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Whitewashed Exteriors: Mark Twain's Imitation Whites

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October 12. – The Discovery. – It was wonderful to find America, but it would have been more wonderful to miss it.

Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar[1]

He was most fifty and he looked it. His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through it like he was behind vines. It was all black, no gray; so was his long, mixed-up whiskers. There warn't no color in his face, where his face showed; it was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl – a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white.[2]

O Liberty, white Goddess! Is it well
To leave the gates unguarded?[3]

Near the end of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), in what is perhaps the supreme demonstration of Mark Twain's belief in the power of dominant culture to shape the consciousness of even its marginalized subjects, Huck bestows on Jim what (for Huck) is the ultimate praise. When Jim appears to sacrifice his freedom in order to help the wounded Tom Sawyer, Huck comments that Jim was "white inside" (349). Given that the whole incident is the product of yet another of Tom's childish pranks, here risking the lives of all three characters in the effort to "set a free nigger free" (366), it is bitingly ironic that Huck – even when passing as Tom Sawyer – should describe Jim in quite this fashion.[4] Among numerous negative representations

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[1] Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Other Tales* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 143. Subsequent page references are cited in parentheses in the text.

[2] Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884; reprint, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 69. Subsequent page references are cited in parentheses in the text.

[3] Thomas Bailey Aldrich, "Unguarded Gates," (*Atlantic Monthly*, July 1892).

[4] The significance of this passing should not be underestimated. Myra Jehlen is one critic who overstates her case when she argues, citing the wrecked steamboat incident, that Huck

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throughout the novel, white behaviour has ranged from the Widow Douglas's stiflingly repressive ethic, to the cold-blooded slaughter that is the product of the gentlemanly codes followed by the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons, to the sheer brutality of Pap Finn, all enacted beneath the overarching theme of slavery. The way in which Pap is described as effectively whiter-than-white, with "no color in his face" and "skin white to make a body sick," should alert any reader to the idea that, for Twain, the codes by which the dominant culture lives are inextricably linked to ideologies of race, even where his white protagonists are not slave-owners, or when no non-white characters are present in a particular episode.[5]

The very fact that Huck is able to deploy such a phrase at all alerts us to the manner in which racial identities are constructed in the novel, through a polarization of the white/black divide. To be white is to manifest a particular set of cultural markers – for Huck, the values transmitted through the romantic fictions that inform Tom Sawyer's childhood games and the Grangerford/Shepherdson feud – and while it is clear that Twain is scathing in his criticism of Southern white culture, Huck's relationship with Jim (and the partial transformation that this brings about in Huck's own thinking and behaviour) interrogates the racial identities within the black/white binary, rather than moving beyond it. While such a strategy makes sense in terms of the cultural logic of the antebellum South where the novel is staged, its relevance to the America of the mid-1880s, when it was published, is questionable.

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has a "totally uncritical acceptance of the established culture." Although this does explain his eagerness to board the boat, Huck is moved to do so (as Jehlen acknowledges) by the "spirit" of Tom Sawyer. This spirit is certainly powerful, and shapes Huck's actions on many occasions, but there are also numerous instances of more critical insights, especially when Huck is exposed to the violent consequences of white cultural codes. See Myra Jehlen, "Banned in Concord: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Classic American Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain*, ed. Forrest G. Robinson (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 93–115, 99.

[5] Eric Lott points to the links between black and lower-class white Americans, citing the fact that, when Pap makes his black professor speech, he is "actually as black as the hated 'mulatter,' since he is, as Huck says, 'just all mud' after a drunken night lying in the gutter." But such blackface performance is less suggestive of "interracial recognitions and identifications" (although, on one level, Twain's irony does hint at these) than it is an attempt to establish absolute differences. Lott is correct to argue that such scenes indicate "a severe white insecurity about the status of whiteness," and this insecurity is present throughout much of Twain's fiction. Nevertheless, the manner in which, by the era of post-Reconstruction America in the1880s, blackface acts turned slavery into a subject of comedy and portrayed black Americans as "simps, dopes, and docile tunesmiths" counters this to a much greater extent than Lott suggests. See Eric Lott, "Mr. Clemens and Jim Crow: Twain, Race, and Blackface," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain*, 129–52, 130.

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At the end of the novel, Huck famously vows to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" (369), a gesture situated at a time when his Missouri community represented frontier experience, but whose futility would be unlikely to be lost on the readers of the 1880s, by when such uncolonized spaces (at least in mainland North America) were rapidly vanishing. This, alongside the marginal presence of actual foreigners (as opposed to romantic fictions propagating their beliefs, and the King and Duke's fraudulent manipulation of Southern ignorance of Europe), raises problems of the novel's relevance to American culture of the time that are never resolved. As Jonathan Arac has put it in his important assessment of the way in which *Huckleberry Finn* became canonized from the mid-twentieth century, the novel's "America of WASPs and slaves could appear a welcome simplification compared with an America of the 1880s, in which immigration, increasingly of Catholics from Southern and Eastern Europe, was becoming a politically sensitive concern."[6] Likewise, the representation of Jim, whether he is viewed as a positive alternative to white values or as an acquiescent Uncle Tom, was becoming anachronistic by the 1880s and 1890s, when such notions of racial passivity were rapidly being replaced by fears of black male–white female miscegenation and the image of the "black rapist." In contrast, in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), Twain revisits the antebellum South to comment much more overtly upon the United States of the late nineteenth century. Although the novel's ostensible time span is from the 1830s to 1850s, its subject matter offers (whether intentionally or not on Twain's part) a highly complex examination of the America of the 1890s, both through the internal dynamics of a racial politics insisting upon an absolute split between

