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DOUBLING THE PROBLEM OF THE COLOR LINE: MARK TWAIN AND W.E.B. DU BOIS

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ABSTRACT

Alex Davis

Doubling the Problem of the Color Line: Mark Twain and W.E.B. Du Bois

This MA Thesis explores the turn of the century works of Mark Twain and W.E.B. Du Bois in the context of both their larger bodies of work, as well as their personal and intellectual backgrounds. The object of this comparative analysis is to draw out the congruencies and divergences between these works in order to better understand each writer's methods and ideologies. Chapters One and Two investigate Twain and Du Bois's autobiographical accounts of the formations of their racial subjectivities and the ways these formative experiences affect their later writings. Chapter Three finds their moment of convergence in the first year of the twentieth century, when Du Bois's "On the Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind" and Twain's "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" both take on issues of race and US and European imperialism.

Introduction

Samuel Langhorne Clemens and William Edward Burghardt Du Bois were contemporaries but likely never met. While it is probable that Du Bois had occasion to read at least some of Clemens's work, no evidence exists that Clemens was even aware of Du Bois's, let alone that he had read it. The generational divide between them meant that Clemens, through his pseudonymous alter ego Mark Twain, was already well established at the pinnacle of American literary culture when Du Bois was still in adolescence. Yet as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, and bequeathed to it all of the polemics and paradoxes that a meiotic division between eras reproduces and leaves unresolved, both men published works that, in their parallel preoccupations, speak directly to the problem of race and its role in the United States in the new century.

Aside from the uncanny parallels in the texts themselves, there is an intriguing symmetry to the publication dates of the two works I will analyze in this introduction; Twain's *Following the Equator* was published in 1897, just three years before the turn of the century, while Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* was published in 1903, just three years after. Both works contain a trove of autobiographical anecdotes. However, at the heart of this symmetry lies the fact that both moments share the onset of racial consciousness: on one side of this dividing line between the centuries, Twain achieves a moment of *anagnorisis* without a corresponding moment of peripety, while on the other, Du Bois's own moment of *anagnorisis* leads to his recognition of what would become the central focus of his career for the next sixty years.

The moment in which Twain most clearly registers the formation of his own racial subjectivity comes in Chapter 38 of *Following the Equator*. After recounting his arrival in the "bewitching and bewildering" city of Bombay, Twain explains that "even now, after the lapse of a year, the delirium of those days in Bombay has not left me" (*FTE* 348). It is important to note the "lapse of a year" between the events recounted in the chapter and their being set down by the author, as it is indicative of how profound yet inenubilable the recollection is. Upon arriving in their lodgings, Twain witnesses an incident between an Indian servant who is prostrate, cleaning, and "doing it well enough," and a "burly German" who "put on a look that betrayed dissatisfaction, then without explaining what was wrong, gave the native a brisk cuff on the jaw and then told him where the defect was" (*FTE* 351). The look of "betrayed dissatisfaction" that the German man "put on" belies the performative nature of this incident, wherein the German feigns unhappiness as a pretext to punish the servant and assert his dominance and superiority. The artificially affective display of displeasure on the part of the German is juxtaposed with the "meekness" of the servant, who remains silent, "not showing in his face or manner any resentment" towards his abuser. This contrast between the two faces leads Twain to remark that it "seemed such a shame to do that before us all" and that he hadn't "seen the like of this for fifty years. It carried me back to my boyhood, and flashed upon me that this was the usual way of explaining one's desires to a slave. I was able to remember that the method seemed right and natural to me in those days, I being born to it and unaware that elsewhere there were other methods" (*FTE* 351). The connection

between the sense of shame he feels at witnessing the physical abuse of the servant and the reflexive recollection of his boyhood in Hannibal, MO where he witnessed the socially sanctioned abuse of slaves, as well as his assertion that the "method seemed right and natural" to him, indicate Twain's consciousness of his own shame at having condoned such acts, even when he was "unaware" that there were "other methods." This incident from Twain's youth, recollected at such a great temporal and geographical distance in India, and again one year later in England as he was writing the book, indicates that it instilled in him a deep sense of the injustice of race-slavery. However, his assumption that these "methods" were unjust remained unacknowledged by the young Clemens, and not until his alter ego began to write about issues of race and slavery in the late 1860's did Mark Twain begin address them, however obliquely.

Twain's firsthand experience of physical abuse as a child seems to have been minimal. He describes how his father,

> a refined and kindly gentleman, very grave, rather austere, of rigid probity, a sternly just and upright man, albeit he attended no church and never spoke of religious matters, and had no part nor lot in the pious joys of his Presbyterian family, nor ever seemed to suffer from this deprivation. He laid his hand upon me in punishment only twice in his life, and then not heavily; once for telling him a lie—which surprised me, and showed me how unsuspicious he was, for that was not my maiden effort. He punished me those two times only, and never any other member of the family at all. (*FTE* 351-2)

Here, Twain paints a portrait of John Clemens as too naïve to be cruel. His father is presented on the one hand as "kindly" and "unsuspicious" since he had only caught young Sam in one act of dishonesty, and punished him mildly, and on the other hand as "grave," "rigid," "austere," "sternly just and upright," yet somehow free from the sin of wrath. However, his gravity, rigidity, austerity, and uprightness also belie that his conduct is that of a man who shares the values of his society, which in this case is a society that finds abusing slaves "right and natural." Twain goes on to describe that his father was mild with him, "yet every now and then he cuffed our harmless slave boy, Lewis, for trifling little blunders and awkwardnesses. My father had passed his life among the slaves from his cradle up, and his cuffings proceeded from the custom of the time, not from his nature" (*FTE* 351). Reconciling his father's "kindly" nature with the "natural" method of disciplining a "harmless slave boy" with bodily harm, Twain is apparently successful in alleviating the cognitive dissonance he would otherwise experience at the incompatibility of his sense of injustice and his insistence that his father's cruelty was nothing more than custom.

And yet, his recollections of injustices witnessed during his boyhood are not finished. Twain's cognitive struggle apparent in them comes to its climax when he describes that at the age of ten he

> saw a man fling a lump of iron-ore at a slaveman in anger, for merely doing something awkwardly—as if that were a crime. It bounded from the man's skull, and the man fell and never spoke again. He was dead in an hour. I knew the man had a right to kill his slave if he wanted to, and yet it seemed a pitiful

> thing and somehow wrong, though why wrong I was not deep enough to explain if I had been asked to do it. Nobody in the village approved of that murder, but of course no one said much about it. (*FTE 352)*

The rationale for physical punishment in both this case and the case of the Clemens's boy Lewis was thin: both suffered the misfortune of making a mistake, or "awkwardness" in the presence of their masters. That one was killed and the other merely "cuffed" doesn't detract from the repugnance of either situation. It is here, by witnessing one man whose existence was predicated upon the fact of another's "right to kill" him culminate in the cruelty of wanton murder, that Twain's conception of race is jarred. His racial subjectivity, which he acknowledges comes from what is deemed "right and natural" by the custom of his culture, is formed against the backdrop of maiming and murder. The village's general "disapproval" of this killing, which no one discusses, is the basis for what Twain will later call "the lie of silent assertion" which is the tacit assertion "that there wasn't anything going on in which humane and intelligent people were interested" ("My First Lie…"). Reconciling the "right to kill" or otherwise dispose of a slave as the "fictions of law and custom" allow with his innate sense that it was "a pitiful thing and somehow wrong" becomes the unacknowledged impetus of much of Twain's writing, where, despite a conscious effort to sidestep these issues, he would delve much more deeply into the enigma of race but leave the problems and paradoxes unresolved.

For Du Bois, a childhood incident is also the basis for the formation of his racial subjectivity. But while Twain's formative episode is one of cognitive

dissonance, denial, and attempts at deferment, Du Bois instantly recognizes that his own ontological self-consciousness is mediated by the gazes of others, gazes not unlike Twain's own as he watches the "burly German" beat the servant, as he watches his father "cuff" Lewis, as he watches a man struck in the head with a piece of iron ore and die slowly for some "awkwardness." Du Bois begins in *The Souls of Black Folk* by describing the moment, "in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation [of the color line] first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me" (*Souls* 101). These "rollicking days of boyhood" spent "away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghkanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse…" (*Souls* 101) are uncannily reminiscent of Twain's own boyhood in Hannibal, along the Mississippi, as well as the depictions of "boyhood" in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. But it is here that the similarities end. For while both spent days lost in the wildernesses of their boyhood, Du Bois's would be cut short.

While the time and space of "rollicking boyhood" was one free of cares and concerns, it was not absolutely safe from encroachment by others. Du Bois's early childhood coincided with the Reconstruction era, yet the relative tolerance of the isolated New England community of Great Barrington, Massachusetts spared him the stark realities that faced black youths in other parts of the country. The presuppositions and prejudices that predominated most of white America in the late 1870's were creeping into Great Barrington in unexpected ways, foreshadowing the devastating reversals to civil rights that would begin in earnest in the next decade. Du

Bois recounts that “something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil” (*Souls* 101). The “tall newcomer” and peremptory refusal to exchange with the young Du Bois, to grant him equal footing, or to accept his gift as hers signifies the refusal of Lady Liberty to accept black people as equal. Her glance encapsulates him and reduces him to an object, a vessel in which to pour her preconceived notions of this Other. Despite all that they could, and probably did share, “in heart and life and longing” the “shadow” of a “vast veil” blotted out any light from this childish exchange. It is this glib glance that galvanizes Du Bois, and gives him the desire to shed light on the darkness brought on by the veil and the color line. But first, he retreats to safer ground of mental and social isolation, in which he “had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows” (*Souls* 101-2). This retreat into a kind of stoicism is an attempt to negate the reality of the veil by existing solely in his mind, and outside of the veil’s shadow. It is similar to Twain’s unwillingness to deal directly with the realities of race and class in his own work, but for Du Bois this retreat is short-lived; it was only able to sustain him for so long before the realities of the world forced him to understand that while he may have felt his internal condition to be untouched by the gaze of the others, his

external conditions were increasingly defined by them. He began the process of re-appropriating his identity when he realized that over "the years all this fine contempt began to fade; for the words I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine. But they should not keep these prizes, I said; some, all, I would wrest from them. Just how I would do it I could never decide: by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in my head,—some way" (*Souls* 102).

Du Bois's decision, early in his life, to directly engage the systemic oppression he faces by exhibiting his finer talents and humanity to the world make him the preeminent black scholar of the twentieth century. It is his acknowledgment and criticism of the social conditions which define him that allow him to effect social change in his lifetime. Conversely, the security and comfort Twain finds as an affluent white author put distinct limits on his ability to take risks with his reputation and confront the status quo. Time and again, his investment in whiteness means that his work fails to live up to its potential for explicit social critique.

In the analysis to follow, I will trace the formation of both Twain and Du Bois's racial subjectivities, and how these formative moments shape their writing. Chapter One traces Twain's race/class consciousness through his own early experience of the color line to the critical problems of his later writings. Chapter Two explores how Du Bois uses the moment of the formation of his own racial subjectivity to connect himself to John Brown in his biography of the radical abolitionist, and thus connect his own incipient radicalism to Brown's. The final chapter is a comparative

analysis of a crucial moment of intersection between Twain and Du Bois, in which their historical moment leads them to consider imperialism and the global color line.

Chapter One

Roxy in Rebellion: Race and the American Body Politic in *Those Extraordinary Twins*

To begin to understand the paradoxes of Mark Twain's "problem" texts, starting with *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and spanning the next decade and a half through his anti-imperialist essays and his final "dream writings," we must explore the question, both textual and contextual, of Twain's own self-consciousness about his race and his class. In Twain's work, his painful awareness of the iniquities and injustices perpetrated by a transnational system of capital that draws a global color line is everywhere visible, but almost nowhere made explicit, and never resolved. Once the textual problems of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins* are viewed within the larger context of Samuel Clemens's complicated racial subjectivity and class-consciousness, it becomes clear that this text was just the first noticeable fracture in the façade of his public persona, Mark Twain.

While Twain's ruminations on the formation of his racial subjectivity have already been covered at some length in the introduction to this thesis, an addendum to my analysis of the passage in *Following the Equator* will serve to reiterate how crucial this moment is to understanding Twain's complex cathexes of race and class, as it is indicative of the deeply rooted emotional investment in these ideas that cause them to be the central focus of most of his work. Following the incident, written "after the lapse of a year," in which Twain's observation of a German tourist's physical abuse of an Indian porter in their hotel in Bombay triggers in him a "space-

annihilating" sense-memory of the horrors of American race-slavery that he witnessed as a young boy, he appears to retreat from the revelations of these remembrances. But the specter of race-slavery, the "nascent insights into continuities between New World slavery and Old World imperialism,"[1] and the cognitive dissonance caused by the tacit recognition of the logics that underlie these systems of oppression linger below the surface of the chapter's concluding passages. Twain recalls that after the incident he went to bed to "nurse [a] cough. It was about nine in the evening. What a state of things! For three hours the yelling and shouting of natives in the hall continued, along with the velvety patter of their swift bare feet—what a racket it was! They were yelling orders and messages down three flights" (*FTE* 352). While superficially it would seem that Twain's painful reminiscences have ceased and the narrative is returning to a description of his travels, it is clear that the sounds of the native servants' labor, the "orders and messages" echoing through the halls of his hotel, resonate with the psychic reverberations of his preceding moment of *anagnorisis*; his narrative has apparently left the space and time annihilating realm of memory and returned to concrete chronological descriptions, the approximate time and duration of the events he recounts. Yet it is clear from his admission that the incident is being recorded a year later that despite the shift in his narrative, he hasn't left the realm of memory. Indeed, he has been profoundly affected by his realization of the connections between the injustices of imperialism in the present and those of slavery in the past.

[1] Forrest G. Robinson, *The Author-Cat: Clemens's Life in Fiction*, p. 23, Fordham UP, 2007.

Twain goes on to equate the din of these dark-skinned servants with the sounds of "a riot, an insurrection, a revolution" and fancies that they are joined by the sounds of "roofs falling in… windows smashing, *persons being murdered, crows squawking,* and deriding, and cursing, canaries screeching, monkeys jabbering, macaws blaspheming, and every now and then *fiendish bursts of laughter and explosions of dynamite*" (*FTE* 352-3, emphases mine). The explosive cacophony that Twain describes as part of his travelogue creates a sonic smokescreen for the dissonant thoughts triggered by his witnessing the German man's assault on the servant. The extremity of his language when describing these rather routine happenings in the hotel and the surrounding city streets indicates the depth of his trauma. Equating these layers of sound with radical acts such as "riot" and "revolution" indicates just how jarring these recollections are. In the midst of the chaos that surrounds him, Twain has born witness to an action that is representative of the larger systemic violence of imperialism, and in the subsequent moment he hears the imagined sounds of revolt which are just as senselessly violent as the oppression that inspires them. The intrusion of these recollections on his writing process a year later mirrors the intrusion of biracial slave Roxy in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, who Twain claims "wandered" into the narrative, but whose advent signifies the same sort of textual disruption found in this passage. The gravity of his encounter and its implications for his reality takes a heavy emotional toll. Instead of a revolt of the oppressed against their oppressors, however, he transfers the struggle onto himself, so that it is his conscience in revolt against the part of him that, despite his

intimate knowledge of its cruelties, continues to operate within the system of injustice. The implications of Twain's memories—society's and his own culpability in systemic oppression and murder—produce trauma so powerful that when he writes this moment down, "after the lapse of a year," he still associates cacophonous cataclysms surrounding him in the hotel with the pathos of his past and the pathologies of his present.

