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Melissa Asher Rauterkus

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MELISSA ASHER RAUTERKUS
University of Alabama at Birmingham

The National Body Divided: America, Italy, and Mark Twain's Literary Caesarian Operation in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*

FOR OVER A CENTURY NOW, SCHOLARSHIP ON MARK TWAIN'S *PUDD'NHEAD Wilson* (1894) has had much to say about miscegenation, passing, and race training. Countless books and articles devote their attention to Roxy's drop of black blood, Tom's imitation whiteness, and Chambers's learned inferiority complex. Yet very few scholars and studies say anything substantial about the Italian twins. It goes without saying that miscegenation, passing, and race training are major themes of grand significance in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. But there is a common tendency amongst critics to focus on these issues within a domestic framework that pays more attention to the categories of "black" and "white" than it does to that of "alien." Put another way, critics of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* often discuss the problems that race poses for the black and white characters in the novel, but ignore its significance to the representation of the Italian twins, their "inbetween" racial designation, and the transnational dimension of the text.¹

Inspired by the famous Tocci brothers, Twain's twins were initially conjoined at the hip.² Personifying a light-dark, good-bad, and ultimately a North-South dyad, the twins struggle for control over a single pair of

¹Historian David R. Roediger defines the "inbetween" as a racial formulation that many new immigrants—those arriving from Southern and Eastern Europe between 1886 and 1925—occupied as probationary whites, existing somewhere inbetween nonwhiteness and whiteness in addition to black and white. Roediger acknowledges the historian John Higham's use of the term, as well as the religious scholar Robert Orsi's contribution to it (11-13).

²Most scholars agree that Twain modeled his twins after Giacomo and Giovanni Tocci, the dicephalus Italian twins of international acclaim. Like Angelo and Luigi, these cultural oddities, were joined from the rib down, possessing four arms and two legs (Sundquist 260). According to Susan Gillman, Twain most likely saw them on exhibit in 1891 and based his twins on them, having been inspired by the "cultural mythology that arose around Siamese twins at the time" (55).

legs. But in the wake of what Twain dubbed a “literary Caesarian operation,” the conjoined twins were pulled apart. Having determined that *Pudd’nhead Wilson* was not one text, but two fused together, Twain detached the tales and the conjoined twins from one another—a compositional reenactment, if you will, of the drama of civil war. In haste to publish the novel, Twain did not go back into the manuscript to remove all references to conjoined twins.³ As a result, traces of a more perfect union can be found throughout the text. If Twain’s Caesarian operation teaches us anything about surgery, composition, or nationalism for that matter, it is that complications will arise when conjoined twins, novels, or nations divide. And as Twain’s poor editing job may suggest, separation is not always complete or without its own unique set of problems.

Using the twins’ separation as a metaphor of sorts for the crises of secession and fragmentation, I contend that the twins may help us better understand the cultural rift in America and in Italy during the middle and latter years of the nineteenth century. In an American context, their separation may add to the discussion about the national rupture caused by slavery and civil war. In the Italian context, their separation may shed light on the deep fissure between a bourgeois European-North and a so-called barbaric African-South. Acknowledging that Twain’s Caesarian operation may have resulted in separate texts, but not completely severed brothers, I insist that the traces of conjoined twins in *Pudd’nhead Wilson* can teach us much about regionalism, separatism, and national identity. Figuratively, the twins’ imperfect separation is emblematic of one of the central conflicts in the history of American and Italian nationalism: the tension between cultural/racial separatism and cultural/racial pluralism (or the conflict between regionalism and nationalism). In bringing *Pudd’nhead Wilson* into conversation with America and Italy, I also aim to show how the turn towards transnationalism can provide us with a better understanding of how cultural and/or racial paradigms are reproduced within a global context. Arguably, a global perspective both broadens and complicates our critical

³Hershel Parker chronicles the composition and publication history of *Pudd’nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*. In addition to laying out a set of ground rules about reading the text, he also discusses Twain’s rushed editing job and his haphazard deletions of the conjoined twins, noting the “surviving vestiges” of their “Siamese status” which function as a “distracting embarrassment” from the narrative (134).

analysis of regional divides, as it compels us to examine the bigger picture as well as the particulars of a specific cultural model.