[6] Jonathan Arac, *Huckleberry Finn as Idol and Target: The Functions of Criticism in Our Time* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 107. I believe that Arac is correct to argue that it is "possible to link *Huckleberry Finn* to fundamental national historical experiences, but the link can only be made allegorically, that is, only through an aggressively active process of reader's interpretation, about which in fact readers differ very widely" (137). Many critics have attempted to read the novel in the light of the end of Reconstruction and what Shelley Fisher Fishkin has called the effective re-enslavement of thousands of African Americans "through such means as share-cropping, lynchings, and the convict-lease system." Fishkin lists the major studies of *Huckleberry Finn* that offer such readings and points to the historical incidents that could have shaped the book, but her repeated use of "may have" and admission that "it cannot be proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that Twain intentionally wrote these implications into his text" illustrate the "aggressively active process" of readerly interpretation that Arac suggests is necessary to such approaches. See Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Was Huck Black? Mark Twain and African American Voices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 68–76, 69, 73.

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"white" and "black," and through an exploration of how the increased presence of immigrants from Europe posed a new challenge to longer-established representatives of white America. In the remainder of this essay, I will move beyond other readings of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, which have focused on the white/black plot or (less frequently) on immigration, in order to examine the ways in which issues of race and ethnicity are (like the "extraordinary twins" of the novel's companion piece) intertwined and inseparable, and assess the manner in which new definitions of American whiteness emerged as a strategy for containing the double "threat" of the "new Negro" and the immigrant.

Whereas Huck sees Jim as "white inside," in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* it is Roxy's son's external features, his blue eyes and white skin, that enable her to swap the two babies and condemn the real Tom Driscoll to life as an "imitation nigger" (44).[7] At one level, the displacement of the real Tom, who really is "white inside" but is only comfortable in the kitchen, who has the "manners of a slave" and possesses "vulgar and uncouth" gait and gestures (144), renders the concept of behaviour inherent to racial whiteness as absurd as had Pap in *Huckleberry Finn*. But the reverse situation is not necessarily true; indeed, as we shall see, much textual evidence suggests that the imitation Tom Driscoll fails to adopt the behaviour of the white "gentlemen" of the community precisely because he manifests characteristics typical of the racial stereotypes of the day.[8]

As Susan Gillman (among others) has argued, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* speaks "even more pointedly to the growing racism of its own era … than to

[7] Eric J. Sundquist and Brook Thomas are among the critics who have pointed out that the difficulties inherent in the attempts of the citizens of Dawson's Landing to identify race through skin colour in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* echo the case of Homer Plessy, who was so light-skinned that his arrest for travelling in a white-only train car had to be arranged. See Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 225–70; Brook Thomas, *American Literary Realism and the Failed Promise of Contract* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 191–230. I do not dispute this undoubted link. Nevertheless, my argument in this paper and in my analysis of White City illustrates the fact that such difficulties (as well as increasingly desperate attempts to overcome them) were prevalent at the time, and were not limited to Southern states.

[8] At least one contemporary reader was alert to this point; the reviewer for *Public Opinion*, 18 (14 February 1895), 161, commented that "if we reflect upon the career of the rightful heir, it seems to teach the greater force of education and habit than blood or heredity … . But the more minutely detailed behavior of his substitute appears to lead to the belief that antecedents and the inherited moral weakness of the slave were too much for training and environment." *Mark Twain: The Contemporary Reviews*, ed. Louis J. Budd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 369–70.

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the race slavery abolished thirty years earlier,"[9] and the fascination with imitation and its limits situates the novel firmly in the late nineteenth century, despite its staging in the past. Thus, despite this staging, Twain's engagement with hardening post-Reconstruction white attitudes to African American males results in a central "black" character (passing, for most of the novel, as Tom) diametrically opposed to Jim in his behaviour since, unlike Jim, the boy who grows up as Tom Driscoll outdoes even the white masters in his general conduct and his treatment of the "black" characters, Chambers and Roxy. Finally, as we shall see, this transition represents a pattern of racial thinking strikingly similar to that witnessed elsewhere during the 1890s, in the confused (white) desire to educate other races through a culture of spectacle and imitation, whilst simultaneously insisting upon white superiority. In order fully to appreciate this point, it is necessary to commence with a look at Twain's representation of American racial ideologies, and at the seemingly inevitable confusions that emanate from such a representation.

It is clear from the opening pages of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* that the book is designed to participate in (and critique) a range of late nineteenth-century approaches to racial, national and international issues. The introductory "Whisper to the Reader" immediately strikes at the authority of "legal matters," with its mock tribute to the assistance provided by ex-law student and current assistant in a "horse-feed shed," William Hicks, in ensuring that "the legal chapters are right and straight" (3), thus foreshadowing the well documented attack on the "fiction of law and custom" (13) that makes Roxy and her son "black." Likewise, the irreverent tone with which Twain describes Florentine architecture and literature undermines the associations, implied for example by the White City's design, between the United States of the 1890s and the high culture of the Old World. The fact that Twain is himself writing about America from Italy, thus reversing the journey made by Angelo and Luigi in the novel (and millions of immigrants during the 1890s), establishes a distance between author and his subject matter, but his

[9] Susan Gillman, "'Sure Identifiers': Race, Science, and the Law in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture*, ed. Susan Gillman and Forest G. Robinson (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 86–104, 88. It is striking, nevertheless, that few of Twain's contemporaries identified such relevance to their own time. Two reviews of the novel are representative in their attitude: in *Idler*, 6 (August 1894), 222–23, William Livingston Alden remarks that "it is as a carefully painted picture of life in a Mississippi town in the days of slavery that its chief merit lies." And in the *Springfield* [MA] *Republican*, 3 February 1895, 11, the anonymous reviewer praises the novel's "vivid picture of the South of slavery days," a world that both critics seem incapable of linking with their own. *Mark Twain: The Contemporary Reviews*, 359, 369.

