

Presidential Reconstructions: Mark Twain's *Letters from Hawaii* and the Integration of Civil Society

Brian Collins

During the winter of 1866, Californians celebrated an important development—a steamer was now running to Hawaii. What had once been a long trip over rough seas was now “a mere pleasure excursion.”¹ At last the “sick and valetudinarian” would be able to take advantage of the islands’ salubrious breezes.² It was also noted that Americans were “two thousand miles nearer to [Asia,] whose commerce is the richest prize for which the nations contend.”³ Through the Golden Gate, the outlines of a new, American empire were coming into view, and Californians believed they were to preside over it. The question was purely rhetorical when the influential *Sacramento Union* asked:

With the Pacific Railroad creeping slowly but surely toward [California] over mountain and desert and preparing to link her with the East, and with the China mail steamers about to throw open to her the vast trade of our opulent coast line from the Amoor [Amur] River to the equator, what State in the Union has so splendid a future [as this]? Not one, perhaps. She should awake and be ready to join her home prosperity to these tides of commerce that are soon to sweep toward her from the east and the west. To America it has been vouchsafed to materialize the vision, and realize the dream of centuries We have found the true Northwest passage—we have found the true and

only direct route to the bursting coffers of “Ormus and of Ind”—to the enchanted land whose mere drippings, in ages that are gone, enriched ancient Venice, first, then Portugal, Holland, and in our own time, England—and each in succession they longed and sought for the fountain head of the vast Oriental wealth, and sought in vain . . . but we have found it over the waves of the Pacific, and American enterprise will penetrate to the heart and center of its hoarded treasures, its imperial affluence. The gateway of this path is the Golden Gate of San Francisco; its depot, its distributing house, is California; her customers are the nations of the earth . . . California has got the world where it must pay tribute to her. She is about to be appointed to preside over almost the exclusive trade of 450,000,00 people—the exclusive trade of the most opulent land on earth. It is the land where the fabled Aladdin’s lamp lies buried—and she is the new Aladdin who shall seize it from its obscurity and summon the genie and command him to crown her with power and greatness, and bring to her feet the hoarded treasures of the earth!⁴

One of the things that makes this particular frontier booster worth quoting at such great length is his remarkable style. The genre is popular rather than “literary,” and the writer never strays from the conventions, but there is an extraordinary fluency too. One commentator called it “gift of empathy . . . particularly powerful with respect to language. [He] apprehended tone and rhythm and imagery as if by instinct, and could apparently write at will in almost any style,” including the idiom of an expansionist public “in whose behalf he was investigating commercial opportunities in [Hawaii].”⁵ But there is much more at work in this writing than a keen ear for public discourse: the writer to whom the critic is referring is none other than Mark Twain, and as Freud suggested in one of his most valuable contributions to literary theory, the ear of the humorist is also well tuned to the unspoken.⁶ *Wit has a relation to the unconscious.* Humor gives ideology a glimpse of the outside which haunts it. Consider, for example, Twain’s famous account of the ruins near Waikiki:

Nearby is an interesting ruin . . . the meager remains of an ancient heathen temple—a place where human sacrifices were offered up in those bygone days when the simple child of nature, yielding momentarily to sin when sorely tempted, acknowledged his error when calm reflection had shown it to him, and came forward with noble frankness and offered up his grandmother—in those old days when the luckless sinner could keep on cleansing his conscience and achieving periodi-

cal happiness as long as his relations held out; long, long before the missionaries braved a thousand privations to come and make them permanently miserable by telling them how blissful a place heaven is, and how nearly impossible it is to get there; and showed the poor native how dreary a place perdition is and what unnecessarily liberal facilities there are for going to it; showed him how, in his ignorance, he had gone and fooled away all his kinfolks to no purpose; showed him what a rapture it is to work all day long for fifty cents to buy food for the next day with, as compared with fishing for pastime and lolling in the shade through eternal summer, and eating of the bounty that nobody labored to provide but nature. How sad it is to think of the multitudes who have gone to their graves in this beautiful island and never knew there was a hell! And it inclines right-thinking man to weep rather than to laugh when he reflects how surprised they must have been when they got there. (*LH*, 52-53)