Transnational Discoveries: Conjoined Texts, Twins, and the Irony of Separation

By its very nature, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is a text that is deeply engaged with questions of transnationalism, separatism, and race. For starters, Twain wrote the novel in Italy and made frequent trips to America during its composition. In fact, it was in the midst of one of his many trips back and forth across the Atlantic that he discovered the infamous problem with the manuscript. In the preface to *Those Extraordinary Twins*, Twain recalls his horror upon making the shocking discovery that the novel was “not one story, but two stories tangled together.” Drawing from an earlier sketch, “Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins” (1869), in which two brothers fight on opposite sides during the Civil War, Twain went on to depict the schism in his manuscript as a bitter feud between two stories that “obstructed and interrupted each other at every turn.” Afraid to offer the book up for publication on the grounds that “it would unseat the reader’s reason,” Twain explains, he opted for immediate separation. Interestingly enough, he appropriated what was perhaps one of the nineteenth century’s most popular metaphors for the sectional crisis: surgery. In his trademark tongue-in-cheek fashion, Twain writes, “I pulled one of the stories out by the roots, and left the other one—a kind of literary Caesarian operation” (119). But Twain did not stop here; he also pulled the Italian twins apart, presumably because they mirror the flaw in his book (they are two in one). In his quest to eliminate the book’s defect, Twain eliminated the twins’ defect—i.e., their deformity. As the preface reveals, he also considered eliminating the twins’ racial specificity. Proving that he saw physical deformity and racial difference as two sides of the same coin, Twain writes, “They had no occasion to have foreign names now” (122).⁴ Pressed for cash and in a hurry to

⁴It is worth mentioning that Twain’s momentary contemplation of a name change—after the Caesarian operation—reveals his initial reluctance to engage in a more complicated discussion about racial difference. Given the tragic proportions of his miscegenation plot, it is likely that Twain wanted to evade additional questions about the racial particularity of the non-white/non-black other because of its unintelligibility in the nineteenth-century lexicon. In some respects, the purging of the Italian names would have signified a textual streamlining of the novella’s treatment of the American racial crisis in its full dimensions. Twain’s point about the twins no longer needing “foreign”

publish the novel, Twain not only left in the traces of conjoined twins, but he also left in the Italian names because it would have been too much work to change them throughout the manuscript.

Had Twain changed the twins' names to something more culturally neutral, much of *Pudd'nhead Wilson's* meaning with regard to race and nationalism would have been lost. Written in the early 1890s, but set in the antebellum South, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* reveals just as much about the institution of slavery in the years leading up to the Civil War as it does about American nativism and anti-Italian bigotry. For example, when Judge Driscoll and his nephew Tom deride the twins as "peanut pedlers" and "organ-grinders bereft of their brother-monkey," the twins become victims of American nativism (83). According to historian John Higham, the "Italians were often thought to be the most degraded of the European newcomers" (66). They were frequently subjected to such epithets. If the twins' names were something other than Angelo and Luigi—say, Adam and Luke—these racial slurs would lose all meaning because the twins' *italianità* (Italianness) would be scriptively invisible. Thus, the twins' names are not as arbitrary as Twain would like to have readers believe; his choice of names is just as deliberate as his choice of hair colors.

Not only do the blonde and brunette Angelo and Luigi play off of the black/white American racial binary featured in the Tom/Chambers pairing, but they also speak to the North/South divide in Italy. During the nineteenth century, the North/South divide split Italy into a land of two nations. The North celebrated its fair-haired and fair-skinned features and lamented the existence of its darker half to the South. According to historian Thomas Guglielmo, Italian anthropologists such as Cesare Lombroso, Giuseppe Sergi, and Alfredo Niceforo went so far as to argue that Southerners were racially distinct from Northerners and biologically predisposed towards crime (33). Twain's twins appear to embody this argument. In the text, the twins' contradictory features and temperaments articulate this very understanding of Southern racial difference. The quintessential example is the text's reference to Luigi's "southern blood" after the "philopena" insult (56). Perhaps in no other place in the text is it spelled out so clearly that the twins are indeed separate men fused together by a shared history, like the twin kernels of a nut.

names post-operation suggests that he acknowledged the analogous relationship between racial otherness and the otherness of disability.

In terms of cultural criticism, the reference to “southern blood” suddenly introduces the significance of what Italian scholars call the “Southern Question.” Put simply, the Southern Question is a body of work devoted to analyzing the ways in which Northern aggression has bastardized *il Mezzogiorno* (the South) (Gramsci 32-33). Most notably, this has manifested itself in stereotypes of Southerners as violent, stupid, and prone to criminal activity. Aside from debunking these myths, the Southern Question also reveals the extent to which Northern identity was, historically speaking, tangled up in its view of the South. Though the North claimed to be separate from the South, it was in actuality psychologically wedded to it, and was thus imperfectly separated from its subaltern half. The North could only understand itself in relationship to the very thing that it prided itself on not being, making it in some respects dependent upon the South for its very sense of itself. In *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, the twins function in a similar way.