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focus on, for example, Dante's sexual desire for Beatrice and her purchase of a "chunk of chestnut cake" (3) immediately makes clear that for Twain (unlike, say, the Henry James of *The Bostonians*) Europe is not necessarily a different and superior model to be imitated by a provincial white America. Such an approach is not coincidental; unlike *Huckleberry Finn*'s relatively straightforward binary opposition between white and black, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is concerned with the place of the white immigrant as well as that of the African American in American culture.[10]

The confusions and dissimulations are furthered in the opening chapter of the novel through the description of Dawson's Landing as a "snug little collection of modest one-and-two-storey frame dwellings whose white-washed exteriors were almost concealed from sight by climbing tangles of rose-vines, honeysuckles, and morning-glories" (5). The idyllic account of the settlement, cleansed by the "clear waters" of the Mississippi (6), continues for two pages, before the revelation that this is a slaveholding town. Parodying the popular urban histories of the time, which invariably celebrated the virtue and industry of the white population, Twain initially glosses over this uncomfortable detail, instead constructing a narrative of origins built around the aristocratic codes of the First Families of Virginia (FFV). Although it soon becomes plain that these families are not only morally tainted, but also mixed in a manner that ridicules the whole premise of racial separation, this opening account concentrates on the FFV's "religion," the need to "be a gentleman without stain or blemish" (7). Later in the book, it is the paradoxically invisible stain made on Tom by his one thirty-second part of black blood that unsettles this whole structure, but here the story appears clear, and Twain systematically deflects attention from the confusion to follow by informing the reader that "we have no concern" (7) with Colonel Cecil Burleigh Essex (Tom's father).

The other significant moment in the opening pages of the book is the arrival of David Wilson. As a result of his half-a-dog joke, Wilson is marginalized physically, socially and textually for most of the novel, living and working in a "small house on the extreme western verge of the town" (10),

[10] It is possible to see Dante's presence in *Inferno*-esque abolitionist writing about slavery. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Tom's movement steadily south (from the relative contentment of the Shelby farm, via his time with the St. Claires) signifies a moral as much as a geographical descent, concluding in his temptation and death at the Hell-like Legree estate. Likewise, the expression "sold down the river," much used in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, illustrates the extent to which the horrors of slavery were defined according to a sliding scale, by which moving further south was equated with increased hardship. Of course, this is also one of the great puzzles of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, in which Jim and Huck continue south downriver after missing Cairo in the fog.

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having little paid work and appearing only rarely in the main body of the text. Reminders of his presence are found instead in the calendar entries which introduce each chapter, and which comment, to greater or lesser degrees, on the events that take place. But this marginality is deceptive, and he functions as a kind of ideological time-bomb; as a native of New York State, the "college-bred" Wilson is (as the notes to the World's Classics edition make clear) "well ahead of his time in practising as a trained lawyer in a settlement so far west" (266), although, in other ways, he has pursued a conventional American course, venturing "to this remote region … to seek his fortune" (8). As such, he is following the path taken by millions of Americans throughout the nineteenth century, moving to what was (at the time of the novel's staging) a frontier community, in a re-enactment of the Western myth. But, because of his ironic remark – an indicator of his difference as an educated Easterner – Wilson is unable to achieve this dream. Instead, as his calendar parodically suggests, he falls back on another great American myth, the work ethic as promulgated by Benjamin Franklin. Despite his failure, Wilson resolves not only to "work his way into the legal field yet," but also interests himself "in every new thing that was born into the universe of ideas" (10). Most importantly, in an anachronism that parallels his legal qualifications out West, he keeps fingerprint records of the population of Dawson's Landing, and it is these records that eventually reveal not only Tom's guilt but also Roxy's exchange of the babies twenty years before. The result of these revelations is both the restoration of a social order disrupted by the exchange, and the making of Wilson as a leading citizen of the town, a combination that, as we shall see, exemplifies the fusion of Southern racial discourse and Northern scientific and legal practice by the 1890s.

I cite these passages at such length because they point to the inextricable links between national and transnational, immigration and domestic race relations that appear in a novel published in 1894. What *Pudd'nhead Wilson* depicts is a conflation of Northern and Southern racial discourses, represented in contradictory attempts to preserve and yet unsettle a national narrative facing profound disruption at this time from the double presence of the "new Negro" and the "new white" European settler. In order to clarify this point, I will now turn to Twain's representations of American and Italian "whiteness" and of non-white American identities.

In the introduction to *Producing American Races*, Patricia McKee provides an overview that initially appears to sum up the state of racial understanding in Dawson's Landing. For McKee (drawing here on critics such as Richard Dyer and Toni Morrison), "whiteness is understood as inclusive, normal, and unremarkable, difficult to specify or define." Notwithstanding

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differences between individuals, she continues, "identities of whiteness are in circulation, one might say, in the space between any individual white person and the irremediably 'other,' massed identity of blackness."[11] On one level, such assertions do seem to describe *Pudd'nhead Wilson*; the respective fates of Tom and Chambers, and the success finally achieved by Wilson himself as a result of his restoration of social and racial order, do highlight the extent to which whiteness exists in relation to a massed black otherness, despite the complex mixture of humour and tragedy engendered by Twain's satirical representation of white culture. Although the novel's plot is conditional upon narratorial awareness of this point – in particular, since the twenty-three-year non-detection of Roxana's switch of the babies depends upon the "invisibility" of a "black" master criminal – on one level, it seems to do little to challenge such a stance.