The joke about the ignorant barbarian, who “fooled away all of his kinfolks to no purpose,” is unremarkable in this context; such progressivism was a staple of expansionist thought. But when Twain turns the tables to satirize civilization (“working all day . . . to buy food for the next . . . [instead of] lolling in the shade . . .”) something much more fascinating occurs. It is not the primitivism *per se*—even the American consul was known to have mourned the fall of “Nature’s children” in Hawaii—but the special focus on wage labor.⁷ Remember that enormous utopian energies were invested in this social form during the early industrial period: it was to be both the salvation of democracy at home and the best hope for civilizing the savages around the world.⁸ But remember too that by 1866, when a permanent working class was already in evidence, such convictions masked considerable uneasiness. The liberal ideal was in no real jeopardy—the seriousness of the problem, stemming as it did from a fundamental social contradiction, was virtually impossible for the bourgeois mind to grasp—but failing to master the contradiction, this culture was vexed by an inkling that the problem was worse than imagined. Bourgeois thought was haunted by an outside it could not acknowledge.⁹ Twain’s joke about labor temporarily defuses this tension. If only for a moment, if only in fun, his readers could think the unthinkable: perhaps the problem of labor was the symptom of a much deeper ailment plaguing civilization as whole.

This is not to suggest that the humorist was a “public ventilator,” whose primary function was to “maintain the psychic equilibrium” of bourgeois society.¹⁰ One ought not confuse the *uses* to which his work was put with the work itself. Humor is always a “compromise formation,” which is to say, it both conceals *and* reveals; which of these processes is the decisive one in the end

depends on the conditions of reception. There is no better proof of this than our being able to take the very same *Letters from Hawaii* and use them today to chart the limits of bourgeois thought. That is not to go to the other extreme and try to turn Twain into a subversive, but simply to point out the political significance of humor, along with literary art in general, is never a given, but is determined by reading. To be sure, the *Letters* are marked by politics—those which, for the most part, Twain shared with his readers—but as aesthetic objects they also have a dimension which cannot be reduced to ideology, and it is precisely this that makes them such valuable historical documents.

* * *

What has just been said about Twain's joke about labor rests upon the assumption that American imperialism is inextricably bound up with life *within* the United States: national culture is shaped to a large extent by the "crucible of international power relations, and . . . conversely, imperialism as a political or economic process abroad is inseparable from the social relations and cultural discourses . . . at home."¹¹ In Letter 12, while he is describing his visit to the Hawaiian legislature, Twain creates an image which is emblematic of this idea.

[Presiding over the Assembly is the King's father, His Royal Highness M. Kekuanaoa,] an erect, strongly built, massive featured, white-haired, swarthy old gentleman of eighty years of age or thereabouts. He was simply but well dressed, in a blue coat and white vest, and white pantaloons, without spot, dust, or blemish upon them. He bears himself with a calm, stately dignity, and is a man of noble presence. He was a young man and a distinguished warrior under the terrific old fighter, Kamehameha I, more than a half century ago, and I could not help saying to myself, "This man, naked as the day he was born, and war club and spear in hand, has charged at the head of a horde of savages against other hordes of savages far back in the past, and reveled in slaughter and carnage; has worshipped wooden images on his bended knees; has seen hundreds of his race offered up in heathen temples as sacrifices to hideous idols, at a time when no missionary's foot had ever pressed this soil, and he had never heard of the white man's God; has believed his enemy could secretly pray him to death; has seen the day, in his childhood, when it was a crime punishable by death for a man to eat with his wife. or for a plebeian to let his shadow fall upon the King—and look at him: an educated Christian; neatly and handsomely dressed; a high minded, elegant gentleman; a traveler, in some degree, and one who has

been the honored guest of royalty in Europe; a man practiced in holding the reins of an enlightened government, and well versed in the politics of his country and, in general, practical information. *Look at him, sitting there presiding over the deliberations of a legislative body, among whom are white men*—a grave, dignified, statesmanlike personage, and as seemingly natural and fitted to the place as if he had been born to it and had never been out of it in his lifetime. (*LH*, 108-109; my emphasis)

