

# **Fabricating Freakery: The Display of Exceptional Bodies in Nineteenth-Century London**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD**

## Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis is my own.

John Jacob Woolf

Date:

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines five individuals in the tradition of freakery: the performance of constructed abnormality as entertainment. Departing from a tendency to explore the 'freak' and the 'freak show' from the mid-nineteenth century, this thesis starts at the beginning of the 1800s to explore the diachronic evolution of freakery as it went from small-scale transitory exhibitions to large-scale commercial enterprises tied to the burgeoning entertainment industry. This thesis argues that, as the freak show changed, it functioned as an index for broader social changes across the nineteenth century. Each chapter represents one or more of those changes, probing the construction and presentation of a specific identity rooted in a particular epoch and framed around the life history of a performer, whether this biography was alleged or 'real'.

The five agents explored in this thesis are Daniel Lambert (1770-1809), who displayed as a Fat Man; Chang and Eng, The Siamese Twins (1811-1874); Charles Stratton (1838-1883), a little person known as General Tom Thumb; Julia Pastrana (1834?-1860), billed as The Baboon Lady; and Joseph Merrick (1862-1890), The Elephant Man. Freakery was a lived identity reliant on a biographical history and dependent on numerous discourses that turned constructed identities into ambiguous, paradoxical and ambivalent representations. The hitherto entrenched historiographical dichotomy between the 'offstage' and 'onstage' life of a 'freak' is substituted for the claim of interdependency between performer and performance, reality and representation: agencies and the culture of everyday life were imbricated in the construction of 'freak' identities that were marked by character as much as corporeality. Overall, this thesis presents a picture of pervasive freakery in nineteenth-century London and beyond: a practice and discourse that permeated life and culture, representations and perceptions.

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## Abbreviations

BHC	Bridgeport History Centre, Bridgeport Public Library, Connecticut
BLL	British Library, London
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
MCNY	Museum of the City of New York, Manhattan
NFAS	National Fairground Archives, Sheffield
NCSA	North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh
RA	Royal Archives, Queen Victoria's Journals, Digital Archive
RCSL	Royal College of Surgeons, London
RLHAM	Royal London Hospital Archives and Museum
ROLLR	Record Office of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland
SHC, UNC	Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
STH	Stamford Town Hall, Lincolnshire
STL	Stamford Town Library, Lincolnshire
TCLC, MUNB	Trinity College Library Cambridge, Papers of A. J. Munby
TBMB	The Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, Connecticut
TJJC	The John Johnson Collection: An Archive of Printed Ephemera, Digital Archive
WLL	Wellcome Library, London

## Introduction

### Surveying the Scene: Histories, Studies and Sources

The Siamese Twins, viz: a 2 headed girl, or rather 2 girls, yet one, joined together by a sort of bar of flesh not far from the region of the heart. The lower part of the body is one, whilst the upper parts are distinct. There are 2 heads with different brains & will power, 2 hearts, arms, & 4 legs, grown together! It is one of the most remarkable phenomena possible. They are very dark coloured, if not exactly Negros, & look very merry & happy. Their parents were slaves from South Carolina, & they speak English. They sang. They sang duets with clear fine voices.<sup>1</sup>

Queen Victoria, the icon of Britain and her Empire, the namesake of the period, was a monarch drawn to 'freaks of nature': a term synonymous with human anomalies from 1847.<sup>2</sup> Writing in her diary in 1871, Queen Victoria's Siamese Twins were Millie and Christine (1851-1912), joined at the base of the spine, born into slavery in North Carolina, sold and separated from their families until, so the biographies claim, 'a Southern gentleman' named J. P. Smith bought the twins and their mother. Allegedly, Millie and Christine were subsequently kidnapped and exhibited for two years before Smith tracked them down and reunited them with their mother as free citizens. They continued to perform until adulthood; returning to Europe in 1873 and 1885 before retiring in the early 1900s and moving to Columbus County where they lived with their parents and fourteen other siblings.<sup>3</sup>

English monarchs had long associated with those deemed different. James IV had his own court Siamese Twins.<sup>4</sup> Queen Mary, Charles I, George II, George III and George IV were all acquainted with 'little people'.<sup>5</sup> But Queen Victoria's interest reflected a heightened national concern in corporeal difference. In 1844, on three separate occasions, she invited the little person General Tom Thumb to

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Archives, Queen Victoria's Journals, Digital Archive (RA), VIC/MAIN/QVJ (W), 24 June 1871 (Princess Beatrice's copies)

<<http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItem.do?FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2908993789717&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=1&ItemNumber=2&ItemID=qvj14020&volumeType=PSBEA>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>2</sup> 'freak, n.1', *OED Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/74344?rskey=aqJf7Y&result=1>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Drimmer, *Very Special People: The Struggles, Loves and Triumph of Human Oddities* (New York: Citadel, 1991), pp. 38-45. For a complete biography see: Joanne Martell, *Millie-Christine: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* (North Carolina: John F. Blair, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: John Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 110.

<sup>5</sup> C. J. S. Thompson, *The History and Lore of Freaks* (London: Random House, 1996), pp. 191-198. I will use the terms 'little people' or 'little person' in line with the preference of the Little People of America and Little People UK, charity groups designed to promote the rights of the community. I will not use the term 'midget', denoting diminutive but proportional people, which is considered offensive.

Buckingham Palace where he amused the royal audience with skits and songs.<sup>6</sup> In the same year, she invited three performing 'Highland Dwarfs' who 'though certainly not pretty are very extraordinary'.<sup>7</sup> During her reign she met Jean Hannema: 'a most wonderful little Dutch dwarf'.<sup>8</sup> She was acquainted with '2 horrid little monstrosities, Aztecs', who were a pair of diminutive microcephalic siblings named Maximo and Bartola, and the 'Chinese giant Chang 7ft, 6 inches high!!'.<sup>9</sup>

Queen Victoria's fascination with exceptional bodies reflected a contemporaneous interest explored in this PhD. It considers the construction and display of physical difference across the nineteenth century, explored through the lens of freakery: 'the intentional performance of constructed abnormality as entertainment'.<sup>10</sup> The term encompasses the popular phenomenon of the freak show defined as the 'formally organized exhibition of people with alleged and real physical, mental, or behavioural anomalies for amusement and profit', usually associated with the burgeoning commercial entertainment industry from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Although the term 'freak' was used more consistently in Britain from around 1847, the term 'freakery' is deployed in this thesis as a label of convenience to explore the construction of identities presented in the tradition of freakery from the early nineteenth century. This thesis uses the term 'freak' to denote staged performance, constructed identities, the apparent cultivation of Otherness and relationships between exhibit and exhibited that were the hallmarks of the freak show from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Eric D. Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb: Charles Stratton, P. T. Barnum, and the Dawn of American Celebrity* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), pp. 1-9.

<sup>7</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ (W), 15 May 1846 (Princess Beatrice's copies)

<<http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItem.do?FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2908994568148&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=1&ItemNumber=1&ItemID=qvj04955&volumeType=PSBEA>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>8</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ (W), 21 February 1849 (Princess Beatrice's copies)

<<http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItem.do?FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2908994703619&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=1&ItemNumber=1&ItemID=qvj05935&volumeType=PSBEA>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>9</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ (W), 4 July 1853 (Princess Beatrice's copies)

<<http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItem.do?FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2910546071357&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=1&ItemNumber=1&ItemID=qvj07498&volumeType=PSBEA>> [accessed 3 February 2016]; RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ (W), 23 March 1867 (Princess Beatrice's copies)

<<http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItem.do?FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2908994836409&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=1&ItemNumber=1&ItemID=qvj12466&volumeType=PSBEA>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>10</sup> Michael M. Chemers, *Staging Stigma: A Critical Examination of the American Freak Show* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Ally Crockford, 'Spectacular Medical Freakery: British "Translations" of Nineteenth-Century European Teratology', in *Exploring the Cultural History of Continental European Freak Shows and 'Enfreakment'*, ed. by Anna Kérchy and Andrea Zittlau (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), pp. 112-128.

The thesis is thus produced in the anti-nominalist mode of current historical scholarship, which enables a history that unites chronologically variable moments under the phenomenon of freakery. Each chapter explores a specific historical epoch and set of discursive fields that fabricated a particular freak identity. Thus the freak show presents a picture of social, economic and cultural change across the nineteenth century. Adopting a case-study approach, each chapter represents one or more of these changes, arguing that freak identities were ambiguously and paradoxically constructed, often engendering ambivalent responses. It is argued that these 'onstage' identities were inextricable from the 'offstage' existence of freak performers: both onstage and offstage were cultural productions and performative spaces central to the fabrication of freaks. Moreover, as the display of physical difference went from small-scale to large-scale commercial enterprises during the nineteenth century, freakery proliferated and embedded in sites beyond formally organised exhibitions. These arguments point to the centrality of freakery in nineteenth-century London and beyond: a practice and discourse that permeated life and culture, representations and perceptions.

### **Situating Bodily Exceptionality**

This thesis proceeds on a case-study basis organised around the principle that the life and display of a socially constructed 'freak' represents one or more discursive trends across the nineteenth century. Daniel Lambert (1770-1809), the subject of Chapter One, exhibited as a Fat Man between 1806 and 1809. Hailing from Leicester, he embarked on public displays in London and the British Isles after losing his job at a bridewell. His exhibitions centralise the changing notions of gentlemanly character, intersected with notions of manliness, eccentricity and Englishness, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The protagonists of the second chapter, Chang and Eng (1811-1874), Siamese Twins from today's Thailand, arrived in London in 1829 under the 'care' of two merchants. The twins eventually went into business alone, overseeing their exhibitions across England and America and becoming husbands, fathers and slave-owning farmers in the American South. Their lived experiences were central to the construction of their freakery, which simultaneously utilised the discourses of Orientalism and the practice of medicine to represent their physiological difference. Conversely, their freakery defined elements of their lived experience. This chapter, therefore, uses lived experience to index the fabrication and changes in Chang and Eng's freakery.

The third protagonist, Charles Stratton (1838-1883) billed as General Tom Thumb, performed under the management of the American showman P. T. Barnum (1810-1891). Stratton first appeared in America before coming to London, at the age of four, in 1844. This preceded a successful European

tour that marked the beginning of Stratton's career as a professional performer. In 1863, at a large public ceremony in Grace Church, New York, Tom Thumb married the little person Lavinia Warren (1841-1919) and together they formed the 'General Tom Thumb Company' which travelled the world. Charles Stratton's performances reveal the rise of commercial and capitalist forces that ushered in the rise of a freak industry, while capitalising on the craze for fairy tales that came to define the social construction of General Tom Thumb.

Julia Pastrana (1834?-1860), the subject of Chapter Four, was allegedly born in Mexico and performed in London in 1857 as The Baboon Lady. Under the management of Theodore Lent, (dates unknown), who later became her husband, Pastrana performed across America and Europe before dying shortly after childbirth. Lent embalmed his wife and child and continued touring with their corpses, returning to London in 1862 to exhibit as The Embalmed Nondescript. Pastrana's display centralises questions of sexuality, bestiality and biographical obscurity and, by examining responses to her display, meticulously recorded by two nineteenth-century spectators, the emotions of wonder and disgust are explored.

The final protagonist, Joseph Merrick (1862-1890) The Elephant Man, was born in Leicester and resided in the workhouse before embarking on public displays. In 1884 he was exhibited in London, subsequently joining a travelling fair which concluded with his abandonment in Europe. Returning to London in 1886, he was housed at the London Hospital under the care of the eminent surgeon Frederick Treves (1853-1923). This chapter elucidates the relationship between freakery and medicine, indexing the rise of an institutional culture that increasingly confined abnormal bodies, while relying on the imagery, language and bodies of the freak show.

Each protagonist is analysed at a specific historical juncture, chronologically ordered, which situates the freak show at crucial moments across the nineteenth century. This enables the charting of change and continuity in the practice of freakery. Moreover, through a focus on the social construction of freak identities in relation to one or more discursive trends, freakery serves as an index for broader social, cultural and economic change. In particular, the developments in notions of gentlemanliness, masculinity, sexuality, commercialisation, capitalism, medicine and institutional culture are illuminated. While adopting a macro perspective across the nineteenth century, this thesis hones analysis into specific, micro moments of construction and display. All the performers are initially analysed in relation to their performances in London: 'that great centre of wonder-seeking and money-possessing population'.<sup>13</sup> London was a region that provided the links between

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<sup>13</sup> *Era*, 19 July 1857, p. 11.

cities and nations that helped freakery thrive. It was a space with a long history of varied entertainments: inns, taverns, shows and street performers clustered around Fleet Street, the Strand, Covent Garden and Charing Cross from the Georgian period.<sup>14</sup> Londoners could frequent the major theatres at Drury Lane (1663), Covent Garden (1732) and the Haymarket (1766) or enjoy farce, melodrama, burlesque and extravaganza at one of the many minor theatres.<sup>15</sup> From the nineteenth century exceptional bodies were exhibited in Piccadilly, the Haymarket, Regent Street, Leicester Square, Oxford Circus and the Strand.<sup>16</sup>

Just like the freak show, London was a space where boundaries were transgressed.<sup>17</sup> It was a cosmos of parishes, people and poverty with an expanding population, infrastructure and renown. In 1801 the population was 959,000, ten years later it was over 1,000,000, by 1851 it had reached 2,363,000 and in 1901 it stood at 4,536,000.<sup>18</sup> It was a capital awash with the paradoxes of modernity; it was a space where the past met the present and the future looked ominous.<sup>19</sup> Expansion, change and industrialisation turned London into a symbolic freak show: a 'Human awful wonder of God', wrote William Blake in *Jerusalem* (1820); 'a monstrous Wen' as Thomas Carlyle told his brother in 1824; and a 'monster city' according to the journalist Henry Mayhew.<sup>20</sup> His writings expressed a view that the urban poor were a 'race of dwarfs', 'City Arabs' or, in the words of Charles Booth in the 1890s, 'wild' and 'dwarfish'.<sup>21</sup> But the presence of deformity was not merely symbolic. The 1851 census documented 409,207 cases of deformity. Twenty-two percent were contained in London alone. The rest were concentrated predominantly in commercial centres, which indicated a strong link between manufacturing, industrialisation and deformity.<sup>22</sup> Peter Kirby has argued, moreover, that many children already suffered deformities and disabilities before entering factory occupations which, as

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<sup>14</sup> Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 204.

<sup>15</sup> Iain Mackintosh, 'Departing Glories of the British Theatre: Setting Suns over a Neo-Classical Landscape', in *London-World City: 1800-1840*, ed. by Celia Fox (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 199-208; Raymond Fitzsimons, *Barnum in London* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1969), pp. 75-76.

<sup>16</sup> National Fairground Archives, Sheffield (NFAS), John Bramwell Taylor, Box One, 178T1.1-158.

<sup>17</sup> Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 41-80.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Hall, *Cities in Civilisation: Culture, Innovation, and Urban Order* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), p. 657.

<sup>19</sup> Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 3-10, 212-215.

<sup>20</sup> Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage Books, 2008); Porter, *London*, pp. 312, 226.

<sup>21</sup> Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 17-28; Carl Chinn, *Poverty Amidst Prosperity: The Urban Poor in England, 1834-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 90; Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), p. 582.

<sup>22</sup> Erin O'Connor, *Raw Material: Producing Pathology in Victorian Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 183-184.

dangerous and potentially deadly environments, contributed to the disfiguration of the population.<sup>23</sup> As such, physical deformity was not confined to commercial displays of exceptional bodies: it was a visual presence in the streets of London.

But while these performers all came to London in the nineteenth century, a period marked for 'Deformito-Mania', or a fascination with the deformed body, London was not the only space in which freakery thrived.<sup>24</sup> Across Europe, America and, from the mid-1840s, the world; freak shows travelled internationally, a testimony to developments in technology and communication but also reflecting a much longer and international interest in the exceptional body. Indeed, as early as the Stone Age, cave drawings documented monstrous births, prehistoric gravesites suggested ritual sacrifices of such bodies and clay tablets at the Assyrian city of Nineveh described sixty two abnormal births and their deeper meaning.<sup>25</sup> The Egyptians made gods and jesters of little people while Aristotle, Cicero, Pliny and Augustine all pondered bodily difference.<sup>26</sup> In ancient Greece and Rome monstrous babies were killed at birth, considered malevolent signs of cosmic chaos.<sup>27</sup> But Romans also used monsters as the inspiration for gods: Janus, the god of gates and doors, had two male heads and a fused back signifying the beginning and ending of time.<sup>28</sup> Interpretive occasions were open and moral meanings ambiguous: monsters and angels could even operate in the same religious cosmology with monsters teaching what to fear, angels teaching what to love, but both igniting fear and devotion.<sup>29</sup>

Representations of the anomalous body proliferated in early modern European print culture.<sup>30</sup> Julie Crawford argued for the literary genre of 'marvelous Protestantism' in which monstrous births, salient in illustrated broadsheets, ballads and pamphlets between the 1560s and 1660s, were used

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Kirby, *Child Workers and Industrial Health in Britain, 1780-1850* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 74-78, 151-162.

<sup>24</sup> *Punch; or The London Charivari*, 4 September 1847, XII, p. 90.

<sup>25</sup> Rosemarie Garland Thomson, 'Introduction: From Wonder to Error—A Genealogy of Freak Discourse in Modernity', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. by Rosemarie Garland Thomson (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 1-22.

<sup>26</sup> Jack Hunter, *Freak Babylon: An Illustrated History of Teratology & Freakshows* (London: Creation Books, 2010), pp. 10-30.

<sup>27</sup> A. W. Bates, *Emblematic Monsters: Unnatural Conceptions and Deformed Births in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 158-159.

<sup>28</sup> Roger E. Stevenson, 'Causes of Human Anomalies: An Overview and Historical Perspective', in *Human Malformations and Related Anomalies*, ed. by Roger E. Stevenson, Judith G. Hall and Richard M. Goodman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 3-20.

<sup>29</sup> Edward J. Ingebreetsen, *At Stake: Monsters and the Rhetoric of Fear in Public Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001), pp. xiii-xvi; Timothy K. Beal, *Religion and its Monsters* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 75-76.

<sup>30</sup> Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes, 'Introduction', in *Monstrous Bodies/ Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 1-22.

as Protestant fables recounting divine punishment.<sup>31</sup> Ulinka Rublack opened her study on Reformation Europe by drawing attention to the monstrous image of the Pope-Ass deployed in Protestant propaganda as a warning against the corrupting influence of the papacy.<sup>32</sup> This textual prevalence occurred in tandem with a growing culture of display. By the seventeenth century, monsters could be seen in fairs, marketplaces, coffeehouses and taverns across Europe. The decadence of Charles II's reign (1660-1685) led the writer Henry Morely to note that 'the taste for monsters became a disease'.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, London's 'monster shows' became a site for the mingling of all classes.<sup>34</sup> This remained a hallmark of nineteenth-century freakery as grades of pricing ensured accessibility.<sup>35</sup> One shilling entertainment was affordable to the upper working classes, the artisans, master craftsmen and clerks, but penny shows and cheaper entrance fees ensured a broader social access.<sup>36</sup> In 1840, for example, a travelling exhibition with human anomalies was priced 'Ladies and Gentlemen, 1s', 'Trades people, 6d' and 'Working people, Servants and Children, 3d'.<sup>37</sup> The Skeleton Man, exhibited at Westminster Hall in 1869, charged six pence for 'ladies and gentlemen' and three pence for the 'working classes': 'the reduced prices are in order that the working classes may enjoy the treat'.<sup>38</sup>

The continuity in accessibility between the seventeenth and nineteenth century has been offset with conceptual discontinuity. According to Rosemary Garland Thomson, as modernity developed the monster went from a sign of revelation, wonder and awe to a 'pathological terata' signifying error.<sup>39</sup> Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan Landes signalled the monster's normalisation in the Enlightenment.<sup>40</sup> A. W. Bates argued that the later seventeenth century witnessed a decline in the symbolic status of monsters as learned culture looked to causation. Utilising Foucault's concept of 'discontinuity', Bates signalled a moment when words became descriptive tools for an examination

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<sup>31</sup> Julie Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism: Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England* (Durham, NC: John Hopkins University, 2005), pp. 2-9.

<sup>32</sup> Ulinka Rublack, *Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1-4.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Morley, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* (London: Frederick Warne, 1874), p. 246.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Semonin, 'Monsters in the Marketplace: The Exhibition of Human Oddities in Early Modern England', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 69-81.

<sup>35</sup> London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Bartholomew Fair Folder, SC/GL/BFS/001-022.

<sup>36</sup> Judith Flanders, *Consuming Passions: Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain* (London: Harper Press, 2006), p. 29.

<sup>37</sup> British Library, London (BLL), Fillinham Collection of Cuttings, Volume IV: Fairs, 1889.b.10/4/9.

<sup>38</sup> BLL, Evanion 464.

<sup>39</sup> Thomson, 'Introduction', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 1-22 (p. 3).

<sup>40</sup> Knoppers and Landes, 'Introduction', in *Monstrous Bodies/ Political Monstrosities*, ed. by Knoppers and Landes, pp. 1-22.



of nature.<sup>41</sup> But the monster remained a source of entertainment and by the early nineteenth century could be seen in rented rooms, museums and fairs.<sup>42</sup>

In critical discourse the freak has commonly been treated separately to the monster: the latter denoting a medical concept reflective of the anomalous body, while the freak was constructed through performance and spectacle. But the monster and the freak were interconnected: medicine and freakery were often mutually dependent.<sup>43</sup> According to Elizabeth Stephens, there was a close relationship between exhibitions of human anatomy and the freak show.<sup>44</sup> The freak and the monster reflected and contained the fears of a given moment. They problematised binary categories, generated meaning, signalled an interpretive occasion and were historically contingent cultural productions.

By the mid-nineteenth century, spurred by new railways and steamships, freakery was truly international with acts from around the world, and increasingly from colonised areas, traversing the Atlantic. Some continued into Russia and Constantinople following what became an established freak show route.<sup>45</sup> This fed the phenomenon of 'exotic freaks' or 'human zoos' in which ethnographic living curiosities were exhibited to paying audiences.<sup>46</sup> These shows were mainly temporary, lasted only a summer and were usually privately financed either by individuals or small groups. But they developed into large-scale commercial enterprises tied to mass entertainment, particularly after the 1851 Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace, London.<sup>47</sup> Although the freak and ethnographic exhibit have been treated as separate phenomena, much like the freak and monster there was equivalence between the two. Ethnographic exhibits represented nations and demonstrated 'typical' characteristics of a race; whereas freaks were commonly presented with individuality and uniqueness. But, as Helen Davies has argued, freaks could also demonstrate generalised, racial characteristics: they were often presented with a specific ethnographic history and were displayed on the basis of physiological markers demonstrating difference.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Bates, *Emblematic Monsters*, pp. 199-213.

<sup>42</sup> LMA, Fairs Folder: Theatre Playbills, Bartholomew Fair, 1810-1819, 83-88.

<sup>43</sup> Crockford, 'Spectacular Medical Freakery', in *Exploring the Cultural History of Continental European Freak Shows*, ed. by Kerchy and Zittlau, pp. 112-128.

<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Stephens, *Anatomy as Spectacle: Public Exhibitions of the Body from 1700 to the Present* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), pp. 87-101.

<sup>45</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>46</sup> Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch and Nanette Jacomijn Snoep, 'Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage', in *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage*, ed. by Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch and Nanette Jacomijn Snoep (Paris: Musée de Quai, 2011), pp. 20-54.

<sup>47</sup> Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, pp. 2-4, 271-284.

<sup>48</sup> Helen Davies, *Neo-Victorian Freakery: The Cultural Afterlife of the Victorian Freak Show* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 28-29.

The performance of those deemed different became embedded in the emerging entertainment industry. From at least the medieval ages, wakes and fairs provided popular amusement at seasonal sites but, as Nadja Durbach and Julia Douthwaite have argued, it was the establishment of permanent sites from the mid-nineteenth century that entrenched the freak show.<sup>49</sup> But this was part of longer durational changes from roughly the 1780s as leisure concordant with the rhythms of agriculture shifted to leisure based on industrial holidays.<sup>50</sup> From the 1830s working hours declined as leisure time increased, while a period of ‘cultural reconstruction’ began as industrialisation took hold.<sup>51</sup> The rise of ‘rational recreation’ marked leisure as a field for edification and moral improvement, spurred by a rising middle class and their ‘culture of self-improvement’. This sought to impart gentlemanly conduct and self-restraint within leisure activities buoyed by the introduction of the Saturday half-holiday.<sup>52</sup>

It was no coincidence, as Erin O’Connor argued, that ‘Deformito-Mania’ occurred in the 1840s. This was a decade that witnessed the intensification of the mass market, the building of more railways, the opening of more factories and the repeal of the Corn Laws. Amidst change and disruption, Chartist agitation, cholera and Irish immigration, freakery thrived, further capitalising on the expanding Empire, Darwinian thinking and the professionalisation of science and medicine.<sup>53</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, freakery was at a zenith: firmly connected to circuses, music halls, theatres, seaside resorts, zoos, pleasure gardens and popular museums. Freakery was neatly embedded within a nexus of commercial entertainment. But, at the same time, the seeds of cultural discontent were growing. By the second decade of the twentieth century, the advancement of medicine, changing tastes and the effects of World War One would eventually render the freak show unpalatable.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 4-14; Julia V. Douthwaite, *The Wild Girl, Natural Man, and the Monster: Dangerous Experiments in the Age of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 48.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), pp. 244-286; James Walvin, *Leisure and Society, 1830-1950* (London: Longman, 1978), pp. 2-57; Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c.1780-c.1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp. 15-56.

<sup>51</sup> Hugh Cunningham, *Time, Work and Leisure: Life Changes in England since 1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp. 66-91; Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge, 1987), p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*, pp. 47-67; G. R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 538-543; Mike Huggins, *The Victorians and Sport* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 18- 49; J. M. Golby and A. W. Purdue, *The Civilisation of the Crowd: Popular Culture in England, 1750-1900* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), pp. 63-114.

<sup>53</sup> O’Connor, *Raw Material*, pp. 148-208.

<sup>54</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 62-67; Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 171-184.

## Engaging with 'Freak Studies'

This thesis contributes to a burgeoning field of scholarly work inaugurated by Leslie Fiedler's *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (1978). He deployed a Freudian psychoanalytic framework to argue that society had a 'psychic need' for monsters, rooting this yearning in the psychology of childhood and adolescence. Our 'primordial fears' were aroused by the freak: scale, sexuality, our need to transcend the state of bestiality and our precarious individuality.<sup>55</sup> But the universalism inherent in Fiedler's Freudian approach and his slippage towards essentialising freaks on the basis of their physiology was superseded by the social constructionist approach deployed by Robert Bogdan in his 1988 study on the American Freak Show.

Bogdan argued that a series of standardised techniques, strategies and styles were used to construct the freak: a social construction established through organisations and patterned relationships. By analysing these organisations, Bogdan observed the institutionalisation of the freak show within the American entertainment industry and the means by which distinct patterns of presenting and constructing freaks arose. As such, "'Freak" is not a quality that belongs to the person on display. It is something we created: a perspective, a set of practices—a social construction.'<sup>56</sup> There was an 'exotic' mode of presentation that was designed to appeal to the primitive and bestial and an 'aggrandized presentation' which imbued the freak with elevated status and talents. These were not absolute modes, however, with certain freaks blurring the boundaries.<sup>57</sup>

Bogdan's thesis precipitated a field of scholarship termed 'Freak Studies', a body of work that focused on the freak as a social category that destabilised the hegemonic discourses that marked it as stigmatic.<sup>58</sup> The 'freak of nature' was the 'freak of culture'.<sup>59</sup> A collection of essays edited by Rosemarie Garland Thomson (1997) sought to expose the historicised cultural logic and practices involved in the construction of corporeal difference. The issue of representation was centralised as contributing scholars rooted their analysis in the social systems of disability, race, gender, class and sexuality.<sup>60</sup> In 2001 Benjamin Reiss explored the 1835 exhibition of Joice Heth, billed by Barnum as the nurse of George Washington, partly in an attempt to reveal her private persona and constantly

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<sup>55</sup> Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, p. xi.

<sup>57</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 104-116; Robert Bogdan, 'The Social Construction of Freaks', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 23-37.

<sup>58</sup> Michael M. Chemers, 'Introduction Staging Stigma: A Freak Studies Manifesto', *Disability Quarterly Studies*, 25:3 (2005) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/574/751>> [accessed 3 February 2016]; Chemers, *Staging Stigma*, p. 24.

<sup>59</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 109; Thomson, 'Introduction', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 1-22 (p. 10).

<sup>60</sup> Thomson, 'Introduction', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 1-22.

to explore the cultural significance of her public profile: 'to take a tour with Barnum and Heth is also to take a tour of antebellum cultural history'.<sup>61</sup> A 2008 collection of essays, *Victorian Freaks*, similarly explored the social construction of freakery operating under the thesis that the 'social context has as much weight as physical difference'.<sup>62</sup>

Freak Studies built upon and contributed to the pioneering work in the field of Disability Studies, influenced by a longer tradition concerned with the social constraints and social relationships working on and through the body.<sup>63</sup> Emerging in the 1970s and 1980s, with a second wave in the 1990s, Disability Studies focused on the concept of disability, hitherto relegated to a 'freak show' in academia, as a crucial discourse of identity formation.<sup>64</sup> Michael Oliver discussed 'the social theory of disability' as opposed to the 'medical model' in which the former related to outcomes of social relations that restricted people with 'impairment'.<sup>65</sup> Lennard Davis' seminal work, *Enforcing Normalcy* (1995), argued that disability was both socially constructed and central to discussions about the politics of embodiment. He moved the discussion towards the social systems and relationships that turned the body into a complex locus of power structures perceived by 'normal' people through functional modality (the perception of inability) and an appearance modality (visualisations that mark the body in a spectacular moment that engenders emotive responses). In shifting attention to the social realm, Davis demonstrated the construction and history of the 'normal', thus defamiliarising the term in a move that remains a hallmark of Disability Studies.<sup>66</sup>

In utilising these wider historiographical developments, Freak Studies was imbued with a postmodernist and political programme. The social model of disability underlay the postmodernist premise that identity is constructed as opposed to essential. Cindy LaCom argued for the need to read bodily difference in the historical context to better understand how identity was constructed.<sup>67</sup> The feminist biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling concurred that the body underwent a process of social

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<sup>61</sup> Benjamin Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death and Memory in Barnum's America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> Marlene Tromp and Karyn Valerius, 'Introduction: Toward Situating the Victorian Freak', in *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. by Marlene Tromp (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2008), pp. 1-18 (p. 4).

<sup>63</sup> Lisa Blackman, *The Body: The Key Concepts* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), pp. 15-35.

<sup>64</sup> Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 158.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Oliver, *The Politics of Disablement* (London: Macmillan Education, 1990), pp. 9-11, 22-24, 78-94; Michael Oliver, *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 41-57.

<sup>66</sup> Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, pp. 1-49.

<sup>67</sup> Cindy Lacom, "'It Is More Than Lame": Female Disability, Sexuality, and the Maternal in the Nineteenth-Century Novel', in *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses and Disability*, ed. by David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 189-201.

construction: the body exists as ‘a somatic fact *created by* a cultural effect’.<sup>68</sup> In this way, identity is framed by wider discursive fields which potentially mark the body as stigmatic. However, in order for the body to be entrenched as ‘marked’, a constant enforcement through performative means is necessary. This, in turn, allows an element of agency and flexibility against a social system influencing identity construction.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, as David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder wrote, ‘freak show analysis allows an explicitly political methodology to take shape’: it exposes social relations that mark the body as deviant to a greater extent than the more general receptions of biological difference explored by disability researchers.<sup>70</sup> Freak Studies provides the possibility of socialising disability, realising Lennard Davis’ hope that a ‘dismodern’ future might normalise impairment, dependency and mutation.<sup>71</sup> In echoes of Mikhail Bakhtin’s grotesque body, which holds the possibility of disrupting oppressive binary oppositions, Rosemarie Garland Thomson’s reading of disabled literary characters entwined with her political attempts to turn disabled bodies from abnormal pathologies into extraordinary markers of identity that require accommodation in the social fabric.<sup>72</sup> Michael Chemers even dwelled on the possibility of establishing a ‘freaktopia’ in which physical disability is celebrated.<sup>73</sup>

Nadja Durbach’s study on the British Freak Show from 1847 to 1914 ushered in what has been called a ‘third wave’ of Freak Studies, shifting attention from a Disability Studies approach towards the intersection of numerous cultural narratives on the freak’s body.<sup>74</sup> Durbach argued that far from being marginal and exploitative, the freak show was central to debates that invested corporeal difference and Otherness with meaning. The freak show utilised discourses of race, gender, class, sex and ethnicity, illuminating how Otherness was formed and, as a corollary, how identity was constructed. She cautioned against treating the freak as disabled as the latter only emerged around

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<sup>68</sup> Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 21.

<sup>69</sup> Chemers, ‘Introduction Staging Stigma’ <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/574/751>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>70</sup> David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, ‘Exploitations of Embodiment: Born Freak and the Academic Bally Plank’, *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 25:3 (2005) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/575/752>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>71</sup> Lennard J. Davis, *Bending Over Backwards: Dismodernism and Other Difficult Positions* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 9-32.

<sup>72</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 303-367; Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 135-137.

<sup>73</sup> Chemers, *Staging Stigma*, pp. 135-139; Richard Howells and Michael M. Chemers, ‘Midget Cities: Utopia, Utopianism, and the *Vor-Schein* of the “Freak” Show’, *Disability Quarterly Studies*, 25:3 (2005) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/579/756>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>74</sup> Adam P. Newman, review of *Conjoined Twins in Black and White: The Lives of Millie-Christine McKoy and Daisy and Violent Hilton*, ed. by Linda Frost, *Callaloo*, 35:3 (2012), 836-838.

the turn of the nineteenth century in reference to wounded soldiers and sailors who made demands on the state. As Durbach highlighted, clause twenty-seven of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act distinguished the 'able-bodied' poor, who could work, from those 'wholly unable to work' due to 'old Age or Infirmary of the Body'. The opposite of 'able-bodied' was not 'disabled' or 'deformed' but 'infirm', which denoted the incapacity to work. The freak, by nineteenth-century terminology, was not infirm, disabled, nor indeed a cripple evoking sympathy but an able-bodied performer.<sup>75</sup>

Since Durbach's contribution, the study of freakery has been approached by an array of scholars from different disciplinary perspectives. Cynthia Wu linked Disability and Asian-American Studies in her exploration of Chang and Eng where cultural anxieties concerning individuality, nationhood and normativity were imputed.<sup>76</sup> Wu expanded the analytical lens to contemporary cultural productions, building on the broader contextualisation of freakery executed by Rachel Adams who identified the paradox that while nineteenth-century freak shows declined, their representation and symbolic importance proliferated during the twentieth century.<sup>77</sup> The interest in freak show legacies and generativity was continued by Robin Blyn, Elizabeth Stephens and Helen Davies who explored, in various ways, the prevalence of freak show aesthetics and contemporary reimagining of Victorian freakery.<sup>78</sup>

Underscoring these historiographical contributions are questions of voyeurism, prurience and exploitation. The freak show has been read as exploitative and empowering.<sup>79</sup> Engagement precipitates moral and political questions: 'how do we talk about freaks without reinscribing the oppressive attitudes we attempt to critique?', as Thomson pondered.<sup>80</sup> How do we discuss a subject matter that potentially titillates and excites curiosity while at the same time trying to transcend voyeurism through historical analysis? Do we include lurid photographs of the subjects we are

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<sup>75</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 14-21.

<sup>76</sup> Cynthia Wu, *Chang and Eng Reconnected: The Original Siamese Twins in American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), pp. 5-10.

<sup>77</sup> Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Robin Blyn, *The Freak-Garde: Extraordinary Bodies and Revolutionary Art in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Elizabeth Stephens, 'Geeks and Gaffs: The Queer Legacy of the 1950s American Freak Show', in Heike Bauer and Matt Cook, *Queer 1950s: Rethinking Sexuality in the Postwar Years* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 183-195; Davies, *Neo-Victorian Freakery*, pp. 1-21.

<sup>79</sup> On the freak show as exploitative see: Mitchell and Synder, 'Exploitations of Embodiment' <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/575/752>> [accessed 3 February 2016]; David A. Gerber, 'The "Careers" of People Exhibited in Freak Shows: The Problem of Volition and Valorization', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 38-54. For the freak show as a form of empowerment see: Bodgan, *Freak Show*, pp. 267-281; Matthew Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), pp. 136-154; Cheryl Marie Wade, 'Disability Culture Rap', in *The Ragged Edge: The Disability Experience from the Pages of the First Fifteen Years of The Disability Rag*, ed. by Barrett Shaw (Louisville, KY: Avocado Press, 1994), pp. 15-18.

<sup>80</sup> Rosemarie Garland Thomson, 'Freakery Unfurled', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. ix-xi (p. x).

discussing, potentially rendering the study another freak show? And how do we address the historical baggage and appropriate usage of the term 'freak'?

It is a word that continues to hold pejorative connotations. Frederick Drimmer deemed freak an 'ugly word' preferring instead 'very special people' to encapsulate their 'dignity and courage' in the face of their 'special burden'.<sup>81</sup> Leslie Fiedler, first writing in the late 1970s, declared that 'we live at a moment when the name "Freaks" is being rejected by the kinds of physiologically deviant humans to whom it has traditionally been applied'.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the advent of the Disability Rights Movement in the 1970s sought social and political change to see the community accommodated rather than excluded but Fiedler used the term 'freak' for it captured the associated mythical, 'quasi-religious awe'. He also drew attention to the 1960s 'Cultural Revolution' where 'Freaking out' encapsulated an individual's nonconformity against dominant modes of thinking and behaving.<sup>83</sup>

But the freak, then, became a label of self-indulgence as well as an expression for alternatives to conformity.<sup>84</sup> Mary Russo argued that freakishness emerged in the 1960s as an American form of dissent: identification with the freak turned it into an act of self-will.<sup>85</sup> More recently, Robin Blyn argued for a 'Freak-Garde' in which the twentieth-century avant-garde appropriated the legacy of the freak show to critique liberal capitalism.<sup>86</sup> Although this demonstrates the flexibility and generativity of freakery, igniting questions about the particular problems of embodiment experienced by nineteenth-century freak performers, the problem of language remains. Some disability activists and scholars have used the term 'freak' as a badge of pride within the *Geek Love* mentality, a 1989 novel by Katherine Dunn that celebrated human difference and rejected the vulgarity of normality.<sup>87</sup> But the disability activist Eli Clare struggled with the term, feeling it more harmful, hurtful and unsettling than words such as 'queer' and 'cripple'.<sup>88</sup> James Gamson noted that few are willing to use the term 'freak' because, in so doing, it renders one outside social acknowledgement, although for Gamson it served as a powerful tool for resistance and rebellion.<sup>89</sup>

This thesis uses the term 'freak' in line with its use in Freak Studies: a historically specific and analytic category. Marlene Tromp and Karyn Valerius, following Rachel Adams, adopted the word for its

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<sup>81</sup> Drimmer *Very Special People*, pp. xii-xiii.

<sup>82</sup> Fiedler, *Freaks*, p. 13.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 300-319.

<sup>84</sup> Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.*, p. 139.

<sup>85</sup> Mary J. Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 75-76.

<sup>86</sup> Blyn, *The Freak-Garde*, pp. ix-xiii.

<sup>87</sup> Chemers, *Staging Stigma*, pp. 1-10.

<sup>88</sup> Eli Claire, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation* (Cambridge, MA: South End, 1999), pp. 70, 93.

<sup>89</sup> Joshua Gamson, *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 165-169.

'plasticity', fluidity and political ambiguity.<sup>90</sup> Rachel Adams' exploration of freak identity, informed by Judith Butler's description of gendered performance, maintained that the freak was 'an identity instituted through gesture, costume, and staging'; thus instituted through performance in 'a stylized repetition of acts'.<sup>91</sup> The term 'freak' was used for its lack of inherent identity: remaining historically contingent it resists ideological positioning and identity politics yet evokes the objectification to which performers were subject for entertainment and profit.<sup>92</sup>

The freak is marked by the active agency of the 'freak performer'. I use the latter because, as Adams suggested, it restores agency to the individual assuming the role of freak without essentialising their difference. It empowers the performers in freakery, treating them as effective agents in the construction of their difference.<sup>93</sup> To reiterate: freakery is deployed to signal 'the intentional performance of constructed abnormality as entertainment'.<sup>94</sup> Freak is used as a flexible, analytical category to signal the performers in the tradition of freakery. Many of the performers in this thesis would not have recognised the term nor applied the label to their own performances but the epistemological and philosophical premise of the thesis is anti-nominalist: the term 'freak' is used as a historically specific meta term to explore the nineteenth-century practice of displaying physical difference.

There is a danger, however, in losing historical specificity by uncritically applying the term 'freak'.<sup>95</sup> To avoid this pitfall, I omit 'freak' from the performers who, displaying in the tradition of freakery, would not have recognised the term. Moreover, the historically variable utterances of freakery are analysed through a case study, historically rooted approach within precise epochs. Furthermore, this thesis recognises a spectrum of performativity. Daniel Lambert, for example, did not perform in the manner of General Tom Thumb who sang and danced for audiences. Rather, Lambert's performances were confined to social occasions in rented apartments in which he conversed with visitors. But this remains a performance in Goffman's sense of a 'continual presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers'.<sup>96</sup> In the end, the use of freak is designed to question some of the premises upon which freakery has been deployed, in

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<sup>90</sup> Tromp and Valerius, 'Introduction', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 1-18 (p. 7).

<sup>91</sup> Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.*, p. 6.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-10.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Chemers, *Staging Stigma*, p. 24.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, Lucie Storchová, 'Normalizing Bodily Difference in Autobiographical Narratives of the Central European Armless Wonders Carl Hermann Unthan and Frantisek Filip', in *Exploring the Cultural History of Continental European Freak Shows*, ed. by Kérchy and Zittlau, pp. 169-192.

<sup>96</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), p. 22.



particular the recourse to Othering, the assumption of bodily centrality and the social negativity associated with the practice.

The theoretical commitments and empirical research lead to the conclusion that the distinction between the freak as a constructed performative role and the freak performer as an individual separate from the freak is an unsustainable dichotomy. Consequently, where the distinction is made, it is for heuristic purposes. In some places it helps the clarity of presentation, no more. This is not to diminish the agency of the subjects, but it is to foster a notion of subjectivity that departs from life lived in its full complexity, an agency imbricated with culture and constraints.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, as Thomson argued, to avoid reinscribing oppressive attitudes, there needs to be a focus on 'the materiality of the people who performed as freaks and the particular circumstances of their actual lives'.<sup>98</sup> These 'actual lives', however, do not reside in the realms of reality offstage as opposed to constructions onstage. Correspondingly, materiality is not treated as dichotomous to metaphor. Rather, representations rather than realities dominate. Furthermore, this thesis includes images of freaks because to withhold them would be as tantalising as publishing them, because images were part of the performance and constitute important historical evidence. Neither praise nor condemnation of freakery is argued in this thesis: in some cases the freak show was exploitative, at other times it was empowering. In this sense, as Chemers suggested, it was much like the contemporary entertainment industry.<sup>99</sup>

### **Methodology: Navigating Possibilities**

Evidently, Freak Studies is a fertile ground for scholarly engagement: serviceable to a cultural, political and/or psychoanalytical approach and enabling exploration into numerous discourses, cultural productions, power structures, relationships between Them and Us, contemporaneous entertainment environments and the formation and reflection of cultural concerns and constructed identities. There are, in short, a profusion of possibilities when analysing the freak and their shows. Indeed, the freak was constructed through a plethora of cultural strands in nineteenth-century life. The challenge is to navigate through the possibilities; drawing contours for analysis, organising materials and honing exploration into certain facets of freakery.

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<sup>97</sup> William E. Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 21-26; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 23-24.

<sup>98</sup> Thomson, 'Freakery Unfurled', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. ix-xi (p. x).

<sup>99</sup> Michael M. Chemers, 'Le Freak, C'est Chic: The Twenty-First Century Freak Show as Theatre of Transgression', *Modern Drama*, 46:2 (2003), 285-304.

When I first embarked on the PhD, I was drawn to the question of lived experience: how a freak identity shaped, reflected and encompassed the everyday life of the freak performer; how the freak construct and the performer interrelated. This reflected my interest in the lived experience of marginalised people from the past. I came to Freak Studies through the history of psychiatry, a field not dissimilar to the former: both apprehend the construction and management of difference; one through the prism of confinement, the other through the mode of display. In my work on the history of psychiatry, I argued that the historiography had become obsessed with the macro discursive construction of madness at the expense of a micro institutional analysis that explored how the management of madness affected confined people.<sup>100</sup> I took these arguments into my engagement with freaks and found that, in many ways, these concerns held true for the historiography on freak shows: a focus on social constructions and the freak show as an institution but an under evaluation of how these discourses and performances impacted the lived experience of the performer.

I found that modern biographies of famous freak performers often tried to capture lived experience but, as I argue in this thesis, these modern accounts are steeped in sentimentality and sensationalism. Many reduce performers to their physiology, using the language and imagery of the nineteenth-century freak show without critical analysis.<sup>101</sup> Others use freak show ephemera to reconstruct the life of their subject, often recapitulating the showmanship strategies of the nineteenth-century performances, while uncritically asserting anecdotes as fact.<sup>102</sup> Other modern biographies deduce character traits from freak show materials, assert them as statements of personality and steep the accounts in a piteous discourse that reveals more about the biographer's emotive response than it does the performer.<sup>103</sup> Thus unsatisfied with this work, I initially attempted

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<sup>100</sup> For the social context of madness see, for example, Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 35-60; Andrew T. Scull, *Museums of Madness: The Social Organisation of Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Allen Lane, 1979), pp. 113-119; Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct* (London: Martin Secker, 1961). For a shift away from the discursive constructions of madness see, for example, Roy Porter, *A Social History of Madness: Stories of the Insane* (London: Phoenix, 1996); Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For an explicit institutional focus see, for example, Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality and Medicine: A Study of the York Retreat, 1796-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Richard Alfred Hunter and Ida Macalpine, *Psychiatry for the Poor: 1851 Colney Hatch Asylum-Friern Hospital 1973; a Medical and Social History* (London: Dawson, 1974); Charlotte Mackenzie, *Psychiatry for the Rich: A History of Ticehurst Private Asylum, 1792-1917* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>101</sup> Marc Hartzman, *American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers* (London: Penguin Group, 2005); Francine Hornberger, *Carny Folk: The World's Wierdest Sideshow Acts* (New York: Citadel Press Books, 2005); Daniel P. Mannix, *Freaks: We Who Are Not As Others* (New York: RE/Search, 1999); Mike Parker, *The World's Most Fantastic Freaks* (London: Octopus Publishing Group, 1983).

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, Joanne Martell, *Millie-Christine*, pp. vi-viii.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, Jan Bondeson, *Freaks: The Pig-Faced Lady of Manchester Square & other Medical Marvels* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), pp. 115-116; Jeanette Sitton and Mae Siu-Wai Strohane, *Measured by the Soul: The*

to capture the lived experience of freak performers. But I came to realise, (and subsequently argue in this thesis), that I was searching for a mirage. Indeed, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's difficulty in fixing a 'Third World Woman' signifier, Rani of Sirmur, as an object of knowledge prefigured my own difficulty. Like the archives relating to Sirmur, the archives of freaks were cultural constructions dealing with objects of representations. Moreover, like the subaltern, the freak offstage was a perpetually changing and ultimately unknowable domain.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, I discovered that the existence of an 'offstage' realm distinct from an 'onstage' performance was a false dichotomy; rather, the offstage world was co-opted into the cultural work of the freak construct onstage: both onstage and offstage existed as cultural productions, representations and performances.

But before arriving at this conclusion, I had to explore the plethora of archives relating to the freak show: searching, in other words, for the freak performer. A search, however, necessarily begins at a starting point and I carried a series of theoretical principles and methodological premises that informed my exploration of the archives, although I neither set out to prove, nor deny, any assumptions.<sup>105</sup> This study, falling within the rubric of cultural history, derived impetus from New Historicism: the insistence on rendering culture as text, the emphasis given to representations, accounting for human diversity and the necessity of historicising a given episode. It propels analysis towards non-traditional sources, exploring how these were embedded in material practices and circulated in society.<sup>106</sup> In reading culture as text, (here analogous to Foucault's discursive fields), New Historicism maintains the anti-humanistic mode of criticism that rejects the notion of a 'human essence' and instead asserts the individual as inseparable (connected and created) from a matrix of social practices and material institutions governed by discourses of the dominant culture.<sup>107</sup> New Historicism has brought historicism to literary theory and criticism, expanding the nexus of representations while remaining critical of canonising texts. Moreover, the New Historicist drive to focus on the particular against scientific generalisation assists in elevating individuals and events, which feature prominently in this thesis.

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*Life of Joseph Carey Merrick also known as, The Elephant Man* ([England (?)]: Friends of Joseph Carey Merrick, 2012), p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmour: An Essay in Reading the Archives', *History and Theory*, 24:3 (1983), 247-272.

<sup>105</sup> I am hinting at the debate concerning the possibility of approaching 'a dead reality independent of the enquiry': E. H. Carr, *What is History?*, ed. by R. W. Davies (London: Penguin Group, 1990), pp. 7-30; G. R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1984), pp. 70-113.

<sup>106</sup> Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton, 'Introduction: Old, New, Now', in *Rethinking Historicism: From Shakespeare to Milton*, ed. by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 1-22; Paul Hamilton, *Historicism* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 150-163.

<sup>107</sup> Neema Parvini, *Shakespeare and Contemporary Theory: New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 97-121.

Furthermore, to refer to fabrication in the title of this thesis is to signal an indebtedness to social construction: the act of becoming. But the influence of feminist theory warned me against rigid dichotomies between the freak and freak performer and the 'linking postulates' of public and private, body and discourse, nature and culture, reality and construction.<sup>108</sup> Such dualisms result from 'a certain kind of denied dependency on a subordinated other', as the philosopher Val Plumwood argued.<sup>109</sup> This is not to erase difference or refute material reality: Judith Butler argued that the material body does exist and needs to be discussed but that it does not designate a site prior to discourse.<sup>110</sup> This interdependency between language and materiality underscored Butler's notion of performativity, discombobulating the disjuncture between the reality of sex and the appearance of gender by arguing for their interconnection.<sup>111</sup> Anne Fausto-Sterling's authoritative study similarly discredited the dualisms between male and female, sex and gender, real and constructed (sometimes framed as nature and culture), demonstrating instead their interconnections within the realm of biology. Hers was a study in 'dualisms denied' and transcended.<sup>112</sup>

Informed by these studies, I was not weighed down by them. Rather, I maintained awareness that dualisms can obscure interconnections between the sources and, as I discovered, between offstage and onstage lives. Indeed, as Toril Moi argued, there 'can be no *methodological* distinction between "life" and "text"'. In critiquing Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), Moi highlighted the interconnections between text and person: 'to read the dream is at once to read the text and the person', not because the text's meaning is the person but because 'for Freud, the person only reveals herself in the form of a text: to all practical purposes, the Freudian subject *is* a text'.<sup>113</sup> Moi was establishing the theoretical premise that guided her exploration of Simone de Beauvoir whose letters, diaries and novels were the texts that produced de Beauvoir. Although Moi suggested that she was not writing a biography, Paula Backscheider claimed the approach reflected 'neo-biographies' that are either ideological, focus on a portion of someone's life or blend intellectual biography and cultural studies.<sup>114</sup> This thesis confirms Moi's methodological premise: the distinction between life and text is unsustainable; that the two were embedded just as the freak and freak

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<sup>108</sup> Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 45.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>110</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 27-55.

<sup>111</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 128-141.

<sup>112</sup> Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*, pp. 1-29.

<sup>113</sup> Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 25-26.

<sup>114</sup> Paula R. Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 43; Caine, *Biography and History*, pp. 99-100.

performer, public and private, cannot be separated. This recognises, moreover, that to write about freakery is to engage in a form of biography: when reading the discursive freak, one is approaching the agency of the freak performer who acted the role. It is to approach an aspect of a life.

As Martin Danahay argued, all texts are spaces of identity formation; thus distinctions between autobiography, biography and fiction obscure the cultural assumptions about identity that feed into them as genres.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, freak show ephemera presents an array of representations used for identity construction. For this thesis I located freaks in newspapers, posters, photographs, engravings, novels, children's literature, poems, clothes and souvenirs. Anne Featherstone highlighted the prevalence of freaks in postcards and trade advertisements from the late nineteenth century.<sup>116</sup> Fiona Yvette Pettit noted the various print media in which freaks arose, including comic illustrations, anecdotes, nostalgic stories and reviews.<sup>117</sup> I also explored an array of materials in diverse sites, generated by the nineteenth-century proliferation of printing houses.<sup>118</sup> These included billposters, handbills and photographs contained in archives across England and America; children's stories; adult popular fiction and periodicals, newspapers and journals. I also mined 'eccentric biographies' that included freak performers: early nineteenth-century group biographies of individuals with eccentric bodies, behaviours and talents.<sup>119</sup> Collectively, these prints were increasingly communicated to an ever more literate population.<sup>120</sup>

Furthermore, freakery was a visual and auditory presence: in the early nineteenth century most exhibitions relied on 'criers' in the street. Showmen would also tempt people through oral announcements and 'show cloths' with painted pictures sometimes as 'large as life'.<sup>121</sup> Billposters and handbills were plastered on buildings, sandwich boards and distributed in the streets. Later in the century, advertising agencies promoted shows and colour and specialist typefaces were

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<sup>115</sup> Martin A. Danahay, 'Male Masochism: A Model of Victorian Identity Formation', in *Life Writing and Victorian Culture*, ed. by Amigoni, pp. 87-104.

<sup>116</sup> Anne Featherstone, 'Showing the Freaks: Photographic Images of the Extraordinary Body', in *Visual Delights: Essays on the Popular and Projected Image in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. by Simon Popple and Vanessa Toulmin (Towbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), pp. 135-142; Anne Featherstone, 'Shopping and Looking: Trade Advertisements in the Era and Performance History Research', *Nineteenth-Century Theatre*, 28:1 (2000), 26-61.

<sup>117</sup> Fiona Yvette Pettit, 'Freaks in Late Nineteenth-Century British Media and Medicine' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2012), pp. 33-35.

<sup>118</sup> Michael Twyman, *Printing 1779-1970: An Illustrated History of its Development and Uses in England* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970), pp. 5-17.

<sup>119</sup> James Gregory, 'Eccentric Lives: Character, Characters and Curiosities in Britain, c. 1760-1900', in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal: Social and Cultural Histories of Norms and Normativity*, ed. by Waltraud Ernst (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 73-100.

<sup>120</sup> Roger S. Schofield, 'Dimensions of Illiteracy in England, 1740-1850', in *The History of Reading: A Reader*, ed. by Shafquat Towheed, Rosalind Crone and Katie Halsey (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 152-160.

<sup>121</sup> LMA, Noble Collection SC/GL/NOB/C/O26/5/T.1825.112; Carl Hammer and Gideon Bosker, *Freak Show: Sideshow Banner Art* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996), pp. 10-13; Vanessa Toulmin, *Pleasurelands* (Sheffield: National Fairground Archive, 2003), pp. 7-8.

introduced to promotional materials.<sup>122</sup> An array of newspapers and political caricatures took freak shows into public and domestic domains. From the 1820s, images were provided through cheap woodcuts and lithography. The rise of pictorial journalism circulated wood-engraved images from the 1840s.<sup>123</sup> The earliest forms of photography, daguerreotypes (1839) and calotypes (1841), depicted people on display and were often used as source material for engraved illustrations from the 1870s and 1880s. By the 1890s they were being reproduced as half-tone illustrations in periodicals.<sup>124</sup> The visual predominance of freakery was bolstered by the introduction of mass produced cartes-de-visite from the 1860s.<sup>125</sup>

The profusion of source materials instantly provided a profusion of analytical possibilities: whole chapters could be written on the work of these ephemera materials, how they communicate the social construction of freaks in different ways, the manner in which freaks become embedded in cultural productions and material practices and how freakery became a changing experiential continuum from the street, the show and into the home. Indeed, the pervasiveness of freak show ephemera suggests different modes of performance and spectatorship. It hints at a porous freakery experienced outside an exhibition hall; as Sadiya Qureshi suggested, ephemera in the streets was as important as the show itself.<sup>126</sup> The permeation of freakery, moreover, demonstrates the saliency of freaks as they existed in cultural productions and domestic spaces. Indeed, I located freaks in more personal realms: in letters, diaries, scrapbooks and photograph albums, which demonstrated how the freak onstage was processed and recorded in different ways. How these freaks were collected and arranged inside the domestic space, their placement within scrapbooks, photograph albums, their embeddedness in the everyday experience of spectators, became yet another avenue for analysis.

Furthermore, the promotional materials detailed the cost and location of shows and the movement of performers across the globe, enabling an opportunity to chart the globalisation of freakery as performers crisscrossed Europe and America. Billposters detailed the full programme of entertainment, allowing for an analysis that situated the freak show within broader performance categories: circus acts, fair stalls, displays of freakish animals, magic shows and theatrical productions. The materials demonstrated what showmen thought the audience would find

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<sup>122</sup> Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, pp. 47-63; Twyman, *Printing*, pp. 36-84.

<sup>123</sup> Twyman, *Printing*, pp. 36-47.

<sup>124</sup> Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, p. 56.

<sup>125</sup> Peter Hamilton and Roger Hargreaves, *The Beautiful and the Damned: The Creation of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Photography* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2001), pp. 43-54.

<sup>126</sup> Sadiya Qureshi, 'Reading Ephemera', in *The History of Reading Volume 3: Methods, Strategies, Tactics*, ed. by Rosalind Crone and Shafquat Towheed (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 135-155.

interesting, thus revealing topical concerns and the cultural codes used to construct performed identities. But these meanings were never singular or stable, thus posing the question: which cultural strands and codes are worth detailed exploration; where should one draw the chronological limits of examination? Trying to cover everything ran the risk of a cursory exploration, while focusing on a singular theme carried the danger of simplification. Moreover, the prevalence of freakery raised further questions: did this permeation engender problems of normativity as abnormality became more prevalent; did it stabilise or destabilise the contours of normality through proximity with abnormality? The richness of the archives presented a limitless potential for analysis.

In navigating through the archives, and in my determination to explore the lives of freak performers, I paid particular attention to 'exhibition pamphlets', also known as 'true life pamphlets', the majority of which were sold within exhibitions. These pamphlets ranged in length but usually cost between six pence and one shilling with the proceeds typically going to the performer. Filled with falsities and hyperbole, exhibition pamphlets commonly included biographical information, commentary and anecdotes on the physiology and character of the exhibit. They incorporated newspaper reviews, medical testimonials, images and sometimes poems or quotations allegedly from the performer. For ethnographic displays, histories of the land and culture were also provided.<sup>127</sup> The biographies were illuminating source materials: they collapsed multiple discursive strands into a single source that articulated the manner in which a freak was constructed. Subsequently, they could be juxtaposed with other texts to explore the construction and disruptions in the social construction of freakery. Moreover, biographies elucidated the interconnections between onstage and offstage existence: seemingly 'private' affairs, whether alleged or real, were offered for public consumption in these exhibition pamphlets.

These biographies, in short, are filled with analytical potential. Heather McHold, for example, demonstrated the utility of biographies in her exploration of middle-class ideologies imbued in the presentation of late nineteenth-century freaks.<sup>128</sup> Conversely, Jacomijn Snoep noted that ethnographic exhibits were denied biographies and thus histories, becoming instead anonymous, ahistorical representatives of a race.<sup>129</sup> Thus advertised biographies breathed life and individuality into a freak construct. Furthermore, these life pamphlets were not only crucial to the fabrication and

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<sup>127</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 17-20.

<sup>128</sup> Heather McHold, 'Even as You and I: Freak Shows and Lay Discourse on Spectacular Deformity', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 21-36; Heather McHold, 'Diagnosing Difference: The Scientific, Medical, and Popular Engagement with Monstrosity in Victorian Britain' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Illinois, 2002), p. 345.

<sup>129</sup> Nanette Jacomijn Snoep, 'Savage Imagery', in *Human Zoos*, ed. by Blanchard, Boëtsch and Snoep, pp. 102-125 (p. 121).

advertisement of freak identities but they also reflected the 'Age of Biography' in which the actors performed.<sup>130</sup> Thomas Carlyle in England and Ralph Waldo Emerson in America both centralised the primacy of individual lives in the study of history.<sup>131</sup> David Amigoni's edited collection of essays highlighted the numerous forms of life writing within the nineteenth century.<sup>132</sup> Margaret Pelling argued that biography and medicine, increasingly professionalised in the nineteenth century, were 'natural partners': medicine had a narrative structure in which diagnosis was rendered from the life history of a patient.<sup>133</sup> This was particularly true of psychiatry, another professionalising discipline, in which the patient's 'story' was framed within the narrative of clinical psychiatry.<sup>134</sup> Thus biographies of freaks not only articulated the construction of a freak, they were source materials reflecting the contemporaneous concern for life histories.

But in my initial desire to access lived experience, my object of focus became increasingly elusive. The materials I explored were all cultural productions designed to advertise, or reflect upon, the phenomenon of freakery. Freak biographies were not designed to elucidate lived experience offstage. They were articles designed to use alleged 'private' details for the construction and presentation of the 'public' freak. Each freak biography had a purpose: to construct a particular freak persona within a given context. Contemporaneous exhibition pamphlets utilised life histories but they were not revelations of 'truth' or insights into a performer's sense of self. The closest I came to reconstructing lived experience, untainted by the hyperbolic, deceptive and sensationalist tendencies of the freak show, was at Chapel Hill and Raleigh, North Carolina. I sifted through Chang and Eng correspondence, ledger and account books, legal documentation, census records, slave and agricultural schedules. But while these materials were rich and insightful, and offered the best insight into lived experience, the vast majority of these letters were not written by Chang and Eng. Instead they were composed by their manager Charles Harris. They were not unmediated accounts but existed as representations of Chang and Eng's possible concerns. Moreover, they could not be dislocated from Chang and Eng's lives as performers: the material, in some form or another, reflected their experiences as performers and, indeed, the very assemblage of the archives testified to the contemporary interest in their lives as The Siamese Twins.

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<sup>130</sup> Richard D. Altick, *Lives and Letters: A History of Literary Biography in England and America* (New York: Alfred. A. Knopf, 1966), p. 77.

<sup>131</sup> Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 11-14.

<sup>132</sup> David Amigoni, 'Introduction: Victorian Life Writing: Centres, Print, Constituencies', in *Life Writing and Victorian Culture*, ed. by David Amigoni (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 1-20.

<sup>133</sup> Margaret Pelling, 'More and Better Lives—The New Edition of the DNB', *Journal of Medical Biography*, 14:1 (2006), 1.

<sup>134</sup> Carol Berkenkotter, *Patient Tales: Case Histories and the Uses of Narrative in Psychiatry* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 1-5.



When staring at Stratton's clothes the problem could become acute. His Masonic Uniform testified to his membership of the Freemasons: elements of his life distinct from the public stage. But, at the same time, images of Tom Thumb in this Masonic uniform circulated in cartes-de-visite.<sup>135</sup> His private world was advertised, promoted and consumed as part of his public persona. These clothes were another means of fabricating his identity. His court suits and top hats promoted his characterisation as a refined gentleman.<sup>136</sup> His shoes were necessary attire but articulated his diminutive proportions and were even presented as gifts to admiring acquaintances.<sup>137</sup> The distinction between a public and a private realm was eroded: when did his clothes become private statements as opposed to public ones? None of the materials seemed to stand independently, nor make much sense, without recourse to freakery.

The inaccessibility of freak performers beyond their public personas was exacerbated by the absence of their own words and thoughts. This dearth possibly reflects the low status in which some were held: in a similar manner to the sick, poor and hermaphrodites in France and Britain.<sup>138</sup> Possibly, for Chang, Eng and Pastrana, their absent words reflected a poor command of the English language. But these remain partial explanations because the English Lambert and the American Stratton were renowned and socially praised yet their personal reflections are minimal. When they do surface or when, for example, Lavinia Warren wrote and published an autobiography, the texts cannot be divorced from public performance; as Kerry Duff argued they present 'performances of subjectivity'.<sup>139</sup> Maybe, however, the absence of words was a conscious strategy: an attempt to maintain a semblance of privacy inaccessible to the contemporaneous public and now, incidentally, to the contemporary historian.

Crucially, however, what began as a search to find the performer behind the performance ended in the location of the cultural context from which the freak was formed. The materials were all performances, generated at particular moments to construct a freak identity and thus presenting a mirror to nineteenth-century society while, in the process, obscuring the lived experience of the freak performer. Therein developed the central argument of this thesis and the organisational principle from which it is presented: the offstage and onstage are not discrete realms but interconnected cultural productions bound to their period. In consequence, the freak show becomes

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<sup>135</sup> The Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, Connecticut (TBMB), Masonic Uniform, Tom Thumb, 2014.7.1 A-E.

<sup>136</sup> TBMB, Tom Thumb's Court Suit, T2008.5.1; TBMB, Box TT, Top Hat, EL 1988.111.1-112.1.

<sup>137</sup> TBMB, Box TT Footwear.

<sup>138</sup> Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 167.

<sup>139</sup> Kerry Duff, 'Biographies of Scale', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 25:4 (2005) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/617/794>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

an index for broader social change across the nineteenth century. The case studies in this thesis are chosen to represent one or more of these changes.

In this journey to and through the subject of freakery, I am aware that there are many avenues I have not taken. I could have brought urban history and historical geography to bear on this study: exploring the movement of freak performers across the globe, their interaction with the environment, the reciprocal relationships and differences between American, British and European freak shows. Indeed, I am interested in the status of freakery as an epitome of globalisation and modernity and there is certainly interesting work to be done in this area. I was tempted to explore the evolution of nineteenth-century freakery into contemporary performances, exemplified in the work of Mat Fraser and other disability performers, exploring how the dynamics of nineteenth-century freakery remain prevalent in contemporary cultural productions. Moreover, based on my experiences studying the history of psychiatry, I also considered linking the subjects of madness and freakery throughout the thesis: considering their connections, divergences and mutual dependencies in managing difference. Moreover, I contemplated a structure which focused each chapter on a specific entertainment environment: probing how the performance space affected the construction, presentation and reception of a freak.

In the end, however, I could not escape the conclusion that the freak show was a mirror to nineteenth-century society and that certain freak displays, more so than others, took us into the heart of discursive concerns and social changes. Thus the choice for each chapter, the specific case study approach, is designed to represent one or more of these changes. Daniel Lambert takes us into the heart of changing notions of gentlemanly character intersected with notions of manliness, eccentricity and English identity; Chang and Eng reveal how freakery and lived experience were interconnected, while highlighting how Orientalism and medicine defined their freakery in the early nineteenth century; Tom Thumb demonstrates the rise of a freak industry that utilised intensifying capitalist and commercial forces, including the preoccupation with fairy tales; Julia Pastrana reveals the emotions of wonder and disgust interconnected with changing notions of sexuality; and Joseph Merrick demonstrates the proliferation of an institutional culture that increasingly contained freak bodies. By using each chapter to gauge broader social, cultural and economic changes, the diachronic focus supports the additional argument mounted in this thesis; namely, that the actual display of exceptional bodies went from a small-scale to a large-scale phenomenon as the nineteenth century progressed.

## Key Concerns

In this thesis, I argue that 'onstage' and 'offstage' are not discrete domains but interconnected fields: the offstage world is co-opted to do the cultural work of fabricating freaks and becomes part of the very performance. In order to mount this argument, which challenges the hitherto entrenched historiographical dichotomy between an onstage and offstage freak existence, I have concentrated on life histories within each chapter, exploring how these were presented and asking what this reveals about freakery and the broader context from which identities were formed and displayed. It has meant engaging with biographies, both contemporaneous and contemporary, and probing this entrenched distinction between an onstage and offstage existence.

This dualism was succinctly noted by Bogdan: 'the onstage freak is something else off stage'.<sup>140</sup> Bogdan complicated the dichotomy by claiming that presentations could transform into realities, particularly in the aggrandised mode as freak performers were lured by the attributes of their freak identities.<sup>141</sup> But Bogdan was criticised by David Gerber for failing to maintain the distinction: 'it seems a logical result of Bogdan's understanding of the freak show that the dancer must ultimately be confused with the dance—or the human being with the freak'. Gerber's ultimate criticism derived from Bogdan's willingness to accept the morality of the freak show as a space creating opportunity, status and power; thus Bogdan read the lives of freak performers as if they were a 'real-life correlative'.<sup>142</sup>

Yet this remained dependent on Bogdan's distinction between an onstage and offstage life. Both Bogdan and Gerber premised their approaches on the assumption that the two were separate realms. For Gerber, this facilitated the remoralisation of the freak show as an arena exploiting disabled lives. For Bogdan, the distinction was a consequence of the social construction of the freak through organisational structures. Bogdan relied on Erving Goffman's dramaturgical and essentially dichotomous model which proposed that there are social masks and encounters of performance: 'fronts' that disguise some form of 'authentic' bodily and psychic reality.<sup>143</sup> This informed Bogdan's stress on the presentation of freaks as a stylised act reliant on tradition and social arrangements. Michael Chemers also used Goffman's framework as it enabled an analysis that 'separates the actor

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<sup>140</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, p. 3.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>142</sup> Gerber, 'The "Careers" of People Exhibited in Freak Shows', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 38-54 (p. 52).

<sup>143</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, pp. 22-30.

from the role' and could thus support Chemers' programme of asserting the active agency of freaks as cultural actors.<sup>144</sup>

For Rachel Adams, using the example of the exhibition of Wild Men, in treating the freak as a performative category it would seem 'abundantly clear' that there was a 'discrepancy between identities onstage and off' and that the 'disabled actors' performed rather than embodied freakishness.<sup>145</sup> Marlene Tromp and Karyn Valerius were equally clear that a 'palpable distinction' existed between Stratton as a freak performer and Tom Thumb as a freak persona.<sup>146</sup> Cynthia Wu drew a sharp distinction between materiality and metaphor: Chang and Eng as real people and Chang and Eng as discursive constructs; a dualism analogous to distinctions between 'impairment' and 'disability', body and discourse, reality and construction and, indeed, the freak onstage versus offstage.

This latter distinction establishes a dichotomous framework that resurrects an Enlightenment view of agency. This supposes autonomy and a causation of action and result: the performer decides to assume a role and leaves behind some kind of 'authentic' or 'real' life, which they reassume once the performance is complete. Rikke Andreassen and Anne Folke Henningsen centralised this form of agency in their exploration of nineteenth-century 'human zoos'. 'Agency and the People Behind the Exhibitions' suggested that a behind-the-scenes existence was distinct from an onstage performance.<sup>147</sup> But I have come to the conclusion that this form of agency, underpinning a distinction between offstage and onstage realities, is unsustainable. Theoretically, the Enlightenment notion of agency centralises autonomy at the expense of multiple interconnections and constraints.<sup>148</sup> Empirically, the archives illuminating agency offstage are cultural productions utilised in the display of freaks onstage. The materials are not windows into a freak performer's sense of self nor do they present 'realities' distinct to performance 'representations': life and text were intertwined.

This thesis also argues that freak identities were ambiguously constructed and ambivalently received. David Gilmore sought to explore the 'moral ambiguities and affective ambivalence' of monsters: their power derived from fusion, merger, subversion and reversion of ontology, dualisms and distinctions. Hinting at the universalism inherent in his Freudian inspired study, Gilmore

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<sup>144</sup> Chemers, *Staging Stigma*, p. 17.

<sup>145</sup> Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.*, p. 6.

<sup>146</sup> Tromp and Valerius, 'Introduction', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 1-18 (p. 11).

<sup>147</sup> Rikke Andreassen, *Human Exhibitions: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Ethnic Displays* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 83-114.

<sup>148</sup> Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, pp. 21-26; Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp. 23-24.

concluded that monsters could 'overcome the barrier of time' and represent our 'innermost selves'.<sup>149</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argued that the monster, as pure culture, evoked both fear and desire, escaping categories in an ontological liminality that demands a response to the question of 'why we have created them'.<sup>150</sup> Margrit Shildrick also acknowledged a post-Freudian interpretation, arguing that the monster created a space for open signification derivative from the status of paradox. But despite Shildrick's insistence on discursive formations creating all beings and selves, she implied a universal analysis which maintained the 'inherent ambiguity' of the monster throughout time.<sup>151</sup> This was a consequence of the monster's hybridity: the 'surface manifestations of a much deeper uncertainty and vulnerability of the self'.<sup>152</sup>

If everything is constructed, however, there can be no inherent existence. The ambiguity of monstrosity was neither an inherent part of the discursively constructed monster nor was it necessarily a consequence of the self's vulnerability. Rather, when ambiguity was detectable, it reflected the unification of discourses and seeming binaries at a specific historical moment. It was, moreover, manifest in the linguistic dilemmas provoked by an encounter with difference. In this thesis, therefore, the universalism implicit in psychoanalysis is avoided for its methodological incompatibility with a social constructionist approach. Rather, this thesis centralises historicism and a focus on social construction within specific epochs. In this approach, I have located historic moments of ambiguity and ambivalence as an overriding central component of freakery. Indeed, I argue that while markers of difference were crucial to public performances, normality was equally prevalent. Discourses of gentlemanliness, masculinity and femininity even led to the praise of freak performers as models worthy of imitation. As Lillian Craton argued in her exploration of disabled characters in nineteenth-century British fiction, the freak could 'often play surprisingly positive roles'.<sup>153</sup>

Throughout this thesis I challenge the tyranny of oppositions that has marked a number of critical expositions into freakery. It has been treated as axiomatic that the freak exemplifies difference: the antinormative representation. The freak is either perceived as oppositional to the norm or a figure that collapses normative discourses into a representation. The danger is to perceive the freak in

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<sup>149</sup> David D. Gilmore, *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and all Manner of Imaginary Terrors* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 18, 194.

<sup>150</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 3-25 (p. 20).

<sup>151</sup> Margrit Shildrick, *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), pp. 1-27 (p. 20).

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>153</sup> Lillian Craton, *The Victorian Freak Show: The Significance of Disability and Physical Differences in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Fiction* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009), p. 4.

dichotomous terms: assuming an antinormative position that looks at how the freak disrupts normativity without considering the nature of the norms or how the freak representation is an extension of norms rather than a disruption. As Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth Wilson argued in their seminal article on Queer Theory and its alliance with antinormativity, the norm is neither restrictive nor exclusive; in fact, through the notion of averages, which developed at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the norm functioned by 'collating the world'.<sup>154</sup> The norm incorporates difference, the centre and the periphery, and it evaluates everything. The norm is neither stable nor immobile but a complex domain which intersects with notions of difference, which are included within the shifting and multivalent realms of normativity. This movement of athwart, rather than opposition, between norms and antinorms is explored in this thesis which notes how monstrosity, eccentricity and freakery were incorporated into normativity; how difference existed in degrees rather than absolutes; how freakery achieved integration rather than exclusion within broader contemporaneous practices, discourses and professions. As a corollary, then, the terms 'freak' and 'freakery', as deployed in this thesis, do not necessarily signal an opposition to the norm. Like Matt Cook's use of 'queer', freakery has various meanings and associations. It incorporates the sense of oddity and eccentricity, but with imprecise ways of indicating abnormality, and freakery could simultaneously incorporate other discourses, identities and notions of normality.<sup>155</sup>

In a similar vein, I argue that character and personality, as much as physiology, were central to freakery, shifting attention away from the discourses that marked the body as stigmatic and towards the discourses that normalised and extolled freaks for their encapsulation of hegemonic discourses. Performed identities could become a composite of normative notions ambiguously straddling structural dualisms both denied and enforced. This, in turn, led to a polymorphism as freak identities shifted ground, multiplied and transformed. These shifts reflected broader discursive altercations and, in some cases, the lived experience of performers themselves. As their lives developed, their freak identities followed. Similarly, as cultural concerns shifted, freak constructions responded. Yet the ambiguous nature of these identities ignited ambivalent responses, explored through corresponding problems of language.