McKee's argument appears less convincing when it comes to the representation of the Italian twins, Angelo and Luigi Capello. Initially, responses to them exhibit a combination of fascination with the exotic and a markedly undemocratic appreciation of their aristocratic heritage. Thus "the great majority" of Dawson's Landing's citizens "were overwhelmed by the … dim and awful associations with gilded courts and stately ceremony and anointed kingship" (37). The arrival of the twins prompts an unprecedented exhibition of their manners and dress, which are responded to with awe by the locals, but which already mark their own otherness, since, as Tom's return from Yale makes clear, it is impermissible for a local to act or dress in such style.[12] It is therefore unsurprising that initial enthusiasm for Angelo and Luigi swiftly turns to xenophobic hostility, and it is easy for Tom and Judge Driscoll to marginalize a pair whose south European ethnic markers prove hard to assimilate. Predictably, given the frequent analogies between colour and morality, and popular attitudes to Italian immigrants in the 1890s, there is an even more overt racial dimension to the twins' rejection: Angelo, the "blonde twin," is teetotal and even-tempered, Luigi, the "dark" one, drinks, has a short temper and is quick to resort to violence. Although the townspeople themselves seem happy to treat the "exact duplicates" (34) in identical fashions, and (perhaps as a result of the history of the book's

[11] Patricia McKee, *Producing American Races: Henry James, William Faulkner, Toni Morrison* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 3, 13.

[12] Tom "brought home with him a suit of clothes of such exquisite style and cut and fashion – Eastern fashion, city fashion – that it filled everybody with anguish and was regarded as a peculiarly wanton affront" (30). I will discuss the full significance of this scene, and of the manner of the town's response to it, later in the essay.

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composition[13]) find it hard to separate them, it is notable that even Twain's parodic reconstruction of American racial assumptions is itself marked by those assumptions, denoting what Myra Jehlen has astutely labelled a "familiar dilemma in his work generally which frequently ends … in a stalemate between radical criticism and an implicit conservatism expressed in the refusal or the inability, when it comes to it, to imagine significant change."[14]

As such, Twain's representation of the treatment of Angelo and Luigi leading up to and after the murder of Judge Driscoll satirizes, without ever fully escaping, the popular "scientific" discourse of the 1890s. Sydney G. Fisher, for instance, claimed that the "native white element of the population is 54.87 per cent, but it produces only 3.19 per cent of the white prisoners. The foreign white element [32.93%] … produces 56.81 per cent of the white prisoners." He continues, in an effort to blame immigrants even for crimes perpetrated by native-born white Americans, "How many of the murders committed by natives are due to the example of the foreigners cannot be estimated, but it is doubtless no small proportion."[15] In this context, it is easy to see the target of Twain's irony; given such attitudes toward immigrants, it is not surprising that the citizens of Dawson's Landing are quick to turn against the twins. Furthermore, in one way, the Judge's murder is the result of "the example of foreigners," since Tom has stolen the murder weapon, already used to kill in self-defence, from Angelo and Luigi. Whereas a culture exemplified by the White City is designed to instruct immigrants and foreigners in the niceties of culture, Fisher's article and the behaviour of certain characters in Twain's novel reveal the simultaneous fear that white American behaviour will be contaminated by the presence of a threatening and undesirable otherness.

In addition, through its representation of Angelo and Luigi as essentially honest and cultured visitors, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (unlike *Those Extraordinary Twins*) parodies other responses to immigrants at the time. Nationally, texts such as Protestant clergyman Josiah Strong's *Our Country: Its Possible Future*

[13] Twain provides an account of the "literary Caesarian operation" by which he split *Pudd'nhead Wilson* from *Those Extraordinary Twins* in the introduction to the latter tale. The process involved transforming the "combination consisting of two heads and four arms joined to a single body and a single pair of legs" – the "youthful Italian 'freak'" of *Those Extraordinary Twins* – into "two separate men" (150, 152), although there are moments in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* where Twain appears to have forgotten to change the text.

[14] Myra Jehlen, "The Ties that Bind: Race and Sex in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 105–20, 120.

[15] *Popular Science Monthly*, 1 October 1896, n.p.

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and Its Present Crisis (1885) proved hugely popular with their warnings that Catholics would always be loyal to their religion, rather than to the United States, and were thus unfit for citizenship. Likewise, and in a move destabilized by Twain's representation of the different habits of the twins, many Protestants were alarmed at what they saw as the Catholic Church's opposition to the temperance movement. The American Protective Association, founded in 1887, also recruited a large membership with its calls to boycott Catholic businessmen and not vote for Catholic politicians.[16] A more general desire to stem the tide of non-English-speaking, southern and eastern European immigrants was summarized in Thomas Bailey Aldrich's "Unguarded Gates," published in the *Atlantic Monthly* of July 1892, in which he demanded, "Stay those to who thy sacred portals come/To waste the gifts of freedom."

