MARY TWAIN'S VICTORIAN CONVERSATION
IN THE ELIZABETHAN MANNER

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The thesis presents Mark Twain's *1601* in the form of a new edition comprising a critical analysis, a photographic copy of the only authorized text of the work, and a glossary.

In the summer of 1876 Mark Twain wrote *1601*, mailed it to his boon companion, the Reverend Joseph Twichell, and America's first significant piece of home-grown ribaldry was loosed into a milieu ready to receive it with secret anticipation and public censure. Although critics have shied away from dealing with *1601* seriously, they have found great sport in speculating about which "ancient English books" Twain had been reading that furnished the inspiration for his small classic. The validity of the various contentions is examined with the disclosure that the writer delved deep into historical volumes for his sources. Even though *1601* has appeared in more than fifty editions, no canon can be established for the first edition produced in Cleveland, but evidence is presented that the edition printed at West Point in 1882 was authorized by Twain himself.
Despite the fact that many critics relegated 1601 to "the smoking room" and the author enjoyed giving the impression that it was spun off very casually, a close study shows it draws on highly developed literary skills. The humor alone includes both high and low burlesque, understatement, satire, exaggeration, and wit.

An inquiry into the life and writings of Twain reveals that this excursion into ribaldry was not unrelated to the role of dutiful husband, father, and citizen of Hartford, Connecticut, which he had chosen for himself. Interpreted on a symbolic level, 1601 afforded Twain the opportunity to mock those arbiters of propriety that he otherwise cheerfully cultivated on his climb into sober society.

One of the tools Twain used was a vocabulary that made use of thirty words which ranged from the mildly impolite to the genuinely taboo. Of the latter, fourteen may be traced to Indo-European roots, which would date them as early as the fifth millennium B.C. The two newest words employed date from the eighteenth century.

Previously undetected by critics are the recurrent images relating to age, sterility, and death in 1601. While the words denoting death in the conversation are completely circumspect, they are counterbalanced against the words of life and regeneration which fall under a
profound stigma in the society the author coveted. Thus, in its few pages 1801 captures the dilemma of Mark Twain as a man and as a writer.
MARK TWAIN'S VICTORIAN CONVERSATION
IN THE ELIZABETHAN MANNER

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

A FAT LETTER FOR THE PARSON

In the summer of 1876 Mark Twain wrote 1601, sent it to his boon companion, the Reverend Joseph Twichell, and America's first significant piece of home-grown ribaldry was loosed into a milieu ready to receive it with secret anticipation and public censure.¹ Propriety reigned in nineteenth century America, and nothing was sacred from the roving hand of the censor. By 1833 Noah Webster had produced an edition of the Bible from which he had painstakingly cleansed many of the very words Twain put into 1601.² Euphemism was the byword of the century, but it did not gather legal force until the emergence of Anthony Comstock. He volunteered his services to the Young Men's Christian Association in 1872 and soon was named agent for its newly-formed Committee for the Suppression of Vice. On the heels of this, Comstock was appointed special agent of the Post Office to enforce the new

¹Although Benjamin Franklin had written a letter with a proposal for rendering crepitus socially acceptable almost a hundred years before Clemens wrote 1601, his letter remained unpublished for another fifty years. Ralph Ginzburg, An Unhurried View of Erotica (New York, 1958), p. 78.

federal law against sending obscene material through the mails. By 1874 he claimed to have seized and destroyed 134,000 pounds of books, 194,000 pictures, 14,200 pounds of stereotype plates, 5,500 playing cards, 31,150 boxes of pills and powders, and 60,300 rubber articles.3

In England a parallel situation existed. By 1818 Thomas Bowdler had produced The Family Shakespeare, from which he had expurgated words not suitable for the parlor. The first major legislation on obscenity was passed by Parliament in 1853. In 1858 Lord Chief Justice Cockburn laid down the Hicklin rule, which gave sweeping interpretation to what constituted obscenity. "With every tightening of the legal screw and with every new refinement of Victorian modesty, the pornographic business took a fresh leap forward," according to David Loth. "By the time Cockburn's rulings had been propounded, the golden age of English erotica was in full swing."4 The English-speaking world was primed for 1601.

For Mark Twain 1876 was a vintage year. He was forty years old, already famous as an author and lecturer. With the wooing and winning of his "precious little darling," Olivia Langdon, six years earlier, he had exchanged life


as a footloose printer-pilot-miner-reporter for the urbane respectability of a Hartford burgher. His grief over the death of his first child—and only son—was diverted by the presence of Susy and Clara. The mounting debts that were to haunt him in later years had only begun to intrude on his life.

It had already become the Clemens' custom to summer at Quarry Farm, a Langdon Family retreat on the edge of Elmira, New York. An indulgent sister-in-law had built for Mark on a hillside beside the old quarry from which the farm took its name, an octagonal study, somewhat suggestive of a pilot house. Its peaked roof, ample windows looking out on green slopes, and a tiny fireplace for chilly days added to its charms. Mark would isolate himself in this study after breakfast and work until late afternoon.\(^5\) Here, during the summer of 1876, he finished The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. Immersing himself in "archaic" English in preparation for writing The Prince and the Pauper, he struck off 1601. Twain notes that it "made a fat letter" when he bundled it up and sent it to Twichell in Hartford. Apparently it slipped past the household censor, Livy. There is no indication that she was ever aware of its existence.

\(^5\) Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain, A Biography (New York, 1923), II, 508.
The Reverend Mr. Twichell was eminently suited to appreciate 1801. He and two friends had once been rusticated from Yale for engaging in a brawl with New Haven firemen. Nevertheless, he had graduated and gone on to complete his studies at Union Theological Seminary. He immediately set out to serve as a chaplain in the Civil War. The handsome youth returned to marry a young woman he had met while on leave and to be installed as pastor of Asylum Hill Congregational Church, which had been organized to serve the Nook Farm colony. He was to remain in the same parish for his entire career. Twain first met Twichell in October of 1868 when he was in Hartford overseeing the publication of Innocents Abroad. Having just referred to the wealthy Asylum Hill congregation as "The Church of the Holy Speculators," Twain was introduced by an embarrassed Elisha Bliss to the man standing behind him, the pastor of the church. Even though Twain and Twichell were but newly acquainted, the clergyman was one of the first to whom Mark confided the news of his betrothal. Twichell wrote in reply:

Receive my benediction, Mark—my very, very choicest! I breathe it toward you—that particular doxologic & hallelujah formula thereof which I use on occasions which but for the sake of propriety I should celebrate by a smiting of my thigh, a grand passadum and three cheers.

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with a tiger!—a style of Te Deum which somehow I never could manage to execute successfully in the pulpit. Bless you, my son!—yea, Bless you, my children both!!'

Despite the fatherly tone of the message, Twichell was Mark's junior by three years. However, the minister and his wife, Harmony, had weathered several years of marriage and already had produced the first of an eventual brood of nine children. It was Mark rather than Livy who brought Twichell from Hartford to assist the Reverend Thomas K. Beecher in performing the rites that joined Mark and Livy in Elmira on February 2, 1870. Although Mark never succumbed to membership in his congregation, it was Twichell, "who of all people in Mark Twain's crowded life was to be his closest friend." 8

The aged Twain left behind two slightly different accounts of the writing of 1501. In his Notebook he briefly recalls having written a conversation between Elizabeth and her courtiers, overheard by a "stupid, stupid old nobleman." 9


9 Samuel L. Clemens, *Mark Twain's Notebook*, edited by Albert Bigelow Paine (New York, 1935), p. 151. Although the collected works of Clemens published by Gabriel Wells and Harper & Brothers were available to me, but neither as a complete set, I have cited individual books rather than volumes of the collected works.
I sent it anonymously to a magazine—and how the editor abused it and the sender. But that man was a praiser of Rabelais, and had been saying "Oh, that we had a Rabelais." I judged I could furnish him one.

Then I took it to one of the greatest, best and most learned of Divines and read it to him. He came within an ace of killing himself with laughter. ... 10

(In a fuller account, Twain recalls having first mailed it to Twichell.) The editor of the Notebook, Albert Bigelow Paine, adds that the "divine" was Twichell, but that the statement that Twain had sent it to an editor is "to be heavily discounted." 11 Undoubtedly, Twain's longer account, which appears in his Autobiography, is the more accurate of the two versions.

10 Ibid., p. 151. 11 Ibid., p. 152.
forever. I was immediately full of a desire to practice my archaics and contrive one of those stirring conversations out of my own head. I thought I would practice on Twichell. I have always practiced doubtful things on Twichell from the beginning, thirty-nine years ago.

... It made a fat letter. I bundled it up and mailed it to Twichell in Hartford. And in the fall, when we returned to our home in Hartford and Twichell and I resumed the Saturday ten-mile walk to Talcott Tower and back, every Saturday, as had been our custom for years, we used to carry that letter along. There was a grove of hickory trees by the roadside, six miles out, and close by it was the only place in that whole region where the fringed gentian grew. On our return from the Tower we used to gather the gentians, then lie down on the grass upon the golden carpet of fallen hickory leaves and get out that letter and read it by the help of these poetical surroundings. We used to laugh ourselves lame and sore over the cupbearer's troubles.12

How Mark Twain's letter to Joe Twichell found its way into print is a separate story, one to quicken the pulse of bibliographers and to stir confusion into the files of cataloguers.

CHAPTER II

TRACKING THE SOURCES

Had Mark Twain specified which "ancient English books" he had been reading or which one contained the brief conversation which impressed him "with the frank indelicacies of speech permissible among ladies and gentlemen in that ancient time," he would have spoiled a lively game of speculation that scholars have played ever since. The author himself offers few clues. On the basis of his own reminiscence in his Autobiography, he would seem to eliminate non-English authors. This would, of course, exclude Rabelais, whom he also removes from the running with the comment that his dialogue seems "exaggerated, artificial." Shakespeare is eliminated for the same reason. These exclusions narrow the field but slightly.

The sport of speculating on which books inspired 1601 was sharpened when portions of the Samuel Clemens library were auctioned in 1911, one year after his death. Other books were sold later before cataloguers were able to compile accurate lists of the holdings. Many are now reassembled with the Mark Twain Papers at the University of California Library at Berkeley. The absence of a definitive list of Mark Twain's reading has obliged scholars to
dig for clues in his writings and the old editions themselves.

Paine infers that Pepys was the source when he writes concerning Twain, "In his reading that year [1876] at the farm he gave more than customary attention to one of his favorite books, Pepys' Diary, that captivating old record which no one can follow continuously without catching the infection of its manner and the desire of imitation." It is true that in 1601 Twain introduces the cupbearer as "the Pepys of that day." Pepys may well have been among the "ancient English books" Twain had been reading, but any version available at that time is hardly a contender for the one containing the "brief conversation." In nineteenth century editions Pepys' encounters with women may become indecent, but his language never.

In 1949 Harold Aspiz suggested John Aubrey's Brief Lives as the source of the "brief conversation." Bacil F. Kirtley made the same guess in 1965. The evidence is tantalizing. Aubrey, who was born in Wiltshire in 1626 and recorded court gossip until his death in 1697,

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included in Brief Lives every one of the non-fictional characters appearing in 1601: Queen Elizabeth, Bacon, Raleigh, Jonson, Beaumont, and Shakespeare.4 Aubrey's Raleigh captures the swashbuckling verve that Twain reproduces in his Raleigh.

Furthermore, Aubrey includes this brief conversation under the sketch of Edward De Vere, Earl of Oxford:

This Earle of Oxford, making of his low obeisance to Queen Elizabeth, happened to let a Fart, at which he was so abashed and ashamed that he went to Travell 7 yeares. On his returne the Queen welcomed him home, and sayd, My Lord, I had forgot the Fart.5

This would seem to fill all the particulars for the "brief conversation," except for one impediment. As Howard G. Baetzhold points out in Mark Twain & John Bull: The British Connection, this passage does not appear in the only edition of Aubrey's Brief Lives that apparently could have been available to Twain in 1876.6 Oliver Lawson Dick comments on the 1813 edition of Brief Lives, which was edited by two clergymen, Philip Bliss and John Walter, that "it is

4 John Aubrey, Letters Written by Eminent Persons in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries to which are added, Hearne's Journeys to Reading, and to Whaddon Hall, the Seat of Browne Willis, Esq., and Lives of Eminent Men, by John Aubrey, Esq., edited by John Walker (London, 1813).


incomplete, inaccurate and heavily expurgated, and yet the debt we owe to it is enormous, for this book remained for eighty-five years the only edition of the Brief Lives."7

Yet when the next edition of Brief Lives appeared in 1898 its editor, Andrew Clark, wrote in the preface, "The necessary excisions have not been numerous. They suggest two reflections. The turbulence attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh seems to have made his name in the next age the centre of aggregation of quite a number of coarse stories."8 The 1813 edition cites no "turbulence" caused by Sir Walter Raleigh which has been purged from the 1898 edition. This would seem to point to still another edition circulating prior to 1898. Is it possible that a furtive, under-the-counter volume containing some bawdy stories from Aubrey circulated without coming to the notice of the bibliographers?

The voluminous manuscripts of John Aubrey's Brief Lives were deposited by the author in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford in 1693. Except for having been transferred to its sister institution, the Bodleian Library, they have remained in Oxford through the ensuing centuries. Many scholars have dipped into Aubrey as a

rich source of historical data. By 1876 Twain had visited England twice, and produced a short sketch on Magdalen College at Oxford. His penchant for the British Museum is well documented, and it would have been entirely in character for him to have indulged his taste for archives with visits to the Ashmolean and Bodleian while in Oxford. While this is pure speculation, the possibility that Twain had some familiarity with the writings of John Aubrey at the time he wrote _1601_ cannot be ruled out.

