THE EXTRAORDINARY DOUBLE BODY
IMAGES IN LITERATURE, ART, AND ON THE SIDESHOW STAGE

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by

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In the introductory chapter to the book *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, Rosemarie Garland Thomson writes that “the extraordinary body is fundamental to the narratives by which we make sense of ourselves and our world.... the exceptional body seems to compel explanation, inspire representation.... [it] fires rich, if anxious, narratives and practices that probe the contours and boundaries of what we take to be human” (1). There are many narratives that one can examine in order to understand the freakish or extraordinary body; such a great wealth of material exists in fact, that readers who assume the primacy of the normative may be surprised. Thomson makes reference to Stone Age drawings and Assyrian tablets, as well as the writings of men considered to be at the foundation of Western thought: Aristotle, Cicero, Pliny, and St. Augustine, among others (1). Examples of discourse about unusual bodies can be found anywhere from Greek urns that feature dwarfs to texts such as John Bulwer's *Anthropometamorphosis* (1650) or Ambroise Paré's *Des Monstres et prodiges* (1573). Freak narratives are drawn from the entire gamut of human communication; they are to be found in narratives of law, of history, and of medicine, as well as in images from the canon of fine art, from advertisements, from prehistoric art, from outsider art, and from photographs. Naturally, religious narratives that read these births as omens are laced with examples of freaks, but so too are entertainment narratives: novels, short stories, movies,
stage plays, and even popular music. The rise of the sideshow, however, brought exceptional and strange bodies into an unprecedented prominence in American society, and so it is not surprising that a great deal of recent material concerning freaks sets its focus on the sideshow.

While strange and unusual bodies have been exhibited and displayed in a variety of ways throughout human history, it is through the rise of the American sideshow that “freaks” became unified, not by any particular physiological similarity, but by their marketability as emblems of difference. The life of the sideshow waxed and waned alongside the popularity of the traveling circus. The sideshow had its formal beginnings in the dime museum, another form of American popular entertainment that has retreated into extinction with the advent of radio and moving pictures. The dime museum was more or less a stationary sideshow, and in effect was the cultural ancestor of today's Ripley's Believe it or Not tourist traps. P.T. Barnum's American Museum in New York was one of the more successful dime museums in the country, and when Barnum elected to focus on the business of the traveling circus, the freaks that had furnished the museum were absorbed into the mix (Davis 20). Although freaks had been a part of small traveling shows for quite some time, Barnum helped to launch many of the most famous—for instance, Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren—into the world of popular spectacle (Davis 53). Rosemarie Garland Thomson pinpoints the era of the sideshow as spanning the one hundred years between 1840 and 1940, during a period of “swift and chaotic modernization” (“Introduction” 11). Thomson goes on to suggest that “Modernity moved the freak from the embodiment of wonder to the embodiment of error” (13) via cultural
changes such as the development of mass production, which bred a greater desire for
cconformity, and the increasing categorization of body abnormalities as medical
anomalies. Though sideshows continued to limp along with traveling shows in the second
half of the twentieth century, their drawing power was greatly reduced. Yet Rachel
Adams, in her book *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination*,
declares that “freak shows never really vanished” because “as actual freak shows were
evicted from popular culture, their representational currency multiplied, granting them
symbolic importance.... [the freak show's] history and iconography [is] preserved in
literature, film, and the visual arts” (2). Recent offerings of pop culture entertainments
bolsters Adams's claim: reality shows and talk shows on television, from *Jersey Shore* to
*Jerry Springer*, highlight the lives of many people who, by being featured on these
shows, become performers of the weird and the freakish. The cast of *Jersey Shore*
currently performs the freakery of a particular subculture, while *Jerry Springer's* talk
show routinely features not only guests with relationship problems, fetishes, or dire
secrets, but also those considered physically handicapped—for example, Kenny
Easterday, who was born with the condition sacral agenesis and has no legs, has appeared
in six episodes of the show according to the Internet Movie Database. Many analyses of
the freakish choose to emphasize that the freak show remains with us, having shifted its
venue to television and the Internet. I prefer to emphasize the fact that the true sideshow,
the ten-in-one that traveled with circuses and carnivals, has all but died out; the freak
show lives on, because a showing of freaks is not especially tied to a particular age. But
the sideshow, though we may continue to evoke its iconography in art and literature, is
itself no more. It is important to realize that some things are inextricably linked to certain periods in history. The sideshow, even the idea of the sideshow, cannot be fully separated from the circuses and carnivals of which it was a part, nor can it be separated from the modern culture that evolved around it.

The shift to seeing the sideshow, as Adams says, as possessed of “representational currency” and “symbolic importance,” allowed freaks to take a more prominent role in literary and filmic representations. Freaks stepped up to occupy roles as major characters in the collective narrative, and the explicitly different individual became a focal point in his or her own right. It is from this cultural shift toward a sympathy with the freakish that narratives such as the film *Freaks*, directed by Tod Browning, or Katherine Dunn's novel *Geek Love* have emerged; both are stories set within carnival sideshows, with sideshow performers as main characters, and both address the ever-present conflicts between “freaks” and “norms,” ultimately demonstrating the thinness of the line that separates the two. The extraordinary body does indeed beg for narrative to explicate it, but this explication must always take place in relation to the normative body, as both *Freaks* and *Geek Love* demonstrate explicitly. The freak embodies strangeness, and not always a purely physical strangeness. Rachel Adams suggests that the freaks of the latter half of the twentieth century “are increasingly understood not as alien strangers but as the embodiment of the strangeness within” (112). While it is important to acknowledge that freaks are used by the normative population to describe the intricacies of their own inner lives and inner selves, it is also important to take freakish characters and representations at face value, to analyze them as human beings who are non-normative and who may
have any number of conflicting feelings about their physical differences. Language, in this context, becomes of the utmost importance. Throughout my paper, I will avoid using words like “disabled” to describe sideshow performers or freakish characters. A great many sideshow performers cannot in any sense be described as “disabled,” while those with acts that relied upon their deformity often demonstrated within the acts themselves that they had no particular problems with the ability to perform everyday (and sometimes exceptionally complex) tasks. “Differently abled,” is perhaps the more accurate term, but ableness is not the focus of the freak show. Freak performers were freak performers, by and large, because they possessed bodies that were in some way anomalous—extraordinary, exceptional, strange, unusual, non-normative bodies. I will also continue to use the term “freak,” not as a slur, but as a concise and accurate word that describes the group of people who were united by their careers as paid entertainers and displayers of their own bodily difference. Sideshow workers were advertised as being freaks. I do not pretend that the word itself is an empowering one; I merely acknowledge that it is useful as a way of describing and referring to those with who were set apart by their involvement with the sideshow.

As I have previously alluded, sideshow performers were a diverse group, encompassing a vast number of people whose bodies could be sold as freakish to the carnival- or circus-going public at any given time. Thus, Rachel Adams declares “that freakishness is a historically variable quality, derived less from particular physical attributes than the spectacle of the extraordinary body swathed in theatrical props, promoted by advertising and performative fanfare” (5). Adams cites the inclusion of
performers “with extremely long hair or nails, tattoos, and women in pants” (4) as proof of this. The tattooed freak is a particularly interesting case of cultural specificity, since tattooed men and women were staples of the sideshow at the end of the nineteenth century, until an electric inking tattoo process invented at the turn of the century made tattooing easier and more commonplace. The novelty of the act was lost and tattooed men and women found themselves in far less demand as freak performers (Davis 126). To further show the importance of costume and context in freak acts, Thomson writes that “An animal-skin wrap, a spear, and some grunting noises... made a retarded black man into the Missing Link” (5); it is also an act that is reliant upon a post-Darwin cultural awareness of evolution. Yet, although a great many sideshow acts were products of culture, others were interpreted via a process of naming and marketing that grounded them by comparing their deformities to that which was knowable. This is particularly evident in acts that represent performers as animalistic; and so, individuals with and extreme growth of hair on their faces become “The Dog-Faced Boy” or “The Lion Woman;” a man with fused fingers is dubbed “The Lobster Boy;” and a man without arms becomes “Sealo.” Even referring to a performer without legs as a “half-man” relies upon our culturally specific idea of what a “whole man” is in comparison.

Still other freaks, the rarest of the rare, embody a kind of difference that transcends culture, and so is freakish and compelling no matter when or where it may manifest. Conjoined twins are, perhaps, the “purest” of the freaks, given that the singularity of the body is a state that the population at large takes very much for granted. Conjoined twins continue to fascinate, even now that they exist in the realm of medical
error, because they question the normative idea of individual selfhood by their very existence. In Katherine Dunn's novel *Geek Love*, the eldest son in the Binewski family is Arty, who has flippers that attach directly to his torso rather than limbs, feet, or hands; he performs swimming in a tank of water and is billed as “Aqua Boy.” Arty describes his conjoined twin sisters, Elly and Iphy, as “true freaks.... They don't have to play or dance or sing. They could sit on a bench and wave and still get crowds.... Nobody's going to upstage them!” In contrast, Arty describes himself as “an industrial accident! But I made it into something.... I'm a freak but not much of a freak. I'm... fucked up without being special” (103). Arty concisely identifies that there is a hierarchy of freakishness, and that the less desirable freaks—those that are less truly, inherently, freakish—must create their own acts, their own personas, in order to attract audiences. Arty represents the kind of freak performer that must truly craft a performance around his or her unusual body. Elly and Iphy, on the other hand, represent an idealized state of pure freakishness, in which they are young, attractive, and there is no need for them to be anything other than what they are. Leslie Fiedler, in the introduction to his book *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self*, attributes this hierarchy of freakishness to the “mythological dimension” that freaks possess (as do movie monsters); this cultural mythology, Fiedler supposes, separates the true freaks from “the category of unfortunates whom early French teratologists called mutiles: the blind, deaf, dumb, lame, crippled, perhaps even hunchbacks and harelips... along with amputees, paraplegics, and other victims of natural or man-made disasters” (23). The essential difference between those who inspire pity and those who inspire mythology depends upon two crucial factors acting together: the true
freak is a "human child of human parents, however altered by forces we do not quite understand into something mythic and mysterious," and this alteration "challenges the conventional boundaries between male and female, sexed and sexless, animal and human, large and small, self and other, and consequently between reality and illusion, experience and fantasy, fact and myth" (Fiedler 24). Being different from birth ensures the freak's total separation from the normative, as opposed to being the victim of accident or illness who once possessed a normative body--such a transformation inspires pity and fear in normative onlookers, who are aware that illness and accident has the potential to also strike them. Fiedler's use of the phrase "altered by forces we do not quite understand" raises a striking question, however: does a greater understanding of the origins of freaks, in effect, "de-freakify" them? There does seem to be a correlation between advancements in medical knowledge and technology and the decline of the sideshow. Though the sideshow once employed medical science to testify to the unique or genuine quality of freak acts, Thomson asserts that science and the sideshow had fully diverged by the mid-twentieth century (Extraordinary Bodies 75). Medical science overtook the sideshow as the more relative cultural force, resulting a culture that pathologized deviations from the normative body: in effect non-normatizing the extraordinary body to such an extreme that the display of such bodies became private, “anonymized” in medical journals, and largely removed from the public view. Medical science “assumes that any somatic trait that falls short of the idealized norm must be corrected or eliminated.... Extraordinary bodies are seen as deviations to be standardized, rather than unique, even enriching aspects of individuals” (Thomson 79), and so those that were previously thought of as freaks that
might inspire interest and wonder have been reframed as errors of nature. The scientific understanding of freaks works to destabilize the hierarchy of pure freakishness and almost, but not entirely, succeeds. Conjoined twins who are able to lead productive and happy lives without being separated continue to provoke interest, and thus prolong the public wonder at the unusual body that defies the boundaries of the normative somatic self.

My focus in this paper will encompass two types of freak acts on opposite ends of the spectrum of the culturally/intrinsically created. Representing the intrinsic freak are the conjoined twins, who are perhaps the only freaks capable of approaching the state of true existential difference, rather than being in some way, as Arty puts it, “fucked up.” I will also focus on the culturally-created freak performance of the half-and-half: a performer who claims to be a hermaphrodite that is divided laterally between male and female, with a costume reflecting this. Of course, the hermaphrodite does show distinct bodily difference, and is not a creation wholly of performance. But the actual hermaphrodite, whatever form it might take, is distinct from the act of the half-and-half, which is created entirely by the manipulation of costume, make-up, hair, and accessories. There is no guarantee that the half-and-half is necessarily a genuine hermaphrodite, but there is also no guarantee that they are not. Certainly many half-and-half acts practiced some form of bodily manipulation in order to make their acts as convincing as possible. Both the half-and-half as a cultural construct and the hermaphrodite as an example of an unusual body will be discussed.
In her article “Intolerable Ambiguity: Freaks as/at the Limit,” Elizabeth Grosz identifies how hermaphrodites and conjoined twins are similarly identified and treated in the current cultural climate. These similarities include “a continuum of identities” which, when talking about conjoinment, “rang[es] from the so-called normal, individuated singular subject, to a nonindividuated, collectivized multiple subject” (63). So too is the hermaphrodite typically placed on a continuum which places males at one end, females on the other, and the hermaphrodite somewhere in between the two. Grosz also notes that both hermaphrodites and conjoined twins are “not given an identity independent of his or her bodily morphology... but [acquire] an identity in the relation to the body....If it is uncertain where one body ends and another begins, the subject's identity too much remain undecidably singular and plural, individual and collective” (63-4). This is true for the hermaphrodite as well, because when the sex of a body is uncertain or simultaneously male and female, bodily identity hovers between the singular and plural. Finally, Grosz observes that, for both hermaphrodites and conjoined twins, “there appears to be a medical imperative for surgical intervention and normalization, even if surgery may actually endanger lives that may otherwise remain healthy.... Surgery, it is argued, provides the only hope of... normality” (64). While these similarities in modern cultural discourses are all significant—they certainly point toward a fundamental similarity in how we understand the two conditions—it is Grosz's rationale for limiting her article to a treatment of hermaphrodites and conjoined twins that more succinctly shows the connection between the two; she writes, “I focus on those two examples of monstrosity that most tangibly present the human subject as ambiguously one identity and two, or one
sex and the other” (58). But the additional reference to sex is hardly necessary, if we consider male and female as not only biological constructs, but as cultural constructs and identities: man and woman, both represented by the half-and-half. The truest link, therefore, between the two is found in each act's portrayal of the ambiguity of the individual self. These acts raise questions about the extent, and indeed the very nature, of individuality, because each demonstrates its freakishness through the doubling of what is, in the average human, a singular trait. To fully illustrate the link between the hermaphroditic and the conjoined, chapter two surveys instances in literature and philosophy from antiquity to the Renaissance portraying bodies that are both conjoined and double-sexed. Most commonly these bodies act as metaphors for love or for heterosexual union. However, at times the bodies reported were presented as literal occurrences, especially in the natural medicine of the period.

Chapter three focuses upon the methods by which we discuss duality, particularly as it appears in literature, art, and popular entertainment. The figure of the “literary double,” as a derivation of Freud's concept of the double as “uncanny,” is addressed, as are the methods by which doubling may be understood to occur. The terms “fusion” and “fission,” as they apply to characters in horror and fantasy entertainment as well as to conjoined twins and half-and-halves, are critically examined. The chapter culminates in a look at the physical origins of conjoined twins, and whether they arise from a single egg that undergoes an incomplete split or whether the egg splits completely and then re-fuses at some point during gestation. In order to more fully understand all aspects of the creation and maintenance of the double self, chapter four will focus upon a fictional
character which exhibits physical elements of the double—by virtue of having two heads—and yet is not understood as a character with dual or doubled selves.

Conjoined twins naturally embody duality by being two conscious selves in a body that may be quite nearly two separate and complete bodies. Such was the case for Chang and Eng, whose sole point of connection was a flexible band of cartilaginous flesh that linked them at the breastbone. Other twins may share a great deal more: for example the Tocci brothers, who are described as each having “a well-formed head perfect arms, and a perfect thorax to the sixth rib; they had a common abdomen, a single anus, two legs, two sacra, two vertebral columns, one penis, but three buttocks” (Gould and Pyle 186). Abigail and Brittany Hensel, born in 1990, offer a more recent example of close conjoinment; Dreger describes them as having a body “largely like that of a singleton, with two arms and two legs... but with two heads (36). The contrast between the separate individual consciousnesses and the joined body generates the tension between individuated selves over the body that must, in some fashion, be shared. Conjoined twins, therefore, raise many questions, from the mundane that ask about the simple mechanics of such an arrangement to the more pressingly philosophical: how is selfhood affected by the physical attachment of two mentally separate selves? Are they mentally separate? How does a society that extolls individuality while simultaneously taking it for granted as the normative state of existence deal with plural creatures like conjoined twins? These questions are addressed—though not decisively answered—not only in literary pieces by Mark Twain and Katherine Dunn, but also in the advertising and promotional material used by specific sideshow acts. Chapter five looks principally at the ways in which Twain
and Dunn describe and deal with conjoined characters in their respective works: “Those Extraordinary Twins” and *Geek Love*.

The half-and-half is an act that features an unambiguously singular body, with no plurality of limbs or heads. The doubling is created by the performer's costume and make-up, which are crafted to represent the presence of both sexes in the performer's body. Performers' names also tend to reflect the dual selves they represent; male-female hyphenated stage names were the norm for performers, with acts such as Claude-Claudette, Jean-Jeanette, and Albert-Alberta taking the stage in the first half of the twentieth century (Stencell 176). For the half-and-half the representation of both genders in one body often required the adoption of a double name, as well as a costume that manipulated secondary sex characteristics and gender signifiers such as the length of the hair or the paleness of the skin. The half-and-half is not merely a hermaphrodite, but a fantasy of a hermaphroditic body that is split neatly between the sexes. This split raises considerable confusion as to whether the single-bodied performer should be considered as one person or two, with the assumption being that people are limited to one gender and that any individual possessing multiple genders (concurrently or even over the course of a lifetime) must be pluralized. Unlike conjoined twins, half-and-half characters are not given starring roles in literature; in Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding* and Robertson Davies's *World of Wonders* half-and-halfs are minor characters that act as symbolic stand-ins for or reflections of the turmoils of the protagonist. The roles that half-and-halfs play in these stories, and the queer implications of these roles, will be examined in chapter six.
As with conjoined twins, issues of plurality and selfhood are also used in promotional materials that advertise and describe the half-and-half. In many ways, because they are such visual constructs, the photographs and filmic representations of half-and-halves are at least as descriptive as the texts written about them. Chapter seven will focus upon the ways in which sideshow advertising, particularly through the use of language, creates the confusion between single and double bodies for both conjoined twins—with a focus on Daisy and Violet Hilton and Millie-Christine McKoy—and for half-and-halves. The final chapter will focus upon the imagery of the sideshow, specifically the painted banners that were hung on the midway. I will discuss the techniques and stylistic choices of the artists, as well as explicate the process I went through myself in creating my own sideshow banner focused on doubling acts.

My goal is ultimately to provide a thorough and well-rounded overview, not only of the ways in which conjoined twins and half-and-halves are presented in a variety of media, but also of what various kinds of physical doubling mean to the nature of selfhood and how certain people are able to be simultaneously both one and two. To accomplish this, I have examined a wide variety of sources beyond just the literary. The physical double should be not only read about in text, but also read visually. The sideshow itself acted as a multimedia performance, with visuals, sound, artwork, and reading material to take home, and so in the end I could not confine myself to investigating the sideshow via the single medium of text.
CHAPTER II

A UNITY OF BODIES: CONFLATING CONJOINED TWINS AND HERMAPHRODITES THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Half-and-halfs and conjoined twins did not coincidentally happen upon the parallels between them. In fact, there is a long tradition in Western cultural history of depicting conjoined twins and hermaphrodites in the same body. The body depicted frequently acted as an allegory, depicting an imagined state of perfect union, rather than the mortal and strange bodies showcased in the sideshow. Nevertheless, the co-mingling of conjoinment and hermaphroditism demonstrates the underlying similarities that can be read in these two states of extraordinary selfhood. To investigate the ways in which the two states have been combined, it is necessary to turn from the half-and-half—a construct that is peculiar to the sideshow—and instead focus on the representations of the figure of the hermaphrodite. However, I have limited my discussion to depictions of the hermaphrodite that portray a vertical bisection of the body, rather than the more conventional horizontal split (a female torso from the waist up and male genitals below the waist) that was common in antiquity.