At first it seems merely ironic that Twain should have reconstructed the Hawaiian president—turning him into a wild savage—at the very moment a much better known Presidential Reconstruction was unfolding back at home, but the two things are linked by much more than the pun; indeed, it would not be going too far to say that both are responses to the very same historical problem, that of a multiracial civil society: the Civil War had established that all men should be “free” to dispose of their own labor, whether they be blacks in the South or the savages of new territories like Hawaii, but since the distinction between civil society and political society had been fading for some time, integrating the former brought the nation closer than ever to a multiracial body-politic, and that was something few white Americans were prepared to accept. What lay behind this attitude is less important at this point than its consequences: at home, the freedmen were stalled, then presented with an unworkable arrangement, and finally betrayed; abroad, by pursuing “commercial” rather than territorial expansion, Americans were able to convince themselves they bore no direct responsibility for the political fate of the savages.¹² Nothing more cogently illustrates the connection between these two fronts than the objection of one pundit to a proposal for the annexation of Cuba: “Uncle Sam,” he warned, “has too many niggers already” (*AFR*, 155).

What has Twain’s presidential reconstruction to do with any of this? Consider the status of Hawaii in 1866. The archipelago seemed to be on the verge of slipping away into British hands, and many began to feel annexation was the only way to retain this important way station; Twain himself was moving toward the same position.¹³ What of the aforementioned disincentive attached to territorial expansion, the fear that annexation would lead to a multiracial political society? A survey of the public discourse about the islands might lead one to think Californians were immune to this anxiety; the political implications of annexation never come up. But the history of race relations within the state would hardly support such a conclusion. If the public appears undaunted it is because it had found a way of managing its fear of a multiracial citizenry; this is what lies behind Twain’s presidential reconstruction. The passage offered Twain’s readers a safe, because indirect, way of worrying about an issue that was simply too central to the liberal ideal to ignore altogether. Between the lines of Twain’s

simple celebration of progress they could read about the political competency of their future countrymen; as long as the theme never became explicit, they could go on dreaming of annexation. Note how closely Twain's language resembles that of the explicit, contemporary debate about incorporating alien peoples. Here is Senator Carl Schurz (himself a naturalized citizen!) arguing against the annexation of Cuba:

Have you thought of it, what this means? . . . fancy ten or twelve tropical States added to the Southern States we already possess; fancy the Senators and Representatives of ten or twelve millions of tropical people, people of the Latin race mixed with Indian and African blood . . . fancy them sitting in the Halls of Congress, throwing the weight of their intelligence, their morality, their political notions and habits, their prejudices and passions, into the scale of the destinies of this Republic . . . fancy this, and tell me, does not your imagination recoil from the picture.¹⁴

Schurz's words give us a glimpse of the inner core of anti-annexationist sentiment: fear of the savage was at bottom a fear of the unruly body ("fancy . . . Senators and Representatives . . . of the Latin race mixed with Indian and African blood . . . *sitting in the Halls of Congress, throwing [their] weight* . . . into the scale of the destinies of this Republic . . .").¹⁵ And so, in a context where one could not address the problem of a multiracial political society directly, one could make do with an image such as this: "This man, *naked as the day he was born*, and war club and spear in hand, has charged at the head of a horde of savages . . . *Look at him, sitting there* presiding over the deliberations of a legislative body, *among whom are white men*" (my emphasis).