As he continues recounting the events of that evening, Twain remarks that by "midnight I had suffered all the different kinds of shocks there are, and knew that I could never more be disturbed by them, either isolated or in combination. Then came peace—stillness deep and solemn and lasted till five" (*FTE* 353). The attention to chronology in this passage and his assertion that after suffering "all the different kinds of shocks there are" he "could never more be disturbed by them" indicates that pangs of conscience can be diminished by temporal and geographical distance from the event that triggers them, but the late composition of this passage would indicate that they are never eradicated. Sleep, the "stillness deep and solemn" of unconsciousness is a kind of death, and his only respite from the trauma of witnessing the assault, torture, and murder of human beings. However, his "bad faith,"[2] a psychic counterrevolution, ultimately fails to repress the revolt of his conscience, and is interrupted by a new, haunting apparition. The temporary peace he has been able to find is interrupted when

[2] Forrest Robinson, *In Bad Faith: The Dynamics of Deception in Mark Twain's America*, Harvard UP, 1986

> it all broke loose again. And who re-started it? The Bird of Birds the Indian crow. I came to know him well, by and by, and be infatuated with him. I suppose he is the hardest lot that wears feathers… He has been reincarnated more times than Shiva; and he has kept a sample of each incarnation, and fused it into his constitution. In the course of his evolutionary promotions, his sublime march toward ultimate perfection, he has been a gambler, a low comedian, a dissolute priest, a fussy woman, a blackguard, a scoffer, a liar, a thief, a spy, an informer, a trading politician, a swindler, a professional hypocrite, a patriot for cash, a reformer, a lecturer, a lawyer, a conspirator, a rebel, a royalist, a democrat, a practicer and propagator of irreverence, a meddler, an intruder, a busybody, an infidel, and a wallower in sin for the mere love of it. The strange result, the incredible result, of this patient accumulation of all damnable traits is, that be does not know what care is, he does not know what sorrow is, he does not know what remorse is, his life is one long thundering ecstasy of happiness, and he will go to his death untroubled, knowing that he will soon turn up again as an author or something, and be even more intolerably capable and comfortable than ever he was before. (*FTE* 353).

Here Twain is brought back in a complex psychic return to himself by the Indian Crow. Forrest Robinson asserts, “the staple elements of Clemens’s ‘personal’ bad faith… converge in the raucous crow, who is of course a figure, dimly glimpsed perhaps, of Clemens himself” (*The Author Cat* 24). The Indian Crow is better seen

not as a projection but rather a drama of recognition, an empty signifier onto which Twain enacts his own perceived insatiability, inconsistency, and iniquity. The traits that Twain recognizes in the Indian Crow, his various identities as "a trading politician, a swindler, a professional hypocrite, a patriot for cash, a reformer, a lecturer, a lawyer, a conspirator,… a democrat" are those of white American elites, the very archetypal personas of his fiction.

As the Indian Crow is a doubling of himself biographically, it also serves to double race and class contextually in relation to Twain and his contemporaries' "possessive investment in whiteness."[3] Twain goes on to juxtapose the Indian Crow with the "American blackbird." The Indian Crow, Twain says,

> is much bigger than the [American] blackbird; and he lacks the blackbird's trim and slender and beautiful build and shapely beak; and of course his sober garb of gray and rusty black is a poor and humble thing compared with the splendid lustre of the blackbird's metallic sables and shifting and flashing bronze glories. The blackbird is a perfect gentleman, in deportment and attire, and is not noisy, I believe, except when holding religious services and political conventions in a tree. (*FTE* 354)

If the Indian Crow doubles Twain, as well as whiteness itself, then the American blackbird produces a twinning with and of black Americans. Indeed, the advent of the Indian Crow and the American blackbird is yet another echo of Roxy's advent in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*; all of these figures serve to disrupt narratives that are otherwise

[3] George Lipsitz, *The Posessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, Temple UP, 1998

unconcerned with race or slavery by making it the nexus of the entire plot. Comparing the physiognomy of the two birds, as well as describing the American blackbird's "religious services" as "noisy" and thus linking these services to those lively services of black Baptist and Methodist congregations in the U.S. makes this twinning even more apparent. In fact, the implied criticism in Twain's contrasting the unimpressive "gray and rusty black" of the Indian crow with the "splendid lustre of the blackbird's metallic sables" is made explicit later in *Following the Equator* when he remarks that a white complexion "is not an unbearably unpleasant complexion when it keeps to itself, but when it comes into competition with masses of brown and black the fact is betrayed that it is endurable only because we are used to it. Nearly all black and brown skins are beautiful, but a beautiful white skin is rare… I could notice this as a boy, down South in the slavery days before the war" (*FTE* 381). While these are the most striking examples of Twain's consciousness of a kind of a global color-line, his cognizance of the issues of race and class that reverberate throughout the whole of *Following the Equator* are rooted in a distinctly American context: "down South in the slavery days." When the juxtaposition of the Indian Crow and the American blackbird is read in this context, the comparison of the Indian Crow as "the hardest lot that wears feathers" to the American blackbird, a polite and "perfect gentleman," belies the complexity of the two figures for Twain. The "hard lot" of the Indian Crow can be read as both an allusion to the false notion of a "white man's burden" felt by the various white elites with whom he associates the Indian Crow, as

well as the corruption of these same people by their complicity in the institution of slavery.

Twain has thus indirectly identified the dialectical relationship between masters and slaves,[4] colonists and subaltern peoples. While it has taken him decades to acknowledge that his deeply self-conscious racial subjectivity originates during his boyhood in the heyday of Southern slavery, this self-consciousness has always been the unacknowledged impetus of his creative endeavors. The comparison between the Indian Crow and the American blackbird in this passage is indicative of Twain's inability to escape the specter of race and repression, even half a world away from the resurgence of antebellum injustices embodied by Jim Crow laws in the United States.

In light of this understanding of the early origins of Twain's racial subjectivity and the trauma he experiences during moments of self-consciousness, it becomes clear that the material conditions of his upbringing and occupation contributed to the production of his problem texts by causing him to obscure issues of race and slavery in his work. When one approaches *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins* in particular, it becomes strikingly apparent that Twain's preoccupation with national politics around issues of race up to the time the text was written worked to produce the novel in its present form. The most significant problem critics such as Hershel Parker[5] find with these texts is that when *Pudd'nhead Wilson* ends with the discovery of Tom's true identity as a slave, his role in the murder is ignored, he is

[4] G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford UP, 1977.
[5] Hershel Parker, *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons: Literary Authority in American Fiction*, Northwestern UP, 1984

reckoned as property not accounted for in his former master's estate, and he is sold down the river to correct this error in accounting. The narrator's remarks do little to acknowledge the miscarriage of justice, and it is the silence on this issue that critics have identified as the central problem of the text. However, a closer reading of both the race-slavery plot of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and the farcical plot of *Those Extraordinary Twins* reveals that the figures in each plot and the events they participate in serve as uncanny representations of the political situation in the U.S. Not only does the plot of the text itself contain compelling evidence for a reading along these lines, but so too does Twain's composition of the text, which follows a trajectory similar to that of the national history that informs its plot: like the U.S., the text is conceived as a unified body, but the inherent unresolved conflicts within it cause a disruptive disunification which results in a tenuous reunification, where the underlying issues of the conflict are still unresolved. The conjoined body of the Capello twins in the initial plot is a doubling of the freakishly conjoined American body politic, indeed an inversion of the Hobbesian body politic, where the ideals of freedom and equality set down in the founding documents are confronted by the realities of private property and race-slavery which are codified and legitimized in the very same documents.

While *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins* were conceived of, written, and published before the global lecture tour that comprised the basis for *Following the Equator*, these texts share as a common *raison d'etre* Twain's precarious financial situation; he wrote and lectured his way out of a substantial debt

in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the only reason that *Those Extraordinary Twins*, which Twain deemed unpublishable, appears alongside *Pudd'nhead Wilson* in the American editions is because Webster offered him an extra $1,500 to allow it. In light of this, each text's treatment of issues surrounding wealth, poverty, and crime, can be attributed to Twain's heightened sensitivity to these matters during the mid-1890's. This, coupled with his deeply rooted conception of race, made him particularly sensitive to the issues of the period in which he writes. Additionally, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins* emerge at an interesting juncture in U.S. history, first marked by an intensification of the post-Reconstruction movement to curtail the civil liberties of black citizens in the 1890s that W.E.B Du Bois would later call a "second slavery,"[6] and also following the end of a period of widespread reflection on the Civil War in the 1880s which was marked by much monument-building and a host of memoirs published by those who took part. Twain published and distributed Ulysses S. Grant's autobiography (Kaplan 277), and his own semi-autobiographical account of his brief stint as a member of the pro-confederate Missouri State Militia, "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed," appeared in 1885 in the *Century Magazine* series on the Civil War entitled "Battles and Leaders." *The Century Magazine* would serially publish *Pudd'nhead Wilson* almost ten years later. But this period of national reflection worked more towards rekindling sectional division and racist ideology than it did towards reunification of the Republic. As public ceremonies played up reconciliation, and many remarked on

[6] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,* Chicago, 1903, Chapter I: Of Our Spiritual Strivings.

the poignancy of incidents such as Grant's former Union colleagues and Confederate opponents "Sherman and Johnston, Sheridan and Buckner" walking "side by side as pallbearers" (Kaplan 279) in Grant's funeral procession, black sharecroppers in Southern states and the hundreds of thousands of former slaves who moved North to toil in factories were largely ignored.

While the individual incidents that comprised the national traumas of the Civil War were relived over and over, the causes, the antebellum conflicts over the issue of slavery from the Missouri Compromise to Bleeding Kansas, were buried under a dreamy mix of heroic nostalgia and sacrosanct silence. William James exposes this misguided attention to single battles and lone figures, and fatal failure of the national memory to take in the conflict as a whole in his 1897 oration at the unveiling of a Monument to Colonel Robert G. Shaw, commander of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, the first black regiment in the Union Army. James remarks that Shaw didn't deserve a monument for his prowess as a soldier in combat, but because he "dropped his warm commission in the glorious Second [Massachusetts Regiment] to head your dubious fortunes, negroes of the 54th" and "risk[ed] his worldly fortunes all alone in resisting an enthroned abuse" (Menand 147-8). James's comment exemplifies the paradox of a monument built to a soldier whose true distinction was not his "military valor," but his willingness to sacrifice everything for the cause of Abolition. However, the traumas of the war, much like Twain's own traumas at witnessing firsthand the systemic violence of slavery, were too much for the national psyche to grapple with in any concerted way, and the kind of idealism prevalent

among Abolitionists in the antebellum period gave way to a philosophy of pragmatism in the post-bellum period.[7] The costs of idealism were too high. Systemic racism and the financial interests of the white ruling class would continue to support an "enthroned abuse" and a new kind of slavery would indeed return to the U.S.

The paradox of an era defined both by a national reflection on the war that was fought over slavery as well as a return to juridically sanctioned racism was certainly clear to Twain, who had always been acutely aware of and critical of hypocrisies, and most certainly set the tone for the works produced in this period. [8] The inchoate ideals of freedom set forth just over a century before during the American Revolution were corrupted and malformed by the institution of slavery which had been enshrined in the founding documents. The authors of these documents, most of whom were deists or Christians and for whom slavery *should* have been an abomination, were somehow able to resolve any cognitive dissonance presented by this oxymoron simply by relegating it to the realm of pragmatism and expediency. The ideology of business interests trumped ideologies of religion and idealism. What Twain would later call the "lie of silent assertion"[9] used to justify slavery, which began when the founding fathers' debate over slavery ended, lasted even after the question of slavery was purportedly settled. The silence in this case is more powerful than the debate that preceded it. This broader "silent assertion," that there was nothing wrong with a system that touted the superiority of the white race,

[7] For more on this, see Louis Menand's *The Metaphysical Club*, 2001.
[8] See Eric Sundquists, "Mark Twain and Homer Plessy" in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture,* Ed. Susan Gilman and Forrest Robinson, Duke UP, 1990.
[9] Mark Twain, "My First Lie and How I Got Out of It," New York, 1899.

and its use to justify everything from Jim Crow to American imperialism was at times anything but silent in a decade characterized by rampant lynching and violent repression. All of these paradoxes embodied in post- and antebellum American politics find themselves represented in the body that Angelo and Luigi share, as well as in the characters and events that surround them in Dawson's Landing.

After the serial publication of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* in the magazine *The Century*, Webster & Co. published it in book form, along with what remained of *Those Extraordinary Twins* and a note from the author on the composition of the text. In his interstitial musings on the origin of the text that "changed itself from a farce to a tragedy" (*PW* 149) Twain indicates his own sense of perplexity at the strange metamorphoses of both the narrative and the characters who inhabit it. His supposed "shock" at the discovery "that it was not one story, but two stories tangled together" that "obstructed and interrupted each other at every turn" which caused him to fear he would "unseat the reader's reason" (*PW* 149) seems to be more an evasion than a statement of his genuine feeling. Instead of finding a way to reconcile the two narratives which he found to be incommensurate he resolved to separate them and publish the tragedy as the main text; however, the separation of the text into its tragic and farcical components does not resolve the dialectical tensions between them. That the incommensurability of the two plots would supposedly "unseat the reader's reason" does not indicate that the problem lies in the text itself, but instead that it lies in the "reason" of the author and his reading public for whom the tensions prove

problematic. Twain himself gives an unintentional example of faulty reasoning in his "Final Remarks" to *Those Extraordinary Twins* when he writes

> As you see, it was an extravagant sort of a tale, and had no purpose but to exhibit that monstrous 'freak' in all sorts of grotesque lights. But when Roxy wandered into the tale she had to be furnished with something to do; so she changed the children in the cradle; this necessitated the invention of a reason for it; this, in turn resulted in making the children prominent personages—nothing could prevent it, of course. Their career began to take a tragic aspect, and some one had to be brought in to help work the machinery; so *Pudd'nhead* Wilson was introduced and taken on trial. By this time the whole show was being run by new people and in their interest, and the original show was become side-tracked and forgotten; the twin-monster, and the heroine, and the lads, and the old ladies had dwindled to inconsequentialities and were merely in the way. Their story was one story, the new people's story was another story, and there was no connection between them, no interdependence, no kinship. It is not practicable or rational to tell two stories at the same time; so I dug out the farce and left the tragedy. (*PW* 209)

Twains weak inductive reasoning in these final remarks illustrates a line of thinking similar to the one that would inspire the composition of his extended scene of *anagnorisis* and deferred perepity in *Following the Equator*. He is using his humorous writing as an evasion of the real problems that underlie the composition of the text. While the implications of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary*

Twins clearly allude to the tragedy and injustice of a national return to sanctioned racism and murder, and it is in the long history of slavery and civil conflict that Roxy can trace her origins, Twain sidesteps this problem by describing her advent as an accidental "wandering" into a freak show—and he was unintentionally correct; he inverts the historico-material processes and conditions that made a character like Roxy possible by decontextualizing her and attempting to derive her actions in the plot from her mere appearance in it. By reducing the politics (represented by the conjoined Capello twins) and the "lads" and "ladies" of the community to which Roxy and Tom belong (both literally and figuratively) to "mere inconsequentialities," Twain attempts to absolve them of their complicity in her bondage and the crimes that are committed as a result. Roxy has "wandered" into the "freak" of America's paradoxical politics. While attempts to be ambiguous or evade these issues in his previous novels were satisfying to Twain's sense of coherent textual composition, the fallacious reasoning that had allowed him to avoid them is here stretched beyond its limits. It is not that the two stories *couldn't* be told in a "practicable and rational" way, but instead that what was feasible and rational to Twain and his larger white audience in the last decade of the nineteenth century was radically limited by the socio-economic and ideological realities of the time. Their collective investment in whiteness and the socio-economic and political efficacy it affords them is too important and precarious to be challenged by the realities of the violent oppression of an entire race that is its cost.

