

# **Freaks in Late Nineteenth-Century British Media and Medicine**

Submitted by Fiona Yvette Pettit to the University of Exeter as a thesis for  
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## Abstract

This thesis explores the prevalence of freaks in late nineteenth-century British culture through popular and medical print media. Through their consistent representation and exhibition, freaks became a part of mainstream culture. Due to their regular reproduction, freak narratives and images often perpetuated the lives of freaks long after their deaths; thereby creating freak legacies. This thesis employs the theoretical concept of generativity, drawn from John Kotre's work, to investigate the role of freaks and freak legacies in late nineteenth-century culture. Generativity is the process which allows the continuation of lives after death, through the creation and perpetuation of legacy. Through their regular representation and reproduction in print, I argue, freaks were generative in that they contributed to the perpetuation of their own and others' legacies in late nineteenth-century Britain. In particular, the generativity of freak narratives for medical and popular press readerships is considered to demonstrate the multiple ways freak representations were constructed to suit broad and diverse audiences.

The first two chapters of this thesis examine popular representations of freaks and the last two look at medicine's interaction with freak bodies. The first half of this thesis establishes the mainstream status of freaks by exploring their numerous representations in a diverse range of popular print sources. The first chapter demonstrates some of the ways popular media engaged with freaks and their legacies. In the second chapter, the popular appeal of freaks is further explored through a case study of the two UK visits of the Barnum and Bailey circus at the end of the nineteenth century. Particular attention is paid to the generative use of freaks in building the famous showman Phineas T. Barnum's legacy. Then, the next half of this thesis turns to medical culture to explore the professional engagement with anomalous bodies. Chapter three explores the intricacies of the medicine –freak relationship by demonstrating medicine's attempts to assert authority over freakish bodies. The final chapter examines the importance of legacy to the medical profession and offers an analysis of three freak case studies which demonstrate this aim. These case studies also make up a chapter in *Popular Exhibitions, Science and Showmanship, 1840-1910*, which is due to be published by Pickering and Chatto in 2012.

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## Introduction

In 1884, the surgeon Frederick Treves first encountered the ‘Elephant Man’, a freak whose real name was Joseph Merrick. Merrick was being displayed by the showman Tom Norman in a shop on Mile End Road, across from the London Hospital. Merrick suffered from large, tumorous overgrowths on his body, with those on his face and head likened to the trunk of an elephant. His show had already attracted the attention of lay and medical audiences alike. Treves’ visit with Merrick in the shop instigated a series of events that led to the end of Norman’s show and Merrick’s eventual move into the London Hospital as a permanent resident. In the hospital Merrick was again displayed, only here it was for the satisfaction of medical curiosity rather than the paying public. His stay was funded by benefactors who had answered the hospital chairman’s appeals to readers of the *Times* newspaper (Gomm 6; Gomm 10). Merrick’s earlier exhibitions were openly disgraced by both the hospital chairman and Treves himself in his *British Medical Journal* report and later memoirs (Treves 1–37; “The ‘Elephant-Man’” 1188). Yet, even as a medical specimen Merrick was subjected to regular exhibitions which were also demeaning, because he was required to strip naked and bare his deformity in its entirety for his learned audiences. Notably, Treves chose to refer to Merrick as the “Elephant Man” in his presentations. After his death in 1890, a cast was taken of Merrick’s body and his skeleton was prepared for display as a specimen within the London Medical College’s Pathological Museum (Durbach 57).<sup>1</sup> In a response to Treves’ allegations against Norman’s mistreatment of Merrick, the showman signalled the similarity between Treves’ and his own interactions with Merrick for readers of the *World’s Fair*. Norman ended his commentary by asking readers: “who really ‘exploited’ poor Joseph? I, the Showman, got the abuse. Dr. Treeves, [sic] the eminent surgeon (who you must admit was also a Showman, but on a rather higher social scale) received the publicity and praise” (qtd. in Norman 110).

Merrick’s story demonstrates the interactive relationship between popular entertainment and medical practices at the end of the nineteenth century. Freak shows shared spaces such as music halls, shops, circuses and fairs with other popular entertainments of the time, but attracted popular and professional audiences from both ends of the class spectrum. As Merrick’s case shows, freaks piqued both lay and medical curiosity. This crossover of interests allowed a cyclical exchange of subjects and narratives. Not only did medicine and popular entertainment borrow each others’ language and subjects, but they also shared display practices in the exhibition of living and deceased freaks which were often accompanied

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<sup>1</sup> Merrick’s skeleton remains under the care of the London Medical College’s Pathological Museum, but is only accessible to medical trainees and professionals or researchers with special approval from the museum.

by informative (though not necessarily accurate) lectures. Further, Merrick's case also illuminates the crucial role played by print media in the dissemination of both medical and popular representations of freaks. Through print, freaks could reach local and distant audiences and take on varied meanings adapted for the readers of different publications. Live and print presentations of freaks intrigued varied and widespread audiences in Britain during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Due to their import in popular and scientific spheres freak narratives continued to be presented and reproduced long after their lives had ended. Through their constant reproduction freaks pervaded mainstream culture and became familiar oddities.

The overarching aim of this study is to demonstrate the centrality of freaks in late nineteenth-century British culture as shown through print. The prevalence of freaks in print reflects the physical presence of freaks in popular entertainment and scientific communities. Print culture employed the narratives of both living and deceased freak performers, contributing to the creation and dissemination of freak afterlives, or legacies, amongst a wide-ranging audience. Legacy refers to the means through which people live on after death. As the periodical historians J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel have noted, "Nineteenth-century Britain was uniquely the age of the periodical" and, I argue, it was this medium that had the most significant impact on the longevity of freak legacies (Vann and VanArsdel 7). In this thesis, the theoretical concept of generativity, drawn from John Kotre's work, will be used in order to investigate the role of freaks and freak legacies in late nineteenth-century culture. Generativity is the process which allows the continuation of lives or ideas through the creation and perpetuation of legacies. Through their regular representation and reproduction in print, I argue, freaks were generative in that they contributed to the perpetuation of their own and others' legacies. In particular, the generativity of freak narratives for medical and popular press readerships will be considered, showing that freaks were significant beyond being deviations from the norm.

### **Literature Review**

Since the field of freak show studies is relatively small, the wide engagement with freaks during the nineteenth century means that they should be considered through broader cultural studies. This thesis, being concerned with the print and exhibition representations of freaks for popular and medical audiences, looks to print culture, popular entertainment and popular science to clarify the position of freaks within Victorian culture. Previous work in these fields has shown that Victorian society and culture was formed by an integrated web where the interests of one section of society seamlessly crossed over into other sectors and was

reshaped to fit new territories. Print media was one place where glimpses of this movement between fields have been captured.

As Richard Altick has illustrated, nineteenth-century shows and exhibitions “ministered to the same widespread impulses and interests to which print also catered”, so it is important to consider the audience experiences of shows as relayed through the medium of print (Altick 1). Collectively, these accounts demonstrate that people of all ages and classes gave in to their curiosity by attending the shows. However, the interest in extraordinary beings was not always expressed in reference to specific performances. Often many of the more famous freaks (both contemporary and those from earlier periods) would also appear in longer periodical pieces or in volumes published about eccentric people. Thus, freaks maintained a permanent position in the print world as objects of interest. But their place in print was not new to the nineteenth century. In fact, in early modern Europe it was more likely for audiences to consume the printed representations than the actual physical freaks themselves. According to Nadja Durbach, freak audiences were historically accustomed to “carefully crafted visual and textual representations of monstrosity that were tailored to serve a particular political, moral, or religious need” (Durbach 2).<sup>2</sup> The power of print to advance an argument through representations of a particular object or event was not lost in Victorian reproductions of freaks, but was commonly disguised as journalism catering to the curious minds of readers. The multitude of formats featuring freak representations extended this curiosity to each sector of society.

The significance of periodical print to understandings of nineteenth-century culture has become an established concept in Victorian studies. In their extensive *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland*, Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor explain the scope of nineteenth-century periodical and newspaper culture:

Serials played a significant part in fostering many of the learned, social and political discourses of the century; they ‘made’ authors, routinely published whole books serially and disseminated knowledge, both verbal and visual; they also created, investigated, reported and disseminated news, and advertising, thereby playing a vital role in the economy; and of course they entertained, through fiction, cartoons, contests, puzzles, and satire. (Brake and Demoor v)

Thus, periodicals catered to the interests of readers through numerous modes of presentation. Since the readership was broad and varied, periodicals reflect the engagement of many Victorians with their contemporary culture. Or, as Laurel Brake, Bill Bell and David Finkelstein have explained it, the popular press “through subtle modulation and transformation was able

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<sup>2</sup> For further discussion of early modern interpretations of monstrous bodies see Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750*, New York: Zone Books, 1998, p. 173-214.



both to reflect and to mediate social consciousness throughout the long nineteenth century” (Brake, Bell, and Finkelstein 2–3). Further, Vann and VanArsdel have demonstrated the importance of periodicals to professionalization movements in their edited collection *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society*. Here, too, it is noted that both the learned sectors, such as law and medicine, as well as entertainment and the arts benefitted from the proliferation of print media. Print played an active role in the formation and representation of high and low contemporary culture. Therefore, researching freaks through print culture reveals their place within popular and professional society.

The visibility of print was one aspect allowing this medium to successfully carry on freak show traditions. Many periodicals included images (in the form of engravings or photographs), but they were also visual in their language. Kate Flint has shown in her exploration of the complex relationship between Victorians and their visual world, that visibility brings together both image and language.<sup>3</sup> She explains: “individuals do not merely use their capacity for visualization in relation to the material, tangible world, but this facility is a central component in the activity of the memory and imagination, and hence is crucial to the practices of both reading and writing” (Flint, “‘Seeing Is Believing?’” 26). Whereas freak shows and medical displays gave audiences the opportunity to physically witness the visual representation of freaks, print provided an alternative, but equally engaging, freak encounter. Further, Flint’s work has shown that both popular and scientific spheres challenged the “adequacy of representation” as well as the “sufficiency of the visible” in presenting reality (Flint, *Victorians and the Visual Imagination* 25). Thus, in both medical and popular spheres, neither the display nor the print representation could fully encapsulate the freak. Therefore, an inclusive account of the freak show must work through different media representations, examining the role of freaks in entertainment and medical cultures in order to expose the variability of freak encounters.

The role of print culture in the development of Victorian society has been pursued in numerous fields of study. One field of research which has greatly benefitted from the use of periodical print is that of nineteenth-century popular science. As Samuel J. M. M. Alberti contends, “Popularizers of science were at the forefront of the emerging visual culture” and print was one medium through which they “bombarded their audiences” (Alberti, “The Museum Affect” 380–381). Being a field that explores the interactions of professional and popular society through engagement in scientific debates and practices, popular science studies offer an essential background to my study of freaks and their representations.

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<sup>3</sup> See Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000; and Flint, “‘Seeing is believing?’: Visuality and Victorian Fiction”, *A Concise Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Francis O’Gorman, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004, p.25–46.

For instance, *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media* edited by Louise Henson, Geoffrey Cantor, *et al.* provides an exemplary model in the use of print media as a “means of examining the cultural embeddedness of science across a wide range of nineteenth-century contexts” (Cantor *et al.* xx). Taking “for granted that science formed a fundamental and integral part of the cultural economy of nineteenth-century Britain” the authors within this collection produce case studies that highlight the varied and widespread audiences engaging with science through print media (Cantor *et al.* xvii). What is made clear through these studies is the diversity of periodicals participating in the dissemination of science. Whilst specialist science journals directly represented the subject, those for alternative audiences, such as women or children, also took part in scientific discussion. Although aimed at different audiences, periodicals often shared topics and spoke to representations in other publications: “The open-endedness of the periodical, along with its material ephemerality and particular relationship to time, makes the form particularly suited to dialogue” (Cantor *et al.* xviii). This dialogue of ideas between periodicals reflects the circulation of ideas within culture more generally. Even within a particular journal there can be an underlying dialogue connecting disparate articles as has been shown in *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical: Reading the Magazine of Nature*, by Cantor, Gowan Dawson, *et al.* “Science, technology, and medicine” the authors explain, “appear[ed] not only in avowedly scientific articles, but also in other forms of narrative including fictional representations, glancing asides in political reports, and caricatures and allusions in comic magazines” (Dawson, Noakes, and Topham 1). Print media permitted science to permeate nineteenth-century culture. This thesis aims to show a similar crossover of popular and scientific spheres in the widespread dissemination of freaks through print, as well as the adaptation of scientific ideologies in freak narratives to suit implied readerships.

Popular science research has also shown that the far-reaching presence of science was not limited to print media. Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman’s *Science in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences* and *Victorian Science in Context* edited by Bernard Lightman are two collections that provide significant contributions to understanding the multimedia experience of science in the nineteenth century. These works demonstrate the dissemination of scientific knowledge amongst learned professional groups as well as lay people and pleasure-seeking audiences. In particular, Fyfe and Lightman’s collection illuminates the diversity of scientific spaces and the audience experiences in these spaces. Scientific encounters were made possible in numerous spaces, including public and professional museums, lectures, guidebooks, and country estates. Display and exhibition visits were multimedia events. The audience experience was not limited to the exhibit itself, but also involved the interaction of audience members, smells, sounds, books, flyers, pamphlets and

lecturers. Fyfe, in particular, exemplifies the significance of print in extending the museum experience for visitors (Fyfe 196–230). Her discussion of the textual museum experience is comparable to the freak encounters had by those who were unable to attend the exhibitions and those who revisited the freaks via souvenir pamphlets and newspaper reviews. The live experiences of displays were therefore more than just a visual encounter, with freaks in print providing an experience in its own right.

Bernard Lightman furthers the discussion on the widespread dissemination of science in *Victorian Popularizers of Science*. Here, Lightman explores the efforts of individuals to promote scientific knowledge, and their own positions within the field of science, for wide-ranging audiences. He explains that there was not a clear divide between elite and popular cultures. Each sphere could borrow and appropriate information from the other resulting in the production of popular culture's "own indigenous science" (Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science* 14). This interaction of spheres is evident in the late nineteenth-century freak show. By acknowledging medicine as a science as well, such work provides a useful context for the consideration of its relationship with the late Victorian freak show.

However, the ambition of professional medicine was to distance itself from the popular and lay discourse which, as chapters three and four will show, suggests a complicated version of the relationship between popular culture and science. Work in the history of science makes clear that "Victorian science and culture were inextricably linked in the eyes of the Victorians themselves, scientists and nonscientists alike", but medicine's activity during this period indicates an attempt to escape this interconnectedness and assume an elevated position (Lightman, *Victorian Science in Context* 3). Sam Alberti offers one example of this through museum access in the late nineteenth century. He shows that whilst medical museums "remained behind closed doors" other museums containing natural collections opened to a "broader public" during this period "as part of the program of rational recreation and science education" (Alberti, "The Museum Affect" 380). He sees this as part of the "construction of professional communities in the sciences" taking place at the time (Alberti, "The Museum Affect" 380). Whereas public access to natural collections was allowed, albeit through a regulated experience, medicine restricted its collections to members of the profession. Distancing itself from the public in this manner was part of medicine's efforts to establish an elite professional status. Nonetheless, the freak show was one platform where medicine, often unwittingly, engaged with popular practices. For this reason, medical interactions with freaks need to be understood for their participation in popular science despite medicine's supposed resistance to popularising activities.

Studies in the history of medicine have highlighted some of the sensationalising techniques at work in the profession during the nineteenth century. One example can be

found in A. J. Youngson's, *The Scientific Revolution in Victorian Medicine*. He posits that British medicine struggled to compete with medically advanced countries, such as France, at the start of the nineteenth century due to the resistance to new ideas, particularly the inclusion of scientific ideas in medicine. Using the surgeon Joseph Lister as an example, Youngson shows the importance of presentation and character to the adoption of new ideas. Since Lister "was by inclination a scientist in a profession that did not, when he was a young man, have much to do with science; surgeons least of all", he initially found it difficult to promote his findings on antiseptic treatments in surgery (Youngson 219). Youngson explains further that Lister

was a solitary figure; and until almost the end of his campaign for antiseptics he spoke as such. These facts are important because in a small world such as medicine was at that time, personalities matter. Findings are not simply findings; they are the findings of someone. The reputation of the author may affect their credibility; his personality and connections, in a small world, may affect their acceptability. (Youngson 219)

This interpretation of nineteenth-century medicine suggests that the obstacles in establishing new practices owed largely to presentation. In this sense, in order for the medical man to promote his ideas and gain the recognition and support his findings deserve, he must adapt and showcase his work to suit the audience he hoped to gain. Much like the showmen promoted their freaks, medical men needed the ability to persuade a disbelieving crowd or the support of a respected figure in the field to do this work for them. So, showmen and medical practitioners not only shared an interest in physical anomalies, but also shared promotional techniques.

In her study of nineteenth-century medical treatments of intersexed people, Alice Domurat Dreger also explores the complicated relationship between the medical community, unusual anatomies and the public perception of both. In the course of the century, Dreger finds a shift in the relationship between medical and public exhibitions. During the first half of the century there were "very blurry distinctions [...] between medical and public displays" as even the focus of medical reports of intersexed individuals was "still on the whole person, not just the parts" (Dreger, "Jarring Bodies" 165). Medical professionals were so intrigued by unusual physiologies that they were willing to support careers of freaks in exchange for examination time. Using the case of the "hermaphroditic Gottlieb Göttlich" who "earned fame and fortune by exhibiting himself at medical schools and to the lay public across Europe and the British Isles" in the 1830s, Dreger illuminates the early nineteenth-century relationship of the freak performer to medical practice (Dreger, "Jarring Bodies" 165). "[I]n exchange for letting them examine him and publish reports about him, the medical and scientific men gave Göttlich certificates which testified that his case was of deep interest to the medical man, the

naturalist, the phrenologist, and the physiologist”, which Göttlich “used in turn to generate still more interest and profit” (Dreger, “Jarring Bodies” 166). Through this exchange Göttlich was increasing his performance potential and biomedical men were improving “medical knowledge of the conditions as well as building their own professional reputations” (“Jarring Bodies” 166). Later in the century, however, this relationship changed. Contrary to the early-century doctors who “would recognize these people as authorities of a unique and strangely attractive experience”, the “later physicians offered instead the much more abstract value of ‘the good of humanity’ in exchange for ready and unlimited access to *all* unusual bodies” (“Jarring Bodies” 168). Individuals with extraordinary physicalities came more and more to be seen as the property of others at the end of the century.

In her longer work *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, which focuses on this late century relationship between biomedical men and hermaphroditism, Dreger argues that “scientists and medical doctors” became the “accepted and sought-after authorities in nearly all matters concerning anatomies and identities” (Dreger, *Hermaphrodites* 10). While much of Dreger’s study looks at people who were examined for their abnormal physical traits the majority of her subjects are not people who, like Göttlich, performed as freaks. Yet Dreger’s recognition of the exchange between popular entertainment and medicine, as well as her demonstration of the increasing authority of medicine over unusual anatomies provides an important contextualisation of medicine for this thesis. The notion of medical authority in terms of the freak show is pursued in chapters three and four.

So, while medicine sought to establish itself as an authority, separate from other popular discourse, in many ways it became more integrated with popular culture. By borrowing freaks and showman-like styles of presentation, medicine included popular culture in its practices. Yet, as Dreger explains, medicine also became more authoritative in the nineteenth century. In extending the decree of medical knowledge over the domain of popular culture medicine also partook in the process of its own popularisation. Within this popular image of medicine were previous interactions between freaks and medical professionals, and freak shows readily capitalised on this relationship for legitimatisation purposes. Medicine also took advantage of its dealings with freak shows to acquire further access to unusual bodies. Therefore, the medical profession can be seen as an active participant in the popularisation of science through its interactions with the freak show.

Jane Goodall has traced the popular theatrical engagement with one of the most famous nineteenth-century scientific debates, evolutionary theory, in *Performance and Evolution in the Age of Darwin*. In her discussion of the “historical relationship between performative and scientific traditions of display”, including some early and mid-nineteenth-century freak displays, Goodall recognizes both “co-dependency” and tension between the

two cultures (Goodall 12–13). Her work shows how science borrowed subjects from the freak show to fuel evolutionary debates just as the freak show would borrow evolutionary narratives to promote acts, like the ‘missing link’ exhibitions. Goodall acknowledges the problematic relationship between popular entertainment and scientific professionals in the sharing of ideas. She explains that where the “intellectual circles” “controlled the parameters of enquiry in order to stabilise a model of knowledge, popular discourses could engage in explorations without a map, exercising the freedom to invent as well as observe” (Goodall 5, 6). Her study provides a fascinating exploration of the interaction between spheres through their uses of a scientific theory. Evolution pervaded the popular imagination and Goodall’s investigation underscores the importance of performance spaces in this trade of ideas. Whereas Goodall’s work looks at “how performed entertainments played with and upon themes of evolution” by focusing more on the performance than the audience, my study delves into the audience encounter with freaks through print media with a focus on the representation rather than the performance of freaks (Goodall 5).

While freak shows, in themselves, were not usually scientific, many of the narratives they employed were rooted in scientific discourse. As indicated by studies of popular science, the promotion of rational recreation meant that there was a fine line between entertainment and education in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Popularizers of science could promote their entertainments as informative, instructive amusements that would both entertain and educate their audiences. Freak show promoters’ use of medical language offers one illustration of the role of freak shows within the wider practice of popular science.

While the popularity of rational recreation could be seen as one reason for freak shows engaging with scientific and medical debates to promote and legitimize their exhibitions, another was for the topicality of scientific debates, or what Andrew Horrall terms “up-to-datedness” (Horrall 5). Using London as his case study, Horrall shows how “up-to-date culture” was “played out simultaneously in London’s stages, sports pitches, public spaces, cinema screens and sitting rooms” between 1890-1918 to reach audiences across social classes (Horrall 4). This increase in popular consumption of contemporary issues through entertainment is supported by Hugh Cunningham’s contention that the period from 1850-1880 saw an increase in leisure time as well as a rise in public transport and entertainment spaces (H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* 140–191). The introduction of the Bank Holiday Act in 1871 brought some “regularisation of leisure” and with this came an increase in train companies promoting holiday excursions and seasonal entertainments (H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* 143). These factors amounted not only to wider access to leisure time, but the need to fill that time. Entertainment was one means through which this

was done, and the ideology behind rational recreation meant participation in certain popular entertainments could be justified.

Peter Bailey has also discussed the “Victorians’ new leisure world” and the changes it brought to popular entertainment and culture in *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Bailey 10). Horrall, Cunningham and Bailey all distinguish between the social classes, but Bailey explains that the

constituency for popular culture fluctuates and recomposes; while not coterminous with any single class it is broadly democratic, answering both to the ritual promptings of an indigenous custom, old and newly forged, and the slicker formulations of mass or middlebrow commercial confection. It generates its own initiatives while readily appropriating from other sources, including ‘high’ or elite cultures. (Bailey 11)

Thus, the freak show, which catered to diverse audiences, was firmly rooted in its contemporary popular culture. Freak shows borrowed from elite cultures, such as medicine, to create Lightman’s indigenous science that would make the displays up-to-date, instructive and worthy of the audience’s precious leisure time.

The diversity of Victorian pleasure-seeking audiences tends to be overlooked in freak show studies. In their extensive study on Victorian audiences in London, Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow warn against the temptation to “overcategorize audiences by class”, explaining that with the “capacity of Londoners to walk long distances in the nineteenth century and the increasing availability of new, inexpensive forms of public transport, it is dangerous to assume that audiences even at neighbourhood theatres were specifically local” (40). Their work encourages further discussion on the diversity of audiences attending nineteenth-century popular entertainments. This rings true in British freak history studies, which often agree with Heather McHold’s contention that it was the “working-classes that made up the majority of freak show audiences” (McHold, “‘Even as You and I’: Freak Shows and Lay Discourse on Spectacular Deformity” 25). While some of the advertising and pricing suggests working-class accessibility to the shows, there is also evidence indicating a widespread interest in freaks amongst the middle and upper classes. Also, print media demonstrates that men, women, children, professionals and casual pleasure-seekers all attended freak shows. Pieces scattered throughout late nineteenth-century periodicals reveal that the fascination with freaks was spread across the social and economic categories. Further, the sources also indicate the longevity of freak popularity in the minds of the British public. “At all times, curiosity was a great leveller” according to Altick, so “Exhibitions that engaged the attention of the ‘lower ranks’ also attracted the cultivated and, perhaps to a lesser extent, vice versa” (Altick 3). Indeed, part of what makes print representations of freak shows particularly interesting is their

representations of audiences and the different opinions reserved for the varied groups of audience members that were in attendance.

Altick's classic 1978 work, *The Shows of London*, was one of the earliest studies giving some insight specifically into the freak show in Victorian Britain.<sup>4</sup> Since then, British freak show studies have appeared in occasional journal articles and a chapter on freaks was included in Erin O'Connor's 2000, *Raw Materials: Producing Pathology in Victorian Culture*. However, the field of British freak show history has recently been enriched by two full-length publications. Marlene Tromp's 2008 collection, *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain* and Nadja Durbach's 2010, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* have both brought attention to the significant role of freaks in Victorian Britain. These major works on British freak shows have each made clear that the popular engagement with freaks rested on purposefully constructed freak identities with influences from popular and medical discourse.

Tromp's collection identifies the importance of cultural context "in the evolving concept of freakery" (Tromp and Valerius 16). Her work continues in the tradition of studies done on the American history that look for culturalist explanations for the freak show. Tromp's collection explains how freaks can be read as representative of "English concerns and anxieties" because "freakishness is made, not just with biology, but with a social function in a social context" (Tromp and Valerius 6, 4). Essays within the collection look at both specific freak acts, humans and animals, and marginal characters in fiction to show how the "ambiguity, rhetorical excess, and ambivalence mobilized by the freak could work to oppose the standard of normalcy – to destabilize its naturalized status – as well as to produce and confirm it" (Tromp and Valerius 9). Tromp's collection uses freaks as a means to decipher broader social concerns of nineteenth-century Britain. In doing so the significance of freaks is read within their cultural context. This thesis, too, is concerned with the context of freak representations, but rather than detail the dominant cultural concerns being written on the freak's body I aim to evidence the many and varied forms of freak engagements circulating in different discourses. The presentation of the freak varied in different forms of print. The similarities between representations in, for example, a boy's paper and a promotional pamphlet, or a show review and a medical report are made significant when the source is taken into account. Pooling the evidence from each of these to generate a general overview of

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<sup>4</sup> Freak show history in the United States has been explored in several major works including: Robert Bogdan, *Freak Shows: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, Chicago: U Chicago P, 1988; Rosemarie Garland Thomson, ed., *Freakery: Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, New York: New York UP, 1996; Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination*, Chicago: Chicago UP, 2001; and, Thomas Fahy, *Freak Shows and the Modern American Imagination*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.



how a particular freak was perceived, as done in Tromp's collection, may demonstrate the widespread engagement with freaks, but it overlooks the significance of diverse audiences. Nevertheless, Tromp's collection makes a remarkable introduction to the discussion on the diversity of freak functions in British Victorian culture which this thesis aims to elaborate.

Durbach's work also establishes the importance of freaks to Victorian debates such as empire, evolution and gender through the scientific and medical engagement with performing freaks by detailing five particular case studies. In line with Tromp's collection, Durbach interprets the Victorian and Edwardian freak show specifically as the "product of its time and place" (Durbach 21). My study aims to follow Durbach's lead in interpreting freak show engagement through both scientific and popular spheres. Of particular interest is her study of the showman's and doctor's language concerning Joseph Merrick. Her comparison between the medical and entertainment spheres in their engagement with Merrick exemplifies the cyclical uses of freaks for different ends. Also, her observation that freak show studies should acknowledge that "meanings attached to particular anomalous bodies [...] were being produced, reproduced, and endlessly reworked by a variety of historical actors" holds much weight in my thesis (Durbach 14). While Durbach's work utilizes numerous sources to support her interpretations, more needs to be said on the audiences consuming the multiple meanings at work. This is where my work differs from Durbach.

Rather than explore the British anxieties enacted on the freak's body, I explore the contexts through which freaks were represented. Freaks occupied several performance and print spaces and it is important to acknowledge these not just in demonstration of the mainstream status of freaks, but also to highlight the similarities and differences of freak representations in reference to their contexts. The variations between the reproduction of a freak's history in an entertainment venue and a medical environment offer further evidence of the cultural work done by freaks for their varying audiences. By exploring freak representations through the concept of generativity, I will show how freaks were able to take on the broader culturalist readings attributed to them by Durbach and Tromp, and, therefore, why the context of the freak display changed the meaning of the freak. Instead of extending Durbach and Tromp's discussions of the cultural concerns represented by the freak body, this thesis aims to establish the significant presence and reproduction of freaks in the cyclical exchange between popular and medical discourse.

Some of the shorter works that have discussed the British engagement with freaks also provide valuable contributions to this thesis as they discuss the significance of freak performance and print context. Vanessa Toulmin has discussed the importance of venue to the freak performances. Concentrating on acts managed by the famous showman Tom Norman, Toulmin examines the effect of the freak display according to location, by focussing on

shopfront shows, museums of curiosity and the World's Fair at the Royal Agricultural Hall in London. Different venues meant varying audiences and alterations to the showman's oration; so, the "venue in which the showmen presented the performance changed the reception of the act, the audience's response, but not necessarily the act itself" (Toulmin 134). Thus, the location of freaks can alter their interpretation even if the content remained the same. In my thesis, this notion is taken into account when considering the placement of freaks, not just in performances, but also in print.

Ann Featherstone demonstrates the significance of seemingly small details in her discussions of freak photographs and trade ads. When examining photographs of freaks on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century souvenir postcards, Featherstone illuminates the hidden information found in the style of the card. For example, the cruder imagery, such as a scantily clad fat woman, was indicative of smaller exhibitions (Featherstone, "Showing the Freaks" 135). Featherstone goes on to highlight the importance of freaks' photographs and paintings to the production of the showman's narrative, the appropriate venues and the creation of the show as a whole. In another article Featherstone discusses the Classified advertisements in the performing arts journal the *Era* at the end of the nineteenth century. These ads show "not merely the economic and business relationship between manager and artistes, but also the attitudes which performers and managers brought to each other and their profession, and the practical processes involved in performance", allowing us to "unpick the industry" (Featherstone, "Shopping and Looking" 33). Since they were intended for a closed readership of those in the industry the ads "often fill the gap between the ordinary and the exhibition lives of the freaks and novelties" (52). Featherstone's work demonstrates the valuable information to be found in these materials. The photographs were an important mode of income for freaks and showmen, but also worked to reproduce freak legacies. As Featherstone shows, freak postcards demonstrate the integration of freaks into everyday life because the postcards were often used for their intended purpose. Following in Featherstone's footsteps this thesis explores the details found in both the smaller advertisements in periodicals as well as in popular visual representations of freaks to elucidate the mainstream placement of freaks in late nineteenth-century culture.

It is important here to also mention the significant body of research on extraordinary bodies which has been done through the lens of disability studies.<sup>5</sup> Disability studies, according to Tom Shakespeare and Nicholas Watson, largely focus on a social model of disability which

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, New York: Columbia UP, 1997; Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture*, Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2004; and, Petra Kuppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge*, London: Routledge, 2003, 31-48.

differentiates the impairment of an individual from the disabling social environment (Shakespeare and Watson 9). The social model of disability came about in 1970s with the rejection of the medical model, which defines disability as a problem with the body (Shakespeare and Watson 9; Snyder and D. Mitchell 179–185).<sup>6</sup> The social model of disability stresses the environmental factors that disable people with impairments. This understanding of disability has prompted the interpretation of the contemporary and historical experience of people with impairments and has been at the forefront of disability rights campaigns.<sup>7</sup> Recently, Shakespeare and Watson proposed a new approach to disability in which every person is considered to have an impairment of some kind, but the disabled group in any society should be seen as those whose needs fail to be met and suffer negative consequences because of this failure (Shakespeare and Watson 19). Within this reconceptualisation of disability, they acknowledge that the disabled minority is an ever-changing group that is defined by their society.

