Mark's Signs/Twain's Twins: Narcissism in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*

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Summary

Through his work "On Narcissism" Freud was to bequeath an intellectual legacy in which the problems of subject and object were described, and in a sense delimited, by the classical iconology inherited with the very naming of "narcissism" itself. Studies of the double in literature are frequently informed by this model. Using Freud's standard formulation of *narcissism* as a point of departure, this paper examines the figure of the double in Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. The argument rests on the claim that the narcissistic crisis in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* does not mirror all other such crises; rather, it is inscribed within certain particularities, a history, if you will. Perhaps *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is an historical novel, written as it is from a post-Civil War moment, reflecting back on Twain's relationship to the slavery of the American South. The "family romance" between the slave-woman, Roxy, and her son impels the plot and constitutes that son as the exemplary narcissist: however, it is a psychological drama that is crossed and scarred by the deforming features of the slave economy.

Opsomming

Deur middel van sy werk "On Narcissism" het Freud 'n intellektuele erfenis nagelaat waarin die problematiek van subjek en objek beskryf word, en in 'n sekere mate afgebaken is deur die klassieke ikonologie wat deur die einste betekenis van die woord "narsissisme" geërf is. Studies oor die dubbel binne die letterkunde word dikwels deur hierdie model geïnformeer. Deur Freud se standaardformulering van *narsissisme* as vertrekpunt te gebruik, ondersoek hierdie artikel die figuur van die dubbel in Twain se *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Die argument berus op die aanspraak dat die narsissistiese krisis in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* nie 'n spieëlbeeld van alle ander sulke krisisse is nie, maar eerder dat dit binne bepaalde eienaardighede ingeskryf is. Moontlik is *Pudd'nhead Wilson* 'n historiese roman, geskryf, soos dit wel is, in 'n post-Siviele Oorlog moment, wat terugreflekteer op Twain se verhouding tot die slawerny van die Amerikaanse Suide. Die "familieromanse" tussen die slawevrou, Roxy, en haar seun is die aandrywingspunt van die storielyn en konstituteer daardie seun as die voorbeeldige narsissis: alhoewel dit 'n psigologiese drama is wat deurkruis en gelitteken is deur die misvormende eienskappe van die slawe-ekonomie.

Preamble: On Narcissism

> Where'er I went I sought myself in me,
> And knew not that I always was in thee.
> Come set me free, dear dwelling of my soul,
> Restore me to myself entire and whole.
> Would'st kill the spirit prison'd in thy heart,
> The soul that loves and tears itself apart?
> Nay, hold me still, to me I'll not return;
> Not death from thee but rather life I learn.
> Absent from thee, wherever I may roam,
> My exil'd self can never find its home
>
> (Paul Fleming, transl. by F.J. Warnke)[1]

When Freud followed Näcke and Havelock Ellis in representing the drama of the self's enchantment with the self as, specifically, a narcissistic longing, he

invoked, for better and for worse, a legacy which was already entailed. By returning to the classical and neoclassical representations of the narcissistic moment he imported to his analysis of the relationship certain unforeseen features, not least of which is the characterization of the libido's attachment to the ego as homoerotic: given the literary and visual depictions of this story, as well as its Hellenistic orbit, Freud's conclusion is almost predetermined. For modern Western readers Freud's discourse has privileged a particular moment in our conception of the relationship between the self, its objects, and its ideal. For the crisis in subject and object relations to be recognized as narcissism, it seems it must avail itself to the rhetorics and iconology of the Ovidian tale as mediated through the psychoanalytic tradition, which itself gazes towards the mirror. Further, the trope of Narcissus, because of its mythic origins, has been strikingly resistant to change. When we talk of self-love, we step outside of time and into a relationship of identity and reflection that knows no history. All narcissism mirrors itself, and we forget other figures and conceits which Western thought has constructed to contain the problem of the self and its relations. Other representations which address the psychological organization of the subject and its object are not readily recuperated, by the post-Freudian reader, as narcissistic dilemmas. Thus, for example, it is difficult for us to recognize that St Augustine's theological problematic about the plenitude of God is at the same time an expression of his anxiety about the boundary between the self and the object of worship: "[o]r is it rather that I should not exist, unless I existed in you? For *all things find in you their origin, their impulse, the centre of their being*. This, Lord, is the true answer to my question. But if I exist in you, how can I call upon you to come to me? And where would you come from?" (Augustine 1974: 22. Emphasis in the original). Augustine's crisis is that he cannot reconcile an understanding of his own discrete subjectivity with his belief in a limitless God, one who can and must invade him. Because Augustine's dilemma is articulated within the language of Judeo-Christian metaphysics, it does not offer itself to the hermeneutics of narcissism.

A similar theological quandary is reflected in a love poem by the German metaphysical poet, Paul Fleming (see epigraph). This poem is only signalled as a love poem by its title, "Auff ihr Abwesen"/"In her Absence". In all other respects it conforms to a pious plea for union with Christ the bridegroom. Regardless of whether the poem expresses a spiritual or a physical longing, the abandonment of the lover to the beloved is represented as a drama about identity. This is vividly apparent in the original German (see endnote) as the problem of subject and object is foregrounded as grammatical crisis: "*Ich irrte hin und her, und suchte mich in mir.*" However, the play on the nature of faith, spiritual rapture, and erotics in such metaphysical meditations belongs to a distinct theological, literary and philosophical tradition, and it is not easy to read Fleming's poem as an examination of narcissism and the problem of psychological boundaries, in part because narcissism is defined, for the modern Western mind, by such a powerful set of specifically Hellenistic and Freudian representations.

