

No one watching from the dock knew what Abel Coffin had under the sheet that covered a shapeless but ambulatory form as the two figures disembarked from the *Sachem* in Boston Harbor on 16 August 1829. Coffin, a mariner who specialized in overseas trade, led the rumpled mass down the gangplank and into an enclosed carriage, whereupon he and the swaddled form were whisked away. An article appearing in the *Patriot* the next day aroused even more curiosity about the strange cargo. The reporter announced that “two Siamese youths, males, eighteen years of age, their bodies connected from their birth” had arrived in the city and that “[t]hey will probably be exhibited to the public when proper arrangements have been made.”<sup>1</sup> After an examination by a prominent anatomist at the Harvard Medical School, whose observations were publicized to generate more interest in the upcoming spectacle, the two young men went onstage for the first time as the Siamese Double Boys.<sup>2</sup>

Thus began the American lives of Chang and Eng, who were better known later in their career as the Siamese Twins. They were discovered in a Thai village along the banks of the Mekong River by the Scottish merchant Robert Hunter who would eventually collaborate with Abel Coffin to bring the twins to the United States. Early in their career, Chang and Eng toured under contract with Coffin and his business associate, James Webster Hale, but as soon as they fulfilled the agreement’s terms, they gained autonomy as performers, hiring managers rather than being indentured to employers. P. T. Barnum is often falsely credited with establishing the careers of the Siamese Twins; in fact, Chang and Eng had only a brief contract with the famous showman toward the end of their lives. The burgeoning freak-

show circuit in the United States and abroad brought the twins a measure of financial affluence. They settled in the western part of North Carolina near Mount Airy, converted to Christianity, married white women who were also sisters, adopted the surname Bunker, bought a plantation with slaves, and fathered twenty-two children between them, two of whom fought in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. They were so well known as public figures and so ubiquitous as conjoined twins that the term *Siamese twins* eventually came to refer to all conjoined twins, even, anachronistically, those who had lived long before they did. And although their ancestry was more Chinese than Thai, their origins in Siam—a nation that existed in the minds of Westerners as a mystical, isolated, and impenetrable space—was foregrounded in their stage name.

The range of textual media in which representations of Chang and Eng Bunker are found in nineteenth-century Anglo-American arts and culture include newspaper accounts of their performances; visual images in advertising posters; souvenir booklets; trading cards; and portrayals of the twins in song, drama, and fictional prose. My attention in this essay will focus on two examples from this motley collection of texts in order to read this figure of anatomical and racial difference within late-nineteenth-century discourses of nation, national unity, and economic-imperialist nation building. Mark Twain's essay "Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins" and Thomas Nast's cartoon "The American Twins" are polemic tracts that jointly use the racial difference and anatomical materiality of the Bunker twins as a rhetorical device. Although both texts invoke a reconciliatory politics during times of civil unrest, they demonstrate an uneasy ambivalence about the national unity they advocate. Both evince an unspoken concern about the nation's inability to contain racial—and other valences of—difference in visions of national unity even while calling for harmonious interconnectedness among Americans variously situated socially with respect to race, class, and gender. That Twain's essay appeared in 1869 and Nast's cartoon in 1874 locates these texts firmly within the postbellum events of a nation undergoing reconstruction and industrial growth; the racialization of Chang and Eng in both texts rests on and reinforces ideas widely circulating about the place of Asian-raced labor during this period. Across the United States and its territories, Chinese migrants functioned largely as exploited non-citizen labor, and their racial difference within the expanding econ-

omy served the crucial purpose of dividing and conquering a racially and ethnically heterogeneous work force. This economy positioned Chinese workers in ways that undermined the efforts of working-class whites and laborers of other racial groups in a variety of different workplaces, such as the plantation, the railroad, and the laundry.<sup>3</sup>

The figure of the Chinaman with which all Americans in the second half of the nineteenth century would have been familiar was a fairly recent construction. Images of Asian-raced peoples during the nineteenth century underwent considerable transformation as the social and economic landscape changed between the Jacksonian era and the period after the Civil War. During the early part of the century before the advent of Chinese immigration to California in 1849, Chinese people were spectacular objects of visual consumption in the United States. At this time, China dominated the international trade arena, dealing in commodities such as spices, tea, silks, and porcelain; moreover, the ongoing projects of U.S. expansion in the early 1800s were motivated largely by a desire to compete with what was then the world's leading economic stronghold.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the place that China occupied in this early version of the global economy informed the idea of China in the white American collective imagination. Thus, perceptions of China during these years before the annexation of Mexico and the ensuing recruitment of Chinese workers to build and develop this recently acquired territory rested upon what were then China's primary exports to the United States: not labor but luxury goods. At the time of Chang and Eng's arrival in Boston, China for Anglo-Americans did not yet signify the dirty, disease-ridden "coolie" but, instead, opulence and endless wealth.<sup>5</sup> And not unexpectedly, the Asian body on public display during the 1830s was contextualized in a way that referenced and rested upon international flows of goods and capital that supported the consumption habits of the Anglo-American ownership classes.

Scholarship in the field of Asian American studies referencing Chang and Eng invariably reads their presence on the nineteenth-century sideshow stage alongside another contemporaneous Chinese performer, Afong Moy (alternatively spelled Ahfong Moy), to show how popular audiences received and visually consumed Asian-raced human curiosities in the early-nineteenth-century United States.<sup>6</sup> Starting in 1834, spectators in the city of New York had the opportunity to observe a young woman from China in popular venues such as

Barnum's American Museum and Peale's Museum. Foregrounded as being of particular curiosity were her bound feet, a physical anomaly calling to mind highly sexualized concepts of Chinese patriarchal rule and female submission. An 1835 lithograph depicts her dressed in a long silk gown and seated on a stage designed to look like a parlor containing various chinoiserie: painted scrolls, patterned curtains, large porcelain planters, a Chinese lantern, and an oriental rug. A turret evocative of North African architecture hangs over the stage, and beside her is a round table covered with a sheer lace tablecloth on which rest a dainty teapot and cup.

Contemporaneous lithographs of the young Chang and Eng similarly show them framed by the trappings of class respectability in the early 1800s. Images from this early part of their career depict them within a space reminiscent of a parlor or sitting room replete with patterned carpeting, corded drapes, and Chippendale furniture. At times, there would be a board for checkers or chess in the background (one of Chang and Eng's acts would be to challenge an audience member to a match) or, alternatively, a badminton set, all games that allude to activities of the leisure class.