But to fully appreciate the interest that this image must have held for Twain's readers, one needs to keep in mind that when it came to the Hawaiian, what the public most feared was not savagery precisely, but "semi-civilization." A century of intensive contact with the west had given rise to a highly syncretic culture in the islands, and this in turn generated anxieties which were somewhat different than those Schurz expressed. In 1873, after the pressure for annexation had subsided, Twain himself would air such feelings openly. The following portrait was meant to be illustrative of Hawaiian culture as a whole:

[King Kamehameha] was frequently on hand in . . . Church, on Sundays; but whenever he got into trouble he did not fly to the cross for help—he flew to the heathen gods of his ancestors. Now this was a man who would write you a beautiful letter, in a faultless hand, and word it in faultless English; and perhaps throw in a few classical allusions . . . or he would array himself in elegant evening dress and entertain you at his board in a

princely style, and converse like a born Christian gentleman; and day after day he would work like a beaver in affairs of State, and on occasions exchange autograph letters with the kings and emperors of the old world. And the very next week, business being over he would retire to a cluster of dismal little straw-thatched native huts by the sea-shore, and there for a fortnight he would turn himself into a heathen whom you could not tell from his savage grandfather. He would reduce his dress to a breech-clout, fill himself daily full of whiskey, and sit with certain of his concubines while others danced the peculiar hula-hula. And if oppressed by great responsibilities he would summon one of his familiars, an ancient witch, and ask her to tell him the opinion and commands of the heathen gods, and these commands he would obey. He was so superstitious that he would not step over a line drawn across the road, but would walk around it.¹⁶

What was most threatening in “semi-civilized” Hawaii was a savage body cloaked in the mere raiments of civilization, something all too easily cast off. This is the figure that Twain’s presidential reconstruction summons and then dispels. Remember how vividly Hawaii’s past is brought before us there. Hordes of naked savages clash before our very eyes. In this respect, the passage resembles the one just quoted, where savagery persists beneath a thin surface of civilized “affectations.” At the same time, by virtue of the retrospective language (i.e., “more than a half century ago . . . far back in the past . . . at a time when no missionary’s foot had ever pressed this soil,” etc.), such an image is prevented from coming into full view, and so Twain’s readers are able to reflect on the problem of the savage at a safe distance. The effect in this case is not owed to a joke, but the process is much the same in both the funny and the merely entertaining—both give us glimpse of something of forbidden.

* * *

Before concluding, let us consider one last illuminating portion of Twain’s Hawaiian correspondence, namely letter 15, which describes the ordeal of a group of sailors who washed ashore in Hawaii in June of 1866, after drifting in an open and scantily provisioned lifeboat for forty-three days. The main thread of the letter focuses on the men’s struggle to keep from cannibalizing each other in the face of growing privation. That the tale reveals more about the public’s preoccupations than about the experience of the castaways is certain since it might be fairly called a fabrication; Twain’s informants had insisted that “the ship-wrecked mariner’s last dreadful resort” had never even been discussed.¹⁷

Though he is careful to avoid egregious misrepresentation, Twain creates a story of cannibalism where there was not one by a strategy of insinuation. Early

on, he dwells upon suggestive detail, as in the following passage, where it takes very little imagination to guess what is upon the sailors' minds: "In the long intervals [between rations] they looked mutely into each other's faces . . . 'Didn't you talk?' I asked one of the men. 'No; we were too downhearted . . . We only looked at each other . . .'" And lest we miss the implication, Twain adds, "And thought, I suppose" (*LH*, 143). Since the sailors' own tale was so short of gory details, Twain had to be quite resourceful, as when he anthropomorphizes a man-sized sea turtle that was unfortunate enough to swim within reach of the starving mariners: "His delicate flesh was carefully divided among the party and eagerly devoured—after being 'warmed' like the dolphins that went before him" (*LH*, 145). Then there are the section-headings, which lead us to believe the tale is moving inexorably toward the real thing, beginning with "Rations," then "Sumptuous Fare" (meaning a few fish that were caught and devoured raw), "Rations Reduced," "Further Reduction of Rations," "Rations Still Further Reduced," "Rations Still Further Reduced" once again, "The Last Ration!" "Starvation Fare," and finally, "The Awful Alternative."

