

## The Reception of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* in 1885. A Controversial Process

© [Fernando Romeu](#) (1998)

### Abstract

Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has always been a controversial work. Even today its presence in the syllabuses of many schools is being questioned, despite the work's hypercanonization. The 1885 reception of the work can provide many clues to these current debates. However, the two previous studies of the initial reception do not make a qualitative analysis of the arguments used by supporters and detractors. Here a quantitative and qualitative analysis is made of the main arguments that were used to attack and to support the book, as well as the contextual events that affected its reception. The results show that the success of Twain's book was never in danger, since both sides of the debate agreed on the fundamental importance of the work's social repercussions. Further, the detractors did not perform well and historical events such as the Concord library ban favored Twain's supporters, polarizing the debate and actually forcing some detractors to change their position.

---

The fact that a literary work written 113 years ago still stirs up intense debate in the press and the media in general is quite amazing. This may seem even more surprising if we take into account that the book was canonized some forty years ago, which should make it an uncontested classic. But it is precisely this canonization and the arguments behind it that make *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* such a polemical work.

If we wanted to trace back the roots of the debate, we should probably look for them in Lionel Trilling's 1948 introduction to the Rinehart College Edition of *Huckleberry Finn*, which according to Arac "changed a book, once felt as a nationally shared yet personal possession, into assigned reading" (1997:108). And even if we did not read this specific piece of criticism, we could use any other article or work written between 1945-50, the period when *Huckleberry Finn* was canonized.

However, most of the reasons for the canonization of the book had already been aired in the aftermath of its publication in 1885. Indeed, the debate that took place

from February to June 1885 laid the bases for the canonization of Huckleberry Finn.

There are two main studies of the 19th -century reception of Huck Finn. The first was written by Vogelback in 1939 and was published in *American Literature*. Since Vogelback missed many of the 19th-century reviews and criticisms, he believed that "Huckleberry Finn received at the time practically no critical attention in America" (266). But he also made some good points, indicating, for instance, that "The adverse criticism was based less on artistic grounds than on moral" (269). Vogelback's article, though certainly limited, was not a totally wrong account of the 19th-century reception of Huckleberry Finn.

The second major article was written by Victor Fischer in 1983 and published in *American Realism*. It is very well documented and gives a clear picture of the critical reaction to Huckleberry Finn in 1885. Fischer uncovered numerous reviews and comments and gave a descriptive analysis of them, with some interesting conclusions in the last part of his article. He examines Twain's predictions about the behavior of the press and the way he tried to stage-manage the critical reaction to the book. Fischer also considers the way the press was divided about the value of Huckleberry Finn and about Twain as a writer and/or person.

The purpose of the present article is to review the arguments used in the 1885 debate, both for and against the book, and to assess their importance for later criticism. Not all the 1885 reviews and comments will be analyzed. I have focused on the newspapers that participated most actively in the debate, i.e. those from Hartford, Boston, Springfield, New York, and San Francisco, and also on two important magazines, the *Century* and the *Atlantic*. The critical reactions to Huckleberry Finn will be analyzed from both a quantitative and a qualitative point of view and important historical facts such as the Concord library banning of the book will also be taken into account.

It is worth reviewing all the 1885 criticism again in order to clarify the extent to which it affected Twain's success. Also, it may illustrate the different attitudes towards art in the late 19th century and the reasons why the discourse that won the battle did so.

Anyone more or less familiar with the 19th century debate over Huckleberry Finn might believe it was of little relevance for later critics or even readers since, because of several incidents and due mainly to the Concord ban, the book was rarely considered on its own merits. But this is a false impression. Many reviews dealt with the intrinsic merits of the book quite profusely. Indeed, most of the reasons why Huckleberry Finn is praised today were already pointed out and

discussed by 19th- century critics.

Some factors concerning Huckleberry Finn or Twain himself may have contributed to this apparently poor evaluation of the book's merits. First, the book was not new to the reviewers; excerpts of it had been read during a lecture tour which preceded its publication and some chapters had appeared in the Century magazine and had elicited comments that probably biased readers and reviewers. Second, before the book appeared, some engravings were manipulated in a way that made them look obscene; although these engravings were not printed in the book, they reached the public through an advertising brochure that had already been distributed when the publishers realised the obscenity of the engravings. Third, Twain sued Estes & Lauriat, a Boston publishing firm, because it had released a catalog -before the book came out- that offered the book at a lower price than the one that was supposed to be charged by subscription agents. The lawsuit was followed by the Boston newspapers, which were delighted to print full accounts of it and especially of the final verdict, which favored Estes&Lauriat. Fourth, the book was sold by subscription, a method that newspapers did not like, because it meant that the book would not be advertised in their pages. Finally, and most important, the book was banned within a month of its publication. The Concord, Massachusetts, Public Library decided to exclude Huckleberry Finn from its shelves on the grounds that it was "rough, coarse and inelegant, dealing with a series of experiences not elevating, the whole book being more suited to the slums than to intelligent, respectable people". In other words, they thought it was "the veriest trash" (Boston Evening Transcript, March 17 1885, p.6). The banning of the book was widely echoed by the press and elicited a considerable number of editorial comments and criticism.

To all these factors we should add the fact that Twain was already a well-known author who had supporters and detractors. This could have led to a kind of criticism based on the author and his actions, rather than the book itself.

There were many reviews and comments on Huckleberry Finn in 1885 (cf. Fischer:1983). Most of them were concentrated in five cities: Boston, Hartford, New York, San Francisco and Springfield. My analysis of the 19th-century reception of Huckleberry Finn will be based on the articles published by newspapers in these cities, as well as the reviews in the Century, Atlantic and Life magazines.

Our corpus thus comprises some thirty-five articles. They have been classified according to their predominantly positive and negative attitude towards the book. Ten categories have been established in order to quantify the presence of various

arguments in the debate over the book. These categories correspond to the lines of analysis that the articles follow. That is to say, they have not been established a priori, but after reading all the articles and seeing the arguments they use for and against. The categories are:

- 1) Comparison of the book with Twain's previous works.
- 2) Evaluation of the portrayal of human nature in the book.
- 3) Evaluation of the faithfulness with which Southwestern life is portrayed.
- 4) Evaluation of the use of dialects in the book.
- 5) Evaluation of the cohesiveness of the work.
- 6) Comments on the respectability of the readers of the book.
- 7) Comments on the tastefulness of the contents.
- 8) Evaluation of the truthfulness of the events and characters in the book.
- 9) Reference to the author's initial "warning".
- 10) Appropriateness and quality of the humor in the book.