This is not to suggest that Freud's scheme is without validity. I am obviously indebted to Freud's formulation of the problem; indeed, I am dependent upon it. However, I am interested in considering whether one can examine the historical content of a narcissistic figure; I want to ask to what extent the use of doubles in Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* has individual features, a set of fingerprints which renders it distinct from similar aesthetic experiments. I hope to show that the twinning device does not mirror all other literary doubles. There is not simply one scene of narcissistic misrecognition which gets played out across Time. Rather, I hope to demonstrate that the doubles in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* are generated by certain contingent features produced by the writer's personal history, a Southern slave economy, literary-philosophical precedent, and Twain's literary purposes.

I Mainly Auto-Biographical

There has been, over the years, a consensus about the centrality of the figure of the double in Twain's work. One of the most recent, and most sophisticated, of the studies of this theme is Susan Gillman's *Dark Twins*. Gillman has consolidated some extremely interesting material, particularly from Twain's "minor" writings and from social history. She catalogues his involvement with and protracted interest in the fields of psychology, mental telepathy and hypnotism.[2] Hypnosis is, in fact, a special case, for it provides her with a figure for Twain's procedure as a writer.

> Mark Twain's version of the metaphor [of hypnosis], however, reverses that relationship and turns the artist from mesmerizer into mesmerized subject, controlled or possessed by his own literary creations, his own performance, his own audience. Twain's self-described experiences with writing reiterate many of the central motifs associated in the public mind with the hypnotic or mediumistic trance.
>
> (Gillman 1989: 146)

Gillman's observations cast Twain as one *possessed*, not in full, conscious control of his writing. Her assessment is not unlike that of Twain himself, who describes the writing process in similar terms; however, where Gillman had cast Twain as possessed by such features as "his own literary creations, his own performance, his own audience," Twain describes the experience as a splitting of his own subjectivity:

> I have grown so accustomed to considering that all my powerful impulses come to me from somebody else, that I often feel like a mere amanuensis when I sit down to write . . . I consider that that other person is supplying the thoughts to me, and that I am merely writing from dictation.
>
> (Gillman 1989: 139)

This complete abandonment of the integral self to the will of another is strongly reminiscent of the scene of hypnosis; it is the same abandonment which makes hypnosis infinitely compelling, appalling and inherently incomprehensible. Borch-Jacobsen, in a recent essay on "Hypnosis in Psychoanalysis" articulates the riddle:

> What is this strange emotional malleability of the hypnotized person, which causes him [sic] to feel, perceive, and sometimes even experience in his body everything that the hypnotist directs? How to explain this "paralysis" of the will, this radical disengagement of self, which is at the same time a radical engagement by an other?
>
> (Borch-Jacobsen 1989: 93–94)

Looking at the later writings of Freud on the transference, Borch-Jacobsen postulates that in fact the procedure of psychoanalysis, because of that transference, is strikingly similar to hypnosis: "We might go so far as to say that the whole analytical process moves once again toward the establishment of a hypnotic type of "rapport", in which the subject speaks and thinks like another" (p. 104). Both analysis and hypnosis, then, share the common feature of "this forceful invasion of the 'subject' by another identity" (p. 101). Both procedures depend upon the undermining of the boundary of the self. Keeping in mind Twain's characterization of his own creative moments as a kind of possession, it is really with little surprise that one discovers that he himself had a keen interest in both hypnosis and psychoanalysis. He in fact equated the two in his own mind: "Hypnotism & mind-cure are the same thing; no difference between them" (Gillman 1989: 153). It is also no surprise to discover that he had read William James's *Principles of Psychology* and had followed the research of Charcot.[3] What is remarkable, however, in view of all his expressed familiarity with the field, is Twain's recounting of his childhood experience of mesmerism, and his attempt, as an adult, to recuperate and rewrite the event.

The episode is described in Chapter 11 of his *Autobiography*. We are told of the arrival, in Twain's home town, of an itinerant mesmerist who performed every night for a period of about two weeks. We are led to imagine the scene: the young Samuel Clemens, sitting night after night in the auditorium, longing to surrender himself to the mesmerist's will, resenting those who abandon themselves and win celebrity by humiliating themselves before an eager public. On the fourth night, he can bear it no longer, and so feigns his own hypnosis. "Upon suggestion, I fled from snakes, passed buckets at a fire, became excited over steamboat-races, made love to imaginary girls and kissed them" (Twain 1959: 51). Night after night the boy feigns surrender, yields himself, allows himself to be an expression of the hypnotist's intention. Of course, the voice of the autobiographer can give a rational account of this behaviour, one which transforms it from the chaos of excess to the logic of economics: what Twain loses in self-control, he gains through public adulation and attention. Twain, as a spectator at his own performance, sees himself humiliated through complicity but compensated through celebrity. There is a related episode recounted by Twain in which he deliberately contracts measles (by climbing into bed with an ailing friend). He is rewarded with an acute attack which nearly kills him.