But, on the other hand, Alan Gribben, research assistant to the Mark Twain Papers, writes:

> In the research that I have accomplished up to this point I find no certain evidence that Clemens either owned or read Aubrey's _Brief Lives_. Aubrey's book is not mentioned in any of Clemens's notebooks (we have compiled an index to these forty documents), and I have not yet turned up anything to warrant its inclusion as part of the author's personal library. If Twain had discovered a writer as kindred to him as John Aubrey, it is reasonable to expect his appreciation would have spilled over into his writings, as it did for Pepys and Lecky. So, despite the striking resemblance between portions of the two works, evidence neither supports nor quite excludes _Brief Lives_ as a source for _1601_.

Baetzhold suggests Marguerite of Navarre's _Heptameron_ as a book in which Twain may have found inspiration.

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9 Alan Gribben, Research Assistant, Mark Twain Papers, in a letter to the author dated June 5, 1970.
for 1601, "for he had just added a copy of the Heptameron to his library in 1875." Marguerite’s tales of lecherous priests and pristine maidens could certainly have furnished the impetus for Twain’s two clerical anecdotes. In fact, he does attribute one to her via Sir Walter Raleigh. Marguerite’s tales may deal with racy exploits, but she is a disciple of her own verdict that "there is nothing which may not be said decorously." The Heptameron is not likely to have furnished the example of the indelicate conversation.

The most promising prospect for the inspiration is offered by Walter Blair in Mark Twain & Huck Finn. He suggests parts one and two of the ballad entitled "The Part" from Thomas D’Urfey’s Wit and Mirth: or Pills to Purge Melancholy, originally edited between 1698 and 1720. The fourth stanza reads:

When at Noon as in State
The Queen was at Meat
And the Princely Dane sat by Her,
A Fart there was heard,
That the Company scar’d;

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10Sætzhold, op. cit., p. 82.


12Walter Blair, Mark Twain & Huck Finn (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960), p. 94.
As a Gun at their Ears had been fir'd;
With a hum, &c.:12

As the guests, who include the clergy, a comptroller, squire, maids, and ladies, protest their innocence—"Nor e'er did such a thing in their lives,"—the final stanzas hint at who is to bear the blame.

So that turning the Jest,
They agreed it at last,
That nought from the Presence did come,
But the noise that they heard,
Was some Yeoman o' the Guard,
That Brought Dishes into the next Room;
With a hum, &c.

But the truth of the sound
Not at all could be found,
Since none but the doer could tell,
So that hushing up the Shame,
The Beef-eater bore the blame,
And the Queen, God be pris'd din'd well;
With a hum, hum, hum.14

The second part of "The Fart" begins with the phrase, "Ye Peers that in State;/ Now with Commons are met . . . ,"15 catching the theme of class distinction that Twain was to emphasize in 1601. Although D'Urfey's Yeoman of the Guard is not as obviously allied with the upper class as Twain's cupbearer, the yeoman does insist in similar spirit, "For tho' I'm no Lord, . . . / Yet my Privilege I'll maintain."16 Furthermore, both yeoman and cupbearer serve

13 Thomas D'Urfey, Wit and Mirth; or Pills to Purge Melancholy, edited by Thomas D'Urfey, a facsimile reproduction of the 1876 reprint of the original edition of 1719-1720 (New York, 1959), 1, 29.
14 Ibid., p. 32. 15 Ibid., p. 32. 16 Ibid., p. 33.
their authors as fictional catalysts. And so it is that Walter Blair, who first submitted the suggestion that the D'Urfey ballad may be the debated source for 1601, seems to emerge as the winner. Another fact that becomes clear in this exploration into the literary ancestry of 1601 is that Mark Twain delved deep into historical volumes for his research. To his readers' delight his prowls through the musty tomes uncovered several juicy morsels from the dry bones of the past.
CHAPTER III
FROM MANUSCRIPT INTO PRINT

Once the manuscript for _1601_ left the hands of Mark Twain, the author’s role became that of a fond parent observing a remarkable offspring who is completely capable of making his own meteoric progress. In his dotage Twain himself recalled that "Fwichell, who was never able to keep a secret when he knew it ought to be revealed," showed the letter to his friend Dean Sage, a lumber dealer. This gentleman tested the humor of the piece by dropping the manuscript in the aisle of a smoking car, allowing it to travel the length of the car anonymously. When Sage finally claimed the copy he was convinced of its literary merit, and had a dozen copies printed privately in Brooklyn. "He sent one to David Gray in Buffalo, one to a friend in Japan, one to Lord Houghton in England, and one to a Jewish Rabbi in Albany, a very learned man and an able critic and lover of old-time literatures."¹

Most scholars believe that _1601_ was first printed, not in Brooklyn, but in Cleveland, in 1880. The smoking car incident may indeed have taken place as Twain recollected, but more likely at a later date. As noted in

¹Clemens, _Autobiography_, edited by Neider, p. 259.
Chapter I, his biographer, Faine, pointed out another instance where Twain's memory relating to 1601 seems slightly askew. Prime evidence supporting the Cleveland printing of 1880 is contained in a series of letters written by John Hay, then Assistant Secretary of State in Washington, to Alexander Gunn of Cleveland. Hay, who later served as ambassador to Great Britain, eventually became Secretary of State under Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. Gunn is identified as "a man of rare taste—a lover of books, a connoisseur in art and many of the good things of life," who lived in Cleveland overlooking Lake Erie: "before the smoke and dirt of the city drove him to his retreat." The three Hay-Gunn letters, which form an appropriate complement to 1601, came into the possession of Frank Ginn as early as October, 1905. His heirs later presented them to the Princeton University Library. The third letter of the series was first published in The Saturday Evening Post, October 10, 1903, under the caption, "A Negative Assent." All three letters were printed together with an introduction titled, "An Unpublished Masterpiece," by Charles Orr in Putnam's Monthly and The Critic for November, 1906. On June 28 of this same year, Orr, then director of schools in Cleveland,

had written to Twain. He enclosed copies of the Hay-Gunn letters and asked for the title of the piece mentioned, whether it were printed in his published writings, and if he knew Gunn. Twain may have furnished answers to all three questions, but Orr never revealed the title to his readers. In his introductory paragraphs he writes, "A literary masterpiece by Mark Twain, though not known to collectors, is said to be in print; perhaps a few copies are still in the hands of the author." Twain was still alive to savor this tribute to 1601. The letters read as follows:

June 21, 1880

Dear Gunn:
Are you in Cleveland for all this week?
If you will say yes by return mail, I have a masterpiece to submit to your consideration which is only in my hands for a few days.
Yours, very much worried by the depravity of Christendom,

Hay.

June 24, 1880

My Dear Gunn:
Here it is. It was written by Mark Twain in a serious effort to bring back our literature and philosophy to the sober and chaste Elizabethan standard. But the taste of the present day is too corrupt for anything so classic. He has not yet been able even to find a publisher. The Globe has not yet recovered from Downey's inroad, and they won't touch it.
I send it to you as one of the few lingering relics of that race of appreciative critics,

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who know a good thing when they see it. Read it with reverence and gratitude and send it back to me; for Mark is impatient to see once more his wandering offspring.

Yours,

Hay.

Washington, D. C.
July 7, 1880

My Dear Gunn:

I have your letter, and the proposition which you make to pull a few proofs of the masterpiece is highly attractive, and of course highly immoral. I cannot properly consent to it, and I am afraid the great man would think I was taking an unfair advantage of his confidence. Please send back the document as soon as you can, and if, in spite of my prohibition, you take these proofs, save me one.

Very truly yours,

John Hay.

Orr adds that the proofs were taken in the form of a little brochure of some eight pages with the title "An Evening at the Social Fireside of the Tudors."

Twain bibliographers conclude that the Cleveland printing must have been an eight-page pamphlet, issued without hard covers, and consisting of no more than four copies. Both Princeton and Yale libraries own a copy of 1601 which meet the slim specifications for the Cleveland edition. But, unfortunately, the two copies are not identical. In 1915 Faine claimed to possess the original

manuscript, but its present location is a mystery. Thus, no authority has ever been able to establish a canon for the Cleveland edition of 1601.5

Despite the seeming impossibility of determining the first printed edition of 1601, all Twain scholars agree that the one and only authorized edition was that printed on a small hand press at the United States Military Academy, West Point, in 1882. Twain wrote to Lieutenant Charles Erskine Scott Wood, then adjutant of the academy, asking him to print "something" he could not trust to an ordinary printer. At Twain's request and working from a manuscript provided by the author, Wood adapted the original text to conform to Elizabethan spelling. Sergeant John Tucker, foreman of the printing shop, set the antique-style type. In the preface to the 1925 Grabhorn Press edition of 1601 Wood stated, "The only editing I did was as to the spelling and a few old English words introduced."6 In the spirit of the assignment Wood and his assistants even soaked handmade linen paper in weak coffee and then mildewed it to simulate antiquity.7


6Ibid., pp. 52-53.

7Martha Anne Turnor, "Mark Twain's '1601' Through Fifty Editions," Mark Twain Journal, XII, No. 4 (Summer, 1965), 11.
Fifty copies were produced. The colophon read "Done att Ye Academie Presse, M DCCLXXXII," a gleeful jab at Establishment decorum.

That Twain wholeheartedly approved of the West Point edition and of Wood's minor alterations is borne out in this reminiscence in his *Autobiography*.

When we sailed for Europe in 1891 I left those sumptuous West Point copies hidden away in a drawer of my study, where I thought they would be safe. We were gone nearly ten years, and whenever anybody wanted a copy I promised it—the promise to be made good when we should return to America. In Berlin I promised one to Rudolph Lindau, of the Foreign Office. . . . I promised one to Mommsen and one to William Walter Phelps, who was our Minister at the Berlin court . . . .

In London Lord Wolseley . . . asked me for a copy of 1501 . . . .

We reached home the next year and not a sign of those precious masterpieces could be found on the premises anywhere . . . . Two or three days ago I found out that they have reappeared and are safe in our house in New York.

In the early years of the century doubt existed about whether Twain actually wrote 1601. Some people attributed the work to Eugene Field, and others to an unnamed British actor. Proof that Twain was the author was established by his letter to his publisher, James R. Osgood, dated May 24, 1884, which contained the statement, "I have mailed you a 1601; but mind, if it is for a lady you are to assume the authorship of it yourself." In

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another letter written by Twain on July 30, 1906, he asserted, "If there is a decent word findable in it, it is because I overlooked it." Both of these letters are now part of the Princeton collection. With the eventual appearance of Twain's Notebook and Autobiography, his authorship is no longer questioned. To this date, however, 1601 has never been produced by a major publishing house, nor is it among the standard collections of the works of Mark Twain.

Despite the absence of a definitive edition of 1601, bibliographers had by 1965 recorded at least fifty editions of the work. Many are lavish with such refinements as deckle-edged paper, rubricated capitals, leather bindings, and red silk tie cords. The vintardecade for 1601 was the nineteen twenties, when twenty different editions made their appearance. The names of the presses, when included, show a creativity befitting the piece, itself: "The Attic Press," "Printed a ye Sign of ye Flea," "The Old Backhouse," "Ye Puritan Press at ye Virgin," "Ye Blow Grasse Press." Not only did the text undergo unnumbered variations from edition to edition, but the title, too, appeared under new guises such as Conversazione, Facetia Americana, and An Essay on Mind. An expurgated edition was published in 1925 at "The Sign of the Mocki-Grisball." Scholars generally concur that
the edition of 1601 edited by Franklin J. Meine, which was first published in Chicago in 1939, and reissued in 1961, is the most reliable. It includes both what Meine held to be a verbatim Cleveland reprint and a facsimile West Point text. ⁹

Although 1601 remains an illegitimate offspring among Mark Twain's literary progeny, it has not suffered a lack of benefactors willing to promote its future. Among the supporters have been a secretary of state, a West Point adjutant, a Protestant clergyman, a rabbi, a director of public schools, and assorted diplomats and royalty.

⁹Samuel L. Clemens, [Date, 1601:] Conversation As It was by the Social Fireside in the Time of the Tudors, edited by Franklin J. Meine (New York [1961]).
CHAPTER IV

CRITICS IN RETREAT

The more than fifty editions of *1601* are in themselves testimony that readers throughout the world have regarded the little book with affection. Furthermore, it was public knowledge as early as 1906 that *1601* was the work of Mark Twain, celebrated both as author and personage. Adding these facts together one would expect an abundance of critical commentary on *1601*. This is not the case. After nearly a century in circulation, *1601* has attracted little scholarly attention. In contrast, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" is dissected almost annually.

Studies consist of precisely two scholarly articles on bibliographic aspects of *1601* which appeared in periodicals, and three noteworthy forewords published as parts of editions of *1601*. Authors of the articles are John S. Van E. Kohn and Martha Anne Turner, whose entries were cited in an earlier chapter. In 1925 the seventy-three-year-old Charles Erskine Scott Wood contributed a foreword for the Grabhorn edition printed in San Francisco. Wood, who had obliged Mark Twain by printing the West Point copies, offered this insight:
Refinement seems to make for weakness—or let us say a cutting edge—but the old vulgar monosyllabic words bit like the blow of a pioneer's ax—and Mark was like that. Then I think 1601 came out of Mark's instinctive humor, satire and hatred of puritanism... I think he delighted, too, in shocking—giving resounding slaps on what Chaucer would quite simply call "the bare erse."

Meine labels the foreword written by Earle H. Emmons for the 1927 edition of 1601 printed in "Nieu Yorke City" as "entertaining and penetrating." But Meine's own foreword to 1601, first printed in 1939 and reissued in 1961, remains unsurpassed. He offers ample quotations from sundry sources relative to Twain's gusto for earthy language, the Bay-Gunn correspondence, the purported verbatim reprint of the Cleveland printing and the facsimile West Point printing, ruminations on the historical persons cast in the conversation, and a good bibliography. Meine, however, makes no pretense of attempting a critical evaluation of 1601.