While the Caesarian operation may have separated the twins, it did not make them entirely independent of one another. In fact, the twins’ subjectivities are dependent upon one another because they are informed by this vexed relationship between North and South. In a way, the Southern Question accentuates and contextualizes this paradox of division contained in the contradiction between separation and dependency. Geographically, the Southern Question helps us locate the twins’ textual separation in the history of Italian regional conflict, but it is also applicable to the American experience. In the American context, the Southern Question helps us understand the twins’ separation in relation to the sectional crisis—a conflict that also relied upon the image of a backwards and volatile South. Thinking about the twins’ Caesarian operation in relation to these narratives about national fracture is meaningful because it adds political dimension to the problem of having two-in-one—a problem that practically destroyed America and Italy, if not Twain’s book. Moreover, it provides us with a cultural apparatus with which we can discuss the twins’ imperfect separation in relationship to the tension between regionalism and nationalism. Reading the text’s traces of imperfect separation in this context can help us comprehend the fractured identities of divided national bodies and what are often conflicting desires for regional autonomy and national belonging. Written in the aftermath of separatist rebellion, Reconstruction, and Unification, *Pudd’nhead Wilson*’s post-operation traces of conjoined twins may speak

to these histories while articulating a desire for reunion, nationalism, and possibly even racial harmony.

Post-Operation Iterations: Surgery Gone Awry

The first example of the twins' imperfect separation features the dual usage of the subjective pronouns "I" and "we." The usage of both the singular and the plural forms not only tells us quite a bit about the twins' complex identities, but it also has something to say about the nature of national fracture. In an epistle addressed to Aunt Patsy, the twins express their interest in renting a room in her house. The letter appears to have been authored by the "I" of the note, but makes a number of references to "we":

HONORED MADAM: My brother and I have seen your advertisement, by chance, and beg leave to take the room you offer. We are twenty-four years of age and twins. We are Italians by birth, but have lived long in the various countries of Europe, and several years in the United States. Our names are Luigi and Angelo Capello. You desire but one guest; but dear Madam, if you will allow us to pay for two, we will not incommode you. We shall be down Thursday. (26)

The author's use of the pronoun "we" is not necessarily odd, considering that he is referring to himself and his brother, but it is perhaps our first clue that his identity is not completely independent of his brother's. In a way, this feature of the text triggers a type of cognitive dissonance. We know that the twins have been separated, but the fact of their conglomerate past inevitably affects how we read the letter. As a result, the references to "we" are jarring, producing tension between the singular and the plural forms that has the effect of reinforcing the fact of separation, while simultaneously conjuring the image of Siamese twins. The double usage of "I" and "we" almost gives the impression that the twins are both separate and conjoined. What is even more perplexing is the author's written declaration that "You desire but one guest; but dear Madam, if you will allow us to pay for two, we will not incommode you." The expression can be read two ways. On the one hand, it implies that two (separate) brothers intend to share a room at twice the price. On the other, it betrays a more cryptic meaning about the intricacies of tightly interwoven singular and dual identities. The statement seems to suggest that it would be impossible for Siamese twins to "incommode" a landlord requesting a "single" guest because from the waist down the twins constitute a "single" body.

Taken together, these two linguistic conundrums shed light on the nature of national fracture. Not only might we think of secession or regionalism as the very conflict between the “I” and the “we” of a national body, but we also might think of the twins’ simultaneously singular and dual identities in the context of Civil War or separatist rebellion. The battle over slavery is a good example. The debate over its expansion divided the nation into two halves: slave-masters concerned with their individual interests and the rest of the Union. This conflict can be articulated as the struggle between the “I”—as in individual slave-masters—and the “we”—as in the republic. It can also be described as the battle between the singular and the plural. The North’s desire to preserve the Union at all costs could be classified as a desire to preserve the singular entity known as the United States, while the South’s desire to preserve its way of life—in the face of alleged Northern aggression—could be considered a plea for cultural pluralism. We might view the twins within this context. In some respects they reenact the drama at the heart of civil war and are a metaphor for the national body. Not only do the twins share a conjoined past shattered by separation, but they articulate both singular and divided subjectivities that mirror the opposition between nationalism and regionalism.