For confirmation of Twain's consciousness of the evils embodied in systemic racism in the U.S. and his reluctance to speak directly to these evils, which would jeopardize his popularity as an author and thus his income, one need look no further than "The United States of Lyncherdom," written in 1901, which was to be published in the *North American Review* as an introduction to a larger "subscription-book history of lynching in America" (Kaplan 364). While he was sure that "nothing but such a book [could] rouse the sheriffs to put down the mobs and the lynchings" he was ultimately dissuaded from publishing the article which "would kill [book] sales in the South" (Kaplan 365). Despite having an article that would surely serve to draw attention to the epidemic of lynching and had the potential to spark a national conversation on the subject, it was relegated to the pile of works to be published posthumously, and wasn't seen by the public for over twenty years. If Twain was unwilling to confront the epidemic of lynching with an article and subscription book in 1901, when his financial situation was relatively stable, it is clear why he was unwilling to address issues of race and the legacy of slavery in 1894, when he undertook to write the novel that would become the texts of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins* as a way to escape crushing debt and financial ruin. For Twain, separating the narratives allows him to ignore the underlying issues that caused a murder-mystery plot driven by the issues of race slavery to arise suddenly and, by his account, without warning during the composition of a comedy concerned with the misadventures of conjoined twins from Europe in the town of Dawson's Landing. However, while this sidestepping of these issues seems to have been

satisfying to him in his earlier novels, his method for avoiding a direct engagement with the consequences of race-slavery in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins* is what leads to the some critics describing the text as "unfinished" and "unreadable." Twain's inability to cope with the financial ramifications of leaving the two plots entwined, and thus alienating much of his audience, and the irresistible allure of the $1,500 he was offered to allow the farcical plot to be published as an addendum, is what produces the texts in their present form.

In *Those Extraordinary Twins*, what remains of this original plot presents us with intimations of how the process of composition worked and, more importantly, the elements from the original plot that survive in one form or another in the narrative proper indicate that the two seemingly disparate plots are actually inextricably linked to the tensions of race and slavery in the United States. After the arrival of the "double-headed human creature with four arms, one body, and a single pair of legs" (*PW* 154) at Patsy Cooper's home, her visceral reaction to the grotesque assortment of limbs and heads on one body reveals yet another conspicuous detail of their physiognomy and her own heightened sensitivity to issues of race: Luigi is noticeably darker than Angelo. Her inference that "the dark skinned one" was "[u]p to all kinds of mischief and disobedience when he was a boy" and that "the blonde one" with "such kind blue eyes, and curly copper hair and fresh complexion" was "as good as gold" is based solely on skin color, and directly linked to the ideology of race that was dominant in Missouri. Rowena's enraptured response to her mother's perturbance, "deary me—how beautiful! But both are that; the dark one's as beautiful

as a picture" illustrates that despite the predominance of this ideology of race there is a milder one, much akin to the romanticism of Northern abolitionists, that sees dark skin as beautiful, but only in an abstract, mediated form: here "a picture." It is also the first indication that despite the fact that the black characters from the later tragic plot are almost completely absent in the farce, the social forces that define them are already at work in the plot. Since the twins share one body it is impossible that Angelo, whose very name conjures the image of angels in "pure white" robes, is Caucasian while it is only Luigi's origins that are questionable. The implication is that the twins are the product of miscegenation and so the issues surrounding mixed blood that arise around Roxy and Tom in the later narrative are already operative at some level in the first text. The sudden arrival of the twins in Dawson's Landing and the inability of these "simple Missourians [to] become sufficiently wonted to the spectacle of one body feeding two heads" echoes the simultaneous arrival of European colonists and African slaves on the continent, and the inability of the "simple" American society that grew out of the original colonies to reconcile their values with the contradictory reality of race-slavery.

The Capello twins are not, however, simply linked with the failures of American liberal democratic values, but are also an illustration of the ways that a pragmatic, liberal-democratic existence in the body of the twins is just successful enough to keep them dependent on one another despite their opposing personalities. The morning after their arrival, Patsy Cooper and her family are again astounded by the way the guests work together during breakfast and notice, "the hand that picked

up a biscuit carried it to the wrong mouth, as often as any other way" (*PW* 162). This puzzling mingling of limbs leads Patsy to remark to herself that she "can't understand it; and now, here is the dark complected hand with a potato on its fork… there, the light complected head's got it" (*PW* 162). Again, Patsy fixates not only on the grotesque nature of the twins' construction, but also on the physical manifestation of race that seems to bother her, and makes her skeptical of Luigi. When questioned as to why they choreograph their meals in such a way, Luigi responds "it is a great economy for us both: it saves time and labor. We have a system of signs which nobody can notice or understand but ourselves" (*PW* 163). The interdependence of one twin on the other is akin to the interdependence of the Northern and Southern states during the antebellum period. The figure of the "dark complected hand" feeding the light complected head" is not only indicative of the Southern slaveholders' complete dependence on their slaves, but also indicates the larger dependence of the white elites in the North on Southern slave labor to supply textile mills. Indeed, this reading is reinforced by Twain's description of the relationship as an "economical" one that "saves time and labor;" it is a doubling of the interdependent economic relationship between of the agrarian, slaveholding South and the Northern industrial economy. This economic interdependence was the reason that the issue of race-slavery in the United States remained a constant source of conflict that was never resolved. Southern States were unwilling to give up the slave labor that kept their production costs low, and northern states were unwilling to interrupt the flow of commerce between the two regions. It was deemed a matter of

expediency and caused the issue to be largely ignored with each successive generation and presidential administration, until a critical shift in the nature of production, away from rural petty-commodity producers towards merchant-capital and eventually industrial capital meant that the economics of slavery were no longer sustainable within the larger system of capital.[10]

The deferral of the issue of slavery that began with the founding fathers and continued until the conflicts just before the Civil War itself is a theme obliquely taken up in both the early plot of the conjoined twins and the murder-mystery/race slavery plot. In both instances, the twins are invited to an anti-temperance meeting at the Market Hall by a group calling themselves the Sons of Liberty, whose name is an obvious reference to the patriot group of that name. The Market Hall is the shared space where groups as disparate as the Freethinkers and Baptists can meet, though never at the same time. Since this scene was transplanted from the original farce into the tragedy, the twins are no longer conjoined, but this only adds to the sense of division created by the underlying issues of race and slavery that lead to the Civil War. Tom Driscoll, whose appearance in *Those Extraordinary Twins* is only as a minor character competing with Angelo for Rowena Cooper's affection, is now the principle subject of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. His identity, like that of the twins, is bound up with that of his own double, Chambers, who is the true son of the aristocratic Percy Driscoll but is living as a slave while Tom, the son of a slave, lives as a master. At the meeting of the Sons of Liberty in Market Hall, Tom insults Angelo, perhaps a

[10] See Charles Post's, *The American Road to Capitalism: Studies in Class-Structure, Economic Development, and Political Conflict, 1620-1877*, 2011.

vestigial plot point of the rivalry stemming from their competition over Rowena in the original narrative, and Luigi kicks Tom, who tumbles into the audience below. The narrator remarks that

> Even a sober person does not like to have a human being emptied on him when he is not doing any harm; a person who is not sober cannot endure such an attention at all. The nest of Sons of Liberty that Driscoll landed in had not a sober bird in it; in fact there was probably not an entirely sober one in the auditorium. Driscoll was promptly and indignantly flung on the heads of Sons in the next row, and these Sons passed him on toward the rear, and then immediately began to pummel the front row Sons who had passed him to them. This course was strictly followed by bench after bench as Driscoll traveled in his tumultuous and airy flight toward the door; so he left behind him an ever-lengthening wake of raging and plunging and fighting and swearing humanity. Down went group after group of torches, and presently above the deafening clatter of the gavel, roar of angry voices, and crash of succumbing benches, rose the paralyzing cry of –"FIRE!" (*PW* 71)

While the Market House has been a space shared by groups with widely divergent ideologies, the entrance of the Twins and Tom becomes the breaking point. The "dark complected" Luigi is literally forcing the assembled Sons of Liberty to grapple with Tom, whose very existence is predicated upon the myriad injustices and corruptions perpetrated against black people in the U.S. The motif of sobriety is an indictment of the idealistic fervor of the original Sons of Liberty who were drunk on the rhetoric of

independence and liberty (which manifested itself in actions that had more to do with private property rights and taxation than it did with any ideology of liberation) that they were unable to endure having the issue of slavery, a blatant contradiction to these ideals, intrude upon their pure and abstract thought world. When the twins launch Tom onto the heads of the Sons of Liberty they are confronted with the incommensurability of their values and their practices, and quite literally foisting the biracial Tom onto the successive rows of the audience, their "sons," in much the same way the issue of slavery was left unresolved by the authors of the Constitution and foisted on successive generations of Americans. The course Tom takes across the heads of the Sons of Liberty and the chaotic brawling left in his wake is the same course the issues of race and slavery took through the history of the United States. The crescendo of the scene comes when the "deafening clatter of the gavel, roar of angry voices, and crash of succumbing benches" culminates in the final, "paralyzing cry of –'FIRE!'" The invocation of "gavels" and "benches" in the chaos and collapse of this scene parallels the myriad legal conflicts, the most notorious of which was the Dred Scott decision, that led up to the violent conflagrations that were Bloody Kansas and the Civil War. The juridically coded language is also significant in terms of the court cases that "succumbed" to public bigotry, and sanctioned the racism and oppression that were making a violent resurgence during Twain's composition of the novel.[11] From the perspective of the 1890's, looking back on the course the nation had taken and realizing that despite such a contentious history that lead inevitably to

[11] Sundquist.

violent conflict, the fact that in just thirty years the nation had forgotten everything and was returning to the same institutions that had brought about its near ruin must have been maddening for Mark Twain.

The inability of the judiciary to effectively adjudicate this return to antebellum era repression was a miscarriage of justice that Twain must have felt deeply, for his resolutions of the plots of both *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins* both highlight the lunacy of the legal system. In much the same way that he avoids the implications of the resonances of New World slavery with of the injustices of Old World imperialism in the passage from *Following the Equator*, the respective endings of the tragic and farcical plots simultaneously allude to and sidestep these same issues. While the court's decision at the end of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* to reckon Tom as part of the value of his former master's estate and sell him down the river as property echoes the dehumanizing economics of antebellum attitudes towards slaves, the end of *Those Extraordinary Twins* avoids the legal system altogether, and nods towards the rampant vigilantism and lynching of blacks that was reaching a fever-pitch in the 1890s. At the end of *Those Extraordinary Twins,* Angelo and Luigi, who are nominated by the Whig and Democratic parties respectively, run against each other for a position on the Board of Aldermen in Dawson's Landing. Tying Angelo to "Whigism" and a political program of "reform" is an interesting contradiction that at once subtly links him with the antebellum Northern politics of abolition which eventually split the Whig party, and also to the Republican Party, which was comprised of the remnants of the Whigs and moderate Northern Democrats, and who

adopted a platform of business, expansion, and imperialism in the post-bellum period. Luigi's Democratic nomination, dark complexion, and fiery disposition link him to Southern politicians of the antebellum period, but also to the black legislators of the Reconstruction era whose legacies were being rewritten and tarnished during Twain's composition of this text. Prior to the election, the alternating control of the Twins' shared legs mean that when Angelo is in control, he takes them to "all manner of moral and religious meetings" canvassing for support, but when Luigi is in control, he takes them to "balls, rum shops, Sons of Liberty parades, horse races, and campaign riots" (*PW* 206) that serve to alienate Angelo from his core constituency. This moral inconsistency makes it difficult after the election for the victorious Angelo to face a "community that had come to distrust and detest him because there was such a lack of harmony between his morals, which were confessedly excellent, and his methods of illustrating them, which were distinctly damnable" (*PW* 207). The moral inconsistency of the Capello twins is more than just an indication of the inconsistencies of politicians; it is also an indictment of the entire liberal democratic system, which, on the one hand espouses high minded rhetoric of equality and liberty, and on the other courts the support of all manner of ostentatious and iniquitous groups in order to gain power and wield it unjustly and in contradiction to these ideals. After the election of the "light complected" Angelo to the board of alderman, the city government and services of Dawson's Landing become paralyzed. The board cannot meet because Angelo cannot attend with his brother. However, it is physically impossible for Angelo to attend meetings without Luigi. The paradox of their

composition means that Angelo's dreams of reform are dashed, along with any hopes of a functional government in Dawson's Landing. The matter of Luigi's attendance at meetings is "carried up and up from court to court," but because the courts cannot decide how to solve the issue of the "dark complected" Luigi's unsanctioned and unwanted attendance at board meetings, the people become more and more frustrated as their finances dwindle. Luigi's physical exclusion from attending board meetings parallels the violent and "deliberate campaign to disfranchise blacks and strip them of legal protections that was underway by the early 1890's,"[12] and the solution of the residents of Dawson's Landing is also a reiteration of this violence. As one citizen remarks, "…we ought to have hired the official half of this human phillipene to resign; but it's too late now; some of us haven't got anything left to hire him with" another remarks, "Yes we have… we've got *this*!" and "produces a halter" (*PW* 208). Here the play on the homophones "hire" and "higher" foreshadows to the imminent lynching. As one citizen objects that "Count Angelo is innocent; we mustn't hang him" another responds by asking, "who said anything about hanging him? We are only going to hang the other one" (*PW* 208). The immediate acquiescence of those who dissented and the subsequent lynching of Luigi is both the abrupt ending to a flawed narrative and an acknowledgment of the failures of liberal democratic compromise.