Many historical and cultural texts that describe hermaphrodites do so by combining and conflating the dual-sexed body with the dual-selved body, and in a variety of different ways. That is not to say that hermaphrodites are shown as conjoined twins as well (although some examples of this exist), but that popular thought about a body—ideal
or otherwise—possessing both sexes naturally led to the representation of that body as having multiple selves and, in some depictions, of having multiple heads or limbs as well. Many drawings of hermaphrodites portray the genitals as being side-by-side, while occasional descriptions of hermaphrodites refer to the presence of a single female breast. This argues against Leslie Fiedler's assertion that “the androgyne is never portrayed either in the art or legend of the West as bilaterally differentiated” (183). Fiedler claims to be looking for “mythological sources” (183) from which the split costume of the half-and-half may be derived, but manages to overlook two keys to the history of showing the hermaphrodite. First, he writes that the illustrations of hermaphrodites included in Paré's *Des Monstres et prodiges* are presented with both male and female sex organs but are “otherwise undifferentiated in their bodies” (181); to declare this is to overlook the role that the woodcut artist allows the length of the subjects' hair to play in the determining of gender. Second, the focus of Fiedler's “mythology” is apparently limited to Western Classicism, and therefore ignores the imagery associated with the mythology and mysticism of alchemy, which is particularly saturated with images of a double-headed hermaphrodite divided down the middle.

Explicit images of hermaphrodites in the Renaissance originate principally from two different branches of study: teratology, or the study of monsters, and alchemy. Ambroise Paré's late sixteenth century work *Des Monstres et prodiges* (On Monsters and Marvels) is perhaps the most frequently cited treatise on teratology studies of the Renaissance. It contains a wealth of collected woodcuts, from a variety of original sources (Pallister xxix). Paré' includes two different woodcuts which depict
hermaphroditic figures that are also doubled in another sense. The first relevant woodcut (see fig. 1) features a figure with a male and a female set of genitalia, set side-by-side, and also two heads; one head, presumably the one that is female, has longer hair and is attached on the left side, over the female genitalia, while the head that is male is over the male genitalia. The second woodcut depicts what appear to be pygopagus twins, joined at the back, and so possessing four arms, four legs, and two heads (see fig. 2). Each twin is shown as hermaphroditic, with genitals side-by-side—the genital configurations actually mirror one another, so that the twin on the viewer’s left has male genitals and then female genitals, read left to right, while the twin on the right has female and then male genitals. Despite both twins being hermaphroditic, the head on the left has short hair while the head on the right has longer hair. Interestingly, in the illustration of the non-conjoined hermaphrodite (see fig. 3) the artist chooses to again portray the genitals as being side-by-side and distinct, but the hair of the figure is shown at a length between that of the males and that of the females. Length of hair initially seems like a trivial detail, but in nude drawings of ambiguously sexed or double-sexed bodies, clearly it becomes one of the main modes of communicating gender. Even the apparently illogical choice to code hermaphroditic conjoined twins as male or female communicates a certain mode of thought: a double body that is ambiguously sexed should be able to be separated into a male half and a female half. When confronted with the singular body, the artist retains the genital configuration, but must concede to a compromise or a blend when it comes to the

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1 It is reasonable to assume that the artist links hair length to the sex of the subjects, as the other woodcuts that are done in a similar style feature this gender dichotomy. See, for example, the “girl having two heads” (Paré 9), both of which have long hair, the conjoined female twins with long hair (10) and the conjoined male twins with short hair (14).
length of the hair. Part of what allows for the creation of the half-and-half, then, must be a shift toward thinking of the double-sexed body as more than one identity even when the number of heads is singular.

The image of the conjoined hermaphrodite that has a singular body with two heads and both male and female genitals placed side by side between the legs—as shown in fig. 1—can also be found throughout alchemical texts as the rebis, a representation of Sol and Luna (also representing the metals gold and silver) as “a hermaphroditic brother-sister pair” (Long 111). Especially relevant to the discussion of hermaphrodites and conjoined twins is Long's summation of alchemy as being “based on the presumption that everything can be dissolved, and the boundaries between different elements can be erased and rewritten; thus, 'conjunction' and 'separation' are two basic concepts in this process” (113). Because alchemy focused not only upon the manipulation of metal, but of the body as well (Long 111), it is not especially surprising that a conjoined, hermaphroditic figure appears so frequently in the imagery of alchemy. Often the figure is unclothed, showing the full extent of the physical fusion of male and female. In a plate from Michael Maier's *Atalanta fugiens* (see fig. 4) the rebis stands behind the lovers Hermes and Aphrodite. The bisection of the sexes of the rebis is vertical; the male half is positioned above Hermes while the female half is behind Aphrodite. The rebis is double-headed. There is the suggestion of a rounded breast on the female half, as well as of longer hair on the female head. Otherwise, there appears to be some small attention paid to the differences in male and female musculature, particularly in the area of the hip crease where the thighs join to the torso. The iliac crest on the male side is sharper and extends higher, while the
crease on the female side is notably shorter. This detail may just as easily be a quirk of the physical position in which the rebis stands, or a less than meaningful detail of artistic shading. However, the artist does seem to have taken great pains to portray the figure as a unified whole, and so any concessions to sex differences (aside from the obvious genitalia) are minute. The subtle rounding of the female breast exemplifies this, as it is present but does not especially detract from the overall masculine musculature chosen for the body of the rebis. But, even more interesting, the body of Venus in the etching is also quite bulky, and is distinguishable from that of Hermes only by clothes, prominent breasts, and hair. The artist shies away from a depiction of the extremes of sexual dimorphism, uniting the lovers as physically similar specimens—though not explicitly hermaphroditic, as the rebis behind them is, Hermes and Aphrodite certainly appear to represent between them a blending or mixing of gendered traits.

Although the rebis is overwhelmingly portrayed in images as a nude, all the better to show off its essential dual nature, the image of the clothed rebis is not unheard of. The rebis found in the *Codex Germanicus* (see fig. 5) is an example that comes remarkably close to the image of the half-and-half. Instead of having two separate heads, this rebis has two faces on one single, overlarge head. The body is vertically bisected and, although both sides wear the same style of tunic, an effort has been made to use light and dark to create contrast. The lower portion of the tunic is light on the side of the female head and dark on the side of the male, echoing the batwings that stretch behind the figure: again, the female side is lighter than that of the male. Also, unlike many other representations of the rebis, this one affords the male side facial hair, and thus creates a more definitively
gendered split between the two halves. It is difficult to see this image of the rebis and not bring to mind that of the half-and-half.

Finally, some degree of hermaphroditism is also evident in the figure of Mercurius, one of the central characters of alchemic texts. Jung explains that, to alchemists, Mercurius was not only a designation for the element, but also for “the essence, moisture, or principle behind or within the quicksilver” (211) and identifies the gods Hermes and Thoth as the “forerunners of the alchemical Mercurius in his aerial aspect” (212). But Mercurius has more than one aspect—Jung identifies associations with water and fire as well as with the air, and notes that “Water and fire are classic opposites and can be valid definitions of one and the same thing only if this thing unites in itself the contrary qualities of fire and water. The psychologem 'Mercurius' must therefore possess an essentially antinomian dual nature” (216). This unity that makes up Mercury's dual nature is expressed via a number of opposing traits, including creation and destruction (Long 111-12) and, of course, male and female (Jung 218). But, unlike the rebis, Mercurius is not consistently depicted as both male and female; instead, Mercurius encompasses the duality of gender amid a host of other dualities that he represents.

The conflation and co-mingling of dual-sexed and dual-selved bodies is also evident in written material from Classical mythology. Ovid's account of the origins of Hermaphroditus involves the fusion of two oppositely-sexed bodies: Hermaphroditus, who is male, and Salmacis, who is female. Salmacis sees Hermaphroditus bathing and is overcome with lust for him; she assaults him, “entwine[s] him, like a snake” (85). She clings to him so fervently that “her... body seemed / fixed fast to his” (85). Finally,
Salmacis entreats the Gods to “ordain / No day shall ever dawn to part us twain!” (85). Her plea is answered and the result is: “both bodies merged / In one, both blended in one form and face” and “when in fast embrace their limbs were knit / They two were two no more, nor man, nor woman— / One body then that neither seemed and both” (85). Their joining results from Salmacis’ lust for Hermaphroditus; the literal, supernatural union of their two bodies creates an entirely new, singular creature, “unmanned” and “bisexed” (85). This story, therefore, links sexual and romantic union with the figure of the double-sexed being.

This myth is the reverse of one that is put forth in Plato’s *Symposium* by the playwright Aristophanes, who posits an early race of beings who were born conjoined in pairs that were, overwhelmingly, male/female, or “hermaphroditic,” in nature. In his speech, Aristophanes says, “the original human nature was not like the present.... In the first place, the sexes were originally three in number... there was man, woman, and the union of the two.... In the second place, the primeval man was round and had four hands and four feet, back and sides forming a circle, one head with two faces, looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely alike” (337). These original beings were powerful enough to launch an attack on the gods, and so for their hubris, Zeus declares that they shall be cut in two. Zeus further threatens that “if they continue insolent and won’t be quiet, I will split them again and they shall hop about on a single leg” (335-36), which is an interesting suggestion in the context of the singular or plural identity and the state of the body. However, this does not come to pass, and early man was merely split in half. But naturally, not being used to a singular existence, “the two parts of man, each
desiring his other half, came together, and threw their arms about one another eager to
grow into one, and would have perished from hunger without ever making an effort,
because they did not like to do anything apart” (336). The desire for conjoinment and
companionship, therefore, is shown to transcend the actual separate state of the body. In
answer to this piteous new existence, Zeus “turned the parts of generation round in
front... and they sowed the seed... in one another; and after the transposition the male
generated in the female in order that by the mutual embraces of man and woman they
might breed... or if man came to man they might be satisfied... so ancient is the desire of
one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, making one of two”
(336). This passage postulates that sex (but only penetrative sex, as women who “come
to” women are not mentioned) is the substitute for a bodily union and conjoinment that
was present in original state of man. But it is not only sex that is evidence of this human
desire for union, as Aristophanes later goes on to say that “the intense yearning which
each of [the lovers] has towards the other does not appear to be the desire of intercourse,
but of something else which the soul desires and can not tell” (337). This desire for
conjoinment between individuals in love is not limited to the desire to meld the body, but
is also something that affects the soul. Aristophanes imagines Hephaestus offering the
lovers the chance to become a single entity to “melt into one and... grow together, so that
being two you shall become one, and while you live live a common life as if you were a
single man, and after your death in the world below still be one departed soul instead of
two” (337); naturally the lovers reply to this would be yes, that it is this full state of union
that they truly desire. Aristophanes' parable, throughout, shows romantic love as a state
of union of the body and the soul. Yet the bodily metaphor that is used is quite remarkable when compared with the bodies of conjoined twins or of hermaphrodites. Actual conjoined twins are always identical, never fraternal, and so are always of the same sex. A joined pair that is both male and female can be read not only as two separate selves that are joined by love or by the sex act, but also as a single, hermaphroditic entity. These two mythic stories advance an image of sexual desire that unifies the flesh of two individuals, therefore linking romantic and physical love and desire with the so-called “monstrous” body of the conjoined twin and, in the case of the heterosexual union, also with the intersexed or hermaphroditic body.

Some readings of the Book of Genesis present a similar view of the origin of man. Like the double-beings in Aristophanes' tale, the figure of Adam was also read as a dual figure that was later separated. In his philosophical treatise on love, written at the turn of the sixteenth century, Jewish scholar Leone Ebreo reads the first creation myth of the Bible (and not the second, in which Eve is created from Adam's rib) as saying:

that Adam, that is the first man, whom God created on the sixth day of the Creation, being a human individual, combined in him male and female without division; and therefore the text says that God created Adam in His own likeness, 'male and female created He them'. And at one time it speaks of Adam in the singular as a man, at another in the plural—male and female created He them—to denote that, being one individual, he contained in himself both male and female. (349)
Ebreo adds that “the ancient Hebrew commentators in their Chaldean commentary here say, 'Adam was created of two persons, the one part male the other female’” (349). Ruth Gilbert also notes that “[i]n the first chapter of Genesis humanity is referred to by the collective sexually undifferentiated noun, *ha-*‘adam’” (15). There is not only a confusion of sexes within Adam, but also a suggestion of more than one self or the potential for multiple selves, which would facilitate a physical, fleshly split. In a way the selves—“souls,” perhaps, if we are speaking divinely—are separate even when joined within one flesh, are evidently multiple within the singular. At the same time they are not separate, as Ebreo explains “that there was first an individual called Adam, because the woman was never called Eve until she was separated from the male, Adam” (349). This interpretation ascribes great significance to the separate name in its definition of the separate self, along with the all-important division of bodies. Eve is not truly separate until she is named independently of Adam; therefore, when the second self remains unnamed, it may be that it is present but not truly and wholly separate.

The Biblical version of this myth differs significantly from that written by Plato. In Plato’s version, the dual beings are separated as a divine punishment. In the Bible, the split comes before Adam and Eve’s famous transgression, with the intent that the female shall be a companion to the male. This suggests that existing as a dual self within a singular body is not companionship in and of itself, and that the dual self is not truly double until physical separation and individuation take place; Ebreo writes “that it did not seem good that Adam, male and female, should be contained in one single body, joined at
the shoulders, with the faces turned in opposite directions; but it was better that the woman should be divided from him, and that they should come face to face, that she might be a mate for him” (349). Ultimately, and paradoxically, this split of the selves is meant to further the state of union found in marriage and intercourse: “man and woman, being two divided halves of a single individual, come together again as one body and individual in the marriage and union of the flesh” (Ebreo 350). To become one again, man must first be separated into two.

This state of divinely ordained “original duality” shows an attraction to androgyny as an ideal based in “an aesthetic and cultural attraction to wholeness and union” (Gilbert 13). There is, then, an important distinction to be drawn between androgyny and hermaphroditism. Gilbert notes, “Androgyny is repeatedly... linked to a condition of plenitude presenting a spiritual transcendence of sexual difference and the body. Hermaphroditism, in contrast, is usually... used as a term that highlights sexual difference whether in direct relation to the body or to the performance of gender” (12).

Yet, Gilbert writes that one may affect the other, “the androgyne is hermaphrodized by its association with the flesh.... the grossly embodied hermaphrodite might be 'androgynized' by an association with the sublime” (13) and, indeed, in these mythic stories, the sublime must necessarily have a strong presence. The states of embodiment and the sublime apply not only to androgynous or hermaphroditic figures, but also to “the idea of heterosexual union (a potentially debased conjunction) [which] was considered [by many Renaissance philosophers and artists] to be a form of 'androgynous hermaphroditism'. In its ideal form married love (a spiritually sanctioned eroticism) transformed the degraded
hermaphroditic couplings of male and female into androgynous spiritual transmutations of the flesh” (13). This, then, demonstrates a mythic thought process—wherein the sexual act is a temporary bodily union that results in the formation of an entirely new creature, one that may be regarded not only as a hermaphrodite, but also as a state of voluntary conjoinment in which two individuals temporarily become one. This state, according to Gilbert, is one that may be viewed as monstrous and hermaphroditic when it is entirely a product of fleshly desire, but becomes transcendent when religiously (and culturally) sanctioned.

Grace Tiffany, however, elects not to recognize a distinction between the terms “androgyne” or hermaphrodite because, she says, “the fact is that Renaissance poets, playwrights, and even prose writers frequently used them interchangeably” (11). Instead, Tiffany's aim is to describe the distinction between the positive and the negative hermaphrodite/androgyne, which she labels “‘mythic androgyny' and 'satiric androgyny' (or 'mythic hermaphroditism' and 'satiric hermaphroditism')” (12). Tiffany's analysis is more relevant to discussion of a kind of androgyny that results from cross-gender behavior or the crossdressing that is a frequent part of Shakespeare's plays, rather than from literal instances of hermaphroditism or union—and, indeed, her idea of the “mythic” versus the “satiric” is not too far a cry from the distinction that Gilbert draws between the terms “androgyne” and “hermaphrodite.” However, Tiffany does make the assertion that the “mythic androgyne... embodies... an innate impulse toward recombination with the Other, whose alterity it radically questions.... this androgyne's doubled gender needs to be interpreted not (or not primarily) as the broadness of his or her private personality, but as
his or her necessary involvement with someone else” (13). This, then, is another way in which the hermaphroditic becomes linked with the double identity. While the physical act of copulation and conjoinment is very much emphasized, and may be referred to directly, it is often through metaphor and through the emotional bond between lovers that this hermaphroditism is expressed.

Both physical and spiritual hermaphroditism are expressed in a number of Shakespeare's works. The most famous example of purely physical hermaphroditism achieved via sexual intercourse is Iago's use of the phrase “making the beast with two backs” (Othello 1.1.117) to describe copulation between Othello and Desdemona. The image is relevant not only for the way in which it suggests the creation of something new and singular from male-female sexual union, but also for the equation of this new creation with a “beast.” The term clearly has great significance, given Othello's racial otherness within the play, but it is also an example of the link that is often made between hermaphroditic fusion and bestial fusion. Tiffany identifies “the beast and the androgyne” as “relational symbols that give meaning to our stories of erotic striving. Symbolically, they propose a paradox, indicating both our ineradicable impulse toward total relational unity and our inevitable failure to achieve it” (19-20). The “beast” in question represents the union toward which lovers strive, while at the same time the need for such a third reinforces the inability of the two humans to achieve total physical unity on their own. This is shown by John Donne in his poem “The Flea,” in which he similarly invites a bestial third into the image of copulation by using the flea's ingestion of blood from both himself and his mistress as a reflection of the sexual act. The mingling of the blood from
the two separate beings creates a union akin to that which is achieved via intercourse. Donne evokes this sense of oneness when he writes “in this flea, our two bloods mingled bee” (4) and notes that the flea “swells with one blood made of two” (8). But the flea not only represents a physical state of union between the two, it also begins to take on the character of a child as Donne says “Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare.... This flea is you and I” (10-12). A child, the product of parents' hermaphroditic sexual union, would also be a representation of three lives or three bloods: those of its parents and the new life belonging to itself. Where the singular “beast with two backs” is a figurative third that emerges from sexual union, the child/flea is the literal third born out of intercourse/the mixing of blood.

Beyond the act of copulation, hermaphroditic union may also be evoked via an emotional or spiritual union that creates a similar sense of oneness without specifically referencing intercourse; Shakespeare uses this device quite frequently. In The Merchant of Venice, Portia speaks of division and union to her lover Bassanio:

One half of me is yours, the other half yours—
Mine own, I would say, but if mine, then yours,
And so all yours. O, these naughty times
Puts bars between the owners and their rights;
And so, though yours, not yours. (3.2.16-20)
Because of the connection their love affords them, they are so united in their sense of selfhood that Portia can declare that not only half of herself belongs to Bassanio but all of herself, since what is hers must be his. In this way, the division that ascribes ownership to individuals disintegrates with the spiritual union of love. However, restrictions of the physical body, and the distance that it creates, preclude union in the fullest sense, that is, in body and in mind simultaneously. Thus, Portia must necessarily retain some ownership, creating an ambiguous state in which she is both Bassanio's and not-Bassanio's, and they are joined while still frustratingly separate. Of course, not directly referencing a physical union leaves open the possibility for other spiritual unions that are not based upon romantic and physical love. These unions need not necessarily be hermaphroditic; in A Midsummer Night's Dream, Helena describes the close bond between her and Hermia in such a way that it recalls not only sisters or lovers, but also conjoined twins. She recalls their childhood bond being “As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds / Had been incorporate. So we grew together” (3.2.204-205). It is of special interest that Helena says she and Hermia “grew together,” thereby confirming their united relationship as one of the fusion of two beings who began as separate and fully individuated. However, she does make it clear that their bodies are not truly united; it is their hearts, or their selfhoods, that have become meshed.

Siblings, particularly male/female fraternal twins, also display “an original unity that symbolically hermaphroditize[s] them” (Gilbert 87). Viola and Sebastian in Twelfth Night, for example, are perceived by Orsino as “One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons,” (5.1.208) when seen together. Viola is still dressed as Cesario, and their
resemblance is so great that Antonio asks, “How have you made division of yourself? / An apple cleft in two is not more twin / Than these two creatures” (5.1.215-17). Thus, they form “feminine and masculine halves of an androgynous ideal” (Gilbert 87), although it is evident that each must, in some fashion, tend toward androgyny on his or her own, in order for Viola to maintain the young male disguise of Cesario and be mistaken for her own brother. The ideal androgyne is, therefore, dependent upon physical similarity between the two bodies that come together, as well as on the more androgynous physicality of youth.