In what might be another instance of imperfect separation, the text produces a scriptive display of simultaneously conjoined and divided identities using a simple punctuation mark, the em dash. It appears in a speech act in which Rowena praises the romantic splendor of the twins’ names, “Luigi—Angelo” (26). On the one hand, this performative gesture consolidates the twins’ identities, suggesting that they are “one ‘extraordinary body,’” as Daphne Brooks has said about those other antebellum Siamese twins, Millie-Christine (310).⁵ On the other hand, it divides them, much in the same way a hyphen does in contemporary usage when employed to describe a hybrid cultural location (e.g. Italian-American or African-American). Though in these instances the hyphen is intended to evoke cultural pluralism, it often has the effect of splitting subjectivities into oppositional categories that may in some way, shape, or form be at odds with one another. According to Donna Gabaccia, we

⁵In her discussion on Millie-Christine, Brooks reads the hyphen joining the girls’ names as a symptom of their conglomerate status, proof that they saw themselves as a single figure. I mention this to make the case that the em dash may function in a similar manner with regard to Angelo and Luigi.

can attribute this feature of the hyphen to the American racial past, since “the hyphenated ethnic identities of the United States are the legacy of racial exclusion from the nation” (57). Regardless of how we choose to read the hyphen (or, in this case, the em dash), it raises some interesting questions about identity: Does the hyphen articulate plural subjectivities? Does it express division? Does it speak to cultural, racial, or regional difference?

As the plethora of criticism on Twain’s interests in doubles, divided selves, and race would seem to indicate, the answer to all of these questions is a resounding yes.⁶ The em dash bridges the twins’ identities at the same time that it divides them; it also expresses their complex cultural locations. For starters, it produces a binary. Like all binaries, it naturalizes what is an artificial relationship between two terms. As such, it joins two concepts, making them one larger idea, only to draw a distinction between them. For example: black-white. Together they form a definition of race that also explains the contrast between the two terms. The em dash that appears in the scriptive display “Luigi—Angelo” functions in a similar way. It translates the names Luigi and Angelo into cultural, racial, and regional locations that are at odds with one another. By way of metonymy, Luigi comes to signify Southern racial difference, while Angelo articulates Northern Italian identity. Hence, the em dash adds nuance to Italian identity by invoking regionalism. But it also bridges these regional identities to espouse a more comprehensive and complex view of Italian nationalism.

Narratives of National Fracture

In his famous “House Divided” speech, Abraham Lincoln lamented the existence of the two-in-one problem that plagued the Union. Addressing the schism between North and South over the question of slavery, Lincoln declared that a “house divided against itself cannot stand” (426). As Lincoln saw it, the Union would have to become all of one thing or the other; it could not be sustained “half *slave* and half *free*” (426). Lincoln’s greatest fear materialized when the Southern states

⁶There is a great deal of scholarship on Twain’s interest in twins, doppelgangers, and divided selves. Arguably, such scholarship suggests that Twain saw nineteenth-century identity categories as fluid subject positions that were not rooted in biology, but were in actuality socially constructed and thus susceptible to manipulation. See Gillman; Morris; Mitsuishi; and Marcus.

seceded from the Union and the nation erupted into war only two years after this address. Interestingly enough, much of Angelo's narrative can be read in this context. Though he does not specify the nature of the conflict, Angelo references a "war" and reveals that his father was "on the losing side and had to fly for his life" (27). He goes on to explain that after the war his father's estates were "confiscated, his personal property seized" (27). In a way, Mr. Capello's flight for escape and the seizure of his property are evocative of the punitive measures Congress inflicted on the Southern states during "Radical Reconstruction." There is also the interesting correlation between Angelo's use of the word "child" and his comparison of his time in the museum to "slavery." It brings to mind arguments in support of and against the manumission of slaves. Before the war, one of the most famous arguments in support of slavery was the idea that slaves were children in need of constant supervision and care. And Angelo's remark that "when we escaped from that slavery . . . we were in some respects men" (28) is reminiscent of anti-slavery arguments, which called for the manumission of slaves with the objective of affording African American men masculinity. My point in mentioning these connections is not to force a Civil War reading onto Angelo's narrative, but simply to point out just how much of his narrative is already in conversation with sectional crisis and slavery. But this is not the only possible reading: Angelo's narrative also speaks to the Italian experience with regional rebellion and national fracture.