With several exceptions, coping with 1601 seems to have presented an uncomfortable dilemma for the otherwise cool critics. If a scholar praised 1601 he risked the outrage of an army of upright citizens with a vested interest in Comstockery. And, to boot, Twain did not seem to be overturning convention for a redeeming social purpose, but just for fun! On the other hand, if a scholar

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1Clemens, 1601, edited by Meine, p. 19.
denounced 1601 too vigorously; it might reflect on his virility. More than one writer evaded the dilemma by relegating 1601 to "the smoking room." Even for critics not intimidated by the foregoing reasons, the work set up troublesome problems. How could they reconcile the beloved, white-garbed and white-maned American hero with a panderer of "salacious literature." Furthermore, it was a problem they did not have to confront. Most editions slipped into circulation so quietly that the obligation of writing a review was easily side-stepped. Yet through the years a residue of brief appraisals of 1601, ranging in length from one sentence to several pages, has accumulated.

One of the most daring sallies into 1601 was also one of the earliest. In The Ordeal of Mark Twain Van Wyck Brooks wrote:

Mark Twain's verbal Rabelaisianism was obviously the expression of that vital sap which, not having been permitted to inform his work, had been driven inward and left there to ferment. No wonder he was always indulging in orgies of forbidden words. Consider the famous book, "1601," that "fireside conversation in the time of Queen Elizabeth": is there any obsolete verbal indecency in the English language that Mark Twain has not painstakingly resurrected and assembled there? He, whose blood was in constant ferment and who could not contain within the narrow bonds that had been set for him the riotous exuberance of his nature, had to have an escape-valve, and he poured through it a fetid stream of meaningless obscenity—the waste of a priceless psychic material! . . .

In all these ways, I say, these blind, indirect, extravagant, wasteful ways, the creative
self in Mark Twain constantly strove to break through the censorship his own will had accepted, to cross the threshold of the unconscious.\(^2\)

When Dixon Wecter edited *Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks*, he noted in his introduction:

Although one may gravely doubt Van Wyck Brooks's thesis that Mark Twain without censorship would have emerged the New World Rabelais—since his sallies into the world of men only like 1601 and the Stomach Club speech, are curiously gauche and sophomoric—nevertheless he did possess a zest for salty speech, and for the humors and disgusts of the body.\(^3\)

In the *Mark Twain Handbook*, E. Hudson Long stated:

Too much has been made of this bit of ribaldry, both by enthusiasts who claim literary qualities it does not possess and the Freudians who see it as the way Mark would have written if unhempered. Neither is correct, yet it remains an amusing story for the smoking room. Moreover, it is funny and illustrates the coarse strain of Mark's nature, but its literary importance is minor.\(^4\)

By the time Edward Wagenknecht edited his revised *Mark Twain: The Man and His Work* in 1961 indications of a new controversy are present... . . . I realize that I am running the risk of offending Mr. Franklin J. Meine, who apparently considers 1601 the greatest thing in all literature. I ran afoul of Mr. Meine in my first edition by calling 1601, not censuriously but descriptively, the most famous piece of pornography in American literature. Mr. Meine insists that it is not

\(^2\)Van Wyck Brooks, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (New York, 1920), pp. 185–86.


pornographic, but he does not say what it is. There are, nevertheless, touches of pornography in it, but being always ready to receive instruction from experts, I am quite willing to admit, after twenty-five years, that it is more scatological than pornographic, and I am reliably informed that the same is, in general, true of the other pieces. As to why, being, as nobody doubts he was, a "moral" man, Mark Twain found it necessary to write such things, I am not sure that any explanation can completely cover the case, but, by the same token, I am not sure that any explanation is necessary.5

Meine's first edition of 1601 also attracted the attention of The Saturday Review of Literature in which Basil Davenport wrote:

... it represents Queen Elizabeth, a group of her ladies in waiting, and Shakespeare and other authors, indifferently talking filth, without wit or humor, a salad made of nothing but garlic, without so much as a pinch of salt to commend it. This laborious muck-heaps is here enshrined in a Limited edition ....... 6

In a subsequent letter to the editor of the same magazine Cyril Clemens noted:

Sir:—You have my heartiest congratulations on Mr. Basil Davenport's scholarly and discriminating review of Mark Twain's "1601." As the reviewer so ably brings out there is no rhyme or reason for an elaborate edition of this piece. . . . He (Twain) would turn in his grave if he knew that this ephemera was being embalmed with footnotes and critical comment! ... The consensus of opinion, of course, was that the piece was totally unworthy of publication, an opinion in which Twain himself most completely concurred. . . . Twain's


6Basil Davenport, "1601 and All That," The Saturday Review of Literature, XX, No. 10 (July 1, 1939), 19.
reputation would have been infinitely better served by bringing out a well edited edition of "The Jumping Frog."^7

This Mr. Clemens presumed to speak for the other Mr. Clemens because his great-grandfather was a cousin of Mark Twain's father. He appears to owe a higher allegiance to kinship than to scholarship.

In *Mark Twain as a Literary Artist* Gladys Carmen Bellamy referred briefly to 1501, associating it with Mark Twain's complaint, "Delicacy—a sad, sad false delicacy—robs literature of the best two things among its belongings. Family circle narrative and obscene stories." She continued:

Paradoxical Mark Twain! bewailing the loss to literature of "obscene stories," yet carefully, so carefully, detouring around an irregular bit of actual life with the pious pronouncement, "they sinned." ... ... If your artist and your moralist live inside the same skin, there will be some curious results.^8

In an article entitled "Mark Twain and Sexuality"

Alexander E. Jones, noting 1601, stated:

Undoubtedly, part of his fascination with "obscene stories" was neurotic—excessive interest in such material is a form of exhibitionism and is said to represent a continuation of, or regression to, phallic sexuality. But in part it was also simply the result of a normal masculine taste for bawdry. Sex was of compelling interest to him,

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^7Cyril Clemens, "Letters to the Editor," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, XX, No. 23 (September 30, 1939), 9.

but it lay under a ban imposed partly by the mores of polite society and partly by the rigor of his own super-ego. But these taboos did not apply to pornography, which lies outside society and is completely amoral; and so there was no psychological block, and obscenity could ripple forth unimpeded in sweetly "innocent indecencies." And thus the paradox that Twain could be simultaneously Victorian and Elizabethan.9

In Mark Twain & Huck Finn Walter Blair disagrees with critics who believe 1601 represents a "fierce rebellion against censorship." He writes, "I suggest that, written as it was for masculine readers, it was not, as some critics have believed, a unique phenomenon."10 He sees its importance primarily in relation to Huckleberry Finn. Blair points out the evidence in 1601 of Twain's reading during the period and his use of the narrator as a fictional technique.

Stanley Kauffmann in The New Republic dismissed Letters From the Earth with the comment, "This, like 1601, is just lodge-meeting, smoking room stuff."11

Although many of his comments concerning the sexual inhibitions of Hawthorne and Twain are significant.

10 Blair, op. cit., pp. 95-98.
Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* dismisses *1601* as "pseudo-nostalgia [that] cannot be taken too seriously, however; it may, indeed, be the projection of mere personal weakness and fantasy."\(^{12}\)

In *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain* Justin Kaplan compares *1601* with *Huckleberry Finn*:

Clemens worked on two projects which, though they were grotesquely contrasting in quality, were related in important respects. Both were implicit rejections of the taboos and codes of polite society, and both were experiments in using the vernacular as a literary medium. The first, written for private circulation, was a harmless but soon notorious piece of bawdry called *1601*... This excursion into what Clemens imagined plain-spoken Elizabethan English to have been was, in a sense, an escape from the restraints of juvenile literature, a covert way of scribbling dirty words on Tom Sawyer's fence... It seems now only a minor sort of curiosity.\(^{13}\)

Like Blair, Howard G. Baetzhold sees *1601* as important for its revelation of those books Twain was reading during 1875, as well as "an exercise in maintaining a restricted point of view... coming as it did at the time he was beginning *Huckleberry Finn*."\(^{14}\)

This mixed bag represents the accumulated critical material available on *1601*. At first glance explanations


\(^{13}\)Justin Kaplan, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain* (New York, 1966), pp. 198-97.

\(^{14}\)Baetzhold, *op. cit.*, p. 83
and verdicts seem to veer off in all directions, from the ripe denunciations of the offended to the cold clinical pronouncements of the psychologists. But analysis reveals that the commentaries fall into four basic categories: those that dismiss 1861 as of no importance, those that deem it evil, those that see it as encapsulated from Twain's inner censors and thus safely amoral, and finally those that recognize it as one facet of a man pulled between lye soap and scrub brush fundamentalism and naked freedom. Both Blair and Baetzhold offer astute commentaries on 1861, but rather than evaluating it for itself use it as a springboard to discuss Huckleberry Finn.

Those critics who dismiss 1861 as unimportant must reckon with the facts that few books appear in fifty different editions and that its popularity remains undiminished. It would be more appropriate for this school of critics to analyze 1861 for flaws in structure or style or to examine the quirks in society that give rise to underground literature. The bald statement that 1861 is unimportant cannot be substantiated.

Critics who write off 1861 because it offends their moral standards may be on somewhat less shaky ground. But even here no consensus exists on what constitutes pornography, except that most observers will agree that its boundaries are constantly moving. The change is
coming about more by virtue of what is finding its way into fiction than through reasoned defenses of relaxed taboos. The Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, named by President Lyndon B. Johnson and created by Congress, states in its report:

Although American society is experiencing a transition in relation to its attitudes toward sexuality, a great deal of ambivalence remains in these attitudes and there is confusion in the area of sexuality and its treatment.

The fear of pornography felt by many people is a symptom of this confusion and ambivalence about sexuality ....... It directly represents to many people the danger and the unpleasantness which is actually associated by them with sexual behavior, and indeed with the very concept of sexuality. 15

Admittedly, 1601 is both scatological and to a lesser extent erotic. The Bible also contains examples of both. In Letters From the Earth Mark Twain took delight in pointing out evidences of scatology, apparently referring to II Kings 9:8 and Deuteronomy 23:13. Surely to the Israelites these matters were a practical consideration and not a source of merriment. Moreover, some of the most beautifully erotic passages in all literature are found in the Song of Solomon.

What no critic pointed out is that while pornographic literature in England and in the late nineteenth century

was replete with flagellation and homosexuality, 1601 is purely heterosexual, resorting to no deviation other than exaggeration. And exaggeration is the working tool of the writer. Has fertility ever been symbolized more expressively than by the ram in 1601 who "wil tup above an hundred yewes 'twixt sunne & sunne, & after, if yt hee can have none more to shag, wil masturbate until hee hath enrich'd whole acres with hys seed"? Until a generally accepted definition of pornography is acknowledged, scholars who would discredit 1601 on moral grounds will have to present specific objections.

Critics who assert that 1601 can be neatly explained by the fact that Twain compartmentalized this area of his life use the same reasoning as those who believe he intended it for men only. This may have been Twain's rationalization at times, but not consistently. When he mailed a 1601 to Osgood he wrote, "If it is for a lady you are to assume the authorship of it yourself." He also confesses to talking with "daring frankness" to the "faultlessly formed" Elinor Glyn in 1908 concerning her book extolling free love. Another refutation of the for-men-only theory is scored in an incident recalled by Joseph Hooker Twichell, son of Twain's boon companion.

16 Clemens, 1601, edited by Maine, p. 48.
During one of the last years of Twain's life he had been invited to address a ladies literary club in Hartford. He was a guest of the Twichells and one evening read Joe and Harmony his "completely objectionable" and unpublished story of a shotgun wedding. Harmony did not interrupt the reading, but her compressed lips amused her husband. Although Harmony had never been accorded membership in this elite club, she was invited to accompany Twain as his hostess. When he announced to the women that he had first hesitated over reading this story, but was encouraged after testing it out on the Twichells, Harmony was horrified. Many of the women upon hearing the story left "in a huff."¹⁹ No doubt some of these indiscretions may be attributed to the frustrations of his last years. But Twain had also outlived his censors.

Those critics who are sensitive to the paradox in Mark Twain might have provided penetrating interpretations of 1801. Instead we have only shreds and scraps of insight from scholars who apparently did not permit themselves to fully explore it in print. It is unfortunate that neither they nor anyone else has attempted to write a serious analysis of this famous piece of American humor.

¹⁹ Strong, Joseph Hopkins Twichell, p. 158.
CHAPTER V

THE EÜRITIVE SCHOLAR

When the reader chances upon Huck Finn's glowing testimony in favor of victuals stewed "in a barrel of odds and ends . . . where things get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around," the reader may not be quite prepared to discover that its author, Mark Twain, was dining in an altogether different style. Olivia's personal maid recalled the company dinners at Nook Farm with "soup first," fillet of beef or canvasback ducks, and always crème de menthe. "We always had our ice cream put up in some wonderful shapes—like flowers or cherubs, little angels . . . . "

This same dichotomy existed in Mark Twain the writer. He loved to strike the pose of a tousled genius effortlessly tossing together tales to enchant the world. Once he explained,

If you invent two or three people and turn them loose in your manuscript, something is bound to happen to them—you can't help it; and then it will take you the rest of the book to get them out of the natural consequences of that occurrence,

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2 Mary Lawton, A Lifetime with Mark Twain (New York, 1925), pp. 18-19.
and so, first thing you know, there's your book all finished up and never cost you an idea.  