There are far too many images of love-as-fusion strewn throughout literature and art to examine all of them here. Still, it is gratifying that Alice Domurat Dreger, in her critical examination of cultural reactions to conjoined twins titled One of Us—incidentally, a brilliant title, as it references not only the most famous line from the film Freaks, but also highlights the dual existence of conjoined twins as both singular and plural entities—touches upon the ways in which the lyrics of modern love songs bring to mind a state of conjoinment. She cites the musical Side Show, which is based upon the exploits of Daisy and Violet Hilton. Of the show’s final duet, “I Will Never Leave You,” Dreger writes “Though the characters of Daisy and Violet sing it to each other, it is a romantic number that would sound just as appropriate being sung by a couple of lovers” (49). She goes on to observe that “[s]ongs about never being alone, songs about feeling the constant touch of another, songs about someone who knows you as well as you know yourself—all of them sound like celebrations of conjoinment” (50). It is, in fact, tempting to see the twin-hermaphrodite image in all the myriad images of heterosexual love that
high and low culture bombards us with. But Dreger also warns that “[n]o matter how much they resonate, these age-old effusions about attachment are intended to be just metaphorical. Love is supposed to be an experience of the individual, and an individual is expected to be the only inhabitant of his or her skin” (50). While her use of the phrase “just metaphorical” is misleading, given the power of metaphor, it is still true that the explicit image of the hermaphroditic double-being is either meant to discomfit or meant to represent a state of divinely-sanctioned unity that arises from the coming together of two singular bodies, and therefore does not specifically celebrate conjoinment or hermaphroditism in any sense of these bodies as they are lived. They are metaphors and symbols, absolutely, but still the tendency to combine hermaphroditism with doubling reminiscent of conjoinment speaks volumes about the close relationship between the two as manifestations of the double-self.
Fig. 1. Figure of a monster having two heads, one male and the other female, woodcut from Ambroise Paré, *Des Monstres et prodiges*; rpt. in Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982; fig. 13; 19; print).
Fig. 2. Figure of two hermaphroditic twin children, being joined back to back the one to the other, woodcut from Ambroise Paré, *Des Monstres et prodiges*; rpt. in Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982; fig. 20; 29; print).
Fig. 4. The hermaphroditic rebis, Hermes, and Aphrodite, from Michael Maier, *Atlanta fugiens* (Plate 38); rpt. in Kathleen P. Long, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006; fig. 4.1; 112; print).
CHAPTER III
CREATING THE DOUBLE SELF THROUGH FUSION AND FISSION

The literary figure of the double is generally associated with the uncanny, the strange, and often with a character who encounters some form of tragedy. In defining “the uncanny,” Nicholas Royle writes that “[i]t has to do with a sense of ourselves as double, split, at odds with ourselves” (6). Freud, of course, addresses—in essence, names and so creates—the double in his essay “The 'Uncanny,’” explicating the significance of the double as first a manifestation of “the primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man” and serves as “an insurance against the destruction of the ego” (Freud 210-11). It is after overcoming this narcissistic stage that “the 'double' reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death” (Freud 211). Royle then adds to this observation: “One may want one's double dead; but the death of the double will always be the death of oneself” (190). Naturally, Freud, Royle, and virtually all those who write about the role of the double are speaking principally of a “double” that manifests itself in symbols, and not of a double that takes physical form. Twins are quite obviously a manifestation of doubling, but perhaps too obvious an example for many theorists to address at length. In fact, C.F. Keppler writes in *The Literature of the Second Self* that “physical duplication by itself is never enough for, nor is it necessary to, the literature of the second self. On the whole it is an obvious and comparatively heavy-handed device” (7). But conjoined twins present a
more thorny problem than mere physical similarity and must be discussed separately; after all, they are double in mind, while at the same time sharing a single, connected body. Keppler also dismisses “the purely subjective 'other'” as being a proper manifestation of the “second self,” because “there is too little real division; there are no separate selves at all” (7). He goes on to note that this subjective other, the “‘split personality' is almost always to some extent an ‘alternating personality,' in which now one and now another of the combatant elements in the psyche appears on top” (8). However, the half-and-half is an entity in which both selves are equally matched, with the body split evenly between the two. In fact, in dismissing the single body that splits into two or more identities, Keppler only considers figures like the werewolf or Robert Louis Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde, who occupy the same body at different times (8). While characters such as these are related to the half-and-half, the half-and-half remains its own distinct creature.

In his analysis of not the “double” but the “second self,” Keppler clearly strives for a level of psychological sophistication that is not strictly necessary when discussing the representation of conjoined twins or half-and-halves; Keppler rejects the term “double” or “doppelganger” as being too dependent upon duplication, which need not be a physical or a psychological feature of what he refers to as the “second self” (2). Given the physical duplication that occurs in conjoined twins, and the multiple selves present in the half-and-half, the term “double” seems appropriate to discussions of these characters. While they may not, therefore, qualify as “second selves” by Keppler's understanding, in many ways his descriptions of the second self—for example, as “an inescapable two that are at the
same time an indisputable one” (1)--are still applicable, particularly to conjoined twin characters. Of the dualism present in a relationship between doubles, Keppler writes that “what each of them lack is exactly what the other possesses” (9). This tendency toward the double self as a whole self shall be seen not only in the figure of the half-and-half, but also in the literary depictions of conjoined twins.

Because conjoined twins and half-and-halfs occupy a liminal space between the fully-fledged literary “double” or “second self” and the monstrous “split self” or “split personality,” it is necessary not only to approach these characters from the point of uncanny doubling, but also from what Noël Carroll analyzes as two methods of creating monsters in the horror genre: fusion and fission. The use (and modification) of a definition formed as a reaction to what Carroll calls “art horror” is not an act of flippancy, but rather an acknowledgment of the role that imagination plays in the formation of the “monstrous.” By the broadest definition possible, the “monstrous body” represents “those bodies that in their gross failure to approximate to corporeal norms are radically excluded” (Shildrick 2). Shildrick goes on to elaborate, saying that “[m]onsters... show themselves in many different and culturally specific ways, but what is monstrous about them is most often the form of their embodiment.... what concerns me is that monsters operate primarily in the imaginary” (9). That is, the monster becomes monstrous through the ruminations of the normative observer; moreover, the perceived embodiment of the monster need not necessarily take an objective, literal form. This allows for the discussion of historical or idealized monsters, such as the rebis or the half-and-half. The half-and-half is also a freak, which is a term that is not necessarily
synonymous with “monster,” although freakishness develops out of outsider status and othering as much as monstrosity does. Here, the use of the term “freak” distinguishes the half-and-half from a mythical creature like the rebis by providing a grounding in the historical and corporeal; the rebis, after all, was a monster of the imagination, while the half-and-half was performed in actuality.

Rosemarie Garland Thomson acknowledges that “monster” is “perhaps the earliest and most enduring name for the singular body[; it] derives from the Latin monstra, meaning to warn, show, or sign, and which has given us the modern verb demonstrate” (3). In antiquity, monstrous bodies were themselves texts to be read, to decipher the future and the pleasure or displeasure of the gods. Ambiguity was inherent in the monstrous, and according to Garland, the monstrous body “challeng[ed] the boundaries of the human and the coherence of what seemed to be the natural world... [and] appeared as sublime, merging the terrible with the wonderful, equating repulsion with attraction” (3). This aligns with Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's description of monsters as “disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration.... A mixed category, the monster resists any classification built on hierarchy or a merely binary opposition” (6-7). The monstrous is omnipresent throughout the span of human culture, and to discuss the monster as it appears in the context of the freak show is also, obliquely, to discuss the monsters of the horror movie genre, and vice versa. Still, the monsters of the horror genre are, by and large, imaginary constructs, even though they may stand in for real groups or bodies that may be othered in less fanciful texts. Freaks that appeared in the sideshow occupy a distinct place in the
world of monstrosity by not only capturing the monstrous imagination, but also existing within the “real world.” Freaks are capable of stepping outside of the bounds of narrative that define and create them on the sideshow stage; therefore they are bound by narrative conventions while at the same time containing the potential to transgress them. This makes freaks, especially those like conjoined twins or half-and-halfs that are made monstrous by occupying more than one ontological category, excellent tests of the limits of Carroll's definitions.

Carroll defines the fusion figure as “a composite that unites attributes held to be categorically distinct and/or at odds in the cultural scheme of things in unambiguously one, spatio-temporally discrete entity” (43). When addressing the issue of fission, Carroll further subdivides the term. He begins by describing fission as “contradictory elements... distributed over different, though metaphysically related, identities” (46), the goes on to identify “temporal fission... [which] divides characters in time,” as is the case for the werewolf or Jekyll and Hyde, and “spatial fission... [which] multiples characters in space,” as in the case of the (wholly separate) doppelganger. Carroll notably sticks to describing the fanciful monsters of the horror tradition—while some books on horror do address material like Tod Browning's *Freaks*, Carroll's does not—and yet, the principles of fusion and fission are useful for talking about a great many sideshow acts, not only conjoined twins and half-and-halfs. However, the distinction between fusion and fission is exceptionally important to the discussion of double-figures. For Margrit Shildrick there is “a difference between putative twins who remain anomalously joined at birth, and a putative singleton whose body has unfortunately begun to divide prenatally” (59). Our
understanding of the origin of the double—particularly of an incompletely separated double—going as far back as the womb is of great importance to how double characters are conceived and portrayed.

Carroll's definitions need some adjustment in order to apply coherently to conjoined twins or half-and-halfs. Temporal fission can be dismissed immediately, as the salient point of the freakishness of conjoined twins and half-and-halfs is that they are simultaneously two and one. In fact, Carroll's entire conception of temporal fusion is somewhat suspect; of the werewolf, he writes that “the human identity and the wolf identity are not fused but, so to speak, they are sequenced” and that these identities are “different [and] mutually exclusive” (46). This is disingenuous, not only in a discussion of werewolves, but especially if Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are held to “exemplif[y]” such a split (47). To state that these double identities are sequenced is to ignore, first, the crucial moments of change when the identities switch places and during which the subject is both man and wolf, monster and man. It is also to dismiss the effect that a double, divided physical identity (which is sequenced) has on the inner identity or inner self. The werewolf is especially monstrous because the man is the wolf, and vice versa. They are not wholly separate personalities that share a physical space, like roommates alternating days in an apartment. This is made especially clear in recent fictional media that explores werewolf characters as sympathetic monsters. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* uncontrolled lycanthropy is framed as an illness; the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher Remus Lupin is able to keep the wolf side of himself tamed by taking a special potion (medication) during the full moon, which “makes [him]
safe” (352) by allowing him to “keep his mind when [he] transform[s]” (Rowling 353). This suggests that Lupin never stops being himself when he transforms into a wolf, but that he simply cannot access the human “tameness” without a potion. Significantly, Lupin also identifies himself in the first person when describing things he did while transformed: for instance, he refers to being a wolf without the potion as a time when “I was dangerous” (353) and says that “The screams and howls the villagers used to hear were made by me” (353). It is also interesting that, because the potion was not available when he was a child, his friends learned to change themselves into animals because “They couldn't keep me company as humans.... A werewolf is only a danger to people” (354). Their company was crucial to Lupin because “Under their influence, I became less dangerous. My body was still wolffish, but my mind seemed to become less so while I was with them” (355). The company of friends, therefore, was able to provide a certain humanizing factor to mitigate the bestial that would fog Lupin's mind; here, the contact of friends is shown to be nearly as effective as a medication. For Lupin, the transformation is not from one self to a separate other, but an unwanted clouding of his own perceptions and thinking abilities. Contact with friends or a potion taken prior to transforming are both shown to lessen the mental drama of transformation, removing the aspect of mental transformation and leaving behind only the physical.

Another werewolf in popular literature, Sergeant Angua von Uberwald of Terry Pratchett's Discworld series, shows a similar rejection of lycanthropy as a curse in which a separate other overtakes the self. Unlike Lupin, however, Angua's lycanthropy is not regarded as an illness but as an inherited trait. Her family is a werewolf family, and she
explains in *The Fifth Elephant* that two of her siblings were “yennorks,” or werewolves that remain in the form of either a wolf or a human because “the little... switch... inside them didn't work” (157). But Angua rejects the idea that she had “a human sister and a wolf brother,” insisting that “They were both *werewolves*” (157). For Angua, werewolf identity is a genetic trait, and a lack of change does not disqualify family members from being regarded as werewolves. But then, Angua is also very firm on the point that the shape she occupies does not dictate her identity: “I can look like a wolf, but I'm not a wolf. I'm a werewolf! I'm not a human either. I'm a werewolf! ... Wolves have got a good sense of smell. You can't fool it. I can pass for human, but I can't pass for wolf” (138). Angua, then, does not switch from one pole to the other, or from one identity to the other; her identity is singular, and she does not see herself as a human-who-becomes-a-wolf, but instead as something that is entirely other. Like Lupin, her outer shape may change, and the change may affect her thought processes—Angua's mother scolds her father for spending too much time as a wolf, as the wolfishness then carries over even after he has become human again (47)—but neither Angua nor Lupin regard their essential identities as split, and neither do they refer to their wolf-aspects as being outside of their humanoid identities or otherwise wholly differentiated from one another. Angua and Lupin are both sympathetic portrayals of werewolves; they are not villainous monsters but heroes, or at least agents of good, and rather than being cursed with lycanthropy, they interact with the change as either a chronic illness or as a genetic trait. Carroll's definition of temporal fission leaves no room for an investigation of monsters such as these, in which the dual
selves are not dual at all, but instead a single self that undergoes a dramatic physical transformation.

Carroll's definition is also lacking in the case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, where it is essential that Jekyll and Hyde are understood as manifestations of the same self, and that Hyde is as much a part of Jekyll's inner life as he is a part of his physical life. As Jekyll writes in his own statement of his work, he discovers “man is not truly one, but truly two” (Stevenson 520) and Jekyll's dream is in fact to separate “these polar twins” (521). The “second form and countenance” that results from his experiments should not be regarded as an entirely separate creature, however, as Jekyll writes that “they were the expression, and bore the stamp, of lower elements of my soul” (521). Carroll identifies that fission and fusion are “meant to apply to the organization of opposed cultural categories, generally of a deep biological or ontological sort: human/reptile, living/dead, etc. But it is also true that in much horror.... the opposition of such cultural categories in the biology of the horrific creatures portend further oppositions... which... are generally deep-seated in the culture” (48). Carroll does not go on to explore precisely how this representation of categorical oppositions might be reflective of the monster's inner psyche, or how diametric distinctions like good/evil or man/beast might be made manifest in the same body in order to depict a single self's capacity to encompass both poles. Thus, it is clear that his definition must be adapted to more fully explicate, not only the various characteristics of the werewolf and the fragmented inner self of Dr. Jekyll, but also the divided male/female character of the half-and-half.
Since it is evident that there is something lacking in Carroll's definitions, a more descriptive way of understanding fission is to divide the term into the categories complete fission and incomplete fission. Complete fission takes the place of spatial fission, describing those instances in which characters are haunted by wholly separate doppelgangers who become, by virtue of being removed from the original physical self, a menacing other. Incomplete fission describes a split self which may not necessarily be split in time, and which physically manifests ontological uncertainty in the inner self, either sequentially or concurrently.

Clearly, the half-and-half embodies a case of incomplete fusion, exhibiting the opposing cultural categories of man and woman and thus becoming two well-defined identities within a single self. But why not class the half-and-half as an example of fusion? Carroll's definition of fusion relies heavily upon hybridity, and many of his examples are monsters that combine the human and the animal. Beyond that aspect, fusion also implies a more seamless transition between that which is being fused: disparate elements, to be sure, but not always as clearly reflective of ontological boundaries as those embodying fission tend to be. Even Frankenstein's monster, though not necessarily “seamless,” shows far less of a definitive physical split than the half-and-half and, as Carroll observes, even maintains a kind of “continuing identity” throughout his bodily coalescence, including quite literal changes of his brain (44). Fusion describes conjoined twins much more accurately than it does the half-and-half; although, again, there are some limitations in Carroll's definition. Most importantly, Carroll only accounts for the fusion of opposing or dissimilar elements. Unlike in the case of fission, which
more or less necessitates splitting into opposites, the element of disparity appears less integral to the success of the fusion. After all, the fusion of multiple living things in the same ontological category can also be quite horrifying, although it is true that the greater the number, the greater the horror such a creature provokes.

An example of this kind of fusion is a creature called a “rat king.” Supposedly made when multiple rats become tangled by their tails, the result is a multi-rat creature with a center formed of fused tails, with the separate bodies radiating out in a star-like pattern. In his novel *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*, Terry Pratchett conceives of this physical fusion of rats as a man-made thing, like Frankenstein's monster, but then also as a creature that gains an independent identity. The rat king, which calls itself Spider, is able to influence other sentient minds, and it has this power because of the unnatural fusion that was forced upon it. Spider is a singular, unified being, created from the combination of eight individual, but corporeally similar, bodies. Spider describes itself thusly: “Men made me for sport! Tie the rats' tails together and watch them struggle! But I did not struggle. Together we are strong! One mind is as strong as one mind and two minds are as strong as two minds, but three minds are four minds, and four minds are eight minds, and eight minds... are one, one mind stronger than eight” (Pratchett 258). The implication here is that the strength of unity or wholeness is actually more attainable when a larger number of similar minds are combined. While it could be argued that Carroll's claim that fusion “unite[s] attributes held to be categorically distinct and/or at odds” (43) might conceivably include separate, different bodies of the same species, it is more accurate to read this ambiguity as a lack of
thorough exploration on Carroll's part. To clarify this point, the definition of fusion must be expanded to include the coming together of multiple similar bodies. For the sake of symmetry, it is prudent to identify two types of fusion—dissimilar fusion and similar fusion—especially as the goals of each type are markedly different. Dissimilar fusion creates new creatures by juxtaposing elements of those that already exist, and relies heavily on hybrid sensibilities to achieve monstrous effect. Similar fusion relies on the union of creatures or objects of similar physical shape and origin, thereby including fusions of animals of the same species: Spider the rat king, for example, or human beings. In the case of conjoined twins, the similar fusion is of two human beings who are genetically identical, but this need not necessarily be the case; Frankenstein's monster is, after all, created from multiple parts of different human bodies. Carroll's stipulation that the product of fusion is “unambiguously one” (43) does pose a problem for conjoined twins, insofar as conjoined twins are understood to be of one body, but not of one self (except in the case of parasitic twins, where one twin has been partially absorbed by the other and displays no particular signs of consciousness). Yet, there are reported instances of conjoined twins thinking as a single unit: Millie and Christine McKoy preferred to be known by the hyphenated “Millie-Christine” and often signed photos as “Chrissie-Millie” (Frost 4), while Chang and Eng reportedly signed letters as ChangEng (Grosz 62). For conjoined twins, the line between two and one is less well-defined.

Another avenue of exploration that is relative to describing conjoined twins in relation to either fusion or fission is the more scientific, basic answer to Margrit Shildrick's question of whether conjoined twins result from an instance of the fusion of
two or the fission of one. Shildrick quotes the 1992 edition of the Encyclopaedia Brittanica as asserting that conjoined twins “probably arise following the less than complete separation of the halves of the early embryo, or from partial separation at later stages” (59). Scholarly, non-medical, descriptions, as well as descriptions in more popular contexts, waver between discussing conjoined twins as either the product of fusion or an incomplete split. Christine Quigley, for instance, begins the preface to her encyclopedia on conjoined twins by alluding to the moment “when two human ova fail to fully separate during pregnancy,” then goes on to describe conjoined twins as “physically joined from conception” (1). But there is considerable theoretical evidence to show that conjoined twins are the product of an early fusion of monozygotic twin embryos that attain complete separation and then fuse together after the initial separation has occurred.