> I have never enjoyed anything in my life any more than I enjoyed dying that time. I was, in effect, dying. The word had been passed and the family notified to assemble around the bed and see me off. I knew them all. There was no doubtfulness in my vision. They were all crying, but that did not affect me. I took

> but the vaguest interest in it and that merely because I was the center of all this emotional attention and was gratified by it and vain of it.
>
> (Twain 1959: 78)

These two episodes reveal graphically just how much Twain is prepared to jeopardize his ego in order to satisfy his libido. In both instances, however, it seems that having survived these episodes, the ego attempts to reassert itself, by claiming that the scenes were, all along, constructed and manipulated to serve the self. In the retelling, of course, Twain does not, or cannot, detect the contradictory drives at work here.[4]

There is a noteworthy postscript to the hypnotism story. Twain, as an adult, attempts to convince his mother that he had, thirty-five years previously, faked his trance, and duped his public:

> [B]eing moved by what seemed to me a rather noble and perhaps heroic impulse, I thought I would humble myself and confess my ancient fault. It cost me a great effort to make up my mind; I dreaded the sorrow that would look out of her eyes; but after long and troubled reflection, the sacrifice seemed due and right and I gathered my resolution together and made the confession.
>
> (Twain 1959: 57)

Of course, there is no moment of recognition and restoration: Twain's mother simply refuses to believe him, thus reiterating her inability to award her son the attention that he seeks throughout their relationship. Again and again, he tries to provide evidence that what she had witnessed had been a sham; again and again, the recreation of the scene serves only to remind her of its authenticity. "And so the lie which I played upon her in my youth remained with her as an unchallenged truth to the day of her death" (p. 58). Twain's insistence here, his burden to disabuse his mother after thirty-five years (and, what is still more striking, upon a first visit to her after a ten year absence) is not without its own logic. As he attempts to constitute himself as an integrated, stable adult, he renounces the threateningly powerful maternal image of himself as a childish, manipulable homunculus. He recasts himself as *man* and not *son*. The will to explain away his vulnerability in the face of hypnotic rapture is explained in part by Harland's discussion of hypnosis in *Superstructuralism*.

> The case of hypnosis furnishes an excellent illustration of the imposed extraneous nature of the individual self. The stage hypnotist's victim may eat a lemon under the influence of hypnotic suggestion, or may bark like a dog under the influence of post-hypnotic suggestion; yet afterwards he [sic] will almost always try to maintain that his behaviour was under his own control. Even when he has been forced to admit to some very odd behaviour indeed, he still feels that he had perfectly sound reasons for it at the time. Frequently he ends up by resorting to blatant evasions or ridiculous excuses and rationalizations. It is as though he must at all costs paper over the cracks and incoherences in his facade of unity.
>
> (Harland 1987: 39)

Obviously, it is not important for our purposes to determine whether or not Twain was hypnotized. What is of interest is the conflict between the desire

to yield to, to become another voice, and the need to assert wholeness and the immaculate discreetness of the self. This conflict finds expression in Twain's work in the problematic figure, the double or twin.

In order to discuss how narcissism is manifest in the thematized doubling and twinning that takes place in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, it is necessary at this point to note that our understanding of the figure of the double has become increasingly rich and complex in the past three decades. The mirror image, particularly in literary uses, is often conflated with the double. Freud does not discuss the mirror specifically in his papers dealing with narcissism; however, he does mention it in his essay on "The Uncanny" (1919).[5] Here Freud effectively relinquishes the field to Rank. He does seem, however, to commit himself to an interpretation, in privileging certain readings which identify doubles, mirror images and shadows as expressions of the superego. In his paper "On Narcissism" (1914), however, the double is the somewhat less persecutory ego ideal.

For Lacan, the mirror image is, precisely, ideal: it is an imaginary construction of the self which can never be realized, a self which is integrated, whole and immaculate. It is important to realize that Lacan's conception, although in some respects derived from Freud, is not an ideal which should be integrated into the self; rather it is an impossible illusion which should be understood as a misrecognition.[6] Further, the mirror image has an aggressive component, as it stands *in the place of* the subject.

For object-relations theory the mirror is the nurturing parent. Clearly Freud and Lacan both to varying degrees acknowledge this, but they do not place the parent as literally as do Klein, Kernberg, Winnicott. What becomes central for these latter theorists is the capacity of the parent adequately to reward and affirm the infant. Every new venture undertaken by the child should be perceived by the parent, and then reflected back with appropriate encouragement. It is here that the infant attains the assurance necessary for healthy development.