What inspired Twain to turn the castaways' tale into a story about cannibalism was perhaps again just a sense that it would be entertaining; once more, however, entertaining his readers seems to have consisted of giving them a glimpse of the problem of an integrated political society. Cannibalism, it is perhaps needless to say, was a principle synecdoche for savagery; the tale as a whole, in turn, unfolds as an allegory for the conflict between civilization and savagism. In this way, the narrative poses the very question Twain's readers most needed answering at this moment. Annexation would bring savagery into the bosom of civilization; would civilization survive such an encounter?

A few other details are worth noting in this context. First, it is telling that the "*Hornet* letter"—*Hornet* is the name of sailors' vessel—appears between the very installments (letters 14 and 16) in which Twain stewes over the revival of "pagan deviltry" during the funeral of a Hawaiian princess, that is, at the very moment he confronts strong evidence of resurgent savagery among these prospective American citizens. Second, we note that it is not only travel at the far reaches of a commercial empire which leads to the ordeal of the sailors but also a crisis of scarcity. Readers familiar with nineteenth-century American social thought will recall it was just such crises during which the political competency of the citizenry was to be believed to face its greatest test. It was just such crises, to put it more bluntly, which separated the civilized from the savages. From the standpoint of nineteenth-century liberalism, the virtuous citizen was of course the man who could remain faithful to reason in the face of crisis, and so continue to act in a "public-spirited" manner: the propertied classes, for instance, were expected to wield their power responsibly; the less fortunate to abide strictly by the law. The savage, on the other hand, by definition, allowed passion, and especially divisive self-interest, to take over during hard times.

But the *Hornet* letter does not just allude to the anxieties associated with annexation; like Twain's description of the savage-turned-parliamentarian, it

also manages them. Twain's tale is an allegory that must end happily, and so it does, following the very political logic just outlined. Order is preserved within the drifting community through "the magnanimity and utter unselfishness of Captain Mitchell (and through his example, the same conduct in his men)" (*LH*, 146), which is to say they survive, above all else, by keeping their passions in check: "No disposition was ever shown by the strong to impose upon the weak," Twain reports, "and no greediness, no desire on the part of any to get more than his just share of food, was ever evinced. On the contrary, they were thoughtful of each other and always ready to care for and assist each other to the utmost of their ability. . . . these men could starve, if need be, but they seem not to have known how to be mean" (*LH*, 146). One is hardly surprised to discover that what sustains virtue here is paternalistic social relations: reading like an exemplum of Whiggish political philosophy, the letter celebrates the way in which a deferent community integrates itself around a leader, whose authority flows from his superior self-restraint. Not even the basic drive for food, intensified by days of fasting, tempts Captain Mitchell to abuse his privileged access to the dwindling provisions (*LH*, 158). But even more remarkable is his divine sentience: Mitchell, we are told, remains awake for the duration of the trip! And all the while remaining a loving father who "labored without ceasing to keep [his men] cheerful" (*LH*, 145). Such courage, of course, by some weird law of political thermodynamics, translates itself into a commensurate loyalty among the men. Twain admits:

I have done the third mate some little wrong in the beginning of this letter. I have said he was as self-possessed as a statue—that he never betrayed emotion or enthusiasm. He never did except when he spoke of "the old man." It always thawed through his ice then. The men were the same way; the captain is their hero—their true and faithful friend, whom they delight to honor. I said to one of these infatuated skeletons, "But you wouldn't go quite so far as to die for him?" A snap of the finger—"As quick as that!" (*LH*, 152)

Twain himself was not entirely unaware of the political resonance of the tale, comparing Captain Mitchell to "the fine old hero . . . Grant" (*LH*, 137-138), who was for postbellum Whigs, at least until the scandals of the early '70s, the perfect embodiment of the ideal statesman, someone who was above the self-interested machinations into which politics in the republic seemed to have degenerated.