Rowena Spencer describes this theory in the following passage:

Monzygotic (“identical”) twins are thought to result from division of the fertilized ovum (oocyte) during the first week after fertilization.... It is proposed... that conjoined twins have their beginning at about this same time, the inner cell mass “dividing in its main bulk,” with the two separate monozygotic embryos staying close enough together (or remaining united just enough) to share either the amnion alone or both the amnion and the yolk sac. Then, as the embryos continue their rapid growth, they might come in contact with one another... and become reunited. (10)
Spencer goes on to explicate the ways in which separate embryos might meet during development in order to produce all the various types of conjoinment that occur, the details of which are too complex to summarize here. Nevertheless, she makes several key arguments against the fission theory—that conjoined twins develop from a single fertilized egg that fails to ever divide fully. Spencer mentions the occurrence of “triplets—conjoined twins with either a monovular [identical] or a binovular [fraternal] sibling” (20). The presence of a monovular, or identical, triplet seems counter-intuitive to the fission theory; why would the egg completely split to form one embryo, but incompletely split the other two? Spencer identifies multiple ways in which the developing zygote might come in contact with another zygote; one distinction she makes is between ventral unions and dorsal unions of the “embryonic discs.” Ventrally united embryos beget thoracopagus or omphalopagus (e.g. Chang and Eng), parapagus, or ischiopagus twins, while dorsally united embryos result in craniopagus, rachipagus (e.g. Millie-Christine), or pygopagus (e.g. Daisy and Violet Hilton) twins (Spencer 20-21)—for clarification, see fig. 6. Ventrally united twins “typically share some portion of the gastrointestinal tract and may be expected to have a single umbilicus, umbilical cord, and placenta; however, a significant portion of these cases have duplication of all or some portion of these latter structures, supporting the theory that they did, indeed, arise from two separate discs with two body stalks” and not from the division of a single embryo (Spencer 20). For dorsally united twins, Spencer admits that “[a]t first glance, craniopagus or pygopagus theoretically might result from division of a very early fused ovum, leaving the two embryos attached only at the extreme rostral or caudal end aspect
of the disc” but in fact “[t]hese two areas of the early embryonic disc are not occupied by the primordium of the neural tube,” making division extremely unlikely (21). In fact, Spencer asserts that “there is no conceivable mechanism whereby fission of a developing embryo, at any stage, in any place, in any direction, can result in twins united only in the neural tube” as the dorsally united twins are (22). Fusion of the neural tubes of two separate embryos is, however, feasible.

Although the evidence overwhelmingly points toward conjoined twins being the product of fusion between two fully divided monovular zygotes, the fact that conjoined twins are always identical prompts a certain degree of existential uncertainty. Is the question of fusion versus fission truly relevant when identical twins result from fission regardless? Or do uncertainties such as these undermine categorical conjecture, when it is applied to the nature of identity? While it is true that, regardless of how it is achieved, doubling is found in portrayals of both conjoined twins and half-and-halves, it is also quite evident that the doubling manifests itself differently in each. It is certainly not unreasonable to trace these differences back to the formation of the body, the formation of identity, and to cultural and aesthetic ideas about identity, the body, and the double. Moreover, though conventional identical twins are regarded as curiosities in their own right (perhaps in part because they seem to be the embodiment of the doppelgänger phenomenon in everyday life), conjoined twins are the more remarkable because they are physically connected. In a sense, conjoined twins have physically returned to the oneness that they came from, as Aristophanes’ mythic figures strove to do, and therefore they occupy a physical state that is forever out of reach of those born single.
Fig. 6. Types of conjoined twins: Ce = cephalopagus; T = thoracopagus; O = omphalopagus; I = ischiopagus; Dic = parapagus dicephalus; Dip = parapagus diprosopus; Pa = parapagus; Cr = craniopagus; R = rachipagus; Py = pygopagus, from Rowena Spencer, M.D., Conjoined Twins: Developmental Malformations and Clinical Implications (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003; fig. 2.2; 13; print).
CHAPTER IV
TWO HEADS, ONE BRAIN: ZAPHOD BEEBLEBROX AS AN ALIEN AT THE LIMITS OF DEFINITION

In order to more fully understand the many ways in which conjoined twins are depicted and how authors of fiction resolve the problems and peculiarities associated with the physical connection of two separate identities, it is necessary to explore a character that shares many traits with conjoined twins while avoiding that which is at the forefront of the formation of a dual identity: more than one individuated self.

Zaphod Beeblebrox is a major character in Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, a series of five science fiction/humor novels that began life as a multi-part BBC radioplay first broadcast in 1978. Zaphod is an alien from Betelgeuse 5, and he makes his first appearance as President of the Galaxy. He quickly becomes ex-President when he and his human companion, Trillian, steal a revolutionary new spaceship that he is meant to be unveiling. Zaphod's anatomy renders him especially distinctive; he is described as being humanoid, but with a second head and a third arm (30). It is made clear that his third arm is an elective addition. In the original radio scripts, after having his physical advances rebuffed by Trillian, Zaphod says, “I grew that one specially for you, Trillian... Took me six months but it was worth every minute” (46). In the novel the extra arm is presumably a surgical addition, “fitted just beneath his right one to help improve his ski-boxing” (28), rather than something organically “grown” by
Zaphod himself. Also, the sexual connotation evident in the radioplay is lost, given that it
instead is meant to help improve his performance in a sport. The second head, however,
is more or less assumed to be a trait present since birth. In the script for the radioplays,
the first mention of the number of Zaphod's heads comes when Arthur Dent, recalling the
previous time he met Zaphod on Earth, says, “he only had the two arms and the one
head” (49). A note from editor and producer Geoffrey Perkins explains that “the line
about [Zaphod's] extra head was put in as [a] little extra throwaway joke which was to
cause enormous headaches (sic) when the show transferred to television” (50).
Interestingly, the exact number of heads that Zaphod has is not indicated until the
following episode, when Ford remarks, “I wish I had two heads like yours, Zaphod. I
could have hours of fun banging them against a wall” (64).

Of course, the problem of the exact number of heads and how to represent them is
not just one that affects those working on television or movie adaptations. Arthur
mentions that Zaphod had a conventional human body at the time of their first meeting
(HHG novel 74), and while we know that Zaphod's extra arm was a late addition, the
disappearance of his second head is something of a puzzlement. Much later in the novel
series, an alternate version of Trillian—who missed her chance to leave the Earth with
Zaphod—recounts that at the time “he had a bird cage over [the second head].... With a
cloth over the cage. Pretended he had a parrot.... he pulled the cloth back for a moment....
There was another head in there.... It was a worrying moment” (Mostly Harmless 652).
This addition to the scene not only preserves Zaphod's heads bodily, it also changes the
dynamic of the original retelling of the scene, in which Zaphod appeared to be quite
ordinarily human. The original implication is that Zaphod, in a human guise, is able to easily charm Trillian away from the less charismatic Arthur Dent using the line, “Why don’t you talk to me instead? I'm from a different planet” (*HHG* novel 74). As Trillian then points out to Arthur, when they meet again on the spaceship, “you must admit, he did turn out to be from a different planet” (74), implying that this was a pleasant surprise rather than a forgone conclusion. But, in the alternate-Trillian's version of the story, she is actually confronted with Zaphod's physical difference before she agrees to go with him. Therefore, the fact that he is an alien is a conscious part of their discourse, because his body does not allow him to possess two heads and “pass” as a human. Having two heads, in effect, becomes shorthand for his alienness.

Still, the exact configuration of Zaphod's heads remains contentious. Apart from Arthur's initial recollection of him having only one head, the novels make it clear that Zaphod's heads are meant to be wholly separate and, though independent of one another, essentially two components of the singular whole individual that is Zaphod Beeblebrox. In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* novel, Trillian refers to Zaphod's “two windpipes” (123), while Zaphod himself casually uses the phrase “my brains” (124). That the heads are independent entities that speak, act, and react on their own is also shown throughout the book: for example, a camera “home[s] in for a close-up on the more popular of his two heads” (30), and he also he “pick[s] the teeth in his right-hand head with his left hand” while his “left-hand [head]... grin[s] a broad, relaxed, nonchalant grin” (72). Also, in episode six of the radioplay, Zaphod has the line “No problem. Pas de problème!” (115), which is explained by Geoffrey Perkins in his notes to the episode as
being an ad-lib of the actor that was borne of “a rather quaint little theory about Zaphod's second head speaking French” (127).

That Zaphod's heads may have knowledge independent of one another is explored in a rather eerie context in the first novel, as Zaphod tries to explain his motivations for stealing the spaceship Heart of Gold and discovering the lost planet of Magrathea. He says, “[P]art of my mind just didn't seem to work properly” (97), and in fact throughout this explanation he refers to his mind in the singular. While trying to understand what about his mind is not working, Zaphod runs a number of tests on himself and then, when these do not produce results, he “superimpos[es] the results from one head on top of the results from the other head” (98), revealing that despite his own understanding of himself as being of a singular mind, the heads are still tested independently. When this superimposition yields no results, he decides to run the superimposed results through a green filter because he “was always superstitious about the color green” (98). It is only under this green filter that he is able to see “a whole section in the middle of both brains that relate only to each other and not to anything else around them. Some bastard has cauterized all the synapses and electronically traumatized those two lumps of cerebellum.” When he is asked if he knows who did this to him, Zaphod replies that “they left their initials burned into the cauterized synapses. They left them there for me to see” and that those initials are, in fact, his own: “Z.B.” (98). This creation of a separate set of locked away thoughts and desires works in Zaphod as a kind of purpose-built id, prompting Zaphod to act on impulse for reasons that his conscious mind cannot understand, and hiding his intentions from the kind of government tests that would have
prevented him from becoming President of the Galaxy and fulfilling his own hidden goals. What is especially intriguing is that, though each head has its own section of brain that has been cauterized, the two separate sections relate only to one another and images of the brains must be superimposed in order for the damage to be visible. Thus, although Zaphod may be of two minds after he alters his brains, it is not as though the second mind is localized in one head. The damage is evenly spread between the two brains, thereby suggesting that Zaphod's two brains and two heads originally formed a singular cohesive whole. Zaphod's singular self is not only made clear by this discussion of his mind, or even by the consistent usage of singular pronouns. In the third book of the series, *Life, The Universe and Everything*, the issue of Zaphod's soul is raised briefly, as “he'd always more or less assumed that he had one as he had a full complement of everything else, and indeed two of some things” (361). Yet, the fact that he does have two of some things (most notably, heads), there is still a basic expectation that his soul will be a singular thing.

Generally, visual depictions of Zaphod portray him with two heads in a configuration that is found—albeit rarely—among human beings; *parapagus dicephalus* is the medical classification for conjoined twins with a single lower body but two separate heads. These twins may even possess a third or fourth arm in the space between their heads, where the shoulders may or may not be fused (Dreger 36); the placement of Zaphod's third arm immediately beneath his original right arm (*HHG* novel 28) therefore has more in common with Mark Twain's fictional depiction of conjoined twins in his short story “Those Extraordinary Twins” (see chapter four for additional discussion) than
it does with any model provided by nature. So it was especially significant when the 2005 Hollywood film adaptation of the series broke from the dicephalic, side-by-side model of Zaphod's heads that had been used in the British television miniseries and, instead, chose to depict Zaphod's second head as being beneath the chin of his main head. Even more peculiar is that the head functions, not as an integral part of Zaphod's self, but as an embarrassing id-type that must push its way into conversation. Furthermore, Ford actually inquires about his second head, suggesting that it is a relatively recent addition. Zaphod tells him that “Apparently you can't be president [of the galaxy] with a whole brain... some parts of my personality weren't exactly what you'd call, ah, 'presidential’” and so Zaphod was forced to rope off those unsuitable parts and restrain them in the head at his neck, which he generally keeps covered with a shirt or scarf. Zaphod's second head therefore loses the inherent alien quality that it maintained in all other incarnations of the story, and becomes instead a form of body/brain/personality modification. That the second head functions as a repository for negative personality traits does connect the character with the Zaphod of the books, who sections off a part of his own brains; but, because in the movie Zaphod began as having only the single head, any kind of question of intrinsic plurality in Zaphod's character has been effectively deleted. Even more bizarre is the fact that the head can be removed and left behind with minimal damage to Zaphod; this is shown when his rival Humma Kavula surgically removes Zaphod's second head in order to hold it hostage. Zaphod is depicted as being capable of surviving without the second head, and seems only to experience minor discomfort. This suggests that, whatever link remains between Zaphod's primary personality and the secondary id-
conglomerate at his neck, it is minimal and not necessary for Zaphod's overall survival. Contrasted with the Zaphod from the books, radioplays, and television miniseries, the significance of the change becomes startling: in all other versions, it is very much a part of Zaphod's character that he has two heads and not only one, and the loss of a head would therefore constitute a major bodily injury. In the movie, this is not so, and therefore it cannot even be said that the Zaphod Beeblebrox of the film is a two-headed character in the same way that preceding versions of Zaphod have been.

There is some suggestion within the radioplays and the novels that Zaphod's body is recognizably unique even to non-humans. In the sixth episode of the radioplay, he says of a chair they have found in the cockpit of an unfamiliar spaceship that it “could have been made for me, it's got the two headrests” (113). Then, in episode seven of the radioplay, his reply to a receptionist who asks “just who do you think you are honey, Zaphod Beeblebrox or something?” is “Yeah, count the heads” (138). Evidently, Zaphod is unique enough in the number of heads he possesses that he can use them as a distinguishing trait. The only other character depicted with a body similar to Zaphod's is, in fact, related to him. The issue of Zaphod's ancestry is, however, something of a problem. Zaphod is introduced as Ford Prefect's “semi-cousin” by way of “shar[ing] three of the same mothers” (HHG radioplay 49). Ford, however, does not have any more heads or limbs than the average human being. The family member who does have two heads is Zaphod's great-grandfather, and it is only when he appears in the second novel, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*, that this is made clear. He appears to Zaphod, Ford, Arthur, and Trillian as a ghost, summoned by a séance, and is described as having
“two small wispy-haired heads,” one of which “loll[s] in sleep, [while] the other squint[s] sharply” (161). In response to the appearance of his great-grandfather's ghost, Zaphod gives “the intricate little double nod which is the traditional Betelgeusian gesture of familial respect” (161), and so implies that other residents of Betelgeuse share Zaphod's unusual physical characteristics, though none outside of his own family are mentioned. The issue of familial heredity is also further complicated by what Zaphod describes as “an accident with a contraceptive and a time machine” (160), which reversed the usual chronology of succession; thus, his great-grandfather is Zaphod Beeblebrox the Fourth, while he himself is Zaphod Beeblebrox the First. This leaves the origin of the trait of double-heads somewhat ambiguous: did the trait begin with Zaphod the First or the Fourth? Or, perhaps, with a more distant ancestor? It also raises the question of how many Betelgeusians actually possess the trait; Ford Prefect does not, but perhaps this is because he originally comes from Betelgeuse Seven rather than from Betelgeuse Five (HHG novel 34). Or, it may be that the trait is linked to the male sex chromosome and, because Ford shares only female relatives with Zaphod, does not share the double-headed trait.

Of course, the more practical explanation is that The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy was originally written as an experimental radioplay, later adapted to novels, television, comics, and movies, and that many of the inconsistencies are, in fact, jokes. The humor of Zaphod's ancestry does not, however, undermine what is essentially relevant about his character: that he is commonly described and depicted as sharing physical similarities with a certain kind of conjoined twin and yet differs significantly
from conjoined twins by being a single personality with two heads, rather than two individuals sharing a single body. In some ways, the Zaphod of the novels may be read as a character that demonstrates incomplete fission, since a part of his mind is shown to be cordoned off, separated and yet still functioning to control his wills and impulses. However, his outer body undergoes no particular changes and shows no sign of difference, and so is very unlike examples of incomplete fission such as the werewolf, Jekyll and Hyde, or the half-and-half. Zaphod's unusual anatomy is more what would be expected from similar fusion, and yet there is no background to suggest fusion has taken place; Zaphod, as far as can be ascertained from the narrative, has always been singular, and remains singular even when he divorces a part of the mind from the access of the whole. The Zaphod depicted in the 2005 movie is a better candidate for fission, even for complete fission, given that his second “head” is capable of being completely detached.

Zaphod Beeblebrox is a singular character whose body defies the precedents that the bodies of conjoined twins have established: that more than one head yields more than one separate self and that this trait is an isolated, non-hereditary occurrence resulting from fusion at the embryonic stage. Because he is a single individual with two heads, with ancestors who similarly possess two heads, Zaphod is defined within the overarching Hitchhiker's Guide narratives as being not only an alien to human beings but also a distinctive alien among other “alien” creatures.
CHAPTER V

CONJOINED TWINS IN THE LITERARY IMAGINATION

Certain themes and devices are recurrent in literature that includes characters which are conjoined twins. Mark Twain and Katherine Dunn both find remarkably similar ways of addressing those problems that would naturally most trouble and intrigue readers with normative bodies. Conjoined twins are most often represented as complementary doubles, demonstrating opposing character traits in order to balance as well as contrast, and fully set the two identities apart as separate. Mark Twain uses this strategy to an extreme in his satirical “Those Extraordinary Twins,” which is not, in fact, a separate short story, but rather the excised portions of his classic Pudd'nhead Wilson, a story that is in itself focused on racial doubling in the form of two babies switched at birth. Pudd'nhead Wilson began as a story about conjoined twins Angelo and Luigi, but the secondary plot line focusing on Pudd'nhead Wilson and the trial began to take precedence and Twain eventually “pulled one of the stories out by the roots, and left the other one—a kind of literary Caesarean operation” (184). This suggests that one story gave birth to the other, and is in that sense not a bad metaphor. But the image of surgery and of separation also suggests the physical separation of conjoined twins. In fact, for the purposes of Pudd'nhead Wilson, Twain writes of Angelo and Luigi that he “took those twins apart and made two separate men of them” (187), and so alludes to this process of editing as a kind of separation surgery. “Those Extraordinary Twins” is, then, remarkable
not only for its depiction of conjoined twins as central characters, but also for the story fragments themselves having once been united with another story, and only the surgery of editing was able to separate the two.

Angelo and Luigi are a physically impossible pair, and Mark Twain uses their incredible anatomies for comedic and dramatic effect, as do the illustrators. The twins are depicted as double-headed with only two shoulders, and two arms on each shoulder. This is a physical impossibility; in other examples of *parapagus* twins—those who share their lower bodies and a varying degree of upper body as well—the twins have two distinct sets of shoulders and four arms, which are joined to the shoulders in the usual singular fashion. This is the case for the Tocci brothers, on whom Twain may have based Angelo and Luigi, and it is also the configuration of Elly and Iphy in Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love*. Parapagus twins may also have one set of fused shoulders with just two arms (and sometimes a vestigial third arm between them); this is the case for Brittany and Abigail Hensel, though their third arm was removed when they were young (Dreger 36). Angelo and Luigi, therefore, have a strange, insectoid, and even an alien quality to them. After first seeing the twins, Aunt Patsy Cooper's reaction reflects this as well: “There was just a wormy squirming of arms in the air—seemed to be a couple of dozen of them, all writhing at once, and it just made me dizzy to see them go” (191). Additionally, when Twain describes the two getting undressed, he writes that, “The abundance of sleeves made the partnership-coat hard to get off, for it was like skinning a tarantula” (193), and so makes a direct comparison to something in the Arthropod family, which is widely noted for its abundance of legs. Many of the illustrations also enhance this quality by
making the twins' limbs long and thin, and so all the more like an insect. Twain exploits this particular aspect of their unusual body for comedic purposes, as in the scene in which they eat cooperatively with all four arms working without remaining exclusive to either Angelo or Luigi (198).

Twain also uses the twins' impossible physical appearances—impossible because conjoined twins are always identical, and so it is unlikely that they would look so radically different as Twain implies—to reflect their characters and illustrate the divisiveness of their ideals, while at the same time framing them as complements by describing even their superficial traits as polar opposites. Rowena and her mother, Aunt Patsy Cooper, are renting a room to the twins and, upon their first encounter with Angelo and Luigi, discuss their thoughts:

“I’m sure he is goodhearted and means well. Both of his faces show it.”

“I’m not so certain about that. The one on the left—I mean the one on its left—hasn’t near as good a face as its brother…. anyway it’s the dark-skinned one; the one that was west of his brother when they stood in the door. Up to all kinds of mischief and disobedience when he was a boy, I’ll be bound…. But the one on the right is as good as gold, I can see that…. it’s the right-hand one—the blonde one. He has such kind blue eyes and curly copper hair and fresh complexion—” (Twain 191)
This passage is intriguing because, firstly, Rowena refers to Angelo and Luigi using a singular pronoun, which gives us the improbable (and, out of context, unintelligible) sentence: “Both of his faces show it.” More important, however, is the emphasis that is placed on the twins’ differing physical attributes, namely their hair color and complexions. Angelo is “the blonde one,” and Aunt Patsy's description of him brings to mind certain angelic qualities. Luigi, then, is the darker twin, whom Aunt Patsy assumes to have been “[u]p to all kinds of mischief and disobedience” during childhood; it is, perhaps, not coincidental that the name Luigi begins with the same letters as “Lucifer,” especially given Angelo's name and the contrast that Twain sets up between them. Indeed, Aunt Patsy's assessment of the two based upon their looks is more or less accurate. Angelo is a teetotaler and Luigi drinks (250); Luigi smokes and Angelo does not (194); Angelo is a Methodist and Luigi is a Freethinker (204). Angelo himself describes their polarities in the follow terms: “As a rule, what one of us has lacked, the other, by the bounty of Providence, has been able to supply. My brother is hardy, I am not; he is very masculine, assertive, aggressive; I am much less so. I am subject to illness, he is never ill” (200). It is of particular interest that Angelo paints himself as less masculine and assertive than his brother, while suggesting that, what one of them lacks, the other is able to supply. Certainly, this comment brings to mind the state of hermaphroditic oneness, especially as it is paired with the apportioning of masculinity. In order to achieve wholeness between them, conjoined twins take on differing and opposing characteristics, even down to attributes that may be ascribed to masculinity or
femininity. Thus, the conjoined body retains its link to the hermaphroditic, even when the twins are definitively sexed as either male or female.

In Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love*, Elly and Iphy are portrayed in a way that is distinctly similar to Angelo and Luigi, except without the impossibilities of appearance and structure that Twain focused on—Elly and Iphy are identical twins with conventionally separated torsos. Dunn gives special attention to the ways in which Elly and Iphy share physical processes and sensations:

If you stood facing the twins, Elly was on your left and Iphy on your right. Elly was right-handed and Iphy was left-handed. But Iphy was the right leg and Elly was the left leg. If you pulled Elly’s hair, Iphy yelped too. If you kissed Iphy’s cheek, Elly smiled. If Elly burnt her hand on the popcorn machine, Iphy cried also and couldn’t sleep that night from the pain. They ran and climbed and danced gracefully. They had separate hearts but a meshing bloodstream; separate stomachs but a common intestine. They had one liver and one set of kidneys. They had two brains and a nervous system that was peculiarly connected and unexpectedly separate…. (51)

Some material of this nature can be found in Twain's story. For instance, Angelo reveals that he “cannot abide medicines, cannot take them” and so Luigi takes the medicine for him (200) and has even eaten for Angelo when cheap, poor food “revolted” him (201).
Most of Angelo and Luigi's shared physicality is evident in the ingestion of food, drink, or medicine. Alcohol is particularly contentious, given that Angelo doesn't drink; when “Luigi swallow[s] half a tumbler of whiskey... Angelo... [takes] a pill to keep it from giving him the headache” (194). Later, Angelo faints just prior to Luigi's duel, and when he wakes “he [is] still so weak that Luigi [is] obliged to drink a stiff horn of brandy to brace him up” (232). Finally, in order to sabotage Angelo's speech in front of the Teetotaller's Union, “Luigi drank a couple of glasses of whiskey—which steadied his nerves and clarified his mind, but made Angelo drunk” (250). This, then, ruins Angelo's romantic prospects with Rowena, who “would never marry a man who drank.” When Angelo avows that he doesn't drink, Rowena responds “you get drunk, and that is worse” (251). Because of their joined nature, the actions of one twin invariably affect the other. For Twain, this is more or less confined to the ingestive appetites, and the effects of what is put into the body by the choice of one twin or the other. Unlike Elly and Iphy, shared pain seems to not to be a condition of their conjoinment. Angelo is mildly wounded multiple times during the pistol duel with the judge, but there is never any indication that these wounds particularly affect Luigi or cause him any pain (233-35). Twain also fails to touch on any particular shared physical pleasures akin to Elly smiling when Iphy's cheek is kissed; he is purely focused on the consumption of food, drink, and medicine. Dunn broaches the subject of food as well, especially the idea of consuming particular foods in order to discomfit the other, but not to the extent that Twain does. Elly eats cheese and other foods in order to make them constipated, which Iphy hates; she also eats chocolate to give herself pimples, though “Elly's eating the stuff never gave Iphy pimples. The
punishment was that Iphy had to sleep next to Elly's pimples” (52). This contrasts somewhat with Twain's twins, in which medicine, food, and alcohol ingested by one always affects the other physically. Angelo and Luigi, therefore, come across with a more prominent physical connection through the medium of ingestion, but less of a physical connection where pain or tactile sensations are concerned, to the extent that one twin may feel pain even in a shared body part while the other does not—for example, Angelo wishes Luigi “wouldn't wear such tight boots” when he has control of their legs because “they hurt [Angelo's] feet,” but Luigi seems unaffected by any pain (193). For Dunn's twins, they both experience actual bodily discomfort only in the parts of the body that they share. Discomforts on unshared body parts may be physical in only one and psychological in the other, as with Elly's pimples. Dunn's twins, therefore, lack the direct ingestive conduit that seems to exist between Twain's.

Instead, Dunn's focus is especially on what is shared neurologically between Elly and Iphy, rather than on how they react to stimuli that they consume. Yet, Elly and Iphy still have a strong aspect of polar opposites to their characters. Elly is the more aggressive, while Iphy is a peacemaker. Their travel-along piano tutor “claimed that Iphy was all melody and Elly was rhythm exclusively” but “[t]hey were both sopranos” (51). However, rather than framing them as two halves of a conceptual whole, with a masculine and feminine yin/yang dynamic akin to Angelo and Luigi, their older brother Arty “speculate[s] that their two brains functioned as right and left lobes of a single brain” (Dunn 51). This theory conceptualizes Elly and Iphy as undeniably singular, the
mind of a united creature that would not function correctly if it were split and is greatly reminiscent of the shared but singular self that typifies.

Another aspect of their physicality that suggests unity rather than division is their sister Olympia's observation that “Iphy was the right leg and Elly was the left leg,” which seems to contradict something she states only paragraphs before: “Elly, rest her hard and toothy soul, ruled their body” (51). Elly's dominance is not presented as complete, given that we know they each have control over one leg and have differing dominant hand preferences. The description of her soul as “hard and toothy” actually mitigates the sense of her control, suggesting that she holds on to control by force of will and personality. The more singular—not always cooperative, but certainly enmeshed—bodily selfhood of Elly and Iphy seems far more extraordinary when compared to Twain's explanation of the way Angelo and Luigi navigate issues of bodily control. Twain envisions the twins' body as belonging to both, “But not to both at the same time” (208). Instead, control operates on a strict schedule, wherein the brothers alternate total control over their body every week, so that “The week ends every Saturday at midnight to the minute, to the second, to the last shade of a fraction of a second, infallibly, unerringly, and in that instant the one brother’s power over the body vanishes and the other brother takes possession, asleep or awake” (209). This system, which seems to have biological or divine origins and so is out of the control of the brothers, gives the brothers an autonomy and a sense of separation that Elly and Iphy lack.

Iphy and Elly operate the most frequently as a pair that is dependent upon their interwoven bodies. One area in which this is most evident is in their combined sexual
life, something both fictional and non-fictional stories of conjoined twins often take great pains to deny or downplay, instead maintaining that independent sex lives are entirely possible. Even Alice Domurat Dreger, who campaigns quite strongly for the rights of conjoined twins in her book *One of Us*, especially for twins' right to live as best serves their unique bodies, has this to say about conjoined twins and sex:

So far as I can ascertain, [conjoined twins] do what most people do: seek out a lover, find a little privacy, and do the deed, understanding it to be a one-on-one affair. Of course, the other twin is right there, but people who are conjoined who have talked about their sex lives consistently report that during sexual intimacy their siblings remain quiet and mentally distant. (49)

Dreger does not, however, question whether this mental distance is really equivalent to actual privacy and intimacy for the couple involved, nor does she particularly explore the idea of conjoined twins working together with a single lover as anything except a stigmatizing fantasy of moralizers who condemned the sexually active Chang and Eng and shot down the Hilton sisters' attempts at marriage. Dreger also observes from her readings on conjoinment that “one gets the sense that many adults seem to fear a conjoined child will grow up to be loved sexually almost as much as they fear a conjoined child will *not* grow up to be loved sexually” (62). Curiously, Dreger refers to conjoined children as separate and singular rather than as a plural unit, yet again
demonstrating a certain unwillingness on the part of all those involved—observers and participants alike—to even entertain the idea of a plural love affair, in which conjoined twins might share one lover or even two.

Mark Twain's story demonstrates this particular blindness toward what is necessarily shared between conjoined twins; between Luigi and Angelo, only Angelo appears to have something of a sexual and romantic life. He is described as being an admirer of “female beauty” (Twain 205) and engages in a tentative courtship with Rowena, which ends due to his brother's alcohol consumption (251). Still, this is a romance that involves only Rowena and Angelo; Aunt Patsy believes that Rowena has a “leaning” toward Angelo. When Luigi berates Angelo's choices, “Rowena's soft heart was pierced by Luigi's unfeeling words” and she wishes she had “the dear privilege of protecting and defending [Angelo] with [her] weak voice” (242). The idea that Rowena would only be attracted to one twin rather than to both is taken for granted.

For Katherine Dunn's twins, Iphy and Elly, sex both unites them through their shared sexual body and cause a sharp divide between their individual desires. Elly and Iphy's first sexual encounter is fraught with conflict. Their younger sister, Olympia, narrates the story, relating her meeting with the man as he is leaving the twins' trailer. “That was strange,” he says. “I don't think I was right. I think I did something... wrong. One of them didn't want it. She cried and scratched at me. The other one... did” (203). Iphy, it turns out, is the twin who was less enthused, as she tells Olympia “[Elly] just sold our cherry!... And I was saving mine!” (203). Iphy simultaneously acknowledges that she shares her virginity with her sister, and also feels a sense of
individual propriety toward it. Iphy has, at first, the more sentimental attitude toward sex, and her sister sneers at her, “He wouldn't have hugged us anyway. They are never going to want to hug us or cuddle up afterward” (204). Elly, in contrast, conceives of their sexuality as an extension of the sideshow performance, and muses, “A virginity like ours could be worth a lot.... We can send out flyers. Put it up in lights, 'The Exquisite Convenience of Two Women with One Cunt!'” (205). In fact, for Elly, their sexuality is the truest, basest point of their sideshow act. She says:

> You know what all the norms really want to ask? … What they want to know, all of them, but never do unless they're drunk or simple, is How do we fuck? That and who, or maybe what. Most of the guys wonder what it would be like to fuck us. So, I figure, why not capitalize on that curiosity? They don't care that I play bass and Iphy plays treble, or whether we both like the same flavor of ice cream or any of the other stupid questions they ask. The thing that boggles them and keeps them staring all the way through a sonata in G is musing about our posture in bed. (207)

The twins' sideshow performance, in Elly's mind, acts as an excuse for the erotic gaze of their patrons, and so it is only natural to conceive of their sexual lives as an extension of their act, as a final reveal in which they perform the most intimate exploits together. In this way, Elly is the consummate performer, and Iphy quickly reconsiders the extension of their partnership. Within a single scene she shifts from crying over the loss of her
virginity to asking her sister, “we're never going to do it with anybody old or fat, are we?” (205). Notice that she uses the pronoun “we,” showing a disinclination for distancing herself from Elly's actions; indeed, she assumes her inclusion. Finally, when going over their new business model with their piano tutor, whom they enlist to help them procure sexual patrons, Iphy says of their potential customers: “They'll be people... who are truly interested in what we have to offer” (207). Again, the use of “we” is significant, and firmly cements their sexuality identity as one that is intrinsically doubled.

The assumption, too, is that their customers are interested in intercourse with the twins as a unit, and not with only one or the other. In the only description offered of the twins performance during the sexual act, they are shown as working together to please the man, with “Elly... sucking his cock while Iphy licked and kissed his ass” (240). It is a far cry from Dreger's portrait of conjoined twins, in which one removes herself mentally while the other is engaged with a lover. Still, romance or tenderness is associated with the singular, one-to-one sexual act, a mindset that Iphy tends toward initially before she is confronted with the news that their brother Arty has “norm girls” come to his trailer as well (205).

The relationship between Iphy and their brother Arty acts as the main agent of discord in the union between Iphy and Elly. Olympia initially describes the twins as being “self-sufficient. They needed only each other,” and yet Arty “had a way of splitting them” (51). The reason for this splitting, Olympia reasons, is that “Elly's harshness flared against anyone who might distract Iphy's attention from her.... Arty was dangerous. He flirted with Iphy. He toyed with her. Elly hated him. She acted, sometimes, as though
Arty could tear Iphy away from her” (52). The impression one gets is of Elly and Arty as rival lovers, struggling to possess Iphy. It is particularly noteworthy that Elly's physical attachment to Iphy does not assure her place as Iphy's companion. When Iphy declares that she is “going to marry Arty,” it prompts a physical fight between the two, as Elly reacts by punching Iphy in the mouth (139). An earlier fight occurs because “Iphy said [Arty's] name in her sleep” (112). A fight between conjoined twins invites the uncomfortable realization that the physical bond between the two becomes insurmountable and invites violence when disagreement occurs; a physical fight between conjoined twins is as disquieting to experience as a depiction of a singular individual fighting against their own will to the point of self-harm. The claustrophobia of the twins' conjoinment is especially evident when, in the aftermath of a fight, “They lay in bed with their faces turned away from each other all that day” (111), as if not seeing one another is comparable to not sharing a body between them. This non-acknowledgement and physical refusal of one another most closely resembles the state that Dreger describes conjoined twins as adopting when making love, but for Elly and Iphy it is a necessity when there has been a fallout between them. Yet singular love in all its forms does not split them; it is specifically Iphy's love for Arty. Iphy recounts a time when she saw a boy who was a geek in the carnival, noting that “[Elly] shut down when I talked to him. Whenever he came around, she'd cut her voltage way back and stay quiet. She wanted me to go ahead and love him” (280). Rather than the focus of mental distancing being on the sex act, it is emphasized as a part of the discourse of courtship. Iphy specifies that “He would come and find us and talk to me. Not to Elly, but to me” (281), and so it is in love
relationships, not sexual relationships, that the twins become separate people rather than an inseparable team. Yet, this doesn't please Iphy. She says, of the courtship, that “a terrible thing happened. He seemed to forget about her. He forgot she was a part of me. That was what we'd meant to happen. Elly was glad.... She wanted me to love somebody else than Arty” (281). Elly can deal with Iphy loving another person, so long as that person is not Arty, but for Iphy the normality of the boy makes it impossible. She says she realized that “if there's one thing a healthy, beautiful, utterly normal boy does not do, it's fall in love with half of a pair of Siamese twins.... if he comes to loving me it's because I've twisted him and changed him” (281). Iphy is unable to forget her conjoinment, and the ability to forget the conjoinment is presented by Dunn as a necessity for love, though not for sex. There is no hint that love might be possible in an arrangement involving more than two people. As in Twain's story, only one of the Binewski twins displays evidence of feelings of love: for Angelo and Luigi, only Angelo is shown to feel anything toward Rowena, while for Iphy and Elly, only Iphy is shown as being capable of performing romantically (as opposed to sexually). For both sets of twins, it is the less outspoken and and harsh twin—the more characteristically feminine—that is shown as attempting to love.

Elly and Iphy challenge ideas about the singular and plural body throughout the novel. Their mother instructs their sister Olympia, “We use the plural form... whenever we refer to Electra and Iphigenia. We do not say ‘Where is Elly and Iphy?’ We say ‘Where are Elly and Iphy?’” (51); she calls to them as the hyphenated “Elly-Iphy” (56); and she cuts the twins' birthday cake “into the shape of two hearts that interlocked” (129).
Olympia describes herself as “the third or fourth Binewski child, depending on whether you count heads or asses” (328), with Iphy and Elly being the ones to cause the uncertainty. Their plural nature is further complicated not only by a pregnancy, but also by the lobotomy of Elly that Arty orders; the subsequent unresponsiveness of Elly prompts the reporter Norval Sanderson to observe, after watching their younger brother Chick help the twins to walk, that “They strolled off, the three. Two? Or do we count the ballooning belly and call it four?” (274). Mark Twain's twins, Angelo and Luigi, are similarly puzzled over. When Rowena's mother refers to the twins in the singular, Rowena corrects her, asserting that “you ought to say they—it’s nearer right” (197).

When the twins are put on trial, the twin who committed the crime of assaulting Tom Driscoll cannot be positively identified because “his identity is so merged in his brother’s that we have not been able to tell which was him. We cannot convict both, for only one is guilty. We cannot acquit both, for only one is innocent” (228). Finally, at the end of Twain's story, the townspeople decide to hang Luigi for various offenses. When people protest that Angelo must not be hanged, as he is innocent, the response is: “Who said anything about hanging him? We are only going to hang the other one” (254). But, naturally, if one twin is hanged to death, the other must follow. Similarly, Iphy murders Elly, although Elly's death must necessarily be her own (318). Both Twain and Dunn explore their twins as individuals who do not act independently—not necessarily restricted by their conjoinment, but united in a manner that is inescapable even in death. Conjoined twins, especially those that share limbs, are necessarily both plural identities and singular bodies. Therefore, they make excellent characters, as is seen in Twain's
story, for satirizing legal, ethical, and belief systems that frown upon ambiguities. But, as seen in Dunn's novel, conjoined twins are also wonderful grist for the tragedies of love and desire that inevitably result from people who are born into a state of constant companionship. Yet, despite the wide difference between the tones of these works, certain themes and subjects are touched upon in both: the confusion of plural or singular pronouns, the perception of pain and sensation and control, the intake of food, love and sex, and death. All of these show that there is a heightened attention to the physicality of the conjoined body; a body which does not operate within the story in anything like the same way if it is not conjoined. Conjoined characters may be used to address issues outside of conjoinment, but fundamentally their purpose is always to question and explore the conjoined state of simultaneous individuality and physical union.
CHAPTER VI

HALF-AND-HALFS AS SYMBOLS OF QUEERNESS

Unlike conjoined twins, half-and-halves are not foregrounded in any sideshow fiction that I have been able to find. While more modern novels have focused upon characters that are intersexed—for instance, Jeffrey Eugenides’s *Middlesex*—they must be distinguished from stories that include the sideshow half-and-half and dwell upon the attendant idiosyncrasies thereof. Rather than delving particularly deeply into the thoughts or lives of sideshow half-and-halves, authors who choose to include half-and-half characters often use them in heavily symbolic ways as minor rather than major characters which are fraught with symbolism that relates intimately back to the struggles of the story's main characters. Robertson Davies' half-and-half character in *World of Wonders* acquires symbolic meaning by being related to the over-arching personal narrative of the main character; the two are juxtaposed as embodiments of both queerness and doubleness resulting from fission. For Davies, the connection between the half-and-half and his protagonist does not rely so greatly on a comparison of genders, or a sense of gender fragmentation. For Carson McCullers, on the other hand, the half-and-half is wholly reflective of the uncertain gender development of her young protagonist in *The Member of the Wedding*.

Davies takes great pains to describe the half-and-half as what it so often was: an act performed by someone who was not intersexed or hermaphroditic, but instead used costume and make-up and body manipulation in order to appear so. The magician
Magnus Eisengrim recounts the particulars of the sideshow that he became a part of in his youth, and of the half-and-half he says:

Andro the Hermaphrodite was all gaff. He was a man, of a kind, and besottedly in love with himself. The left side of his body was supposed to be the female half, and he spent a lot of time on it with depilatories and skin creams; when he attached a pretty good left breast to it, and combed out the long, curly hair he allowed to grow on one side of his head, he was an interesting sight. His right side he exercised strenuously, so that he had big leg and arm muscles which he touched up with some fancy shadowing. I never became used to finding him using the men's bucket.... He was a show-off; in show business you get used to vanity, but Andro was a very special case. (576)

What is odd about the portrayal of this particular half-and-half is, first, that Davies has given him the name “Andro,” a decidedly masculine name, and one that lacks the female counterpart that many half-and-halves adopt—in contrast, the minor half-and-half character in Carter's *Nights at the Circus* is called Albert/Albertina. Andro is not only the name that the half-and-half answers to backstage; Eisengrim recounts the talker's spiel as referring to “Andro, the Italian nobleman so evenly divided between the sexes that you may see him shave the whiskers offa the one side of his face, while the other displays the peachy smoothness of a lovely woman” (540). Even the pronouns used to advertise the
act are masculine. Again this is very much in contrast with Carter's half-and-half, as the
protagonist Fevvers uses “him/her” to refer to Albert/Albertina in her own recollections
of the sideshow brothel in which they were both employed (61). Obviously, the narrator's
perception of the half-and-half as truly hermaphroditic or not affects the way in which
they describe the individual's gender identity. It is especially interesting that both Andro
and Albert/Albertina are introduced, not firsthand, but rather in the recollections of a
main character. Yet Eisengrim's recollections and emotional impressions are particularly
suspect: first, because he traveled with the sideshow when he was young, from late
childhood throughout his adolescence, and he recalls the events at the age of sixty;
second, because throughout the novel Eisengrim's impressions are challenged by other
characters, and his recollections are declared “inevitably... coloured by later opinions”
(571); and finally, because there is an ambivalent hostility throughout the novel—indeed,
throughout the entire Deptford Trilogy, of which World of Wonders is the final book—
toward male homosexuality.

