Annotated Bibliography


**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Public Reception, Book Reviews, Secondary Comments during Harte’s Life


**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Comments after Harte’s Death


**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Mid-Century Criticism


**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Mid-Century Criticism, Mark Twain


Erskine places Harte among leading American novelists, but seemingly does so begrudgingly. He writes, “[Harte] was in no sense a literary agent … It might be doubted whether he had even ordinary talents in writing” (325). What follows are passive aggressive descriptions of Harte’s life and works, although he makes a distinction between American and English reception. Erskine connects Harte to Dickens, because of their quest for realism, commitment to romance
and incident, and concern with their character’s humanity (351-55). He ends with a discussion of Harte as humorist. Erskine provides evidence of critical reception shortly after Harte’s death.

**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Early Criticism


In this introduction, Harte discusses his “first efforts toward indicating a peculiarly characteristic of Western American literature,” and uses for an example the composition history of “The Luck of Roaring Camp” (xii). Specifically, he relates the contentious discussion between himself, the *Overland*’s publisher, and its printer over whether the story would cast an immoral shadow over California. Harte claims the survival of the text depended upon reception from the East, and provides some evidence for this. This composition history is corroborated in several other sources, but more research was needed to provide Anton Roman’s perspective.

**Keywords:** Composition History, Reception History, Public Reception, Critical Reception


**Keywords:** Biography, Reception History, Critical Reception, Composition History


In this article, Kolb claims Harte’s role as humorist; to do so, he criticizes Brooks and Warren’s *Understanding Fiction* for not correctly identifying Harte’s work. He also sets up a disconnect between critical reception and Harte’s continuing publication. Kolb points to Harte’s ironic
narrators, juxtaposition, and hyperbolic sentimentalism from several of his short stories as evidence for his humor. Kolb’s work is cited in at least one other source (Krauth).

**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Late 20th Criticism, Humor Studies


**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Contemporary Criticism, Genre, Gold Rush


Krauth moves the discussion about Mark Twain and Bret Harte’s complicated history past speculation and Twain’s virulent attacks. Instead, he posits, along with Hamlin Hill, Twain’s acrimonious comments reveal “Twain contending with himself” (19). Specifically, Krauth points to Twain’s anxieties over gender and fears over “sentimentalism” as Twain’s underlying concerns about his own work. Bret Harte, it seems, becomes the physical representation. In developing his criticism, Krauth discusses the ironic sentimentality in Harte’s “The Luck of Roaring Camp,” where humor functions with “pathos,” but ultimately undercuts the emotion.

**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Contemporary Criticism, Mark Twain, Sentimentalism, Dickens-Harte Connection, Realism, Humor Studies


**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, British Reception, Humor Studies


**Keywords:** Composition History, Anton Roman

May’s article details Harte’s tenure as editor and occasional contributor if the *Overland Monthly,* for which he was the first and most influential editor. May claims Harte would be more popular for staying at the magazine than for the half dozen stories he wrote for it (271). The bulk of the article discusses “Etc.,” the editorials Harte contributed monthly. These led to commotion between Harte and leading San Franciscan businessmen. There is also an aside to Anton Roman claiming to have published “The Luck” over the printer, not Harte.

**Keywords:** Reception History, Mid-Century Criticism, Composition History, Californian Reception


**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Early Criticism, Humor Studies, Dickens-Harte Connection


**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Contemporary Criticism, Republicanism


This chapter is divided into two sections. It provides a brief biographic sketch of Harte’s time as editor at the *Overland Monthly,* and his literary success in England and the Eastern United States. The chapter closes with a critical reading of “The Luck of Roaring Camp,” in which
Nissen argues the framework of Harte’s story is “child-rearing practices of middle-class white women of his day” (100). This contemporary reading, coupled with a few excerpts of Harte’s reception during his day, makes the chapter effective. However, it does not provide any composition history.

**Keywords:** Biography, Reception History, Critical Reception, Contemporary Criticism, Queer Theory


**Keywords:** Biography, Composition History, Noah Brooks, Reception History, Critical Reception, Early Criticism


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**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Contemporary Criticism, Queer Theory


**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Late 20th Criticism, Genre, Local Color


**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Australian Reception, Book Review

Along with his recollection of the *Overland Monthly’s* inception, Roman presents his side of “The Luck of Roaring Camp” controversy. He relates reading the story’s proofs with his wife, and having no objections, went back to San Francisco to order its printing. This leads to a more nuanced reading of the story’s composition history.

**Keywords:** Composition History, Anton Roman, Sociology of Texts, Harte as Editor


Ruggles’ article provides publication history for the USSR, from 1918-57. The data demonstrates “the law of supply and demand;” Ruggles writes, “Once the Soviet authorities permit the publication of a book, its vogue is more or less controlled by the general public” (420). Of particular note is Table 5, “The Soviet All-Time Best Seller List of American Authors” (424). Bret Harte is listed seventh, behind London, Twain, Dreiser, Sinclair, Cooper, and O. Henry. Ruggles’ statistical data works in conjunction with Scharnhorst’s bibliography.

**Keywords:** Publication History, International Publication, Translation


**Keywords:** Bibliography, Publication History, Periodical Publication, Collected Works


**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Contemporary Criticism, Genre, Naturalism, Miscegenation

Keywords: Biography, Composition History, Reception History, Contemporary Criticism


Scharnhorst’s article exposes aesthetic, critical, and ideological reasons behind Bret Harte’s exclusion from the canon. He provides a brief publication history of Harte’s work, claiming that the second quarter of the twentieth-century is “the height of his modern popularity” (203). However, the New Critics’ dismissal of his sentimental work, comparisons to Mark Twain, and feminist mindsets have led to his diminished place in—or altogether exclusion from—the canon. I do not necessarily agree with Scharnhorst’s logic in the third area, but the publication history and discussion of reception work into the short story’s textual history.

Keywords: Publication History, Reception History, Critical Reception, Public Reception, National Reception, New Critics, Mark Twain


Keywords: Reception History, Critical Reception, Composition History


Keywords: Reception History, Critical Reception, Gender, Mark Twain


Keywords: Reception History, Critical Reception, Howells

**Keywords:** Reception History, Critical Reception, Local Color, Genre


Witschi discusses the Gold Rush narrative’s valuing of “real” descriptions of mining’s physical deprivations, the value placed on human bodies as natural resources, and how writers like Bret Harte, Mark Twain, and Dan De Quille. He claims a narrative shift occurs within “The Luck of Roaring Camp” that turns attention away from human suffering in mining to historicizing the moment. Story becomes more important than life. This reading, however, only occurs on pages 38-40: the rest discuss the Gold Rush genre.

**Keywords:** Reception, Critical Reception, Contemporary Reception, Genre, Gold Rush, Bodies as Resources