Therefore, as Durbach has noted, the twentieth-century conception of disability is incompatible with understanding the Victorian freak show (Durbach 14–21). First of all, many freak performers were not impaired as they “had bodily anomalies that in no way interfered with their cognitive or physical abilities”, such as hirsute women (21). Disabled signifies the group who is at a lesser advantage from society’s inability to cope with the needs of those with impairment. So, Durbach argues, those who were impaired and disabled by their environment in the nineteenth-century would have been the “cripple” or the “infirm”, with the defining difference between them and the able-bodied being the ability to work (Durbach 18–19). Freaks, on the other hand, “tended to construct themselves as skilled performers whose bodies allowed them to lead normal, if not extraordinary, lives, a fact that was central to their public personae” (20). For these reasons this thesis recognises the importance of capturing the history of people living with impairments, and aims to do so here, but it does not utilize a disability studies framework that views freaks as disadvantaged by their contemporary society. Instead, I approach the history of extraordinary bodies in the freak show through their legacies. It is in the productivity, and therefore the generative value, of their representations that I analyze the late nineteenth-century engagement with freaks.

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<sup>6</sup> Julia Miele Rodas claims that “the seventies were, for the Disability Movement, what the Sixties were for the Women’s Liberation and Black Power Movement” (Rodas 382).

<sup>7</sup> For recent examples see David M. Turner and Kevin Stagg, eds., *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity*, London: Routledge, 2006; Tobin Siebers, “Words Stare like a Glass Eye: From Visual to Disability Studies and Back Again,” *PMLA*, 119.5(2004): 1315 – 1324; and Julia Miele Rodas, “Mainstreaming Disability Studies?” *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 34 (2006): 371-384.

## Key Aims

Ultimately, this thesis aims to show that rather than being marginal ‘others’ freaks were a part of mainstream culture. Through regular and repeated print representations, I argue, freaks became familiar and generative for varied members of late nineteenth-century Britain. As Robert Bogdan argues, freaks represent “a way of thinking, of presenting, a set of practices, an institution” (Bogdan, *Freak Show* 10). They are a “social construction” (Bogdan, *Freak Show* xi). Following this line of enquiry, works on freaks, such as Tromp’s and Durbach’s, have focused on deciphering the freakish embodiment of social concerns. They have shown, for instance, that a society preoccupied with evolution would gaze at freaks such as Krao or Julia Pastrana in search of evidence (amount of hair, simian traits, behaviour, intelligence, etc) to support or disprove the theory. Their method of reading the culture written on the freaks’ bodies has produced fascinating work, but has, invariably, overlooked other significant aspects of the freak show. Freak representations certainly followed a formulaic construction, but there were variations to these representations that do more than simply verify the audience’s notions of normality. Both contemporary and historic freaks circulated in nineteenth-century popular and medical culture. Freaks regularly appeared in exhibitions and print throughout the period. If freaks were a construct of their particular time and society, then the material context of their representation, as in their print medium, needs to be brought into the equation. Freaks were brought before popular and medical audiences, children, men, women, upper, middle and working class audiences, so a blanket reading of the meaning of the freak in Victorian culture ignores the variability of freak representations and audiences. The diversity and regularity of freak representations also indicate the ability of freaks to live beyond their corporeal bodies. It is the longevity of freaks and the productivity of their legacies with which this thesis is concerned. Rather than read freaks simply as representations of their culture’s beliefs, this thesis aims to show the interconnectedness of late nineteenth-century society through freaks and their legacies.

The familiarity with freaks mediated by print media contributed to the idea of legacy. Throughout this thesis, legacy will be referred to as the means (here, representations) through which people (namely freaks, showmen and doctors) live on after their death. Freak narratives and presentations were laden with speculation and inaccuracies, but through regular reproduction these aspects became engrained in freak representations. These embellishments were further supported by references to previous freaks, either recent or historical, retelling and associating previous legacies with current freaks. In this manner of grouping the past with the present and myth with reality freak legacies were created and perpetuated. Showmen and medical men also found opportunity within the freak show to build a reputation and subsequent legacy.

For the showman, the successful presentation of freaks could lead to further exhibition successes. By relying on audience familiarity with previously exhibited freaks showmen were able to stress the freakish attributes that were similar in the current exhibition and differentiate from any disagreeable traits in previous shows. For example, chapter one explains that when the conjoined sisters Millie Christine were shown in Britain during the 1870s references were commonly made to the earlier popular exhibition of the conjoined brothers Chang and Eng Bunker. The promotional material for Millie Christine highlighted their delightful personality, polite manners and talented vocals. In periodical reports on the girls and their shows these attributes were also stressed, but often to the effect of differentiating them from their moody and awkward predecessors Chang and Eng. Even in smaller shows the familiarity with famous freaks was a popular method used by showmen to attract visitors. These associations between past and present shows also helped to professionalise showmen by creating a sense of community. As with other trades, part of this professional status came from establishing a sense of like-minded interests and spirit amongst practitioners of the craft. In linking freak acts and shows together, showmen tied themselves to both freak legacies and a professional community.

Freak legacies were perpetuated in medicine in a similar fashion to their popular preservation, but with a medically focused narrative. As with popular print, the freak under discussion in medical literature would be grouped with freaks of the past and any stories, diagnoses, treatments and outcomes would be relayed. By taking on a freak case the medical practitioner opened the possibility that his own name and legacy could be tied to the freaks' legacy. On a larger scale freaks offered the medical profession support in its gradual professionalization through the nineteenth century. In providing opportunities for the study of rare conditions, singular and expert knowledge could be gathered. This expertise would then be called upon in the promotional material for freak acts. Also, through the controversy that sometimes built around freak shows, medical men would be called on as independent, reliable advisors. In these ways the expert status of medical practitioners was propounded and supported by the freak show.

Legacy provides a completely new model for understanding the way that freak show discourses circulated for the popular and medical professions, a model that doesn't depend simply on culturalist ideas. It suggests that freaks were highly productive for particular groups and individuals, as well as broadly for the whole culture. It suggests that freakery was not marginal, defining what normality might be, but that it was central, creating the ability for individuals (showmen/doctors) and groups (popular/medical profession) to define and assert their legacies. Similar to previous freak work, my study examines the usefulness of freaks as a tool within their culture. However, freaks were not simply used as symbolic references for

wider social concerns; rather, they were a means of connecting seemingly disparate spheres in Victorian society, namely popular entertainment and medicine, through legacy. My analysis of freak legacy will be informed by the concept of generativity.

### Legacy and Generativity

Since the psychologist Erik Erikson coined the term “generativity” in 1950, to explain the “concern for establishing and guiding the next generation”, the concept has primarily been used by those within the field of psychology and psycho-sociology, such as Dan McAdams (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* xv).<sup>8</sup> McAdams and other sociologists have primarily applied the concept of generativity to the analysis of personally orated life-narratives.<sup>9</sup> This dominant employment of generativity is important to bear in mind when applying it to the analysis of text-based histories and, therefore, demands an explanation of the understanding and differentiation of technique used for this thesis. Here, John Kotre’s 1984 conceptualisation of generativity, and later works employing his definitions, foreground the understanding of generativity used in this study.<sup>10</sup>

From the time of Erikson’s initial explanation of generativity, Kotre contends, the term has “been extended, too broadly for clarity’s sake, to mean any kind of care or responsibility for others – too broadly because the essence the term seeks to name is propagation, reproduction, fertility in the deepest and most human sense of the word” (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* xv). Generativity represents all the “actions and creations” that move into the future through individuals and communities (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* xv). Further, in *Outliving the Self*, Kotre broadens Erikson’s original altruistic conception of generativity as a “desirable achievement” to also include consideration of its “negative and dark outcomes”, making generativity “an impulse that can be channelled into vice as well as into virtue” (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* 9). Thus, he defines generativity as “a desire to invest one’s substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self” with both positive and negative results (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* 10).

Kotre offers four types of generativity through which this work is done: biological, parental, technical and cultural (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* 12). Each of these types can be

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<sup>8</sup> See Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*. New York: Norton, 1950 and 1963.

<sup>9</sup> McAdams’ work on the expression of generativity through life-stories is extensive, with his most recent, significant work being Dan McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans live by*, New York: Oxford UP, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Throughout this thesis the 1996 edition of *Outliving the Self: How We Live on in Future Generations* will be used since it includes additional input from the author. The original was published in 1984 with a slightly different title: *Outliving the Self: Generativity and the Interpretation of Lives*. With the exception of an added paragraph, the 1996 edition presents the same work as the original (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* xvii–xviii).

developed either through 'agentic' or 'communal' modes. Whereas agentic "represents the self-asserting, self-expanding existence of the individual," communal "represents the participation of the individual in a mutual, interpersonal reality or in some larger organism" (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* 16). Agentic generativity asserts an individual's addition to cultural ideals while communal generativity emphasizes "the life of the work or the principle", often with an individual or symbol embodying these ideals. Both of these modes are apparent when evaluating the freak show within nineteenth-century medical and entertainment practices. When coupled with Kotre's third and fourth types, technical and cultural generativity, agentic and communal means of generativity produce a useful framework for understanding freak legacies of all kinds.

Technical generativity is the teaching and passing on of skills. In its agentic aspect, this can be thought of in terms of generativity between a master and a student, but the communal aspect is more useful in terms of freak show. The communal mode still involves the passing on of skills and knowledge, but in a less personal manner. In this thesis, communal technical generativity describes the art of representing and viewing the freak as a practice that is taught and passed on through public interfaces, such as the newspaper and the freak show. As Manheimer asserts, "it is in the passage of story from teller to listener that outliving the self takes place" and this is done through a "shaped account in the context of a shareable culture" (Manheimer 18). Thus, it is the communal transmission of freaks that makes this type of generativity relevant to the freak show. Technical generativity also contributed to the development of the medical profession. Throughout the nineteenth century the training requirements for medical practitioners underwent several transitions and the method of learning was a major part of these changes. One example was the move from apprentice-style training to the communal learning space of hospitals. The idea of shared or communal knowledge was strongly supported through medical journals. The inclusion of freak cases (and freak legacies within them) indicates the participation of freaks in the professionalization of medicine. So, freaks were technically generative in popular and medical culture.

For Kotre, culture is "an integrated set of symbols interpreting existence and giving a sense of meaning and place to members of a perduring collectivity" (*Outliving the Self* 14). So, cultural generativity is legacy-making at work within a particular collective, like medicine or popular entertainment. Berman further explains that, "cultures establish the bases upon which people can obtain a sense of personal worth and knowledge of what constitutes a lasting legacy" (9). Therefore, it is in the more durable, long-lasting symbols that the values of a specific culture can be identified and the value of legacy within that culture can be assessed. For example, chapter four will show that the eighteenth-century surgeon John Hunter became a symbol for the nineteenth-century medical profession, but he was largely unknown outside

of medical culture. The symbols giving meaning vary between cultures, so generativity “can be understood only in relation to an abiding culture” (Berman 5). Thus, nineteenth-century medical practitioners existed within their own culture, apart from general populace, placing value in their own symbols of communal generativity.

But, individuals may partake of several cultures. So, it makes sense that some cultures may share symbols or values. For example, medical men would encounter freaks through both their participation in medical culture and entertainment culture. Partaking in one did not discount their place in the other culture, but the participation in multiple cultures often blurred the distinction between their roles as doctors and as spectators. This overlap of popular and medical cultures echoes the evidence in the history of science studies, discussed above, which illustrate the almost indistinguishable boundaries between popular and scientific spheres.

Different sectors or cultures in society had varying means of viewing and engaging with freaks (technical generativity) and these often overlapped. Freak representations in print and exhibition took on various forms for diverse appeal. While their representations may have been underscored by a particular idea, like evolution, it was up to the interpreting culture to identify the valuable symbols within the freak representation (cultural generativity). Thus, the popular and medical engagement with freaks in the late nineteenth century fostered environments for technical and cultural generativity practices.

The legacies presented within a culture can be the result of both individual and communal efforts to propagate the importance of selected symbols. Kotre identifies several key moments in a person’s relationship with culture when these ideals may be worked into their life story. This can happen at the time a person first identifies with a specific culture, when they come to terms with the prospect of their own death or once they have died and those that follow attribute meaning to their lives (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* 259–261). These are the moments when individuals or communities knowingly or unknowingly contribute to cultural generativity by reaffirming shared ideals. In chapters two and four the examples of P. T. Barnum and John Hunter will show two very different individual legacy creations, through agentic and communal means respectively. However, freak legacies will largely be considered in this thesis for their collective impact. The regular reproduction of freaks and freak legacies illustrates the versatility of their generativity. Some individual freak cases will be identified for their generativity, but, primarily, the generativity of freaks was articulated through communal assertions. It was more the cultures of print media, medicine and popular entertainment that fostered the creation and continuation of freak legacies, rather than the individual freaks themselves.



A decade after his initial re-conception of generativity Kotre again reviewed its recent uses and called for further consideration of “generative outcome” or legacy (Kotre, “Generative Outcome” 37). Generative outcome is shown through generative products. For example, a child is a generative product from biological generativity. If that child is driven to succeed in education or career due to its parent’s humble beginnings, his drive would be an example of generative outcome or legacy. Legacy, or generative outcome, is brought to life or enacted through a generative product. Freaks were generative products of late Victorian popular and medical culture. Due to the adaptability of their reproductions freak legacies became the generative outcome from the generative product. Kotre contends “[w]hen you think of generative products, something other than children, the outcome story gets even more interesting” (Kotre, “Generative Outcome” 38). To illustrate his meaning Kotre describes a documentary on the hymn “Amazing Grace”. A history of the song and the composer were given in the programme, but it mainly “followed the composition” (generative product) and the many uses (generative outcome) it has been put to through time (Kotre, “Generative Outcome” 38). For Kotre, the variations in the presentations and uses of “Amazing Grace” and the diversity of its singers, listeners and adapters through time demonstrate generative outcome from a generative product. In this sense, freaks, too, can be seen as generative products and their legacies as generative outcome.

Finally, McAdams has shown that life narratives are subject to their environment – their culture. He explains: “the meaning individuals make through their own life stories is a cultural meaning: told and understood in culture, critiqued and amended according to cultural standards, and lived in a social and cultural environment whose narratives are as much as they can ever know” (McAdams, “The Redemptive Self: Generativity and the Stories Americans Live By” 97). The generative self is one that shapes and is shaped by culture making generativity a two-way street. Whereas McAdams grounds his analysis of highly generative adults in American culture, his work points to the importance of considering freaks within their own culture. Through McAdams’ contextualisation of his subjects’ stories in the broader cultural context of American values, generativity reflects a kind of cultural intertextuality. Hunter and Rowles explain that people understand their lives “as a coherent part of some larger system of meaning” (E. G. Hunter and Rowles 330). Therefore, to be generative is to speak to and adopt important cultural markers or stories. In this sense freaks are both a reflection and propagation of the cultures generatively using their representations.

The notorious American showman Phineas T. Barnum would be an example of what McAdams calls a “highly generative” person (McAdams, “The Redemptive Self: Generativity

and the Stories Americans Live By” 91).<sup>11</sup> Barnum made a living from trading on popular cultural narratives making a name for himself and ensuring his own legacy. In doing this Barnum became an integral part to the culture he sold; he became his own product. Barnum’s generativity, the making of his legacy, benefitted from his use of freaks and, as chapter two will show, the success of Barnum’s freaks in Britain owed much to Barnum’s legacy.

While the showman, Barnum, certainly exhibited the traits of a “highly generative” individual, freaks can be seen as generative products (McAdams, “The Redemptive Self: Generativity and the Stories Americans Live By” 91). Like “Amazing Grace” freaks were presented through multiple means for various purposes, people and communities. Freaks and freak legacies were products of their culture and of generative people like Barnum, and even medical men like Frederick Treves. With the combination of their familiarity and malleability freaks could both represent topical issues as well as be the topics of conversation. Freaks were productive to both individuals and groups. Freaks served the generativity of culture and individuals, and their legacies were the generative outcomes of these uses. By primarily adopting Kotre’s conception of generativity, supplemented by McAdams’ work on generative people, generativity offers a useful tool for the interpretation of freak representations in nineteenth-century Britain.

Since Erikson’s introduction of the word generativity it has been put to use primarily in research involving first-hand accounts and interactions with individuals. While Kotre does call for a move towards research on the rippling effects of generative outcome, his own example of “Amazing Grace” still looks at evidence contemporary to the 1990s documentary. So, applying this mode of interpretation to a historical period takes the generativity model slightly out of context. However, as Kotre explains, in 1950 “‘Generativity’ was a new word, but the idea behind it was very old, perhaps the oldest in existence” (Kotre, “What Makes” 24). And, as McAdams puts it: “generativity is a human universal” (McAdams, “The Redemptive Self: Generativity and the Stories Americans Live By” 97). Therefore, the desire for individual and communal legacies to proliferate is widespread and far pre-dates Erikson or the Victorians.

Existing work on generativity is in agreement on the interconnected relationship between identity and culture. The modes of generativity employed by individuals are influenced by their specific culture or cultures. Freaks were just one source of cultural expression in the Victorian era, but their appeal to such broad audiences made freaks important forms of generativity. So while the analysis of the generativity of the late nineteenth-century freak show may not entirely adhere to the research models set in place by Erikson, Kotre or McAdams, the idea behind the word and their contribution to its study do

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<sup>11</sup> McAdams specifically relates this term to American people, so using it to refer to Barnum is in keeping with McAdams’ meaning (McAdams, *The Redemptive Self* 5).

enrich this work on freaks. Just as “[e]xplanation in life-historical research comes down to interpretation, or the discovery of connections” so too does this study aim to interpret the interconnections between the late nineteenth-century freak show and its culture through generativity (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* 3).

### Sourcing Freaks

While this study of the nineteenth-century British freak show utilises ephemeral memorabilia from these entertainments, there is also a wealth of information to be gained from the contemporary periodical press. Freaks appeared in stories, comics, reviews, advertisements, case studies and other print items. Periodicals from this period are full of topical pieces and topicality has been noted as “an important way of interpreting the Victorian age” (Vann and VanArsdel 4).<sup>12</sup> Further, it has been acknowledged that the “British professions made enormous use of journals and journalism to establish their collective identities in the nineteenth century” (King, “Professions and the Press” 510). Thus, periodical literature is useful for identifying current events and debates as well as for recognizing communal efforts towards professionalization. Freaks play in to both of these conversations.

The material used for this study spans from national general interest journals and newspapers, such as the *Times*, to regional papers, and from comic magazines, such as *Fun*, to medical journals like the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*. Periodical media presents a diverse textual and visual overview of the presence of freaks within their contemporary culture. Further material provided by ephemeral show memorabilia enriches this undertaking by providing points of reference for the freak information printed in the press. Often the show pamphlets and flyers contain phrases of praise published in the periodical press, while the media reports themselves borrow the narratives and key details of the performers printed in the show materials. This cyclical exchange took place between the popular press, popular entertainment and medicine. However, rather than occupying prominent physical spaces within these fields freaks were usually situated in the margins. Despite this peripheral placement freaks regularly captured the imagination and attention of varied Victorian audiences due to the frequency of freak appearances. It is this regularity of freak encounters, I argue, that allowed freaks to maintain a position within mainstream culture. As Cantor, Dawson, *et al.* have argued, the “hybrid, and overtly pluralist intertextual format of the periodical” allowed for the content to “point beyond” its immediate context and “enact a continuing dialogue” with the content of other periodicals and culture itself (Cantor *et al.* xviii).

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<sup>12</sup> This notion of topicality introduced by Vann and VanArsdel is from Richard Altick’s *Presence of the Present* (1991).

So while freak representations in print were often small and in peripheral pieces, their presence across popular and scientific spheres signals their participation in the multifaceted intellectual and recreational environments that made up Victorian culture. Through their frequent reference, presentation and re-presentation freaks were ubiquitous in late nineteenth-century print and exhibition culture. Therefore, deciphering freak encounters through their printed representations is a necessary method for understanding the role of freaks within their culture.

A substantial part of the periodical print used in this thesis has been accessed via digital archives. Recent developments in the digitisation of print media from the nineteenth century have allowed the position of freaks within their culture to be re-examined through multiple and varied sources. As Andrew M. Stauffer contends, these important sources “have been proliferating” for over a decade and are “becoming part of the way we live now as scholars” (Stauffer 293). Embracing the benefits of this mode of research allows for the re-evaluation of the nineteenth-century freak show as a marginal entertainment. Being able to easily search a broad range of sources allows for a clearer idea of the familiarity of freaks than was previously available. Further, the variety and breadth of sources made available through these means, and the presence of freaks within them, highlights the communal interest in freaks, drawing together otherwise disparate groups of late-Victorian society. This evidence then serves as an indication of the widespread popularity and familiarity of freaks in the late nineteenth century.

However, the use of digitised sources for Victorian studies is still a contested method of research due to the absence of personal interaction with the source. Jim Mussell cautions against the misinterpretation of print culture through digital searches. He worries that “[r]ather than read tracts of the press, users will instead encounter spots of it – usually articles – that are not only divorced from the other articles on a page, but also from the section, issue, and volume that they are within” (Mussell 97). Since Victorian periodical literature is considered to be a “vast repository of contemporary culture” there is a danger of misinterpretation in a disjointed approach to the material (Vann and VanArsdel 4). Within this study, the placement of freak images, comics, reviews, advertisements and other forms of print presence will be taken into account. At the same time, the regular appearances of freaks through small snippets in numerous periodicals is an important aspect of their nineteenth-century presence not to be overshadowed by their seeming insignificance next to longer, more detailed reports and stories. It is this apparent displacement of these pieces within their periodical context that infers the significance of their deceptively marginal presence in Victorian culture.

Julia Thomas notes another concern in digital research is that the “structure of the archive and the format of digitisation [...] anticipate what users are looking for and how they might search” (Thomas 103). This predetermined search technique can be both a help and a hindrance. For example, some of the freak evidence physically existing in archive collections is in the form of newspaper clippings, some with handwritten dates on them. While it is not possible to source all of these, the digitised periodical archives certainly make the task easier. But the presence of these bits of paper in archival scrapbooks also supports the use of snippets found through digitised search results. Clippings in the archive present material out of its periodical context yet aligned in its freak context. Digital freak search results may also present material out of its immediate periodical context, but provide a broader print context as they can include the appearance of freaks within multiple sources. Rather than trends in the past to “privilege certain titles as exemplars” in periodical research this method includes material viewed by a wider and varied reading audience (Mussell 96). Also, most results do provide the opportunity to browse the page, section and whole issue in which the piece resides. Therefore, both physical and digital archives are integral resources for the study of freaks in Victorian culture.

Alongside these concerns Thomas and Mussell acknowledge the profound effect these resources will have on the future study of Victorian culture by “recontextualising familiar writers, texts and events, and populating the field with references to otherwise obscure works” (Mussell 96). So too, I argue, do they allow for the recontextualisation of freaks. Both sides to this argument raise valid concerns for the research methodology undertaken for this project. While the evidence presented in this thesis has been found through encounters with both material items and digitised versions, it is the digital search methods that have most successfully exposed the diversity of freaks in the late nineteenth century. It is through the multiplicity of freak entries in print that signalled their mainstream presence. In many ways this new method of research supports work that has shown the diversity of entertainment and audiences. At the same time, it allows a reconsideration of the materials supporting conjectures of freaks being viewed primarily by working-class rather than mainstream audiences.

Using print media as evidence also permits a limitation to the timescale of this study. This thesis focuses on material from the period from 1870-1900 with some flexibility on either end of the timeframe. I have chosen this time span for several reasons. This period represents a time of significant change in various sectors of Victorian society. Periodical print saw a rapid increase in the number of publications and readerships (Vann and VanArsdel 4; Brake, Bell, and Finkelstein 3). Professional society was on the rise (Perkin 17–26). Popular entertainment benefitted from the improving means of transport, both in terms of audiences reaching venues

and entertainments travelling to different regions (H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* 157–164). Medicine saw a shift in teaching and training practices with the opening of more hospitals and university medical degrees (N. Parry and J. Parry 131–161). All of these factors had an impact on the presentation and consumption of freaks. While *Punch* magazine represented 1847 as the age of “deformito-mania”, freak shows and freak audiences continued to flourish through the end of the century, aided by the advancements taking place across the board (“The Deformito-Mania” 90). This thesis is interested in how freak legacies were drawn upon and created by different communities in this period of growth and development. The generativity of freaks allowed for the historic and contemporary to be used in the designs for the future.

However, in using the concept of generativity a strict time period is difficult to determine. To analyse freak legacies at work in print and exhibition between 1870-1900, I have had to stretch back to the eighteenth-century and move forward to the twentieth. While I am interested in the productivity of freaks for particular groups of people in the late nineteenth century, the freak legacies at work draw on their predecessors and project into the future. To understand the legacy phenomenon I have had to refer to the origin and future use of the representations at work, but these will be considered for their relevance to the late nineteenth-century engagement with the freak legacy.

### **Thesis Layout**

Taking into account the diversity of freaks, performance space, audiences and representation styles, this thesis attempts to piece the composite parts together in order to understand the centrality of freaks in late nineteenth-century culture. It is through the multiplicity of freak presentations that they became ubiquitous. Through their ubiquity freaks became familiar generative oddities whose legacies served multiple communities. This is evidenced in the multiple print formats occupied by freaks. Therefore, the engagement with freaks will be broken down into four contexts that demonstrate the differing generativity of freaks depending on context: freak representations in popular print; engagement with freaks in the Barnum and Bailey Circus visits to the United Kingdom in 1889-90 and 1897-1899; the ambiguity of medical authority over freak displays; and the use of freak legacies in medical case studies.

Generativity is specific to its culture. As such, the first chapter attempts to delineate the generative work of freaks in a series of cultures through print. To demonstrate how earlier freak legacies generated and fed into later freak representations, this chapter begins with a discussion of what James Gregory calls the “eccentric biography” genre (Gregory, “Eccentric

Biography” 342). These were popular works that contained a collection of biographies on people thought to have been eccentric for anything from behaviour or crimes to physical appearance. Gregory has explored the appeal of these works to a range of audiences from the eighteenth century through to the end of the nineteenth. The fascination that attracted audiences to the eccentric characters within these works “connects the genre of eccentric biography with the freak show” (Gregory, “Eccentric Biography” 360). The first chapter then goes on to discuss the familiarity with freaks in the latter part of the nineteenth century as indicated by the presence of freak legacies in print for a range of audiences. In particular, representations of freaks and their legacies for audiences of women and for boys will be examined. Altogether, the various print manifestations of freaks indicate both the presence and appeal for a range of audiences. While this chapter does refer to some articles on freak exhibitions, it is primarily concerned with the print accounts of freaks past and present.

Chapter two then considers popular freak show attendance and engagement in the Barnum and Bailey circus. The role of Barnum’s legacy, as created by himself and others, was integral to the show’s success in Britain. The circus visited two times during this period: first for the 1889-1890 winter season, then for a longer touring visit from 1897-1899. Since Barnum was only alive for the first of these visits, the role of his legacy is particularly significant. Barnum already had a history with the British public that had begun with his exhibition of the freak called Tom Thumb in 1844.<sup>13</sup> While Barnum had successfully pursued a show business career incorporating various entertainments, he was renowned for his exhibition of freaks. Freaks were just one part of the Barnum and Bailey circus that promised a multitude of entertainments, but they received regular attention in print, both in the show material and periodical media. For these reasons, the Barnum and Bailey circus offers an illuminating account of the popular British engagement with freaks and their legacies at the end of the century.

From here the thesis turns from popular to medical freak representations. Chapter three is interested in the intervention of medicine in the popular engagement with freaks. As a discipline undergoing professionalization, the exertion of authority could strengthen the process. Joseph Merrick’s case was just one in which medicine sought to assert its superiority over popular uses of freaks and some of these instances will be explored. This chapter will consider popular print accounts of medical expertise in disputed freak cases, as well as medical assertions of authority shown in the medical press and medical exhibition of unusual anatomies.

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<sup>13</sup> See Raymund Fitzsimons, *Barnum in London*, London: Geoffrey Bles, 1969.

Finally, the fourth chapter will discuss the use of particular legacies in the professionalization of medicine. Here, the creation of John Hunter's legacy as a figurehead for British surgeons will be explained. In the building of Hunter's legacy the precedent of being remembered for medical excellence was set for the following generations. His work came to represent justification for future work with freaks. After understanding Hunter's role in this formation, I then demonstrate the use of three freak cases and their legacies in the building of medical legacy.

From these chapters, it is hoped that the generativity of freaks for varying groups is made clear. Legacy shows that freaks were productive not only in their live appearances, but in their written afterlives. Through their written legacies freaks were shaped and re-shaped by different audiences. In the regular reproduction of freak narratives and images the distinguishing traits of the freak became familiar to audiences. Freaks became familiar mainstream oddities presented and re-presented throughout the nineteenth century, serving the generativity of popular and medical communities. Therefore, freaks need not be considered only as peripheral bodies of significance only because they helped define the norm.



## Chapter One: Freaks in Print

Barbara Babcock has noted that “What is socially peripheral is often symbolically central” (qtd. in Carroll, *Science and Eccentricity*, 4). Freaks, I argue, fall into the socially peripheral category, but their generativity places them in a symbolically central position in late nineteenth-century British culture. In their appearances in different forms of popular print freak representations were adjusted to appeal to varied audiences. For freaks, generative value derived from the malleability of their representations. This chapter will demonstrate the generativity of freaks in their ability to be presented and re-presented in various popular print formats, mainly periodical form, throughout the nineteenth century. Due to this flexibility of freak reproductions, freaks were brought before broad and diverse audiences. Despite their marginal placement freaks were able to seep into the centre of popular culture.

To a degree, the representation of freak shows in periodicals is reflective of the nature of the shows themselves. In print media evidence of the shows can be found in classified ads, comic illustrations, anecdotes, nostalgic stories, reviews as well as informative essays on some of the more famous freaks of the past or contemporary freaks due to exhibit in Britain. The exhibitions themselves came in multiple formats too: as part of fairs or circuses, as variety entertainments, museums of curiosity, shop-front shows, and some were even hired as waitresses at public houses or for “private performances in the drawing rooms of the rich and famous” (Durbach 7). As Nadja Durbach has rightly commented, this array of performance styles allowed exhibitors to give “their elite clientele a degree of social segregation while at the same time providing inexpensive amusement for the masses” (7). In the same way, freaks were presented in journals aimed both at young or adult readership and in national, local and regional newspapers, granting diverse mass audiences the chance to indulge in the mediated spectacle of freak bodies. Both print representations and the shows offered audiences multiple opportunities to consume freaks in varied amounts and environments to accommodate their differing tastes.

Evidence of the popularity of freak shows can mostly be found in the marginal print rather than headlines or major articles. In her article exploring the trade advertisements of the entertainment journal the *Era*, Ann Featherstone has shown that even the small classified ads reveal the prevalence of freak shows in the nineteenth century (Featherstone, “Shopping and Looking” 26–61). As will be shown here, this was true in general newspapers as well as those for specialist audiences. While the advertisements, handbills, posters and programmes help to evidence the existence of the shows and the manner in which freaks and their images were displayed to audiences, the reactions and recollections given in the print media suggest a

much more pervasive integration of freaks into everyday culture. One did not need to look solely at the entertainment reviews or seek out seedy locations to access freaks for they were already present in so many guises.

The prevalence of references to and reviews of freak shows (including shows meant for general entertainment as well as those which claimed to be for medical and scientific purposes), indicates that the consumption of these displays was not limited to the working classes, but was made to suit members of any age from every level of society. In fact, reminiscences of childhood visits to freak shows in trade and popular publications, as well as the descriptive accounts of past and present shows in some boys' papers suggest that the consumption of freaks was a familiar, even nostalgic, activity for middle-class writers and their readership. However, the appropriateness of female attendance was more ambiguous. While some pieces on freaks, such as the trade advertisements, do not differentiate between the types of audience members, these two groups of visitors, boys and women, regularly received attention. The implications of the focus on these two groups of punters are very significant, suggesting intriguing readings of both the shows and their audiences. Rather than looking solely at the physicality of the freaks to provide an explanation of the cultural work being done by the shows, examining the popular print representations of both the freaks and their audiences, including those which appeared without reference to any particular show, tends to situate these marginal bodies at the centre of Victorian culture. Reading freak representations in this way, as very much a part of mainstream culture, allows us to examine the generative outcomes of freaks, and to understand the changing significance of their legacies to this culture as it progressed.