When homosexuality is mentioned within the novels, it often goes hand-in-hand
with boyhood, and the relationship between adult men and boys. In the first book, Fifth
Business, the tone is dismissive: upon the accusation that he is “queer,” Ramsay, a
teacher at a boys' boarding school, quips “The Sin of Sodom, you mean? If you knew
boys as I do, you would not suggest anything so grotesque. If Oscar Wilde had pleaded
insanity, he would have walked out of court a free man” (189). In the second book, The
Manticore, which principally concerns itself with the psychotherapy of the character
David Staunton, the protagonist recalls an argument about love and sex that took place
between his teenaged self and the homosexual priest named Knoppwood who had been one of his mentors. David says to the priest, “Everybody knows what you are. You're a fairy. You're a fairy who's afraid to do anything about it. So what makes you such an authority about real men and women, who have passions you can't begin to share or understand?” (428). The insult is meant to wound Knoppwood by placing him outside the bounds of true man- or womanhood, and therefore rendering him both impotent—as a homosexual who has taken a vow of chastity in order to avoid sexual contact—and as unimportant to those who are “real” and conventionally gendered in their desires. David Staunton shows throughout his therapy and recollections of his childhood that he has a special concern for traditional gender roles, particularly what it means to be a man, and his own failure to live up to expectations. Therefore it does not come as a surprise when David falls out with his homosexual confidant over the way in which David's father exercises his own masculinity—as a “swordsman,” which Knoppwood defines as “an expert in sticking something long and thin, or thick and curved, into other people; and always with intent to wound” (427-8). Therefore, David is profoundly influenced and haunted by the image of quintessential manhood as aggressor, as someone who inflicts wounds. Ultimately, his father's influence leaves David as impotent as Knoppwood, unable to form heterosexual relationships because he is unable to interact with women as his father did, and so failing to embody the masculinity to which he feels obligated.

But it is in World of Wonders that the physical relationship between a man and a boy becomes realized, and in the most painful way possible. Magnus Eisengrim reveals that he came to join the sideshow because he was raped and then kidnapped by the show's
magician, Willard. Eisengrim is fair, in his own way, and draws the line between the pleasurable and the painful by emphasizing that he “was no Greek lad, discovering the supposed pleasures of pederastic love in a society that knew it and condoned it. I was a boy not yet quite ten years old, who did not know what sex was in any form. I thought I was being killed, and in a shameful way” (545-6). Of the act of sodomy itself, Eisengrim says he thought of it as, “something filthy going it where I knew only that filthy things should come out.... what Willard did to me was, in a sense I could understand, a reversal of the order of nature” (547). Again, Eisengrim concedes with the phrase “in a sense I could understand” that such an act need not be intrinsically terrible, although in his experience it was. Still, because of Eisengrim’s strict Protestant upbringing and the turn-of-the-century setting, the rape becomes framed in the terms of religious moralism for Eisengrim, both in the understanding he had at the time—“I knew for a certainty that I had angered God” (557)—and in his analysis as an adult—“... at this first sexual approach I yielded. I cosied up to Willard.... I can only think it was the Devil prompting me” (553). Eisengrim also observes of the carnival workers that “their deepest morality was precisely that of the kind of people they amused... their travelling way of life... did not cut far into the rock of North American accepted custom and morality” (560), and that this morality precludes any discussion of the sexual relationship between Eisengrim and Willard among the carnival workers, aside from rumors that “Willard was something they called an arse-bandit” (575).

Interestingly, Eisengrim immediately follows the observation about rumors with an explanation of “gaff” or, as he defines it, “the element of deception in an exhibition”
(575), which had “a moral stigma attaching to it” (575). Eisengrim then juxtaposes the
gaffed Andro with the gaffed act in which he himself comes to participate in: Abdullah,
supposedly a card-playing automaton, is actually a puppet operated by the hidden
Eisengrim. It is Hannah, the fat lady, who “ma[kes gaffs] a moral issue and dr[aws] a
sharp line between gaffed Talent, like Abdullah, and honest talent, like Fat Ladies” (577).
Eisengrim, therefore, aligns himself within his own narrative with the stigmatized fakery
of Andro, the half-and-half, and thus young Eisengrim receives moral judgment not only
for the homosexual relationship that is pressed upon him but also for his status as a
sideshow fake. Hannah considers herself an expert on Biblical knowledge and wisdom,
and she rails against Andro for “offering yourself to stand bare-naked in front of artists,
some of 'em women, at fifty cents an hour.... it's the spirit of an unclean devil inside of
you, crying out with a large voice” (582). The assessment of Andro as possessed by a
devil recalls the adult Eisengrim's fear that he himself was prompted by the devil to
respond to Willard's first affectionate touches without understanding them. Later, the
characters who have been listening to Eisengrim's story speak about the nature of the
Devil among themselves, and one comes to the conclusion that “He is the only
explanation of the appalling ambiguities of life!” (598). Hermaphroditism, homosexuality,
and pederasty all may be termed “appalling ambiguities”: the hermaphrodite (even the
gaffed hermaphrodite) as an ambiguity of gender, homosexuality an ambiguity of sex and
love, and pederasty an ambiguity of sexual maturation and of cultural attitudes toward
acceptable sexual relationships.
Given the way in which Eisengrim strings together his own narrative with descriptions of Andro, it is reasonable to consider the two as parallel in the context of the sideshow. Both Andro and Eisengrim perform acts of queerness that are, at their essence, false. Andro is not a true hermaphrodite, but instead changed his body to portray a character that is both masculine and feminine in equal parts. Likewise, Eisengrim is not a “true” homosexual—he recalls taking a great interest in seeing the pretty, young wife of the knifethrower nude (584)—and instead performs homosexual acts for the benefit of Willard, who forces him to comply. Andro's state of incomplete fission is also a preemptive echo of the person that Eisengrim becomes after leaving the sideshow. During the carnival's off-season, certain acts were booked on the vaudeville circuit, leading to Willard and young Eisengrim traveling with Andro. Eisengrim's opinion of Andro appears to improve with Andro's act, and he says, “I was interested in Andro, and watched him rehearse.... [he] was the nearest thing to real Talent I had met with up to that time, and he fascinated me. He was a serious, unrelenting worker and perfectionist” (611). Thus, Andro begins to sound like a shade of the man who will later lift Eisengrim out of his life as a street conjurer: Sir John.

Eisengrim describes Sir John as “an egoist.... he was wholly devoted to an ideal of theatrical art that was contained—so far as he was concerned—within himself. I think he knew perfectly well what he did, and he thought it worth the doing. It served his art, and his art demanded a remorseless egoism” (683-4). Sir John's egoism serves abilities as a performer much in the same way that Andro's vanity and perfectionism serve his own performance. More intriguing, however, is the way in which Eisengrim becomes
associated with Sir John: he is hired to work as a stunt double for the man, to perform acrobatic tricks in a performance of *Scaramouche*. But Sir John is, at first, averse to Eisengrim's presence. Another member of the company explains why:

Put it like this: you're a famous actor... and for thirty years everybody's said how distinguished you are, and what a beautiful expressive face you have.... So: you want a Double. And when the Double comes—and such a Double that you can't deny him—he's a seedy little carnie, with the shifty eyes of a pickpocket... and every time you look at him you heave. He looks like everything inside yourself that you've choked off and shut out in order to be what you are now. (682)

Eisengrim begins his career as being, not a perfect physical double, but a mirror image of Sir John, one that is low and ill-bred where Sir John is high and successful. As it is explained to him, Eisengrim “looks like everything inside [Sir John] that [he's] choked off and shut out,” and so he appears as a dark shadow to Sir John's light, the Hyde to Sir John's Jekyll—an apt comparison, in fact, because Sir John wants to put on and star in a stage version of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (713), though the project never comes to fruition.

Eisengrim stays with Sir John, becoming not just a stage double, but a kind of literal doppelganger as well. When the time comes for him to have a stage name, the stage manager reasons, “He's a double.... in Scotland... we had a name for such things. If
a man met a creature like himself... it was a sure sign of ill luck or even death.... Now:
such an uncanny creature was called a fetch. And this lad's a fetch, and we can do no
better than to name him Fetch” (698). Ingestree, who is listening to Eisengrim's
recollections, reveals that he acted and traveled with the same company in which
Eisengrim spent time as Sir John's double, and describes Eisengrim as:

trying to be Sir John off the stage as well as on.... you ate poor old Sir
John. You ate him down to the core.... Your emulation, as you call it,
sucked the pith out of that poor old ham, and gobbled it up and made it
part of yourself.... to be idolized by you... was a terrible, vampire-like
feeding on his personality and his spirit—because his personality as an
actor was all there was of his spirit. (721-2)

In Ingestree's eyes, Eisengrim became not just a double, but a monstrous doppelganger.
Eisengrim, by being the fetch of Sir John and immersing himself fully in his task “to get
inside Sir John” (683) and so imitate him exactly, becomes the product of complete
fission—the physically separate doppelganger or double. Yet there remains a touch of
incomplete fission about their relationship as well, with the figurative references to
consumption via eating, or feeding as a vampire does, suggesting physical dependency.
Thus, Eisengrim fulfills the role of the fetch as a harbinger of death, and in fact even
remains in the employ of Sir John and his wife until the couple's deaths.
Eisengrim's uncanny doubling of Sir John relies upon costume and performance, onstage and off, just as Andro's act relies upon intricacies of hair, make-up, and clothing. Of Andro's vaudeville act, Eisengrim says:

He played in the dark, except for a single spotlight, and he waltzed with himself.... on his female side he wore a red evening gown, cut very low in the back... on his masculine side he wore only half a pair of black satin knee-breeches.... When he wrapped himself in his own arms, we saw a beautiful woman in the arms of a half-naked muscular man.... He worked up all sorts of illusions, kissing his own hand, pressing closer what looked like two bodies... (611)

It is significant that Andro uses his single body to create the illusion that there are two bodies present, while Eisengrim-as-Fetch uses his body to create the illusion that there is only one body, one Sir John, rather than two. Ingestree remarks that Eisengrim styled his hair the way that Sir John did and chose his clothes to imitate Sir John's style of dress (721). Eisengrim himself says of his physical likeness to Sir John that “[he] never thought the resemblance went beyond a reasonable facsimile,” and it was only when they “were on equal terms—dressed and wigged alike... [that Sir John's] friends had been deceived by the likeness” (704). Both Andro and Eisengrim, therefore, both altered aspects of their hair and costume in order to consciously appear as doubles.
In effect, the queerness and the doubling effected by both Andro and Eisengrim are mirror images of one another. Andro's queerness, manifested in his simultaneous embodiment of both genders, operates on a surface level as something that is performed and displayed; Eisengrim's queerness, in contrast, is thrust upon him by Willard and performed in secret. Andro's doubling takes the form of two genders in one body, while Eisengrim acts as a double for Sir John—and, in effect, another part of Sir John which seems to consume the elder man's selfhood. Andro enacts the ambiguity of gender by embodying both; Eisengrim embodies the ambiguous state of youth. The ambiguity of youth and of aging convey themselves via the transitional changes that take place: Eisengrim takes his audience through his relationship with Willard, in which he goes from being sexual supplicant to the caregiver for a drug addict, and then through yet another relationship with an older man (this one non-sexual) as he transforms himself into Sir John and then overtakes the master. Andro performs the duality of gender, while Eisengrim, for much of his life story, plays the part of the youth in dualistic young/old, master/apprentice relationships.

Unlike the oblique relationship Davies establishes between his main character and the sideshow half-and-half, Carson McCullers uses the half-and-half as a more explicit symbol of the ambiguities of gender experienced by the main character in _The Member of the Wedding_. Twelve year old Frankie Addams fears that her adolescent body will develop into something freakish; she calculates that, at her current rate of growth, by the age of eighteen “according to mathematics and unless she could somehow stop herself, she would grow to be over nine feet tall. And what would be a lady who is over nine feet
high? She would be a Freak” (16-17). Here, it is bodily growth and change that creates a sense of isolation which makes Frankie fear that she will grow beyond proportion and become freakish. As Leslie Fiedler notes, the fear is not an especially abnormal one, as children find the issue of scale ever-present, and any child might “come to feel that compared to an adult, he is himself a Midget, while compared to a baby or his last year's self, he is a Giant. In his deep consciousness, he is forever growing bigger and smaller, depending on the context and the eye in which he sees himself reflected” (28). Growing too large is especially a concern for young women, given the culturally gendered expectation that women will be smaller and more delicate than men. In fact, Fiedler sums up Lewis Carroll's classic Alice in Wonderland by concluding that “the process of female maturation implies learning to make oneself... the arbiter of scale: learning to be just the right size for every occasion” (31). As Rachel Adams points out, in The Member of the Wedding, “Frankie awkwardly attempts to conceal her body beneath the childish androgyny of boys' clothing” (96): “a pair of blue black shorts, a B.V.D. undervest... [And h]er hair had been cut like a boy's” (McCullers 2). This resonates with Fiedler's assessment of yet another children's book: L. Frank Baum's The Land of Oz, in which “the protagonist enters the scene as a boy but exits as a girl: a princess, in fact, restored to her throne once her true sex has been released from a witch's spell, i.e., once she has passed over the threshold of puberty” (30). At the beginning of the novel, Frankie remains in a boyish state of pubescence; as the novel progresses, she experiments with the trappings of adult femininity.
At age eleven, Frankie goes to the Chattahoochee Exposition and experiences the House of Freaks. There she sees (among other acts) the “Half-Man Half-Woman, a morphidite and a miracle of science. This Freak was divided completely in half—the left side was a man and the right side a woman. The costume on the left was a leopard skin and on the right side a brassiere and a spangled skirt. Half the face was bearded and the other half bright glazed with paint. Both eyes were strange” (18). Frankie feels an unsettling connection, and not only with the half-and-half; “She was afraid of all the Freaks, for it seemed to her that they had looked at her in a secret way and tried to connect their eyes with hers, as though to say: we know you. She was afraid of their long Freak eyes” (18). It is quite telling that Frankie pays special attention to the strangeness of the eyes of the half-and-half, but fears the connection that comes from the object of spectacle looking back. Rachel Adams writes that “sideshows are hardly spaces of restraint or decorum, and things seldom go as planned: freaks talk back.... Spectacle relies on a degree of submission that has little consonance with the rowdy, undisciplined clientele... or the behavior of performers.... the form of the freak show itself was far more interactive than critics have acknowledged” (13). The freaks' looking back is the first step of this interactive dialogue between performer and spectator; given Frankie's reaction to the stares of the freaks, it is also the most poignant step, and certainly the most terrifying for spectators who see themselves in the bodies of the freaks. This mutual exchange of gazes, and the recognition that accompanies them, prompts the freak's designation as “double” (Adams 8)—or “secret self” as Leslie Fiedler terms it—of the outwardly normative but inwardly freakish spectator. So it is for Frankie, who is so stirred by the
sight of the Half-Man Half-Woman; the freaks, especially the half-and-half, act as representations of her feared inner self. Unlike Magnus Eisengrim's Andro, Frankie's Half-Man Half-Woman does not appear to her as a benign parallel but as an unsettlingly direct double. Because of this, Frankie not only reacts badly to seeing the half-and-half at the sideshow, she also “threaten[s] to take [John Henry] to the Fair and sell him to the Freak Pavilion” when he opines “that people ought to be half boy and half girl” rather than, as Frankie suggests, able to switch back and forth between the two at will (92). For Frankie, two genders in one body is only acceptable in the context of the freak show; to be both at once would leave a person with only the possibility of an existence within the sideshow. Still, Frankie can accept a certain amount of queerness in the form of switching back and forth between being a man or a woman. She retains a certain gender essentialist attitude, then, in which being able to be both is all right, so long as one cannot be both at the same time. Given that she begins the novel exhibiting a great deal of personal androgyny in her tastes and appearance, her aversion to the mixing of genders does seem to be predicated on a fear of her inner self.

Despite her unease with the Half-Man Half-Woman of the sideshow, Frankie nevertheless experiences deep feelings of love and connection with the unit of her brother, Jarvis, and his fiancée Janice, symbolized by the upcoming event of their wedding. Berenice says she has “never before... heard of anybody falling in love with a wedding” (77). By falling in love with the wedding, Frankie falls in love with the hermaphroditic double unit of Jarvis-Janice that the wedding creates. When Berenice accuses Frankie of being jealous because of the wedding, Frankie asserts that she cannot
be jealous because she says: “I couldn't be jealous of one of them without being jealous of them both. I sociate the two of them together” (15), showing that she thinks of them as an inseparable pair, a singular entity in two bodies. It is into this union that she inserts herself, realizing that “[t]hey are the we of me” (39). Both Jarvis and Janice have names beginning with the letters J and A and the pairing of their names creates a hyphenation that evokes the dual male and female names adopted by sideshow half-and-halves; significantly, Janice and Jarvis are named, but the Half-Man Half-Woman that Frankie sees is not. To insinuate herself into the union of Jarvis-Janice, Frankie decides to rename herself “F. Jasmine” (15). The union of Janis and Jarvis is respectable, desirable, and sanctioned by the community, as the wedding itself proves. But the Half-Man Half-Woman is an outsider, curiously objectified by the sideshow, already united with him/herself by virtue of being both in one. But, although Frankie seeks a place within the unity of the heterosexual married couple, she also feels great hostility toward heterosexual union via sex itself. She “committed a queer sin” with a boy named Barney MacKean, and this sin “made a shriveling sickness in her stomach, and she dreaded the eyes of everyone” (23). Again, eyes have a particular significance for Frankie following this encounter, creating a parallel between the unease Frankie feels when viewing the sideshow and the unease she feels engaging in sexual activity. For Frankie the bodily union of male and female, whether achieved via sex or via physical manipulation of the individual body, represents that which is freakish and unnatural. Frankie also seems to see marriage as separate from the sexual act, as she rages against the girls in the neighborhood who “were talking nasty lies about married people” (11)—presumably the
lies in question revolved around sexual acts. Frankie manages to compartmentalize to the extent that she can feel very positive about marriage in general, while simultaneously denying the sexual, bodily union that presumably follows. There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn from Frankie's aversion to sex and attraction to marriage: Frankie may not have matured enough to begin to truly comprehend the sexual aspect of relationships as pleasurable; she may be experiencing anxiety about or animosity toward the gender role she is expected to perform and embody as she grows up, to the extent that she prefers the androgynous but understands androgyny as a freakish trait; or she may be attracted to her brother's bride and only able to understand the attraction by channeling it through the union of the two. The half-and-half that Frankie encounters represents that which is freakish and unnatural about the combining of genders, and serves to offset the alternative configuration of marriage—in which there are two distinct bodies and two distinct genders—and make it seem all the more appealing and normative. The alternative to marriage is freakishness, which is even bolstered by Berenice's assertion that marriage will halt growth (25). This suggestion, when put to Frankie while she is worrying about growing so tall that she will be a freak, makes the message all too clear: marriage will end your freakishness, but without being married you are at risk of growing into a freakish giant, or perhaps even a Half-Man Half-Woman.

McCullers and Davies both use half-and-halvs in their novels in very limited capacities, so that the half-and-half does not operate as a character in their own right, but rather acts symbolically on the behalf of the main character. This sharply contrasts with the treatment of conjoined twins in literature: conjoined twins are given far more
character development, as they are placed in main and major roles within the stories. Half-and-half characters may be significant carriers of symbolism, but they are not major characters, and they get little to no chance to develop. They exist solely for the benefit of the development of the main character. Symbolic half-and-half characters, and indeed all freak characters that are used as background symbols to describe the inner lives of non-freak characters, represent a problem that is particularly endemic in modern literature that includes sideshow performers: sideshow freaks are frequently denied the right to their own stories. Novels and short stories about conjoined twins tend to be the exception. But even then, as Rachel Adams understands, “psychoanalytic account[s] of freaks... threate[n] to universalize phenomena that are historically and culturally variable, and to appropriate the details of individual lives as effects of authorial subjectivity” (8). To be utilized and read as only a carrier of metaphor is, therefore, to rob the sideshow performer of their currency as the subject of literature—a subject that stands alone rather than doubling or reflecting a more prominent character. In this way, Davies, McCullers, and all other authors that employ half-and-halves as minor characters are guilty of using the idea of this particular sideshow act as a stand-in rather than as a character with agency. Universalizing freakishness ultimately saps its power, and the repeated use of the half-and-half as background symbol ensures that the half-and-half will rarely be treated in fiction as a legitimate character, as well-developed and complex as Magnus Eisengrim or Frankie Addams.
CHAPTER VII

DOUBLE SELVES IN THE PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS OF THE SIDESHOW

Both conjoined twins and half-and-halves occupy a space of being both single and plural in their aspects. Nowhere is this capitalized upon more than in the advertisements and promotional media produced for sideshows. What is curious, however, is how the state of doubleness is not necessarily static; it may change, leaning more toward separation or union, depending upon the act in question, who views them, which parts of the body are given attention, and how advertising portrays them. This is especially true for conjoined twins, and I will be examining the narratives of two sets of conjoined twins—Violet and Daisy Hilton and Millie-Christine McKoy—in order to highlight some of the differences and similarities of their presentation. The Hiltons and the McCoys are excellent subjects for comparison, because both are joined at the hip and lower back, though Millie-Christine shared more than the Hiltons did. Unfortunately, while a great amount of rich material is available concerning conjoined twins in the sideshow, and the Hiltons and McCoys in particular, the same cannot be said for half-and-half acts. The half-and-half remains somewhat more formulaic and static than the conjoined twin act, and far less infused with the individual personalities of the performers. Moreover, far less written material exists concerning the half-and-half, and nothing comparable to the Hiltons' and the McCoys' biographical booklets exists. Still, a brief survey of a variety of advertising material and promotional pamphlets does drive home the ways in which the
half-and-half was consistently billed as being two selves in a single body. This supposed physical difference was most often blatantly eroticized in ways that conjoined twins generally were not—though this is not to say that conjoined twins were not eroticized by the advertising and written material put out as a part of their public exhibitions, only that the effect was generally more subtle.