In the Freudian scenario, then, the mirror image does have an ideal component. How is it, then, that so frequently in literature, as Freud notes in his work on the uncanny, the double has an avenging or persecutory component? Freud's formulation of the superego as conscience does have some relevance here, but what about those doubles which take on explicitly negative attributes, as libidinous, furtive, or suicidal selves? Can they possibly be the expression of an ideal *imago*, or is there another operation at work? I suggest that these figures alert us to the psychological defense referred to as "splitting", in which all of the feared and hated aspects of the self are projected onto another. As articulated by Kernberg, "the remnants of the unacceptable self images are repressed and projected onto external objects, which are devalued" (Kernberg 1970: 217). This splitting of positive and negative attributes is central to the work of Klein, who complicates Freud's model of the repressed:

> Whereas Freud's mechanism of repression describes the censorship and inhibition of forbidden feelings, Klein developed additional concepts of "splitting" and

> "projective identification", by which unwanted feelings were displaced into other persons and objects, which were then invested with qualities which derive from unconscious fantasy. This was not only a process of fantasy attribution, but also of the actual pushing of feelings onto others.
>
> (Rustin 1983: 60)

For the healthy development of the child through this, the "paranoid-schizoid" phase, the mother must be able to contain these negative projections of the child without being overwhelmed by them. The child will thus gradually grow to recognize both positive and negative attributes in the mother, and will be able to tolerate similar contradictions/complements in the self. The figure of the shadowy twin in literature, when organized as a being that contains all that is antithetical to the self, may be understood in these terms as a repository for negative projections.

With these considerations in mind, I shall be examining *Pudd'nhead Wilson* as an exemplary instance of how Twain deploys the double motif, as well as considering certain of the inherent features of this motif which seem to resist Twain's purposes.

II: Twain's Twins

> When he got to be old enough to begin to toddle about, and say broken words, and get an idea of what his hands were for, he was a more consummate pest than ever. Roxy got no rest while he was awake. He would call for anything and everything he saw, simply saying "Awnt it!" (want it), which was a command. When it was brought, he said, in a frenzy, and motioning it away with his hands, "Don't awnt it! don't awnt it!" and the moment it was gone he set up frantic yells of "Awnt it! awnt it! awnt it!" and Roxy had to give wings to her heels to get that thing back to him again before he could get time to carry out his intention of going into convulsions about it.
>
> What he preferred above all other things was the tongs. This was because his "father" had forbidden him to have them.
>
> *Pudd'nhead Wilson*[7]

In the preceding scene we are invited to witness the character development of Roxy's son (who will, for clarity, be referred to as "Tom" throughout), after his mother, a slave woman, has exchanged him for his master's child. The episode is remarkable, for it coalesces a number of central psychoanalytic motifs. Most interestingly, it provides an enactment of the much debated "fort-da" episode, described by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* Freud observes an eighteen month old child who confirms his mastery over his environment (and his relationships) by alternately casting away and retrieving small objects, while simultaneously verbalizing their disappearance and reappearance. Brenkman, in his examination of this scene, presents Lacan's reformulation of the sequence as centrally about the acquisition of language: "the moment in which desire becomes human is also the moment the child is born into language" (Brenkman 1987: 147). For Lacan, of course, the episode involves the infant in identifying itself as separate from its objects, the Self as distinct from others. Brenkman then describes what he refers to as the "dialectic of the request":

> Vital needs prompt the helpless infant to cry. Crying is invested by the Other as a request for love; this investment is reinforced in the infant's experience by his or her total dependence, such that the request generalizes the particular need . . . In Freud's vocabulary it is the "memory-traces" of these gratifications which comprise the primal layers of the unconscious. Lacan in turn calls them *signifiers*. . . . These memory-traces are not signs or indicators of the vital needs or tendencies. They are the residue or remainder left behind by the unbalanced and nonreciprocal dialogue between the subject and the Other.
>
> (Brenkman 187: 159)

What is central to this description is the fact that there is always a residue; the gesture of the parent can never be equivalent to the need of the infant.

There is another asymmetry foreseen by Lacan, and that is due to the principle of denial, characterized as the Law of the Father. Interestingly, the principles of reward and restraint are gendered in precisely this way in Twain's narrative. The mother, Roxy, is infinitely affirming and indulgent; it is the surrogate father who forbids the boy access to "the tongs" (and the Oedipal overtones here are obvious). Further, it is his denial that creates the desire in the boy: thus the boy's desire is actually structured in response to the father's prohibition. Brenkman historicizes the account given by Lacan by locating it within a particular familial structure:

> The exclusiveness of the child's relation to the mother, the intensity of his dependence and love, are organized by a social practice peculiar to the restricted family.
>
> (Brenkman 187: 149)

Brenkman is here assuming the bourgeois family unit as the norm for the Lacanian model. In *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the "restricted family" such as identified by Brenkman is complicated in significant ways, because of the intersection between family and slave relations. Twain has, in fact, foregrounded the abnormal relations produced under the slave economy in the early pages of the novel. We are told that, besides Roxy, Driscoll has three slaves, "a man, a woman, and a boy twelve years old. They were not related" (Twain 1980: 10). What Twain has constituted here is an *anti-family*, which exhibits the external signs of normal generational bonds, yet is brought together solely under economic imperatives. Similarly, there are abnormal components to the relationship between Roxy and her son, elements which are a direct consequence of the slave economy and which, in turn, determine psychological features of the mother and child. For example, when Roxy switches the two children she transforms her own son into her master, and thus she finds a legitimating device for flooding his little ego with gratification. She is in no position to deny him anything. Thus the usual paradigm of the mother/infant diad is amplified: "He was her darling, her master, and her deity, all in one, and in her worship of him she forgot who she was and what she had been" (p. 19).