Two further examples are particularly pertinent to *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. In 1890 the lawyer and scholar J. Appleton Morgan published an article, "What Shall We Do With the 'Dago'?," in which he prefigures the stereotypes that the people of Dawson's Landing are quick to attach to the twins. Explaining that he refers to Italians, despite the Spanish origins of the term "dago," he claims,

> The knife with which he cuts his bread he also uses to lop off another "dago's" finger or ear, or to slash another's cheek. He quarrels over his meals; and his game, whatever it is, which he plays with pennies after his meal is over, is carried on with knife at hand. More even than this, he sleeps in herds; and if a "dago" in his sleep rolls up against another "dago," the two whip out their knives and settle it there and then … He is quite as familiar with the sight of human blood as with the sight of the food he eats … The male "dago," when sober, instinctively retreats before his employer or boss, or any other man, and has no idea of assaulting him … But, when infuriated with liquor, he will upon any fancied occasion use the only argument he possesses – his knife.[17]

Twain's rewriting of such attitudes is rather more complex but, nevertheless, it does contain both refutations and echoes of the above. On the one hand, although a knife is central to the novel's plot, its two moments of use as a weapon are clearly distinguished. Whereas Luigi kills to protect his brother from an intruder, Tom is the one who acts as cold-blooded "assassin."

[16] See Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, *Ethnic Americans: a History of Immigration* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 67–68.

[17] *Popular Science Monthly*, December 1890. Reprinted in Wayne Moquin, ed., *Makers of America: Natives and Aliens, 1891–1903* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational Corporation, 1971), 5–6.

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Although Tom's accusations of murder against Luigi are unhesitatingly accepted by the townspeople, whose hurry to convict the twins indicates attitudes similar to those seen in Appleton Morgan's article, the fact that the reader knows the truth about both deaths indicates Twain's own rejection of the stereotype. Luigi subsequently acts like a "gentleman" in fighting the duel with Judge Driscoll, and is innocent of any crime. On the other hand, however, it is during his induction into the rum party that Luigi's "southern blood leaped to the boiling point," resulting in his kicking Tom. While it is Tom who is drunk, and there is clear provocation, at this moment Twain's representation of the Italian is uncomfortably close to Morgan's.

The second example was the lynching of eleven Italians suspected of murdering the police chief in New Orleans in March 1891, an event that received enormous attention nationwide. Of the eleven, two had not been brought to trial, six were acquitted, and the remainder's case was deemed a mistrial. Writing about the incident, Henry Cabot Lodge, a leading advocate of immigration restriction, suggested that there "has been no hostility to the Italians in America, as such." While such a claim may seem extraordinary given the other examples cited here, Lodge develops a disingenuous argument that comes close to defending those responsible for the lynchings. In a move typical of reactions to immigrant groups at the time (and, in particular, after Chicago's Haymarket Square atrocity of 4 May 1886, following which four well-known anarchists were executed in a highly public miscarriage of justice), Lodge accepts the common view that the Italians were members of the Mafia, and condemns conditions in Europe, which breed "secret societies, with assassination among their tenets." Lodge's conclusion has clear resonance for *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, a novel concerned with the development of frontier towns such as Dawson's Landing:

> There are great states in the West and Southwest naturally anxious to have their lands occupied and their population increased, but there is something more important than rapidity of settlement or the quick development of wealth. These advantages will be dearly bought if we pay for them a price which involves the lowering of the standard of American citizenship.[18]

It is quite possible that Lodge was right to believe that the men in New Orleans were members of the Mafia, although he does not offer any proof. Like Judge Driscoll, he is happy to spread the belief that the Italians are assassins and, although in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* the twins survive the "constant

[18] *North American Review*, May 1891. Reprinted in *Makers of America*, 39–40. Sundquist mentions this incident and notes the serious consequences it had for the United States' diplomatic relations with Italy. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 261–62.

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danger of being lynched" (122) (as opposed to *Those Extraordinary Twins*, where they do not (208)), there is no doubt that Roxy is not alone in hating "these outlandish devils" and "shouldn't ever sleep satisfied till she saw them hanged" (126). Ironically, in the light of Lodge's comments, it is the twins' own choice to abandon their claim for citizenship, a decision informed by the "standard of American citizenship" they have witnessed.

This representation of the twins also points to other problems with McKee's argument since, as is made clear even at the stage of their popularity and "preparation for citizenship" (94) – a preparation that on another level clearly marks their "whiteness" – there are inherent and unbridgeable differences within whiteness that do not depend solely on massed black otherness. While McKee suggests that the political "dominance of whites in modern Western cultures" is the product of a whiteness "abstracted from history and cultural practices, [and] understood as inclusive, normal, and unremarkable," in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* Twain goes to great lengths to highlight specifically the cultural and historical factors that are responsible for the construction of particular forms of whiteness and the exclusion of whites of particular types. Thus while the twins are indeed eligible for citizenship as a result of their colour, this is not the same thing as eligibility for a more specifically American white identity. In this respect, it is something of an irrelevance whether or not their preparation is successful, since certain members of the community – those defined by their identification with the First Families of Virginia – appeal to precisely the same kind of privileging of aristocratic class and heritage as that associated with the twins, in order to transform American identity from what Walter Benn Michaels has called "the sort of thing that could be acquired (through naturalization) into the sort of thing that had to be inherited (from one's parents)."[19]

At least in their ideals, the standards of the FFV "nobility" are quickly summarized by Twain:

> It had its unwritten laws, and they were as clearly defined and as strict as any that could be found among the printed statutes of the land. The F.F.V. was born a

[19] Walter Benn Michaels, *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 8. In his discussion of Charles Chesnutt, Sundquist has noted that, in the 1890s, there was a convergence of "national interest in the purity of racial stock and the ancestral sources of contemporary fitness to survive the Darwinian social struggle," and a "southern worship of genealogy … driven specifically by the need to recreate the aura of aristocratic greatness supposedly smashed by the Civil War." Sundquist, 408.