Social historian John Kuo Wei Tchen points to the irony that this widely circulated image of Afong Moy, presumably in her element, appears to conform more accurately to the interior décor of class-privileged white Americans than to that of actual people living in China. "Yet to the Anglo-American eye," notes Tchen, the setting appeared to be in the 'Chinese taste.'"<sup>7</sup> There is a paradox in the location of these Chinese bodies as objects of mass consumption. On one hand, a large part of the appeal that Chang and Eng and Afong Moy exude stems, if only subliminally, from their association with the upper echelons of Anglo-American society and the exclusiveness that accompanies it. The stage resembling a parlor and the props of Chinese-originated decorative objects found in the sitting rooms of economically comfortable white Americans suggest restricted access for the spectators. On the other hand, the economically diverse cross-section of American society that would have comprised the spectators at events featuring the appearance of Chang and Eng or Afong Moy renders these performers objects of mass consumption readily available to anyone who can afford the nominal entry fee. The fact remains that nineteenth-century freak shows were populated largely by immigrants and the working classes.<sup>8</sup> By alluding to class privilege in shows that featured

performers Afong Moy or Chang and Eng, the material relations on which nineteenth-century U.S. cultures of human exhibition rested made the trappings of privilege vicariously accessible to virtually all.

The juxtaposition of Chang and Eng with Afong Moy is a likely, logical, and completely plausible critical maneuver given the many similarities of their venues and the stylization of their performances, but I want to suggest that another—possibly more productive—project may be to pair Chang and Eng with another set of Chinese bodies that was also circulated for visual consumption in the nineteenth-century United States, albeit in a different context. Historian Lucy Cohen notes that during the 1840s, Christian missionaries, particularly from the American South, were involved in evangelizing missions in China. On regular occasions, missionaries would return to the United States with representative specimens of “heathens” converted, and they would conduct tours circulating these converts to legitimize and raise more funds for their ongoing efforts abroad. Although these early visitors to the United States traveling with missionaries eventually returned to China after their tour was over, beginning with the 1850s a number of these converts to Christianity remained in the United States as theology students and eventually became missionaries themselves.<sup>9</sup>

This spectacle of the heathen made civil—indeed, the heathen-turned-civilizing-agent—presents another lens through which to read portrayals of Chang and Eng in the literary and visual record. The odd trajectory of their lives from Siamese village boys to Christian, Victorian-era gentlemen is, within these nineteenth-century evangelist discourses of conversion and transformation, a completely likely and, even expected, transformation. Unlike Afong Moy whose stage act relied upon her fixed inscription as a foreign object as she spoke in Chinese and ate with chopsticks for the amusement of her spectators, Chang and Eng performed interactively with their English-speaking audience members, telling jokes and engaging in light banter. But even though they were able to engage their audience in a way that suggested redemptive conversion and reform, their racial difference in the face of growing anxieties about racial contamination within the postbellum industrialized nation as well as their anatomical difference (which, particularly after they began appearing onstage with their children, alluded to non-normative, non-Christian sexual practices) continued to haunt their depictions in nineteenth-century American arts and culture. This vision of the redeemed yet troublingly racially

and anatomically anomalous body eventually became a useful trope for social commentary on the state of national affairs during this tumultuous period.

It is precisely these allusions to the alleged redemptive and transformative promise of Asian-raced peoples during this period of continued and renewed class stratification that made representations of the Bunker twins ripe for metaphor-making during the historical moment of the industrial revolution. As the nation and the state grappled with questions about how to contain difference and dissent on both a cultural and juridical level, Mark Twain and Thomas Nast found ways to adopt Chang and Eng as tropes that allude to an uneasy—but ideologically necessary—unity within a heterogeneously constituted populace that saw itself in need of a redemptive solution. Here, the Bunkers' curious social location presented an unusual situation even more puzzling than their anatomy, for they were naturalized (in the state of New York) at a time when citizenship was limited only to white (and, later, black) people. Moreover, their status as slaveholding, landed subjects positioned them in stark contrast to the class identity of most Chinese people then living in the United States, who were exploited as noncitizen labor. As bearers of a certain type of racial difference who were nevertheless racialized very differently from contemporaneous others of their racial group, Chang and Eng represent an odd contradiction that is just as or even more confounding than their anatomical constitution. But it is that very social distance from Chinese laborers who were abject presences in the national grain that, according to the logic that Twain and Nast employed, allowed them to become universalized as exemplary figures for the nation as a whole during this period. And not inconsequentially, their standing as subjects who benefited from enslaved labor gets erased from these literary and visual texts emerging at this particular moment in the U.S. past.



My reading of two nation-building texts by Twain and Nast participates in a recently initiated set of conversations about the need for a critical consideration of race in disability studies.<sup>10</sup> Whereas those working in disability studies when it coalesced into an institutionally recognized field in the 1990s worked to shed light on the absence of considerations of disability in cognate modes of inquiry generated by the intellectual left,<sup>11</sup> newer disability studies scholars are currently

challenging their own field's past oversights of racism, imperialism, neocolonialism, and the international division of labor.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, even the earliest examples of protodisability studies scholarship have referenced issues of racial difference in order to stake a claim about disabled people's social location and disenfranchisement, but these texts have tended to stop short of thinking through the interrelatedness of these two axes of identity. By simply making the claim that disability is like race, this early scholarship not only creates a white-centered model of disability while ignoring intersections of race and disability but, in some cases, replicates damaging images of blackness as they have existed historically in the white mind.<sup>13</sup> My readings of Twain and Nast are indebted to the disability studies frameworks that have already been established insofar as they are concerned with the politics of textual representation, but I also signal a continued commitment to an interrogation of power that takes into account both race and ability status.

The use of the extraordinary or disabled body as metaphor has a troubled history. Disabled figures in literature are often objects of pity, scorn, fear, or disgust that function as narrative devices instead of complex, multidimensional characters. Existing as metaphor primarily, the disabled figure operates by invoking and mobilizing cultural anxieties about anatomical, sensory, or cognitive difference.<sup>14</sup> Because disabled figures are so often rendered as figurative devices in literature rather than treated fully as characters, the rhetorical effectiveness of their portrayals ultimately depends upon and reinforces collective anxieties about disability; however, behind every text containing a politically problematic disabled figure there exists the possibility of a redemptive or subversive reading that contests and challenges ableist norms.