Mark Twain would like to give the impression that 1601 was spun off as casually. Close inspection of the Elizabethan conversation proves this to be a conceit. Even though Twain may never have intended the "fat letter" to be shared by anyone but Joe Twichell, nevertheless he packed into its few pages a welter of professional techniques, polished to his professional standards.

At first reading 1601 appears to be simply a string of ribald anecdotes: loosely tied together. This assumption will not bear scrutiny. In the first place, Twain's choice of the unsympathetic cupbearer as a narrator imposes a tight discipline on him as an author. Walter Blair sees his selection of the first person singular point of view in relating 1601 as significant:

The chief pleasure: [as the author recalled it later] is in an effect achieved because of the fictional point of view. Twain shows the recognition of the importance of its choice to the sketch.

Thinking back, one realizes that the selection of the narrator had long been an important concern of Twain and basic to his successes . . . . Thus in 1876 a tradition of popular American humor which Twain knew well, his random experiments as a humorist, and his artistic instinct helped him cope with a problem which Henry James would formulate and solve—more complexly, of course—only after much

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experimentation and careful thought some years later. Since the canon for the Cleveland edition of 1601 cannot be established and since Twain gave Charles Erskine Scott Wood permission to edit the manuscript to conform to Elizabethan spelling for the edition produced at West Point, it is hard to determine which spellings may be attributed to the author. Inconsistencies abound. For example, Beaumont is spelled with a final e on pages forty-three and forty-nine, but without on page forty-five. Wind appears as wind on page forty-four and as wynd on page forty-seven. On page forty-seven he appears spelled he and hee. Old occurs repeatedly as olde, but on pages forty-eight and forty-nine as old. Rather than carelessness, these inconsistencies may point to either Twain or Wood's earnest endeavor to reproduce the capricious spelling typical of seventeenth-century literature.

Skill is evident in the structure of 1601. Once the reader accepts the fact that the clown may be weeping behind his painted-on smile, the steady progression toward the deliberately ironic conclusion becomes apparent. The parenthetical remarks concerning the plight of the cupbearer delineate the framework of the story. Next the characters are introduced in a single, economically stated...

"Blair, op. cit., pp. 97-98."
paragraph. The action begins when "one did breake wind" in the third paragraph. The inquisition, which allows the characters to develop and interact, shapes the rising action. Sir Walter Raleigh's confession forms a psuedo-climax, but does not dispel the tension mounting between the pedantic royal ladies and the restless upstarts. The true climax comes when the suspense is shattered in the second to the last paragraph by the queen's startling exclamation, "O shit!" One hesitates to label the final paragraph concerning the outwitted archbishop as falling action, yet it constitutes precisely that. The note of restrained pathos with which the tale concludes is an earmark of the contemporary short story.

A dissection of the techniques of humor employed in 1601 also reveals a basic sophistication of style. The most conspicuous form of humor used is burlesque, entirely in keeping with the period setting. Richmond P. Bond, who sees burlesque as both creative and critical by nature, summarizes low burlesque as that which places the subject above the style, and the high burlesque as that which fixes the style above the subject.\(^5\) Twain draws upon both in 1601.

Most notable example of the low burlesque in 1601 is when "the very flower of the Euphuists hersel"e," Queen Elizabeth, responds to a tedious speech with the comment, "O shit!" No more exalted personage could be chosen to be wed to any more humble expression.

Twain calls upon high burlesque more frequently in the conversation. The foremost example of this form is Shakespeare's declamation upon the fart.

In the grete hand of God I stand, & so proclaim my innocence. Tho'gh the sinless hosts of Heav'n hadde foretold the coming of the most desolating breath, proclaiming it a werke of uninspired man, its quaking thunders, its firmament-clogging rotenesse his owne achievement in due course of nature, yet hadde not I believed it; but hadde sayd the pit itself hath furnished forth the stink, & Heav'n's artillery hath shook the globe in admiration of it.

Not only is this high burlesque, but it is also a carefully-wrought parody on the Shakespearean style.

As much as Twain would like the reader to believe him innocent of the professional techniques that produce great literature, he stands exposed by his own testimony. Six years before he wrote 1601 he did a short piece entitled "Unburlesquable Things," which shows a keen analysis of this form of humor. He writes:

There are some things which cannot be burlesqued, for the simple reason that in themselves

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6 Clemens, 1601, edited by Keine, p. 45.
they are so extravagant and grotesque that
nothing is left for burlesque to take hold of.

There was no burlesquing the "situation"
when . . . . Henri Rochefort brayed forth the pro-
clamation that whenever he was arrested forty
thousand ouvriers would be there to know the
reason why—when, alas! right on top of it one
single humble policeman took him and marched him
off to prison through an atmosphere with never
a taint of garlic in it.

Although burlesque in its several variations predomi-
nates in 1601, Twain also draws on other humorous devices.
The understatement of Sir Walter Raleigh's comment, "I
perceive that I am weak to-daie & cannot justice doe unto
my powers . . . . " following on the heels of his "god-
lesse & rocke-shivering blast" \(^8\) is delicious. Satire,
which Twain uses so incisively in pieces such as "A De-
fense of General Funston" and "To the Person Sitting in
Darkness," appears only subtly in 1601. It may be
glimpsed in the queen's question, "Nayhap the Lady Mar-
gery hath done the companie this favour?" \(^9\) Exaggeration,
that hallmark of Western frontier humor which he employs
so effectively in The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Cala-
veras County, turns up, appropriately, in respect to the

\(^7\) Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain: Life As I Find It,
edited by Charles Neider (Garden City, New York, 1951),
p. 126.

\(^8\) Clemens, 1601, edited by Meine, p. 47.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 44.
"people in the uttermost parts of America that copulate not until they be five-&-thirty yeeres of age, the women beeing eight-&-twenty, & doe it then but once in seven yeeres."\textsuperscript{10} Some of the humor in 1601 may be categorized as wit, such as the well-turned sentence, "widows in England doe wear prickes too, but 'twixt the thyghs, & not wilted neither, till coition hath done that office for them."\textsuperscript{11} Or, "them that would explore a cunt stop'd not to consider the spelling o' t."\textsuperscript{12} Sixteen-one is a mixed dish. Primarily a burlesque, it combines both high and low forms of that red meat and then peppers the pot with a little understatement, satire, exaggeration, and wit. Despite the fact that many critics relegated 1601 to the smoking room with the inference that it was merely low comedy, close study reveals that it draws on highly developed literary skills.

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 48. \textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 43. \textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 50.
CHAPTER VI

UP FROM HANNIBAL

For many scholars long familiar with the life and art of Mark Twain, 1601 persists as an enigma. "As to why, being, as nobody doubts he was, a 'moral' man, Mark Twain found it necessary to write such things I am not sure that any explanation can completely cover the case," comments Edward Wagenknecht on 1601 in his 1961 edition of Mark Twain: The Man and His Work.¹ In dealing with a man as complex as Twain and a subject as hedged with privacy as sex, no one could dare to venture a complete or final explanation. However, probing under the surface of both Twain and 1601 does reveal that this excursion into ribaldry was not unrelated to the role of dutiful husband, father, and citizen of Hartford, Connecticut which he had chosen for himself.

Concerning obscenity Allen Walker Read writes in American Speech:

The determinant of obscenity lies not in words or things, but in the attitudes that people have towards these words and things. To hazard a definition, we may say that obscenity is any

¹Wagenknecht, op. cit., p. 151.
reference to the bodily functions that gives to anyone a certain emotional reaction, that of a "fearful thrill" in seeing, doing, or speaking the forbidden. Thus it is the existence of a ban or taboo that creates the obscenity where none existed before.²

In short, we have set apart a small group of words as "obscenity symbols," and all virtuous people tacitly enter into a conspiracy to maintain the sacredness of these symbols. Obscenity is an artificially created product and finds its strongest bulwark in those "right-minded people" who preserve its sanctity by the hush in their own usage and by their training of the young.³

Thus, on the basis of Read's definition of obscenity, it is precisely because Twain was a "moral" man that he could derive a "fearful thrill" in writing 1601.

Nevertheless, many readers of Mark Twain experience a certain reluctance in assigning such adjectives as "moral," "virtuous," or "right-minded" to an author famed for his portraits of boyish incorrigibility. In The Adventures of Tom Sawyer Huck complains to Tom:

"The widder's good to me, and friendly; but I can't stand them ways. She makes me git up just at the same time every morning; she makes me wash, they comb me all to thunder; she won't let me sleep in the woods; I got to wear them blamed clothes that just smothers me, Tom; they don't seem to let any air git through 'em, somehow; and they're so rotten nice that I can't set down, nor lay down, nor roll around anywhere's; I hain't slid on a cellar-door for—well, it 'pears to be years; I got to go to church and sweat and sweat—I hate them ornery sermons! 1


³Ibid., p. 267.
can't ketch a fly in there, I can't chaw. I got to wear shoes all Sunday. The widder wouldn't let me smoke; she wouldn't let me yell, she wouldn't let me gape; nor stretch, nor scratch, before folks."

The plight of youth straining to burst from the cocoon of parlor decorum recurs throughout Twain's work. It is most pronounced in those writings of his Hartford years, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *1861*. Undoubtedly it expressed a wistful yearning for the familiar comforts of Hannibal.

Yet evidence points to the fact that for Mark Twain the "sivilizing" was imposed by none other than himself. In writing his *Autobiography* Twain recalls his first meeting with "that wise and just and humane and charming man and great citizen and diplomat, Anson Burlingame" in Honolulu in 1865.

Mr. Burlingame gave me some advice, one day, which I have never forgotten, and which I have lived by for forty years. He said, in substance:

"Avoid inferiors. Seek your comradeships among your superiors in intellect and character; always climb."

One year later Twain put life in the mining camps of California behind him and sailed on the Quaker City for a tour of the Holy Land. Among the wealthy and

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respectable passengers was: Mary Mason Fairbanks, wife of the publisher of the Cleveland Herald. In describing "Mother Fairbanks" to his family Twain writes:

She was the most refined, intelligent, & cultivated lady in the ship. She sewed my buttons on, kept my clothes in presentable trim, fed me on Egyptian jam, (when I behaved,) [cured] lectured me awfully on the quarter-deck on moonlit promenading evenings, & cured me of several bad habits. I am under lasting obligations to her. She looks young, because she is so good—but she has a grown son & daughter at home. She always drummed us up for prayer-meeting, with her monitory "seven bells, my boys—you know what it is time for."

"Mother Fairbanks" was all of thirty-eight years old to Mark's thirty-one years at the time of the cruise. And her "grown" children had attained the ripe ages of eleven and twelve. Mark, nonetheless, cultivated this filial relationship until the death of Mrs. Fairbanks in 1898. While visiting in Hartford in 1868 he wrote to her:

I am the guest of Mr. Hooker's (Henry Ward Beecher's brother-in-law) family here for a few days, & I tell you I have to walk mighty straight. I desire to have the respect of this sterling old Puritan community, for their respect is well worth having—and so I don't dare to smoke after I go to bed, & in fact I don't dare to do anything that's comfortable & natural.

When Mark Twain finally chose a wife it was the cameo-like Olivia Langdon, daughter of a prosperous coal

6 Clemens, Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks, p. xxii. The brackets are Veltser's and indicate cancellations.

7 Ibid., p. 15.
merchant in Elmira, New York. After a trip from Elmira to Buffalo in a private railroad car the bridegroom received as a wedding gift from his father-in-law a three-story brick mansion complete with three servants, a horse, and a carriage. Twain later insisted that the coachman's livery cost more than any coat he, himself, had ever worn. Just prior to his marriage he confides to Mrs. Fairbanks that Livy "isn't demonstrative, a bit, (who ever supposed she would be?) but she sticks like a good girl, & answers every letter just as soon as she has read it—& lectures me like smoke, too. But I like it." During the same period a letter from Mark to Livy contains these statements:

I stopped chewing tobacco because it was a mean habit, partly, & partly because my mother desired it.. I ceased from profanity because Mrs. Fairbanks desired it.. I stopped drinking strong liquors because you desired it.. I stopped drinking all other liquors because it seemed plain that you desired it.. I did what I could to learn to leave my hands out of my pantaloon pockets & quit lolling at full length in easy chairs, because you desired it.10

Despite its callow exaggerations, a comment by Leslie A. Fiedler, comparing Hawthorne and Twain, seems relevant. He writes, "Both married, late in life, pale hypochondriac spinsters, intellectual invalids—as if to assert publicly

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8Kaplan, op. cit., p. 114.
9Clemens, Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks, p. 55.
10Clemens, The Love Letters of Mark Twain, p. 136.
that they sought in marriage: not sex but culture!" Kaplan notes that the first months in the Clemens house in Buffalo were punctuated at regular intervals by prayers, Bible readings, and grace before meals. "After all, what does tobacco matter?" he joked. "Let's have another chapter of Deuteronomy." Time eroded Mark's resolutions, and he eventually succumbed again to tobacco, liquor, and lolling. He remained outside the pale of institutional Christianity.

In *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* Van Wyck Brooks writes, "We cannot properly grasp the significance of Mark Twain's marriage unless we realize that he had been manoeuvred into the role of a candidate for gentility." In *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain* Kaplan offers a more tempered interpretation. Citing Mark's submission to the corrections of Mrs. Fairbanks, Livy, and others, he states, "he conformed only as far as his evolving goals and standards told him to conform, and he generally had his own way." But the game, once begun with such willing and attentive mentors as "Mother Fairbanks" and Livy, continued to

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12 Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
14 Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
flourish with only minor alterations. The goal continued to be the "sivilizing" of Mark Twain.