### **TWAIN'S CAREER AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE RECEPTION PROCESS**

As has been indicated above, it was quite tempting for reviewers to measure the quality of Huckleberry Finn against Twain's previous works. Fourteen articles did so, eight of them considering Huckleberry Finn to be an advance over Twain's previous works. Only three of them considered that the book was in a sense a partial sequel to Tom Sawyer. The Atlantic said, "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (C.L. Webster & Co.) is in some sense a sequel to the Adventures of Tom Sawyer, though each of the two stories is complete in itself"; a month previously, the Hartford Daily Times of March 9 had said, "Everybody will want to see Huckleberry Finn, Mr Clemens's story -a sort of continuation of his Tom Sawyer". In spite of these slightly hesitant criticisms, Huckleberry Finn was considered an advance over Twain's previous works by those newspapers that praised the book, to the point that the San Francisco Chronicle's review, published on March 15, shortly before the book was banned by the Concord Public Library, described Huckleberry Finn as "the most amusing book Mark Twain has written for years". All these epithets could be expected from any positive article. What might be more interesting is the opinion of the newspapers that criticised the book. Again, it would be quite normal for all of them to say that the book was worse than Twain's previous works. Yet, surprisingly, they recognized Twain's prestige and popularity, even when they regretted it. The Springfield (Mass.) Daily Republican of March 17 said "It is time that this influential pseudonym should cease to carry into homes and libraries unworthy productions" .

## THE ASSESSMENT OF HUMOR IN HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Twain's prestige and his previous books were widely taken into account by contemporary critics. This could be seen as indication that the book was not judged on its merits. However, in most cases, comparisons of Huckleberry Finn with Twain's previous works was indeed followed by a discussion of the book's features. Often, both supporters and detractors assessed the book's particularly humorous passages as a way of reinforcing their opinion about it. Newspapers that supported the book praised the humor, some of them more enthusiastically than others. The detractors, of course, said that it contained little humor. However, there was not a uniform condemnation of the book on the basis of humor. The San Francisco Evening Bulletin of March 14, the newspaper that presented the most wide-ranging and devastating critique of Huckleberry Finn, praised the humor, although it said it was immoral:

"It is an amusing story, if such scrap-work can be called a story. The author rarely fails when he sets out to tickle the ribs of young or old. [...] The funny book will always be read in this world of dryness and dearth".

Other newspapers praised the humor in Twain's previous books but complained about the humor in Huckleberry Finn. The Boston Evening Traveller of March 5 said, "Mr. Clemens has contributed to some humorous literature that will hold its place, but his Huckleberry Finn appears to be singularly flat, stale and unprofitable." It is interesting to notice that the Evening Traveller here quoted from Hamlet, a piece of classically canonical literature, in its attack to a work that proposed a passably new concept of literature. Both the Evening Bulletin and the Evening Traveller found moral reasons for their attack on the humor: "dearth", "dryness", "stale", "flat" and "unprofitable" are subjective epithets that seem not to correspond to a serious analysis of a work of literature. The journalists and critics that supported Huckleberry Finn also used non-technical epithets to praise it. Some of them made some small negative comments on specific sections of the book in which the humor was not as effective as in the rest. For this, they also used moral epithets. Nevertheless, supporters of Huckleberry Finn grounded their appraisal of the book better than did detractors. The San Francisco Chronicle said, "Running all through the book is the sharpest satire on the ante-bellum estimate of the slave." And the Century devoted one paragraph of its review to the book's humor, praising it highly but commenting on some passages that were not as perfect as they might have been. For instance, "the fun in the long account of Tom Sawyer's artificial imitation of escapes from prison is somewhat forced." Yet, this is just a minor comment within general approval of the book and its humor. When praising

Twain's humor, the Century also gave quite specific reasons for its opinions: "His [Huck's] perverted views regarding the unholiness of his actions [trying to free Jim] are most instructive and amusing." As we can see, supporters of the book made comments that were more specific and not as moralizing as those of the detractors.

Humor was one of the features that both supporters and detractors coincided in commenting on. They also coincided in commenting on the author's note or "warning."

### **TWAIN'S IRONY AND HIS "WARNING" ABOUT THE LACK OF MOTIVE, MORAL AND PLOT IN THE BOOK**

At the beginning of Huckleberry Finn. Twain published the following notice:

"Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot." (Twain, 1996:XX)His detractors did not hesitate to remark on several occasions that the notice was true. We thus find comments like:

"As to the work itself, it is well described by the author, as being without a motive, a moral, or a plot." (San Francisco Daily Examiner, March 9, 1885, p.3)

Supporters also expressed their opinion about the notice, saying it was not true.

Surprisingly, the first comment on the notice in a positive article appeared before any detractor said that the notice was true: on February 15 the New York Sun stated that Huckleberry Finn can "brag of both a motive and a fairish plot, while a beautiful moral decorates nearly every one of its shining pages [...]." Another comment on the falsehood of the "warning" appeared in the Century.

The points that both supporters and detractors discussed were Twain's previous works, the humor and the author's "warning". In general, though, the discourse of those who praised the book was quite different from that of those who did not. If anything characterizes the 19th-century reception of Huckleberry Finn, it is the difference in the arguments used by its supporters and detractors. This difference nevertheless became less noticeable after the Concord ban, when critics and journalists started quoting and dismissing each other's arguments about the banning of the book.

### **THE ARGUMENTS USED BY DETRACTORS**

The book was attacked mainly because of its bad taste and lack of respectability, as well as the supposed truthfulness of the authorial warning, which said that the book had no plot, no motive, and, most important, no moral.

### **GOOD HUMOR, BAD TASTE**

Supporters of Huckleberry Finn did not deal with the issue of tastefulness.

However, detractors used this argument to deprecate the book. The Boston Daily Advertiser of March 12 remarked, "One cannot have the book long in his hands without being tempted to regret that the author should so often have laid himself open to the charge of coarseness and bad taste." The Boston Evening Traveller of March 5 opined, "The taste of this gratuitous presentation is as bad as the book itself, which is an extreme statement." Other newspapers, while not commenting directly on the tastefulness of the book, made clear allusions to it. The San Francisco Evening Bulletin said, "Many fastidious people hide their scruples, because they want to be amused." After the ban, other newspapers reproduced the censors's edict, which attacked the book harshly on the basis of tastefulness. On March 17, the Boston Evening Transcript stated:

"Huckleberry Finn" Barred Out. The Concord (Mass.) Public Library committee has decided to exclude Mark Twain's latest book from the library. One member of the committee says that, while he does not want to call it immoral, he thinks it contains but little humor, and that of a very coarse type. He regards it as the veriest trash. The librarian and other members of the committee entertain similar views, characterizing it as rough, coarse and inelegant, dealing with a series of experiences not elevating, the whole book being more suited to the slums than to the intelligent, respectable people."

The issue of tastefulness was only used by detractors of the book, which tells us something about the possible ideology behind them. We will deal with this issue below.

