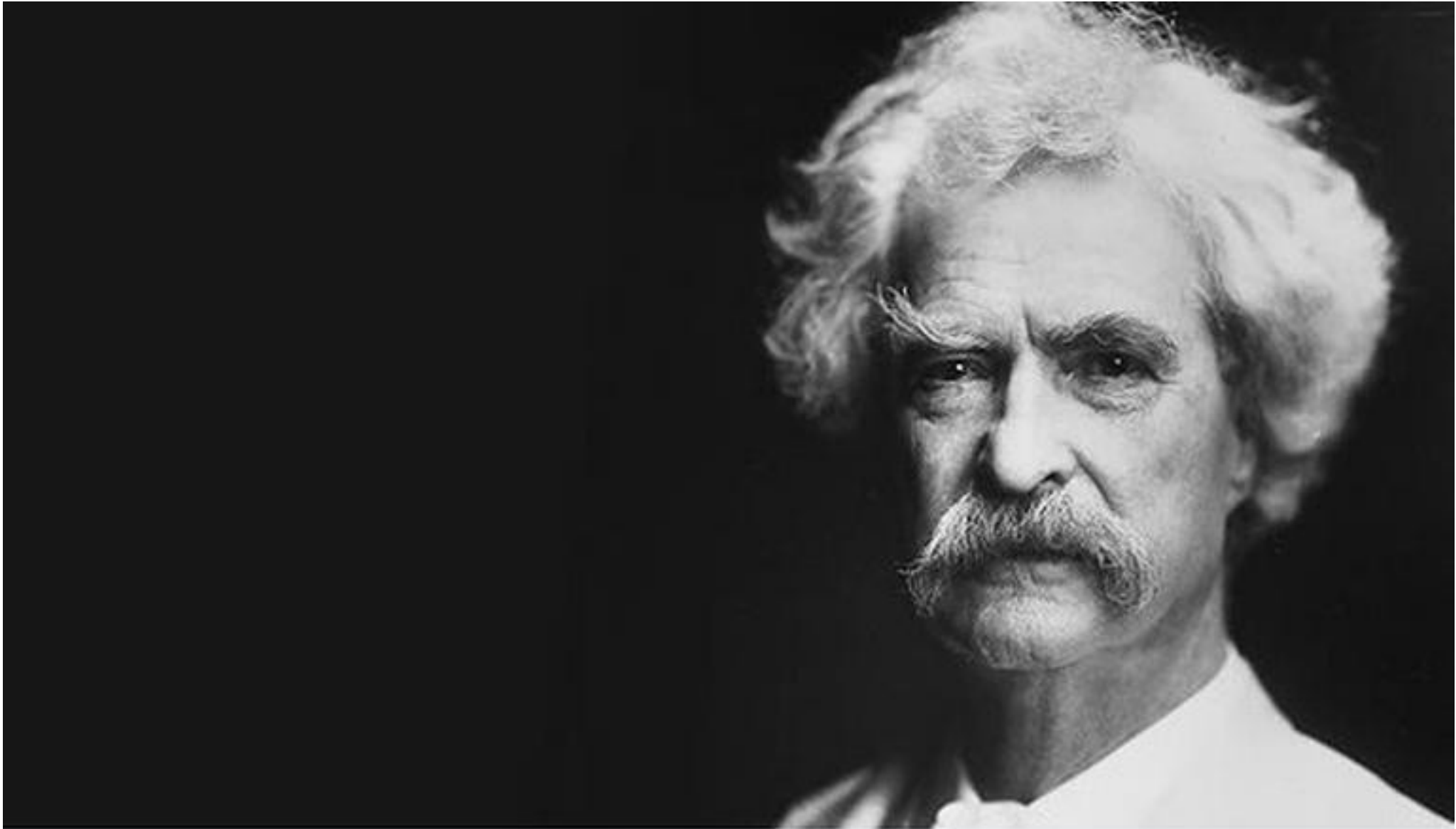