Like the US, Italy was also divided into two incongruent halves during much of the nineteenth century. Unlike the US, however, Italy had not ever known total cohesion. During the Renaissance, the nation was divided into separate city-states estranged from one another by custom and dialect. To make matters worse, foreign rulers, deeply entrenched throughout its regions, controlled various parts of the nation. Consequently, the Risorgimento—the Italian struggle for national autonomy and unity—involved not only the merger of lands long severed from one another, but also the casting off of multiple intruders (e.g., the Austrians in the North, the Spanish Bourbons in the South, and the French in Rome and the Papal States in central Italy) (Doyle 28). Though the Risorgimento (the Resurgence) hoped to recreate the romantic splendor of ancient Rome, the road to Unification was less than glorious. In fact, as Nelson Moe has argued, the Risorgimento failed to truly revitalize Italy or to recreate the magnificence of Rome. Instead, Unification "split the nation in two, accentuating the northerness of

one part and the southernness of the other.” Influenced by the rise of what Moe calls “western Eurocentrism” and “bourgeois civilization,” liberal elites had high hopes of bringing Italy into the fabric of modernity (2). Unfortunately for them, they could not reconcile their visions of Italy’s potential greatness with what they perceived to be the “backwardness” of the South: its squalor, ignorance, and servitude. Consequently, the South was marked as other within the nation and frequently derided as the backdoor to Africa (Doyle 71).

In a way, *Pudd’nhead Wilson* echoes these narratives of sectional strife. For starters, its compositional history includes a battle between warring texts that were pulled apart only to be published together in 1894.⁷ Symbolically, this reenacts the drama of national fracture, with its emphasis on rupture and reunion. Compositionally speaking, Twain tried to achieve what Edgar Allan Poe called “unity of effect,” but was unsuccessful. Instead, he separated the tragedy from the farce. As Catherine O’Connell argues, this resulted in “almost a century” of critics reading the tragedy “as a complete novel” and the farce “as merely vestigial” (100). Noting the general tendency of most critics to understand the two works as “fully divided or divisible,” O’Connell makes an important intervention for studies on *Pudd’nhead Wilson* when she asserts that both texts together form a novel about “race slavery and segregation” (100). Beyond implying that the two texts should be read together, O’Connell’s comments gesture towards expressing the profound sense of imperfect separation that informs both the tragedy and the farce. More explicit are Susan Gillman’s remarks about *Pudd’nhead Wilson*’s compositional traces of imperfect separation. As Gillman explains,

the books are connected . . . by a number of important shared issues, none of which emerges as fully or as clearly in either work alone: the anomalous connections between bond and bondage in the relationships of Siamese twins and of blacks and whites under slavery; the legal classifications that seek to determine individual responsibility by defining the status of Siamese twins and of racially mixed offspring; and finally, a self-conscious demonstration of the problems of authorship that joins the two works quite literally through the bridge passages (prefatory and final remarks) in which the author reveals their process of composition. (54)

⁷In 1894 the American Publishing Company reunited the tragedy with the farce and published the stories together as *The Tragedy of Pudd’nhead Wilson and the Comedy of Those Extraordinary Twins*.

Pointing out the books' similar themes, racial dilemmas, and awareness of their own fracture, Gillman makes the case that the tragedy and the farce are deeply connected, if not conjoined.

I'd like to add to O'Connell's and Gillman's remarks by positing that the Italian twins embody the text's compositional crisis of division. Like the infamous Caesarian operation that separated the tragedy from the farce, the twins expose the intricacies of the two-in-one crisis and prompt questions about the nature of division: How do we make sense of twinned bodies? Can singular and dual identities coexist simultaneously? Once separated, how can we reconcile our understanding of individuality with duality or plurality? Despite the fact that Twain clearly states in his preface that he decided to make separate men of the twins, there persists amongst readers a tendency to see them in their formerly conjoined state. This can be attributed to the few, but glaringly obvious examples of imperfect separation, which inevitably conjure the image of Siamese twins. In a way, these post-operation traces of Siamese twins provide the perfect commentary on national fracture. The textual slippage between the twins' conjoined and divided states produces a crisis in representation and in cognition analogous to the conflict caused by separatist rebellion. Making matters even more complicated is the question of borders or boundaries—i.e. where does one nation end and the other begin? (Or in the twins' case, where does one man end and the other begin?) The twins certainly do not answer this question; rather, they embody it, which is to say that they ask it themselves.