The book was attacked quite unanimously with respect to the respectability of its contents. Up to mid-March 1885, three newspapers had questioned the respectability of Huckleberry Finn. Before the book was published, the Herald (Boston) reviewed the chapters that had appeared in the Century and remarked, "It is pitched in but one key, and that is the key of a vulgar and abhorrent life." (Herald, February 1, 1885, p.17) On March 5 the Boston Evening Traveller stated, "It is doubtful if the editon could be disposed of to people of average intellect at anything short of the point of the bayonet." And the San Francisco Evening Bulletin commented:

"Huckleberry Finn is, in a restricted sense, a typical character. Yet the type is not altogether desirable, nor is it one that most parents who want a future full of promise for their young folks would select without some hesitation. [...] [I]t must also be admitted that not a little of the assisted wit' is of the more dreary sort."

### **THE SUPPORTERS' REACTION TO THE ATTACKS**

The attacks continued after the book was banned, when some supporters reacted to

these attacks and leapt to the defense of Huckleberry Finn. The New York Herald of March 18 ironically stated,

"The sage censors of the Concord public library have unanimously reached the conclusion that Huckleberry Finn' is not the sort of reading matter for knowledge-seekers of a town which boasts the only summer school of philosophy' in the universe."

The Hartford Courant and the San Francisco Chronicle reacted to these accusations. The Courant published the following short note, also on March 18:

"The public library committee of Concord, Mass., have given Mark Twain's new book, Huckleberry Finn' a wide advertisement by refusing to allow it to be put on their shelves. The result will be that people in Concord will buy the book instead of drawing it from the library, and those who do will smile at the idea that it is not for respectable people."

And on March 29 the San Francisco Chronicle, after prasing several features of the book, said, "These are only a few instances which go to show that this is not a boy's book and does not fall under the head of flippant and worthless literature." It is true that some newspapers that gave decisive support to Twain mentioned the issue of his work's respectability , but this was their reaction to what had been a recurrent theme in the detractors's comments.

### THE SUPPORTERS'S DISCOURSE

Supporters of the book focused on a different set of categories in their comments and reviews. The beauty of Huck's soul and actions, the truthfulness of the narrative and the cohesion of the book were the categories mainly used by supporters and not so much by detractors.

### WAS THE SOUTHWEST LIKE THIS ? REALISM IN HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Another topic that was quite common in reviews was the portrayal of speech varieties in Huckleberry Finn. Eleven texts in our corpus deal with this issue. The appropriateness of the language in Huckleberry Finn was mainly debated before the Concord ban. The portrayal of speech varieties was attacked only on one occasion. Before the ban, the Boston Daily Globe of February 20 had questioned Twain's mastery of language. Its brief comment on the recently appeared book said:

"Mark Twain makes the hero of his new book tell the story in what is supposed to be a boy's dialect. On the very second page this "low-down", uneducated urchin is made to say "commence", where any boy, especially if he hadn't been to school, would have said "begin". The less education, the more Anglo-Saxon, and, generally, the better grammar. Mark ought to know this."

Surprisingly, this is a quite objective criticism of the book. However, it doesn't apply to the whole book, it is not, by any means, generalizable.

Apart from this, there were no further attacks on Twain's mastery and portrayal of dialect. What is more, the San Francisco Evening Bulletin, which attacked Huckleberry Finn considerably, praised the use of dialects in it, in saying that "The author turns his knowledge of Western dialects to account."

Up to seven newspapers commented on Twain's ability to use dialects. On February 20, the same day that the Boston Daily Globe's attack on Huckleberry Finn appeared, the Hartford Courant said, "And the dialects of the people, white and black - what a study are they; and yet nobody talks for the sake of exhibiting a dialect." The San Francisco Chronicle commented that, "in regard to the dialect it surpasses any of the author's previous stories in the command of half dozen species of patois which passed for the English language in old Missouri".

The argument that the book portrayed Southwestern life faithfully was used in more than half the positive reviews, whereas it only appeared in two negative reviews, and one of those said that it was one of the good aspects of the book. But this was the only attack on Twain's realism in Huckleberry Finn, perhaps because praise for realism erased the possible effect of the attack. The San Francisco Chronicle said, "It is a more minute and faithful picture of Southwestern manners and customs fifty years ago than was "Life on the Mississippi"." And the Century commented that, "every scene is given, not described; and the result is a vivid picture of Western life forty or fifty years ago. [...] [T]he book is a most valuable record of an important part of our motley American civilization". The Hartford newspapers also praised this aspect of Huckleberry Finn. The Daily Times said, "Mr. Clemens describes things as they really were, in Missouri - and as they still are, to a somewhat modified extent; and this book is as good as a trip through all the regions which it treats." New York did not have much to say about this aspect of the book. Only The Sun of Feb 15 said "we get no end of stirring incident, river lore, human nature, philology and fun."

### HUCK'S GOOD-HEARTEDNESS

Reference to Huck's moral nature appears in half the reviews and comments made by those who had a positive attitude towards the book. On February 15, the New York Sun said, as has been quoted above, that the book contained much of human nature. Other critics did not comment directly on the beauty of Huck's soul but showed interest in his qualms of conscience. The Century said, "Another admirable instance [of humor] is to be seen in Huckleberry Finn's mixed feelings about rescuing Jim, the negro, from slavery. His perverted views regarding the

unholiness of his action are most instructive and amusing."

Only two detractors commented on Huck's qualms of conscience or on the immorality of any specific action. Mostly they attacked the book in general. Despite these attacks, positive comments on the goodness of Huck's nature prevailed over negative opinions.

### A SMALL DEBATE ABOUT THE COHESIVENESS OF THE BOOK

The cohesion of the book was another point of discussion in which supporters had more to say than detractors. The debate over this issue was concentrated in San Francisco. Three newspapers from that city dealt with the cohesiveness of Huckleberry Finn, on the 14th and the 15th of March, just before the ban. The San Francisco Evening Bulletin said, "There is very little of literary art in the story. It is a string of incidents ingeniously fastened together," thus revealing, in a sense, the cohesion of the work. The San Francisco Chronicle, while saying that "the plot is extremely simple", opined that "when the story gets under good headway it is remarkably well proportioned and the interest is never allowed to flag for a moment."

With regard to the cohesion of the narrative, supporters differed from those who said that the authorial notice was true. Only the Argonaut (San Francisco) acknowledged that Twain's claim that the book has no plot was right. However, the

Century praised the unity of the work, saying:

"This later book, Huckleberry Finn', has the great advantage of being written in autobiographical form. This secures a unity in the narration that is most valuable; every scene is given, not described; and the result is a vivid picture of Western life forty or fifty years ago. While Tom Sawyer' is scarcely more than an apparently fortuitous collection of incidents, and its thread is one that has to do with murders, this story has a more intelligible plot."

The comments on the cohesion of the book may be taken as a sequel to the opinions about the notice.

### THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE STORY

Supporters commented more confidently on the truthfulness of the narrative. Indeed, it is logical they did so, because half of the reviews with a favorable attitude to Huckleberry Finn praised its portrayal of the Southwestern life. The issue of truthfulness, though, did not interest many reviewers. Only San Francisco newspapers and the Century commented on the truth contained in Twain's recently published book. The San Francisco Chronicle, which had praised Twain's realism, remarked towards the end of its review that, "Any one who has ever lived in the

Southwest, or who has visited that section, will recognize the truth of all these sketches and the art with which they are brought into this story." The same newspaper made similar comments on March 29, in a second review that appeared in reply to the Concord ban. The Century also had its say: "What makes it valuable is the evident truthfulness of the narrative, and where this is lacking and its place is taken by ingenious invention, the book suffers."

### NON-LITERARY FACTORS IN REVIEWS

So far we have been looking at how the book was evaluated in terms of chiefly literary and moral criteria. However, the 19th-century reception of Huckleberry Finn was importantly marked by the weight that factors external to the book had on its evaluation.

The presence of external factors in reviews was significant from February to mid-March 1885. This is the period when the book was on the market and had not yet been banned by the Concord Public Library. Reference to external factors appeared in almost half the reviews in our corpus. The non-literary factors that will be assessed here are the complaints and reports of publication details, (delays in the publication and problems with the engravings) comments on Twain's eagerness for money, reference to Twain's self-advertising strategies, and the role of the Century in the success of the book.

Three newspapers made extensive reference to non-literary factors in their attacks on Huckleberry Finn. On March 5, the Boston Evening Traveller stated:

"It is little wonder that Mr. Samuel Clemens, otherwise Mark Twain, resorted to real or mock lawsuits, as maybe to restrain some real or imaginary selling of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn", as a means of advertising that extraordinarily senseless publication. [...] This publication rejoices on two frontispieces, of which the one is supposed to be a faithful portrait of Huckleberry Finn, and the other an engraving of the classic features of Mr. Mark Twain [...]"

The San Francisco Evening Bulletin published a rather long article on Huckleberry Finn on March 14, basing most of its attacks on external factors:

"Mark Twain long since learned the art of writing for the market. His recent books have the character of commercial ventures. He probably estimates in advance his profits. His books are not sold to any great extent over the counters of booksellers, but are circulated by subscription agents. Lately Mark Twain, it is reported, has become the silent partner in a publishing house, the imprint of which is on the present volume. [...] No book has been on the market with more advertising. Then the Century gave the enterprise a lift by publishing a chapter of the book in advance, which, while an advertisement, was still a readable article. "Huckleberry

Finn" has been introduced to the world as it were with the blare of trumpets. [...] The book is attractive enough to command commercial success, and that, it may be supposed, was the inspiring motive in its production."

The Boston Evening Traveller and the San Francisco Evening Bulletin devoted more than a half their comments to attacking the book on the basis of aspects that had to do with the author's life.

Another San Francisco newspaper, the Daily Examiner, began its article by saying,

"The San Francisco agents of this book give notice that, though some unavoidable delays have occurred, this volume is well ready for delivery to subscribers." It goes on to state that the book gives a false picture of life in the West, then returns to arguments against the author, noting that, "[...] when he paid a visit to his old haunts on the Comstock, a party of his former intimates played a practical joke on him, he was one of the maddest mortals who could be seen in a day's march."

In addition to these three articles, two further newspapers made reference to the chapters in the Century, but they commented on the content of the chapters and not on the fact that the magazine actually contributed to the success of the book.

After the ban, references to external factors increased considerably. Almost all newspapers made reference to the ban. The opinion of those who had reviewed the book favorably remained favorable: they pointed out that the banning was contradictory, because, in their attempt to censure Huckleberry Finn, the censors had given it considerable publicity. Supporters also ridiculed Concord as the home of nonsensical and obsolete philosophy. On March 17 the New York Sun said, "Trascendentalism, even before it was second hand, and humor never got along with each other, and Concord has pampered its Over-soul at the expense of its understanding."

The newspapers that had reviewed the book unfavorably either quoted the censors' words or said that the Concord ban reinforced their opinion about the book. Some of them, however, realized that the ban was counter-productive for their interests, because it would stir up the interest in the book. Other detractors reacted even more negatively to the ban. The Boston Daily Globe, which had deprecated Twain's use of language, commented:

"They [the members of the Concord public library committee] do not pick out any particular passage, but just sit on the book in general. When Mark writes another book he should think of the Concord School of Philosophy and put a little more whenceness of the hereafter among his nowness of the here."

Defamers of Huckleberry Finn returned to their bitter attacks after Twain directed

an ironic letter to the Free Trade Club of Concord, which had elected him as an honorary member. Thus, the Boston Daily Globe of April 2, in spite of having laughed at the ban some days before, stated:

"Huckleberry Finn,' alias Mark Twain', alias S. L. CLEMENS, began life as the writer of grotesque sketches that were coarse and strong and humorous. At first the humorous predominated, and out of this he made a reputation and a fortune. Having won these he has consented to convert himself into a walking sign, a literary sandwich, placarded all over with advertisements of his wares.[...] Lately he has made a new departure. Not contented with crying his goods alone he has asked the world to assist him. Some have complied. Of these he says nothing. Those who have refused are made objects of ridicule. His letter to the Free Trade Club is the last effort in this direction."

Defamers of the book included many more comments on external factors than did defenders. Defenders began to talk about these issues when they had become a recurrent aspect in the defamers' reviews.

### EFFECTS OF THE 1885 CRITICISM

About half the 1885 reviews and comments on Huckleberry Finn were unfavorable. This, together with the events that affected Twain's reputation, like the lawsuit, the Concord ban, the incidents with the engravings, the denunciations of his eagerness for commercial success, and the press hostility to the subscription method, could have affected the success of Twain's recently appeared work. However, it did not. Victor Fischer (1983:2) makes the following comments: "Although disapproval of the subscription publishing and the bad publicity affected some contemporary reaction, they did so principally in Massachusetts. Critics in Boston and New York did deplore the book, and their attitudes to some extent influenced opinions expressed in other cities around the country. However, Huck was also well received and intelligently praised in New York, Connecticut, Georgia, California and even Massachusetts. Moreover, the Concord Library ban which drew out so many hostile comments on the book, was also well and repeatedly denounced by editors who had already reviewed the book favorably or who took the opportunity to defend it for the first time. [...] In fact, the intrinsic merits of the book combined with this large sale to unify its readers over the next ten years." (1983:2-3)

Fischer also notes:

"Contemporary critics of Huck Finn can be placed in two rough categories: those who took the book seriously and reviewed it, favorably or unfavorably, as a literary work; and those who wrote about it as a scandal, an event, or an episode in

## Mark Twain's life." (35)

These points are largely correct, as will be shown below and can be deduced from the analysis above. Fischer, unlike Vogelback, who thought that the general reaction to the book had been negative, basically says that:

- a) Unfavorable attitudes toward the book were concentrated in one area that influenced other places.
- b) The ban was not totally negative in effect.
- c) The book overcame the debate; it was only in trouble for a few months.
- d) Both the positive and the negative criticism can be divided into serious and sensationalist.