Although Rosemarie Garland-Thomson makes the standard observation that disabled characters in literature are overwhelmingly marked with the brand of otherness and stylized to effect certain emotional responses in a reader who, presumably, is anatomically normative, she is not content to interpret all disabled figures all of the time in this light. Recognizing the complexity with which the extraordinary body can generate alternate meanings, some of which can contest anatomical normativity, she argues that disability is a "multivalent trope" whose analysis summons forth numerous competing interpretations. Her project attempts to present "possibilities for signification that go

beyond a monologic interpretation of corporeal difference as deviance,” backing her claims of a possible empathic alliance between an anatomically normative reader and disabled literary figure by deploying a materialist rethinking of the social space of the freak show.<sup>15</sup> While Garland-Thomson concedes that freak shows were, by and large, exploitative means of employment for all but a small handful of unusually successful performers (Chang and Eng Bunker among them), she steers clear of a wholesale condemnation of the freak-show industry because of its transgressive potential. As she observes, nineteenth-century freak shows were populated largely by an immigrant and working-class population drawn to U.S. urban centers by the industrial revolution. At this time of intense standardization and mechanization, the freak-show performer who flaunted deviance offered a refreshing celebration of nonconformity to a spectator population displaced and distanced from middle-class, Anglo-American ideals of respectability. The freak on stage was someone who dared to be different.

Rachel Adams, however, takes issue with Garland-Thomson’s project of reading disability in this redemptive light, finding her claim that spectators could have identified with the freak-show performer inadequately theorized. Not content to celebrate unproblematically this reversal of the objectifying gaze, Adams warns that “each recognition is in fact a misrecognition, in which the sympathetic onlooker reads himself onto the body on display, obliterating its personhood as completely as the most exploitative exhibit.”<sup>16</sup> If the presumably unmarked spectator (or reader) wishes to identify with a freak-show performer (or disabled fictional character), those terms of identification may be hasty and politically ill-informed rather than redemptive, ultimately eliding the differences in the respective social locations between the gazer and the gazed-upon.

My own conceptual framework in reading Twain’s “Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins” and Nast’s cartoon “The American Twins” launches from Adams’s complication of Garland-Thomson’s claim. While I concur with Garland-Thomson that the extraordinary body as metaphor or material presence can function in ways that go beyond a limiting exposition of disability in literature, there are some dire consequences for celebratory embraces of freakishness. In this dynamic, there may be an appropriation of difference of certain types rather than a responsible and politically efficacious alliance with it. But it is these very identifications, however fraught, across lines of social

location that are worth probing more closely if only to uncover the power differentials they contain. Particularly in narratives about national unity and national identities, which is where my analysis of nineteenth-century Bunker-twin metaphors is located, these identifications across racial, class, and anatomical lines become significant in light of how difference is negotiated, consumed, domesticated, parodied, and eventually erased in order to render it safe and palatable. During times of civil unrest in the body politic, the extraordinary body of Chang and Eng Bunker served as a useful, albeit problematic, trope for the nineteenth-century Anglo-American subject grappling with the contradictions of a single nation-state containing multiple political and cultural contingencies across region, race, and class.<sup>17</sup>



A cover of one of many publicity pamphlets for the Siamese Twins sports a line drawing of the American eagle; underneath it are the words “United We Stand.” When the reader of the pamphlet turns the page, an image of Chang and Eng—the true subject of the text—comes into view. Allison Pingree is quick to point out the jingoistic spirit behind the conjoining of these words and this image, a combination that in this context is laced with comedy.<sup>18</sup> A deliberately humorous invocation of U.S. patriotism gets mobilized to sell a pair of performers who—because they suggest both racial and anatomical foreignness—do not immediately come to mind as symbols of American national pride. It is precisely the incongruity of the words and the image that creates the logic of the pamphlet’s humor. But what happens when the inverse takes place, when the Siamese Twins are deployed to sell an Anglo-American vision of national unity? What are the implications for conceptualizing a cohesive America by alluding to anatomical anomaly and racial difference? What both Twain and Nast demonstrate is that their project of selling national unity to a heterogeneous civil society necessitates the erasure of Chang and Eng’s racial difference to suggest a universal spirit behind the patriotic call. Chang and Eng, in effect, engage in whiteface performance through the mobilization of their body as literary and visual metaphor even as the logic of these metaphors continues to rest upon their palpable and visible distance from whiteness. This whitening that ultimately serves to underscore the subject’s further difference from actual white identity lies, after all, at the heart of any racial drag.<sup>19</sup>

The theme of doubling and twinning in Twain's work has already received considerable attention. The key texts for such readings, *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *The Comedy of Those Extraordinary Twins* (both published in 1894), have generated a variety of theoretical approaches.<sup>20</sup> As Twain goes on to discuss in the preface to *Those Extraordinary Twins*, the inspiration for Angelo and Luigi originates in a picture he saw of "a youthful Italian 'freak' or 'freaks'—which was—or were—on exhibition in our cities—a combination consisting of two heads and four arms joined to a single body and a single pair of legs."<sup>21</sup> Here he references Giovanni and Giacomo Tocci, conjoined twins and sideshow performers from Italy born in 1878 who toured throughout Europe and the United States. Even though Twain locates the germ of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins* in his musings upon sighting a photograph of the Toccis, who were actually born four years after the death of Chang and Eng Bunker, his long-time fascination with twins generally and conjoined twins in particular predated his writing of the two novels. There are striking similarities between the logistical and moral dilemmas Twain puts forth in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins* on the one hand and in his "Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins" on the other. All three texts convey concerns about the inseparability of self and other that ultimately raise questions about how difference can be reconciled, be it with violence or with negotiation.

An obvious precursor to *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins*, "Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins" appeared in *Packard's Monthly* and was later republished in Twain's 1875 collection *Sketches New and Old* under the title "The Siamese Twins." This satiric piece, which playfully purports to be biographical, makes reference to the many anecdotes (some real, others embellished, and many purely fictional) about Chang and Eng Bunker that were widely circulated throughout their lengthy career. However, under the punchy veneer of deadpan humor emblematic of Twain's style, the essay acknowledges the existence of ongoing sectional strife in the wake of the Civil War and reveals ambivalent feelings toward the phenomenon of Asian migration to the American continent during this time, making a crucial link between sectional reconciliation along the Eastern seaboard and the influx of noncitizen labor exploited on the California coast during this period. The rendering of the Bunkers' anatomy, two individuals cohabiting one body, into a metaphor that describes multiple

competing factions within one nation exemplifies the seeming paradox of national unity with which many white Americans struggled during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the invocation of readily recognizable racial stereotypes about the Asian mind—pliable as they may be at this historical moment after a very recent shift in U.S. portrayals of Chinese people—points toward the contrasting sentiments commanding middle-class, white Americans' views toward a foreign race of workers transforming the economy of the American continent.