The interconnections between normality and abnormality, and the discourse of freakery and other cultural concerns, suggests a phenomenon which could be described as 'permafreakery'. Barry Reay, in his seminal study on Arthur Munby, argued for a 'permasexuality' operative in nineteenth-century

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<sup>154</sup> Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth A. Wilson, 'Introduction: Antinormativity's Queer Conventions', *Differences*, 26:1 (2015), 1-25 (p. 17).

<sup>155</sup> Matt Cook, *Queer Domesticities: Homosexuality and Home Life in Twentieth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 7-10, 209-214.

society: a sexualisation that permeated all facets of cultural life, including the perceptions of historical agents.<sup>156</sup> In the realm of freakery, this permalsexuality appears prevalent: Chang, Eng, Tom Thumb and Julia Pastrana all had children, (or at least allegedly had children), which was widely advertised during their shows and heightened the titillation and sexualisation of their freakish bodies. But this permalsexuality met a permafreakery in which the freakish body, the object and subject of sexual and voyeuristic impulses, proliferated beyond the confines of an exhibition space both materially and representationally. Freak performances occurred in a variety of spaces, they were advertised through a variety of means and freak identities were constructed on the basis of multiple cultural strands. Freakery, then, was a pervasive, adaptable and polymorphic performance of constructed abnormality, which moves the debate beyond the perception that freakery was an antinormative category or a contained form of entertainment.

There are notable precedents for reading freakery beyond an Othering framework. Rebecca Stern suggested 'affiliation' as 'an effort toward alliance, collaboration, and understanding; it recognises difference but neither fetishizes nor seeks to erase it'.<sup>157</sup> Martha Stoddard Holmes, prioritising 'ability trouble' in her analysis, drew attention to the ways in which Wilkie Collins' *The Law and the Lady* (1875) used the disabled figure of Miserrimus Dexter as 'an endorsement of irregular bodies'.<sup>158</sup> Christopher Smit, exploring the photographs of Charles Eisenmann in the late nineteenth century, considered notions of responsibility, reciprocity and cultural union which led him to conclude that Eisenmann's photographs suggest a new aesthetic based on mutuality and equality between disabled subject and nondisabled photographer.<sup>159</sup> Christian Flaugh's study of human bodies and cultural narratives in twentieth-century Francophile texts moved beyond the dichotomy of 'disabled' and 'non-disabled' by highlighting the transiency of ability, narrative and identity as freak identities moved in a 'spectrum of bodily abilities'.<sup>160</sup>

Thus freakery can be read beyond the category of Otherness with an awareness of moments of affiliation, collaboration and abilities. Thomson highlighted the paradox that while 'enfreakment elaborately foregrounds specific bodily eccentricities, it also collapses all those differences into a

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<sup>156</sup> Barry Reay, *Watching Hannah: Sexuality, Horror and Bodily De-formation in Victorian England* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), pp. 164-165.

<sup>157</sup> Rebecca Stern, 'Our Bear Women, Ourselves: Affiliating with Julia Pastrana', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 200-233 (p. 204).

<sup>158</sup> Martha Stoddard Holmes, 'Queering the Marriage Plot: Wilkie Collins's *The Law and the Lady*', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 237-258 (p. 239).

<sup>159</sup> Christopher Smit, 'A Collaborative Aesthetic: Levinas's Idea of Responsibility and the Photographs of Charles Eisenmann and the Late Nineteenth-Century Freak-Performer', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 283-311.

<sup>160</sup> Christian Flaugh, *Operation Freak: Narrative, Identity, and the Spectrum of Bodily Abilities* (Montréal, Québec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), p. 9.

“freakery”, a single amorphous category of corporeal otherness’.<sup>161</sup> While her stress on amorphousness anticipated the complex and ambivalent renderings she deduced from freakery, the tendency to use the terms ‘freakery’, ‘freak’ and ‘Other’ as synonymous implies a social negativity and dichotomy between Other and Same when positivity and interdependencies often prevailed.

In this thesis, these arguments are located in the broader entertainment context of nineteenth-century London. This approach was evident in Richard Altick’s contextualisation of exhibitions within the London amusement industry or Clare Sears’ exploration into hetero-normative public spaces in nineteenth-century San Francisco, which examined both the criminalisation of cross-dressing and the commercial freak show.<sup>162</sup> By focusing on moments of freakery in London, this thesis shifts the focus away from the American experience, which gained prominence after Bogdan’s exposition. Andrea Dennett, for example, explored the American Dime Museum, a popular space which synthesised entertainment and education, chronicling its evolution from a cabinet of curiosities to its zenith in the latter half of the century and finally to its demise as a victim of competition from newer amusements.<sup>163</sup> James Cook similarly focused on the American popular amusement industry in a 2001 study which considered a mode of popular culture known as ‘artful deception’.<sup>164</sup> This geographical emphasis has recently given way to studies on British freakery and European freak shows that demonstrated how freakery became an established part of the entertainment industry across Europe.<sup>165</sup>

But while scholars are increasingly expanding freakery’s geographical remit, there remains a tendency to read the freak show only from the mid-nineteenth century. This is for good reason: it was from 1847 that the term ‘freak’ became synonymous with corporeal difference. It was also from the 1840s that rising commercial entertainment, imperialism and taxonomy supported and reflected the interest in freak shows. But many of the economic and cultural forces that supported the burgeoning of freakery were part of longer term trends. Moreover, as freakery was the ‘enactment of a tradition’, a broader sense of freakery’s evolution is enabled when the chronological parameters

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<sup>161</sup> Thomson, ‘Introduction’, in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 1-22 (p. 10).

<sup>162</sup> Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London: A Panoramic History of Exhibitions, 1800-1862* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1978), pp. 253-267; Clare Sears, ‘Electric Brilliancy: Cross-Dressing Law and Freak Show Displays in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco’, in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, ed. by Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 554-564.

<sup>163</sup> Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

<sup>164</sup> James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 8-9, 13-14, 119-162.

<sup>165</sup> Anna Kérchy and Andrea Zittlau, ‘Introduction’, in *Exploring the Cultural History of Continental European Freak Shows*, ed. by Kérchy and Zittlau, pp. 1-19.



are pushed back to the early nineteenth century.<sup>166</sup> I argue that the public performance of bodies deemed different, for the purpose of amusement, profit and occasionally education, went from a small-scale, transitory phenomenon to a large-scale, commercial enterprise across the nineteenth century. The development was not linear or absolute but it captured a general trend that denotes the integration of freakery within London amusement and beyond. The 1840s was a crucial decade both in terms of the commercialisation, formalisation and professionalisation of freakery but also because the boundaries of exhibition spaces were dissolved. As the forces of modernity intensified, freak representations proliferated from the stage and into the streets and homes of Victorian London.

By charting the changing practice of freakery across the nineteenth century, the freak show becomes an index for broader discursive changes as the social construction of freaks mirrored Victorian culture. In this thesis, therefore, I demonstrate a series of changes, such as the shifts in gentlemanliness from a social to a moral category; the rise of character as a quality that could be taught and learnt; the uneasy synthesis between gentlemanliness and the divergent and changing notions of manliness; the permeation of sexuality within culture and perceptions; the ambiguous role of Orientalism and imperialism; the development of medicine and institutionalism; the rise of commercialisation, a freak industry and a fairy-tale craze; the role of emotions and the position of natural history and embalming practices as they relate to freakery; the importance of biography and autobiography in nineteenth-century culture; and the changing tastes and entertainment forms as they impacted freakery. All these discourses, practices and professions were subject to moments of change, rapture and influence on contemporaneous society and, by extension, freakery.

## **Thesis Layout**

The New Historicists Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher centralised the importance of ‘an encounter with the singular, the specific, and the individual’.<sup>167</sup> From here the diversity of human experience can be found as culture comprises one large text within an interlocking web of smaller texts. Hence each chapter in this thesis emphasises the particular: a constructed identity, displayed at a particular moment as a vehicle into discursive changes. Each life and identity represents a unit from which a series of discourses and historical forces converged. But Greenblatt and Gallagher mused on this subsequent dilemma: if all culture is text and if specific units are a fruitful source for

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<sup>166</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, p. 3.

<sup>167</sup> Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 6.

analysis, where does one designate the boundaries of those units and which are the significant ones? There are no theoretical answers to these questions; rather, the required approach is receptiveness to materials rich in what Ezra Pound called 'interpreting detail'.<sup>168</sup> In this thesis, exhibition pamphlets are the preliminary materials for interpretation. Each chapter begins by rooting analysis in a biographical sketch of the performer before considering the means by which the social construction of the public identity was effected and its wider significance. This involves the exploration of freakery as it reflected significant cultural concerns at particular historical junctures.

Chapter One, 'Daniel Lambert, The Fat Man: Biographies, Characters, Eccentricity and English Identity', explores the role of biographies in establishing a series of public identities connected to notions of wonder, prodigy and eccentricity. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Lambert's display corresponded to modes of presentation prevalent in the preceding century. Within eccentric biographies and life pamphlets, however, his live exhibitions assumed a textual form. Reading these as specific entertainment environments, I argue that the biographies, in an attempt to sell publications, adopted the intentions to entertain and edify. As a result, Lambert's physiological difference was mitigated in favour of ideal character traits presented as worthy of imitation. Furthermore, they carried national relevance which turned Lambert into an icon of England: the apparent Other incorporated into national discourse as an epitome of England. This chapter takes us into the heart of notions concerning gentlemanliness, masculinity and eccentricity, unified around the notion of character, which reflected changing ideas of Englishness.

Chapter Two, 'Chang and Eng, The Siamese Twins: Medicine, Orientalism and Everyday Life', explores the 1829 and 1830 display of Chang and Eng when they were first exhibited in London. They were presented as ethnic and biological Others, but not quite. A reciprocal relationship was established between freakery and medicine and their display was a site for a coalition of interests between the agents of exhibition, medicine and anatomy. Chang and Eng's presentation also drew on prevalent and paradoxical notions about Asia, the Siamese and the Chinese. These, in turn, placed the twins amidst a matrix of notions concerning Oriental Otherness. But rather than strengthening their essential difference to Western spectators, Chang and Eng were brought into the fields of medicine, natural history and imperial expansion that undermined their potential difference while dissolving the entertainment boundaries of freakery. This permeation also occurred at the personal level: Chang and Eng's private worlds both impacted and defined their public presentation

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<sup>168</sup> Gallagher and Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, p. 15.

as The Siamese Twins. Conversely, their status as The Siamese Twins impacted their families who became involved in their displays.

Chapter Three, 'Charles Stratton, The Man in Miniature: Fairies, Commodities and the Freak Industry', explores the fabrication of General Tom Thumb: praised as a perfect gentleman nonetheless made paradoxical by statements concerning his manly virility and infantile size. In touching upon notions of gentlemanliness and masculinity, this chapter draws connections to the arguments mounted in relation to Daniel Lambert. Tom Thumb, moreover, was represented both as a man and as a fairy, taking his constructed persona into the realm of children's literature from which it was partly derived. Tom Thumb's performances, managed by the American showman P. T. Barnum, were contingent on the expanding commercial and capitalist forces that changed the value of freaks and the means by which they were presented. In turn, a 'freak industry' was born: larger in scale, populated by full-time professional freak performers, commercially expansive and global in scale.

Chapter Four, 'Julia Pastrana, The Baboon Lady: Wonder, Disgust and Biographical Mystery', focuses on the centrality of biographical mystery in the fabrication of Pastrana who performed in London in 1857 and again in 1862 after her embalment. Contemporary historians, biographers and artists have sought to posit the 'truth' about Pastrana's life and character but have unwittingly perpetuated the sensationalist mysteries prevalent in her freak show. It is argued that these mysteries were central to her social construction. The sexual and colonial motifs embedded in Pastrana's promotional material insinuated that her mother had copulated with bears and baboons. At the same time, however, it was claimed that Pastrana's feminine attributes predominated over the bestial. This uneasy synthesis defined the reactions of two nineteenth-century spectators: the naturalist Francis Buckland and the civil servant Arthur Munby. The former was drawn to the process of embalment and the feminine attributes underpinning Pastrana's character. His reaction was filled with wonder based on his commitment to Creationism. Munby, on the other hand, was drawn to the bestial aspect of Pastrana, responding to her display with disgust. His reaction was conditioned by Darwinian thinking. In this chapter, therefore, the fabrication process is brought towards the spectators themselves, revealing how reactions to Pastrana differed based on individual references, prejudices and interests.

The final chapter, 'Joseph Merrick, The Elephant Man: Exhibiting, Confining and Making Elephant Men', explores four constructions of Merrick. The first source is the alleged autobiography of Merrick, sold at his exhibitions, which constructed an independent, self-reliant protagonist who gained employment in the benign freak show. This image is offset by Francis Carr-Gomm, Chairman

of the London Hospital, who wrote to *The Times* in 1886 and 1887. He portrayed Merrick as a deserving recipient of charity who had been maltreated in the malevolent freak show. Thirty-three years later Frederick Treves, the surgeon who cared for Merrick at the London Hospital, wrote his own self-glorified account. Treves emphasised his role in the 'rescue' of Merrick who was presented as an object of Otherness: brutalised, feminised, infantilised and tragically seeking a life of normality which ultimately led to his death. Finally, this image was challenged by the London showman Tom Norman who argued in 1923 that the real crime was to deprive Merrick of his economic independence and confine him to the London Hospital as a dependent. Underscoring these Elephant Men was the increasingly tense relationship between freakery and medicine.

These five identities present a picture of change and continuity in the practice of freakery and the cultural life of nineteenth-century London and beyond. The case studies suggest that public presentations of freaks were ambiguous, ambivalent and transitory constructions, utilising notions of abnormality and normality to present topical and liminal identities. These freak identities were articulated through life histories that brought character, individuality and uniqueness into the performed identities who exhibited, across the nineteenth century, in small-scale transitory exhibitions that increasingly became large-scale commercial enterprises tied to the burgeoning entertainment industry. These sites did not restrict representations of freakery but rather proliferated the representations of freaks as they embedded and permeated nineteenth-century culture.

## Chapter One

### Daniel Lambert, The Fat Man: Biographies, Characters, Eccentricity and English Identity

The half-courteous, half-sullen manner in which this 'gross fat man' received the majority of his visitors met the humour of my husband, and he liked as well as pitied him; for it was distressing sometimes to hear the coarse observations made by unfeeling people, and the silly unthinking questions asked by many of them about his appetite, &c.<sup>1</sup>

Anne Jackson Mathews, writing about her husband, the comedian Charles Mathews, thus commented on the "gross fat man" Daniel Lambert. In contemporaneous sources Lambert was not described as a 'freak of nature', a term which emerged from 1847, but rather as a 'wonder', 'prodigy' or 'eccentric'. He testifies to the linguistic and discursive nexus from which the 'freak of nature' would arise by the mid-nineteenth century. In this sense, then, he is an introduction, a background, to the freak show: his presence enabling a chronological evaluation of freakery across the nineteenth century. A native of Leicester, Lambert spent the last three years of his life exhibiting across England at an alleged weight of fifty-two stones and eleven pounds.<sup>2</sup> In opening with Mathews, I want to suggest the multiplicity of readings and responses engendered by freakery. Mathews articulated the crudeness, rudeness and pity Lambert received but in the rest of this chapter I argue that multiple Lamberts were constructed through a number of biographies that turned Mathews' "gross fat man" into a subject of praise. Lambert's character profiles were used to exemplify positive attributes of gentlemanliness, manliness and eccentricity, which were projected into a nationalist discourse that turned Lambert into a positive symbol of Englishness.

Daniel Lambert, like the other agents of this thesis, offers a range of analytical possibilities. Although my argument centralises gentlemanly character, which intersects with notions of manliness and national identity, Lambert also offers an opportunity to chart the importance of place and travel. Lambert's movement across Britain, in particular his relationship to London and Stamford, opens the door to an analysis that explores the relationship between Lambert's smaller regional exhibitions and those in London. Furthermore, while this chapter explores visual depictions of Lambert, more could be said on the role of clothing to enhance his display and the role of furniture to support his exceptional size. This, in turn, could bring material culture into an analysis of freakery and fatness.

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Mathews [Anne Jackson], *The Life and Correspondence of Charles Mathews the Elder, Comedian* (London: Warne and Routledge, 1860), p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Bondeson, *Freaks: The Pig-Faced Lady of Manchester Square & other Medical Marvels* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), pp. 131-134.

There are further analytical possibilities: a longer durational analysis of aberrant size and the changing and multiple forms of displaying corpulence through human and animal exhibitions; a deeper exploration of Lambert's relationship to eccentricity and, by extension, the intersections between discourses of freakery and eccentricity; and the legacy of Lambert beyond the early nineteenth century, which could explore, amongst others, his cultural embeddedness in literature. Nonetheless, in line with the organising principle of this thesis, which explores case studies that index change across the nineteenth century, this chapter focuses specifically on the discourses of gentlemanly character and manliness, alongside their relationship to eccentricity and Englishness, which were crucial building blocks in the social construction of Lambert's freakery.

Lambert was identified as much by his character as by physiology. By character I mean 'moral constitution, personality' as defined in one variant by the *Oxford English Dictionary*.<sup>3</sup> This naturally masks the complexity of the term in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Character assumed various meanings in different contexts and did not signal a consistent set of qualities.<sup>4</sup> As Stefan Collini argued, the notion of character remained prominent in Victorian political thought, denoting the moral qualities of an individual alongside an evaluative element.<sup>5</sup> Where relevant, these complexities are explored. To add a caveat, however, character is not considered distinct from the body. Physiognomy, promoted as a science by philosophers and scientists from Aristotle to Carl G. Jung, was only one expression of the belief that human personality could be read on the basis of appearance. Physiognomists thought that reading the face, hands, eyes and posture could reveal truths about the 'inner man'. In *Essays on Physiognomy* which first appeared in French (1775-1778), then in English (1789-1798), Joseph Kasper Lavater claimed:

The beauty and deformity of the countenance is in a just and determinate proportion to the moral beauty and deformity of the man. The morally best, the most beautiful. The morally worst, the most deformed.<sup>6</sup>

Lambert's presentation reversed that assumption. But as an Englishman displayed at the beginning of the century, Lambert has largely been omitted from Freak Studies with its predominant focus on

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<sup>3</sup> 'character, n.' *OED Online*

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/30639?rskey=qN5xW3&result=1&isAdvanced=false>> [accessed 4 February 2016].

<sup>4</sup> Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class in England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 62-69.

<sup>5</sup> Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Sinclair Carey, 'The Quasimodo Complex: Deformity Reconsidered', in *The Tyranny of the Normal: An Anthology*, ed. by Carol Donley and Sheryl Buckley (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1996), pp. 27-52 (p. 32).

America or the British freak show from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> A notable exception is Joyce Huff who explored Lambert's fatness as a 'positive symbol of English eccentricity' evidenced in his framing as John Bull, the icon of England. Pitted against the small frame of Napoleon during the Napoleonic War, Lambert's association with John Bull turned the 'freak' into a 'national symbol'. At the same time, however, Huff argued that Lambert encapsulated broader fears about the management of consumer desire as his corpulence represented aberrant consumption of space, resources and goods.<sup>8</sup> Paul Youngquist developed this analysis by highlighting Lambert's representational 'double work of deviance': a singular body which nonetheless upheld normative structures as he embodied the 'true born Englishman'.<sup>9</sup>

Sander Gilman, on the other hand, placed Lambert in the long discourse of obesity as an example of 'the freakish nature of fat'.<sup>10</sup> Gilman read Lambert within a medical discourse from the 1860s, one which increasingly turned fatness into a pathological disease rather than a fashion or moral failing.<sup>11</sup> In these interpretations, Lambert's corporeality remained the ultimate marker of his difference and the site from which analysis centred. For Huff, Lambert's physiology was the space in which Victorian consumer anxieties were imputed. Even when his extraordinariness was presented in a positive fashion, it served to reinforce the norms that stigmatised fat people and thus bolstered Lambert's difference: Youngquist's 'double work of deviance'.

This chapter, on the other hand, shows a disjuncture between Lambert's fatness and his numerous character profiles. Presented as a model worthy of imitation, Lambert was constructed and praised beyond his physiology. It was his morals which made him a gentleman; his corpulence was almost incidental. These arguments are mounted by analysing 'eccentric biographies', a genre spanning the 1790s to 1900s. The eccentrics included abnormal bodies, behaviours, talents and inanimate objects presented in a series of biographies, filled with anecdotes, often accompanied with portraits and usually comprising moralistic statements. Eccentric biographies could be found in expensively bound books and cheaper collections in chapbooks, pamphlets and periodicals. They were located in numerous spaces: the libraries of aristocrats, newsagents, lending libraries and second-hand booksellers. According to James Gregory, a crucial space was the bourgeois home which enabled

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<sup>7</sup> For a short discussion on Lambert in reference to jovial fat men see: Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981), pp. 128-129.

<sup>8</sup> Joyce L. Huff, 'Freaklore: The Dissemination, Fragmentation, and Reinvention of the Legend Daniel Lambert, King of Fat Men', in *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. by Marlene Tromp (Columbus: Ohio State University), pp. 37-59 (p. 51).

<sup>9</sup> Paul Youngquist, *Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> Sander L. Gilman, *Obesity: The Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Sander L. Gilman, *Fat: A Cultural History of Obesity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), pp. 80-85.

eccentric biographies to place ‘abnormality on the national stage’ from the late eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Victoria Carroll has also shown how eccentric biographies catered to a diverse social audience who did not necessarily require advanced literary skills as the short, well-defined sections of text made consumption manageable.<sup>13</sup> Following from historians who have stressed the equivalence between eccentric biographies and the live freak show, this chapter explores eccentric biographies as specific ‘entertainment environments’ that informed the construction of Lambert.<sup>14</sup> This develops Vanessa Toulmin’s suggestion that ‘entertainment environments’ could have a direct bearing on the experience and format of viewing freaks.<sup>15</sup>

The same approach is adopted for the second set of biographies analysed in this chapter, a series of ‘life pamphlets’ published in 1809. The first edition was published five days after Lambert’s death by John Drakard who, a few months later, started the weekly *Stamford News*.<sup>16</sup> By the end of 1809 there were four editions of Lambert’s life pamphlets being sold in London and Leicester, according to the pamphlet’s publishing details.<sup>17</sup> By 1818 there was an edition published in America and, as late as 1892, another edition in Stamford.<sup>18</sup> The life pamphlets were short biographical sketches of approximately twenty-eight pages, written by an anonymous author or authors and sold for six pence. While Lambert was the focus, they also included shorter biographies of other corpulent individuals. This turned the life pamphlets, much like the eccentric biographies, into ‘collective biographies’: the combination of subjects to represent the phenomenon of fatness or eccentricity.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> James Gregory, ‘Eccentric Lives: Character, Characters and Curiosities in Britain, c. 1760-1900’, in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal: Social and Cultural Histories of Norms and Normativity*, ed. by Waltraud Ernst (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 73-100 (p. 73).

<sup>13</sup> Victoria Carroll, *Science and Eccentricity: Collecting, Writing and Performing Science for Early Nineteenth-Century Audiences* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), p. 23-25.

<sup>14</sup> Victoria Carroll, ‘“Beyond the Pale of Ordinary Criticism”: Eccentricity and the Fossil Books of Thomas Hawkins’, *Isis*, 98:2 (2007), 225-265; Fiona Yvette Pettit, ‘Freaks in Late Nineteenth-Century British Media and Medicine’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2012), pp. 35-37.

<sup>15</sup> Vanessa Toulmin, ‘“Curios Things in Curios Places”: Temporary Exhibition Venues in the Victorian and Edwardian Entertainment Environment’, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 4:2 (2006), 113-138.

<sup>16</sup> G. F. R. Barker, ‘Drakard, John (1774/5–1854)’, rev. M. Clare Loughlin-Chow, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8019>> [accessed 4 February 2016].

<sup>17</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man, the Late Daniel Lambert* (Stamford: J. Drakard, 1809), title page.

<sup>18</sup> Anon., *The Late Daniel Lambert, from his Birth to the Moment of his Dissolution, with an Account of Men Noted for their Corpulency, and other Interesting Matter* (New York: Samuel Woods & Sons, 1818); Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Human Mammoth Daniel Lambert* (Stamford: Post Printing Works, 1892).

<sup>19</sup> Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 47-65.



These materials have escaped sustained historical scrutiny, especially within Freak Studies, although some nineteenth-century biographies have been used in modern accounts of Lambert's life. But, uncritically deployed, this usage has led to the recapitulation of contemporaneous presentations. David Clarke, Jan Bondeson, David Haslam and Fiona Haslam all retold nineteenth-century anecdotes about Lambert as if they were 'fact', rather than intentional biographical strategies desiring to mix entertainment with edification.<sup>20</sup> Philippa Massey, on the other hand, went *In Search of Daniel Lambert* in 2009 and unearthed some important documents that revealed further details about Lambert's family history. But her desire to uncover an 'authentic' Lambert led to the attribution of motives and intentions on a man whose constructed public persona masked contemporaneous marketing strategies and conventions of writing designed to project a certain image.<sup>21</sup>

There is a dearth of primary material directly from Lambert. Nonetheless, in a rare letter dated 12 May 1805 Lambert acknowledged the receipt of two cocks and four hens, one of which he returned with the letter for 'she goes upon the nest every day, and comes from thence cackling but never lays—consequently she is of no service to me.'<sup>22</sup> It offers a glimpse of Lambert outside the milieu of exhibitions: a businessman involved in the breeding of cocks and hens. But the vast majority of available sources are representations of Lambert, written by others, regarding his life as a displaying Fat Man. The same is true with Lambert as with the other performers in this thesis: it is representations not discrete 'realities' that predominate and it is the words of others, not the words of performers, which dominate.

Lambert remains a public image, a social construction, so when the *Oxford National Biography* reconstructed Lambert's life, claiming he was fond of walking, swimming, hunting, 'drank only water, and slept less than eight hours a day', it projected statements of questionable veracity drawn from sources constructing a certain image of Lambert.<sup>23</sup> It used anecdotes infused with meanings which underscored the construction of a series of Lamberts, echoing broader discursive concerns about fatness and character. The point here is not to disparage biographies but rather to frame the life of Lambert within a critical discourse that explores the function and purpose of the sources that presented his life. In the process, a singular Lambert evaporates and a multiplicity of constructed Lamberts come into view.

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<sup>20</sup> David T. D. Clarke, *Daniel Lambert* (Leicester: Leicestershire Museums, 1981), pp. 1-2; Bondeson, *Freaks*, p. 113; David Haslam and Fiona Haslam, *Fat, Gluttony and Sloth: Obesity in Literature, Art and Medicine* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Philippa Massey, *In Search of Daniel Lambert* (Stamford: Stamford Museum, 2009), p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Stamford Town Hall, Lincolnshire (STH), Daniel Lambert Folder F52LAM.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Seccombe, 'Lambert, Daniel (1770–1809)', rev. E. L. O'Brien, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15932>> [accessed 4 February 2016].

## Biographical Sketch

This biographical sketch offers a brief outline of Lambert's life as recounted in the 1809 life pamphlets. They claim he was born on 13 March 1770 in the parish of St. Margaret, Leicester. His parents had three other children who were ordinarily sized and, although Lambert had a 'heavy' auntie and uncle, there were no family traits to suggest he would become extremely fat.<sup>24</sup>

Allegedly, Lambert was raised around 'horses, dogs, and cocks, and all the other appendages of sporting'. In 1784, at the age of fourteen, Lambert was apprenticed to a die-casting and engraving business in Birmingham. He served four years, (out of the standard seven), and returned to Leicester where his life was purportedly filled with adventure. He narrowly escaped a devastating fire and got into a fight with a performing bear striking 'her with his left hand such a violent blow on the skull, as brought her to the ground; on which she declined the contest, and "yelling fled"'.<sup>25</sup>

In the early 1790s, when Lambert succeeded his father as keeper of the Leicester gaol, 'his bulk received the greatest and most rapid increase'. This was 'attributed to the confinement and sedentary life' of being a gaol keeper. In his job he was renowned for compassion, his 'disposition fraught with benevolence', and he continued as keeper until the Easter of 1805 when the prison was closed. Lambert was granted an annuity of fifty pounds for life, read by the life pamphlets as 'proof of the approbation which his conduct had merited'.<sup>26</sup>

It was around this time that Lambert allegedly gained notoriety for his corpulence. He was framed as a shy yet witty man who hid from the prying eyes of curiosity seekers. One anecdote reported that a stranger called on Lambert at home whereby his servant answered the door and informed the caller that the shy master never received strangers: "'Let him know," replied the curious stranger, "that I called about some cocks"'. Lambert overheard and reportedly called "tell the gentlemen that I am a Shy-cock".<sup>27</sup>

The sources tell how Lambert felt 'dread' at the prospect of being 'exposed to indignity and insult from the curiosity' of the public. But in April 1806 he decided to exhibit his body realising 'he must either submit to be a closed prisoner in his own house, or endure all the inconveniences without

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<sup>24</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 4, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

receiving the profits of an exhibition'. Thus while he 'abhorred the very idea of exhibiting himself', he eventually conceded to exhibit his body.<sup>28</sup>

Lambert exhibited himself in London: 'there was not a gentleman in town from his own county but went to see him, not merely gazing at him as a spectacle, but treating him in the most friendly and soothing manner'. His 'apartments had more the air of a place of fashionable resort than of an exhibition' and, amidst some unfavourable encounters, anecdotes reported the overall respect Lambert received. A group of Quakers allegedly visited and felt compelled to remove their hats in deference; foreigners came to pay their respects; a party of fourteen travelled from Guernsey and the little person, Count Joseph Boruwlaski, came to visit.<sup>29</sup>

The narrative of Lambert's life abruptly ends at this point. The sources jump to 20 June 1809 when Lambert rented a ground floor room at the Waggon and Horses Inn, Stamford, and the next morning was found dead. He purportedly weighed fifty-two stones and eleven pounds. At his funeral:

'youth and hoar age,' were assembled, numbers of whom had been in expectation of seeing him alive, in propria persona, but were now obliged to content themselves with the mere sight of his coffin, which, to a contemplative mind, would create reflections on the mutability of all sublunary things.<sup>30</sup>

## Questioning the Biographies

This version of Lambert's biography appeared in all the editions of the 1809 life pamphlets as well as the eccentric biographies. Occasionally there were minor variations in the anecdotes and, as Fiona Pettit explored, later eccentric biographies adopted a different tone on the question of Lambert's corpulence but the basic narrative of his life remained the same.<sup>31</sup> Yet this narrative poses more questions than it answers. It is not clear why Lambert left his apprenticeship and how or why word of his fatness spread. The sources claim Lambert did not have the assistance of a showman: 'he is too noble a spirit to submit to be the hired puppet of any Show-man'.<sup>32</sup> The implication was that Lambert conducted the exhibitions on his own. Yet who collected the fees, who placed the

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<sup>28</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-15.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>31</sup> Pettit, 'Freaks', pp. 39-41.

<sup>32</sup> William Granger, *The New Wonderful Museum and Extraordinary Magazine: Being a Complete Repository of all the Wonders, Curiosities, and Rarities of Nature and Art*, 6 vols (London: A. Hogg, 1802-1808), VI (1808), p. 2679.

advertisements, who decided on a touring route and who knew about the tradition and mechanics of presenting human oddities?

Indeed, Lambert's exhibition can be placed within a respectable lineage of exhibitions. It cost one shilling to visit Lambert, differentiating his exhibition from the penny shows frequented by a wider social audience. He was exhibited at number 53 Piccadilly London: a respectable and increasingly expensive part of town located on a busy road filled with expansive houses, inns, taverns and booksellers.<sup>33</sup> An advertisement was placed in *The Times*: 'Exhibition—Mr Daniel Lambert, of Leicester, the greatest curiosity in the world, who, at the age of 36 years, weighs upwards of 50 stone [...] will receive company at his house'.<sup>34</sup> Although it is not clear whether Lambert slept in the house, used it as an exhibition space or both, it was an important presentation as the home was perceived as the product of middle-class status which, by the 1830s, would denote the very qualification of that status and part of being a gentleman.<sup>35</sup> It thus imbued the exhibition with respectability, echoed in the statement that Lambert would 'receive company'. His exhibition was not framed as a performance but rather a social occasion, not dissimilar to the 'levees' used to describe freak shows from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

Lambert's exhibition followed an established precedent. As early as 1752 the little person John Coan adopted a similar respectable strategy: he charged two shillings and six pence for his exhibition until he reduced the fee to one shilling.<sup>37</sup> Charles Byrne, the Irish Giant, stressed the propriety of his exhibition space as a 'large elegant room' (1782).<sup>38</sup> In 1784 'the surprising, North-British Giant' exhibited in a 'Genteel Apartment' at Bartholomew Fair and targeted 'the Nobility, Gentry, and all who "Admire the extraordinary productions of nature"' in an attempt to distance the exhibition from the other booths at the fair.<sup>39</sup> These strategies attempted to project a respectable exhibition through high pricing, an absent manager, a domesticated exhibition space and targeted advertising to wealthier audiences. There was a longstanding belief that spectacular exhibitions and popular fairs encouraged anarchy, licentiousness and violence. This culminated in censorship and suppression through the Vagrant's Act (1824), the Regulation of Fairs Acts (1823, 1848, 1850) and

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<sup>33</sup> Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage Books, 2008), p. 116; Ben Weinreb and others, *The London Encyclopaedia* (London: Macmillan, 2008), pp. 638-640.

<sup>34</sup> *The Times*, 2 April 1806, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 11-26.

<sup>36</sup> Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> The John Johnson Collection: An Archive of Printed Ephemera (TJJC), Human Freaks 1 (25).

<sup>38</sup> TJJC, Human Freaks 2 (7d).

<sup>39</sup> London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Bartholomew Fair Folder SC/GL/BFS/029.

the Theatre's Act (1848). In response to these pressures, showmen emphasised the respectability of their exhibitions: a strategy entrenched by the late Victorian period.<sup>40</sup>

Although Lambert's exhibition suggested a respectable form of display, the biographical insinuation that Lambert did this alone is questionable. There are further unanswered questions. It is not known who wrote the life pamphlets, how they obtained all the information or whether Lambert was complicit. Bondeson implied that the earliest account of Lambert's life appeared in Granger's *The Wonderful Museum* of 1808.<sup>41</sup> Yet as early as 1806 *The Eccentric Mirror* included a biography of Lambert because:

The meagre details relative to Mr. Lambert which have hitherto been laid before the public are equally unsatisfactory and erroneous. This consideration induced the editor of *The Eccentric Mirror* to apply to a source which he knew was not liable to mistake; and as the following is the only authentic account of this remarkable character, he can with the greater confidence direct to it the attention of the curious and inquisitive.<sup>42</sup>

It is not clear whether this 'source' was a person or a text. There was another 1806 publication on Lambert (Figure 1) but this one page broadside does not include the detail as rendered in either *The Eccentric Mirror* or the 1809 life pamphlet. *The Eccentric Mirror* was probably implying that the source was Lambert but the author's refusal to state this directly suggests the questionable veracity of the insinuation.

There are further ambiguities: Bondeson perpetuated the nineteenth-century claim that Lambert was shy and reluctant to exhibit; he was 'quite sensitive about his grotesque appearance' and was 'very averse to putting himself on show'.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Gilman asserted that 'Lambert had been displayed as a wonder of nature along with giants and dwarfs much against his own desires.'<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Heather McHold, 'Even as You and I: Freak Shows and Lay Discourse on Spectacular Deformity', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 21-36.

<sup>41</sup> Bondeson, *Freaks*, p. 125.

<sup>42</sup> H. Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror: Reflecting a Faithful and Interesting Delineation of Male and Female Characters, Ancient and Modern, who have been Particularly Distinguished by Extraordinary Qualifications, Talents, and Propensities, Natural or Acquired, Comprehending Singular Instances of Longevity, Conformation, Bulk, Stature, Powers of Mind and of Body, Wonderful Exploits, Adventures, Habits, Propensities, Enterprising Pursuits, &c. &c. &c.*, 4 vols (London: James Cundee, 1806-7, 1813), I (1806), p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Bondeson, *Freaks*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>44</sup> Gilman, *Obesity*, p. 3.

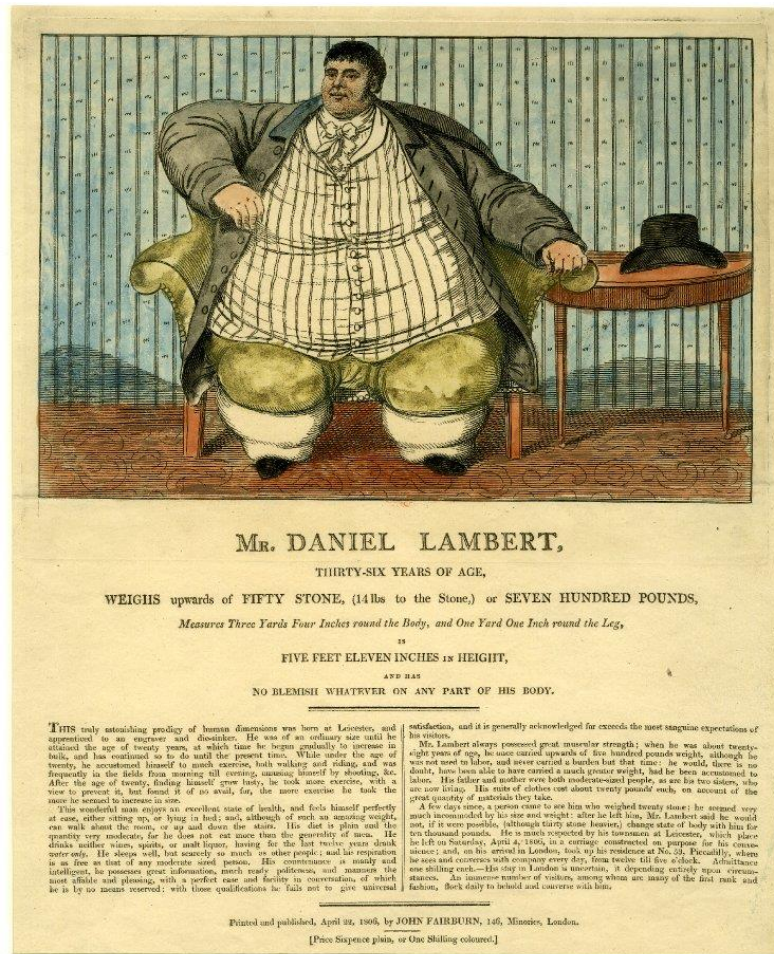


Figure 1.

Daniel Lambert, Broadside, 1806, London, (C) The British Museum, Trustees of the British Museum

But an alternative picture of Lambert is equally applicable, one which presents him as a keen self-promoter and businessman or an agent complicit with another. If Lambert was reluctant to exhibit his body, he nonetheless pursued all avenues to make his exhibitions successful. It would appear from an advertisement in the *Leicester Journal* that Lambert underwent a small publicity campaign ‘for publishing by subscription a full-length portrait’ of himself.<sup>45</sup> Figure 2 is the only verified portrait of Lambert painted from life and executed by Benjamin Marshall in 1806.

<sup>45</sup> The Record Office of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR), Scrapbook 38’31.



**Figure 2.**

Benjamin Marshall, Portrait of Daniel Lambert, Oil on Canvas, 1806, reproduced by kind permission of the Leicester Arts and Museums Service

Allegedly, Lambert also commissioned the construction of a large carriage to take him to London.<sup>46</sup> This could have been a necessity or a publicity stunt similarly adopted by Stephen Kemble, the theatre manager and actor, a few months later. Kemble rode into London in a specially crafted carriage to accommodate his 'monstrous size', a stunt which led one reviewer to write 'no wonder that the public curiosity was raised to a considerable pitch'.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, Lambert did not confine his exhibition to London. As Bondeson documented from newspaper sources, Lambert returned to Leicester after five months in the capital but in December 1806 was again on tour, visiting Birmingham and Coventry among other places. He returned to London in early 1807 and again in the summer of 1808. This was followed by a tour of the provinces with exhibitions in Manchester, York, Cambridge and Huntingdon before travelling to Stamford where he died.<sup>48</sup> This is not necessarily the shy Lambert reluctant to exhibit his body but possibly a

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<sup>46</sup> Massey, *In Search of Daniel Lambert*, p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 13 March 1806, n. p.

<sup>48</sup> Bondeson, *Freaks*, p. 123.

keen self-promoter committed to earning money from exhibitions. Furthermore, Lambert coupled these exhibitions with his business selling dogs. He posted advertisements 'to the sporting world' and advertised the sale of his setters and pointers. From these sales he made a total of 215 guineas, a huge amount of money that reflected the pedigree of his dogs and, possibly, the novelty of owning breeds from the notorious Fat Man.<sup>49</sup>

Thus an alternative and equally applicable character profile of Lambert is possible: a shrewd businessman capitalising on money-making opportunities. But such a claim rests on the assumption that there is a single, coherent Lambert who can be located amidst the archival traces. It supposes, moreover, that Lambert's life offstage is a realm distinct from his exhibitions as a Fat Man. But the sources detail his actions and movements as an exhibited person. Furthermore, the biographies were conditioned by literary conventions and audience expectations. They entered a highly competitive commercial market which was burgeoning due to technological changes that reduced prices because cheap printing and engraving methods were realised through stereotyping, machine-made paper, ready-made binding and steel and wood engravings.<sup>50</sup> This was coupled with a rise in the urban population and increased literacy that consequently expanded the literary market.<sup>51</sup>

Lambert's biographies aggressively courted and pandered to this market. Two days after Lambert's death an advertisement called for 'any particulars relative to the said Mr. D. Lambert': information used in the first edition of the life pamphlet published five days later.<sup>52</sup> It exploited the 'great crowds' at Lambert's funeral, an event mentioned in the pamphlet's title.<sup>53</sup> By the end of the year, the pamphlet was already in its fourth edition. Similarly, eccentric biographies were reprinted in numerous editions and came in the form of serial literature, compendia, single and multiple volume books, which added to the 'spectacle of multiplicity' in the form and content of literature.<sup>54</sup> The newest publications were advertised in the press and jostled for readers by disparaging other publications: *Kirby's Wonderful and Eccentric Museum* stated that its efforts would not 'be confined to the mere arrangement of what has been before written by others', highlighting the prevalence of

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<sup>49</sup> *Morning Post*, 19 June 1806, p. [1]; *Morning Post*, 30 June 1806, p. [1].

<sup>50</sup> William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 177-185.

<sup>51</sup> Roger S. Schofield, 'Dimensions of Illiteracy in England, 1740-1850', in *The History of Reading: A Reader*, ed. by Shafquat Towheed, Rosalind Crone and Katie Halsey (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 152-160.

<sup>52</sup> Stamford Town Library, Lincolnshire (STL), Daniel Lambert Primary References Folder, *Stamford Mercury*, 23 June 1809, n. p.

<sup>53</sup> STL, Daniel Lambert Primary References Folder, 'A Contemporary Account of the Death of Daniel Lambert at Stamford—June 1809'; Anon., *The Heaviest Man that Ever Existed*, title page.

<sup>54</sup> David Stewart, *Romantic Magazines and Metropolitan Literary Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 10.



plagiarism and competition.<sup>55</sup> Crucially, however, the biographies catered to the demands and expectations of a growing readership. They were designed to sell an image of the Fat Man; these were presentations, not revelations, of Lambert.

### Model of Imitation

In the early nineteenth century, these presentations were 'positive', defined as possessing a quality rather than an absence.<sup>56</sup> The life pamphlet was explicit:

the moralist will delight to investigate the qualities of that mind which animated such a prodigious body. Shrewd and intelligent, Mr Lambert had improved his natural talents by reading and observation. In company he was lively and agreeable; the general information he possessed, and the numerous anecdotes treasured up in a memory uncommonly retentive, rendered his society extremely pleasant and instructive. [...]. With respect to humanity, temperance, and liberality of sentiment, Mr. Lambert may be held up as a model worthy of general imitation.<sup>57</sup>

The phrase, 'model worthy of general imitation', would reappear. Huff drew attention to an 1815 Christian tract which praised Lambert's 'humanity, temperance and liberality of sentiment' that made him 'a model worthy of general imitation'.<sup>58</sup> Huff implied that this was the first utterance, reprinted and plagiarised throughout the nineteenth century, but these words were already in circulation in 1809. It suggests that the life pamphlets not only achieved a high level of circulation but managed to successfully promote a eulogised Lambert. The words also insinuate Lambert's relevance beyond his 'prodigious body', denoting character traits presented as pedagogic examples.

Indeed, in both the eccentric biographies and life pamphlets, Lambert was presented with a pedagogic function. As Pettit stressed, many of the eccentric biographies were designed for instructing boys at home and in schools.<sup>59</sup> But the didactic nature of the biographies was not just aimed at the young: eccentric biographies were designed for the whole family and life pamphlets

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<sup>55</sup> R. S. Kirby, *Kirby's Wonderful and Eccentric Museum; or, Magazine of Remarkable Characters; including all the Curiosities of Nature and Art, from the Remotest Period to the Present Time, drawn from every Authentic Source*, 6 vols (London: R.S. Kirby, 1803-1820), I (1803), p. iii.

<sup>56</sup> 'positive, adj. and n.' *OED Online*

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/148318?rskey=dBlfj5&result=1&isAdvanced=false>> [accessed 4 February 2016].

<sup>57</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 28.

<sup>58</sup> Huff, 'Freaklore', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 37-59 (p. 48).

<sup>59</sup> Pettit, 'Freaks', pp. 38-39.

made no particular pitch to children but nonetheless maintained Lambert's educative potential. In stressing attributes worthy of emulation, the biographies positioned themselves, however ostensibly, within a broader nexus of behavioural literature.

Courtesy books, written primarily by and for men, were popular from the Renaissance until the 1770s. They presented an ideal social type exemplified in the aristocratic gentlemen. Courtesy books prescribed ethical and social behaviour to an elite readership destined for leadership roles. Conduct books, on the other hand, achieved their greatest level of popularity between the 1770s and 1830s. They were predominantly written by and for middle-class adults and children and, like the earlier courtesy books, prescribed behaviour and offered practical advice, maintaining a stress on morals and manners.<sup>60</sup> Manners could also be depicted in 'the art of conversation', the title of a number of manuals from the seventeenth to nineteenth century. In Britain, these publications articulated a number of important conversational precepts, such as avoiding boasting, raillery and ensuring that a dialogue was reciprocal.<sup>61</sup> It was from the 1830s that etiquette books entrenched and codified the behavioural rules circulating in the older conduct books. Etiquette books were written to an assumed humbler class of readers who were rising up the social ranks: the middle classes (men, women and children) who were seeking to emulate fashionable 'Society'.<sup>62</sup> Biographies of Lambert endeavoured to present their publications within this market. They were not mere outlines of his life.

Corporeal difference alone did not satisfy the conventions of biographies. They demanded, and were celebrated for, an instructive element. As early as 1750, Samuel Johnson wrote that 'no species of writing seems more worthy of cultivation than biography, since none can be more delightful or more useful [...] or more widely diffuse instruction to every diversity of condition'.<sup>63</sup> James Stanfield, an early nineteenth-century theorist of biography, claimed biographies could be 'actively applied to the improvable points of education and conduct'.<sup>64</sup> As Richard Altick argued, the idea that biography should be used as a tool for edification was omnipresent in the early nineteenth century, reflecting the desire for useful knowledge.<sup>65</sup>

Eccentric biographies which included Lambert were explicit: 'biography contributes perhaps more than any other species of writing to a knowledge of the nature of the human mind' and it 'teaches us

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<sup>60</sup> Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class*, pp. 8-19.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 90, 108-112.

<sup>62</sup> Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class*, pp. 19-31.

<sup>63</sup> Carroll, *Science and Eccentricity*, p. 20.

<sup>64</sup> Richard D. Altick, *Lives and Letters: A History of Literary Biography in England and America* (New York: Alfred. A. Knopf, 1966), p. 80.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-89.

that there is scarcely an affliction incident to our nature, however severe, which we are not capable of enduring'.<sup>66</sup> Biographies ensured that 'readers in general will be improved, as well as surprised'.<sup>67</sup> The emulating potential of this genre was stated as late as 1849: "'Man is not made for himself alone," and even should he become the most wretched of recluses, or the most unloving of misers, his examples may be a beacon to other men.'<sup>68</sup> Biographies of Lambert, intended to instruct a readership, were designed to present a protagonist worthy of imitation.

Biographies of Lambert also aimed to be an entertaining form of pedagogy. This closely resembled the movement 'rational recreation' that reached a heyday in the 1830s and 1840s. It was embraced by middle-class reformers with the belief that 'leisure activities should be controlled, ordered, and improving'.<sup>69</sup> Rational recreation was a trend, nonetheless, recognisable from the 1780s as recreation was imbued with the ideas of 'moral reformation', rationality and found expression through the establishment of improving societies.<sup>70</sup> In 1780 the 'extraordinary performances' of George Yates' puppet show, at the supposedly rowdy Bartholomew Fair, promised 'singular, surprising, amazingly diverting, and rational' entertainment.<sup>71</sup> Lambert's biographies echoed these dual aims of entertainment and edification. Behavioural literature, biographical conventions and rational recreation informed the manner in which Lambert was presented, providing a framework of entertainment and edification that turned Lambert into a model of imitation.

Indeed, the biographies were self-proclaimed entertainment offering 'entertaining descriptions' and 'wonderful exploits, entertaining pursuits'.<sup>72</sup> These publications, along with the life pamphlets, incorporated stories of Lambert to emphasise his extraordinariness. His life was framed as a series of unexpected and entertaining occurrences: his fight with a bear, for example, was made additionally novel when a small bear 'instantly took off his hat, and apparently in a token of submission, tumbled heels over head at the feet of the conqueror'.<sup>73</sup> This anecdote functioned, in the words of Stephen

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<sup>66</sup> Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror*, I (1806), no. 12, pp. 1-2.

<sup>67</sup> Granger, *The New Wonderful Museum*, I (1804), p. iii.

<sup>68</sup> F. W. Fairholt, *Eccentric and Remarkable Characters. A Series of Biographical Memoirs of Persons Famous for Extraordinary Actions or Singularities. With Illustrations* (London: Richard Bentley, 1849), p. v.

<sup>69</sup> Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c.1780-c.1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 90; Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 47-67.

<sup>70</sup> Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), pp. 45-46, 178-179; J. M. Golby and A. W. Purdue, *The Civilisation of the Crowd: Popular Culture in England, 1750-1900* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), pp. 63-114.

<sup>71</sup> LMA, Bartholomew Fair Folder SC/GL/BFS/009.

<sup>72</sup> Granger, *The New Wonderful Museum*, title page; Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror*, title page.

<sup>73</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 6.

Greenblatt, as a 'principle register of the unexpected'.<sup>74</sup> As a literary device, the anecdote ensured a pithy story that was accessible and novel. Anecdotes also had the function of conveying a particular message about a protagonist: Lambert's bear story was designed to highlight his 'agility', 'physical strength or courage'.<sup>75</sup> Anecdotes were a means of articulating worthy attributes which echoed the stated desire to edify the readership.

Eccentric biographies went further by claiming they amounted to collections of natural phenomenon designed for the purpose of learning. This was signalled in their titles: *The New Wonderful Museum* and *Kirby's Wonderful and Eccentric Museum*. By connecting themselves to these sites of learning, eccentric biographies were legitimising the novelty and entertainment provided in their pages. They contracted the world's eccentricities into a consumable text. Framed as textual museums, eccentric biographies hoped to promote a curiosity that was not 'impertinent or mischievous' but educational.<sup>76</sup> It was arguably a respectable way of masking voyeurism. Eccentric biographies commonly referenced Alexander Pope, 'the proper study of mankind is man', which the *Eccentric Biography* acknowledged as leading 'the mind to the most profound and elevated reflections'.<sup>77</sup> The refrain to Pope was predicated on the assumption that lessons could be deduced. As the *Eccentric and Remarkable Characters* wrote in 1849:

If the axiom of Pope be admitted, that 'the proper study of mankind is man', the records of his vices and virtues, his faults and follies are worthy of our attention, inasmuch as every action becomes a mark for imitation or avoidance.<sup>78</sup>

Quoting Pope did not transform individuals into pedagogic tools and claiming that Lambert was worthy of imitation did not conceal the real intention: to sell publications. These were commercial publications that pandered to a specific market, seeking to capture a prevailing 'public appetite for novelty' through entertaining and novel anecdotes of questionable veracity.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, Lambert's biographies could well have been subject to John Stuart Mill's critique that 'the Grand achievement of the present age is the *diffusion of superficial knowledge*'.<sup>80</sup> But by infusing the presentation with

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<sup>74</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 6; Anon., *The Late Daniel Lambert, from his Birth to the Moment of his Dissolution, with an Account of Men Noted for their Corpulency, and other Interesting Matter* (New York: Samuel Woods & Sons, 1818), pp. 9, 11.

<sup>76</sup> Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror*, I (1806), no. 2, p. 30.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Tegg, *Eccentric Biography; or Lives of Extraordinary Characters whether Remarkable for their Splendid Talents, Singular Propensities, or Wonderful Adventures* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1826), p. iii.

<sup>78</sup> Fairholt, *Eccentric and Remarkable Characters*, p. v.

<sup>79</sup> Ricky Jay, *Extraordinary Exhibitions: The Wonderful Remains of an Enormous Head, the Whimsiphisicon & Death to the Savage Unitarians* (New York: The Quantuck Lane Press, 2005), p. 138.

<sup>80</sup> John Stuart Mill, 'The Spirit of the Age', *Examiner*, 9 January 1831, pp. 20-21.

edificatory intent, biographies constructed Lambert on the basis of what he could teach. His character was constructed with attributes that could be praised and adopted. On the basis of claims to edification and entertainment, Lambert was presented as a model worthy of imitation.

### Gentlemanliness and Manliness

Lambert's character profiles were presented on the basis of gentlemanliness and manliness. In the eighteenth century, as Victoria Carroll argued, gentlemanliness was defined predominantly on the basis of social rank but by the middle of the nineteenth century it had been redefined on the basis of character: a 'moral order embodied in the individual' as Samuel Smiles wrote.<sup>81</sup> By the later Victorian period, character assumed even greater importance and became associated with the equally crucial concept of manliness.<sup>82</sup> Early to mid-nineteenth-century definitions of manliness and gentlemanliness were distinct categories: the former was socially inclusive, earned by mastering the external world through self-help and discipline. It was a category linked to rugged individualism while gentlemanliness was more exclusive, associated with affluence and politeness.<sup>83</sup> There was an uneasy relationship between the gentleman's 'art of pleasing' and the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century definitions of manliness as open, direct and sincere in social relations.<sup>84</sup> Lambert's presentation in the biographies incorporated these evolving and contradictory categories of gentlemanliness and manliness.

His markers of gentlemanliness were numerous: *Kirby's* noted that 'he is an intelligent man, reads much, and possesses great vivacity'.<sup>85</sup> He was renowned as 'a humane keeper of the prison' and *The Eccentric Mirror* praised his 'qualities and endowments of mind', which 'raise him above the level of the generality of men'.<sup>86</sup> Representations of Lambert also commended the qualities of his manners: 'very pleasing; well-informed, affable, and polite; and having a manly countenance and possessing address, he was exceedingly admired by those who had the pleasure of conversing with him'.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Carroll, *Science and Eccentricity*, p. 158.

<sup>82</sup> H. S. Jones, *Intellect and Character in Victorian England: Mark Pattison and the Invention of the Dom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 128-129.

<sup>83</sup> John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), pp. 86-98.

<sup>84</sup> Edward Copeland, *The Silver Fork Novel: Fashion Fiction in the Age of Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 146-151; Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 61-61; Robin Gilmour, *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 16-36.

<sup>85</sup> Kirby, *Kirby's*, II (1804), p. 409.

<sup>86</sup> Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror*, I (1806), no. 1, p. 1.

<sup>87</sup> Anon., *The Eccentric Magazine; or, Lives and Portraits of Remarkable Characters*, 2 vols (London: G. Smeeton, 1812-1814), II (1814), p. 241.

Indeed, visitors were 'extremely pleased with the urbanity of his manners'.<sup>88</sup> One newspaper explicitly stated the effect: 'what adds to the pleasure of his company, he is in every respect a gentleman in his conversation and manners'.<sup>89</sup>

These attributes underpinned Lambert's status as a gentleman. Alexis de Tocqueville claimed in 1856 that the category of gentleman had socially widened as classes drew nearer and intermingled: what was once the preserve of the aristocrats began to filter down the social scale and the gentleman started to shift from a social to a moral category.<sup>90</sup> Inherited wealth was not a sufficient criterion: it was manners and comportment which also created the gentleman, a meritocratic perspective which enabled the emergent middle classes to embrace gentlemanliness. As early as 1755, Dr. Johnson's dictionary claimed that the definition of 'gentleman', as meaning 'man of birth', was 'now out of use' and instead the gentleman was more commonly linked to 'a man raised above the vulgar by his character and post'.<sup>91</sup>

Thus redefinitions of gentlemanliness moved away from an emphasis on hereditary status towards the notion of character. This closely resembled ideas of respectability, attention to personal appearance, manners and attitude, which united character and gentlemanliness into a moral quality that could be learnt.<sup>92</sup> This was evidenced in the proliferation of courtesy books, conduct books and indeed eccentric biographies. Moreover, the increased inclusivity of gentlemanliness manifested a deeper social struggle and aspiration. From the 1780s England was in a period of transition moving away from an agrarian based economy, where land was the source of aristocratic power, towards a capitalist system offering the emergent middle classes an opportunity in leadership and influence. Yet, sandwiched above the hardships of manual labour and below the prestige of inherited land, the middle classes needed to ascertain, prove and assert their worth.<sup>93</sup> Lawrence Klein persuasively argued that politeness became a means for the powerless to appropriate power within their culture.<sup>94</sup> Similarly in the early nineteenth century, a 'polite discourse' accompanied by appropriate manners was encouraged as a means of social assertion.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Anon., *The Eccentric Magazine*, II (1814), p. 248.

<sup>89</sup> *York Herald*, 4 June 1808, p. [1].

<sup>90</sup> Gilmour, *The Idea of the Gentleman*, p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> Lawrence James, *The Middle Class: A History* (London: Abacus, 2008), p. 152.

<sup>92</sup> Carroll, *Science and Eccentricity*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>93</sup> Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 75-93.

<sup>94</sup> Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 8-14.

<sup>95</sup> Copeland, *The Silver Folk Novel*, p. 146; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Revised Edition* (London, Routledge, 2002), pp. 397-401.

In this context, Lambert as a gentleman carried resonance: despite extreme corpulence, he could cultivate inner virtue; despite being an exhibiting Fat Man, he promoted the inclusivity of gentlemanliness as a moral rather than a social virtue; if a Fat Man could be a gentleman, so too could the readers absorbing the lessons he exemplified. Lambert's intelligence, compassion, mind, morals and manners adhered to the inner qualities necessary for the new definitions of gentlemanliness. While his body was arguably a source of social marginalisation, his inner qualities were worthy of praise and espousal. He was an aspirant model who sought to embrace the moral criteria of the gentleman. Lambert was proof of this possibility, suggesting a persona that potentially resonated with a readership struggling 'to be "someone"': a gentleman with power, influence and wealth similar to the ruling aristocrats and differentiated from the 'vulgar' classes.<sup>96</sup>

Contextualising the presentation of Lambert demonstrates that the biographies, conditioned by the need to edify, elevated Lambert to the position of a gentleman within a new context that increasingly valued moral qualities as a means of social assertion and distinction. But according to John Tosh there was a clear divide between manliness and gentlemanliness. One such manifestation of this distinction derived from 'frank straightforwardness' in both action and speech.<sup>97</sup> This was a manly attribute explicitly transcribed into Lambert's presentation. In the life pamphlets, for example, it was claimed that one visitor crudely asked the cost of Lambert's coat and met the retort, "if I knew what part of my next coat your shilling would pay for, I can assure you I would cut out the piece".<sup>98</sup> On another occasion, Lambert allegedly lost his temper and threatened to throw a rude visitor out of the window.<sup>99</sup> These anecdotes exemplified the manly qualities of Lambert, which were bolstered by his alleged 'fondness for hunting, coursing, racing, fishing, and cocking'.<sup>100</sup> *Wonderful Characters* proclaimed Lambert 'as fond of rural sports as any man in England'.<sup>101</sup> These interests were noted by the press: the *York Herald* deemed 'Mr Lambert—as a true sportsman'.<sup>102</sup> Lambert could converse with his upper-class visitors because his 'knowledge of what appertains to the Turf and the Sports of the Field, we believe is not excelled by that of any man in the kingdom'.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 13.

<sup>97</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, pp. 86-98.

<sup>98</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 14.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>100</sup> Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror*, I (1806), no. 1, p. 20.

<sup>101</sup> H. Wilson, *Wonderful Characters: Comprising Memoirs and Anecdotes of the Most Remarkable Persons, of Every Age and Nation; Comprehending Extraordinary instances of Longevity, Conformation, Bulk, Stature, Powers of Mind and Body, Wonderful Exploits, Adventures, Enterprising Pursuits, Habits, Propensities, &c.* (London: Walker, 1842), p. 19.

<sup>102</sup> *York Herald*, 4 June 1808, p. [1].

<sup>103</sup> *York Herald*, 17 September 1808, p. [1].

Foxhunting was perceived as a male bonding chivalrous affair and a 'corrective to effeminacy', evidenced in the military style uniforms and the bleeding of the foxes tail.<sup>104</sup> Lambert's association thus enhanced his manliness but it simultaneously tapped into a gentlemanly culture based on older definitions of wealth. From the eighteenth century, fox hunting was associated with the Tory country gentleman and reflected an environment of gentlemanliness: 'Gentlemen assumed that only gentlemen were capable of appreciating the art of hunting hounds.'<sup>105</sup> It was a moneyed pursuit, tied to an upper-class interest in horseracing and breeding, to which Lambert was bound: Benjamin Marshall, an enthusiast of fox hunting and field sports, included in his portrait of Lambert a picture of a horse and hunting dog (Figure 2).<sup>106</sup>

In association with these sports, Lambert was linked both with gentlemanliness as a social category as well as exhibiting traits of manliness, a category at odds with gentlemanliness. These attributes coexisted in the presentation of Lambert who demonstrated, as such, a paradoxical self. This ambiguity was socially determined. New definitions of gentlemanliness stressed inner morality over social status yet the latter still pertained: gentlemanliness, after all, was achieved through differentiation from 'vulgar' classes.<sup>107</sup> In Lambert's presentation as a gentleman with manly traits, he was framed by two contradictory normative notions.

Youngquist highlighted the 'double work of deviance' to argue that Lambert's normality worked to enhance his freakishness.<sup>108</sup> But Lambert's corpulence was presented in a manner that maintained his moral rectitude. Lambert's fatness was exceptional, but Lambert was not morally culpable. An 1806 handbill stated:

his diet is plain and the quantity very moderate, for he does not eat more than the generality of men. He drinks neither wines, spirits, or malt liquor, having for the last twelve years drank only water. He sleeps well, but scarcely as much as other people; and his respiration is as free as that of any moderate sized person.<sup>109</sup>

This was echoed in the life pamphlets which claimed Lambert ate with 'moderation', 'never drank any other beverage than water', 'slept less than the generality of mankind', was 'never inclined to

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<sup>104</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 406.

<sup>105</sup> Jane Ridley, *Fox Hunting* (London: Collins, 1990), pp. 11, 17-28.

<sup>106</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging The Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 2003), pp. 170-172; Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 49-50; Emma Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain since 1066* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 124-140; Massey, *In Search of Daniel Lambert*, p. 23.

<sup>107</sup> James, *The Middle Class*, pp. 150-166.

<sup>108</sup> Youngquist, *Monstrosities*, p. 40.

<sup>109</sup> STL, Daniel Lambert Newspaper Cutting Folder, 'Mr Daniel Lambert'.



drowsiness' and 'his respiration was so perfectly free and unobstructed, that he never snored'.<sup>110</sup> These statements countered a prevalent medical discourse. By the eighteenth century there was an increasing recognition that fatness had health consequences. The anatomist Giovanni Battista Morgagni argued in 1761 that fatness carried the risk of disease, especially when concentrated within the bowels. The physician William Cullen listed fatigue, gout and breathing problems as a corollary of fatness.<sup>111</sup> Yet Lambert was supposedly free from these ailments.

It was implied that Lambert's fatness was not his fault and, therefore, not due to any moral failing. This countered another prevalent notion, established by the end of the eighteenth century, that fatness was a failure of the mind rather than the body.<sup>112</sup> The Enlightenment taught that man was master over his body. In 1797 Immanuel Kant argued that even an old man could rationally control his body by restricting liquor intake before bedtime and therefore avoiding frequent trips to the bathroom.<sup>113</sup> Thus as the eighteenth turned into the nineteenth century, being fat was increasingly seen as being your 'own fault'.<sup>114</sup> But Lambert's fatness, in the early nineteenth century, was presented without personal moral failing. His inner qualities were untarnished by his corpulence.

Moreover, it was commonly stated that Lambert was healthy. It was deemed indecent to stare at the sick but an educative curiosity toward the healthy body was acceptable.<sup>115</sup> Edward Bright (1721-1750), a grocer from Essex, was estimated to have weighed forty-four stone at his death but according to his biography, included in Lambert's life pamphlet, he 'was always strong and active' and 'took much exercise from his childhood', despite weighing over ten stone from the age of twelve.<sup>116</sup> Morelli, *The Skeleton Man*, was deemed to have always eaten well and, as late as the 1870s, the thirteen year old James Paine, the 'Second Daniel Lambert', had a doctor's report in his promotional material confirming he did not have dropsy.<sup>117</sup> Lambert's 'uncommonly healthy constitution' thus worked to legitimise his display as a respectable exhibition because audiences were reassured that he was not sick or diseased.<sup>118</sup> Readers were assured that their curiosity had educational value and that sensibilities would not be offended by viewing a sick individual. To be

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<sup>110</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>111</sup> Gilman, *Obesity*, p. 46.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>113</sup> Sander L. Gilman, *Diets and Dieting: A Cultural Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 84.

<sup>114</sup> Gilman, *Obesity*, p. 59.

<sup>115</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>116</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 24.

<sup>117</sup> Thomas Prest, *The Magazine of Curiosity and Wonder, an Interesting Miscellany of the Surprising, Remarkable, Astonishing* (London: G. Drake, 1835), p. 2; STH, The Philips Collection, Entertainment Folders 232.

<sup>118</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 16.

healthy, in short, meant being a sellable entity. Fundamentally, however, Lambert's supposed healthiness maintained his status as a gentleman, exhibiting traits of manliness.

## The Eccentric Englishman

Inside the eccentric biographies, Lambert's positive framing assumed another characterisation that placed him at the centre of debates concerning Englishness. He was presented within a humour tradition that took the form of mockery through pun. The *Eccentric Magazine* opened their article with 'this very remarkable *great* personage'; *The Eccentric Mirror* referred to him as 'the *greatest* man in the British Empire'.<sup>119</sup> In 1818 the Scottish historian John Millar described the humourist as 'a person who exhibits particular whims and oddities, not for the sake of producing mirth, but to gratify his own inclination'.<sup>120</sup> Lambert was renowned for relaying 'humorous sallies' which 'gave life, vivacity, and interest, to his conversation'.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, the entertaining anecdotes of his biography wove humour into his life and character.

But it also underscored a humour characterisation that fed into Lambert's construction as 'the corpulent Knight' or 'Sir John Falstaff'.<sup>122</sup> *The Eccentric Mirror* and Lambert's life pamphlet opened with a quote from Falstaff in William Shakespeare's *Henry IV*: 'A goodly, portly man i'faith, and corpulent, of a cheerful look, a pleasing eye, and a most noble carriage.'<sup>123</sup> Falstaff was 'a rotund figure filled with contradictions': a subversive, vain, boastful and cowardly knight but also a popular 'jovial spirit'.<sup>124</sup> When Lambert was being exhibited, Stephen Kemble was playing Falstaff on London stages and both were causing a sensation.<sup>125</sup> Constructed as 'the Falstaff of the present day', Lambert was connected to 'the epitome of Englishness': William Shakespeare.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Anon., *The Eccentric Magazine*, II (1814), p. 241; Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror*, I (1806), no. 1, p. 34.

<sup>120</sup> John Millar, *An Historical View of the English Government, from the Settlement of the Saxons in Britain, to the Revolution in 1688: To which are subjoined, some Dissertations connected with the History of the Government, from the Revolution to the Present Time* (London: J. Mawman, 1818), p. 370.

<sup>121</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 28.

<sup>122</sup> Wilson, *Wonderful Characters*, p. 13; Bondeson, *Freaks*, p. 119.

<sup>123</sup> Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror*, I (1806), no. 1, p. 1; Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, title page.

<sup>124</sup> Joachim Frenk, *Textualised Objects: Material Culture in Early Modern English Literature* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter Verlag, 2012), p. 190; Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 21-61.

<sup>125</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, 13 March 1806, n. p.

<sup>126</sup> Granger, *The New Wonderful Museum*, VI (1808), p. 2673; Kathryn Prince, *Shakespeare in the Victorian Periodicals* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 31.

Moreover, as a humorist, Lambert echoed a trait that was perceived as an explicitly English characteristic. According to Millar, ‘the English are regarded by their neighbours as a nation of humorists; a set of originals, moulded into singular shapes’.<sup>127</sup> Lambert as a humorous character was thus inextricable from notions of Englishness. This was similar to Lambert’s framing as an eccentric. The term ‘eccentric’ initially denoted a circle that was not concentric with another circle and, in astronomy, eccentric signalled orbits that did not have the sun at their centre or, in the Copernican system, the earth. From the seventeenth century, eccentric could also mean not agreeing or having little in common as well as applying to individuals ‘deviating from usual methods, odd, whimsical’.<sup>128</sup> In nineteenth-century eccentric biographies, the eccentric could signify personal attributes. Aristotle’s eccentricity rested on his ‘immensity of genius’, which placed him outside the spectrum of ordinary, in a similar manner to the ‘extraordinary talents’ of Catherine the Great.<sup>129</sup> An article on Jonathan Swift proclaimed that ‘in no class of mankind do we find more frequent instances of eccentricity than among men of extraordinary genius and talents’.<sup>130</sup>

The eccentric was a benevolent transgressor of the norm. The *Eccentric Biography* wrote: ‘the title imports a deviation from the regular path of life by the persons noticed in the work’.<sup>131</sup> Thomas Tegg’s *Eccentric Biography* offered a similar definition: ‘whoever, either in character or conduct, swerves from the beaten track’.<sup>132</sup> *The Eccentric Mirror* phrased deviation somewhat differently, albeit with the same sentiment: ‘distinguished by any extraordinary circumstances from the mass of society’.<sup>133</sup> This distinctiveness could include anything from a miser or religious fanatic to ‘curious products of art’, the nature of dreams and corporeal ‘deviations of nature, such as giants, dwarfs, strong men, personal deformity’.<sup>134</sup> Lambert was placed within this discourse. His body was a deviation from the ordinary stature of man and was, moreover, all the more peculiar for being healthy. Additionally, his mind, morals, manners and interests were exemplified as gentlemanly and manly attributes worthy of imitation, thus bolstering his status as an eccentric with positive connotations.

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<sup>127</sup> Millar, *An Historical View of the English Government*, p. 370.

<sup>128</sup> ‘eccentric, adj. and n.’ *OED Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/59245?redirectedFrom=eccentric>> [accessed 4 February 2016]; Carroll, *Science and Eccentricity*, pp. 11-44.

<sup>129</sup> Anon., *Eccentric Biography; or, Sketches of Remarkable Characters, Ancient and Modern. Including Potentates, Statesmen, Divines, Historians, Naval and Military Heroes, Philosophers, Lawyers, Imposters, Poets, Painters, Players, Dramatic Writers, Misers, &c.* (London: Vernan and Hood, 1801), pp. 21, 56.

<sup>130</sup> Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror*, III (1807), no. 23, p. 1.

<sup>131</sup> Anon., *Eccentric Biography*, ‘advertisement’, n. p.

<sup>132</sup> Tegg, *Eccentric Biography*, p. iii.

<sup>133</sup> Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror*, I (1806), no. 1, p. 1.

<sup>134</sup> Kirby, *Kirby’s*, II (1804), p. 422; James Caulfield, *Portraits, Memoires, and Characters of Remarkable Persons, from the Revolution in 1688 to the End of the Reign of George II. Collected from the Most Authentic Accounts Extant*, 4 vols (London: H. R. Young and T. H. Whitely, 1819), I (1819), p. vi.

Eccentric biographies incorporated rather than stigmatised eccentricity. The eccentric was part of the normal: 'it is very difficult to draw the lines between moderate eccentricity, and what may be deemed only an extension of the too arbitrary bounds prescribed by rigid regularity and decorum'.<sup>135</sup> Eccentricity existed in degrees, often mirroring the socially determined boundaries of 'regularity'. *The Eccentric Magazine* quoted Pope to highlight the point: 'Virtuous or vicious ev'ry man must be, | Few in extremes, but all in the degree.'<sup>136</sup> This affirmed the argument that eccentricity was a 'normative notion: being ex-centred enables eccentrics to delineate and negotiate boundaries between the margins and the centre, the canon and the norm'.<sup>137</sup> In other words, eccentricity was a contested notion where boundaries were negotiated, a process which commonly bestowed the eccentric with an outsider and insider status. This was clearly evident with the paradoxical status of Lambert: the ideal gentleman with manly credentials, also exhibiting as a Fat Man.

Moreover, the process of negotiating these boundaries between regularity and eccentricity was framed in a positive fashion. *The New Wonderful Museum* wanted a collection of 'the extraordinaries and wonders of human nature [...] that is, what is the last and highest pitche, to which man's nature hath ever reached in all perfections and defects of mind and body'.<sup>138</sup> This echoed Francis Bacon's advice to assemble 'a compilation, or particular natural history [...] of all monsters and prodigious births of nature; of everything, in short which is new, rare and unusual in nature'.<sup>139</sup> Bacon stressed the secular causes for monstrosity, thus enveloping the monster into natural and logical systems of nature's laws. As Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum argued, 'the moment when attempts are made to define difference as natural fact—no longer as a sign for divine or preternatural agency—it is revealed as the norm's inverse reflection'.<sup>140</sup> The monster, like the eccentric, was subsumed within nature, thus signalling a close proximity between regularity and singularity. In *The New Wonderful Museum* both 'perfections and defects' are given an elevated status, locked into proximity, marked by degrees of difference but deemed worthy of celebration. The eccentric, as such, became part of 'the great family of mankind' who was championed rather than vilified.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Anon., *Eccentric Biography*, 'advertisement', n. p.

<sup>136</sup> Anon., *The Eccentric Magazine*, I (1812), p. 13.

<sup>137</sup> Sophie Aymes-Stokes and Laurent Mellet, 'Introduction', in *In and Out: Eccentricity in Britain*, ed. by Sophie Aymes-Stokes and Laurent Mellet (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp. 1-32 (p. 9).

<sup>138</sup> Granger, *The New Wonderful Museum*, title page.

<sup>139</sup> Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum, 'Introduction', in *'Defects': Engendering the Modern Body*, ed. by Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 1-28 (p. 13).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Tegg, *Eccentric Biography*, p. iii.