The validity of these arguments is attested by the reviews and comments cited above. However, Fischer's findings can be fleshed out and a deeper analysis of the debate around Huckleberry Finn can be made. In particular, we might add that:

- a) The debate around the book was concentrated in four cities located in two main areas. These areas influenced the other States, which were not in a position to speak for themselves.
  - b) The most serious and influential reviewers were on Twain's side.
  - c) Unfavorable criticism performed poorly.
  - d) The Concord ban was decisive for Twain's success.
  - e) The 1885 criticism set the basis for further analyses of Huckleberry Finn.
- We shall now investigate each of these points.

### THE CONCENTRATION OF THE DEBATE IN NEW ENGLAND AND CALIFORNIA

The pre-1885 debate around Huckleberry Finn dealt mostly with external factors, with the lecture tour and with the Century chapters, and did not attract New England and California critics as much as it did in 1885. Positioning with respect to the book, however, had already begun, despite the fact that there had been relatively little debate before 1885. Sides were taken clearly in January and mainly in February 1885. Boston became the center of opposition to the book and Hartford became the stark protector of Huckleberry Finn. New York entered the debate a little later, with a first positive appreciation by the Sun, which remained without a negative opinion until two weeks later. San Francisco entered the debate in March, with a negative review of the book. The debate was concentrated in these cities. The only other city that was active was Springfield (Massachusetts), through its Republican. The positions of these newspapers were echoed throughout the country by other newspapers. It seems that most reprinted reviews were from newspapers with unfavorable attitudes toward the book. But these were usually

short notes with few arguments, or direct quotes without editorial comment. Moreover, newspapers supporting Huckleberry Finn could also be read beyond the cities of publication.

Initially there were two cities supporting the book and three attacking it. Before the book was published, Boston commented quite extensively about the *Century* chapters. But the comments were usually short, for example:

"Mark Twain's Royalty on the Mississippi' has a trifle of "too muchness of that sort of thing," which is the prevailing characteristic of this sort of writing. It is pitched in but one key, and that is the key of a vulgar and abhorrent life." (*The Herald*, February 1, 1885)

This was supposed to be a review of the excerpts in the *Century*.

However, Boston was not the first city to review the book. The first review of Huckleberry Finn that appeared in the cities of our interest was in the *New York Sun* on February 15. The review was entitled "Some Interesting Sketches from Life on the Mississippi Forty Years Ago." It called Mark Twain "The greatest living authority on the Mississippi River and on juvenile cussedness", said that the author's "warning" was by no means true, and also that "we get no end of stirring incident, river lore, human nature, philology, and fun." In this review, Huck's moral decision in chapter #31 is also commented upon, but I will deal with that issue below.

Many of the lines of analysis that were to become commonplace had been set out in the first of the reviews in our corpus. On February 17, the *Hartford Evening Post* reviewed the book, considering the "warning" and the frontispieces as examples of Twain's sense of humor, commenting positively on the use of dialects, and saying the following about Huck's moral nature: "Huckleberry Finn is a bad boy and a sharp one, who makes many acquaintances in his island retreats and river wanderings and finally assists in stealing an ante-bellum "nigger"- a philanthropic act that will long keep his memory green." Three days later, both the *Hartford Courant* and the *Boston Daily Globe* published their reviews. Whereas the *Daily Globe* only wrote about Twain's use of language in the book, saying that it was inaccurate in making Huck say "commence" instead of "begin", the *Hartford Courant's* reviewer wrote a far longer review and praised Huckleberry Finn because it was an advance over Tom Sawyer, because of the realism in both the depiction of life and the portrayal of speech varieties, and also because of the doses of humor and human nature which could be found in the book. By February, it seemed that the supporters were winning the battle. In March, however, the book was not reviewed so favorably, at least initially. The *New York World* began its

review by assuring the reader that Huckleberry Finn was a bad book by an author whose reputation was firmly established. It implicitly acknowledged that the book was humorous and it complained about the lack of respectability on which this humor thrived. It also attacked Twain's use of dialect, saying that the varieties were indistinguishable. The review, in general, concentrated on respectability. Two other attacks followed, including the first review from San Francisco. The Boston Evening Traveller criticized the book on the basis of the lawsuit, Twain's supposed eagerness for money, and the book's lack of respectability and excess of bad taste. The San Francisco Daily Examiner announced that, after some delays, the book was available to the public, and started reviewing it by confirming the truthfulness of Twain's "warning". It was the only newspaper to deny the authenticity of Twain's depiction of Southwestern life. The main body of the review, though, dealt with Twain's ambiguous sense of humor. On the same day, the Hartford Daily Times reviewed the book and praised the same aspects that the Courant had praised three weeks before. The Boston Daily Advertiser, a much quoted newspaper, regretted in its review that "the author should so often have laid himself open to the charge of coarseness and bad taste," and stated that the "warning" was quite true. The longest attack on Huckleberry Finn came from San Francisco, on the first page of the Evening Bulletin. The attack was based on the commercial character of Huckleberry Finn, the help received from the Century, and the truthfulness of the author's notice. Yet the reviewer focused on the issue of morality. He also praised some qualities of the book, like the humor (regretting its moral shortcomings, of course), the use of dialects, and the presence of river scenes. The reviewer thus deprecated the book's respectability but praised its formal aspects. Right before the ban, one of the most favorable reviews came out: the San Francisco Chronicle added some new arguments to the already known qualities such as the cohesiveness of the work. The reviewer showed awareness of the negative appreciations of the book and said, "The person who can withstand the abounding humor of this book must be proof against all jokes except of the Joe Miller order."

Then the book was banned at Concord, and criticism took a different course. Three newspapers printed in Boston published accounts of the ban on February 17. Most of them consisted of a brief explanation of the library's action followed by some quotations of the committee members' words. It is quite predictable that the first ones to react to the ban were defamers, because they would use it to reinforce their judgements. However, the Boston Daily Globe, which had attacked Huckleberry Finn a month before, aligned itself with Twain by criticizing the "Concord School

of Philosophy", as we have seen above. Also, The New York Herald attacked Concord bitterly on March 18.

But not everyone was so unhappy about the Concord decision. The Boston Literary World said, "We are glad to see that the commendation given to this sort of literature by its publication in the CENTURY has received a check by this action at Concord." And the Daily Republican of March 17 attacked Mark Twain and summarized the reasons behind the attacks saying "The trouble with Mr. Clemens is that he has no reliable sense of propriety."