Kotre explains that generative outcome is "how a person's identity lives on by adapting to the needs of changing times" (Kotre, "Generative Outcome" 39). Exhibited freaks lived on through the stories and narratives that were created for them and these were regularly adapted to suit changing audiences. Freak legacies were thus kept alive in the popular imagination through regular print representations, small and large, that were suited to the tastes of varied readerships. These included regular print representations concerning freaks of the past, whose legacies were moulded to suit the needs of different audiences, rather than accurately reflecting their own historical context. Due to the boom in periodical publications in that latter part of the nineteenth century, freaks, dead and alive, were able to reach a wide-ranging audience through textual and visual representations. Therefore, through the generativity of freaks, late nineteenth-century popular culture was able to shape a past to which it wanted to belong and a present that appealed to diverse tastes.

This chapter will first look to the genre of 'eccentric biography' where historical freaks regularly featured, before turning to late nineteenth-century representations of freaks in

popular print. The aim of this approach is to show how late-Victorian freaks were not only reflective of their contemporary culture, as has been argued by freak scholars like Durbach and Tromp, but also how their legacies were specifically shaped to appeal to the varied cultural interests of different sectors in society. Incorporating eccentric biography into this analysis highlights the history of popular freak representation and interpretation through print. This genre predisposed popular culture to freaks, meaning late nineteenth-century print representations followed a familiar tradition of interpreting them. The continuation of this practice demonstrates the technical generativity of freak representations as their presentation and reception trained contemporary audiences to engage with freaks in a similar manner to their predecessors. Further, the familiarity with freaks that was fostered through this process helped broaden the audiences engaging with them at the end of the century. Freaks were then culturally generative for the different social sectors they were placed before. The final sections of this chapter will focus on female and boy readerships, because these groups seem to have been especially important targets for late-century print material concerning freaks.

### **Eccentric Biographies**

Traversing the period from 1790 to 1901, the genre of eccentric biography provided readers with the opportunity to study the lives of some of history's greatest eccentrics. In his work exploring the format and popularity of the genre, James Gregory emphasises that "the 'eccentricity' in these collections comprehended abnormal bodies as well as abnormal activity or experiences", so fat men and women, giants, dwarfs and other potential or actual freak show performers made appearances in many of the collections (Gregory, "Eccentric Biography" 343). The freaks were in addition to the other objects and characters within the collections who, as one 1842 biography explained, had "acquired celebrity or notoriety, by deviating materially from the general course of human existence" (H. Wilson, *Wonderful Characters* 1842 v). In fact, as Victoria Carroll has discovered, many of the eccentric bodies were popular freaks and the language used in their descriptions may even have been lifted from the show advertisements. Therefore, these works should "be read in part as printed equivalents of live displays of human wonders" (Carroll, "Beyond the Pale" 233).

Although various editions were printed and reprinted, the format of the material often stayed the same, presenting a series of biographies on eccentrics which, Gregory notes, "were often introduced and concluded with moralistic comment" (Gregory, "Eccentric Biography" 344). Furthermore, the numerous formats, ranging from "[l]avishly illustrated and expensively bound" book volumes, to cheaper reprints later in the century, pamphlets, chapbooks and regularly published periodicals, allowed the genre to proliferate amongst all audiences during

the Victorian period ("Eccentric Biography" 351). From aristocratic libraries to bourgeois homes, even to the more affordable copies "retailed by the newsagents and railway booksellers W.H. Smith's", lending libraries and second-hand booksellers, eccentric biographies were made available and consumed at every level of the social scale ("Eccentric Biography" 352). While the publications continued to be printed in various formats throughout the nineteenth century, new contributions to the genre began to wane around mid-century, and from the 1860s the publications were usually just reprints or reformations of earlier versions. There were a few new provincial versions with "local emphasis" published later in the century, but none of the larger London publishers produced new collections in the late nineteenth century (Gregory, "Eccentric Lives" 78). However, due to their generativity, freak representations continued to flourish in reprints of eccentric biographies as well as the other print formats discussed later in this chapter.

Eccentric biographies emphasise the cultural and generative value of freaks through the exploitation of "one defining characteristic of English identity"; that is, eccentricity (Gregory, "Eccentric Lives" 91). Eccentricity was used to appeal to the tastes and mindset of British readers. The eccentric representation of freaks helped set the standard for later freak print presentations while it also created a widespread familiarity with freak images. As Gregory has pointed out, these collections were "anecdotal rather than analytical, and made no attempt to examine cultural factors that might contribute to eccentricity", but they did purport eccentricity as a key part of British identity, "assert[ing] that individuality was a national trait" (Gregory, "Eccentric Lives" 89). This is evident, he argues, from the prevalence of writing and consumption of eccentric characters.

However, Carroll has argued that the British interaction with eccentric people and things "was more subtle and complex than simply admiring shared national identity" (Carroll, *Science and Eccentricity* 43). Eccentricity existed in a multitude of forms and nationalities so its presentation to British audiences needs to be considered beyond its national symbolism. While her focus is primarily on the figure of the natural scientist in the nineteenth century, Carroll identifies other popular forms of engagement with eccentricity through biographies, fiction and freak shows. In the Victorian era, the "boundaries discriminating the 'normal' from the eccentric had been redrawn" which allowed eccentricity to "become yet more entrenched [in culture] as the century progressed" (Carroll, *Science and Eccentricity* 43–44). While not all eccentrics put before the public were British, the acceptance and enjoyment of eccentricity became a noted British trait. Eccentricity was regularly brought before the public, being identified as a national trait, a medium for moralist tales and serving a number of other functions just as freaks did. So, the British interest in eccentricity made representations of British and foreign freaks alluring in eccentric biographies. Here, examples of the freakish

embodiment of eccentricity, as shown in eccentric biographies, will be examined for the early-century interpretations of freaks since these would prove highly influential in later forms of freak representation.

Even popular figures such as Jane Austen, Robert Browning and Charles Darwin read or owned eccentric biographies (Gregory, "Eccentric Biography" 352). Most intriguing amongst the famous names, unsurprisingly, is Charles Dickens since characters eccentric in both body and behaviour fill the casts of his novels. Similar to the moral messages put forward in the biographies, Dickens used his readers' familiarity with eccentricity to portray his own message. For example, Julia Saville has posited that Dickens sought "to reconcile individualism with communal responsibility" and using eccentric characters allowed him to align the "distinctiveness of the individual with the coherence of the nation" (Saville 784, 782). Thus, Dickens was able to "create a sense of like-mindedness among readers" through eccentric characters (795). This is similar to the eccentric biographies, which often try to tie a moral message into the textual representations of extraordinary beings and forge a consensus on British ideals. With their distinguishing characteristics, eccentrics drew attention to themselves and, as will be discussed below, this attention was used to highlight the respectable qualities they still possessed, or to instruct on ways to avoid the dismal fate of some of the lower eccentrics (i.e. murderers, thieves, misers, etc). Therefore, Dickens' eccentrics echoed the personalities within the eccentric biographies and spoke to audiences who most likely had consumed the legacies of eccentric individuals through the genre, furthering their familiarity with common types of freak interpretation.<sup>14</sup> Such narratives were highly durable exemplifying the generativity of freaks.

A particular audience worth considering with the eccentric biographies, which would become a prominent feature in freak representations later in the century, was the boy readership. When mentioning the famous personages who read the biographies, Gregory remarks that Browning and Darwin were children when they enjoyed the collections (Gregory, "Eccentric Biography" 352). In fact, an "important market was the bourgeois family and its children" with many editions being particularly suited "for home readership" (Gregory, "Eccentric Lives" 80). He notes that some volumes even boasted being "'admirably adapted for boys'" as these works "provided instruction about the world" and despite the range of topics they "could be defended for their moral lessons" ("Eccentric Biography" 352). Just as freak

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<sup>14</sup> For more on Dickens and representations of freakishness (human and as an idea) see Jami Moss, "'A Body of Organized Truth': Freaks in Britain, 1830-1900." PhD thesis. U of Wisconsin – Madison, 1999. 64-121; and, Kelly Hager, "Jasper Packlemerton, Victorian Freak." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 34 (2006): 209-232.

representations later in the century spoke to male audiences, young and old, so too did these earlier collections.

Educational value was another feature encouraging interest in eccentrics. In an 1830 edition of an eccentric biography collection, Henry Wilson endorsed the genre on his frontispiece, stating:

There are not wanting persons so dull and insensible, as to deter students from reading books of this kind which, they say, are poetical, and pernicious to the purity of morals; but I am of the opinion, that they are not only worthy to be read by the instructors of youth in their schools, but that the old and experienced should again and again peruse them. (H. Wilson, *Wonderful Characters* 1830 title page)

Of the characters he presented for their “avarice and other vices”, Wilson assured readers “their failings will not be held forth as worthy of imitation” (*Wonderful Characters* 1830 iii). The collection, Wilson made clear, was “calculated to convey much useful and agreeable knowledge, to inform the understanding, to improve the judgement, and to amend the heart” of his readers (*Wonderful Characters* 1830 iv). In making such declarations as these Wilson invited readers to make the most of his collections for the continual instructive amusement of all ages. Many other eccentric biographies of the time employed this same tone of justification for their publication, so their appeal to youth is worthy of attention (King, ed. iii–iv; Timbs iii–iv).

As recent studies, such as Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin’s recent *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, have shown, education in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was more than just classroom-based learning at large schools. Children were taught in the home, in small privately run institutions and even in social situations through conversation.<sup>15</sup> Education was a flexible concept at this time, so it is likely that the instructive value of these texts was seen in predominantly informal settings. However, Wilson’s reference to “youth in their schools” is more likely to have been directed at boys. For, as Hilton and Shefrin point out, “more boys at every level of society attended large educational institutions” than girls (Hilton and Shefrin 2). While later freak representations rarely claimed moral justification, they did claim to be suitable for young male audiences as a form of instructive amusement. Therefore, these early century freak presentations laid the foundation for later practices of reproducing freak legacies. Exploring a few of the earlier freak

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<sup>15</sup> See also Michèle Cohen “‘Familiar Conversation’: The Role of the ‘Familiar Format’ in Education in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England” in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, Ed. Hilton and Shefrin, 99–116.

representations reveals some of the key features reproduced later in the century, exposing the generativity of freak representations.

### **Eccentric Case Studies: Daniel Lambert**

Daniel Lambert was a popular Fat Man during his life (1770-1809) and appeared in numerous representations later in the nineteenth century. In her work on Lambert's Victorian legacy, Joyce L. Huff discovered that Lambert "appeared not simply as an object of study in books and articles on scientific and medical curiosities but also as a carnivalesque Bacchus figure in a broadsheet ballad, a role model in a Christian tract, and a British national icon, in the style of John Bull, in at least five political cartoons" and his name even became "a household word" (Huff 43). She notes that "Lambert's physical difference is cast as both freakish and heroic" in these accounts and his "body sometimes appears as the representative English body" (44). Browsing just a sampling of eccentric biographies gives voice to these claims concerning Lambert. For instance, Lambert's appearance in Timbs's 1866 volume of *English Eccentrics and Eccentricities*, which emphasizes its dedication to modern eccentrics, illustrates the popular position Lambert held in the Victorian imagination. While he is written about predominantly in complimentary tones for his intelligence, manners and heroism, his eccentric feature, his size, also drives a cautionary narrative in his representations. This element of Lambert's legacy highlights his generativity in the slight alterations progressively made to his presentation.

In the style of freak show variety display, Lambert's piece is followed by one concerning a dwarf in both Wilson's 1842 edition and Timbs's collection, further exaggerating his freakish size. Also in Timbs, Wilson (in both his 1842 and 1830 editions), a further collection by James Caulfield (1819), and the anonymous 1824 collection, *The Cabinet of Curiosities; or, Wonders of the World Displayed*, Lambert is given a significant portion of text highlighting his fine qualities and citing his bravery (either through wrestling a bear, saving people from drowning or both), as well as emphasising his surprisingly good health and breath control. Alongside this praise for Lambert, most pieces included the embarrassing circumstances surrounding his death at an inn, which had to have the wall surrounding the door removed to convey his body in a specially made square-shaped coffin to the burial site. Due to the size of Lambert's body and coffin, Caulfield explains, "his remains were drawn by eight men with ropes to the burial-ground: into the church it was not possible to take him" (Caulfield, *Lives and Portraits* 202). Further, Lambert's size required an expedient burial since "very few hours after death, almost all identity of feature was lost; and although he was buried in eight-and-forty hours, his remains had been kept quite as long as was prudent" (*Lives and Portraits* 202).

Lambert's extraordinary body required extraordinary measures to be taken after his death. In each of the representations, the details of the events following his death are weaved into legacy of Lambert's eccentricity. The inclusion of both Lambert's praiseworthy and embarrassing attributes is demonstrative of his generativity. Generally, the flexibility of freak representations, in their ability to adapt numerous meanings, allowed them to fulfil the role of instructive amusement while it also secured their longevity. Lambert's legacy was based on two modes of instruction: example and warning. His heroic actions and tasteful behaviour were worthy of emulation, but his freakish size was ultimately problematic as evidenced in the spectacle of his burial.

Timbs's collection differs from the others, however, in its inclusion of notes on the dangers of corpulence and other large men. For example, details were included on the difficulties faced by fat men, Edward Bright and another unnamed gentleman, due to their size. Then there is a page and a half filled with "A Cure for Corpulence" telling the story of a man who was able to lose weight after cutting down to a diet of only meat (Timbs 279–280). Finally, Timbs completes the section with another page and a half dedicated to "Epitaphs on Fat Folks" which contains four humorous, yet censorious, lamentations on the passing of unnamed corpulent men (281–282). Throughout the account of Lambert, comments are made concerning the dangers of his size and, in contrast to earlier eccentric representations, Lambert is blamed for his corpulence. For instance, a Mr Wadd is quoted saying "It is clear, therefore, that he was a strong, active man, and continued so after the disease had made great progress; and I think it may fairly be inferred that he would not have fallen a sacrifice so early in life, if he had possessed fortitude enough to meet the evil, and to have opposed it with determined perseverance" (Timbs 273). The Mr Wadd cited in this piece is the surgeon, William Wadd, who wrote on corpulence early in the century.<sup>16</sup> It is telling that this reference, from Wadd's 1816 *Cursory Remarks on Corpulence; or Obesity Considered as a Disease*, only appeared in an eccentric biography of Lambert half a century after its publication (Wadd 46). The intended purpose of Timbs' representation of Lambert differed from those of earlier versions. With the previous portrayals, Lambert is recognised to have been very active (particularly when he was young) and strong despite his size, but here this fact is used to show that Lambert's extreme size was unnecessary.

Both Wilson and Timbs attribute the increase in Lambert's size after the age of nineteen to his "confinement and sedentary life" during the period he spent as keeper of the Leicester prison (H. Wilson, *Wonderful Characters* 1830 112; H. Wilson, *Wonderful Characters*

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<sup>16</sup>William Wadd was the author of *Comments on Corpulency and Lineaments of Leanness*, (London: Ebers & Co., 1829); and *Cursory Remarks on Corpulence; or Obesity Considered as a Disease*, (London: J. Callow, 1816).



1842 15; Timbs 273). However, the 1819 and 1824 accounts mark more sensational reasons for his weight gain. Caulfield noted in 1819 that Lambert's "field-exercises [...] proved not only unavailing, but seemed to produce a directly opposite effect" than intended (Caulfield, *Lives and Portraits* 197). And, contrary to Wilson and Timbs' later portrayals, the 1824 account remarked that the "rapidly increasing size of Mr. Lambert, after this period, cannot be attributed to want of exercise" (*The Cabinet of Curiosities* 378). While the earlier accounts claim Lambert remained active throughout his life, making his increased weight unexplainable, the later recollections blame a very particular period of inactivity for Lambert's growth. Yet, all of the pieces agree on Lambert's comparably good health despite his being a large person. This gradual shift in Lambert's accountability for his own freakish quality presents the most significant marker of the generativity of his image. In the eccentric biographies, Lambert's size begins as an inexplicable phenomenon (1819 and 1824), then becomes the result of his occupation at a particular point in his life (1830 and 1842), and, eventually a result of his lack of fortitude and healthy habits during his time as keeper of the jail (1866). These developments in his biography demonstrate the changing cultural meanings attached to corpulence that his legacy came to represent and the trend to add medical insight into later popular works.

Clearly, Lambert's were considered respectable qualities worthy of repetition and could teach young audiences how such traits could be posthumously remembered. At the same time, the show made of his death and burial demonstrated the lesson to be learned from a potentially controllable freak quality. The fact that Timbs' edition was the latest representation of Lambert (Caulfield's being 1819 and Wilson 1830 and 1842) is significant in the consideration of Lambert's generativity, since Timbs' was the only biography to contain medical input and instructions on weight control. So, while Lambert was distinguished in a number of eccentric biographies and praised for his heroism and English manners, Timbs' later collection took a more scientific and didactic approach to Lambert's freakishness. Thus, the instruction and example set by Lambert's legacy demonstrate the generativity of his image, but his case also informs the representation of later freaks. In each of its reproductions, as Huff has shown, Lambert's legacy became more familiar to wider audiences and was adapted to suit varying representations of consumerism, difference and heroism (Huff 37–59). As later freak representations will show, this versatility of the extraordinary continued in other forms of print throughout the century.

### James Poro: A Non-English Eccentric

Countering the respect given to Daniel Lambert in his various biographies is the case of a man with another sort of anomaly: a parasitic twin.<sup>17</sup> In separate collections, with publication dates ranging from the eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, James Poro's unusual condition is regarded with an air of discomfort, resulting in conflicting approaches to his representation. Yet, it should be noted, the engraving of Poro which accompanies the accounts (with one exception) appears to be the same. The portrait shows Poro holding his shirt open with his right hand while the left hand grasps the back of the twin's head which emerges from the lower part of Poro's chest and torso. The image conceals explicit details of the features, but the twin appears to have a small head of hair with a mouth, nose and at least one eye making up the face. There does seem to be some sort of a torso belonging to the twin with a nipple on it, but no other extremities. Collectively, Poro's biographies typify an important component of freak generativity, that is, the repetition and adaptation of source material in each reproduction. With Poro the original source seems to have been a portrait in the collection of Sir Hans Sloane that was later bequeathed to the British Museum (Caulfield, *Portraits, Memoirs, and Characters* 134; Caulfield, *Lives and Portraits* 172; Granger 400; Nichols 424).<sup>18</sup> The information cited from the attached inscription seems to agree in all but Wilson's 1842 biography on Poro and the visual reproductions appear the same apart from one of Caulfield's 1819 accounts of Poro. But the alterations in Poro's legacy over time contradict the "veridical basis in 'original portraits' [that] was stressed" in eccentric biographies (Gregory, "Eccentric Lives" 81).

Interestingly, James Caulfield published two collections in 1819 that contained Poro's image, but these differed slightly. In one of James Caulfield's 1819 descriptions, Poro is introduced thus: "This curious, but offensive representation, exhibits an excrescence which grew from the body of this unfortunate object, having something of the form and features of human kind" (Caulfield, *Lives and Portraits* 172). Caulfield cites an inscription that states Poro was born in Genoa in 1686 and that the "'child, as they called it, was named Matthew Poro'", referring to the twin (*Lives and Portraits* 172). Here, the engraving is the same as the one used by other authors (see Figure 1). In his other portrayal of Poro, the twin is also referred to as "a monstrous excrescence", but, rather than quote another source, Caulfield writes that the twin: "possessing an independent animated nature to himself, was considered as a twin brother, and was as such baptized by the name of Matthew" (Caulfield, *Portraits, Memoirs, and*

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<sup>17</sup> More precisely Jan Bondeson has classified Poro and his twin as "*omphalopagus parasiticus* conjoined twins" (Bondeson xv).

<sup>18</sup> I have been unable to locate this original painting as the British Museum catalogue only lists two prints and both are reproductions of the original painting.

*Characters* 134). In this version of Poro's biography Caulfield grants the twin a degree of autonomy, whereas the first version only attributes humanity to the twin in the third person plural pronoun, "they". Further, the portrait in this collection slightly differs from the other works in that Matthew has teeth and his eye seems to be open wider than it is shown to be in other images (see Figure 2). This description and image of the Poro twins stands apart from each of the others by allotting some independence to Matthew.

Each biography on Poro was fairly short, containing limited details on his formation and life. For instance, Wilson's 1842 presentation of Poro, was even less informative than either of Caulfield's. The only biographical information given contradicts Caulfield by saying Poro was "Born towards the close of the eighteenth century" and limits the description of his peculiarity to simply being "a very strange mark on his left breast" (H. Wilson, *Wonderful Characters* 1842 282). Then, rather than continuing with any further information or analysis, the piece concludes "As many curious marks on the body oftener remain in obscurity than become exposed to the public; and as the plate annexed shows this extraordinary freak of nature, we leave the reader to form his own conclusions" (*Wonderful Characters* 1842 282–283). In this same collection ten pages were dedicated to the biography of Daniel Lambert who displayed a different form of bodily excess to Poro. With Poro however it seems the unknown status of his excess, human or nonhuman, and Poro's ability to keep it hidden from the public troubled the author. In choosing not to give any further particulars on Poro, Wilson allowed readers the freedom to apply their own cultural reading to Poro's freakishness. It does not seem the case that Poro was assumed to be already familiar to audiences, so the lack of information and decision to include him in a biographical collection is puzzling. While Caulfield referred to the ambiguous human status of the monstrosity, he too struggled with its humanisation and quickly digressed from Poro to detail the life of Lazarus Coloredo "who had a much more perfect twin" and a pair of female conjoined twins (most likely the sisters Helena and Judith) from the early eighteenth century (Caulfield, *Lives and Portraits* 172). Here, at least, the freak of nature was contextualised within the field of similar cases.

What distinguished Poro from other eccentric physiologies within eccentric biographies and with other freaks exhibiting in the nineteenth century was his ability to hide his abnormality. Variances of height, weight, skin conditions and hairiness were much more difficult, if not impossible, to keep from observation. Poro's power to control the advances of curious onlookers was alarming, even though decades had passed since the end of his life. Even for the burgeoning medical profession of the nineteenth century, as Lisa Kochanek observes, the "most disturbing deformities [...] were those which were hidden from scientific sight" (Kochanek 240). Within the biographical collections the more disturbing eccentrics, such as the murderers, were able to hide their deviant qualities and their descriptions were

intended for the moral instruction of readers. So, the hidden nature of Poro's aberration likened him, to some extent, to socially deviant eccentrics instead of aligning him with physically different eccentrics. The variance in Poro's legacy indicates his generativity as a freak in his ability to represent very different concerns throughout time. Further, Poro's case provides an early example of the concern surrounding particular freaks and the extent to which they should be viewed (which will be discussed further in chapter three).

Women within the collections were treated in a different manner. Generally the freakish bodies being discussed were those of men (with the exception of the female conjoined twins briefly mentioned by Caulfield in Poro's piece). When women were written of it was usually for social or cultural eccentricity, as in the case of female soldiers or murderesses, rather than for bodily difference. Edmund Fillingham King's 1860 collection, *Ten Thousand Wonderful Things*, is filled mostly with objects and only a handful of individual humans. There are some groups of people portrayed, such as Bulgarian fishermen or jugglers in Japan, as well as body parts: like the feet of Chinese women. Yet, King's collection does introduce an engraving of a tattooed Abyssinian lady and gives a brief description of the extent to which Abyssinian women are covered, but then goes on to explain the method of the art rather than discuss the woman herself (King, ed. 163–165). As with the biographies presenting Poro, King cites another source for the information on this subject. Here, the travelogue of Mansfield Parkyns is quoted at length on the Abyssinian practice of tattooing.<sup>19</sup> The tattooed woman and the woman who tattooed the author of the piece represent a feature in the freak show, eccentricity through exoticism. Robert Bogdan has demonstrated the extensive use of the exotic mode of presentation in the freak show. This mode "presented the exhibit to appeal to people's interest in the culturally strange, the primitive, the bestial, the exotic" (Bogdan, *Freak Show* 105). King's representation of the tattooed Abyssinian woman employs this method to excite readers through the strange practices in foreign lands. Just as travelogues and reports were "important source[s] of stories in the promotion of freaks" so, too, were they useful for authors of eccentric biographies (Bogdan, *Freak Show* 106). King's Abyssinian woman provides another example of the longevity of freak discourse, not just in individual legacies, but also in the mode of representation.<sup>20</sup> Yet, this early trend of excluding representations of female freaks, exotic or otherwise, changed as the century progressed and print media increasingly reached out to female audiences.

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<sup>19</sup> See Mansfield Parkyns' *Life in Abyssinnia: Being Notes Collected During Three Years' Residence and Travels in that Country*, London: John Murray, 1853.

<sup>20</sup> For instance, see the 1881 flyer from the display of the tattooed man Captain Georges Costentenus, who was said to have acquired his body art from "Chinese Tartars for engaging in Rebellion against the King" (*Royal Aquarium - Farini's Gallery recto*).

Eccentric biographies can thus be seen as precursors, as well as companions, to the late nineteenth-century freak show. The physiological others presented in the collections illustrate the long history of popular interest in eccentric bodies and the methods of representation that mediated that interest. The generativity of freaks is exemplified through the above cases. The evolution in Daniel Lambert's representations demonstrates the adaptability of freak representations to suit contemporary concerns. Whereas Lambert's freakishness often came second to his admirable British qualities, James Poro's freakishness became increasingly disturbing to the point of his biographical details being incorrect. Both of these men were frequently included in eccentric biographies for their extraordinary bodies, but their representations served different purposes. Poro was presented purely for his physical anomaly with little or no biographical information, while Lambert's image was instructive in both health and behaviour. Lambert was seen through the "aggrandized mode" of freak presentation which "emphasized how, with the exception of the particular physical, mental, or behavioral [sic] condition, the freak was an upstanding, high-status person with talents of conventional and socially prestigious nature" (Bogdan, *Freak Show* 108). Poro, on the other hand, had a physical anomaly that was curious in itself without Poro's life or personality being taken into account. The tattooed Abyssinian woman addressed the curiosity and interest in people from distant lands. Exoticism, like aggrandizement, could be instructive in eccentric biographies and freak show more generally. These cases present modes of freak representation that continued throughout the nineteenth century. Freaks in eccentric biographies helped shape the norms of freak representations in print. The rest of this chapter will show that freaks continued to be presented for various audiences and purposes. As the century went on, freak representations became more versatile and were adapted to suit readers of all ages and classes. This versatility of freaks is the crucial component of their productivity and, therefore, their generativity.

### **Historical Freak Biographies in the Late Nineteenth Century**

From around 1870 through to the end of the century print representations of freaks were ubiquitous. They were posted as advertisements for current exhibitions, or found as smaller advertisements in the classified sections of newspapers; they appeared in reviews in entertainment journals and local papers, as sights of interest in medical journals, and in the guise of many other formats in a variety of periodicals. Freaks had become a familiar sight of the abnormal. In exploring these representations the legacy of earlier printed interest can be seen. Although the popularity of freaks and their appearances (both live and in print) remained

strong in the latter part of the nineteenth century, there were opposing forces at play in their representations making them both familiar, yet new.

Freak history pieces were one type of article that appeared a number of times at the end of the century which present a clear link to eccentric biographies. These pieces would run over a number of pages, usually in monthly magazines, and give details on several freaks. Some of the articles would focus on particular types of freaks, like giants or dwarfs, while others presented a variety of the freaks found in historical records. Here, six pieces found in four different monthly periodicals that competed for a similar, middle-class readership will be presented to demonstrate the continuation of aspects in eccentric biography as a popular form of engagement with freak legacies at the end of the nineteenth century.

The earliest of these articles is a discussion on several giants by Andrew Wilson in an 1877 volume of the *Gentleman's Magazine* (Andrew Wilson, "On Giants" 335–348). This long-standing magazine (which began in 1737) was "designed to appeal to a middle- to upper-class town and country readership" (D. H. Lawrence, "Gentleman's Magazine" 246). However, around the time the article on giants was printed, this publication was undergoing transformations, including a reduction in price, in order to compete with the numerous other popular magazines on the market, collectively known as shilling monthlies ("Gentleman's Magazine" 246). So, while the journal's title implies a particular audience, the *Gentleman's Magazine* was broadening its appeal. At the same time, the inclusion of freaks was not a new subject in the magazine. In fact, James Poro had even made an appearance in the magazine in 1777 (Nichols 424). Therefore, the article on giants came at a time when the journal strove to keep readers interested, but freakish subject matter was not an awkward or new sensationalising technique in this publication.

Under the guise of instruction the author, Andrew Wilson, introduces a number of human and animal cases of giants throughout time. He implores readers for the scientific consideration of his subjects whose conditions "result from the operation of laws as binding and as inexorable in their sway as those which rule the physical universe at large", rather than encourage a belief in the "capriciousness" of nature (Andrew Wilson, "On Giants" 335). Wilson reflects on historical studies that believed Adam and Eve to have each been over 100 feet tall and the "infantile stage of natural science" that credited the fossils of extinct animals as the bones of human giants ("On Giants" 337). Then, before turning to the "best-authenticated cases of mankind having attained in modern times a very large stature", the author surveys instances of giants in "several groups of lower animals" in order to develop a "study of comparative development" ("On Giants" 338). Over seven and a half pages relay the records of giant cuttlefish and sea worms. With this approach, Wilson establishes a scientific, and therefore informative, justification for his examination of giants. As will be shown in chapter

four, attempts to de-sensationalize the representation of freaks by providing a scientific context was a common practice in the learned professions. Wilson's employment of this method is indicative of the audience this article, and journal, targeted.

This piece assumes that readers are familiar with popularly exhibited freaks, but that they pursue this interest for respectable reasons rather than for the simple satisfaction of curiosity. When detailing the measurements of the "most celebrated of living giants" Anna Swan and Captain Bates, the author acknowledges his readers' familiarity in saying "Many of our readers will remember the exhibition of the two latter persons a few years ago in London" (Andrew Wilson, "On Giants" 346). But the author does not discourage nor demean the interest his readers have in the popular sensations. Due to the informative lens through which his subject is relayed, Wilson credits his middle-class readers with a learned interest in freaks. At the same time, he discourages the "'extraordinary taste' of a section of the public" who view freaks "through a sense of mere, and certainly not strictly commendable, curiosity" (Andrew Wilson, "On Giants" 348). So, an interest in freaks is permitted as a form of popular science, but the ability for the public outside of Wilson's readership to engage with the entertainment in a learned manner is disputed. Here, as in the earlier eccentric biographies, freak legacies continue as an acceptable subject for middle-class readers. However, the scientific tone of this 1877 article stresses the knowledge, and arguably education, necessary to appropriately consume freaks. In this sense, freak representations are made technically generative by the author instructing on the manner in which they should be interpreted.

Later in the century, the fascination in giants continued, as demonstrated by a piece in the *English Illustrated Magazine* in 1897 and two separate articles on giants and dwarfs in the *Strand* in 1894. Both of these titles were heavily illustrated, monthly magazines of similar length and, from 1893, were sold for the same price of 6d (Nelson, "English Illustrated Magazine" 203; Tilley 604). The *English Illustrated Magazine* began in 1883 and "sought a family readership" with entertaining as well as educational articles "addressing readers eager to learn but not necessarily well educated" (Nelson, "English Illustrated Magazine" 203). Starting several years later, the *Strand* began in 1891 with an "emphasis on illustration and entertainment", but was "solidly middle class in tone" (Tilley 604). Both journals were considered general interest magazines, although the *Strand* targeted middle-class readers, and both were filled with engravings and photograph reproductions (Anderson 136, 141, 130). Unlike the *English Illustrated Magazine*, the *Strand* was not directed by instructional aims and family values. Yet, giants and their histories were deemed suitable for the audiences of both publications.