Once the decision had been made to leave Buffalo, Mark and Livy found themselves free to choose a new home site dictated by neither legacy nor career. Their choice was that "sterling old Puritan community"—Hartford, the home of the Reverend Joseph Twichell, Harriet Beecher Stowe, John Hooker, the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, Charles Dudley Warner, and Elisha Bliss. William Dean Howells, who told Warner that "he was merely living in exile in Cambridge, and that his true home was in Hartford, or in Hartford as he resolved to spell it thenceforth," was a frequent visitor.15 From this erudite and sedate company came new players for the game. When consulted about the manuscript for The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Howells answered, "As to the point in your book; I'd have that swearing out in an instant."16 The offensive phrase was deleted.

Among the rewards of the game was the acceptance of those guardians of propriety like "Mother Fairbanks." During the very same summer that Twain wrote 1861 Mrs. Fairbanks wrote him in response to his "Facts Concerning

15Andrews, op. cit., p. 91.

16Bernard DeVoto, Mark Twain's America and Mark Twain at Work (Boston, 1967), p. 17.
the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut" which had just appeared in the Atlantic.

I tried to take up my pen after reading the June Atlantic, to tell you how you pleased me. Do you realize how you have improved? How time and study and conscience have developed the fineness of your nature? I just sit back in my complacence & mentally pat you on the head—not that your well-doing is for me or my approval but because I knew it would be as it is, and I am pleased with my own sagacity. Your late article has some most delicate, metaphysical touches and I never was so sure of your having a live conscience, as since you have proclaimed its death.17

Thus his vigilant mentors not only continued to groom him for his new niche in Eastern society, but petted him at every sign that their efforts were achieving results.

For all of his upward aspirations, Mark Twain remained candid about his barefoot boyhood in Hannibal. Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn itemized its rustic pleasures for a whole world to read. Twain never exploited his father's rather tentative judgeship or his family's worrisome inheritance in Tennessee. In fact, his candor has resulted in a frequent misconception of Hannibal as a crude, frontier outpost.

In later years when money to repay his creditors was more important than any other aspect of propriety, Twain found succor in the Standard Oil mogul, Henry Hütteleston Rogers. The whiskey-drinking, poker-playing Rogers not

17 Clemens, Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks, p. 198.
only restored Twain's fortunes through shrewd financial advice, but offered companionship with a man who had arrived at the top. In 1876, however, Twain was still attempting to adjust to the genteel standards of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church, the Monday Evening Club, and his Nook Farm neighbors. Hartford was more than one rung up the ladder from Hannibal.

It is no surprise, then, that the gist of 1601 is the tension between the high born and the upstart. In introducing the royal cupbearer of Queen Elizabeth the author notes in a parenthetical commentary:

It is supposed that he is of ancient and noble lineage: that he despises these literary canaille; that his soul consumes with wrath to see the Queen stooping to talk with such; and that the old man feels his nobility defiled by contact with Shakespeare, etc., and yet he has got to stay there till Her Majesty chooses to dismiss him.  

In this "righte straunge mixing truly of mighty bloud with mean," the royalty was represented by Queen Elizabeth, the Duchess of Bilgewater, the Countess of Granby, Lady Helen, Lady Margery Boothy, and Lady Alice Dilberry, all female. The cupbearer, although of royal blood, does not participate in the conversation and serves only as a reporter.

\[^{18}\text{Clemens, 1601, edited by Meine, p. 42.}\]
\[^{19}\text{Ibid., p. 43.}\]
Apparently Twain chose to designate Shakespeare, Bacon, Raleigh, Jonson, and Beaumont as those "that doe write playes, bookes, & such like," and thus part of the "literary canaille." In reality Bacon and Raleigh were eventually knighted, Beaumont was born of a distinguished family, Shakespeare's father was a merchant, and Jonson's step-father a bricklayer. Yet it served Twain's fictional purposes to lump them together as a foil for the ladies of the court. The action is heralded with the statement, "behold ranke forgette, & the high holde converse with the low as uppon equal ternaes, a grete scandal did the world heare therof." The undercurrent of class tension is sustained throughout the conversation through references such as the one which appears near the conclusion.

I marked how that Jonson & Shaxpur did fidget to discharge some venom of sarcasm, yet dared they not in the presence, the queene's grace beeing the very flower of the Euphuists herselwe.

Twain trims royalty down to human scale by cataloging their sins: the Duchess of Bilgewater raped by four lords before her marriage, Lady Helen born on her mother's wedding day, and Lady Alice and Lady Margery, "whores from the cradle." By way of balance he cites that Shakespeare's wife was "four months gone with child" at the altar. The clergy is not exempt either. In one anecdote a priest

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20Ibid., p. 43.  21Ibid., p. 43.  22Ibid., p. 52.
dallying in prayer loses: the object of his thanksgiving to a more sprightly abbot. And in the closing tale an old archbishop suffers the ultimate indignity when "hys member felle, & wolde not rise again." Another device Twain employs to deflate the high born is to have the most indelicate expressions pour from the queen's lips.

Consciously or unconsciously, Twain must have identified himself with the "literary canaille," and perhaps most closely with "that brown'd, embattled, bloody swashbuckler,"23 Raleigh. The women of the skit, led by the queen, appear to represent arbiters of rules and decorum, a species familiar to the author.

When Twain permits Raleigh to reflect on "a people in the uttermost parts of America that copulate not until they be five-thirty yeeres:of:age, the women beeing eight-twenty, & doe it then but once in seven yeeres,"24 he seems to become daringly personal. Mark was thirty-four and Livy twenty-four at the time of their marriage. Furthermore, Livy's fragile health must have frequently limited their physical expression of affection. Writing 1601 undoubtedly afforded Mark Twain a tensional release from the strains of adapting to a "sterling old Puritan community" and to a wife who fit easily into such a community.

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23 Ibid., p. 46  
24 Ibid., p. 48.
Burdened by the pursuit of propriety, Mark Twain found relief in writing *1601*. In it he mocked those keepers of decorum that he otherwise cheerfully cultivated on his climb into sober society. But *1601* crossed the threshold from therapy into art. The reason *1601* qualifies as a small classic of its genre may lie in the vocabulary the writer chose to communicate his rebellion. Just as a magnet dropped into a sewing basket leaves cotton threads and wooden spools undisturbed but catches steel needles, Twain's genius passed over the flaccid words and seized the strong. When these pungent words drawn from an old oral tradition were gathered into print in *1601* the impact upon a reader—particularly a "right-minded" one—could be electric.
CHAPTER VII

A LITTLE MUSEUM OF ANCIENT WORDS

When Mark Twain sat down to practice his "archaics" and recreate "the frank indecencies of speech permissible among ladies and gentlemen of that ancient time," 1601 was born. In it he assembled thirty words not suitable for conversation in the Victorian parlor. These words range from the mildly inappropriate to the undeniably vulgar. The vocabulary included in this study is based on the West Point edition of 1601, the only edition that can be established as authorized by Mark Twain.

However, before the taboo words of 1601 can be studied in depth, an objective standard for their selection must be established. No scale exists for measuring the relative impropriety of words. Time and place alter prohibitions: an adjective acceptable at a dinner table in San Francisco might produce an echoing silence at an afternoon tea in Waco. In his introduction to The Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography Clive Barnes writes, "The majority view of the Commission implies that obscenity, like beauty, is in the eye of the
Thus the first obstacle to an objective study of the vocabulary of 1601 is in pinning down precisely which words evoked a "fearful thrill" in the late nineteenth century.

Many dictionaries purport to assist the reader in determining the relative acceptability of a word. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, that verbal Bank of England dedicated to Queen Victoria in 1897, offers the most precise shadings in measuring the relative impoliteness of words. Its comments range from a gentle "not now in polite use" to small lectures such as the comment under *bloody* used as an intensive.

... now constantly in the mouths of the lowest classes, but by respectable people considered "a horrid word," on a par with obscene or profane language.

Despite the guidance that most dictionaries attempt to offer, they can prove an impediment rather than an aid to precision of definition when a word falls under a powerful taboo. They can mislead in two ways. The first way is by simply not listing the word, leaving the impression that it is probably cant or jargon, not worthy to be

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included among real words. The second way—a fault even more disarming—is by defining a word only partially, leaving a false sense of security that the experts have spoken. An example of this second type of misleading definition is found when the OED is consulted for the meaning of maidenhead. It is defined as the state or condition of a maiden, virginity, or the first fruits of anything, but not as a hymen. Because of these two problems, the missing words and incomplete definitions, dictionaries must be approached warily in a study such as this.

In singling out the truly taboo words from the thirty bandied about by Mark Twain in 1601 dictionaries serve as an important tool. Basic reference is the OED. Not only is this work unsurpassed in its scholarship, but it reflects the same Victorian ethos into which Twain launched 1876. To offset its British point of view, Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, based on the International Dictionary of 1890 and 1900, is also consulted. Although these two dictionaries are primary, the real clues are often discovered in dictionaries of slang or literature itself.

The thirty words selected from 1601 as words that may have caused offense in a social setting in 1876 include: arse, ass, belly, bitche, bloudy, bollocks, bowels, buttocks, cod-piece, coition, copulate, cunt, damned, fart,
guts, hell, maiden-hedde, masturbate, occupied, piss, prick, quiff-splitter, roger, shag, shift, shit, stink, thyghs, tup, and whores. (All of these are included in the glossary following the text of 1601.) Sixteen of these are fully defined without qualifying comments by both the OED and Webster's. They are ass, belly, bowels, buttocks, cod-piece, coition, copulate, damned, guts, hell, occupied, shift, stink, thyghs, tup, and whores. (For accuracy the West Point edition spelling and hyphenation is retained, but in tracing these words through the reference books all variants of the spelling and hyphenation have been considered.) These sixteen words certainly contributed to the vigor of 1601, but fail to meet the criterion for taboo words.

Thus the list of authentic taboo words in 1601 is reduced to fourteen: arse, bitche, bloudy, bollocks, cunt, fart, maiden-hedde, masturbate, piss, prick, quiff-splitter, roger, shag, and shit. Those which either of the two dictionaries mentioned above define, but with a warning that they are impolite or vulgar, include arse, bitche, bloudy, bollocks, fart, piss, prick, and shit. Three more are defined, but not in the sense in which Twain uses them in 1601. They are maiden-hedde, roger, and shag. Maidenhead has been discussed previously in this chapter. Although the OED and Webster's do not define
shag or roger as to copulate, it is found in this sense in Francis Grose's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, in Eric Partridge's *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, and in Vance Randolph and George P. Wilson's *Down in the Holler*. Both the OED and Webster's define masturbate, but with a coy imprecision. The OED says simply, to practice self-abuse. And Webster's refers to it as Onanism or self-pollution. Cunt and quiff, and consequently quiff-splitter, are entirely omitted in the OED and Webster's.

Two facts emerge from this list of fourteen words which constitute the authentic taboo vocabulary of 1601.

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6 In what could be considered a companion piece to 1601, Mark Twain's speech to the Stomach Club in Paris in 1879 entitled "Some Thoughts on the Science of Onanism" explores the humor of masturbation. It was first published in *Puck*, Issue 2, I (March-April, 1964), pp. 19-21. The term Onanism is incorrectly derived from the Genesis 38:1-10 story of Onan who practiced coitus interruptus in order to prevent impregnating the widow of his dead brother, thus denying him an heir.

First, all of the words are associated with the human body and its lively functions. And, second, the words are very old. Of the fourteen, seven can be traced to Indo-European roots, which would suggest that they could date as early as the fifth millennium B.C. These are arse, bollock (more commonly spelled ballock), cunt, fart, maiden-hedde (now spelled maidenhead), quiff-splitter, and shit. In the case of both compound words, maiden-hedde and quiff-splitter, the compounds themselves cannot be traced to Indo-European, but evidence would appear to support tracing the components that far back.

One word of the fourteen, masturbate, has a Latin origin, according to The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. The OED claims it is of obscure origin, but suggests Latin and Greek roots. Therefore, masturbate could possibly have a history of two thousand years.

Three more words of the fourteen can be traced to Old English, which makes them at least fourteen centuries old. They are bitche (more commonly spelled bitch), bloody (bloody), and prick. AHD hints at Germanic, Common Germanic, and West Germanic sources, respectively, but this is unattested.

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Another word of the taboo group, **piss**, can be traced to Old French, which was spoken from the ninth century to the early sixteenth. The OED suggests that the word probably passed from the French into the Teutonic language as a euphemism originally.

The remaining two words, **roger** and **shag**, can be followed back only as far as the eighteenth century. As has already been pointed out in this chapter, both words are familiar in the Ozarks. Undoubtedly they were brought to this country by immigrants from Elizabethan England and preserved intact in the isolated mountainous communities such as the Cumberland highlands of south central Kentucky where Mark Twain's parents were reared. Thus the score for the fourteen taboo words contained in **1601** stands at seven possibly dating from the fifth millennium B.C., five in the middle range, and two as new as the eighteenth century.

"Is there any obsolete verbal indecency in the English language that Mark Twain has not painstakingly resurrected and assembled there?" asked Van Wyck Brooks concerning **1601** in *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*. Brooks' question has been dangling unanswered for half a century. He could not have given careful attention to **1601** without having noted one omission. The missing word is the one

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which Allen Walker Read termed the word that "has the deepest stigma of any in the language."¹⁰ That word is fuck. Like cunt and quiff, it, too, is ostracized from the OED and Webster's. The AHD suggests it may derive from the Middle English fucken, a Germanic verb originally meaning to strike, move quickly, penetrate, akin to, or perhaps borrowed from Middle Dutch fokken, to strike, copulate with. Speculation exists that it may derive from the Indo-European root *peig-, meaning evil-minded, hostile. At any rate, Mark Twain could hardly have been unaware of the word and its meaning. He did permit himself to use its synonyms, copulate, roger, and shag in 1601, but he must have considered fuck entirely too daring to mingle with the other thirty words he had assembled.