Comments on the decision of the Concord public library were common in March and April. Detractors of Huckleberry Finn kept on deprecating it on the grounds of tastefulness and respectability. Some of them abandoned their unfavorable attitude towards the book. The Boston Daily Advertiser, which had attacked Huckleberry Finn harshly, said:

"In papers from one end of the country to the other the statement is published and commented upon that the public library committee of Concord has marked "Huckleberry Finn" as unworthy of a place on its shelves. Strange to say, few if any of these journals find any reasons to differ from the book judges of Concord. Probably the editors have all tried to read the book."

The newspapers that had supported Twain replied to detractors' charges on the book and often reviewed it again. Thus, the San Francisco Chronicle on March 19 qualified the Concord action as absurd and praised the book, adding some comments to its previous review (the main focus of the review was to stress that it was not a boys' book.)

The main effect of the ban was to trigger a total polarization of opinions. While those newspapers that had reviewed Huckleberry Finn favorably did not change their attitude, the detractors were not so stable: in some cases they changed sides, which suggests that their assessment depended much more on Twain's irksome behavior than on the intrinsic properties of his book.

This survey of the reception of Huckleberry Finn from January to April 1885 also shows that detractors based their attack on two arguments, respectability and tastefulness, and that they did not deny the qualities that were praised by supporters. The supporters, however, used a greater range of arguments in favor of the book, grounded their statements on specific reasons or excerpts, and replied to the charges that had been made against the book.

It is clear that the debate was concentrated in the five cities mentioned above. News and reviews from those newspapers were quoted and reprinted all over the States (cf. Fischer 1983). To give just a few examples, the New York Sun review

was reprinted in the Sacramento Daily Bee; the Springfield (Mass.) Daily Republican ban report was reprinted, among other newspapers, in the Providence Evening Bulletin, the Cincinnati Commercial Gazette and the CRITIC, and the New York World's report of the Free Trade Club Letter was reprinted in three further papers. This can only mean that the opinions and news from the most influential areas were reprinted by papers that did not have much to say about Twain or were shy enough to wait for authoritative opinions to which they could cling.

A dialectical war between some newspapers was established. Thus, on March 29 the San Francisco Chronicle said, "There is a large class of people who are impervious to a joke, even when it's told by as consummate a master of the art of narration as Mark Twain." And the Hartford Courant of April 4 opined that "the Boston Advertiser attacks Mark Twain as venomously and persistently as if his recent suit against a Boston publishing-house had been brought against itself." Apart from these two overt allusions there were several indirect attacks on Huck's detractors. The detractors, however, did not fight back.

### AUTHORITY WAS ON TWAIN'S SIDE

Although there were many attacks on Twain, they were mainly from voices with little literary authority. It was moral rather than literary authorities that attacked Mark Twain and his book. Contemporary literary authors like W.D. Howells decidedly supported Twain. And the most important authority who placed himself on Twain's side was Thomas Sergeant Perry, who wrote the review for the Century, which also published Howells's *Rise of Silas Laphan* and James's *Bostonians*.

The Century's review did not say anything new about the book. It commented on the same issues that the Hartford and San Francisco newspapers (and New York ones to a lesser extent) had referred to, except for speech varieties. Cleverly enough, it ignored the ban and the charges of coarseness. But it said, in a clear reply to the detractors, "Yet the story is capital reading." The Century's review closed the debate over the book, reasserting all the arguments that had been made in favor of the book and ignoring the attacks on it. By ignoring all the external factors that had surrounded the immediate reception of the work, Perry put himself on the level of formal literary criticism, which had a more authoritative literary voice than the would-be moral giants of the time, as will be shown below.

Arac (1997:74) argues that the main reason behind the canonization of Huckleberry Finn, Huck's decision to go to hell, was already praised in the initial reception of the book. He states that "In fact, chapter 31 won praise from the book's first appearance." With respect to Perry's statement that "His [Huck's]

perverted views regarding the unholiness of his action are most instructive and amusing", Arac commented that "Perry saw not exemplary heroism but a humorous instance of good-hearted ignorance." This is quite true. However, the Century only re-adapted an argument that had been used in many favorable reviews of the book. In spite of the fact that the Century's review was the most influential, other reviews created a state of opinion about Huck's decision in Chapter #31 which resembles very much the opinions of critics that made Huckleberry Finn enter into the American canon. The Hartford Courant had said: "Mr. Clemens strikes in a very amusing way certain psychological problems. What, for instance, in the case of Huck, the son of a town drunkard, perverted from the time of his birth and how does it work? Most amusing is the struggle Huck has with his conscience in regard to slavery. His conscience tells him, the way it has been instructed, that to help the runaway nigger Jim to escape [...] is an enormous offense that will no doubt carry him to the bad place; but his affection for Jim finally induces him to violate his conscience and risk the eternal punishment in helping Jim to escape."

Further, as we have seen above, the Hartford Evening Post qualified Huck's decision as "a philanthropic act that will long keep his memory green". These arguments are more or less in the line of the critical reasoning that has placed Huckleberry Finn on a level that Arac qualifies as "hypercanonization". But, active as it was, the debate provided the 1885 audience with interesting reflections about Huckleberry Finn. One of these was brought up by the Sun on February 15, in commenting that,

"As they neared Cairo, Huck's moral nature began to experience a singular reawakening. A conscience that was sufficiently elastic on the subject of mendacity, and that never kicked when Huck stole chickens or watermelons, or appropriated the goods and chattels of other people, was strongly agitated by the thought that here he was helping a slave to escape to freedom [...]"

However, after deconstructing what was to become a myth, the review built it up again:

"Although this seems like an audacious burlesque of religious sentiment, reaching quite the limits of the permissible, the reflections attributed to Huckleberry on the enormity of his transgression are probably as true as anything else in the book to the Missouri creed of forty years ago."

This positive evaluation of chapter #31 may be seen as an example of the authority that some of the favorable reviewers had. Although, as Vogelback's and Arac's opinions show, the Century's opinion was the one that most influenced later critics,

other favorable reviews were certainly influential, since they used a wide variety of arguments, grounded on textual examples, replying quite successfully to defamers and identifying a set of qualities in Huckleberry Finn that influenced the Century and probably other late-19th-century reviewers. The defamers succeeded in creating a certain hesitation among some critics and people who still valued a novel according to outdated moral standards. However, this would fade out of the context of criticism in the long run, mainly with the change of social values in 20th-century society.

### **THE POOR PERFORMANCE OF DEFAMERS OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN**

Defamers of Huckleberry Finn did not seriously threaten its success. Several reasons show that the detractors's way of attacking Huckleberry Finn was naïve and unconvincing, in spite of the fact that many of them still held a position of power, at least in terms of morality.