The essay is a thinly veiled allegory about regional factionalism during and in the wake of the Civil War. In a key episode, Chang, described as fighting for the Confederate side, and Eng, who fights for the Union side, take each other prisoner, and a jury is summoned to decide who is legitimately the captor and who the captive. (Both Chang and Eng were actually slaveholders who supported the Confederate efforts.) The injunction that comes after a prolonged deliberation considers them both prisoners of each other and orders their exchange. On one hand, this nonsensical solution to the definitive crisis of the nineteenth century that literally pitted brother against brother appears to resolve itself in a facile way; on the other hand, the absurdity of this outcome suggests a reading of Twain's essay as a parody of reconciliationist sentiment that evinced itself in the many Reconstruction-era narratives about nation and reunion.<sup>22</sup> By making its readers uneasy about the underlying tensions within a nation that continued to struggle with its internal difference following the war's end, the essay both references and satirizes contemporaneous cultural productions regarding reunion.

Twain's essay goes on to describe a fictional fistfight between Chang and Eng. Several bystanders who witness the altercation try to separate the twins—writes Twain in his usual deadpan manner—but, of course, they are unsuccessful. Chang and Eng continue to fight each other and, in the end, are both hospitalized with severe injuries. Despite its skeptical stance toward facile celebrations of reconciliation, the essay shows that there is a real threat of injury in disunity. In this scene, which serves as a cautionary tale (and elsewhere in the essay as well), Twain issues a call for unity during a moment of national crisis. The essay's intended audience is not difficult to discern. Although the Civil War and its immediate aftermath affected everyone living in the United States—most dramatically Southern

slaves, whose status shifted from being property to becoming citizens following the Fourteenth Amendment in 1866—the war in the logic of Twain’s essay, and in countless other representations, is conceptualized as a struggle between a Northern white masculine subject and a Southern white masculine (landowning) subject. While men of all racial categories were enlisted in the military efforts, the warring factions of the United States are ultimately assigned an Anglo-American masculine subjectivity.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, the intended reader of this essay is positioned among the collective of Northern and Southern white men of privilege struggling with reconciliation during the Reconstruction period.<sup>24</sup>

Twain addresses this audience directly several times. After praising both Chang’s and Eng’s ability to be accommodating in light of their conjoined condition, he exclaims: “And yet these creatures were ignorant and unlettered—barbarians themselves and the offspring of barbarians, who knew not the light of philosophy and science. What a withering rebuke is this to our boasted civilization, with its quarrels, its wrangling, and its separations of brothers!”<sup>25</sup> Casting the twins as noble savages creates a binary between this foreign body on display and its intended addressee; moreover, the first-person-plural voice in this passage makes reference to an imagined community consisting of an Anglo-American polity, “our boasted civilization.” Twain’s audience, he assumes, is removed both racially and morally from the “barbarian” twins, a distinction he makes along hierarchical lines; however, it is also these “barbarians” who must serve as an example to this community as it struggles to restore itself in the wake of the Civil War. Despite—or because of—this distancing mechanism, Chang and Eng are able to serve as role models for white America. Twain closes his essay with a pointed caution: “There is a moral in these solemn warnings—or, at least, a warning in these solemn morals; one or the other. No matter, it is somehow. Let us heed it; let us profit by it.”<sup>26</sup> During this time of national healing, Twain seems to urge, let the (white citizens of the) United States look upon this model of racial, cultural, and anatomical difference and bury the hatchet that threatens the goal of reunification.

Illustrations printed in the first edition of *Sketches New and Old* (and reproduced in the Norton Critical Edition) depict Chang and Eng with European features. In one of the sketches where they appear to be courting a young Southern belle, there is no phenotypical difference

between the young woman and the twins—a curious nondepiction of a potential act of miscegenation between three people. The visual similarity between the twins and the white woman is disarming in light of the fact that anecdotal evidence suggests that prior to Chang and Eng’s wedding to Sarah and Adelaide Yates, the townsfolk in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, had worried more about their racial difference than about their unusual anatomy in the marital bed.<sup>27</sup> Although Twain’s essay relies on maintaining a racial split between the twins and the white, class-privileged subjects it addresses, this lack of correlation between the written text (which upholds a racial divide between the twins and white people) and the visual text (which elides this racial difference) indicates that Chang and Eng’s racialization is a necessarily slippery phenomenon, shifting even within the space of one text.<sup>28</sup> This image of Chang and Eng in whiteface not only shows how this conjoined and racially marked figure was deployed in nationalist narratives of conflict and reconciliation but also its incongruity with the audience it was expected to transform.

Ironically, only three years after the publication of “Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins,” Twain published *Roughing It*, a nonfictional account of journeys through the Western frontier that expresses outrage at the treatment of Chinese laborers in California by unsympathetic whites even as it perpetuates the racism behind that kind of abuse. Although the figure of the Chinaman in *Roughing It* is framed not as a role model, like Chang and Eng Bunker, but as an object of pity, the Chinaman allows the intended audience—again, white, middle-class America—to congratulate itself. “No Californian *gentleman or lady*,” notes Twain, “ever abuses or oppresses a Chinaman, under any circumstances. . . . Only the scum of the population do it. . . .”<sup>29</sup> It is through this appearance of tolerance that the white middle class distinguishes itself from the poorer whites who are pitted against other disenfranchised groups by the interests of capital.<sup>30</sup> Because the Asian migrant was always cast as a perpetual outsider in the nineteenth-century imagination—whether as the exquisitely clad Afong Moy or the “coolie” laborers—the national unity that Twain prescribes in “Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins” thus applies only to those for whom the privilege of a claim to the United States is already taken for granted.