This adulation of the infant is in large part compensatory, for Roxy never forgets his essential flaw, the fact that he is, to her, always "one part nigger" (p. 70). Obviously in her characterization of her son, she is also stigmatizing

herself. The loathing which she feels for Tom's bad blood can only be an elaboration of her own self-loathing. Freud had demonstrated the way in which a damaged, narcissistic parent would live vicariously through a child, who is thus permitted to live outside of the constraints which had hampered the parent.

> Illness, death, renunciation of enjoyment, restrictions on his own will, shall not touch him; the laws of nature and of society shall be abrogated in his favour; he shall once more really be the centre and core of creation – "His majesty the Baby", as we once fancied ourselves. The child shall fulfil those wishful dreams of the parents which they never carried out.
>
> (Freud 1984: "On Narcissism", p. 85)

Here Twain reproduces the dynamics of a psychological drama, without necessarily fully recognizing the structures which organize that drama. As Tom develops from infancy through to adolescence, we are shown repeatedly how impoverished his emotional life is. He has no capacity for sympathetic identification, and withdraws from human relationships. It seems clear, in Twain's text, that one can locate the overindulgence of Roxy as the source of Tom's narcissism. However, according to the psychoanalytic literature, it would actually be Roxy's *ambivalence* towards her son, not an unqualified adoration of him, that produces these narcissistic traits.[8]

Of course, what makes this narrative about the psychic formation of the narcissistic child so intriguing for our purposes, is the fact that the novel which contains it abounds in doubling motifs. Tom has a surrogate who lives out his life as a slave on Tom's behalf. There are a number of similar "changeling" plots in Twain's oeuvre; the *Medieval Romance* and *The Prince and the Pauper* provide two obvious examples. Now, it is clearly not essential for the changeling story to be at the same time a story of doubles. The changeling is a child who is magically inserted into a community through some fiat, either of supernatural or human agency. (Perhaps the most obvious example in Western literature is the story of Moses in the bulrushes. Significantly, this is the first lesson which the Widow Douglas reads to Huck Finn, in the opening pages of that novel.) However, the changeling story is frequently one which tells of the inverted fortunes of a pair of doubles who assume one another's identities and narratives. Twain's fiction invariably uses this device in order to explore a range of existential and psychological questions. In fact, it is also fairly easy to find such use made of the twin in Twain's essays and autobiographical writings. Irwin recounts a particularly marvellous episode from "An Encounter with an Interviewer", which is worth quoting in full. The interviewer, seeing a picture on the wall, asks whether it is the writer's brother, and when Twain replies that it is indeed his brother Bill, "poor old Bill", the interviewer asks,

> Q. Why? Is he dead, then?
> A. Ah! well, I suppose so. We never could tell. There was a great mystery about it.
> Q. That is sad, very sad. He disappeared, then?
> A. Well, yes, in a sort of general way. We buried him.

Q. *Buried* him! *Buried* him, without knowing whether he was dead or not?
A. Oh, no! Not that. He was dead enough.
Q. Well, I confess that I can't understand this. If you buried him, and you knew he was dead –
A. No! no! We only thought he was.
Q. Oh, I see! He came to life again?
A. I bet he didn't.
Q. Well, I never heard anything like this. *Somebody* was dead. *Somebody* was buried. Now, where was the mystery?
A. Ah! That's just it! That's it exactly. You see, we were twins – defunct and I – and we got mixed in the bathtub when we were only two weeks old, and one of us drowned. But we didn't know which. Some think it was Bill. Some think it was me.
Q. Well, that *is* remarkable. What do *you* think?
A. Goodness knows! I would give whole worlds to know. This solemn, this awful mystery has cast a gloom over my whole life. But I will tell you a secret now, which I have never revealed to any creature before. One of us had a peculiar mark – a large mole on the back of his left hand; that was me. That child was the one who drowned.

(Irwin 1975: 13–14. Emphasis in original)

At an obvious level this tale serves Twain by scandalizing the reader. However, the story also scandalizes language, because of the dangerous manipulation of subject and object pronouns. It is not possible for the subject of an utterance to be anything but "I" (whether in a single or plural form); however, in this extract, Twain violates this rule. He does not speculate about the identify of the other, which grammar can accommodate; he speculates about the identity of his *self*, which is a profoundly disturbing activity. Nor is it a simple questioning of "Who am I?". In this formulation, the subject pronoun can be inserted with confidence in place of the interrogative: "I am I". Rather, the question is "Am I me?". Formulated this way, the problem becomes apparent, for the first person pronoun must thus occur in both nominative and accusative cases, as both subject and object of its own interrogation. (This is something of the procedure in Paul Fleming's poem. See the epigraph.)

The story recounted in the pseudo-interview is structurally almost identical to an episode given in Twain's *Autobiography*. He describes how, one night, he dreams of his brother Henry as a corpse in a metal coffin dressed in a suit of Twain's clothing. According to this account, Twain, upon waking, cannot at first distinguish dream from reality. It does not surprise the reader to find, in the following paragraph, an account of how Henry does, indeed, die shortly after this, and is laid out in a metal coffin wearing a suit of Twain's clothing (Twain 1959: 98–101). This is not the opportunity to engage in a lengthy examination of Twain's relationship with his brother; let me simply comment that there is abundant evidence of his ambivalence towards Henry in the *Autobiography*, and this ambivalence generally revolves around the mother's alleged inequitable treatment of the two boys. "My mother had a good deal of trouble with me but I think she enjoyed it. She had none at all with my brother Henry" (p. 33).