Millie-Christine McKoy were born into slavery in 1851 and exhibited early in life. As young children, they were kidnapped and taken overseas to be shown to English audiences. They were soon recovered by their mother and “owner,” and returned to a life of show business in the United States (Frost 8-9). Millie-Christine spent a large portion of their lives as touring performers, and were often billed as the “Two-Headed Nightingale” in reference to their singing. The McKoy's act was enormously successful, and they were able as adults to travel back to England—even meeting the queen—as well as traveling to France (10-11).

Like many other freak acts, Millie-Christine sold photos and autobiographical pamphlets to supplement their income. Whether these pamphlets were actually written by the twins is unknown, but they still serve as excellent sources for examining the instability of the double self in the singular body. The earlier, shorter pamphlet, which was first published circa 1869 (Frost 40), is titled The History of the Carolina Twins: Told in “Their Own Peculiar Way” by “One of Them,” and so it establishes Millie-Christine as plural from the very beginning. Yet the pamphlet also boasts that it was

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1 The problem of plurality is evident from the beginning. I have elected to use plural pronouns and verbs along with the hyphenated name, except when discussing textual evidence that refers to Millie-Christine in the singular.
written by “one of them,” though it does not clarify which twin supposedly wrote it. The pamphlet is written in the first-person plural, using the pronouns “we” and “our;” this contrasts with the booklet supposedly written by the Hilton sisters, which switches between using “we” and using two separate first-person singular voices, one for Daisy and one for Violet (Intimate Loves and Lives). Despite the use of plural pronouns, Millie-Christine's History recounts that “our mother and the rest of the family came to the conclusion that ‘a child was born’” and notes that they were described in the press as both the “South Carolina Twins” and the “double headed girl” (41). Both the singular and the plural appear to be taken as correct. The History of the Carolina Twins cites two separate reviews of their act, both of which refer to them in the plural (46-47). A short medical testimonial follows these reviews; signed by fully five different physicians, it avows the veracity of Millie-Christine, but its wording is somewhat less clear than that of the newspaper reviews. The testimony begins by referring to them as “the North Carolina Twins,” but goes on to describe the twins' upper bodies and heads as being “perfectly separate, as though belonging to a distinct individuality, forming the most interesting monstrosity” (47). This should, perhaps, read “as though belonging to distinct individuals,” but even if it did, the phrase “as though” does not affirm that they are individuals, but that they are like individuals. The use of the word “monstrosity” is also singular. Overall, the doctors' testimony displays a confusion that is not seen in the reviews of their act. This may be attributed to the differing focuses taken by the reviewers and the physicians: the reviewers concentrate heavily on the twins' performance and personalities, while the physicians focus entirely on their physical structure. Ultimately,
the booklet ends with Millie-Christine's own assessment of their nature. They write:

“Although we speak of ourselves in the plural we feel as but one person.... We have but one heart, one feeling in common, one desire, one purpose” (48). The use of plural pronouns combines with their assertion that they “feel as but one person,” and so Millie-Christine declare themselves simultaneously singular and plural. This conclusion is bolstered by the lyrics to one of their popular songs, which they reprint at the end of the booklet. The speaker of the song uses the first-person singular, and asserts that “Some persons say I must be two, / The doctors say this is not true.... I am most wonderfully made, / All scientific men have said.... I love all things that God has done, / Whether I'm created two or one” (48-49). The emphasis on the conclusions of medical science in the formation of singular or plural identity comes through quite strongly, and yet the last line introduces not only doubt of the singular but a doubt that the use of either the singular or plural is correct. At the end of the song, the love of God takes precedence, and ultimately renders a firm categorization meaningless. Therefore, we see throughout The History of the Carolina Twins a tendency toward ambiguity where Millie-Christine as a plural figure is presented as strongly as Millie-Christine as a single entity.

The slightly later booklet, which first appeared in 1871 (Frost 50), is titled Biographical Sketch of Millie Christine, the Carolina Twin, Surnamed The Two-Headed Nightingale, and the Eighth Wonder of the World. Unlike the previous booklet, the title establishes the singular nature of Millie-Christine several times over. The booklet declares in its opening paragraph that “only one living creature is like Millie Christine, and her name is Christine Millie” (60). The playful wording of this claim implies that
there is a difference or a separation between the two, represented by the change in the order of the names. This implication is short-lived, as on the following page the two names are referred to if they were equivalent (61). This pamphlet emphasizes and maintains the twins as a single being throughout. This takes on a rather confusing cast, and in an overall description of the twins the booklet proclaims that “Millie Christine, physically, has but one existence; mentally, she has two, perfectly developed” (70). Such a description foregrounds the oneness of the twins, and makes the more freakish aspect to be her double-intellect, rather than making the conjoined body the freakish aspect of an otherwise normal set of twins. The description goes on to say that:

The two sets of brains always agree in forming the same conclusions; equally amiable, and equally agreeable in character, they never form different ideas on the same subjects, and the thoughts of each are characterized by that independence which is usually exhibited by natives of America. The tastes and habits of the two are alike.... The two minds can converse each through its own lips. The being is never at a loss for society or for company, for each has, attached to itself, another existence. (70)

When referring to the entire body of Millie-Christine, the booklet calls her “she.” However, when wishing to refer to only one head or to one consciousness, the author resorts to using “it:” “its own lips” refers back to one of the “two minds,” while “attached
to itself” refers back to “each.” There is some acknowledgment of a double presence, both physically and mentally, but the booklet devalues that doubleness by recognizing personhood only when the elements that make up Millie-Christine are taken as a whole. A single head is relegated to non-personhood by being called an “it,” as are either Millie or Christine when one is referenced and the other is not. This description emphasizes similarity and harmony above all else, though it creates a rather amusing contradiction when the author chooses to follow “they never form different ideas on the same subjects” with a nod to Millie-Christine's thoughts being “characterized by that independence which is usually exhibited by natives of America.” Clearly, it is the unit of Millie-Christine (or Christine-Millie) that shows independence, but not either twin individually.

The *Biographical Sketch* booklet reprints and quotes a great deal more material than *The History* does, including eight pages worth of reprinted requests to railway companies, most of which say “It is customary for Millie Christine, the dual woman, to require but one ticket” (52). One of the letters asserts that the single ticket is standard “notwithstanding the fact that she has two heads” (54). The *Biographical Sketch* also includes a much longer assessment by physicians than *The History*; this report of the “special clinic” describes Millie-Christine as “a well-educated, intelligent, quick witted girl” (72). In its physical assessment of the two, the report goes on to state that “[t]he double headed [girl] possessed separate intellectual faculties as entirely distinct as was the brain power of two different individuals, while their faces indicate, to a remarkable degree, intelligence of a high order and amiability” (72). Note that, immediately after identifying their minds as distinct, the report uses the pronoun “their.” But this
concession to doubling does not sustain itself through the remainder of the report, which by the final paragraph is back to describing “the agility of the girl” (73)—meaning Millie-Christine as a singular unit, and not one or the other. Finally, all of the six reviews that are reprinted use singular pronouns to describe Millie-Christine (74-79). This contrasts sharply with the two reviews reprinted in *The History*, both of which use plural pronouns. Interestingly, the final excerpt in the booklet—that of a third-party account of a lecture on the twins—uses the plural pronoun “they” throughout (80-81). The author also names the twins as “Misses Christine Millie and Millie Christine” (81), thereby creating a link back to the first paragraph of the booklet, in which it was implied that reversing the order of the twins' names was an indication of a different self. To acknowledge both twins as “Christine Millie” and “Millie Christine” implies that the two are, indeed, separate individuals, but that each still needs to have her sister's name appended to her own in order to achieve personal completeness and intelligibility.

Clearly, the *Biographical Sketch* pushes the image of Millie-Christine as a singular entity far more than *The History*. While some ambiguity of singular and plural exists in the *Biographical Sketch*, it is not nearly so present as in *The History*. The overall image of the singular is especially strong in the narration of the *Biographical Sketch*, which in turn sets the tone of the booklet overall. The quoted material in the *Biographical Sketch* was also doubtlessly chosen to reflect a more singular sense of identity. That the *Biographical Sketch* was published several years later than *The History* suggests an interesting explanation for this discrepancy: it is not unreasonable to conjecture that the McKoys and their managers found that the image of a single girl with two heads sold
better than twins joined at the hip. Many early print advertisements for Millie-Christine describe the twins as “united twins,” as Barnum's 1854 poster does (see fig. 7). Posters from London bill the twins as “United African Twins” (see fig. 8), while American advertisements are more likely to attach a reference to the Carolinas (see fig. 9). Advertisements from later in the twins' lives refer to Millie-Christine in the singular, as “The Two-headed Nightingale” or simply “The Two-headed Lady” (see fig. 10). The promotional booklets sold in conjunction with Millie-Christine's act also appear to have undergone a considerable rebranding; the cover of The History of the Carolina Twins (see fig. 11) emphasizes the twins plurality, as expected, while a cover for the History and Medical Description of the Two-headed Girl (see fig. 12)—possibly containing similar or identical text to The History of the Carolina Twins—not only emphasizes a singular identity, but removes limbs in order to do so. Millie-Christine are depicted as having four legs and two heads, but only two arms and a single conjoined torso. The illustration makes them appear more conjoined than they actually were, and so makes the moniker of “Two-headed Girl” even more appropriate. Overall, the evolution of the language in their advertisements and promotional materials shows that Millie-Christine's performing image changed through the course of their career, from the plural to the singular. Their actual self-identity cannot be known for certain, although if The History—where they reportedly write “Although we speak of ourselves in the plural we feel as but one person” (48)—is accepted as truly autobiographical, then their sense of self may be judged as falling between the poles of one and two.
Violet and Daisy Hilton were born in 1908 in Brighton, England. Their mother was twenty-one and unwed, and so Violet and Daisy were adopted by the midwife Mary Hilton (Frost 11-12). The twins' career in show business began early, just as Millie-Christine's did. Mary Hilton's daughter, Edith, married a man named Myer Myers, and the two continued to manage the twins after Mary Hilton died. But the Hilton-family's style of management was unethical and controlling; they restricted the twins' social lives and cut them off entirely from the money their shows were earning. The twins sued for and were granted freedom from Edith and Myer Myers in 1931 at the age of twenty-three (12-13). The twins' performing career was filled with far more ups and downs than that of Millie-Christine—especially downs. Part of the reason behind the twins’ lack of success later in their lives can certainly be attributed to the public's waning interest in freak displays, which began in the first half of the twentieth century and trended steadily downward. But the control that was exerted over them during their childhoods left the Hilton sisters unable to manage money and desperate to find love and affection. As Linda Frost notes in her introduction to *Conjoined Twins in Black and White: The Lives of Millie-Christine McKoy and Daisy and Violet Hilton*, “[w]hile affairs of the heart never seem of any centrality in the story of the McKoys, it is in fact—as the title of their memoir shows—the defining framework for the Hiltons' life stories” (14). Love is absolutely a large part of the narrative in *Intimate Loves and Lives of the Hilton Sisters, World Famous Siamese Twins*: a dual autobiography as told to Ethelda Bedford, a staff writer for *American Weekly*, where it was originally published in six parts (Frost 129). Not only do the twins dream about and seek love from a number of different men, they
also find that it causes a number of problems thanks to their conjoinment; difficulty in obtaining a marriage license puts a hold on one relationship (155), while many other potentials fizzled because “our suitors were embarrassed by the inevitable presence of a third person” (154). Of Daisy and Violet's sexual and romantic life, Allison Pingtree writes that the twins “were both permanently single because they were permanently doubled. They were already each other's 'other half”’ (177). Daisy herself says, when confronted with the prospect of marrying but only seeing her husband six months a year, to allow Violet to have six months to do what she wished: “I know now that I would not like a separation from the man I married. And I would never want to be separated from my twin. I couldn't bear to be separated from either of you” (153). Yet none of Daisy's or Violet's relationships last a particularly long time, while they remain joined to one another throughout their lives.

Materials focusing on Violet and Daisy Hilton show none of the confusion of the singular and the plural that Millie-Christine's booklets and advertisements do. Violet and Daisy are largely labeled as “Siamese Twins” in their promotional materials; though Millie-Christine are often compared to the original “Siamese” twins, Chang and Eng (The History 47; Biographical Sketch 79), they themselves are never called “Siamese” twins. Instead of shifting between the singular and plural, the narratives about Violet and Daisy waver between depicting the twins as opposites and showing them as two-halves of a harmonious relationship. In Intimate Loves and Lives of the Hilton Sisters, the twins state that they “are as different in our reactions as day and night. I, Violet, often weep over something which makes my sister chuckle.... we share our lives, just as amiably as we
shared our childhood toys, without quarreling” (131). Daisy describes herself as “impulsive and talkative and quick-motioned,” while Violet says, “I am not a talker and I seldom do anything on impulse” (133). But despite what the twins report as both large and small oppositions in their personalities, the twins stress that they were given “inner harmony to compensate for our being forced to live constantly as an entity” (132). Harmony was also stressed in Millie-Christine's *Biographical Sketch*, but Millie-Christine were shown to achieve it by virtue of their similarities (70), while the Hiltons achieve it in spite of their many differences. But the Hiltons' opposing characters have more in common with the fictional twins discussed in chapter four. Their personalities are depicted as forming a dual whole, reminiscent of yin and yang; they complement one another in order to distinguish themselves as distinct individuals that are, at the same time, halves of a single, well-rounded whole.

To represent the other bodies fashioned around the portrayal of polar opposites, I have found only two short promotional texts depicting half-and-half acts that would have likely been sold to patrons as souvenirs. One features “George-Ette: The Sensation of Two Continents” (see fig. 13) and the other “Rose Robert: Nature's Phenomena” (see fig 14). Both pamphlets purport to be written by the acts themselves. George-Ette begins by identifying hermaphroditism in Christian, Egyptian, and Greek mythology, as well as mentioning the Classical writers Ovid and Virgil as sources for portrayals of hermaphrodite. In contrast, Rose Robert's pamphlet begins with a pseudo-scientific explanation of the origins of life, then explains that “Hermaphrodite Characteristics are common in plant and animal.” When the discussion turns to human beings, Rose Robert
mentions the Classical Greeks and Chinese mythology as sources for stories about hermaphrodites, and also makes the puzzling claim that “it has been stated that primitive man was a man woman.” These pamphlets spend a great deal of time and energy to validate their claims by appealing to history and science to give context to their own claims of peculiarly divided hermaphrodism. George-Ette follows the allusions to mythology with several accounts of others who have “believed him or herself to be [a] man or woman until middle life when [t]he opposite sex asserted itself.” These accounts have been chosen to act as parallels for George-Ette's own life; George-Ette describes him/herself in childhood as “a 'Tom Boy,' but there was nothing unusual otherwise noticed about me until I was nearly twelve years old when it was noticed that my body was developing into the figure of a female on the left side only.” When George-Ette finally saw a doctor, he/she was told that he/she “presented the most perfect appearances of the two sexes in the one body that [the doctor] had ever seen.” Appeals to history and especially to the opinions of medical doctors are also commonplace in Millie-Christine's texts; the Biographical Sketch goes into some detail about conjoined twins similar to Millie-Christine who were born in Hungary in 1701 (60-61), while both The History (47) and the Biographical Sketch (72-73) include testimonies from doctors. To describe her/himself, Rose Robert says somewhat confusingly that “[t]he male portion of my body, my double voice, and the beard, are all birthmarks, and I do not possess hermaphrodite characteristics” and yet avows at the end of the sheet that “it is a known fact that I have been proclaimed nature's nearest complete union of male and female in the one body, because I am the mother of a boy.” Rose Robert's account is especially
interesting because it disavows all connection to genital hermaphrodisism, and seems to attribute her/his status as a half-and-half to secondary sex characteristics alone, the variability of which can be quite wide among each of the sexes. Rose Robert's pamphlet notes this, saying that “The most feminine of women have a growth of colorless hair corresponding to the male beard, and in some cases very pronounced. Women with a more or less definite masculine cast of figure, manner or voice are commonplace, as is the opposite phenomenon.” Rose Robert seems to be attributing their “union of male and female in the one body” not to genital hermaphrodisism or even to a decisive split between the two halves of her/his body—despite the conventional half-and-half costume she/he wears in the central picture (see fig. 14)—but rather to a fortuitous distribution of secondary sex characteristics. Judging from the picture on the lefthand side, Rose Roberts is also capable of styling her/his self as fully male, given that the photo is not in profile but instead shows the full face in the persona of a man. Rose Robert's pamphlet, therefore, presents a far more queered portrait of the half-and-half than the act is generally credited with. The half-and-half act tends to promote gender essentialism, splitting the body into definitively male and female sides and failing to acknowledge a blended or “third” gender that would upset the gender binary. But Rose Robert insists that she/he is not a hermaphrodite, and seems to move between fully-styled male and female selves, as well as donning the usual costume of the half-and-half. George-Ette also admits that he/she “usually dress[es] as a woman on the street as I can better disguise myself in that way, although I prefer male attire.” That George-Ette must disguise him/herself “on the street” does serve as a reminder that the half-and-half persona is only
acceptable within the bounds of the sideshow. Judith Butler observes that “Discrete
genders are part of what ‘humanizes’ individuals” (139), and so for George-Ette to be
read as “human” outside of the sideshow, he/she must “disguise” him/herself by choosing
to exhibit only one gender presentation. Butler’s concept of culturally “intelligible”
gender identities, and the rejection of those that are unintelligible (17) owes as much to
the doubling of identities as to the combination of male and female in one: just as cultural
norms allow little blending of the characteristics of opposing genders, so too does culture
reject the idea that there may comfortably be more than one self within a single body.
Doubling is integral to understanding the half-and-half. Western culture’s conception of a
discrete gender as an attribute of the individual relegates any understanding of a body
such as the half-and-half’s to the outsider space of the sideshow performance.