Chang and Eng Bunker were invoked as exemplary and universal examples for white America not only because of their racial and

cultural foreignness but also because of their physical and anatomical difference. The rhetorical effectiveness of Twain's essay would have been lost, for example, had he featured a pair of nonconjoined twins with normative bodies. The valorization of the Bunkers makes sense insofar as they are portrayed with the mark of overwhelming otherness to a readership that presumes to be anatomically normative. But even as this gaze upon a racially and anatomically foreign body reinforces arbitrary distinctions between margin and center, the hierarchical relationship between Twain's presumed readership and Chang and Eng Bunker is not as stable as it would seem. It is true that arenas of human exhibition—be they sideshows, museums, or World's Fair expositions—function as regulatory ethnographic spaces in which the human specimens on display purport to offer spectators unmediated epistemological control; that is, within these spaces, the gazed-upon are situated in ways that reassure the owners of the gaze that they are culturally and anatomically superior. But this arrangement of power differentials purporting to expose and explain difference to a spectatorship protected from this same kind of exposure and explanation is continually threatened at every turn.



Even though relations between the Northern and Southern states remained tense long after the Civil War, another type of struggle for political ascendancy arose during the postbellum era. The Panic of 1873 abruptly ended the brief period of postwar industrial prosperity and left countless numbers of workers unemployed. Laborers clashed frequently and violently with the State and with the owners of business and industry. Among the most infamous events was the Tompkins Square rally in 1874, when dozens of unemployed workers were injured by New York City police officers, and the Chicago Haymarket Square bombing of 1886 that resulted in eight fatalities. This period of extreme class turmoil witnessed not only a multitude of labor rebellions but also the displacement of the Reconstruction fantasy of national unity. Attempts to achieve reunion of North and South crumbled under the realization that there were once again two nations, one rich and one poor.<sup>31</sup>

Against the backdrop of late-nineteenth-century labor movements, Thomas Nast, one of the most vocal antagonists of socialism, published his political cartoon "The American Twins," which makes a



Figure 1. "The American Twins." By Thomas Nast. *Harper's Weekly*, 7 February 1874, 136.

claim similar to the one in Twain's "Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins." The cartoon depicts two white men standing side by side, one wearing a worker's apron and wielding a hammer in his well-muscled arm and the other clad in a suit and top hat and carrying a bag of money (see fig. 1). Connecting the men at their chests—at precisely the location that connected Chang and Eng Bunker—is a band containing the phrase "The Real Union." The words "Labor" and "Capital" are placed over the men's respective heads to preempt any possible confusion as to what each one represents. The caption of the cartoon reads, "United we stand, Divided we fall."<sup>32</sup> Whereas the words "United we stand" had once appeared alongside the Ameri-

can eagle in the publicity pamphlet for the Siamese Twins—invoking patriotism to sell Chang and Eng Bunker’s on-stage identities—the words return here in a text that inverts that relationship. The Siamese Twins now sell a particular brand of patriotism, one that gives preference to owning-class capital in the service of industrial expansion.

The two men in Nast’s cartoon appear to be of middle age and resemble each other in physical appearance. Both have the same facial creases and jaw line, deep-set eyes, and prominent nose, although the man representing capital is noticeably rotund and has fleshy cheeks. Despite their physical similarities, they are definitely not identical twins; the noticeable differences in appearance between the worker and the capitalist force the reader to regard this image as strictly figurative. Both men wear the same calm, almost solemn expression, indicating perhaps their acceptance of and resignation to their interlocked condition. The man representing labor stands slightly taller, but the top hat worn by the man representing capital creates a semblance of symmetry and balance in the image. The laborer more than the factory owner seems to possess features that signify Irishness. This is a particularly telling aspect of Nast’s cartoon, given his overt hostility toward Irish immigrants in some of his other cartoons, but the two men could conceivably be brothers even if they could not be (identical) conjoined twins.

This image conjoining factory worker and factory owner appeared in *Harper’s Weekly* five years after the first publication of Twain’s essay in *Packard’s Monthly*. The temporal proximity of these two texts comes as no surprise. Like Twain’s essay, “The American Twins” uses a metaphor of conjoined twinning in order to promote unity across politically divisive lines. But rather than prescribe the union of North and South, as Twain’s essay does, “The American Twins” strives to bring together the interests of the working classes with those of the owning classes and invalidate the efforts of labor unions. Nast uses the patriotic rhetoric of nationalist unity in his caption “United we stand, Divided we fall” to mandate that workers form loyalties toward their employers, effecting “The Real Union,” rather than create alliances with each other.

The first-personal plural in the caption of “The American Twins” (as in Twain’s “Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins”) is a particularly curious aspect. Who is the “we” that stands in unity but falls when divided? Presumably, it is an imagined community consisting

of an inclusive U.S. body politic similar to the one Twain purports to address. But in Nast's case, the white specificity of his rhetoric is even more explicit and less ambivalent than in Twain's text, which, after all, foregrounds Chang and Eng's racial difference in the written text while whitening them in the visual one. The two human figures representing labor and capital in "The American Twins" are unambiguously white even though the labor force at this time of intense industrialization was racially mixed. (Workplaces, of course, often remained racially segregated.) Imagine for a moment the likelihood that Nast would have drawn a cartoon depicting a Chinese worker connected to a white capitalist or—even more unlikely, given U.S. laws dictating property ownership at the time—a Chinese worker connected to a Chinese capitalist. The implausibility of these images suggests a white normativity in Nast's call for cross-class solidarity. The gender specificity in "The American Twins" is also significant, given the fact that a sizable number of women participated in the labor movements of the late 1800s. The white male laborer depicted in the cartoon, then, represents an entire working class that was, in reality, heterogeneous in race, ethnicity, and gender.

Like Twain, Nast positioned himself as a sympathetic supporter of Chinese laborers in the United States, and—as with the depictions of the Chinese in *Roughing It*—some of Nast's cartoons express outrage at the victimization of the Chinese by white Americans. But, not unexpectedly, Nast's portrayal of Chinese workers leaves the discourse of their otherness intact. One reason he may have decried the treatment of the Chinese is that industrialists commonly and often successfully used them as strikebreakers throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. That the Chinese filled this need in the U.S. capitalist enterprise would have been regarded favorably in Nast's antiunion politics.<sup>33</sup> White-organized unions during this period were vocal in their support of the series of Chinese Exclusion laws that the U.S. federal government signed into effect starting in 1882.<sup>34</sup> In addition, many of these white labor organizations actively excluded Mexican, black, Chinese, and other Asian workers from their membership, and this failure of cross-class solidarity allowed workers from different racial categories to be pitted against each other by the interests of class-privileged Anglo-Americans. Although I am not claiming that Nast concerned himself with the well-being of Chinese laborers only insofar as they functioned to thwart the efforts of the white working

class, his sympathy as demonstrated in his series of pro-Chinese cartoons conveniently situates itself within a sensibility that supports the interests of white capital. In the end, Nast's championing of the Chinese seems to be another way that the white owning class asserted its leverage. The utopian vision of cross-class solidarity that he prescribes bespeaks both a middle-class and an Anglo-American masculine subjectivity.