In 1894 *The Strand*, printed two successive articles entitled "Giants and Dwarfs I" and "Giants and Dwarfs II" ("Giants and Dwarfs I" 258–264; "Giants and Dwarfs II" 432–438). When

introducing readers to the topic of this report, the author acknowledges both the long-standing interest in displays of the extremes in human size as well as the difficulty of accurately representing them:

Stories of giants and dwarfs have come down to us from the very earliest times, and the most notable feature of these stories is that the giants get bigger and the dwarfs get smaller the further back we go for the stories. This is not evidence that the crop of wonders in these respects has steadily diminished through the ages, nor that the human race has either degenerated or improved. When love of giants and dwarfs is transmitted traditionally through many generations, each transmitter deducts an inch or two from the height of his dwarf and adds it to that of his giant, so that the longer the traditions have run the greater the marvels appear. (“Giants and Dwarfs I” 258)

What is remarked about the exaggerations of the “transmitter” of these histories is a similar characteristic to the promoter of live freaks; both wish to draw audiences to their presentations of human anomalies and sensationalise their exhibits to do so. Accuracy is not considered a necessity in these freak representations. This piece acknowledges not just the fascination and popularity of giants and dwarfs through time, but also the “love” audiences had for them, which in turn made the representation of freaks a tradition. Here, the giants and dwarfs are exonerated of any influence on the degeneration or improvement of the human race and are recognised purely as anomalous and curious bodily formations. Their legacies are passed on through unthreatening visual and textual forms.

Following this introduction of the popular historical interest in giants and dwarfs, the article provides accounts of several individuals who lived through the end of the eighteenth century; with the second article continuing with examples from the nineteenth century. Each person is portrayed through the popular narratives attributed to them both during their lives and posthumously added to their legacies. Apart from the citation provided above, there is very little commentary. Instead, these articles simply transmit the information found in popular records on giants and dwarfs. In line with the journal’s remit, these pieces offer illustrated entertainment without an instructive overtone. The *Strand* presents these giants and dwarfs through the popular legacies that had been constructed for them, therefore the articles buy into a legacy derived from sensationalised show culture.

The 1897 examination of “Some Famous Giants” by W. Gordon Smythies in the *English Illustrated Magazine* uses the illustrated format to provide readers with a more instructive account of giants (Smythies 715–722). This article acknowledges that the “earnest seeker after truth” must be cautious in believing some of the recorded heights and “other fond ideas”



associated with popular giants (Smythies 715). For instance, “Giants are not, as a rule, remarkable for great strength, nor for abnormal appetites; they have anything but bloodthirsty dispositions, but are, on the contrary, gentle, mild, and given to melancholy” (Smythies 715). Throughout the article Smythies relies heavily on aggrandized representations of famous giants in order to portray the freaks’ agreeable features for his family audiences. In the same way that eccentric biographies underscored the admirable qualities of Daniel Lambert, despite his freakishness, Smythies distinguishes the gentle and mild mannerisms of giants recorded in their histories. While the author introduces the piece with his intention to relay the realistic, rather than the sensational, information on his subjects, the representations still derive from show histories. Whereas the *Strand* had conveyed giants and dwarfs through uncensored popular legacies, Smythies’ reproduction of giants spins the information to suit the *English Illustrated Magazine*’s family readership. Here, the generativity of freak legacies rests on the reproduction of instructive, middle-class values.

A year later, freak history appeared on the pages of the *English Illustrated Magazine* again in a piece entitled “Freaks of Nature in Olden Times” (Everard 660–667). However, this time the author, H. S. Everard, surveys the fantastical creatures that captured the interests of ancient and mediaeval natural scientists, such as Aristotle and Albertus Magnus. Both the scientific writings and the “fantastic tales” and “legends being valiantly treated in allegorical fashion” are surveyed to produce this freak history (Everard 661). The article is illustrated with sketches of human and animal freaks, as well as some hybrids. One such example is the Cynocephalus, a “dog-headed race”, which the author struggles to describe since the “information we glean concerning them, perhaps not unnaturally, is vague and nebulous beyond description” (Everard 665). Even in referencing the “illustration of one of these creatures, which (or should it be who?)” the author is troubled by the lack of information and the inability to determine the freak’s human or animal status (665). The freaks presented in this piece serve as a historical and mythical reference for modern consumers of freaks. Everard does not pass judgement on the current practices of freak consumption. Instead, the piece provides readers with a historical context for the wonder of extraordinary bodies. The final justification for this history returns readers to their contemporary culture: “there was about these old-world monstrosities a glamour which surpassed even the interest taken by the multitude of to-day in Messrs. Barnum and Bailey’s ‘Human Freaks’ at Olympia” (Everard 666).<sup>21</sup> By historicising the fascination in freakish bodies, Everard qualifies the popularity of freaks in contemporary culture. Here, the freak legacies cultivate an acceptance of the act of

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<sup>21</sup> See chapter 2 for more on the freaks in Barnum and Bailey’s circus.

viewing freaks. Freak representations thus become generative of further engagement with freaks.

In the same year, A. Krausse wrote a piece on a variety of freaks for the *Ludgate*, which also noted the continued tradition of freak fascination. Krausse explains, “The taste of our ancestors for monstrosities has been inherited by succeeding generations, and the appreciation for freaks of to-day is certainly in no way less marked than of old” (Krausse 149). The *Ludgate* was another general interest illustrated monthly magazine, but was the cheapest of the four magazines discussed here, selling for threepence (Anderson 138; Sally Mitchell, “Ephemeral Journalism and Its Uses” 83). Christopher Pittard has named it amongst the “imitators of the *Strand*” in both “typographical layout and in recurring features” (Pittard 14). In this sense, the *Ludgate* opened the middle-class interests of the *Strand* to a broader audience, as it sold for half of the price.

This article includes a number of different freak types that continued to catch the attention of audiences. In an attempt to limit the article to “Facts about Freaks”, as per its title, Krausse claims:

I have restricted myself to such as can be traced with certainty. The showman in whose hands freaks for the most part are, is not especially famous for the care with which he investigates the claim of his freaks to notoriety, and I have deemed it wise to exclude a large number of curiosities which may or may not have actually existed. Those referred to may be regarded as having all been genuine to the extent of their having been shown to the public for what they are. (Krausse 156)

Krausse’s reproduction of freak legacies serves to continue the established tradition of popular consumption, but the author offers his factual representations in opposition to those often invented by the showman. Yet, even in this “certainty” Krausse cannot guarantee the freaks to have been genuine beyond “having been shown to the public for what they are”. His own reproduction of freak legacies relies on previous representations subjected to sensationalising practices, thus reproducing popular modes of freak engagement.

In this article, Krausse mentions some of the authors in Everard’s piece, lists a number of the giants and dwarfs discussed in the *Strand*, *English Illustrated Magazine* and *Gentleman’s Magazine* as well as some of the eccentrics, such as Daniel Lambert from the biographies earlier in the century. When set against these previous texts, Krausse’s mini collection of freak biographies is illustrative of the history of freak engagement. Whether in volumes of eccentric biographies or in these later freak histories in periodical publications, the art of consuming freaks was a continued practice. Each publication had a slightly different approach to the subject, but they all reproduced freak legacies for their particular (small or wide-ranging)

readership. So, both the legacies of freaks and the popular practice of engaging with freaks were generative. The histories printed in late nineteenth-century periodicals hark back to the familiarity with freaks in eccentric biographies, but freak familiarity was produced through other means as well. It was the small and regular representations, as well as the longer articles, that brought freaks before their viewers. The main source of freak ubiquity in the late nineteenth century was the freak show itself. Even if the performances were restricted to paying audiences the regular promotion for the shows in print advertisements kept freaks in the public imagination.

### **Advertising Freak Performances**

Advertising played an important role in the exhibition of freaks. Freak shows were regularly advertised in print either through announcements in the classified sections or written reviews, as well as being promoted through handbills and posters on the street. Perhaps the most advertised freak show in Britain was the large collection of prodigies attached to the Barnum and Bailey circus, which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. Yet, even smaller shows promoted their entertainments in the hope of drawing in spectators. The sheer range of advertisements indicates the popularity of freak shows and, therefore, their cultural value due to the breadth of their coverage.

In the classified sections of periodicals, advertisements or notices for freak exhibitions evidence the popularity of the shows and demonstrate how “the extraordinary novelty is positioned within the ordinary context” (Featherstone, “Shopping and Looking” 54). Being placed in the familiar format of the classified section demonstrates the insertion of freaks as a regular sight in everyday culture. The advertising for both large and small acts was crucial to the success of the shows since it kept freaks, perhaps subliminally, in the popular imagination. Through the shows and their advertisements freak encounters were often close at hand, making their generativity culturally valuable. Further, the advertisements highlight the movement and show life of freak acts over a period of time. The small changes in the advertisements illustrate adjustments made to their exhibition in order to appeal to different audiences. In order to demonstrate this, the notices pertaining to a freak duo, Senorita Anita and her brother, have been traced over the course of a year. Advertisements for the pair appeared frequently during this time, but reviews of their shows did not. Even though they did not receive the same level of attention as some of the more popular attractions, such as Millie Christine who will be discussed later, their advertisements show that they increasingly appeared before diverse audiences.

From October 1885 until the end of April 1886 Senorita Anita and her brother regularly appeared in advertisements. Initially these were for the entertainment being held at the Royal Aquarium in London. The ads were usually placed in the “Advertisements” or “Notices” sections of newspapers. This pair was named in the advertisements found in the daily papers of the *Standard* and the *Daily News*, as well as the weekly entertainment journal the *Era* and the Sunday broadsheet *Reynold’s Newspaper*, amongst others (“Royal Aquarium” *Standard* 4; “Royal Aquarium” *Daily News* 4; “The Aquarium” 6; “Royal Aquarium” 4). Even though their act joined the larger entertainment in the autumn, it was in the busy Christmas entertainment season when more papers advertised the show. For instance, an advertisement in the December 26 issue of the *Sporting Times* introduced “Senorita Anita, the Tiger Lady, and her young brother, ‘The Bear Boy,’ Two of the most extraordinary, yet beautiful ‘Freaks of Nature’” and their daily receptions at the Royal Aquarium as part of the “Greatest Programme ever attempted in one day” (“Royal Aquarium Westminster” 4). Their exhibition was just one part of the multitude of attractions being held at the Aquarium, all of which could be enjoyed for the entrance price of one shilling.

While many of the ads for this entertainment were kept to a single block within the column listed as part of the Aquarium’s roster of performers, Senorita Anita and her brother Robinson were occasionally given a separate mention. In an earlier *Daily News* notice for the amusements, the Tiger Lady and Bear Boy occupied their own small section which stated that the two had “just arrived, and hold receptions EVERY AFTERNOON and EVENING until further notice. Lectures at 2.30, 4.30, 6.0, 7.30, and 10”, with a similar ad being placed the week before in the *Standard* (“Royal Aquarium” *Daily News* 4; “Royal Aquarium” *Standard* 4). The pair commanded a separate introduction in the advertisement to draw extra attention to their exhibition. This notice was an attempt to catch the eye of potential audiences by singling out the pair of animal-like humans and to promote their popularity by detailing the number of opportunities audiences would have to satiate their curiosity. Once the attractions had gained some attention, they were then incorporated into the larger advertisements.

Apart from those in *The Era*, the notices for the entertainment ran alongside everyday material that made up classified or miscellany sections of newspapers, such as advertisements for other exhibitions, or even medicines and consumables. For example, a notice for the entertainment in a January 1886 issue of *Reynold’s Newspaper* was placed near the end of the list of amusements being held at various London venues and sat next to the “Notices to Correspondents”, “Calendar for the Week” and “Time of High Water” (“Royal Aquarium” 4). Throughout the run of the entertainment the freaks were not only naturalised into the show and incorporated as an ordinary act in the advertisements, but the advertisement itself was also situated within the realm of everyday material. Other than the inclusion of animal

likenesses in their names, very little information was given on the appearance of either of the siblings. This made them alluring enough to appeal to amusement seekers, without being too vulgar to be advertised alongside the other interests of sensitive readers. Since the ads appeared in daily or weekly papers, they also demonstrate how the freaks were made topical for widespread audiences. Both the *Standard*, which was “a powerful force in conservative journalism”, and *Reynold’s Newspaper*, the “most popular post-Chartist radical newspaper”, regularly advertising the Tiger Lady and Bear Boy receptions, indicates the diversity of the freaks’ appeal (Wood 597; Shirley 541).

The most information that was printed on the siblings in a periodical during their season at the Royal Aquarium was in a December review of the entire entertainment in the *Era*. Here, the features of the “gentle”, “ladylike” Tiger Lady and her “lively” brother are detailed (“The Aquarium” 6). Senorita Anita had a “number of mole-like spots of different sizes, covered with fine hair like that on the coat of horse”, and her back “so far as is shown by her dress” was “completely covered with a coat of brown hair” (“The Aquarium” 6). The Bear Boy’s “face and arms are spotted like those of his sister” and he had a “neat pair of short trousers of hair exactly where a boy’s knickerbockers would be” (“The Aquarium” 6). As a journal dedicated to the theatre and music hall it is logical for the *Era* to describe and review the entertainments on offer at the Royal Aquarium, but it is also significant that, despite the level of advertising in the general interest papers, the freaks were only engaged with in an entertainment journal. Apart from enjoying the monetary benefit of advertising the entertainment, other papers generally did not engage with the Tiger Lady and Bear Boy’s exhibition.

Following their London debut the siblings toured and appeared in other venues. In May 1886 the duo were “on view in the sea lion house” of Brighton’s Aquarium, a seemingly appropriate venue for freaks bordering the human and animal divide (“Provincial Theatricals” 16). There is a gap in the mentions of the siblings over the summer months. This may be due to a break in their tour or, as their later flyer indicates, they may have exhibited abroad. A flyer for the Royal Aquarium with the handwritten date of October 30<sup>th</sup> 1886, reveals that the pair had returned to London “after a most successful Continental tour through Germany and Denmark” where they had appeared before several members of nobility (*Beautiful Tiger Lady* recto).<sup>22</sup> After receiving such esteemed audiences the Tiger Lady and Bear Boy commanded an admission fee of one shilling, or half price for children, whereas the entire collective entertainment they participated in the previous winter had charged that same rate. The

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<sup>22</sup> Many of the items in this collection (SC/GL/ENT/001-184) at the London Metropolitan Archives have handwritten dates and sometimes extra notes on them which are assumed to be from the original owner of the collection.

exhibition was promoted as the last opportunity for audiences to see the siblings in England before they returned home to Paraguay “where they intend spending the remainder part of their lives with their parents” (*Beautiful Tiger Lady* recto). However, the two soon after had a “special engagement” at the re-opening of Allsop’s Waxworks and American Museum in Liverpool where the admission was just sixpence to view everything on offer (“Notice - Re-opening of Allsop’s” n.p.). To promote this engagement a notice was printed with the other classifieds on the front page of the *Liverpool Mercury* as well as a paragraph within the “Local News” section which rested between a column on the American markets and the speech given at the annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation. In the paragraph on the re-opening of Allsop’s there are several lines dedicated to the description of Anita and Robinson. Here, it is noted that Anita was “about 20 years of age, of handsome figure, and lays claim to some beauty” and her brother “is many years her junior” (“Local News” 6). Also, a description of their condition is given: “Their backs are extensively coated with hair or fur, and are covered with round patches of fur. In the case of Anita these patches are so numerous as to resemble the tiger, hence her designation ‘Tiger Lady’” (“Local News” 6). This piece furthers previous references to Anita in the advertisements as beautiful and then challenges readers’ perception of the term by detailing the extent of her patches of hair or fur and her resemblance to a tiger. Being positioned between economic and political news the article was presented as another item of everyday material, but its contents bring the exotic into everyday life. Both in print and in person, the appearance of freak exhibitions were inserted as familiar oddities in day to day life.

Senorita Anita and Robinson were only two of the many freaks who toured extensively throughout the nineteenth century. It was not unusual for freaks to partake in large exhibiting collections as well as finding smaller engagements. The trade advertisements in the *Era* in January 1887 reveal that Anita and her brother would soon be on exhibit at Crouch’s Palace of Varieties in Glasgow. They were announced as upcoming acts in the ad along with The Fairy Queen and whichever “good novelties” responded to the notice (“Wanted for Crouch’s Palace of Varieties” 19). In these pages, proprietors advertised positions for novelties, often requiring them to provide their own promotional paintings. Freaks, too, would advertise their upcoming availability and type of employment they sought to fulfil. The sheer number of these small notices suggests that freaks remained popular with late-Victorian audiences throughout Britain.

Although the *Era* was an entertainment journal, these interactions further illustrate the position of freaks as ordinary working bodies, since they were printed within the classifieds

for entertainers and venues of all types.<sup>23</sup> Further, this interaction of workers and employees in this specialist journal marks the demand and, to a degree, the professional status of freak performers. Jane E. Stedman has noted that the *Era* “helped to form, and was representative of, the way in which many actors and actresses viewed their world and defined their ambitions”, so the inclusion of freaks within these pages is significant (Stedman 169). Being the “most important theatrical weekly of its day” meant that the *Era* was a prominent representation of the theatrical trade and the presence of freaks and freak showmen within its pages signifies their professional practice of this trade (Stedman 167).

The movement of Senorita Anita and her brother Robinson, as indicated in the advertising for their shows, exemplifies the widespread appeal of even the smaller freak acts. On the occasions where the Tiger Lady and Bear Boy were mentioned in articles, their exhibition was not related to that of previous freaks or other contemporary freaks on display. Therefore, the siblings were generative of the freak show culture itself. Their show was advertised to diverse groups of society, encouraging freak show patronage across the board. As Terence Nevett claims, advertisements give “an actual and practical sense of the pulse of everyday existence in Victorian times” (Nevett 234). Through their advertisements in general interest newspapers the freaks were placed within an everyday context and made familiar. When in the specialist journal, the *Era*, the Tiger Lady and Bear Boy appeared as workers within a familiar show and exhibition context. While their success as freaks depended on their unique bodies, the freak show culture in which they participated and represented were familiar, everyday occurrences.

### **Broadening Audiences**

Many freak performances would receive attention in general interest newspapers as well as entertainment and specialized periodicals. Within these articles or reviews the propriety of the shows and their appropriate audiences were often debated. Consideration of freak audiences highlights the generative work of freaks, since the encouragement or dismissal of particular viewers demonstrates the different motives at work in freak representations. The common practice of familiarising freaks in order to broaden their audience appeal drew on the legacies of former freak performers and previous freak show audiences. For example, a piece commenting on the 1884 appearance of the dwarf couple General Mite and his wife Millie Edwards, in the *Birmingham Owl*, a satirical liberal weekly, acknowledged that “crowds will flock to see whatever is out of the ordinary course of things” and discussed the duo at length

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<sup>23</sup> For further discussion on these notices see Ann Featherstone “Shopping and looking: trade advertisements in the *Era* and performance history research.” *Nineteenth Century Theatre*. 28 (2000): 26-61.

("Notes About the Midgets" 7). Pre-empting an outcry from the polite readers at such an article, the report explained "Statements like these will be, as they have been, received with a feeling of astonishment, blended with regret that the 'Freaks of Nature' should form an attractive exhibition. Let all such feelings be dismissed" before it went on to detail the respectable nature of both midgets and the pleasant time they had previously spent with Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace ("Notes About the Midgets" 7). Including these details strengthened the appeal of the freaks at the same time that it comforted those who felt drawn to the show.

Acknowledgment of the respectable persons freaks had been shown before was a common tactic. Indeed, an article in the penny weekly, the *London Journal*, had used this same technique when reporting on the 1881 exhibition of General Mite with another midget, Lucia Zarate. Here, it is noted that "No sooner had Mr. Uffner [their showman] taken possession of Piccadilly Hall than the carriages of the aristocracy flocked to see the Midgets" and they had even been to the homes of the Prince and Princess of Wales and Lord and Lady Londesborough ("The Midgets" 92). The reassurance of the freaks' previous respectable, aristocratic patronage turned these articles into strong endorsements for the exhibitions. This sort of encouragement was also rather similar to showmen's encouraging invitations.

To further the promotional aspect of each piece the midgets were illustrated. In the *London Journal* the article borders an illustration of the midgets on stage with an audience of men, women and children at the front and back of the raised platform (see Figure 3). The engraving provides readers with an audience so that they might imagine themselves as a part of it. In the *Owl*, the page following the article is entirely dedicated to sketches of the pair performing various daily activities such as riding a tricycle, taking a morning stroll and exhibiting on a stage, similar to the poses placed on promotional posters (see Figure 4). Both articles and their accompanying illustrations promote the acts and the participation of readers as audience members.

These two pieces demonstrate some of the common elements in late nineteenth-century freak print representations: familiarisation of freaks and suggestions on the appropriate audiences for freak consumption. Here, the audience question is addressed with the reference to the freaks' previous prestigious patrons and familiarised through illustration and emphasis on their likeable qualities. The tastes and habits of the freaks were frequently likened to those of the reader to add to the potential audiences' recognition of their own similarity and, therefore, their familiarity with these extraordinary beings. Another tactic, used in the *London Journal* article, was to make references to memories audiences might have of other popular freaks with similar conditions. Reminding audiences of both historic and recently exhibited dwarfs, such as Count Borolowlaski and Tom Thumb, draws on the previous textual



and live freak encounters audiences may have had. While the anomalies on display were familiarised in this manner they still offered an opportunity for audiences to view something new, as the current displays were modern and present at the time of publication.

In the latter part of the century the regularity of such articles on various freaks increased and maintained a strong presence within the print media. While the freaks did retain their popularity, both in print and in the flesh, throughout the nineteenth century there often remained a rather unsavoury association. For all the attention that freaks acquired in favour of their exhibition, there was always an underlying uncertainty concerning the tastefulness of their shows. While the extreme bias against and attempts to control the exhibition of freaks will be further discussed in chapter three, the remainder of this chapter will examine the distinctions made between viewing audiences. First, the case of Millie Christine, a pair of American conjoined twins, will establish some of the differences in opinion British commentators had towards the exposure of women to extraordinary displays. Then, the representation and encouragement of young boys engaging with freaks will be considered. Exploring the reviews and notices given on the shows of popular freak performers further illustrates the questions surrounding the appropriateness of all audiences to consume these sights, despite their popular legacy and historical presence. In these different approaches to freak representations, the distinctive generativity of freaks for varying audiences is made evident.

### **Millie Christine and Female Audiences<sup>24</sup>**

In 1871 the conjoined twins Millie Christine, or the “Two-Headed Nightingale”, embarked on a tour of the United Kingdom with the giant and giantess Captain Martin Van Buren Bates and Anna Swan.<sup>25</sup> Their exhibition sparked the interest of various sectors of society, resulting in print representations in numerous and diverse publications, ranging from medical journals such as the *Lancet* to women’s periodicals like the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* (“Misses Millie and Christine” 725–726; “Extraordinary in Nature II” 222–223). Generally, these articles would focus on the lives and beings of Millie Christine, but the show also attracted reviews that included the whole troupe. The variations in reporting techniques, the extent of the giant and giantess’s inclusion and the freak representations produced a mixed image of the tastefulness of the shows and, in particular, their appropriateness for

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<sup>24</sup> The twins will be referred to as Millie Christine throughout this thesis. Although Millie and Christine were two people, their singular name Millie Christine was used throughout their lives and careers, so this name will be used here.

<sup>25</sup> The spelling of the giantess’s surname varied between Schwann, Swann and Swan. Since Swan was the most common spelling it will be used throughout this chapter, except when a different spelling appears in a quotation.

female viewers. Millie Christine's cultural generativity was expressed through their varied representations put before different audiences.

Crucial to the majority of articles on the twins was the legacy of Chang and Eng Bunker, the original "Siamese Twins".<sup>26</sup> Like Millie Christine, Chang and Eng had made extensive tours under the management of American showman P. T. Barnum, so audiences had encountered or were aware of conjoined twins from the Bunkers' exhibitions in recent years. This association was further strengthened by the accompaniment of the giants. Although this was the first trip to Britain made by the Kentucky Giant, the giantess was known to British audiences. As the *Era* notes, she was "an old friend, and none other than Miss Anna Schwann [sic], the Nova Scotian lady of Herculean proportions who accompanied the Siamese Twins to this country on the last occasion they exhibited in public at the Egyptian Hall" ("A Wonderful Show" 12). Not only had audiences already met Miss Swan, but their memory of her was tied to the famous Siamese twins, Chang and Eng. Despite Millie Christine's own history of exhibiting in the UK as children, it was the legacy of Chang and Eng that drove the audience familiarisation with Millie Christine during their 1871 visit.<sup>27</sup> Also, through this familiarity and an emphasis on their differentiation from Chang and Eng, Millie Christine were able to broaden the appeal of their freakishness to include female audiences.

Through the Giantess's previous work with the Siamese Twins audiences were able to prepare themselves for a familiar sight with Millie Christine. However, this is where notices strove to differentiate the girls. Rather than the "element of depression and pain" which came with viewing Chang and Eng as they "looked bored and wearied", the sisters were "cheerful, merry, light-hearted and gay" ("A Wonderful Show" 12). The girls would sing and dance for their audiences to maintain the jovial tone of their shows. In contrast to the appearances of the Siamese Twins, "those who imagine there will be something hideous and distressing in the exhibition will be agreeably disappointed when they make the acquaintance of these marvellous ladies" ("A Wonderful Show" 12). Miss Swan's presence in the show with Millie Christine was a perfect opportunity to remind readers of their familiarity with double bodies. Yet this association could not be dwelt on for too long as it was Millie Christine's differences to Chang and Eng that sold their image, not their similarities. Chang and Eng, who had been very successful freak performers were mentioned in a number of articles on Millie Christine for this purpose. This differentiation helped broaden Millie Christine's appeal by stressing the agreeable and tasteful talent displayed in the exhibition, making the girls suitable

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<sup>26</sup> For further history on Chang and Eng see I. Wallace and A. Wallace, *The Two: A Biography*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978).

<sup>27</sup> See "Remarkable Human Phenomena!" Handbill dated September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1855. London Metropolitan Archive, SC/GL/ENT/030, verso.

entertainment for female audiences. In this sense it was the continuation of Chang and Eng's legacy that allowed Millie Christine to be generative for various audiences.

Reviews about freak exhibitions in general interest papers varied in length and purpose. Some were simply to announce the arrival of extraordinary beings at local venues with brief descriptions of the anomaly, while others were more concerned with assuring readers they "need not be alarmed" by the exhibition ("Whitsuntide Amusements" 6). The results of this method of promotion were twofold. By reassuring potential viewers that the sights were in good taste they promoted the show's suitability for respectable audiences. At the same time they piqued further interest from those curious to see a sight that required a defence of its appropriateness. During Millie Christine's exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1871, the Sunday broadsheet, the *Observer*, made comparisons to the famous Siamese twins, Chang and Eng, to alleviate concerns for the appropriateness of the exhibition. Unlike the "melancholy" men, the young ladies "are extremely intelligent, and by their liveliness they dissipate in a great measure the painfulness of the exhibition" ("Whitsuntide Amusements" 6). The legacy of the famous male pair reminded audiences of their familiarity with conjoined freaks. At the same time the differentiation of Millie Christine from Chang and Eng broadened the appeal of the Two-Headed Nightingale due to their livelier personalities.

On their visit up to Manchester later that year, the *Manchester Guardian*, a daily newspaper, also introduced Millie Christine through comparison with Chang and Eng by noting their association with the giants. This report reminds readers of their familiarity with both conjoined twins and giants, stating, "On the last visit of the Siamese twins to Manchester they were accompanied by Miss Anna Swann", but this time "the giant and giantess are accompanied by a pair more closely united than by a ligament" ("The Two-Headed Nightingale Troupe" 5). Rather than compare temperaments this report introduces Millie Christine as the replacement companions for the giants and summarizes the twins' history and physical qualities. The readers were only left with the brief reassurance that the girls "are in good health, of lively dispositions, and seem to be enjoying their visit to this country very heartily," again suggesting the appropriateness of attending the show ("The Two-Headed Nightingale Troupe" 5).

While each of these articles only filled a small portion of a single column on a newspaper page, they had each recruited different uses of Chang and Eng's legacy and familiarity to appeal to potential audiences. One highlighted the disagreeable qualities of Chang and Eng to distance and endorse Millie Christine as a tasteful attraction, while the other used the familiar make-up of the troupe to promote the new act. The difference in these two short reports can also be seen as a reflection of the breadth of the readership for each publication. Although both could be considered general interest newspapers the *Observer* was

only printed once a week for a national readership and the *Manchester Guardian* appeared daily for a local, but significant audience. So, the *Observer's* promotion of the tastefulness of the exhibition, with little detail on the physical formation of Millie Christine, could safely address any reader, whereas the *Manchester Guardian* spoke to its local readership by relaying details on Millie Christine through previous local engagement with conjoined twins and giants.

Some reports took the same principles even further to lure audiences of men and women to attend the show. A popular freak show tactic to broaden appeal was the provision of private scientific viewings in exchange for legitimatisation of the show. Prior to the general public being invited to view Millie Christine, the *Daily News* reported, "a large number of the medical faculty and representatives of the press were invited to a private view" ("An Extraordinary Exhibition" 3). In the *Illustrated Police News* a list of the eminent figures that were in attendance was given. Following this, the report briefly described the features of the twins and their two exhibiting companions. Then audiences were reassured of Millie Christine's authenticity as "the eminent physicians and gentlemen present" inspected the girls and "all agreed that it was a *lusus naturae* of the most wonderful character" ("An Extraordinary Exhibition" 3). While the report within the *Lancet* on this private viewing primarily reflects on previous medical assessments of the twins and notes their current "perfect health", it does corroborate the reports in popular periodicals by acknowledging that the twins "dance, sing, and converse agreeably with their visitors" ("Misses Millie and Christine" 726). With the number of pieces in different papers referencing the medical approval given on the anomaly, these freaks were presented as a show of "so wonderful a character as to justify its intrusion into so unlooked for a quarter" ("An Extraordinary Exhibition" 3). Here, freaks were made familiar and acceptable entertainment through the investigation carried out by eminent domestic men, prior to the opening of the show to the public. By verifying the medical approval given, these reports contributed to the success of Millie Christine's exhibition and subsequent legacy.

Convinced of the newsworthiness and subsequent interest to be had in the twins and their London exhibition, the following week the sensational illustrated paper, the *Illustrated Police News*, printed an engraving of Millie Christine stood upon a stage before a handful of tastefully attired men and women on the front page of the paper ("Millie Christine" f.p.). The image was built out so that readers also found themselves identifying with the point of view of the audience (see Figure 5). While the other illustrations on the cover provide some distance between the viewer and the scene being portrayed, Millie Christine were presented in detail and stood above the disembodied heads of the audience. Both men and women made up the illustrated audience. Millie Christine are seen at the same level and surrounded by the same body parts of the audience which might obscure one's view if stood in the audience, just on a

smaller scale. In this way the paper re-enacted the attraction the twins would have for readers and, having established the approval of the show by the medical community in the previous week's paper, now chose to include readers as willing participants in the exhibition.