In the Sons of Liberty sequence, the text conjures the specter of Siamese twins in its critique of sectional conflict. While there is no concrete trace of conjoined twins, the text produces an impression of Siamese twins as it gestures back to "Personal Habits."⁸ In this parody of the American Civil War, not only do Siamese twins fight on opposite sides but they also take each other prisoner and are exchanged for each other as prisoners by an army court. In a mathematical sense, the twins' respective seizure of each other's person and their subsequent exchange

⁸Tom calls the twins a "human philopena" and Luigi kicks him. We might think of the philopena remark as a "trace." It is possible that in an earlier version of the text the comment was meant to be a wisecrack about the twins' conjoined bodies—a pun on their resemblance to a nut with a double kernel. But this is hard to argue because the text also implies that Tom utters the insult because of the brothers' "extraordinarily close resemblance" to one another (56). I read this as another instance of Twain's sloppy editing job, another trace of the imperfect separation.

seems to cancel out any claims of separateness. The logic undergirding the arithmetic is that an easy act of “simplification” reduces the twins to a single figure, part and parcel of each other’s ontology. As the resolution of “Personal Habits” suggests, the twins are an indivisible family unit in which questions of division or kinship are answered by way of tautology: the twins cannot be divided because their identities are so tangled up in each other that they signify the same thing (i.e., one divided by one is one). Presumably, Twain uses the figure of Siamese twins to address the sheer absurdity of the Civil War and the familial feuds it inspired. Indeed, as Marc Shell has pointed out, Siamese twins were popular in the American imagination because their existence spoke directly to national fears about divided kinship. As Shell puts it, “their existence opposed the otherwise universal undeterminability of kinship that threatens the ideological security of the consanguineous and national family” (33). While Shell’s remarks are certainly apropos to any discussion of “Personal Habits,” it seems to me that ultimately what the parody of sectional strife is suggesting is that civil war is inherently incestuous—a theme that Twain revisits in the Sons of Liberty sequence.

In addition to dramatizing regional conflict, the sketch erects a light/dark binary that ultimately comes to articulate racial character. This can be seen in the depiction of each twin. For example, Angelo is referred to as the “blonde” twin (55), whereas it is implied that Luigi is dark because of his “southern blood” (56). Angelo is passive, dislikes crowds, and objects to drinking on moral grounds, while Luigi is portrayed as a hostile drunkard. Not only does he kick Tom Driscoll over a verbal insult, but he also causes a riot that results in a fire. The point made here is that Southerners are easy to anger and ultimately destructive. It is important to note that before the kick, both brothers enjoy the same privileges of whiteness, despite the fact that they are immigrants. One of those privileges is membership in the Sons of Liberty, an exclusive club. After the kick, however, things change. Luigi is no longer one of the boys. In some respects, the kick introduces a nativist element to the text and heightens the sense of difference between the twins. The text naturalizes Luigi’s aggressive behavior by locating its roots in his blood, whereas it exempts Angelo from such associations by rendering him invisible during the delivery of the insult and “the squaring of the account” (56). From this point on, Luigi is referred to as that “derved Italian savage” (62) and an assassin (78). He

clearly becomes the text's prototypical "alien," the dark enemy-other of Dawson's Landing.

Such a depiction demonstrates the extent to which nationalism depends upon the figure of the alien to create an imagined community. Because the alien inspires fear, he appeals to the nation's mob mentality and facilitates its coming together to eliminate a common foe. As a result, opposition to the alien inspires allegiance, promotes brotherhood, and gives the nation the impression that it is a homogenous entity whose populace is intimately connected. But as Benedict Anderson notes, this sense of belonging is somewhat fictitious if not entirely artificial. Not only will the vast majority of followers "never [come to] know most of their fellow-members," but "the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" even when it is not (6-7). Historically speaking, this was true of the Sons of Liberty society. It was a reactionary group composed of former Know-Nothings and Copperheads from the Midwest and the South, many of whom probably never even met. In theory, the order was opposed to abolition and immigration and was sympathetic to the Southern cause. In practice, there were regional variations that made it a very different organization, depending upon one's geographical location.⁹ Nevertheless, the organization gave the appearance that it was a united front dedicated to defending the nation from anti-slavery advocates, African Americans, foreigners, and pro-Union supporters.

In the text, this cultural legacy is submerged in the conflict between the rum and anti-rum parties. At the outset of the sequence, the rum party's enemy-other is the anti-rum party. Once the twins are interpolated into the drama, however, the nature of the conflict changes. By subtle degrees, nationalism rears its ugly head and the battle between the rum and anti-rum parties is overshadowed by the confrontation between Luigi and Tom Driscoll, the dark foreigner and the native son. The