This cartoon's rhetorical effectiveness rests on an assumption that the anatomical anomaly depicted here, two conjoined bodies, cannot be considered an entity to be feared, gawked at, pitied, or medically altered by separation. The matter-of-fact expressions on both the factory owner and factory worker suggest an assumption that such a conjoined body of individuals who are at political odds with each other is just part of the natural order of things. Nast calls the conjoining of the factory worker and the factory owner "The Real Union," at once playing upon the banter, friendly debate, and open-ended discussion that was part of spectatorship at freak shows ("Is it real, or is it fake?") and locating for the factory worker the source of "realness," stability, and national pride in a connection with one's (often exploitative) employer rather than with one's socioeconomic allies.<sup>35</sup>

The tolerance for and the championing of anatomical difference upon which the rhetoric of "The American Twins" rests, therefore, could also dismantle the ideas behind it. While Nast's anti-union sentiments are clearly conveyed, the image he uses to mobilize that stance has the potential to backfire. As Twain's essay demonstrates, the rocky relationship between the real Chang and Eng, particularly during their later years, was common knowledge. Given the concurrent mitigating narratives that present conjoined twinning in predictably unfavorable ways, Nast's text runs the risk of instilling fear rather than favor in the minds of those who would be disadvantaged most by such a union. To a laborer during this period of class turmoil, the problem was precisely that there was this dependence on an employer who did not ultimately operate with the laborer's best interest in mind. The connection that Nast advocates here (or disavowal of the connection that it seeks to dismantle, that is, the labor union) entails some significant risks for these workers in return for the questionable payoff of a jingoistic pride predicated on industrial progress. Predictably, the owning classes, signified by the capitalist in Nast's cartoon, have everything to gain from such a union. In the end, "The American Twins" uses a

figure of white labor to direct a message to a racially mixed working class in order to maintain the economic and psychic comfort of white capital.



The Boston reporter commenting on the arrival of Chang and Eng in 1829 expressed a sense of wonder that the twins' "unnatural union is not more of a curiosity than the vigorous health they enjoy," noting "their apparent entire contentedness with their condition." The article provides a way of seeing conjoinment in terms other than the tragic.<sup>36</sup> According to this reporter, the apparent physical and psychic well-being that Chang and Eng demonstrate, despite their conjoined condition, is even more extraordinary than the materiality of their anatomy.

The sentiments expressed in this reporter's account repeat a question found in the late-nineteenth-century texts by Twain and Nast: What is more curious, the mere fact of conjoinment or a harmonious acceptance of it? Chang and Eng Bunker's appearance in both texts provides useful options for addressing the imbalances of power—along lines of race, class, region, and gender—that seem to lend themselves to the twins' invocation. And this, in turn, raises important questions as to how the body politic and the body of the conjoined twin are related in a Western Enlightenment set of assumptions and anxieties concerning autonomy, agency, and republican individualism. Twain both replicates and satirizes the easily conceived sentiments of reunion and reunification of the Northern and Southern states in the wake of the Civil War, even while he replicates contemporaneous orientalist images of Asia and Asian bodies circulating during this time. Nast calls for alliances between the working poor and the owning classes, negating the fact that such alliances ultimately benefit those who already have economic capital at the expense of those who do not.

Eventually, the metaphor to which both Twain and Nast allude comes apart, inadvertently dismantling the claims it proposes. This undoing acknowledges the multiplicity of dispositions, alliances, subjectivities, affinities, and value systems among the nation's citizenry despite efforts to maintain a semblance of singularity in the nation. These differing and dissenting contingents occupying varying levels of social privilege often disagree and clash with each other despite—

and often because of—attempts to alleviate tensions and erase the politicized hierarchies within them. Here and elsewhere, the ideology of nation is one in which difference and dissent are equated with danger and, therefore, are subject to containment and erasure. But even as Twain and Nast recognize variation in the national grain and even if they attempt to heal the ruptures created by these power differentials, their calls for unity are troubled not only by the apolitical and ahistorical elision of social difference but also by the implicit exclusion of certain social groups and the aggrandizement of others. In the end, the class-privileged, white, masculine subject remains untouched and protected in these narratives of conflict and reconciliation.

In both Asian American studies and disability studies, these two appearances of Chang and Eng Bunker in the literary and visual record have not yet received a sustained materialist analysis of both racial formation and unusual embodiment. The scholarship in Asian American studies that addresses Chang and Eng Bunker has only a minimal engagement with ability status and fails to fully consider the social location of the unusually embodied in the nineteenth century. Conversely, the disability studies scholarship that references the Bunker twins historicizes their unusual anatomy but overlooks the material specificity of their racialization, regarding their racial difference as a detached but unavoidable observation.<sup>37</sup> My essay positions itself within ongoing interventions in both the fields of ethnic studies and disability studies by analyzing representations of Chang and Eng Bunker as classed, racialized, and ableized subjects that are overdetermined by a late-nineteenth-century social fabric unraveled and rewoven by emancipation, reconstruction, and the industrial revolution in the emerging U.S. empire.

What literary and cultural critics can look forward to in the convergence of these two fields is not merely a facile, additive component to each (as in getting ethnic studies to add disability or getting disability studies to add race) but a nuanced consideration of how these fields can be transformed by intellectually and politically useful cross-pollination. How can the transnational turn in ethnic studies and American studies, for instance, impact a consideration of social location for disabled subjects globally? How can studies of social movements of people of color and indigenous peoples in the United States and worldwide rethink themselves when the material realities of disability come to the forefront? How can we “disable” the genealogy

of thought within critical race studies in order to show how “known theories [have] relied on disability or metaphors of disability to frame themselves?”<sup>38</sup> The double gazes of Chang and Eng looking back at us from the nineteenth century implore us to pursue these and other questions in further analyses of race and disability.

Agnes Scott College

## Notes

I am indebted to a number of people who have commented extensively on this essay, in particular, Martin Pernick, Tobin Siebers, Sidonie Smith, and Patricia Yaeger. Working groups at the University of Michigan, Macalester College, and the Future of Minority Studies Project also provided invaluable feedback. Steve Guthrie intervened at a crucial moment during revision.