Of all the provocative words used by Mark Twain in 1601 one leads such a rakish hide-and-seek flight through the centuries that it deserves to be singled out for special study. That word is quiff-splitter.

CHAPTER VIII

A VENERABLE KENNING

In the fourth paragraph of 1601 Queen Elizabeth introduces what at first seems to be a piquant new word when she comments:

Verily in mine eight and sixty yeeres have I not heard the fellow to this fart. Me-seemeth, by the grete sound and clamour of it, it was male; yet the belly it did lurk behinde shoulde now fall lene & flat agaynst the spine of him that hath beene delivered of so stately & so vaste a bulke, whereas the guts of them that doe quiff-splitters bear, stand comely still & rounde.¹

The word that merits further study is quiff-splitter. From the context a quiff-splitter would seem to denote a peculiarly male appendage. Beards can be quickly eliminated, leaving the definition by default to be the penis.

Since quiff-splitter as a compound is not found anywhere in literature except in 1601, it may be considered original with Mark Twain. However, rump-splitter and probably also quim-stake, were recorded as kennings for penis prior to 1601. Although their earlier presence dims the luster of Twain's coinage, they reinforce the readers'

¹Clemens, 1601, edited by Meine, p. 44.
natural assumption that quiff denotes the female genitalia. Will scholarship support this assumption?

In tracking quiff through the dictionaries one must remain aware that if the word bears the meaning that Twain seems to give it, it is likely to carry a taboo that would exclude it entirely or permit definition only in its more discreet senses. The earliest dictionary to list quiff—in this case a gerundial form of the word—is Francis Grove's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*. Records show that Twain not only owned a copy of this book, but made marginal notations in it. Its whereabouts is now a mystery. We do not know which edition he owned, nor whether he first feasted on its robust pages before or after he wrote *1601*. The third edition, which appeared in 1796, defines quiffing as rosering, which, in turn, it defines as to bull, or lie with a woman.

Quiff apparently does not appear again in a dictionary until a century later when Farmer and Henley include it in *Slang and Its Analogues*. The noun form is defined

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3 Frederick Anderson, Editor—Mark Twain Papers, in a letter to the author dated April 2, 1970.


as a satisfactory result, specifically, an end obtained by means not strictly conventional, and in the military, a small flat curl on the temple. The verb form is defined as to do well, to jog along merrily, and to copulate.

Several phrases are given: to quiff the bladder, meaning to conceal baldness, and in tailor's jargon, to quiff in the press, meaning to change a breast pocket from one side to the other.

In 1903 quiff turns up again in Joseph Wright's The English Dialect Dictionary. The first entry gives the meaning as a dodge, trick, wrinkle, a knack, a verbal catch, and as a verb, to contrive to cut out a garment from a barely sufficient length of stuff. The second entry gives it as a puff, an exhalation, a breath, a dialectal form of whiff, and as a verb, to puff, to smoke.

J. Redding Ware, in Passing English of the Victorian Era, 1909, identifies quiff as Anglo-Indian, meaning idea, fancy, movement, suggestion. He does not document his assertion that it is Anglo-Indian. In separate entries he also includes quiff as an Army expression for the sweep of hair over the forehead, and guifs as manoeuvres.

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In 1925 Fraser and Gibbons in Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases, an astonishingly circumspect collection of words to come from fighting men, define quiff as a tricky or improvised way of doing anything. Further definitions given are a man carefully dressed for some special occasion and a soldiers' name for the forelock of hair worn long. After offering many variations on these themes they allude to "the word itself being East End slang," but do not carry this possibility further. In a separate entry they define quiff tack as materials for cleaning harness equipment. 8

An inmate of Auburn Prison in New York compiled a convict's vocabulary in 1931 in which he defines quiff as a cheap prostitute. 9

Although the OED skips quiff, the Supplement, first appearing in 1933, defines it as a curl or lock of hair worn on the forehead; especially by soldiers. 10 (Within the same constellation of dictionaries, The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1933, and The Oxford Universal

8 Edward Fraser and John Gibbons, Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases (London, 1925), pp. 235-34.
9 George Kilburn, "Convicts' Jargon," American Speech, VI, No. 6 (August, 1931), 440.
Dictionary, 1955, both define quiff as a lock or flat curl of hair coming low on the forehead and sometimes oiled.) The OEDS additionally includes quiff as a United States and dialectic variation of whiff, a puff or whiff of tobacco smoke.

Partridge in his 1937 edition of A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English includes most of the previously mentioned definitions. By the time his Supplement is issued in 1961 he had added the female pudend as a definition for quiff.11

In 1950 Hyman E. Goldin in his Dictionary of American Underworld Lingo gives quiff as a generic term for women of loose morals, epicanes.12 For on one's quiff he offers on one's pratt. He defines pratt as rump, posterior, to have sexual intercourse, and on one's pratt as on one's tail, in close pursuit.

Quiff is defined in Wentworth and Flexner's Dictionary of American Slang in 1960 as money, a cheap prostitute, a girl or woman who will join in sexual intercourse with but little persuasion.13


Strangely enough, despite this wide choice of definitions spread out before them, the only scholars who have attempted to define *quiff-splitter* as used in 1501 steer away from the most obvious. Ramsay and Emberson in *A Mark Twain Lexicon* cite *quiff* as a U. S. and dialectic variant of *whiff*, and then focus on the *OED* definition of *whiff* in its third sense, "a wave or waft of (usually unsavoury) odour." The only other possibility they suggest is *quiff* as a *cheap prostitute*. Either an unsavoury odour or a cheap prostitute makes Queen Elizabeth's fireside comment grotesque.

Turning from dictionaries we find only four known instances where *quiff* surfaced into literature itself. In the rare 1709 edition of *Volume IV of Wit and Mirth, or Pills to Purge Melancholy* by Thomas D'Urfey occurs the line, "By Quiffing with Cullies three pounds she had got." It is from the ballad entitled "The Female Scuffle," which begins, "Of late in the Park, a fair fancy was seen/Betwixt an old Baud and a lusty young Queen."

By the time the 1719 edition was published this song had

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15 Thomas D'Urfey, *Wit and Mirth, or Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1709), IV, 16.
been deleted. It is significant to note that Walter Blair suggests D'Urfey's ballad "The Part" as a likely source of Twain's *1601*, as has been pointed out in Chapter II. The second instance in which *quiff* is known to have appeared in literature is the single use of the word in Twain's *1601*. It turns up again in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, completed in 1921. Blazes Boylan, who doffs his white straw hat as the funeral cortège passes, is observed as "airing his quiff." 15 Thus, the surface meaning of *quiff* here would be a forelock. Yet it would be entirely in character for Joyce to have contrived this as a bawdy, sex-switching pun. *Quiff* is found a fourth time in *The Adventures of Aurie March*, by Saul Bellow, published in 1949. In describing a young blade careening about the Chicago beaches in a big red Blackhawk-Stutz he writes, "he was particularly sex-goaded when he drove, shouting, whistling, and honking after quiff..." 17 Even though used in different forms in these four instances, the meaning is consistent in at least three, and if the Joycean pun is acknowledged, in all four.

Few dictionary-makers attempt to trace the etymology of *quiff*. The "OED" admits it is of obscure origin, but

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ventures a comparison with coif. Partridge offers the suggestion that it may derive from the Italian cuffia, cognate with coif. It is unfortunate that in both instances they are distracted by the definition of quiff as a lack of hair on the forehead. Surely, even the most ascetic linguist can see that to refer to a quiff on a young man's forehead is simply a bawdy tease on another "tuft of brownish hair with fair white flesh about it," as Twain expresses it in 1601. One could go on playing endless word games with richly Freudian interpretations on the sundry definitions of quiff. But one consistent, basic meaning seems to emerge from two and a half centuries of definitions: the female genitalia and its sexual function. No authority attempts to trace quiff to any use earlier than D'Urfey's ribald ballad in 1709. However, the definitions of quiff described so far may comprise merely the top layer of an exciting linguistic tell that leads through deeper layers to a language far more venerable.

In John R. Hell's *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* we find wicn defined as bally, won. If the Old English wicn evolved into the modern queen, why could wicn not have emerged after fourteen centuries underground to become the quiff known to Twain? The analogy may be pushed back even further. According to the AHD queen may be

traced to the Indo-European root *gwen-. Could further scholarship establish a link between cuiff and *gwelbh-, which AHD suggests as an Indo-European root meaning womb? The disappearance of the \( l \) may seem less troubling when we consider that calf, which some scholars believe is also derived from *gwelbh-, retains the \( l \) in spelling, but not in speech.

In addition, AHD suggests that split, the second word in the original compound, can be traced to the Indo-European root *splei-, to splice, split. Thus, it would appear that by using cuiff—splitter Twain joined two words that may both be traced to about the fifth millennium B.C.

Furthermore, he joins them with a true kenning, the poetic device that was a favorite of the Old Norse bards.

19 Morris, AHD, p. 1519.

20 Although the arrow and quiver would appear to be classic male and female symbols, and the words cuiff and cuiver seem strikingly similar, no firm connection can be established. AHD traces the noun form of cuiver, meaning a portable case for arrows, from the Roman French quiveir, a variant of Old French quivre, through Old Low Franconian cocar, which probably derives from the Medieval Latin cucurru. AHD suggests an ultimate derivation from the Hunslish, akin to the Mongolian word for quiver, kökde. This would carry it clear out of the Indo-European family of language into Altaic. The now archaic adjective form of cuiver, meaning nimble, is traced to the Old English cuifer. AHD suggests the Indo-European root *swei-, to live, as a possible source. The verb form of cuiver, to shake, comes from the Middle English cuiveren, probably sharing the same etymology as the adjective.
Twain reveals that he exercised careful scholarship in dating the historical personages in 1601. Since the treasures of Indo-European were then only beginning to be explored, his exciting choice of these word-fossils must be attributed to factors other than scholarship.

More important than the tantalizing fact that Twain owned a Grise dictionary was the fact that as a child and young man he shared the language of the common people: the blacks of Missouri, the Mississippi River sailors, the miners of the West, printers all over, and especially his parents with their unique linguistic inheritance. For in the mountainous isolation of the Cumberlands Elizabethan English was preserved purer than anywhere in England itself.21

When Twain set out to write 1601 he intended only to practice his "archaics." He may not have been aware that in using cuifl he was conserving for the language one of its most archaic words. Appropriately, he even chose to use the word in a sense true to its earliest meaning.

21William Roscoe Thomas, Life Among the Hills and Mountains of Kentucky (Louisville, 1930), p. 84.
CHAPTER IX

DEATH TIPS THE SCALES

No one can read far into Mark Twain without becoming aware that the "humorist" was irresistibly drawn to the macabre. Death stalks the pages of his most popular books. The discovery of the starved body of Injun Joe in the cave is central to the plot of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. The death raft bearing the "gashly" corpse of Pap Finn is integral to the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Twain's preoccupation with death is even more obvious in The Mysterious Stranger in which:

Satan reached out his hand and crushed the life out of them [the little people] with his fingers, threw them away, wiped the red from his fingers on his handkerchief and went on talking where he had left off.1

In several short pieces where death is not interspersed with boyish pranks the full extent of Twain's morbid fascination with death and decay is most apparent. In "The Invalid's Story" he achieves rich humor from the plight of a man who mistakenly believes he is escorting the "ripe"

remains of a friend to his final resting place. In "The Undertaker's Chat" and "The Widow's Protest" Twain again exploits the humor involved in disposing of deceased bodies, but he uses a style more wry than hilarious. Larry R. Dennis sums it up succinctly when he states, "The confrontation with death, the Dark Angel, is a recurring thematic element in Mark Twain's writings." 

Samuel Clemens' "idyllic" boyhood in Hannibal did not shield him from first-hand experience with sudden death.

In Mark Twain: Man and Legend DeLancey Ferguson writes:

Young Sam in the course of his boyhood saw a Negro killed when his master flung a lump of slag at his head. He saw old man Smarr shot down in a drunken brawl, and watched the wounded man cough out his life under the weight of a Bible some pious fool had laid upon his chest. He saw the rowdy young Hyde brothers try to kill their uncle—one kneeling on his chest while the other repeatedly snapped an Allen revolver that would not go off. He saw coffles of chained slaves on their way down the river to hell. He saw a drunken tramp burn to death in the jail, because some of the boys had kindly given him matches and tobacco. One night he saw a drunken ruffian set off with the avowed purpose of raping a widow and her daughter at "the Welshman's," and saw the sequel when the elder woman, after warning the scoundrel

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3Samuel L. Clemens, Sketches New and Old by Mark Twain (New York, 1922), pp. 298-301.

4Ibid., pp. 357-58.

to be gone before the count of ten, riddled him with slugs from a steadily aimed shotgun.⁶

But for all of his encounters with death by violence it was to be the death by natural causes of his father, John Marshall Clemens, that was to affect young Samuel most profoundly. The youth apparently witnessed his autopsy through a keyhole. He was so distressed by this experience that even as an elderly man he found it necessary to allude to it in his notebook on October 10, 1903 as "the post mortem of my uncle."⁷ Another death which marked a poignant loss for Mark was that of his brother Henry following a steamboat fire in 1858. In 1876, the very year in which he wrote 1861, Twain was obliged to recall both of these deaths. In that year both of these bodies were dug up and moved to a new cemetery, and Mark had been consulted about inscriptions for new tombstones.⁸

Even the journey which marked the division in Mark Twain's life between his years in the West and his sally into Eastern society was singled out by death. Cholera broke out on the San Francisco, and by the time the ship docked in New York the epidemic had taken eight lives.

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⁶DeLancey Ferguson, Mark Twain: Man and Legend (Indianapolis, 1943), p. 25.