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gentleman; his highest duty in life was to watch over that great inheritance and keep it unsmirched. He must keep his honor spotless. Those laws were his chart; his course was marked out on it; if he swerved from it by so much as half a point of the compass it meant shipwreck to his honor, that is to say, degradation from his rank as a gentleman. (73)

There are moments when Judge Driscoll comes dangerously close to transgressing these boundaries, most notably when he schemes to "ruin" the twins before the election by slandering them and by having Tom spend money among the "rag-tag and bob-tail" (100) voters. Later, he publicly calls Angelo and Luigi "adventurers, mountebanks, side-show riff-raff, dime-museum freaks" and, with greater racial overtones, "pea-nut peddlers masquerading as gentlemen, organ-grinders bereft of their brother-monkey" (105). For the most part, however, he exemplifies the code, and is shocked to the point of collapse by Tom's failures to live up to it (74). Although his values are derided – for example, by the staging of his duel with Luigi in the "vacant stretch between Wilson's and the haunted house" (84) – Twain generally represents Driscoll sympathetically, as being as much a victim of Tom's evil scheming as is Roxy.

In one way, of course, Michaels's point about American identity is qualified by the FFV, since the kind of American identity he posits (defined here, as his argument suggests, in terms of "inheritance") is dependent in the novel (and the culture it represents) upon having a mother with no trace of black blood. "To all intents and purposes," we are told, Roxy is "as white as anybody," but she is a slave because "the one sixteenth of her which was black outvoted the other fifteen parts and made her a negro" (13). As "Tom" discovers, and as the narrator's lack of interest in Colonel Cecil Burleigh Essex implies, who one's father is makes no difference. But Michaels's argument remains doubly significant, since it provides a further reminder of the political and cultural climate of the 1890s, and of the magnitude of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*'s participation in the debates over American identity at the time. Within the antebellum setting of the novel, the presence of the "Negro" slave with "blue eyes and flaxen curls" (13), and of the Italians, provides the opportunity for mockery of Dawson's Landing's ignorance of the nature of both its own identity and of the exotic outsider. Within the immigration debate of the 1890s, however, the attitude of the FFV offers a commentary not only on the "one-drop" definitions of blackness that, as Eric Sundquist has noted, "had begun to engulf not just the South but most of the nation by the mid-1890s," but also on what Michaels calls a resistance to "subsumption by the Progressive American 'nation'," the latter defined by the availability of national citizenship to those not born

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in the United States.[20] As such, the role of the FFV is twofold: within the novel's time span, they represent a privileged social identity based on claimed biological descent from the members of Sir Walter Raleigh's first colony. Within the context of the 1890s, however, they stand in for that part of the post-Reconstruction South that sought unity against the modern world (here, albeit ambiguously, represented by Wilson) and the "threat" of the "new Negro."[21]

The power of the whiteness imagined by those with "proved descent from the First Families" (7) is both illustrated and undermined by Roxy's own representation of it. It is plain that, despite her status as slave, Roxy endorses many of the codes advocated by the FFV. Early in the book, as she prepares for her intended suicide, she "whitens" herself, putting on her "new Sunday gown" and dressing her "glossy wealth of hair 'like white folks'" (18). Such behaviour is problematized on at least two fronts: first, Twain mocks the "gaudy colours and fantastic figures" of the dress in a manner that reproduces white stereotyping of African American love for bright colours as typified in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and numerous other texts through the nineteenth century; second, in seeking to dress "like white folks," Roxy starts to act like them, assuming the power to enslave the real Tom and free her own son, and claiming that "'Taint no sin – *white* folks has done it!" (19). Throughout the novel, Roxy demonstrates understanding of the workings of FFV ideology and, rather more sketchily, its history. Thus she continues to use white motherhood as a model for her treatment of her son (102), and also understands that it is a "scandal" (28) for honourable slaveholders to sell their slaves "down the river" without due cause (16), a point that will later further indict Tom, who does this to his own mother.

Likewise, Roxy's attitudes to race appear to be largely learned from FFV codes; not only is she proud to tell Tom that his father is "ole Virginny stock" (55), in the process eliding the unequal and probably violent nature of the sexual encounter; she also repeatedly blames "de nigger" (88) in Tom for his ethical lapses. Condemning his failure to challenge Luigi to a duel, Roxy speculates,

> Whatever has come o' yo' Essex blood? Dat's what I can't understan'. En it ain't on'y jist Essex blood dat's in you, not by a long sight – 'deed it ain't!

[20] Sundquist, 228; Michaels, 45. Michaels's argument suggests that such resistance assumed national dimensions in the 1920s; my essay illustrates the extent to which this initially Southern discourse had achieved national significance by the turn of the century.

[21] See Michaels's discussion of this unity, in particular in relation to Thomas Nelson Page's *Red Rock* (1898) and Thomas Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* (1902), in *Our America*, 16–23.