- 1 *Patriot*, 17 August 1829, quoted in Irving Wallace and Amy Wallace, *The Two: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 53–54. For a full description of the twins’ arrival, including the details I have narrated, see *The Two*, 47–54.
- 2 Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, 59.
- 3 See Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 25; Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1971), 5–6; and Tera W. Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997), 78–79.
- 4 Wannu W. Anderson and Robert G. Lee note that “[o]ne of the first economic imperatives of the newly independent United States was to secure a foothold in the lucrative China market” (*Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas* [New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2005], 4).
- 5 I am indebted to Yoonmee Chang for pointing out that differing conceptions about the relative cleanliness or dirtiness of Chinese migrants during the nineteenth century were mistakenly explained by referencing perceived essential cultural traits. In a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian American Studies, Chang observed that Jacob Riis, in *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), attributes neatness to an intrinsic Chinese custom, based on his observation that many Chinese men in New York were launderers. On the other hand, popular representations of the Chinese in San Francisco regard filth as a racially ingrained characteristic even though the conditions of the streets in Chinatown resulted from the local government’s inattention to the maintenance of

- Chinese neighborhoods. In both cases, culture is used to explain phenomena that ultimately have more to do with the material conditions under which racially marked groups live than with their social mores (“Chinese Suicide: Extending Families and Expanding Epistemological Frames in Fae Myenne Ng’s *Bone*,” conference of the Association for Asian Studies; Atlanta, Georgia; 25 March 2006).
- 6 See Krystyn R. Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s–1920s* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2005), 59; Gary Y. Okiihiro, *Common Ground: Reimagining American History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), 75; Robert G. Lee, *Orientalists: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1999), 32; John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776–1882* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1999), 108; and James S. Moy, *Marginal Sights: Staging the Chinese in America* (Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 1993), 12.
  - 7 Tchen, *New York before Chinatown*, 105.
  - 8 See Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1997), 65.
  - 9 See Lucy Cohen, *Chinese in the Post–Civil War South: A People without a History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1984), 1–21.
  - 10 These recent interventions include the formation of the People of Color Caucus within the Society for Disability Studies. The Caucus’s “List of Action Items” was distributed to the general membership in June 2005. In June 2006, the annual meeting of the Society for Disability Studies included the preconference symposium “Mutual Connections: Institute on Race, Ethnicity, and Disability.”
  - 11 Lennard J. Davis calls *disability* “the missing term in the race, class, gender triad”; see *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (New York: Verso, 1995), 1.
  - 12 See Nirmala Erevelles, “Disability and the Political Economy of Place: Case Study of a Voluntary Organization in South India,” *Disability Studies Quarterly* 21 (fall 2001): 5–19; Carrie Sandahl, “Black Man, Blind Man: Disability Identity Politics and Performance,” *Theatre Journal* 56 (2004): 579–602. Moreover, the convergence of race and disability in the humanities has been a two-way conversation with ethnic studies scholars finding ways to incorporate already existing frameworks in disability studies to achieve a more nuanced consideration of race; see “Race, Ethnicity, Disability, and Literature: Intersections and Interventions,” a special issue of *MELUS*, ed. Jennifer C. James and Cynthia Wu, 31 (fall 2006).
  - 13 I am thinking of Leonard Kriegel’s “Uncle Tom and Tiny Tim: Some Reflections of the Cripple as Negro,” *The American Scholar* 38 (summer 1969): 412–30, which alludes to “the black man” throughout as an

angry, disenfranchised figure with whom the (white) “cripple” can relate. Other invocations of blackness used as a rhetorical device to describe the disabled condition also appear in Leslie A. Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978); and Robert F. Murphy, *The Body Silent* (New York: Henry Holt, 1987). Murphy, an anthropologist with a neurological impairment acquired later in life, makes references to his perceived personal connections with indigenous, colonized groups.

- 14 A considerable amount of scholarship in protodisability studies examines disabled characters in literature. One of the earliest monographs addressing physical impairment as metaphor is Peter Hays, *The Limping Hero: Grotesques in Literature* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1971). Too early in its emergence to develop a disability studies framework, Hays’s work does not interrogate the underlying cultural assumptions behind masculinity, heterosexuality, and physical normalcy upon which his claims rest. For texts that consider disabled characters within a gendered, symbolic economy, see Deborah Kent, “In Search of a Heroine: Images of Women with Disabilities in Fiction and Drama,” in *Women with Disabilities: Essays in Psychology, Culture, and Politics*, ed. Michelle Fine and Adrienne Asch (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1988), 90–110; Diane Price Herndl, *Invalid Women: Figuring Feminine Illness in American Fiction and Culture, 1840–1940* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1993); and Leonard Kriegel, “The Cripple in Literature,” in *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images*, ed. Alan Gartner and Tom Joe (New York: Praeger, 1986), 31–46.
- 15 Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 9. Garland-Thomson is the first disability studies scholar to consider the experiences of disabled black women in literature using an ethnic studies framework; see *Extraordinary Bodies*, 103–34.
- 16 Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2001), 31.
- 17 On the anatomical body as a metaphor for the body politic, see Catherine Waldby, *AIDS and the Body Politic: Biomedicine and Sexual Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 33. See also Emily Martin, *Flexible Bodies: Tracking Immunity in American Culture from the Days of Polio to the Age of AIDS* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994); and David Yuan, “Disfigurement and Reconstruction in Oliver Wendell Holmes’s ‘The Human Wheel, Its Spokes and Felloes,’” in *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability*, ed. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1997), 71–88.
- 18 See Allison Pingree, “America’s ‘United Siamese Brothers’: Chang and Eng and Nineteenth-Century Ideologies of Democracy and Domesticity,” in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1996), 92–114.