⁸Kaplan, op. cit., p. 196.
Later Mark and Livy's honeymoon year was barely half-spent when the father of the bride, Jervis Langdon, sickened and on August 6, 1870 died. Soon after the funeral Miss Emma Nye, a friend of Livy's, arrived on a visit of consolation. Within a week Miss Nye fell ill with typhoid fever, and on September 29 died in Mark's nuptial bed. The child Livy carried through these bereavements, Langdon, was born prematurely on November 7. Never robust, he died of diphtheria on June 2, 1872, following an outing during which Mark had absent-mindedly allowed a fur blanket to slip from the child. To the end of his life Mark was to tell himself, "I killed him." Despite the fact that Dixon Wecter labels the Hartford period as "the most creative years for Mark Twain the artist, and the happiest for Clemens the man," the reality of death was never far under the surface merriest.

With this morbid background it should come as no surprise that 1601 is shot through with references to age, sterility, and death. Because Mark Twain's allusions to mortality in this work are neither gruesome nor novel but for the most part rather prosaic, the reader tends to miss them. Yet packed into the 268 lines that comprise the whole of 1601 are the following reminders:

9 Ibid., p. 122. 10 Ibid., p. 149. 11 Clemens, The Love Letters of Mark Twain, p. 192.

he is of ancient and noble lineage. 12

the old man 13

Lady Alice Dilberry, turned seventy, shee beeing two yeeres the queenes graces elder.14

an' I hadde room for such a thundergust within mine auncient bowels, 'tis not in reason I coulde discharge the same & live 15

my limbs are feeble with the weighte and drouth of five & sixty winters 16

forsooth wolde I have gi'en the whole evening of my sinking life to the dribbling of it forth, with trembling & uneasy soul, not launched it sudden in its matchlesse might, taking myne owne life with violence, rending my weak frame like rotten rags.17

I was like to suffocate.18

the coustom of widows of Perigord to wear uppon the hedde-dress, in sign of widowhood, a jewel in the similitude of a man's member wilted & limber 19:

mine old nurse 20

old Rabelais 21

old Lady Margery 22

olde dead Luther 23

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12 Clemens, 1601, edited by Meine, p. 42.
13 Ibid., p. 42.
14 Ibid., p. 43.
15 Ibid., p. 44.
16 Ibid., p. 44.
17 Ibid., pp. 44-45.
18 Ibid., p. 46.
19 Ibid., p. 47.
20 Ibid., p. 48.
21 Ibid., p. 49.
22 Ibid., p. 50.
"an arseful of ashes . . . . 24
I was like to choke once more. 25
olde Sir Nickolas Throgmorton . . . 26
her own lover in that olde daie. 27
that olde foolish bitche. 28
an olde archbishoppe . . . 29

In addition to these many allusions to death and mortality the parched and creaking aspect of aging is heightened by the presence of "the childe" Francis Beaumont and the ingenuous Lady Helen. Most significantly, 1601 closes with the line, "lo hys member felle, & wolde not rise again." 30
Thus, the chain of death references terminates not with promise of resurrection, but with mankind's most primitive symbol of impotency and sterility.

Death is suggested in 1601 in words so proper that they fade into insignificance. Although a reader may question the propriety of "an arseful of ashes" or "that olde foolish bitche," in both these instances the stigma is carried by another word than that which conveys the sense of decay. Basically the images of death recurrent in 1601 are expressed in words that would have been acceptable in any Victorian parlor.

27 Ibid., p. 51.  28 Ibid., p. 53.  29 Ibid., p. 53.
30 Ibid., p. 53.
Counterbalanced against these circumspect words of death in 1601 are the taboo words that pepper its pages. Despite their lowly social status the ribald words are all words associated with the living human body and its digestive or reproductive functions. Undeniably, the taboo words are common words symbolizing life. And here was the core of Mark Twain's dilemma: he yearned to affirm exuberant life and fertility, but even more he coveted propriety in an era and within a society that could accept the common words dealing with death but not the common words dealing with life. His scattered efforts to follow the adventures of a sexually maturing Tom Sawyer or Huck Finn for publication never satisfied his own criteria. But 1601, written for the private delectation of a sympathetic friend, afforded him the freedom to express himself with an unabridged vocabulary. And yet, even freed of the inhibitions that usually bound him, Mark Twain concedes the victory not to life abounding, but to death and sterility. The surface tension of mirth in 1601 films a deep draught of pessimism. Sixteen-one, like the comet that lighted Mark Twain's birth and death, dazzles with its own flash of radiance, but also for the sparks that fly in its wake: the riddle of its literary sources, the incomparable sport it affords the bibliographers, its excavation
of ancient words, and its unguarded glimpse into the life of one of America's greatest authors.
The following twelve pages are a photographic copy of a West Point edition of 1601 now in the collection of the Mark Twain Papers of the General Library of the University of California at Berkeley. Since no canon has ever been established for the Cleveland printing of 1601, the West Point edition must be accepted as the only edition authorized by Samuel L. Clemens. The numbering of the lines has been added.
Date 1601.

CONVERSATION, AS IT WAS BY THE SOCIAL FIRESIDE,

IN THE TIME OF THE TUDORS.

[MEM.—The following is supposed to be an extract from the diary of the Pepys of that day, the same being cup-bearer to Queen Elizabeth. It is supposed that he is of ancient and noble lineage; that he despises these literary canaille; that his soul consumes with wrath to see the Queen stooping to talk with such; and that the old man feels his nobility defiled by contact with Shakspere, etc., and yet he has got to stay there till Her Majesty chooses to dismiss him.]
YESTERNIGHT toke her maieftie ye queene a fantasie such as fhee sometimes hath, & hadde to her closet certaine ye doe write playes, bookes, & szech like, thefe beeing my lord Bacon, his worship Sr. Walter Ralegh, Mr. Ben Jonfon, & ye childe Francis Beaumont, wh beeing but sixteen, hath yet turned his had to ye doing of ye Lattin masters into our Englyche tong, with grete discretion & much applaus. Alfo came with thefe ye famous Shakpur. A righte straunge mixing truly of mighty bloud with mea, ye more in especial fyne ye queenes grace was present, as likewyfe thefe following, to wit: Ye Duchefse of Bilgewater, twenty-two yeeres of age; ye Counteffe of Granby, twenty-six; her doter, ye Lady Helen, fifteen; as alfo these two maides of honor, to wit: ye Lady MargeryBoothy, fixty-five, & ye Lady Alice Dilberry, turned feventy, shee beeing two yceres ye queenes graces elder.

I beeing her maistre's cup-bearer, hadde no choyce but to remayne & behold ranke forgotte, & ye high holde conuerfe wh ye low as uppon equal termes, a grete scandal did ye world heare therof. In ye heat of ye talke it befel ye one did breake
wind, yielding an exceeding mighty & distressful
stink, whereat all did laffe full sore, and the:

Ye Queen. Verily in mine eight and fixty
yeeres have I not heard y fellow to this fart. Me-
seemeth, by y grete sound and clamour of it, it was
male; yet y belly it did lurk behinde shoulde now
fall lene & flat agaynst y spine of him y hath beene
delivered of so stately & so vaste a bulke, whereas
y guts of them y doe quiff-splitters bear, stand
comely still & rounde. Prithee, lette y author
conesse y offspring. Wil my Lady Alice testify?

Lady Alice. Good your grace, an’I hadde room
for such a thundr gust within mine auncient bow-
els, ’tis not in reason I could discharge y same &
live to thanck God for y Hee did chuse handmayd
so humble whereby to shew his power. Nay, ’tis
not I y have broughte forth y ryche o’ermaistering
fog, y fragrant gloom, so pray you seeke ye further.

Ye Queen. Mayhap y Lady Margery hath done
y companie this favour?

Lady Margery. So please you mad, my limbs
are feeble w’th y weighte and drouth of fiue & sixty
winters, & it behoveth y I be tender vnto th. In
y good providence of God, an’ I hadde contained
y wonder, forsooth the wolde I haue gi’en y whole
euening of my sinking life to y dibbling of it
forth, with trembling & vneafy soul, not launched it
suddain its matchlesse might, taking myne owne life
with violence, rending my weak frame like rotten
rags. It was not I, your maiesty.

Ye Queene. O' God's naym, who hath favour-
ed us? Hath it come to pass Æ a fart shall fart
itselfe? Not soche a one as this, I trow. Young
Master Beaumont; but no, 'twould have wafted
him to Heav'n like down of goose’s boddy. 'Twas
not Æ little Lady Helen--nay, ne'er blush, my child;
thoult tickle thy tender maidenedde with many a
mousie-squeak before thou learneft to blow a hur-
ricane like this. Waf't you, my learned & inge-
nious Jonson?

Jonson. So fell a blast hath ne'er mine ears sa-
luted, nor yet a stench so ali-pervading&immortal.
'Twas not a nouice did it, good your maiestie, but
one of uetera experience--elfe hadde hee sayled of
confidence. In sooth it was not I.

Ye Queene. My lord Bacon?

Lord Bacon. Not from my leane eitrailes hath
this prodigie burst forth, so please your grace. Nau't
doth so befit Æ grete as grete performance; &haply
shall ye finde Æ 'tis not from mediocrity this mir-
acle hath issued.
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(Tho' thy subject bee but a fart, yet will thy tedious sink of learning ponderously philosophize. Meantime did thy foul & deadly stink persuade all places to thy degree, thy never smelt I thy like, yet dared I not to leave thy preface, albeit I was like to suffocate.)

Ye Queene. What faith thy worshipful Master Shaxpur?

Shaxpur. In thy great hand of God I stand, & so proclaim my innocence. Tho'gh thy sinless hosts of Heav'n had foretold thy coming of thy most desolating breath, proclaiming it a work of uninspired man, its quaking thunders, itsfirmament-clogging rottenness & his owne achievement in due course of nature, yet had not I believed it; but hadde sayd thy pit itself hath furnished forth thy stink, & Heav'n's artillery hath shook thy globe in admiration of it.

(There was there a silence, & each did turne him toward thy worshipful Sr Walter Ralegh, thy brown'd, embattled, bloody swashbuckler, who rising vp did smile, & simpering, say :)
prefece. It was nothing--less that nothing, madam, I did it but to clere my nether throat; but hadde I come prepared thē hadde I delivered something worthy. Bear with mee, pleafe your grace, till I can make amends.

(Thē delivered hee himselfe of such a godleffe & rocke-shivering blast y all were fain to ftop their ears, & following it did come fo dense & foul a stink y that which went before did feeme a poor & trifling thing beside it. Thē faith he, feigning y he blushed & was confused, I perceive that I am weak to-daie & cannot justice doe vnto my powers; & sat him down as who sholde say, There, it is not moche; yet he that hath an arse to spare lette hym fellow that, an hee think hee can. ByGod, an’ I were y queene, I wolde e’en tip y’ swaggering braggart out o’ the court, & lette him air his gran-deurs & break his intolerable wynd before ye deaf & such as suffocation pleseth.)

Thē fell they to talke about y’ manners & cuft’ms of many peoples, & Master Shaxpur spake of y’ booke of y’ sieur Michael de Montaine, wherein was mention of y’ coustom of widows of Perigord to wear vpon y’ hedde-dres, in sign of widowhood, a jewel in y’ similitude of a man’s mēber wilted & limber,
whereat ye queene did laffe & say, widows in England
doe wear prickes too, but 'twixt ye thyghs, & not
wilted neither, till coition hath done that office for
the. Master Shaxpur did likewise observe how ye ye
fiuer de Montaine hath also spoken of a certaine
emperour of soche mightie prowesse ye hee did take
ten maidē-heddes in ye compas of a single night, ye
while his empreffe did entertain two&twenty lusty
knights atweene her sheetes, yet was not satisfide ;
whereat ye merrie Countesse Granby faith a ram is
yet ye emperour's superiour,ifth hee wil tup above
an hundred yewes 'twixt sunne&sunne, & alfter, if ye
hee can have none more to shag, wil mastrubate
until hee hath enrych'd whole acres w'hys feed.

The spoke ye damned wyndmill, Sr Walter, of a
people in ye uttermost parts of America ye copulate
not vntil they be fiue-& thirty yeeres of age, ye womē
beeing eight-& twenty, & doe it the but once in
sevē yeeres.

Ye Queene. How doth thatte like my lyttle
Lady Helen ? Sh'nd wee send thee thither & preserve
thy belly ?

Lady Helen. Please ye' highnesses grace, mine
old nurfe hath told mee there bee more ways of
serving God thē by locking ye thyghs together; yet
à I willing to serve him your way too, with your highness grace hath set your example.

_Ye Queene_. God's wounds a good answer, child.

_Lady Alice_. Mayhap 'twill weaken where your hair sprouts below your navel.

_Lady Helen_. Nay, it sprouted two years since; I can scarce more than cover it with my hand now.

_Ye Queene_. Hear ye that, my little Beau-monte? Have ye not a small bird about ye that stirrs at hearing tell of soe sweet a nest?

_Beaumonte_. 'Tis not insensible, illustrious madam; but mousing owls & bats of low degree may not aspire to bliss soe whelming & ecstatic as is found in thy downsie nests of birdes of Paradise.

_Ye Queene_. By thy gullet of God, 'tis a neatly-turned compliment. With soch a tong as thine, lad, thou'lt spread the ivorie thyghs of many a willing maid in thy good time, and thy cod-piece bee as handy as thy speech.

Thè spake thè queene of how shee met old Rabelais whè shee was turned of fifteen, & hee did tell her of a man his father knew that hadde a double pair of bollocks, whereon a controversy followed as
concerning the most just way to spell ý word, ý contention running high 'twixt ý learned Bacon & ý ingenious Jonson, until at last ý old Lady Margery, wearying of it all, faith, „Gentles, what mattereth it how ye shal spell ý word? I warrant ye whë ye use ý'bollocks ye shall not think of it; & my Lady Granby, bee ye content, lette ý spelling bee; you shal enjoy ý beating of them on your buttocks just ý fame, I trow. Before I hadde gained my fourteenth yeere I hadde learnt ý them ý would explore a cunt stop'd not to consider the spelling o't."