In being presented as an eccentric and humorous character, included rather than excluded, Lambert contributed to the meaning of Englishness. Since the eighteenth century, the notion of character was more than the development of a moral self but a social category reflected and enacted in everyday life. Conjectural history, popular in the eighteenth century, expressed the notion of character as an inner virtue and ethical type connected to social, historical and cultural advancement.<sup>142</sup> After the French Revolution, the notion of character continued to emphasise this individual and collective dimension.<sup>143</sup> According to Julia Saville, the idea of character 'stood as a manifestation of individual freedom within a nation that prided itself on the liberty of its citizens', therefore, 'to be *a character* in the sense of feeling free to assert one's individuality was simultaneously to participate in defining the *national character* as free'.<sup>144</sup> At the same time, as John Lucas argued, liberty could be a culturally unifying claim that helped establish a sense of Englishness in the eighteenth century.<sup>145</sup> As an eccentric and humorous character, Lambert was contributing to England's self-definition as an island of liberty. *The Eccentric Mirror* examined this association:

It is universally admitted that no country in the world produced so many humourists and eccentric characters as the British Islands. This acknowledgement is an indirect eulogy on the political constitution and the laws under which the English enjoy the happiness of living, and by which each individual is suffered to gratify every whim, fancy, and caprice, provided it be not prejudicial to his fellow-creatures.<sup>146</sup>

The notion of liberty manifested in the tolerance, humour and eccentricity of the English. Individuals were allowed to pursue and express their own whims as long as this did not harm others. These values were read as explicitly English with the implication that England constituted the core of the 'British Islands'. The character of the English was linked directly to the unwritten constitution which, since the Levellers and Glorious Revolution of 1688, was wedded to the idea of the freeborn Englishman.<sup>147</sup> The humourist, like the eccentric, balanced the tensions between individualism and

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<sup>142</sup> Thomas Ahnert and Susan Manning, 'Introduction: Character, Self, and Sociability in the Scottish Enlightenment', in *Character, Self, and Sociability in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. by Thomas Ahnert and Susan Manning (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 1-30.

<sup>143</sup> Jerrold Seigel, 'Necessity, Freedom, and Character Formation from the Eighteenth Century to Nineteenth', in *Character, Self, and Sociability*, ed. by Ahnert and Manning, pp. 249-265.

<sup>144</sup> J. F. Saville, 'Eccentricity as Englishness in *David Copperfield*', *Studies in English Literature*, 42:4 (2002), 781-797 (p. 781).

<sup>145</sup> John Lucas, *England and Englishness: Ideas of Nationhood in English Poetry, 1688-1900* (London: Hogarth Press, 1990), pp. 41-44.

<sup>146</sup> Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror*, I (1806), no. 4, p. 22.

<sup>147</sup> Colley, *Britons*, pp. 147-194; Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Characters, 1650-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 267-275.

conformity as they reflected individuality and a sense of national freedom. In exemplifying these positive characterisations, Lambert was framed as a positive icon of England.

This was encapsulated in his depiction as John Bull, the paragon of Englishness and a symbol of English liberty and wit.<sup>148</sup> Representations of John Bull were legion during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. Previously, Britannia was the prominent icon but during the American War of Independence she began to be depicted as a victim of taxation, government malice or foreign threats. John Bull offered what the female Britannia could not: assertiveness, aggression and participation in the public sphere. He was an ordinary male, a common Englishman and a 'middle class idiom' who reflected the merits of one class without being wholly restrictive.<sup>149</sup>

In eccentric biographies Lambert was hailed as the 'true son of John Bull' and 'a true Englishman'.<sup>150</sup> This assumed a visual form through graphic satires: printed pictures with a political content.<sup>151</sup> By 1800 London had become the centre of an international and domestic trade in prints, which included depictions of anatomy, botany and styles of painting that usually expressed a patriotic theme.<sup>152</sup> Political caricatures reflected and bestowed subjects with status: in the mid-1790s the young George Canning keenly awaited the day he would be caricatured, while Charles Fox complained that his caricature had done more 'mischief than the debates in Parliament or the works of the Press', highlighting their popular impact and influence.<sup>153</sup>

Caricatures were predominantly sold to the middle and upper classes, usually costing around two shillings coloured and one shilling uncoloured. Yet prices varied and prints designed for wealthier patrons could be copied: the cheapest were obtained even by servants and poor craftsmen.<sup>154</sup> Even if prints were not purchased, they could be seen in the windows of shops, on penny ballads and broadsides. Indeed, foreign travellers to London often recorded their surprise at seeing caricatures in public places with content ridiculing the royalty and ruling elites. In this sense, caricatures

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<sup>148</sup> Reva Wolf, 'John Bull, Liberty, and Wit: How England Became Caricature', in *The Efflorescence of Caricature, 1759-1838*, ed. by Todd Porterfield (Ashgate: Surrey, 2011), pp. 49-60.

<sup>149</sup> Tamara L. Hunt, *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 121-169.

<sup>150</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 12; Prest, *The Magazine of Curiosity and Wonder*, p. 17.

<sup>151</sup> Tim Clayton, *Caricatures of the Peoples of the British Isles* (London: British Museum Press, 2007), pp. 7-13.

<sup>152</sup> Tim Clayton, *The English Print, 1688-1802* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. vii-xiv, 209-234.

<sup>153</sup> Hunt, *Defining John Bull*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>154</sup> Clayton, *The English Print*, pp. 129-153.

functioned as physical manifestations of English liberty.<sup>155</sup> As Tom Clayton argued, they played ‘a significant role in moulding a sense of national pride’.<sup>156</sup>

One caricature entitled *Bone Flesh or John Bull in Moderate Condition*, published in London in April 1806, featured Napoleon with Lambert as John Bull (Figure 3). The short Napoleon, standing shoulder length to Lambert who sits on a large chair, states: “I contemplate this wonder of the world”; but Lambert retorts, “No Sir, I am a true born Englishman”. Lambert thus denies his status as a mere exhibition and activates his national identity against Napoleon’s idea of him as a wonder. At the bottom right-hand side of the image is an exhibition handbill advertising Lambert’s exhibition in Piccadilly. The handbill is denied a central position in the image, instead highlighting Lambert’s figure and embodiment as the true born Englishman. The political nature of the cartoon is brought into relief through the captions. Napoleon comments that “dominions cannot match this man”, while Lambert responds “a quiet mind and good Constitution nourished by the free air of Great Britain makes every Englishman thrive”. By playing on the word ‘constitution’, Lambert’s body is equated to the political settlement of England, which prizes liberty or the ‘free air’.

Published two years after Napoleon’s attempted invasion of Britain, the caricature stands as an act of defiance against Napoleon’s expansionist agenda. Lambert becomes the paragon of Englishness at a time when notions of liberty were threatened by the French. The French Revolution had bolstered the importance of English liberty, pushing the notion into a loyalist, conservative framework of constitutional monarchy.<sup>157</sup> Due to an increased threat of invasion, a popular volunteer movement, comprised mainly of the propertied classes but including the working classes, evolved in the late 1790s and 1800s.<sup>158</sup> Lambert’s caricature thus tapped into the defence of English liberty.

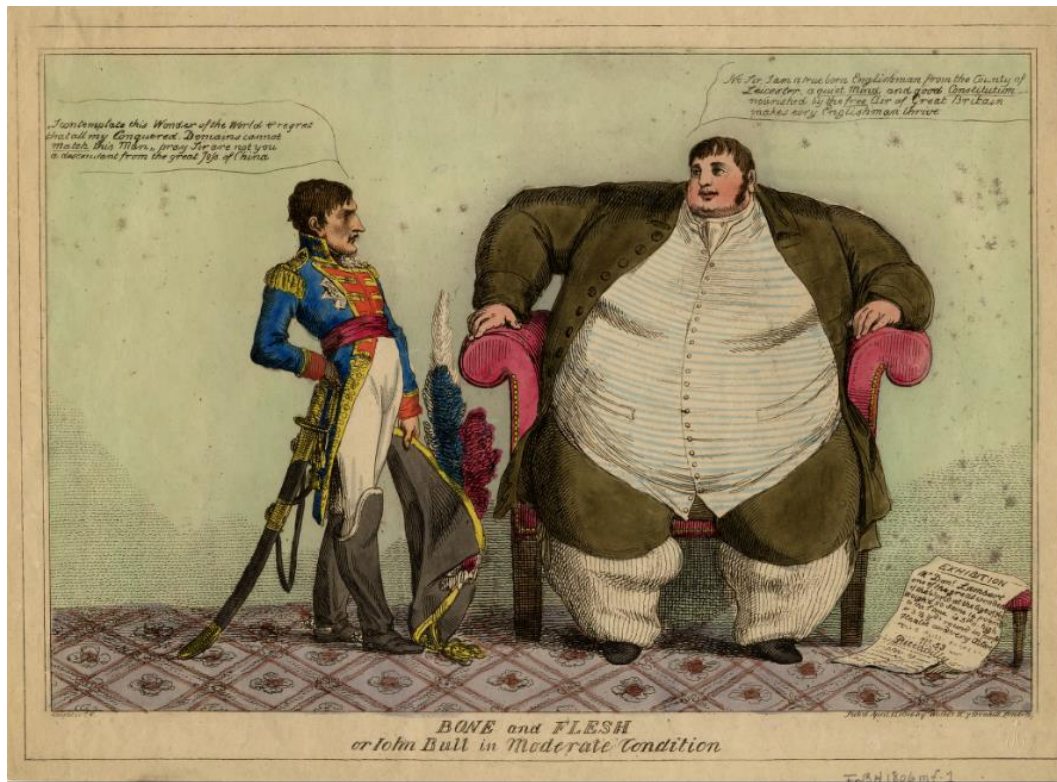
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<sup>155</sup> Clayton, *Caricatures of the Peoples*, pp. 7-13.

<sup>156</sup> Clayton, *The English Print*, p. xiii.

<sup>157</sup> Langford, *Englishness*, pp. 267-275.

<sup>158</sup> Chris Evans, *Debating the Revolution: Britain in the 1790s* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p. 62.



**Figure 3.**

*Bone and flesh, or John Bull in moderate condition*, 1806, (C) The British Museum, Trustees of the British Museum

In *Two Wonders of the World, or a Specimen of a New Troop of Leicestershire Light Horse* (Figure 4), Lambert is dressed in a militia uniform, seated on a massive Leicestershire horse and brandishes a sword. He attacks the tiny Napoleon who drops his hat and sword and holds his hand in horror: “Parbleu! If dis be de specimen of de English Light Horse vatvil de Heavy Horse be? Oh, by Gar, I vil put off de Invasion for an oder time!” With his sword and military uniform, Lambert was aggressively male and patriotic: a defender of English liberty, just as John Bull encapsulated liberty.





**Figure 4.**

*Two Wonders of the World, or a Specimen of a New Troop of Leicestershire Light Horse*, 1806, (C) The British Museum, Trustees of the British Museum

The dichotomous framing between Lambert as an emblem of England and Napoleon as a representative of France undermined the potential Otherness of Lambert's corpulence. It became an expression of nationalist pride as Othering was transferred onto the French, although Napoleon occupied a complex and ambiguous place in political culture. Indeed, Napoleon was revered as well as despised, often treated sympathetically in popular song and theatre.<sup>159</sup> Similarly, John Bull had polymorphic representations, much like Lambert. John Bull was not always a fat citizen or a positive

<sup>159</sup> Stuart Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 2-5, 17-18, 221-31.

reflection of Englishness but could be depicted as a rustic lacking sophistication or a 'naïve yokel easily led by the nose by politicians'.<sup>160</sup>

Nonetheless, perceived differences between the English and French were existent and they often assumed physiological proportions. The French were portrayed as thin, half-starved and dishevelled, (starvation being a factor in the Revolution), compared to the plump Englishman, the stout defender of the island. Indeed, the robust John Bull was commonly depicted with roast beef, beer or punch and in visual satire Napoleon was the 'Gulliver to the great Brobdingnagians'.<sup>161</sup>



Figure 5.

*The English Lamb- and- The French Tiger*, 1806, (C) The British Museum, Trustees of the British Museum

In *The English Lamb and The French Tiger* (Figure 5), Lambert and Napoleon are depicted sitting at a dining table. Lambert tucks into a large roast beef to be washed down with a tankard of brown stout. The small emaciated Emperor sits in the middle of a large seat sipping soup and sinisterly staring. This echoed the tradition within caricatures whereby England was symbolised by food, a motif crucial to oppositions between France and England.<sup>162</sup> Fatness could be a positive expression

<sup>160</sup> Tim Clayton, *Caricatures of the Peoples*, pp. 10, 78-81.

<sup>161</sup> Alexandra Franklin, 'John Bull in a Dream: Fear and Fantasy in the Visual Satires of 1803', in *Resisting Napoleon: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797-1815*, ed. by Mark Philip (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 125-140.

<sup>162</sup> Clayton, *Caricatures of the Peoples*, pp. 72, 76.

of Englishness and reflected perceived articles of national consumption: the British ate roast beef, ham and goose; the French ate roast cat, frogs and garlic.<sup>163</sup>

Lambert was thus part of a nationalist discourse, contributing to the very idea of England as a land of liberty, humour and eccentricity. His prevalence in political caricature, life pamphlets and eccentric biographies suggests a visual prevalence which brought abnormality into the homes of Victorian England. Representations of Lambert solidified connections between fatness, jollity, eccentricity and Englishness. These remained interrelated long after his death. Fatness would literally be linked to Englishness when the physician Thomas King Chambers, a leading authority on obesity in the 1850s, maintained that fatness was a hereditary English trait.<sup>164</sup> Eccentricity, liberty and humour would solidify as cultural and political principles around which English identity was formed. By 1856 the American Ralph Waldo Emerson would again refer to England as 'a nation of humorists' who pushed individual rights to their limits.<sup>165</sup> John Stuart Mill would praise eccentricity as a balance of power against the tyranny of public opinion.<sup>166</sup> Performing fat people became an integral part of nineteenth-century freak shows.<sup>167</sup>

In 1842 it was stated that Lambert's 'remarkable wit and ingenuity' worked 'in direct contradiction to the prevalent opinion, that excessive bulkiness in the human form is a general sign of weakness and stupidity'.<sup>168</sup> Lillian Craton has shown how fat characters in nineteenth-century fiction could achieve a normative and culturally praised status: fat women, for example, could be a 'metaphor for a more permeable, nurturing society'.<sup>169</sup> Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* (1836-1837) encapsulated two prevalent fat characterisations: comical, lazy and stupid represented by Fat Joe and fatness 'charged with energy' represented by Samuel Pickwick and his middle-class friends. This latter association was a decidedly positive articulation of fatness, one to which Lambert was connected.<sup>170</sup> Lambert even entered the national lexicon: Herbert Spencer spoke of a 'Daniel Lambert of Learning' in his *Study of Sociology* (1873) and George Meredith's *One of our Conquerors* (1890) referred to London as the 'Daniel Lambert of cities'. Lambert's portrait also appeared on a number of public

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<sup>163</sup> Clayton, *Caricatures of the Peoples*, p. 76.

<sup>164</sup> Huff, 'Freaklore', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 37-59 (p. 53).

<sup>165</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *English Traits* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, 1856), p. 146.

<sup>166</sup> John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. by Gertrude Himmelfarb (London: Penguin Books, 1974 [1859]), p. 132.

<sup>167</sup> LMA, Fairs Folder: Theatre Playbills, Bartholomew Fair, 1820-1829, 140-141, 144.

<sup>168</sup> Wilson, *Wonderful Characters*, p. 13.

<sup>169</sup> Lillian Craton, *The Victorian Freak Show: The Significance of Disability and Physical Differences in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Fiction* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009), p. 120.

<sup>170</sup> Gilman, *Fat*, pp. 40-57; Juliet McMaster, *Dickens the Designer* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 25, 88.

house signs in London and Leicestershire and he continued to be depicted in texts and material objects long after his death.<sup>171</sup>

## Conclusion

Multiple Lamberts were constructed through a positive frame of reference, drawing on normative notions concerned with gentlemanliness, manliness and eccentricity that turned Lambert into a subject of praise with national relevance. Rather than maintaining the notion of a singular Lambert, an authentic Lambert sourced from representations, I have suggested that his identities were polymorphic. They were formed in reference to the conventions of the biographies in which he featured, which themselves echoed the desire to mix entertainment with edification. In an attempt to realise these objectives, the biographies praised Lambert as a model worthy of imitation. The model he came to exemplify was an ambivalent construction of normative notions expressing social and moral definitions of gentlemanliness alongside contemporaneous ideals of manliness. His characterisations were as important as his corporeal exceptionality, which was framed as an exceptional occurrence within a healthy body. This avoided moral condemnation of his corpulence and maintained Lambert's affirmative construction. This assumed national significance as Lambert came to exemplify the humorous Falstaff and eccentric, both of which were directly associated with prevalent meanings of Englishness. Lambert symbolised national praiseworthy traits of liberty and individuality, typified in his characterisation as John Bull.

Despite the range of analytical possibilities, by focusing on the early social construction of Lambert, in particular the role of gentlemanly character, manliness and the intersecting discourses of eccentricity and Englishness, this chapter has indexed a series of changes across the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This chapter has argued that notions of gentlemanliness shifted from a social to a moral category, although the former was not wholly abandoned. Yet the new focus on the moral criteria of gentlemanliness designated a form of character that could be taught and learnt through right comportment, manners and morals. This was reflected in the rise of behavioural literature, biographies emphasising useful knowledge and rational recreation. This shift in the notion of gentlemanly character was rooted in economic changes: as the capitalist system increasingly displaced land as the source of wealth, power and influence, the middle classes had an opportunity to assert leadership and influence by embracing notions of respectable character.

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<sup>171</sup> Bondeson, *Freaks*, pp. 127-129.

From the eighteenth century, character was perceived as more than the development of an inner self but a collective social quality enacted in everyday life. After the French Revolution, the notion of character assumed national relevance: to be a character was to manifest individual freedom, which contributed to the notion England as a land of liberty. Furthermore, technological changes, buoyed by economic development, provided the material base for the proliferation of biographies that featured Lambert and for the didactic articulation of character. While these biographies emphasised Lambert's gentlemanly character, they also encompassed notions of manliness which, unlike gentlemanliness, was more socially inclusive and involved the mastery of the external world through self-help and discipline. In later chapters, it will be argued that the inner qualities of manliness were increasingly denoted at the level of corporeality. For Lambert, however, his character reflected notions of Englishness and eccentricity: the former expressed through the figure of John Bull, who replaced the iconographical figure of Britannia. From the seventeenth century, eccentricity moved into the realm of individual character. In presenting a character worthy of imitation, Lambert's moral rectitude was untainted by negative associations linked to fatness. Indeed, as this chapter has argued, at the turn of the century being fat was increasingly seen as being a result of personal moral failing and an inability to master the mind. Lambert's social construction worked in direct contradiction to this prevalent discourse.

Lambert's public presentations and offstage life were inseparable. His freakery was a component in his life as a businessman: conducting the sales of his dogs occurred in tandem with exhibitions of his body. His life was presented through biographies that functioned as textual equivalents to his live exhibitions. These biographies were central in maintaining the image of Lambert, breathing life into his construction and propelling his image throughout nineteenth-century culture. He was constructed on the basis of prevalent discourses, which transcribed his agency with contemporaneous concerns that bound him inextricably to the context in which he was presented. *In Search of Daniel Lambert*, to borrow from Philippa Massey, brings the investigation to the culture from which Lambert was fabricated and to which he was presented. There was no Lambert offstage compared to a Lambert onstage.

Lambert's identities embodied ambivalence. His character assumed greater relevance as he was constructed as a model worthy of imitation. His image articulated divergent notions of gentlemanliness and masculinity while, as an eccentric, Lambert was part of the norm and central to meanings of Englishness. His exhibition in Piccadilly highlighted a respectable mode of presenting human wonders. He used high pricing, the alleged absence of a manager and a domesticated environment to project a refined exhibition. He conversed with his audience rather than performing

novelty acts. His exhibition was at the cusp of a historical shift in the display of human anomalies from monsters in the marketplace to freaks in commercial entertainment spaces. Indeed, the relative dearth of ephemera advertising Lambert's live exhibitions hints at the limited commercialisation of his displays. Moreover, in the apparent absence of a manager or a showman, Lambert's display was divorced from later freak shows reliant on these agents. Furthermore, he did not display in commercial, permanent venues, another hallmark of the mid-nineteenth-century freak show.

But his display, fashioned as a social occasion, anticipated the more intimate encounters with freaks in domestic spaces. Lambert was presented as part of a broader 'print culture' that was evidenced from the sixteenth century.<sup>172</sup> Lambert, like the mid-nineteenth-century freak, was a commodity in a marketplace of exhibited human prodigies, both in textual and live displays. The biographical stress on entertainment and edification, exemplified in the eccentric biographies and life pamphlets, remained a hallmark of freak shows in both England and America. Life pamphlets became a common souvenir in later freak shows, evidenced in the exhibition pamphlets sold at performances. Lambert was presented, moreover, amongst a broader collection of human novelties. In the life pamphlets he was placed in a lineage of other Fat Men. In eccentric biographies he was presented within a cosmos of eccentric characters and objects. This collective presentation would become a component of live freak shows later in the century.

In the early nineteenth century, however, Lambert's exhibition exemplified the prevalence of small-scale, transitory displays. He penetrated spaces beyond his apartments: in eccentric biographies that entered aristocratic libraries, the bourgeois home, newsagents, lending libraries, second-hand booksellers and schools. In newspapers his exhibitions were presented to a literate public. Through graphic satire Lambert entered a visual culture reflected on the streets of London. This all suggests Lambert's permeation and cultural embeddedness in nineteenth-century culture. Far from being a "gross fat man", as Anne Jackson Mathews noted, Lambert was a character beyond his physiology, a gentleman worthy of imitation, a presence in national discourse and an agent displayed in an early form of nineteenth-century freakery.

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<sup>172</sup> Jason McElligott and Eve Patten, 'The Perils of Print Culture: An Introduction', in *The Perils of Print Culture: Book, Print and Publishing History in Theory and Practice*, ed. by Jason McElligott and Eve Patten (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 1-16.

## Chapter Two

### Chang and Eng, The Siamese Twins: Medicine, Orientalism and Everyday Life

Chang & Eng,— Two Youths born in the Kingdom of Siam, whose bodies are, by a wonderful caprice of nature, united together as one, arrived in London on Thursday, Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>. And on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> were submitted to the examination of the most eminent professors of Surgery and Medicine of the Metropolis [...]. These Youths have passed their eighteenth year; are in possession of full health and extraordinary bodily strength; display all the faculties of the mind in their fullest extent; and seem in fact in every respect to enjoy a state of perfect happiness and contentment.<sup>1</sup>

Chang and Eng, joined by a ligament at the sternum, were brought to London in 1829. Originally dependent on their Western 'protectors', the twins were independent performers by 1832. They were in charge of their own exhibitions. Chang and Eng became citizens of America: husbands, fathers and slave-owning farmers, transitioning between the interconnected worlds of public performance and domesticity. This chapter argues that Chang and Eng's freakery, as presented in their 1829 to 1830 London performances, was tied to a series of discourses, professions and practices that included medicine, Orientalism, anatomy, natural history and missionary endeavours. These facets of nineteenth-century cultural life impacted Chang and Eng's freakery as their freakery impacted these facets: a permeability simultaneously interconnected with their lives offstage. In the end, Chang and Eng as The Siamese Twins were marked as physiological and exotic Others, but not quite.

In many ways, Chang and Eng are diametric opposites of Daniel Lambert: their freakery was defined by an Oriental and medical discourse that emphasised foreignness, while Lambert epitomised Englishness through his numerous characterisations. As the twins performed somersaults, back flips and played checkers with the audience, Lambert conversed with visitors; as the twins embarked on international tours with managers and assistants, Lambert seemingly travelled independently within the English provinces; while Chang and Eng married and fathered, Lambert remained a bachelor. Yet, taken together, the onstage versus the offstage worlds of Chang, Eng and Lambert remain problematic distinctions: they were polymorphic unstable representations with little distinction between an onstage and offstage life as the latter was utilised in the presentations onstage.

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<sup>1</sup> [James W. Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers, from Actual Observations, Together with Full Length Portraits, the Only Correct Ones, Permitted to be Taken by Their Protectors* (London: W. Turner, 1830), p. 3.

Moreover, biographies were crucial to all their presentations and they remained ambiguous constructions, utilising normative notions that gave them an insider and outsider status. For Chang and Eng this was not as models worthy of praise and imitation but as entities connected to the fields of medicine, natural history and imperialism. They were performers in the tradition of freakery who were presented with elements of Western normality; they were also perceived as ‘monsters’ viewed within the remit of natural law. As a result and similar to Lambert, ambivalence and ambiguity were factors in their construction. Furthermore, if nationality is defined by the presence of an Other, then Chang and Eng, it could be argued, fashioned a sense of national identity from the position of outsider.<sup>2</sup> The twins testify to the permeability of their freakery, passing into the English lexicon just like Lambert. The term ‘Siamese Twins’ became a catchall for conjoined twins and by the late 1860s there was even a toy named ‘The Siamese Link’, which worked by linking two fingers together.<sup>3</sup> Like Lambert’s inclusion in the work of Charles Dickens, by 1894 Mark Twain had published *The Extraordinary Twins* which explored the comical adventures of two characters connected by a ligament.<sup>4</sup>

Chang and Eng feature in numerous modern biographies. Kay Hunter’s 1964 biography, like the contemporary biographies of Lambert, deployed anecdotes from nineteenth-century exhibition pamphlets and asserted them as ‘items of fact’.<sup>5</sup> While Lambert fought with bears, Hunter recalled Chang and Eng’s fight with a python, a tale of questionable veracity used to illuminate the exoticism of Siam.<sup>6</sup> But it was Hunter’s description of the twins’ love and marriage to a pair of white sisters from Wilkes County, North Carolina, that carried mileage in subsequent scholarship and biographies. Hunter presented a tale of love amidst social condemnation as she told how the two sets of siblings fell in love but were subject to angry disapproval from the girls’ father and wider community.<sup>7</sup> Variants of the tale were repeated in subsequent biographies by Frederick Drimmer, Irving and Amy Wallace and David Collins.<sup>8</sup> Hunter’s story also informed analysis in a number of critical studies. Gary Okihiro used Hunter’s story to support his argument that interracial love was subject to

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<sup>2</sup> For this argument in relation to ethnic displays in Denmark see: Rikke Andreassen, *Human Exhibitions: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Ethnic Displays* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), p. 24

<sup>3</sup> Anon., ‘The Siamese Link’, *Lancet*, 93:2405 (1869), 517; Anon., ‘The Siamese Band’, *Lancet*, 93:2405 (1869), 563.

<sup>4</sup> Helen Davies, *Neo-Victorian Freakery: The Cultural Afterlife of the Victorian Freak Show* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 64-70.

<sup>5</sup> Kay Hunter, *Duet for a Lifetime: The Story of the Original Siamese Twins* (London: Michael Joseph, 1964), p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 23-24; Anon., *An Account of Chang and Eng, The World Renowned Siamese Twins, Elegantly Illustrated* (New York: T. W. Strong, 1853), pp. 37-38.

<sup>7</sup> Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 82-85.

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Drimmer, *Very Special People: The Struggles, Loves and Triumph of Human Oddities* (New York: Citadel, 1991), pp. 20-21; Irving and Amy Wallace, *The Two: A Biography* (London: Cassell, 1978), pp. 158-179; David Collins, *Chang and Eng: The Original Siamese Twins* (Oxford: Maxwell Macmillan, 1994), pp. 76-82.



scrutiny and violence within white society.<sup>9</sup> Alison Pingree used elements of the tale in her exploration of antebellum representations of Chang and Eng.<sup>10</sup> David Clarke and Catherine Myser used the story to illuminate the voyeurism to which conjoined twins are subject within contemporary medical documentaries.<sup>11</sup>

But as Joseph Andrew Orser and Cynthia Wu discovered, Hunter's tale is not verified by primary material.<sup>12</sup> The fact that the twins did marry raises interesting questions as Chang and Eng circumvented both the 1790 Naturalisation Act, which limited obtaining citizenship to 'free white persons', and the Anti-Miscegenation Laws which outlawed interracial marriage.<sup>13</sup> Orser's careful reading of Chang and Eng within nineteenth-century America demonstrated the disjuncture between popular and legal understandings of the twins: in the former they were perceived as 'monsters', in the latter they were rendered 'white' as the categories of 'Asiatic', 'Mongolian', 'Oriental' and 'Chinese' were not officially sanctioned by the time Chang and Eng married in 1843.<sup>14</sup>

I could develop this line of exploration by considering the legal status of the twins in England, the racial categories used to classify the twins and, collectively, how these legal definitions impacted the display of Chang and Eng's exceptional bodies. Indeed, like the chapter on Lambert, Chang and Eng offer a range of analytical possibilities: the interpersonal dynamics between the twins and their 'owners'; the respective organisation of Chang and Eng's exhibitions, first conducted by their Western 'protectors', then the twins themselves; the comparisons and contrasts between English and American constructions, presentations and receptions of Chang and Eng; the role of sexuality in the display of Chang and Eng's families; and the legacy of Chang and Eng seen through literary representations.

But this chapter concentrates analysis on Chang and Eng's lived experience as it relates to their freakery. It begins by exploring their presence in London, between 1829 and 1830, before considering how later developments in their life interrelated with their freakery. This focus has been

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<sup>9</sup> Gary Y. Okihiro, *Common Ground: Reimagining American History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 74.

<sup>10</sup> Alison Pingree, 'America's "United Siamese Brothers": Chang and Eng and Nineteenth-Century Ideologies of Democracy and Domesticity', in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 92-114.

<sup>11</sup> David L. Clark and Catherine Myser, 'Being Humaned: Medical Documentaries and the Hyperrealization of Conjoined Twins', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. by Rosemarie Garland Thomson (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 338-355.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Andrew Orser, *The Lives of Chang and Eng: Siam's Twins in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), pp. 94-96; Cynthia Wu, *Chang and Eng Reconnected: The Original Siamese Twins in American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), pp. 23-24.

<sup>13</sup> Wu, *Chang and Eng Reconnected*, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Orser, *The Lives of Chang and Eng*, pp. 100-101.

adopted to index the changing lived experience of the twins and how this impacted their freakery. Indeed, this chapter argues that the lived experience of the twins defined their freakery as their freakery defined their lived experience. Moreover, this chapter builds on existing scholarship which has centralised, in the words of John Kuo Wei Tchen, the ‘combination of racially and biologically framed qualities that made [Chang and Eng] such highly bankable performers’.<sup>15</sup> Robert Bogdan and Holly Martin similarly demonstrated how an exotic and medical discourse contributed to the construction of The Siamese Twins, arguing that when Chang and Eng became husbands, fathers and farmers, their freakery asserted their normality as ‘respectable freaks’ and marvels of normalcy.<sup>16</sup> As with Lambert, paradox remained a hallmark of their constructions: social normality articulated alongside physical exceptionality.

But the focus on lived experience is centralised in this chapter, which draws on a range of primary materials, from exhibition pamphlets published in America and England, roughly between 1830 and 1869, to the twins’ copious personal documents and letters. The first part of the chapter pays particular attention to the 1830 life pamphlet written by Chang and Eng’s manager, published in London, retailed at their shows for a shilling and allegedly selling two thousand copies in 1830 alone.<sup>17</sup> The pamphlet included descriptions of Siam, a biography of the twins, observations of their physical and mental characteristics and medical testimonials.<sup>18</sup> The second part of the chapter shifts attention to lived experience, which is made possible by the copious primary and personal documents relating to the twins.

But a note of caution is necessary: the vast majority of Chang and Eng’s letters were composed by their second manager Charles Harris. Tchen claimed that Chang and Eng ‘dictated’ these letters as ‘the twins expressed their views and values directly’.<sup>19</sup> Orser asserted that ‘we can only assume that [Harris] was forthright when he wrote, repeatedly, that these were the twins’ words’.<sup>20</sup> But it is unlikely that the ‘views and values’ of Chang and Eng were passed purely from their mouths, via Harris’ pen, onto the page. Not only does this collapse the individuality of Chang and Eng who, by all

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<sup>15</sup> John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Durham, NC: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), p.106; Sarah Mitchell, ‘From “Monstrous” to “Abnormal”: The Case of Conjoined Twins in the Nineteenth Century’, in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal: Social and Cultural Histories of Norms and Normativity*, ed. by Waltraud Ernst (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 53-72; Sarah Mitchell, ‘Exhibiting Monstrosity: Chang and Eng, The “Original” Siamese Twins’, *Endeavour*, 27:4 (2003), 150-154.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 200-203; Holly E. Martin, ‘Chang and Eng Bunker, “The Original Siamese Twins”: Living, Dying, and Continuing Under the Spectator’s Gaze’, *Journal of American Culture*, 34:2 (2011), 372-390.

<sup>17</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, p. 90.

<sup>18</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, pp. 3-16.

<sup>19</sup> Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown*, p. 138.

<sup>20</sup> Orser, *The Lives of Chang and Eng*, p. 64.

accounts, had different temperaments and, according to some people, different views, but it begs the question: how can their 'true' views be verified if they exist as representations penned by a manager? Crucially, the content of the letters was reportedly made by the twins and thus the letters exist as possible representations of Chang and Eng's concerns. As with Lambert, therefore, it is representations, not distinct 'realities', which predominate.

## Biographical Sketch

Modern biographies state that Chang and Eng were born on 11 May 1811 in Meklong, a village approximately sixty miles from Bangkok. Their father was a local fisherman who emigrated from China and their mother was a quarter Siamese and three quarters Chinese. During childhood, cholera allegedly took the lives of Chang and Eng's father and three of their siblings so the twins were forced to contribute to the family budget by working as fishermen, merchants and raising ducks.<sup>21</sup>

In 1829 Robert Hunter, a British merchant, 'discovered' the eighteen year olds Chang and Eng in their native Siam. Hunter and his business associate, Captain Abel Coffin, arranged for Chang and Eng to perform in America, travelling from Siam to Boston in March 1829.<sup>22</sup> They performed for eight weeks in Boston under the management of James Webster Hale. Chang and Eng were inspected by a range of medical men before touring in Providence Rhode Island, New York City and Philadelphia. Their stage performances developed from answering audiences' questions to performing somersaults, back flips, feats of strength and challenging spectators to a game of checkers.<sup>23</sup>

In October 1829 Chang and Eng sailed for England. They performed for seven months in the capital's Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, renowned for its displays of natural curiosities. The Egyptian Hall was opposite the location in which Lambert exhibited some twenty-three years previously but, unlike Lambert's apartment, Chang and Eng performed in a purpose-built establishment. It was first erected at number 22 Piccadilly in 1809 before moving to numbers 170-173 and opening its doors in 1811-1812. The Egyptian Hall helped establish the location as a prime spot for exceptional human exhibitions.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 15-16, 24-27, 33-34; Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 13-24.

<sup>22</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 34-37, 42-45; Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 25-33.

<sup>23</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 46-69; Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 41-46.

<sup>24</sup> Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London: A Panoramic History of Exhibitions, 1800-1862* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1978), pp. 250-251; London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Miscellaneous: Theatre Playbills, Folder E.

The twins were again inspected by medical men. Similarly, they performed to a paying public and added to their performances by playing the popular battledore and shuttlecock. They toured the British Isles as 'The United Siamese Brothers' before returning to America in mid-January 1831. Hunter, returning to his business in Singapore, sold half of his Chang and Eng 'concern' to Abel Coffin who embarked on his own business ventures in the East Indies, leaving the twins under the direction of his wife Susan Coffin and their manager James Hale.<sup>25</sup>

The group suffered increased tensions: private correspondence showed that Susan Coffin alienated Hale who was replaced by a new manager, Charles Harris, in October 1831.<sup>26</sup> In a series of letters, Harris revealed the twins' alleged distress as they were refused an increase in expenditure, were provided with second-rate transport and accommodation and were insulted when the American press called them slaves. On their twenty-first birthday, having reached the age of maturity, Chang and Eng terminated their contract and became independent self-employed performers.<sup>27</sup>

The twins embarked on a series of domestic and international tours before temporarily retiring from public life and opening a retail store in Wilkes County, North Carolina, in late 1839. They bought their first piece of land and became naturalised American citizens, changing their name to Chang and Eng Bunker in 1840, purportedly chosen as a result of an intimate friendship with the Bunker family whom they met in New York around 1832.<sup>28</sup>

On the 13 April 1843 Chang and Eng married two local sisters, Adelaide and Sarah Yates, aged nineteen and twenty respectively. Chang's marriage to Adelaide and Eng's union with Sarah was another crucial juncture in the twins' lives, marking their transition from performers and businessmen to members of the Southern slaveholding elite. The wedding gift from their father-in-law David Yates, a local farmer and part-time preacher, was a woman named Aunt Grace. She eventually served as a nursemaid to Eng's eleven and Chang's ten children.<sup>29</sup>

In 1846 the twins bought farms in the White Plains district, Surry County, and built two houses a mile apart.<sup>30</sup> They farmed tobacco, wheat, Indian corn and oats, owning a total of twenty-eight slaves by

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<sup>25</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 71-100; Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 47-61.

<sup>26</sup> North Carolina State Archives (NCSA), Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Correspondence, Capt. Abel Coffin, 1831-1833, 7 September 1831.

<sup>27</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 115-126; Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 61-66.

<sup>28</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 130, 143-147, 151-154, 160-166; Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 75-80.

<sup>29</sup> Wu, *Chang and Eng Reconnected*, pp. 23-24; Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 166-179, 196; Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 81-85, 89.

<sup>30</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 214-217; Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 89-90.

1860.<sup>31</sup> During this period they continued with public performances: in 1849 they purportedly visited 130 towns and cities and briefly worked with the American showman P. T. Barnum in 1860.<sup>32</sup>

Owing to the financial strain of the Civil War (Chang and Eng were for the Confederacy), the twins embarked on an international exhibition, returning to London in February 1869.<sup>33</sup> They were displayed alongside Eng's daughter Katherine, aged twenty-five, and Chang's daughter Nannie, aged twenty-two, who were physically unexceptional other than being the 'mixed-race' offspring of The Siamese Twins.<sup>34</sup>

By late August 1870, the family were back in America. Chang had allegedly developed a strong drinking habit and, on the return journey, suffered a stroke. Chang and Eng continued to tend to their farms and their financial situation improved but, in January 1874, Chang contracted bronchitis. In the early hours of Sunday, 17 January, he was found dead. The family doctor was immediately summoned but failed to reach Eng in time: he died shortly afterwards.<sup>35</sup>

The family were persuaded to release the corpses to the College of Physicians, Philadelphia, for a medical autopsy. On 18 February 1874 their bodies were examined. Casts were made, their conjoined liver was preserved and both were displayed at the Mutter Museum. The remains were sent back to North Carolina where the twins were buried.<sup>36</sup>

## Medicine and Freakery

Chang and Eng's London performances, in 1829-1830, were marked by a reciprocal relationship between medicine and freakery. George Buckley Bolton, surgeon of the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) and member of the Medical and Chirurgical Society of London, was designated the sole medical attendant of Chang and Eng. Bolton was given privileged access to the twins and conducted a series of experiments, the results of which he shared in a report to the RCS.<sup>37</sup> Printed by Richard

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<sup>31</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Slave Schedule, 1860.

<sup>32</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 212-213, 224-226.

<sup>33</sup> Chang's son Christopher fought for the Confederates and was captured by Unionists. See: Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (SHC, UNC), Christopher Wren Bunker Papers 4822-Z.

<sup>34</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 258-286; Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 94-98.

<sup>35</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 287-298; Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 104-115.

<sup>36</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, pp. 305-325; Hunter, *Duet*, pp. 116-123.

<sup>37</sup> George Buckley Bolton, 'Statement of the Principle Circumstances Respecting the United Siamese Twins Now Exhibiting in London', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 120 (1830), 177-186.

Taylor in Fleet Street, the report was widely circulated in London and incorporated into later exhibition pamphlets.<sup>38</sup>

Over thirty attendants at the 1829 private levee in the Egyptian Hall signed their names to a statement of validity testifying to the reliability and decency of Chang and Eng's performances. This signed statement was published on the first page of the 1830 exhibition pamphlet and compiled into a book open for inspection at the Egyptian Hall. The statement praised the 'remarkable and interesting youths'; stressed the reliability of the performance, 'in no respect deceptive'; and emphasised the respectability of the show, 'nothing whatever, offensive to delicacy'. The statement maintained that the twins 'are in possession of full health and extraordinary bodily strength', echoing Lambert's framing as healthy and strong: he was always in possession of 'extraordinary muscular power', according to Lambert's 1809 life pamphlet.<sup>39</sup> The medical statement in Chang and Eng's exhibition pamphlet continued to stress that the twins 'display all the faculties of the mind in their fullest extent; and seem in fact in every respect to enjoy a state of perfect happiness and contentment', testifying to the humanitarian nature of the display.<sup>40</sup>

The signatories were part of a wider medical culture. Astley Cooper, Honoratus Leigh Thomas and Anthony Carlisle had all been Presidents of the RCS, (Thomas presiding when Chang and Eng were displayed at the private levee), they were all elected fellows of the Royal Society, they all hailed from the world of surgery and anatomy and they were all students of John Hunter, the famous anatomist-surgeon.<sup>41</sup> Other signatories, such as William Blizzard, President of RCS between 1822 and 1823, Thomas Copeland, Joseph Henry Green, Edward Stanley and John Scott were practicing surgeons. There was also a cohort from the Royal College of Physicians (RCP): Francis Hawkins, Charles Locock and Henry Halford, President of the RCP when Chang and Eng were displayed in London.

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<sup>38</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, p. 87; Anon., *An Account of Chang and Eng*, p. 9; Anon., *The Siamese Twins: Chang and Eng. A Biographical Sketch* (London: J. W. Last, 1869), p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 3; Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man, the Late Daniel Lambert. From his Birth to the Moment of his Dissolution, with an Account of Men Noted for their Corpulency, and other Interesting Matter* (Stamford: J. Drakard, 1809), p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> W. F. Bynum, 'Cooper, Sir Astley Paston, first baronet (1768–1841)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6211>> [accessed 4 February 2016]; J. B. Bailey, 'Thomas, Honoratus Leigh (1769–1846)', rev. Michael Bevan, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27221>> [accessed 4 February 2016]; W. F. Bynum, 'Carlisle, Sir Anthony (1768–1840)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4687>> [accessed 4 February 2016].

The signed statement of validity helped construct and sensationalise the twins as physiologically exceptional. A personal statement by Joshua Brookes, a leading London anatomist, was included on the first page of the pamphlet and worked as a coda to the signatories' statement:

Having seen and examined the two Siamese Youths, Chang and Eng, I have great pleasure in affirming they constitute a most extraordinary *Lusus Natuare*; the first instance I have ever seen of a living double child; they being totally devoid of deception, afford a very interesting spectacle, and are highly deserving of public patronage.<sup>42</sup>

Brookes' statement, possibly influenced by Hale's anticipations, responded to American critics who claimed the twins were frauds.<sup>43</sup> Brookes verified their physiology, claiming they were *lusus naturae*, the sportive action of nature which marked a deviation from a normal type.<sup>44</sup> Chang and Eng were medical marvels, the living double child, 'the first instance' the renowned anatomist had ever seen. Roy Porter argued that, in the eighteenth century, there was a professional pride in the sciences not sensationalising but rather observing monstrosities with a detached gaze.<sup>45</sup> Here, however, Brookes and the signed signatories were promoting the exhibition of the twins, blurring the distinction between the spectacle of freakery and medical knowledge.

The presence of these medical testimonials, on the first page of the exhibition pamphlet, centralised the importance of Chang and Eng's physiology. This was mirrored at the end of the pamphlet which concluded with a series of medical reports that focused on the '*lusus*, the anatomical structure', of the connecting band:

The ensiform cartilage at the end of each sternum, is united to its fellow, and has been in part ossified, forming a hard, elastic upper edge to the band which connects these boys. This is convex upward, and concave below, becoming the upper boundary of a canal which is in the band, that communicates with the abdominal cavities of both the youths, from which fact, the canal is necessarily lined by a continuation of the natural peritoneal membrane of the cavities, and the whole of this is covered by common integuments. Thus the connecting link is constituted.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, p. 77.

<sup>44</sup> '*lusus naturae*, n.' *OED Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/111426?redirectedFrom=lusus+naturae>> [accessed 4 February 2016].

<sup>45</sup> Roy Porter, *Bodies Politic: Disease, Death and Doctors in Britain, 1650-1900* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 55.

<sup>46</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 14.

The medical interest centred on the 'ensiform cartilage' that comprised the connecting band (Figure 6). But when the same description was printed in an 1869 exhibition pamphlet, the author admitted that 'comparatively few readers can interpret the technical terms of this paper', yet 'we insert here a few extracts, as evincing the interest excited in the mind of the learned world by the presence of the Twins'.<sup>47</sup> The terminology imbued the performance with a respectable, medical discourse. It established an intellectualism suggesting an educative content, in a similar fashion to Lambert's eccentric biographies and life pamphlets. Chang and Eng's medical statement, moreover, focused attention on the ligament, the point which unsettled the question of the twins' individuality: 'Two Bodies: are they two men?' asked the 1869 exhibition pamphlet.<sup>48</sup>

George Bolton maintained that, on the basis of experiments to the ligament, surgical separation was a viable option.<sup>49</sup> The exhibition pamphlet, on the other hand, stressed the 'dangerous consequences' in attempting such a procedure.<sup>50</sup> This echoed Leslie Fiedler's view that the potential to 'fix' Siamese Twins turned them into 'supernumeraries in a psychodrama starring the doctors who make normal humans out of monsters'.<sup>51</sup> The uncertainty over the possibility of separating Chang and Eng certainly brought the audience into the medical drama. In later promotional material the question of severance was even more pronounced: 'Can they be separated?' it was asked directly.<sup>52</sup> When Chang and Eng returned to London in 1869, *The Lancet* was still discussing this possibility.<sup>53</sup>

Whether this manifested a deeper psychological tension between the boundaries of Self and Other, as Fiedler implied, is open to question.<sup>54</sup> Rather than promote an implicit universalism within this Freudian framework, Nadja Durbach's arguments on 'separation anxiety' in the context of Siamese Twins and Lalloo, 'The Double-Bodied Hindoo Boy', seems more pertinent: the possibility of separation reflecting the increased preoccupation with individuality and the autonomous self. As modernity and the premise of individuality advanced, conjoined twins, as neither one nor quite two, complicated the boundaries of Self and Other.<sup>55</sup> Chang and Eng's exhibition pamphlet used the

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<sup>47</sup> Anon., *The Siamese Twins: Chang and Eng*, p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Bolton, 'Statement of the Principle Circumstances Respecting the United Siamese Twins', p. 180.

<sup>50</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 199.

<sup>52</sup> Anon., *The Siamese Twins: Chang and Eng*, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Anon., 'The Siamese Twins', *Lancet*, 93:2372 (1869), 228-230.

<sup>54</sup> Fiedler, *Freaks*, pp. 197-225.

<sup>55</sup> Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 63-66; Allison Pingree, 'The "Exceptions That Prove the Rule": Daisy and Violet Hilton, the "New Woman," and the Bonds of Marriage', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 173-184 (p. 173).



medical fraternity to centralise this concern, directing the audiences' gaze to the physiological dimension that unsettled the contours of the individual.

Surgeons and physicists helped legitimise Chang and Eng's performances. At the turn of the nineteenth century, medicine was modernising and professionalising, slowly imbuing the profession with greater social respectability and cultural authority.<sup>56</sup> Many of the signatories to Chang and Eng's exhibition were of the highest professional order: Sir Henry Hallford was surgeon-extraordinary to George III, Anthony Carlisle occupied the same position for George IV, Astley Cooper was created a baronet in 1821 and appointed the King's surgeon in 1828 and the surgeon Thomas Copeland ran a successful practice that catered to the aristocracy, becoming surgeon-extraordinary to Queen Victoria in 1837.<sup>57</sup> By association, therefore, Hale was affecting a form of cultural authority transference by using the medical fraternity's growing prestige to promote his exhibition as authoritative, sincere and unique. Simultaneously, he could make a social pitch to the 'nobility and gentry, both males and females, all of whom', Hale wrote in the 1830 exhibition pamphlet, 'appear highly gratified at the extraordinary sight'.<sup>58</sup> Like Lambert's exhibition, Chang and Eng cast their freakery in a respectable lineage.

The medical profession derived a number of benefits from associating with Chang and Eng. They were potential trophies in the private anatomical museums that become public museums by the early nineteenth century.<sup>59</sup> These museums also remained in private hands or were institutionalised within hospitals as assemblages of learning. Edward Stanley, a signatory to Chang and Eng's performance, built a reputation by enlarging and cataloguing the anatomical museum at St Bartholomew's Hospital.<sup>60</sup> Joshua Brookes had a collection of 6000 specimens (3000 of which were human preparations) and Astley Cooper amassed his own private museum.<sup>61</sup> Another signatory,

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<sup>56</sup> Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), pp. 305, 316-317, 348-352, 354-356.

<sup>57</sup> G. T. Bettany, 'Hallford, Sir Henry, first baronet (1766-1844)', rev. Michael Bevan, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11919>> [accessed 4 February 2016]; G. C. Boase, 'Copeland, Thomas (1781-1855)', rev. Ian Lyle, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6258>> [accessed 4 February 2016].

<sup>58</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> Russell C. Maulitz, *Morbid Appearances: The Anatomy of Pathology in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 176; A. W. Bates, *The Anatomy of Robert Knox: Murder, Mad Science and Medical Regulation in Nineteenth-Century Edinburgh* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), pp. 51-56.

<sup>60</sup> D'A. Power, 'Stanley, Edward (bap. 1792, d. 1862)', rev. Jean Loudon, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26264>> [accessed 4 February 2016].

<sup>61</sup> Phillip R. Sloan, P. E. Kell, 'Brookes, Joshua (1761-1833)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3559>> [accessed 4 February 2016].

William Clift, was curator of the Hunterian Museum at the RCS, a collection of 18,682 anatomical preparations created in the second half of the eighteenth century by John Hunter.<sup>62</sup>

Exceptional bodies were prime specimens in these museums. In the 1780s the body of Charles Byrne, The Irish Giant, was secured by John Hunter, allegedly via a bribe to the undertaker. Byrne's body was then dissected and displayed in Hunter's collection.<sup>63</sup> A day before Chang and Eng's private levee in London another pair of conjoined twins, Ritta and Christina Parodi, were dissected in the amphitheatre of the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle at the Jardin des Plantes, Paris. In attendance was George Cuvier, the comparative anatomist, who had previously dissected Sara Baartman, The Hottentot Venus, in 1815.<sup>64</sup> Alive in 1810, Baartman was displayed in London's Piccadilly and, as Sadiyah Qureshi suggested, the revealing costume she wore helped 'foster interest in her anatomy', not to mention the erotic evocation.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, during Chang and Eng's private levee, 'the front aspect of the living band' was exposed and medical men were allowed to physically examine the ligament.<sup>66</sup> Abel Coffin even purportedly carried embalming fluid to preserve Chang and Eng in case of sudden death.<sup>67</sup>

There was thus a long tradition of dissecting and posthumously exhibiting people deemed different. Association with the twins, driven by these anatomical interests, was alleged in an 1831 American satire:

Sir Astley bid high to secure them,  
To cut up when the spring was o'er;  
He had, he begged leave to assure them,  
Cut up 'The Skeleton,' before.  
T'was much, they'd see if they reflected,  
To be with care and skill dissected;  
And if next year they would prefer—*he*

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<sup>62</sup> After Hunter's death, the collection was safeguarded by Clift and brought under the charge of the Company of Surgeons in 1799. See: 'Clift, William (1775–1849)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5668>> [accessed 4 February 2016].

<sup>63</sup> Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 57-8. Charles Byrne's skeleton is still on display at the Hunterian Museum, Royal College of Surgeons.

<sup>64</sup> Armand Marie Leroi, *Mutants: On the Form, Varieties and Errors of the Human Body* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), pp. 25-27.

<sup>65</sup> Sadiyah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 120; Sadiyah Qureshi, 'Displaying Sara Baartman, The "Hottentot Venus"', *History of Science* 42:2 (2004), 233-257.

<sup>66</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 1 December 1829, n. p.

<sup>67</sup> Wu, *Chang and Eng Reconnected*, p. 36.

Was not at present in a hurry.<sup>68</sup>

At a time when cadavers were in short supply, yet dissection remained a crucial component of anatomy and the basis of surgical qualification, the potential to view, inspect and eventually dissect Chang and Eng was a promising opportunity. Yet the public nature of the medical endorsements, printed in exhibition pamphlets and quoted in the press, suggests a form of public relations in which the profession willingly advertised their linkage to Chang and Eng. There was an element of self-advertisement: Joshua Brooks and Astley Cooper, for example, ran their own private practices in London. Their testimonials were widely distributed in the popular domain of freakery and projected them as authoritative agents of science. At a collective level, medicine was making a social pitch by demonstrating knowledge and insight to a broad audience. The profession was showing an ability to view and inspect but not steal and dissect.

This was particularly important in the context of the early nineteenth-century relationship between medicine and the wider public. In 1823 the surgeon Thomas Wakley founded *The Lancet* to expose medical malpractice, professionalise the field and unite its disparate elements.<sup>69</sup> Surgeons and anatomists were agents of punishment and death as they dissected the corpses of executed criminals, imbuing the practice with a range of negative associations as explored by Ruth Richardson.<sup>70</sup> Restrictions on cadavers, coupled with increasing demand from proliferating anatomical schools, meant anatomists and surgeons turned to the supply of corpses from resurrectionists and body snatchers, subjects of public fear and loathing on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>71</sup> A year before Chang and Eng were displayed at the private levee, a Select Committee investigated anatomical dependency on resurrectionists and 'Burking' penetrated popular consciousness as the comparative anatomist Robert Knox was exposed for using murdered corpses for dissection.<sup>72</sup>

Thus association with Chang and Eng attempted to project the medical profession in a favourable light. It connected the seemingly closed and corrupt world of medicine to the wider public through the practice of freakery. During Chang and Eng's tour of England, the RCS revealed its desire to improve public relations in an open letter sent to the Home Secretary. It urged reform on the issue

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<sup>68</sup> Edward B. Lytton, *The Siamese Twins: A Satirical Tale of the Times. With Other Poems* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1831), p. 76.

<sup>69</sup> Richardson, *Death*, pp. 42-50.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-29, 75-99.

<sup>71</sup> Michael Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embalmed Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 3-4.

<sup>72</sup> Bates, *The Anatomy of Robert Knox*, pp. 66-77; Richardson, *Death*, pp. 132-144.

of acquiring corpses highlighting reliance on resurrectionists as both 'disgusting to society at large' and degrading the medical profession 'from the high station which it ought to hold'.<sup>73</sup> The letter demonstrated the RCS' sensitivity to public opinion and its desire to increase the profession's social respectability. Participation in Chang and Eng's exhibition was thus another opportunity to reassert the social status of medicine. It tied into a long durational public relations exercise in which the profession attempted to counter its negative associations.<sup>74</sup>

Alliance with Chang and Eng was also a means of overcoming internal divides. Russell Maulitz described these as a 'tripartite division into surgeons, physicians, and apothecaries', whereas Roy Porter highlighted the fluidity and heterogeneity of the profession, maintaining that continued images of the old hierarchy manifested the indeterminacy of roles within the profession.<sup>75</sup> Yet physicians maintained a social superiority over surgeons who, until 1745, were linked with barbers through the Company of Barber-Surgeons and only from 1745 could they claim surgery as a craft in its own right. The RCP, on the other hand, was the oldest medical society, founded by a charter of Henry VIII in 1518, while the RCS had to wait until 1800 for its royal charter. Sir Henry Halford, President of RCP and signatory to Chang and Eng's performance, epitomised the physicians' sense of superiority when refusing to allow midwives into the college in 1832, despite many eminent surgeons practicing in the field: 'I think it is considered rather as a manual operation' that would 'rather disparage the highest grade of the profession'.<sup>76</sup> But in Chang and Eng's exhibition, the RCP, including Halford, was openly associating with its perceived medical inferiors at the RCS. Conversely, therefore, the RCS's association with Chang and Eng brought them into the same field of interest as physicians. Just as medicine connected to the public in the practice of freakery, so physicians and surgeons could meet in the exhibition hall of Chang and Eng.

In sum, therefore, Chang and Eng's freakery became a site for the coalition of interests. James Hale used medicine to construct, sensationalise and legitimise the display of Chang and Eng who were presented as physiological exceptions. For medicine, this association had self-interested benefits: easy access to anomalous bodies, anatomical and curatorial potential and an exercise in public and professional relations. The boundaries between medical knowledge and freakery were blurred as the two interacted in the display of Chang and Eng.

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<sup>73</sup> Richardson, *Death*, p. 165.

<sup>74</sup> Porter, *Bodies Politic*, pp. 129-149.

<sup>75</sup> Maulitz, *Morbid Appearances*, p. 110; Porter, *Bodies Politic*, pp. 171-208.

<sup>76</sup> Richardson, *Death*, p. 35.

## Orientalism and Freakery

Immediately after the medical statement of validity testifying to Chang and Eng's display, the 1830 exhibition pamphlet opened by situating the twins within their foreign culture:

SIAM, from whence these interesting youths were brought, is situated between the Burmese and Chinese Empires, and is tributary to the latter. Bangkok, the Capital, is in the latitude of 13 North, and longitude 101 East; on the river Minam, about forty miles from its mouth. The houses are chiefly built upon rafts, composed of bamboos which rise and fall with the tide, and are moored in situations to suit the convenience of the occupiers.<sup>77</sup>

As Siam remained a relatively unknown country, the display of Chang and Eng became a vehicle for disseminating knowledge about the region. In the exhibition pamphlet, Siam was denoted as a separate entity but defined in relation to the Burmese and Chinese Empires. Coordinates were stated, observations on dwellings provided and the reader and writer assumed the status of Western observer in a region increasingly subject to imperialism. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Siam and Burma were largely stable independent countries but European rivalries between the 1780s and 1820s provoked British expansion, particularly in Southeast Asia.<sup>78</sup> Siam became an 'economic satellite of the British Empire', while Burma's independence at the close of the century had been crushed under British rule.<sup>79</sup>

Marked by their foreignness in a region exposed to exploration and Empire, Chang and Eng were presented and defined through the discourse of Orientalism. This was famously identified by Edward Said as an ontological and epistemological field distinct from the Occident and a discursive domain of Western domination that helped define the West.<sup>80</sup> Although Said overwhelmingly focused on the Islamic world, Orientalism encompassed connected geographies to represent an imaginative space that predominated over geographical realities.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> A. J. Stockwell, 'British Expansion and Rule in South-East Asia', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 372-375; Orser, *The Lives of Chang and Eng*, p. 12; Jonathan Hart, *Empires and Colonies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), III, pp. 125-170.

<sup>79</sup> Eric Tagliacozzo, 'Ambiguous Commodities, Unstable Frontiers: The Case of Burma, Siam, and Imperial Britain, 1800-1900', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46:2 (2004), 354-377 (p. 354).

<sup>80</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 1-28, 201-211.

<sup>81</sup> Although Said was careful to qualify that the 'man-made' Orient had a 'corresponding reality' rooted in the locations and cultures of the East: Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 1-28.



**Figure 6.**

*The Siamese Twins*, Lithograph, London, 1830, Iconographic Collection 679471i, Wellcome Library, London

Indeed, visualisations of the twins were produced by artists who had probably never visited Siam. Chang and Eng's display was part of a wider production of Orientalist landscapes: early nineteenth-century optical entertainments, such as panoramas, dioramas and cosmoramas, depicted exotic topography that promised an 'imaginative engagement with the exotic'.<sup>82</sup> A lithograph of The Siamese Twins demonstrates how Chang and Eng were presented as composite creations of Orientalist discourse with dark skin, bulbous foreheads and slanted eyes (Figure 6). Dressed in pantaloons and brocaded tunics, they stand barefoot in an opening between palm trees and vegetation. In the background are wooden huts and domed architecture which, as Wu noted,

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<sup>82</sup> Edward Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 16, 22-53.

evoked North Africa and West Asia and thus subsumed geographies into a singular Orient.<sup>83</sup> The image was recycled on handbills and tickets in both America and England.<sup>84</sup>

The Orientalism of Chang and Eng was connected to their corporeal difference.<sup>85</sup> Orientalism and medicine intertwined: as David Arnold argued, colonial medicine in India functioned as a tributary of Western authority over Indian medicine and bodies. The stress on environmental factors such as climate, topography and the perceived social and cultural characteristics of Indians helped create 'Oriental bodies' distinct from Western bodies and 'Occidental therapeutics' designed to cure the white imperialists in India.<sup>86</sup> Douglas Baynton showed how the emergent concept of normality in the nineteenth century depended on perceived social and biological hierarchies that collapsed race and disability: Down's syndrome, for example, was labelled 'Mongolism' in 1866 due to perceived physiological similarities.<sup>87</sup> Chang and Eng's billing as The Siamese Twins highlights the concurrence between race and disability. The association functioned within a hierarchy exacerbated by a comparative approach common in Western medicine, evidenced in George Bolton's report on Chang and Eng:

They are much shorter, and appear less advanced in puberty, than youths of this country at the age of eighteen years; but the average stature of their countrymen is less than that of Europeans.<sup>88</sup>

By comparing the twins against the Western standard, Bolton revealed the belief that the Caucasian body was the normative standard at the height of a racially graded scale.<sup>89</sup> Chang and Eng's exhibition pamphlet also utilised implied hierarchies and contrasts by ascribing Oriental despotism to their native homeland. The pamphlet purported that Captain Coffin witnessed the incarceration of the Prince of Laos and his family 'confined in an iron cage, loaded with heavy chains', after which:

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<sup>83</sup> Wu, *Chang and Eng Reconnected*, p. 25.

<sup>84</sup> Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ephemera Collection CbB S56f, CbB S56sl, CbB S56p, CbB S56w.

<sup>85</sup> Orientalism had a biological base of racial inequality see: Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 206-207.

<sup>86</sup> David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 11-60.

<sup>87</sup> Douglas C. Baynton, 'Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History', in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. by Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (New York: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 33-57.

<sup>88</sup> Bolton, 'Statement of the Principle Circumstances Respecting the United Siamese Twins', p. 178.

<sup>89</sup> Mitchell, 'From "Monstrous" to "Abnormal"', in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal*, ed. by Ernst, pp. 53-72; Mitchell, 'Exhibiting Monstrosity', pp. 150-154.

he was to be taken to the place of execution and there hung by a hook to be inserted under his chin; he was afterwards to be seated on sharp pikes five inches in length; then to be placed in boiling oil, and finally pounded to pumice in an immense mortar.<sup>90</sup>

Captain Coffin became a Western observer of degraded Siamese practices, anticipating later exhibition pamphlets which echoed the imperial adventure novels towards the close of the century.<sup>91</sup> Here, however, the pamphlet played on the familiar trope of violent Orientalism. Seven months before Chang and Eng's private levee, Bransby Blake Cooper (nephew of Sir Astley Cooper) gave a detailed report to the Royal Society on the dissection of a Chinese woman's bound-foot: a subject of frequent discussion and one which fuelled the notion of Oriental despotism.<sup>92</sup> Since the failed British embassy to China in 1816, when Lord William Amherst refused to partake in the kowtowing ceremony, the notion of Oriental despotism gained currency.<sup>93</sup> The cruel Orient was prevalent in nineteenth-century art, literature and even the theorising of Karl Marx who attributed Asiatic despotism to acrid climates necessitating artificial irrigation maintained by a strong government.<sup>94</sup>

The context of cruelty in which Chang and Eng were allegedly raised enabled their presence in England to be treated as a form of liberation:

The youths have never expressed any anxiety to return [to Siam]; on the contrary, they say they are so much better pleased with their present manner of life, that if their mother were with them, they should not have the least desire to revisit Siam. They often say she would be astonished to see how much like little kings they now live.<sup>95</sup>

The absent mother provided a self-congratulatory space: 'For Captain Coffin and his Lady, they have a paternal regard, calling them very frequently father and mother.'<sup>96</sup> This paternalism echoed a nineteenth-century discursive strand in which colonised people were frequently collapsed into the figure of the child requiring nurture and parental care.<sup>97</sup> Abel Coffin wrote to his wife Susan in 1831

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<sup>90</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>91</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 90-97.

<sup>92</sup> Mitchell, 'From "Monstrous" to "Abnormal"', in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal*, ed. by Ernst, pp. 53-72.

<sup>93</sup> Ulrike Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge: China and the Networks of British Imperial Expansion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 75-81.

<sup>94</sup> Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 67-70, 83-86.

<sup>95</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 6.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>97</sup> Bill Ashcroft, 'Primitive and Wingless: The Colonial Subject as Child', in *Dickens and the Children of Empire*, ed. by Wendy S. Jacobson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 184-202.



claiming, with regard to the twins, that 'I feel that I shall always do by them as by my own children may God bless you all and may you be as happy as I could wish'.<sup>98</sup> A year previous, Susan wrote to her children that Chang and Eng were 'very good boys indeed': 'they say that they love your mother much I tell them some times I am going home to America they say No No I shall cry mamah if you go home and leave me'.<sup>99</sup> By infantilising Chang and Eng, who were eighteen years old at the time, Susan and Abel Coffin echoed the Orientalist discourse that informed Chang and Eng's social construction. It was a discourse, therefore, that penetrated both the private relationship and the public presentation of the twins.

Chang and Eng's display occurred within a wider context of exploration and Empire, facets of everyday life that interspersed with the practice of freakery. Between 1790 and 1830 the Royal Navy assigned naturalists on their trading expeditions to promote scientific exploration.<sup>100</sup> Particularly after the Napoleonic Wars, as the Royal Navy dominated the seas but with no clear enemies, young officers turned to scientific investigations.<sup>101</sup> Curiosities were then brought back to England for classification and display. William Clift, curator of the Hunterian Museum and a signatory to Chang and Eng's performance, dealt in a range of these natural history specimens, from lump fish to Chinese skulls, many of which were displayed in public exhibitions.<sup>102</sup> Some were fraudulent items, such as the mermaid shown in 1822 at the Turf Coffee-House, St James's Street, which Clift examined and declared a deception.<sup>103</sup> Clift was also in correspondence with William Bullock, proprietor of the Egyptian Hall where Chang and Eng performed.<sup>104</sup> Bullock was both a respected naturalist and a showman who went on frequent expeditions to collect specimens for his museum. In 1822, for example, he secured a family of Laplanders and living reindeer whom he displayed at the Egyptian Hall.<sup>105</sup> In a similar fashion to the blurred boundary of medicine and freakery, Bullock testified to the thin line between natural history and freakery. Showmen, as well as specimens, moved seamlessly between the two practices. Indeed, Sara Baartman, The Hottentot Venus, was

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<sup>98</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Correspondence, Capt. Abel Coffin, 1831-1833, 8 January 1831.

<sup>99</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Correspondence, Capt. Abel Coffin, 1831-1833, 6 March 1830.

<sup>100</sup> R. A. Stafford, 'Scientific Exploration and Empire', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. by Porter, pp. 294-319.

<sup>101</sup> Glyn Williams, *Naturalists at Sea: Scientific Travellers from Dampier to Darwin* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 232-238.

<sup>102</sup> Royal College of Surgeons, London (RCSL), Museum Letters 1821 RCS-MUS/S/5/6/4; RCSL, Research: Memoranda of Natural History, Volume I MS0007/1/6/1/8.

<sup>103</sup> RCSL, Research: The Mermaid MS0007/1/6/1/16.

<sup>104</sup> RCSL, Research: Book of scraps relative to the specimens in the museum and to natural history, pp. 22, 45 MS0007/1/6/1/5.

<sup>105</sup> Michael P. Costeloe, *William Bullock Connoisseur and Virtuoso of the Egyptian Hall: Piccadilly to Mexico (1773-1849)* (Bristol: Bristol HiPLAM, 2008), pp. 42-46, 114-119; Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, pp. 87-90.

brought to England by Alexander Dunlop, the surgeon of an African ship and exporter of museum specimens from the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>106</sup>

The Egyptian Hall, known to Londoners as 'The Home of Mystery', was emblematic of this intermingling between natural history and spectacle.<sup>107</sup> It was redesigned in 1811-1812 to hold 'upwards of Fifteen Thousand Natural and Foreign Curiosities, Antiques, and Productions of the Fine Arts' and expanded to include a 'Roman Gallery', while catering for live exhibitions of human curiosities.<sup>108</sup> A separate exhibition space, the Pantherion, included an Indian hut within a tropical forest stuffed with quadrupeds and botanical exhibits. The Egyptian Hall cost one shilling to enter and was open from ten in the morning till dusk. It was a site that mixed entertainment and edification: a physical manifestation of the eccentric biographies that framed Daniel Lambert, capitalising on the same desires for rational recreation and similarly pitching to men, women and children.<sup>109</sup>

But as Michael Costeloe argued, and in a similar manner to the biographies detailing Lambert, Bullock was 'first and foremost a businessman' and his 'interests and concerns were essentially commercial'.<sup>110</sup> By the time Chang and Eng were displayed at the Egyptian Hall, ownership of the establishment had transferred to Bullock's nephew, George Lackington. It was claimed, moreover, that the educational element had been diluted in favour of more frivolous exhibitions.<sup>111</sup> Richard Altick placed the Egyptian Hall amidst the wider London amusement trade. The venue maintained a semblance of instruction amidst more thrilling exhibitions, housed three or four exhibitions at any one time and employed a collection of entertainers who worked the London circuit.<sup>112</sup> Chang and Eng were professional performers in this category. They worked as London entertainment became increasingly commercialised. The Egyptian Hall thus marked a shift in the presentation of freakery as it slowly became tied to the burgeoning entertainment industry.

The Egyptian Hall was one of many London sites exhibiting foreign people in displays variously labelled 'ethnic shows', 'ethnic displays' or 'human zoos'.<sup>113</sup> The Egyptian Hall hosted an array of these exhibitions: Mexicans in the 1820s, Native Americans and African Bushmen in the 1840s. The

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<sup>106</sup> Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, p. 108.

<sup>107</sup> LMA, Grainger Entertainment SC/GL/ENT/001.

<sup>108</sup> Ben Weinreb and others, *The London Encyclopaedia* (London: Macmillan, 2008), pp. 266-267.

<sup>109</sup> Costeloe, *William Bullock*, pp. 50-51, 113.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179, 194-195.

<sup>112</sup> Altick, *The Shows of London*, pp. 235-252.

<sup>113</sup> Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch and Nanette Jacomijn Snoep, 'Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage', in *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage*, ed. by Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch and Nanette Jacomijn Snoep (Paris: Musée de Quai, 2011), pp. 20-54.

display of foreign people accelerated alongside imperial expansion and London became the capital of both Empire and exotic displays, including living Indians in 1817, Laplanders in 1822, Eskimos in 1824, Fuegians in 1829, Guyanese in 1839, Zulus in 1853 and Aborigines in 1884.<sup>114</sup> By the end of the century, London was hosting the 'Japanese Native Village' in Hyde Park.<sup>115</sup> The Colonial and Indian Exposition of 1886, running for six months in South Kensington, included eighty-nine living 'natives'.<sup>116</sup> While Qureshi has cautioned against collapsing ethnic difference and freakishness, the two frequently met on stage.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, Chang and Eng constitute a prime example of the 'crossovers between the realms of "ethnic show" and "freak show"'.<sup>118</sup>

The display of foreign people involved many agents. In 1855, for example, John Conolly delivered a presidential address to the Ethnological Society calling on his colleagues to attend the display of foreign people on a rational, inquisitive basis.<sup>119</sup> The Colonial and Indian Exhibition relied on anthropological input at the level of curatorship, research and spectatorship. Francis Galton, President of the Anthropological Institute, expressed 'much pleasure' at receiving an invitation to the exhibition and enjoyed 'meeting men from all parts of the Empire' because it provided him with the opportunity of 'inspecting collections of high ethnological interests'.<sup>120</sup>

Agents of Empire were also involved in the display of foreign people. Three years before the British colonised the Cape of Good Hope, a Dutch Missionary Preacher displayed a male and two female Hottentots in 1803, declaring they 'have become civilised and espoused Christianity under his Ministry and by his exertions'.<sup>121</sup> As Britain dominated European trade at Canton, in April and May 1827, two 'Chinese ladies' were exhibited at a 'Chinese exhibition' where 'genuine Chinese goods' were sold: human displays, 'informal empire' and the market for Chinese products meeting on the stage of human exhibitions.<sup>122</sup> By 1844 George Henry, an Anishinabe from a tribe of North America, became a 'missionary manager' having converted to Christianity around 1825. He exhibited

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<sup>114</sup> Blanchard, Boëtsch and Snoep, 'Human Zoos', in *Human Zoos*, ed. by Blanchard, Boëtsch and Snoep, pp. 20-54; Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 121-125; Bernth Lindfors, 'Ethnological Show Business: Footlighting the Dark Continent', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 207-218.

<sup>115</sup> LMA, Grainger Entertainment Folder SC/GL/ENT/102.

<sup>116</sup> Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, p. 238.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>118</sup> Blanchard, Boëtsch and Snoep, 'Human Zoos', in *Human Zoos*, ed. by Blanchard, Boëtsch and Snoep, pp. 20-54 (p. 35).

<sup>119</sup> Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, pp. 185-221.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 256-257.

<sup>121</sup> British Library, London (BLL), Sarah Sophia Banks Collection, Volume V: Cuttings from Newspapers L.R.301.h.7, *Hottentots in England*, 9 November 1803.

<sup>122</sup> Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, pp. 30-31.

unconverted members of his own tribe.<sup>123</sup> Hunter and Coffin, having become equal 'owners' of Chang and Eng in the hope they would 'prove profitable as a curiosity', also assisted missionaries.<sup>124</sup> Coffin even carried a written plea from an English missionary for his 'American brethren' to come to Siam.<sup>125</sup> It was only a year later that Protestant Christian missionaries in America, especially in South Carolina, began evangelising missions to China, regularly bringing back converts to demonstrate the success of their work.<sup>126</sup>

Chang and Eng were displayed within this matrix of Empire. Hunter and Coffin were foreign merchants seizing the opportunity to exhibit Chang and Eng who came from a region increasingly vulnerable to British imperialism. Displayed in the commercial nexus of freakery, Chang and Eng were commodified within the marketplace. Their performances, supported by the exhibition pamphlets, framed and inscribed the twins as physiological and exotic Others.

### **Ambiguity and Ambivalence**

In his exploration of the correlation between the imperial subject and the trope of the child, Bill Ashcroft made a case for the ambiguous nature of the relationship: 'the myth of the child promises the development of the primitive unformed subject into the "Self" while maintaining that subject as the abject Other, the object of imperial rule'.<sup>127</sup> This ambiguity reflects a tradition of scholarship that has questioned some of the binaries erected by Edward Said, in particular the dichotomy between East and West.<sup>128</sup> It has been argued that the Otherness of colonial subjects was never stable or inherent but constantly redefined and maintained.<sup>129</sup> Paradoxes of Empire have been explored: the rise of missionaries as agents of imperialism nonetheless bemoaning imperial injustices; the institutionalisation of Empire alongside the abolition of the slave trade and the rise of liberalism, a

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<sup>123</sup> Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, p. 106.

<sup>124</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Correspondence, Capt. Abel Coffin, 1829-1830, 28 June 1829.

<sup>125</sup> Orser, *The Lives of Chang and Eng*, p. 9.

<sup>126</sup> Wu, *Chang and Eng Reconnected*, p. 21.

<sup>127</sup> Ashcroft, 'Primitive and Wingless', in *Dickens and the Children of Empire*, ed. by Jacobson, pp. 184-202 (p. 194).

<sup>128</sup> Dennis Porter, 'Orientalism and its Problems', in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), pp. 150-161; John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 138-175; John M. MacKenzie, 'Orientalism in Arts and Crafts Revisited: The Modern and the Anti-Modern: The Lessons from the Orient', in *Orientalism Revisited: Art, Land and Voyage*, ed. by Ian Richard Netton (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 117-127.

<sup>129</sup> Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. by Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 1-56; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), pp. 1-22.

defining contradiction at the heart of British India according to Robert Darnton.<sup>130</sup> Additionally, a case has been mounted for considering different 'Orientalisms', especially a distinctive Sinological Orientalism, which warns against treating Orientalism as a homogenous field.<sup>131</sup>

Post-colonial readings have drawn attention to the nature of ambivalence in colonial discourse. Homi Bhabha argued that a nineteenth-century colonial discourse of mimicry, 'a desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*', was constructed around the notion of ambivalence.<sup>132</sup> Mimicry represented difference while simultaneously denying that difference, subverting the power of colonial authority which it paradoxically sought to maintain. Robert Young developed this insight through his identification of two existent models relating to nineteenth-century colonialism: a Hegelian dialectic based on a binary of black and white, Other and Self, and a model of mixture where deviance exists in a matter of degrees.<sup>133</sup>

These insights prove pertinent for Chang and Eng. While they were connected to an overarching Orientalist discourse that collapsed regional variations, they were simultaneously presented against a distinction between Siam and China which complicated their exotic status. Although they were billed as The Siamese Twins, the Coffins privately described them as 'Chinese boys'.<sup>134</sup> The London papers noted that Chang and Eng's colour and features 'point them out at once as belonging to the Chinese race'.<sup>135</sup> The title of the 1830 exhibition pamphlet, and indeed the accompanying promotional posters, stressed that Chang and Eng's parents were Chinese and 'their hair, which is about two and a half feet in length, is braided and arranged upon their heads in the Chinese style'.<sup>136</sup> References to China gave a precision to Chang and Eng's heritage which, paradoxically, confounded the significance of their nationality and ethnicity.