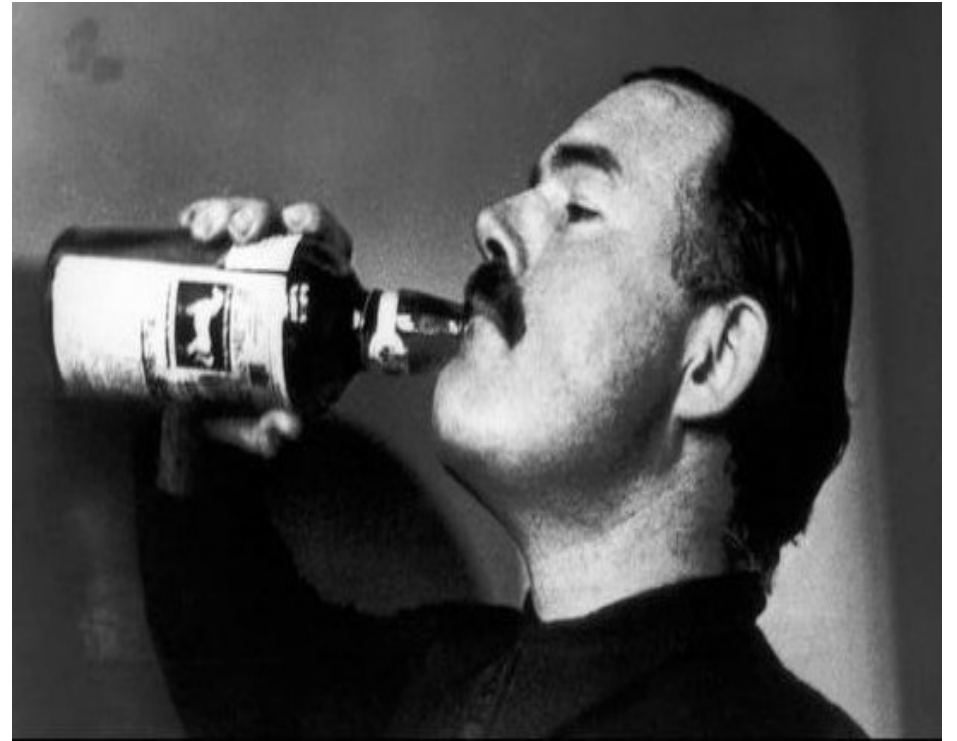