⁹In *Dark Lanterns*, Frank L. Klement traces the history of the Sons of Liberty, a nationalist organization with strong roots in the Midwest and in the South. As Klement points out, H. H. Dodd, the founder of the Sons of Liberty, was a former Know-Nothing who despised foreigners and Catholics (92). In the upper Midwest, the order was primarily composed of Copperheads, Democrats who were opposed to abolitionists, the war, and Lincoln. In Missouri, however, the Sons of Liberty outfit, led by Charles L. Hunt, was far more active. They sympathized with the rebellion and supported the secession of the Southern states to the dismay of their Midwestern leaders, Dodd and Clement L. Vallandigham (107). In 1864, General Henry B. Carrington fallaciously exposed the organization as an anti-Union order that sought to aid the rebellion and establish a Northwest Confederacy (131).

presence of the non-white other initiates what Matthew Frye Jacobson calls “the consolidation of whiteness”—a bridging of internal differences that allows white men to come together in the face of a singular foe (93, 256). In the context of national division, this means that Luigi’s attack on Tom unites the rummies and the anti-rummies in a common pursuit and heals the national wound. In the text, this is depicted as their combined efforts to save the market-house hall from fire. The joint rescue mission is symbolic of a unified national body and is in some respects a reiteration of conjoined twins.

Further traces of imperfect separation can be seen in Tom’s reaction to the twins after the kick. Not only does the kick introduce an element of nativism into the text, but it also introduces the problem of culpability. On the one hand, the kick clearly turns Luigi into Tom’s enemy; on the other hand, it has the effect of implicating Angelo as a guilty party by way of association. Angelo becomes an accomplice to Luigi’s crime for no other reason than that he is his brother. As such, both twins are to blame for the kick, but Tom is not entirely sure which brother is at fault. Undecided about where one twin ends and the other begins, Tom moves back and forth between espousing a singular understanding of guilt and articulating a plural definition of liability. We see this in Tom’s post-kick references to Luigi’s savagery and his verbal attacks on both brothers. In one instance, Tom calls Luigi a “murderous devil” and begs his uncle not to make him challenge the Italian in a duel (60). In another, he refers to Luigi as “that derved Italian savage” (62). Tom also tells his uncle that “Count Luigi is a confessed assassin” (78). Yet this singular view of Luigi’s blameworthiness is contradicted by claims and innuendos about both twins’ responsibility for the assault. For example, shortly after the kick, Tom calls the twins a “jack-pair,” insinuating that they are two asses (as in donkeys) (63). In another instance, the narrator gives us a glimpse into Tom’s mental musings: “He hated the one twin for kicking him, and the other one for being the kicker’s brother” (74). Even Judge Driscoll chimes in, ridiculing the twins as “side-show riff-raff, dime-museum freaks . . . back-alley barbers disguised as nobilities” (83). Presumably, it is the twins’ imperfect separation that makes it difficult to assess individual guilt.

Further complicating the discussion of culpability is Judge Driscoll’s murder. It exposes additional instances of imperfect separation in which Luigi is sometimes blamed for the murder and other times when *both* twins are accused. For example, in the telegram announcing Driscoll’s

murder it is implied that *one* of the twins killed him. The telegram reads, “Judge Driscoll, an old and respected citizen, was assassinated here about mid-night by a profligate Italian nobleman or barber” (95). Given Luigi’s association with the knife, it is safe to assume that he is the murderous Italian in question. Nevertheless, the text negates his singular guilt by pointing the finger at Angelo as well. After the coroner removes the body, the sheriff takes *both* twins to jail, and David Wilson agrees to defend *both* twins when the case goes to trial (96). Even the coroner’s jury is confused by the twins’ singular and dual identities; they come to the conclusion that “the homicide was committed by Luigi, and that Angelo was accessory to it” (97). During the trial, several witnesses corroborate this theory by insisting that they heard Judge Driscoll say that the twins would find their knife when they needed it to “assassinate somebody” (100). But Mrs. Pratt counters these claims by revealing that *both* twins declared their innocence to her and had legitimate alibis (101). The text appears to shift back to a singular understanding of guilt that excludes Angelo when David Wilson declares, “I can’t believe Luigi killed your uncle, and I feel very sorry for him.” Tom’s reply, “I owe them no good will” and “I don’t like them,” is a reiteration of double liability, if not of conjoined twins (103).