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<sup>130</sup> Rowan Strong, 'The Oxford Movement and the British Empire: Newman, Manning and the 1841 Jerusalem Bishopric', in *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World*, ed. by Stewart J. Brown and Peter B. Nockles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 78-98 (p. 89); Robert Darnton, *Censors at Work: How States Shaped Literature* (London: British Library, 2014), pp. 89-143.

<sup>131</sup> Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 14-15.

<sup>132</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85-92 (p. 86).

<sup>133</sup> Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 179-182.

<sup>134</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection, P.C.916.1, Correspondence, Capt. Abel Coffin, 1831-1833, 2 September 1831.

<sup>135</sup> *Morning Post*, 19 November 1829, n. p.

<sup>136</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 7.

Early nineteenth-century views of China comprised a series of conflicting discourses that informed an evolving outlook.<sup>137</sup> Ulrike Hillemann argued that a series of ‘contact zones’ between the British and Chinese functioned as sites for knowledge formation and imperial expansion from 1763 to 1840. In Southeast Asia, the region signalled by the pamphlet and the locality from which the twins hailed, Chinese immigrants were seen as industrious and hardworking compared to the lazy natives: George Finlayson, a Scottish naturalist and traveller, wrote in his 1826 memoirs that the Chinese represented ‘the prototype’ of a greater Mongol race with the Siamese representing a diminished replica.<sup>138</sup> Unlike the malformed and mentally inept Siamese, however, Chang and Eng’s exhibition pamphlet stressed the twins’ ‘shrewdness and keenness of remark’ and ‘well made and proportional’ bodies.<sup>139</sup> As with Lambert, it was stated that they had ‘never been affected with any serious illness’. Moreover, their ‘superior intellect and success in obtaining their livelihood’ ensured that Chang and Eng were distanced from the characteristics of the Siamese and brought closer to their more respectable Chinese heritage.<sup>140</sup>

But there was never one idea about the Chinese. At the Bengal border the Chinese were a threat to Britain’s imperial possession so anxiety drove a quest for knowledge and an image emerged of a potentially threatening adversary. In Britain, China could be mystical, luxurious and lofty while also being despotic and violent.<sup>141</sup> Crucially, therefore, within different ‘contact zones’, early colonial encounters were marked by the production of ambivalent or paradoxical ideas about the Chinese: the positive caricature of the Chinese as industrious workers, for example, could equally become a negative portrayal of their secretive and monopolistic tendencies.<sup>142</sup> Even the physical characteristics of the Chinese, increasingly discussed in British Sinology, were marked by an essential ambivalence: their skin colour standing between the poles of black and fair.<sup>143</sup> Thus the twins expressed a racial liminality. They could simultaneously represent an imagined Oriental space and stand as inept and deformed Siamese, exemplary Chinese or potentially threatening adversaries. Within this matrix of potentials, Chang and Eng occupied an ambiguous place.

The exhibition pamphlet exacerbated this indeterminate status by confounding Chang and Eng’s exoticism. The pamphlet maintained that if the twins ever returned to Siam they would rather live in ‘English’ homes as opposed to the ‘bamboo’ homes of Siam. They were slowly mastering the English

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<sup>137</sup> David Martin Jones, *The Images of China in Western Social and Political Thought* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 14-66.

<sup>138</sup> Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, pp. 1-15, 106-149; Orser, *The Lives of Chang and Eng*, p. 18.

<sup>139</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, pp. 6, 8.

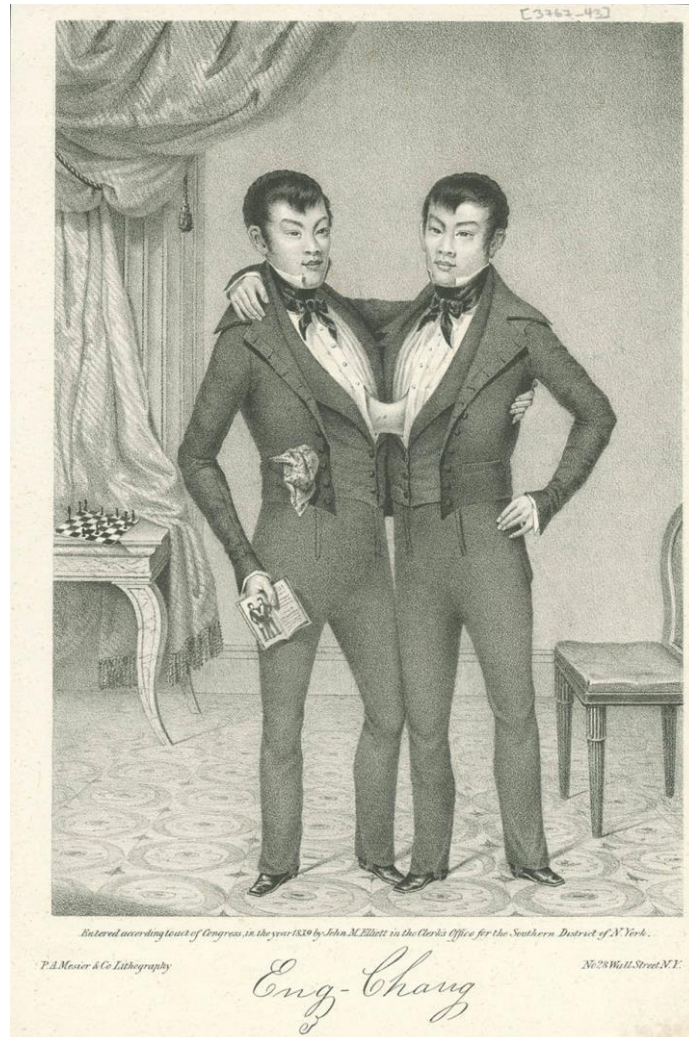
<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>141</sup> Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*, pp. 16-33, 120-141.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136-138.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 152-168.

language which would 'give them such advantages of education as will be ultimately beneficial to them'.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, Chang and Eng's adoption of chess, draughts, shuttlecock and battledore signalled an embrace of popular English recreations. In an 1839 engraving, Chang and Eng's ambivalent status was exemplified (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.**

*Eng-Chang*, engraving, 1839, Chang and Eng Bunker Papers #3761, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

They were domesticated and normalised within a lavish interior fitted with Chippendale furniture, cord drapes, carpet and a checkerboard. They were presented within an interior suggesting domesticity and affluence, depicted with lighter skin, short cropped hair and draped in Western attire wearing polished leather shoes. The image contrasts with the 1830 lithograph (Figure 6),

<sup>144</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 8.

which placed Chang and Eng in an Orientalist landscape, wearing native garb and sporting highly racialised features.

Wu argued that the contrasts between Figures 6 and 7 reflected the class ascension of the twins, which marked a shift in their freakery from 'Exotic Spectacle to Genteel Respectability'.<sup>145</sup> But as Emma Tarlo explored in reference to colonised India, the act of clothing could become a means of classification yet at the same time spiralling into a conflict of split identity and problematic integration.<sup>146</sup> Dress could be a form of resistance to or accommodation with dominant cultures.<sup>147</sup> Yet in the 1839 engraving both are problematic: Chang and Eng are neither actively resistant nor totally accommodated in the domestic milieu. They are still slant-eyed, flat nosed and portrayed with props echoing their status as performers: Chang holding their exhibition pamphlet and a game of checkers evoking their exhibition act. Their ligament is centralised in the middle of the frame, directing the viewers' focus and disrupting their gentlemanly attire. A single chair is depicted to the right of the image, functioning to emphasise the duality of the twins and thus the redundancy of a chair designed for one. Chang and Eng were neither 'other' nor 'same'.<sup>148</sup> Signifiers for identification were both upheld and disrupted.

Posters for the exhibition of *The Wild Man of the Prairies; Or What is it?*, at the Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens in 1846, demonstrate the role of ambiguity in visual form (Figure 8).<sup>149</sup> The Wild Man's body occupies the centre of the image with a table and tea set placed to his right. The engraved lines accentuate the thickness of the Wild Man's body and facial hair, which contrasts with the minimalist, thin strokes used to highlight the domestic furniture. The Wild Man holds a large stick, which supports his underdeveloped body, bolstered by his large hands juxtaposed with the intricate handle of the cup and pot. The Wild Man's hirsute body is covered with a loincloth and he looks uncomfortably beyond the image, enhancing the disequilibrium of the entire visual piece.

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<sup>145</sup> Wu, *Chang and Eng Reconnected*, pp. 23-31.

<sup>146</sup> Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (London: Hurst, 1996), pp. xvii-xxi, 23-61.

<sup>147</sup> Steeve O. Buckridge, *The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), pp. 67-173.

<sup>148</sup> *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader: Nothing Else Like It in the Universe*, ed. by James W. Cook (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 155-157.

<sup>149</sup> LMA, Grainger Entertainment Folder SC/GL/ENT/018.





Figure 8.

*The Wild Man of the Prairies, or, What Is It?*, Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens, [1846?], (C) The British Library Board, Evan. 2878

The poster promotes a visual ambiguity in which the Wild Man is immersed in a domestic milieu, highlighting both the colonisation of the body and the penetration of the outside into the Victorian home. Janet Myers explored Victorian colonial settlements in Australia, showing the imposition of English domestic ideals through the arrangement of domestic motifs within the wilderness. But much like the Wild Man poster, this injected disequilibrium and problematic integration: dual representations of wilderness and domesticity could imply a move toward integration but racial and cultural barriers remained dormant, which dramatised the tension of encounters as portrayed in visual mediums.<sup>150</sup> The Wild Man poster reflects this tension while instigating a deliberative process to decipher who, exactly, was the Wild Man. While much has been written on the Wild Men

<sup>150</sup> Janet C. Myers, *Antipodal England: Emigration and Portable Domesticity in the Victorian Imagination* (Albany, NY: SUNNY Press, 2009), pp. 139-140.

exhibitions, for my purpose the poster highlights the visual ambiguity used to promote 'exotic freaks' and signals the broader visual tradition in which Chang and Eng were displayed.<sup>151</sup>

Binaries, therefore, were never stable. Indeed, Chang and Eng's exhibition occurred within a new context that destabilised the distinction between the monstrous Other and the natural Self. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the meaning of monster had shifted from signifying 'prodigies' and 'marvels' to representing variations subject to the same rules as other beings.<sup>152</sup> Monstrosity and normality were not opposites but manifestations of the same rules of nature. This was the premise behind teratology, the study of monsters, spearheaded by the French anatomist and natural historian Etienne Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire in the eighteenth century. His son Isidore emphasised the proximity of the normal and monstrous in his publication on the history, organisation and classification of anomalies (1832-1836): 'monsters are also normal beings; or rather, there are no monsters, and nature is one whole'.<sup>153</sup> The corollary was an interpretation of all natural phenomena as subject to natural and predictable rules: the moment when the category nature and *contra natura* effectively ceased to exist as all phenomena were brought within the laws set by nature herself.<sup>154</sup>

In the 1830s, therefore, Chang and Eng were not necessarily perceived within a simple binary of normal and abnormal. Indeed, the medical fraternity struggled to categorise the twins, oscillating between United Twins, *lusus natuare*, double living child, Siamese Twins and double monstrosities.<sup>155</sup> Only in 1861 was the term 'conjoined twins' referenced and, following the autopsy of the dissected twins in 1874, 'the monster now before us might be called an *Omphelopagus Xiphodidymus*', although the establishment of this 'scientific nomenclature' was offset with a plethora of unanswered medical questions.<sup>156</sup> The bodies of Chang and Eng were unstable entities: the struggle to define and categorise highlighting the limits of medical science to confine the meaning of Chang and Eng's bodily difference. But they were not necessarily perceived as absolute

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<sup>151</sup> James W. Cook, 'Of Men, Missing Links, and Nondescripts: The Strange Career of P. T. Barnum's "What is It?" Exhibition', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 139-157; James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 119-162; Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 161-175.

<sup>152</sup> Mitchell, 'From "Monstrous" to "Abnormal"', in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal*, ed. by Ernst, pp. 53-72.

<sup>153</sup> Mark S. Blumberg, *Freaks of Nature and What They Tell us About Development and Evolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 27.

<sup>154</sup> Andrew S. Curran, 'Afterwards: Anatomical Readings in the Early Modern Era', in *Monstrous Bodies/ Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 227-245.

<sup>155</sup> M. Sauvage, 'The Period of the First Union of the Siamese Twins', *Lancet*, 29: 735 (1837), 29-30.

<sup>156</sup> Mitchell, 'From "Monstrous" to "Abnormal"', in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal*, ed. by Ernst, pp. 53-72 (p. 62); Anon., 'The Siamese Twins at the College of Physicians', *Richmond and Louisville Medical Journal*, 17:4 (1874), 459-473 (pp.460-461); Wu, *Chang and Eng Reconnected*, p. 38.

Others. Moreover, incorporated into definitions of monstrosity, Chang and Eng were nonetheless presented within nature's laws.

This level of assimilation similarly echoed in the broader practices to which Chang and Eng were connected. Their 1874 autopsy carried an implication expressed, back in 1829, by the Parisian journalist and critic Jules Janin. He had berated the anatomists for dissecting the conjoined Parodi twins: 'You despoil this beautiful corpse, you bring this monster to the level of ordinary men, and when all is done, you have only the shade of a corpse.'<sup>157</sup> Dissection rendered the poetic body a mere cadaver. It substituted the extraordinary for the ordinary body, the abnormal for the normal. Even the potential of dissection placed the twins within the market of corpse commodification in which social outcasts, murderers and the poor were bought by anatomists and surgeons.<sup>158</sup> Chang and Eng's bodies were unique but nonetheless part of a broader normative market.

Similarly, from the late eighteenth century, naturalists brought back an assortment of flora, fauna and other natural items that were subsequently classified and contained in zoological gardens, private collections, museums and anatomical schools.<sup>159</sup> A year after Chang and Eng's London exhibition, Charles Darwin sailed on the *Beagle* as the ship's naturalist, returning almost five years later with over fifteen hundred zoological and geological specimens.<sup>160</sup> These collections complimented the classificatory intent behind the burgeoning practice of taxonomy that reached an apogee in the nineteenth century.<sup>161</sup> Chang and Eng, brought from Siam by two merchants, were part of this acquisition of natural history specimens, normalised within a broader practice. Their freakery was further interconnected with missionary displays of converts, 'ethnic shows' and medicine. As The Siamese Twins, they were defined by medical and Orientalist discourses that marked them as different, but distinctions between Siam and China, visual ambiguity, new understandings of monstrosity and, indeed, the permeation of their freakery with professional and social practices confounded their Otherness.

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<sup>157</sup> Leroi, *Mutants*, p. 26.

<sup>158</sup> Richardson, *Death*, pp. 100-130.

<sup>159</sup> Nicholas Jardine, and Emma Spary, 'The Natures of Cultural History', in *The Cultures of Natural History*, ed. by Nicholas Jardine, James A. Secord and Emma C. Spary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 3-13.

<sup>160</sup> Williams, *Naturalists at Sea*, pp. 239-259.

<sup>161</sup> Harriet Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid and Other Fignents of the Classifying Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 1-50.

## Onstage and Offstage

This permeation similarly manifested itself at a personal level as everyday life blended with performed freakery. A good example, highlighting Chang and Eng's role in the formation of their own freakery, can be noted at the moment they reached the age of maturity in May 1832. They became "Their Own Men" having honoured their contractual obligations to the Coffins.<sup>162</sup> In charge of their own performances, Chang and Eng maintained Charles Harris as their manager, hiring him at the same rate he received under the Coffins and keeping a detailed record of his expenses.<sup>163</sup> They hired servants, often 'negro' boys, to help with their performances.<sup>164</sup> They kept records of their expenditure and income and treated themselves to little luxuries such as ice cream and entertainment excursions.<sup>165</sup> It was not until October 1832 that Abel Coffin, after a 'wildgoose chase', located the twins and resigned himself to the fact that they were 'quite free from me'.<sup>166</sup> They were not simply performers but independent businessmen, a status which possibly echoes Lambert's career.

In May 1833, Chang and Eng's old manager, James Hale, wrote to Chang, Eng and Harris confirming that 'your request that the public should know you "are no longer slaves" will of course be attended to'.<sup>167</sup> In March 1832, Harris had reported that Chang and Eng were deeply offended when it was rumoured they 'were sold by their mother to Mr Hunter and Captain Coffin [...] the idea of persons looking on them as children who had so hard-hearted a mother has sunk but too deeply in their minds'.<sup>168</sup> As such, the new pamphlet, written by Hale and published in America in 1836 omitted any reference to Chang and Eng being bought, stating instead that the twins planned to return to Siam imminently. It claimed that 'since they left home, they have had several opportunities of hearing of their mother'.<sup>169</sup> Thus the twins asserted a direct influence in the content of the exhibition pamphlet. Their newfound independence meant they were at liberty to inform the construction of their freakery. A change in their lives offstage echoed a change in their presentation onstage.

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<sup>162</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Correspondence, Charles Harris to the Coffins, 1832, 29 May 1832.

<sup>163</sup> SHC, UNC, Chang and Eng Bunker3761/226, Ledger 1832-1841, June 1839.

<sup>164</sup> SHC, UNC, Chang and Eng Bunker3761/226, Ledger 1832-1841, March 1839.

<sup>165</sup> SHC, UNC, Chang and Eng Bunker3761/226, Ledger 1832-1841, May 1834 and June-July 1833.

<sup>166</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Correspondence, Capt. Abel Coffin, 1831-1833, 5 October 1832.

<sup>167</sup> NCSA, Thurmond Chatham Papers PC.1139, Hale to Chang and Eng and Harris, 17 May 1833.

<sup>168</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Correspondence, Charles Harris to the Coffins, 1832, 11 April 1832.

<sup>169</sup> [James W. Hale], *A Few Particulars Concerning Chang-Eng, The United Siamese Brothers, Published Under Their Own Direction* (New York: John M. Elliott, 1836), p. 5.

The 1836 exhibition pamphlet emphasised the twins' new status offstage by imbuing them with greater influence in the presentation of their own freakery. The title of the pamphlet, *A Few Particulars Concerning Chang-Eng, The United Siamese Brothers, Published Under Their Own Direction*, contrasted with the 1830 London pamphlet which stated that the content was 'permitted to be taken by their protectors'. The new emphasis was on Chang and Eng's 'own direction'. The 1836 pamphlet reiterated:

The pamphlets concerning Chang-Eng, which have been published previous to this time, were written before the period at which they became of age, and also before they understood the English language. Under these circumstances, the present statement has been written with their knowledge, and under their supervision.<sup>170</sup>

Like the collection of letters written by Harris, the pamphlet was not written by the twins but allegedly under their guidance. Yet they were presented as having overcome their initial vulnerabilities in age and language. In comparison with the 1830 exhibition pamphlet, the 1836 edition remoulded Chang and Eng's freakery to bolster their new status. Unlike in 1830, when they dressed in their native clothes, in 1836 they 'adopted the American style of dress in everything except the hair'. Unlike the 1830 exhibition pamphlet, the 1836 edition claimed Chang and Eng had 'learned to read and write sufficiently to amuse themselves during their hours of relaxation'.<sup>171</sup> In the 1830 pamphlet, Chang and Eng were from a 'poorer class' but in the 1836 version they were self-sufficient businessmen, 'pretty keen at striking a bargain' and bequeathing 'a very flourishing business to their brother' as they left Siam for America. In their 1830 construction, the King of Siam wanted them executed but in the 1836 pamphlet, the King honoured them with gifts.<sup>172</sup> The 1830 pamphlet constructed a violent Orientalist landscape, while the 1836 edition provided a six-page treatment of the European landscape, presenting Chang and Eng as European travellers.<sup>173</sup> Finally, the 1836 pamphlet reversed the gaze of curiosity as Chang and Eng became observers of American exoticism. Admitting the 'superstitious adherence to particular days and hours' in China, the pamphlet commented that this 'is no worse than the twins themselves have met with in this country'.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> [Hale], *A Few Particulars Concerning Chang-Eng*, p. 1.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>172</sup> [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 6; [Hale], *A Few Particulars Concerning Chang-Eng*, p. 5.

<sup>173</sup> [Hale], *A Few Particulars Concerning Chang-Eng*, pp. 7-12.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

The contrasts between the 1830 and 1836 editions highlight the instability of Chang and Eng's constructions. In the space of six years they went from ambivalently constructed Orientalist Others to ambivalently constructed Europeanised self-sufficient performers. They were still The Siamese Twins but discussions of their homeland were uttered amidst clearer signals of their Western normality, echoing the visual ambiguity of the 1839 lithograph (Figure 7). Crucially, Chang and Eng's independence from the Coffins altered the presentation of their freakery, highlighting the interrelationship between their offstage and onstage lives. As they become their "Their Own Men", Chang and Eng demanded that their exhibition pamphlets tackle the spurious claim that they were slaves abandoned by their mother.<sup>175</sup> The 1836 edition went further by aggrandising the twins who, it was stated, were efficient businessmen from a less disreputable background than was previously claimed. Thus a greater sense of autonomy offstage was reflected in the elevated status of the Siamese Twins onstage

Beyond the mid-1830s, Chang and Eng's lives offstage and onstage developed in new directions. They opened a retail store in Wilkes County, bought land in the American South, became naturalised citizens and married two sisters from Wilkes County in 1843.<sup>176</sup> On 10 February 1844 Eng's wife Sarah gave birth to Katherine Marcellus. Six days later Chang's wife Adelaide gave birth to Josephine Virginia.<sup>177</sup> Moreover, the family apparently achieved a high level of communal integration. The twins' neighbour William Rawley wrote to them in 1849:

Myself and wife was at your home yesterday and all your family were well. Your ladies told me to write to you that they were going to write to you as soon as they got their corn planted and that I must send their love to you.<sup>178</sup>

Rawley was not a curiosity-seeker intent on gazing at The Siamese Twins but rather a family friend, neighbour and companion of the Bunker families. Another neighbour, Robert Gilmour, wrote to Chang and Eng in May 1853 commenting on the 'delightful season for planting', noting that 'most of the farmers have got their corn planted' and signing off 'your friend truly and sincerely'.<sup>179</sup> They were addressed as Bunkers, fathers, friends and farmers, not The Siamese Twins on display. In this sense, then, Chang and Eng maintained a semblance of distance from their onstage identities.

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<sup>175</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Correspondence, Charles Harris to the Coffins, 1832, 29 May 1832.

<sup>176</sup> SHC, UNC, Bunker Papers M-3761, 1840-1854, Undated, Account of Wilkes Store; SHC, UNC, Bunker, Chang and Eng 3761/2, 1840-1854, 9 December 1840.

<sup>177</sup> Orser, *The Lives of Chang and Eng*, p. 136.

<sup>178</sup> SHC, UNC, Bunker, Chang and Eng 3761/6/p1, 1840-1854, 30 April 1849.

<sup>179</sup> SHC, UNC, Bunker, Chang and Eng 3761/6/p1, 1840-1854, 13 May 1853.

But their status as performers meant that in other ways their private lives were treated as public property. When Chang and Eng married, newspapers throughout America published articles ranging from simple announcements, to derision, to outright condemnation.<sup>180</sup> A prurient curiosity dominated, especially concerning the sexual nature of their marriages.<sup>181</sup> In consequence, Sarah and Adelaide were brought into the representational field of The Siamese Twins. They were depicted in portraits, commented upon in exhibition pamphlets and used as props to highlight the twins' domesticity. Chang and Eng often exacerbated this attention: in 1849, for additional novelty, 'The Living Siamese Twins Chang-Eng and Their Children', Katherine Marcellus and Josephine Virginia, performed together. The children were marked by their fathers' exoticism as the press commented on their 'Siamese cast of countenance', 'coarse black hair and 'swarthy' complexion.<sup>182</sup> Chang and Eng's freakery, in turn, projected claims to masculinity and domesticity through the display of their children.

This marked a shift in their freakery as they became increasingly domesticated: 'home folks' in the words of an 1853 exhibition pamphlet.<sup>183</sup> An 1850 biographical sketch, asking 'What has become of the Siamese Twins?', featured a picture of the 'Residence of the Siamese Twins, Surry County, N. C.' and confirmed the validity of their marriage with a printed copy of 'their marriage licence and certificate'.<sup>184</sup> The question of their sexual arrangements was insinuated: since their marriage they all 'lived agreeably, occupying the same room and the same *bed*' (italics in original).<sup>185</sup> As late as 1936 Shepherd Dugger, claiming to have met the twins when alive, used the marriage between the Bunkers and Yates as the basis for his 'Romance of the Siamese Twins'.<sup>186</sup>

The two seemingly disparate worlds of Chang and Eng's freakery and their lives of domesticity were intimately connected. This was brought to the fore in 1868 when Chang took his daughter Nannie, aged twenty-one, and Eng his daughter Kate, aged twenty-four, on their tour of the British Isles. Nannie and Kate appeared onstage with The Siamese Twins. Chang and Eng's new manager, Clyde Ingalls, had previously written to the twins asking for a 'picture of your wives and your selves'

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<sup>180</sup> Orser, *The Lives of Chang and Eng*, pp. 97-101.

<sup>181</sup> Davies, *Neo-Victorian Freakery*, pp. 61-74.

<sup>182</sup> Orser, *The Lives of Chang and Eng*, p. 137.

<sup>183</sup> Anon., *An Account of Chang and Eng*, p. 89.

<sup>184</sup> J. N. Morehead, *Lives, Adventures, Anecdotes, Amusements, and Domestic Habits of the Siamese Twins: One of the Greatest Wonders of the Present Time, Being Two Perfectly Formed Persons, Whose Bodies, by a Singular Caprice of Nature, Are United Together As One* (Raleigh: E. E. Barclay, 1850), pp. 5, 24.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>186</sup> Shepherd M. Dugger, *Romance of the Siamese Twins: A Thrilling Story of a Cherokee Indian Family, A Composition on Wild Flowers, A History of Avery County, North Carolina, And Other Sketches and Poems Never Before Published* (Burnsville, NC: Edwards Printing, 1936), pp. 9-19.

stating, 'I think if they are worked up well we can make a big thing of them'.<sup>187</sup> Clearly, the family were designed to be a central part of the promotion. For Nannie it was: 'The first time in my life I was compelled to go before the public. I felt quite embarrassed when the hour came. It was not as I had imagined.'<sup>188</sup> Nannie found the displays 'exceedingly irksome', although she enjoyed meeting Sir James Simpson, a physician who would also visit Millie and Christine's exhibition (the 'United African Twins') in 1857: 'a venerable man far advanced in the downward course of life. Very kind and mild in appearance,' a notable contrast to the 'many people' who 'flocked around us crying here are the "Siamese Twins"' and mistakenly assuming that she and her sister were 'their "Wives"'.<sup>189</sup> But the turning point was when 'one man—I will not say gentleman—asked me if my grandmother or grandfather was a negro': 'I was so angry I could scarcely speak'.<sup>190</sup> For the daughter of a slave owner, born and raised in the American South, to be presumed in the lineage of African-Americans was a major insult. To the spectator, however, Nannie was an exotic curiosity, daughter of The Siamese Twins, whose public presentation precipitated the right to ask questions about her origins. Removed from her community and placed on display alongside The Siamese Twins, Nannie was enveloped in the freakery of her father and uncle. Like her mother and auntie, she was 'enfreaked'. Freakery thus permeated Chang and Eng's familial units. Their wives and children were neither immune from the representations of The Siamese Twins nor could Chang and Eng seemingly maintain a private realm distinct from their public personas. Their lives offstage were used to promote The Siamese Twins onstage as everyday life blended with performed freakery.

## Conclusion

Chang and Eng's freakery was tied to a series of discourses, professions and practices that marked the twins as physiological and exotic Others, but not quite. Their display in London highlighted the reciprocity between medicine and freakery. Medicine helped construct, sensationalise and legitimise Chang and Eng as medical marvels in a respectable performance. Freakery enabled the medical profession to associate with potential anatomical specimens and engage in a public relations exercise at a time when medicine was blighted with negative affiliations. Freakery also brought together surgeons, anatomists and physicians around the bodies of Chang and Eng. In the context of exploration and Empire, Chang and Eng's performances were part of a broader series of

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<sup>187</sup> SHC, UNC, Bunker, Chang and Eng 3761/28/p1-2, 1855-1874, 30 July 1867.

<sup>188</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Nannie Bunker's Diary, 1868-1869, 21 December 1868.

<sup>189</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Nannie Bunker's Diary, 1868-1869, 22-26 December 1868; NCSA, Millie-Christine Collection PC.266.4, First European Tour, Edinburgh, Scotland, January 1857.

<sup>190</sup> NCSA, Siamese Twins Collection P.C.916.1, Nannie Bunker's Diary, 1868-1869, 26 December 1868.



interconnections between freakery on the one hand and natural history, ethnic displays and missionary practices on the other. Chang and Eng were constructed as Orientals, portrayed with dark skin, bulbous foreheads and slanted-eyes and presented as inhabitants of a region marked by violent Oriental despotism.

Paradoxically, however, their doubled difference as physiological and exotic Others was undermined because their display occurred amidst broader normative practices: corpse commodification and natural history acquisitions. At the same time, Chang and Eng's exotic status was complicated by distinctions between the Chinese and Siamese. The twins could represent the deformed Siamese, the exemplary Chinese or become potentially threatening adversaries. Interpretations were never fixed. Indeed, the medical profession failed to find a consistent language to explain the twins' physiology, while the very meaning of monstrosity was unstable: by the early nineteenth century, monstrosity intimated a natural occurrence subject to nature's laws. The ambiguous status of the twins was further reflected in the visual depictions of the twins, presented with markers of normality alongside signs of exoticism. Self and Other, normal and abnormal, Western and exotic: all were interrelated. Chang and Eng's offstage identities as proprietors of their exhibition, husbands, fathers, farmers and neighbours were drawn into their freakery. Their public presentations, in comparison with the London exhibition of 1829-1830, injected greater autonomy, respectability and domesticity into the freakery of The Siamese Twins. This, in turn, brought the families of Chang and Eng into their lives onstage.

In contrast with Lambert, whose life was predominantly sourced through eccentric biographies and life pamphlets, the materials for Chang and Eng, such as the account books, letters and ledgers, present a more autonomous life offstage. But Chang and Eng still denote an agency circumscribed not simply by the culture and discourses in which they operated but also by the very nature of their physiology. They navigated both a collective and individual agency as two separate individuals connected by a ligament. In order to imbue Chang and Eng with individual agency, Alice Dreger claimed they had 'separate lives' and indexed them under separate entries in her book *One of Us: Conjoined Twins and the Future of the Normal*.<sup>191</sup> But the page references were exactly the same, demonstrating the difficulty in discussing one without the other. The issue returns to the nature of agency: if defined in relation to Enlightenment notions of autonomy, Chang and Eng push this to the limits. They were two separate individuals but remained intimately connected on account of their physiology. But if agency is perceived as circumscribed with discourses and constraints, then their

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<sup>191</sup> Alice Domurat Dreger, *One of Us: Conjoined Twins and the Future of the Normal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 18.

agency can be denoted from lived experience in its full complexity. In many ways, Chang and Eng exemplify the definition of agency adopted in this thesis: a life connected to a plethora of strands in cultural life. Chang and Eng, through their connecting ligament, highlight the interdependency between agency and culture.

Chang and Eng's lived experience indexes the changing nature of their freakery as their freakery indexes the changing nature of their lived experience. Initially dependent on their Western 'protectors', Chang and Eng were presented as passive and benevolent Oriental Siamese Twins. But once they reached the age of maturity and assumed charge of their freak shows, The Siamese Twins onstage became independent and respectable men under their 'own direction'. Exhibition pamphlets emphasised their travels around Europe, visual depictions stressed markers of normality and when the twins displayed their families, they asserted claims to masculinity. While this freakery and lived experience interacted and altered over time, the social construction of The Siamese Twins captured broader contemporaneous changes too. The practice of medicine, enmeshed in a troubled relationship with the wider public, embarked on a drive to professionalise, exemplified in the founding of *The Lancet* and captured in medicine's association with the twins. Furthermore, The Siamese Twins as Orientals manifested the broader ambivalences of Orientalism, imperialism and the differing notions concerning the nature of the Chinese. Further still, Chang and Eng's ambiguous construction expressed the new definitions of monstrosity, while the very display of Chang and Eng, in particular at the Egyptian Hall, demonstrated the advancement of commercial entertainment in which freakery was enmeshed.

Indeed, Lambert was displayed in a small, privately hired apartment in Piccadilly, seemingly without a manager. Chang and Eng, on the other hand, were always exhibited with the assistance of managers inside commercialised entertainment venues. This signifies a shift in the practice of displaying human curiosities: a professionalisation and commercialisation that reached a new apogee under P. T. Barnum and General Tom Thumb, the historical actors of the next chapter.

## Chapter Three

### Charles Stratton, The Man in Miniature: Fairies, Commodities and the Freak Industry

He was the smallest child I ever saw that could walk alone. He was not two feet in height, and weighed less than sixteen pounds. He was a bright-eyed little fellow, with light hair and ruddy cheeks, was perfectly healthy, and as symmetrical as an Apollo.<sup>1</sup>

So wrote the showman and entrepreneur P. T. Barnum in his 1855 autobiography. The diminutive Apollo, whom Barnum first met in 1842, was Charles Stratton: a Connecticut infant, not five years of age, measuring less than sixty centimetres in height due to a growth hormone deficiency.<sup>2</sup> Barnum convinced Stratton's parents to allow their son to enter into a four week contract at three dollars a week, expenses included, to exhibit at Barnum's American Museum. A popular establishment in the heart of New York, the American Museum professed to mix entertainment and edification. Stratton made his debut in December 1842 performing under the stage name Barnum provided: General Tom Thumb.

Stratton as Tom Thumb became a household name across America and Europe: a 'pet' of European palaces, a favourite of Queen Victoria and an acquaintance of Abraham Lincoln. In 1863, Tom Thumb also became a family man when he married another little person, Lavinia Warren, in a large public ceremony.<sup>3</sup> This chapter argues that Charles Stratton's agency was collapsed into the identity of General Tom Thumb; a social construction produced through a series of paradoxes. These presented an ambiguous and ambivalent identity which was intimately connected to a commercial and capitalist context that contributed to the birth of a 'freak industry'. This term signals freakery as an expression of capitalist 'popular culture'.<sup>4</sup> Freak industry captures the sense of freakery as a 'cultural industry', not in the sense of hegemonic mass deception integral to the 'culture industry' authored

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<sup>1</sup> Phineas T. Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum, Written by himself*, intro. by Terence Whalen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000 [1855]), p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> Eric D. Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb: Charles Stratton, P. T. Barnum, and the Dawn of American Celebrity* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), p. 1. By the age of twenty-five, Stratton had grown to approximately ninety centimetres at a time when the average height for men was around 168.8 centimetres, based on the average height of regular army recruits between 1860 and 1864. See: Roderick Floud and others, *The Changing Body: Health, Nutrition, and Human Development in the Western World since 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 155.

<sup>4</sup> Popular culture is defined in a manner pertinent to the freak show: the folklore of industrial society. See: Jim Cullen, 'Introduction: The Worldwide Web of Popular Culture', in *Popular Culture in American History*, ed. by Jim Cullen (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp. 1-9.

by proponents of the Frankfurt School but rather in the sense used by Christiane Eisenberg and Andreas Gestrich.<sup>5</sup> Their 'cultural industries' distinguish between idealistic high culture and commercial mass culture by recognising, instead, that both are dependent on the market, which emerged from the eighteenth century as urbanisation established a concentrated pool of consumers. This, in turn, raised demand for cultural consumption and provided the opportunity for entrepreneurs to invest and organise supply.<sup>6</sup> Thus, although 'cultural industries' is often used in a contemporary context, it was a phenomenon with deep historical roots reflected, as Ruti Ungar argued, in the eighteenth-century sport of boxing which drew large crowds, involved large sums of money and gradually professionalised and commercialised in the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter, then, predominantly locates freakery in the economic sphere. For Lambert, contextual changes were denoted through gentlemanly character intersecting with notions of manliness, eccentricity and Englishness; for Chang and Eng, it was lived experience that was chosen as an index of social change; for General Tom Thumb, it is the changing role of commercialisation and capitalism which are explored. But the analytical possibilities stretch further than the contours of this chapter. Indeed, Tom Thumb was fabricated and performed in America before being exported to Britain and the rest of the world, which opens a plethora of questions concerning the differences, similarities and reciprocal relationships between national forms of freakery and the particular role of Barnum in these exchanges. Indeed, Barnum is a crucial agent in the biography of Stratton.<sup>8</sup> Barnum constructed the identity General Tom Thumb, trained Tom Thumb in novelty performances and sold Tom Thumb first in America, then in Europe. Eric Lehman documented the professional relationship between Barnum and Stratton, including Stratton's relative autonomy from Barnum later in his career.<sup>9</sup> But they remained interconnected agents: Barnum oversaw Tom Thumb's 1863 wedding, provided exhibition space at the American Museum and suggested a world tour overseen by his former employee, Sylvester Bleeker. In 1899, a pamphlet stressed the intimacy between Barnum's achievements and his relationship with Tom Thumb: Barnum's 'first grand world-wide success was

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<sup>5</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (London: Verso, 1979), pp. 120-167; Heinz Steinert, *Culture Industry*, trans. by Sally-Ann Spencer (Oxford: Polity Press, 2002), pp. 2-9, 20-27.

<sup>6</sup> Christiane Eisenberg and Andreas Gestrich, 'Cultural Industries as a Field of Historical Research: Approaches, Analytical Dimensions, Long-Term Perspectives', in *Cultural Industries in Britain and Germany: Sport, Music and Entertainment from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Christiane Eisenberg and Andreas Gestrich (Augsburg: Wissner, 2012), pp. 3-22.

<sup>7</sup> Ruti Ungar, 'A Fashionable and Commercial Amusement: Boxing in Georgian England', in *Cultural Industries in Britain and Germany*, ed. by Eisenberg and Gestrich, pp. 23-35.

<sup>8</sup> Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 500-501.

<sup>9</sup> Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb*, pp. 141-142.

made with Tom Thumb'.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, as Lehman argued, Barnum and Stratton ushered in the age of American celebrity. Indeed, Stratton may have been one of the first international celebrities at a time when 'celebrity' assumed its modern meaning.<sup>11</sup> This all presents an opportunity to explore Barnum's unique role in the advancement of freakery and, specifically, the interconnections between freakery and celebrity within England.

Moreover, my exploration of Tom Thumb led me down numerous avenues which, in the end, were either cut or significantly edited from this chapter: the broader relationship between royalty and freakery, in particular Queen Victoria's endorsement of Tom Thumb which transformed his fortunes in England; the tensions between freakery and other forms of entertainment, often manifesting a bifurcated cultural and class distinction between notions of 'high' and 'low' culture; the success of Tom Thumb as a product of modernity and globalisation, three phenomena with interconnected representations; the broader tradition of displaying little people which Tom Thumb both utilised and departed from; and the dynamics of sexuality and domesticity in the displays of Tom Thumb. Although some of these themes are explored in this chapter, they are considered only when they serve to bolster the chosen contours of analysis: the social construction of Tom Thumb, the collapsing of Stratton's agency into fairy-tale representations and the role of commercialisation and capitalism which impacted the construction of Tom Thumb and produced a freak industry. In line with the organisational principle of this thesis, these areas were chosen to index cultural and economic changes as they redefined society and the practice of freakery.

This focus advances the argument that the onstage and offstage realms constitute a false dichotomy. Eric Lehman's 2013 biography sought to draw a line between 'Tom Thumb, the legend' and 'Charles Stratton, the man'; exploring, as Lehman wrote, 'the full story of Charles Stratton the man, his life as a performer and traveller, playboy and comedian'.<sup>12</sup> But Lehman upheld the distinction between an onstage and offstage persona, previously perpetuated yet troubled by Bogdan. He argued that Stratton as Tom Thumb reflected the aggrandised mode of presentation in which freak personas were imbued with exaggerated skills, talents and social status. Unlike the exotic mode of presentation, whereby performers 'clearly understood the difference between their onstage and offstage personas', within the aggrandised mode, particularly when stressed in the extreme, many freak performers 'strove to become their stage persona' because 'the invented identity was so

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<sup>10</sup> Caleb Jefferson, *Life and History of P. T. Barnum: The Greatest Living Showman* (London: Hansard Publishing Union, 1889), p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb*, pp. ix-xix.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xix, xviii.

flattering'.<sup>13</sup> Tom Thumb was a case in point but David Gerber criticised Bogdan for treating Stratton's life 'as if it were a real-life correlative to the aggrandized, mock-heroic character of Tom Thumb'.<sup>14</sup> In so doing, the humanity of Stratton's life was erased and the 'pathos' of his biography concealed: Stratton was raised as a 'freak' from infancy; in adulthood his private life was exploited for commercial gain; he developed a disdain for appearing in public; and by the time of his death, aged forty-five in 1883, Stratton had spent most of his wealth 'with an abandon that suggests compensatory striving'.<sup>15</sup> In the end, Gerber argued, Stratton's biography testified to the exploitation and oppression within the unequal social relations comprising the freak show.

But this analysis continues to rely on a dichotomy between an onstage and offstage life. It attributes motives onto Stratton whose words, like Lambert, Chang and Eng, are practically non-existent in the archives. Moreover, as Michael Chemers warned:

The label 'freak' disintegrates when it touches Stratton; his popularity and influence as well as his artistry and his actions as a private citizen utterly discombobulate our notions of what a freak was, and what an actor was, if we artificially attempt to separate the two.<sup>16</sup>

Although Chemers propagated the dichotomy between a private and public persona, he effectively argued that Tom Thumb's popularity was not merely a function of unusual size but rather a manifestation of Stratton's acting abilities. The level and duration of Tom Thumb's popularity could not have been maintained on the basis of abnormality alone but, as Chemers conceded, the very nature of Tom Thumb's performances played to his diminutive proportions.<sup>17</sup> Stratton was a performer, but a performer in the tradition of freakery.

This chapter begins by exploring the presentation of Tom Thumb in London, between 1844 and 1846, by analysing Tom Thumb's earliest known exhibition pamphlet published in London. Printed in 1845, the pamphlet spanned twenty pages covering the themes outlined in the title: *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton, the American Man in Miniature, known as General Tom Thumb, Twelve Years Old, Twenty-five Inches High, and Weighing Only Fifteen Pounds. With some Account of Remarkable Dwarfs, Giants, and other Human Phenomena, of Ancient and Modern Times. Also, General Tom Thumb's Songs*. The fragile document

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<sup>13</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, p. 147.

<sup>14</sup> David A. Gerber, 'The "Careers" of People Exhibited in Freak Shows: The Problem of Volition and Valorization', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. by Rosemarie Garland Thomson (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 38-54 (p. 52).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Michael M. Chemers, *Staging Stigma: A Critical Examination of the American Freak Show* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 27-55.

does not specify price or author, although the content was most probably overseen by Barnum.<sup>18</sup> Like all exhibition pamphlets, it was sold at the shows and probably cost a shilling. It reflected the content of future exhibition pamphlets and comprised the numerous discursive strands that constructed Tom Thumb.

This chapter proceeds to explore the interrelationships between onstage and offstage identities by analysing contemporaneous children's literature and the autobiographies of Barnum. The first edition of many was published in 1855, allegedly selling 160,000 copies in 1855 alone.<sup>19</sup> It has been read as an extension of Barnum's American Museum, containing miscellaneous collections of Barnum's time with a number of curiosities.<sup>20</sup> For Terence Whalen, Barnum's autobiography encapsulated a 'capitalist irony' which revealed and ridiculed the illusions that made him rich.<sup>21</sup> For Eric Fritz, Barnum's autobiographies propagated a 'theatrical Selfhood' in which every new version established a new version of Barnum that satisfied American notions of the self-made man.<sup>22</sup> For Amy Reading, the autobiographies offered a sustained engagement with the dialectic of deception and exposé.<sup>23</sup>

This reading chimed with Barnum's use of an 'operational aesthetics' in which his public exhibitions, imbued with deception and hoax, nonetheless amused audiences drawn to the pleasure of deciphering the workings of nature and man-made objects. It was the question of reliability and deception that was more pleasurable, democratic and entertaining than the fraud itself.<sup>24</sup> James Cook conceptualised this form of showmanship as 'artful deception', a mode of popular culture that provoked questions of authenticity, reliability and wove illusionism and realism into the promotion of exhibits.<sup>25</sup>

With a view to these discussions, I analyse Barnum's autobiography as it outlines the presentation of General Tom Thumb. This reading reveals how the agency of Charles Stratton was collapsed into the

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<sup>18</sup> Barnum maintained control over the promotion of exhibitions throughout his career. See: *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader: Nothing Else Like It in the Universe*, ed. by James W. Cook (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 103-104.

<sup>19</sup> Philip B. Kunhardt Jr., Philip Kunhardt III and Peter Kunhardt, *P. T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), p. 120.

<sup>20</sup> G. Thomas Couser, *Altered Egos: Authority in American Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 52-69.

<sup>21</sup> Terence Whalen, 'Introduction', in Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum*, pp. vii-xxxvii.

<sup>22</sup> Eric Fretz, 'P. T. Barnum's Theatrical Selfhood and the Nineteenth-Century Culture of Exhibition', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 97-107.

<sup>23</sup> Amy Reading, 'Dishonest Truthfulness: P. T. Barnum's Fifty-year Autobiography Project', *Auto/Biography Studies*, 22:1 (2007), 94-118.

<sup>24</sup> Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 61-89.

<sup>25</sup> James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 8-10, 14-16, 103-104, 117-119.

paradoxical identity of General Tom Thumb and the literary Tom Thumb from ancient fairy tales. In the process, the dichotomy between an onstage and offstage persona is rendered problematic. The rest of the chapter seeks to establish General Tom Thumb's presentation in a commercialised context, exploring the birth of the freak industry by drawing from texts, images and artefacts located at the Barnum Museum and the History Centre in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Unlike the other agents discussed in this thesis, Tom Thumb's performances generated the largest amount of ephemera, which were also mined in archives at Lincolnshire, London, Sheffield and New York: a prolificacy reflecting the international, commercial and popular nature of Tom Thumb at a time when, according to Fred Inglis, the 'industrialisation of celebrity' was well underway.<sup>26</sup>

### Biographical Sketch

Unlike the other subjects of this thesis, Charles Stratton was raised as a performer from the age of four. General Tom Thumb was an identity central to Stratton's development into an adult. As a result, recounting Stratton's biography is predominantly an exercise in exploring his life as Tom Thumb: an identity intimately connected to P. T. Barnum.

As far as is known, Stratton was born on 4 January 1838 in Bridgeport. His father was a local carpenter and his mother a part-time cleaner. Stratton first came to public notice just before his fifth birthday when he appeared at Barnum's American Museum in December 1842, billed as 'General TOM THUMB, a dwarf of eleven years of age, just arrived from England!'<sup>27</sup>

Barnum's American Museum, situated on the corner of Broadway and Anne Street, incorporated an eclectic mix of freaks, natural curiosities, artworks and dramatic performances, all of which could be seen for twenty-five cents. The American Museum mixed entertainment and edification for the whole family. In adopting these aims, the American Museum reflected the intentions of Lambert's nineteenth-century biographies and William Bullock's Egyptian Hall in London.<sup>28</sup>

When Tom Thumb performed at the American Museum, Barnum gave Stratton an identity that echoed an ancient literary tradition, allegedly first written by Richard Johnson in *The History of Tom Thumb* (1621). Barnum also utilised the 'American fancy for European exotics' by making Tom

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<sup>26</sup> Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum*, intro. by Whalen, p. 243; Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb*, pp. 10-36.

<sup>28</sup> Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 23-40.



Thumb English.<sup>29</sup> When Tom Thumb performed in England, Barnum reversed the logic and made him American. Barnum also doubled the age of General Tom Thumb as he feared that revealing Stratton's age would 'provoke the question, How do you know that he *is* a dwarf?', rather than a small child.<sup>30</sup>

Barnum's purchase of the American Museum in 1841 had brought him into the centre of New York entertainment. He had previously worked as a clerk, lottery promoter, owner of a confectionery store and a newspaper editor. In 1835 Barnum acted as the showman for the ex-slave Joice Heth: an old, blind and almost completely paralysed African-American billed as the 161 year old nurse of George Washington. Barnum displayed Heth in taverns, inns, museums, railway houses and concert halls across America.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, Tom Thumb was displayed in a plethora of venues before embarking on a three year European tour in 1844. In London, Tom Thumb entertained social elites from his apartment at 13 Grafton Street in the fashionable West End. It was home to court, parliament and government but, despite these respectable signifiers, the West End was also becoming a location in which sexual transgressions occurred.<sup>32</sup>

Grafton Street was just a six minute walk from the location in which Lambert, Chang and Eng had been displayed earlier in the century. Tom Thumb also visited the homes of rich patrons in social occasions reminiscent of Lambert's exhibitions. Like Lambert, Chang and Eng, Barnum pitched Tom Thumb's performances to the 'nobility and gentry' but while Lambert commissioned a large carriage to carry him from Leicester to London, Tom Thumb had a miniature carriage which he promenaded through Piccadilly.<sup>33</sup> The processions provided a novelty performance outside a traditional entertainment space, something Chang and Eng had attempted by offering spectators a private London river cruise.<sup>34</sup>

Like Chang and Eng, Tom Thumb performed at the Egyptian Hall. Costing one shilling for adults and children, Tom Thumb's performances were widely advertised in the press.<sup>35</sup> The shows capitalised

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<sup>29</sup> Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum*, intro. by Whalen, p. 244.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death and Memory in Barnum's America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 28-51.

<sup>32</sup> Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage Books, 2008), pp. 15-16; Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 12-14.

<sup>33</sup> *The Times*, 12 March 1844, p. 1; *The Times*, 13 March 1844, p. 1; Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb*, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Irving and Amy Wallace, *The Two: A Biography* (London: Cassell, 1978), p. 93.

<sup>35</sup> *Examiner*, 23 March 1844, p. 189; *Era*, 24 March 1844, p. 4; *The Times*, 20 March 1844, p. 1; *The Times*, 21 March 1844, p. 3.

on the meeting between Tom Thumb and Queen Victoria, on the 23 March 1844, arranged as a result of Barnum's contact with the American Ambassador Edward Everett. Tom Thumb and Queen Victoria would meet on three separate occasions, establishing a relationship that was crucial to the popularisation of Tom Thumb. Indeed, he moved from a small exhibition room at the Egyptian Hall to the 'great room' as he attracted huge crowds and daily earnings of allegedly \$500 between 20 March and 20 July 1844.<sup>36</sup>

After Tom Thumb's European tour, in which he entertained King Philip of France, Leopold King of Belgium and Tsar Nicholas II, amongst others, Tom Thumb continued as a professional performer in America. In 1856, when Barnum suffered bankruptcy after failed investments and speculations, Stratton agreed to tour as General Tom Thumb to help Barnum recover his losses. By the 1860s, Stratton owned his own property, pedigree horses and a yacht he sailed on Long Island. He was also made a Knight Templar and a thirty-second-degree Mason.<sup>37</sup>

In 1862, Stratton met the twenty-one year old Mercy Lavinia Warren Bump who was performing at Barnum's American Museum. A year later they were married at Grace Church in New York. Warren's sister, Minnie Warren, was maid-of-honour and Barnum's employee, Commodore Nutt, was the best man. Both were little people, which enabled Barnum to promote the ceremony as the 'Fairy Wedding'.<sup>38</sup>

The 'fairy' quartet formed The General Tom Thumb Company, which travelled on a honeymoon tour and later, between 1869 and 1872, on a world tour managed by Sylvester Bleeker, one of Barnum's friends and a former employee. By the late 1870s, the company was disbanded but Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren continued to tour intermittently.<sup>39</sup>

On the morning of 15 July 1883, Tom Thumb died of a stroke aged forty-five. Lavinia Warren married another little person performer, Count Primo Magri, and together they formed the Lilliputian Opera Company that travelled America. By 1915, Lavinia Warren wrote that 'the old name still draws the crowd (Mrs General Tom Thumb)'.<sup>40</sup> When she passed away at the age of seventy-eight in 1919, she was buried, on request, next to Tom Thumb. Only a few plots away lay Barnum, who had passed away in 1891 at the age of eighty.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Raymund Fitzsimons, *Barnum in London* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1969), pp. 86-89, 94-95.

<sup>37</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 148-161.

<sup>38</sup> Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb*, pp. 119-130, 140-205.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140-205.

<sup>40</sup> The Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, Connecticut (TBMB), Folder Letters from Lavinia, 9 September 1915.

<sup>41</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 159-161.

## Man in Miniature

During General Tom Thumb's London performances between 1844 and 1846, he was not described as a 'freak of nature': a term introduced in 1847.<sup>42</sup> Instead, Tom Thumb was a 'Man in miniature', a phrase which encapsulated both his difference and normality.<sup>43</sup> Like Lambert, Chang and Eng, the construct General Tom Thumb was an ambivalent entity comprised of paradoxes. In the London exhibition pamphlet, three paradoxes predominated. The first was Stratton's physiological peculiarity alongside his bodily perfection. The pamphlet opened by outlining a historical lineage of 'Giants' and 'Pigmies', from which Tom Thumb stood at the apex: 'all these are incomparably less wonderful than the astonishing little man whom we are about to describe'.<sup>44</sup> This echoed Lambert's 1809 life pamphlet which included short biographies of fat men 'in order to shew how far Mr. Lambert surpasses all other men who have hitherto been distinguished for bulk and corpulence'.<sup>45</sup> Renown and praise were denoted at the level of corporeality.

Tom Thumb was located at the extreme of a physiological scale in height 'variations'. These deviations were marked from the 'average of six feet in length': a 'general standard of the human race', which was dubiously reached from the measurements of 'mummies' in the 'catacombs of Egypt'.<sup>46</sup> The terminology of averages and standards echoed the work of Lambert Adolphe Jacques Quetelet, the French statistician, whose *Average Man* (1835) represented a new statistical thinking that conceived variability as error from the mean.<sup>47</sup> According to Lenard Davis, Quetelet significantly contributed to the notion of the normal, which entered the English language, along with the associated words of 'norm', 'normality' and 'normalcy', between the 1840s and 1860s. Quetelet's *l'homme moyen*, denoting the average of all human attributes, became 'the exemplar of the middle way of life'.<sup>48</sup> Conversely, then, Quetelet was drawn to Tom Thumb as 'a miniature of the human

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<sup>42</sup> 'freak, n.1', *OED Online* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/74344?rskey=aqJf7Y&result=1>> [accessed 19 February 2016].

<sup>43</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton, the American Man in Miniature, known as General Tom Thumb, Twelve Years Old, Twenty-Five Inches High, and Weighing Only Fifteen Pounds. With some Account of Remarkable Dwarfs, Giants, and other Human Phenomena, of Ancient and Modern Times. Also, General Tom Thumb's Songs* (London: T. Brettell, 1845), p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man, the Late Daniel Lambert. From his Birth to the Moment of his Dissolution, with an Account of Men Noted for their Corpulency, and other Interesting Matter* (Stamford: J. Drakard, 1809), p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Theodore M. Porter, *The Rise of Statistical Thinking, 1820-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 5-7, 52-56.

<sup>48</sup> Lennard J. Davis, 'Constructing Normalcy', in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. by Lennard J. Davis (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 3-19 (p. 5).

type' and even measured 'the dimensions of the body of this celebrated dwarf'.<sup>49</sup> For Quetelet, and within the exhibition pamphlet, Tom Thumb was deemed remarkable for his 'extreme littleness': his deviation from the 'average'.<sup>50</sup> But, as Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth Wilson argued, this norm functioned by 'collating the world': Tom Thumb might have signalled a deviation but it was a variation measured from the centre.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, Tom Thumb's divergence was disrupted by an aesthetic discourse that emphasised his proportionality. Tom Thumb was praised for his 'elegant proportions' and 'handsomest limbs', which meant he was celebrated for being 'symmetrical in all his proportions'.<sup>52</sup> From the Greek derivation, symmetry and proportionality were synonymous. There were two trajectories of the concept, one mathematical and the other aesthetic, but during the revolutionary and Napoleonic period symmetry entered the realm of scientific discourse as part of natural history, mathematics and physics, although the aesthetic refraction did not fade.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, it became associated in the nineteenth century with notions of the ideal body seen as symmetrical, proportional, neat and constrained.<sup>54</sup> According to Roy Porter, the popular practice of physiognomy, the art of reading the face, and the later phrenology, the practice of reading the contours of the skull to reveal character, upheld and rationalised the aesthetics of the classical body: proportionality and symmetry assuming concurrence with good temperament.<sup>55</sup> Tom Thumb's proportionality thus reflected a moral as well as an aesthetic value.

Tom Thumb's physiological proportionality mitigated his bodily difference. Chang and Eng were praised for being 'well made and proportional in every respect' but this did not undermine the peculiarity of their corporeality.<sup>56</sup> For Tom Thumb, however, it meant that, according to the exhibition pamphlet, he was 'altogether free from the deformities which generally disfigure such

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<sup>49</sup> Lambert Adolphe Jacques Quetelet, *Letters Addressed to the Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, on the Theory of Probabilities, as applied to the Moral and Political Sciences*, trans. by O. G. Downes (London: Charles & Edwin Taylor, 1849), p. 104.

<sup>50</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth A. Wilson, 'Introduction: Antinormativity's Queer Conventions', *Differences*, 26:1 (2015), 1-25 (p. 17).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Giora Hon and Bernard R. Goldstein, *From Summetria to Symmetry: The Making of a Revolutionary Scientific Concept* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), pp. 221-226, 263-293.

<sup>54</sup> Joyce L. Huff, 'Freaklore: The Dissemination, Fragmentation, and Reinvention of the Legend Daniel Lambert, King of Fat Men', in *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. by Marlene Tromp, (Columbus: Ohio State University), pp. 37-59 (p. 38).

<sup>55</sup> Roy Porter, *Bodies Politic: Disease, Death and Doctors in Britain, 1650-1900* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), pp. 63-88.

<sup>56</sup> [James W. Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers, from Actual Observations, Together with Full Length Portraits, the Only Correct Ones, Permitted to be Taken by Their Protectors* (London: W. Turner, 1830), p. 8.

manikins': characters like the 'dwarf' Quilp, from Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), who haunted angelic Nell 'by a vision of his ugly face and stunted figure'.<sup>57</sup> In the fairy tales published by the Brothers Grimm in the early nineteenth century, a series of 'dark elves' reflected a repugnant aesthetic associated with dwarves: dark, broad, gnarled, disproportionate and hairy. In contrast to this malevolent tradition were the benevolent 'light elves' of attractive proportionate physiology.<sup>58</sup> According to Susan Stewart, the dwarf occupied the domain of the grotesque while 'midgets', a derogatory term used to denote proportional little people, were linked to the world of the fairy. They resembled humans in all but size and encapsulated perfected detail in miniature.<sup>59</sup> Tom Thumb was squarely placed in this tradition: his very name echoing the fairy tales and his physiology a 'magnitude in miniature' according to the exhibition pamphlet.<sup>60</sup>

The pamphlet for the little person Nanette Stocker, who performed across Europe from the middle to the late 1840s, emphasised the aesthetic contrast:

Little people are most generally deformed in some respect or other, and for which reason very little interest is excited by their appearance; but Nanette differs from all the individuals of her class, every member is well formed, and taken together, they present the most perfect symmetry.<sup>61</sup>

Tom Thumb and Stocker were in the same aesthetic class: both proportional and symmetrical. Thus, according to Tom Thumb's pamphlet, he was 'not a dwarf, as there is nothing dwarfish in his appearance—he is a perfect Man in miniature!'<sup>62</sup> While Lambert's character was a model worthy of imitation, Tom Thumb's physiology was a model form.

Tom Thumb's distance from bodily deformity was bolstered in the exhibition pamphlet, which claimed that, although he stopped growing at seven months old, 'there were no indications of disease'. Instead, Tom Thumb had 'always been in the most perfect health' bar the occasional cold.<sup>63</sup> This echoed the common freak show strategy evident in statements regarding Lambert's 'uncommonly healthy constitution' and Chang and Eng's 'full health'.<sup>64</sup> But, for Tom Thumb, this

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<sup>57</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 9; Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop: A Tale* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1843), pp. 28, 286.

<sup>58</sup> Betty M. Adelson, *The Lives of Dwarfs: Their Journey from Public Curiosity Toward Social Liberation* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 103-104.

<sup>59</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 111-117.

<sup>60</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 8.

<sup>61</sup> The John Johnson Collection: An Archive of Printed Ephemera, Digital Archive (TJJC), Human Freaks 1 (62).

<sup>62</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>64</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 16; [Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers*, p. 3.

distinction between health and absent disease further moved him toward normality as, according to Sondra Archimedes, the notion of disease had entered pathological anatomy and contributed to the demarcation between normal and abnormal.<sup>65</sup> Rather, Tom Thumb was 'a sort of mental and physical concentration, a chemical synthesis, in which manhood has been boiled down'.<sup>66</sup>

The second articulated paradox echoed Lambert's presentation involving the notions of gentlemanliness and manliness. The early to mid-nineteenth-century associations between gentlemanliness, affluence and politeness were emphasised: Tom Thumb was 'dressed in the most elegant and fashionable manner, with all the grace and dignity of the finished gentleman'.<sup>67</sup> He 'receives all visitors with a courtly grace', presenting Tom Thumb's exhibitions as social occasions in the same manner as Lambert's. Unlike Lambert, however, Tom Thumb's exhibition pamphlet emphasised that the 'utmost care is devoted to his moral and religious education' and 'his ideas regarding the Deity, and the essential requisites of the Gospel, are as lucid and correct as those of many of a more mature age'.<sup>68</sup> Tom Thumb was thus intelligent and pious, versed in the religious tenets circulating and defining middle-class discourse.<sup>69</sup> The pamphlet stressed that 'never was a human being, of any size, blessed with a kinder heart, or more excellent disposition', emphasising the role of compassion underpinning a gentleman and similarly reflected in Lambert's presentation.<sup>70</sup> Tom Thumb's construction echoed, in the same manner as Lambert, the broader shift of gentlemanliness from a social to a moral category that stressed the qualities of mind, manners and morals.<sup>71</sup> Both Lambert and Tom Thumb were presented as gentlemen, representing different sides of the Atlantic and defined by extremes of bodily size.

Like Lambert, Tom Thumb's gentlemanly attributes were synthesised with notions of manliness. While Lambert's manliness was articulated through his directness and love of hunting, Tom Thumb's manliness was given a sexual manifestation. Manliness was imbued with a 'liberal endowment of sexual energy' and it was accepted through all levels of society that young men would engage in sexual activity, albeit with resistance from Evangelicals who emphasised character as an inner moral

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<sup>65</sup> Sondra M. Archimedes, *Gendered Pathologies: The Female Body and the Biomedical Discourse in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 19-28.

<sup>66</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), pp. 86-98; Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 11.

<sup>69</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Revised Edition* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 76-106.

<sup>70</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 11.

<sup>71</sup> Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class in England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 62-69; Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 108-112; Robin Gilmour, *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 1-15.

resource.<sup>72</sup> According to the London exhibition pamphlet, Stratton's 'strange beauty, has made many persons, and especially ladies, so strongly attached to him as to become his almost daily visitors', continuing by asserting that 'he boasts, among his other adventures, of having kissed six thousand ladies'.<sup>73</sup> As John Tosh argued, gentlemanliness and manliness were divergent categories but Tom Thumb, like Lambert, encompassed the two.<sup>74</sup> Tom Thumb's roguish and courtly behaviour coexisted.

But Tom Thumb never manifested rampant manliness. According to Neil Harris, Tom Thumb represented both man and child, 'the perpetual body', with whom the audience, both adults and children, could identify.<sup>75</sup> Lori Merish placed the conflation within a conventionalised aesthetic of cuteness which activated the ambivalence of the child within liberal capitalism: a subject and object of ownership.<sup>76</sup> The exhibition pamphlet claimed Tom Thumb was twelve years old with a size representing the dimensions of an infant: 'the child grew in maturity if not in dimensions'.<sup>77</sup> While Chang and Eng's infantilism manifested the paternalism of Orientalism, Tom Thumb's infantilism reflected his diminutive physiology. The press noted that 'his dimensions and general proportions' reflect 'those of a child of six months old'; and 'the most indifferent spectator must be lost in marvelling how such a combination of the man and child can stand before him'.<sup>78</sup> This infantilism allowed Tom Thumb to kiss women without being seen as a sexual threat, while enhancing his connection to the world of fairies and the innocence of childhood.<sup>79</sup> This was, in turn, undermined by his manly virility and gentlemanly comportment, presenting a paradoxical construction similar to Lambert, Chang and Eng.

Although freakery has been defined as 'the intentional performance of constructed abnormality as entertainment', the constructed identities were far from abnormal.<sup>80</sup> On a corporeal level, the physiology of performers was presented as a basis of difference. Yet heaped onto the body were markers of normality. For Tom Thumb, even his diminutive stature echoed elements of the ideal body as proportional and symmetrical. His liminal status between normal and abnormal mirrored

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<sup>72</sup> John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 102-122.

<sup>73</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 11.

<sup>74</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, pp. 86-98.

<sup>75</sup> Harris, *Humbug*, p. 49.

<sup>76</sup> Lori Merish, 'Cuteness and Commodity Aesthetics: Tom Thumb and Shirley Temple', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 185-203.

<sup>77</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> *The Times*, 21 February 1844, p. 6; *Era*, 3 March 1844, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 111-117.

<sup>80</sup> Chemers, *Staging Stigma*, p. 24.

further ambiguities: a character of gentlemanliness and manliness in the body of a child. These ambiguities led to an ambivalence articulated in the exhibition pamphlet:

We gaze upon his little body, dressed out in the extreme fashion of the day, with indefinite sensations, not easily described, partaking of that class of mixed emotions which are felt, but which language has not been able to explain.<sup>81</sup>

It is noteworthy that the alleged quotation derived from 'an eminently able and intelligent editor' of a medical journal.<sup>82</sup> The extract focused on the emotive response to Tom Thumb rather than diagnostics or causations for his diminutive stature. This marked a departure from Chang and Eng's exhibition pamphlet, which focused in particular on the nature of their connecting ligament. Instead, Tom Thumb's pamphlet used the medical fraternity to stress the sensations and problem of language when confronting the ambiguous Tom Thumb. For Chang, Eng and Joseph Merrick, the protagonist of Chapter Five, the problem of language could reflect limitations in medical knowledge. But, for Tom Thumb, the emphasis remained on the ambivalent sensations he provoked. This ambivalence reflected Zygmunt Bauman's argument that ambivalence represents a 'language-specific disorder' in which an object can be assigned to more than one category.<sup>83</sup> For Tom Thumb, who straddled divergent categories, responses were hard to articulate.

Quoting a correspondent from the *Baltimore Sun*, Tom Thumb's exhibition pamphlet expressed a common response:

I cannot describe the sensations with which one looks upon this diminutive specimen of humanity. Were he deformed, or sickly, or melancholy, we might pity him; but he is so manly, so handsome, so hearty, and so happy, that we look upon him as a being of some other sphere.<sup>84</sup>

Unable to describe the sensations when viewing Tom Thumb, the correspondent rendered Tom Thumb otherworldly. This 'other sphere' was perpetuated by Barnum who aligned Stratton's freakery to a rich literary tradition. Unlike Lambert, whose gentlemanliness was socially rooted, Tom Thumb was an otherworldly being whose name was taken from ancient fairy tales retold throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, by the middle of the nineteenth,

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<sup>81</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 9.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), p. 1.

<sup>84</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 9.



communicated to both adults and children.<sup>85</sup> The third paradox, then, was the articulation of social conventions alongside the fairy-tale reality in which Tom Thumb was placed. In the fairy-tale tradition, Tom is the hero who, no bigger than his father's thumb, embarks on various adventures, becomes the favourite of King Arthur and is blessed with magical powers from his godmother the Fairy Queen. Barnum's addition of the title 'General' echoed the heroism of Richard Johnson's narrative as Sir Thomas fought for God, King and Country, even duelling with a giant and proving victorious by using brains over brawn.

Stratton's freakery thus evoked a literary realm populated by fairies, sorcerers and English courts. General Tom Thumb became part of the contemporaneous craze for fairies and fairy tales evident in the burgeoning discipline of folklore studies, the plethora of fairy operas, operettas and ballets in the 1830s and 1840s and the fairy tales published by the Brothers Grimm in 1812, who sanitized these ancient stories for children and middle-class readers.<sup>86</sup> Stratton's freakery was informed by and reflective of this tradition. General Tom Thumb reflected an otherworldliness, which destabilised the social qualities he presented as a Victorian gentleman, a virile man and a small child. At the same time, Tom Thumb's physiology was marked as exceptional for being diminutively different and paradigmatic of the ideal. In short, the constructed General Tom Thumb was a paradoxical, ambivalent identity provoking corresponding problems of language.

## Fairy Tales and Agency

Following Stratton's European tour, *Life and Travels of Thomas Thumb in the United States, England, France, and Belgium with Illustrations of him in his Different Costumes*, was published anonymously in Philadelphia (1849). It was a children's book illustrated with a series of stereotypes to visualise the adventures of Stratton. The author declared: 'It will be my endeavour to relate the history of the private life and character of my hero, and to note the manners of those who surrounded him and entertained him.'<sup>87</sup> Maintaining a distinction between the 'private' Stratton and his public role, the book remained critical of Stratton's entrance into the public sphere:

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<sup>85</sup> Kane O'Hara, *Tom Thumb; A Burletta, Altered from Henry Fielding, by Kane O'Hara, with Designs by George Cruikshank* (London: Thomas Robb, 1930 [1805]); Chemers, *Staging Stigma*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>86</sup> Jeffrey Richards, *The Golden Age of the Pantomime: Slapstick, Spectacle and Subversion in Victorian England* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), pp. 56-64; Willem de Blécourt, *Tales of Magic, Tales in Print: On the Genealogy of Fairy Tales and the Brothers Grimm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 1-22; Ruth B. Bottigheimer, *Fairy Tales: A New History* (Albany, NY: Excelsior, 2009), pp. 3-13.

<sup>87</sup> TBMB, Box TT Books, 2014.10.1, Anon., *Life and Travels of Thomas Thumb in the United States, England, France, and Belgium* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1849), p. 9.

Our little readers may think it very strange that anybody should travel over the world and be exhibited for money. So it is; and we cannot help thinking this is the most unfortunate part of the little man's history.<sup>88</sup>

It was, however, a central part of Stratton's history: he lived with the identity General Tom Thumb from the age of four. It was much more than a temporary public persona. But despite the author's criticism, the children's book, much like Lambert's biographies, claimed Stratton could instruct the 'young readers': they 'can learn from his good example in some respects', notably his 'cheerful and contented' outlook, his instruction in the Bible and his knowledge of the 'duties to his Maker'.<sup>89</sup> This reflected a trend whereby children's literature in America, prior to the Civil War, functioned in tandem with moral education instilling humility, piety, generosity and obedience.<sup>90</sup> The story of Stratton's life thus wove together praise and criticism of the protagonist, constantly returning to Stratton's physiology as a marker of difference. The story treated Stratton as a social agent, a performer who entered the morally dubious world of freakery as General Tom Thumb.

Yet the author also conflated General Tom Thumb, played by Stratton, with the fairy-tale Tom Thumb, Stratton's life 'nearer to the little man of that name in the nursery tale'.<sup>91</sup> The author went further by locating Stratton in relation to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), reflecting that Stratton must have felt like Gulliver in the gigantic land of Brobdingnag.<sup>92</sup> This popular reference entered Lambert's 1809 life pamphlet when discussing his meeting with the Polish little person Joseph Borulawski: 'this unexpected meeting of the largest and smallest man seemed to realize the fabled history of the inhabitants of Lilliput and Brobdingnag'.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Tom Thumb's exhibition pamphlet referred to Stratton as a 'Lilliputian', noting that 'everyone has read the description of the Lilliputians, in the fascinating travels of Lemuel Gulliver', claiming the 'delightful satire is founded upon the universal curiosity and pleasure with which we contemplate our own species, magnified or diminished in their proportions'.<sup>94</sup> The connection with the Lilliputians enhanced Tom Thumb's connection to fairy tales. This troubled the distinction between Stratton as a social agent and a representative of literature. It bolstered the ethereal nature of General Tom Thumb as a fabricated identity. Furthermore, the linkage between freakery and popular literature perpetuated the

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<sup>88</sup> TBMB, Box TT Books, 2014.10.1, Anon., *Life and Travels of Thomas Thumb*, p. 14.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 36.

<sup>90</sup> James Marten, 'Bringing up Yankees: The Civil War and the Moral Education of Middle-Class Children', in *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class*, ed. by Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 86-100.

<sup>91</sup> TBMB, Box TT Books, 2014.10.1, Anon., *Life and Travels of Thomas Thumb*, p. 10.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>93</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 6.

otherworldliness of General Tom Thumb: one who remained an exemplar for children, yet transcendent as a figure in performance.

The conflation between the literal and literary meant the biographical history of Stratton mirrored the fairy tales of Tom Thumb. *The History of Tom Thumb* (1875), published by the McLoughlin Brothers in America, focused on the literary Tom Thumb but the story mirrored the alleged actions and situations of General Tom Thumb, played by Stratton. The literary Tom Thumb of the McLoughlin Brothers was a favourite of King Arthur and his Queen; General Tom Thumb was a favourite of Queen Victoria. The literary Tom Thumb had a miniature carriage pulled by six white mice; General Tom Thumb had miniature carriages pulled by Shetland ponies. The literary Tom Thumb fought with a cat; General Tom Thumb battled with Queen Victoria's dog.<sup>95</sup> Barnum's effort to secure a meeting between Queen Victoria and General Tom Thumb in 1844 reflects a desire to align General Tom Thumb with the literary Tom Thumb. Indeed, inside the American Museum, Barnum choreographed mock battles between General Tom Thumb and 'giants', a performance that reflected the literary Tom Thumb's characterisation as the 'pigmy giant queller!'<sup>96</sup> The fairy-tale Tom Thumb and the military hero, the paradox of military greatness and proportional smallness, coexisted in the performed identity played by Stratton.

Moreover, the meeting between Queen Victoria and General Tom Thumb echoed the literary Tom Thumb's relationship to King Arthur. Historians and biographers have accepted Barnum's account of General Tom Thumb's meeting with Queen Victoria: Barnum claimed when General Tom Thumb concluded his first meeting, he broke royal protocol by turning his back to the Queen and was subsequently attacked by Her Majesty's poodle. General Tom Thumb comically fought the dog with his miniature cane, 'which renewed and increased the merriment of the royal party'.<sup>97</sup> Yet Queen Victoria never mentioned the incident in her diary, writing instead that General Tom Thumb 'was made to imitate Napoleon & do all parts of tricks, finally, backing out the whole way out of the Gallery'.<sup>98</sup> But Barnum's anecdote brought General Tom Thumb closer to the literary Tom Thumb's fight with a cat, thus imbuing the former's adventures with legendary connotations. If, as Rosemarie Garland Thomson writes, 'the cardinal principle of enfreakment: was that the body envelopes and

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<sup>95</sup> Bridgeport History Centre, Bridgeport Public Library, Connecticut (BHC), Box #1 Tom Thumb, Aunt Louisa's Big Picture Series, *The History of Tom Thumb* (New York: McLoughlin Brothers, 1875).

<sup>96</sup> O'Hara, *Tom Thumb*, p. 9.

<sup>97</sup> Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum*, intro. by Whalen, pp. 258-259.