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My great-great-great-gran'father en yo' great-great-great-great-gran'father was ole Cap'n John Smith, de highest blood dat Ole Virginny ever turned out, en *his* great-great-gran'mother or somers along back dah, was Pocahontas de Injun queen, en' her husban' was a nigger king outen Africa – en yit here you is, a slinkin' outen a duel en disgracin' our whole line like a ornery low-down hound! Yes, it's de nigger in you! (89)

Unlike Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*, who is an astute critic of aspects of Southern white culture such as the romantic codes that lead inevitably to danger, Roxy shows little inclination to dispute the racist orthodoxies propagated by the FFV. Instead, throughout the book, she shows pride in a white genealogy (infused, so she believes in a manner that calls the whole notion of "pure blood" into question, with African and Native American blood whose royalty appears to transcend colour)[22] and is as appalled as Judge Driscoll at Tom's failings.

What is less easy to unravel is the attitude to racial traits advocated in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* by the narrator. In particular, there has been considerable debate as to whether the representation of Tom indicates that his behaviour is the product of "de nigger" in him, or whether, as Wilson's calendar entry suggests, "Training is Everything" (29). Thus, on the one hand, Michael Rogin has argued that Tom "hardly resembles the all-white scions of the First Families of Virginia. He exhibits instead the stereotypical defects of the slaves … Tom is guilty because he is black."[23] On the other, John Carlos Rowe has pointed out that Tom acquires many of his bad habits from imitating whites; for example, he learns to gamble at Yale and is merely expressing his "inheritance" from his white ancestors' regular "speculations"; in addition, as we have seen, the Judge himself is not averse to vote-buying and slander, and enlists Tom's help in ostracizing the twins.[24]

In its own way, each argument has its merits. It is clear that Tom does not live up to what is expected of the male members of the FFV. He wants to sell Chambers down the river without due cause (28), and later does sell his

[22] Although Roxy's understanding of "white" blood initially appears strange, it does, at least in its allusion to Pocahontas, draw on existing myths. For example, Malcolm Kelsall notes that, in the late eighteenth century, "in Virginia the delightful tale of Pocahontas blended the blood of an Indian princess with [Thomas] Jefferson's own family, for tradition held that the Randolphs of Tuckahoe were connected with her bloodstock." Malcolm Kelsall, *Jefferson and the Iconography of Romanticism: Folk, Land, Culture, and the Romantic Nation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 97.

[23] Michael Rogin, "Francis Galton and Mark Twain: The Natal Autograph in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture*, 73–85, 73–74.

[24] John Carlos Rowe, "Fatal Speculations: Murder, Money, and Manners in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 137–54, 146, 152.

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mother (103). Moreover, in two significant instances, his behaviour shows all the signs of the racial stereotypes of the 1890s. First, when he returns from Yale, he parades the town "serene and happy all day" in his fashionable Eastern clothes, in an apparent parody of the contemporary image of the black dandy. Although the "young fellows" of Dawson's Landing who dress the "deformed negro bell-ringer … in a flamboyant curtain-calico exaggeration of [Tom's] finery" (30) are unaware of the full extent of their joke (since they believe Tom to be white), the reader already knows Tom's origins and is likely to read Twain's representation accordingly. Second, when Tom murders his uncle he seems to represent Southern white fears of the danger of the black male, freed from the supervision and constraints of slavery, regressing into an atavistic brute. As such, Tom can be seen as what Myra Jehlen has called, echoing Rogin, "the very type of the upstart Negro of post-Reconstruction plantation fiction: cowardly, absurdly pretentious, lazy and irresponsible, a petty thief but potentially a murderer."[25]

But, as so often with Twain, it is hard to see these arguments as conclusive. It is clear that the pampering Tom receives as a child, when he is "petted, indulged and spoiled" (30), is also a significant factor in his development, and given this upbringing, it is unsurprising that he shows little inclination for work. His sadistic cruelty is unmatched by the behaviour of any other character in the book, white or black, but does resemble the repeated acts of unprovoked violence enacted by whites in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Tom is undeniably a weak character, but he is hardly alone in that within the Twain canon. According to this logic, Wilson's calendar is correct in attributing behaviour to training, and the ease with which Tom switches colour and gender illustrates how fluid these constructs are. Not only does he pass as white and as a girl, and as an old black woman, he also does so unremarked and unsuspected by the white community around him, and even outwits Wilson for most of the novel. Although with hindsight the townsfolk can presumably claim to identify the "nigger" in his behaviour, and to explain his deviance in those terms, the fact that Tom is able to pass as "white" for more than twenty years ridicules the white community's "fiction of law and custom" (13) that separates people by race, rather than categorically constructing Tom according to the "one-drop" rule.

In any case, even if Rogin is correct in his account of Tom, his reading fails to explain Roxy's power. Although her subversive act of swapping Tom and Chambers does not have quite the effect she anticipated, it does mark an astonishing appropriation and inversion of dominant ideologies of race and

[25] Jehlen, "The Ties that Bind," 111.

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gender. As Carolyn Porter has put it, Roxy commits an act "so violent in its implicit threat to her society that it is unthinkable, and so invisible."[26] Roxy is consistently the most astute character in the book. She recognizes that Wilson is the one man likely to detect her secret at a time when he has been labelled a "pudd'nhead" (9) by the rest of the community, she repeatedly uses her superior intelligence to assist Tom in his crimes, and she is even able to perform the near-impossible feat of coming back up the river. In addition, Roxy possesses a uniquely privileged status within the text since, as Jehlen has noted, "she and the narrator are the only ones who know what is going on and can truly identify the participants."[27] For almost the entire book, Roxy exerts an undetected control of the narrative, even transforming this to her own monetary advantage once she has convinced Tom that she is his mother. In all this her race is an advantage since, as Porter recognizes, it ensures that she will never be suspected of possessing the ability to commit what is, in any case, an inconceivable crime.