In another illustration of the troupe of performers, readers were given a less obvious reminder of the Siamese Twins in relation to Millie Christine. The weekly penny rival to *Punch*, *Fun*, presented a cartoon style engraving of the freak troupe with Millie Christine stood at the centre of a stage and the giant and giantess sat towering over either side of the audience ("A Two-Headed Nightingale" 238). What is distinctive about this particular impression, however, is that all of the people involved in the exhibit, apart from the twins, are represented with generic Asian features (see Figure 6). Anna Swan is wearing what appears to be a kimono and has her hair styled with combs and sticks. Captain Bates and the lecturer are wearing jackets which wrap around their bodies and the fabric is covered in geometric patterns. None of the audience, apart from one man, is looking at the girls and instead gaze at the giants. Millie Christine stand poised with toes pointed, each holding a fan, attired in their usual dress style, staring towards the engraving viewer. The lecturer and musician each are thin with pointed eyes and the lecturer wears a long pointed moustache. At first appearance it is a rather bewildering scene, but the central placement of the girls and their gaze at the reader suggest that it is they that form the most significant feature of interest. The last time any similar anomaly had been on view in Britain was the last visit of the Siamese Twins. Even though Chang and Eng were usually dressed smart in western-style suits, their origin could not be forgotten, and here their legacy is utilised to simultaneously familiarise and distinguish Millie Christine's freakishness.<sup>28</sup>

Another interpretation of this print calls on Hans Christian Andersen's 1844 fairy tale "The Nightingale". In the tale, the emperor of China learns of a nightingale in his kingdom that has a voice like no other, so he invites it to his palace. When the little bird attends to the emperor's request and sings to the court the ruler decides to keep it on his grounds so that he may hear her song every day. The nightingale is saddened by her captivity, but sneaks away on the day that the emperor receives a bejewelled, mechanical nightingale as a present. It is only when the emperor is on his death bed and the mechanical bird is too worn to work that the nightingale returns and restores the emperor's health with her music. While the mechanical bird had satisfied the emperor's taste for some years, the natural beauty and power of the real nightingale's song was irreplaceable. So, too, were Millie Christine a unique treat for viewers,

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<sup>28</sup> Cynthia Wu discusses the use of Chang and Eng's origin in American print representations. See Wu, Cynthia. "The Siamese Twins in Late-Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Conflict and Reconciliation". *American Literature* 80.1 (2008): 29-55.

even those who had encountered Chang and Eng. The illustration places the Two-Headed Nightingale in an Asian context to distinguish the girls from other freak acts. At the same time, connotations of the nightingale fairytale coupled with Millie Christine in this illustration underscore the acceptability of the show for prestigious audiences. In fact, two weeks after this print was published Millie Christine gave a private performance for Queen Victoria and her family (Martell 164–166). Just as the nightingale in the story was suitable entertainment for the Chinese emperor and his court, Millie Christine were tasteful entertainment for all sectors of British society, including royalty. Further, Queen Victoria's private audience with the twins also signifies the acceptability of female viewers at the shows. The twins exhibited "double intelligence, beside a double measure of accomplishments and agreeable manners", but "nothing to shock the spectator" ("A Two-Headed Nightingale" 238).

As Donald J. Gray has pointed out, *Fun* was one of the popular comic journals of the century, with its "highly topical" pieces suggesting the "character of the audience for which [its] editors were trying" (Gray 2). He explains, this was a readership who were "conventionally educated and therefore could laugh at the point of parodies of familiar literary texts, who read a newspaper daily and therefore could understand allusions to very current events, who read new books and attended new plays, [...] In short, the editors [...] placed their opinions and interests where large numbers of their contemporaries already were" (Gray 3). Therefore, this depiction of Millie Christine spoke to educated audiences familiar not only with the current display of the twins, but also with that of their predecessors Chang and Eng. Whether the illustration was meant as a reminder of the Siamese twins or as a parody of the fairy tale, or both, the readers consuming this image were equipped with the appropriate knowledge for its interpretation.

Travelling with the pair of giants proved to have an even greater impact on the popularity of the show, especially in print, when Captain Bates and Anna Swan were publicly married on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1871. The reviews of the union were mixed. Some, such as the *Penny Illustrated Paper*, wrote of the wedding ceremony in a serious tone, detailing the events of the ceremony and the apparel of the entire wedding party. Others, such as the *Pall Mall Gazette* contemplated the motives behind the union. In the *Pall Mall Gazette* the author suggests that rather than being "a case of true love" it was more likely that the pair took their vows for "a marriage of cold calculation; for a marriage is of itself an advertisement, and a bride is always, for some inexplicable reason, a more interesting spectacle than a spinster or a matron" ("A Gigantic Marriage" 5). While the article indicated that it would be "an unwarrantable liberty to pronounce an opinion about the cause which has produced so remarkable a union" and failed to give a firm opinion, it did report the events of the ceremony in a mocking tone ("A Gigantic Marriage" 5). The piece noted that the entrance of Millie Christine, who were Miss Swan's

bridesmaids, “naturally caused a buzz of comment and much hilarity” and the “service was read amid a reverential scene of whispering, giggling, and climbing over pews” (“A Gigantic Marriage” 5). The *Pall Mall Gazette* “prided itself on being ‘written by gentlemen for gentlemen’” and used the words of “distinguished practitioners of higher journalism” to fill its columns (Kent 477, 478). So, the inclusion of the Giant’s wedding kept the paper topical, but the tone of the article clearly dismisses the event as a “spectacle” (“A Gigantic Marriage” 5). In reference to the audience the article simply notes the attendance of “those spectators to whom any kind of wedding is always gratifying, and a monster-wedding a joy forever” (“A Gigantic Marriage” 5). While recognizing the popular interest held in this event, particularly by those drawn to romantic unions, the *Pall Mall Gazette* represents Anna Swan and Captain Bates’ wedding as a spectacular publicity stunt.

The *Penny Illustrated Paper*, on the other hand, gave a much more reverential account of the ceremony, as it was “quite a model as well as a novel wedding”, and provided compliments and details on the attire of all of the members of the wedding party (“A Giant’s Wedding” 386). This column runs over three pages of the paper, and even supplied an engraving of the giants saying their vows while the conjoined twins stand in attendance (“A Giant’s Wedding” 385). Rather than the raucous scene depicted by *Pall Mall Gazette*, this paper remarks that the Two Headed Nightingale, “[m]ore unique even in their union than Captain Bates and his partner” were “stood enjoying as much as anyone the marriage of their friends” (“A Giant’s Wedding” 386). In stark contrast to the description given in the other paper, the *Penny Illustrated Paper* relates the ceremony as a wholesome, tasteful affair. By providing the illustration of the wedding scene, which showed the enormity of the giants with their sizable audience behind them as well as their small conjoined friends in front of them, and with the incorporation of gentle comments on the unusual appearance of all the party, this article brings freaks into the everyday world of the readers (see Figure 7). While the giants were extraordinary themselves, they were not as novel a sight as the conjoined girls and, through the domestication of the giants, the twins were able to further situate themselves as part of an acceptable and tasteful entertainment. Being an illustrated penny weekly suggests a potentially lower-class readership of the *Penny Illustrated Paper* compared to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Despite the difference between the two papers’ representations of the wedding, they both illustrate the widespread appeal of the freak troupe as it gained attention from all ends of the social spectrum.

Interestingly, the American magazine *Harper’s Bazar* reported this event with an illustration of the wedding from another angle (see Figure 8). Here, the giants are at the forefront of the picture with Millie Christine at the back and stood behind a banister (“The Giant’s Wedding” 477). Although the illustration and the first part of the report have a similar

tone to the depiction given in the *Penny Illustrated Paper*, the latter half of the piece presents the words of “an English witness” which is really the second paragraph of the mocking *Pall Mall Gazette* report (“The Giant’s Wedding” 477–478). In a sense this international interpretation of the event encapsulates the varied perception and reception of the freak wedding, further demonstrating the diverse appeal of the freaks.

The instance of the wedding and the image created for Millie Christine as polite, well-mannered young ladies raised their profile for audiences of women. The emphasis on taste, talent and the inclusion of female audience members in each of the illustrations promoted the twins as a versatile entertainment. A two-page article published in the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* in October 1871 exemplifies the attributes of Millie Christine that were highlighted in order to justify their appropriateness of female audiences. This journal, published by Samuel Orchard Beeton, was the “first cheap monthly magazine published in Britain specifically for middle-class women” according to Richard Noakes (Noakes). Gowan Dawson, et al. concur that the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* was very popular among its target audience since its “low price guaranteed it enormous sales among middle-class women for whom no comparable publication existed” (Dawson, Noakes, and Topham 19). Due to the instructive tone of the publication and its very specific audience, articles written on popular freaks provide evidence of the qualities that made performing freaks suitable entertainment for women.

Mixed in amongst the serialised novels, fashion reviews and practical instructions for domestic affairs was a two-part feature entitled “The Extraordinary in Nature”. The first part, in the September 1871 issue, was written on “our little living plaything of the hour” Princess Felicie, the “Fairy Queen of Liliput [sic]” (“Extraordinary in Nature” 159). This small girl was introduced after a reminder of the nation’s obsession with General Tom Thumb earlier in the century and was then admired for her doll-like appearance. In its conclusion the piece urged readers to take the opportunity to visit Felicie’s exhibition “for they will never again see such a striking example of the extraordinary in Nature” (“Extraordinary in Nature” 159). Then, the following month’s issue presented readers with Millie Christine, “a freak of nature so astounding and even miraculous a sort, that the questions arising from its contemplation are enough to puzzle the brain of the deepest thinker and philosopher” (“Extraordinary in Nature II” 222). The freaks featured in both pieces had their histories given, as well as description of their dress, mannerisms and appearance. Whereas the Felicie article broached the subject through the legacy of a famous freak, Millie Christine were introduced for their involvement in a more contemporary freak occurrence: the wedding of Anna Swan and Captain Bates. This use of the popular freak show performers and well-publicised event indicates that middle-class women were not only assumed to be familiar with freak show culture, but interested in the



performers. The tactics used to portray Millie Christine as respectable and tasteful entertainment clearly spoke to and encouraged this audience.

The piece informs readers “This latest ‘sight of London,’ which has caused so much excitement among all circles” was a “duplex young lady” but “no monstrosity to be shuddered at and pitied” (“Extraordinary in Nature II” 222). Millie Christine’s history retells the same narrative which accompanied most of their descriptions and promotional material, (their slave history, early exhibitions and buying their own parent’s freedom with their earnings) but this article placed special emphasis on the tasteful training and education the girls received from their “white mamma” whom they considered their “friend and benefactress” (“Extraordinary in Nature II” 223). With the combination of the wedding, the superior training they received at the hands of their benefactress as well as their subsequent loyalty to their educator, the girls come across as being morally astute and worthy of the attention from the magazine’s domestic middle-class readers.

Regularly noted in reviews and promotional material for Millie Christine and emphasised here, was their musical talent and cultivated taste. Again, these qualities were associated with the good education and instruction from their previous owner, Mrs. Smith. Although the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* was not keen on Millie Christine’s style of fashion, as it had a “slight tendency to the gaudy, the reader must not infer that a love of finery has been encouraged to the neglect of more intellectual faculties” (“Extraordinary in Nature II” 223). Echoing the statements that their “manners in the presence of strangers are most engaging” which were printed in Millie Christine’s biographical sketch sold at the shows, conversations with the twins were noted for their pleasant tones (*Biographical Sketch* 7). The magazine employs the same language as the promotional show material to compliment Millie Christine’s talents and encourage readers to experience the twins’ exhibition. The narratives adopted for Millie Christine concerning their social skills and talents had appeared in the popular press from the start of their 1871 exhibition and the reiteration of these points in the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* verifies the significance these notions held for female audiences. Due to their generativity, Millie Christine were presented as respectable young women before their female audiences.

However, in sharing the promotional language the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* encountered similar problems to other publications. The predicament many reports on the shows struggled with was the choice of pronoun to use when writing on the twins. In the shows and in the promotional materials Millie Christine were referred to, and referred to themselves, in the singular. While some pieces followed this example, the *Era* saw “to all intents and purposes two individuals” and wrote of them as “Miss Millie and Miss Christine” (“A Wonderful Show” 12). Other pieces were less decisive about the showman’s or their own

choice of words and instead relinquished the responsibility: “Which is it? A coloured girl with two heads, or two coloured girls united by a bond only dissoluble by death? Whichever it be, singular or plural, the Nightingale sings and dances very pleasantly, and seems quite happy and healthy” (“We Are All of Us” 507). Following their interview with the twins, the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* reported on their “conversation with a well-bred, courteous, affable, and singularly soft-voiced young lady, who replies to the numerous questions addressed to her with untiring sweetness and patience”, but later the journal had difficulty describing their musical talent with the singular and felt “obliged here to revert to the plural” (“Extraordinary in Nature II” 222, 223). So, on Millie Christine’s talents, tastes and manners most pieces were in agreement, but they struggled to clarify the appropriate means to represent the pair. With such agreeable habits and hobbies the twins were suitable participants in tasteful society, yet their extreme physical difference was a continuous reminder of their singularity and therefore their displacement in a familiar environment.

This is not to say, however, that all reviewers believed the shows to be acceptable forms of amusement, particularly for women. In fact, just the advertising alone was enough to disturb some authors. “Can nothing be done, I wonder, to prevent the exhibition of human monstrosity? A giant and giantess may be all very well in their way [...] but here is absolutely announced, as on view, a creature more abnormal than the Siamese Twins” wrote one newspaper correspondent (“London” 2). Another piece declared that after reading an ad for Millie Christine it took “three hours, and half an ounce of Wills’ best, to grapple with, and eventually master the subject. It has not been time or tobacco thrown away” (“About Town” 188). Despite the familiarity viewers had with conjoined bodies through Chang and Eng, the notion of joined singing females was an unsettling one. In some cases the disturbing nature of both the act and the viewing of such a marvel was considered, but justified all the same: “We are all of us a little ashamed of going to stare at monstrosities, but may we not shelter ourselves beneath the example of the great Lord Stowell, who never omitted visiting every exhibition of the kind [...]?” (“We Are All of Us” 507). For some reporters the idea of the monstrous formation of the bodies was only part of the disturbance of the show. More troublesome than the freaks were those who chose to attend the shows: such curiosity seemed to require more justification than Millie Christine’s talents provided.

Near the end of their UK tour, before heading to the continent, Millie Christine exhibited in Ireland. By this point Captain Bates and Anna Swan had returned to the States, so the girls’ association with the newlyweds was no longer relevant (Martell 171–172). The author of an 1872 review of the Dublin exhibition of Millie Christine in the *Freeman’s Journal* illustrates the mixed feelings concerning those in attendance. There were “members of the faculty, drawn probably by motives besides mere curiosity, as well as a number of ladies,

whose presence was, we should say, accountable to the feminine failing solely" ("A Modern Marvel" 6). While the scientific men "mingled their professional speculation with references to the anthropophagia" before the show, the "mamas with grown-up daughters in the throng ... prettily displayed" their fear and "doubted if they could 'look at the thing'" ("A Modern Marvel" 6). Looking at unusual bodies was performed with mixed intentions and the author belittled the women's ability to handle this practice by contrasting their simple fears with the intelligence of the faculty members. While the author allowed the scientific reasoning behind the learned men's presence at the show, he seems less inclined to accept any justification for other members of the audience, especially the females, quelling their curiosity.

Regardless of the intentions, the author acknowledged that the "popular appetite for looking upon the deformed and unnatural furnishes a singular chapter of mankind" ("A Modern Marvel" 6). After parading his knowledge of history's more famous freaks, and reviewing the performance and appearance of Millie Christine, the author concludes with a dismal reflection on the contemporary fascination with extraordinary bodies:

The general effect of their appearance is not so disagreeable as might be supposed. Neither is it pleasant; but then such exhibitions are never pleasant, and nobody visits them for the sake of enjoyment, or, if he does, he never carries away the sense of having had his money's worth in that item. It is a disease of our nature – perhaps the lingering idiosyncrasy of the savage – which prompts us to gloat over deformities that cause us to shudder as we gaze. [. . .] It is unaccountable how the delicacy and refinement of our day can associate itself with the thirst for spectacles so gross of their kind and so demoralising in their effect. Civilisation does not present to us its gracious aspect when it hungers after such gratification [. . .]. ("A Modern Marvel" 6)

After a fairly light-hearted and informative evaluation of the exhibition and its viewers, this condemnation seems a reversal of the author's opinion. The freaks not only presented their audiences with mystifying versions of the human form, but also confused audience members' sense of propriety through the satisfaction of their curiosity. This sentiment was in keeping with the author's earlier remarks against the female spectators, but his displeasure with all able-bodied viewers of freaks reduced the entire audience to diseased, gloating savages, a status far below that of the objects they paid to see. In doing so the author also hints at the fascination with freakish bodies having a very long history. The act of viewing freaks was a practice passed down through freak show legacy, but, for this author, the reliving of this historic practice was no longer in keeping with the tastes of contemporary times.

Millie Christine's exceptional appearance was not the only one to cause a discrepancy in journalistic opinion on freak shows, but their exhibition demonstrates the uncertainty felt by

viewers and commentators alike when it came to attending performances. Through the print representations discussed above, the versatility of Millie Christine's exhibitions is apparent. For some, the shows were enlightening and pleasing entertainment that was even found instructive in the display of tasteful female qualities; for others, the monstrous sight was troublesome and the presence of female audiences presented a decline rather than an improvement in feminine taste. Regardless of the opinion being expressed, reports on the exhibition of Millie Christine were never objective. The twins were described with the intent to intrigue, discourage or instruct potential audiences, and the patronage of female viewers at these displays was at the heart of this discussion. In this sense Millie Christine were culturally generative in that they repeatedly provided support for and against women's engagement with popular entertainment.

### **Boys and Freaks**

In contrast to the mixed reactions to female viewers of freaks, boys are represented as the prime and acceptable freak show audience. The popularity of freaks among boys was regularly acknowledged in the periodicals of the late nineteenth century and usually without a chorus of condemnation, but in a manner that suggests a sly, yet permissible, naughtiness involved in the viewings. In fact, reminiscences on boyhood visits to the shows were used as lead-ins and analogies for a variety of reports, indicating the commonplace practice of attending such exhibitions. For males, freak shows serve a highly generative function. The viewing of freaks was a practice to be enjoyed and passed down through male generations. This practice, as chapter four will show, could serve a vital generative role for professional medical men, but the familiarity with freaks as entertainment was also developed through boyish encounters. Represented as a rite of passage, boyhood consumption of freaks appears in a variety of formats which collectively indicate an acceptance of male childish fascination in extraordinary bodies. Rather than always carrying an instructive tone, like the women's periodical in the representation of Millie Christine, freak shows were often presented as a light-hearted, amusing pastime for boys.

An 1893 article in *Cycling: An Illustrated Weekly* (a journal dedicated to bicycles and wheels), reporting on the National Show featuring "Wonders of the wheel world", began with the author relaying his childhood visit to a travelling show in his village (Juggins 2). He and his friends "strolled around feeling very important, and, as sinners do whilst sinning, very happy", taking in the rides and "wax-works, and tawdrily-attired fat females, giants and dwarfs, and freaks" (Juggins 2). The freaks left quite an impression on him and the author "went back to school sadder and wiser" (Juggins 2). The extent of the show's impact becomes clear as the

article goes on to draw on the author's memory as he compares the characteristics of the many personalities at the National Show to the attributes of freak performers. Here, the author assumes the readers' familiarity with freaks and perhaps their similar childhood memories. Through his comparisons, the report becomes a light-hearted, comical piece about the eccentric characters attending and exhibiting at the National Show, rather than the displays themselves.

Another article, this time in the comical penny weekly, *Pick-Me-Up*, demonstrates the humorous side of displaying freaks and touches on the audience's awareness that not all freaks are genuine. The author, Arnold Golsworthy, remarked on the popularity of the British Museum before he admits to having once tried to open a museum himself with the ambitious "idea that I would open in a small way with two or three freaks of nature, and an elephant or so" (Golsworthy 380). Although he failed on the elephant front he did manage to secure a few freaks with questionable authenticity. He found a man that "stood six feet four in his stockings, and I thought that by brushing his hair up straight and putting corks in his boots I could make him pass for the tallest giant of his size in the world" (Golsworthy 380). Other than the giant, Golsworthy claims he "had a wonderful Spotted Baby – recovering, I understood, from a mild spring rash – and a Bearded Lady. A friend and I were the bearded lady by turns throughout the day" (380). Despite his best efforts at concocting interesting exhibits, the museum failed miserably on its first day following more ridiculous mistakes and comical incidents. Recognising the showman's efforts in the production of freaks, Golsworthy concluded that "the man who endeavours by his own enterprise to educate the public mind to appreciate the wonders of nature will simply get left every time" (380). His piece not only relied on the readers' familiarity with the exhibition of small collections of freaks, but also on their appreciation of the possibility that some of the "wonders of nature" they had seen were, in fact, just the showman's clever creations. This story moves away from the negative emphasis placed on those viewing the degraded freaks by accepting this reality and, instead, made light of the fact that many of the wonders were never pitiable objects to begin with. The author draws on an assumed boyhood wonder at freakish sights and the knowingness involved when indulging in freak gazing. Both *Pick-Me-Up* and *Cycling* were cheap weeklies intended for a general audience, so their representations of boyish interactions with freak shows implies a general assumption of boys partaking in the entertainment.

In an equally light-hearted fashion, magazines and journals for boys included freaks or interactions between boys and freaks in their stories or comics. A small comic in *Boys of England* picturing a woman with her two chubby children being pointed at by a mischievous young boy reads thus:

PRECOCIOUS YOUTH: 'What do you call these?'

MAMMA: 'Little boys, of course.'

PRECOCIOUS YOUTH: 'I thought they might be freaks being fattened for some catch-penny show.' ("Shameful" Illustration 224)

This piece pokes fun at the same notion of the purposeful creation of freaks as Golsworthy's article did through a naughty youth insulting the large woman's children. Similarly, a comic in *Illustrated Chips* showed two women, one large and one thin, being mistaken by a lecturing showman as exhibits within his freak show ("Come on Tabitha" Untitled Comic 5) (See Figure 9). Another piece, in *Chums*, tells an amusing story of a clown who has an accident during a performance and must then become part of the sideshow as the flat-headed freak ("From Clown to Freak: In Four Acts" 44–45). These small insertions of freaks into these popular publications further demonstrate the everyday exposure and ultimately the familiarity boy readers had with freakish bodies.

When the boys' papers weren't mocking the falsity of freaks, they were able to utilise the interest in human prodigies for other witty purposes. The *Marvel* showed Lanky Larry and Bloated Bill run into trouble when some freaks hear insults from the men, and the comic culminates in the duo being attacked and beaten by a number of freaks, including the Armless Wonder, the Dog-Faced Man and a Fat Woman ("Our Funny Page" 15) (See Figure 10). Then there was a story in *Chums* about a group of schoolboys taking in the various pleasures of a fair, among them being the "White Dwarf of the Cordilleras, the man with seventeen toes" ("Markoo the Hindoo Wizard" 689–690). The abundance of freaks within boys' periodicals signifies a real presence of freak shows and of boys forming their audiences. In fact, these short comical pieces were all printed between 1898-1899, which coincides with the United Kingdom tour of the Barnum and Bailey Circus. As the next chapter will show, the circus and the large freak show within it were extremely popular throughout its stay. So, these comical depictions of boyish freak encounters reflect a contemporary opportunity for boys to engage with freaks. Also notable in the characteristically light manner that the shows were dealt with, is the seeming acceptability of this form of amusement for boys. Although the attendance of women and girls were matters of concern for other articles, young men were never mentioned and their own periodicals were full of the fun to be had at such events.

An important point to remember with each of these pieces is that they were all published in the 1890s when boys' magazines were on the rise. While this increase in cheap, humorous, illustrated periodicals saw the demise of longstanding publications like *Boys of England*, the others mentioned above collectively achieved great popularity (Banham 161). *Chums* and the *Marvel* (which was a version of the *Halfpenny Marvel*) were competing story papers for boys and *Illustrated Chips* was a comic which helped "set the benchmark of how comics were to look for the next half a century" ("History of British Comics: 1890-1899 (Early

Comics) Part 2"). Claudia Nelson has examined the "polysemic appeal" of the stories in *Chums* and the *Marvel*, contributing to the broadening of their audiences (Nelson, "Mixed Messages" 7). She notes that "Niche marketing [...] was not the strategy of the more important boys' titles at this time, [...] Rather, most periodicals succeeded by a kind of carpet-bomb effect: extending audience appeal as far as possible" ("Mixed Messages" 2). Thus, while the papers were targeted at boys and claimed to promote middle-class values, they also attracted the working classes and adult readers, possibly even girl readers.

Also, the two freak stories from *Chums* veered from the regular tales that filled its pages. These were often stories of patriotic bravery to encourage "an assertive image of virile manhood", (MacDonald 35). Including these topical pieces acknowledges and, to a degree, condones the existing fascination in freaks. Acknowledging the working-class readership attracted to comic publications, editors gave the material double readings to maintain and instruct this extended audience. Critics appreciated the work done by the "'cloaked' morality" within the pages of publications for boys (Nelson, "Mixed Messages" 15 n.9). One school chaplain even praised the indirect lessons being given through the "true to life" depictions of the stories, stating they must continue to be "of downright amusement, or they will not be read" (B.G. Johns qtd. in Nelson, "Mixed Messages" 15 n.9). So, the inclusion of freaks into the tales helped convey the morals the magazines attempted to present, strictly because they more directly represented reality. Just as eccentric biographies had used freaks to instruct earlier generations, so too did the freaks in boys' magazines. In this way freak representations were technically generative in the instructive amusement they provided, as well as being culturally generative in continuing the popularity of the freak show culture itself.

Even when specific performances were not being reviewed or commented on, nor any jokes or stories revolving around the notion of a freak of nature included, freaks would still appear in periodicals just as a point of interest. For instance, in 1894 *Illustrated Chips* ran a seven-part series of articles featuring different famous freaks in each piece.<sup>29</sup> While *Illustrated Chips* was not strictly a magazine for boys, the comic genre was just beginning to form and during the period this series was published the format of the magazine was similar to that of other publications attracting the interest of boys. Kirsten Drotner has commented that *Illustrated Chips* was "Originally aimed at adults but found a large following among working class juveniles" (Drotner 125). The powerful publisher, Alfred Harmsworth, who was responsible for numerous cheap comic publications during this period, had also acknowledged this trend of youthful interest in his similar magazine *Comic Cuts*, so it should not be assumed the material was intended for a purely adult readership (Nelson, "Mixed Messages" 15 n.7).

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<sup>29</sup> Each part appeared in a separate issue except for parts V and VI which were both printed in the 15 December 1894 issue.

*Illustrated Chips* was a comic publication, but this particular series was not presented as humorous so much as it was informative. The series of short freak pieces were instructive in the sense that they familiarised readers with these freak histories at the same time that they demonstrated how extraordinary bodies should be interpreted. Beginning in November, the first article gave a complementary portrayal of the Chinese giant Chang, “the finest giant of the century, and certainly the most intellectual and cultivated man of great stature of whom we have any reliable record” (“Freaks of Nature: I” 6). Following this was an article on a Fat Man, “who will not show himself for mere dross; an individual who shrinks from the public’s gaze, notwithstanding the fact that submission to that gaze would mean pockets lined with gold” (“Freaks of Nature II” 6). The daily difficulties faced by this unnamed man filled up the bulk of the article, almost evoking pity for the recognisably freakish body that chooses not “to exhibit his corpulence to vulgar crowds” (“Freaks of Nature II” 6). The next report in the series was on the French “Living Skeleton” from earlier in the century named Claude Ambroise Seurat who “weighed only thirty-eight pounds” (“Freaks of Nature III” 2). Then came “a creature which seemed to be half monkey, half man” accompanied by a few seventeenth-century freaks: a man said to have drunk large quantities of water which he could discharge “converted into various sorts of wine, simple waters, beer, oil, and milk”, as well as the bearded lady, Barbara Ursel’n and the fire-eating Richardson (“Freaks of Nature IV” 6). After this was the “Spotted Negro Boy”, George Alexander Grattan, who had been “born in the island of St. Vincent, on the plantation of a Mr. Alexander, of which plantation a man named Grattan was the overseer” who had lived a very short life after being brought to England for exhibition (“Freaks of Nature V, VI” 6). In the same paper, after Grattan, some other children who had short-lived lives and careers are discussed, but their curious attributes were their quickly aging bodies, one even “had a beard” at seven and “the stature of a man” when he was ten-years-old (“Freaks of Nature V, VI” 6). Finally, the last part in the series discussed “Peter the Wild Boy” who was “brought to England in 1726, and, as usual, was exhibited to the wonder-loving public” (“Freaks of Nature VII” 3). Peter was a curiosity simply for his unusual conduct, he was a human boy with animal behaviour. The generativity of the freaks featured in this series is expressed in the passing down of their legacies for the young male readers.

The freaks contained within this series compile an interesting commentary on the history of the British fascination with extraordinary bodies. Mentioning facts such as that both Chang and the un-exhibited Fat Man only went outside when it was dark and it was unlikely they would receive any unsolicited attention, suggests the little effort required to construct and draw crowds to certain kinds of freaks. Also, the pieces acquainted readers with the health implications for extreme forms of human existence by emphasising the early deaths of Grattan, Seurat and the quickly-aged children. However, at least in the case of Grattan, it is the



lack of a regular home-life and subjection to the exhibition lifestyle that largely contributed to the deterioration of his health. Covering the present and the previous couple of centuries, this series accentuated not only the existence of freaks throughout time, but the long-standing public assumption that these people existed to be consumed as objects of the curious gaze. Serving as a series of articles in *Illustrated Chips*, the featured freaks once again become purchasable curiosities, only this time in the form of print instead of flesh, continuing their status as consumables and generative products. These articles were also reminiscent of the eccentric biographies which were popular earlier in the century. It is very probable that the material within these short pieces was even borrowed from the collections.

Within the *Illustrated Chips* magazines which contained the freak articles was a running feature titled "How I Got Strong", said to be written by a Strong Man. This feature instructed readers on exercises and workout regimes they could try in order to achieve the same results as the author. The contrast between these two articles illuminates the precarious placement of freaks within print for boys. While even light-hearted humorous publications found space to encourage readers to aim for a strong, healthy physicality in order to express their masculinity, they also had to distract readers with more bizarre attractions, and in this included the extraordinary human formations of freak bodies. Freaks appealed to both adult and youthful readership in part because they were familiar. Many of the adults would have been familiar with the featured freaks through their own encounters with them, either in person or in print. The younger readers would likely have been familiar with freaks in some capacity, but these articles would have furthered their awareness of the historical fascination the British public had with freakish bodies and broadened their catalogue of knowledge on such figures. Such pieces brought the boy readers closer to the model of their adult counterparts through the encouragement of similar youthful practices such as freak gazing, while also improving their physical strength and health to achieve an ideal body by the time they reached their adult years.

Altogether, these various appearances of freaks within the youthful publications present a fascinating study not just of freaks, but of late Victorian boyhood. Whereas some freak show reviews tended to discourage a feminine interest in freaks the men of distinction were admitted for reasons of patronage. Freak consumption was represented as a generative practice for males through various print forms. Even in the pieces written from an adult male perspective, the reminiscences of their boyhood wonder at freaks played a central role in the narrative. Bodily formation and health were not to be taken for granted and males were encouraged to take responsibility for their own bodies. Even in the cheap half-penny weeklies boys were given exercise regimes to support this practice. The prevalence of freaks within publications for young audiences illustrates how boys were pushed to partake in the same

pastimes as their elders and acquire an awareness of the diversity of the human form. In the boy's magazines freaks were presented not so much as educational examples of biology, but as interesting sights worthy of familiarity in order to fulfil a traditional rite of passage.

### **Conclusion**

Freak consumption was a generative practice that had familiarised audiences with freaks through various print media since the early eccentric biographies. Periodical and newspaper articles made use of an interest in freakish bodies already present among the British public. People from varied walks of life were making their way to the shops and shows displaying extraordinary bodies throughout the country and print media reflected this. Freaks had been available through print form well before the Victorian period, even before the popularity and expansion of the periodical press. While there was, undeniably, a resistance to this preoccupation with living curiosities, which was also represented within the contemporary print media, the popular fascination with and pleasure from the popular pastime far outweighed the negative reviews. However, even the pieces which discouraged the practice continued to raise awareness of the constant presence of freaks in Britain and actually helped maintain their presence within print. Men, women and children were all appealed to, in some form, to consume representations of freaks. Even if people were unable to afford any of the freak appearances in flesh or in print, they were likely to have encountered them through the numerous promotional posters and flyers promoting shows if they resided in urban spaces. Both free advertisements and print representations often were accompanied by illustrations, which could be seen by illiterate audiences and stretched their presence even further. These various modes of presentation ensured that freaks remained technically and culturally generative. Freak legacies continued to flourish in the nineteenth century, taking on different functions to suit different audiences. The act of viewing freaks and the adapted meanings attached to their various representations through time reflect the gradual development of their generativity.