<sup>98</sup> Royal Archives, Queen Victoria's Journals, Digital Archive (RA), VIC/MAIN/QVJ (W), 23 March 1844 (Princess Beatrice's copies)

<<http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItem.do?FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2909226113547&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=1&ItemNumber=2&ItemID=qvj04191&volumeType=PSBEA>> [accessed 19 February 2016].

obliterates the freak's potential humanity', then Stratton's humanity was attacked through an enfreakment tied to popular fairy tales.<sup>99</sup>

Furthermore, Barnum turned Stratton's biography into a fairy-tale adventure. In the 1869 edition of Barnum's autobiography, the marriage between Stratton and Lavinia Warren was told as a fairy-tale romance in which General Tom Thumb, overwhelmed with love, fought off the advances and jealousy of Commodore Nutt.<sup>100</sup> General Tom Thumb eventually proved victorious, asking Warren for her hand in marriage over a game of backgammon and revealing: "The first moment I saw you I felt that you were created to be my wife." It was, according to Barnum, 'love at first sight' and 'an affair of the heart'.<sup>101</sup> Barnum's retelling of the events echoed the stories of the literary Tom Thumb. In Henry Fielding's 1730 edition, for example, Tom Thumb was to marry Princess Huncamunca but King Arthur's Queen, Dollalolla, was in love with Tom Thumb while the courtier, Lord Grizzle, was in love with Huncamunca. This conundrum ignited a series of events as Grizzle and the Queen united to stop the marriage. The themes of love, jealousy and female attraction, crucial components to Fielding's dramatic plot, remained in future editions.<sup>102</sup>

Similarly, Barnum's General Tom Thumb courted female attention, 'the especial favourite of the gentler sex', encountered situations of jealousy and eventually married for love.<sup>103</sup> A 'Fairy Wedding Waltz' was composed to celebrate the occasion and by 1867 an exhibition pamphlet described the whole affair as 'The Fairy Wedding Party'.<sup>104</sup> According to the 1871 exhibition pamphlet, the 'yielding crowds' congregating outside Grace Church showered the couple with 'compliments', including "It's a fairy scene!".<sup>105</sup> Like Chang and Eng's marriage to the Yates sisters, Tom Thumb's marriage was a private affair made public; unlike Chang and Eng, it was a public affair rendered fairy-like.

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<sup>99</sup> Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 59.

<sup>100</sup> Phineas T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs; or, Forty Years' Recollections of P. T. Barnum, Written by Himself* (London: Sampson Low, 1869), pp. 582-608. Romance and marriage were common troupes in fairy tales. See: Bottigheimer, *Fairy Tales*, pp. 8-13, 20-21.

<sup>101</sup> Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, pp. 595, 585.

<sup>102</sup> Henry Fielding, *Tom Thumb and the Tragedy of Tragedies*, ed. by L. J. Morrissey (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1970 [1730]), pp. 1-10.

<sup>103</sup> TBMB, Box TT Books, 2014.10.1, Anon., *Life and Travels of Thomas Thumb*, p. 8.

<sup>104</sup> TBMB, Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren Print Material 1278, *Fairy Wedding Waltz* (1863); Anon., *Sketch of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton the Man in Miniature, known as General Tom Thumb, and his Wife, Lavinia Warren Stratton, including the History of their Courtship and Marriage, with some Account of Remarkable Dwarfs, Giants, and other Human Phenomena, of Ancient and Modern Times, also Songs Given at their Public Levees* (New York: Press of Wynkoop & Hallenbeck, 1867), p. 26.

<sup>105</sup> Anon., *Sketch of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton the Man in Miniature, known as General Tom Thumb, and his Wife, Lavinia Warren Stratton, including the History of their Courtship and Marriage, also a Sketch of the Life of Commodore Nutt, The 30,000 Dollar Nutt, and Miss Minnie*

The marriage also propelled General Tom Thumb into the realms of respectable domesticity and away from his rakish persona. At his wedding, he ‘looked the respectable gentleman in miniature’.<sup>106</sup> After the ceremony, General Tom Thumb allegedly delivered a speech thanking the guests for their kindness and stating that he had become a “family man” who would soon retire from the celebrations as his wife “in the adjoining apartment is anxious to see me”.<sup>107</sup> Although sexuality was insinuated, it was domesticated and contained within the aesthetics of cuteness, the respectability of marriage, the infantilism of the couple and the fairy connotations of the wedding.<sup>108</sup>

Barnum bolstered General Tom Thumb’s new persona by instigating one of his biggest deceptions: renting a child from a foundling hospital and advertising ‘General Tom Thumb’s Family’.<sup>109</sup> Lehman purports that when the alleged family visited London, the borrowed child was possibly introduced to Queen Victoria as the offspring of General Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren.<sup>110</sup> Like Chang and Eng’s display of their children, General Tom Thumb’s family demonstrated a respectable domesticity. Being a father and husband, the constructed Tom Thumb played to the cultural expectations of the mid-nineteenth-century ‘cult of domesticity’ that emphasised the importance of the family and perceived marriage as the vehicle of respectability and stability.<sup>111</sup> Like Lambert, Chang and Eng, Tom Thumb was a reflection of the context in which he was constructed. Moreover, like the previous agents of this thesis, Tom Thumb’s ambiguous construction was also polymorphic and transitory. He moved into domesticity as a husband and alleged father, his roguish persona contained in marriage.

Furthermore, the development of General Tom Thumb’s construction was dependent on the offstage experience of Charles Stratton. His legal marriage to Lavinia Warren, whether motivated by love or publicity, marked a private development inextricable from the public identity of General Tom Thumb. The marriage between Stratton and Warren was thus interconnected to the public freakery of General Tom Thumb. Private relations were offered for public consumption. As with Lambert, Chang and Eng, Stratton’s own voice was silenced. His relationship to Warren was articulated through Barnum’s autobiography, exhibition pamphlets and newspaper accounts. There are no

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Warren, *with some Account of Remarkable Dwarfs, Giants, and other Human Phenomena, of Ancient and Modern Times, also Songs Given at their Public Levees* (London: W. Brickbill, 1871), p. 14.

<sup>106</sup> Anon., *Sketch of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton* (1867), p. 17

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>108</sup> Merish, ‘Cuteness and Commodity Aesthetics’, in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 185-203.

<sup>109</sup> National Fairground Archives, Sheffield (NFAS), John Bramwell Taylor, Box One 178T1.41.

<sup>110</sup> Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>111</sup> F. M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London: Fontana, 1988), pp. 85-113; Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 2012), pp. 33-39; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 322-329.

sources communicating Stratton's feelings, responses or motivations other than those attributed to General Tom Thumb.

Barnum's autobiographies perpetuated Stratton's marginalisation and the conflation between Stratton onstage and offstage. As Barnum noted, 'all autobiographies are necessarily egotistical'.<sup>112</sup> But Barnum's autobiographies conflated Stratton and Tom Thumb so the former's agency became inextricable from the latter's social construction. Barnum wrote about Stratton and 'the General' interchangeably: when praising the personal morality of Stratton it was 'the General' whose 'morals in all respects are unobjectionable'.<sup>113</sup> At points, Barnum did imply a distinction between Stratton and the General: 'I took the greatest pains to encraft upon his [Stratton's] native talent all the instruction he was capable of receiving.'<sup>114</sup> Yet Barnum's agency was given predominance. In both the 1855 and 1869 editions of Barnum's autobiographies, Barnum enhanced his role by reporting a conversation among the inhabitants of Bridgeport:

'We never thought Charlie much of a phenomenon when he lived among us,' said one of the first citizens of the place, 'but now that he has become "Barnumized," he is a rare curiosity.'<sup>115</sup>

Barnum unashamedly reminded the reader that he was the architect of General Tom Thumb by demarcating the nine year old Charlie, who lacked the phenomenal quality, from the General, a unique curiosity. The transformation was not attributed to the skill of Stratton but Barnum. It marked a change of emphasis as newspapers and posters stressed the performance abilities of Stratton, 'unique beyond description', whereas Barnum's autobiography marginalised Stratton's agency.<sup>116</sup> While Betty Adelson sought to 'defreak' the 'dwarf', in this instance, as with Lambert, Chang and Eng, the private identity of Stratton was enveloped in the representational field of freakery, propagated and managed by Barnum.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, preface, n. p.

<sup>113</sup> Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum*, intro. by Whalen, p. 263.

<sup>114</sup> Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, p. 257.

<sup>115</sup> Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum*, intro. by Whalen, p. 292; Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, p. 256.

<sup>116</sup> *Era*, 11 February 1844, p. 8.

<sup>117</sup> Betty M. Adelson, 'Dwarfs: The Changing Lives of Archetypal "Curiosities"—And Echoes of the Past', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 25:3 (2005) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/576/753>> [accessed 4 February 2016]; Adelson, *The Lives of Dwarfs*, pp. xiii, xix.

## Commodifying Tom Thumb

The performances of General Tom Thumb were intimately connected to a commodity culture increasingly penetrating everyday life. As Thomas Richards argued, between 1851 and World War One, the commodity became 'the centrepiece of everyday life, the focal point of all representation, the dead centre of the modern world'.<sup>118</sup> Christoph Linder has shown how, by the mid-nineteenth century, capitalism was influencing everyday life, presenting a culture organised around the production and exchange of material goods.<sup>119</sup> As Victorian homes filled with mass-produced objects that were not primarily functional, men and women were experiencing a maelstrom of choices, pleasurable and painful, hitherto unknown in scale.<sup>120</sup>

Although commercial expansion was evidenced from at least the seventeenth century, the Victorians built a modern world of mass production, distribution and consumption.<sup>121</sup> From roughly the mid-nineteenth century, on both sides of the Atlantic, entertainment was brought even closer into the remit of consumerism.<sup>122</sup> Advertisement was an essential juggernaut driving this consumer society, reflecting the department store boom, rising middle-class markets, a predominant press and the professionalisation and utilisation of new technologies.<sup>123</sup> Railroads, industrial steam, telegraphs, technological developments and the growth of publishing helped to spread news and advertisements.<sup>124</sup> Barnum capitalised on these trends: the new medium of photography, the rise in pictorial journalism, the latest technological developments in billposting and the spread of cheap

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<sup>118</sup> Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 1.

<sup>119</sup> Christoph Lindner, *Fictions of Commodity Culture: From the Victorian to the Postmodern* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 1-16.

<sup>120</sup> Catherine Waters, *Commodity Culture in Dickens's Household Words: The Social Life of Goods* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), pp. 9-33; Erica Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 3-15; Peter N. Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 47-65; Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 40-72.

<sup>122</sup> Gerben Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised: The Emergence of the International Film Industry, 1890-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 17-71; McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, pp. 265-285; Stearns, *Consumerism in World History*, pp. 47-65.

<sup>123</sup> Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 3-15; Tammy C. Whitlock, *Crime, Gender and Consumer Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 17-39.

<sup>124</sup> Judith Flanders, *Consuming Passions: Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain* (London: Harper Press, 2006), pp. 123-163; Aileen Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge: William Chambers and the Business of Publishing, 1820-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 177-185.

print propelled Tom Thumb into public consciousness as part of a new entertainment and commercial culture.<sup>125</sup>

Although the Great Exhibition of 1851 marked a turning point in the development of capitalist forms of representation, centred on the spectacle of the commodity, Tom Thumb's exhibitions from the 1840s marked a crucial moment when freakery became contingent on commodities.<sup>126</sup> Defining commodity as 'anything intended for exchange', an assortment of Tom Thumb commodities flooded the market at precisely this time.<sup>127</sup> Articles specifically commissioned by Barnum became part of Tom Thumb's freakery. His miniature carriage promenaded the streets: 'General Tom Thumb's carriage and pigmy ponies' were even exhibited in London when Tom Thumb was performing elsewhere in Europe.<sup>128</sup> When Tom Thumb returned to London in 1846, promotional material promised that 'the General's miniature Equipage will promenade the streets'.<sup>129</sup> Tom Thumb's assortment of costumes similarly assumed the status of commodity spectacle: 'the little general [...] will appear in Scottish Costume and the elegant court dress worn before Her Majesty'.<sup>130</sup> Referring to Tom Thumb's gloves, the 1845 exhibition pamphlet declared: 'nothing so small and fairy-like are ever otherwise manufactured' and 'all his different costumes, are of themselves curiosities'.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, Tom Thumb would often oblige this curiosity by personalising his encounter with spectators by presenting clothing as gifts.<sup>132</sup>

As befitting a consumer society in which the image predominated over the utility of a commodity, Tom Thumb could be found on a variety of visual formats bought and sold as individual items: medallions, lithographs, stereotypes, daguerreotypes, tintypes, engravings, prints and cartes-de-visite.<sup>133</sup> For Anne Featherstone, photographs of freaks exemplified their status as both performer and commodity: photographs were crucial props in the performance helping to construct the freak

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<sup>125</sup> Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 47-97; Michael Twyman, *Printing 1779-1970: An Illustrated History of its Development and Uses in England* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970), pp. 36-84.

<sup>126</sup> Andrew H. Miller, *Novels Behind Glass: Commodity Culture in Victorian Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 50-90; Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, pp. 17-72.

<sup>127</sup> Claire Wood, *Dickens and the Business of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 6.

<sup>128</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 30 August 1844, p. [1].

<sup>129</sup> NFAS, John Bramwell Taylor, Box Three 178T1.309.

<sup>130</sup> TBMB, Tom Thumb Broadside (1848) T 2013.9.1.

<sup>131</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 7.

<sup>132</sup> TBMB, Box TT LW, Artefacts, 1, Gold Cufflink 1976.001.109; Stamford Town Library, Lincolnshire (STL), Daniel Lambert and Tom Thumb Clothes 2747-2748.

<sup>133</sup> STL, Tom Thumb Medallion ST 2833; STL, Tom Thumb Medallion ST 3043; TBMB, Box TT Daguerreotypes; TBMB, Box TT Album; BHC, Draw #5 Tom Thumb, Fairy Wedding Tintype.



and were produced, sold and collected for and by the audience.<sup>134</sup> From the 1860s, Tom Thumb was depicted on trading cards and paper dolls, items reserved for celebrity figures (Figure 9), and even tiny 'Tom Thumb Segs' (heel plates) and 'Tom Thumb Jujubes' (candy pieces) were manufactured.<sup>135</sup> The ubiquity of Tom Thumb resulted in a tension at the heart of any commodity culture: the search for individuality in a field of uniformity created by standardised, mass-produced products. Thus certain consumers sought more personalised mementos: some put the tiny daguerreotypes of Tom Thumb into small golden frames (Figure 10), while others hand-painted photographic portraits.<sup>136</sup>



**Figure 9.**

General Tom Thumb Paper Dolls, McLoughlin Brothers, 1860s, Box #1 Tom Thumb, Courtesy of the Bridgeport History Centre, Bridgeport Public Library

<sup>134</sup> Anne Featherstone, 'Showing the Freaks: Photographic Images of the Extraordinary Body', in *Visual Delights: Essays on the Popular and Projected Image in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. by Simon Pople and Vanessa Toulmin (Towbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), pp. 135-142.

<sup>135</sup> TBMB, Box TT Merchandising Artefacts, Trade Cards (1880-1890) T 2014.35.1; BHC, Box #1 Tom Thumb, Trade Card and Paper Dolls McLoughlin Brothers (1860s); TBMB, Box TT Merchandising Artefacts, Tom Thumb Segs 2012.12.1; TBMB, Box TT Merchandising Artefacts, Tom Thumb Jujubes EL 1988.195.1.

<sup>136</sup> BHC, Draw #5 Tom Thumb, Small Daguerreotypes, Purple Velvet Case; TBMB, Box TT, LW Framed Items 3; TBMB, Hand-Coloured Portrait, Tom Thumb in Yacht EL 1988.96.1.



**Figure 10.**

General Tom Thumb, Small Daguerreotypes, Date Unknown, Purple Velvet Case, Draw 5 Tom Thumb, Courtesy of the Bridgeport History Centre, Bridgeport Public Library

The alignment between freakery and an emergent consumer culture made the freak body even more marked and salient. Rosemary Garland Thomson explored the correlation between the freak show's zenith, between 1840 and 1940, and the upheaval of modernity. She highlighted modernity's reconfiguration of the human body as machinery, wage labour, urbanisation and geographical mobility led to 'a standardisation of everyday life that saturated the entire social fabric'.<sup>137</sup> Cartes-de-visite assisted in standardising the normative body: proliferating in the 1860s, cartes-de-visite were appealing due to their small size, relatively low price and the ability to buy them individually from a range of outlets.<sup>138</sup> They were not only collectables but opportunities for the middle classes to pose in 'exactly the same way as that of an emperor or a queen'.<sup>139</sup> The uniformity and conventional poses of the photographed subject, further instructed by pedagogic manuals on ideal comportment, helped establish, according to Andrea Volpe, a collective middle-class body.<sup>140</sup>

On the other hand, however, cartes-de-visite standardised the anomalous body. Bearded women, for example, adopted the conventional poses of 'respectable' middle-class women, confounding the demarcation between the normal and abnormal, while little people were commonly photographed

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<sup>137</sup> Rosemarie Garland Thomson, 'Introduction: From Wonder to Error—A Genealogy of Freak Discourse in Modernity', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 1-22 (p. 12).

<sup>138</sup> Peter Hamilton and Roger Hargreaves, *The Beautiful and the Damned: The Creation of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Photography* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2001), pp. 43-54.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>140</sup> Andrea L. Volpe, 'Cartes de Visite Portrait Photographs and the Culture of Class Formation', in *The Middling Sorts*, ed. by Bledstein and Johnston, pp. 157-169.

at a distance and with props, usually chairs and tables, to accentuate their smallness.<sup>141</sup> Barnum was quick to capitalise on cartes-de-visite, their diminutive size complimenting the proportions of Tom Thumb.<sup>142</sup> As a result, Tom Thumb was brought into proximity with normative bodies. For Lambert, a secondary public was bound by a print culture; in the case of Tom Thumb, a larger audience was created through the saliency of Tom Thumb representations. His cartes-de-visite, along with other freak performers, were presented in elaborately decorated photograph albums displayed in sitting rooms. From the 1860s, visitors were encouraged to peruse and admire these albums, thus becoming objects of social prestige and identity projection.<sup>143</sup> They allowed the anomalous body to penetrate the domestic milieu and rest in a field of familial intimacy, often side by side with family photographs.<sup>144</sup>

Thus any conceptual demarcation between the increasingly standardised normal and abnormal body was confounded by the proximity and saliency of the exceptional body to the ordinary body. Moreover, as newspapers and cartes-de-visite entered the home, the contours of domesticity and public freakery were blurred. Ironically, then, when Robert Bogdan highlighted the 1840s as the period when the freak show developed as a 'formally organized exhibition', he also signalled the moment when these spaces were dissolved.<sup>145</sup> Indeed, the 1840s is often recognised as the crucial decade in the development of the freak show as a form of entertainment connected to an emerging entertainment and commercial culture.<sup>146</sup> Nonetheless, as this thesis has shown, the display of the exceptional body was a longer durational phenomenon. Lambert was displayed within a broader print culture; Chang and Eng performed within London's wider amusement trade. But when Tom Thumb came to London in 1844, his performances therein were more explicitly tied to a commercial context that proliferated representations of the anomalous body through numerous commodities.

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<sup>141</sup> For a rich collection of cartes-de-visite and postcards of freaks see: NFAS, Vanessa Performance, Box One 00860001-00860132, Box Two 00860133-00860391; NFAS, England, Paul Bradshaw Photographic Collection IP24 1H2.England.

<sup>142</sup> Christopher R. Smit, 'A Collaborative Aesthetic: Levinas's Idea of Responsibility and the Photographs of Charles Eisenmann and the Late Nineteenth-Century Freak-Performer', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 283-311 (p. 291).

<sup>143</sup> Anne Higonnet, 'Secluded Vision: Images of Feminine Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe', *Radical History Review*, 1987:38 (1987), 17-36; Andrea Kunard, 'Traditions of Collecting and Remembering: Gender, Class and the Nineteenth-Century Sentiment Album and Photographic Album', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 4:3 (2006), 227-243.

<sup>144</sup> Smit, 'A Collaborative Aesthetic', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 283-311 (p. 291).

<sup>145</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, p. 10.

<sup>146</sup> Rachel, Adam *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 10-13; Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 1-5; Thomson, 'Introduction', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 1-22 (pp. 4-5).

The abundance of Tom Thumb ephemera brought commercial enterprises into the remit of freakery. When Tom Thumb first performed in England, he was presented with a personalised bed from a London based company.<sup>147</sup> Disconnected from entertainment, the company, which specialised in military beds, nonetheless recognised the advertising potential of associating with Tom Thumb. There was reciprocity between freakery and business, reminiscent of medicine's public association with Chang and Eng. Indeed, when Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren married in New York, businesses offered wedding gifts which were advertised in Tom Thumb's exhibition pamphlets.<sup>148</sup> On the back of a wedding carte-de-visite, a detailed description was provided of 'Mrs. Gen. Tom Thumb Reception Dress [...] designed by MME. DEMOREST, of 473 Broadway'.<sup>149</sup> This amounted to an early form of product placement that became increasingly common at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>150</sup> Whether these businesses paid to associate with Tom Thumb is not known, but it testifies both to his popularity and his connection to a broader commercial nexus.

The association between freakery and an intensified commercial culture exacerbated tensions during Tom Thumb's London performances. Indeed, commercialisation accompanied apprehensions. Philip Connell argued that, from the late eighteenth century, increased anxiety about the power of commerce penetrated economic, political and moral discourses.<sup>151</sup> Fear of fraud and shoplifting accompanied the expansion of consumption.<sup>152</sup> According to Mary Poovey, the years 1830 to 1864 marked the formative period of an emerging 'mass culture': a homogenised and interconnected aggregate of individuals and domains.<sup>153</sup> But despite this move towards cultural homogeneity, divergent cultural strands could sometimes clash. In 1846 the English historical painter, Benjamin Robert Haydon, rented a small room in the Egyptian Hall. Performing a few doors down the corridor was Tom Thumb. Spectators flocked to see Tom Thumb, while hardly anyone visited Haydon's exhibition of supposedly edifying paintings. A few months later, Haydon committed suicide having

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<sup>147</sup> TBMB, M.R. W Winfield Bed, Museum Display 1976.1.69.

<sup>148</sup> Anon., *Sketch of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton the Man in Miniature* (1871), pp. 19-25; BHC, Draw #5 Tom Thumb, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspapers*, 28 February 1863, p. 356.

<sup>149</sup> TBMB, Box TT Album, Tab 4, Wedding Photograph T 2014.44.1.

<sup>150</sup> Leon Gurevitch, 'The Cinemas of Transactions: The Exchangeable Currency of the Digital Attraction', *Television and New Media*, 11:5 (2010), 367-385.

<sup>151</sup> Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of 'Culture'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 63-67, 234-241.

<sup>152</sup> Whitlock, *Crime, Gender and Consumer Culture*, pp. 103-124, 127-152.

<sup>153</sup> Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 1-19.

blamed the failure of his exhibition on the public patronage afforded to Tom Thumb.<sup>154</sup> *The Times* lamented:

The display of a disgusting dwarf attracted hoards of gaping idiots, who poured into the pockets of a Yankee showman a stream of wealth one tithe of which would have redeemed an honourable English artist from wretchedness and death.<sup>155</sup>

Haydon's death brought into relief the financial success of the American showman, representative of a nation criticised for 'their love of "smart" dealing' in Dickens' *American Notes* (1842).<sup>156</sup> As entertainment entered the orbit of the industrial economy, the middle classes sought to reconcile money and culture by emphasising the utility of art and science for national, educational and moral elevation.<sup>157</sup> Here, however, Haydon's historical paintings were sidelined in favour of a 'disgusting dwarf', no longer the 'man in miniature' with the perfectly proportioned body.



**Figure 11.**

George Cruikshank, etching, *Born a Genius - and Born a Dwarf*, *The Comic Almanack*, 1847, (C) The British Museum, Trustees of the British Museum

<sup>154</sup> Paul O’Keeffe, *A Genius for Failure: The Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon* (London: Bodley Head, 2009), pp. 490-507.

<sup>155</sup> *The Times*, 26 June 1846, p. 5.

<sup>156</sup> Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (London: Granville Publishing, 1985 [1842]), pp. 223-224.

<sup>157</sup> Kate Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums, 1850-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 36-52; Graham Hulme, Brian Buchanan and Kenneth Powell, *The National Portrait Gallery: An Architectural History* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2000), pp. 10-21.

The suicide of Haydon was perceived as a clash between two modes of culture. It was, as *Punch* wrote, “‘High Art’ versus Tom Thumb’ and the latter triumphed.”<sup>158</sup> This was visually captured in George Cruikshank’s 1847 etching, *Born a Genius Born a Dwarf* (Figure 11), published in the popular *Comic Almanack*. The ‘Genius’ sits impoverished and broken in a dark studio as the ‘dwarf’ reclines on an expensive chaise longue eating grapes. Genius is rewarded with poverty; deformity is endowed with the capital for consumption.

Despite the tensions resulting from Haydon’s suicide, Barnum continued to maintain a close connection between Tom Thumb’s performances and the forces of consumerism and capitalism. Indeed, the association was not simply contextual but a deliberate marketing strategy as Barnum brought the capitalist economy into the heart of Tom Thumb’s presentations. On some of Tom Thumb’s 1840s medallions, which were sold as souvenirs, Barnum inscribed: ‘General Tom Thumb’s Equipage | The equipment cost upwards of 400 guineas.’<sup>159</sup> This statement of value brought capital evaluation into the novelty of Tom Thumb’s performances, suggesting that Barnum encouraged spectators to perceive him through an economic calculus while denoting novelty and spectacle through the prism of monetary value. It became increasingly common for Barnum to state economic value. On an 1863 lithograph depicting Tom Thumb’s marriage an inscription stressed: ‘the splendid equipage of Gen. Tom Thumb & Suite, cost over \$2000’.<sup>160</sup>

Commodore Nutt, another of Barnum’s employees and the best man at Tom Thumb’s wedding, also went by the name ‘\$30,000 Nutt’. This was on account of the contract Barnum allegedly offered for his services. Nutt’s 1862 exhibition pamphlet included a supposed letter, written from one of Barnum’s competitors, to Nutt’s father offering ‘FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS *per year*’ for his son, ‘*besides paying all his expenses*’.<sup>161</sup> Establishing a competitive business environment, Barnum then included a letter he purportedly wrote to his agent instructing him to substantially increase the offer. After another competitor offered \$16,000 for three years to employ Nutt, the pamphlet finally revealed that Nutt was secured by Barnum at the rate of \$30,000, significantly higher than Barnum instructed his agent.<sup>162</sup> These letters presented Barnum’s failure to secure the lowest possible terms but they worked to imbue Nutt with greater economic value.

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<sup>158</sup> *Punch; or The London Charivari*, 9 May 1846, X, p. 203.

<sup>159</sup> STL, Tom Thumb Medallion ST 3043.

<sup>160</sup> BHC, Draw #5 Tom Thumb, Illustrations, Gen. Tom Thumb’s Marriage in Grace Church.

<sup>161</sup> TBMB, Box TT, Books EL.1988.159.1, Anon., *History of Commodore Nutt, The Smallest Man in Miniature in the Known World, is Eighteen Years Old, Twenty-Nine Inches High, and Weighs 24 pounds. Now Exhibiting at Barnum’s Museum, New York* (New York: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck & Thomas, 1862), p. 7.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 13.

The actual contract between Nutt and Barnum amounted to \$4,888 plus expense, for a five year period, which was far lower than the \$30,000 Barnum claimed in the exhibition pamphlet.<sup>163</sup> Nonetheless, by publishing the alleged negotiations and rates, Barnum brought the reader into the behind-the-scenes business deal. Furthermore, Barnum presented Nutt through the logic of the market: an increased demand and a single supply subsequently raising value. This signalled a shift in the means by which freakery was promoted as valuable: distinguishing earlier exhibits (judged for their singularity as natural curiosities) from market defined freaks (judged on the basis of capital). In summation, Barnum's brand of freakery was specifically aligned to the emergent capitalist markets.

### **Freak Industry**

The displays of Tom Thumb were part of an emerging 'freak industry' reliant on the market and spearheaded by Barnum: a form of capitalist freakery more grand, commercial, international and integrated with the emerging entertainment industry that reached an apogee in the later nineteenth century in both America and England.<sup>164</sup> In the case of Lambert, there was a single performer travelling, seemingly alone, across the British Isles and exhibiting his body within rented apartments. Representations of Lambert proliferated in a print culture of eccentric biographies and life pamphlets. In the case of Chang and Eng, a greater range of agents and a clearer organisational structure were discernible: Chang and Eng as the performers, displayed for profit by their 'owners' and organised by their manager James Hale then Charles Harris. When the twins became their 'own men', they became the sole proprietors of their business, hiring managers and servants and developing the commercial outlets adopted by Hale and Harris: billposters, pamphlets and advertisements printed in the press. While Lambert did not have an exhibition pamphlet, Chang and Eng's exhibitions were always accompanied by these commodities. Moreover, unlike Lambert, Chang and Eng could be found in a range of venues: from inns, hotels and taverns through to the emerging commercial museums like Peale's Museum in Philadelphia and even, in 1860, Barnum's American Museum. Finally, while Lambert remained within the United Kingdom, Chang and Eng performed in South America, Cuba and Europe.

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<sup>163</sup> TBMB, Barnum Investments #1, Commodore Contract, 12 December 1861, EL 1988.951.

<sup>164</sup> LeRoy Ashby, *With Amusement For All: A History of American Popular Culture since 1830* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), pp. 73-106; Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised*, pp. 1-109; Peter Bailey, 'An Industrial Art? Victorian Music Hall and the Popular Stage Revisited', in *Cultural Industries in Britain and Germany*, ed. by Eisenberg and Gestrich, pp. 36-48.

Tom Thumb's displays marked another moment in this trajectory. Barnum propelled Tom Thumb into national and international celebrity from the commercial American Museum. For Bogdan, Barnum's American Museum 'brought the freak show to prominence as a central part of what would soon constitute the popular amusement industry'.<sup>165</sup> Barnum's acquisition of the American Museum in 1841 transformed him from an itinerant showman exhibiting displays in inns and taverns, little different to preindustrial showmen, to proprietor and manager of a burgeoning commercial concern. Barnum's American Museum reflected Peter Bailey's succinct description of entertainment as an industry: entertainment run on capitalist lines and propelled by the production of 'fun' to provide commercialised pleasure, in regulated measure, within material spaces.<sup>166</sup>

It was from the American Museum that Barnum instigated a series of contractual partnerships and transnational networks between exhibition halls for the display of Tom Thumb.<sup>167</sup> As Michael Zakim argued, the office became a crucial production site in the industrialised economy. The American Museum was emblematic of the office as a space from which the market was analysed, deciphered and given legible form through bookkeeping, uniform accounting and trade journals.<sup>168</sup> When Tom Thumb came to London in 1844, he performed in a range of venues far outnumbering Chang and Eng's 1829-1830 London performances. These included the Princess Theatre, the Royal Adelaide Gallery, the Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens, Astley's Royal Amphitheatre and the Royal Theatre, Lyceum, which was on a far greater scale than Chang and Eng who, besides the Egyptian Hall, had a short stint in Lewis' Great Sale Room and the Surrey Theatre.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, Tom Thumb's international performances were part of Barnum's capitalist enterprise. Barnum used global networks to promote his businesses on both sides of the Atlantic. He used Tom Thumb's European tour to forge business connections, attending the 1844 Parisian Grand Exhibition 'in search of novelties for America'.<sup>170</sup> Barnum even partnered with the proprietor of London's Royal Adelaide Gallery in an early form of capitalist venture.<sup>171</sup> Barnum also dispatched agents across Europe to acquire specimens for the America Museum.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 10, 25-62.

<sup>166</sup> Peter Bailey, 'Entertainment! Liberalizing Modern Pleasure in the Victorian Leisure Industry', in *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain*, ed. by Simon Gunn and James Vernon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), pp. 119-133.

<sup>167</sup> *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader*, ed. by Cook, p. 4.

<sup>168</sup> Michael Zakim, 'Producing Capitalism: The Clerk at Work', in *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. by Michael Zakim and Garry J. Kornblith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 199-222.

<sup>169</sup> Wallace and Wallace, *The Two*, p. 93.

<sup>170</sup> *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader*, ed. by Cook, p. 70.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.



It was the combination of Barnum's financially successful American Museum and Tom Thumb's tours that enabled the expansion of Barnum's entertainment empire. Indeed, two years after Barnum purchased the American Museum he bought Peale's New York Museum, running it as a 'rival' establishment. In 1845 Barnum bought the Baltimore Museum, in 1849 he opened the Philadelphia Museum and in 1850 he conducted extensive renovations of his American Museum. Between 1850 and 1853, Barnum managed a series of successful tours with Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, and established *Barnum's Great Asiatic Caravan, Museum and Menagerie*.<sup>173</sup> By 1853 Barnum's personal ledger showed that the year's profit at the American Museum amounted to \$55, 650.60 and the sideshow of freaks, connected to his Asiatic Caravan, made a profit of \$2,816.50.<sup>174</sup> By 1854 Barnum was being praised as 'the most celebrated man for enterprise, and second in wealth'.<sup>175</sup> Barnum's capitalist expansion mirrored the great industrialists and financiers of the time. As Leroy Ashby argued, *Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth*, forged in partnership with James Bailey, reflected trends in the wider economy. It was analogous to large corporations, such as John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil, which brought order, predictability and control to business sectors through tighter organisation and centralisation.<sup>176</sup>

Crucially, the freak show remained a central component of Barnum's entertainments. In his seminal work on the emergence of high and low culture within nineteenth-century America, Lawrence Levine argued that the work of William Shakespeare achieved cultural integration as part of a broader milieu inhabited by magicians, dancers, singers, acrobats, minstrels and comics.<sup>177</sup> Similarly, within Barnum's expanding entertainment empire, freakery remained an integrated and integral component. In Barnum's American Museum, for example, freak performers exhibited alongside other natural curiosities and entertaining spectacles. 'Albinoes, fat boys, giants, dwarfs' performed alongside waxworks, 'Cosmorama and Dramatic Departments', a menagerie, baby shows, automaton music troupes and a grand aquarium.<sup>178</sup> Freakery did not stand alone as a self-contained industry but remained part of Barnum's great combination. *Barnum's Great Travelling World's Fair* of 1873 embedded freakery within menageries, railroad processions, tableaux, a travelling museum,

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<sup>173</sup> Phineas T. Barnum, *Selected Letters of P. T. Barnum*, ed. and intro. by A. H. Saxon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. xxv-xxxv.

<sup>174</sup> BHC, Draw #1 P. T. Barnum, Bethel Ledger, pp. 250, 241.

<sup>175</sup> Anon., *The True Lamplighter, and Aunt Mary's Cabin. Sketches of Franklin Gray, Queen Victoria, Joe Smith and the Mormons, P. T. Barnum, Ward Trial in Kentucky, Wooden Nutmegs, John Burrill, Jona Wilson* (Boston: Perkins & Fay, 1854), p. 29.

<sup>176</sup> Ashby, *With Amusement For All*, pp. 73-106.

<sup>177</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/ Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 11-82.

<sup>178</sup> Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum*, intro. by Whalen, p. 225; Museum of the City of New York (MCNY), *Barnum's American Museum and Hippodrome* Volume 9.

a hippodrome, a mechanical automaton, a portrait and armour gallery, acrobatic performances and other such displays.<sup>179</sup> Freakery was an integral, consistent, part of the entertainment.

As Barnum's empire grew, so too did the display of exceptional bodies, which shifted from single to multiple performances. Barnum's freak performers were often displayed as part of a collective. At the American Museum, Tom Thumb was part of a community of performers. He also travelled as part of Barnum's circuses in the 1850s and he performed alongside Lavinia Warren, Commodore Nutt and Minnie Warren in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>180</sup> By 1899, when *Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth* went to London, large freak shows were connected to menageries, museums, circuses and processions. By the early twentieth century, communities of little people were displayed in 'Midget Cities' connected to world fairs.<sup>181</sup>

This trajectory mirrored the burgeoning army of employees hired by Barnum. Unlike Lambert, Chang and Eng, Barnum had a plethora of agents. In 1844 he brought an employee from America to help him manage Tom Thumb's French shows.<sup>182</sup> Barnum employed agents, managers, stagehands and personal secretaries to help with business. When the General Tom Thumb Company went on a world tour in the early 1870s, a manager, treasurer, agent, general assistant, door keeper, coachman and pianist accompanied the group.<sup>183</sup> Towards the end of the century, during Barnum and Bailey's travelling shows, an army of employees were deployed. For the travelling show of 1890, for example, among the advertisers alone there were thirteen billposters, a lead billposter, a manager, lithographers, lithographer boarders and a calliope manager overseeing the playing of musical instruments to garner attention.<sup>184</sup>

This shift in scale reflected the trajectory noted by Sadiya Qureshi in which exhibitions of foreign people went from small-scale transitory displays at the beginning of the century to large-scale commercial enterprises tied to mass entertainment.<sup>185</sup> This expansion was similarly evident in American circuses during the nineteenth century: in 1835, for example, a capitalist stock company established the *Zoological Institute* in New York, a conglomerate that combined a dozen menageries and three circuses. As Matthew Wittman argued, these early circuses were a dimension of the

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<sup>179</sup> BHC, Draw#8-Circus/Barnum, 1871-1880, P. T. Barnum's Advance Courier (1873).

<sup>180</sup> Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb*, p. 25.

<sup>181</sup> Richard Howells and Michael M. Chemers, 'Midget Cities: Utopia, Utopianism, and the *Vor-schein* of the "Freak" Show', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 25:3 (2005) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/579/756>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>182</sup> *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader*, ed. by Cook, pp. 73-74.

<sup>183</sup> Sylvester Bleeker, *Gen. Tom Thumb's Three Years' Tour Around The World, Accompanied by his Wife—Lavinia Warren Stratton, Commodore Nutt, Miss Minnie Warren, and Party* (New York: S. Booth, 1872), p. 11.

<sup>184</sup> MCNY, Barnum and Bailey Circus Volume 11, Barnum and Bailey Official Route Book: Season of 1890.

<sup>185</sup> Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, pp. 2-4.

'market revolution' and relied on the expansion of railroads, industrial steam and locomotive power, which allowed the circus to become an active participant in domestic and foreign markets.<sup>186</sup> Music-halls in England followed a similar capitalist trajectory: penny gaffs at the middle of the century reached commercial zenith between 1880 and 1919.<sup>187</sup> Family-run shops were increasingly replaced by larger, multi-employee shops and commercial bazaars from the early nineteenth century.<sup>188</sup> Similarly, by the end of the nineteenth century, what began as small-scale exhibitions of human curiosities became larger freak shows connected to commercial museums, circuses, world fairs, amusement parks and carnivals.<sup>189</sup>

Tom Thumb's display thus marks a key transitional phase in the exhibition of the exceptional body. Broadly speaking, a move from smaller-scale exhibitions to larger, more commercial and internationalised exhibitions were discernible from the 1840s. This was not an absolute or linear shift: Chang and Eng anticipated these developments and even Lambert was exhibited, in textual form, as part of a commercial 'print culture'. Furthermore, Barnum was not the only important figure supporting the development of the freak industry. William Bullock's Egyptian Hall and Charles and Rubens Peale's Philadelphia Museum anticipated Barnum's American Museum. The showmen T. D. Rice, George Catlin and Isaac Van Amburgh all went international before Barnum, while Carl Hagenbeck and Buffalo Bill followed Barnum in establishing international exhibitions of living curiosities.<sup>190</sup> But, as James Cook argued, 'none of these innovators really came close to matching the Great Yankee Showman's durability, range of products, or cumulative impact'.<sup>191</sup>

## Conclusion

Tom Thumb's 1845 London exhibition pamphlet comprised a series of paradoxes. Tom Thumb was presented as a physiological variation yet his body was praised for being proportional and symmetrical. This occurred at a time when the notions of norms and averages entered the lexicon, denoting deviations which remained part of the natural order of things. Tom Thumb's character was

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<sup>186</sup> Matthew Wittmann, 'The Transnational History of the Early American Circus', in *The American Circus*, ed. by Susan Weber, Kenneth L. Ames and Matthew Wittmann (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 55-86.

<sup>187</sup> Barry J. Faulk, *Music Halls and Modernity: The Late-Victorian Discovery of Popular Culture* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004), pp. 7-22.

<sup>188</sup> Whitlock, *Crime, Gender and Consumer Culture*, pp. 20-26, 30-36, 43-60.

<sup>189</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 32-62.

<sup>190</sup> Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful*, pp. 12-14; *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader*, ed. by Cook, pp. 1-8; Rikke Andreassen, *Human Exhibitions: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Ethnic Displays* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 8-12.

<sup>191</sup> *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader*, ed. by Cook, p. 2.

constructed around the competing and contradictory discourses of gentlemanliness, manliness and infantilism, social markers disrupted by the fairy-tale tradition in which Tom Thumb was placed. The ambiguity of the Tom Thumb construction provoked ambivalent responses: extracts from the exhibition pamphlet articulated the difficulty in describing the sensations generated from viewing Tom Thumb. In response to the dilemma, he was perceived in an 'other sphere'.<sup>192</sup>

This, in turn, mirrored Barnum's strategy of linking the fabricated General Tom Thumb to the Tom Thumb from popular fairy tales. General Tom Thumb's performances with 'giants' at the American Museum, his meeting with Queen Victoria and the battle with her poodle mirrored the literary Tom Thumb's fight with giants, his relationship to King Arthur's court and his battle with cats. Stratton's marriage to Lavinia Warren was a public occasion presented as a fairy-tale romance realised in a fairy-tale wedding. The event was exploited to alter Tom Thumb's social construction, moving the fabricated identity towards respectability and domesticity in a similar manner to Chang and Eng's marriage to the Yates sisters. Public identities in the tradition of freakery remained transitory constructions, utilising developments in the lives of performers offstage.

Barnum's autobiographies, alongside contemporaneous children's literature, collapsed Stratton's agency into the identities of both General Tom Thumb and the fairy-tale Tom Thumb. The private Stratton, as a performer existing offstage, cannot be divorced from the onstage General Tom Thumb. From the age of four, Stratton was General Tom Thumb. The life and anecdotes of Stratton were told by others as he lived the identity of General Tom Thumb. Barnum's autobiography, while asserting his own centrality in the transformation of Stratton into General Tom Thumb, also mitigated Stratton's agency. General Tom Thumb and Stratton were presented as one and the same. Seemingly private affairs, such as Stratton's marriage to Lavinia Warren, were presented for a wider public. How, then, could the 'front' be separate or indeed separated from the 'authentic' self of the performer?

According to Derek Hudson and reaffirmed by A. N. Wilson, the mid-Victorians 'were forced by the pressures of a materialist age to live out a world of fantasy in their daily lives'.<sup>193</sup> General Tom Thumb was one such fantasy. He was part of the 1830s and 1840s craze for fairies; he was presented and perceived within an alternate reality. The context of materialism witnessed, as this chapter argued, an intensification of commercialisation and capitalism increasingly penetrating everyday life and defining the construction and display of Tom Thumb. Representations proliferated in a

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<sup>192</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 9.

<sup>193</sup> A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London: Arrow Books, 2003), p. 322; Derek Hudson, *Munby, Man of Two Worlds: The Life and Diaries of Arthur J. Munby, 1828-1910* (London: John Murray, 1972), p. 3.

commodity culture that brought Tom Thumb into physical proximity with normal bodies, intensified by the rise of pictorial journalism from the 1840s and cartes-de-visite from the 1860s. Tom Thumb was incorporated into family photograph albums and newspapers that entered the domestic milieu. This, in turn, expanded the range of spectators and dissolved the formally organised contours of an exhibition space. Thus although the 1840s is commonly denoted as the decade that witnessed the birth of the freak show, it was also the decade in which the boundaries of the 'formally organized exhibitions' were dissolved.<sup>194</sup>

Businesses beyond entertainment used the popularity of Tom Thumb to promote their products, further expanding his range of representations while bringing freakery into the process of advertisement. The suicide of Haydon in 1846 sparked condemnation as Tom Thumb and Barnum, representative of American rampant consumerism, were favoured over an English historical artist: frivolous freakery in favour of edifying cultural works. The tensions underlying commercialisation found expression in this moment but Barnum continued to use the capitalist system as a means of presenting the socially constructed Tom Thumb and Commodore Nutt. The novelty value of their freakery was infused with the value of capital. This reflected the emerging freak industry dependent on the commercial and capitalist market, supported by the spread of railroads, industrial steam, telegraphs and the growth of publishing that collectively proliferated news, advertisement and connected localities.

The 1840s marked an increase in the scale of freak performances as Tom Thumb's displays, to a greater degree than Lambert, Chang and Eng, began in the commercialised space of the American Museum, went international through a series of networks and comprised a segment of Barnum's capitalist endeavours on both sides of the Atlantic. This signalled the emergence of an industry analogous with developments in the display of exotic freaks, the American circus, English music halls and shops, thus returning to the overall argument of the chapter: Tom Thumb was contingent on the capitalist and commercial forces penetrating everyday life.

This chapter, then, has demonstrated how the construction and display of General Tom Thumb indexes the rise of commercial and capitalist forces from the 1840s. The intensification of these long durational phenomena helped proliferate representations of Tom Thumb, defined the very construction of his 'freak' identity and the mode by which he was displayed. The next chapter will consider how a freak identity could be divergently interpreted by two nineteenth-century spectators who confronted Julia Pastrana, The Baboon Lady.

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<sup>194</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 10-11.

## Chapter Four

### **Julia Pastrana, The Baboon Lady: Wonder, Disgust and Biographical Mystery**

This young lady, the wonder of the world, supposed by eminent naturalists and Physicians to be a hybrid, wherein the nature of woman predominates over the Ourang-Outangs is very singular. [...] A feeling of pity, rather than of repugnance or antipathy, is generally experienced in the bosom of all who pay her visit.<sup>1</sup>

So claimed the 1860 exhibition pamphlet accompanying a public lecture on Julia Pastrana: a Mexican-Indian woman remarkable for her beard, hirsute body and protruding jaw. Pastrana was displayed throughout North America and Europe from the mid-1850s before marrying her manager, Theodore Lent, and giving birth to a boy who had the same congenital traits. Pastrana and her child died shortly afterwards, in 1860, yet Lent embalmed their corpses and continued to exhibit them across Europe. The embalmed Pastrana was still on display as late as 1973; she was only laid to rest in her native Mexico in 2013.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis has focused on the fabrication of public identities within the tradition of freakery. It has argued for ambiguity and ambivalence; the interaction between freak constructions and everyday cultural, economic and social life; the interconnections between onstage and offstage existence; and the shift from small to large-scale exhibitions of exceptional bodies. In this chapter, the focus is reversed: the reception of Pastrana's exhibitions, recorded by the naturalist Francis Buckland (1826-1880) and the civil servant Arthur Munby (1828-1910), will be considered. A close reading reveals seemingly divergent responses from the same spectacle. This, in turn, suggests that the representation of a freak identity did not, in itself, present a canvass of predetermined meaning. Instead, the freak underwent a process of perception through the prism of subjective, personal assumptions that imbued divergent meanings into the freak construction.

Julia Pastrana has been analysed through a variety of prisms; in this regard, like the other agents of this thesis, she presents a profusion of analytical possibilities. For example, Rosemary Garland Thomson argued that five cultural oppositions were disrupted in Pastrana's living and embalmed exhibitions: human/ animal, civilised/primitive, normal/pathological, male/female and Self/Other.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anon., *Account of Miss Pastrana, The Nondescript; and the Double-Bodied Boy* (London: E. Hancock, 1860), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 216-244; Laura Anderson Barbata, 'Julia Pastrana: Brief Chronology' <<http://www.lauraandersonbarbata.com/work/mx-lab/julia-pastrana/3.php>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

<sup>3</sup> Rosemarie Garland Thomson, 'Making Freaks: Visual Rhetorics and the Spectacle of Julia Pastrana', in *Thinking the Limits of the Body*, ed. by Jeffrey Cohen and Gail Weiss (Albany: State University of New York

Thomson also explored these disruptions in the context of staring, which recruited Pastrana's body to question the aforementioned foundational dualisms.<sup>4</sup> As Thomson elucidated, staring is a physiological response, a cultural and historical condition, a former of social relations between 'starer and staree' and a vehicle for knowledge. Staring is not simply looking or gazing but a didactic process where various scripts, performances and positions are made legible.<sup>5</sup> Lillian Craton, on the other hand, argued that Pastrana's body operated as a site of cultural anxiety where bodily spectacle was perceived as endangering middle-class normality, in particular notions of femininity and masculinity. Pastrana's performances also functioned as cultural magnets that pulled agents towards the various meanings generated from her physical difference. Moreover, Pastrana's embalming exemplified Karl Marx's concept of reification, the transformation of human qualities into independent objects, as she went from a person to a commodity in embalmed form.<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Stern, moving beyond a recourse to Othering, argued that Pastrana's body meant different things in different cultural contexts.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, as every freak identity is void of inherent meaning, it can be constructed, used and analysed in a multiplicity of ways. I have chosen to explore Pastrana because she enables an exploration that considers emotional responses to her exhibitions, while foregrounding the complex dynamics of sexuality, intersecting with biographical obscurity, which together underpinned her display. Furthermore, as the archives allow us to focus on spectator response, the materials raise the importance of personal and cultural concerns as they impacted on the experience of freakery. While Buckland and Munby were subject to the same living and dead Pastrana, Buckland was wedded to natural theology, perceiving Pastrana in the light of Creationism. His experience was filled with wonder. Munby, on the other hand, represented a new mode of thinking, responding to Pastrana's display through the contemporaneous concerns of Darwinism. His experience was filled with disgust. This conclusion questions Thomson's use of Buckland as evidence for a new discourse that increasingly substituted pre-Enlightenment wonder for horror and the scientific discourse of

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Press, 2003), pp. 129-144; Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 70-78.

<sup>4</sup> Rosemarie Garland Thomson, 'Narratives of Deviance and Delight: Staring at Julia Pastrana, The "Extraordinary Lady"', in *Beyond the Binary: Reconstructing Cultural Identity in a Multicultural Context*, ed. by Timothy B. Powell (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999), pp. 81-104.

<sup>5</sup> Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 13-59.

<sup>6</sup> Lillian Craton, *The Victorian Freak Show: The Significance of Disability and Physical Differences in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Fiction* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009) pp. 1-3, 6-7, 121-123.

<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Stern, 'Our Bear Women, Ourselves: Affiliating with Julia Pastrana', in *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. by Marlene Tromp (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2008), pp. 200-233.

pathology.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, contrary to the opening quotation, Buckland and Munby did not necessarily experience a sense of pity. Instead, their reactions reveal a filtration process in which personal beliefs, assumptions and prejudices conditioned divergent responses. Paradoxically, however, while Buckland and Munby perceived Pastrana through different subjective and cultural concerns, they were ultimately united in the experience of ambivalence and pleasure when confronting Pastrana.

The first part of this chapter focuses on Pastrana's contemporaneous biography, deemed 'untrustworthy' and 'irrelevant' by Richard Altick.<sup>9</sup> Matthew Sweet argued that Pastrana's life needed 'talking up with a bit of showman's ballyhoo', arguing that the personalities and lives of freak performers needed resuscitation to better understand the Victorian period.<sup>10</sup> Yet, in many cases, the result has been the perpetuation of nineteenth-century freakery into modern texts.<sup>11</sup> Instead, this chapter argues that Pastrana's contemporaneous biography, with all its hyperbole, sensationalism and possible factual falsity, was a central facet of Pastrana's freakery as it raised questions that insinuated bestial copulation. The second part of this chapter concentrates on the personal archives and published materials of Buckland and Munby. Francis Buckland, an eccentric naturalist whose house on London's Albany Street doubled as a menagerie, first studied then worked as the House Surgeon at St George's Hospital. Buckland proceeded to work as the Assistant Surgeon for the 2nd Life Guards, between 1854 and 1863, and began to research and write on zoology, aiming to 'instruct and amuse' in his articles for *The Field*, a journal devoted to natural history.<sup>12</sup> In 1866, Buckland started the rival *Land and Water*, particularly contributing on the subject of fish, which reflected his new role as government inspector of fisheries from 1867.<sup>13</sup>

His short article on Pastrana recounts his visit to her 1857 and 1862 exhibitions. The article was incorporated into *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, the last in a quartet of volumes

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<sup>8</sup> Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, p. 74; Rosemarie Garland Thomson, 'Introduction: From Wonder to Error—A Genealogy of Freak Discourse in Modernity', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. by Rosemarie Garland Thomson (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 1-22.

<sup>9</sup> Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London: A Panoramic History of Exhibitions, 1800-1862* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1978), p. 266.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 141.

<sup>11</sup> Frederick Drimmer, *Very Special People: The Struggles, Loves and Triumph of Human Oddities* (New York: Citadel, 1991), pp. 311-319; Christopher Hals Gylseth and Lars O. Toverud, *Julia Pastrana: The Tragic Story of the Victorian Ape Woman*, trans. by Donald Tumasonis (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Wellcome Library, London (WLL), Francis Trevelyan Buckland Archives and Manuscripts MS.8713/5A, MS.8713/24.

<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey Harold Orchard Burgess, *The Curious World of Frank Buckland* (London: John Baker, 1967); George C. Bompas, *Life of Frank Buckland By His Brother-In-Law* (London: Smith, Elder, 1885); John Napier, 'O Rare Frank Buckland!', *New Scientist*, 72:1031 (1976), 647-649; Mervyn Gordon, 'Memoirs of Frank Buckland and Extracts from Some of his Records', *Annals of The Royal College of Surgeons of England*, 10:2 (1952), 133-139.



written between 1857 and 1872 and published extensively in numerous editions between the late 1850s and 1880s.<sup>14</sup> Buckland aimed to ‘afford some amusement, perhaps instruction, to those who take an interest in the curiosities of Natural History.’<sup>15</sup> His desire to mix edification and entertainment echoed the intentions of Daniel Lambert’s biographies, William Bullock’s Egyptian Hall and P. T. Barnum’s American Museum. The public presentation of Buckland’s response to Pastrana is explored in tandem with Buckland’s personal scrapbooks at the Royal College of Surgeons, which offer another perspective from which to address his interests and concerns.

Arthur Munby also published a response to Pastrana in a collection of poems, *Relicta: Verses* (1909), but the majority of his reflections are contained in his voluminous private diaries stored at his *alma mater* Trinity College.<sup>16</sup> Graduating from Cambridge University in 1851, Munby was called to the Bar in 1855 but spent his professional life as a civil servant in the Ecclesiastical Commission from 1858 until his retirement in 1888. His dairies, notebooks and photograph albums document in minute detail his fascination with working women, including acrobats, freak performers and the noseless, alongside his secret love affair and marriage to a working-class servant, Hannah Cullwick, in 1875.<sup>17</sup> While Munby also occupied a world populated with poets, artists and writers, this was inseparable, as Barry Reay argued, from his concealed passion for working women: the public and private interrelated.<sup>18</sup> As Griselda Pollock highlighted, Munby’s archives ‘solicit different readings’: the possibilities and complexities are endless.<sup>19</sup> In particular, the intersections between race, class, gender, sexuality and the physical environment converge around Munby and the seemingly unfeminine bodies in his archives. Thus to read Munby opens a magnitude of analytical opportunities. But this chapter specifically focuses on Munby’s response to Pastrana, exploring how this illuminates the fabricated identity and how his response reflects changing cultural concerns, seen through comparisons and contrasts with Francis Buckland.

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<sup>14</sup> Francis T. Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1888), pp. 40-42.

<sup>15</sup> Francis T. Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: First Series* (London: Macmillan, 1903 [1857]), p. xiii.

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Joseph Munby, *Relicta: Verses* (London: Bertram Dobell, 1909), pp. 5-13.

<sup>17</sup> Diane Atkinson, *Love and Dirt: The Marriage of Arthur Munby and Hannah Cullwick* (London: Macmillan, 2003), pp. 221-283.

<sup>18</sup> Barry Reay, *Watching Hannah: Sexuality, Horror and Bodily De-formation in Victorian England* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), pp. 169-171; Derek Hudson, *Munby, Man of Two Worlds: The Life and Diaries of Arthur J. Munby, 1828-1910* (London: John Murray, 1972), pp. 145-205.

<sup>19</sup> Griselda Pollock, ‘‘With my own eyes’’: Fetishism, the Labouring Body and the Colour of its Sex’, *Art History*, 17:3 (1995), 342-382; 342.

## Biographical Sketch

Julia Pastrana was probably born in 1832 or 1834 in the Sierra Madre region of Western Mexico.<sup>20</sup> She suffered from two rare congenital disorders, 'generalized hypertrichosis terminus and gingival hyperplasia', which meant her face and body were covered in dark hair and her gums were so overgrown it looked as if she had a second set of teeth.<sup>21</sup> Although there are numerous stories relating to Pastrana's early years, the 2003 biography by Christopher Gylseth and Lars Toverud cited three possible tales: that Pastrana was sold into show business by her parents; that she was left to die in a forest; and a third story which Gylseth and Toverud adopted.<sup>22</sup>

They claimed Pastrana was born in 1834 in the Sinaloa forest of Mexico. Pastrana's mother thought she was bewitched so fled from her 'so called Root-Digger Indian' tribe. Two years later, a group of Mexican herders found Pastrana and her mother in a mountain cave. The child was taken into care and baptised Julia Pastrana. She apparently became a local celebrity and started working as a maid to Pedro Sanchez, the Governor for the state of Sinaloa. In April 1854 Pastrana left Sanchez's household and met Mr. Rates, an American showman, who persuaded her to perform in New York.<sup>23</sup>

Posters and pamphlets suggest Pastrana was first exhibited in December 1854 at the Gothic Hall musical theatre, 316 Broadway, billed as The Marvellous Hybrid or Bear Woman.<sup>24</sup> She toured America and Canada under the management of a subsequent showman, Theodore Lent, although there were possibly two other managers associated with Pastrana's early career.<sup>25</sup>

In 1857, Pastrana was in London performing at the Regent Gallery, Piccadilly, advertised as 'Miss Julia Pastrana, the Nondescript, known throughout the United States and Canada as the BEAR WOMAN'.<sup>26</sup> The Gallery was located at the Quadrant, positioned on the curve between Piccadilly and Oxford Street, and home to lodgings, residences and shops selling imported and exotic delicacies. The colonnades of cast-iron columns, with a variety of formal and picturesque facades,

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<sup>20</sup> For the claim that Pastrana was born in 1834 see: Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, p. 218; Gylseth and Toverud, *Julia Pastrana*, p. 2. For the claim that Pastrana was born in 1832 see: Drimmer, *Very Special People*, p. 311.

<sup>21</sup> Jan Bondeson and A. E. W. Miles, 'Julia Pastrana, The Nondescript: An Example of Congenital, Generalized Hypertrichosis Terminalis With Ginger Hyperplasia', *American Journal of Medical Genetics*, 47:2 (1993), 198-212.

<sup>22</sup> Gylseth and Toverud, *Julia Pastrana*, p. 4, fn. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-24.

<sup>24</sup> Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, p. 219.

<sup>25</sup> Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, pp. 216-244; Gylseth and Toverud, *Julia Pastrana*, pp. 1-24; Drimmer, *Very Special People*, pp. 311-319.

<sup>26</sup> The John Johnson Collection: An Archive of Printed Ephemera, Digital Archive (TJJC), Human Freaks 3 (6).

offered a covered footway so 'those who have nothing to do but walk about and amuse themselves may do so everyday in the week'.<sup>27</sup>

The Regent Gallery was in the vicinity of the previous exhibitions of Lambert, Chang, Eng and Tom Thumb. It was a renowned space for freakery: the 'Gigantic Youth' from Yorkshire was shown at 50 Piccadilly in 1812 having already, allegedly, been introduced to 'Majesties, and Royal Family, at Windsor'.<sup>28</sup> Around 1817 to 1829 (exact dates unknown), a Fat Boy, three years old, was on display for one shilling at 183 Piccadilly and in the mid-1840s the 'Human Tripod' was exhibited for half a crown at the Quadrant, being declared 'a bipenis, as well as a trisceles' with three legs.<sup>29</sup> Pastrana could be seen three times a day for the price of three shillings from the stalls, two shillings from the 'area' and one shilling from the gallery. She danced the Highland fling, performed English and Spanish songs and conversed with the audience.<sup>30</sup> She was widely advertised, inspected by medical men and casts were made of her teeth.<sup>31</sup>

Much like the Egyptian Hall and Cosmorama Room, the Regent Gallery was a commercial exhibition hall which, from the first decades of the nineteenth century, displayed an array of human curiosities from little people to human skeletons.<sup>32</sup> Like Chang, Eng and Tom Thumb, Pastrana's freakery was connected to the burgeoning entertainment industry. Indeed, after appearing in London, Pastrana performed across Europe in an array of commercial spaces, including the circuses of Rentz and Hinne's troupe of equestrian performers.<sup>33</sup>

Theodore Lent utilised similar advertisement ploys adopted in the exhibitions of Lambert, Chang, Eng and Tom Thumb. In 1857, Lent invited the press 'to an elegant lunch' in Liverpool and allowed an interview with Pastrana, although the German reporter suspected Pastrana was told what to say by Lent.<sup>34</sup> Her exhibitions were widely advertised and even in Liverpool the disingenuous claim was promoted that she was 'Patronized by the Queen and all the Crowned Heads of Europe', possibly capitalising on Barnum's success with Tom Thumb.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ben Weinreb, and others, *The London Encyclopaedia* (London: Macmillan, 2008), p. 686.

<sup>28</sup> TJJ, Human Freaks 2 (10).

<sup>29</sup> TJJ, Human Freaks 2 (9); TJJ, Human Freaks 2 (82).

<sup>30</sup> TJJ, Human Freaks 3 (6).

<sup>31</sup> John Zachariah Laurence, 'A Short Account of the Bearded and Hairy Female', *Lancet*, 2 (1857), 48; A. E. W. Miles, *Julia Pastrana: The Bearded Lady* (London: Royal Society of Medicine, 1974), pp. 1-5.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Stephens, 'Touching Bodies: Tact/ility in Nineteenth-Century Medical Photographs and Models', in *Bodies, Sex and Desire from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. by Kate Fisher and Sarah Toulalan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 87-101 (p. 87).

<sup>33</sup> Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, pp. 223-228.

<sup>34</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 12 August 1857, p. 3; Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, pp. 225-226.

<sup>35</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 31 August 1857, p. [1].

Pastrana was performing in Moscow when, according to medical reports, she gave birth to a boy in March 1860. Her son was born with the same congenital traits and died two days later by asphyxia. Due to complications, Pastrana died shortly afterwards. The bodies were sent for embalming at Moscow University with a view to their preservation in the University's Anatomical Museum. The embalming was conducted by Professor Sokolov.<sup>36</sup>

In an article for *The Lancet*, Sokolov claimed that Lent and Pastrana had married, possibly when travelling around Europe, with Sokolov testifying to seeing 'a legal certificate of [Lent's] marriage with Julia Pastrana, attested by the council'.<sup>37</sup> It was claimed that Lent originally sold the bodies to Sokolov for £500 but, on realising the profit potential of the embalmed bodies, offered him £800 as a repurchase.<sup>38</sup>

Lent continued touring Europe with the embalmed bodies, confirming Susan Stewart's argument that life and death were ultimately irrelevant in the spectacle of exceptional bodies: it was merely the possibility of existence that titillated spectators.<sup>39</sup> In February 1862, The Embalmed Female Nondescript and Child were displayed at the Burlington Gallery, 191 Piccadilly, a site usually reserved for high art exhibitions (Figure 12). A year later, a waxwork of Pastrana was displayed at the London Anatomical Museum.<sup>40</sup>

According to Bondeson, the embalmed Pastrana and child joined a travelling English museum. In 1864, the corpses were touring Sweden with a German anatomical museum. Here, Lent allegedly married Marie Bartel, another Bearded Lady, who occasionally performed as Pastrana's sister. Lent and Bartel signed a series of contracts with European circuses and in 1884 returned to Moscow where, the biographies claim, Lent went insane. It is reported that Lent was committed to a Russian mental asylum and died shortly afterwards.<sup>41</sup>

Bondeson discovered that in 1895 the embalmed Pastrana and son were sold to a Scandinavian showman and were still being displayed as late as 1973. In 1990, Pastrana was discovered in an underground department at the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Oslo.<sup>42</sup> It was not until 2003 that a

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<sup>36</sup> J. Sokolov, 'Julia Pastrana and her child', *Lancet*, 1 (1862), 467-469.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 468.

<sup>38</sup> G. Van Hare, *Fifty Years of a Showman's Life; or, The Life and Travels of Van Hare by Himself* (London: W. H. Allen, 1888), p. 46.

<sup>39</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: John Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 111.

<sup>40</sup> *Morning Post*, 27 May 1863, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, p. 233; Gylseth and Toverud, *Julia Pastrana*, p. 85; Drimmer, *Very Special People*, pp. 318-319.

<sup>42</sup> Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, pp. 233-241.

Mexican artist, Laura Anderson Barbata, began a campaign to repatriate Pastrana and bury her with dignity. In February of 2013 she was laid to rest in Mexico.<sup>43</sup>

## Mythologies

Mystery and obscurity are defining characteristics in Pastrana's life history. There are no birth, baptism or early year records enabling a reconstruction of Pastrana's formative years. Bondeson claimed that 'the early history of Julia Pastrana is veiled in mystery'; Barbata noted that 'the details of her life as a child are not certain'; and Gylseth and Toverud similarly concluded that 'Julia's earliest childhood is cloaked in obscurity'.<sup>44</sup> Lent, too, is a figure of obscurity. No records survive which shed light on Theodore Lent: it is not even known what he looked like.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, there is no direct documentation which confirms the marriage between Lent and Pastrana. Many historians have claimed that Theodore Lent was Lewis Lent, an American showman and circus owner.<sup>46</sup> Yet there is no evidence to support the claim. Indeed, if Theodore Lent was Lewis Lent then he did not die in a Russian mental asylum in 1884: a contemporaneous obituary for Lewis Lent, which makes no reference either to Pastrana or Bartel, claimed he died in America in 1887.<sup>47</sup> Lewis Lent appears in the American census for 1880: aged sixty-five, occupation 'circus business', living in New York City and married to Mary A. Lent.<sup>48</sup> She was described as 'white', 'female', aged forty-eight and her occupation 'at home'. She was born in Massachusetts and the section on 'health', which asked whether the individual was 'sick or temporarily disabled', was left blank.<sup>49</sup> It is hard to conclude that

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<sup>43</sup> Barbata, 'Julia Pastrana' <<http://www.lauraandersonbarbata.com/work/mx-lab/julia-pastrana/3.php>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

<sup>44</sup> Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, p. 218; Barbata, 'Julia Pastrana' <<http://www.lauraandersonbarbata.com/work/mx-lab/julia-pastrana/3.php>> [accessed 5 February 2016]; Gylseth and Toverud, *Julia Pastrana*, p. 142.

<sup>45</sup> It remains a subject of speculation based on a single pictorial representation. See: Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, p. 228.

<sup>46</sup> Miles, *Julia Pastrana*, p. 3; Janet Browne and Sharon Messenger, 'Victorian Spectacle: Julia Pastrana, The Bearded and Hairy Female', *Endeavour*, 27:4 (2003), 155-159. Gylseth and Toverud, *Julia Pastrana*, p. 143 cite Thomas Frost as their reference for Theodore Lent but Frost was discussing Lewis Lent not Theodore Lent, two different people. See: Thomas Frost, *Circus Life and Circus Celebrities* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1873), p. 223.

<sup>47</sup> Anon., 'A Veteran Showman Dead', *The New York Times*, 29 May 1887.

<sup>48</sup> Year: 1880; Census Place: New York City, New York; Roll: 880; Family History Film: 1254880; Page: 80A; Enumeration District: 277; Image: 0101. *The National Archives* <<http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db=1880usfedcen&indiv=try&h=2749413>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

<sup>49</sup> Year: 1880; Census Place: New York City, New York; Roll: 880; Family History Film: 1254880; Page: 80A; Enumeration District: 277; Image: 0101. *The National Archives* <<http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db=1880usfedcen&indiv=try&h=3884620>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

this was the performing Bearded Lady Marie Bartel, supposedly born in Karlsburg, Germany.<sup>50</sup> We can possibly never know whether Lent (whoever he was) married Pastrana (or indeed Bartel) and whether he died in a Russian mental asylum.

Despite the centrality of the unknown in the story of Pastrana, historians and biographers have tried to chart the 'realities' of Pastrana's life and character. But this has recapitulated the mystery of her birth and, in the process, resurrected the dynamics of her exhibitions. An extreme example is the sensationalist biography by Gylseth and Toverud who wove biographical 'facts' with literary flourishes. Amidst the uncertainty of Pastrana's early years, the biographers claimed that when Pastrana was born, her mother knew:

something is terribly wrong. This child will bring much sorrow, and nothing will remain the same. 'Naualli', she murmurs with fear in her voice, while the baby girl turns its grotesque face towards her.<sup>51</sup>

Rebecca Stern dismissed this 'grossly Gothic introduction' but, in a more subtle manner, she enacted a similar perpetuation of literary imaginings by relying on another account by Hermann Waldemar Otto.<sup>52</sup> He was far from a reliable, Gothic-neutral source: a nineteenth-century German circus owner and journalist who wrote under the pseudonym Signor Saltarino and whose description of Pastrana in *Fahrend Volk* (1895), was steeped in a stylised narrative. Describing his encounter with the embalmed Pastrana he wrote:

I came with positive feelings before that glass case, that *coffin*, where that lifeless body was shown [...]. She stood before me in a red, silk-like harlot's dress with a frightening rictus across her face, with her child in a similar costume on a pole beside her like a parrot. The rain streamed down outside the show-booths [...] and a heavy wind howled round the tent, and I felt a deep, deep sympathy for that poor corpse who could not see and hear, nor feel pain and sorrow. I remembered her saying once with a happy smile, 'He loves me for my own sake'.<sup>53</sup>

Pathetic fallacy is used to describe the encounter: her alleged words emphasise the pathos of the silenced 'mummy'. The supposed meeting between Otto and the living Pastrana was asserted by

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<sup>50</sup> Drimmer, *Very Special People*, pp. 317-318.

<sup>51</sup> Gylseth and Toverud, *Julia Pastrana*, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Stern, 'Our Bear Women, Ourselves', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 200-233 (p. 201, fn. 4).

<sup>53</sup> Gylseth and Toverud, *Julia Pastrana*, pp. 75-76.

Stern, Glysth, Toverud and Bondeson.<sup>54</sup> But Otto was born in 1863, the year after Pastrana was embalmed and he published his account in 1895.<sup>55</sup> He never met Pastrana. This alleged recollection of meeting her alive was a product of literary imagination. But historians and biographers have relied on Otto's supposed acquaintance with Pastrana in an attempt to posit conclusions about her personality. Glysth and Toverud use Otto to suggest that Pastrana was 'good-hearted'.<sup>56</sup> Stern, citing Otto in her footnotes, claimed 'according to the sparse primary information left by her few acquaintances' Pastrana was 'an intelligent, kindly woman, normal in all respects but that of her appearance'.<sup>57</sup> Bondeson maintained that she 'was a normal, intelligent woman of gentle disposition'.<sup>58</sup> These character attributions derived from Otto's sensationalist writing:

For the few who knew her better, she was a warm, feeling, thoughtful, spiritually very gifted being with a sensitive heart and mind [...] and it affected her very deeply in her heart with sadness, having to stand *beside* people, instead of *with* them, and to be shown as a freak for money, not sharing any of the everyday joys in a home filled with love. She liked to read, she was hungry for knowledge, a fine judge of persons, and besides, a good-hearted creature!<sup>59</sup>

Whether Otto actually captured Pastrana's 'real' character is speculative. Maybe she was all that Otto claimed or maybe these were character traits that served to bolster her feminine attributes, thus heightening the contrast with her appearance. Maybe these character traits derived from another contemporaneous myth: when Francis Buckland saw Pastrana in 1857, he revealed a prevalent rumour that 'she was very charitable, and gave largely to local institutions from her earnings'.<sup>60</sup> Yet this reflected a clever advertising ploy, possibly developed by Lent. In June 1857, when Pastrana was being exhibited at the Regent's Gallery, the popular dramatist Douglas William Jerrold had just died. An advertisement for Pastrana's performance offered the 'entire proceeds' to the public fund designed to 'perpetuate' Jerrold's memory.<sup>61</sup> This ostensibly benevolent gesture may

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<sup>54</sup> For the implication that Otto and Pastrana were acquaintances see: Stern, 'Our Bear Women, Ourselves', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 200-233 (p. 201). For the claim that Otto and Pastrana met and had a long conversation see: Gylseth and Toverud, *Julia Pastrana*, p. 55. For a more cautious assessment see: Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, p. 226.

<sup>55</sup> Otto was born on 14 April 1863. This was a year after Pastrana was embalmed. Otto published his account of Pastrana in 1895 and died on 11 January 1941 see: Marline Otte, *Jewish Identities in German Popular Entertainment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 47, fn. 5.

<sup>56</sup> Gylseth and Toverud, *Julia Pastrana*, p. 56.

<sup>57</sup> Stern, 'Our Bear Women, Ourselves', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 200-233 (p. 201, fn. 3).

<sup>58</sup> Bondeson, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities*, p. 243.

<sup>59</sup> Gylseth and Toverud, *Julia Pastrana*, p. 56.

<sup>60</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, p. 42.

<sup>61</sup> *Morning Post*, 7 August 1857, p. 1.

have deliberately sought to tap into the symbolic union between femininity and philanthropy, thus paradoxically bolstering the masculinity and bestiality allegedly reflected in Pastrana's features.<sup>62</sup>

The point, however, is that the 'realities' of Pastrana's character are impossible to deduce from the available material. Yet contemporary cultural productions have perpetuated an idealised Pastrana based on dubious and sensational claims. Stern suggested that Pastrana's alleged dying words, "He loves me for my own sake", were central to modern artistic interpretations.<sup>63</sup> In Shaun Prendergast's 1998 play, Lent is presented as a worshipper of mammon while Pastrana, wrote Christine Mather, was framed as 'an angelic beauty trapped inside a terrifying beast' who longed to have 'a normal child to reveal her inner beauty to the world'.<sup>64</sup> Further artistic works by Holley Bakich and Kathleen Anderson Culebro have asserted the self-possession of Pastrana.<sup>65</sup> Thus Pastrana remains a performance constructed from materials with questionable historical veracity. In turn, the contemporary reimagining of Pastrana perpetuates her nineteenth-century fabrication as The Baboon Lady. Her modern reconstructions reveal more about modern sentimentality and politics than they do about Pastrana.

### **Fabricating Identities**

Fundamentally, however, the modern desire to reconstruct Pastrana has distracted from the centrality of mystery within her nineteenth-century social construction. The obscurity of Pastrana's origins was deliberately propagated as a basis from which to construct her freak persona. In August 1857, *The Morning Chronicle* captured the correlation between Pastrana's mysterious origins and the interest in her exhibition:

The interest excited by this unique specimen of humanity has by no means decreased, while the mystery that surrounds her birth, parentage, and origin still remains a source of wonder to all parties. She has been visited by many eminent medical men, who can point out no satisfactory solution of the problem, and it seems probable that Miss Julia will quit the world

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<sup>62</sup> Frank K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 47-72.

<sup>63</sup> Stern, 'Our Bear Women, Ourselves', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 200-233 (p. 217).

<sup>64</sup> Christine Mather, 'Performance Review: The True History of the Tragic Life and Triumphant Death of Julia Pastrana, the Ugliest Woman in the World', *Theatre Journal*, 51:2 (1999), 215-216 (p. 215).