The unifying thread of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins* is the hypocrisy of a liberal democratic body politic that simultaneously espouses the

[12] Eric Sundquist, "Mark Twain and Homer Plessy" in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture*, Eds. Susan Gilman and Forrest G. Robinson, Duke UP, 1990.

rhetoric of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, yet denies those very things to black Americans. The corrupting influence of this hypocrisy has ramifications throughout both plots, such as in the acts of the desperate Roxy when she switches her son with her master's, and in the lynching of one conjoined twins when the act will surely kill both. Indeed, these texts signal a motif that will recur with much frequency in Twain's later writing. Roxy's "wandering" into the freak show of *Those Extraordinary Twins* and upsetting the plot is repeated by the appearance of the Indian Crow in *Following the Equator*, the appearance of the servant George in *The Great Dark*, and the appearance of Jasper in his unfinished novel *Which was It?* In this sense, Roxy's appearance can be equated with the same ideas of rebellion and revolution which the appearance of the Indian Crow inspires in the later work. Twain's own consciousness of the injustices of race slavery, Jim Crow, and a western imperialism that extends the color line around the globe manifests itself in these characters who refuse to conform to the roles he sets out for them. Roxy's rebellion is the rebellion of Twain's conscience against his own investment in whiteness and capitalism. While his anti-imperialist essays will be dealt with in the final chapter of this thesis, it is important to note the dubious role he played in the movement. Although he was an outspoken critic of the effects of global imperialism, which had capitalism as its impetus, he was nonetheless inextricably tied up in the world of capital through his own financial enterprises. He delivered biting criticisms of American interventions abroad to rooms full of the executives and bankers who

orchestrated them.[13] It is no wonder then that throughout the final decade of his life, in texts that seem to follow the same patterns of composition as *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins*, black characters appear in much the same manner as Roxy and to much the same effect: they disrupt the cohesiveness of the earlier narrative and force Twain to jeopardize his popularity and tell a story which he is not willing to tell.

The Great Dark, another unfinished text, is a dream-like narrative concerning a lone vessel on a vast and endless sea which is actually a drop of water under a microscope. During the course of this narrative that introduces a relatively large cast of characters, almost too many to all occupy one boat at sea, a black servant named George comes in to help Henry Edwards, the narrator, ease his cabin-fevered mind with some exercise. In the scene that follows, Henry steps into a boxing ring with George. And then

> a curious thing happened; I seemed to remember a thousand boxing bouts with George, the whole boxing art came flooding in upon me, and I knew just what to do! I was a prey to no indecisions, I had no trouble. We fought six rounds, I held my own all through, and I finally knocked George out. I was not astonished; it seemed a familiar experience. Alice showed no surprise, George showed none; apparently it was an old story to them. (*WWTD* 136)

Here, Twain is sparring with the specter of American race-slavery in his writing. Much like the act of witnessing the German tourist's abuse of the Indian servant

[13] Forrest Robinson, Gabriel Brahm, and Catherine Carlstroem, *The Jester and the Sages: Mark Twain in Conversation with Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx,* p. 95

triggers a flood of memories, here Twain is again confronted with the same issues. He is forced to grapple with race, servitude, violence, and his own self-consciousness. But his long experience of writing, obliquely, about race has already laid out the path for this narrative. He has Henry defeat George with "no trouble" and finally "knock[s] George out" in an act that surprises no one, least of all the author of the passage. It is also no surprise that very soon after this incident, the narrative trails off and is left unfinished.

The problems in Twain's unfinished texts ultimately trace their origins not just to the author himself, but also to the society which produced him. While it is clear that he was painfully aware of the injustices daily perpetrated both in the United States and abroad, his feeling that "reform is eternally, infernally recursive, a job that can never be finished"[14] coupled with his inextricable entanglement in the socio-economics of his time meant that his willingness to give voice to the kind of idealism that was ultimately marginally successful after the Civil War went only so far. Once the financial security his status as an author afforded him was in danger, his rationale began to conform to the kind of pragmatism that dominated political and ethical thought in the U.S. after the 1870s. Despite the undeniable tendency of his writing to mirror and critique the social-realities which produced them, Twain was more concerned with his own bottom line than giving voice to radical ideals of reform. While he struggled with pangs of conscience in the final decade of his life, he did so

[14] *Ibid.,* p. 106

in the security afforded him by his race and class. However, for those whose privilege was precarious, provocations to radicalism were more difficult to resist.

Chapter Two

Re-Periodizing Radicalism: Formations of Racial and Revolutionary Subjectivities in W.E.B. Du Bois' Early Works

Few scholars engage in the kind of self-reflection that W.E.B. Du Bois practiced throughout his career. His many autobiographical works trace his intellectual development from his childhood in Great Barrington through his flight from the United States to Ghana in 1961. The standard chronology scholars have derived from these sources locates Du Bois' shift towards radical politics in the era just after the First World War, a moment when the triumph of the Bolsheviks prompted those on the left to embrace new, non-capitalist visions for the future. While Du Bois himself locates this shift towards socialist sympathies in the inter-war period, it is clear from his autobiographical and biographical works that his radicalism had been gestating for some time before that. While not nearly as well-known as his autobiographical and scholarly works such as *The Souls of Black Folk* or *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois' biography of John Brown seems to be one of the earliest indications of his shift from an ideological investment in the liberal-democratic system of the U.S. towards radicalism. Brown serves as a nodal point for Du Bois, allowing him to use his own analysis of Brown's economic and political situation to develop his broader historical materialist analysis of world affairs. The textual history of *John Brown* and Du Bois' approach to his subject in this biography have intriguing implications for the way that scholars periodize Du Bois' intellectual development.

Du Bois draws on events from his autobiographical writings to inform his *John Brown*. His description of his first encounter with the color line in *The Souls of Black Folk* has often been cited in scholarship on the formation of his racial subjectivity. However, in this essay I move analysis of this passage forward by investigating how Du Bois uses this autobiographical moment to flesh out his biography of Brown and takes an instrumentalist approach to his subject in order to link himself to Brown's radicalism via parallels between their autobiographical moments.

Du Bois' relationship to Marxist thought began gradually. He remarks in his *Autobiography* that while he was becoming "a devoted follower of [William] James as [James] was developing his philosophy of pragmatism" at Harvard, the work of "Karl Marx was mentioned but only incidentally" and Marx himself was regarded "as one whose doubtful theories had long since been refuted" (*Autobiography* 133). However limited his exposure to Marx may have been in these early years, the incipient influence on Du Bois' scholarship was detectable even while he remained at Harvard under the influence of Santayana and James. Indeed, in a fifty-two page, handwritten essay for James' Philosophy 4 course entitled "The Renaissance of Ethics: A Critical Comparison of Scholastic and Modern Ethics" Du Bois presents an argument with "intriguingly similar solutions to the perennial mind-matter puzzle worked out in Marx's *Kapital*" that "waveringly arrived at the same conclusion: ethical imperatives arose out of the interaction of mind and matter as both became transformed and purposive through willpower" (Levering Lewis 95). These

"interactions of mind and matter" that mold a society's ethical imperatives are painstakingly illustrated through his analysis of antebellum political economy in his biography of John Brown. Du Bois' early foray into historical materialist analysis foreshadows his eventual divergence from James' pragmatism and his loss of faith in the liberal-democratic values that were ingrained in him at Harvard. While his earlier works such as "On the Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind" or "The Talented Tenth" operate within a framework of liberal democratic politics and capitalist ideology, and even make excuses for domestic and global imperialism while extolling the necessity of a Black Elite to be the exemplars of moral and economic life for Black Americans, Du Bois' work after the turn of the century would soon begin to incorporate a more nuanced, critical analysis of the issues of race and economics.

Du Bois' *John Brown* is a relatively understudied text, the significance of which is not well-recognized.[15] His undertaking this biographical project came close on the heels of two formative experiences, both of which contribute to the tone and scope of *John Brown*. The primary experience was his first-of-its-kind sociological study entitled *The Philadelphia Negro*. This experience provided Du Bois with an invaluable insight into how the material conditions in which individuals find themselves are intertwined with the socio-economics and politics of large populations of people. The second experience came in 1899, the same year in which *The*

[15] A recent exception is R. Blakeslee Gilpin's *John Brown Still Lives! : America's Long Reckoning with Violence, Equality, & Change,* University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Philadelphia Negro was published, and which he recounts sixty years later in his *Autobiography*. Du Bois writes that

> At the very same time when my studies were most successful, there cut across this plan which I had as a scientist, a red ray which could not be ignored. I remember when it first, as it were, startled me to my feet: a poor Negro in central Georgia, Sam Hose, had killed his landlord's wife. I wrote out a careful and reasoned statement concerning the evident facts and started down to the *Atlanta Constitution* office, carrying in my pocket a letter of introduction to Joel Chandler Harris. I did not get there. On the way news met me: Sam Hose had been lynched, and they said that his knuckles were on exhibition at a grocery store farther down on Mitchell Street, along which I was walking. I turned back to the university. I began to turn aside from my work. (*Autobiography* 221-2)

In *Blood Talk,* Susan Gillman underscores the vital importance of Du Bois' "red ray" moment in his intellectual development. It is the moment which leads Du Bois to "ultimately abandon the academy and its scholarly audience, but not his intellectual project, the study of the Negro Problems, itself" (Gillman 178). However, it also serves as the moment in which the synthesis of his sociological work and his subjective experience as a black man begin to radicalize him. In this context, the "red ray" can be linked to the red of the communist party to which Du Bois would eventually belong. His project of revolutionary analysis and action can be traced to

this moment, and his work on *John Brown* provided him the opportunity to link his own experience to those of an established radical.

The biography of John Brown was the result of a compromise between Du Bois and Ellis P. Olberholtzer, editor of *The American Crisis Biographies* (a series that was to "give an impartial view of the causes, the course, and the consequences of the Civil War"). In 1903, Olberholtzer requested that Du Bois write "a life of Frederick Douglass," which, for political reasons, was later assigned to Booker T. Washington (*Brown* 5-6). Oberholtzer suggested that Du Bois might instead be interested in a life of Blanche K. Bruce, the first African-American U.S. Senator. Du Bois countered by indicating that a biography of Nat Turner would be "the best subject for [him]" as "around Turner would center the slave trade, foreign and internal, Negro insurrections from Toussaint down to John Brown, the beginnings of abolitionism, the movement of the free Negroes of the North and the whole plantation economy which was changing critically in the thirties, and the general subjective Negro point of view of the system of slavery" (*Brown* 7). In his play on "Turner" and the idea of events turning around him at their center, we see that Du Bois desired that whoever he took for his subject should be a common center of gravity for the larger events of the era in which he lived. Much like the gravitational wobble of a star at the center of a planetary system, the cumulative influences of the system in which the biographical subject finds himself at the center tug him ever so slightly in disparate directions. It is clear that Du Bois's concern was to do more than present the life of one person in the context of a civil conflict; instead he wanted to address through that

life the macro-issues of global capitalism and the ways that race-slavery was incorporated within that system. In presenting the life of the biographical subject as part of a global nexus, Du Bois is intimating his tendencies as a radical, internationalist scholar as early as 1903, well before established scholarship ascribes this tendency to him.

Du Bois's suggestion of two figures central to the understanding of black resistance to slavery and white domination illustrate his desire to present a truly revolutionary subject to his readership, and thus underscores the political aim of his work. Olberholtzer plead ignorance "of the life of Turner and the importance of the movement which he lead" and wondered whether there was "sufficient material" (*Brown* 7) for a biography of him. Despite Du Bois's assurance that Nat Turner's rebellion was integral to an understanding of Southern fears of slave revolt, and the plantation system in general, Oberholtzer suggested instead a life of John Brown. Brown, who had been frequently dismissed as a fanatic by white scholars, must have seemed a safe choice for Oberholtzer, whose refusal of Turner reveals the power of Turner's legacy 75 years later. The contrast between Turner's briefly successful insurrection and Brown's failed raid on Harpers Ferry make it clear why Brown was the "safer" choice in Olberholzer's estimation. The failure of the raid on Harpers Ferry allowed Brown to be dismissed by the white establishment as an ineffectual zealot, but his failure in 1859 was merely the culmination of his earlier successes in Kansas. Du Bois accepted and proceeded to place Brown in the same global context he had planned for Turner.

In the same year that he began his negotiations with Olberholtzer, Du Bois had famously asserted that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line" (*Souls* 100). In locating the problem not just domestically, but in the broader historical context of the century, Du Bois established himself as a global thinker. The following, much-studied passage from *The Souls of Black Folk* is one wherein the innocence of childhood is violated by something external to it, and artificial. In both the violation of youthful naiveté as well as the poetic description of emotion and setting, Du Bois' encounter foreshadows the way he will describe John Brown's first encounter with the color line, and thus link himself to Brown and, ultimately, radical politics. For Du Bois, his encounter occurred

> …in the early days of rollicking boyhood [when] the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghkanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil… Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house? (*Souls* 101, 102)

References to the “days of rollicking boyhood… away up hills of New England” near three winding rivers give an almost Edenic feeling to this passage, disrupting any sense of definite spatio-temporal location. The timelessness of this space is reinforced by the idea that the rivers flow to the sea, like time flowing into eternity. The violent interruption of Du Bois’ youthful innocence “all in a day” is a disruption of the chronotope of an idyllic boyhood in the vast expanse of hills. However, the event of disruption itself becomes a chronotope, where the undefined expanse of the “early days of rollicking boyhood” is compressed into a single day which envelopes the future. The darkness of this moment was frequently re-lived by Du Bois throughout his career. The transition between these two chronotopes is marked by the shadow that sweeps across him, where the shadow is the Veil, whose dark transparency at once obscures the humanity he shares with others, and also casts a shadow on the brighter, more “rollicking” days of his boyhood. That he “remember[s] well when” the shadow fell also serves to reiterate the idea of the ability of this disruption to be as timeless moving into the future as the boyhood which precedes it was in the past. The veil between these two time periods explains why the earlier period of boyhood is so vaguely described as a kind of distant memory, while the moment of the disruption of youthful innocence, is so vividly viewed from behind the veil.

Du Bois describes his boyhood in this passage using general temporal and topographical terms, however, the moment that boyhood innocence is interrupted is more precisely located in a “wee wooden schoolhouse.” In American fiction, such as in Mark Twain’s novels, the schoolhouse is a place where the wonder and wandering

of a rollicksome boyhood are restrained by authority figures who attempt to "sivilize" (Twain 2) their students. It is not surprising, then, that Du Bois' own experience of coming into contact with "civil" thought is located in the schoolhouse. While on the surface there is nothing inherently wrong with the children's desire to exchange visiting cards, the exchange is the catalyst for the young Du Bois' becoming conscious of his difference. Thus, the schoolhouse is the site of both his academic education and his social education. The "glance" of the newcomer is at once the glance of the "other" and the thing that serves to let Du Bois know that, based on some visible sign, *he* is the other. The Veil becomes the material signifier of this concept. In retrospect, the visiting cards themselves, which are small photographs of various people and places around the world, are symbolic in this instance because of the global perspective they represent. Thus, the schoolhouse becomes a kind of commodities exchange for ideas, wherein Du Bois gains a powerful and awful idea of himself as the other. It is no accident that in his biography of Brown, an exchange of commodities also becomes the catalyst for the formation of Brown's racial subjectivity. The perepity of this moment is so jarring and disturbing that it elicited an appeal to God for an answer; his "own house" was at once his home and boyhood, the school-house, and God's house.