- 19 The minority subject's assigned particularity (to the ethnic) is positioned as incommensurate with ideals of the universal (the nation); for Chang and Eng Bunker to occupy this role as exemplars of U.S. nationalistic pride, therefore, they must be positioned at a proximal distance from Anglo-American universality and whitened, so to speak, in the process. It is interesting to note, however, that this process that Chang and Eng undergo to pass from one racial category to another is not incidental in Twain's "Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins" or in Nast's "The American Twins" but, in fact, crucial to the spirit of reform behind these texts. That Chang and Eng themselves are transformed and reformed through becoming white signals the transformative and reformative potential they have as metaphor. But also, the incongruity between Chang and Eng's actual racial categorization and their representation in arts and letters casts into high relief the gulf between the races.
- 20 Literary critics have commonly regarded the twinning motif in these two novels and in Twain's work more broadly as a device for discussing black-white racial binaries. Susan Gillman has produced the most extensive work on the theme of the double in Twain, addressing the ways nineteenth-century concerns about racial identity and anxieties about racial ambiguity and racial imposture are articulated through black-white pairings and twinings in Twain's fiction; see *Dark Twins: Imposture and Identity in Mark Twain's America* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989). See also Susan Gillman and Forrest G. Robinson, eds., *Mark Twain's "Pudd'nhead Wilson": Race, Conflict, and Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1990).
- 21 Mark Twain, "The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson" and "The Comedy of Those Extraordinary Twins," ed. Shelley Fisher Fishkin (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 311. At the time of *Pudd'nhead Wilson's* publication, images of Italians were undergoing a shift similar to the transformation of images of Chinese people that took place following 1849. Previously linked with Old World nobility, Italians became increasingly associated with dirt, disease, and hard labor with the entrance of working-class Italian immigrants into the U.S. workforce of the industrialized Northeast; see Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1994), 103–35.
- 22 For a reading of literary texts concerning sectional reunion after the Civil War, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001), 211–54.
- 23 It is widely known that black as well as white soldiers were involved in the Civil War, but little attention has been paid to Civil War soldiers of Asian descent. Two of the Bunker sons fought for the Confederate Army, and historical documents show that soldiers of Chinese descent were enlisted among the ranks on both the Union and the Confederate sides. For information on Asian American soldiers in the Civil War, see the Web

site, Association to Commemorate the Chinese Serving the American Civil War, maintained by Gordon Kwok; <http://hometown.aol.com/gordonkwok/accsacw.html> (September 2007).

- 24 In *Race and Reunion*, Blight argues that the dizzying array of texts and cultural rituals that emerged in the postbellum period celebrating sectional reunion and reconciliation between Northern and Southern whites ultimately came at the cost of ignoring the growing divide between black and white Americans. Of interest also is Elizabeth Young's claim that white women's representations of the Civil War imagine reconstruction by casting resolutions of sectional conflict in the guise of domesticity whereby the negotiations of power among white women, white men, and black workers inside the home become acts of nation building in the postbellum period; see *Disarming the Nation: Women's Writing and the American Civil War* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999).
- 25 Mark Twain, "The Siamese Twins," *Sketches New and Old* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1875), 248.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 253.
- 27 See Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, 176.
- 28 Publicity posters from the earlier part of Chang and Eng's career often picture them as childlike and with coded Asian features. During this period, illustrators often drew them sporting long queues and eyes with an exaggerated slant. The twins were commonly depicted wearing what illustrators perceived as "native costume"—silk robes with intricate brocade—and they were commonly positioned in front of what was understood to be their natural element: palm trees and thatched-roof huts. Even if they were drawn in a parlor setting and wearing Western clothing, their features still depicted them as foreign. Toward the latter part of their career, images fell more in line with the illustrations in *Sketches New and Old*. The twins' racial marking dropped off considerably as both illustrations and photographs depicted them as Victorian gentlemen in three-piece, dark suits—often alongside their wives or children. For examples of these publicity items, see "Chang and Eng Bunker Papers," National Library of Medicine, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and the collection "Chang and Eng Bunker," College of Physicians of Philadelphia; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- 29 Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, ed. Shelley Fisher Fishkin (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 297.
- 30 Conversely, *Ah Sin, The Heathen Chinee*, a play coauthored by Twain and Bret Harte, is overtly—rather than quietly—racist. It opened at the National Theater in Washington, D.C., in 1877. Written for Charles T. Parsloe, one of the most prominent Chinese impersonators at the time, the play makes no attempts to hide its reliance on the conventions of yellow-face minstrelsy or its hostile reification of stereotypes about Chinese men; see Moy, *Marginal Sights*, 23–34.

- 31 Class and regional conflict were often interrelated. Northern “carpetbaggers” migrating south found themselves targets of hostility among Southerners who saw them as scavengers profiting from the region’s war-related losses. Southerners understood these migrants to come from the lowest rungs of the Northern socioeconomic ladder, but most carpetbaggers were middle class in both income and education. White Southern Republicans—“scalawags” and traitors, as they were derisively called—were similarly stereotyped by the Southern middle class—even though, like “carpetbaggers,” there was a considerable amount of class heterogeneity among them; see Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 129; and Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865–1877* (New York: Knopf, 1965), 159–60.
- 32 Thomas Nast, “The American Twins,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 7 February 1874, 136.
- 33 In fact, Nast’s cartoon “The Comet of Chinese Labor” directly addresses the usefulness of the Chinese for breaking strikes (*Harper’s Weekly*, 13 June 1870); see [www.csub.edu/~gsantos/cat15.html](http://www.csub.edu/~gsantos/cat15.html). This image depicts the first mass arrival of Chinese to the East Coast, which occurred when white union members struck for higher wages at a shoe factory in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1870. Seventy-five Chinese workers were transported from San Francisco via the newly completed transcontinental railroad to fill their places. The practice of using Chinese workers to replace white workers on strike was repeated many times after this event.
- 34 For discussion of how the interests of the white working classes were framed in a way that excluded the participation of Chinese laborers, see Tomas Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1994), 153–82; and Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2001), 158–78.
- 35 James W. Cook has argued that the freak show and related forms of entertainment provided an open-ended forum for debate among spectators about the authenticity of the exhibits; this forum was the main attraction more than the exhibits themselves; see *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001).
- 36 *Patriot*, 17 August 1829, quoted in Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, 54.
- 37 For one notable exception, see Alice Domurat Dreger, *One of Us: Conjoined Twins and the Future of Normal* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004), 18–27.
- 38 “Disabling theory” is a phrase coined by Tobin Siebers that eventually became the title of a 2003 Modern Language Association panel organized by the Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession. The cited pas-

sage is from the call for papers collectively written and issued by the committee. For one example of “disabling” a piece of theory that relies on concepts of disability without nevertheless engaging the material conditions that inform actual disabled peoples’ lives, see David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder’s analysis of N. Katherine Hayles’s invocation of cyborgs in “Introduction: Disability Studies and the Double Bind of Representation,” in *The Body and Physical Difference*, ed. Mitchell and Snyder, 8.