The events that surrounded the publication of the book facilitated attacks on Twain and also led some people who probably might have remained neutral to take the defamers's side, since Twain had attacked their friends (for instance, some Boston newspapers seem to have become angry with Twain because of the lawsuit and because of his attack on canonical writers like Longfellow).

Twain's irreverent and satirical behavior made his book appear clearly antimoral and unethical. A sequence of chapters, known as "Royalty on the Mississippi" appeared in the Century before the book was available. These chapters were ambiguous enough to be interpreted as immoral. This, together with Twain's irreverence and obvious financial interests, earned Twain the enmity of most moral giants.

The lawsuit against Estes & Lauriat increased the conception of Twain as a writer for whom money was more important than the transmission of knowledge and ideas. When combined with his obstination in subscription publishing and the fact that he had a share in the publishing business, this could only reinforce his image of money-seeker. Supporters of the book did not pay attention to these aspects and based their writings mostly on textual appreciations. The defamers, however, saw in Twain's supposed greed a starting point to consider him an unethical writer. For people who based their ideal of literature on tradition (see the passing use of Shakespeare in the Boston Evening Traveller above) it was unethical for a writer to care seriously about business matters and not to care at all about charges of coarseness and bad taste. Not only did Twain's lack of ethics become the focus of negative criticism, it also became the only argument against Twain's new book. When the book actually appeared, the critical positions had already been taken.

Defamers of Huckleberry Finn did not need to start reading the book in order to attack it. The authorial note not only said that the book had no motive, but also that it had no plot and, what is more important, no moral. If the book did not have a plot, then it was of low literary value, because it did not resemble the great books written by Hawthorne or Melville. And by denying that the book contained a moral, Twain would seem to have deprived himself of the immediate entry into the Boston canon.

An analysis of the pre-ban criticism made by defamers shows that most of them thought that the book was by no means elevating or that its contents were. Only two reviews out of seven did not mention this issue. More than half the reviews deemed Twain's "warning" true and were disgusted by it. Another category shared by defamers was humor. They said that there was humor in the book and that it would make readers laugh, but they regretted its low morality and its coarseness and distastefulness. However, there was not such a consensus with respect to the formal aspects of the book and some of the reviewers even praised some formal features like characterization.

Supporters also shared many of the criteria for praising the book. Humor was almost unanimously praised, as was realism (either because of the faithful depiction of southwestern life or because of the portrayal of speech varieties). Half the reviews made reference to Huck's moral nature and some of them commented on Huck's moral struggle in chapter #31. As far as the "warning" is concerned, all the newspapers that commented on it coincided in saying that it was not true. Two issues must be taken into account to assess the extent to which supporters and detractors may have met with success:

a) Supporters dealt with the same topic. Although they differed in the focus of their reviews, they shared a basic set of categories (realism, humor, invalidity of the "warning", human nature). Detractors also shared a set of categories, but all their argumentation was based on respectability, with all other arguments supporting this main one.

b) Supporters did not hesitate in praising everything that had to do with Mark Twain and his new book. They were also ready to reply to the attacks. The detractors condemned the book but praised some qualities of it and its author, in spite of having to condemn the book because of its lack of respectability.

### **RESPECTABILITY, THE MAIN ARGUMENT IN THE DEFAMERS' DISCOURSE**

The New York World of March 2 wrote "Literary Ability Wasted on a Pitiable Exhibition of Irreverence and Vulgarity" as a heading for its review. The

Springfield Daily Republican of March 17 said "Mr. Clemens is a genuine and powerful humorist, with a bitter vein of satire on the weaknesses of humanity which is sometimes wholesome, sometimes only grotesque, but in certain of his works degenerates into gross trifling with every fine feeling. The trouble with Mr. Clemens is that he has no reliable sense of propriety."

The last judgment from the Daily Republican explains overtly the reason why the book was attacked so fiercely by many conservative newspapers.

Supporters started reacting against detractors even before the book was banned.

The San Francisco Chronicle, in the last part of its review, opined,

"There is a large class of people who are impervious to a joke, even when told by as consummate a master of the art of narration as is Mark Twain. For all these the book will be dreary, flat, stale and unprofitable."

It is a clear allusion to the Boston Evening Traveller's words. Defamers did not react against these attacks neither did they deprecate any of the qualities praised by supporters.

### THE EFFECTS OF THE CONCORD BAN

Huckleberry Finn was banned at Concord in mid-March 1885. The ban was the key for the success of supporters of the book. Before the ban, supporters and detractors formed two groups that were quite homogeneous within themselves, in spite of the above-mentioned issues. The Concord ban, while unifying the opinion of supporters, divided detractors. So not only did defamers not fight the supporters's accusations against them, they also implicitly defended the book on some occasions by attacking Concord.

But not all detractors were so upset about the ban. The Springfield Daily Republican said "The Concord public library committee deserve well of the public by their action in banishing Mark Twain's new book, "Huckleberry Finn," on the ground that it is trashy and vicious."

However, the Concord ban did away with any possibility of triumph for the defamers of Huckleberry Finn. The Concord School of Philosophy was unpopular and was ridiculed even by newspapers with a conservative bias, even though it represented an extreme of conservative American thinking. If such a ridiculed institution used the same arguments to censure the book as had been used by detractors, detractors were on the ridiculous level of Concord ban philosophers. The only solution for the detractors was to find a new set of categories to attack the book, which they did not do.

The supporters reacted to the ban by praising again the qualities of the book and by laughing at Concord. The most scornful newspapers were those from New York.

The New York Sun on March 18 stated, "Transcendentalism, even before it was second hand, and humor, never got along with each other, and Concord has pampered its Over-Soul at the expense of its understanding."

On many other occasions the irony was not so much directed against Concord but against newspapers, especially against the Daily Advertiser. The reason for this shift in focus seems to be The Advertiser's rage after Twain's ironic letter to the Free Trade Club of Concord, which had elected him as an honorary member. Newspapers that had attacked Twain and then laughed at Concord, now attacked Twain again because of his letter to the Free Trade Club, thus showing that the main reason behind their attacks was Twain's irreverence and not so much the qualities of his book. The Advertiser said on April 2:

"The general condemnation of Huckleberry Finn is an indication that in matters of humor the tide has turned at last and that the old school of coarse, flippant and irreverent joke matters is going out to return no more. "Huckleberry Finn" is little if at all worse than earlier works by the same author, but the public taste has improved [...]."

Two days later, the Hartford Courant stated, "The Boston Advertiser attacks Mark Twain as venomously and persistently as if his recent lawsuit against a Boston publishing-house had been brought against itself." And the New York Sun was even more bitter:

"From the shores of the lake commonly known as the Boston Frogpond, there comes a solemn deliverance. We quote from the columns of our esteemed contemporary, the Daily Advertiser, a newspaper whose department of Shipping Intelligence is edited with rare critical ability."