Mark Twain



"All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn. American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since."

(Green Hills of Africa, 1935)



Quotations and misquotations

Concerning the difference between man and the jackass: some observers hold that there isn't any. But this wrongs the jackass.

It's a classic... something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read.

Marriage—yes, it is the supreme felicity of life. I concede it. And it is also the supreme tragedy of life. The deeper the love the surer the tragedy. And the more disconsolating when it comes.

**Patriotism is supporting your country all the time, and your government
when it deserves it.**

OUR CIVIL WAR WAS A BLOT ON OUR HISTORY,
BUT NOT AS GREAT A BLOT AS THE BUYING AND
SELLING OF NEGRO SOULS.

I have been an author for 20 years and an ass for 55.

GIVING UP SMOKING IS THE EASIEST THING IN THE
WORLD. I KNOW BECAUSE I'VE DONE IT THOUSANDS
OF TIMES.



"Once you put it down, you simply can't pick it up."

(On Henry James's books)

"They require that the author shall make the reader feel a deep interest in the personages of his tale and in their fate; and that he shall make the reader love the good people in the tale and hate the bad ones. But the reader of the Deerslayer tale dislikes the good people in it, is indifferent to the others, and wishes they would all get drowned together."

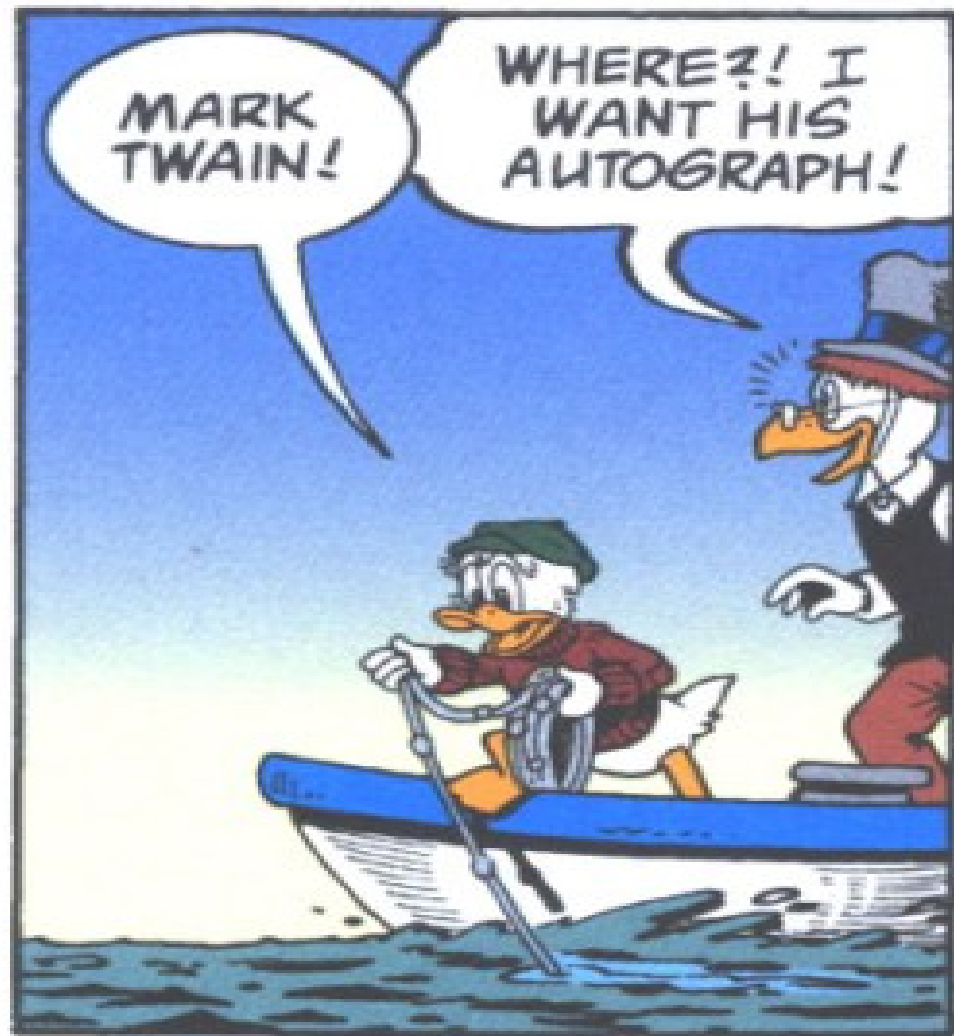
(On James Fenimore Cooper's books)













WHITEWASHING SUCKS, TOM.
IT POWERFUL SUCKS.

A Siamese cat is sitting on a laptop keyboard, looking at the screen. The cat is light-colored with dark brown points on its face, ears, and paws. The laptop is black and is open. The background is a red surface, possibly a bedsheet or blanket. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, bold, sans-serif font with a black outline.

Can't talk now...

**...too busy writing the next great
American novel.**

WHEN a writer calls his work a romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a novel. **The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience.** The former — while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart — has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. **If he think fit, also, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights, and deepen and enrich the shadows, of the picture.**

He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and, especially, to mingle the marvellous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavor, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the public. He can hardly be said, however, to commit a literary crime, even if he disregard this caution.