It is through this reading of Du Bois' description of his first encounter with the veil and the color line that we can begin to understand the way he writes of John Brown's first experience of seeing a slave. For his biography of Brown, Du Bois uses a combination of existing historical scholarship and his own literary flourishes to

describe the events leading up to Brown's first encounter with, and condemnation of slavery. The description begins with Brown as the

> Wide-eyed urchin of five sat staring at the new world of wild beast and wilder brown men. Then came life itself in its realness—the driving of cows and the killing of rattlesnakes, and swift free rides on great mornings alone with earth and tree and sky. He became "a rambler in the wild new country…" At first the Indians filled him with great fear. But his kindly old father thought of Indians as neither vermin nor property and his fear soon wore off… The tragedy and comedy of this broad silent life turned on things strangely simple—the stealing of "three large brass pins"; the disappearance of the wonderful yellow marble which an Indian boy had given him; the love and losing of a little bob-tailed squirrel for which he wept and hunted the world in vain… all these things happened before he was eight and they were his main education… of books and formal schooling he had little. (*Brown* 21, 22)

Invoking the "tragedy and comedy" of Brown's early years is a means for Du Bois to dramatize in his biography and take literary liberties with the story, bringing it into line with his own autobiographical writing and allowing him to connect himself to his subject. Brown's connection to these "wilder brown men" is indicated both by his eventual acceptance of them as friends and equals, as well as his own surname, which links him not only to Native Americans but also to the wider world of "brown men." This wild world of the Alleghenies that was to serve both as John Brown's wandering grounds and his school is connected by the greater chain of the Appalachians to the

same hills that Du Bois would haunt less than a century later, reinforcing the depth of connection between the author and his subject. While there are marked differences between Du Bois' formal education and Brown's itinerant youth, there are nonetheless striking parallels in the Edenic qualities of the descriptions of their boyhoods in nature. This is reinforced by Brown's "killing of rattlesnakes" which seems to foreshadow the religious basis for his abolitionism later in life.

Brown is doubled in this passage. At once he simultaneously echoes the young Du Bois, and serves a similar function to the girl who was the "outsider" in Du Bois' school; like the girl, his initial reaction is to fear the things and people he does not know. He differs from the young girl in Du Bois' classroom in that his innate, childhood fears and prejudices are assuaged by his father instead of encouraged. The phrase "vermin" resonates with the image of the bob-tailed squirrel that Brown loves so deeply and mourns the loss of, and illustrates that even if he *had* been brought up to consider other human beings as "vermin" it would still be part of his nature to love them. The word "property" is both an allusion to slavery, and is connected to the idea of the exchange of ideas in the passage from *Souls*. That the Native Americans aren't property themselves, but human beings capable of having and exchanging commodities as well is illustrated by the yellow marble that John trades with an Indian boy. The loss of this marble as well as the loss of the squirrel are foreshadowing the loss of innocence that will be take place after his first encounter with the horrors of slavery and more generally the loss of his natural education as it is replaced by his education in the ways of "mere money-getting" in his adulthood. His

lack of "formal" education and his abundance of a kind of "natural" education, that is, an education which takes place in and about the natural world, served for Du Bois to create in John Brown a subject who illustrated that racial prejudices are not innate but are instead instilled in the pupils who enter the "wee wooden schoolhouse." Brown had a nature that "was in its very essence religious, even mystical, but never superstitious or blindly trustful in half-known creeds and formulas" (*Brown* 23). Du Bois attributes the mystical nature of his character to his upbringing in the wild. The "superstitions" and blindly trusted "half-known creeds and formulas" are those that would come with a conventional schoolhouse education, where they are taken "blindly" as truth, when in reality they are based on half-truths or outright lies.

Just as Du Bois's "rollicking boyhood" came to an abrupt, traumatic end, so too did Brown's. The instance of John Brown's first contact with the color line and his peering behind the veil is striking for its similarities to Du Bois' as well as for the literary liberties that Du Bois takes in its retelling. Brown finds himself again a stranger in a new place, confronted by practices that are unfamiliar to him. His early childhood experiences seem to have prepared him for the following incident, which

> stands out as *foretaste* and *prophecy*—an incident of which we know only the indefinite outline, and yet one which *unconsciously foretold* to the boy the life deed of the man. It was during the war [of 1812] that a certain landlord welcomed John to his home whither the boy had ridden with cattle, a hundred miles through the wilderness. He praised the big, grave and bashful lad to his guests and made much of him. John, however, discovered something far more

> interesting than praise and good food in the landlord's parlor, and that was another boy in the landlord's yard. Fellow souls were scarce with this backwoodsman and his diffidence warmed to the kindly welcome of the stranger, especially because he was black, half naked and wretched. In John's very ears the kind voices of the master and his folk turned to harsh abuse with this black boy. …once they beat the wretched thing before John's very eyes with an iron shovel, and again and again struck him with any weapon that chanced. In wide-eyed silence John looked on and questioned, Was the boy bad or stupid? No, he was active, intelligent and with the great warm sympathy of *his race* did [Brown] "numerous little acts of kindness," so that John readily, in his straightforward candor, acknowledged him "*fully if not more than his equal*." …But that *this boy* was fatherless and motherless, and that all slaves must of necessity be fatherless and motherless with none to protect them or provide for them, save at the will or caprice of the master—this was to the half-grown man a thing of fearful portent and he asked, "Is God their Father?" And what he asked, a million and a half black bondmen were asking through the land. (*Brown* 25-27, emphases mine)

Du Bois' poetics in this passage are comparable to the lyrical language of his novels, and yet this is a biography of a man who died almost a decade before Du Bois was born. That Du Bois crafts such a striking description of Brown's first encounter with a slave from an "indefinite outline" ties the task of the biographer to that of the storyteller. Du Bois fleshes out the skeleton of this "indefinite outline" with vivid

descriptions not only of the brutality of slavery but also the loss of his own youthful naiveté. The "early years" of John Brown's manhood echo the "early days" of Du Bois' own boyhood. The shift from days to years in the two descriptions signals the increasingly swift passage of time as one passes from boyhood into adulthood. In the formative incident we are again confronted with the shift from a timelessness of boyhood amongst nature in the hills to a more specific time and place, the significance of which is to play a part in the "life deed of the man" that emerges from the occurrence. That the transformative nature of this incident in John's life is described as "unconscious" contrasts with the incident from Du Bois' life which "dawn[s] upon [him] with a certain suddenness" and seems to indicate that while for Du Bois the realization of difference came all at once, for Brown the realization led but slowly to the formation of his own racial subjectivity.

The driving of cattle through the wilderness is a vestige of the earlier description of Brown's boyhood, where the cattle serve to reiterate the freedom of his youthful life in nature. In locating this instance temporally as "during the war" of 1812, we are given a historical context for Brown's journey via the political backdrop of a country whose sovereignty has been violated by Britain, echoing the violation of personal sovereignty that is slavery. The praise and flattery of this landlord takes on a sinister disingenuousness which is also reminiscent of the serpent in the garden, for it is quickly overshadowed by the "harsh abuse" of the young slave. That Du Bois describes this young slave as a "fellow soul" to Brown is indicative of Brown's sympathy with all living things, and underscores his uncorrupted sense of fellowship

with all human beings. Indeed, in his introduction to the work, Du Bois says "of all Americans, [Brown] has perhaps come nearest to touching the real souls of black folk" (*Brown* 8), where the word "real" is linked with the "realness" of life described in the passage about Brown's early boyhood, and the "souls of black folk" is an allusion to Du Bois' earlier work.

John Brown's initial attraction to the young slave is the natural affinity of two boys of proximate age who would, in normal circumstances, take to the activities characteristic of a "rollicking boyhood." However, John is confronted, like Du Bois was, with a new idea of this boy as "other." His affinity for the young slave is shaken when he hears the "harsh abuse" of the master, and causes him to wonder if there *is* something different about this boy. As a result of the landlord's harshness with the boy, John looks for evidence of the boy's innate badness or stupidity, which in other people might mark the beginnings of a presupposition of innate negativity in difference. For Brown, however, these presuppositions are immediately dispelled by the "kindly welcome" and "numerous little acts of kindness" by the boy. These acts of kindness are in stark contrast to the way the boy is treated by his masters, who beat him constantly and keep him outside, naked in the elements. That these events occur before Brown's very eyes is a reiteration that what he hears from the landlord is in stark contrast to he can see is his nature as a "master" of other men. In describing Brown as "wide-eyed" Du Bois is recalling the "wide-eyed" urchin of earlier passages who was in awe of the "wild beasts and wilder brown men" of the new world he entered. Here, the savagery of the landlord and the "civilization" he

represents is the true beastliness, and by virtue of being compared to the positive experiences of Brown's youth in the wild amongst other brown men, it is white culture that is indicted as beastly.

Ending this passage with Brown's concerns about how slaves are essentially orphans is part of a deeper theme within Du Bois' writing wherein the institution of slavery is described as destructive of black families. By replacing the love and protection of a mother and father with the "will or caprice of a master" Du Bois is underscoring this theme of his writing. This time, it is viewed through the eyes of a young white man as opposed to through the eyes of an African American sociologist. This shifting of perspectives are a reminiscent of Du Bois' concept of whiteness studies, which he later takes up *Darkwater*. The chapter "The Souls of White Folk" in *Darkwater* even ends with an epigraph entitled "The Riddle of the Sphinx" which is also the title of one of the last Chapters of *John Brown*. Ending this passage by asking "Is God not their Father?" is an echo of the question Du Bois asks in the passage from *Souls* and reiterates the utter consternation of one confronted with so profound an injustice as the color line and the veil. By stating that Brown's question was the question of "a million and a half black bondmen throughout the land" intimately connects Brown to those men and to Du Bois, who would ask a similar question almost a century later.

Having established the connection between John Brown's induction into the white world and his own induction into the world behind the veil, Du Bois sets out to portray Brown's life and intellectual development in the manner that he had intended

to portray Nat Turner's, that is, to illustrate that both subjects have as defining moments, incidents connected with "the slave trade, foreign and internal, Negro insurrections… the beginnings of abolitionism, the movement of the free Negroes of the North and the whole plantation economy which was changing critically in the thirties, and the general subjective Negro point of view of the system of slavery" (*Brown* 7). Both Brown and Turner function as ways for Du Bois to analyze the shifts in plantation economy that occurred during their lives, but how these two revolutionary figures are affected by these shifts is quite different. For Brown, the moment that "foretold the life deed of the man" also marked his entrance into the world of rural subsistence production as a way of making a living. His transaction with the landowner introduced him both to the brutality of slavery, and the soon-to-be transformed rural economy. Brown's place in both of these contexts makes him an ideal case study for Du Bois. Du Bois goes on to analyze how Brown's fortune, built on land speculation in the late 1830's, collapsed after "Jackson's blind tinkering with the banking system precipitated a [national economic] crisis"[16] and as such Brown's own life lends credence to what Robert Brenner calls a "neo-Smithian" thesis of the rise of capital from the elimination of pre-capitalist modes of rural subsistence production, the removal of the means of production from the control of the producers, and the compulsion of these producers to submit to market-competition or perish. The crisis of 1837 demolished both Brown's "partly fictitious" fortune in "land along new canal routes" and his very real wealth in the form of his personally owned means of

[16] W.E.B Du Bois, *John Brown*, 1909, p.50

production, his farm land and his family's leather tannery; Brown was forced to search for a new source of income. Brown's misfortune was not unique, in fact "the commercial depression of 1837-42… left most farmers in the northwest with crushing debts accrued to obtain land… they had to engage in successful market-competition in order to survive as property owning agrarians."[17] In Brown's case, he was forced into a series of ill-fated, market-driven ventures that would ultimately lead him to abandon his business pursuits altogether and head west to Kansas and the territories, where the question of the expansion of slavery were being fought out.

For Du Bois, an analysis of mid-Nineteenth Century political-economy is crucial to his development of Brown as a biographical subject. The shifts in modes of production and the vacillations in the flow of capital in these decades facilitated Brown's personal misfortunes, which in turn were the catalysts for his radicalism. In the early 1840's, after unsuccessfully breeding racehorses, farming, surveying, and cattle-driving, Brown "began sheep farming near Hudson, [Ohio,] keeping his own and a rich merchant's sheep and also buying wool on commission."[18] His decision to take up sheep farming was directly related to the sharp increase in demand for wool in the U.S. and England, the outcome of the easing of tariffs on both sides of the Atlantic after a long economic duel that began during the War of 1812. As he and his partner began to develop a reputation for some of the best fine-grade wool in the U.S., Brown attempted to organize his fellow wool producers into a cooperative in order to

[17] Charles Post, *The American Road to Capitalism: Studies in Class-Structure, Economic Development, and Political Conflict, 1620-1877*, 2011, p. 233
[18] Du Bois, *John Brown*, p. 51

resist the cost-cutting by manufacturer's agents who went from farm to isolated farm to buy from unwitting rural producers who, due to economic downturn, were easily manipulated into selling at low prices.[19] Brown's efforts in this matter were driven by his own radical Christian beliefs, particularly those surrounding fair dealings with others and equitable treatment of his fellow man. The immediate outcome: Brown established his own warehouse and became both a producer and a merchant in wool, but stubbornly refused to sell to the manufacturers at prices they demanded. Unfortunately, instead of fostering a spirit of solidarity among his fellow producers, Brown's attempts at levelling the playing field for wool-farmers in Ohio alienated him from them, and he found them unwilling to cooperate. Through what Du Bois defines as tactics employed by these "well-organized industrial highwaymen [who] could hold up the wool farmer and make him hand over some of his earnings,"[20] John Brown yet again became caught up in the economic currents of a shift from a system dominated by merchant-capital to one dominated by industrial-capital, and was once more ruined. His resistance to the injustices of the market and his attempt to collectivize production amongst wool farmers allow Du Bois to establish Brown's economic radicalism as a precursor to his roles as a Free-Soil guerilla in Bleeding Kansas and his final attempt to foment slave rebellion with his raid on Harpers Ferry.