Both newspapers said that Concord's decision was due to the fact that the Concord Trustees only acquired non-fictional works. They ironized this idea. The Courant said "the life of Huck Finn is not the only biography that partakes of the nature of fiction, and the Concord library would be further depleted if all the biographies that are true were cast out from it." The Sun continued in its ironic vein:

"It is not more than six weeks since the trustees of the public library at Concord, who rigidly exclude works of fiction from the shelves of their institution, purchased a copy of this same book, "Huckleberry Finn," under the impression that they were getting the autobiography of one of the Pilgrim Fathers."

It is clear that at first the newspapers reported the Concord ban as being due to the "coarseness and bad taste" that the trustees found in the book. Later on, they said that it was due to the fictional character of the work. Detractors did not pay attention to this, and they charged at Twain because of his ironic letter to the Free

Trade Club. Supporters did not mention the issue of tastefulness and focused on the fictional character of the work to explain Concord's action. By doing so, they avoided confrontation with moralists and could laugh at Concord, as has been shown in the above quotes.

It is evident that all the attacks on Huckleberry Finn came from conservative moral authorities. In spite of the fact that attacks on Huckleberry Finn were echoed in other newspapers throughout the States, supporters did not hesitate on any occasion to express their opinion of the book. The discourse of those who deprecated the book was based on conservatism and on attacking primarily Twain and then his book. As has been pointed out, they committed many mistakes and were not able to reply to the supporters' charges. In May, when most newspapers were silent, an important literary authority had his say in favor of Huckleberry Finn. Perry's review was probably radically in favor of Huckleberry Finn because of the attacks that detractors had made on the *Century*. *Century*'s review was the clearest sign that Huckleberry Finn had overcome the attacks upon it.

### **THE WEIGHT OF THE 1885 CRITICISM**

It was not until 1983, when Victor Fischer's article appeared, that the general impression of 19th century criticism of Huckleberry Finn began to change. However, there are still many people and critics who think that the reception of Huckleberry Finn in the aftermath of its publication was only an uproar caused by incidents external to the book.

I believe that the 1885 reviewers set the basis for most of the 20th century criticism. The book has been recurrently classified as a piece of humorous or realist literature and the theme of human nature has recently become the most widely commented topic in Twainian criticism. The difference between the 1885 criticism and that of the present-day lies in the topics on which they focus. For 19th-century critics, the issue of race was not as important as, for example, realism. This is not the case nowadays.

Detractors of the book did have their influence on many critics during the nineteenth century. But they only caused hesitation about some extremely uncoventional passages. After 1885, reviewers praised Huckleberry Finn highly. In 1891, Andrew Lang wrote in the *Illustrated London News* "Now I do not mean to assert that Mark Twain is "an impeccable artist", but he is just as far as from being a mere coarse buffoon" and "I have no hesitation in saying that Mark Twain is one among the greatest of contemporary makers of fiction". Lang commented on minor shortcomings, but gave an enthusiastic appraisal of the work.

Five years later, the *Punch* said, "I have not space to dwell on all great points of

this Homeric book - for Homeric it is, in the true sense, as no other English book is that I know of".

Both the Punch and the Illustrated London News were published in England, which indicates a considerable internationalization of Huckleberry Finn. What is more striking is that they echoed the arguments that had been used during the first five months of 1885, and they decided to support Huckleberry Finn, thus reinforcing the opinion that supporters had won the debate.

The doors of the American canon were already open to Huckleberry Finn in the 19th century.

#### References

- Arac, Jonathan. 1997. Huckleberry Finn as Idol and Target. The Functions of Criticism in Our Time. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Fischer, Victor. 1983. "Huck Finn Reviewed: The Reception of Huckleberry Finn in the United States, 1885-1897". American Literary Realism 16. pp. 1-57
- Twain, Mark. 1996. Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. New York: Random House.
- Vogelback, Arthur L. 1939. The Publication and Reception of Huckleberry Finn in America. American Literature (November) pp.260-272.

#### Reviews & Articles

A large number of reviews were necessary for this article. I am very grateful to scholar Victor Fischer for his assistance in searching the reviews and in facilitating my access to them. I also wish to thank Dr. Anthony Pym and Dr. Ricardo Miguel for their many helpful suggestions.

Boston Herald, 1 February 1885, p.17

New York Sun, 15 February 1885, p.3

Hartford Evening Post, 17 February 1885, p.3

Boston Daily Globe, 20 February 1885, p.4

Hartford Courant, 20 February 1885, p.2

Life, 5 (26 February 1885) , p.2

Sacramento Daily Bee, 28 February 1885, p.6

New York World, 2 March 1885, p.6

Boston Evening Traveller, 5 March 1885, p.1

Hartford Daily Times, 9 March 1885, p.4

San Francisco Daily Examiner, 9 March 1885, p.3

Boston Daily Advertiser, 12 March 1885, p.2

San Francisco Argonaut, 14 March 1885, p.10

- San Francisco Evening Bulletin, 14 March 1885, p.1  
San Francisco Chronicle, 15 March 1885, p.6  
San Francisco Morning Call, 17 March 1885, p.5  
Boston Daily Globe, 17 March 1885, p.2  
Boston Transcript, 17 March 1885, p.6  
Springfield (Mass.) Daily Republican, 17 March 1885, p.4  
Hartford Courant, 18 March 1885, p.2  
New York Herald, 18 March 1885, p.6  
New York Sun, 18 March 1885, p.2  
New York World, 18 March 1885, p.4  
Boston Evening Transcript, 19 March 1885, p.4  
Boston Literary World, 16 (21 March 1885), 106  
Providence Evening Bulletin, 19 March 1885, p.2  
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, 21 March 1885, Supplement, p.2  
Boston Daily Advertiser, 23 March 1885, p.4  
Springfield (Mass.) Daily Republican, 26 March 1885, p.4  
Critic, 3 (28 March 1885), 155.  
San Francisco Chronicle, 29 March 1885, p.4  
Boston Daily Advertiser, 2 April 1885, p.4  
Boston Daily Globe, 2 April 1885, p.4  
New York World, 2 April 1885, p.1  
Springfield (Mass.) Daily Republican, 3 April 1885, p.4  
Hartford Courant, 4 April 1885, p.2  
New York Sun, 6 April 1885, p.2  
New York Sun, 17 April 1885, p.2  
Atlantic, 55 (April 1885) 576  
Thomas Sergeant Perry, Century, 350 (May 1885), 171-72  
Andrew Lang, Illustrated London News 14 February 1891, p.222.  
Punch 4 (January 1896), pp. 4-5

[TORNAR A LA PÀGINA INICIAL SOBRE TWAIN](#)