In the present work the author has proposed to himself — but with what success, fortunately, it is not for him to judge — to keep undeviatingly within his immunities. The point of view in which this tale comes under the romantic definition lies in the attempt to connect a by-gone time with the very present that is flitting away from us. It is a legend, prolonging itself, from an epoch now gray in the distance, down into our own broad day-light, and bringing along with it some of its legendary mist, which the reader,

according to his pleasure, may either disregard, or allow it to float almost imperceptibly about the characters and events for the sake of a picturesque effect. The narrative, it may be, is woven of so humble a texture as to require this advantage, and, at the same time, to render it the more difficult of attainment.

Many writers lay very great stress upon some definite moral purpose, at which they profess to aim their works. Not to be deficient in this particular, the author has provided himself with a moral; — the truth, namely, that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief;

— and he would feel it a singular gratification, if this romance might effectually convince mankind — or, indeed, any one man — of the folly of tumbling down an avalanche of ill-gotten gold, or real estate, on the heads of an unfortunate posterity, thereby to maim and crush them, until the accumulated mass shall be scattered abroad in its original atoms. In good faith, however, he is not sufficiently imaginative to flatter himself with the slightest hope of this kind. **When romances do really teach anything, or produce any effective operation, it is usually through a far more subtle process than the ostensible one.** The author has considered it hardly worth his while, therefore, relentlessly to impale the story with its moral, as with an iron rod, — or, rather, as by sticking a pin through a butterfly, — thus at once depriving it of life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural attitude.

A high truth, indeed, fairly, finely, and skilfully wrought out, brightening at every step, and crowning the final development of a work of fiction, may add an artistic glory, but is never any truer, and seldom any more evident, at the last page than at the first.

The reader may perhaps choose to assign an actual locality to the imaginary events of this narrative. If permitted by the historical connection, — which, though slight, was essential to his plan, — the author would very willingly have avoided anything of this nature. Not to speak of other objections, it exposes the romance to an inflexible and exceedingly dangerous species of criticism, by bringing his fancy-pictures almost into positive contact with the realities of the moment. It has been no part of his object, however, to describe local manners,

nor in any way to meddle with the characteristics of a community for whom he cherishes a proper respect and a natural regard. He trusts not to be considered as unpardonably offending, by laying out a street that infringes upon nobody's private rights, and appropriating a lot of land which had no visible owner, and building a house, of materials long in use for constructing castles in the air.

The personages of the tale — though they give themselves out to be of ancient stability and considerable prominence — are really of the author's own making, or, at all events, of his own mixing; their virtues can shed no lustre, nor their defects redound, in the remotest degree, to the discredit of the venerable town of which they profess to be inhabitants.

He would be glad, therefore, if — especially in the quarter to which he alludes — the book may be read strictly as a romance, having a great deal more to do with the clouds overhead than with any portion of the actual soil of the County of Essex.

- LENOX, January 27, 1851.

Henry James – Portrait of a Lady

The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million —a number of possible windows not to be reckoned, rather; every one of which has been pierced, or is still pierceable, in its vast front, by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will. These apertures, of dissimilar shape and size, hang so, all together, over the human scene that we might have expected of them a greater sameness of report than we find. They are but windows at best, mere holes in a dead wall, disconnected, perched aloft; they are not hinged doors opening straight upon life. But they have this mark of their own that at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a

unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. He and his neighbors are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where the other sees white, one seeing big where the other sees small, one seeing coarse where the other sees fine. And so on, and so on; there is fortunately no saying on what, for the particular pair of eyes, the window may not [sic] open; "fortunately" by reason, precisely, of this incalculability of range. The spreading field, the human scene, is the "choice of subject"; the pierced aperture, either broad or balconied or slit-like and low-browed, is the "literary form"; but they are, singly or together, as nothing without the posted presence of the watcher—without, in other words, the consciousness of the artist. Tell me what the artist is, and I will tell you of what he has been conscious [sic].

Mark Twain - Incipit

You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly—Tom's Aunt Polly, she is—and Mary, and the Widow Douglas is all told about in that book, which is mostly a true book, with some stretchers, as I said before.