Evident in all the freak material exposing the popular interest in freaks was the shared knowledge of freakish bodies. Whether articles were praising or discouraging the exhibitions of extraordinary humans, none denied the reality of the British public's familiarity with freaks. Famous freaks throughout history were brought to the fore time and again in print to continue the longstanding tradition of gazing at extraordinary bodies. New freaks exhibiting in Britain were opportunities for audiences to acquaint themselves with the extremes of bodily formation and continue the tradition. While the justification for these practices varied from each type of audience, particularly with medical audiences, the exhibitions themselves were

always acknowledged as a part of British culture. The fact of their existence was never represented as unfamiliar, but the appropriateness of the displays for entertainment purposes was a contested point, which will be discussed further in chapter three. In this sense, freak representations continued to appear through communal uses of their cultural generativity. Whether in comics, stories, editorials, advertisements, cartoons, reviews, jokes or features, freaks were constantly presented in the press forcing readers to evaluate their relationship and familiarity with these extraordinary bodies. Through these various forms in which freaks were represented and their consistent presence in the latter part of the nineteenth century it is clear that these marginalised bodies were far from being outsiders and, in fact, actually resided at the centre of popular culture.

Print culture provided a very significant (perhaps the most significant) medium for transmission of freak legacies through generations. This would be highly important for freak performers and for showmen, as the next chapter will show.

## Chapter Two: Barnum and Bailey in the UK

I thus address the world through the medium of the latest invention, Edison's phonograph, so that my voice, like my great show, will reach future generations and be heard centuries after I have joined the great and, as I believe, happy majority.

(P.T. Barnum qtd. in Kunhardt Jr., Kunhardt, and Kunhardt III 340)

Highly generative adults look to the future in their life stories with hope and optimism regarding their own legacies even when they are less sanguine about the future of the world in general. They believe that the products of their generative efforts will continue to flourish and grow. They see themselves as continuing to make a positive mark on the world. They know that they will die one day, but their stories suggest that the good work they have done or will do will live on through their children, their students, the family business, or through other venues wherein they have invested and continue to invest their generative efforts. (McAdams, "The Redemptive Self: Generativity and the Stories Americans Live By" 93)

In the nineteenth century the American showman Phineas T. Barnum was a renowned figure in the world of entertainment and had an international reputation as a freak showman. During the Victorian period several famous freak acts (including Chang and Eng Bunker and Millie Christine) successfully exhibited in Britain, trading on Barnum's name. Alongside his freak exhibiting, Barnum undertook various enterprises throughout his lifetime to build his reputation and create his legacy. Significantly, Barnum's success with freaks and other sensations was built upon his marketing prowess rather than his acquisition of genuine or authentic spectacles alone. Barnum created sensations that he could sell and entertainments he could convince audiences to willingly partake in, knowing they might view spectacularised phonies rather than genuine oddities. This knowingness was part of Barnum's style of entertainment. The showman's ability to spin a convincing and compelling story to lure audiences into his shows' despite how extraordinary the exhibit may be, was a technique that came to be synonymous with Barnum's image. Barnum's skill as a storyteller was paramount to the success of his shows, and ultimately his legacy.

Not only did Barnum sell his entertainments, but he also shaped and traded on his own story. Due to his efforts to create and promote his own legacy Barnum was what Dan McAdams has termed a "highly generative adult" (McAdams, "The Redemptive Self: Generativity and the Stories Americans Live By" 91). The showman purposefully made himself a sensation as spectacular as his entertainments so that he could draw the crowds in during his life and perpetuate his image after death. Rather than challenge the myth woven into Barnum's history, this chapter will examine the power his self-made legacy had in the UK at

the end of the nineteenth century and, in particular, its influence on the popular engagement with freaks during the visits of the Barnum and Bailey circus in 1889-1890 and 1897-1899.

As the previous chapter has shown, Victorian audiences continued a longstanding tradition of viewing freaks in print and in person. Through both of these methods of popular engagement with freaks Barnum came to represent the archetypal showman. Barnum's generativity was intricately linked with freaks, with both parties simultaneously supporting and relying on the other. This chapter explores Barnum's legacy through his agentic generativity which ran alongside the pre-existing model of freak generativity, discussed in the previous chapter. Through freak exhibition Barnum had been able to establish his career in entertainment culture, and it was also freaks that perpetuated his legacy. Whereas the first UK visit of the circus demonstrates Barnum's extensive generative efforts, the second visit shows the results of his generativity. During these two visits freaks played an important role in reinforcing Barnum's legacy whilst also contributing to the distinct generativity of freak bodies within late nineteenth-century British culture.

Barnum's status as a dominant figure in popular exhibition culture was largely achieved through his circulation of selected narratives which appeared in periodical print as well as in the many editions of his autobiography (Fretz 97–107). Barnum's carefully crafted stories of his own life were often woven into articles on his freak exhibitions, endorsing the shows. Barnum's life stories reflect what McAdams terms "the personal myth" in that they are "evolving narratives of the self that portray how a person in the here and now understands who he or she is, was, and may become in the future" (McAdams, "The Redemptive Self: Generativity and the Stories Americans Live By" 86). The "personal myth" also gives "highly generative adults" a "narrative identity" and this helps "to reinforce, sustain, and justify the significant life commitments and investments they have made" (McAdams, "The Redemptive Self: Generativity and the Stories Americans Live By" 86). For Barnum, his career as a showman was the means through which he expressed his narrative identity. While Barnum's life narratives came to include the various good deeds he did for his local community, the funds that allowed him to perform these acts were acquired from his success as a showman. In Barnum's histories he often acknowledges the genius in his early attempts to amuse audiences through deception, but his later entertainments are often portrayed as instructive amusements appropriate for all ages, put together by an honest Christian. The image Barnum created through these means provided crucial support for the Barnum and Bailey "Greatest Show on Earth" that came to England at the end of the nineteenth century. The freaks incorporated in this large circus were alluring for their participation in the large, hyped-up entertainment and, in particular, Barnum's notorious legacy as a freak showman.

The freaks in the Barnum and Bailey circus offer a particularly interesting study because they were regularly referred to in reviews and received ample print coverage, despite being a modest portion of an enormous entertainment. The two visits the Greatest Show on Earth made to the United Kingdom provide insight into the unique relationship shared between P. T. Barnum, his entertainments, and the English viewing public. Also, Barnum's status as a premier showman amongst other entertainers in Britain is evident in the continued support and enthusiasm shown for Barnum and his circus in the entertainment journal, the *Era*. The circus was an institution familiar to British audiences often endorsed as a safe, sober environment with enjoyment available to all. Since circuses in Britain already represented "popular entertainment at its most prolific and accessible", according to Bratton and Featherstone, Barnum's significant inclusion and promotion of freaks in this form of amusement increased their status as acceptable entertainment for mainstream audiences (J. Bratton and Featherstone 12). So, the attention British popular print gave to this circus indicates both the widespread appeal of freaks and other circus bodies as well as the popular fascination with Barnum himself.

The first visit of the Barnum and Bailey circus was held at the Olympia in Kensington, London for the 1889 winter season and the second visit from 1897-1899 included tours of the United Kingdom in the warm seasons and winters at the Olympia. During the circus's first visit, Barnum's show received varying amounts of criticism, along with its regularly full houses. However, amongst the faults which were discussed in the print media, the freaks rarely obtained any negative press. In fact, Barnum's famous curiosities almost stood out as a main attraction in the show, despite their location in the peripheral circus space. Although the freaks received regular press attention, the main focus of this visit was to solidify Barnum's legacy. When the circus returned for its longer visit at the end of the century, and Barnum's legacy was well and truly established, the freaks secured a celebrity status through an explosion in the print interest they received. This time the circus as a whole was commended for its improved programme and superior acts. Then, midway through this visit of the circus the collection of freaks protested against their name and demanded to be called "Prodigies", rather than "Freaks". While it is likely the protest was a publicity stunt to maintain the interest in and coverage of the circus during its stay in Britain, it is a point worth considering due to the influence of Barnum's legacy in representations of the circus.<sup>30</sup> The freak protest reveals the importance of British print media to the show as the popular press used the protest to further promote the freaks, even while doubting the sincerity of their protest. Interwoven into this

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<sup>30</sup> Durbach, for instance, marks the protest as an "orchestrated" publicity stunt (Durbach 20).

relationship is the legacy of Barnum's own history with the British press and public, and his notoriety as a freak showman.

This chapter aims to provide a case study of the print representations of the popular circus during its late nineteenth-century visits to the United Kingdom and, in particular, the attention given to the performing freaks. Barnum's generative personality and legacy, I argue, were crucial to the success of the circus and the popularity of the freaks with British audiences. Due to Barnum's well-documented usage of the press, which Irving Wallace claims "bludgeoned readers into submission by persistent reiteration", a wide range of periodicals will be referred to so that the extent of the show's appeal can be considered (Wallace 61). In order to fully appreciate the reception of the visits from Barnum and Bailey's "Greatest Show on Earth" the circus will first be contextualised within British circus history. This history will briefly be described to help clarify the important differences between the tradition of the British circus and Barnum's circus. However, Barnum had also had a substantial influence on British entertainment traditions, and especially upon the practice of showmanship and the exhibition of freaks. Therefore, examining the image Barnum had already forged for himself in the United Kingdom will underscore the impact of the circus's two visits and the role his legacy played. Each visit will be considered separately since Barnum was only alive to accompany the first of the circus's two trips to the United Kingdom. The freak representations for each visit implicate Barnum's influence, both by his active presence in the circus and the posthumous attachment of his name to the great enterprise. Finally, the circus's visit to the southwest town of Torquay as part of the 1899 provincial tour will provide an example of local engagement with the show. Print representations of the circus in Torquay will also return us to the interest boys had in freaks, as discussed in the first chapter. While the Barnum and Bailey circus has been noted in studies of circus history, there appears to be a lack of any substantial account of the circus's two United Kingdom visits and this chapter hopes to (at least partially) fill that void.

When unravelling the history of the Barnum and Bailey circus in the United Kingdom, or indeed anywhere it travelled, it is important to bear in mind the nature of the material containing this information. Much of the publicity materials (including programmes, posters, *cartes de visite*) were used as sources of information for the journalists reviewing the circus. In fact, it is quite likely the managers or their agents either had some influence over the newspaper articles or contributed to pieces themselves. Therefore, when reviewing this material, and many of the historical perspectives on the circus and its managers, it is necessary to approach the "facts" with a bit of caution. Yet, the Barnum myth was vital to the popularity of the circus, so all print accounts and propaganda feed into this. Since this chapter is concerned with the representation of Barnum's legacy and freaks, the validity of the claims

made in print will not be questioned here. Instead, all print representations will be considered for their contribution to Barnum's public persona.

Barnum and Bailey were both very successful in their careers and understood the impact their character had on their circus's publicity campaign. Barnum's abilities as a showman were well-known by audiences throughout Britain and America. As will be shown, he regularly took advantage of print media in his advertising, either as himself or disguised as a reviewer. This is important to bear in mind when conducting a study of the press representations of Barnum and Bailey's Circus, for as Altick says of the sources relied on in his own work, they "are in all likelihood showmen's puffs posing as reviews or news stories" (Altick 4). In past ventures, Barnum had reaped the benefits of both good and bad press, since both encouraged audiences to view the exhibition in question and draw conclusions on the display for themselves. So, even the negative reviews and comments the circus received, particularly during its first tour, could work in Barnum's favour. Whereas Barnum's approach to publicity was to always make himself as big a presence and personality as his show, Bailey kept a bit of distance from the limelight using Barnum's name to help promote the show. Therefore, Barnum's generativity and resultant posthumous legacy served an important function in the success and popularity of the circus and its freaks.

### **Placing the American Circus in British Circus Culture**

Nineteenth-century circuses most often employed a multicultural troupe and transient lifestyle, which tended to place them oddly within the cultures for whom they performed. This itinerant amusement captivated nineteenth-century audiences worldwide, yet the performers within circuses were admired for the distance they seemed to place between themselves and any local or national culture. As Helen Stoddart posits, the circus is an "entertainment which has always been both constitutionally international and, at the same time, strategically xenophobic" (Stoddart 72). Part of the appeal of the circus was its exoticised troupe of performers who were made alluring in a similar fashion to exoticised freaks. Yet, with its origins in Philip Astley's late eighteenth-century London entertainments, the circus's exoticism was also a familiar and traditional feature of the entertainment for late nineteenth-century British audiences (Stoddart 13–17; Assael 3–5).

When examining the Barnum and Bailey circus at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly its visits to the United Kingdom, this "strategic xenophobia" lends itself as another tool to promote the circus as a patriotic, all-inclusive entertainment for the masses. Barnum and Bailey's enterprise brought British audiences a large collection of acts presented through the reinterpretation of familiar circus and freak show entertainments. These reconstructed



familiarities were portrayed as safe, alluring and exciting displays of otherness. The international nature of the circus allowed audiences to consume foreign and curious sights alongside the fascinating extremes and capabilities of human physiology; and, under Barnum's direction this was under the pretext of being an educational, rational amusement. Audiences were also drawn to this 'other' culture of the circus to learn more about their own culture. Paul Bouissac sees all circuses (not just those of the nineteenth century) as "a kind of mirror in which the culture is reflected, condensed and at the same time transcended; perhaps the circus seems to stand outside the culture only because it is at its very center" (Bouissac 9). And Brenda Assael compares the Victorian circus to a fun-house mirror reflecting a "'grotesque realism' that was colourful, ornamental, and, most of all, exaggerated but nonetheless based on a truth about the nineteenth-century world" (Assael 154). Therefore, the late nineteenth-century circus brought audiences closer to their own culture which increasingly borrowed from the conquered foreign cultures being incorporated into the British Empire.

The continued expansion and development of circus arts throughout the nineteenth century coincided with other changes taking place in the Victorian era, such as the growth of the British Empire and the technological advances in transportation, which domestic and visiting circuses used to their advantage. For instance, skilled performers were imported from abroad for British circuses and train companies arranged excursions throughout the 1889 winter season to allow distant audiences to see the Barnum and Bailey circus at London's Olympia ("Barnum's Show at Olympia" 10). The circus exploited contemporary culture to reflect a sensationalised, yet familiar, version of the audience's world.

While George Speaight has shown some of the differing aspects in the art's development in America, he also notes that "[t]he Circus in England first inspired, and was then much influenced by, the Circus in America" (Speaight 7). This separate growth of the trade gave the shows their edge when proprietors took their exhibitions overseas and the interaction of international practices helped the art progress. Rather than focus on the varying paths of development the circus followed across the globe, this brief history serves to highlight the novel attractions the Barnum and Bailey Greatest Show on Earth had for British audiences, in comparison to their native circuses. Some of the extraordinary features of the Barnum and Bailey circus were practiced by shows throughout America, while others were unique to this collaboration.

Although the beginnings of the modern circus are largely credited to Philip Astley's trick riding enterprises in London in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the interest in this entertainment was quickly taken up in other parts of the country and it was not long before the form had developed and established itself across the world. "The circus was built upon admiration of the skill and the muscle of both horses and humans", so proprietors

continued to enhance their shows with additional animal entertainments and further variances of human talent (J. Bratton and Featherstone 6). A selection of the acts included in the shows, alongside the equestrian tricks, would be clowning, acrobatics, trapeze, tightrope walking, tricks with dogs, monkeys and later wild cats and elephants. Many of the spectacles on offer in the circus already had a history of display, just under a different design. For instance, English Fairs had satiated pleasure-seekers' curiosity and delighted crowds with displays of human strength and skill for centuries, but many of the larger fairs were shut down in the early nineteenth century and the majority either ceased altogether by mid-century or underwent radical changes in their structure.<sup>31</sup>

Under the new format of the circus these entertainments continued to develop their acts. In the circus, the exhibition was held in a single, circular performance space, ideally suited for the equestrian acts. In England there were a number of permanent amphitheatres the circuses would reside in, until an American circus introduced their tenting practice in 1842 (Speaight 43).<sup>32</sup> Circuses ranged from small, family-run businesses to large, international institutions, often merging or buying out other shows to decrease competition and increase in size (as was the case with Barnum and Bailey's collaboration).<sup>33</sup> Along with the addition of new animal acts, many circuses also joined with travelling menageries, but, apart from the use of some of the animals for acts in the ring, this combination could prove difficult for touring purposes.<sup>34</sup> However, "menageries promoted an essentially rational and scientific exhibition, while circuses were all skill and amusement", so the appeal of a joint venture could prove very prosperous for the managers and many American shows took up this opportunity (J. Bratton and Featherstone 14). Tenting practices and the inclusion of animals are just two aspects that followed different routes of development in England and America, but eventually converged.

When the Greatest Show on Earth first came to England in 1889 it brought its own exhibition practices along with it. For this initial visit the circus used the permanent location of the Olympia in London. However, when the circus returned at the end of the century it reverted back to its American style and between the Christmas seasons at the Olympia, it went on a tenting tour around the country by train.<sup>35</sup> This method of transportation alone was startling to the English audiences since "No circus had ever travelled by train in England

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<sup>31</sup> For more on Fair history see Ian Starsmore, *English Fairs*, London: Tantivy Press, 1980.

<sup>32</sup> However, Speaight questions whether tenting practices really were introduced through an American circus or if this was already an established practice in Britain prior to 1842 that was never recorded.

<sup>33</sup> For more in depth, historical discussions on the changes in circus practices see Speaight, Assael or Stoddart.

<sup>34</sup> See Bratton and Featherstone for further explanation of the different traveling needs of either entertainment (14–15).

<sup>35</sup> Speaight claims the transport was a seventy-car train with sixty-foot-long trucks, while Stoddart notes it being four trains made up of sixty-one circus cars (Speaight 107; Stoddart 24).

before" (Speaight 107). This impressive method of transportation "consolidated an image of American wealth, ambition and systematic organisation on a grand scale", which was able to attract the attention and admiration of potential audiences (Stoddart 24).

The layout of the exhibition also contributed to the image of the show as an imposing American enterprise. Although it "was an Englishman, George Sanger, who first put three rings in a circus in 1860", it was not a regular sight in the British context (Speaight 108). It was "between 1871 and 1881, [when] the American circus introduced both the three-ring circus and, with it, an extra entertainment in the form of the 'midway'" (Stoddart 24). The "midway" functioned as a space leading up to the main arena that was lined with stalls of freaks and other pre-show entertainments for the audience to consume prior to the main event. Therefore, in 1889 when Barnum and Bailey brought their impressive three-rings with two extra stages, a menagerie, human and animal freaks and some museum style displays, all for a single fee, they impressed an American style on their new English patrons. Rather than the long tunnel of a midway, the freaks and other extra exhibits were gathered in a large anteroom which was necessarily passed through to get to the main arena. In both visits of the great circus, the show concluded with a large spectacle. Equestrian dramas performed within a riding ring were not a new entertainment to the English viewing public, but the enormous tableaux spectacle displaying stories adapted for English sensibilities and created with hundreds of circus employees, was yet another new and exciting experience for Barnum and Bailey's British audiences. Setting themselves apart from all the exhibitions on offer in Britain, the American showmen sought to emphasize the uniqueness and originality of their entertainment.

In making familiar sights, such as the circus and freaks, into a single spectacular entertainment attracted large crowds and further promoted Barnum's legacy. Both Barnum and Bailey were experienced circus managers when they eventually joined forces which may explain their great success at home and abroad. Despite their working relationship however, the proprietors were portrayed as having quite different approaches to their profession. Barnum furnished the fame and spectacular side of the business and Bailey did the majority of the managing and maintaining of the circus itself. While Bailey's clever administration of the Greatest Show on Earth was vital to the success of the circus, it was Barnum's history and the influence of his legacy on the exhibition which accounts for the acceptance and fame of the freaks within the show. The image of Barnum in the popular imagination, created through his generative efforts prior to the circus's visit, supported the success of the circus in Britain while it also perpetuated his legacy.

## Phineas T. Barnum

Writing Barnum's history is a challenge in itself, as has been shown in the numerous biographies on the great showman.<sup>36</sup> Due to the nature of Barnum's career, the language used both by and about the showman often follows the hyperbolic patter of a promotional spiel. This, in itself, demonstrates the influence of Barnum's generative personality on his legacy. Creating a marketable personal image was an important part of Barnum's career as a showman. Indeed, Eric Fretz has shown how "Barnum displayed theatrical Selfhood to the public" both in the creation of his own image through his autobiographies and in his management of human curiosities (Fretz 98). Barnum understood the power of language and the extent to which he made it work in his favour is well known. In his advertising, sales, lecturing and writing, Barnum manipulated his words to suit his audience. The showman claimed his "disposition was of that speculative character which refused to be satisfied unless I was engaged in some business where my profits might be enhanced, or, at least, made to depend upon my energy, perseverance, attention to business, tact, and 'calculation'" (Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs* 27).<sup>37</sup> Through his self-made public persona came Barnum's legacy, encapsulating both the highs and lows of his career, and this was repeatedly portrayed in popular contexts.

Barnum's autobiography, which he regularly adapted and republished in his later years, made a large contribution to the Barnum myth. Bratton and Featherstone have remarked how the prominent figures who write autobiographies "wish to make a public statement laying out the contribution they feel they have made to their time" and these in turn "contribute to our sense that these are or were the leaders they claim to be" (33). In the case of Barnum, between his autobiographies and exemplary model of showmanship, the fact is difficult to pick out from the fiction. Yet, the truth is not the important factor in Barnum's history because it was the publicly created image that fed his career and ultimate legacy. This section will, therefore, seek to explain how this popular persona was created and modified during his life. This allows us to interpret the fascination with which he was regarded, and the contribution this made to the profession of showmanship in Britain. Essentially, Barnum was his own main attraction.

In many respects Barnum epitomised the notion of a showman: he could sell any object to almost any audience through exciting, though not always honest, means. As Joe Kember has stated, Barnum was the "model" for "aggressive career-making" and, even after

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<sup>36</sup> Some of these are: Wallace, Werner, Kunhardt et al., A.H. Saxon or Neil Harris, or indeed one of the many versions of Barnum's autobiography.

<sup>37</sup> Barnum's 1889 autobiography, *Struggles and Triumphs or, Sixty Years' Recollections of P.T. Barnum* will be used in this paper, since this was the last one published prior to the circus's visit to the UK.

his death in 1891, he “remained synonymous with the idea of entrepreneurial showmanship” (Kember 99).<sup>38</sup> Tied into this showmanship, was an appreciation for Barnum’s art of deception. As Peter Kendrick conjectured in his 1933 lecture, “whilst [Barnum] cheapened and vulgarised certain human activities, and made people ashamed of themselves when they woke up, the harm was not lasting and was probably balanced by the sanative laughter and amusement he provided for millions” (Kendrick 23). So, even when deceiving his audiences, Barnum’s legacy forgives his deception due to the amusement it had provided. Through Barnum’s eyes, his patrons were appreciative of the hoaxes; he wrote, “the public appears disposed to be amused even when they are conscious of being deceived” (Barnum qtd. in Green 385). The deception was part of the fun and this knowingness built a communal bond between showman and audience.

According to typically hyperbolic accounts of his life, the art and value of publicity is believed to have come to Barnum very early in his career. Gregory Green attributes this to an early experience Barnum had with newspapers in 1831. After his editorials had been rejected by the local press he printed his own paper called the *Herald of Freedom*. This career was short-lived as three suits of libel were brought against the paper, ultimately putting Barnum in jail for sixty days. Here, Barnum continued to edit his paper, explaining his plights to his readers as well as the religious prosecution he was suffering, which all helped his subscription list grow. When the time came for his release, Barnum’s supporters turned out to witness a patriotic ceremony involving a national salute, an oration on the freedom of the press and his journey home with an escort of forty men on horseback. As Green summarizes, this affair, “taught him the power of the press, taught him how to both use and misuse the power. It taught him about the mass mind and how to harness its force. ...In a word, it taught him about business” (Green 389). This exciting account is an example of the exaggerated character of Barnum’s life story. Although Green cites several sources, including Barnum’s autobiography, the showman’s dramatic introduction to fame and notoriety becomes an extravagant tale in itself. Barnum’s generativity can be seen in the creation of a former self that makes his later successes more incredible.

Some of the other stories recounted by legacies of Barnum’s early career also exploit his propensity to stretch the truth in a very public forum. The first human being he purchased for exhibition purposes was Joice Heth, supposedly George Washington’s nurse, who brought with her documents confirming her old age. Wallace notes, “overnight [Barnum] became showman and slaveholder” (Wallace 14). The exhibition of the first American president’s nurse became a success as did Barnum himself. When Heth became very ill and passed away,

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<sup>38</sup> For an in-depth discussion on the history of late nineteenth-century showmen and showmanship see Joe Kember, *Marketing Modernity: Victorian Popular Shows and Early Cinema*, Exeter: Exeter UP, 2009.

Barnum allowed some medical men to examine her and investigate the claim of her age being 161 years old. After the autopsy revealed Heth to have been merely half of the age she claimed to be, and before the exposure of the truth in the New York papers, one of the examining doctors confronted Barnum about his findings. According to Wallace, “Barnum was astounded, or so he always insisted . . . [He] had hired Joice in perfect good faith, and relied upon her appearance and the documents as evidence of the truth of her story” (Wallace 24). Thus began Barnum’s career of presenting the stories and self-image he felt audiences desired to hear.

There are two major events in Barnum’s career which directly relate to the impression English audiences had of the great showman prior to the arrival of the circus.<sup>39</sup> In 1844, Barnum brought Charles Stratton, a man who exhibited as the dwarf, Tom Thumb, over to England. This first encounter with the British public brought great fame and wealth both to himself and his exhibit. At the same time, Barnum was thought to have renewed the popular fascination with extraordinary bodies and encouraged media attention paid to this surge of interest. This popular exhibition helped situate Barnum as the lead showman of freaks, a position which was later supported by his sending other acts, such as Chang and Eng Bunker, across the Atlantic to exhibit under his name. Later in his career, when his international reputation was already secured, he purchased the London Zoo’s beloved elephant Jumbo. Both of these events are regularly mentioned in Barnum’s biographies as well as having been individually studied.<sup>40</sup> In the case of Tom Thumb, Barnum was depicted as being directly responsible for the planning and success of the exhibition. However, the purchase of Jumbo has largely been recognised as his partner’s doing, but it was Barnum’s name that was influential in the hype. Both of these acts generated massive amounts of media attention and public reaction which later contributed to the image of Barnum that accompanied the Greatest Show on Earth in London. In fact, Barnum even traded on the British attachment to Jumbo by including the elephant’s corpse in the London exhibition. Stories of Barnum and his actions in America circulated in the British press as well, building his legacy from a distance.

Even in tales on the merging of the large circuses that eventually became Barnum and Bailey’s Greatest Show on Earth, Barnum comes across as a generative figure manipulating his future legacy. While other circuses had the tendency to avoid showing near Barnum, the “Great London Circus, Sanger’s Royal British Menagerie and Grand International Allied Shows”, managed by Cooper, Bailey and Hutchinson, proved to be a legitimate rival that

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<sup>39</sup> Arguably, Barnum’s acquisition and extensive tour with the singing sensation Jenny Lind also has implications on his relationship with British audiences. However, as this piece focuses on the British interest in Barnum’s visually curious exhibits, Jenny Lind has been omitted from this history.

<sup>40</sup> For example see Raymond Fitzsimons, *Barnum in London*, London: Bles, 1969; and, Paul Chambers, *Jumbo: The Greatest Elephant in the World*, Hanover: Steerforth Press, 2008.

Barnum turned to his advantage (Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs* 324). Rather than letting the show's popularity upset him, "it made him [Barnum] glad, because he heard that the Great London Circus Proprietors had followed his lead in making their show refined and moral" according to the *Era* ("Barnum's New Departure" 4). The story of the 1880 merger also emphasises Barnum's persona in that the rival entertainment is depicted as following his lead rather than presenting independent motives. The entertainment journal notes that Barnum was so pleased that this show "approached his own in magnitude and excellence" that "he conceived the design of being the owner or controller of the two greatest shows on earth" as he watched the rival entertainment ("Barnum's New Departure" 4). In his autobiography, published after the merged circus was a success, Barnum explains that "after days of negotiation we decided to join our two shows in one mammoth combination, and, sink or swim, to exhibit them for at least, one season for one price of admission" (Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs* 324). By portraying the venture as a gamble that had worked in his favour, Barnum perpetuates his own image and legacy as an unsurpassed "chancer", and a master of showmen.

Apart from the potential increase of earnings in the joining of the two large shows, this collaboration had further meaning for Barnum. In the unifying contract Barnum bound himself and his estate, and the London proprietors bound themselves to Barnum and his estate, for twenty years. Explaining the motivation behind this move Barnum told the *Era*:

Of course I don't expect to live for twenty years, but my estate will. I don't care for fame. I want notoriety—notoriety for having furnished to the world innocent and moral amusement—and I want my name to live after me in connection with that kind of amusement. To carry out this purpose I have put a clause in my will bequeathing my name, as a showman, to my estate, so that the contract with the estate will carry the exclusive right to use the name of Barnum. I have catered for the amusement of the grandparents of this generation, and I mean that my name will travel over the world for centuries, perhaps, as a guarantee for excellence and morality in the show business. I want it always to mean that the people shall get their money's worth in the seeing of astounding things and the enjoyment of refined innocent fun.

("Barnum's New Departure" 4)

Here, Barnum's generative personality is explicit. As McAdams claims, highly generative adults "know that they will die one day, but their stories suggest that the good work they have done or will do will live on through [...] venues wherein they have invested and continue to invest their generative efforts" (McAdams, "The Redemptive Self: Generativity and the Stories Americans Live By" 93). This union guaranteed the continuation of the good name Barnum had

made for himself even after his eventual passing. Through this deal, the showman secured a contractual agreement that meant his self-made legacy would be promoted even after his death.

In the reports (as well as Barnum's own work) on this merging of circuses it is important to spot the showman's influence, since it is his account that makes up the bulk of the story. When Barnum expresses his interest in the competing circus he does so through a complimentary nod to his own career in instructive amusement. Then when he forms a union with the other proprietors he claims it was under the condition that his name succeeds him. The whole of the union, according to Barnum, circles around his experience and good name. He leads the reporters to further emphasize the weight he carried in the deal by suggesting that the agreement was made in part out of good business practice and in part as Barnum's own generosity in offering to foster the careers of budding proprietors by lending his fame to their circus. Barnum is unapologetic for his legacy being the driving force behind his actions, signifying his generative motivations.

Eventually, Barnum and Bailey rejoined as sole partners and renamed the circus Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth in 1888. John Culhane places the emphasis of this jointure on Bailey's talent as a manager. Before the decision was made, Culhane believes, "Barnum missed Bailey. He didn't make as much money when Bailey was gone, and that was no wonder. No one could run a circus like Bailey" (Culhane 138). Yet, Barnum's name continued as a key part of the attraction.

When the two men joined forces, the representation of the duo suggested an uneven division of work. Barnum was an elderly man at this point, so it was believed that Bailey took control of the affairs of the circus, while Barnum's influence was seen as driving the reputation of the show. The collection of freaks continued to grow and improve under Barnum's name which maintained its attraction for the pleasure seekers. Abroad, Barnum had already created a name for himself as an exhibitor of great sensations, which would benefit the duo too. Bailey, on the other hand, was believed to be a shrewd businessman, but one that preferred to stay behind the scenes. Werner states that "Bailey hated every form of humbug and used his energy as much as possible to make it unnecessary by obtaining curiosities which people would recognize readily as unique" (Werner 328). Thus, Bailey was represented as continuing the precedent that Barnum had set in presenting fascinating sensations, only he (supposedly) did so without compromising the integrity of the show or the audience. In this sense, Barnum's reputation and legacy still dominated the show.

Knowing the potential for his highly praised spectacle and persona overseas, Barnum stated that the "immense patronage which my own country bestows on my efforts is all that keeps me from taking my big show to Europe, where my name is as well-known as in America"



(Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs* 327). Having secured a legacy in America and with previous success abroad Barnum's generative tendencies were projected onto solidifying his international legacy. Eventually it was decided the circus would attempt "the greatest and most daring undertaking that was ever before ventured upon by individuals in the line of public exhibition" the 'Greatest Show on Earth' would go to London in 1889 for the winter season (Werner 358). Just as the purchase of Jumbo had been Bailey's idea, but was publicised as Barnum's handiwork, so too was this new challenge.