Roxy is able to outwit the FFV by appropriating and subverting their codes, herself acting at times as a white supremacist, and also assuming the power to liberate or enslave. Within the novel, however, there is an alternative version of whiteness, initially kept at the margins of society, but finally (in contrast to the fate of Angelo and Luigi) emerging in triumph and achieving a political and legal power to match the hereditary authority of the FFV, and to strip Tom of his freedom and Roxy of her influence. This, of course, is what Rogin has labelled the "new social order" associated with Wilson himself. As Rogin continues,

> Judge Driscoll's power derived from property, human property. … Pudd'nhead's authority comes not from the ownership of property, but from human capital in the modern sense; he has invested in acquiring not other human beings, but a professional skill. Both Judge Driscoll and Pudd'nhead are lawyers, but whereas the former relies on persuasion, which can make things seem different than they are, the latter possesses a science … [through which] he exposes the black murderer who possessed the identity of his white changeling double.[28]

Rogin's argument underestimates the force of history in the South, since, as we have seen, the Judge's power emanates from a shared communal sense of his ancestry, alongside his current ownership of human property. It does, however, rightly point to the true significance of Wilson's role in re-establishing, but also nationalizing, the socio-racial order. While, of course,

[26] Carolyn Porter, "Roxanna's Plot," in *Mark Twain: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 154–68, 158. Porter's astute argument fully illustrates the extent of Roxy's subversion of the norms of Southern culture. [27] Jehlen, "The Ties that Bind," 109. [28] Rogin, 78.

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Wilson's faith in (and use of) new science (fingerprints) identifies him with developments of the kind associated with the North, the consequence of his actions is the restoration of traditional Southern racial hegemony. In particular, the exposure of Tom as the murderer does not result in an orthodox form of punishment. Instead he is transformed back into property and sold down the river for the benefit of the creditors of the Percy Driscoll estate, and for Wilson himself, who is "a made man for good" (143). In his embodiment of Franklinian industriousness and enlightenment curiosity, Wilson converts a mainstay of American democratic ideology (and, furthermore, in Franklin, a figure indelibly associated with the Quakers, some of the most vocal and active advocates of abolition) into an agent of racial oppression. Likewise, Wilson's actions restore racial "order" in another fashion: Roxy, the perfect criminal since, as we have seen, as a "black" female she is entirely invisible to the white patriarchal power structure, is transformed into a stereotypical "negress" in her melodramatic reaction to her son's exposure, exclaiming (as the clock strikes twelve), "De Lord have mercy on me, po' misable sinner dat I is!" (143). As Porter has put it, "in some nightmarish version of Cinderella, Roxanna is reduced to the rags of a racial stereotype."[29]

For Rogin, the scene illustrates the replacement of one social order by another, with professional skill and scientific knowledge superseding the old paternal codes, and it is true that Dawson's Landing is a community in transition. As we have seen, Tom's citizenship – indeed, his very identity as a person – is revoked because Wilson's Northern curiosity and discipline reveal him to be "black" and, in a re-enactment of Pap Finn's rant about the college professor, only fit to be seen as property. As such, in a further commentary on the absurd "fiction of law and custom," "it was not that he had really committed the murder, the guilt lay with the erroneous inventory" (144). Where the FFV have been blind to the subversion at the heart of their society, Wilson has been able to expose and, to some extent, correct it. Although it is clear that the real Tom will never be suited to his new situation, Twain appears uninterested in pursuing his fate (thus continuing the pattern of the whole narrative), and concludes by recording that "Tom" was sold down the river. It seems that the citizens of Dawson's Landing have learnt very little from their experience, only coming to appreciate that Wilson and his ways do have their uses.

But when we place the fate of Angelo and Luigi alongside that of Tom, another narrative emerges. Although the Judge is dead and the real Tom is

[29] Porter, 168.

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unsuited to assuming his duties, there is no indication that this represents the end of their kind's power. As we have seen, the twins cannot be accepted because their version of white identity does not meet the requirements of the FFV. They are easily discredited because the townspeople still value the old codes, and while they are eligible for citizenship, this is not the same as the national identity that transcends citizenship. Although they are finally cleared of any crime, the twins are then transformed into "heroes of romance" (143), roles that their retreat to Europe indicates are not what they had aspired to. Written at a moment when nostalgia for antebellum plantation codes was gaining enormous credence – and only a few years before the publication of hugely popular plantation novels by Thomas Nelson Page and others – *Pudd'nhead Wilson* partially shares the conservatism of such texts and, finally, will not permit Roxy's power to survive. Instead, as the friendship between Judge Driscoll and Wilson seems to signify, a new alliance between traditional white Southern codes and new legal and scientific Northern ones reimposes old bonds.

The purpose of such a reading is not to suggest a conscious or extreme form of racism on Twain's part. Far from it. Instead, it illustrates the extent to which a writer as sensitive as was Twain to the subtleties of his culture's racial discourses remains unable entirely to escape the logic of such language. Like Huck, whose bursts of insight are interspersed with his own moments of hegemonic reasoning, Twain veers between an ability to read through those "fictions of law and custom" that support the racial hierarchy and an inability to do anything but reinscribe them. In his conclusions, however, Twain is unambiguous: the power accrued by David Wilson, placed at the heart of the developing economy of Dawson's Landing, comes at the expense of the freedoms and opportunities promised to the emancipated slave and the immigrant after the Civil War.

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