In the case of the twins conjoined by implication, Judge Driscoll’s murder begs the question: which side of the body is at fault? The twins take on this question at the same time that they are unfairly put at the center of what is really a case of familial homicide—another nod to the incestuous nature of civil war. In actuality, Tom Driscoll is the murderer: he kills his own uncle for control of his will. Yet the twins are blamed for the murder because in some respects their cultural locations as foreigners make them an ideal target, while their curious physical form only accentuates their presupposed deviancy. Locating one twin’s savagery in his blood and implicating the other because of his attachment to the former, the text evokes the double bind that is race and disability. Not only are the twins Italian, but they are also known as “freaks,” i.e., cultural oddities, museum exhibitions, and sideshow attractions. The twins’ presumed guilt and swift imprisonment demonstrates the extent to which racialized and “deformed” subjects are always already guilty in a hierarchical society obsessed with racial purity and normativity. Presumably, this is why the twins go back to Italy after they are acquitted of murder. The migration home symbolizes the restoration of cultural identity and national belonging. It also negates the

fact of assimilation, diaspora, and emigration, resuscitating that primordial definition of the nation as a group of people of common ancestry, language, and point of origin.

Suturing the Wound: Forgetting Fracture

In his lecture entitled “What is a Nation?,” delivered at the Sorbonne on March 11, 1882, Ernest Renan discussed the cultural significance of forgetfulness in the project of solidifying national identity. As Renan explained, “Forgetting . . . is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation” (11). What Renan meant was that nations are often created in the midst or in the wake of violence; forgetting such brutality, or the “founding trauma” to invoke Dominick LaCapra, is essential to the nation’s ability to create a homogenous community. Though many of Renan’s remarks were made in the context of French struggles for religious and political freedom, his argument is apropos to any discussion of national crisis and community formation. His comments are particularly relevant to *Pudd’nhead Wilson* because they give us a theoretical language to discuss and comprehend the post-operation traces of conjoined twins that are present throughout the text. Aside from exposing the text’s imperfect separation, the traces of conjoined twins engage in an amnesiac-like cycle of negation, disavowal, and sublimation similar to what Renan describes in his argument about nations. In fact, I would even go so far as to say that these traces are proof that the text is trying to forget the trauma of separation, the profound sense of fracture that permeates its pages. The post-operation traces of conjoined twins deny the fact that the Caesarian operation really happened.

A literalist might say that these traces are merely the result of Twain’s poor editing job, or lack thereof. But a more metaphorical, and presumably more literary, reading might interpret these traces as symptoms of a formerly fractured, now reunited, but still deeply divided and traumatized national psyche, a psyche seeking to leave the painful past behind so that it might move forward as an integrated whole. Indeed, it seems worth reiterating that Twain wrote *Pudd’nhead Wilson* almost thirty years after the American Civil War, a crisis so tragic that it held a firm grip on the cultural imagination well into the 1890s. He also produced the text during a massive wave of immigration from southern Italy, a crisis in and of itself that only widened the racial gap between black and white by making Italians “invisible Negroes.” For all

its emphasis on slavery, immigration, and division, it seems fair to say that the text not only absorbed the traumas of its era, but that it displaced them onto the Siamese twins. Hence, the twins act out the nation's desire for cohesiveness and homogeneity in their willful forgetting of the operation that divided them.

In forgetting the crisis of separation, the twins demonstrate the accuracy of Renan's claims. Indeed, forgetting is a powerful agent in the creation of national identity. The image of conjoined twins, situated in a narrative about slavery and immigration, functions to suture the national wound caused by these crises. It presents an image of fraternal devotion and collective will that stands in direct opposition to the reality of national fracture. As such, it rewrites the narrative of incestuous violence that is often a part of internal disputes, and presents in its place a benign portrayal of brotherly love and legitimate familial affiliation. In disavowing the fact of separation, the twins alleviate the fears of a nineteenth-century audience grappling with the legacy of war: sectional hostility, miscegenation, and divided loyalties. The image of conjoined twins assures such an audience that the violent rupture never happened and *will not ever happen again*.

Ultimately, *Pudd'nhead Wilson's* traces and reiterations of conjoined twins restore the bonds of kinship severed during the Caesarian operation. If we agree that the Caesarian operation is a compositional reenactment of the fracture of Civil War, then these textual remnants and reiterations underscore the sheer imperfection of Twain's surgery and the dominance of the national ideal in the cultural imagination. In the context of national crisis, such manifestations suture the national wound caused by regionalism and separatism. They also negate the racist fantasy of difference that prefigures the crisis of division. By negating such a fantasy, the text engages in a type of willful amnesia that sublimates the trauma of separation. Forgetting the rupture implicit in separation, the text reinstates the image of conglomerate twins and reifies the republic. Denying Twain's protestations of separation, the text demonstrates that such disavowals are key in the formulation of national identity. Without the ability to forget, conjoined twins, novels, and nations would forever exist as fractured entities, eternally divided against themselves.

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