The stories from Barnum's life, told by himself or his biographers, present a stylised history of a highly generative adult. The showman continually advanced his career and subsequent legacy through the creation and manipulation of his own image. Due to Barnum's involvement and extensive use of the press, it should also be accepted that the praise he received in print for his ventures was probably highly influenced by the showman himself. Indeed, as Kember has observed, "[s]ometimes all that remains of the highly institutionalised practices of showmanship is the myth itself: the naturalised model of performance and personality the showmen wanted their audiences to see" (Kember 89). Regardless of the author, printed accounts of Barnum present the legacy of the Barnum myth and, consequently, the Barnum that English audiences were familiar with at the time of the circus's visit.

### **Barnum and Bailey's 'Greatest Show on Earth' Comes to the Olympia**

Discussion of Barnum's highly anticipated return to England began months before the arrangements had been finalised. As early as January of 1889 talk of Barnum's visit appeared in newspapers. For instance, an early piece of gossip came in the *Birmingham Daily Post's* report that "George O. Starr, Barnum and Bailey's representative, has been travelling about Europe hunting up novelties for 'the greatest show on earth.' The result has been satisfactory" ("Barnum's Show" 8). After confirming the curiosities were being sent off by steamer, this brief paragraph assures readers they will have the opportunity to view the unnamed sights, saying Mr Starr "will return at once to superintend the negotiations now in progress regarding the visit of Barnum's show to England" ("Barnum's Show" 8). At this stage, reportage only hinted at the novelty of the sights in Barnum and Bailey's circus, but whetting of the British appetite for spectacle was achieved.

The mystery around the new exhibits being gathered for Barnum's collection of curiosities increased with further small mentions of the agent. In February, the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* reported that the agent, this time with the added title of "Colonel", went missing when he set out to secure "zoological and other novelties for 'Barnum's Big Show'" in Algiers ("An American Traveller" 3). The blurb verified the great lengths taken by the showman

to obtain exotic specimen as Starr's "route lay through the desert, which swarms with dangerous fanatical tribes, and against the advice of his friends he set out alone" ("An American Traveller" 3). Yet, Barnum and Bailey were represented as honest and concerned employers who had "instructed a representative in Algiers to spare no expense in ascertaining the fate of the missing traveller" ("An American Traveller" 3). By appearing in small mentions in various papers, Barnum's name was kept in the public eye. These pieces highlight the lengths taken by Barnum to secure curiosities, promoting his image as a showman of the rarest and most exotic freaks.

The story of Starr's adventures and the possible danger he faced also highlights Barnum's use of the press to excite popular interest in his entertainments, prior to the announcements of exhibition dates. An early example is the popular story of Barnum's Feejee Mermaid at the American Museum in 1842. The cunning showman created media hype around his exhibit through the careful insertion of regular notices in various newspapers prior to its exhibition. It was only when he felt he had created a sufficient buzz around the mermaid that the showman changed tactics in the campaign and substantiated the exhibit's appeal by announcing its future appearance in New York.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, one might speculate whether Starr found himself in some trouble, or if this scare was just an early advertisement for the thrill-seeking punters the circus hoped to attract. In fact, soon after the anxiety was expressed for Colonel Starr, the *Daily News* reported that the agent was found and had "successfully accomplished his mission" of arranging some new additions to Barnum's collection and he was soon due to be in England again ("Colonel Starr" 6).

These early 1889 print references to Barnum and his entertainments were indicative of the press attention to come later that year. Notes on Starr's journeys appeared in regional and national papers, showing the breadth of audience being targeted. According to Wallace, Barnum "contended that the only liquid a man could safely use in excess was printer's ink" and Barnum's endorsement of this notion is evident in the print representations prior to and during this visit of the circus (Wallace 61). In a freely distributed promotional programme the audience was encouraged to engage with the wide range of print representations of the circus:

Be sure and read *all* the couriers, newspapers, folders, programmes and other advertisements of this colossal aggregation of living wonders, marvelous [sic] feats, stupendous and imperial ancient races, pastimes, spectacles [...] even then you will gather but a mere suggestion of the boundless feast of pleasures which it is beyond the power of language to adequately describe. (P. T. Barnum's 6)

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<sup>41</sup> See chapter 3 in Wallace; and, Barnum's *Struggles and Triumphs*, p.60-61.

Print accounts of the circus and audience engagement with them were encouraged, despite the claim of their inability to adequately describe the show. Print representations, whilst significant, were just one part of what promised to be an extensive, multimedia circus experience. This explicit acknowledgement of the breadth of print coverage, alongside Barnum's previous exploitation of the press in his promotion of shows, verifies the unreliable objectivity of print representations. Yet, as with Barnum's history more generally, it is the indistinguishable mix of myth and reality that made Barnum's legacy. Rather than question the accuracy in representations of the circus, the print accounts here are considered for their support of Barnum's legacy and consequently the promotion of freaks as a family entertainment. By reminding audiences of his record as a showman of rare freaks ten months before the circus opened, Barnum generatively demonstrates the significance and extent of his legacy.

In the summer of 1889, Starr returned to England to make the necessary arrangements for his employers and their show. At the same time, he initiated excitement and talk about the circus' visit to the Olympia in London. Affirming the proprietors' belief in their show and certainty of its success in London, Starr told the *Pall Mall Gazette*,

The English people know very well when they have got a good thing, and never allow it to fail for want of patronage. I am sure of that as the result of a good deal of close observation. Well, in Barnum and Bailey's show, they will find they have so many good things that they will take care to make our venture a success for us, never fear. At all events, I will promise you this, that Barnum and Bailey will endeavour to give the English people more for their money than they have ever had given them before. ("Barnum Coming to Olympia" 3)

Not only were the English to get an astounding number of acts, horses, wild animals and human curiosities, "the biggest thing in the whole crowd" was that "Phineas T. Barnum, the great old veteran, [was] coming over himself, and [would] himself conduct the ring performances" ("Barnum Coming to Olympia" 3). Barnum had long established an international reputation and his visit, alongside the great circus, was portrayed to be a welcome one. Much like his employer, Starr generated anticipation by promoting the acts he was responsible for, and Barnum was to be the most significant feature.

While some articles acknowledged that Barnum had, at times, played clever tricks to acquire audiences, the good acts he had performed throughout his career had earned him a significant reputation which shone a favourable light on the showman. Praise for his past deeds and accomplishments poured forth in the many announcements of his visit, especially from the journal dedicated to his trade – the *Era*. For instance, one piece stated, Barnum "has been an editor, a legislator, a business man, and a banker; he has been mayor of the thriving

city whose prosperity he has done so much to promote; he has won fame and plaudits as a lecturer, and has done good service as an advocate of temperance and reform" ("Theatrical Gossip" 8). In another article, the paper contrasts Barnum to the less influential English showmen, noting "we do not hear of their endowing their native towns with public buildings, or taking their places as 'men of the time'" ("Advent" *Era* 13). Further, this article claims Barnum had "been opening streets, planting trees, filling swamps, making docks, and erecting houses and factories in his native town of Bridgeport" for nearly forty years ("Advent" *Era* 13). He was president of his town hospital, had held the position of mayor and had continually made contributions toward the welfare of his hometown. He was considered "a singular paradox. Lavish in speculation and investment, but comparatively economical in personal expenditure; a member of a profession noted for its conviviality, who does not drink or smoke; [. . .] a philosopher and a moralist, who has lived up to the principles he has professed" ("Advent" *Era* 13). The show journal's veneration of Barnum demonstrates the iconic status he had deliberately acquired in the United Kingdom through his generative efforts as a showman.

However, the benevolent side of Barnum's career also seeped into other periodical representations of the showman and his impending visit. The *Leeds Mercury* noted that even if Barnum had at one time "made money by humbug, there has been no humbug about the generous munificence with which he has spent it for public and philanthropic purposes in his native town" ("Advent" *Leeds* 2). In fact, the *Illustrated Police News* represented bringing the circus over to England as a gesture of Barnum's respect for America's "mother country" ("A Marvellous Enterprise" 3). In response to questions about the expense of the show, reportedly in excess of "three quarters of a million dollars", Barnum replied "'Possibly it may not be pecuniarily [sic] profitable but I love old England and I am determined to show her what her daughter is able to produce in the way of an astonishing, amusing, moral, and instructive entertainment'" ("A Marvellous Enterprise" 3). The narrative of the expense of the show was repeated throughout the promotional articles. These reflect Barnum's acknowledgement in the promotional booklet; "while I expect it to prove financially successful, the loss of a hundred thousand pounds, or more, as an offset to the pleasure of making this grand experiment, would neither disturb my bank account, nor my equanimity" (*P. T. Barnum's* 2). Through print representations, Barnum was represented as an exemplary entertainer as well as a philanthropic showman. The overwhelming response in popular print to his impending arrival implicates Barnum as a celebrity the British were eager to embrace, making this visit of the circus, the climax to his generative efforts overseas.

Indeed, this exhibition would be "Barnum's last great adventure as a showman" and the publicity portrayed his determination to deliver a spectacle like no other (Wallace 222). Just as Barnum had contractually tied his name to the circus in order to posthumously

promote his legacy, his presence at the shows was presented as a memorable attraction within the circus. Even in the promotional programme a full page was dedicated to select details of Barnum's career and further promotion for the showman appeared in the advertisement of his autobiography on the last page (*P. T. Barnum's* 13, 15). Stressing the significance of his legacy the programme observes the length of Barnum's experience as a showman, spanning "For even a longer period than that covered by the beneficent reign of your illustrious sovereign", due to his having provided "cheap, moral amusement, and rare and charming instruction" for his patrons and "their children and their children's children" (*P. T. Barnum's* 6). Already the showman's legacy had reached out to generations of entertainment-seekers in America and this trip to London was promoted as the chance for British audiences to have a similar shared experience amongst multiple generations. The show was sold as "something to be pleasantly remembered and talked about all your lives", and Barnum's name and image were prominent in print representations of the circus to encourage his presence in future memories of the show (*P. T. Barnum's* 13).

Central to the expectation built around the show, apart from Barnum himself, was its sheer size and the novelty a show of such proportion would be to the circus-goers. Multiple reports focused on the scale of transport required to bring the circus over. Three large steamers were employed through the Anchor Line Steamship Company for the purpose of conveying the "show direct to London" ("*Barnum's Big Show*" 7). "Some of his wagons and properties are of such colossal size that they cannot be got under railway bridges" so the show travelled via the Thames in order to reach its final destination ("*Advent*" *Leeds* 2). Several papers included descriptions of the steamers' cargo, but the *Illustrated Police News* provided readers with a carefully detailed list:

included in this show will be eight hundred persons of both sexes, including the champions of every kind of performance, the leaders in every line of entertainment, three hundred and eighty horses, forty ponies, eighteen elephants, twenty-six camels, thirty-two led beasts, such as elk, buffalo, the hairy dwarf trick elephant, llamas, giant oxen and horses, zebus, trained zebras, dromedaries, &c., forty cages of rare wild animals, the stuffed skin of the world-renowned Jumbo and his skeleton, the rarest of living curiosities, ten bands of music and colossal orchestrian combinations of mechanical musical instruments, twenty-two golden chariots for the grand illuminated night street pageants, five hundred tons of baggage, including wardrobe and other paraphernalia – sixty tons of printed matter, illuminated and illustrated descriptive bills, posters, catalogues, &c. Added to all this is the immense

amount of meat, hay, and grain and live food for all these animals, and provisions for the eight hundred passengers. ("A Marvellous Enterprise" 3) Through these reports, printed months in advance of the show's departure from America, Barnum and Bailey's circus was continually sensationalised to attract potential audiences. As verified by Barnum in a short article in the *New York Times*, this extensive advertising was all part of the show: "Forty advance agents will be sent over six weeks ahead of the expedition with sixty tons of printing, and the whole of Great Britain will be billed for the first announcement, a thing never done before except for the Queen's Exhibition" ("Barnum's London Season" 1). With such a large freight being sent to England, the show promised (as Starr had stated) to be a greater spectacle than the English public had previously experienced at a circus.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, the scale of the show was also represented as a limiting factor. Rather than move around as it would when at home, Barnum and Bailey's show would remain at the Olympia for the duration of its run. The size of the troupe was claimed to outweigh the capacity of the English rail system and it was unlikely the size of carriages it required would fit through any railway tunnels. Instead of transporting the circus, the railways would mobilize the viewing public from outside of London, enabling spectators beyond the capital to take part in the great event. As the *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, among other newspapers, told their readers "All who desire to see one of the real wonders in the show line, and can afford a trip to London, will have to make a pilgrimage to Olympia to gratify their curiosity" ("London Letter" 4). In the promotional booklet, the message of the circus's single home for the duration of the visit was regularly reinforced, but with the reassurance that "the railway officials have everywhere generously and promptly co-operated with our agents in securing unprecedentedly low, round-trip, excursion rates from all parts of the United Kingdom" (*P. T. Barnum's* 7). Therefore, the circus was extensively advertised "in every principal place in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales" to encourage punters to make this journey to the capital (*P. T. Barnum's* 6). Indeed, the *Era* later confirmed that even through the "closing weeks of the show [...] cheap excursions run to Olympia from all parts of Great Britain" ("Barnum's Show at Olympia" 10). So, while the circus was unable to tour as it did at home it was still able to make use of the British transport system to access distant audiences.

Even within London, the railway companies were preparing for the circus crowds. Although the Olympia had been closed during the summer, the District Railway Company

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<sup>42</sup> Speaight notes that some of the freight turned out to be surplus because "the authorities in London would not allow the huge parade to drive through the streets, so the great wagons and some 200 horses to pull them had been brought over for nothing" (Speaight 106–107).

“understood that Mr. Barnum, of New York, [would] open it early in October,<sup>43</sup> and run his world-renowned show until March next” and this would “necessarily bring a large accession of traffic to the railway during the autumn and Christmas season” (“The District Railway” 9). News of the accommodations being made for the upcoming show even reached the Australian press with the *Queensland Figaro and Punch* speculating on “great jubilation amongst the shareholders and directors of the Metropolitan Railway as to the prospects of increased traffic and larger dividends at the next annual meeting” from the popularity of Barnum’s circus (“Barnum the Great” 557). Expectations were high regarding audience numbers, so arrangements were set in place to accommodate Britain’s amusement seekers through British transport.

In addition to the periodical reports on the upcoming circus, Barnum and Bailey also “issued several hundred thousand copies of [their] illustrated paper, of the same size as *Harper’s Weekly*, for free distribution throughout Great Britain” (Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs* 360).<sup>44</sup> The paper advertised the main attractions of the show and offered extra proof of the decent nature of the entertainment it contained. Within its pages was the following piece, entitled “P.T. Barnum’s Philosophy” which was “intended for the special consideration of ‘parents and guardians’”:

If you would be as happy as a child, please one.  
Childish wonder is the first step in human wisdom.  
To best please a child is the highest triumph of philosophy.  
A happy child is the most likely to make an honest man.  
To stimulate wholesome curiosity in the mind of the child is to plant golden seed.  
I would rather be called the children’s friend than the world’s king.  
Amusement to children is like rain to flowers.  
He that makes useful knowledge most attractive to the young is the king of sages.  
Childish laughter is the echo of heavenly music.  
The noblest art is that of making others happy.  
Wholesome recreation conquers evil thoughts.  
Innocent amusement transforms tears into rainbows.  
The author of harmless mirth is a public benefactor.

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<sup>43</sup> The show actually opened in November.

<sup>44</sup> The promotional booklet repeatedly referred to earlier in this chapter appears to be separate from the one Barnum mentions, since it does not contain the excerpt he provides. Due to Barnum’s tradition of excessive advertising it is very likely that there were multiple pre-show promotional booklets in circulation.

I say—as the poet said of his ballads—if I might provide the amusements of a nation I would not care who made its laws. (Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs* 360)

Certainly Barnum felt his entertainment was suitable for people of all ages and classes. He was repeatedly represented as having spent his career building a reputation based on his morals and the above statements were those he had made in support of this work. By sharing his philosophy with potential audiences, Barnum hoped to continue generating public respect and acceptance of his efforts. For this same reason it was also advertised that “[u]nattended ladies and children can attend it with perfect propriety and safety. In America it has become the established custom for them to do so, and they can assuredly do so here” (*P. T. Barnum’s* 2). Barnum furthered his persona and his legacy as a moral provider of instructive, safe amusement through the free magazines he provided. By promoting this image, Barnum was consequently also promoting freak exhibition as a form of tasteful, rational recreation.

One newspaper which actively promoted Barnum’s image and show before the opening of the circus was the *Times*. The paper not only reinforced the representation of Barnum’s moral character, but also reported on other notable figures celebrating the showman at a banquet thrown in his honour. Feeling indebted to the popular showman for transporting his expansive show overseas to provide the English public with an addition to “its stock of harmless gaiety in the dull days before Christmas”, fashionable Londoners arranged a banquet to honour Barnum (“None Will Grudge” 9). “The large and influential committee by whom the complimentary reception was organized” was comprised of Sirs, Lords, Earls, M.P.s, as well as other eminent men from London society (“Banquet to Mr. Barnum” 6). The night was filled with compliments and toasts directed at the showman, praising his accomplishments. Mr. George Augustus Sala remarked on Barnum’s ability to “minister to that craving and inborn desire which all had” to see his previous shows in Britain, because “instead of making people miserable [he] amused and instructed them” (“Banquet to Mr. Barnum” 6). Barnum’s entertainment was commended for being “thoroughly wholesome, useful and pleasing” (“Banquet to Mr. Barnum” 6). All were familiar with the showman’s extensive collection of human curiosities, but the distinguished crowd accepted that in Barnum’s hands they were tasteful, instructive exhibitions void of the vulgarity sometimes associated with such amusements. Indeed, the “attraction his wonders exert wherever they are displayed is evidence that science, art, and letters have not changed civilized humanity radically from what it was when Bartholomew Fair was in its glory” and Barnum was praised for continuing and enhancing the popular English pastime of freak exhibition (“None Will Grudge” 9). Through clever advertising and promotional techniques, Barnum had established his show as an impressive and respectable form of entertainment, suitable for members from any level of



society, and the elite thanked and celebrated the showman for sharing this with their proud country. However, as with all promotion of Barnum's image and legacy, the showman's involvement in the organisation and print representation of the event is unknown.<sup>45</sup>

When the time finally arrived, opening night proved the show was to be a great success because "Fifteen thousand persons crammed into the Olympia to applaud the spectacle", and talk of the circus and the collection of freaks regularly earned attention in the print media (Wallace 223). In fact, it would have been a difficult task for one to be seated without first viewing at least some of the freaks as the audience was directed through an annexe with the stuffed remains and bones of Jumbo the elephant and, further on, filled with Barnum's collection of human curiosities and the menagerie. Once the audience were seated they were bombarded with three rings of simultaneous displays of acrobats, trapeze artists, clowns, horse riding and a variety of other acts by humans and animals. This busy display was followed by the concluding performance of the grand tableaux spectacle drama, "Nero; or the Destruction of Rome". Many reviews followed the language in the advertising noting that the abundance of sights for a single price was more than had ever been offered in London, propounding the show's popularity. For instance, a review in the *Times* stated, "High as may have been the hopes raised as to the merits of the 'greatest show on earth,' the public are not likely to experience any sense of disappointment when they come to inspect it, especially as the whole galaxy of natural and artificial wonders is on view for the modest charge of 1s. or 2s., according to the day of the week" ("Opening" 7). On top of all the impressive bodies within the show was added the American showman himself. In a carriage Barnum would circle the hippodrome track, stop intermittently "rise, remove his shining top hat, and call out to the audiences in his sharply Yankee-accented English: 'I suppose you all come to see Barnum. Wa-al, I'm Barnum'" (Culhane 140). If the sights of the skilled, strong bodies flying through the air and mastering horses and other beasts as well as the freakish bodies on display prior to the show weren't enough for audiences, here they had the most curious sight placed before them, Barnum. The overwhelming mix of entertainment offered at the Olympia continued to receive regular press attention just as it had prior to the opening. Through the various print representations of the showman and his circus, Barnum's legacy was reinforced.

For one reporter, however, the tightly-packed programme was rather excessive instead of impressive: "It does not do to give three or four entertainments in one arena at one and the same time" reads the article in the *Illustrated London News*, and this was for two reasons (C.S. 615). "In the first place, it is difficult to obtain three or four entertainments of equally attractive value" and the second reason being that "the desire to look far ahead and

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<sup>45</sup> Speaight recognizes this dinner as "a stunt to be repeated by Bertram Mills in later years" (107).

notice what is amusing others, while in front of you there is nothing to look at, eventually causes distraction, bewilderment, or a splitting headache" (C.S. 615). The reporter described the show as being made of three parts: the freaks, the "overvaunted [sic] 'displays,' which are abundant enough but not good of their class" and the "spectacular play of 'Nero'" (C.S. 615). While the freaks and the performance of "Nero; or the Destruction of Rome" won the commentator's praise, the feats performed within the rings and on the horses failed to impress their audience to the same degree. Interestingly, the abnormal bodies of the freaks received the most attention and commendation while the able-bodied performers were criticised for their mediocre talent. Even the animals in the circus were rated higher than the performing humans by this author, who felt that the "horses are splendid creatures" but the clowns made "a very poor display" and the "second-class riding, leaping and *haute d'école*, and the acrobatic feats that are done twice as well at an ordinary music hall" could "well be rigorously curtailed" (C.S. 615). This was a trend that appeared in a number of reports on the circus. What becomes interesting in the reviews regularly appearing throughout the show's visit is the habitual attention paid to the freaks; here (for many viewers) was the peripheral entertainment displacing the attention meant for the main attractions in the circus rings.

Since Barnum's legacy played such an important role in the promotion of the circus, the attention given to the freaks seems to follow in natural order due to his history as a freak showman. At the same time, the circus was promoted as unique for being the largest entertainment of its type and was supported by Barnum's larger-than-life image, so it was the combination of all the attractions that would contribute to his future legacy. Therefore, each of the three components (the freaks, the ring performance and the "Nero" drama) held a Barnumesque attraction, but it was the freaks that had the greatest attachment to Barnum's name and were at the heart of the praise for the circus. Even in the favourable *Times* review on the opening, which praised the show in its entirety, the freaks and pre-show spectacles occupied the majority of the journalist's attention.

As the spectators made their way to their seats they were given the opportunity to view Barnum's infamous collection of "the 'freaks,' or, as we should call them, the monstrosities" (C.S. 615). Other than the freaks, the "various annexes to the main building" held "a large menagerie, and a host of museum curiosities" and, "other sights such as only America can produce" ("Opening" 7). Although British viewers had been made aware of Barnum's efforts to secure international curiosities, the spectacular presentation of his collection was put down to Barnum's ways as an American showman. Before reaching the freaks, the "stuffed figure and skeleton of Jumbo" the much loved elephant Barnum had bought from the London zoo, were "the first objects [to] catch the eye of the visitor" ("Opening" 7). As this journalist for the *Times* insists "Jumbo dead has become an even more

profitable speculation than Jumbo alive” but, “it needed a Barnum to perceive that, to borrow the language of the profession, there was money also in his hide” (“Opening” 7). After Jumbo came the freaks, who were followed by the “science gallery” which contained a mermaid, “living trunkless heads and breathing truncated busts”, and finally there was the menagerie (“Opening” 7).

But, according to the *Illustrated London News*, of the various curiosities preceding the show, the “‘freaks,’ or ‘monstrosities’ will probably attract the most attention” since, “There never has been a time when the English people have ignored ‘freaks’” (C.S. 615). Another journalist even praised the showman’s honest advertising in the build up to the show: “Again Mr. Barnum’s posters tell the truth. There are the freaks in the flesh as represented on the somewhat gaudy posters that have been staring at us for the last month” (“Man” 16 Nov. 1564). Recognising the English interest in abnormal bodies and his image as a master freak showman, Barnum had taken care to thoroughly promote his renowned collection of freaks. Since it was his freaks “which secured Mr. Barnum his reputation in the first instance” their part in the “greatest show on earth” was highly anticipated and expected to be as extraordinary as the array of other acts involved in the show (“Opening” 7). Among his collection was the Kentucky giant who stood next to a dwarf, a provocatively dressed tattooed woman on whom one reporter commented, “in a low white satin gown with a tattooed bosom and legs gave me rather a turn at first; but I bravely held on” (“Man” 16 Nov. 1564). Then there was the Skeleton dude contrasted with the Fat Lady, “the two-headed child, and the man with no legs, whose feet appear to be attached to his hip-bones”, the Aztec man and wife, and a “bearded lady, who but for Barnum’s well-known professional rectitude might be taken for a young man of a somewhat effeminate cast” (“Opening” 7). The extraordinary beings were his speciality and the attachment of Barnum’s name to the freaks was enough to secure their genuine status as far as the English were concerned. But these walk-through exhibits “though numerous and interesting, [were], properly speaking, but the *hors d’œuvre* of the entertainments which Barnum spreads before his patrons” (“Opening” 7).

Since Barnum was already recognised by British audiences as a predominant figure in freak exhibition, his abilities as a circus showman were expected to be at a similar level. The freaks and menagerie delighted and shocked the audience for the novelty of their appearance and this expectation was extended to the performances in the ring. Overwhelmed by the multitude of sights *The Times* explained the experience thus: “At a given moment, he [the spectator] may note here the exercises of the *haute école*, there a group of performing elephants, bears, or seals, elsewhere clowns, acrobats, trapezists, contortionists, bicyclists, skaters, all in a bewildering medley” (“Opening” 7). No one review was able “to note all the striking features of a programme which is almost as complicated as a railway time-table”

("Opening" 7). While some of the riding regularly disappointed the audience, who had "seen much better in London many a time," other performances in this section, such as "the clever little Spanish boy on the slack wire" were "well worth a visit" according to the *County Gentleman's* "Man About Town" ("Man" 16 Nov. 1564). Acts involving animals seem to have left the strongest impression on the spectators. For example the "horse and dog races around the entire arena" were a hit with audiences, particularly when the Shetland ponies had "for their riders tiny monkeys in jockey colours, who hold on grimly to their saddles while the animals fly at their highest speed" ("Opening" 7). Another act was a "gentleman in sky-blue trousers" who rode "with consummate skill one thorough bred horse, and [drove] four others at racing speed, jumping high hurdles as they fly. This quite brought the house down – it was delightful" ("Man" 16 Nov. 1564). Even though these reviews in the *Times* and the *County Gentleman* praise the main performance and the abundance of entertainments on offer, they each also spend time commenting on the freaks. The *Times*, in particular, dedicates a significant portion of text to the freaks that amounts to more than that on the stunts in the ring.

Interestingly, the pro-Barnum show journal the *Era* differed in the weighting of its reviews. While the freaks and "supernatural illusions and curious realities" are briefly discussed, the majority of the article on the opening of the show reviews the ring performances and the "Nero" drama ("Barnum's Show at Olympia" 14). Then, again, when the show is revisited the following week the circus feats fill the main part of the article with individual acts being described. Here, the freaks have a short mention, by way of a list of exhibits, in the final paragraph without critique or praise ("Barnum Revisited" 11). Further, the journal commended the "Nero" drama shortly after the opening of the circus and claimed it was "becoming the talk of the town, and will contribute more to the success of 'the greatest show on earth' then [sic] either its 'freaks,' or its performances" ("Theatrical Gossip" 10). However, the influence of Barnum's generativity does come across in the short mention of the freaks, as the journalist notes there being plenty "to furnish food for reflection and matter for conversational reminiscences as long as life and memory shall last" ("Barnum's Show at Olympia" 14). While the acts performed in the arena outweighed the written attention given to the freaks in this report, the journalist acknowledges that the freaks would continue to circulate in discussions of the circus, therefore keeping Barnum's legacy alive.

The contrast between the *Era's* approach to the subject of the circus and reviews in other periodicals may have been due to the journal's open support for Barnum. Whereas other pieces praised Barnum on his known strengths as a freak showman, but were less enthusiastic about his circus performers, the show journal emphasised his efforts to bring together the large entertainment, and offered positive feedback to the performers themselves. By offering

praise for what might be considered Barnum's weakness, that is entertaining crowds who were very familiar with circus acts, the journal encouraged support from the show community for his inventive approaches to traditional entertainments.

However, all of the reviews were in agreement on the impressive spectacle of the tableaux. In the *Times*, the great spectacle of "Nero; or, the Destruction of Rome" was claimed to be a "fitting climax to the programme" and the "crowning feature of Mr. Barnum's enterprise" ("Opening" 7). The *Illustrated London News* reviewer found the piece to be "a very fine thing, both in design and in execution", and the *County Gentleman's* Man About Town believed the "magnificent spectacle" which had been "gorgeously put on" would "draw all London" to the circus (C.S. 615; "Man" 16 Nov. 1564). Barnum was regularly commended for the "Nero" sensation in periodical reviews, with few forwarding their congratulations to the actual creator of the drama, Imre Kiralfy.

Michael Means states that the piece had originally been "performed on Long Island in a specially constructed open air theatre", but Imre Kiralfy received a generous sum from Barnum to adjust and "produce *Nero* as part of the Barnum & Bailey Circus in London" (Means 4). In appointing an experienced creator to take the lead in the spectacle production, rather than attempt it himself, Barnum added to the strength of his circus. Indeed, the *Era* claimed "Kiralfy has fairly compelled all our spectacle providers to take a back seat, for it may safely be said, and without fear of contradiction, that in extent, in taste, in grandeur, and in beauty nothing like *Nero* has ever before been seen in this country" ("Theatrical Gossip" 10). The spectacular tableau drama was regularly referred to being of an extraordinary magnitude in comparison to those previously shown in Britain and it is very likely this was the case due to the enormity of the circus itself. As Means points out, the pinnacle moment in the spectacle was the grand procession which involved the entire company "right down to potato peelers and stable mockers out" as well as "[a]ll the horses, elephants, camels, and caged cats" (Means 6).

Whereas Barnum's expertise in freak exhibition had strengthened the preshow entertainment, Kiralfy's spectacle production became the strength of the performances, even though this praise was generally awarded to Barnum too. From the first night "Nero" awed the circus audiences and was regularly applauded in print representations of the show. It seems that Barnum listened to the positive reviews of the spectacle, because the show was later adjusted by changing the ringed programme and extending the final piece "so as to constitute a good half of the entertainment" ("Barnum's Exhibition at Olympia" 4). This alone exemplifies the success of the tableau since previous spectacles of this nature only "tended to be ten or twenty minutes long" (Means 4).

This massive combination of spectacles for a single price contributed to the circus's success. For, "unlike the ordinary showman, who would be disposed to make a separate charge for each particular sight, he throws all his marvels into one bewildering heap, thereby not only dazzling and delighting the visitor, but laying him, in spite of himself, under the necessity of coming again and again" ("Opening" 7). The Barnum and Bailey Circus comprised a multitude of human and animal bodies into one spectacular show for a single price. While the freaks were found to be "attractive from morning until night, because there is something in the human race that is strangely attracted by monstrosities" the other performers were carefully scrutinized and criticised for less than impressive performances (C.S. 615). Nevertheless, Barnum succeeded in capturing the imagination and fascination of English audiences. Being advertised and reviewed as containing more wondrous sights than had ever been offered to the English pleasure-seeking public for one price, the large circus was able to secure sizable audiences throughout its winter engagement. Indeed, the *Era* noted that the circus had been so successful in obtaining audiences that "Managers of theatres will not be sorry when Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> comes, and the formidable rivals who have so seriously depleted pit and gallery audiences take their departure for their native land" ("Barnum's Show at Olympia" 10). The repeated comments on Barnum's skills as a showman and generosity in offering the full programme of entertainment for a single price for the duration of the circus's visit emphasise the importance of this event to the concretization of Barnum's legacy.

There was, however, one problem that received several comments from visitors and that was the issue of space and the resultant seating. Cramming more acts and patrons into the Olympia than the venue had ever previously held, had its downside. The complaints against this inconvenience ranged from the handling of sales to the experience of the seating itself. One review even complained against the effect the overflowing entertainment had on some of the exhibits. Due to their position outside the main arena, the freaks were in a noticeably unpleasant situation. This visitor appealed to Barnum, asking "can nothing be done to make those poor unfortunate 'Freaks' more comfortable? They were shivering with cold the night I was there, and it was quite pitiable to see them. I am sure, Mr. P. T. B., you will see to this, won't you. I have heard you are one of the kindest men going. Don't forget your poor 'Freaks'" ("Man" 7 Dec 1868). Here, again, the freaks, who were so important to the creation of Barnum's reputation and legacy, become a concern to the audience, and their peripheral setting, instead of a central place in show, was seen as an unsettling problem.