<sup>65</sup> Stern, 'Our Bear Women, Ourselves', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 200-233 (pp. 216-224).



she has so mysteriously entered with no more elucidation of her antecedents than has been obtained up to the present moment.<sup>66</sup>

The question of Pastrana's origins reflected intellectual struggles between the opposing theories of monogenesis and polygenesis. James Prichard, an English physician and ethnologist, argued that 'all the tribes of men are of one family', asserting the essential unity of man.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, the comparative anatomist, Robert Knox, stressed the centrality of distinct races.<sup>68</sup> People were biologically, hierarchically different and 'in human history race is everything'.<sup>69</sup> Knox's views were shared by James Hunt who, a year after Pastrana's 1862 exhibition, established a rival to the Ethnological Society, the Anthropological Society of London and delivered a paper which claimed there was 'good reason for classifying the negro as a distinct species'.<sup>70</sup> Pastrana's exhibition pamphlet utilised these debates: on two separate occasions it claimed Pastrana had no 'admixture' or 'trace of Negro Blood' but, at the same time, it was suggested that she be ranked as a 'Distinct Species'.<sup>71</sup>

This indeterminate status echoed Pastrana's title as *The Nondescript*, a term which invited scientific explanation by holding the promise of revealing nature's hidden explanations.<sup>72</sup> But these mysteries were compounded by the paradox of Pastrana's physiology: 'the face of a Baboon—the body and limbs of a Woman—the skin of a Bear', 'wherein the nature of woman predominates over the Orang-Outangs'.<sup>73</sup> Pastrana's lower jaw was described as 'much extended, and the angle of the face [...] very singular', which echoed Peter Camper's prognathism facial type: exhibiting an extension or protrusion of the lower jaw.<sup>74</sup> The practice of physiognomy, popularised in the first half of the nineteenth century by George Combe, linked higher facial angles with Greco-Roman beauty and intelligence. At the opposite end of the aesthetic and cultural hierarchy were sloping foreheads and

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<sup>66</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 10 August 1857, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> James Cowles Prichard, *The Natural History of Man; Comprising Inquiries into the Modifying Influence of Physical and Moral Agencies of the Different Tribes of the Human Family* (London: H. Bailliere, 1843), p. 26.

<sup>68</sup> Carol MacCormack, 'Medicine and Anthropology', in *Companion Encyclopaedia of the History of Medicine*, ed. by W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), II, pp. 1436-1448; Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 6-19.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Knox, *The Races of Men: A Fragment* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1850), p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 208-218.

<sup>71</sup> Anon., *Account of Miss Pastrana*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>72</sup> Jane R. Goodall, *Performance and Evolution in the Age of Darwin: Out of the Natural Order* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 48.

<sup>73</sup> Anon., *Account of Miss Pastrana*, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> Anon., *Account of Miss Pastrana*, p. 4; L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), pp. xix-xxii, 50-53, 89-93.

protruding mouths and chins, which were linked to lower primates.<sup>75</sup> Unlike Tom Thumb, whose symmetry and proportionality brought him closer to the ideal, Pastrana was placed at the lower end of the hierarchy.

Pastrana's physiology was thus perceived as characteristically simian. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the measuring of race through anthropological means had focused particular attention on Irish prognathism which, in popular caricature, presented the Irish with simian features.<sup>76</sup> The echoes of prognathism in Pastrana's billing were explicitly stated in a medical text that claimed she had 'pronounced prognathism, which gave her a simian appearance'.<sup>77</sup> Pastrana was thus placed in proximity to the lower realm of primates and further away from the human ideal within physiognomy's racial hierarchies.<sup>78</sup> Yet, at the same time, promotional material stressed that Pastrana was a 'little lady', her 'form and limbs are quite perfect, with wonderfully small hands and feet'. Mirroring the paradoxical construction of Tom Thumb, Pastrana was both simian and 'a Lady in every respect'.<sup>79</sup> *The Lancet* confirmed Pastrana's femininity. The medical journal encouraged readers to attend Pastrana's exhibition by advertising her display at the Regent Gallery, thus demonstrating medicine's continued engagement with freakery as evidenced in Chang and Eng's 1829-1830 London performances. But *The Lancet* also stressed the vitality of Pastrana's body: 'remarkable for the full development of her breasts' and noting that she had a regular menstrual cycle.<sup>80</sup>

Thomson's analysis of this article concluded that Pastrana's body 'depends not upon her absolute otherness, but rather upon the conflicting presence of radical differences and familiar traits'.<sup>81</sup> The promotional material for Pastrana's 1857 exhibition, for example, praised her 'very pretty whiskers, beard, and moustache'.<sup>82</sup> The words 'lady', 'pretty' and 'fine' coexisted with the description of the

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<sup>75</sup> Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 44-45; Nanette Jacomijn Snoep, 'Savage Imagery', in *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage*, ed. by Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch and Nanette Jacomijn Snoep (Paris: Musée de Quai, 2011), pp. 102-125; David Stack, *Queen Victoria's Skull: George Combe and the Mid-Victorian Mind* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2008), pp. 217-230.

<sup>76</sup> Sharrona Pearl, *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 112-128.

<sup>77</sup> George M. Gould and Walter L. Pyle, *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine: Being an Encyclopedic Collection of Rare and Extraordinary Cases, and of the Most Striking Instances of Abnormality in All Branches of Medicine and Surgery, Derived from an Exhaustive Research of Medical Literature from its Origins to the Present Day, Abstracted, Classified, Annotated, and Indexed, Popular Edition* (Philadelphia: W. B. Sanders and Company, 1901 [1896]), p. 229.

<sup>78</sup> Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist*, pp. 121-181.

<sup>79</sup> WLL, *Oversize Ephemera* EPH+33:3.

<sup>80</sup> Laurence, 'A Short Account of the Bearded and Hairy Female', p. 48.

<sup>81</sup> Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, p. 74.

<sup>82</sup> TJJ, *Human Freaks* 3 (6).

masculine beard which, according to Christopher Oldstone-Moore, signalled a new 'elemental masculinity' connoting health, vitality and the masculine qualities of independence, hardiness and decisiveness.<sup>83</sup> This, in turn, signals a shift in notions of masculinity as they were increasingly read in terms of corporeality. But Pastrana's body and performances were essentially feminine: described as a lady, she danced and sang romantic songs that suggested a performance of romantic courtship.<sup>84</sup> Within Pastrana's exhibition, therefore, a series of signifiers presented an ambiguous construction in the conflicting presence of the feminine, masculine and bestial.

It was partly on this basis that Pastrana's origin remained 'a source of wonder'.<sup>85</sup> But the answers were not simply probed through reading Pastrana's physiology. Indeed, *The Morning Chronicle's* article confirmed a link between the biographical 'mystery that surrounds her birth' and the 'problem' of her categorisation.<sup>86</sup> This correlation was framed to insinuate bestial copulation, a common theme used to present Africans on stage.<sup>87</sup> The poster for Pastrana's 1857 exhibition contained a short section on the 'Root-Digger Indians to which Tribe Julia's Mother belonged':

These remarkable beings inhabit the Mountains, in Mexico, and live in caves with animals of different description, such as Bears, Monkeys, Squirrels, &c., between which and themselves they know no difference; their food consists of grass, roots, insects, barks of tree, &c.<sup>88</sup>

The tribe to which Pastrana's mother allegedly belonged not only lived with animals but also lacked the faculty to decipher the difference between varieties of animals and, crucially, between members of their own tribe and the animal kingdom. The implication was similarly utilised, in the same year, by the self-described 'Dr' Joseph Kahn who exploited the excitement of Pastrana's exhibition by holding a lecture at his Anatomical and Pathological Museum, an establishment intended to show the 'wondrous' structure of the human body and to warn against abuses that 'distort or defile' its 'beautiful structure'.<sup>89</sup> Kahn delivered a lecture on the 'Curious history of the Life, Habits, and Adventures of that Strangely-formed Being, and Singular-looking Creature, the BABOON LADY, Miss

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<sup>83</sup> Christopher Oldstone-Moore, 'The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain', *Victorian Studies*, 48:1 (2005), 7-34 (p. 7).

<sup>84</sup> TJJ, *Human Freaks* 3 (6).

<sup>85</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 10 August 1857, p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Bernth Lindfors, 'Introduction', in *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business*, ed. by Bernth Lindfors (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. vii-xiii (p. viii).

<sup>88</sup> TJJ, *Human Freaks* 3 (6).

<sup>89</sup> A. W. Bates, 'Dr Kahn's Museum: Obscene Anatomy in Victorian London', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 99:12 (2006), 618-624 (p. 618).

Julia Pastrana' maintaining that Pastrana was 'a Root Digger Indian of Mexico'. The poster for the lecture stated:

Her Remarkable Formation, and Mysterious Parentage, and how she was Discovered in a Cave, suckled by her Indian Mother, Dwelling with Baboons, Bears, and Monkeys.<sup>90</sup>

According to the press, 'the delicate inference is obvious'.<sup>91</sup> The stress on Pastrana's tribal origins further supported the bestial undertones of her display. The term 'Root Digger' entered the vernacular around the middle of the century as it was applied by white settlers to native Indians in California. The term 'Root Digger' signalled dirty, lazy, bloodthirsty and animalistic savages.<sup>92</sup> The term collapsed regional variations of native Indians scattered across Utah, New Mexico and the Gulf of California, instead unifying the Diggers 'in consequence of the method of procuring their food, which consists principally of grass-hoppers, snails and wasps', which made them 'certainly the most filthy and abominable'.<sup>93</sup> George Payson, the General Counsel for the Western Railroad Association, described Californian native Indians in 1853 with 'monstrous heads', 'long black hair' and 'dwarfish bodies and distorted limbs' which were 'peculiarly inhuman'.<sup>94</sup> As with Chang and Eng, these comparisons echoed the proximity of disability and race which, according to Douglas Baynton, were linked to the concept of normality in an explicit hierarchy.<sup>95</sup>

Bishop Oscar Penn Fitzgerald, superintendent of education in California between 1867 and 1871, wrote that 'the Digger Indian holds a low place in the scale of humanity'.<sup>96</sup> These Californian Indians were linked to 'baboons', 'ourang-outangs', 'gorillas' and 'monkeys', which led white colonists to speculate that Californian Indians were a 'connecting link' between humans and animals.<sup>97</sup> Thus the claim that Pastrana was the offspring of a Root Digger offered a biographical explanation for her peculiar physiology. But the Root Diggers also carried a sexual connotation. Since the early 1850s, the practice of 'Digger prostitution' was widespread, particularly in California where Indian women were routinely captured and held as concubines or sold into prostitution. Although an enforced

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<sup>90</sup> WLL, Freaks Ephemera Box 3 EPH 499B, 'Curious History of the Baboon Lady'.

<sup>91</sup> *Era*, 19 July 1857, p. 11.

<sup>92</sup> Allan Lonnerberg, 'The Digger Indian Stereotype in California', *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology*, 3:2 (1981), 215-223; Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: the Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 111-113.

<sup>93</sup> Anon., *Account of Miss Pastrana*, p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> George Payson, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1853), p. 256.

<sup>95</sup> Douglas C. Baynton, 'Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History', in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. by Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (New York: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 33-57.

<sup>96</sup> Bishop O. P. Fitzgerald, *California Sketches Old and New* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1895), p. 133.

<sup>97</sup> Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines*, pp. 111-113.

sexual practice, the prevalence of prostitution convinced colonialists that these women were sexually available.<sup>98</sup>

In Mexico, where Pastrana's mother was variously claimed to be a native, living in a cave and/or where she gave birth to Pastrana, women were similarly perceived as 'hypersexual'.<sup>99</sup> Particularly from the middle of the nineteenth century, Mexico was subject to increased British financial investment and subsequent opportunities for British travel in the region.<sup>100</sup> Colonialism perpetuated the practice of prostitution as native women served armies and frontier settlements with Chinese, Indian and Aboriginal women available for sexual purchase.<sup>101</sup>

The social and symbolic association between natives and sexuality fuelled the insinuation of bestiality. The implication was that Pastrana's mother sexually consorted with the animal kingdom. The 1862 exhibition poster referred to Pastrana's mother as a 'Mexican woman' who:

fell into the hands of a rival tribe of Digger Indians, who kept her closely confined in a cave for the whole time from her capture to her recovery by the Mexican Ranchero. The place, however, where she was found was some hundreds of miles from any human beings [...] and in a region of country abounding in monkeys, baboons, and bears. She was at the time suckling this child, then about two years old.<sup>102</sup>

The inferred bestiality occurred shortly after legal changes to the Offences Against the Person Act removed capital indictment to sodomy in 1861. But the Elizabethan definition of 'the abnormal crime of Buggery', as an 'Infamous Crime' performed 'either with Mankind or with beast', was retained.<sup>103</sup> These legal changes brought bestiality, as synonymous with buggery, to public attention, heightening an awareness of bestial copulation as implied in Pastrana's exhibition. It was bolstered by Pastrana's billing as both The Baboon Lady and The Bear Lady. In Western thought, monkeys had long symbolised both male and female sexuality: in erotic art, for example, nymphomaniacs were

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<sup>98</sup> Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines* pp. 120-121; Glenda Riley, *Confronting Race: Women and Indians on the Frontiers, 1815-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), pp. 87-88.

<sup>99</sup> Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines*, pp. 79, 166.

<sup>100</sup> Karen M. Morin, *Frontiers of Femininity: A New Historical Geography of the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), pp. 117-118.

<sup>101</sup> Richard Phillips, *Sex, Politics and Empire: A Postcolonial Geography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 1-25; Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 177-198.

<sup>102</sup> WLL, Oversize Ephemera EPH+33:4.

<sup>103</sup> Charles Upchurch, *Before Wilde: Sex Between Men in Britain's Age of Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 83-104 (p. 92); Sean Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861-1913* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 85-118.

often depicted with virile simians.<sup>104</sup> Bears, on the other hand, remained animals of native Indian reverence, thus enforcing Pastrana's connection with Indian tribes.<sup>105</sup>

Furthermore, as Nadja Durbach highlighted, it was not atypical for non-white hairy women, particularly in the 1880s, to be presented as hybrids. Animalism, primitivism and hirsute bodies suggested perverse sexuality in contrast to white self-control.<sup>106</sup> Galia Ofek supported this reading, demonstrating how hirsute women signified deficient femininity, hyper sexuality, primitivism and bestiality, evidenced in scientific treatment of female hairiness from the 1870s.<sup>107</sup> For Pastrana, these interrelated discourses presented a paradoxical construction: simian and masculine, yet feminine; The Baboon Lady whose origins, while certainly mysterious, suggested bestial copulation. Out of this matrix of signifiers and insinuation, two nineteenth-century spectators perceived Pastrana in very different ways.

## Francis Buckland

Francis Buckland, the pisciculturist and naturalist, first saw Julia Pastrana in 1857. He revisited her exhibition in 1862, purchased a photograph sold at her exhibition and wrote about his experience in the fourth and final series of *Curiosities of Natural History* (1888).<sup>108</sup> His private scrapbooks reveal an ongoing interest in hybrid monsters: a sketch of his room at Oxford University depicted a series of monsters from mythology.<sup>109</sup> He was friends with the performing 'French Giant' Joseph Brice, he celebrated the marriage of the 'Giantess' Anna Swan and often visited freak shows.<sup>110</sup> It was not surprising, then, that Buckland was drawn to Pastrana.

Buckland titled his article: 'The female nondescript Julia Pastrana, and exhibitions of human mummies, etc'. 'From giants', he opened,

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<sup>104</sup> Curtis, *Apes and Angels*, pp. 171-174; Desmond Morris, *Monkey* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), pp. 56-61.

<sup>105</sup> S. G. Deogaonkar and S. S. Deogaonkar, *Native Americans and Native Indians* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 2002), pp. 47, 58, 83-84.

<sup>106</sup> Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 97-110; Nadja Durbach, 'The Missing Link and the Hairy Belle: Krao and the Victorian Discourses of Evolution, Imperialism, and Primitive Sexuality', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 134-153.

<sup>107</sup> Galia Ofek, *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 56-62.

<sup>108</sup> Miles, *Julia Pastrana*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>109</sup> Royal College of Surgeons, London (RCSL), The Papers of Francis Buckland Volume I MS0035/1.65, MS0035/1.82.

<sup>110</sup> Burgess, *The Curious World of Frank Buckland*, pp. 181-195; Bompas, *Life of Frank Buckland By His Brother-In-Law*, pp. 121, 228, 305.

I now proceed to other human Exhibitions. It is seldom, very seldom, that we are invited to see modern mummies, though ancient mummies are not so very uncommon.<sup>111</sup>

In the preceding forty pages, Buckland had discussed the exhibition of ‘giants’, thus placing Pastrana in the lineage of human exhibitions. Buckland also aligned Pastrana to the context of human mummification, at a time when England was gripped by ‘Egyptomania’.<sup>112</sup> He viewed the embalmed Pastrana with the ‘eminent taxidermist’ Abraham Dee Bartlett, a zoologist, naturalist and superintendent at London Zoo.<sup>113</sup> In a letter to *The Field*, which was published in *The Penny Illustrated Paper* on 1 March 1862, the alleged topic of their conversation was revealed:

He agrees with me that it is the most wonderful specimen of the art of preserving ever brought before the public notice, and both he and I are at a loss to know the means which have been employed.<sup>114</sup>

Pastrana was rendered a piece of art. Buckland’s reference to ‘the art of preserving’ was instructive: both he and Bartlett were skilled in taxidermy, which was partly seen as an aesthetic practice. In particular, as Michelle Henning argued, anthropomorphic taxidermy functioned beyond scientific illustration or preservation to represent a unique art form.<sup>115</sup> Buckland’s reference to art similarly echoed the ‘art of embalming’.<sup>116</sup> 1861 was a turning point as Northerners in the American Civil War started to embalm their dead: in May the first prominent military figure was killed and embalmed, establishing a pattern for future usage and visibility.<sup>117</sup> The practice, moreover, contributed to the Victorian cult of death at a time when dying became a commercialised and professionalised industry.<sup>118</sup> Pastrana could be read, therefore, as both an artwork and commodity.

But the process of Pastrana’s embalming remained a mystery: ‘as regards the history of the embalment, there were some queer stories told’, Buckland claimed.<sup>119</sup> This mystery was arguably created, or at least perpetuated, to lure audiences and invite speculation. An anonymous author,

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<sup>111</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, p. 40.

<sup>112</sup> Meilee D. Bridges, ‘Tales from the Crypt: Bram Stoker and the Curse of the Egyptian Mummy’, *Victorians Institute Journal*, 36 (2008), 137-166; Kelly Hurley, ‘The Victorian Mummy-Fetish: H. Rider Haggard, Frank Aubrey, and the White Mummy’, in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 180-199.

<sup>113</sup> WLL, *Oversize Ephemera* EPH+33:4.

<sup>114</sup> WLL, *Oversize Ephemera* EPH+33:4; TJJC, *Human Freaks* 3 (8).

<sup>115</sup> Michelle Henning, ‘Anthropomorphic Taxidermy and the Death of Nature: The Curious Art of Hermann Ploucquet, Walter Potter, and Charles Waterton’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 35:2 (2007), 663-678.

<sup>116</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser*, 30 August 1862, p. 3.

<sup>117</sup> Edward C. Johnson, Gail R. Johnson and Melissa Johnson, ‘The Origin and History of Embalming’, in *Embalming: History, Theory, and Practice*, ed. by Robert G. Mayer (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006), pp. 457-498.

<sup>118</sup> James Steven Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), pp. 141-175; Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 272-281.

<sup>119</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, p. 42.

writing in *The Lancet*, declared 'we are promised the particulars of the process', but a couple of months later the embalmer Sokolov revealed little, merely stating that he injected Pastrana with 'decay-arresting mixtures'.<sup>120</sup> He might have been reluctant to reveal his technique but, in either case, mystery was intensified: the obscurity of Pastrana's embalming added to Pastrana's mysterious parentage.

This accompanied a change of tone. In 1857, Pastrana was displayed as the 'Grand and Novel Attraction, Miss Julia Pastrana, The Nondescript' being 'pronounced by most eminent Naturalists and Physicians the wonder of the world'.<sup>121</sup> But in her 1862 exhibition she was billed as 'Miss Julia Pastrana, the Embalmed Nondescript' being 'pronounced by the medical profession to be the greatest scientific curiosity ever exhibited in London'.<sup>122</sup> In 1857, her mysterious parentage hinged on the denigration of Root-Digger Indians and Mexicans but in 1862, while these myths were still propagated, there was a new cause for celebration: the Western development of science. The 1862 exhibition poster proudly proclaimed 'the Greatest triumph that modern science has yet achieved'.<sup>123</sup>

But despite the change of tone between the 1857 and 1862 exhibitions, ambivalence continued to define Buckland's response to Pastrana. Recollections of the living Pastrana echoed in Buckland's description of the embalmed Pastrana. When Buckland first went to the 1862 exhibition, he almost immediately exclaimed, "Julia Pastrana!"<sup>124</sup> Buckland's description oscillated between the living and the dead as he compared the two:

the huge deformed lips and the squat nose remained exactly as in life: and the beard and luxuriant growth of soft black hair on and about the face were in no respect changed from their former appearance.<sup>125</sup>

Buckland admitted that 'it was almost difficult to imagine that the mummy was really that of a human being, and not of an artificial model'. He made a telling comparison to waxworks: Pastrana's face was 'exactly like an exceedingly good portrait in wax, but it was *not* formed of wax'.<sup>126</sup> The

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<sup>120</sup> Anon., 'A New Process of Embalming and Preserving the Human Body', *Lancet*, 1 (1862), 294; Sokolov, 'Julia Pastrana and Her Child', p. 468.

<sup>121</sup> WLL, Oversize Ephemera EPH+33:3.

<sup>122</sup> WLL, Oversize Ephemera EPH+33:4; *Standard*, 5 May 1862, p. 1.

<sup>123</sup> TJJ, Human Freaks 3 (8).

<sup>124</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, p. 40.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*



cultural work of waxworks dissolved the categories of life and death.<sup>127</sup> This dissolution was noted by the 1862 poster: 'the subject on exhibition was seen when living by thousands in this metropolis, many of whom, having paid a visit to the Gallery, at once recognise her'.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, as Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey argued, the embalmed body occupies an ambivalent space: as a replica of the living body and materiality the dead body, the embalmed body objectifies both. The corpse functions as a 'memory object' in which the transience of life is expressed through the visual entrenchment of the dead.<sup>129</sup> To Buckland, The Embalmed Nondescript did not stand alone: the memory of the living Pastrana stood in the shadows.

But the living Pastrana was also perceived ambivalently. After commenting on the process and visual significance of Pastrana's mummification, Buckland reverted to her live 1857 exhibition:

I well recollect seeing and speaking to this poor Julia Pastrana when in life. She was about four feet six inches in height; her eyes were deep black, and somewhat prominent, and their lids had long, thick eyelashes: her features were simply hideous on account of the profusion of hair growing on her forehead, and her black beard; but her figure was exceedingly good and graceful, and her tiny foot and well-turned ankle, *bien chausse*, perfection itself.<sup>130</sup>

Despite Buckland's sense of aesthetic repulsion, his reference to Pastrana's graceful and good figure was the last in a trio of compliments. First he wrote, 'the arms, chest, &c.' retained 'their former roundness and well-formed appearance', followed by 'there was no unpleasantness, or disagreeable concomitant about the figure'.<sup>131</sup> After these two statements Buckland eventually admitted that Pastrana's figure was 'exceedingly good and graceful'. It is almost as if he was either reluctant to concede these positive features or was leading the reader to a shocking revelation; namely, that the hideous Embalmed Nondescript was, in reality, not absolutely abhorrent but rather quite beautiful from the neck down.

Buckland drew particular attention to Pastrana's hair, which he perceived as inherently ambiguous:

Now there are certain cases where 'too much of a good thing' becomes a nuisance and a bore. The female sex, from time immemorial, have been entitled to the beauty and

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<sup>127</sup> Michelle E. Bloom, *Waxworks: A Cultural Obsession* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. xi-xix.

<sup>128</sup> WLL, Freaks Ephemera Box 3 EPH 499B, 'Burlington Gallery, 191 Piccadilly'.

<sup>129</sup> Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture* (London: Berg, 2001), pp. 129-141.

<sup>130</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

ornament which long hair affords to the human figure. But it is just possible for the hair to grow so long that it becomes a deformity.<sup>132</sup>

For Buckland, hair straddled a thin line between beauty and deformity, its beauty containing the seed of ugliness. In 1858, Buckland delivered a lecture, 'On Horn, Hair and Bristles', which placed Pastrana on a continuum of ordinariness. Buckland argued that all babies were born with 'a down of silky hair' but that Pastrana's had simply failed to shed.<sup>133</sup> The line between ordinary and extraordinary was thus rendered precarious: Pastrana's exceptionalism rooted in ordinary physicality. This further complicated the aesthetic status of Pastrana. Although for Buckland the profusion of black facial hair was the cause of Pastrana's hideousness, her hair as an article of difference was rendered unstable due to proximity with normality. Indeed, the reviewer of Buckland's lecture even referred to Pastrana as 'the celebrated hairy beauty'.<sup>134</sup>

Representations of hair in Victorian England were liminal and ambiguous. From the 1860s, especially through sensational fiction, the paradigms of golden silky hair, signifying safety and femininity in opposition to black hair, connoting disruptive femininity and danger, were increasingly destabilised.<sup>135</sup> This symbolic instability was detectable in Buckland's response to Pastrana. Indeed, Buckland's next article was on the 'Woolly Woman of Hayti', a supposedly fifty-eight year old black woman named Madame Antoinette, who 'presented a long, thick, plaited mass of wool-like hair'.<sup>136</sup> In comparison to Antoinette's 'crisp' and 'woolly' hair, Pastrana's hair was 'soft' and 'silky', yet also black and growing from her forehead.<sup>137</sup>

As Galia Ofek argued, the power of Pastrana derived from the liminal nature of her hairiness. Ofek denoted this liminality in a pejorative sense: Pastrana's hair haunting 'men's imagination' as it destabilised the contours between male and female, human and animal.<sup>138</sup> But, for Buckland, what lurked in the shadow of Pastrana's deformity was the figure of beauty. His article was littered with references to physical perfection: a figure 'exceedingly good and graceful', feet and ankles 'perfection itself' and 'soft' hair. Buckland went further: 'she had a sweet voice, great taste in music and dancing' and she was 'very charitable'.<sup>139</sup> The ideal woman, in a physical and cultural sense, underpinned The Embalmed Nondescript. This was similar, then, to Tom Thumb's ideal proportional

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<sup>132</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History*, p. 49.

<sup>133</sup> RCSL, The Papers of Francis Buckland, Volume I MS0035/1.157.

<sup>134</sup> *Standard*, 23 February 1858, p. 4.

<sup>135</sup> Ofek, *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture*, pp. 183-210.

<sup>136</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 49.

<sup>138</sup> Ofek, *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture*, p. 57.

<sup>139</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, p. 42.

and symmetrical body. Once again, the exceptional body in the tradition of freakery could project elements of the perfect form.

There is an important absence in Buckland's description of Pastrana. Despite her label as The Baboon Lady, Buckland never referred to her as simian or commented on the connection between humans and animals more generally. The silence is noteworthy, especially because Buckland was greatly fond of simian creatures.<sup>140</sup> It is even more revealing because Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) made a case for the existence of natural selection: its ability to produce, adapt and diversify species and its role in producing extant and extinct species.<sup>141</sup> But Buckland only noted that 'an idea was also attempted to be promulgated that she was not altogether human'.<sup>142</sup> Instead, Buckland consciously avoided raising the spectre of Darwin. As he revealed in 1875:

I am not a disciple of Darwin or the development theory. I believe in the doctrine—I am sorry to say now old fashioned—that the great Creator made all things in the beginning, and that he made them good.<sup>143</sup>

Buckland criticised what he perceived as materialist thinking in science, which challenged the 'distinct duality of man':

Man's position in creation is truly and exactly where he has always found himself, and where his Maker placed him, lord of creation [...] at the head of all creatures, elevated above and separated from them by an immeasurable height and unfathomable abyss.<sup>144</sup>

For Buckland, there was a clear separation between mankind and beast, both of which were made according to God's design and were therefore good. Buckland's engagement with natural history was inextricable from his High Church Anglican Christianity and ultimately his view of Pastrana. Buckland was firmly wedded to the tradition of natural theology or physico-theology which, according to Peter Harrison, 'enjoyed its last hurrah' in the Bridgewater Treatises (1833-1836), to which Buckland's father, William Buckland, contributed.<sup>145</sup> Buckland junior, in 1875, wrote that he was trained:

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<sup>140</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: First Series*, pp. 291- 319; Burgess, *The Curious World of Frank Buckland*, p. 188.

<sup>141</sup> M. J. S. Hodge, *Before and After Darwin: Origins, Species, Cosmogonies, and Ontologies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 461-464.

<sup>142</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, p. 40.

<sup>143</sup> Francis T. Buckland, *Log-Book of a Fisherman and Zoologist* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1875), p. xii.

<sup>144</sup> Francis T. Buckland, 'Man's Place in Nature', *Land and Water*, 13:328 (1872), 305.

<sup>145</sup> Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 171.

in the good school of the Bridgewater Treatises, the seven volumes of which are written by the most eminent men of that day to show the 'power, wisdom, and goodness of God, as manifested in the Creation'. I therefore hereby declare myself to be a staunch upholder of the school, instituted by these good and learned men.<sup>146</sup>

The Bridgewater Treatises built on William Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802), which asserted the 'truth' of God's design in nature.<sup>147</sup> For William Buckland, 'the direct agency of Creative Interference' was evidenced in the origin of species.<sup>148</sup> Francis Buckland's personal scrapbook contains two pages dedicated to his father's work on the Bridgewater Treatises.<sup>149</sup> It was the referential framework from which he viewed Pastrana. It instilled a relationship to natural theology dominated by non-empirical wonder: his dominant 'emotional experience' to natural history.<sup>150</sup>

Wonder is based on the conceptualisation of the world as transcendent of the purely physical: a perception of the 'more-than-physical order of reality' usually associated with divinity.<sup>151</sup> Thus when Buckland discussed rats he wrote that 'if we only look we may find something to admire and reflect upon in the humblest works of the munificent Creator'.<sup>152</sup> In the second series of *Curiosities of Natural History* he added: 'I do not think *too much* can be written about the ever-various and beautiful works of the great Creator' and in the third series Buckland hoped 'to continue my exertions in the investigation of the wonderful works of creation'.<sup>153</sup> Buckland articulated the correlation between the 'wonderful' and the 'works of creation'. He was propagating a pre-modern

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<sup>146</sup> Buckland, *Log-Book of a Fisherman and Zoologist*, p. xi.

<sup>147</sup> Stuart Peterfreund, *Turning Points in Natural Theology from Bacon to Darwin: The Way of the Argument from Design* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. vii-xvi, 112-122; George Wilson Meadley, *The Works of William Paley, D. D., In Five Volumes with a Memoir of His Life* (Boston: Joshua Belcher, 1810), pp. 263-264, 149-169; Jonathan R. Topham, 'Biology in the Service of Natural Theology: Paley, Darwin, and the Bridgewater Treatises', in *Biology and Ideology from Descartes to Dawkins*, ed. by Denis R. Alexander and Ronald L. Numbers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 88-113.

<sup>148</sup> William Buckland, *Geology and Mineralogy Considered With Reference to Natural Theology*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1837-1841), I (1837), p. 436.

<sup>149</sup> RCSI, The Papers of Francis Buckland, Volume I MS0035/1.176-177.

<sup>150</sup> Robert C. Fuller, *Wonder: From Emotion to Spirituality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 1-41 (p. 33); Carol E. Izard and Brian P. Ackerman, 'Motivational, Organizational, and Regulatory Functions of Discrete Emotions', in *Handbook of Emotions*, ed. by Michael Lewis and Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones (London: Guilford, 2000), pp. 253-264; Sarah Tindal Kareem, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 7-14.

<sup>151</sup> Fuller, *Wonder*, p. 13.

<sup>152</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: First Series*, p. 57.

<sup>153</sup> Francis T. Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Second Series* (London: Macmillan, 1903 [1860]), p. vii; Francis T. Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Third Series* (London: Macmillan, 1905 [1865]), p. v.

notion of wonder, rooted in the Augustinian framework of thought, in which all creations, including monsters, portents, prodigies and wonders, were within the realm of God's creation.<sup>154</sup>

Thomson argued that, as a result of modernity, horror replaced wonder as the dominant reaction to corporeal difference.<sup>155</sup> Yet, as Sarah Tindal Kareem effectively demonstrated, wonder was accommodated by the new age of scepticism.<sup>156</sup> Wonder adapted to the new historical context: part of a much longer history of reinvention and accommodation.<sup>157</sup> Buckland, like his American counterpart John Burroughs, wrote in the tradition of 'literary natural history': he presented natural sciences in aesthetic terms, centralised the experience of the naturalist in opposition to the dispassionate observer, painted pictures of the natural world and, crucially, played to the emotional experience of wonder.<sup>158</sup>

In Buckland's article on Pastrana, words expressing wonderment are prevalent. Her facial hair was 'remarkable' and her embalmed 'face was marvellous'.<sup>159</sup> 'Remarkable', meaning singular or exceptional, was enforced by 'marvellous', a word which evoked wonder or astonishment and was chiefly used in a positive sense.<sup>160</sup> The skin of the embalmed Pastrana was described as being 'prepared in some wonderful way', something to marvel, and she was perceived by Buckland as a 'wonderful specimen'.<sup>161</sup> Pastrana was also described in the language of curiosity, a concept which, since the eighteenth century, contained an implicit empiricism for it carried the potential to rationalise wonders.<sup>162</sup> Pastrana was 'a great natural curiosity' and her embalming was described as 'curious'.<sup>163</sup> Revealingly, however, at a lecture delivered to the Literary and Scientific Institution at Windsor in 1861, Buckland disclosed that he would have preferred to call *Curiosities of Natural History* 'Wonders of Nature', 'were it not for the fear of empiricism'.<sup>164</sup> In titling his series

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<sup>154</sup> Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), pp. 39-48.

<sup>155</sup> Thomson, 'Introduction', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 1-22.

<sup>156</sup> Kareem, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, pp. 1-30.

<sup>157</sup> Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, pp. 109-119; Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 19-20.

<sup>158</sup> Michael G. Buckley, "'The Footsteps of Creative Energy": John Burroughs and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Natural History', *Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture*, 21:4 (2007), 261-272.

<sup>159</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, p. 41.

<sup>160</sup> 'remarkable, adj., n., and adv.' *OED Online*

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/162074?redirectedFrom=remarkable>> [accessed 5 February 2016];

'marvellous | marvelous, adj., adv., and n.' *OED Online*

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/114511?redirectedFrom=marvelous>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

<sup>161</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, p. 41.

<sup>162</sup> Barbara M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 2; R. J. W. Evans and Alexander Marr, *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 1-20.

<sup>163</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, pp. 40, 42.

<sup>164</sup> RCSI, The Papers of Francis Buckland, Volume II MS0035/2.7.

'Curiosities' over 'Wonder', Buckland acknowledged the empiricism of the former and thus projected a more 'scientific' publication. Yet wonder underpinned his work and remained the prevalent response, or 'emotional reaction', to the specimens in his publication.<sup>165</sup>

When we considered the ordained position of man, as lord of the creation and of created things, it is indeed surprising how few there are who open their eyes to the cognisance of the wonders which surround them. The earth is full of God's handiwork.<sup>166</sup>

Buckland's response to Pastrana was engendered by his commitment to the cause of Creationism. He was wedded to an older mode of thinking, which he partly expressed in refusing to discuss the animalistic aspects of Pastrana's freakishness. His article, as such, revealed that both beauty and life stood in the shadows of deformity and death. Ultimately, Pastrana was part of the wonders in natural history. She was an example of 'God's handiwork', which could only be good. He was not troubled by her proximity to the animal kingdom because God had ensured a clear division. The mysteries of her birth and the mysteries of her embalming were nothing compared to the mysterious work of the creator.

### **Arthur Munby**

On the other hand, the diarist and civil servant Arthur Munby responded to Pastrana in a manner which represented a new mode of thinking that was increasingly challenging the foundations of Creationism. Munby's reaction was dominated by the perception of an ape in the physiology, ancestry and posture of Pastrana. Munby consciously pondered Darwinian ideas and focused on the animalism inherent in Pastrana's display. He was troubled by her proximity to the animal kingdom and, rather than respond with a sense of wonder, his more secular deliberations leant towards disgust.

This is not to suggest that Munby's disgust mitigated the pleasure he derived from viewing Pastrana. Indeed, disgust was central to Munby's heterosocial and heterosexual pleasure generated from observing unfeminine bodies. His confrontation with Pastrana was part of his ongoing ethnographical observations, indexed in his dairies as 'Working Women, studies of'.<sup>167</sup> His obsession with these women, from collier girls to acrobats, was 'all-pervasive', as Angela John suggested, and

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<sup>165</sup> Richard S. Lazarus and Bernice N. Lazarus, *Passion and Reason: Making Sense of our Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 133.

<sup>166</sup> RCSL, The Papers of Francis Buckland, Volume II MS0035/2.7.

<sup>167</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 4, 1 January-18 March, 1860, n. p.

his obsession was intimately connected to male pleasure.<sup>168</sup> Peter Stallybrass and Allon White noted that the opposition Munby established between himself, as an upper-class male, and his working-class maid-cum-wife, Hannah Cullwick, relied on a physical and social separation which was 'constitutive of desire'.<sup>169</sup> It was desire riddled with contradiction: the lowly status of the maid reinforcing the social superiority of Munby, yet Cullwick's physical strength contrasting with Munby's own puniness; while Cullwick washed Munby's feet and licked his boots, he would sit upon her knees.<sup>170</sup> But, as Griselda Pollock argued, these contradictions were central to Munby's pornographic pleasure: the oppositions between licit-illicit, clean-dirty, pure-indecent, presented the opportunity for transgression and the danger of proximity.<sup>171</sup>

Anne McClintock suggested that, through photographs of women that Munby began to collect and arrange from the 1870s, he turned the contradictions of his time, (public and private, labour and leisure, empire and metropolis), into a 'circus of images in which he was both ring master and privileged spectator.'<sup>172</sup> The contradictions of his age were managed and frozen in his photographs as spectacle, much like Pastrana was frozen as spectacle in her embalmed form. Crucially, it was pleasure that underpinned Munby's photographic endeavour: 'Munby's pleasure is [...] entirely the pleasure of the exhibitor.'<sup>173</sup> Additional to the logic of pornographic pleasure was, as Martha Dana Rust suggested, the discovery, collection and ultimately the colonisation of the female servant body which constituted Munby's 'voyeuristic pleasure'.<sup>174</sup> Thus while Munby's response to Pastrana was characterised by disgust, it was underpinned by sexual pleasure, which Munby experienced towards a plethora of unfeminine bodies.

While this section explores some of Munby's broader relationships to the unfeminine body, it does so in order to elucidate Munby's response to Pastrana. He recorded Pastrana in three separate diary entries: the first between January and March 1862 but without a specific date. He wrote both retrospectively, recalling seeing the live Pastrana in 1857, and presently as he experienced the embalmed exhibition.<sup>175</sup> The second entry was dated 30 May 1862 when Munby returned to the

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<sup>168</sup> Angela V. John, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Women Workers at Victorian Coal Mines* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 104.

<sup>169</sup> Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 156.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.

<sup>171</sup> Griselda Pollock, 'The Dangers of Proximity: The Spaces of Sexuality and Surveillance in Word and Image', *Discourse*, 16.2 (1993), 3-50.

<sup>172</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 129.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Martha Dana Rust, 'In the Humble Service of Her Emancipation: Hannah Cullwick's Maid-of-All-Work Diaries', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 29:1 (1994), 95-108; 99.

<sup>175</sup> Trinity College Library Cambridge, Papers of A. J. Munby (TCLC, MUNB), 12, pp. 204-209.

exhibition and purchased a photograph.<sup>176</sup> He made a final reference to Pastrana on 5 January 1863 when he went to see a 'beautiful series' of wax models at the London Anatomical Exhibition and noted 'one of the most interesting things in the collection is a full length nude model of Julia Pastrana'.<sup>177</sup> Munby also wrote *Pastrana* (1909), a dream-like, thirty-two stanza fictionalised poem in which the narrator encountered 'a big black ape' which, he soon realised, was a lady.<sup>178</sup>

In Munby's diaries he revealed an awareness of the showman's strategy to perpetuate the mysterious origins of Pastrana in an attempt to insinuate bestial copulation:

Of her origin nothing certain was or is known: the story however being that her mother was a Mexican Indian, who was lost for years in a country full of apes & bears.

It is held, I believe, that such a union as is thus hinted at can never produce conception; the spermatozoa of beasts being unable to germinate in the human female, and vice versa? Moreover a detailed inspection of this creature was all in favour of her humanity, in spite of her fearfully bestial appearance & her brutish ways: but still, if ever there was a suspicious case it was this; and the tremendous issues of the problem gave a hideous fascination to the case.<sup>179</sup>

Munby explicitly noted that the 'union as is thus hinted' was the uncertainty of Pastrana's origins coupled with the tale that her mother was found in a 'country full of apes & bears'. This myth troubled her status as a human because it 'hinted' that Pastrana was the product of an unholy 'union'. Munby did not deny the possibility. He wrote 'it is held, I believe' which injected a note of ambivalence, further supported by the question mark. She was a 'suspicious case' who confounded the 'problem' of whether it was possible for a woman to bear the child of an ape.

Munby proceeded by questioning Pastrana's status as an ape and/or human by stating that, ultimately, Pastrana 'proved her humanity (unless Darwin's views be correct) by producing a child'.<sup>180</sup> Munby's bracketed reference to Darwin was instructive. Published in 1859, *On the Origin of Species* confused the problem of the separation between man and ape. Although part of a much longer and wider historical debate, Darwin implied, without directly stating, that a strict dichotomy between ape and human was misleading as both were connected on an evolutionary scale.<sup>181</sup> In

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<sup>176</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 13, pp. 191-192.

<sup>177</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 17, p. 83.

<sup>178</sup> Arthur Joseph Munby, *Relicta: Verses* (London: Bertram Dobell, 1909), pp. 5-13.

<sup>179</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 12, pp. 206-207.

<sup>180</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 12, p. 207.

<sup>181</sup> Peter Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: University of California, 2003), pp. 84-95.



rejecting the immutability of species, Darwin suggested that secondary causes of slight variations led to the extinction and creation of species. He stressed, in direct contradiction to Buckland's worldview: 'It is so easy to hide our ignorance under such expressions as the "plan of creation", "unity of design", etc., and to think that we give an explanation when we only restate a fact.'<sup>182</sup> The power of these new ideas enforced Munby's ambivalence: giving birth to a child did not necessarily prove her humanity because apes and humans were possibly connecting species.

Munby was thus actively responding to contemporaneous thought. The idea of 'missing links', evident in literary and scientific writing of the 1860s, posited a belief in the interconnection between humans and monkeys and the possibility of discovering the species that linked the two on the evolutionary scale.<sup>183</sup> In the 1860s, caricatures of evolution proliferated in the popular press, popular fiction, satire and burlesque.<sup>184</sup> The popular understanding of evolution impacted the freak show: an array of P. T. Barnum's exhibitions utilised the question, 'What is it?', to play on these concerns.<sup>185</sup> Alfred Wallace, Darwin's co-theorist on evolution, even visited Pastrana's exhibition and brought her to Darwin's attention: she became a 'splendid addition' to his 1868 *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*.<sup>186</sup> Darwin described Pastrana as 'a Spanish dancer', 'a remarkably fine woman' but with a 'gorilla-like appearance', expressing the feminine-bestial ambiguity detectable in her exhibition pamphlet.<sup>187</sup> The questionable boundary between man and ape was also expressed through the prevalence of the 'simian paddy', which proliferated in caricatures during the 1860s and served as graphic symbols of violent republicanism warning against degeneracy.<sup>188</sup> Munby's response to Pastrana echoed and embraced these broader cultural concerns.

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<sup>182</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection; or, The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, intro. by Richard Keynes (London: The Folio Society, 2006 [1859]), p. 382.

<sup>183</sup> A. Hodgson, 'Defining the Species: Apes, Savages and Humans in Scientific and Literary Writing of the 1860s', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 4:2 (1999), 228-251.

<sup>184</sup> Edward Caudill, 'The Press and Tails of Darwin: Victorian Satire of Evolution', *Journalism History*, 20:3-4 (1994), 107-115; Janet Browne, 'Darwin in Caricature: A Study in the Popularisation and Dissemination of Evolution', *American Philosophical Society*, 145:4 (2001), 496-509; Goodall, *Performance and Evolution in The Age of Darwin*, pp. 47-79.

<sup>185</sup> James W. Cook, 'Of Men, Missing Links, and Nondescripts: The Strange Career of P.T. Barnum's "What is It?" Exhibition', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 139-157; Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 90-97.

<sup>186</sup> Darwin to Wallace, [12-31] Mar [1867], *Darwin Correspondence Database* <<http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-5440>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

<sup>187</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1868), II, p. 328.

<sup>188</sup> Curtis, *Apes and Angels*, pp. 94-108.

His 'hideous fascination' with Pastrana echoed the emotion of disgust: an aversion emotion which primarily focuses on the appearance of an object.<sup>189</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that beyond Pastrana's ancestry Munby perceived the appearance of an ape: she had 'the face of an ape' and sat in 'an apish posture' during her live performance. He dwelled on her act of smoking: 'I gave her a cigarette, which she eagerly seized, and seating herself in an *apish* posture astride of a tall chain, she lighted it and smoked it through.'<sup>190</sup> This was not the first time Munby commented on female smokers whom he felt 'fated to meet'.<sup>191</sup> Conversely, it was not the last time he expressed disgust at apes: two years later, when he visited the monkeys and baboons at the London Zoological Gardens, he was aesthetically and morally repulsed: 'wrinkled and old even in youth, crouching together in hideous piteous groups; shameless, obscene, wicked!' They were 'base brutes' who 'willingly expose' themselves and are 'unable to realise this presence of a superior species'.<sup>192</sup> Munby thus perceived an absolute hierarchy between primates and man yet the imputation of moral criteria muddied the absolute distinction. As *The Embalmed Nondescript*, Munby perceived 'a stuffed ape in woman's clothes' who was positioned 'like an animal painfully reared on its hindlegs'.<sup>193</sup> When he saw Pastrana again in daylight, she appeared 'more apelike and hideous than ever'.<sup>194</sup> In his poem, she was literally 'a big black ape' which engendered, as the narrator stated, 'disgust'.<sup>195</sup> It was the appearance of Pastrana that was central to Munby's disgust: a 'fearfully bestial appearance' and 'a hideous hairy face'.<sup>196</sup>

Disgust is also an aesthetic emotion which ignites a physical reaction and a desire to achieve distance while, paradoxically, containing what theorists have described as the 'macabre allure', the 'paradoxical magnetism' or the 'demonic pull' in which aversion and desire for distance are married to attraction and a pull to proximity.<sup>197</sup> Again, therefore, it is not surprising that Munby gathered information about Pastrana's life. He recorded Pastrana's marriage to 'the wretch who exhibited her', documented the birth and death of her child and recorded her embalming in Russia and her subsequent exhibition.<sup>198</sup> Munby even returned to her exhibition and purchased a photograph. It

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<sup>189</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 12, p. 207; Kelly, *Yuck! The Nature and Moral Significance of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), pp. 35-41.

<sup>190</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 12, pp. 205-206.

<sup>191</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 17, p. 116.

<sup>192</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 24, pp. 81-82. For the moral dimension of disgust see: Kelly, *Yuck!*, pp. 125-135.

<sup>193</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 12, pp. 210, 209.

<sup>194</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 13, p. 192.

<sup>195</sup> Munby, *Relicta*, pp. 5, 7.

<sup>196</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 12, pp. 207, 210.

<sup>197</sup> Aurel Kolnai, *On Disgust* (Illinois: Carus Publishing Company, 2004), p. 42; Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Savouring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 3; Colin McGinn, *The Meaning of Disgust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 48.

<sup>198</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 12, pp. 207-208.

was on this visit that he minutely examined and touched the skin and breasts of the embalmed Pastrana: 'The hairy skin of her arms and bosom resembles, to the eye and touch, the hide of a Chinese pig.'<sup>199</sup> The bestiality that Munby perceived in her appearance was imputed onto the texture of her skin: not only did she resemble an animal, she felt like an animal.<sup>200</sup> This was not like the 'petting' to which Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren were subject and neither was it correlative with the 1852 exhibition of Madame Fortune, The Bearded Lady from Geneva, whose promotional material stated that 'everybody will be allowed to touch her beard'.<sup>201</sup> Rather, it appeared to be an explicitly sexually charged intimate moment between Munby and the embalmed Pastrana who, despite her repulsive appearance ('more apelike and hideous than ever'), propelled Munby's hand as a function of the paradox of disgust.<sup>202</sup>

For Munby, disgust trumped the potential for fear:

If one thinks of it, a more fearful and flesh-creeping sight than this could hardly be. So I thought I should find it; and yet, whether from having seen her alive or not, I felt scarcely more affected by it than by an ordinary museum specimen: although, to add to its horror, the child, embalmed likewise [...] stood under a glass shade [...]. As a result of embalming, they are wonderful; but the hideous hairy face of this dead Julia Pastrana, staring at you with great glass eyes, & crowned with a ghastly contrast of gay flowers, is enough to fill your fancy with nightmares. It is like seeing a stuffed ape in woman's clothes, & knowing that it is a woman after all.<sup>203</sup>

Disgust commonly engenders an ambivalent response in the lure and distancing it effects.<sup>204</sup> For Munby, despite perceiving an apish appearance and an embalmed staring corpse, he conceded that Pastrana was female. He expected to be scared yet, to his surprise, he experienced the embalmed Pastrana as he did a museum specimen: with a detached engagement. He admitted, nonetheless, a 'horror' which was bolstered by the embalmed child. For Munby horror and disgust were interconnected: in 1862, for example, he was 'accosted' by a prostitute who 'said that for ten years she had been accustomed to appear before men, not only naked, but in the character of a beast'. Munby claimed 'she imitated the most *disgusting* actions of the animal', which made him 'quite sick with dwelling upon such *horrors*'.<sup>205</sup> Although Barry Reay emphasised Munby's horror when staring

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<sup>199</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 13, p. 192.

<sup>200</sup> On skin as an elicitor of disgust see: McGinn, *The Meaning of Disgust*, pp. 13-39.

<sup>201</sup> London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Miscellaneous Folder: Theatre Playbills, Folder L, 'Linwood Gallery'.

<sup>202</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 13, p. 192.

<sup>203</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 12, pp. 209-210.

<sup>204</sup> McGinn, *The Meaning of Disgust*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>205</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 14, pp. 10-11.

at Pastrana, horror was intimately connected to his sense of disgust, which he generally experienced when confronting what he perceived to be human-animal hybrids.<sup>206</sup> Indeed, horror and disgust are closely aligned emotional responses.<sup>207</sup>

Munby's horror was bolstered by the 'ghastly contrast' of 'gay flowers' on Pastrana's head which, as symbols of life and growth, stood in contrast to the dead Pastrana.<sup>208</sup> There was another symbolic potency, the hairy mother and child displayed behind a glass case, which echoed the trade and fashion for funeral and mourning ephemera. Mourning jewellery commonly included hair from a loved one, enshrined beneath glass in a silver or gold frame, an image not dissimilar to the embalmed Pastrana (Figure 12).<sup>209</sup> In a similar fashion to Buckland, Munby was drawn to the intermingling of life and death in Pastrana's embalmed display but, unlike Buckland, his attention was ultimately directed towards the animalistic nature of the 'stuffed woman'. For Munby, moreover, the process of embalment had robbed Pastrana of her humanity: she was little different to a museum specimen.

Despite Munby's disgust, he responded to Pastrana with ambivalence. While his attention was fixated on what he perceived as disgusting bestiality, he was also aware that Pastrana was 'woman after all'. He recognised that 'she was substantially human: she spoke several languages, sang, danced, was lively and intelligent'. Yet this recognition was tainted by his perception of an ape:

A being in woman's clothes, and with hands & feet not only human but very shapely; but of bestial aspect—her dark olive skin covered thinly with black hair, over nearly the whole body: her face the face of an ape, hairy all over—having enormous lips, an abnormal tongue, faunlike tufted ears, and a peaked faunlike beard; a profusion however of coarse black woman's hair on the head.<sup>210</sup>

Munby's struggle to differentiate the ape and human in Pastrana's form is evident in the repeated use of the conjunction 'but'. He noted 'a being in woman's clothes' 'but' with 'shapely' hands and

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<sup>206</sup> Reay, *Watching Hannah*, pp. 46- 50, 168. Munby commonly reacted with disgust when confronted with what he perceived to be animal-human hybrids. For Munby's reaction to an actress in *Puss in Boots* see: TCLC, MUNB, 4, pp. 6-7. For Munby's sketch and poem of Harriet Langford, a noseless woman he 'befriended' see: TCLC, MUNB 97, Notebook 2, 16 October 1865, pp. 6-7. For Munby's interactions with a homeless lady who allegedly wanted to become an ape see: TCLC, MUNB, 97, Notebook 7, 13 February, 1880, p. 76.

<sup>207</sup> Katerina Bantinaki, 'The Paradox of Horror: Fear as a Positive Emotion', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 70:4 (2012), 383–392; Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror; or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 12-42.

<sup>208</sup> Hallam and Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture*, p. 133.

<sup>209</sup> Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death*, pp. 199-204; Marcia R. Pointon, *Brilliant Effects: A Cultural History of Gem Stones and Jewellery* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 293-314.

<sup>210</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 12, pp. 205, 209.

feet 'but' with a 'bestial appearance'. He also perceived 'faunlike' features in her 'tuft ears' and 'faunlike beard', weaving together two descriptive references: one literal and animalistic ('the face of an ape') and the other a mythological simile ('faunlike'). Returning to Zygmunt Bauman's argument that ambivalence represents a 'language-specific disorder', one response to the dilemma was to place freakery within a realm beyond the 'real'.<sup>211</sup>



**Figure 12.**

Julia Pastrana, a Bearded Lady, Embalmed, wood engraving, 1862, ICV No 7473, Wellcome Library, London

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<sup>211</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), p. 1.

The narrator of Munby's poem confronted Pastrana in 'the soft sweet aftermath | Of the lawnlike woodland green', a naturalistic setting reminiscent of the faun's dwelling. The poem continued to evoke a mythological connection when it described Pastrana as having an 'elfish look' and even referred to her as an 'angry elf'.<sup>212</sup> Munby used mythological creatures to highlight the peculiarities of Pastrana's physiology and he used descriptive terms that expressed his ambivalence about her humanity. Similarly, Tom Thumb was perceived as a 'being of some other sphere' and when Munby visited the 1869 exhibition of the 'Giantess; Miss Anna Swan, of Nova Scotia, aged nineteen' at the Egyptian Hall, he wrote that she seemed 'of a larger species, from another world; not human' yet belonging 'to a like grade of being'.<sup>213</sup> The freak, like ambivalence, defied categorisation. Thus a response to the dilemma was to elevate the freak into a mythical fairy tale, or alternative reality.

The supernatural descriptions also underpinned a colonial reading. George Parsons described Root-Digger Indians as having a particular 'impish aspect', extending their animal association to the supernatural.<sup>214</sup> In a similar manner, Munby's *Pastrana* represented 'a monstrous birth of the teeming East'.<sup>215</sup> Munby utilised the imaginative space of the East as an alternative geography evoking wickedness. Indeed, as Pollock argued, Munby relied on racist stereotyping in his sketches of disfigurement through blackness.<sup>216</sup> Yet the East remained an ambiguous space: when Munby visited the London Zoological Gardens in 1864, he recalled how the elephants, camels, giraffes and hippopotami evoked 'one's boyish love of the marvellous East'.<sup>217</sup> The East, like Pastrana, was a confusing place inviting attraction as well as repulsion.

In the end, Munby's ambivalence resulted in an account of Pastrana that was riddled with inconsistency. In his poem, the narrator described Pastrana as 'a big black ape' who sat and swung in a 'walnut tree'. The narrator, as he stared, soon perceived in the eyes of the ape a human beneath the façade of the beast: 'a creature in disguise'. It would appear that the narrator recognised that the beast was a woman pretending to be an ape. But the creature's performance got more extreme: it gnawed at the collar and chain around its 'broad black breast' and the narrator, frightened that the beast might escape and attack, left the 'woodland green' and proceeded to a 'sumptuous inn'.

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<sup>212</sup> Munby, *Relicta*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>213</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton, the American Man in Miniature, known as General Tom Thumb, Twelve Years Old, Twenty-Five Inches High, and Weighing Only Fifteen Pounds. With some Account of Remarkable Dwarfs, Giants, and other Human Phenomena, of Ancient and Modern Times. Also, General Tom Thumb's Songs* (London: T. Brettell, 1845), p. 9; TCLC, MUNB, 37, 15 March 1869, n. p.

<sup>214</sup> Paysons, *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities*, p. 256.

<sup>215</sup> Munby, *Relicta*, pp. 5-13.

<sup>216</sup> Pollock, 'With my own eyes', 342-382; 344-346, 373-375.

<sup>217</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 24, p. 80.

Yet, while eating, he saw the ape 'Who has human features, and lips to kiss.' This time, therefore, the creature reverted to its human form. Yet its eyes betrayed its true status and while the creature stared directly at the narrator, the Head Waiter, pale from fear, covered it with 'a thick grey web, like a shroud for the dead'. The creature fought and screamed and tried to rip the shroud with its teeth but, assisted by another waiter, it was carried away and locked in a 'garden-house'.<sup>218</sup> Again, therefore, the beast was ultimately contained, despite passing as a woman. Munby's poem thus presented an irreconcilable inconsistency: an ape that was also a lady, who could pass as a lady, yet ultimately needed to be contained because it was an ape.

Munby's ambivalence stretched further and deeper than Buckland's. Munby's first ever reference to Pastrana described her feminine attributes - 'shapely' hands and feet - which were then qualified: 'but of bestial aspect'.<sup>219</sup> The direction of ambiguity moved to undermine the feminine qualities. Buckland's use of the conjunction, on the other hand, operated in the alternative direction. Buckland started his article by confirming that Pastrana's 'features were simply hideous' yet he proceeded to qualify, 'but her figure was exceedingly good and graceful'.<sup>220</sup> While Buckland perceived the shadow of beauty behind deformity, Munby stared at the absent feminine ideal.<sup>221</sup> While Munby acknowledged Pastrana's humanity and feminine attributes, he struggled to reconcile this with his perception of a simian being.

This argument is exemplified through Munby's response to Harriet Langdon, a noseless woman in her late twenties who supported herself through needlework. Munby first met Langdon in 1861 and, like Pastrana, Munby perceived simian features (referring to her as 'a grinning noseless baboon') but, unlike Pastrana, Munby clearly denoted a 'tall ladylike young woman' with a 'sweet and elegant' figure.<sup>222</sup> Munby's sketches depicted Langdon with a slender neck, a long and graceful body and her hair neatly contained in a bonnet. Thus part of Munby's 'horror' derived from the 'cruel irony in that contrast' between Langdon's body and her face.<sup>223</sup> Moreover, writing about his first encounter with Langford, Munby was clear that, in comparison to the other women amidst the crowd, Langford offered a double distortion: '(what a contrast their pretty faces to hers, and yet she was the finer woman)'.<sup>224</sup> This bracketed reference reveals a fundamental difference between Pastrana and Langdon: the latter demonstrated the inner ideal woman, Pastrana did not.

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<sup>218</sup> Munby, *Relicta*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>219</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 12, p. 205.

<sup>220</sup> Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, pp. 40, 42.

<sup>221</sup> Reay, *Watching Hannah*, p. 169.

<sup>222</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 35, 18 June 1867, n. p.

<sup>223</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 36, 10 February 1868, n. p.

<sup>224</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 9, 23 June-26 August 1861, n. p.

In an unpublished poem that mused on Langdon's ugliness, Munby noted, alongside references to 'her features are undone', 'huge black teeth', 'dead lips' and 'demon's grin', that beneath Langford's outer appearance lay a 'young soul'. This 'should' result in a face 'fresh & fair' but her facial deformity amounted to a stolen femininity.<sup>225</sup> Munby even indulged in creating and destroying this femininity by purchasing a wax nose and having Langford place and remove the artefact from her face.<sup>226</sup> In contrast, Pastrana's femininity was not malleable: it was totally infected by her bestiality. An ambiguity, stemming from her mythic origins that insinuated human-animal copulation, permeated her whole being. While Langford had undergone a 'loathsome metamorphosis', Pastrana was born with her loathsomeness.<sup>227</sup> Leonore Davidoff argued that Munby's inversion of stereotypes in his relationships with socially peripheral women (black becoming white, degradation signalling love, masculine becoming feminine) suggested the possibility of transformation: the passing back and forth between oppositions, a movement enacted through the will of Munby (as exemplified, for example, in the construction and deconstruction of Langdon's femininity).<sup>228</sup> But, for Pastrana, Munby was unable to effect this transformation: there was no potential metamorphosis because her bestiality was innate. Langford's deformity was acquired; it was a hideous process, whereas Pastrana's deformity was inherited from birth: it was total and fixed.

## Conclusion

Both Buckland and Munby perceived ambiguity and experienced ambivalence when staring at Pastrana. Yet Munby tended towards disgust, Buckland towards wonder; Munby concentrated on the simian presence, Buckland the process of embalming. Fundamentally, the divergence reflected a broader shift: Buckland remained wedded to Creationism as espoused by his father and the authors of the Bridgewater Treatises, while Munby willingly pondered prevalent Darwinian thinking. This, in turn, has complicated the teleological account that links the freak to the emergence of modernity, secularisation and the equation of freak with physiological error.<sup>229</sup> Buckland upsets this narrative: he wrote later than Munby but remained committed to an earlier notion of wonder as an expression of God's will, perceiving Pastrana as a manifestation of God's wondrous creation. This was not, as Heather McHold argued, the mid-nineteenth-century shift in wonder's meaning from 'nature's

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<sup>225</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 97, 16 October 1865, n. p.

<sup>226</sup> Reay, *Watching Hannah*, p. 48.

<sup>227</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 35, 18 June 1867, n. p.

<sup>228</sup> Leonore Davidoff, 'Class and Gender in Victorian England: The Diaries of Arthur J. Munby and Hannah Cullwick', *Feminist Studies*, 5:1 (1979), 87-141; 110.

<sup>229</sup> Thomson, 'Introduction', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 1-22.



diversity and power' to wonder as a property of 'respectable normalcy'.<sup>230</sup> Instead, Buckland reversed the trajectory, which suggests, in turn, that responses to exceptional bodies were filtered through and heavily influenced by individual thought processes and convictions. But, although Buckland and Munby approached Pastrana from different places, they both experienced ambivalence to varying degrees and both, crucially, derived pleasure from the experience of seeing Pastrana.

Buckland and Munby were guided by the showman's hand. They were subject to the 'story' or 'idea' that Pastrana was 'not altogether human'.<sup>231</sup> In part, this reflected the reading of Pastrana's physiology: her feminine form alongside bestial and masculine markers. In the context of debates between monogenesis and polygenesis theories, caricatures of Irish prognathism and the practice of physiology, Pastrana was linked to lower primates. But Buckland and Munby were also subject to Pastrana's biography. This biographical obscurity has led historians, biographers and artists to posit conclusions about Pastrana's life and character. This remains a speculative process. It has resulted in sensationalist accounts, idealisations of Pastrana's character and statements of questionable veracity concerning her life. More fundamentally, however, it overlooks the centrality of biographical mystery to Pastrana's freakery. This became the basis from which an ambivalent and ambiguous freak persona was erected. Biographical obscurity unsettled Pastrana's humanity. The question of her mother's copulation with apes and bears underscored Pastrana's bestiality and billing as the Bear, Baboon and Nondescript. This tapped into broader topical concerns about the relationship between mankind and beast and utilised symbolic associations between Indians, Mexicans, animals, sexuality and hairiness.

Sexuality thus permeated the construction and display of Pastrana. Indeed, her social construction corresponds to the notion of 'permasexuality': a sexualisation that permeated all facets of nineteenth-century life, including the perceptions of historical agents exemplified in Arthur Munby's response.<sup>232</sup> Pastrana's biography was framed to insinuate bestial copulation. Her mother, as both a Root-Digger and/or Mexican, played to notions of hypersexuality. Furthermore, as The Baboon Lady, Pastrana comprised masculine and feminine features and, through the perceptions of Buckland and Munby, male pleasure was a unifying factor in their response to Pastrana. Her exhibition, moreover, reveals further contemporaneous changes, such as the rise of an 'elemental masculinity' that increasingly located manliness in the physical body, the symbolic instability of hair in the 1860s, the

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<sup>230</sup> Heather McHold, 'Even as You and I: Freak Shows and Lay Discourse on Spectacular Deformity', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Tromp, pp. 21-36 (p. 32).

<sup>231</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 12, p. 206; Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*, p. 40.

<sup>232</sup> Reay, *Watching Hannah*, pp. 164-165.

new and commercialised means of dealing with death through embalment and mourning ephemera and the broader debates concerning the theories of monogenesis and polygenesis. The rise of Darwinism, particularly in the 1860s, signals the shift away from an older mode of thinking exemplified in Buckland's natural theology. Indeed, the 1860s witnessed the proliferation of caricatures of evolution in the popular press, popular fiction, satire and burlesque. Yet Buckland's continued adherence to the early nineteenth-century Bridgewater Treatises' Creationism highlights the overlapping nature of discourse where, previously, rupture has been argued.

Although Pastrana's exhibitions comprised a matrix of signifiers that reflected wider motifs and discursive trends, as Buckland and Munby testify, how these were interpreted, and indeed whether they were even noted, was not predictable and should not be treated as a given. The meanings embedded in freak representations did not necessarily translate into perceptions of spectators. For example, although Pastrana's construction as The Bear Lady evoked a clear connection with the simian species, it does not necessary follow that every spectator dwelled on the disruption this caused to divisions between humans and animals; this was clearly not the case for Buckland. The notion of a freak spectacle structured around the 'collective act of looking' was conducted on the basis of individualistic, heterogeneous perspectives.<sup>233</sup> It suggests that spectators should not be treated as a homogenised whole, neither should the freak construct be assumed to articulate the same meanings, however multiple, to audiences from similar backgrounds.

As in the previous chapters, the arguments remain: freak representations as ambiguous and ambivalent constructions, onstage and offstage worlds intertwined, the centrality of biographies, the obscurity of 'realities' and the shift to commercial forms of freakery. But, unlike the previous chapters, extant source material enables an exploration into spectators' responses, which suggests the heterogeneity of perceptions. The next chapter delves further into the individual relationship with freakery by exploring four constructions, produced by four different agents, who created numerous versions of the Elephant Man.

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<sup>233</sup> Thomson, 'Introduction', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 1-22 (p. 4).

## Chapter Five

### Joseph Merrick, The Elephant Man: Exhibiting, Confining and Making Elephant Men

As a specimen of humanity, Merrick was ignoble and repulsive; but the spirit of Merrick, if it can be seen in the form of the living, would assume the figure of an upstanding and heroic man, smooth browed and clean of limb, and with eyes that flashed undaunted courage.<sup>1</sup>

So wrote Frederick Treves surgeon-cum-saviour of Joseph Merrick, The Elephant Man. It is the abiding image of an individual who remained virtuous despite extreme physical deformities. Merrick suffered from Proteus Syndrome, a rare genetic mutation characterised by progressive and abnormal growth, which affected Merrick's feet, legs and left arm.<sup>2</sup> His back and face were covered with lumps of protruding tissue and because of an injury the young Merrick sustained to his hip, he was left permanently lame.<sup>3</sup>

According to Treves, Merrick was cruelly displayed in an exploitative freak show before being rescued and given permanent refuge at the London Hospital. Despite physical and social torment, Merrick's spirit remained undefiled: a sentimental image popularised by the anthropologist Ashley Montagu in 1971 and the postmodernist filmmaker David Lynch in 1980.<sup>4</sup> The idealisation of Merrick, much like that of Pastrana, has continued in contemporary cultural productions: plays, fiction, poems, television documentaries and biographies exemplify his 'strong moral character and quiet courage in the face of overwhelming adversity', according to a recent biography.<sup>5</sup> My intention is not to deny this reading but rather, like the previous chapters in this thesis, to explore how the historical images of Merrick were constructed and to ask what this reveals about the context in which they were formed and how this elucidates the practice of freakery.

This chapter argues that there was never one Elephant Man but rather a series of Elephant Men: freak personas produced by a number of narratives, conditioned by specific contexts. This chapter explores four of these texts, arguing that Merrick's biography was interpreted and moulded to create a series of Elephant Men that reflected the divergent yet interconnected milieus of freakery

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Treves, *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences* (London: W. H. Allen, 1980 [1923]), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Rag De Souza, 'Origins of The Elephant Man: Mosaic Somatic Mutations Cause Proteus Syndrome', *Clinical Genetics*, 81:2 (2012), 123-124; J. A. R. Tibbles and M. M. Cohen Jr., 'The Proteus Syndrome: The Elephant Man Diagnosed', *British Medical Journal*, 293:6548 (1986), 683-685.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Howell and Peter Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> Ashley Montagu, *The Elephant Man: A Study in Human Dignity* (New York: Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, 1971).

<sup>5</sup> Jeanette Sitton and Mae Siu-Wai Stroshane, *Measured by the Soul: The Life of Joseph Carey Merrick also known as, The Elephant Man* ([England(?): Friends of Joseph Carey Merrick, 2012), pp. 8-9.

and medical institutionalisation. In turn, this case study illuminates the changing relationship between medicine and freakery, which was influenced by a burgeoning culture of institutionalisation that increasingly confined exceptional bodies. While this case study was chosen to index these changes, the fabrication of Merrick's freakery presents a profusion of analytical possibilities. Indeed, Merrick has become the archetypal Victorian freak: historians have sought to uncover the 'truth' of Merrick's life; others have analysed the texts that constructed The Elephant Man; others have contextualised Merrick in relation to Jack the Ripper, prostitution, medical discourse and Victorian slums; others have approached Merrick through his relationship to Treves and Victorian showmen; and yet others have looked at neo-Victorian representations of Merrick.<sup>6</sup> While these themes are touched upon in this chapter, I hope to intervene in the historiography by centralising the role of biography in the fabrication of Merrick's freakery, paying particular attention to the tensions and contradictions embedded in the texts which constructed different Elephant Men. These tensions, in turn, diminished the agency of Merrick and, instead, take us into the heart of late nineteenth and early twentieth century social developments.

Furthermore, the fabrication of Elephant Men brings analysis back to the discourses concerning medicine. The reciprocity between medicine and freakery, evidenced in Chang and Eng's London display of 1829-1830, becomes an asymmetrical relationship as medicine's march to professionalism and social legitimacy was increasingly realised by the 1880s. As a result, medicine made a forceful claim to exceptional bodies. Furthermore, this chapter also returns us to developments in notions of masculinity, race, children's literature, entertainment environments and the condition of freakery in Victorian society. It pushes the chronology towards the end of the century, highlighting the rise of an institutional culture that increasingly confined freak bodies.

The first text explored in this chapter is the alleged autobiography written by Merrick and sold at his shows from around 1880 to 1885.<sup>7</sup> In their detailed research on Merrick's life, Michael Howell and Peter Ford claimed 'on balance, the tone and content, the words and phrases chosen, have an authentic feeling' and may support the proposition that Merrick was the author of the alleged autobiography.<sup>8</sup> Under this assumption, an analysis focusing on Merrick's subjectivity could be advanced. When dealing with working-class autobiographies, David Vincent argued that the construction of subjectivity, how the facts of an author's life were woven together, provides the

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<sup>6</sup> All of which are referenced in the course of this chapter.

<sup>7</sup> J. C. Merrick, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Carey Merrick* (Leicester: H. & A. Cockshaw, 1880 [1885(?)]).

<sup>8</sup> Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, p. 103.

potential for a revelatory historical analysis.<sup>9</sup> As a means of elucidating subjectivity, Roy Pascal developed the notion of 'present philosophy': the autobiographical imposition of a pattern in life events, a unifying structure that enables the author to comprehend the facets and experiences of his or her life.<sup>10</sup> It would be possible, then, to explore how Merrick presented an understanding of himself in isolation, in relation to others and in relation to the wider historical and cultural context.

But Merrick's authorship cannot be verified. Even if he was the author, the autobiography was not a stream of unmediated consciousness but, most probably, guided by showmen and the context of Merrick's exhibition. Indeed, on the back of the autobiographical pamphlet were advertisements for the music halls owned by two of the men involved in Merrick's exhibitions. Furthermore, as Francis O'Gorman argued in his reading of Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* (1907), an autobiography depicting the struggle to forge an identity within a middle-class Puritan sect, autobiographies contain the perennial problem of approach: whether to read them as cultural or personal texts, moments for drawing generalisations or instances of the particular.<sup>11</sup> I approach Merrick's autobiography to explore the specificity of his construction, reading the text as a performance rather than a revelation of self.<sup>12</sup> Thus the autobiography will be read as a component of freakery that constructed an image of an Elephant Man.

The same approach is adopted for the second text allegedly written by Francis Carr-Gomm, Chairman of the London Hospital, who published two letters in *The Times*. Merrick had just arrived at the London Hospital after being robbed and abandoned in Europe so Carr-Gomm was confronted with an immediate problem expressed in his first letter of December 1886: 'Can any of the readers suggest to me some fitting place where he can be received?'<sup>13</sup> According to the London Hospital minutes, one benefactor offered '£50 yearly' if Merrick was kept at the institution, '(the only other suggestions the Chairman had received were to send him to a Hospital for the blind, to lighthouses or to Dartmoor.)'<sup>14</sup> A total of £230 was raised in public donations, although Carr-Gomm never

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<sup>9</sup> David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Autobiography* (London: Europa, 1981), pp. 1-13.

<sup>10</sup> Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Francis O'Gorman, 'Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*, Modernism, and a History of Nerves', in *Modernism and Autobiography*, ed. by Maria Dibattista and Emily O. Wittman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 3-17.

<sup>12</sup> Kerry Duff, 'Biographies of Scale', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 25:4 (2005) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/617/794>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>13</sup> *The Times*, 4 December 1886, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Royal London Hospital Archives and Museum (RLHAM), London Hospital Committee Minutes, 28 September 1886 – 18 December 1888, LH/A/5/43, p. 82. It appears that the offer of fifty pounds a year, subject to Merrick's residency at the hospital, persuaded Carr-Gomm to accept Merrick as a permanent resident. See: RLHAM, London Hospital Committee Minutes, 28 September 1886 – 18 December 1888, LH/A/5/43, pp. 87-88.

explicitly asked for money. In his second letter, published in January 1887, he thanked the public for their kindness and revealed that Merrick would reside permanently at the London Hospital.<sup>15</sup>

The third source was written by Frederick Treves in *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences* (1923), published at the end of a successful career, some thirty-three years after Merrick's death. Treves' text is a collection of anecdotes from Treves' life as a surgeon, written in the last year of his life while residing in the South of France. Treves had been a surgeon at the London Hospital before running his own private practice. He had worked as surgeon-extraordinary to Queen Victoria; he was employed on the front line of the South African War; and he was the recipient of a baronetcy in 1902, awarded after performing successful emergency surgery on Edward VII.<sup>16</sup> In *Reminiscences*, Treves was more concerned about reputation than 'truth'. He wrote to his literary editor, Sir Norman Flower, 'I don't want to end up with a failure' and admitted that 'it is a pity that the whole truth cannot always be told'.<sup>17</sup> In the original hand-written manuscript, which contains very few corrections, one is glaring: Treves originally wrote the name 'Joseph Merrick' before crossing-out Joseph and writing 'John'.<sup>18</sup> It can only be conjectured as to why but, for whatever reason, it exemplified a process of distancing that reconstructed Joseph Merrick the man into John Merrick, Treves' literary construct.

The final source was produced by Tom Norman, Merrick's London freak show manager. Norman was a successful showman and auctioneer who responded to Treves' *Reminiscences* in 1923. Published in a showman's journal, *World's Fair*, and republished in posthumous memoirs, Norman challenged Treves' account which demonised Norman as a 'Vampire Showman'.<sup>19</sup> Norman's writings were an act of self-defence, which turned into self-glorification, as he reversed Treves' interpretation of Merrick's life. In diametrical opposition to the surgeon, Norman presented an Elephant Man whose longing for independence was realised in the freak show before his incarceration at the London Hospital.