Sr W. In sooth, whë a shift's turned upp delay is meet for naught but dalliance. Boccaccio hath a story of a priest ý did beguile a mayd into his cell, thë knelt him in a corner for to pray for grace ý hee bee rightly thanckful for ý tèder maid-èchëdëd ý Lord hadde sent him; but ý abbot spying through ý key-hole, did see a tuft of brownish hair with fair white flesh about it, wherefore whë ý priest’s prayer was donne, his chance was gone, forasmuch as ý lyttle mayd hadde but ý one cunt, & ý was already occupied to her content.

Thë conversed they of religion, & ý mightie werke ý olde dead Luther did doe by ý grace of God. Thë next about poetry, & Master Shaxpur did rede a parte of his Kyng Henry iv, ý which,
it seemeth vnto mee, is not of y' ualte of an arseful of ashes, yet they praised it bravely, one&all.

Y' fame did rede a portion of his "Venus & Adonis," to their prodigious admiration, whereas I, beeing sleepy & fatigued withal, did deme it but paltric stove, & was the more discomforted in y' y' bloudie bucanier hadde gotte his wynd again, & did turne his mind to farting with such uillain zeal y' presently I was like to choke once more. God damn this wyndy uussian&all his breed. I wolde y' hell mighre gette hym.

They talked about y' wonderful defense which olde Sr Nickolas Throgmorton did make for himselfe before y' judges in y' time of Mary; wch was unlucky matter for to broach, fith it fetched out y' queene with a Pity y' hee, havingso moche wit, hadde yet not enough to save his doter's maiden bedde founde for her marriage-bedde. And y' queene did give y' damn'd Sr. Walter a look y' made hym wince—for shee hath not forgot shee was her own lover in y' olde daie. There was silent uncomfortablenes now; 'twas not a good turne for talk to take, fith if y' queene must find offese in a little harmlesse debauching, when pricks were stiff & cunts not loath to take y' stiffness out of them, who of y' companie was finlefs; beholde was not
wife of Master Shaxpur four months gone with child whē she stood uppe before yē altar? Was not her Grace of Bilgewater roger’d by four lords before she hadde a husband? Was not yē lyttle Lady Helen born on her mother’s wedding-day? And, beholde, were not yē Lady Alice & yē Lady Margery there, mouthing religion, whores from yē cradle?

In time came they to discourse of Coruaṭes; & of yē new painter, Rubēs, yē is beginnyng to bee heard of. Fine words & dainty-wrought phrasēs from yē ladies now, one or two of them beeing, in other days, pupils of yē poor aś, Lille, himself; & I marked how yē Jonson & Shaxpur did fidget to discharge some uenom of farcaśm, yet dared they not in yē presence, yē queene’s grace beeing yē very flower of yē Euphuists herselfe. But beholde, there bee they yē, having a specialtie, & admiring it in themselfes, bee jealous when a neighbour doth effaye it, nor can bide it in them long. Wherefore ’twas observable yē queene waxed uncontent; & in tyme a labor’d grandiose speech out of yē mouth of Lady Alice, who manifestly did mightily pride herself thereon, did quite exhausťe yē queene’s endurance, who listened till yē gaudy speche was done, thē lifted up her brows, & with uaste irony, mincing
sayth, "O shit!" Whereat they all did laffe, but not y Lady Alice, y olde foolish bitche.

Now was Sr Walter minded of a tale hee once did hear y ingenious Margrette of Navarre relate, about a maid, which beeing like to suffer rape by an olde archbishoppe, did smartly contrive a device to save her maydēhedde, & said to him, "First, my lord, I prithee, take out thy holy tool & pifs before mee," wch doing, lo hys member felle, & wolde not rise again.
"A sociologist does not refuse to study certain criminals on the ground that they are too perverted or too dastardly; surely a student of language is even less warranted in refusing to consider certain four-letter words because they are too 'nasty' or too 'dirty.'"

Allen Walker Read
GLOSSARY

Words are listed as spelled and hyphenated in the West Point edition of 1601, the only printing authorized by Mark Twain. In cases where the customary spelling differs, this will appear in parentheses following the original. All Indo-European roots cited are found in the appendix of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.


ASS: a stupid person, a dolt. In Old English assa, Latin asinus, Greek onos, all meaning ass, a hoofed mammal of the genus Equus.

BELLY: the abdomen in both sexes or, in women, the uterus. In Old English bel(i)g, bæl(i)g, bar, purse, bellows. Suggested Indo-European root *bhelg-, to swell.
BITCHE (BITCH): a lewd or spiteful woman. Francis Grose calls it the "most offensive appellation that can be given to an English woman, even more provoking than that of a whore, as may be gathered from the regular Billingsgate or St. Giles's answer—'I may be a whore, but can't be a bitch.'"¹ Old English bicce, female dog, passibly from the Germanic bekjôn.

BLOODY (BLOODY): a British intensive considered vulgar. From the Old English blôdcir. Noting that this adjective is without improper significance in America but is considered indecent in England, H. L. Mencken wrote, "Just why it is viewed so shudderingly by the English is one of the mysteries of the language. . .

Various amateur etymologists have sought to account for its present evil fame by giving it loathsome derivations, sometimes theological and sometimes catamenial, but the professional etymologists all agree that these derivations are invalid, though when it comes to providing a better one they unhappily disagree."² The OED suggests bloody may

¹Grose, A Classical Dictionary, p. 37.
have come into use in reference to the habits of the "bloods" or aristocratic rowdies of the end of the seventeenth century. It further states that offensive as the word is "to ears polite," there is no evidence for believing it to have derived from the oath "'s blood," meaning God's blood. Eric Partridge in his essay, "The Word Bloody," enlarges upon these speculations, but dismisses the idea that the stigma could originate in association with menstruation as "ingenious, but . . . much too restricted to be valid."  His haste in discarding this theory fails to take into account the fact that some of the most profound taboos in primitive society concern the menstruating woman.

BOLLOCKS (BALLOCKS): the testicles. Eric Partridge claims the word was standard English until about 1840 when it became vulgar.  However, in the eighteenth century Samuel Johnson omitted it from his dictionary as he did other vulgar words.  Old English

3Eric Partridge, Here, There and Everywhere (Ftiseg- port, New York, 1950), p. 36.
4Partridge, A Dictionary of Slang, I, 29.
beallucas, testicles. May derive from Indo-European root *bhel-, to blow, swell. May be cognate to the Greek phallos, phalus.

BOWELS: the intestines or entrails. Middle English b(o)uel, from Old French b(u)el, boiel, from Latin botellus, diminutive of botulus, sausage. May derive from Indo-European root *gwet-, intestine.

BUTTOCKS: the rump. The delicacy of Webster's definition of the singular form is worth noting; "The part at the back of the hip, which in men forms one of the protuberances on which he sits." Possible source is Old English diminutive buttuc, end, strip of land. May descend from Indo-European *bhau-, to strike.

COD-PIECE (CODPIECE): a pouch, sometimes conspicuous and ornamented, to the front of the close-fitting hose or breeches worn by men from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. An archaic definition of cod is the scrotum. Old English codd, bas, husk. Indo-European source may be *ku-, a hypothetical base of a variety of conceivably related Germanic words meaning a hollow space or place, an enclosing object, a round object, a lump. Thus, may be cognate with cunt.
COITION: human sexual intercourse. From the Latin co-, together, and ire, to go. Source may be the Indo-European root *ei-, to go.

COPULATE: to engage in sexual intercourse. From the Latin copulare, to fasten together. Indo-European root may be *ap-, to take, reach.

CUNT: the female pudendum. Not mentioned by Samuel Johnson in his dictionary, the CED or Webster's. Partridge in his annotated edition of Grose's A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue cautions against its use, but defends its inclusion. From the Middle English cunte, probably related to the Middle Low German kunte. Indo-European source may be *ku-, already discussed under codpiece, with which it may be cognate.

DAMNED: an adjective form meaning detestable, doomed to eternal punishment, cursed. From the Latin damnare, to condemn, to inflict loss upon. Probable Indo-European source may be *dan-, to apportion.

FART: as noun, an audible expulsion of intestinal gas through the anus; as verb, to expel intestinal gas.
through the anus. Samuel Johnson terms it "wind from behind." The OED defines it, but Webster's does not. Probably from Old English feortan. Indo-European root may be *perd- or *pezd-, both forms meaning to fart.

GUTS: the viscera or entrails. Old English guttas.
Indo-European root may be *gheu-, to pour, a libation.

HELL: a place of torment for the dead. When Mark Twain has Huckleberry Finn say "... and they comb me all to hell" in the manuscript of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer his literary mentor William Dean Howells wrote back, "I'd have that swearing out in an instant." Twain did use the word hell elsewhere, such as in Following the Equator, however. In Old English hel(l). Possible Indo-European source may be *kel-, to cover, conceal, save.

MAIDENHEAD: the hymen. The OED defines maidenhead as the state or condition of a maiden, virginity, or the first-fruits of anything, but not

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6 DeVoto, Mark Twain's America and Mark Twain at Work, p. 17.
as a hymen. Webster's shows no inhibitions against defining it as a hymen. Middle English maidenhood, formed from maiden and hood, a variant of hood. Maiden probably derives from the Indo-European *maghu-, a young person of either sex. Possible root of hood is *kadh-, to shelter, cover.

MASTURBATE: to excite the genital organs, usually to a state of orgasm, by means other than sexual intercourse. Samuel Johnson does not define the word. The OED defines it as to practice self-abuse. Webster's defines it as to practice Onanism; self-pollution. See Footnote Six, Chapter VII, for more information on this word as well as reference to Mark Twain's speech to the Paris Stomach Club on "Some Thoughts on the Science of Onanism." From the Latin masturbāri.

OCCUPIED: to be engaged in sexual intercourse. Since it no longer bore this meaning for Mark Twain's generation, the writer was probably deliberately restoring it in the sense in which Shakespeare's Doll Tearsheet referred to it in the Second Part of Henry the Fourth, II, iv, 161. Allen Walker Read writes of it, "Few people realize that it was once one of the most
obscene words in the language. Scarcely a record survives of any use of the word in the latter half of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century; then when it was revived, about 1767, it had been washed clean. Grose lists it in his dictionary in the sense of having carnal knowledge. Probably derives from the Latin occupare, to occupy. Possible Indo-European root may be *kap-, to grasp.

FISS: to urinate. Samuel Johnson, the OED, and Webster's all offer definitions. Middle English pissen, from Old French pissier, possibly from Vulgar Latin pissiare. The OED suggests that it may have passed from the French into the Teutonic as an euphemism originally.

PRICKE (PRICK): the penis. Grose defines it as the virile member. From Old English price, pricked mark, puncture.

QUIFF-SPLITTER: a kenning original to Mark Twain for the penis. See Chapter VIII for a complete study of this compound.

ROGER: to have intercourse. Grose defines it as to bull, or lie with a woman, from the name of Roger being frequently given to a bull. According to Randolph it is familiar among old-timers in the Ozarks who define it as meaning to copulate, particularly among sheep and goats. Partridge dates the word at about 1750. However, its recurrent use in the secret diary of William Byrd, who was born in Virginia in 1674 and attended school in England, suggests a somewhat earlier date. Byrd's shorthand diaries, not transcribed until this century, contain the frequently repeated refrain, "I said a short prayer and had good thoughts, good health, and good humor, thank God Almighty. I rogered my wife with vigor." Occasionally Byrd alternates this verb with "flourished" or "gave her a flourish."

SHAG: to copulate. This is the sense in which Grose defines it also. Partridge dates the word from the eighteenth century. Randolph writes, "The term shag, used as the name of a dance step, seems very shocking.

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8 Randolph, op. cit., p. 112.
to the old-timers in the Ozarks who know the word only in its ancient sense of a sexual attack."\(^{10}\)

**SHIFT:** a woman's undergarment. None of the dictionaries caution against the use of the word. However, in Ireland in 1907 when John Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* was first performed, the "audience broke up in disorder at the word shift."\(^{11}\) The word so inflamed the Irish that William Butler Yeats noted seventy policemen were stationed inside the theater, and the newspapers estimated 500 more were stationed outside to quell the rioting. Middle English *shiften*, to arrange, apportion, change. Old English *sciften*, to arrange, possibly from German *skip-*.  

**SHIT:** excrement. Listed in the *OED*, but not *Webster's*. Grose includes combinations of the word, inserting a dash for the vowel. Found in Old English as *bescitan*, to befoul. Suggested Indo-European root is *skei-*, to cut, split.  

\(^{10}\) Randolph, *op. cit.*, p. 111.  

STINK: a strong, offensive odor, a stench. Old English stincan, stanc, stancen, possibly from Germanic stinkwan.

THUNDER-GUST: a strong gust of wind accompanying a thunder-storm. Thunder occurs in Old English as thunor. Indo-European root may be *stena-, to thunder. Gust derives from Old Norse gustr. The Indo-European root is probably *theu, to pour, pour a libation, thus, possibly sharing the same source as guts.

THIGHS (THIGGS): that part of the human leg extending from the hips to the knees. Old English thech. Possible Indo-European root may be *teua-, to swell.

TUP: to have intercourse with a ewe, said of a ram. Grose defines the noun form as a ram, a cuckold. Middle English toure, tup(re), a ram.

HORSES: prostitutes, harlots. Old English hore. Indo-European root may be *ru-, to like, desire.
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