One ingredient of "An Encounter with an Interviewer" which deserves attention is the mole on the left hand of "defunct" (and it is not without significance that the mark is on the left/*sinister* hand). It seems that, in writing of doubles, there is always an attempt by Twain to invoke some external evidence which can allegedly validate the *true and authentic* identities of each of the characters involved. In *The Prince and the Pauper* only the true prince is supposed to have knowledge of the whereabouts of the Great Seal. In the *Medieval Romance*, the Ducal Throne has the power to identify and destroy any pretender who sits unlawfully upon it. In *Pudd'nhead Wilson* there are the all-important fingerprints, which can establish categorically who each of the characters is. Interestingly, it seems that these very tokens of proof provide Twain with considerable unease, for, despite protestation to the contrary, the secret sign frequently fails to be an adequate safeguard against the pretender. Both the prince and the pauper know where the Great Seal is; the narrative of the *Medieval Romance* is terminated self-consciously without resolution, because the narrator says that the plot has become too complicated, and in "An Encounter with an Interviewer" confusion still reigns about the identify of "defunct" in spite of the signifying mole.

In *Pudd'nhead Wilson* the identifying secret does at first seem to fulfil its promise. Here the fingerprints can be used *legally* and *scientifically* to substantiate identity. Twain must have been delighted at finding a device which so incontrovertibly establishes and confirms the uniqueness and discreetness of an individual. Gillman discusses Twain's interest in the then recently discovered field of research into fingerprinting techniques, and she cites his familiarity with Francis Galton's *Fingerprints*, published in 1892 (Gillman 1989: 88–91). Ironically, however, the fingerprints in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* undermine Twain's own purposes, as Gillman demonstrates in an interesting discussion of how the vital evidence used in the case does not serve truth and justice. Rather, it reaffirms how we are socially constituted:

> Rather than leading to any stable, independent determinant of identity, then, the fingerprints focus attention on the social context that authorizes their use in the science of "personal identification".
>
> (Gillman 1989: 91)

What is demonstrated is that science, as it is "invented" by nineteenth-century legal, political and philosophical imperatives, is an ideological instrument. Wilson's truth about Tom's identity serves the structures of nineteenth-century antebellum sociopolitical organization, by demonstrating that there *is* a difference between Tom and his surrogate, freeman and slave.

What interests me is not so much Twain's deployment of the fingerprint motif in isolation; rather, it is important to see how this relates to various disclosure devices in his work. In the other novels cited above, the sign has marvellous and mythic resonances. Twain is quite clearly drawing on the stuff of Western Romance in these instances: the birthmark that reveals hitherto concealed kinship is a well-known figure in literature. What Twain has not adequately taken into account, however, is the way in which the notion of *being* has changed by the late nineteenth century: the problem that besets him

is about the relationship of the self to the self. He is asking that question which is a grammatical impossibility, "Am I me?". A mark which can be used publically to attest to an individual's identity fails precisely because its proof is physical, external.[9] Thus, even though the technical development of the fingerprint is new, modern, *avant-garde* ("The fingerprints in this one is virgin ground" he told his publisher Fred Hall),[10] it cannot address the phenomenological and existential anxieties which Twain's work so often reflects. I suspect that Twain, for all his excitement over the literary potential of the fingerprint, was frustrated with the application of the idea. The courtcase and its ruling are, as Gillman has pointed out, masterpieces of convolution, manipulation and distortion. The novel closes leaving the reader with a sense of symmetry rather than a sense of justice. Ironically, the abandoned Siamese twins who were the basis of the first version of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, an aborted novella called *Those Extraordinary Twins*, probably held more metaphoric promise for Twain. Their interest lay in the fact that external evidence could not be used to designate identity. In *Pudd'nhead Wilson* the twins no longer share one body; nonetheless there are still traces of Twain's earlier experiment: "We were their only child", Angelo explains, a conflation of personae that is one of the traces from *Those Extraordinary Twins* still embedded in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*.[11]

Pudd'nhead Wilson thus has two sets of doubles, Chambers and Tom, and Luigi and Angelo, each carrying with them very different metaphoric meaning and potential. Critics have felt uneasy at dealing with this material which is, after all, they assert, part of an unstable text which Twain radically revised, and thus is beyond recuperation. There is the scepticism of those who see Antonio and Luigi only as Twain's weak version of the failed Siamese twins. In *Those Extraordinary Twins* Luigi and Antonio provided farce while allowing Twain to explore questions of identity and psychology: in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* their final function is different *in kind* from the function first intended. What is interesting to me, however, is that it seems that in spite of Twain's plot changes, Luigi and Angelo import to *Pudd'nhead Wilson* a whole range of meaning beyond their mechanical place in the structure of the text.

One important orbit of meaning, I suggest, comes from Locke and liberal philosophy, via Swiftian satire. The problem of identity is of central importance to Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. In Book I, Chapter iv and Book II, Chapter i there are lengthy meditations on the body, the soul, and identity. Is a sane man, Locke sceptically asks, culpable for the crimes he commits when he is a mad man? Locke's questions invoked much ridicule from Stillingfleet and others, who defended the conception of an essential self (Fox 1988: 36–45). Swift plays into this controversy when, in 1708, he writes about a pair of young female Siamese twins who made a tour of Europe with their father.