This chapter builds on the analysis by Nadja Durbach who juxtaposed the narratives produced by Treves and Norman to argue that Norman's account illuminated the social and economic roles of the deformed working poor. Her analysis exposed the relationships between freakery, labour, charity,

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<sup>15</sup> *The Times*, 5 January 1887, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> A. Keith, 'Treves, Sir Frederick, baronet (1853–1923)', rev. D. D. Gibbs, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36557>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

<sup>17</sup> British Library, London (BLL), The Papers of Frederick Treves R.P.3008/1, 19 October 1922; BLL, The Papers of Frederick Treves R.P.3008/1, 30 October 1922.

<sup>18</sup> The Record Office of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR), *The Elephant Man*: Manuscript by Sir Frederick Treves, 1925, DE 2226, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Tom Norman, 'The Elephant Man. Some Facts', *World's Fair*, 24 February 1923, no. 963.

the state and science, demonstrating the ultimate success of Treves' narrative as science appropriated the anomalous body.<sup>20</sup> Durbach distanced her analysis from the interpretive anthropological approach of Peter Graham and Fritz Oehlschlaeger who sought to show the divergent constructions of Merrick but, nonetheless, maintained that Treves was 'probably more faithful to the essence of Merrick'.<sup>21</sup> Instead, Durbach highlighted the similar working-class background of Norman and Merrick, suggesting that Norman 'understood and articulated' the place of freakery in working-class culture and offered an important counter-narrative to Treves' account.<sup>22</sup>

Taking my cue from Durbach, this chapter proceeds by analysing four narratives that illuminate divergent constructions of The Elephant Man, each produced from distinct subjective positions and collectively mirroring developments in the practice of freakery and medical institutionalisation. It was on the basis of biography that Merrick's life and character were presented: his life was a dynamic terrain utilised and infused with divergent constructions of The Elephant Man. These constructions were produced at different times in Merrick's life and death, mixing his life events with prejudicial interpretations to bolster contemporaneous, personal and professional concerns. This chapter thus continues from the reading of Julia Pastrana by analysing micro, individual contexts. Ultimately, as Durbach highlighted, the constructions reveal more about the authors and the cultures from which they were produced than they do about Joseph Merrick.<sup>23</sup>

### **Biographical Sketch**

As the majority of this chapter explores the construction and interpretation of Merrick's biography, this is a brief sketch of Joseph Carey Merrick. He was born into a Leicestershire working-class family on 5 August 1862. His father was a warehouseman and his mother was a servant who died of bronchopneumonia three months before Merrick's eleventh birthday. In December 1874, Merrick's father, Joseph Rockley, remarried a twenty-nine year old widow, Emma Wood Antill, who had children of her own. Purportedly, Joseph Merrick suffered under the cruelty of his stepmother so went to live with his uncle, Charles Barnabus Merrick, who owned a hairdressing shop in Leicester.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Chicago: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 33-57.

<sup>21</sup> Peter W. Graham and Fritz H. Oehlschlaeger, *Articulating The Elephant Man: Joseph Merrick and His Interpreters* (Durham, NC: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, p. 38.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>24</sup> Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, pp. 55-58, 72-73.

According to Howell and Ford, Merrick attended school until the age of twelve before working at Messrs Freeman's Cigar Manufacturer for two years. But his deformed right arm impeded his work so he became a hawker until his license was revoked in 1879, allegedly due to his frightening appearance.<sup>25</sup> Workhouse registers show that in December 1879 Merrick presented himself to the Leicester Union Workhouse because he was 'unable to work'.<sup>26</sup>

Within twelve weeks, however, Merrick was discharged at his 'own request', a possible rejection of the degradation and control inside the institution.<sup>27</sup> Yet two days later, Merrick was forced to return. The reason on the admissions register: 'No Work'.<sup>28</sup> Merrick remained institutionalised for another two years. He underwent surgery at the hospital's infirmary to remove some of his 'trunk', around three or four ounces of flesh.<sup>29</sup>

Howell and Ford claimed Merrick wrote to Sam Torr, a popular entertainer who owned a newly refurbished music hall in Leicester. Torr allegedly agreed to establish a syndicate of interested businessmen to exhibit Merrick as a freak. The group comprised Mr. J Ellis, owner of a music hall in Nottingham, the showmen George Hitchcock and Tom Norman, as well as 'Professor' Sam Roper who had formed Sam Roper's Fair that travelled from Nottingham to King's Lynn. On 3 August 1884, Merrick was finally discharged from the workhouse at his 'own request'.<sup>30</sup>

Merrick was first displayed at Ellis' music hall as 'The Elephant Man, Half-a-Man and Half-an-Elephant', before travelling with Roper's Fair.<sup>31</sup> When Merrick came to London in late 1884, Tom Norman oversaw the exhibition. He was only twenty-four years old and already ran thirteen London show-shops: temporary exhibition venues in vacant commercial premises. Norman also conducted shows at the Royal Agricultural Hall in Islington and travelled with other acts in English fairs.<sup>32</sup> Norman exhibited Merrick in a show-shop on the Whitechapel Road, in London's East End, directly opposite the London Hospital, possibly a deliberate strategy to court the medical fraternity who frequented freak shows for the latest pathological specimens.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, pp. 73-76.

<sup>26</sup> ROLLR, Leicester Workhouse Admissions and Discharges, 1879-1905, G/12/60/1, Entry: 1434, 29 December 1879.

<sup>27</sup> ROLLR, Leicester Workhouse Admissions and Discharges, 1879-1905, G/12/60/1, Entry: 1902, 22 March 1880.

<sup>28</sup> ROLLR, Leicester Workhouse Admissions and Discharges, 1879-1905, G/12/60/1, Entry: 1947, 24 March 1880.

<sup>29</sup> Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, pp. 82-86.

<sup>30</sup> ROLLR, Leicester Workhouse Admissions and Discharges, 1879-1905, G/12/60/1, Entry: 8506, 3 August 1884.

<sup>31</sup> Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, pp. 86-92.

<sup>32</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, p. 37.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.



Unlike the previous agents of this thesis, all of whom displayed in the more expensive West End, Merrick's exhibition occurred in an area renowned for poverty, immorality and sexual transgression. The inhabitants were the harbingers of degeneracy and backwardness.<sup>34</sup> According to Helen Davies, neo-Victorian recollections and reconstructions of Merrick were connected with two elements central to the East End: Jack the Ripper and sex workers, both monstrous and displaying disfigured bodies.<sup>35</sup>

Freakery was not limited to a geographical region or a particular clientele. Alongside the medical men, Norman catered to the working classes and immigrant population who lived in the locality.<sup>36</sup> Vanessa Toulmin argued that show-shops responded to the desire for cheap entertainment amongst the urban and working classes, utilising the availability of commercial premises in busy thoroughfares.<sup>37</sup> In Merrick's case, this was a temporary exhibition space sandwiched between commercial shops and close to a 'freak-museum' at The Bell and Mackerel public house.<sup>38</sup> Unlike the level of advertisement seen in the case of Chang, Eng, Tom Thumb and Pastrana, Norman erected a large canvass depicting a human metamorphosing into an elephant and delivered a spiel to garner attention. While Lambert, Chang, Eng, Tom Thumb and Pastrana charged a shilling entrance fee, Norman set the price at two pence.

It was in November 1884 that the eminent surgeon, Frederick Treves, first encountered Merrick. Treves conducted a medical examination and in December exhibited Merrick as a case of 'Congenital Deformity' to the Pathological Society of London.<sup>39</sup> Soon afterwards, the police closed Merrick's public exhibition on the grounds of decency, forcing Merrick on the road with Sam Roper's Fair. Thereafter, Merrick joined a travelling European show where, in Brussels, he was allegedly robbed of his life savings and abandoned.<sup>40</sup> By late 1886, Merrick had returned to London and was temporarily placed in an isolation ward at the London Hospital.<sup>41</sup> It was the capital's largest charitable institution

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<sup>34</sup> Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 79, 83.

<sup>35</sup> Helen Davies, *Neo-Victorian Freakery: The Cultural Afterlife of the Victorian Freak Show* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 159-196.

<sup>36</sup> Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>37</sup> Vanessa Toulmin, "'Curios Things in Curios Places": Temporary Exhibition Venues in the Victorian and Edwardian Entertainment Environment', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 4:2 (2006), 113-138.

<sup>38</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, p. 39.

<sup>39</sup> Anon., 'Pathological Society of London, Tuesday December 2 1884,' *British Medical Journal*, 6 December 1884, p. 1140; Anon., 'Pathological Society of London', *Lancet*, 6 December 1884, II, pp. 1000-1002.

<sup>40</sup> Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, pp. 105-111; Jonathan Evans, *Treves and the Elephant Man* (London: Royal London Hospital, 2003), p. 52.

<sup>41</sup> RLHAM, London Hospital Committee Minutes, 28 September 1886 – 18 December 1888, LH/A/5/43, pp. 80-81, 87-88; Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, pp. 111-119.

run for curable patients.<sup>42</sup> But after Carr-Gomm's public appeal, Merrick the incurable was granted permanent residency at the hospital.

Merrick was provided with his own quarters and was visited by an array of distinguished guests, including the Prince and Princess of Wales. He allegedly spent his days in quiet leisure, attending the hospital's chapel, visiting the theatre and holidaying in a secluded estate. He was also inspected, examined and photographed by the hospital's staff.<sup>43</sup>

On 11 April 1890, Merrick died and the inquest concluded a cause of natural death:

Witnesses believe that the exact cause of death was asphyxia, the back of his head being greatly deformed, and while the patient was taking a natural sleep the weight of the head overcame him, and so suffocated him.<sup>44</sup>

A funeral was held in the hospital chapel after which the body of Merrick was 'handed over to Mr Treves the licensed anatomist of the college'.<sup>45</sup> Treves dissected Merrick and arranged his skeleton for the private college museum.<sup>46</sup>

## The Autobiography

Merrick's autobiography worked to establish an image of the Elephant Man as an independent performer earning a healthy living within the freak show. The front page of the autobiography proclaimed 'Half a Man & Half an Elephant', 'The greatest freak of nature!', and opened by centralising Merrick's bodily exceptionality on the basis of maternal impressions:

The deformity which I am now exhibiting was caused by my mother being frightened by an Elephant; my mother was going along the street when a procession of Animals were passing by, there was a terrible crush of people to see them, and unfortunately she was pushed under the Elephant's feet, which frightened her very much; this occurring during a time of pregnancy was the cause of my deformity.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> A. E. Clark-Kennedy, *The London: A Study in the Voluntary Hospital System, Volume II: The Second Hundred Years, 1840-1948* (London: Pitman Medical Publishers, 1963), pp. 40-93; *The London Hospital Illustrated: 250 Years*, ed. by Claire Dauntton (London: B. T. Batsford, 1990), pp. 15-21.

<sup>43</sup> Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, pp. 144-167.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>45</sup> RLHAM, London Hospital Committee Minutes, 1 January 1889 – 2 December 1891, LH/A/5/44, p. 236.

<sup>46</sup> Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, pp. 192-202.

<sup>47</sup> Merrick, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Carey Merrick*, n. p.

This complemented Norman's alleged spiel, which explained 'how this unfortunate man's mother had been frightened by an elephant when in a Delicate State of Health'.<sup>48</sup> The theory of maternal impressions proposed that a child's physiology was determined by the experiences of the mother while pregnant. The theory had a long antecedent dating back to Hippocrates, remaining contested in the eighteenth century but still prevalent in some quarters by the late nineteenth century.<sup>49</sup> Maternal impressions were often evoked in the freak show.<sup>50</sup> It enhanced the performance by revealing shocking biographical stories that bolstered the exceptionality of the freak.

Maternal impressions also provoked a genuine fear: Norman warned women in a 'Delicate State of Health' not to attend the exhibition as this could repeat a case of negative maternal impressions, while simply desiring to see monstrosities could also cause a monstrous birth.<sup>51</sup> Back in 1834, for example, the display of an infant girl with a large head and skeleton body warned 'No Pregnant Women Allowed'.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, Merrick's physiology was connected to a biographical tale articulated through the theory of maternal impressions: his right hand 'almost the size and shape of an Elephant's fore-leg' and his body 'like that of an Elephant'.<sup>53</sup> Like Pastrana, the life history of Merrick's mother infused with his physiology. It presented a physiology that destabilised the dualism between man and beast.

The autobiography also deployed prevalent literary tropes. It stated: 'I went to school like other children until I was about 11 or 12 years of age', then 'the greatest misfortune of my life occurred, namely—the death of my mother, peace to her'. Thereafter,

my father broke up his home and went to lodgings; unfortunately for me he married his landlady; henceforth I never had a moments comfort [...] she was the means of making my life a perfect misery<sup>54</sup>

The death of a loving mother was particularly common in nineteenth-century novels.<sup>55</sup> It naturally produced the orphan who, according to Laura Peters, was a necessary figure affirming familial

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<sup>48</sup> Norman and Norman, *The Penny Showman*, p. 104.

<sup>49</sup> Rosi Braidotti, 'Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: On Teratology and Embodied differences', in *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace*, ed. by Nina Lykke and Rosi Braidotti (London: Zed Books, 1996), pp. 132-152; Dennis Todd, *Imagining Monsters: Miscreations of the Self in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 45-52.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 110.

<sup>51</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>52</sup> London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Miscellaneous: Theatre Playbills, Folder C, 'Cross Street'.

<sup>53</sup> Merrick, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Carey Merrick*, n. p.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth Thiel, *The Fantasy of the Family: Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature and the Myth of the Domestic Ideal* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 26-28.

ideals.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, the evil stepmother, who came into being from parental loss, death and bereavement, functioned as an agent of Otherhood used to subvert and thus evoke the middle-class ideology of domesticity.<sup>57</sup> Conversely, the benevolent uncle was often presented as the saviour of parental loss and a figure of righteous patriarchy.<sup>58</sup> All these tropes were in Merrick's autobiography: even his uncle was 'the best friend I had in those days'.<sup>59</sup> This avuncular image, while not explored in the autobiography, tapped into the broader representational correlation between the uncle, who remedied the failings of paternalism, with capitalism: the former often presented as an epitome of avuncular capitalism and a vehicle for self-help in the capitalist system.<sup>60</sup> Merrick's autobiography thus used characters and a particular narrative to assert wider normative values concerned with the ideal family.

The familial themes of a kind mother, caring uncle and an evil stepmother intersected with children's fairy tales. As Jacqueline Schectman argued, giants and ogres in literature often functioned as bad fathers, while the 'Wicked Stepmother' became another cruel agent. These tropes bolstered and preserved the image of the natural and kind mother: the Grimm Brothers, for example, substituted 'stepmother' for 'mother' in their stories of child cruelty to maintain the purity of the mother image.<sup>61</sup> As with Tom Thumb, then, Merrick's construction infused with broader literary and fairy-tale motifs that centralised a seemingly marginal text, about a marginal figure, within contemporaneous cultural productions.

In this sense, Merrick's autobiography was not unique. Nineteenth-century autobiographies were replete with mental and physical frailty, as evidenced in the autobiographies of John Stuart Mill, William Hale White and John Ruskin, albeit couched less explicitly than Gosse's *Father and Son*.<sup>62</sup> As Vivienne Richmond explored in Louise Jermy's autobiography, *The Memoirs of a Working Woman* (1934), Jermy's various jobs were crucial facets of her life. She was born in 1877, the daughter of a labourer in Hampshire and, like Merrick, suffered under the cruelty of her stepmother. Jermy's work left her partly 'crippled' and her autobiography functioned to articulate her social dislocation rather

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<sup>56</sup> Laura L. Peters, *Orphan Texts: Victorian Orphans, Culture and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 141-143.

<sup>57</sup> Thiel, *The Fantasy of the Family*, pp. 73-100; Lisa Wilson, *A History of Stepfamilies in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), pp. 45-57.

<sup>58</sup> Thiel, *The Fantasy of the Family*, pp. 101-128.

<sup>59</sup> Merrick, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Carey Merrick*, n. p.

<sup>60</sup> Eileen Cleere, *Avuncularism: Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Nineteenth-Century English Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 15-20, 118-119.

<sup>61</sup> Jacqueline Schectman, *The Stepmother in Fairy Tales: Bereavement and the Feminine Shadow* (Boston: Sigo Press, 1993), p. xiv.

<sup>62</sup> O'Gorman, 'Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*', in *Modernism and Autobiography*, ed. by Dibattista and Wittman, pp. 3-17 (p. 5).

than a sense of belonging. Moreover, her birth mother, who died a year after Jermy was born, was idealised through an inherited cloak.<sup>63</sup> The themes of suffering, domestic hardship and idealisation, despite echoing fairy-tale motifs, were not simply fantasy. Inside Merrick's autobiography, there was a space for audience identification with his life history.

The cruelty of Merrick's stepmother, offended by his deformities and ugliness, propelled the narrative. In comparison to his stepmother's children, 'I not being so handsome as they, together with my deformity' were the reasons for her torment. This was compounded by Merrick's failure to contribute to the family budget, a result of his inability to work due to his deformities: 'being lame and deformed no one would employ me'. This exacerbated the cruelty of his stepmother who only reluctantly gave him food: 'what few meals I did have, I was taunted with the remark—"That's more than you have earned"'.<sup>64</sup> It was maternal loss, an evil stepmother and physiological exceptionality which both denied Merrick the means to earn a living and contributed to his suffering. But, in the context of working-class masculinity, suffering presented the opportunity to prove moral worth by drawing on character to overcome hardship and demonstrate self-reliance.<sup>65</sup> As Stefan Collini effectively showed, character's core qualities were self-restraint, perseverance, effort and courage in adversity. Conversely, therefore, character functioned at an evaluative level, warning against impulsiveness and fecklessness. Character was seen to develop in the world of work.<sup>66</sup>

In Merrick's autobiography, suffering became the precondition for a triumphant teleology into employment. Over half of Merrick's autobiography was dedicated to employment history:

I obtained employment at Messrs. Freeman's, Cigar Manufactures, and worked there about two years, but my right hand got too heavy for making cigars, so I had to leave them.

Thereafter, 'unable to get employment my father got me a pedlar's licence to hawk the town'. Again, however, 'being deformed, people would not come to the door to buy my wares', so Merrick was forced into the workhouse yet decided:

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<sup>63</sup> Vivienne Richmond, *Clothing the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 168-176.

<sup>64</sup> Merrick, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Carey Merrick*, n. p.

<sup>65</sup> John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), pp. 87-88.

<sup>66</sup> Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 91-118.

I'll get my living by being exhibited about the country. Knowing Mr Sam Torr, Gladstone Vaults, Wharf Street, Leicester, went in for Novelties, I wrote to him, he came to see me, and soon arranged matters<sup>67</sup>

The full details of Torr's business demonstrate the showman's influence by injecting advertisement into the account. Yet according to the autobiography, Merrick had the idea of being exhibited ('so thought I') and he contacted the freak show agent. Purportedly, it was Merrick who independently sought and promoted his place in the field of employment. Inside the freak show, Merrick was an 'able-bodied' performer, an economic agent distinguishable from those 'wholly unable to work' due to 'old Age or Infirmary of the Body'.<sup>68</sup> Merrick's employment history thus worked to articulate both his economic productivity and also, by extension, his bodily healthiness. Masculinity was increasingly located at the level of the body, supported by self-will and employment, so Merrick suggested to the readers that, despite his deformities, he was healthy, active and productive in the economic sphere.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the freak show was presented as a decent milieu:

In making my first appearance before the public, who have treated me well—in fact I may say I am as comfortable now as I was uncomfortable before.<sup>70</sup>

The autobiography presented a journey into comfortable employment and security. The pattern applied to these life events was unified around Merrick's struggle and ultimately successful transition into work, his body a vehicle for the realisation of a normative value. Peter Gay effectively captured the centrality of work in Victorian England: 'one of the commandments of the bourgeois Decalogue'. Gay's language of piety reflected work's 'ethical imperative', which embraced the values of the Victorian bourgeois: hard work, honest dealing, self-discipline, familial commitment and personal duty.<sup>71</sup> Work was the principle which united the middle and working classes. Moreover, the dignity of labour was the foundation of working-class masculinity and independence.<sup>72</sup> Work was the arena in which male identity was established, the very bedrock of the working-class moral

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<sup>67</sup> Merrick, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Carey Merrick*, n. p.

<sup>68</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 14-21.

<sup>69</sup> Christopher Oldstone-Moore, 'The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain', *Victorian Studies*, 48:1 (2005), 7-34 (p. 8).

<sup>70</sup> Merrick, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Carey Merrick*, n. p.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Gay, *Schnitzler's Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture, 1815-1914* (London: Penguin Press, 2001), pp. 191-220.

<sup>72</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, pp. 83-102.

economy.<sup>73</sup> It was also a necessary tenet of respectability: a slippery notion nonetheless premised, in part, on the maintenance of a steady income and avoidance of the workhouse.<sup>74</sup>

The twinning of adversity and employment thus turned Merrick's autobiography into a triumphant tale of self-help. These notions were popularised by Samuel Smiles whose *Self-Help* (1859) paid homage to the hardworking individual: 'Labour is the best test of the energies of men, and furnishes an admirable training for practical wisdom.'<sup>75</sup> In *Character* (1871), Smiles suggested that work was the foundation of Western civilisation: 'the law of our being—the living principle that carries men and nations forward'.<sup>76</sup> In emphasising his struggle for work, Merrick's life was structured to conform and reflect these normative values shared amongst the classes. Furthermore, like Lambert, Tom Thumb and Pastrana, Merrick was presented as an exemplar: an independent, self-reliant individual, who effected the necessary autobiographical transformation from suffering into self-improvement, realised by freak show employment.

Merrick's autobiography was situated within an emerging disability discourse that argued for inclusion in the workforce. Only three years after Merrick's autobiography, across the Atlantic the freak show performer R. A. Steere made a similar case in his own autobiography. He presented a picture of independent manhood in the field of work and stated, on behalf of little people, 'we are quite capable of taking care of ourselves'.<sup>77</sup> By the latter part of the nineteenth century, members and advocates of the blind community were demanding schemes to enable the blind to work.<sup>78</sup> There were calls from the charitable to enlarge educational and industrial training for 'epileptic and crippled children and adults'.<sup>79</sup> Ben Purse, who led the National League of the Blind and Disabled when it was first established in 1899, specifically drew on Samuel Smiles' self-help philosophy to promote employment within the blind community.<sup>80</sup> The notion of self-help, premised on the principles of self-reliance and independence, was also embedded in legislative and charitable

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<sup>73</sup> Keith McClelland, 'Masculinity and the 'Representative Artisan' in Britain, 1850-1880', in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, ed. by Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 74-91.

<sup>74</sup> Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, pp. 121-134.

<sup>75</sup> Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help; with Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (London: John Murray, 1859), p. 24.

<sup>76</sup> Samuel Smiles, *Character* (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 88.

<sup>77</sup> Duff, 'Biographies of Scale' <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/617/794>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>78</sup> Mansfield Turner and William Harris, *A Guide to the Institutions & Charities for the Blind in the United Kingdom; Together with Lists of Books and Appliances for their Use* (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1871), pp. vii-xi.

<sup>79</sup> Family Welfare Association, *The Epileptic and Crippled Child and Adult: A Report on the Present Condition of These Classes of Afflicted Persons, With Suggestions for their Better Education and Employment* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1893), pp. 99-100.

<sup>80</sup> Ben Purse, *The Blind in Industry: Fifty Years of Work and Wages* (London: Edson, 1925), pp. 95-101.

structures. Sanctions and rewards were designed to encourage diligence and self-help.<sup>81</sup> The proliferating workhouses were structured around the utilitarian commitment to self-help and self-reliance, specifically designed to create conditions so deplorable as to encourage independence.<sup>82</sup> Merrick's autobiography was not political, neither did it explicitly or even consciously tap into an emerging disability discourse, but it was part of a broader trend.

The autobiography concluded by quoting Isaac Watts, an Independent minister who influenced the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century and shaped the evangelicalism of the nineteenth.<sup>83</sup>

Watt's words were drawn from the poem *False Greatness* (1706):

Was I so tall, could reach the pole,  
Or grasp the ocean with a span;  
I would be measured by the soul,  
The mind's the standard of the man.<sup>84</sup>

The autobiography concluded with a call for an ethical judgement to be based on character. Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* worked in a similar manner to Merrick's autobiography as suffering, poor health and the death of a mother defined the experience of the protagonist. Philip Gosse, the father in the autobiography, *Father and Son*, held 'steadily to the law of the fixity of species', in a similar manner to Francis Buckland's commitment to Creationism. But, unlike Buckland, Philip Gosse formulated a theory to 'justify geology to godly readers of "Genesis"': a theory which was widely mocked and rejected.<sup>85</sup> But, as David Parker argued, the climax of *Father and Son* occurred at the conclusion of the epilogue when the son, Edmund Gosse, recognised his choice: 'cease to think for himself; or his individualism must be instantly confirmed'.<sup>86</sup> In other words, live by his father's worldview or affirm his individuality.

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<sup>81</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 271-280; Robert Humphreys, *Poor Relief and Charity, 1869-1945: The London Charity Organization Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 1-22.

<sup>82</sup> Simon Fowler, *Workhouse: The People, The Places, The Life Behind Doors* (London: The National Archives, 2007), pp. 89, 105-109.

<sup>83</sup> Isabel Rivers, 'Watts, Isaac (1674–1748)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28888>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

<sup>84</sup> Merrick, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Carey Merrick*, n. p.

<sup>85</sup> Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son: A Study of Two Temperaments*, ed. by Peter Abbs (London: Penguin Books, 1983 [1907]), pp. 103-104.

<sup>86</sup> David Parker, *The Self in Moral Space: Life Narrative and the Good* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 72.



It was a moral experience requiring moral action but, more fundamentally, it raised the ethical proposition that identity was an act of moral choice.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Merrick's autobiography concluded by asking for an ethical judgement based on character rather than physiology. While Edmund Gosse made the choice himself, Merrick conceded the choice to his readers. His autobiography thus presented the reader with the power to formulate and judge Merrick's identity. It was a subtle, paradoxical, concession: for while the autobiography worked to assert Merrick's character through his successful realisation of employment, it concluded by de-activating his agency and passing the responsibility to formulate Merrick's agency onto the reader.

Nonetheless, like *Father and Son*, Merrick's autobiography sought to affirm the individuality of the protagonist beyond physiology. Merrick's autobiography started by emphasising his physiology and concluded by centralising metaphysical attributes. Despite opening with the theory of maternal impressions, which asserted Merrick's bodily exceptionality, the autobiography concluded with an implicit normativity claim for the right of inclusion and acceptance based on character. As Kerry Duff argued, the hallmark of all freak autobiographies is a freak subjectivity that demands normativity as well as exceptionality.<sup>88</sup> Merrick's autobiography both requested normative treatment and illuminated normative values through the presentation of the exceptional body. Indeed, Merrick's biographical history had worked to assert his claim to normality. In the process, the autobiography created an Elephant Man who was deformed yet independent, whose story was a trajectory of suffering into successful employment.

### **Francis Carr-Gomm**

Six years later, a new Elephant Man was presented to the public through Carr-Gomm's letters in *The Times*. This Elephant Man was a deserving object of charity, a dependent in need of assistance and a creature whose life was mired in tragedy. The London Hospital, as a charitable foundation, frequently made public appeals, especially for financial assistance.<sup>89</sup> The hospital stood at the intersection of medical authority, voluntarism and philanthropy: three facets underpinning the metropolitan benevolent economy.<sup>90</sup> Governors of voluntary hospitals invested time and effort into soliciting contributions through donations, subscriptions and legacies. In churches, pamphlets, press

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<sup>87</sup> Parker, *The Self in Moral Space*, pp. 71-80.

<sup>88</sup> Duff, 'Biographies of Scale' <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/617/794>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>89</sup> Clark-Kennedy, *The London*, pp. 10, 36-45.

<sup>90</sup> Keir Waddington, *Charity and the London Hospitals, 1850-1898* (London: Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 37-57.

releases, musical programmes and charity bazaars governors appealed to public benevolence.<sup>91</sup> Carr-Gomm's letters were thus part of a distinct institutional setting that required and utilised the charitable impulse. It was in this mould that Merrick was cast.

Carr-Gomm's 1886 letter presented a biography that centralised suffering. He maintained that Merrick 'had never before known in his life what quiet and rest were'; that Treves originally found Merrick in an exhibition room 'endeavouring to warm himself over a brick which was heated by a lamp', but the 'police stopped the exhibition of his deformities as against public decency'. Thereafter, Merrick was forced to exhibit in Belgium 'but the police there too kept him moving on, so that his life was a miserable and hunted one'. As a result, the unscrupulous showman robbed Merrick of his savings 'and left him alone and absolutely destitute in a foreign country'. Merrick was forced to pawn his few possessions and head back to England 'for he felt that the only friend he had in the world was Mr. Treves, of the London Hospital'. When he finally arrived, after a horrendous journey, 'he had only the clothes in which he stood' and 'the question now arises what is to be done with him in the future'.<sup>92</sup>

According to Carr-Gomm, the options were limited: Merrick had 'the greatest horror of the workhouse', he was rejected by institutions designed for incurable patients (for reasons not stated), 'the police rightly prevent his being personally exhibited' and his deformities were 'so terrible indeed that women and nervous persons fly in terror from the sight of him'.<sup>93</sup> In posing the question of where he should reside, Carr-Gomm was insinuating an assumption: freak show employment was not a viable option. Some form of institutional care was required.

Merrick's autobiography used suffering to demonstrate Merrick's character as he independently found employment despite the hardships he faced. Carr-Gomm, on the other hand, used suffering to present Merrick's situation as calamitous, thus helping to establish Merrick as a worthy recipient of charity and care:

Through all the miserable vicissitudes of his life he had carried about a painting of his mother to show that she was a decent and presentable person, and as a memorial of the only one who was kind to him in life until he came under the kind care of the nursing staff of the London Hospital and the surgeon who has befriended him.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Waddington, *Charity and the London Hospitals*, p. 13.

<sup>92</sup> *The Times*, 4 December 1886, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

Carr-Gomm transformed the narrative into a glorification of medical maternalism. He established a continuum between motherly love and the 'nursing staff', presenting the London Hospital as a benevolent maternal replacement. Nursing was an active part of the hospital and increasingly professionalised: in 1870 a new nurses' training school was established in the compound.<sup>95</sup> Carr-Gomm worked to glorify the institution. He also tapped into the wider symbolic potency of the mother, often used as a symbol of charities depicted on badges with a child in her arms.<sup>96</sup> Philanthropy and femininity were intimately connected: the former an extension of domestic ideology as wives and mothers exemplified the emotional, nurturing, kind and sympathetic attributes central to charitable endeavours.<sup>97</sup> It was a correlation utilised in Pastrana's promotional materials and in Carr-Gomm's public appeal.

By making Merrick's mother a 'decent and presentable' woman, Carr-Gomm placed Merrick within a respectable familial lineage. The word 'vicissitude' implied that Merrick's descent from maternal kindness into hopeless abandon was not the result of personal failing but tragic life events, evoking the reality of domestic fragility. According to middle-class notions of family, the home was perceived as the site of morality and 'snug domesticity': a haven from the amoral world of the market.<sup>98</sup> The death of Merrick's mother thus propelled him into the cruel world of freak show capitalism. Carr-Gomm wrote: 'it is a case of singular affliction brought about through no fault of himself'. By stressing Merrick's innocence, Carr-Gomm established Merrick as a respectable person. He continued to assert that Merrick 'is superior in intelligence, can read and write, is quiet, gentle, not to say even refined in his mind'.<sup>99</sup> Merrick was positioned as a deserving recipient of charity.

Good character, including the willingness to self-help, was a necessary prerequisite for receiving charity, which was deemed permissible only for the 'deserving'. The 'undeserving' were dealt with by the stigmatised Poor Law.<sup>100</sup> In his second letter, Carr-Gomm reassured the readers of Merrick's worthiness as a charitable recipient: 'Merrick has desired me to convey to them his most grateful thanks', stressing 'that he is deeply sensible of their kindness'.<sup>101</sup> Alan Kidd effectively argued that

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<sup>95</sup> Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), pp. 375-381.

<sup>96</sup> Frank K. Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 98.

<sup>97</sup> Dorice Williams Elliot, *The Angel out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002), pp. 1-31.

<sup>98</sup> Peters, *Orphan Texts*, p. 3.

<sup>99</sup> *The Times*, 4 December 1886, p. 6.

<sup>100</sup> Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service*, p. 67; Anne Borsay and Peter Shapely, 'Introduction', in *Medicine, Charity and Mutual Aid: The Consumption of Health and Welfare in Britain, c. 1550-1950*, ed. by Anne Borsay and Peter Shapely (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 1-10.

<sup>101</sup> *The Times*, 5 January 1887, p. 10.

deference functioned as a 'return' for a charitable gift, creating the 'deserving' recipient.<sup>102</sup> Carr-Gomm thus injected reciprocity into the charitable relationship between Merrick and the public, locking the former within the nexus of charitable giving and receiving. Carr-Gomm concluded his first letter by explicitly theologising:

The Master of the Temple on Advent Sunday preached an eloquent sermon on the subject of our Master's answer to the question, 'Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' showing how one of the Creator's objects in permitting men to be born to a life of hopeless and miserable disability was that the works of God should be manifested in evoking the sympathy and kindly aid of those on whom such a heavy cross is not laid.

According to Frank Prochaska, charity was synonymous with Christ. Although all religious denominations stressed the importance of public service, this was particularly true of Evangelicals who dominated the world of philanthropy. They maintained that although mankind had fallen, the alleviation of human suffering through voluntary effort was imperative.<sup>103</sup> For women, evangelicalism encouraged their engagement as a necessary and natural component of service to God.<sup>104</sup> Carr-Gomm thus marketed Merrick to a prevalent 'voluntary impulse' and repackaged him as a creature of God whose very purpose was to evoke the compassion of the more fortunate. Carr-Gomm drew on the precept of evangelicalism designed for the rich: to help the deserving but less fortunate, a call that presented the possibility of turning personal privilege into virtue and thus, as Boyd Hilton highlighted, becoming an act 'as much about the spiritual needs of the giver as about the material needs of the poor'.<sup>105</sup>

Carr-Gomm's alignment to an evangelical charitable discourse revealed a tension. Charitable giving in the late nineteenth century was designed to encourage self-help but Merrick was presented as being in a dire predicament beyond self-reliance. He not only needed support, he needed institutional care. This troubled the hospital's medical mission to cure and return patients to productive labour, an aim which, according to Anne Borsay, 'stigmatised patients who were unable to return to economically rational social roles'.<sup>106</sup> Carr-Gomm worked to alleviate the tension. He reassured the public that Merrick 'occupies his time in the hospital by making with his one available

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<sup>102</sup> Alan Kidd, 'Philanthropy and the "Social History Paradigm"', *Social History*, 21:2 (1996), 180-192 (p. 186).

<sup>103</sup> Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>104</sup> Frank K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 8-17, 118-123.

<sup>105</sup> Frank K. Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), pp. 21-40; Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 102.

<sup>106</sup> Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 43.

hand little cardboard models, which he sends to the matron, doctor, and those who have been kind to him'.<sup>107</sup> This inferred that Merrick was both productive and deferential: a deserving recipient of charity. In Carr-Gomm's second letter, he thanked the public for their generosity and proclaimed that, as a result, Merrick would permanently reside at the London Hospital. But he reassured that Merrick was 'of course a free agent' and that his time was spent industriously: he was 'being taught basket-making, to give him some definite occupation'.<sup>108</sup> Merrick was both independent and engaged in self-improving work. Just as Daniel Lambert's biographies had conformed to the expectations to mix entertainment with edification, Carr-Gomm worked to satisfy the expectation and premise that charitable assistance should not encourage indolence. Carr-Gomm utilised the sentiments and convictions of his readers to encourage philanthropy and, in the process, he placed Merrick within the nexus of charity.

As a result, Carr-Gomm established a new Elephant Man distinct from the autobiography: the independent, self-reliant, employed Merrick was now the respectable object of charity. While the autobiography bolstered a sense of agency, Carr-Gomm's letters marginalised Merrick and proclaimed the virtues of the London Hospital. The teleology was also reversed: no longer a triumph of employment over adversity, now it was medical care over degradation. This was, in part, a reflection of Merrick's lived experience: his autobiography was published at a time when Merrick was employed within the freak show, while Carr-Gomm's letters were composed when Merrick had just been robbed and abandoned in Europe. But there was also an implicit assumption in Carr-Gomm's letters: Merrick had no future as a freak performer, he required institutional care.

## Frederick Treves

Frederick Treves pushed Carr-Gomm's Elephant Man to its logical conclusion. Carr-Gomm's public appeal was premised on an asymmetrical relationship between the recipient and the benefactor: the mother symbol of philanthropy producing the childlike needy recipient.<sup>109</sup> Treves took this a stage further, turning Merrick into an object of Otherness in his 1923 *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences*. In a similar manner to Carr-Gomm, Treves remodelled Merrick's life history to present a biography rooted in tragedy and cruelty: his mother 'basely deserted him when he was very small', she was 'worthless and inhuman' and Merrick only had 'some memory' of her. Unlike the autobiography and Carr-Gomm's letters, Treves maligned Merrick's mother as a cruel agent in

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<sup>107</sup> *The Times*, 4 December 1886, p. 6.

<sup>108</sup> *The Times*, 5 January 1887, p. 10.

<sup>109</sup> Elliot, *The Angel out of the House*, p. 11.

Merrick's dark familial past: 'He had had no childhood. He had had no boyhood. He had never experienced pleasure.'<sup>110</sup> Like Carr-Gomm, however, Treves maligned all of Merrick's freak show life:

He was taken about the country to be exhibited as a monstrosity and an object of loathing. He was shunned like a leper, housed like a wild beast, and got his only view of the world from a peephole in a showman's cart.<sup>111</sup>

Treves utilised a Gothic discourse, (not distinct, as Durbach argued, from medical discourse), in order to present Merrick as a composite being who lurked in the shadowy corners of London's East End.<sup>112</sup> Treves claimed the 'Vampire Showman' treated Merrick like a 'dog'. His bestial treatment reflected his bestial deformities: 'the most disgusting specimen of humanity that I have ever seen'. In a similar manner to Arthur Munby's response to Pastrana, Treves claimed that people reacted to 'the creature' with 'horror and disgust'.<sup>113</sup> But while the press complained that 'the wood engravings make Miss Pastrana appear much more hideous than she really is', there was no ambiguity in Treves' description of Merrick's extreme deformities: 'rudimentary trunk', the nose 'merely a lump of flesh' and 'sack-like masses of flesh' hanging from Merrick's back.<sup>114</sup> Treves' language portrayed a monstrous Merrick in a monstrous milieu, imbuing a social critique against freakery.

The presentation worked to glorify Treves and the London Hospital. Treves was the crucial agent effecting a change in Merrick's life. After he inspected Merrick in 1884, 'I gave him my card. This card was destined to play a critical part in Merrick's life.' According to Treves, when Merrick arrived at Liverpool Street after being robbed on the continent, he cowed in a waiting room but 'produced with a ray of hope [...] my card'. Treves claimed he went to the station where he found Merrick 'thrown there like a bundle. He was so huddled and so helpless looking' but 'he seemed pleased to see me'.<sup>115</sup> From there, Treves took Merrick to the London Hospital. Treves thus became the pivotal piece in the narrative. He saved Merrick from the malign freak show and brought him to the London Hospital.

The hospital was presented as a place that ensured Merrick's happiness: 'Merrick, I may say, was now one of the most contented creatures I have chanced to meet. More than once he said to me: "I am happy every hour of the day."' <sup>116</sup> Treves' self-glorification was closely linked to his work at the

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<sup>110</sup> Treves, *The Elephant Man*, p. 15.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>112</sup> Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic at the Fin-De-Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 49-50; Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>113</sup> Treves, *The Elephant Man*, p. 11.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-11.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 12-13.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

London Hospital, that 'friendly inn'. According to Treves, it was here that a metamorphosis occurred: Merrick's fears of moving home were abated, 'he lost his shyness', he was visited by women of note, he was taken to the theatre and he holidayed in the countryside. Merrick became a celebrity: 'Everybody wanted to see him. He must have been visited by every lady of note in the social world.'<sup>117</sup> In contrast to the exploitative world of the freak show, Merrick was presented in a refuge of social acceptance.

Treves' recollections were plotted within a sentimental narrative: a kind surgeon saving a poor creature from the cruelty of a showman. Sentimentality presented a very different teleological account to the autobiography where despair led to triumph through work. Instead, Treves' teleology had Merrick's despair encompass his childhood and freak show employment before his social salvation at the hands of a benevolent surgeon. Sentimentality appealed to the emotions and the senses rather than reason, often insinuating a social critique against the established order. According to the Victorian painter Richard Redgrave, sentimentality functioned as a mask concealing the interpretive act of the artist. Sentimentality thus presented a scene implicitly imbued with predetermined moral meanings.<sup>118</sup> For Treves, the predetermination resided in the implicit value of institutionalisation and medical care over employment in the freak show.

The benevolence Merrick received was brought into relief by an Othering discourse. Merrick was linked to the animal kingdom: a 'sick sheep', a 'wild beast' and a 'creature'. In a similar manner to Pastrana's construction, this bestiality was linked to a racial hierarchy as Merrick was described as 'a monstrous figure as hideous as an Indian idol', a 'primitive creature' and his voice was so unintelligible owing to his deformity that he 'might as well have spoken in Arabic'.<sup>119</sup> Merrick was linked to those at the lower end of the evolutionary scale at a time when racial difference was increasingly focused on biological indicators. In the early nineteenth century, racial difference was predominantly constructed through cultural indicators such as clothing but increasingly skin colour, nose shape and hair type were used to denote racial disparity.<sup>120</sup> Thus, for example, Chang and Eng's racial difference focused in part on their clothes and geography, while Pastrana and Merrick demonstrated racial Otherness on the grounds of biological features.

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<sup>117</sup> Treves, *The Elephant Man*, pp. 16, 19.

<sup>118</sup> Lillian Craton, *The Victorian Freak Show: The Significance of Disability and Physical Differences in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Fiction* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009), pp. 42-48.

<sup>119</sup> Treves, *The Elephant Man*, pp. 18, 12.

<sup>120</sup> Esme Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire, 1840-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 5, 79-97.

At the same time, Merrick was also feminised and, like Tom Thumb, infantilised. At the London Hospital 'he showed himself to be a gentle, affectionate and loveable creature, as amiable as a happy woman' and he 'still remained in many ways a mere child'.<sup>121</sup> Treves thus reversed the masculinity inherent in Merrick's autobiography. While the latter articulated masculinity through employment, Treves worked from a different premise. Treves became the first President of the Boys' Brigade, an organisation that institutionalised imperial manliness through athleticism.<sup>122</sup> By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, masculinity reflected the value of stoicism, the forbearance of pain and the expression of sentiment.<sup>123</sup> 'Manly independence' was inculcated in public schools through games, athletics, rowing and the establishment of Spartan surroundings.<sup>124</sup> Self-control assumed a central part of manliness: the demonstration of emotional restraint at the expense of mid-nineteenth-century 'muscular Christianity' which emphasised compassion, fairness and altruism.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, masculinity was a quality based on external appearance: comportment, physique, appearance and performance reflective of inner qualities.<sup>126</sup> Two years after Merrick's death, Treves lamented 'the weakling, the delicate, the misshapen' products of society.<sup>127</sup> In the same publication, Treves precluded the possibility of judging an individual on the basis of a distinction between mind and body:

Montaigne well says, in speaking of a man as he should be, 'I would have the disposition of his limbs formed at the same time with his mind. 'Tis not a soul, 'tis not a body we are training, but a man, and we must not divide him.'<sup>128</sup>

The epigraph which opened this chapter is rendered problematic. Treves separated the 'spirit' and 'specimen' of Merrick but masculinity was perceived, in the words of the historian George Mosse, 'as of one piece from its very beginning: body and soul, outward appearance and inward virtue were

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<sup>121</sup> Treves, *The Elephant Man*, pp. 16, 21.

<sup>122</sup> J. A. Mangan and Colm Hickey, 'Athleticism in the Service of the Proletariat: Preparation for the English Elementary School and the Extension of Middle-Class Manliness', in *Making European Masculinities: Sport, Europe, Gender*, ed. by J. A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 112-139; John Springhall, 'Building Character in the British Boy: The Attempt to Extend Christian Manliness to Working-Class Adolescents', in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, ed. by J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 52-74.

<sup>123</sup> Michael Roper, 'Between Manliness and Masculinities: The "War Generation" and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950', *Journal of British Studies*, 44:2 (2005), 343-362.

<sup>124</sup> J. A. Mangan and Callum McKenzie, 'The Other Side of the Coin: Victorian Masculinity, Field Sports and English Elite Education', in *Making European Masculinities*, ed. by Mangan, pp. 62-85; John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 118, 189.

<sup>125</sup> Roper, 'Between Manliness and Masculinities', pp. 343-362.

<sup>126</sup> Allen Warren, 'Popular Manliness: Baden Powell, Scouting and the Development of Manly Character', in *Manliness and Morality*, ed. by Mangan and Walvin, pp. 199-219.

<sup>127</sup> Frederick Treves, *Physical Education* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1892), p. 1.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.



supposed to form one harmonious whole'.<sup>129</sup> Lambert's masculinity was articulated through his participation in field sports and conversational directness, synthesised with notions of gentlemanliness. Tom Thumb's masculinity reflected his virile behaviour, coexistent with his gentlemanly behaviour and contained within his infantile form. By the time Merrick was displayed, however, the notions of masculinity evidenced in the behaviour of Lambert and Tom Thumb, were coexistent with an increasing focus on athleticism. Merrick was not one harmonious whole: his inner qualities did not reflect his physical appearance. As such, in Treves' account, Merrick was locked into an Othering discourse. This, in turn, enabled the surgeon to assume a greater balance of power: becoming the father to the child, the man to the woman and the civilised to the savage.

However, similarly to Merrick's autobiography and Carr-Gomm's letters, Treves' account contained a tension. Through an Othering framework, Treves attributed Merrick's death to his normative fantasies but, at the same time, Treves insinuated his own culpability in Merrick's demise. Treves continually asserted that Merrick 'had all the invention of an imaginative boy or girl'. He ominously and revealingly wrote that 'Merrick made little secret of the fancies that haunted his boyish brain'. When discussing Merrick's time at the London Hospital, Treves abandoned the Gothic and embraced a romantic discourse describing Merrick as 'amorous' and 'romantic', which ventured into parody as Merrick 'loved to imagine himself a dandy and a young man about town'.<sup>130</sup> As Seth Koven argued, these claims played to the Victorian 'moral imagination' as ultimately mimesis produced nemesis: the desire to be someone else leading to a tragic outcome.<sup>131</sup> Merrick became deluded by a normative fantasy which resulted in the belief that he could sleep like other people. According to Treves:

He often said to me that he wished he could lie down to sleep 'like other people'. I think on this last night he must, with some determination, have made the experiment. The pillow was soft, and the head, when placed on it, must have fallen backwards and caused a dislocation of the neck. Thus it came about that his death was due to the desire that had dominated his life—the pathetic but hopeless desire to be 'like other people'.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> Treves, *The Elephant Man*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>131</sup> Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 128-129.

<sup>132</sup> Treves, *The Elephant Man*, p. 27.

This desire echoed Hermann Waldemar Otto's claim that Pastrana, on her deathbed, believed Lent "loves me for my own sake".<sup>133</sup> While the alleged words of Pastrana and Merrick demonstrate the attribution of sentimentality onto freak performers, Merrick's romantic and childish imagination was the basis from which Treves painted a normative fantasy. But in so doing, Treves rendered his own role problematic: he wanted 'to secure Merrick's recovery', which he defined as bringing Merrick 'to life' and enabling him 'to become a human being himself and to be admitted to the communion of his kind'. It was Treves who introduced Merrick to a stream of visitors, thus instigating the normative project that perpetuated Merrick's fantasies. It was Treves who arranged and accompanied Merrick to the theatre where his mind, filled with 'the fancies of a youth', interpreted 'everything' as 'real'. It was Treves who pandered to Merrick's childish, romantic imagination by giving him 'a dressing bag with silver fittings', a theatrical prop which indulged Merrick's 'self-deception' as 'the Piccadilly exquisite, the young spark, the gallant'.<sup>134</sup> Yet, at the end of his recollections, Treves conceded that normalising Merrick was a 'hopeless desire', thus positing the impossibility of realising the normalisation he attempted to effect. Indeed, Treves revealed that it was this normalisation that led to Merrick's death. Treves thus implicated himself in Merrick's demise yet Treves used Merrick's childish imagination as a scapegoat for his own failings.

Treves could not return Merrick to society as an economic agent: the ultimate goal of his profession and the London Hospital. Treves was also unable to diagnose Merrick. This was a medical rather than a personal failing: the inability to diagnose Merrick's condition well into the twentieth century contextualises the medical limitations of the 1880s. Indeed, Treves demonstrated aptitude in locating Merrick's condition in the central nervous system.<sup>135</sup> Yet he was unable to offer a diagnosis. As Andrew Smith argued, Treves' use of gothic language to describe Merrick's deformities reflected the failure of medical language to communicate Merrick's exceptional physiology.<sup>136</sup> But this also turned Merrick's physiology into a cultural text: as James Mussell argued, the inability to identify the cause of influenza during the pandemics of the late nineteenth century turned a 'thing' into a media message, passing biology into the realm of culture.<sup>137</sup> Similarly in the case of Treves, unable to cure, normalise or diagnose, he produced a text that reflected his own failures back onto Merrick and his

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<sup>133</sup> Christopher Gylseth and Lars Toverud, *Julia Pastrana: The Tragic Story of the Victorian Ape Woman*, trans. by Donald Tumasonis (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003), pp. 75-76.

<sup>134</sup> Treves, *The Elephant Man*, pp. 17, 24, 22.

<sup>135</sup> Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, p. 172.

<sup>136</sup> Smith, *Victorian Demons*, pp. 45-52.

<sup>137</sup> James Mussell, 'Writing the "Great Proteus of Disease": Influenza, Informatics and the Body in the Late Nineteenth Century', in *Minds, Bodies, Machines, 1770-1930*, ed. by Deirdre Coleman and Hilary Fraser (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 161-178.

normative fantasy. It was Treves' limitation that turned Merrick's biology and biography into a cultural product.

A new Elephant Man was created by Treves: a feminised, racialised, brutalised and infantilised Other. The independent, self-reliant, masculine Elephant Man of the autobiography was now the dependant, Othered Elephant Man of Treves' recollections: a dependent all his life and an orphan mistreated by evil showmen yet saved by a surgeon. Underscoring the construction of Merrick as a fantasist was Treves' limitations and culpability. Peters argued that the orphan in Victorian literature was presented as an Other, an outsider, yet contained and sustained by the family and wider society. As such, the orphan was a social scapegoat: a necessary entity whose death was desired. Peters developed an interpretation of the Other based on Derrida's notion of a scapegoat who is offered for ritual sacrifice: a being contained within the community, an outsider kept inside but sacrificed when calamity strikes.<sup>138</sup> This interpretation is fitting for Treves' Elephant Man: a 'creature' whose death was a 'Place of Deliverance' from 'the clutches of the Great Despair'.<sup>139</sup>

### Tom Norman

Tom Norman produced yet another construction of The Elephant Man premised on a very different interpretation. Published in 1923, after Treves' recollections, Norman's account was an act of professional and personal defence. Diverging from the showman's propensity to deceive, Norman proclaimed his commitment to keeping the 'record straight'. He deconstructed Treves' account highlighting, for example, Treves' claim that Merrick's exhibition was 'lit by the faint blue light of the gas jet' yet he could still perceive a 'red tablecloth' and a 'brown blanket'. Norman challenged Treves' claim that Merrick's exhibition was 'cold and dank' yet the sun was 'shining outside', in November.<sup>140</sup> Against Treves' accusation that Norman treated Merrick like an animal, Norman asserted:

I believed that most of the show's visitors, after the shock of seeing Joseph, must have felt some sympathy and pity for him, and had I attempted to be harsh with him in front of the audience, I would very soon have the show wrecked, and me with it.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Peters, *Orphan Texts*, pp. 141-143.

<sup>139</sup> Treves, *The Elephant Man*, p. 27.

<sup>140</sup> Tom Norman and George Barnum Norman, *The Penny Showman: Memoirs of Tom Norman 'Silver King'* (London: Privately Published, 1985), pp. 106-107.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

Norman positioned himself as the purveyor of truth, debunking Treves' assumption of authority and thus complicating the assumed relationship between showman-deception and medicine-empiricism. Norman proceeded to reverse the relationships established in Treves' narrative. While Treves characterised the freak show as malevolent, Norman stressed benevolence. He noted the 'spirit of friendship' between Merrick and his managers and emphasised Merrick's 'comfort' which was 'much appreciated'.<sup>142</sup> Treves claimed Merrick had to 'expose his nakedness and piteous deformities before a gaping crowd' but Norman alleged that Merrick said to him, after an examination conducted by Treves: "I was stripped naked, and felt like an animal at the cattle market."<sup>143</sup> According to Norman, Merrick refused any further dehumanising inspections, which provoked the wrath of Treves who began 'the campaign of vilification' against Norman. Treves was cast as arrogant and impatient with 'little sense of humour' and a nasty temper. Norman alleged that Treves abused his authority, being 'instrumental' in ensuring that the authorities closed Merrick's London exhibition and even barring Norman from visiting his 'friend' at the London Hospital.<sup>144</sup> These narrative reversals set the stage for Norman to salvage his reputation, but they also redefined Merrick's biography: a happy creature under Norman's care before his dehumanising treatment at the hands of Treves.

Remoulding Merrick's biography meant Norman's Elephant Man was committed to independence and, as such, recast in the mould originally established in the autobiography. Norman's Merrick 'was a man of very strong character and beliefs—was anxious to earn his own living and be independent of charity'. He was 'not content to live off charity, seized the opportunity of joining the showmen' and then was 'able to pay his way'.<sup>145</sup> Norman reasserted Merrick's agency: he was the one who sought escape from the stigmatised, dependent life of the workhouse. Unlike Carr-Gomm's letters, Norman conflated the workhouse and charity as both denied Merrick the chance to earn his living independently. As Norman and Merrick came from a similar working-class background, Norman understood the importance of Merrick's independence.<sup>146</sup>

Indeed, Merrick feared the workhouse and reportedly told Norman: "I don't ever want to go back to that other place." The freedom afforded by the freak show was constructed in opposition to the dependency conditioned in the workhouse: the former enabled Merrick to 'save enough money and find him a home somewhere', an 'ambition' Norman had 'come to share', which turned the freak show into a motor for social mobility.<sup>147</sup> In this sense, Norman resuscitated the discursive work of

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<sup>142</sup> Norman and Norman, *The Penny Showman*, pp. 103.

<sup>143</sup> Treves, *The Elephant Man*, p. 15; Norman and Norman, *The Penny Showman*, p. 108.

<sup>144</sup> Norman and Norman, *The Penny Showman*, pp. 106, 108.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 104.

<sup>146</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>147</sup> Norman and Norman, *The Penny Showman*, pp. 104, 108-109.

Merrick's autobiography through an attribution of motive: this Elephant Man was propelled by the desire to be self-reliant, an independent economic agent. Norman located the possibility of realising this dream within the freak show.

In this portrait, Norman became the benevolent agent in Merrick's life. When Norman first met Merrick:

I remember thinking, 'Oh God! I can't use you'. But on looking into this unfortunate man's eyes I could see so much suffering and pleading that a great feeling of pity and sympathy overcame any other emotions I may have had.<sup>148</sup>

Ironically, Norman appropriated Carr-Gomm's charitable discourse to present himself as the benefactor and Merrick as the object of charity. The relationship was presented as asymmetric: Norman had the power to affect a benevolent change. He was moved by the suffering and longing in Merrick's eyes, the 'unfortunate' man in need of help. Norman's self-defence thus undermined his construction of The Elephant Man as an independent agent. Instead, it presented an Elephant Man who longed for independence but was dependent on Norman's goodwill. Like The Elephant Man of Carr-Gomm and Treves, Norman's Elephant Man was in need of a saviour. Like all the constructions explored in this chapter, Norman's account was steeped in contradiction.

Norman's self-glorification turned the freak show into a haven of refuge and the showman became the benevolent agent. Norman stated this explicitly when discussing a woman he once managed, Mary Ann Bevan, billed as The Ugliest Woman on Earth: 'Here is another instance of the Showman being a freak of nature's salvation.'<sup>149</sup> As such, Norman claimed he 'was the only real friend Joseph ever had'.<sup>150</sup> Norman accepted and presented Merrick as a respectable human being, privately calling him 'Joseph' in an attempt 'to impart that little dignity that the full name of Joseph has over "Joe"'. Publically, Norman told the audience that Merrick was a 'remarkable human being'.<sup>151</sup> The freak show was thus presented as a respectable milieu which humanised the exhibited Elephant Man. Norman claimed he told the audience:

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<sup>148</sup> Norman and Norman, *The Penny Showman*, p. 103.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 108-109.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you please not to despise or condemn this man on account of his unusual appearance. Remember we do not make ourselves, and were you to cut or prick Joseph he would bleed, and that bleed or blood would be red, the same as yours or mine.<sup>152</sup>

Regardless of whether Norman actually uttered these words, they stressed the respectability of his show. He did not seek to degrade Merrick nor deny his humanity. Rather, by drawing on Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Norman cast Merrick as the Other but rooted Merrick's humanity and normativity within the universalism of human blood, like the Jewish Shylock. Norman's account, in turn, elevated the intentions of the showman to humanise rather than objectify.

By remoulding himself as the benevolent agent helping to realise Merrick's dream of independence, Norman's Elephant Man was subject to a life history that went from despair in workhouse pauperism, to salvation in the freak show, to despair once more in the London Hospital:

Despite all Dr Treeves' statements about Joseph Merrick being happy and content in his 'haven of refuge' it is my belief that Joseph, whose only wish was to be free and independent, felt as if he were a prisoner and living on charity, and was keenly conscious of the indignity of having to appear before a never-ending stream of doctors, surgeons and Dr Treeves' friends—on that night, probably in a 'what the Hell' frame of mind, quite conscious of the risk, he lay fully on the bed and never woke up. Perhaps that is what he wanted.<sup>153</sup>

While the surgeon claimed Merrick's death was a tragic attempt to achieve normality and be like other people, which subsequently rendered his own role problematic, Norman maintained that it was deprivation of independence and freedom that 'perhaps' led to Merrick's demise. Norman insinuated Treves' culpability and implied suicide. Merrick's death was not, as the surgeon claimed, a benevolent release but rather a tragic event caused by a man with thwarted dreams and desires. Thus Norman ultimately reworked the biography of Merrick: now the life of The Elephant Man was a trajectory of fortune into despair. The roles of key protagonists were reversed: Treves and the London Hospital were the vampires of a different name, while Norman was the compassionate businessman who supported an Elephant Man who worked and longed for independence but was ultimately deprived of independence.

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<sup>152</sup> Norman and Norman, *The Penny Showman*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

## Institutional Spectatorship

Norman concluded his memoir with an important assertion:

The question is—who really ‘exploited’ poor Joseph? I, the Showman, got the abuse. Dr Treeves, the eminent surgeon (who you must admit was also a Showman, but on a rather higher social scale) received the publicity and praise.<sup>154</sup>

Indeed, Treves received public congratulations: even the showmen’s trade journal extolled Treves as the ‘brilliant surgeon’ who was able to ‘remedy some of Fate’s mischief’ to ensure that Merrick spent the remainder of his days ‘in something approaching comfort’.<sup>155</sup> Treves’ commendation reflected an asymmetry in class and professional status. By the late nineteenth century, freakery was in slow descent. In the 1880s, the newly formed London County Council started to licence venues leading to a prediction from a fellow showman: ‘your and mine occupation is gone’.<sup>156</sup> Merrick’s display was closed by the authorities ‘in the interests of public decency’, highlighting a discerning attitude and reflecting the increased importance of ‘respectable’ entertainment.<sup>157</sup> By the time Treves and Norman published their accounts, the freak show was also suffering due to changes brought about by the First World War.<sup>158</sup> Norman, therefore, was not only defending himself against Treves, he was defending himself in a climate of increased hostility.

Both Norman’s account and Merrick’s autobiography were produced within a culture of freakery that defended the practice. Both accounts, in turn, failed to receive the publicity and praise comparable to Treves. Alongside Carr-Gomm, Treves was writing from a position of authority: at the apex of medical and charitable authority. Charity and medicine were connected: Carr-Gomm’s letters highlighted the charitable impulse sustaining the medical work of the London Hospital. It was part of a ‘mixed economy of welfare’ where London’s sick labouring poor could receive free treatment in voluntary hospitals, the workhouse infirmaries or, if they could afford the subscription, sick clubs or friendly societies.<sup>159</sup> The principles of voluntarism and philanthropy remained fundamental to the Great War and the subsequent welfare provision for returning servicemen.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Norman and Norman, *The Penny Showman*, p. 110.

<sup>155</sup> Anon., ‘The Elephant Man: Story of a Freak that Fiction has Never Equalled’, *World’s Fair*, 17 February 1923, no. 962.

<sup>156</sup> Norman and Norman, *The Penny Showman*, p. 13.

<sup>157</sup> *Leicester Chronicle and Leicester Mercury*, 11 December 1886, p. 3.

<sup>158</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 175-177.

<sup>159</sup> Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, p. 3; Michelle Higgs, *Life in the Victorian and Edwardian Workhouse* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), pp. 67-76.

<sup>160</sup> Kevin Brown, *Fighting Fit: Health, Medicine and War in the Twentieth Century* (Stroud: History Press, 2008), pp. 67-78; Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 29-46, 115-128.

Between 1918 and 1956, new charities and voluntary associations developed in response to the war's disabled soldiers while the stress on curing patients and returning them to the front line, or into productive work, remained unabated.<sup>161</sup> Treves and Carr-Gomm thus constructed their Elephant Men from an ascendant medical and charitable institutional culture. Invariably, therefore, Treves was to receive the praise: his construction carried greater social weight and legitimacy.

Carr-Gomm and Treves were entrenched in proliferating institutional structures. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the combined number of inmates in lunatic asylums, prisons and workhouses nearly doubled, although the proportion of the confined population remained much the same.<sup>162</sup> Nonetheless, this institutionalisation formed part of a distinct shift conceptualised by Michel Foucault as the 'great confinement'.<sup>163</sup> Institutions spread as a result of industrialisation, a market society, a burgeoning middle class, an expanding population and state enlargement.<sup>164</sup> The 'chief centres of confinement' were the hospitals, prisons and workhouses: institutional frameworks that isolated deviance and imposed the bourgeois ideology of work and self-discipline.<sup>165</sup>

The professionalisation of psychiatry was practiced in the increasing number of asylums.<sup>166</sup> The professionalisation of medicine was practiced in the increasing number of hospitals.<sup>167</sup> Punishment was concealed within institutional walls as part of this new economy of power.<sup>168</sup> The physicality of the clinic focused the medical gaze on symptoms only interpretable to medical men.<sup>169</sup> By 1916, hospital wards were swelling as the shell-shocked, blind, paralysed and deaf returned from the Great War.<sup>170</sup> By 1938, there were 696 voluntary hospitals in England and Wales alone.<sup>171</sup> The rise of institutions reflected and enhanced institutionalised authority, while isolating deviancy within centres of confinement. Moreover, as Joanna Bourke argued, the interwar years saw notions of masculinity return to corporeality: the desire to establish a masculine identity reflected in war medals and the walk of the wounded, returned to masculinity as a marker of physical fitness,

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<sup>161</sup> Julie Anderson, *War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain: 'Soul of a Nation'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 1-41.

<sup>162</sup> Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p. 261.

<sup>163</sup> Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 35-60.

<sup>164</sup> Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, pp. 348-358.

<sup>165</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, p. 41.

<sup>166</sup> Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, pp. 492-503.

<sup>167</sup> J. B. Morrell, 'Professionalisation', in *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, ed. by R. C. Olby and others (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 980-989.

<sup>168</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 3-31.

<sup>169</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1973), pp. 88-106.

<sup>170</sup> Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), pp. 73-75, 157-159.

<sup>171</sup> Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy*, p. 44.



wholeness and muscularity. 'Curative work' inflicted on the war wounded returned to older notions of masculinity as an expression of productive work, while the very 'curative' process involved teaching ex-servicemen to become 'men'. This, in turn, mitigated the class, generational and geographical distinctions concerning masculinity: the corporeal muscular body reigned supreme.<sup>172</sup> Those that could not realise the ideal faced social marginalisation and institutional confinement.

Rachel Adams suggested that a counterpart to the history of the freak show is the history of institutionalisation: both were imbued with the project of normalisation that demarcated the stigmatic. Yet her suggestion that institutions 'concealed abnormality from view' could confuse confinement and concealment.<sup>173</sup> Although public access to viewing inmates in Bethlehem Royal Hospital ended in 1770, visitors could still purchase entrance tickets signed by the governor.<sup>174</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, institutions for the deaf frequently made spectacles of inmates. The admission process was a public occasion in which charitable benefactors and subscribers actually voted for candidates, aged between six and twelve, in a public selection process. The electorate based their decisions on biographical notes circulated in advance of a meeting, highlighting the importance of life histories in the spectatorship and provocation of charitable sentiment.<sup>175</sup> Charity could be a thin guise for voyeurism.

Indeed, Carr-Gomm's letters to *The Times* turned Merrick into a public spectacle. Carr-Gomm raised attention to Merrick's case with an implicit motive to render financial aid. He combined spectatorship with an economic motive, not dissimilar to the freak shows he condemned. Carr-Gomm's letters were published under the heading 'The Elephant Man', thus using the language of the freak show while tantalisingly withholding a description of Merrick's 'terrible deformities', so as not to 'shock your readers'.<sup>176</sup> Yet Carr-Gomm directed readers to the *British Medical Journal* where further 'details are given, with illustrations', although he quickly qualified:

one of our objects, however, is to prevent his deformity being made anything of a show, except for purely scientific purposes, and the hospital officials have instructions to secure for him as far as possible immunity from the gaze of the curious.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), pp. 31-75.

<sup>173</sup> Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 15.

<sup>174</sup> Jonathan Andrews and others, *The History of Bethlem* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 14.

<sup>175</sup> Anne Borsay, 'Deaf Children and Charitable Education in Britain, 1790-1914', in *Medicine, Charity and Mutual Aid*, ed. by Borsay and Shapely, pp. 71-90.

<sup>176</sup> *The Times*, 4 December 1886, p. 6.

<sup>177</sup> *The Times*, 5 January 1887, p. 10.

Carr-Gomm admitted that showmanship and science were united. The London Hospital allowed visitors to see Merrick in a social occasion reminiscent of Lambert's receptions at the beginning of the century. Moreover, like Tom Thumb, 'it became a cult among the personal friends of the Princess [Alexandra of Wales] to visit the Elephant-Man in the London Hospital'.<sup>178</sup> Merrick's room was even called 'the Elephant House' by the medical staff.<sup>179</sup> In this arrangement Treves assumed the role of a respectable showman. It was not the first time: before ever meeting Merrick, Treves had a reputation for finding and exhibiting human anomalies.<sup>180</sup> He then twice exhibited Merrick to the Pathological Society of London and, to the end, displayed Merrick to enhance his own reputation, adamant that the title of his book should include Merrick's freak show title: 'it is a book of Reminiscence, the most conspicuous of which concerns that poor devil the Elephant Man'.<sup>181</sup>

As Durbach highlighted, the surgeon John Bland-Sutton also displayed Lalloo, The Double-Bodied Hindoo Boy, at the Pathological Society of London in 1888.<sup>182</sup> Lalloo was a freak performer who had a parasitic twin growing from his chest. He featured, along with Julia Pastrana and other freak performers, in an examination of teratology by George Gould and Walter Pyle.<sup>183</sup> They aimed to enrich the 'highest type of philosophical minds' through 'investigation and explanation' yet there was a thin line between medical investigation and voyeurism as Gould and Pyle admitted that 'the strange and exceptional is of absorbing interest'.<sup>184</sup> Lisa Lochanek's analysis of the medical journal, *The Lancet*, revealed how medical 'cases' were discussed in the language and visual imagery of the freak show.<sup>185</sup> Sheila Moeschen demonstrated how, in the American context, sideshow cartes-de-visite and medical photographs shared a similar aesthetic tradition.<sup>186</sup> There existed a dialectical relationship between freakery and cultures of medical confinement with the former borrowing the language, visual culture and exhibits from the latter.

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<sup>178</sup> John Bland-Sutton, *The Story of a Surgeon* (London: Methuen, 1930), p. 140.

<sup>179</sup> Wilfred Thomason Grenfell, *A Labrador Doctor: The Autobiography of Sir Wilfred Thomason Grenfell* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1954 [1919]), p. 65.

<sup>180</sup> Stephen Trombley, *Sir Frederick Treves: The Extra-ordinary Edwardian* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 35.

<sup>181</sup> RLHAM, Transactions of the Pathological Society LH/Z/1 Merrick; BLL, The Papers of Frederick Treves R.P.3008/1, 30 October 1922.

<sup>182</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, p. 40.

<sup>183</sup> George M. Gould and Walter L. Pyle, *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine: Being an Encyclopedic Collection of Rare and Extraordinary Cases, and of the Most Striking Instances of Abnormality in All Branches of Medicine and Surgery, Derived from an Exhaustive Research of Medical Literature from its Origins to the Present Day, Abstracted, Classified, Annotated, and Indexed, Popular Edition* (Philadelphia: W. B. Sanders and Company, 1901 [1896]), pp. 192-193, 217.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>185</sup> Lisa A. Kochanek, 'Reframing the Freak: From Sideshow to Science', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 30:3 (1997), 227-243.

<sup>186</sup> Sheila Moeschen, 'Aesthetic Traces in Unlikely Places: Re-Visioning the Freak in 19th-Century American Photography', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 25:4 (2005) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/613>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

By placing Merrick's exhibition on the Whitechapel Road, opposite the London Hospital, Norman courted the association between freakery and medicine. It was a successful strategy as a number of medical men, including Treves and Bland-Sutton, visited Merrick's display.<sup>187</sup> The freak show was used as a source for extraordinary bodies. Showmen courted the association. They borrowed from medical discourse: Merrick's deformities, for example, were explained on the basis of maternal impressions. When P. T. Barnum brought the obese Boston Prize Ladies to London in 1885, he published a special invitation to 'Medical Gentlemen'.<sup>188</sup> The exhibition poster advertising Lalloo's freak show in 1887 quoted the 'Medical Scientific Papers, and certain Learned Societies', including a 'Surgeon' who praised Lalloo as 'Without a parallel in World History'.<sup>189</sup> Showmen used the association between freakery and medicine to sell and legitimise their exhibits and, in so doing, maintained the reciprocal relationship that was noted at the beginning of the century in the case of Chang and Eng.

But there was a notable change in emphasis. In 1829, Chang and Eng's medical attendant, George Bolton, concluded his paper to the Royal College of Surgeons by thanking the 'owners' Abel Coffin, Richard Hunter and the manager James Hale for 'the liberal manner in which they have uniformly afforded the means of investigating so curious an object of philosophical inquiry' which, Bolton declared, 'entitle them equally to the thanks of the philanthropist and the lover of science'.<sup>190</sup> By the time of Merrick's display, however, medicine's authority had burgeoned to such an extent that the exceptional body was perceived as the rightful remit of professionals rather than showmen. In the case of Treves and Norman, the reciprocal relationship between freakery and medicine broke down in the mutual hostility evidenced in their texts. Moreover, while the medical signatories to Chang and Eng's 1829-1830 exhibitions helped promote and sensationalise the twins, by the latter part of the century the exceptional body was increasingly de-sensationalized, demystified and contained within proliferating institutions. As Alice Domurat Dreger argued, by the end of the nineteenth century, medicine had effectively eliminated hermaphrodites by constructing two binary sexes in which ambiguous bodies were interpreted and consigned.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Norman and Norman, *The Penny Showman*, p. 105; Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, pp. 24, 168; Bland-Sutton, *The Story of a Surgeon*, p. 139.

<sup>188</sup> BLL, Evanion 467.

<sup>189</sup> BLL, Evanion 461.

<sup>190</sup> George Buckley Bolton, 'Statement of the Principle Circumstances Respecting the United Siamese Twins Now Exhibiting in London', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 120 (1830), 177-186 (p. 186).

<sup>191</sup> Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 139-166.



**Figure 13.**

Photograph of three sisters with achondroplasia, taken between 1895-1896, (L0061376), SBHB MU/14/1/9/1, St Bartholomew's Hospital Archives & Museum, Wellcome Images

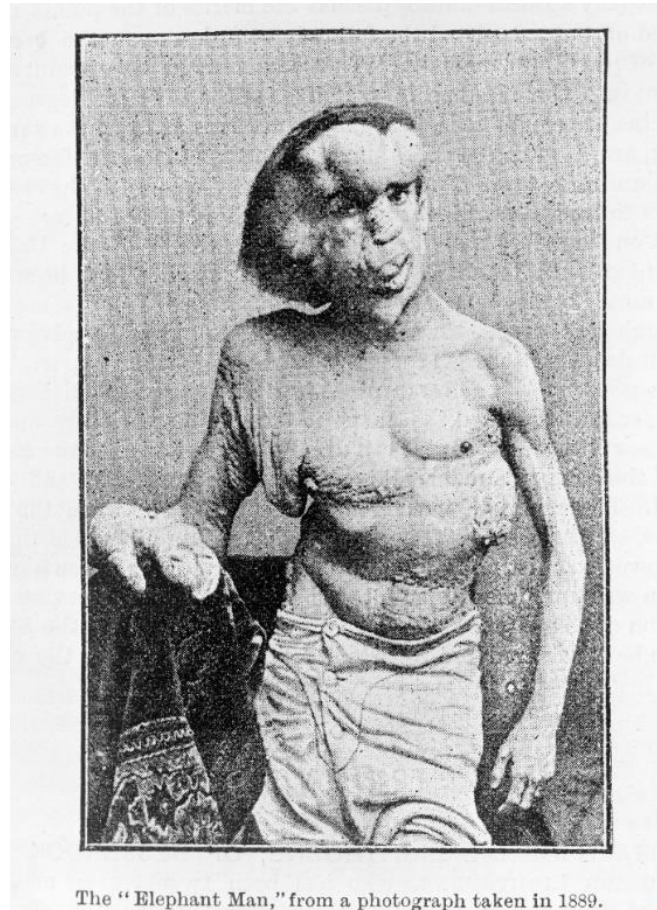
At St Bartholomew's Hospital, the Photographic Society, founded in 1890 and largely comprising medical students, produced a number of images depicting predominantly localised, physical manifestations of disease. These images were used as reference tools for medical students and staff and the photographed patients were mainly taken from the wards of St Bartholomew. Many of the subjects, such as those with acromegaly, elephantiasis, achondroplasia and even the 'tattooed man', were bodies that could have been found in freak shows.<sup>192</sup> Figure 13, taken between 1895 and 1896, depicts three achondroplasia sisters stripped naked and framed to centralise their bodily difference. Demystified and de-sensationalised, their bodies function as pedagogic tools for illuminating examples of pathology. They are objectified and pacified behind the medical gaze, which fixes and entrenches their deviancy onto their corporeality under the guise of objectivity: establishing in turn 'the truth of deviance'.<sup>193</sup> As Benjamin Singer argued in relation to medical photography of transgender bodies, these images exemplify a separation between medical providers and those with

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<sup>192</sup> Wellcome Images, St Bartholomew's Hospital Archives and Museum MU/14/48/68, MU/14/1/3/2, MU/14/1/9/1, MU/14/48/68, MU/14/1/3/2, MU/14/1/9/1.