In the crisis of "land speculation in the north-west [which completed] the subordination of rural household-producers to 'market discipline' in the 1840's and

[19] *Ibid.,* p. 64
[20] *Ibid.*

1850's,"[21] Brown's family lost access to their primary means of production, the family tannery, and Brown was compelled to specialize the output of his farmland. The process of shifting from household-production, in which small farmers produced first for themselves using only physical surpluses for trade on the market, to petty-commodity production, or specialized production for direct competition on the market, was gradual, eventually forcing producers to succeed and expand their capital, or fail and try their luck elsewhere.[22] After some success in this specialization occupying the role of a pseudo merchant-capitalist, Brown's luck again ran out as merchant-capital was subordinated to industrial-capital, backed by banks and combinations formed between different firms, that exerted ever greater economic pressure on smaller merchants and the producers who supplied them. However, the vicissitudes of the post industrial-capital market would prove to be yet another invisible force that guided John Brown's life. As he waded through "the slough of despond… in the succeeding years from 1842 to 1846, [the gravity of which] was never fully betrayed, by this stern, self-repressing Puritan… the loss of a fortune and the shattering of a dream, the bankruptcy and imprisonment, and the death of five children" served as catalysts for Brown's radicalization, as "it dawned on him that he had sinned in the selfish pursuit of petty ends: that he must be about his Father's business of giving the death-blow to that 'sum of all villainies—slavery'".[23]

[21] Post, p. 234
[22] *Ibid.,* p. 230-2
[23] Du Bois, *John Brown,* p. 96

Du Bois' purpose in taking on Brown as his subject becomes clearest when he begins to consider antebellum economic injustices at their intersection with the socio-political injustices. Du Bois writes that "the economic history of the land from the War of 1812 to the Civil War covers a period of extraordinary development—so much so that no man's life which fell in these years may be written without knowledge of and allowance for the battling gigantic social forces and welding of material, out of which the present United States was designed" (*John Brown* 49). Prior to the shift in economic dominance, merchant-capital and Southern slavery had not been mutually exclusive systems, and had indeed worked in a sort of symbiotic relationship, since the requisite of merchant-capital was simply that there be commodities produced for trade and the mode of production was of almost no consequence. The incident from his youth that brought about his own abhorrence for slavery was intimately connected with the economic system in which he became an active participant as an adult, and Brown had often vowed to do work towards the abolition of slavery. Indeed, part of Brown's purpose in entering the wool business was to use as much of his profit as he could for the founding of schools for former slaves and other free blacks in the Ohio River Valley.[24] Indeed, it was during one of his trips as a surveyor for Oberlin College, which had agreed to back his endeavor, that he first visited Virginia, though whether "he visited Harpers Ferry on this trip is doubtful, but possible" (*John Brown* 54). It was during this period that the emergence of industrial-capital as the dominant form of capital "required *capitalist* or *petty*-

[24] *Ibid.,* p. 65

commodity social-property relations" to which "the geographical expansion of plantation-slavery became an *obstacle*."[25] This conflict arose due to the complex interactions of earlier merchant-capital that initially encouraged the expansion of plantation-slavery in order that they might facilitate the cotton trade in the northeast and on the world market. But when these actions opened the way for industrial-capital to become the dominant form of capital, requiring western markets (rural petty-commodity producers) to purchase commodities that they no longer produced themselves from eastern manufacturers, plantations, with their household-production and their non-capitalist labor organization, became an obstacle.[26] As the debate over the expansion of plantation-slavery grew more and more urgent and contentious, Northern settler groups financed both by abolitionists and northern industrialists began sending settlers to Kansas so that when the question of a territorial constitution was raised, they could vote in favor of free soil and thus limit the spread of plantation-slavery. Southern interests, many from slave-holding regions of Missouri, financed similar expeditions, while also organizing militia groups, later referred to as Border Ruffians, to bring Northern settlers into line, scare them out of the territory, or murder them. The resulting conflict over the expansion of slavery into the territories "compelled those who loved the right to meet law and force by force and lawlessness, and one man that led that lawless fight on the plains of Kansas and struck its bloodiest blow, was John Brown" (*John Brown* 126). The conflict was a proxy war between Southern Democrats and Northern Whigs (later Republicans), and this crisis of

[25] Post, p. 235
[26] *Ibid.,* p. 16

bourgeois, liberal-democratic compromise and the bloody conflict that ensued were a prelude to the Civil War.

According to Du Bois, while Brown was neither "the central figure of Kansas territorial history" nor "the acknowledged leader of men and measures," he was "down in the blood and dust of battle... [one] who delivered the master-stroke—the [maker] of the thoughts of men" (*John Brown* 134). It was in his violent and bloody opposition to the Border Ruffians and other pro-slavery partisans that Brown began to assert his agency, and thus to form his revolutionary subjectivity. Du Bois asserts that of all the "opportunists and politicians" in Kansas in the middle of the 19th Century, Brown was the only "man who in all this bewildering broil was least the puppet of his circumstances—the man who most clearly saw the crux of the conflict, most definitely knew his own convictions and was readiest at the crisis for decisive action, was a man whose leadership lay not in his office, wealth or influence, but in the white flame of his utter devotion to an ideal" (*John Brown* 134-5). Du Bois portrays Brown's apotheosis in Kansas in a manner similar to his own "red ray" narrative from his *Autobiography*. Here, his consciousness of the "crux of the conflict," that is, the larger socio-economic forces at play in the conflict is essential to the efficacy of his emerging revolutionary consciousness. Brown's consciousness of the material conditions that have brought him to his present situation allow him to sever the ties that made him the "puppet" of capital's caprice. The parallels between Du Bois' later radicalism and his narrative choices in the Brown biography are indicative of his incipient radicalism; the contrast between his own "red ray" and the "white flame" of

Brown; his description of Brown as one who was "readiest at the crisis for decisive action" reverberates in his consciousness a year later, when he becomes the founding editor of the *The Crisis*, a publication with which he will part ways decades later, when his own readiness for more decisive, radical action will lead to a conflict between Du Bois and the NAACP. For Du Bois, the political project of *John Brown* was to simultaneously lay the foundation for his own radicalism while legitimizing it through the parallels between his own life and Brown's.

While most scholarship locates Brown's apotheosis in his actions at Harper's Ferry, and still others locate this moment as his ultimate failure, Du Bois takes yet another approach. His John Brown's greatest successes were in Kansas, where he lived by his convictions and took the actions necessary to bring about the changes his ideals demanded. The ultimate success of the Free Soilers in Kansas foreshadowed the ultimate abolition in the nation as a whole, and these successes were in large part due to the actions of Brown and those like him. His subsequent defeat at Harper's Ferry is inconsequential. In Du Bois's text, Brown's uncompromising adherence to his own moral code, derived not from the society in which he lived but from a higher truth, gave his actions meaning.

Chapter Three

Race, Class, and Imperialism in the Turn-of-the-Century Works of Mark Twain and W.E.B. Du Bois

Initially, the rationale for a detailed, comparative study of the works of Mark Twain and W.E.B Du Bois during the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century might seem narrow. Certainly both men wrote prolifically, and much of their subject matter shares as a common center of gravity the questions of race, class, and the legacy of slavery in the United States, but after that it would seem that the comparison begins to fall flat—Twain's writing on race is never overtly political, and Du Bois's work is urgently so. Furthermore, the two were separated by a generation; Twain came of age in the antebellum period where the question of slavery's place in the growing nation raged, while Du Bois's formative years coincided with the end of Reconstruction and the return to what he would later call a "second slavery." The first decade of the twentieth century was the last decade of Twain's life; his most recognizable and lauded works were already well behind him, and his later works were bitterly and bitingly critical of the world he observed around him, or else dreamlike, ephemeral, and rarely finished. Conversely, Du Bois was still in the early years of a career that would span six more decades, and his prolific writing on Black culture and history in America would be punctuated by his autobiographical works *Darkwater* and *Dusk of Dawn*, both of which would bring him to the forefront of the discourse on race in America and the world. So it would

seem that during this period dusk was beginning to overtake Twain's career, while Du Bois's was just beginning to dawn.

However, this shared moment—of transition from the 19th to the 20th century, of the trajectory of their careers, of the place of the U.S. globally, etc.—sheds a revealing light on these American writers who are painfully conscious of the politics of race in the U.S. and globally. In David Levering Lewis's review of Twain's recently released autobiography, the scholar and biographer of Du Bois recounts the following incident from 1906 at an event held at Carnegie Hall, where Twain

> shared a most curious confidence. Having found himself in [Booker T.] Washington's company several times before, only on the Carnegie Hall stage had Twain made the sudden discovery that the Tuskegee principal was a *mulatto*: "Always, before, he was black, to me." "Last night, he was a mulatto" and had "blue eyes," Twain marveled, adding he had "never noticed whether he had eyes at all," then going on to praise Washington's "wonderful work in this quarter century." Dr. Washington, the Great Negro Leader, and the corporeal Booker Taliaferro Washington, a man of as much personal capacity as any accomplished white man, fused in a flash in Twain's mind that evening. It seems certain that Mark Twain and W.E.B. Du Bois never met; nor do any of the former's thoughts about Du Bois's American classic, *The Souls of Black Folk*, spring to mind. Even so, Twain's Carnegie Hall epiphany seems to have been a perfect illustration of the existential divide between the races incomparably described by Du Bois in his 1903 classic: "like, mayhap,

in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil." (Lewis "Twain's Guilded Age, and Ours")

A close, comparative analysis of their works will illustrate that despite the many differences between them, Du Bois and Twain are both struggling with the implications a phenomenon that goes by many names, but that Du Bois calls a "double consciousness," which differs in its significance for both of them, and in some sense involves exponentially more than two identities. Both of them struggle to "peer behind the Veil" in order to understand the Other, from whom they are separated but through whose gaze their own consciousness derives its sense of being.

The two works that most clearly illustrate the parallels between Twain and Du Bois were written and published within a year of each other and take as the objects of their inquiry imperialism and its rationalization by imperialist powers, as well as the subjugation of non-European nations by the major European powers and the United States. Du Bois's "The Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind" (1900) and Twain's "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" (1901) situate both authors as global thinkers concerned with the role of subaltern peoples of color in countries exploited by western imperial powers, and the motives behind the rhetoric those powers employ to rationalize their actions at home and abroad. Both Twain and Du Bois had travelled widely before these essays were written, and the experiences of their travels hugely affected their worldviews.[27] For both writers their spatial and temporal distance from

[27] Twain's travels through the British Empire form the bulk of his book *Following the Equator*, while Du Bois spent several years studying in Germany and travelling

the United States and the defamiliarized surroundings they found themselves in during their travels served as catalysts for profound, dereifying epiphanies about their all-too-familiar American notions of race and political power. From this distance, Du Bois and Twain both register that the formation of their respective racial subjectivities occurs during their childhoods in the U.S., which, despite their different socio-economic backgrounds, are surprisingly similar. It is no wonder, then, that two distinctly American writers take a transnational approach to a critique of imperialism and racism in these two turn-of-the-century essays, since it was their journeys abroad that offered them some of their clearest insights into these problems.

However, while they both engage in criticisms of the prevailing socio-economic order in the U.S. that is beginning to metastasize and become a global concern, neither writer offers a satisfying resolution to the issues they identify. Indeed, their unacknowledged ideological investments in the very system they critique prevents this kind of revolutionary thought, though both authors get at it obliquely, and one of them, Du Bois, eventually adopts a more radical political agenda that seeks to correct the issues identified in this earlier work. The possibilities of radical interventions by either author are limited by their ideological investments in the prevailing politics of the time. One of the most striking aspects of the comparison of these two works is the way that Twain and Du Bois manage to diverge so radically even as their subjects overlap. Indeed, while each of these writers begins within a framework of white elite liberalism, their ultimate trajectories are worlds apart. While

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through Europe which he recounts frequently in his autobiographical work, but most usefully here in his last autobiography, *Dusk of Dawn*.

Twain's "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" offers a much more cutting criticism of Euro-American imperialism than Du Bois's "On the Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind," his analysis never goes much beyond a darkly humorous list of the atrocities committed at the behest of global capital. Conversely, while Du Bois's address is almost apologetic when it comes to the atrocities committed by the Belgians in the Congo Free State, his eventual self-criticism of this position comes after he leaves the white liberal ideology he learned at Harvard behind.

Du Bois's, "The Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind" was presented to the American Negro Academy in 1900, taking as its central concern "the problem of the color line… in its larger aspect in time and space" ("The Present Outlook…" 47). Du Bois begins his analysis of the situation faced by colonized peoples of the world by describing the conditions on the continent of Africa, and from there moves east across the Middle-East, Asia, the Asian sub-continent, the nations of the Pacific, South America, and finally arrives at the end of his analysis with a description of the situation in United States, and the role of the "American Negro" in bringing about a "brown and yellow world out of whose advancing civilization the color line has faded as mists before the sun" ("The Present Outlook…" 53). The eastward direction Du Bois takes is in stark contradistinction to the direction of the United States' westward expansion and striving for dominance in the Pacific and the Caribbean, as well as Twain's travels through the British Empire in *Following the Equator,* which begin in British Columbia and proceed west into the Pacific. Indeed, it is yet another indication of the dawning of his career, as an eastward rotation of the

Earth towards the sun is what brings about the dawn each morning. While this work appears much earlier in his career than most of his more radical, pan-African works, it is nonetheless crucial to an understanding of how his outlook began to be transnational and developed into the more recognizable and widely read works. It is also important to read this essay in light of Du Bois's later self-criticism of this period in his work, especially in *Dusk of Dawn* where he addresses the naiveté of accepting the socio-economic order of the U.S. at the turn of the century as the correct and inevitable outcome for democracies all over the world, with the caveat that African-Americans be granted the same rights to participate within that framework as white Americans. Finally, it is useful to keep in mind that while Du Bois isn't known as a satirist or humorist the way Twain is, in several instances he takes a sardonic tone that has a similar effect to Twain's ironic jabs in "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," although his is a more subtle approach than Twain's. Indeed, in a 1942 contribution to the *Mark Twain Quarterly* entitled "The Humor of Negroes" Du Bois remarks that while what is normally conceived of as "Negro humor" developed in the U.S. as "a defense mechanism; reaction from tragedy; oppositions set out in the face of the hurt and insult. In part it supplies those inner pleasures and gratifications which are denied in broad outline to a casteridden and restricted people" and that this kind of humor doesn't exist in "dignified [and] serious… tribal relations" of native Africans. The humor of African-Americans contains "an undercurrent of resentment, of anger and vengeance which lies not far beneath the surface and which sometimes exhibits itself at the most unwanted times and under unawaited circumstances" and which can

be glimpsed in the way that Du Bois deals with the nuances of British Imperial treatment of "the dark races of mankind" as contrasted with the treatment of African-Americans in the U.S.

In his opening to "On the Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind," Du Bois acknowledges the difficulty of considering the global question of the color line when the situation in the U.S. is so dire, especially considering that in the preceding decade "over seventeen hundred negroes were lynched" (*Dusk of Dawn* 29). But he asserts that the question must be posed as a transnational one since "the secret of social progress is wide and thorough understanding of the social forces which move and modify your age" ("The Present Outlook…" 47). Du Bois, who had read Marx at Harvard but not yet adopted an overtly Marxist perspective, is nonetheless acutely aware of the various social constructions which, if taken for granted, impede the ability to successfully analyze the historical conditions that produce the present. It is an especially prescient statement when considered in light of his later self-criticisms, and it becomes clear that his development as a Marxist thinker was well underway, though here it is in embryonic form and despite the apologies he makes for certain brands of imperialism later in this essay.

While many in his audience would likely have preferred to focus on race as a domestic, U.S. problem, Du Bois asserts that "a glance over the world at the dawn of the new century will convince us that this is but the beginning of the problem—that the color line belts the world and that the social problem of the twentieth century is to be the relation of the civilized world to the dark races of mankind" ("The Present

Outlook…" 48). Establishing the color line as a global issue that "belts the world" is geographically significant in that it connects the color line with the actual equator, where a large portion of "the dark races of mankind" are to be found, and also calls to mind Twain's earlier work, *Following the Equator*. Utilizing the epidemic of repression and murder at home in the U.S. as a starting point for analyzing the larger, global question of the relationship of "civilization" to "the dark races of mankind" is a way to connect domestic issues surrounding the disenfranchisement of African-Americans and their degradation to a caste of menial laborers at home to the exploitation and murder of other "dark races" abroad. Here, Du Bois is not as explicit about the economic factors underlying the establishment of the color line in the U.S. and globally as Twain will be in "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" but he nonetheless gets at this obliquely when later he equates "civilization" with "the rapid development of trade and industry… [and] the railroad" ("The Present Outlook…" 48) in the Congo Free State, and the "establishment of permanent government and industrial conditions"—the very institutions which are denied "the dark races of mankind" but which, according to Du Bois, they require in order to be self-sufficient and free from colonial rule. In fact, puppet bourgeois democracies and capitalist exploitation are to be the basis for the "relation" of western imperial powers to the people of color who inhabit the rest of the world, and Du Bois is bearing witness to the beginning of the United States' earnest entry into this system.