> Here is the sight of two girls joined together at the back which, in the newsmonger's phrase, causes a great many speculations; and raises abundance of questions in divinity, law, and physic.
>
> (Fox 1988: 67)

In his *Memoirs of Scriblerus* Swift went on to exploit the figure of the Siamese twins for satiric effect. Scriblerus, an old pedant, marries a pair of Siamese twins, the Bohemian sisters Lindamira and Indamara, and is tried for bigamy and incest (Fox 1988: 81). The example of Siamese twins, then, becomes a trope in modern Western thought; it provides a kind of test case, or limit term, for definitions of personal identity.

There is another line of inheritance which Twain inevitably invokes by using the Italians, Giacomo and Giovanni Tocci, whom he had seen on exhibition in 1891, and not on the Orientals, Chang and Eng, who had provided the source of earlier work of his on this theme (Gillman 1989: 54–60). The Italian names give the twins a romantic literary legacy which cannot be avoided. The subsequent introduction of Chambers and Tom into the plot gives a doubling to the twinning. In *Those Extraordinary Twins* there had been only one set of doubles; *Pudd'nhead Wilson* has two, the identical but not Siamese twins, Angelo and Luigi, and Tom and Chambers, who are not identical, but of the Prince and the Pauper type. They are changelings who are transposed into one another's realms. Twain can thus initially separate out two relatively distinct narrative realms for the two pairs to inhabit. Luigi and Antonio represent an archaic romantic and mythic sphere, while Tom and Chambers show how the trope is transformed for a post-industrial, historically specific narrative.

Such a shift of course implies a necessary change in the narrative possibilities. When Luigi and Antonio first arrive at Dawson's Landing, they produce certain expectations in the reader. We are, at that point in the novel, watching with some dread, as Tom Driscoll, Roxy's son, lives out an assumed identity. The Italianate twins bring onto the scene a sense of fable, and the possibility for marvellous resolution, in which truth will be revealed and order will be restored. However, the context of the situation is no longer appropriate for such an ending: we have entered an age of industrial technology. What can be determined is no longer Truth, but Fact, as Dickens has shown us. The fact of the matter is what science and law can establish, and the end of this quest is no longer the revelation of truth, but rather, the determination of fact. The stabilizing of identity will reveal Tom to be an upstart slave, and his mother's criminal imposition will be disclosed. Thus the encounter between the two sets of doubles invokes a narrative promise which Twain cannot actually fulfill. The resolution of the novel is deeply ambiguous, and we are uneasy about celebrating Pudd'nhead Wilson's final triumph as custodian of fact. We have, represented in the meeting of the two pairs, evidence of what Foucault might call a shift in the discursive régime,[12] as one type of enquiry asserts itself over its predecessor. Consequently, too, the narrative form of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is no longer that of *Those Extraordinary Twins*, and the detective novel, which has *fact* as its end, replaces the romantic comedy.

If the twins enter the text as figures from a fabled past, readily identifiable with Shakespearean comedy, Tom and Chambers are, by contrast, creatures determined by history. Luigi and Antonio are preoccupied with questions of honour and courage; Tom and Chambers are governed by questions of economic necessity.[13] Luigi and Antonio are immediately recognized for their

potential as suitors; Tom and Chambers have no romantic or sexual interest. The significance of this last feature can be coherently explained through a close consideration of certain elements in Tom's narrative, as we follow his development from infancy through into manhood.

It is remarkable that, in a novel where so much emphasis is given to Tom's psychological evolution, he is never mentioned as having any romantic or sexual impulses: such a plotline is not even contemplated by the narrative. This is not to say that he has no desire, however; Tom has one consuming passion, and that is for money. It is as if his sexual energy is displaced, and expressed only through a financial compulsion. Freud's description of anality and hoarding is too familiar to need reiteration here. Rather, I would like to draw attention to some interesting intersections between other sexual, psychological and economic factors in operation.

It is necessary to bear in mind, from the start, that *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is an historical novel, in that it is written in a *post-abolition* America about *antebellum* society. Twain's text is thus centrally concerned about the conditions of existence in a slave economy, and the two central protagonists, Roxy and Tom are constantly worrying about money. While Twain is not insensitive to the big metaphysical issues of freedom and dignity, he identifies economics as the *last instance* in this novel. Roxy's past sexual expenditure has only increased her economic dependency, because she is subsequently burdened with a slave-child. Her solution is covertly to insert her son into the place of the heir: initially this strategy is justified as a means of ensuring that he is never sold into slavery in the South. However, by the end of the novel she is completely immersed in her son's drive for economic power.

Tom's financial fortunes fluctuate mercilessly, largely as a consequence of his gambling, for which he acquires a taste while at Yale. Gambling is a useful folly for literary purposes, because the novelist can use it to manipulate the plot to an extraordinary extent. It does serve particularly well in this case, because it stands as a figure for the desire for gross return on minimal expenditure, and thus also represents the principle of a slave economy. Tom's gambling further also provides a useful metaphor for his deflected sexual energy. A healthy and regenerating sexual drive requires a generous investment of the self, which is in turn rewarded, and the circuit of exchange is renewed. It is interesting that Freud describes the narcissistic self-attachment as the "damming-up of libido in the ego" (Freud 1984: "On Narcissism" p. 78), a figure which suggests a system with too much energy flowing in one direction.