<sup>193</sup> T. Benjamin Singer, 'From the Medical Gaze to 'Sublime Mutations': The Ethics of (Re)viewing Non-Normative Body Images', in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 601-620 (p. 601).

non-normative bodies. The images are not merely representational but signal a social, material and ethical dimension that illuminates the troubling relationship between medicine and non-normative bodies which, as I have argued, reflects the increased control the former held over the latter.<sup>194</sup>



**Figure 14.**

Photograph of The "Elephant Man", British Medical Journal, 19 April 1890, L0014964, Wellcome Library, London

Similar medical images were taken of Merrick, a less explicit example seen in Figure 14, but as Durbach has highlighted Merrick was also photographed in his 'Sunday Best', a carte-de-visite that circulated within the hospital. The London hospital, then, made 'itself complicit in commodifying Merrick's monstrosity'.<sup>195</sup> While science increasingly appropriated the bodies found in freak shows, the subsequent treatment could reflect the tradition of freakery. Indeed, according to Grenfell, a young surgeon who helped care for Merrick, 'he used to talk freely of how he would look in a huge

<sup>194</sup> Singer, 'From the Medical Gaze to 'Sublime Mutations'', pp. 601-620.

<sup>195</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, p. 41.

bottle of alcohol—an end to which in his imagination he was fated to come'.<sup>196</sup> His skeleton was added to the Pathological Museum joining, amongst others, a plaster cast of 'an adult microcephalic idiot', a conjoined Kitten and a wax model of a 'Chinaman, with a parasitic foetus'.<sup>197</sup> This museum was never open to the public, so Merrick's skeleton was never officially exhibited but in the words of the surgeon, John Bland-Sutton, such a collection could be 'little better than a freak-museum'.<sup>198</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the making of four versions of The Elephant Man, each produced from different perspectives and rooted in distinct contexts. There was The Elephant Man of the autobiography: an individual who suffered parental loss, familial and communal rejection but diligently found work in the freak show. There was The Elephant Man of Carr-Gomm's letters: a deserving recipient of charity, respectable, deferential and dependent, mired in a life of tragedy but on the cusp of new hope. Behind this Elephant Man were the requirements of a hospital Chairman intent on eliciting charity: appealing to a strain of evangelicalism to satisfy the expectations and sentiments of a charitable public. There was The Elephant Man of the surgeon: a tragic figure unable to shake the burden of deformity until death. This Elephant Man was an exploited orphan saved from great despair and resuscitated through paternal care yet remaining a feminised, racialised, brutalised and infantilised Other. Behind the construction was the problematic self-glorification of a surgeon who turned Merrick into a scapegoat to compensate for the author's own limitations. Finally, there was The Elephant Man of the showman: a social aspirant realising his dreams of independence in a benevolent freak show until imprisonment in a house of dependency. Behind this Elephant Man was authorial defence and glorification.

Biographical and bodily trouble unified the texts. The autobiography centralised Merrick's elephant-like body as the locus of both familial and community rejection but the text concluded by requesting that the reader judge Merrick's character rather than his physiology. Ironically, this request undercut the agency previously afforded to Merrick: his autobiography emphasised his independent character but ended by requesting external validation from the reader. Carr-Gomm's letters were responsive to Merrick's immediate predicament and implicitly accepted the necessity of institutional care, relying on a charitable discourse to appeal for public assistance. Treves' failure to normalise Merrick

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<sup>196</sup> Grenfell, *A Labrador Doctor*, p. 65.

<sup>197</sup> *Descriptive Catalogue of the Pathological Museum of the London Hospital*, ed. by F. Charlewood Turner, Frederick S. Eve and T. H. Openshaw (London: London Hospital Medical College, 1890), pp. 122-123.

<sup>198</sup> Bland-Sutton, *The Story of a Surgeon*, p. 8.

rendered Treves' position problematic: he fostered Merrick's normative fantasies, which were then used as the scapegoat for Merrick's death. Norman, on the other hand, insinuated suicide. He argued that the best response to Merrick's physiological condition was employment. Ironically, this independence was presented as conditional on the showman's kindness: in defending himself against the charges made by Treves, Norman became the agent upon whom Merrick was dependent.

Each text is imbued with different intentions derived from two distinct yet interconnected cultures: a culture of freakery and a culture of medical institutionalisation. Unlike the ostensible friendly relationship between freakery and medicine evidenced in Chang and Eng's 1829-1830 exhibitions, Treves and Norman demonstrated an increased hostility between the two modes of dealing with difference. Indeed, the texts creating the Elephant Men upheld a dichotomy between the freak show and institutional care. But the latter relied on the specimens, language and visual culture of the former, while the freak show continued to court and cater to the scientific community. The reciprocity evidenced in Chang and Eng's display remained intact but it was the London Hospital which held ultimate authority over Merrick's body.

Indeed, by focusing on constructions of The Elephant Man, this chapter has indexed the rise of an institutional culture that reached an apogee in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that the combined number of inmates in lunatic asylums, prisons and workhouses nearly doubled; offering a coping mechanism for managing difference and entrenching the power of medical, charitable and scientific authority.<sup>199</sup> Married to changing notions of taste, fuelled by the rise of disabled servicemen following World War One, exceptional bodies increasingly shifted from the stage into institutional cells. Indeed, the twentieth-century showman, Daniel Mannix, bemoaned this trend and noted how a 'family of pinheads', with the medical condition known as microcephaly, went from stars in the freak show to 'miserably unhappy' inmates.<sup>200</sup>

This chapter has also noted other contextual developments; in particular, it has explored how notions of masculinity, much like those of race, were increasingly located at the level of physiology: the inner man reflected through the outer man. Athleticism, stoicism and manly independence replaced mid-century 'muscular Christianity', which emphasised compassion and fairness. Rather, it was self-help and self-discipline that made the man. The focus on physicality marks a shift from the masculinity of Daniel Lambert, which was registered through his character, which in turn

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<sup>199</sup> Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p. 261.

<sup>200</sup> Daniel P. Mannix, *Freaks: We Who Are Not As Others* (New York: RE/Search, 1999), pp. 11-12.

demonstrates a broader shift, cited by Josh Tosh, in which the manliness of the mind gave way to the manliness of the body.<sup>201</sup> This was bolstered by the imperial masculinity of the late nineteenth century and the effects of World War One as noted in this chapter. This indexing of changing notions across the nineteenth century is not to diminish the complexity of manliness and masculinity, which had numerous social meanings, but it is to register a broader shift in meaning and perception. Indeed, it was in the field of employment that working-class masculinity was developed, a belief maintained by the disability community who argued for the right to work. At the same time, feminine ideals were located in the practices of charity, philanthropy and nursing: the natural, kind and domestic mother of the fairy tales, in opposition to the evil stepmother, was realised in the aforementioned roles.

Drawing on these operative discourses, Merrick's freak identity, like the representations of Lambert, Chang, Eng, Tom Thumb and Pastrana, was neither single nor stable. The Elephant Man was an image reproduced, reinterpreted and redefined. It was an open text available for remoulding, producing polymorphic personas based on the interpretation of life events. The Elephant Men were prevalent in numerous texts and sites: freak show pamphlets, newspapers, memoirs, journals and photographs. Merrick was displayed in music halls, travelling fairs, show-shops, London's Pathological Society, medical journals and within the London Hospital. His exhibition complicates the trajectory argued in this thesis: freakery moving from small-scale to large-scale commercial enterprises across the nineteenth century. The partnership between Torr, Ellis, Roper, Norman and Hitchcock enabled Merrick to leave the workhouse and enter the freak show. He was initially displayed in the commercial, professionalised music halls connected to the entertainment industry, making his debut at Mr. Ellis' music hall in Nottingham.<sup>202</sup> Merrick also travelled as part of a broader collective with Sam Roper's Fair and a travelling show that toured Europe.<sup>203</sup> But Merrick was also displayed in smaller, less commercially orientated exhibitions. His display on the Whitechapel Road, admission two pence, occurred in a temporary, make-shift venue unlike the permanent commercial establishments of the Egyptian Hall, Regent Gallery and Burlington Gallery in which Chang, Eng, Tom Thumb and Pastrana performed. Norman used older modes of advertisement common in English fairs: the oral spiel and cheap show cloths, which suggests an element of continuity in the practice of freakery. The trajectory of change was not, therefore, linear or absolute: there were polymorphic forms of exhibiting exceptional bodies.

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<sup>201</sup> John Tosh, 'What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain', *History Workshop* 38 (1994); 179-202.

<sup>202</sup> Howell and Ford, *The True History of The Elephant Man*, p. 92.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-110.



Joseph Merrick is inseparable from The Elephant Man. His extreme physiological difference exemplifies the difficulty in separating the performer from the freak persona: for Joseph Merrick, both onstage and off, evoked a series of responses on the basis of his body, his corporeality and his freakery defining his life and legacy. Even Joseph Merrick's name was forever confused with John and synonymous with The Elephant Man. To attempt a separation between Merrick and The Elephant Man, the offstage and onstage personae, seems at best misplaced and at worst dehumanising. It denies Joseph Merrick the specific difficulties he encountered as a historical actor. It misrepresents the interdependency between Merrick and The Elephant Man. The attempts to reconstitute an independent Merrick have invariably led to idealisation, attribution of motive and the imposition of modern sentimentality which, in the end, reveals more about the producer than the historical figure. But this chapter, as with all the others in this thesis, is part of the continual reimagining of freak performers. I have not been able to give Merrick a voice. Instead, I have explored the fabrications that produced the freak. The subject of freakery concerns real people but they have become my own constructions. In the end, I doubt it can be any other way.

## Conclusion: Onstage, Offstage, Ambiguity and Change

During a tour of the English provinces in 1846, Tom Thumb travelled to Stamford, Lincolnshire, where he met James Dixon, proprietor of the Daniel Lambert Inn, who had purchased a set of Daniel Lambert's clothes back in 1826.<sup>1</sup> Reportedly, Tom Thumb 'seemed much amused with the apparel: he passed through one of the sleeves of the coat, and got into one of the stockings'.<sup>2</sup> As a token of appreciation, Tom Thumb presented Dixon with his suit, which was exhibited in the Daniel Lambert Inn. To accompany the display, Dixon commissioned an exhibition pamphlet which borrowed liberally from Lambert's 1809 life pamphlets and the exhibition pamphlets of Tom Thumb.<sup>3</sup> P. T. Barnum, in turn, placed a wax figure of Lambert in his American Museum, New York.<sup>4</sup>

Barnum also made his mark on Joseph Merrick's London manager, Tom Norman. Allegedly, Barnum named Norman the 'Silver King' on account of his 'silver tongue'.<sup>5</sup> In return, Norman gave his son the middle name Barnum. P. T. Barnum also met Theodore Lent and Julia Pastrana, after one of her shows in 1857, where she 'would not take off the thick veil which covered her face until Mr. Lent came in'.<sup>6</sup> A few years later, Barnum was overseeing the display of Chang and Eng at his American Museum. By 1868, Barnum was overseeing their exhibitions in Britain.<sup>7</sup> It was on this tour that Chang and Eng allegedly formed a friendship with Francis Buckland, who wrote about Pastrana and would later write about Lambert.<sup>8</sup> Buckland was 'glad that the Siamese Twins have once more appeared before the public':

As a child I had heard much of them from my father; in the nursery we used to tie two kittens together and call them the 'Siamese Twins,' and I have a picture in my old scrap-book of the twins as they appeared in 1830.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Bondeson, *Freaks: The Pig-Faced Lady of Manchester Square & other Medical Marvels* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Man the Late Daniel Lambert, from his Birth to the Moment of his Dissolution; with an Account of Men Noted for their Corpulency, and a Short but Interesting Account of General Tom Thumb, 14 years old, 25 Inches High, and Weighing only 15 Pounds* (Stamford: M. Johnson & Son, 1846), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Philip B. Kunhardt Jr., Philip Kunhardt III and Peter Kunhardt, *P. T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), p. 160.

<sup>5</sup> Vanessa Toulmin, 'Norman, Tom (1860–1930)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/73081>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

<sup>6</sup> G. Van Hare, *Fifty Years of a Showman's Life; or, The Life and Travels of Van Hare* (London: W. H. Allen, 1888), p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> Kunhardt, Kunhardt and Kunhardt, *P. T. Barnum*, pp. 144-147.

<sup>8</sup> Irving Wallace and Amy Wallace, *The Two: A Biography* (London: Cassell, 1978), p. 275; Francis Buckland, 'Extraordinary Characters', *Land and Water*, 14:361 (1872), 412.

<sup>9</sup> Francis Buckland, 'The Siamese Twins', *Land and Water*, 7:161 (1869), 113.

On the front page of Buckland's personal scrapbook, as a token of interest and possibly friendship, he pasted a carte-de-visite of the twins.<sup>10</sup> Arthur Munby also saw Chang and Eng in their 1869 London exhibition: 'it is strange to see a human being who is not completely rounded off from every other: but the apparent duality here is much less than I expected'.<sup>11</sup> In 1865 Munby's future wife, the servant Hannah Cullwick, was given a treat by her mistress. She was taken to see Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren performing in Hastings with their fake child. Cullwick recorded in her diary: 'I thought the little lady was very proud and the little general rather vulgar in manner. I bought a card of the little pair for a shilling.'<sup>12</sup>

The agents of this thesis were connected by the phenomenon of freakery. London was often the space in which they met. It was a centrifugal force for freakery but it was not the only locality: New York, Paris, Hamburg, Denmark and Moscow were cities, amongst others, that accommodated an international freakery. By focusing on social constructions initially presented to a London public, where 'abortions and monstrosities of all sorts are pretty sure to find favour', this thesis has taken five performed identities in the tradition of freakery, considered how the social construction of these identities were formed and functioned, in what context they were constructed and analysed what this revealed about the phenomenon of freakery in nineteenth-century London.<sup>13</sup> The case studies were chosen to represent a set of discourses that defined the construction and presentation of freakery, while demonstrating how the freak show functions as an index for broader contemporaneous change.

By approaching freakery as an interconnected phenomenon to discourse and agency, the dichotomy between an onstage and offstage life has been questioned. The proposition that offstage 'realities' were distinct from onstage 'representations' has been challenged: the latter only existed as manifestations of the former. The offstage world was co-opted into the performance onstage, thus the archives providing a 'window' into offstage existence remain cultural productions that evade any clear elucidation into lived experience. The life of Charles Stratton, for example, is conveyed through ephemera relating to General Tom Thumb. Conversely, representations of Tom Thumb were brought to life through the performances of Stratton. Tom Thumb as a performed persona did not cease when Stratton left the stage. Furthermore, Tom Thumb was an identity constituted through the cultural strands of everyday cultural life: the fairy tales of Tom Thumb, the discourses of manliness

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<sup>10</sup> Royal College of Surgeons, London (RCSL), The Papers of Francis Buckland, Volume I MS0035/1/ VI-VII.

<sup>11</sup> Trinity College Library Cambridge, Papers of A. J. Munby (TCLC, MUNB), 37, 12 Friday 1869, n. p.

<sup>12</sup> Diane Atkinson, *Love and Dirt: The Marriage of Arthur Munby and Hannah Cullwick* (London: Macmillan, 2003), p. 137.

<sup>13</sup> *Era*, 19 July 1857, p. 11.

and gentlemanliness and the intensified commercial and capitalist forces. Performed and lived by Charles Stratton, Tom Thumb permeated the identity and agency of the performer. In the process, the 'reality' of Charles Stratton's lived experience offstage, like that of other performers, remains elusive. Rather, the social construction of Tom Thumb indexes broader social, cultural and economic changes occurring during the nineteenth century.

By focusing on the relationship between onstage and offstage realms, a critical lens has been applied to biographies. This has resulted in questioning the factual accuracy of some modern biographies but, more importantly, it has meant asking what contemporaneous life histories reveal about nineteenth-century cultural sensibilities. As cultural productions utilised for the social construction of freaks, biographies reveal contextual concerns. This thesis has argued that biographies of freak performers, presented in exhibition pamphlets, were crucial devices that fabricated freak identities. Biographies elucidated the role of character and personal history, beyond physiology, that were fundamental to the fabrication of freaks.

This thesis has stressed the numerous and various discourses that pervaded and permeated freakery. The display of exceptional bodies was dependent on broader cultural strands: freakery was not an autonomous field disconnected from contemporaneous debates and practices. Within the tradition of freakery, constructed identities were ambiguously comprised and ambivalently received. These identities have been explored beyond an Othering framework, highlighting the liminality and paradoxes at the heart of freak constructs. Rather than focus on the mid to late nineteenth century, this thesis explored the exhibition of physical difference across the nineteenth century. Pervasive freakery underpinned the argument that, while the display of human difference went from small-scale to large-scale commercial enterprises, exhibitions simultaneously penetrated milieus beyond exhibition halls. Freakery was embedded in numerous spaces, representations, perceptions and lives: centralised rather than marginalised in nineteenth-century culture.

## **Onstage and Offstage**

Michael Chemers identified Robert Bogdan's *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (1988) as the seminal study that inaugurated Freak Studies. As a developing field, Freak Studies has largely challenged a social discourse, rooted in a nineteenth-century 'social decency', which criticised the freak show on the grounds of offence caused to the public. This altered with the intellectual ferment of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement: attention was turned to freak performers and their supposed humiliation and exploitation. These arguments were advanced

at a time when the freak show was declining. According to Chemers, the maturation of Freak Studies began when three assumptions underpinning the discourse against freakery were challenged. These assumptions included the conviction that freakery reinforced normative hierarchies, that opposition was driven by a desire to dissolve those hierarchies and thus liberate disabled individuals from a history of exploitation and that the freak show reflected cultural depravity and unscrupulous curiosity.<sup>14</sup>

Although there remains dissenting voices, Freak Studies has largely challenged these assumptions.<sup>15</sup> In the process, the agency of the freak performer as an actor involved in highly stylised theatricality and performativity has been established. The freak body and the freak show became sites of celebration and politicised minority affirmation, a 'peculiarity as eminence', that had the power to disrupt oppressive social systems.<sup>16</sup> The freak was no longer pitied, marginalised or perceived as a simple victim of exploitative practices but rather 'an active agent', even an 'artist'.<sup>17</sup> These arguments comprised what has been called the 'second-wave' of Freak Studies, which drew on Disability Studies, Leslie Fielder's Freudian analysis and Bogdan's material exposition.<sup>18</sup> This 'second-wave' morphed into a 'third-wave' as scholars turned attention to the numerous discourses informing the construction of freaks: the intersection of narratives concerning race, gender, sexuality, nationality and disability.<sup>19</sup> In particular, the work of Nadja Durbach has moved the debate beyond disability reductionism, contextualising the freak as an able-bodied performer whose presentation was marked by a series of discourses that brought the freak into the centre of contemporaneous debates.<sup>20</sup>

Through an engagement with the interdisciplinary field of Freak Studies, I have attempted to shift the historiographical focus. I have avoided debates concerning the freak show's exploitative, liberating or subversive potential. I have resisted an approach which either centralises the life of a

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<sup>14</sup> Michael M. Chemers, 'Introduction Staging Stigma: A Freak Studies Manifesto', *Disability Quarterly Studies*, 25:3 (2005) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/574/751>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

<sup>15</sup> David A. Gerber, 'The "Careers" of People Exhibited in Freak Shows: The Problem of Volition and Valorization', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. by Rosemarie Garland Thomson (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 38-54.

<sup>16</sup> Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Chemers, *Staging Stigma*, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Adam P. Newman, review of *Conjoined Twins in Black and White: The Lives of Millie-Christine McKoy and Daisy and Violent Hilton*, ed. by Linda Frost, *Callaloo*, 35:3 (2012), 836-838; Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981); Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

<sup>19</sup> Newman, 'Conjoined Twins in Black and White', pp. 836-838.

<sup>20</sup> Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Chicago: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 14-21.

performer, as is common in modern biographies, or considers discourses at the expense of agency, which is common in Freak Studies. Instead, I have explored the interrelation between the agency of the freak performer, the discourses that constructed the freak and the practice of freakery across the nineteenth century. In particular, I have argued that freakery needs to be seen as a practice imbricated in everyday life; subsequently indexing broader social, cultural and economic changes.

This thesis has challenged the argument that ‘the onstage freak is something else off stage’.<sup>21</sup> This distinction has been propagated, yet underdeveloped, in a number of critical studies. The distinction between onstage and offstage existence may have arisen from a methodological overreliance on Erving Goffman. His dramaturgical model, concerned with modes of presentation assumed by an actor and their meaning in a broader social context, was essentially dichotomous. Goffman proposed the existence of ‘fronts’ that disguised some form of ‘authentic’ bodily and psychic reality.<sup>22</sup> His argument informed Bogdan’s emphasis on the presentation of freaks as a stylised act reliant on tradition and social arrangements.<sup>23</sup> Rosemarie Garland Thomson relied on Goffman’s theory of stigmatisation to direct attention to the social framing of disability.<sup>24</sup> Michael Chemers was clear that Goffman’s model allowed for an ‘analysis of the freak that separates the actor from the role’.<sup>25</sup>

From this premise, the freak performer was an artist who enacted their freakishness onstage. The performer adopted theatrical techniques, rhetoric, costume, sets and staging, that empowered and offered a space for resistance against existing stigmas. On stage, identity was acted rather than embodied, upholding the postmodernist premise that identity is constructed rather than essential.<sup>26</sup> This reading supported the social model of disability, which claimed that disability was the product of social relations rather than impairment.<sup>27</sup> This reading underscored the political attempts to humanise freak performers against the discourses that denied their humanity, rescuing the freak performer ‘hitherto visible only as a voiceless victim of conscienceless managers and gawping, degenerate audiences’.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 22-30.

<sup>23</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, p. 3, fn. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, pp. 30-32.

<sup>25</sup> Chemers, *Staging Stigma*, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 6; Marlene Tromp and Karyn Valerius, ‘Introduction: Toward Situating the Victorian Freak’, in *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. by Marlene Tromp (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2008), pp. 1-18.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Oliver, *The Politics of Disablement* (London: Macmillan Education, 1990), pp. 9-11, 22-24, 78-94.

<sup>28</sup> Chemers, *Staging Stigma*, p. 25; Rosemarie Garland Thomson, ‘Introduction: From Wonder to Error—A Genealogy of Freak Discourse in Modernity’, in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 1-22.

But the theoretical commitments in this thesis suggest that the offstage versus onstage is essentially a false dichotomy. It relies on an Enlightenment notion of agency concerning the autonomous subject: when an individual decides on some kind of action and carries it out; in other words, an independent agency which assumes that historical actors are units free from the contextual constraints in which they operated.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the distinction between offstage realities and onstage representations is analogous to dualisms between the body and discourse, materiality and metaphor and reality and construction that overlook their interconnections, dependencies and the inseparability of language and materiality. Thus, although this thesis has used the term 'freak performer' or 'performer' in opposition to the 'freak', Charles Stratton dichotomous to General Tom Thumb, it has done so for heuristic purposes only.

The inseparability of the freak and freak performer has also proven to be an empirical inevitability. Lambert's life was presented in eccentric biographies and life pamphlets with the intention of commercial publications to entertain and edify. There is only a single extant letter from Lambert, discussing hens and cocks.<sup>30</sup> The majority of Chang and Eng's letters were written by a manager whose motivations are unclear and whose words are only possible and partial representations, (or total misrepresentations), of the twins' concerns. Neither Lambert, Tom Thumb nor Pastrana left first-hand accounts of their experiences and it is not clear whether Merrick's autobiography was written by him, let alone reflected the 'reality' of his experiences and thoughts. Even if it was authored by Merrick, the alleged autobiography was sold in the milieu of the freak show: presenting a performance of freak subjectivity rather than a revelation of self. As Kerry Duff and Eric Fretz have highlighted, autobiographies connected to freakery were performances that constructed images: they were not translucent mirrors of human psyche or historical 'reality'.<sup>31</sup>

This is not to suggest that moments beyond the public stage are impossible to glean nor, indeed, that contemporary biographies should be disregarded. Joseph Andrew Orser, for example, effectively balanced a reading of Chang and Eng's life amidst the social, cultural and economic contexts that constructed their abnormality.<sup>32</sup> In this thesis, the chapter on Chang and Eng argued that lived experience impacted freakery as freakery impacted lived experience. Moreover, biographies are necessary for fathoming freakery because, as I have argued, to approach freakery is

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<sup>29</sup> William E. Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 21-26; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 23-24.

<sup>30</sup> Stamford Town Hall, Lincolnshire (STH), Daniel Lambert Folder F52LAM.

<sup>31</sup> Kerry Duff, 'Biographies of Scale', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 25:4 (2005) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/617/794>> [accessed 3 February 2016]; Eric Fretz, 'P. T. Barnum's Theatrical Selfhood and the Nineteenth-Century Culture of Exhibition' in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 97-107.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph Andrew Orser, *The Lives of Chang and Eng: Siam's Twins in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), pp. 9-36.

to approach a lived experience, however elusive that might be; hence each chapter in this thesis opened with a biographical sketch as a frame of reference. Nor do I propose a hyper-relativist postmodernist position: Lambert was a goal keeper; Chang and Eng did marry, father and own plantations in the American South; Stratton did wed Lavinia Warren; Pastrana was embalmed and Merrick entered and eventually died at the London Hospital. These things happened and they happened to real people. But they did not occur independently or autonomously of freakery. Indeed, there was no separate realm offstage, a fully accessible lived experience, as opposed to performances onstage.

Contemporary biographies have contributed to misrepresentations. The majority reduce performers to their physiology; others are explicitly sensationalist resurrecting the nineteenth-century exhibitory dynamics to create a literary spectacle; others directly use sources produced in the freak show and present them as fact; others lock the freak into a piteous discourse imputing modern sentiment onto the freak performer, thus revealing more about the biographer than the subject. Many biographies also make assertions about a performer's character, motivations and attitudes in an attempt to unearth the 'true' person. Jan Bondeson, for example, sought to uncover an authentic Lambert, positing conclusions about his personality which were recapitulated by Sander Gilman.<sup>33</sup> These personality profiles reflected contemporaneous strategies and presentations, thus transferring historical performance narratives into modern scholarship.

This transference was similarly evident in the elaborate tales of Chang and Eng's marriage to the Yates sisters, Tom Thumb's fight with a poodle at Buckingham Palace and Pastrana's idealised character: tales retold, analysed and accepted by contemporary scholars. In the chapter on Pastrana, the uncritical treatment of biographies obscured her freak show strategies: biographical obscurity was a fundamental pillar of her construction used to insinuate bestiality and destabilise Pastrana's humanity and femininity. Some critical readings even attributed motivations as revelations of agency. Holly Martin, for example, claimed Chang and Eng pursued a life of normalcy because they internalised the spectators' gaze, believing they were abnormal and thus searching for a life of normality. Deduced from Fatimah Tobing Rony's theory of the 'third eye', Martin's argument is not supported in the archives.<sup>34</sup> Chang and Eng left no statements supporting Martin's argument which, in the end, reconstructed Chang and Eng's agency through theoretical speculation.

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<sup>33</sup> Bondeson, *Freaks*, pp. 115-116; Sander L. Gilman, *Obesity: The Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Holly E. Martin, 'Chang and Eng Bunker, "The Original Siamese Twins": Living, Dying, and Continuing Under the Spectator's Gaze', *Journal of American Culture*, 34:2 (2011), 372-390.



According to Leonard Cassuto, the desire to unearth the 'truth' of character echoes the Freudian propensity within biographies to solve what Freud described as the 'riddle' of character, 'the first step in biography'. In other words, 'the biographer has to locate the subject's secret self'.<sup>35</sup> This assumes that a coherent authentic self is waiting to be found. It rests on the assumption that the performer can be wrenched from their life onstage. Moreover, the desire to reconstruct the inner lives of freak performers can result in dehumanisation as they become recapitulations of modern sensibilities and theoretical systems of thought. Any analysis reconstitutes the subject under scrutiny but, as Martin's argument illuminated, some more than others.

The focus on the correlations between onstage and offstage has meant centralising contemporaneous biographies which, presented in exhibition pamphlets, reflected the nineteenth-century 'Age of Biography' in which they existed.<sup>36</sup> Biographies established a frame of reference that communicated meaning about a performer. Performed identities were imbued with a history and thus presented with individuality. Uniqueness was not simply registered at the level of physiology, but was framed within a life history that demonstrated character amidst social pressure and challenging experience. Biographies could also imbue exhibits with elevated status: in the case of Lambert and Tom Thumb, biographies were presented as forms of pedagogy that instructed the public in right values and comportment. Biographies also turned seemingly private affairs into tales for public consumption. Whether communicating the family history of Lambert, Pastrana or Merrick, or outlining the marriages of Chang, Eng and Tom Thumb, their lives beyond the stage were aligned with their public performance. These stories worked to construct the exhibited identity: anecdotes about Lambert's life, such as his alleged fight with a bear, were designed to construct a brave and agile Lambert. Chang and Eng's freakery developed in line with events in their life: becoming sole proprietors of their travelling exhibitions changed the tone of their exhibitions as they asserted their 'own direction'.<sup>37</sup> When Chang and Eng became husbands and fathers, their domestic world was brought into their public performances: their wives and children displayed to assert their claim to normality. To perceive freakery entails gleaning perpetually changing lived experience.

Freakery, as such, was a dynamic, evolutionary performance contingent on the lives of performers. But the offstage Charles Stratton, for example, merged with the onstage General Tom Thumb. Stratton's biography was told by Barnum to reflect the stories of the literary Tom Thumb: both

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<sup>35</sup> Leonard Cassuto, 'The Silhouette and the Secret Self: Theorizing Biography in Our Times', *American Quarterly*, 58:4 (2006), 1249-1261 (p. 1251).

<sup>36</sup> Richard D. Altick, *Lives and Letters: A History of Literary Biography in England and America* (New York: Alfred. A. Knopf, 1966), p. 77.

<sup>37</sup> [James W. Hale], *A Few Particulars Concerning Chang-Eng, The United Siamese Brothers, Published Under Their Own Direction* (New York: John M. Elliott, 1836).

subject to adventures on the basis of their size; both battling with animals, a dog and cat respectively; both owners of miniature carriages, pulled by Shetland ponies and mice respectively; both favourites of the English court; and both embroiled in romantic tales involving jealousy. The interconnection between Stratton, General Tom Thumb and the fairy-tale Tom Thumb was a hallmark of all the performers in this thesis: they existed interdependently with their freak representations. This, in turn, meant the voices of performers, divorced from their public profiles, were largely absent. When they do surface in the historical archives, they are almost always made through the prism of freak identities.

Julia Pastrana left no account detailing her perspectives on performance, life or love. Her words were attributions, such as the claim that Lent “loved me for my own sake”, or were open to question, such as her interview with a German reporter who queried the veracity of Pastrana’s account and suspected Lent’s influence. Whether alleged or ‘real’, the biographical mystery surrounding Pastrana’s origins insinuated bestiality and informed her construction as an animalistic creature. As her life came to an end, her freakery continued as *The Embalmed Nondescript*: ‘the greatest scientific curiosity ever exhibited in London’.<sup>38</sup> For Merrick, like Pastrana, the alleged experience of his mother, frightened by elephants, informed Merrick’s construction as *The Elephant Man*. On the basis of maternal impressions, his mother’s fright by ‘an elephant when in a Delicate State of Health’ defined his freak show title.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Merrick’s biography was used as the basis from which his life and character were constructed, establishing in the process a series of *Elephant Men*.

Performers were linked, and often agents of success, in the lives of others. Lambert was presented as an autonomous figure but the articles published, portraits executed and the carriage constructed suggest that other agents were involved in his exhibitions. The career of Chang and Eng was reliant on Robert Hunter, the Coffins, James Hale and Charles Harris. Barnum widely advertised his success on the basis of his relationship with Tom Thumb. He declared in 1873: ‘you have all heard of my three New York Museums; my appearance before kings, queens, and royal courts, with Gen. Tom Thumb’.<sup>40</sup> When Barnum’s *Greatest Show on Earth* came to London in 1889, it was still being proclaimed that Barnum ‘owes much of his success’ to Tom Thumb.<sup>41</sup> Barnum even created a framed Tom Thumb Memorial Archive filled with a letter, medallion, images of Tom Thumb and a picture of

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<sup>38</sup> WLL, Oversize Ephemera EPH+33:4; *Standard*, 5 May 1862, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Tom Norman and George Barnum Norman, *The Penny Showman: Memoirs of Tom Norman ‘Silver King’* (London: Privately Published, 1985), p. 104.

<sup>40</sup> The Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, Connecticut (TBMB), Box Circus to 1900, 2551, *Harper’s Weekly*, 29 March 1873, p. 254.

<sup>41</sup> TBMB, Barnum Investments #1, 2012.11.4, *The District Railway Authorised Guide to Olympia*.

Barnum. Underneath the image of Tom Thumb in his Highland costume Barnum wrote: 'General Tom Thumb as he appeared in my public exhibition of him in Europe 1858.'<sup>42</sup> The memorial, completed two years before Barnum's death, serves as a memento of their personal relationship and the importance of Stratton to Barnum.

Freakery, then, was more than display and discourse but involved intimate personal relationships. Pastrana featured in the scrapbooks and diaries of the naturalist Francis Buckland and the civil servant Arthur Munby. In testament to Pastrana's appeal, both Buckland and Munby wrote about their experience after seeing the live Pastrana. Buckland continued to use Pastrana in his lectures. In his private scrapbook, Buckland placed Pastrana's photograph alongside intimate letters from his mother to her 'dear little Boy', demonstrating how the freak body could penetrate the familial and personal sphere of a spectator.<sup>43</sup> For Munby, photographs were memories to which he constantly returned: sometimes he cut himself out of photographs in which he originally appeared, at other times he coloured images by hand.<sup>44</sup> He meticulously documented his photographs: writing references, notes and dates on the back of images.<sup>45</sup>

This ongoing inspection was similarly enacted in Munby's diaries where he wrote indexes or returned to pencilled jottings and rewrote them in pen.<sup>46</sup> By recording Pastrana in detail, purchasing her photograph and touching her body, Munby brought The Baboon Lady into his ongoing process of observing, documenting, correcting and recollecting encounters. Merrick, on the other hand, was used in the act of self-glorification and self-defence. Both Treves and Norman returned to their relationship with Merrick and asserted their alleged benevolence in his story. Merrick was imbued in Treves' and Norman's sense of professional worth. The freak show was read both as a benevolent space helping to realise masculine self-reliance and an exploitative arena contributing to Merrick's charitable status or Otherness: constructions which reflected different subjective positions.

### **Embodied Ambiguity**

The freak, then, was a social construction without inherent meaning. The freak could be created and received in different ways depending on historical context and subjective positioning. The freak, as such, generates a profusion of possible meanings and significances. I have argued, nonetheless, that

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<sup>42</sup> TBMB, Barnum's Tom Thumb Memorial Archive 1135.

<sup>43</sup> RCSL, The Papers of Francis Buckland, Volume I MS0035/1-9.

<sup>44</sup> TCLC, MUNB, Albums of photographs, 114, 4a (ii); 119, 19; 113, 20d.

<sup>45</sup> TCLC, MUNB, Albums of photographs, 113, 17G.

<sup>46</sup> TCLC, MUNB, 4, index, n. p.; TCLC, MUNB, 97, Book 6, 16 September, n. p.

the freak identities in this thesis all disrupted structural dualisms and thus engendered ambivalent responses. The freak's embodiment of ambiguity was closely aligned to the permeating phenomenon of freakery: it was on the basis of synthesised opposites that the freak was an open space which attracted a plethora of agents, discourses, practices and professions. The role of language and ambivalence has been explored in this thesis, highlighting a dilemma succinctly noted by Zygmunt Bauman:

Ambivalence, the possibility of assigning an object or an event to more than one category, is a language-specific disorder: a failure of the naming (segregating) function that language is meant to perform.<sup>47</sup>

Language classifies and segregates entities but the term 'freak', and associated terms like 'freakery' and 'enfreakment', manifest the language disorder noted by Bauman: the freak was a constructed entity that straddled, compressed and dissolved categories. As such, the term 'freak' is one of ambivalence as much as signifying a representation denoted by ambivalence. The label 'freak' reflects the impossibility of the representation being confined to a single category. The term encapsulates the ambivalence of the freak as a definition and as a subject because the freak was both of these at once. Ambivalence becomes, therefore, an argument mounted in reference to the social construction of freakery but ambivalence is also a linguistic presence in this very thesis.

Ambivalence as a 'language-specific disorder' was effectively captured in the exhibition pamphlet accompanying a lecture on Julia Pastrana: 'Language fails us when we attempt to depict the mingled sensations that filled our minds.'<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Lambert's pamphlet stressed the 'wonder and surprise' experienced when viewing the prodigious Fat Man.<sup>49</sup> Tom Thumb's pamphlet returned to the corresponding problem of language: he was 'not easily described, partaking of that class of mixed emotions which are felt, but which language has not been able to explain'.<sup>50</sup> A response to the problem of language was to place the freak within an alternate reality: Munby's poem, *Pastrana*, placed her in a faunlike dwelling. Tom Thumb was described 'as a being of some other sphere' and

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<sup>47</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Anon., *Account of Miss Pastrana, The Nondescript; and the Double-Bodied Boy* (London: E. Hancock, 1860), p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man, the Late Daniel Lambert. From his Birth to the Moment of his Dissolution, with an Account of Men Noted for their Corpulency, and other Interesting Matter* (Stamford: J. Drakard, 1809), p. 27.

<sup>50</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton, The American Man in Miniature, known as General Tom Thumb, Twelve Years Old, Twenty-Five Inches High, and Weighing Only Fifteen Pounds. With some Account of Remarkable Dwarfs, Giants, and other Human Phenomena, of Ancient and Modern Times. Also, General Tom Thumb's Songs* (London: T. Brettell, 1845), p. 9.

connected to the fairy tales of the literary Tom Thumb.<sup>51</sup> For Chang, Eng and Merrick, the linguistic ambivalence reflected a medical limitation: numerous terms were given to their 'condition' because medicine had yet to fully comprehend and categorise their unique physiology. Indeed, the failure of medical language to contain Merrick's corporeality contributed to a gothic and romantic discourse in Treves' account.<sup>52</sup>

This problem of language manifested the embodied ambiguity of the public identities in freakery. Lambert was the ideal gentleman ambivalently straddling social and moral definitions of the term, while encompassing divergent notions of manliness. Lambert was both an exhibited Fat Man and a caricature extolling the virtues of English liberty. Chang and Eng were exotic and medical Others, but not quite: markers of normality, distinctions between Siam and China, new definitions of monstrosity and the context of anatomy and natural history acquisitions troubled their status as simple Others. Tom Thumb was a paradoxical construct: a peculiar body exemplifying perfected symmetry and proportionality, a gentleman undermined by masculinity and infantilism. Tom Thumb was a social being but rooted in a rich literary tradition. Pastrana was feminine, masculine and bestial. Ambivalence and ambiguity defined the reactions of Buckland and Munby but Buckland could praise Pastrana as a wonderful manifestation of God's design despite the repulsive appearance he perceived. Munby could admit her feminine markers but overwhelmingly responded with disgust at the thought of a bestial-human product. Merrick's ambiguity was reflected in his numerous constructions as an individual realising self-reliance in the freak show, a deserving dependent in need of help, a tragic figure in need of salvation and an imprisoned creature longing for independence.

The freak was more than the sum of corporeal parts. Lambert was not just a Fat Man but a benevolent, compassionate gentleman whose physiological difference did not sully nor reflect his moral character. Indeed, on the basis of Lambert's character, he was extolled as a 'model worthy of general imitation'.<sup>53</sup> In Chang and Eng's early performances, they were childlike and passive subjects which reflected a strand of nineteenth-century colonialism that collapsed colonised people into the figure of the child.<sup>54</sup> Tom Thumb, much like Lambert, exemplified gentlemanliness and manliness. Part of the appeal derived from Tom Thumb's roguish and gentlemanly behaviour within the body of a child. Pastrana was constructed as charitable because she, or Lent, offered the 'entire proceeds' of

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<sup>51</sup> Anon., *An Account of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton*, p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic at the Fin-De-Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 49-50.

<sup>53</sup> Anon., *The Life of that Wonderful and Extraordinary Heavy Man*, p. 28.

<sup>54</sup> Bill Ashcroft, 'Primitive and Wingless: The Colonial Subject as Child', in *Dickens and the Children of Empire*, ed. by Wendy S. Jacobson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 184-202.

an evening show to 'perpetuate' the memory of a popular wit and dramatist.<sup>55</sup> Merrick's constructions as different Elephant Men functioned to articulate versions of his character. Crucially, all these performers in the tradition of freakery were fabricated on the basis of moral or mental attributes. The body served as a marker of difference but character presented signifiers of conventionality. Freakery was not a Bacchanalian celebration of flesh but a carefully managed performance in which the freak was presented with a personality, comportment and a life history.

At times the freak was presented as emblematic of normative beings. The freak was exceptional yet assimilated to an extent that undermined its potential Otherness. The eccentric was perceived in degrees rather than absolutes: a correspondent to the norm rather than a binary opposite.

Lambert's corpulence ceased to be Other when assimilated into representations of Englishness. He was a fat national icon in opposition to the emaciated French. Chang and Eng were perceived as monstrous but this was connected to a new understanding that deviations were part of the normal scheme of nature. Chang and Eng were entities within broader normative markets of corpse commodification, natural history exchanges and networks of imperialism. As their presentations progressed they began to assert their regularity: visualisations depicted them with increased markers of Western normality, while displaying their families evoked claims to masculinity.

As Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth Wilson argued, the 'norm' existed as an all-encompassing phenomenon: it was neither stable, immobile, restrictive nor exclusive, but a flexible, multivalent category that accommodated difference.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the case studies in this thesis have indexed how normative notions changed over time and need to be frozen within a specific historical epoch in order to explore their influence on freakery. Furthermore, freak representations manifested elements of normativity, troubling the assumption that freakery exists as an antinormative paradigm. As I have argued, freaks could even become normative beings praised for their exemplification of normative notions such as domesticity, English identity, masculinity and gentlemanly character. Tom Thumb, for example, performed in the American Museum as a 'dwarf' but he became renowned as an actor. By the time of his death in 1883, as Eric Lehman highlighted, the *Daily Los Angeles Herald* proclaimed that 'General Tom was probably better known than any man in the United States'. The *Herald* used the word 'man', rather than 'midget', 'dwarf' or 'freak',

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<sup>55</sup> *Morning Post*, 7 August 1857, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth A. Wilson, 'Introduction: Antinormativity's Queer Conventions', *Differences*, 26:1 (2015), 1-25.

as Stratton was 'by almost any standard the most popular performer of the century'.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Stratton's physiological exceptionality was presented as expressive of bodily perfection.

On the other hand, Pastrana was billed as The Nondescript, Bear and Baboon Lady but it was claimed that the feminine predominated over the bestial with considerable attention focused on her corporeal conformity and sexuality. Merrick was arguably the most extreme case of physiological difference, yet even his constructions uttered claims to normality that positioned him as self-reliant, masculine and respectable. His autobiography emphasised familial rejection, which in turn supported notions of the bourgeois family through the figures of a benevolent uncle and deceased mother in opposition to the evil stepmother and outcast orphan. Furthermore, Merrick's autobiography concluded with a plea for judgement to be made on the basis of character rather than physiology. Indeed, the whole pamphlet worked to assert Merrick's normative status despite his exceptional body.

These public identities in the tradition of freakery, ambiguously constructed and ambivalently received, exemplified oxymoronic representations which generated polymorphic beings. Lambert was presented as a Fat Man, an eccentric, a gentleman, a humourist, a Falstaff and a John Bull. Chang and Eng were foreigners, medical anomalies, Southern gentlemen, fathers and husbands. Tom Thumb was a literary figure rooted in fairy tales, a gentleman, a virile man, a child and an actor beyond his physical difference. Pastrana was feminine, charitable, bestial and a lifeless embalmed being, perceived as representing God's wonderful creation or a Darwinian problem engendering disgust. Similarly, there was never one Elephant Man but a series of Elephant Men. This all suggests a commonality in freak representations: there was never an identity. The freak was a source of instability and multiple readings as they reflected a series of composite elements.

The freak, then, lacked an inherent identity. It was a dependent arising phenomenon constituted through various scripts, such as 'gesture, costume, and staging' as Rachel Adams argued, and three additional narratives identified by Thomson: the oral spiel or 'lecture', the textual accounts and the visual materials that disseminated freak representations.<sup>58</sup> These narratives were formulated, as I have argued, through the cultural strands of everyday life. But the response of spectators is missing in this amalgam of elements fabricating the freak. The process of perception imbued freak representations with meaning. In the chapter on Pastrana, I argued that perception cannot be

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<sup>57</sup> Eric D. Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb: Charles Stratton, P. T. Barnum, and the Dawn of American Celebrity* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), p. ix.

<sup>58</sup> Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.*, p. 6; Thomson, 'Introduction', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 1-22 (p. 7).

assumed from a reading of the fabricated freak alone: there was not a straight continuum between representation and reception.

Meanings altered as they were read through the prism of subjective positions. Munby experienced disgust, Buckland responded with wonder; Munby concentrated on the simian presence in Pastrana's performances, Buckland dwelled on the process of embalming, but both were united in their sense of ambivalence and pleasure when viewing Pastrana. Further research exploring individual responses to freakery would prove illuminating. A consideration of spectator reception offers the possibility of complicating readings of freak representations: it would add the element of reception to the process of fabricating freaks, possibly disrupting further teleological accounts and expanding the range of questions and approaches to the subject bringing, for example, the history of emotions to Freak Studies.

Nonetheless, the freak's lack of inherent existence contributed to the permeability of freakery as argued in this thesis. As an open space in which various interpretations and meanings could be imputed and gleaned, the freak was serviceable to different agents, practices and professions. Anatomy and science approached the freak as a physiological entity and used freak performers to explore and fathom medical conditions or to bolster professional status by association. Public identities in the tradition of freakery were used for a number of other functions: ethnographers and anthropologists approached the freak to confirm and observe supposed racial hierarchies; families enjoyed the freak as respectable entertainment; publishers, businesses, showmen and photographers promoted freakery for commercial gain; authors used freakery to bolster characterisations, to propel dramatic plots, to offer insights into human subjectivity or social realities; commentators used freakery to forward critiques about the state of entertainment, culture and taste.<sup>59</sup>

Therein lies the opportunity and challenge when confronting freaks: a profusion of empirical and analytical possibilities. Throughout this thesis I have suggested the numerous ways in which a public identity within the tradition of freakery could be analysed. As a permeating, pervasive, generative and open phenomenon, freakery presents the historian with multiple opportunities for analysis. However, this thesis has highlighted the hegemonic discourses that brought normative notions within the realms of bodily difference. Lambert was enmeshed in a discourse of eccentricity and Englishness. Like Tom Thumb, Lambert was fabricated around notions of masculinity and gentlemanliness, while Tom Thumb was additionally presented on the basis of infantilism, economic

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<sup>59</sup> Erin O'Connor, *Raw Material: Producing Pathology in Victorian Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 155-158.



worth and the craze for fairy tales. Chang and Eng were defined by medical and Orientalist discourses; their freakery and lived experience interdependent. Pastrana was constructed on the basis of colonial and sexual motifs, her mother's Root-Digger tribe presenting the possibility of bestial copulation. Munby's response illuminated the emotion of disgust; Buckland centralised the role of wonder. Merrick, on the other hand, was tied to broader discourses concerned with masculinity, self-help, charity and medicine. Moreover, all the agents of this thesis had biographies that were central to the fabrication of their freakery.

By observing the discourses that informed the construction of freakery, the freak becomes an index for broader cultural, social and economic changes. Each case study has honed analysis into a set of discursive trends that accounted for the fabrication of the freak identity. The case studies have illuminated characteristics in specific historical epochs: the early nineteenth-century proliferation of eccentric biographies and the practice of physiognomy, the problem of corpse acquisition for anatomists in the 1820s, the craze for fairies in the 1830s and 1840s, the birth of the 'norm' in the 1840s, the intensification of commercialisation and advertisement from the 1840s, the proliferation of Darwinism in the 1860s, the popularisation of *carte-de-visite* in the same decade and the spread of self-help and institutionalism in the latter nineteenth century.

The case studies have also enabled the charting and evaluation of wider contemporaneous developments. This thesis has noted shifts in definitions of gentlemanliness from a social to a moral category, the changing notions of monstrosity and eccentricity, the prevalence of life histories in nineteenth-century culture, the advancement of masculinity as a marker of physical athleticism, the rise of character as a social condition that could be learnt, the ambiguous role of Orientalism, the debates concerning monogenesis and polygenesis, the rise of imperialism, capitalism and commercial forces, the professionalisation of medicine within proliferating institutions and changes in entertainment taste that contributed to the declining status of freakery. These chronological evaluations have also problematised teleological accounts. As evidenced in Buckland's response to Pastrana, modernity did not simply usher in a secularisation that displaced wonder with error or marvels with pathology. Rather, through a close reading of personal assumptions, 'God's handiwork' was still perceived in freakery, natural theology still operative and the freak engendering the emotional response of wonder.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> RCSL, The Papers of Francis Buckland, Volume II MS0035/2.7.

## Exhibiting Freakery

While indexing societal change across the nineteenth century, this thesis has also explored the broader display of exceptional bodies. This thesis has noted a series of commonalities: the healthy body, for example, was a constant trope ensuring a 'healthy curiosity' and a respectable display.<sup>61</sup> Entertainment alongside respectability was another consistent theme: Lambert's social setting in which visitors conversed with the Fat Man; the eccentric biographies mixing entertainment with edification; the performances of Chang, Eng, Tom Thumb and Pastrana in establishments catering to the whole family and Norman's assertions of Merrick's humanity helped to ensure a freakery of decorum that avoided the charges of licentiousness and depravity. The suppression of fairs and spectacular exhibitions, the angst ignited by Haydon's suicide, which was blamed on the success of Tom Thumb, and the censorship of Merrick's London exhibition highlighted the cultural fears concerning freakery.

In response, exhibitions of freakery asserted their respectability. Lambert's exhibitions deployed mechanisms to promote a freakery of propriety: a shilling entrance fee, a respectable location and, along with Chang, Eng, Tom Thumb and Pastrana, Lambert pitched his exhibitions to the 'Nobility and Gentry'.<sup>62</sup> Lambert, Chang, Eng, Tom Thumb and Pastrana all performed in the respectable West End, utilising the urban environment to present a respectable exhibition. Merrick, on the other hand, was displayed for two pence in a show-shop in the notorious East End. But once he entered the London Hospital, Merrick was visited by an array of socially distinguished individuals, including the Prince and Princess of Wales, which continued the tradition of association between royalty and freakery.

Freakery and children were also connected: Pastrana's 1857 exhibition, for example, emphasised that 'Ladies & Children are highly amused at her strange appearance, her Dancing and Singing'.<sup>63</sup> By 1865, Barnum claimed he was 'made rich by catering for the children'.<sup>64</sup> Of course, Charles Stratton was only a child when he performed as General Tom Thumb and, like Barnum, Chang and Eng had no scruples when it came to exhibiting their own children. Moreover, women were assured that the exhibitions were conducive to their sensibilities: 'the most fastidious female will find nothing in the exhibition, which is calculated to wound her delicate feelings', according to Chang and Eng's

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<sup>61</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, p. 27.

<sup>62</sup> *Morning Post*, 7 August 1857, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> WLL, Ephemeral Collection EPH+33:3.

<sup>64</sup> A. H. Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 140.

exhibition pamphlet.<sup>65</sup> Norman responded to the prevalent fear of maternal impressions and warned women in a 'Delicate State of Health' not to attend the exhibition.<sup>66</sup> Lambert, Chang, Eng, Tom Thumb, Pastrana and Merrick were all graced with female company. The need to alleviate fears and attract women was enhanced as they became key consumers of urban recreation with some freak shows even offering private viewing rooms 'for ladies only'.<sup>67</sup> This all contributed to the dialectic between entertainment and edification that underpinned the majority of freak shows.

Alongside these commonalities was a broader shift in the practice of freakery as it went from a small-scale phenomenon to a larger commercial enterprise during the nineteenth century. While Lambert was displayed in privately rented apartments, at the end of the century freaks could be seen within an international 'freak industry' connected to the emergent entertainment industry. By 1829, Chang and Eng had moved from Lambert's private apartments into the commercial venue of the Egyptian Hall with exhibitions overseen by a series of managers. When Chang and Eng became sole proprietors of their displays, they hired their own managers and diligently recorded their own income and expenditure. They underwent international campaigns and performed in a mixture of commercial museums alongside preindustrial sites, such as taverns, inns and hotels.

Tom Thumb represented a turning point. His manager, P. T. Barnum, forged an international entertainment empire with freakery as a consistent, integrated and crucial component. As James Cook suggested, the globalisation of American entertainment is often perceived as a twentieth-century phenomenon. But Barnum demonstrates an earlier trend in the nineteenth-century tradition of freakery.<sup>68</sup> Tom Thumb was displayed in a plethora of commercial venues run on capitalist lines, the American Museum marking the site from which Tom Thumb was propelled into international celebrity. Barnum developed overseas connections and utilised foreign markets to promote Tom Thumb abroad and Barnum's business ventures at home.

Tom Thumb performed as part of a collective of freak performers, overseen by a burgeoning company of employees hired by Barnum. Tom Thumb went on world tours traversing the globe from Scotland to Australia, Japan to Cuba. While Lambert, Chang and Eng developed businesses outside of freakery, Tom Thumb was a full-time professional freak performer. His display marked the movement of a trajectory from single, small-scale exhibitions to multiple, larger-scale commercial

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<sup>65</sup> [James W. Hale], *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Siamese Twin Brothers, from Actual Observations, Together with Full Length Portraits, the Only Correct Ones, Permitted to be Taken by Their Protectors* (London: W. Turner, 1830), p. 13.

<sup>66</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader: Nothing Else Like It in the Universe*, ed. by James W. Cook (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 7.

enterprises. But it was not a linear, uniform or absolute trajectory. Merrick demonstrated the multiple forms in which freakery occurred: he was displayed in a small-scale, temporary venue as an individual freak and he also performed in music halls that were part of a broader entertainment industry.

The increasingly organised and professionalised display of freakery was matched by a diffusion of freakery beyond the exhibition hall. Criers, show cloths, posters, photographs and souvenirs took freakery into the streets and homes of nineteenth-century London. The means and magnitude by which promotional materials were disseminated increased as the century progressed. The crudely illustrated show cloths gave way to billposters, which proliferated in the 1830s and 1840s, then cartes-de-visite from the 1860s. Colour and specialist typefaces were introduced in promotional materials by the end of the century. From the mid-nineteenth century, as advertisement boomed, freak representations proliferated within a burgeoning commodity culture. Advertisements littered the streets of London, which led to a growth in the size of billposters to ensure impact and the development of new ways of advertising.<sup>69</sup>

The showman Albert Smith deployed posters, handbills and sent dispatches to the press when showing his panoramic entertainment, *The Ascent of Mont Blanc*, at the Egyptian Hall in 1852. But Smith also used commercial sponsorship, sold souvenirs and merchandise and introduced a quadrille and polka named after the entertainment. Barnum, who claimed Smith as his mentor, used similar advertising techniques when he brought Tom Thumb to London: ensuring that the Tom Thumb Polka was heard everywhere and utilising all press outlets to promote the show.<sup>70</sup> But despite these developments, as Merrick's exhibition highlighted, older modes of advertisement were still deployed: the oral spiels outside the exhibition space and show cloths to garner attention were not totally displaced by the increasingly sophisticated, aggrandised and novel means of advertisement.

When Bogdan signalled the 1840s as the period that witnessed the birth of the freak show as a 'formally organized exhibition', he also presented the decade when these spaces were dissolved.<sup>71</sup> The freak show was more than a formally organised exhibition within a specific site. Performers were found in eccentric biographies, life pamphlets, autobiographies, political caricatures, clothes denoting the absent performer, (or displays of Tom Thumb's miniature carriage), waxworks, embalmed figures, medical casts, pub signs, handbills, playbills, posters, numerous forms of

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<sup>69</sup> Sadiyah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 47-63; Michael Twyman, *Printing 1779-1970: An Illustrated History of its Development and Uses in England* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970), pp. 36-84.

<sup>70</sup> Mike Simkin, 'Albert Smith: Entrepreneur and Showman', *Living Pictures*, 1:1 (2001), 18-28.

<sup>71</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, p. 10.

photographic print, engravings, souvenirs, newspapers, visiting cards, entertainment programmes, children's literature, private diaries, poems, fiction, periodicals and journals. The freak show was not simply a spectacle confined to the exhibition hall but a porous arena that seeped into the streets and homes of nineteenth-century London. Freakery collapsed the contours of an exhibition space taking the freak performance into new sites and establishing new forms of spectatorship.

Barry Reay coined the term 'permasexuality' in opposition to Peter Bailey's 'parasexuality'. The latter was denoted in the character of the barmaid who suggested a form of Victorian sexuality that was open but not conclusive, flirtatious but never fully sexually realised. 'Permasexuality', on the other hand, conveyed a sexualisation that permeated all facets of nineteenth-century cultural life, including the perceptions of historical agents.<sup>72</sup> Permasexuality was sexuality interconnected, dispersed and omnipresent in the multiple strands that comprised Victorian life. To adopt Reay's terminology, it could be suggested that the nineteenth century also experienced a 'permafreakery': a pervasive, adaptable and polymorphic performance of constructed abnormality, which fuelled and relied upon the operative 'permasexuality'.

But the dispersal of freakery did not mitigate the centrality of freak performers in cultural life. Peter Stallybrass, Allon White, Victoria Carroll and Fiona Pettit have all used Barbara Babcock's argument that 'what is socially peripheral is so often symbolically central' when discussing social outcasts.<sup>73</sup> Pettit, for example, used this conclusion as a premise to assert the social marginalisation of freaks alongside their centralised generative legacies in late nineteenth-century culture.<sup>74</sup> But while the symbolic centrality of freakery is beyond doubt, evidenced in their proliferation through representational forms and their connection to discourses, the extent to which freaks should always be seen as socially peripheral is questionable. They were able-bodied performers engaged in employment. They were not the socially marginalised 'infirm', 'crippled' and 'disabled'.<sup>75</sup> Freak performers engaged in performances that became integrated within the emergent entertainment industry. They often graced the minor and major theatres of London. Moreover, as Pettit suggested, the UK tours of the *Barnum and Bailey Circus* in 1889, 1897 and 1899 presented freaks almost as the

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<sup>72</sup> Barry Reay, *Watching Hannah: Sexuality, Horror and Bodily De-formation in Victorian England* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), pp. 164-165.

<sup>73</sup> Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 20; Victoria Carroll, *Science and Eccentricity: Collecting, Writing and Performing Science for Early Nineteenth-Century Audiences* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), pp. 4-6; Fiona Yvette Pettit, 'Freaks in Late Nineteenth-Century British Media and Medicine' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2012), p. 33.

<sup>74</sup> Pettit, 'Freaks', pp. 20-32.

<sup>75</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 14-21.

‘main attraction in the show’.<sup>76</sup> Freak performers were seen and discussed by rich and poor alike, celebrated as actors and pedagogic agents. Even royalty paid homage to freakery. Tom Thumb was one of the first international celebrities.

But there was a difference in status conferred. Lambert and Tom Thumb were buried and laid to rest, their funerals attracting large crowds of admirers (or curiosity-seekers). Chang, Eng and Merrick were dissected and displayed to medical men. Pastrana’s freakery assumed a new form as she was displayed to paying audiences as *The Embalmed Nondescript*. It is noteworthy that the dissected and embalmed bodies had been placed within racial hierarchies during life: Chang and Eng as Orientals, Pastrana as a possible distinct species and Merrick, like Pastrana, closer to the animal kingdom on a racial hierarchy. Their subsequent treatment in death suggests a lack of status not attributable to the Western Lambert and Tom Thumb. Moreover, while Lambert and Tom Thumb represented the human figure magnified and miniaturised in scale, Chang, Eng, Pastrana and Merrick demonstrated corporeal abnormalities arguably more acute and differentiated from the standardised body.

Their dissections, during the latter part of the nineteenth century, occurred when an emergent institutional culture assumed greater authority over the anomalous body. There were calls for this development during Tom Thumb’s display in 1844: at the height of ‘Deformito-Mania’, after the suicide of the English painter Robert Haydon, the author Angus Bethune Reach demanded that ‘the secrecy of private dwelling or public asylum enwrap’ the freak performer.<sup>77</sup> This became an increased reality as medicine professionalised and assumed greater authority. As Michel Foucault argued, the ‘great confinement’ isolated deviance within institutional structures that imposed the bourgeois ideology of work and self-discipline.<sup>78</sup> These centres of confinement increasingly appropriated the anomalous body, evidenced in Merrick’s confinement at the London Hospital. At the same time, the freak show’s respectability was challenged, reflected in the licensing laws of the London County Council which targeted showmen.

During Chang and Eng’s first display in London, between 1829 and 1830, medicine forged a mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationship with freakery. In 1829, professions were still forming and had yet to resemble modern scientific disciplines or specialities: pathology, for example, was part of everyday practice within clinical medicine and would not become a separate discipline until the advent of

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<sup>76</sup> Pettit, ‘Freaks’, p. 78.

<sup>77</sup> Raymund Fitzsimons, *Barnum in London* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1969), p. 137.

<sup>78</sup> Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 35-60.

microscopy.<sup>79</sup> Areas of study were interrelated: medicine, anatomy, surgery, pathology and natural philosophy consistently crossed paths as new sciences were forming. The comparative anatomist George Cuvier, who dissected Sara Baartman and attended the dissection of the Parodi Twins, was also one of the founding influences in the development of scientific palaeontology.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, the term 'scientist' was not coined until 1833, when William Whewell used the term to distinguish students studying the material world.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, the discipline of ethnography only emerged in the 1830s and 1840s as the terms 'ethnology', 'ethnographic' and 'ethnological' were introduced, signalling the professionalisation of the field.<sup>82</sup> It was within the permeability of interests and indeterminate professional boundaries that freakery could nestle within interconnected fields of interest.

By the time of Merrick's display, however, disciplines were increasingly defined and professionalised. The relationship between freakery and medicine had shifted from mutual public endorsement during Chang and Eng's 1839-1830 performances to outright hostility between Treves and Norman in the 1920s. The freak show was perceived as a separate remit to the hospitals, asylums, workhouses and prisons that isolated deviancy. Just as punishment moved from public spaces into institutional environments, so pressure mounted for exceptional bodies to move from public displays to sites for the study of pathology.<sup>83</sup> Merrick's confinement at the London Hospital signalled a trend that continued into the twentieth century. Deborah Cohen noted a similar development in the treatment of mentally deficient children: during the Victorian period, renowned for its self-confidence, optimism and sense of progress, 'imbeciles' were seen as poor fools to be pitied, reformed, cured and improved. By the end of the century, however, attempts to 'cure' had largely failed and hereditarian beliefs turned the 'imbecile' into a national danger as idiocy, it was believed, could be transmitted down the generations. As such, the 'idiot' became a source of shame who questioned the mental and bodily soundness of the parents. Cohen argued that the Victorians had a greater acceptance of variation, an argument testified by the celebration of freakery, which she locates in the structure of the familial unit: larger families brought heterogeneous experiences and different bodies into the home. But as the homogenised nuclear family became the norm in the

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<sup>79</sup> Russell C. Maulitz, *Morbid Appearances: The Anatomy of Pathology in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 3, 134-135.

<sup>80</sup> Wilfred Norman Edwards, *The Early History of Paleontology* (London: British Museum, 1967), pp. 38-39.

<sup>81</sup> J. B. Morrell, 'Professionalisation', in *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, ed. by R. C. Olby and others (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 980-989.

<sup>82</sup> Michael Bravo, 'Ethnological Encounters', in *The Cultures of Natural History*, ed. by Nicholas Jardine, James A. Secord and Emma C. Spary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 338-357.

<sup>83</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 3-31.

twentieth century, variations from the norm became less acceptable. As such, 'imbecile' children were concealed in proliferating institutions, which reached an apogee in the 1960s.<sup>84</sup>

There were other pressures contributing to freakery's decline. By the twentieth century, according to Bogdan, the rediscovery and application of Mendel's laws of genetics, the rise of eugenics and social Darwinism turned the once interesting and amusing freaks into social dangers who threatened the national fabric as inherited anomalies were perceived to produce weak beings. The discovery of the endocrine system, ductless glands that regulate growth, secondary sexual functions and the X-Ray further demystified human difference and exposed the showmen's fantastical stories as falsities.<sup>85</sup> Durbach concluded her study of the British freak show with a chapter on its decline during the twentieth century. She argued for a number of factors that marginalised and rendered unpalatable the freak show. These included new trends in the leisure industry, in particular the rise of the cinema in the years after World War One, which displaced freak shows as a form of entertainment. Disabled veterans and the rise of the Disability Rights Movement in the 1970s altered perceptions of the anomalous body while, at a practical level, the 1920 Aliens Order meant that noncitizens needed a work visa, which in turn restricted the access of foreign freaks to England.<sup>86</sup>

Despite these pressures, the legacy of the freak show continued to thrive. Rachel Adams demonstrated the saliency of the freak in twentieth-century cinema, photography, fiction and contemporary performance theatre.<sup>87</sup> Robin Blyn argued for a twentieth-century 'Freak-Garde' in which the avant-garde utilised the arts of the freak show as a means of resisting liberal capitalism seen, for example, in the photography of Diane Arbus.<sup>88</sup> Elizabeth Stephens argued that the death of the freak show in the 1950s bequeathed a freak aesthetics seen in more recent neo-burlesque and neo-vaudeville performances.<sup>89</sup> Today, the 'relocation of the freak show' can be observed in contemporary culture: talk shows, science fiction, medical documentaries, the phenomenon of body building and even in the life of the late 'celebrity freak' Michael Jackson.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: The Things we Tried to Hide* (London: Viking, 2014), pp. 77-112.

<sup>85</sup> Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 62-67.

<sup>86</sup> Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp. 171-184.

<sup>87</sup> Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.*, pp. 60-209.

<sup>88</sup> Robin Blyn, *The Freak-Garde: Extraordinary Bodies and Revolutionary Art in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), pp. 149-183.

<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth Stephens, 'Geeks and Gaffs: The Queer Legacy of the 1950s American Freak Show', in *Queer 1950s: Rethinking Sexuality in the Postwar Years*, ed. by Heike Bauer and Matt Cook (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 183-195.

<sup>90</sup> Andrea Stulman Dennett, 'The Dime Museum Freak Show Reconfigures as Talk Show', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 315-326; Jeffrey A. Weinstock, 'Freaks in Space: "Extraterrestrialism" and "Deep-Space Multiculturalism"', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 327-337; David L. Clark and Catherine Myser, 'Being



Durbach drew attention to the shared dynamics between the Victorian freak show and Gunther Von Hagen's *Body Worlds*, a display of pastinated corpses that opened in London in 2002.<sup>91</sup> A 2003 study exploring museum collections of disabled lives, including those associated with the freak show, found that a number of collections, lacking contextualisation or perpetuating fictions based on an absence of historical context, presented displays reminiscent of the freak show.<sup>92</sup> Contemporary biographies can also resurrect the sensationalist tendencies of the nineteenth-century freak show and there remains a danger even in critical freak studies, a problem of voyeurism outlined in the introduction, which seeks to explore freakery as a historical phenomenon, but tells stories and reproduces images that might titillate and excite curiosity.

For Jennifer Miller, the founder of New York's queer performance group *Circus Amok* and the occasional performer of *The Bearded Lady* at Coney Island, engaging with the freak show is not a choice but a cultural imperative because the freak show is still a lens through which physical difference is perceived.<sup>93</sup> For the disabled activist and theorist Terri Thrower, there is still the 'everyday freak show': people continue to stare and unfavourably react to the disabled person in the street.<sup>94</sup> Richard Butchins' documentary, *The Last American Freak Show*, was excluded from the London International Disability Film Festival in 2008 because BAFTA's Head of Events was 'uncomfortable' about the film. Mat Fraser, the disabled actor and activist, lamented at the time: 'Heaven forbid that anyone should be made to feel uncomfortable by a film about disability made by a disabled person.'<sup>95</sup>

As I wrote in the introduction to this thesis, when I began navigating through the archives I wanted to illuminate lived experience, capturing the voices of the freak performers behind their freak constructions. But the historical performers had no voice: their words were practically non-existent in the archives. The more I researched Lambert, Chang, Eng, Stratton, Pastrana and Merrick, the less

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Humaned: Medical Documentaries and the Hyperrealization of Conjoined Twins', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 338-355; Cecile Lindsay, 'Bodybuilding: A Postmodern Freak Show', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 356-367; David D. Yuan, 'The Celebrity Freak: Michael Jackson's "Grotesque Glory"', in *Freakery*, ed. by Thomson, pp. 368-384.

<sup>91</sup> Nadja Durbach, "'Skinless Wonders": Body Worlds and the Victorian Freak Show', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 69:1 (2014), 38-67.

<sup>92</sup> Richard Sandell and others, 'In The Shadow of the Freakshow: The Impact of Freakshow Tradition on the Display and Understanding of Disability History in Museums', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 25:4 (2005) <<http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/614/791>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

<sup>93</sup> Stephens, 'Geeks and Gaffs', in *Queer 1950s*, ed. by Bauer and Cook, pp. 183-195 (p. 190).

<sup>94</sup> Terri Thrower, 'Overcoming the Need to "Overcome": Challenging Disability Narratives in *The Miracle*', in *Different Bodies: Essays on Disability in Film and Television*, ed. by Marja Evelyn Mogk (London: McFarland, 2013), pp. 205-218 (p. 212).

<sup>95</sup> Mat Fraser, 'Go Ahead—Take a Look', *The Guardian*, 15 February 2008 <<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2008/feb/15/disability.baftas2008>> [accessed 5 February 2016].

I knew about them as people. They faded into the distance as the cultural concerns of their day focused in the foreground. The more I wrote about these performers, the more they became my own academic constructions. So I decided to meet some contemporary performers who were acting in the tradition of freakery. Mat Fraser kindly gave me some of his time. I had watched him perform in *Sealboy: Freak*, a performance inspired by a twentieth-century sideshow act featuring Stanislaus Berent who, like Fraser, had phocomelia. Fraser and I discussed the history and legacy of the freak show and he was very clear on one point. It seems fitting to end with his voice: ‘The thing you normals will never understand is that I am always on display—whether performing on stage or walking in the streets.’<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Mat Fraser, Personal Interview, 12 November 2012.

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Box-Barnum's American Museum  
Box- Circus/ Barnum, 1871-1880  
Box-Circus/ Barnum, 1881-1891  
Box #1 P.T. Barnum  
Box 1 PTB Letters  
Box 2 PTB Letters  
Box #1 Tom Thumb  
Box #2 Tom Thumb  
Draw#6: Barnum's American Museum  
Draw#8-Circus/Barnum, 1871-1880  
Draw#9 Circus/ Barnum, 1881-1891  
Draw #1 P.T. Barnum  
Draw #5 Tom Thumb  
The Fairy Wedding Album, Tom Thumb-Lavinia Warren

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G/12/94, Workhouse Medical Officer's Report Book, October 1871- November 1880  
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SOUTHERN HISTORICAL COLLECTION, THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL (SHC, UNC)

298/1/6, Gwyn, James Papers  
1040, Gordon-Hackett Papers, 1752-1856  
3761, Bunker, Chang and Eng  
4654-Z, Dobson Family Papers  
4822-Z, Christopher Wren Bunker Papers  
M-3761, Chang and Eng Bunker Papers  
Op3761, Bunker, Chang and Eng  
P.3761, Bunker, Chang and Eng

STAMFORD TOWN HALL, LINCOLNSHIRE (STH)

230-234, The Philips Collection, The Stamford Entertainment Posters  
F52LAM, Daniel Lambert

STAMFORD TOWN LIBRARY, LINCOLNSHIRE (STL)

2736, Tom Thumb Miniature Album  
2747-8, Daniel Lambert and Tom Thumb Clothes  
Folder, Daniel Lambert Newspaper Cutting  
Folder, Daniel Lambert Primary References  
Folder, Daniel Lambert General Interest  
ST 2748, Daniel Lambert Replica Clothes  
ST 2833, Tom Thumb Medallion  
ST 3043, Tom Thumb Medallion  
ST 3384.2, Tom Thumb Playing Cards

TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY, CAMBRIDGE (TCLC, MUNB)

MUNB, 1-65, Diaries of A. J. Munby  
MUNB, 97, Arthur Munby's Notebooks  
MUNB, 108-109, Poetry of Arthur Munby  
MUNB, 110, Arthur Munby Miscellanea  
MUNB, 111-121, Albums of Photographs

THE BARNUM MUSEUM, BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT (TBMB) In the absence of formal cataloguing, the below is arranged in reference to the Barnum Museum's internal system.

1135, Barnum's Tom Thumb Memorial Archive, 1889  
1976.1.69, Bed presented by company M. R. W Winfield  
1976.1.95, Tom Thumb Show Carriage, 1850  
1976.1.132, 'Nutt Carriage'  
2003.9.62 A-I, Lavinia Warren Paper dolls  
2014.7.1 A-E, Masonic Uniform, Tom Thumb  
Barnum Investments #1  
Box Circus to 1900  
Box Circus to 1900, Oversized  
Box Lavinia Documentary  
Box TT Album  
Box TT Books  
Box TT Daguerreotypes  
Box TT Footwear  
Box TT LW, Artefacts, 1  
Box TT LW Framed Items 3  
Box TT Merchandising Artefacts  
EL 1988.111.1, Box TT, Top Hat  
EL 1988.112.1, Box TT, Top Hat  
Folder, Letters from Lavinia  
T 2008.5.1, Tom Thumb's Court Suit  
T 2013.9.1, Tom Thumb Broadside, 1848  
Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren Print Material

## WELLCOME LIBRARY, LONDON (WLL)

941i, Iconographic Collection  
942i, Iconographic Collection  
943i, Iconographic Collection  
EPH+33, Oversize Ephemera  
EPH 499, Freaks Ephemera Box 1  
EPH 499A, Freaks Ephemera Box 2  
EPH 499B, Freaks Ephemera Box 3  
EPH 499C, Freaks Ephemeral Box 4  
EPH 499D, Freaks Ephemeral Box 5  
MS.8713, Francis Trevelyan Buckland Archives and Manuscripts  
SBHB MU/14, St Bartholomew's Hospital Archives & Museum, Wellcome Images

## WILSON LIBRARY, THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

CbB S56c, Ephemera Collection  
CbB S56f, Ephemera Collection  
CbB S56p, Ephemera Collection  
CbB S56s, Ephemera Collection  
CbB S56sl, Ephemera Collection  
CbB S56w, Ephemera Collection

## JOURNALS

*British Medical Journal*  
*Lancet: A Journal of British and Foreign Medicine, Physiology, Surgery, Chemistry, Criticism, Literature, and News*  
*Land and Water: A Journal of Field Sports, Sea and River Fisheries, and Practical Natural History*  
*Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*  
*Punch; or The London Charivari*  
*Richmond and Louisville Medical Journal*  
*World's Fair*

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19<sup>th</sup> Century British Library Newspapers <<http://find.galegroup.com/bncn>> (Accessed via the British Library Catalogue):

*Bristol Mercury*  
*Daily News*  
*Derby Mercury*  
*Era*  
*Examiner*  
*Hampshire Advertiser*  
*Leicester Chronicle and Leicester Mercury*  
*Liverpool Mercury*  
*Morning Chronicle*  
*Morning Post*  
*Reynolds' Newspaper*  
*Standard*

York Herald

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The Times

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- Extraordinary Strength, Avarice, Astonishing Fortitude, as well as Genuine Narrations of Giants, Dwarfs, Misers, Imposters; Singular Vices and Virtues; Uncommon Eclipses, Storms, Remarkable Providences, Heroic Achievements, Supernatural Occurrences, Strange Discoveries of Long-Concealed Murders, &c. &c. Forming altogether a New and Complete History of the Extraordinaries and Wonder of the World. The Whole Selected from the most Approved and Celebrated Historians, Voyagers, Travellers, Philosophers, Physicians and other Eminent and Distinguished Persons of every age and country, and from the most Expensive Works and Manuscripts, 6 vols (London: A. Hogg, 1802-1808)*
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Disability Museum <<http://www.disabilitymuseum.org>>

John Johnson Collection <<http://johnjohnson.chadwyck.com>> (Accessed via the Senate House Library Catalogue)

Laura Anderson Barbata <<http://www.lauraandersonbarbata.com/work/mx-lab/julia-pastrana/3.php>>

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/index.jsp>>

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