Allusions to doubling abound throughout half-and-half advertisements. The
performer Josephine-Joseph was billed as “Sister and Brother in One Body” (Stencell
176) and the caption of a newspaper photo (see fig. 15) describes her/his “feminine side”
as being “typical of woman, with all the soft curves and tender skin, [while] the
masculine side is as fully developed as any man’s, with ridges of muscle extending from
the forearm to the shoulder blades. In the face, also, one side is extremely male, while the
other is that of a pretty girl.” This description sets up each side of Josephine-Joseph as
representing the bodily traits of the quintessentially masculine and feminine. Josephine-
Joseph is also billed as “Double Bodied” (Nickell 197), and George-Ette is labeled “The
Double Bodied Venus” (see fig. 13). Francies Benton’s advertisement proclaims “male
and female in one. One body—two people” (Reis 110). A painted banner advertisement
announces “Roberta-Ray: Two Bodies and One Head” (see fig. 16). Obviously, being billed as a double person in a singular body was an effective marketing strategy for half-and-halfs, just as being billed as a single person with two heads was evidently lucrative for Millie-Christine. Half-and-halfs show a degree of blatant eroticism in many of their advertisements. While Millie-Christine were subjected to multiple genital exams by different doctors (Frost 22), and both sets of twins endured questions and speculations about their love lives and prospects for marriage, the eroticism of the conjoined twins was kept coded in the language of heteronormativity: dating, marriage, and the possibility of children. The half-and-half, instead, embodies the eroticism of heterosexual union in one body. A pitch card for a half-and-half act (see fig. 17) depicts a typical pose designed to show the attributes of both sexes to full advantage: the male arm is raised and bent, to highlight the definition in the bicep; the female leg is canted to give a softer line to the female hip and thigh; a gauzy garment is draped suggestively over the female breast and over the genitals, but is flimsy enough to show the peak of the nipple and the possibility of unknown genitalia between the thighs. The banner advertisement for Roberta-Ray is similarly eroticized, with the middle figure’s chest fully exposed and the female profile on the right also baring her breast. George-Ette affects a similar pose on the cover of his/her pamphlet, while also proclaiming him/herself to be “The Double Bodied Venus” in an obvious reference to beauty open to sexual fulfillment—he/she does not, after all, compare him/herself to the chaste Diana. The doubled figure invites sexual exploration and erotic imaginings, and half-and-half acts often capitalized on the thrills that a male/female pair displayed in a single body could provide.
Both the conjoined twin acts of the Hilton and McKoy sisters and the various half-and-half acts that performed in sideshows across the nation capitalized upon what is inherently freakish and appealing in a body that is simultaneously one person and two. An astounding degree of variety was obviously present in the ways in which all the various acts presented themselves, and yet in the end it is still the various mechanics of the lives and the selves of the doubles that compelled audiences. Conjoined twins “challenge... the borders of personal identity by placing a multiplied self where there is usually only one, and by questioning where individual agency begins and ends” (Pingree 173-4) and so, in their own fashion, do half-and-half acts. The problem of pronouns arises for both acts—singular or plural for twins, male or female or both for half-and-halfs—and so the problem of complete identity follows. Are half-and-halfs more than one self or are they perhaps more singular, more unified than those who are definitively male or female, because they encompass both ends of the range of human genders? Similarly, are conjoined twins more singular when they are in perfect agreement with one another, or does the pairing of opposing traits and preferences create a more singular, rounded being? Or do multiple heads always equal multiple selves? If that is the case, then is the half-and-half indisputably singular? Both conjoined twins and half-and-halfs raise multiple questions about the possibilities of plural identities, and their existence also brings to light the ways in which society is tailored to the individual. Rigid boundaries and societal norms that define selfhood and gender as singular states force those whose minds and bodies approach a state of plurality to be defined as freaks. And, as much as
the public upheld these norms of the singular, they still flocked to catch a glimpse of those that were, in some way, more than one.
Fig. 7. 1854 poster for P.T. Barnum's American Museum, featuring Millie-Christine; rpt. in Joanne Martell, *Millie-Christine: fearfully and wonderfully made* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, Publisher, 2000; 17; print).
Fig. 8. 1855 herald from the Theatre Royal in Liverpool, England; rpt. in Joanne Martell, *Millie-Christine: fearfully and wonderfully made* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, Publisher, 2000; 38; print).
Fig. 9. 1866 illustration for a newspaper article; rpt in Joanne Martell, *Millie-Christine: fearfully and wonderfully made* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, Publisher, 2000; 115; print).
Fig. 10. 1882 poster for Inter-Ocean Railroad show by Strobridge Lithograph Company; rpt in Joanne Martell, Millie-Christine: fearfully and wonderfully made (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, Publisher, 2000; 206; print).
Fig. 11. Cover of booklet titled *The History of the Carolina Twins*; rpt. in Linda Frost, *Conjoined Twins in Black and White: The Lives of Millie-Christine McKoy and Daisy and Violet Hilton* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009; fig. 1; 114; print).
Fig. 12. 1869 cover of booklet titled *History and Medical Description of the Two-headed Girl*; rpt. in Joanne Martell, *Millie-Christine: fearfully and wonderfully made* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, Publisher, 2000; 126; print).
Fig. 13. Cover of a pamphlet entitled “George-Ette: The Sensation of Two Continents;” from Half-and-half File, Photographic Print File, Robert L. Parkinson Library; Baraboo, WI: Circus World Museum; print.
TO BEGIN MY STORY, dear friends, we must go back to the first inhabitants of this world, and they were the protozoa. Zoa is the Greek word for animals, and proto means first.

All subsequent creatures developed from these ancestors of animal life on this globe. Every animal goes through a series of changes of process of evolution before arriving at maturity. Regardless of whether it is Animal or Man, it always begins as a one-celled animal. We all go back to the beginning of life.

Hermaphrodite Characteristics are common in plant and animal life. We take another step up the evolutionary ladder and find the earthworm. Each worm has the organs of the two sexes properly developed. In this instance we have true hermaphroditism.

There are some human beings who possess hermaphrodite characteristics; this is no new discovery, in fact, very ancient.

The Classical Greek mind had a particular interest in speculating about it, traces of it are found in Chinese mythology and it has been stated that primitive man was a man woman.

Since I have been on exhibition, appearing before the leading medical universities in this country and abroad, as well as appearing before the public, there has been one question that seems to be in the minds of everyone: Whether or not I am a Hermaphrodite.

The male portion of my body, my double voice, and the beard, are all birthmarks, and I do not possess hermaphrodite characteristics.

The most feminine of women have a growth of colorless hair corresponding to the male beard, and in some cases very pronounced.

Women with a more or less definite masculine cast of figure, manner or voice are commonplace, as is the opposite phenomenon.

In regards to the other so-called Half Men—Half Women, as there are several others on exhibition, it is a known fact that I have been proclaimed nature's nearest complete union of male and female in the one body, because I am the mother of a boy.

ROSE ROBERT.
Fig. 15. Newspaper clipping of Josephine-Joseph; from Photographic Print File, Robert L. Parkinson Library, SID-N45-Josephine-2; Baraboo, WI: Circus World Museum; print.
Fig. 16. Sideshow banner titled *Roberta-Ray: Two Bodies and One Head*, photo by Jim Secreto photography; rpt in Randy Johnson, et. al, *Freaks, Geeks and Strange Girls: Sideshow Banners of the Great American Midway* (San Francisco: Last Gasp Publications, 2004; 41; print).
Fig. 17. Sideshow pitch card for a half-and-half, from the collection of Charlie Rudolph; rpt in Randy Johnson, et. al, *Freaks, Geeks and Strange Girls: Sideshow Banners of the Great American Midway* (San Francisco: Last Gasp Publications, 2004; 40; print).
CHAPTER VIII

IMAGE-MAKING AND THE ART OF THE SIDESHOW BANNER

While the language used in sideshow advertising occupies a central place in the
creation and maintenance of the freakish, it is the more iconic banners and artwork that
created the bulk of the sideshow aesthetic entrenched within the culture. The massive size
of the banners—the United States Tent and Awning Company manufactured banners up
to fifteen feet high and thirty-four feet wide by 1911 (Hammer & Bosker 13)—made
them effective as advertising tools on the midway while also creating a sense of
overwhelming immersion when viewed up close. The majority of sideshow banners are
pure fantasy and link the viewer, not to the exhibit within the tent, but to a more intensely
imagined realm of spectacle. Sideshow banners transformed the image of the freakish
body, creating and adjusting meaning to suit the business of selling spectacle; Carl
Hammer and Gideon Bosker write in their collection of sideshow artwork that “[o]ne of
the most curious and unusual talents of banner painters was the ability to sanitize—
sometimes even mythologize—flagrant examples of human misfortune while at the same
time satisfying the voyeuristic impulses of the carnival-going public” (69). This analysis
makes two interesting leaps of logic: that those performers with bodily anomalies are
“examples of human misfortune” and, moreover, that a voyeuristic public is interested in
the spectacle of human misery or misfortune over the spectacle of the strange and
different body. Hammer and Bosker note that “the artists humanized these [unfortunate]
subjects by presenting them with rather positive, almost upbeat facial expressions” (70). Again, they adhere to the misleading assumption that those subjects with deformities must be “humanized”—in effect, that they are not recognizably human before the artist re-imagines their image. Longtime sideshow banner painter and performer Johnny Meah addresses the fantasy of the banners in a kinder fashion, likening them to modern television advertising and saying that “we casually (sic) accept the canards pitched at us on television, knowing in our hearts that the washer that never needs a repairman usually (sic) does and the exhaustive clinical studies done on Glitz or Glop rarely decrease your visits to the dentists. Freddy the Frog Boy, you see, was just the Ipana of his day” (Johnson 17). To Meah the fantasy is a necessary part of the selling power of the sideshow. Because the sideshow is already in the business of selling human extremes, the banners advertising the individual acts must absolutely push every boundary: the girls are lovely and perfectly proportioned, even when they have four legs (Johnson 76) or alligator skin (Johnson 122); the Strong Man is powerful enough to wrestle a lion bare-handed (Johnson 23); a Wild Woman rips the limbs from her human victims and devours them (Hammer & Bosker 59); and animal/human acts reside in their natural habitats, with the Penguin Boy depicted in an Arctic setting (Hammer & Bosker 51) and Otis the Frog Boy in a swamp (Hammer & Bosker 16). Sideshows, like commercial products, not only sell the reality (which inevitably disappoints or becomes mundane) but the fantasy as well. But sideshows do not sell the fantasy that their product will make customers more attractive, healthier, or more socially desirable. Instead, they sell a mythology of the world as something more than what we experience in the normative confines of life, both
bodily and spiritually. The ideal aesthetic of the sideshow represents reality heightened to extremes that are sometimes ghoulish, grotesque, unsettling, or otherworldly: not the extremes of the desirable or attractive or perfect, but instead the boundaries of humanity.

The sideshow banner is meant to give the viewer a peek through the window or the curtain into another, more brightly colored world. In fact, the more theatrically conscious of the banners do contain a stage curtain; Snap Wyatt's *Spotted Girl* (see fig. 18) is one example of this particular framing strategy. Every canvas has a bright border, usually in a bright shade of red or orange, and some form of scrolling banner or basic text box on which the short description of act is written. No matter how naturalistic the painting may be—and, generally speaking, sideshow banners shy away from naturalism in favor of the boldly stylistic—it is impossible to forget that the image is an advertisement. Nevertheless, the painted figures do not strive to connect with viewers as if they were people very much like their customers. Rather, they appear as emissaries from an entirely different world, not only made strange by deformity or bodily modification or personal talent, but also by their mannered, not-entirely-natural bodily contortions and facial expressions. This tendency is more evident in the later works by Snap Wyatt and Johnny Meah, which are also more likely to show the use bold colors with minimal shading and dark outlines around the figures. Describing the three artists who had the greatest influence on him, Johnny Meah writes of the work of banner painter Danny Cassella¹, who painted mostly for shows on Coney Island, that it “bordered fine art, with subtley (sic) graduated wet blends and minimal hard lining;” Fred Johnson's

¹ This artist is credited as Dan Casola by online sources. See fig. 20.
work, he says, “managed to create an aura of weirdness... with curious color combinations and lavish brushstrokes” (Johnson 47). In contrast, Snap Wyatt's “strongest suite was speed... using a bold cartoonical style,” though he “lack[ed] Cassella's muted blends or Johnson's eye-catching composition, [his works] were still unique in their own brash way” (Johnson 47). Meah's own art has evolved considerably: his earlier banners tend to exhibit a cartoonishness similar to Wyatt's, with dark outlines and little appeal to naturalism, while his later banners exhibit a blended style that looks very nearly airbrushed. However, Meah consistently works to set his subjects within a scene, giving greater attention to creating backgrounds (see fig. 19 for an example) where Wyatt had already demonstrated that they weren't strictly necessary to the intelligibility of the banner. Frequently, Wyatt avoided the issue of the background altogether by using a solid bright color or the framing device of curtains to sidestep the creation of a truly integrated scene and instead foreground the figure (see fig. 18).

The majority of banner artists tend to restrict themselves to using local color, with some amount of tinting and shading when the artist desires; there is little experimentation with lighting, reflection, or any kind of unexpected color work. Some exceptions exist: Dan Casola's “Armless Wonder” banner does indeed show fine art sensibilities in the choice of a limited palette that mostly eschews local color, using shades of red and pink to render the background landscape and accenting the figure's yellow clothes with a bright turquoise reflection that causes the figure to pop (see fig. 20). Other banners done earlier in the century show a more conventional understanding of illustration and painting, and so feature more human-like subjects that lack distorted anatomy. For
example, the central figure in *Roberta-Ray: Two Bodies and One Head* (see fig. 16) looks very much like she/he could have stepped out of a contemporary advertisement for cosmetics, and all three views of the figure are reminiscent of poses that an artist's model might take. The artist of *Chief Roongwa: Formerly Witch Doctor of the Ubangi Savages* (see fig. 21) appears to have adopted an impressionist approach, creating the figures with a rather sophisticated understanding of light and shadow rather than harsh outlines. The background is left loose with lots of visible brushstrokes. *Oriental Magic* (see fig. 22) on the other hand does use dark linework and largely avoids color blending, but the delicate line quality, attention to drapery, and tightly arranged composition makes the overall effect reminiscent of childrens' books of the era (circa 1915). The artists for these banners may very well have worked doing illustrations in other media, and so carried their styles over to banner painting. Later artists like Johnson, Wyatt, and Meah worked more or less exclusively as sign and banner painters, and their styles recall only the carnival and sideshow.

I would venture that early banner art was, much of the time, executed by artists who were somewhat more adept at using models or references than later banner artists. This is especially evident in the glassy-eyed, distorted, and largely similar faces often painted by Johnson, Wyatt, and an early Meah. Because banner painters infrequently made any attempt to portray a likeness of the act that their banner was meant to advertise (Hammer & Bosker 20), and rarely saw their subjects at all, the generic quality of many of their faces makes some amount of sense. As Hammer and Bosker put it, sideshow banners “having come wholly from the imagination of the artist who created them... were
fraudulent to the very core” (20). In order to capture some of that fraudulent spirit in my own sideshow banner, I relaxed some of my own more naturalist tendencies and worried less about the strictures of logical spatial relationships. However, I have backed away from the more outrageous physical and facial distortions of the later banner artists. Because my own primary interest in painting and drawing is portraiture, I used photographic and live references to paint both my own face and that of a friend. The face, the most expressive, most crucially human part of the body, and more than anything else I wished to emphasize my subjects' humanity.

My banner depicts four (or is it six?) figures: a double-headed horse, a double-headed rabbit, a pair of conjoined twins, and a half-and-half (see fig. 24). My intention was to depict the conjoined twins and the half-and-half not merely as themselves, but as performers of other acts as well. The conjoined twins are bareback riders or horse tamers, and initially I felt that the composition did not serve this interaction as well as I had hoped it would (see fig. 23 for an in-progress view). I solved this problem by adding reins to the horses and placing the reins in the twins’ right hand. The half-and-half performs a magic act, presumably with the aid of the rabbits, which leap into the frame on the right. The trick that the half-and-half performs on the banner is more symbolic, however, as he/she appears to conjure tiny twin dragons of fire and ice from his/her top hat. Unfortunately, I was unable to make the dragons appear made of light as I had intended. Because of the slow drying time of the oil paints, any further work would have merely made them appear muddy rather than transparent.
I used Fred Johnson's *Tattooing By Stoney* (see fig. 25) as a model for how to lay out the banner and the border. I found that one of the more interesting, and ultimately rather freeing, things about this composition was that I felt very little need to plan the layout in detail beforehand. I did not feel particularly in danger of adding a disparate element or of adding too much. Essentially, I was able to plan the composition on the canvas itself as I went, which gives the process more of the flavor of a puzzle than the meticulously pre-planned composition. The rabbits were a very late addition, but ultimately one with which I am pleased. They provide an adequate balance to the “Alive” circle on the left and fill the empty space on the right as well. I did give a great deal of thought as to whether or not I wanted the rabbits to break out of the frame; I had already considered and rejected the idea when it came to the horses’ legs and the half-and-half’s hand. The figures on the original sideshow banners rarely, if ever, broke out of their painted frames. So while I was intrigued by the idea, I was wary of breaching the frame multiple times or of the breach being large enough to run off the edge of the canvas. The rabbits were an excellent solution, as their legs could break the line of the frame and still remain on the orange portion of the canvas without any trouble. I did not use a model for the lettering—which is essentially my own handwriting and could, admittedly, be fancied up a bit. The title I decided upon for the act was *The Double Creature Feature*; in part, I was taken in by the sound of the words, as they have a delightful way of rattling around in the brain and mouth, but mostly I was drawn to the sideshow’s tradition of wordplay and puns. I had some experience with this on a visit to the now-defunct American Dime Museum of Baltimore, Maryland. A banner outside advertised the “World's Largest Bat!”
The exhibit turned out to be an, admittedly impressive, giant baseball bat. I wanted to evoke a similar sense of the corny doubleness of words and language in my title, which plays upon the common “double feature,” or two acts or shows presented together. But the word “double” could also attach to “creature,” and thus advertise a feature of “doubled” creatures: the two-headed horse, the conjoined twins, and the half-and-half.

Initially, I thought I would paint just a set of conjoined twins, and would depict both myself and my model as joined; the objective was to be a representation of the closeness of friendship and the exchange of selves that occurs when two people live atop one another for extended periods of time. Ultimately, however, it dawned on me that this was too common a theme and that the chance to do a self-portrait as a half-and-half would be a more interesting choice. Ruminating upon my own gender identity often brings me to the conclusion that I am “half and half and neither of either” (Carter 59), which is a distressing thought. To be represented as a half-and-half, particularly one that can perform magic, is a freeing kind of fantasy. I have endeavored, in this painting, to elevate half-and-halfs and conjoined twins from curiosities to be looked at, to skilled performers in their own right. Neither the half-and-half nor the conjoined twins are unduly sexualized, and, of course, the faces are detailed and more or less proportionate. They are not perfect likenesses, but I did not intend them to be; the figures are, after all, fantasy performers. I used primarily local color throughout the painting, except when working with skin tones, where I endeavored to move color from other areas—the background and the twins' leotard, for example (see fig. 24). The colors in the skin are still not as saturated as I would have made them had I not been working on a banner of
this style; more expressive color work would have infected the banner with too much of a “fine art” sensibility, and clashed with the comparatively flat portions of background, banner frame, and text.

I intend that this painting should act as a summation of what I have personally taken from this study. I have tried to convey the pervasiveness of the double in life, art, and literature and to highlight the questions that the sideshow poses over and over again: what does it mean to be one person? When is one person actually two people? There are no definitive answers to these questions, because the answers are being remade every day by the people who live in the liminal spaces. We must, instead, compromise in our thinking, and understand that just as there are ways of being between genders, there are ways of being between one and two people. Innate physical differences may lead to this state of betweenness, as in the cases of conjoined twins and the intersexed, but performance of double-selfhood leads to a sense of doubleness as well, particularly in the realm of gender.

In my banner, I am selling a rather optimistic view of “positive freaks;” I am fully aware that in many ways, the sideshow itself was not an ideal representation of people, and many performances upheld an unfortunate status quo rather than acting as transformative agents for social change. I sell and transmit a state of fantasy, just as the actual sideshow banners did, and what's more, I'm proud of it. Fantasy can be its own agent of subversion and agent of change. Because I do not literally have to “sell” this banner, I am not beholden to the whims of audiences. But the banner is not pretending to be high art. It is humorous, fantastical, strange, and only marginally less disposable than
the original sideshow banners. Just as I could not promise to give a definitive answer to
the nature of the double self, I cannot pretend that this banner represents anything other
than entertainment. Entertainment is, after all, what the sideshow is about.
Fig. 18. Spotted Girl by Snap Wyatt, circa 1940s; rpt. in Carl Hammer and Gideon Bosker, *Freak Show: Sideshow Banner Art* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996; 74; print).
Fig 19. *Giant Alaskan King Crab* by Johnny Meah, circa 1960s; rpt. in Carl Hammer and Gideon Bosker, *Freak Show: Sideshow Banner Art* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996; 67; print).
Fig. 20. *Armless Wonder* by Dan Casola; rpt. in “Rare & Vintage: Coney Island Sideshow Banner by Dan Casola,” *Amusing the Zillion* (16 November, 2009; web; 10 November 2011).
Fig. 21. *Chief Roongwa: Formerly Witch Doctor of the Ubangi Savages* by an unknown artist circa 1930s, photo by Jim Secreto photography; rpt in Randy Johnson, et. al, *Freaks, Geeks and Strange Girls: Sideshow Banners of the Great American Midway* (San Francisco: Last Gasp Publications, 2004; 29; print).
Fig. 23. *The Double Creature Feature* by Seth Ingram (in progress).
Fig. 24. *The Double Creature Feature* by Seth Ingram (finished); 2011; Oil, 36”x60”; Kent, Ohio.
Fig. 7.8. *Tattooing By Stoney* by Fred Johnson, circa 1930-1940, from the collection of Larry Aronson; rpt. in Carl Hammer and Gideon Bosker, *Freak Show: Sideshow Banner Art* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996; 38; print).
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