There is a fleeting suggestion that Tom *does* have sexual drives, a suggestion that, curiously, comes from Pudd'nhead Wilson himself, the one who is set up as witness for the prosecution. We hear of a mysterious young woman, whom Wilson sees in Tom's bedroom. Wilson is immediately suspicious. Who can the young woman be? and what is she doing in Tom's bedroom? It is, we discover later, Tom in disguise, but by keeping this information from us Twain implicates us in Wilson's fantasies and projections, and we as readers construct Tom's female self as an other, and link the two in a relation with specifically erotic overtones. However, Tom's erotic

economy is a closed one, in which the self is always tested against its own image, an image which petrifies the viewer.

This scene can be read as a thematization of the antebellum Southern slave economy. What should be structured as *an open exchange between* becomes a fixated *circulation within*, reflecting a dread of such difference as may jeopardise identity. In pre-civil war America, the legal classification of the child followed the condition of the mother; thus the children of a slave woman were automatically classified as slaves. In such a situation, the circulation of women becomes a major threat to the management of racial identity. Restricted circulation circumvents the threat of miscegenation. Safe exchange is closed exchange; ultimately, in fact, it is stasis, narcissism, with subject and object as identical. Tom's erotic economy is not a homoerotic one[14]; rather, it returns us to the question "am I me?" as formulated earlier, in which self is both subject and object of its own utterance, yet it also mimes the logic of the slave-owning sector of the American South.

What this suggests, is that the figure of the double, deployed as it is over and over again in Twain's work, provides a striking point of conjunction between his own psychological organization, which can itself be read in economic terms, and the material structures of the nineteenth-century slave economy in North America. Twain's use of the double, so frequently a figure analyzed as an ahistorical, universal image of "otherness", in fact has its own specific features and coordinates. Part of the interest of the two texts, *Those Extraordinary Twins* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, lies in the shift which they manifest, from a timeless farce about doubles, being, and identity, to an uneasy, contradictory work which adds the dimensions of history and politics. In Twain's own assessment, the novella "changed itself from a farce to a tragedy while I was going along with it" (*Pudd'nhead Wilson* p. x). But the scene of automatic writing that Twain describes for us here, reminds us once again of the young Samuel Clemens in the thrall of the hypnotist. He characterizes himself as neither wholly agent nor object in the creative process. It is there, at the "sign of the double" that "Mark Twain" represents himself in language.

Notes

1. Auff ihr Abwesen
   Ich irrte hin und her, und suchte mich in mir,
   und wuste dieses nicht, dass ich gantz war in dir.
   Ach! thu dich mir doch auff, du Wohnhauss meiner Seelen!
   Komm, Schöne, gieb mich mir. Benim mir dieses quälen.
   Schau, wie er sich betrübt, mein Geist, der in dir lebt?
   Tödst du den, der dich liebt? itzt hat er ausgelebt.
   Doch, gieb mich nicht aus dir. Ich mag nicht in mich kehren.
   Kein Todt hat macht an mir. Du kanst mich leben lehren.
   Ich sey auch, wo ich sey, bin ich, Schatz, nicht bey dir,
   So bin ich nimmermehr selbest in und bey mir.

   (Fleming 1974: 172–73)
2. See Chapter 5, "The Dream Writings and the Cosmic Consciousness".

3. In 1898 he stated in an unpublished version of "My Platonic Sweetheart" that he had derived his understanding of dreams from Charcot and James. See Gillman 1989: 136.
4. The terms *ego* and *libido* are notoriously fraught in Freud. The shift between topographical and economic models of the subject imply profound instability for such terms. Within the topographical model, the libido may in some sense be likened to the *id*, aligned against the *ego*. In economic terms, the libido would be aligned with Eros as a life force. The shift between the two paradigms, topographical and economic, tends to undermine any binary representation of the organization of the subject, as Laplanche demonstrates in his *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*.
5. See Freud 1984: vol. 14, 356–359.
6. Twain 1980: 18.
7. For the history of this debate, see Annie Reich (1960), "Pathologic Forms of Self-esteem Regulation"; Heinz Kohut (1966), "Forms and Transformations of Narcissism"; Otto Kernberg (1970), "Factors in the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personalities".
8. A work which in some ways prefigures Twain's is Dostoyevsky's early novel, *The Double* (1846). Golyadkin, Dostoyevsky's protagonist, has his life invaded by someone who is identical in all physical attributes. Appropriately, the only differences between the two men are internal, differences in character and psychology. Golyadkin cannot defend himself against this imposter, and he is ultimately displaced. Dostoyevsky was keenly aware of the aggressive aspect of the double.
9. Gillman 1989: 88.
10. See *Pudd'nhead Wilson* p. 27.
11. See *Power/Knowledge*. Foucault 1980: 112–113.
12. Although the narrative does not concern itself with Chamber's story we are given enough information to recognize that his life has been one of humiliation and servitude, and so the dichotomy I am establishing holds true.
13. However, Freud's own work on narcissism has led to much subsequent contentious argument over the links between narcissism and homosexual object choice.

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