The U.S. is the point of departure for Du Bois's global analysis; however in all of his examples of the global color line we shall see that he constantly refers back

to the situation in the U.S., though in some instances the references are subtle. “If we start eastward tonight and land on the continent of Africa we land in the center of the greater Negro problem,” Du Bois writes, again emphasizing leaving behind the darkness of the American night and travelling east towards the dawn, and a new light in which to view the issues that plague his people at home. He goes on to remark that “[t]he nineteenth century of the Christian era has seen strange transformation in the continent where civilization was born twice nineteen centuries before the Christ-child” and the cause of this transformation becomes apparent as he describes the dissection of the continent by “the English at the North and on the cape, the Portuguese and Germans on the East and West coasts, the French in Guinea and the Saharah [sic], Belgium in the Congo, and everywhere the great seething masses of the Negro people” (“The Present Outlook…” 48). Here, the continuity between the civilizations that arose on the African continent well before Europe had even been a part of the Roman Empire, and the civilizations that still exist there is interrupted and to some extent immolated by European colonial expeditions. The unity of the continent itself is fragmented by the carving up of the landmass into arbitrary divisions of territories. The description of the “seething masses of the Negro people,” calls to mind a unified black body that spans the continent but is also dissected by the colonial expeditions of the European countries listed.

Despite the dire implications of this assault on the sovereignty of African nations, Du Bois, perhaps inadvertently, or perhaps with a sense of the “apparently innocent and really sophisticated” ironic play he describes later in “The Humor of

Negroes", finds a silver lining in these European adventures in Africa. In the Boer War and the recapture of Khartoum, Du Bois apparently finds "the determined attempt to plant English civilization at two centers in the heart of Africa" to be a positive and desirable project, since England is a "European nation whose success in dealing with the underdeveloped races has been far greater than any others'" ("The Present Outlook…" 48). This naïve acceptance of "English civilization" as something that Africa and the rest of the "underdeveloped" world require for advancement is what he will criticize forty years later in *Dusk of Dawn* when he regrets that he "did not question the interpretation which pictured this as the advance of civilization and the benevolent tutelage of barbarians" and that he "had not yet linked the political development of Europe with the race problem in America" (*Dusk of Dawn* 41-2). But Du Bois goes on in his analysis of England's attempts to introduce its brand of civilization in the heart of Africa, acknowledging that we can "say what we will of England's rapacity and injustice (and much can be said) the plain fact remains that no other European nation—America least of all—has governed its alien subjects with half the wisdom and justice that England has" ("The Present Outlook…" 48). In a sharp contradistinction to his naïve attribution of a positive impetus for the spread of "English civilization," Du Bois is showing profound insight here when, while acknowledging England's "rapacity and injustice," he juxtaposes them with the American situation, which is much worse. While there is certainly no true "wisdom" or "justice" in colonial interventions by the English in Africa because by its very nature colonial adventurism requires in its early stages a swift, reactionary brutality in

response to any resistance from colonial subjects as opposed to "wise" or well-thought-out dealings, Du Bois is indicating that the United States exercises even less wisdom in its dealings with "its alien subjects." He goes on to celebrate the cause of the Boer War as the "abolition of Negro slavery among the Cape Dutch by England" (the real cause was the discovery of gold and diamonds on South African farmland) but uses this opportunity again to contrast conditions of Negroes in Georgia with those of Black Africans in the Free State established by the Transvaal Boers, who don't have "a third of the rights" which are "enjoyed in Georgia—he cannot hold land, cannot live in town, has practically no civil status, and is in all but name a slave." He continues, asserting that "[a]mong the English his treatment is by no means ideal and yet there he has the advantage of school, has the right of suffrage under some circumstances, and has just courts before which he may plead his case" ("The Present Outlook…" 48). These frequent juxtapositions of the plights of people of color in the U.S. and globally, especially with the emphasis on fractional freedoms, like "a third of the rights", or suffrage "under *some* circumstances", or that one "*may* plead his case" before just courts serve the dual purpose of educating his audience about the injustices of global color line, but also to remind them of the long history of fractional freedoms and marginalization in the U.S. Fractional consideration as juridical subjects for African-Americans was the norm since the Three-Fifths Compromise only counted three of every five black slaves towards a state's population, and later codification of what it meant to be black was concerned with what proportion of a person's blood came from black ancestors. The abysmal state of

education for black children and adults, particularly in the South, was an all-too-familiar issue for Du Bois, who spent a summer in the late 1880's teaching in a rural part of Tennessee.[28] And while in the U.S. a black man "may" go before a court to plead his case, the fact that judges and juries were all white meant that these proceedings were anything but "just." That Du Bois is attempting to draw these parallels between European colonialism—even England's benevolent brand—and the U.S.'s treatment of African-Americans becomes most evident when he leaves the continent of Africa and addresses the color line in places like the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific. In his brief assessment of the Turkish invasion of Armenia, Du Bois recognizes that in the aftermath it was the "unjust determination to keep down the conquered, to recognize among Armenians no rights which a Turk was bound to respect" which echoes the words of Chief Justice Taney in the 1857 Dred Scott decision, where he asserts that blacks are inferior to whites, and therefore "have no rights which a white man is bound to respect." Despite the fact that later on Du Bois would recognize and regret in the works of this period a failure on his part to perceive "the connection of economics and politics" (*Dusk of Dawn* 41) in the events of the turn-of-the-century, as well as his naïve belief in the suitability of Western bourgeois democracy to "civilizing" the underdeveloped and undeveloped "dark races of mankind," it is apparent that he *is* aware of these paradoxes in his early works, albeit unconsciously. His investment in the ideals of Western bourgeois democracy comes

[28] See Chapter IV, "Of the Meaning of Progress" in Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

from the fact that these were the dominant ideologies of his age, and his training at Harvard reinforced this.

After his analysis of the global color line brings him back to the situation in the United States via South America, Du Bois recounts the history of Africans in America, from "the seventeenth century" to his present, which finds a race of people who, after the Civil War, had been freed, "enfranchised and protected in [their] civil rights, and yet a generation later [finds] the freedmen in economic serfdom, practically without a vote, denied in many cases common law rights, and subject to all sorts of petty discrimination" ("The Present Outlook…" 51), all of which he has attributed also to European imperial subjects around the globe as well. Yet despite the present "retrogression" at home Du Bois remains optimistic, asserting that "as long as there is motion there is hope," even if the motion is backwards. The advancement of African-Americans, through resistance to the color line and self-improvement, becomes all the more important for Du Bois at the end of his essay because,

> the colored population of *our* land is, through the new imperial policy [of the U.S.], about to be doubled by *our own* ownership of Porto [sic] Rico, and Hawaii, *our* protectorate of Cuba, and the conquest of the Philippines. This is for *us* and for the nation the greatest event since the Civil War and demands attention and action on *our* part. What is to be *our* attitude toward these new lands and the masses of dark men and women who inhabit them? Manifestly it must be of deepest sympathy and strongest alliance. *We* must stand ready to guard and guide them with *our* vote and *our* earnings. Negro and Filipino,

> Indian and Porto [sic] Rican, Cuban and Hawaiian, all must stand together under the stars and stripes for an America that knows no color line in the freedom of its opportunities. *We* must remember that the twentieth century will find nearly twenty millions of brown and black people under the protection of the American flag, a third of the nation, and that on the success and efficiency of the nine millions of *our own* number depends the ultimate destiny of Filipinos, Porto [sic] Ricans, Indians and Hawaiians, and that *on us* too depends in a large degree the attitude of Europe towards the teeming millions of Asia and Africa. ("The Present Outlook…" 53, emphases mine).

In this passage, Du Bois isn't using "our", "we", or "us" as a way to indicate the whole of the United States, but only black Americans, who he implores to act now to better their situation and demand the rights they have been denied. In this passage Du Bois envisions an America justly governed by and for all of its citizens, and much like Jose Martí's essay of almost a decade earlier, postulates "Our America," an America that follows through on its unfulfilled promises to marginalized peoples. While Martí's essay castigates the "prideful villager [who] thinks that his hometown contains the whole world" (Martí 288), Du Bois takes a step beyond the U.S.-centric view that Martí criticizes, and asserts not just a global community of "the dark races of mankind", but also that if the U.S. is to pursue its "imperial policy," then it is the responsibility of African-Americans to ensure that the new arrival will find the color line already abolished, and the opportunities promised to be there for the taking. Unfortunately, the naivety of this passage which Du Bois will lament four decades

later is his unacknowledged assumption that there can be change to the socio-economic and political situation in the U.S. quickly enough to make the nominal democracy that is being exported to people of these new territorial acquisitions the "civilizing" good he strives to make it with the symbol of the "stars and stripes." The actions of the U.S. in all of these territories after Du Bois writes this essay are never benevolent, and in the Philippines the bloodshed and violence last for years. While he is correct that fighting for civil rights at home will eventually translate to better conditions for subaltern peoples abroad, it isn't until after World War II that the process of decolonization begins, and it isn't until the 1960's that peoples of color in the third world gain the freedoms that they strive for.

Twain's activities in the Anti-Imperialism League and writings critical of U.S. and European imperialism in the names of "Christendom" and "Civilization" earned him the condemnation of many leading Americans, including Theodore Roosevelt, who remarked that when he heard criticism of the atrocities committed by Christian missionaries abroad levelled by Twain and others, he "[felt] like skinning them alive" (Kaplan 364). However, despite his consciousness of the ills perpetrated in the name of these western democratic ideals both at home and abroad, Twain's work, with its trademark irony and wit, serves only to highlight them and never makes a real attempt to offer possible resolutions. Indeed, it is a curious thread running throughout his *oeuvre* that the iniquities of racism and slavery are never corrected, despite the fact that the criticisms levelled in his works seem to beg for correctives. For instance, in *Huckleberry Finn*, despite Tom Sawyer's knowledge of Jim's manumission he defers

the moment of Jim's freedom in order that he may play a perilous prank on Huck and Jim, which readers may find humorous but is one of the cruelest acts in the novel. The tragedy of Roxy and her son Tom's bondage in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is all but brushed aside in the novel's *dénouement*, where Tom is sold down the river once it's discovered that he was indeed a slave and therefore property whose value wasn't taken into account when his former master's debts were settled. Towards the end of his career, Twain wasn't even able to complete *Which Was It?*, the story of the financially imperiled aristocrat George Harrison and the mulatto, Jasper, a former slave and distant blood-relative of Harrison who uses this fact and his knowledge of a murder Harrison commits during a failed attempt at burglary to blackmail Harrison. His work on this narrative all but ceases once the question of Harrison's culpability for Jasper's degradation is raised. Indeed, this later work meanders on for almost 250 pages while Twain establishes the basis for Harrison's financial trouble, the greed of those who try to take advantage of his predicament, and the rationalizations of the Idiot Philosopher, Sol Bailey. But all of this falls by the wayside once Jasper enters the narrative, which both further complicates the intricacies of the previously laid plots and renders most of them superfluous. Although the last few pages of the narrative are spent in trying to regain the bearings of the earlier plots in light of the advent of Jasper, not even the rationalizations of the Idiot Philosopher can restore the narrative's former trajectory and resolve the cognitive dissonance Twain must have felt when the plots surrounding money's corrupting influence on the residents of Indiantown culminated in the tragedy of Jasper's plot.

Twain's essay, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" was published in January of 1901. On December 30, 1900 Twain had published the following excerpt in the New York *Herald*,

A GREETING FROM THE NINETEENTH TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

> I bring you the stately nation named Christendom, returning, bedraggled, besmirched, and dishonored, from pirate raids in Kiao-Chou, Manchuria, South Africa, and the Philippines, with her soul full of meanness, her pocket full of boodle, and her mouth full of hypocrisies. Give her soap and towel, but hide the looking glass (Smith 5).

Under the banners of "Christendom" and "civilization" the U.S., England, France, and Germany had spent the preceding years in colonial exploits that, at the cost of the lives of tens of thousands of people, had immensely enriched them. The hypocrisy of justifying "pirate" raids for "boodle" with rhetoric to the effect that the pirate nations were bringing Christianity and civilization to otherwise uncivilized peoples was one that greatly upset Twain, whose profound sensitivity to duplicity, even his own, made him a sort of expert on the subject, and therefore a vocal critic of it. The purpose of Twain's placing this statement in the newspaper serves in some ways to encourage people to demand the cessation of such imperialist adventurism, or to provide them with "soap and towel" to give these nations, that they might clean up their acts. However, the imperative to "hide the looking glass" betrays Twain's knowledge that even in pointing out the sins committed in the name of Christianity and civilization by

holding a mirror up to those who sin and hoping it might bring about reform would be fleeting. Even utilizing the shock of recognizing in one's reflection the stains of such criminal acts as an incentive for reform seemed futile. Twain knew that attempts at "reform would always fail" because "human conscience [is] so easily confounded by its own bad-faith rationalizations of wrongdoing that it reinforces the corrupting influences [already] at play in its social environment or constructs new modes of subjugation" when waves of reform alter the former modes (Carlstroem and Robinson 106-7). In this sense, the mirror functions as a Pauline glass, through which "we see… darkly" (1 Corinthians 13) the true meaning of the "charity" of the Christian nations of the west towards non-white nations, and so it must be avoided in order that the conscience of the nation not come "face to face" with its people, who remain untroubled by the realities of imperialism.

Before "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" begins its depiction of the conditions of foreign peoples in exotic environs invaded by the U.S. and its foreign policy, Twain describes the conditions of our own urban jungles, those "most densely populated and least known" parts of the U.S. As was frequently his habit, he attempts to exculpate himself from any accusations of an ulterior motive by saying that his purpose in this article is *not* to "describe the terrible offences against humanity committed in the name of Politics in some of the most notorious East Side districts" but instead to "let the great mass of more or less careless citizens of this beautiful metropolis of the New World get some conception of the havoc and ruin wrought to man, woman and child" ("To the Person…" 6). Here "careless" citizens are both

those without the burden of knowledge, therefore without the worry it would arouse, and those who *do* know but choose to ignore their knowledge, that they might be free from care. In the same way that Du Bois begins and ends his essay by addressing domestic issues that are inextricably interwoven with the conditions that contribute to imperial endeavors, Twain quite convincingly illustrates the correlation between U.S. foreign and domestic policy, and their root causes. Twain goes on to describe

> a section of the city territory completely dominated by one man, without whose permission neither legitimate nor illegitimate business can be conducted; *where illegitimate business is encouraged and legitimate business discouraged*; where the respectable residents have to fasten their doors and windows summer nights and sit in their rooms with asphyxiating air and 100-degree temperature, rather than try to catch the faint whiff of breeze in their natural breathing places, the stoops of their homes; *where naked women dance by night in the streets, and unsexed men prowl like vultures through the darkness on 'business'* not only permitted but encouraged by the police… where men walking with their wives along the street are openly insulted; *where children that have adult diseases are the chief patrons of the hospitals and dispensaries*; where it is the rule, rather than the exception, that *murder, rape, robbery and theft go unpunished* -- in short where the Premium of the most awful forms of Vice is the Profit of the politicians (Twain 6).