Since there was absolutely no real evidence that the sailors would have cannibalized one another except for such political relations, Twain must make the very most of their reluctance to consume a rooster that had got into the boat:

At even tide the wanderers missed a cheerful spirit [who had been transferred to another lifeboat]--a plucky, strong-hearted fellow, who never drooped his head or lost his grip--a staunch and true good friend, who was always at his post in storm or calm, in rain or shine--who scorned to say die, and yet was never afraid to die--a thin little trim and taut old rooster . . . [I]s it not to the high honor of that boat's crew of starving men, that, tortured day and night by the pangs of hunger as they were, they refused to appease them with the blood of their humble comrade?(*LH*, 147-8)

Where starving men refuse to eat even the anthropomorphic, one can only conclude they were afraid such a course would have led them to a much more gruesome feast.

Perhaps because keeping the specter of cannibalism hovering was clearly beginning to prove awkward here (if it were not for the uniformly sentimental tone of the letter, one would suspect his burlesque impulse was at work in the passage just quoted), in the remainder of his letter Twain relies exclusively on the suggestive section headings alluded to above. In the end, however, when land is sighted and the men are saved, he again emphasizes details which must have pleased his readers:

Shortly it was proven beyond question that they were almost to land. Then there was joy in the party. One man . . . said the sight of the green hills was better to him than a day's rations, a strange figure for a man who had been fasting for forty days and forty nights . . . They said "it was good to see the green fields again." It was all they cared for. The "green fields" were a haven of rest for the weary wayfarers: it was sufficient; they were satisfied . . . (*LH*, 156-157)

Significantly, the castaways are more weary than hungry upon their arrival in Hawaii. Their thrilling to the proximity not of food, but of a "haven of rest," points up the fact that somewhere along the way their struggle for physical survival evolved into something more urgent, namely a struggle to keep from becoming savages. And so the very anxieties which at this time always attended the idea of annexing alien peoples are defused. Twain's parable assures us that the civilized, with their republican ways, will stay civilized.

* * *

In July of 1866, when Twain returned to San Francisco, he discovered that his letters had made "the best known honest man on the Pacific Coast."¹⁸ The warm reception, in turn, prompted the lecturing that would lead him east and on

to national fame. What we have tried to do here is probe a bit deeper into the substance of this popularity, guided by the suggestion that humor plays a role in mediating unacknowledged psychic conflict. Whenever there are questions at once too difficult to solve and too urgent to ignore, we count on the humorist with his allusive language to help us relegate them to the margins of thought, where they can be both forgotten and remembered at the very same time, like the latent content of some dream. It would be well worth recalling one of Freud's own formulations on the subject; despite the corruption his language always suffers in translation, the passage brilliantly captures this conception of wit as something we count on to do a special cultural work for us:

One can characterize the psychic processes in the hearer [of the joke] . . . hardly more pointedly than by asserting that he has bought the pleasure of the witticism with very little expenditure on his part. One might say that it is presented to him. The words of the witticism which he hears necessarily produce in him that idea or thought-connection whose formation in him was also resisted by great inner hindrances. He would have had to make an effort of his own in order to bring it about spontaneously like [the teller of the joke], or he would have had to put forth at least as much psychic expenditure to equalize the force of the suppression or repression of the inhibition. (BW, 735)

For an aphoristic distillation of this theory, we can turn to Twain himself, who late in life explained, "The secret source of all humor is not joy but sorrow."¹⁹ This, above all, is what wants emphasizing here—humor has a *secret* content. To be sure, where Twain mimics contemporary discourses like expansionism and travel writing, he allows us to eavesdrop on the popular culture, and in doing so contributes a great deal to our historical understanding. But such discourses were only a point of departure for Twain; the real art begins where such discourses failed. Unless we remember that Twain is also telling us about the unspoken, an important part of the historical value of texts like the *Letters from Hawaii* will have eluded us.

Notes

1. San Francisco *Newsletter*, December 23, 1865, 7.
2. San Francisco *Newsletter*, December 23, 1865, 3.
3. San Francisco *Newsletter*, January 6, 1866, 8.
4. Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Letters from Hawaii*, ed. A. Grove Day (New York, 1966), 273-274. Hereafter *LH*.
5. Henry Nash Smith, *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer* (Cambridge, 1962), 16.
6. See Sigmund Freud, "Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious" in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, trans. A.A. Brill (New York, 1938). Hereafter *BW*.

7. Walter LaFeber alludes to the consul's primitivism in *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, Volume II: The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913* (Cambridge, 1993), 97. Hereafter *AFR*.

8. Lincoln's thinking is typical of mid-century attitudes about prosperity in the industrial age: "There is no such thing as a man who is a hired laborer, of a necessity, always remaining in his early condition. . . . My understanding of the hired laborer is this He works industriously, he behaves soberly, and the result of a year or two's labor is a surplus capital. Now he buys land on his own hook; he settles, marries, begets sons and daughters, and in course of time he too has enough capital to hire some beginner." *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, 1859-1865*, ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York, 1989), 84.

9. The *locus classicus* with respect to the contradiction of wage-labor appears at the end of chapter 6 in Marx's *Capital*, vol. 1: "The sphere [of exchange], within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour-power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. . . . both buyer and seller of a commodity, say of labour-power, are constrained only by their own free will. They contract as free agents, and the agreement they come to, is but the form in which they give legal expression to their common will. . . . [but on] leaving this sphere . . . we think we can perceive a change in the physiognomy of our dramatic personae. He, who before was the money-owner, now strides in front as capitalist; the possessor of labour-power follows as his labourer. The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business; the other, timid and holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but—a hiding." In letter 23, Twain himself would propose to solve the problem of wage-labor by sloughing off the worst work onto the Chinese: "The sooner California adopts coolie labor the better it will be for her. It cheapens no labor of men's hands save the hardest and most exhausting drudgery—drudgery which neither intelligence nor education are required to fit a man for—drudgery which all white men abhor and are glad to escape from. . . . [E]very ship load of coolies received there and put to work would so create labor—would permit men to open so many mines they cannot afford to work now, and begin so many improvements they dare not think of at present—that all the best class of the working population who might be emancipated from the pick and shovel by that shipload would find easier and more profitable employment in superintending and overseeing the coolies" (*LH* 271-272; my emphasis).

10. Van Wyck Brooks, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (New York, 1933), 194, 213.

11. Amy Kaplan, "Left Alone in America," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (Durham, North Carolina, 1993), 16.

12. On the Reconstruction, see Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1872* (New York, 1988); and Hans L. Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson: A Biography* (New York, 1989), 214-233. On commercial expansionism, see LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*.

13. In lectures he delivered upon returning from Hawaii, Twain would ask, "The property has got to fall to some heir, and why not the United States?" See Philip S. Foner, *Mark Twain: Social Critic* (New York), 240.

14. Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898-1900* (New York, 1968), 23-24.

15. On the psychosexual element in Indian-hating, see Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Minneapolis, 1980); and Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Sons: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York, 1975).

16. Mark Twain, "The Sandwich Islands," *New York Tribune*, January 9, 1873.

17. It is now fairly clear that when Twain wrote the *Hornet* letter he had no evidence that the specter of cannibalism had hung so heavily over the journey. Indeed, his informants seem to have been insistent about this. It was only after penning his account, when he was allowed to read the journals of a few survivors, that Twain learned the group did discuss the "awful alternative," contrary to what he had first been told. But lest we rush to conclude from this that he played up the issue in his letter because he had somehow sensed the truth, we ought to note that the survivors' journals also revealed that there was a great deal more dissension among the castaways than first reported; surely it would have been as reasonable to presume the castaways had argued during the long ordeal as that they had considered eating one another? One thing is certain—as I will show in a moment—to have emphasized dissension rather than cannibalism would have been to tell a story with an entirely different moral. For more background on the *Hornet* letter see Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Notebooks and Journals*, ed. Frederick Anderson et al. (Berkeley, 1975), I, 102, 145, 149, 173, and 174.

18. Mark Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, ed. Charles Neider (New York, 1959), 157.

19. Mark Twain, *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World* (New York, 1923), vol. 1, 101.