While Twain makes it explicit that he is here describing the poorer neighborhoods of New York, under the sway of Tammany Hall political corruption, the description would also be an apt one if he were attempting to give an account of any city under the control of an autocratic colonial governor. Describing "sections" of "territory" under the control of one man, without whom no business may be conducted, legitimate or otherwise, is reminiscent of the way any number of colonial enclaves function in Africa, China, India, or the islands of the Pacific. By sanctioning "illegitimate" business, which is to say various criminal enterprises ranging from robbery to rape, the ward bosses of Tammany Hall were very much like the men in charge of imperialist bureaucracies abroad; their pockets were lined with the ill-gotten proceeds of prostitution and piracy that they allowed to occur within their autonomous regions. The most interesting description in this passage is the fate of the "respectable residents" who, by virtue of the politically sanctioned crime committed on their very doorstep, are made virtual prisoners in their own tenements. These residents are the original residents of the neighborhoods under the corrupt influence of Tammany Hall, who share a similar predicament with those native residents of countries that find themselves under control of a corrupt foreign power. The parallel is quite clear when one considers the "100-degree temperature" of the city in this passage and the "black belt circling the world" being exploited by western imperialist powers. The oppressive heat and the oppressive socio-political conditions both in the poorer neighborhoods of New York City and at the locus of colonial power in the various nations being exploited by the west are inextricably linked. Here, one can

begin to consider the various identities of "the person sitting in darkness"; the native inhabitants of New York's slums and those natives who live in countries being invaded by colonial powers, both of whom are forced at night to sequester themselves in the darkness of their homes, and deny themselves the free air of their own community in order to save themselves from the depravity brought on by the greed of foreign invaders. At first the "naked women" who "dance by night" through the streets seem to be the prostitutes of the Bowery or some other neighborhood who are pursued through the night by their drunken clientele. But these women are also reminiscent of the native women of equatorial climes, who, owing to the oppressive heat, go about wearing fewer, lighter clothes and so provoking the unwanted and brutal attentions of the white European invaders, and so the "unsexed men who prowl through the darkness on 'business'" are the sexually repressed Victorian invaders, whose business is the imperialist exploitation of "the person sitting in darkness." The last portion of this section sets the tone for the rest of the essay. The idea of a man and his wife being accosted when they're out for an evening stroll, the depravities that breed "children that have adult diseases" and the lack of punishment for "murder, rape, robbery, and theft" are an affront to the bourgeois sensibilities of his American readership, but these are the results their complicity in a system that set up "the Premiums of the most awful forms of vice" as the "profit of politicians." The greed for profit that is the impetus for the evils committed on the very doorsteps of those who live in New York, and from which many of that city's inhabitants profit is the same greed that provides the impetus for imperialist interventions abroad. The

shocking truth of their own complicity, as oppressive as the sweltering heat of the city in summer, or the tropics, that keeps these "careless" and "respectable" residents locked in their houses, willfully in darkness and willfully ignorant of the foulness and corruption that surrounds them.

In the same way Du Bois's essay uses the U.S. as a point of departure for an eastward survey of the global color line, Twain too follows his description of domestic issues by leaving them behind, in this case moving west, across the Pacific, and considering the situation of missionaries in China. He begins with what he asserts is the account of a Reverend Ament, who

> has returned from a trip which he made for the purpose of collecting indemnities for damages done by Boxers. *Everywhere he went he compelled the Chinese to pay.* He says that all his native Christians are now provided for. He had 700 of them under his charge, and 300 were killed. He has *collected 300 taels for each* of these murders, and has *compelled full payment for all the property belonging to Christians* that was destroyed. He also assessed fines amounting to THIRTEEN TIMES the amount of the indemnity. *This money will be used for the propagation of the Gospel.*

Twain's characterization of Rev. Ament's "mission" in China is intentionally dubious. As a central player in the actions of missionaries that led the Boxers to rebel in an attempt to assert their sovereignty, Ament was more than just an agent for the collection of reparations after the fact. The 300 *taels* of silver collected as reparations for each of the Chinese and foreign Christians killed at the hands of the Boxers is

reminiscent of the 30 pieces of silver paid to Judas Iscariot for betraying Christ. In this sense the distinctly un-Christian nature of demanding monetary compensation for wrongs committed by one's enemy becomes clear. Instead of turning the other cheek, the missionaries and Ament want to bring about the financial ruin of the Chinese people, to their own financial advantage. The compounding of the "fines" by Rev. Ament by "thirteen" seems to be both an ill omen and a subtle insinuation of the thirteen stripes on the U.S. flag. Therefore, the "gospel" to be propagated is that of greed and subjugation, a gospel which echoes the values of the criminals that run New York's slums that Twain begins this essay with. What Twain doesn't mention here is that Rev. Ament was able to "compel" payment because everywhere he went he was in the company of U.S. troops. But Ament's comments in defense of his actions belie this fact anyway, when Twain quotes him as saying "I criticize [sic] the Americans. *The soft hand of the Americans is not as good as the mailed fist of the Germans*" ("To the Person…" 7). Here, the reference is to German and other European troops who, along with their contingents of Catholic missionaries, demanded "in addition to money, *head for head.*.. [i]n the Wenchiu country, 680 Catholics were killed, and for this the European Catholics here demand 750,000 strings of cash and 680 *heads*." This fact strengthens the reading of an indictment of U.S. and European military action in China both before and after the Boxer Rebellion, and culminates in Twains description of the missionaries and their vindictiveness as representative of the "American spirit."

The American spirit is also one that thrives on self-delusion. Twain refers to the Boxers as China's "traduced" patriots, which initially seems to indicate that they are both "lead along as a spectacle" (OED, "traduce") in defeat, but also seems to indicate that the Western press has slandered and vilified them (OED, "traduce", 3a). The slanderous depiction of the Boxers, who are truly motivated by nationalism, or the same kind of patriotism that is found to be a positive attribute in figures like George Washington, is accepted as gospel by Washington's heirs. Twain goes on to sarcastically commend Ament, commenting on his importance to the American public, who "all hold him dear for manfully defending his fellow missionaries from exaggerated charges which were beginning to distress us, but which his testimony has so considerably modified that we can now contemplate them without noticeable pain" leaving them as "careless" of the suffering of the Boxers as they are of those in the slums of New York City. In a bitterly ironic conclusion to his analysis of this news, Twain reiterates the imperialist perversion, and indeed inversion, of Christian values when he describes how "[b]y happy luck, we get all these glad tidings on Christmas Eve -- just in time to enable us to celebrate the day with proper gaiety and enthusiasm. Our spirits soar, and we find we can even make jokes: Taels I win, Heads you lose" ("To the Person…" 7). The play on "heads" and "Taels" and uncertainty of a flipped coin is here quite striking. This observation is particularly incisive, because not only does it refer again to the hypocrisy of Christian missionaries, it also simultaneously captures the public's reluctance to face the hard truths that the article

on Rev. Ament's Chinese expedition reveals and Twain's own use of humorous deflections to belie these same truths.

The underlying motive for all of the atrocities committed by imperial powers abroad is profit. Imperial powers aren't just invading new land to gain more raw materials for production and consumption of domestic goods. Colonial holdings in what would become known as the Third-world also offer a broader market for domestically produced goods, as both the colonists and colonized natives will increase the demand for these goods. Twain plays with this concept when he likens the Christian missionary ideology to a product to be exported. He asks,

> would it not be prudent to get our Civilization-tools together, and see how much stock is left on hand in the way of Glass Beads and Theology, and Maxim Guns and Hymn Books, and Trade-Gin and Torches of Progress and Enlightenment (patent adjustable ones, good to fire villages with, upon occasion), and balance the books, and arrive at the profit and loss, so that we may intelligently decide whether to continue the business or sell out the property and start a new Civilization Scheme on the proceeds?

The global black belt breaks down the historical divide between the domestic frontier of the "West" and foreign, extra-continental empires. Twain draws this out when he intertwines imagery associated with both global imperialism and the U.S.'s own westward expansion by using terms like "glass beads," which were frequently used in trades with Native American, and Maxim Guns, the first mass-produced machine-gun. Mixed in with these concrete commodities are the ideologies of the "hymn

book," "progress," and "Enlightenment" that justify the use of violence and despotism to propagate them. All of this is meticulously reckoned in the balance books which will assist the powers that be in determining the profitability of conferring the blessings of civilization on "the person sitting in darkness." Twain even uses corporate language to describe the "Blessings-of-Civilization Trust", in which he reckons

> there is more money …, more territory, more sovereignty, and other kinds of emolument, than there is in any other game that is played. But Christendom has been playing it badly of late years, and must certainly suffer by it, in my opinion. She has been so eager to get every stake that appeared on the green cloth, that the People who Sit in Darkness have noticed it -- they have noticed it, and have begun to show alarm. They have become suspicious of the Blessings of Civilization. More -- they have begun to examine them. This is not well. The Blessings of Civilization are all right, and a good commercial property; there could not be a better, in a dim light… It will bring into camp any idiot that sits in darkness anywhere… This brand is strictly for Export ("to the Person…" 10)

Referring to imperial powers as "Blessings-of-Civilization Trust" and likening their exploits to a "game" rightly depicts Western powers of the U.S. and Europe as what they are: criminals. Various criminal enterprises have long been loosely referred to as "the Game" and here it recalls the Tammany Hall bosses who have corrupted the slums of New York City. But there is a glimmer of hope in this passage, as the greed

for profit and “every stake that appeared on green cloth” has made “People who Sit in Darkness” more aware of the duplicitous nature of colonial expansion and the underlying motives and ideology. Asserting that the “blessings of civilization” require “a dim light” in order to be appreciated again alludes to the shady, nefarious nature of the criminal enterprise of the imperial state. When viewed dimly “any idiot that sits in darkness anywhere” will prefer it to “darkness”, until the dim light reveals the tainted nature of the product. That there is a “brand” of civilization that is “strictly for Export” leads Twain to ask his reader if “it is, perhaps, possible that there are two kinds of civilization—one for home consumption and one for the heathen market?” (“to the Person…12). It is here that Twain gets at an issue which parallels one Du Bois will ponder in his later works and has already alluded to in his essay: the hypocrisy of the American promise of liberty.

In broaching the question of two “brands” of civilization, Twain, like Du Bois, comes to the question of what the U.S. role in the Philippines means, and how it can be reconciled with the promises of liberty and democracy that the U.S. espouses. He criticizes the hypocrisy of the United States and its Secretary of State when faced with the

> Philippine temptation. It was strong; it was too strong, and he made that bad mistake: he played the European game, the Chamberlain game. It was a pity; it was a great pity, that error; that one grievous error, that irrevocable error. For it was the very place and time to play the American game again. And at no cost. Rich winnings to be gathered in, too; rich and permanent;

> indestructible; a fortune transmissible forever to the children of the flag. Not land, not money, not dominion -- no, something worth many times more than that dross: our share, the spectacle of a nation of long harassed and persecuted slaves set free through our influence; our posterity's share, the golden memory of that fair deed. The game was in our hands… ("to the Person…" 14)

Instead of living up to the ideals of its founding documents and play "the American game" to secure independence for the Philippines, the U.S. decided to play "the European game" for the profit of sugar trusts. In an implicit reference to the "stars and stripes" of Du Bois's essay, Twain here laments the loss of an intangible "fortune" forever "transmissible" to "the children of the flag" that would reinforce the national mythos of liberty and equality. This failure to help "a nation of long harassed and persecuted slaves" achieve the same ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence and codified in the Constitution becomes particularly poignant when, by referring to Filipinos as "slaves" Twain recalls the all-too-recent failures of the U.S. to treat its own newly emancipated slaves with the dignity and justice it demanded for itself in the 18th century.

The relatively recent "failure" of Radical Reconstruction and the return to Antebellum injustices such as the codification of racial segregation and the establishment of a black underclass contribute to both Twain and Du Bois's work of this era. In the final pages of "To The Person Sitting in Darkness" Twain recounts a newspaper clipping which gives a tally of losses which "During the last ten months… have been 268 killed and 750 wounded; Filipino loss, *three thousand two hundred*

and twenty-seven killed, and 694 wounded" ("to the Person…" 19). The disparity in casualties doesn't just indicate that the U.S. superiority in technical terms means higher casualty rates for the Filipinos; we armed them to fight the Spanish, so the match was even. Such a disparity indicates instead the wholesale slaughter of Filipinos, with no quarter given to wounded or captured insurgents, which is corroborated by Twain's inclusion of the remarks of a soldier who admits "We never left one alive. If one was wounded, we would run our bayonets through him" (*Ibid.*, 19). To this, Twain remarks that "We must stand ready to grab the Person Sitting in Darkness, for he will swoon away at this confession, saying: "Good God, those 'niggers' spare their wounded, and the Americans massacre theirs!" (*Ibid.)*. Here, instead of a person of color in an equatorial colony or an island in the pacific, the "person sitting in darkness" is white. Most likely he is one of those "careless citizens" to whom the news of a compassionate enemy—one who until that moment could be dismissed with an epithet, who is slaughtered wholesale by young American soldiers—leads him to question whether "There must be two Americas: one that sets the captive free, and one that takes a once-captive's new freedom away from him, and picks a quarrel with him with nothing to found it on; then kills him to get his land" (*Ibid.* 15). If this person sitting in darkness begins to understand that the people his country is murdering are "like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing" but that they are separated from one and other, "shut out from their world by a vast veil", he may begin to question the origins of the veil.

That both authors take the "dark" as their central motif is intriguing. The complexity of its various connotations in the context of both articles reiterates the nexus of race and class that links these works. For both Du Bois and Twain the dark skin of those who are exploited by global imperialism is a fitting counterpoint to the whiteness of imperialist aggressors. But Twain's is also the darkness which white elites choose to wrap themselves in in order to cut themselves off from the realities of torture and murder committed abroad in their name. His is the "darkness" that envelopes those outside of the gas lamp glow of civilization, though the "blessings" of such a civilization are dubious, and bring with them a darkness all their own. Conversely, Du Bois's "dark" is one of the ages, of time and place; for the "dark races of mankind" to come into the light of civilization means to embrace the material cultures of modernity. To Du Bois, who was still enthralled by the white liberal values instilled in him at Harvard, railroads and industrial manufacturing were the means by which the "dark races" could successfully integrate within a larger system of global capital. Yet it is no coincidence that the byproduct of railroads and industry is omnipresent black soot, which covers everything with its filth. The darkness of racism and capital were apparent to both Twain and Du Bois, but their approaches to criticism and radical interventions are ultimately defined by their subject positions.

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