Yet, the majority of grumblers were concerned with their own comfort. The Editor of the *Times* received several letters criticizing the arrangements for tickets sales. One gentleman wrote "as a warning to many parents who, during the coming holidays, are preparing to take their youngsters to Barnum's show", explaining the difficulty he had in purchasing tickets by

post and the discourteous treatment he received when trying to rectify the mistakes made by the organisers (Q.C. 7). On two occasions his request for two full-price adult and two half-price children's seats were erroneously processed as four full-price adult tickets in cheaper seats, and choosing to attend the show in spite of the mistake he "found that there were only three seats available, and on referring to the tickets it was discovered that one of them bore no letter or number" (Q.C. 7). In both his attempts to approach the sales staff and describe his grievance in a letter to Barnum the man received no help or refund for the error. A couple of days later, another man wrote of his similar negative "experience of Mr. Barnum's method of selling seats at Olympia" (M. 14). On the other hand, in response to these unfavourable letters came one from a man who found the staff he dealt with "exceedingly civil" and another who was "a stranger to Messrs. Barnum and Bailey," but received such fantastic service, he thought "that their attention and courtesy to me should see the light of print as well as the complaint from 'Q.C.''" (C.H.G. 13; Justice 4). The Barnum and Bailey show was such a large event in London that audiences felt it was their right and duty to accurately represent it for their fellow citizens. Just as passionately as some felt against the management's faults, others felt in favour of the exciting entertainment and used their praise to encourage their fellow citizens to experience the event.

This rather mundane aspect of the circus presents a side of the management hidden in all the self-promotion and praise. Multiple letters exchanged between Barnum and Bailey's solicitor and the London Theatres' Committee and their solicitors demonstrate the management's late compliance with certain rules and regulations (*LCC Olympia 1887-1895*). The committee's architect had inspected Olympia and advised changes to be made with the seating arrangements and an increase in the size of the gangways. Obviously, Barnum and Bailey were aware of their limited stay at the Olympia and expected to fill as many seats as they could throughout the winter season (which could also explain the problems complained of above). Only after some reassurance that the circus would be legally closed for non-compliance with the regulations and for these not being carried out prior to the show's opening were the seating issues finally addressed. While the circus proprietors felt that the concerns had been appropriately addressed, the Council continued to insist that the circus was neglecting its responsibilities. By this point, however, the circus had already run for a month.

Since this side of the management was regularly represented to have been under Bailey's meticulous control it seems odd that this essential work was ignored for so long. At the same time, he may have considered this another way to make use of Barnum's established reputation. Indeed, one of the early letters responding to the Council was written by Barnum, on elaborately illustrated stationery promoting the Olympia performance of the circus, asking for a personal meeting with the committee (see Figure 11). He wrote "We are always very

anxious to do everything in our power for the comfort and safety of our patrons, and to comply with the law” and if the proprietors were able to meet with the committee the managers would “without doubt be able to satisfy their requirements” (Barnum, “Dec 13 Barnum Letter” 1). Later, when the Council felt the appropriate measures still had not been met, Barnum and Bailey’s solicitors wrote that the proprietors were “very anxious” that the members of the committee should “personally visit and inspect the [...] remaining points of issue” and enclosed tickets with the letter (Campbell, Reeves and Hooper 1). Through this correspondence, which demonstrates increasing frustration on the part of the Council, Barnum is shown to use his showmanship to manage the dispute. The Theatres’ Committee could have closed the entertainment as soon as they realised the circus’s failure to comply, yet closing down the nationally popular American showman’s circus may have caused further chaos than the silent exchange of stern letters. In fact, there appears no final resolution or compliance to have been made in the records of this exchange. Instead, the final letter, dated 15<sup>th</sup> February 1890 (the date of the final performance), is a response on behalf of the owners of Olympia stating that no application had been made to extend the show’s run and it would cease on the initial date proposed (Stanley and Woodhouse 1). So, it would seem that the power of Barnum’s image and legacy had superseded the Council’s regulations.

Along with the audience complaints on the seating and the building regulation issues raised by the London County Council, Barnum received further unfavourable attention. During the short period of time that the circus was in London, Barnum had a few different legal claims made against him. Among them were: the illegal employment of infant dancers under an apprenticeship contract elsewhere; employing adult dancers otherwise employed; the employment of active soldiers in Her Majesty’s military; unpaid fees due to the agent of the white elephant; and, a misprinted address in an advertisement for 300 employees which led to the home of a local citizen being inundated by jobseekers (“Katti Lanner’s Pupils” 8; Campbell, Reeves and Hooper, “Francesco V. Barnum” 16; “Soldiers at Olympia” 12; “Action Against Barnum” 11; “Not for Barnum” 12). In each of these cases, all reported in the *Era*, it was either found there were no grounds to charge Barnum and his company or he was found innocent. While Barnum’s legacy was closely entwined with the display of freaks, which worked to his advantage in the circus, it seems his name also held sway in other ways, as each dispute against his practices or his show were dismissed in his favour. Yet, it is also worth noting that these aspects of the circus’s visit received very little press attention and are absent from Barnum’s accounts of the visit.

Whether it was praise or criticism of the show, Barnum usually welcomed all press coverage. Due to his reputation as a showman, his freaks and curiosities almost always received at least a mention in reviews. When the circus finally made its grand exit from



England in February 1890 “Mr. Barnum made a short speech to his guests, declaring his gratitude for the kind treatment which he had received from the English Press. He said that any one who had something really good to introduce to the public could not do better than invite the fullest criticism by the Press, and therefore, if kind things had been said of him, he felt that he deserved them” (“Barnum’s Embarcation” 8). Barnum had introduced his freaks to English audiences earlier in the century and this visit of his circus had introduced yet more spectacular sights to be accredited to his name and legacy.

From long before the announcement of the circus’s London winter season through to its grand departure, the Barnum and Bailey circus did its best to maintain popular interest in the show. Even with Barnum’s previous experience of the English fascination with freaks, they were only included and advertised as a staple part of the circus. Yet, the attention the freaks attracted was significant because it highlights the influence of Barnum’s legacy in representations of the circus. Since Barnum’s image as a master showman of freaks was already popularly recognised, it would seem that this visit of the circus was more focused on capitalising on Barnum’s legacy and securing its continuance. Altogether, the 1889-1890 winter season had been a great success for the circus and allowed the impression of Barnum as the symbol for extraordinary entertainment to continue in the media for some time to come.

### **Impressing Audiences: The Second Visit and Tour of the Great Show**

The legacy of Barnum’s relationship with the English and his unsurpassed collection of living curiosities continued on even after his passing in 1891. Still touring as Barnum and Bailey’s Greatest Show on Earth, the well-known circus returned to England in the latter part of 1897, appearing again at London’s Olympia before making a summer provincial tour around the country. After this, the show would return to the Olympia for another winter season in 1898, before embarking on its final English tour in 1899. The “Greatest Show on Earth” was then to sail to the Continent to make a European tour, as the management felt “other countries and other people would be equally as much pleased and delighted with a sight of its manifold and wonderful attractions” (“Amongst” 25 Dec. 8).

It was during this long stay in England that the mass fascination with freaks was truly reinforced by the press and Barnum’s freaks, quite literally, made a new name for themselves. This tour aimed to gain a greater audience than the circus’s previous visit and the show boasted to have a new programme and new additions to the collection of curiosities for the audiences’ enjoyment. Although Barnum was no longer around, the reputation he had built and the influence of his name contributed to Bailey’s continued successful management and expansion of the circus. The circus was still named after the joint efforts of Barnum and Bailey,

and the freaks, in particular, were still frequently referred to as Barnum's freaks. The ongoing popularity of this visit demonstrates the results of Barnum's generative efforts as his legacy still held sway in promoting the circus, particularly in enticing audiences through the freak performers. The circus, freaks included, can be considered, in part, as the generative product of Barnum's legacy-making efforts. Also, the press attention given to freaks during this visit can be seen as an extension of the types of freak legacies introduced in the first chapter. However, now, more than ever, freak representations sought to humanize the freaks, demonstrating the ability of freaks to take on changing cultural meanings.

Since its last visit to England, the Barnum and Bailey show had made the necessary adjustments to tempt audiences once again. In anticipation of the large event, commentators noticed the efforts of Mr. Bailey in preparing for the rigorous schedule; Barnum's partner was found to be "as active and enterprising as ever, and the latest proof of his remarkable energy is afforded by the bodily transference of 'the world's grandest, largest, best amusement institution' – the description is his own – from America to England" ("Barnum and Bailey Show" 25 Nov. 12). Indeed transporting the show was a grand enterprise in itself since not only the large menagerie and staff needed to make the journey, but all of the equipment and paraphernalia required for the show to tour by train around the country also would need to be taken into account. The railway carriages, however, "to the number of 70—each nearly 60 ft. long" would be made in England ("Amongst" 25 Dec. 1899).<sup>46</sup> As well as employing British workmen to construct the necessary vehicles, the circus further encouraged its role as a profitable business in the British economy by "set[ting] up a special British limited company, Barnum and Bailey Ltd, which declared a ten per cent dividend for the first half year", and remained in place after the circus left (Speaight 107). Indeed, in 1902 the show journal the *Showman* remarked on Bailey's continued allegiance to his British shareholders because he "very generously conceded to the company the rights for an extended tour in America which ought to prove of material advantage to the company [...] and the shareholders may look to the future with much confidence" ("Notes of the Week" 258). As Barnum had made generative efforts to ensure a legacy in Britain, Bailey continued to promote the circus's financial legacy, at least on behalf of its shareholders. Therefore, investing in the circus and promoting the continuation of its legacy came with a monetary incentive.

The show was set to surpass its previous performance and promised the amusement would be "on a far greater scale and to furnish a vastly greater variety of entertainment than was before given" ("Barnum and Bailey's" 30 Nov. 4). Rather than following the same schedule

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<sup>46</sup> However, the *Ludgate* notes there being "sixty-one railroad cars [...] specially constructed in this country" with each being "54 feet long, 8 feet wide, and runs on two four-wheeled bogie trucks with low wheels" (Jones 400). See note 35 for other details on these carriages.

of its previous visit, the circus came to London in November in preparation for its opening on Boxing Day. Considering the responses given during the last visit of the circus, the programme appears to have been changed to accommodate the preferences of English audiences. Since the British “public have had their satiety” of “spectacles lasting two or three hours”, the circus promised that this time around “No single entertainment will last more than half an hour, and the visitor will not have time to be bored” and produced spectacles, such as the “Mahdi”, that featured the success of British heroics abroad (“Barnum and Bailey’s” 30 Nov. 4). Also, a separate ticket booth and entrance were offered for women so that they might avoid the crowds, and a second Side Show tent of freaks was added for visitors who arrived too early to enter or too late to fit in the main tent, or those who felt “they cannot afford to pay for the manifold wonders offered for a shilling, but are willing to spend a humble sixpence at a place where they can get big returns for it in the way of amusement” (Dean 5). Having an extra tent dedicated to just freak performers indicates the manager’s recognition of the entertainment’s popular appeal. While the main advertising campaigns sought to stress the magnitude and magnificence of the show in its entirety, the additional tent of prodigies signifies the high value of the freaks and their ability to draw the crowds into the Greatest Show on Earth. By interacting with the potential audiences in these ways, the circus both brought a profitable business and entertainment to the British economy, offering monetary and generative benefits.

Again, the papers were full of praise for the immense programme of entertainment offered at a single price. “London audiences are so accustomed to pay extra fees for almost everything they see after gaining admission to a large exhibition” that they needed to be reminded of the value they get for their money with the Barnum and Bailey show; the “freaks, the horse fair, and the menagerie are all included” with their seating purchase (“Amongst” 17 Jan. 2). Like before, the audience could enjoy viewing a large collection of impressive and genuine freaks before they even enter the arena. “This is a freak country” wrote one review in the *Sporting Times*, so the curious bodies offered were represented as welcome amusement to the English viewers (Gubbins 2). Among the collection this time were a Giantess, a Bearded Lady, a Moss-haired girl, and the “startling novelty” of the “thousand-dollars-a-week Freak” bearing “an incumbrance [sic]” on his front which, to one viewer, “appeared to be the claw of a sick goose and an inanimate infantine foot covered with a cheap sock” (Gubbins 2). Another audience member noted that “Great Peter the Small, and two little Indian girls – the Orissa twins – who joined together, as were the Siamese twins of years gone by, monopolise a very large share of the visitors favours” (“Barnum’s’ at Olympia” 3).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The Orissa sisters will be discussed in more detail in the fourth chapter.

Furthering the emphasis on the freaks in the circus a reviewer of the Bristol show reminded readers they “must not forget that there is also a “freak” show apart from the main exhibition. It is not advertised as one of the main attractions of Barnum and Bailey’s, because the managers make it a rule not to advertise anything which cannot be seen without an extra charge” (“Barnum and Bailey” 6). “As a discoverer and collector of extraordinary people” this reviewer contends, “Barnum is known all over the globe” (“Barnum and Bailey” 6). This side tent was provided purely for those wishing to pay a little extra to indulge in yet more of Barnum’s curious sights. This piece is representative of many other articles that continued to credit Barnum for the freak collection, further emphasising the success of his generative efforts in life. The extra freak exhibition space also highlights the magnitude of the circus as well as the additional practises that were made possible by being a travelling circus.

The second tour took full advantage of the mobility and dynamism of tenting arrangements. Not only were these tours instrumental in reaching wider audiences, but they provided further opportunity for the circus to impress its American practises on British viewers. With a winter base in Stoke on Trent, the circus’s first tour in 1898 reached towns and cities from Glasgow to Brighton with a heavy concentration of performances in the North-West (“A Few Interesting Facts” n.p.) (See Figure 12). The second tour in 1899 covered some of the areas missed in the previous one, this time reaching the South-West and Wales. Since this tour tented in some small towns “excursion trains, with circus entrance combined with the rail fare, were arranged to draw people in from surrounding areas, and when they played at a small town like Llandudno, for instance, which by itself could not justify the visit of such a large outfit, 15,000 people were brought into the town on sixty-two special excursion trains” (Speaight 108). This time around audiences were not pushed to travel long distances to the capital for the circus, instead the circus was brought to them.

For each of the tours the circus printed numerous programmes and pamphlets which regularly featured the freaks and were sold as extra income and promotion for the show. These additional representations of the circus further demonstrate the techniques used to promote the freaks for varied audiences. For instance, the *Barnum-Bailey Illustrated Handbook of Natural History*, which discussed the freaks and the animals in the menageries as subjects of Natural History, claimed to be “instrumental in diffusing a taste for knowledge” (*Barnum-Bailey* [2]). In the preface of this booklet the exhibits are represented as instructive amusements. Then, in the description of the freak collection, the language reverts back to sensationalising the freaks as the “most picturesque, weird, unearthly and wonderful sight” (*Barnum-Bailey* [3]). On the same page is an illustration of the troupe of freaks that is similar to one appearing in an advertisement for the circus in the *Illustrated London News* (“Barnum and Bailey. Greatest Show on Earth.” 929). In both sketches the freaks are each posed to

demonstrate their othering quality and the grouping of them altogether in the sketch impresses the size of the show on the viewer. In the official programme for the 1898 and 1899 tours the two freak displays are separately mentioned with very brief descriptions of the sights to be consumed in the all-inclusive price and in the extra tents (*Official Programme 1898* [2], 3; *Official Programme 1899* [3], 20). However, neither programme refers to the performers as freaks, calling them prodigies instead. The 1899 tour further capitalised on the interest in freaks by selling an extra *Official Guide. Book of Marvels*, which gave descriptions of the prodigies and other acts. This guide also included a map of the circus layout so customers could navigate their way around the main tent and extra-admission side shows (Dean 4) (see Figure 13). The circus's investment in this variety of printed material promoting the show demonstrates the continuation of Barnumesque technique.

Similarly, the local engagement with the circus's visit was apparent in the print representations which appeared in forms of print other than periodicals. For example, the 1899 visit of the circus to Salisbury was reviewed in a pamphlet using the character of Ben Sloper which was sold for 3d. Sloper was a regional character who wrote pieces in the local dialect, and here he details his "an he's Nancy's visit ta Barnum and Bailey's Girstest Show on Earth, at Zalsbury" (Sloper 1). Of the nineteen pages making up the account, seven are spent describing "Tha Zide Show" and "Tha Minagery an tha Frakes" (Sloper 7–11, 11–13). As the case of Torquay, discussed further down, will show, local representations commonly reflected the emphasis on the freaks promoted by the circus.

The additional print representations and the extra tent of freaks meant audiences were offered numerous and varied opportunities to view freaks. Many of the areas covered by the tours would have citizens who were unable to afford the journey to London, so the tenting season extended the circus's claims of being an inclusive entertainment. This, then, could perhaps also justify the addition of a side tent. As stated earlier, the circus advertised the side tent as an option for those that could not afford the main entertainment price, or those who came at the wrong times to enter the main tent. At the same time, the side tent was also an exclusive addition to the show, in that it was only accessible to those who could afford the extra expense. Either way it was perceived, the extra tent of freaks indicates their primary importance as a sight, endorsed by Barnum's legacy, which British audiences were willing to pay to see. The side tent was situated just opposite the ticket booths for the main event, so this entrance would have to be passed in order to reach the entrance of the menagerie tent, and it was necessary to pass through this in order for patrons to reach their seats in the main tent. Even in the menagerie tent the freaks were (literally) placed centre stage on raised platforms which would make it difficult to not catch at least a glimpse of the human curiosities. Just as Barnum's name held the dominant position in the circus title, so too did the freaks, the

representatives of his show business legacy, hold a dominant position within the circus. In this setting, the freaks were made central; exhibiting as the products of Barnum's generativity.

Along with the freaks, audiences were invited to view the menagerie, "no fewer than 400 animals" in the horse stables and, just after the freaks, "the contingent of Dervishes, Sudanese, and other natives of Africa, who follow the example of the sword swallower, the fire king, the snake charmer, and others in giving a performance on their own account from time to time" ("Barnum and Bailey's" 28 Dec. 4). This group of people had specifically been employed by the circus for the "spectacular military drama, by Mr. Bennett Burleigh, entitled, 'The Mahdi; or, For the Victoria Cross'" which was performed as the final piece in the arena ("Barnum and Bailey's" 28 Dec. 4).

While the freaks were not directly competing with the spectacular feats displayed within the circus rings, they did display themselves in a manner that would highlight their unique traits, mostly through a performance of sorts. Some freaks, such as the man without arms, performed familiar, everyday activities only using "his toes with the deftness of fingers" where audience members would have used their hands ("Barnum and Bailey's" 28 Dec. 4). By comparison to the acts audiences were about to witness from the able-bodied performers in the arena, the legless acrobat would "give performances of his own on a pole fixed in front of his section of the platform" ("Barnum and Bailey's" 28 Dec. 4). In the pre-show entertainment the freaks needed to use whichever tactic would emphasise their peculiarity set against those around them.

In the arena, the displays in the rings once again made a spectacle of the human body in a different way. Here, the extensive programme explored the exciting capabilities of beautiful, able-bodies as they performed gymnastic, acrobatic, trapeze and other feats which could only be successfully executed by a select number of skilled people in the world. Along with this, there were also the thrilling displays of man conquering beast through the multitude of equestrian acts and wild animal performances. Finally, the British body was displayed as triumphant against the various African people in "The Mahdi". Although they were shown to be amazing for their own capabilities, the freaks were positioned to act as a precursor to the show. As in the first tour audiences first consumed one extreme of human existence in the form of the freaks, before they took in the other end of the spectrum during the gallant displays in the arena.

The result of the show's extended stay and broader audience catchment is especially apparent in the periodical press's greater engagement with the freaks. Rather than simply offering brief reviews of the freaks within the show, some articles began to focus their attention solely on the freaks. Although the extended reach of the circus could account for some of the interest, this extra attention was more likely the consequence of the freaks'

protest against their name in the winter of 1898-1899. Claiming that the title of freak was unsuitable for the variety of features exhibited by the pre-show performers, the freaks demanded that a more respectable title be allocated. While it is very probable that the curiosities had genuinely tired of the title, the change in name was represented in the press as a Barnumesque publicity stunt rather than a genuine appeal from the performers. One article even contemplates this possibility by questioning “And whence does all this come? Is it from the ignorance of the real meaning of the word ‘freak’ (lusus naturæ) on the part of these poor things, or is it an artfully and carefully prepared advertisement? For my own part, I incline to the latter idea” (“Man” 14 Jan. 41). The new term requested, ‘prodigy’, had long been associated with human curiosities on display and it was suggested that British audiences would feel more comfortable with the notion of gazing at an exceptional specimen that was a human prodigy rather than the unusual, curious freak of nature. While subsequent print representations of the name change largely indicate that audiences would continue to be drawn to the exhibitions regardless of the collective name they adopted, the large troupe agreed that it mattered to them, stating they

Emphatically protest against the application of the word ‘freak,’ and severely condemn its general assignment. [. . .] In the opinion of many some of us are really the development of a higher type, and are superior persons, inasmuch as some of us are gifted with extraordinary attributes not apparent in ordinary beings. (“Man” 14 Jan. 41)

The bold move to adopt the name prodigy certainly influenced a wave of media attention on this aspect of the show.

In response to the change from freaks to prodigies, periodicals questioned and mocked the performers, while others revisited their knowledge of the exhibits. One writer even “visited the prodigies – late the freaks – once more this week just to see whether the change of title had made them very proud”, only to find they were much the same as before (The Dwarf of Blood 2). In accordance with its title, *Fun* printed a couple of poems in answer to the protest, first questioning the time and place chosen for the renaming:

The ‘Freaks’ of Barnum and Bailey’s Show  
(We smile on them benignantly)  
Against the name of ‘freak’ you know,  
Protest, *en masse*, indignantly;  
But why in England make the fuss?  
There must be something wrong with them,  
The name has naught to do with us,  
They brought it ‘right along’ with them.

(Party on the Spot 1)

Brushing off any importance in the prodigies' accomplishment, the author simply mocks the timing and location of the incident. In the following week, *Fun* printed another facetious poem about the event which mockingly shames viewers for being so presumptuous with their terminology:

And, since these folks are not as we,  
We've had the cheek (our cheeks  
Suffused with shame must surely be!)  
To speak of them as 'freaks.'

("Who Said Freaks?" 31)

These light-hearted pieces portray the protest simply as part of the entertainment and promotion of the circus and represented it in the same joking manner they would other subjects. Indeed, even *Cycling* returned to the use of freaks, and the protest in particular, to discuss its usual subject matter: "If Barnum's freaks are prodigies, / And highly honoured feel; / What shall we call the oddities/ Connected with the wheel?" (Juggins, "Query" 44) In these instances the protest brought mocking attention to the ongoing circus and the freak performers within it, and fulfilled Barnum's notion that all publicity was beneficial.

Other periodicals took advantage of the newfound hype around freaks to print promotional information for the show, but, again, the serious intentions of the name change were overlooked in some articles which continued to refer to the freaks. For instance, the weekly, the *Big Budget*, printed their piece nearly a month after the protest and it shows no remorse in its regular usage of freak. Claiming that the "writer personally interviewed each 'freak,' who nearly always had very interesting information to impart", the piece aimed to prepare readers "who intend going later to Barnum's great show at Olympia" and to provide them with a "reference when they see the freaks in the flesh before them" ("The World's Marvels" 141). Since the article does provide a little history for each of the represented freaks, a mention of the name debate would seem a significant bit of knowledge to omit from their readers' guide, especially when it claims to be written after personal interviews with the protesters. Rather than getting caught up in the excitement around the name change, this article chose to sell the familiar to their readers. Whichever route journals chose to take when reporting on the performers (in respect to the name debate), the circus continued to benefit from the extra attention paid to the extraordinary bodies within its show and, itself, ceased to use the name of freak in both advertising and promotional materials. This renewed interest in Barnum's freaks, then, was an extension of the showman's generative publicity practices, continuing his legacy.



One guide sold at the circus during 1899 which gave lengthy details on each of the prodigies as well as some of the other exhibits was the *Book of Marvels in the Barnum and Bailey Greatest Show on Earth*. The section dedicated to descriptions of the prodigies introduced them as “The Strangest Human Beings on Earth. Yet in their feelings and affections the Prodigies are ‘Even as You and I’” (Dean 7). Another article, which also appeared a month after the protest, tried to paint a humanising picture of the freaks and also used the phrase, “Even as You and I” in its title.<sup>48</sup> “The general public,” wrote Goddard, “who only see the strange people on their platform, scarcely realise that but for one particular trick which Dame Nature has played each one of them, these sports of Fortune are just men and women, with feelings and habits, the likes and dislikes, the occupations and amusements of the rest of the world, with, of course, certain inevitable limitations” (Goddard 493). In order to illustrate his contention, Goddard detailed his findings from his visit with the freaks in their home environments. Heather McHold has argued that Goddard’s article followed the trend of freak show promoters in “extending notions of bourgeois respectability to human oddities” as a means to acquire audiences (McHold, “‘Even as You and I’: Freak Shows and Lay Discourse on Spectacular Deformity” 25). This style of representation is an extension of freak generativity discussed in chapter one, only here the emphasis is on humanising the freaks.

Barnum’s freaks were usually promoted by the circus for their extraordinarily rare attributes and, when bourgeois notions of respectability were placed on them it often came from the journalists or even the freaks themselves. This is not to say that there was no thought put into the manner in which the freaks were exhibited, as Barnum certainly did take care to give his audiences a show and had built his successful career and subsequent legacy through his clever promotion and exhibition of extraordinary bodies. Rather, the circus’ prodigies seem to have been given some power in their own representations. According to Eric Fretz, the living curiosities Barnum had shown throughout his career “were not selfless and will-less mannequins. And it is their assertion of self as it conflicts with Barnum’s presentation of them that makes Barnum’s participation in the exhibition culture interesting” (Fretz 104). The freaks’ protest and performance characteristics, then, can be seen as an assertion of the performers’ desired image.

In many ways, the promotion of Barnum’s freaks was more a promotion of himself as a remarkable showman. In the advertisements for the 1899 tour of Barnum and Bailey’s circus the performers were simply referred to as a “Stupendous Assembly of New Living Human

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<sup>48</sup> Goddard gives an unreferenced quote for this phrase: “‘A Freak there was, but a Man he was, Even as you and I’”, but I have been unable to trace its origins (Goddard 493). In 1897, Rudyard Kipling published his poem “The Vampire” which repeatedly uses the phrase “Even as you and I!”, but does not have the full line quoted by Goddard (Kipling 2, 6, 13, 17, 24, 28).

Prodigies”, which emphasised that they were an impressive collection of unique sights, while also respecting their feelings on the terminology employed for their representation (“Classified Ad 5 - No Title” 1).<sup>49</sup> Indeed, much of the circus’s print promotion emphasized the collective extraordinariness of the freaks rather than their individual traits. Therefore, it seems that if emphasis was being made regarding the status of the human prodigies, it was either through the assertions of the freaks themselves, or the notions placed on them by the press. In light of Barnum’s absence from the freak protest against their name, the involvement of Barnum’s freaks in their own image is evident. The representations of the freaks were created through the combined media and show depictions.

However, as McHold points out, Goddard’s article does appeal to his British audiences by challenging popular cultural preoccupations and the preconceptions viewers may have constructed from other representations of freaks. Instead of emphasising the extraordinary difference between the prodigies and their audiences, Goddard focuses on the features easiest to compare with their unremarkable spectators. In fact, he felt the revelations from his “unofficial talk” with the performers were “an agreeable surprise to anyone who, not unnaturally, expects to find something distinctly pathetic about them” (Goddard 496). Instead of interviewing the miserable freaks he had anticipated, Goddard explains that his assumptions were generally quashed. Although he had expected to learn that “‘Jo Jo,’ the ‘Dog-Faced Boy,’ naturally goes out very little because his peculiar deformity cannot be hidden”, the author found it “distinctly odd” that “Eli Bowen the ‘Legless Wonder’” was able to spend “his leisure chiefly in visiting his friends” when back home in the States (495, 494, 493). On the other hand, the journalist was pleased to have his misconception “that when Nature builds a man or woman four stories high, it generally runs out of material to furnish the top storey” nullified when he met the giantess Miss Leah May, “for she [was] a particularly bright American girl” (496). Apart from describing the genial personalities and everyday activities undertaken by the prodigies, Goddard, in consideration of the preoccupations of his English readers, also made a point of referring to the hereditary possibilities of some of the freaks’ abnormalities. He learned that Jo Jo’s “hirsute peculiarity [was] partially hereditary”, and the sword-swallowing Delno Fritz “inherit[ed] his peculiar appetite” from his father, but Delkano, who ate “hot horse-shoes, live coals, and blazing rubber, [...] freely admits that his unnatural appetite is not hereditary” (495). Pleased by the results of his visit with the prodigies, Goddard finished by telling his readers: “In public they are ‘freaks,’ but when they are off their platforms and their pedestals it is pleasant to find that, with the one particular reservation in each case, they are

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<sup>49</sup> Previous advertisements had referred to them as freaks, such as one in the *Times*, in February 1898, promoting the “Museum of living freaks and curiosities” amongst the other acts in the exhibition (“Olympia” 10).

just men and women, normal and healthy, 'even as you and I'" (496). Without explicitly stating it, Goddard confirms that at the heart of the construction of a freak is the performance. Whereas in the first visit, much of the excitement caused by freaks was represented to be associated with their relation to Barnum, Goddard shows in his article that although Barnum's legacy still lingered, the freak appeal was also tied to British concerns and freak preconceptions. Along with the other circus participants, it was the performance of their difference, of their unique quality, that made the freaks a popular, sensational part of the show. In this sense, the second visit of the circus was more actively concerned with freak legacy than the first visit.

Since the Barnum and Bailey circus had been a successful enterprise in America for a number of years the American origin of the circus is a point worth considering. Despite many similarities between the two cultures, the tastes of British audiences had to be accommodated in the promotion of the circus exhibits. As McHold has stated, "while Americans savored hucksterism and prized the sassy defiance that mass culture presented to the values of social and intellectual elites as essential elements of Jacksonian national identity, tomfoolery, crowds, and class insubordination caused considerable more social and cultural tension in late-Victorian Britain" (McHold, "'Even as You and I': Freak Shows and Lay Discourse on Spectacular Deformity" 22). When he was still alive Barnum had been able to negotiate this difference to suit the new audiences, as is evident in the immense praise and welcome he received from the British elite when the circus came in 1889. For the show's second and extensive visit, Bailey, too, adjusted the show to fit within British tastes. Clearly, the final spectacle within the circus, which was that of "The Mahdi", had specifically been chosen for its complimentary demonstration of British success in the Sudan. While the freaks may have been referred to in print for their manners and participation in a bourgeois lifestyle when away from the stage, the circus promotion seems to neither have accentuated nor denied this point.

Along with the imperial pride displayed in the performance of "The Mahdi", the British interest in the empire was also highlighted in some of the freak promotion. The promotional *Book of Marvels* booklet being sold during the 1899 season, for example, laid great emphasis on the origins of many of the freaks. Hassan Ali, the "Egyptian Giant" who "speaks very little English" and must be spoken to in Arabic, is described primarily in terms of his nationality and religion. His background is given in terms of his family; his "'father was a mere soldier of the Mahdi, and died the death of a brave man in the Sudan'" and his wife, "a Mohammedan, [...] would not leave the privacy of her home to have her face gazed upon by infidels" (Dean 7, 8). A further three freaks had emphasis placed on their religion through their title or their advertised back-story. These were "Khusania the Hindu Dwarf", Lalloo, the Double-Bodied Hindu Boy" and "Miss Delphi, the Orange-Headed Girl" whose Hindu parents believed "a soul

of a sacred monkey had taken up its habitation in her body, giving it the strange appearance that she possesses" (Dean 8). Emphasis on the religious and ethnic origins of freaks was part of what Bogdan describes as the exoticisation of freaks; that is, the mode of presenting freaks "to appeal to people's interest in the culturally strange, the primitive, the bestial, the exotic" (Bogdan, *Freak Show* 105). Here, the exotic freaks were from cultures that were strange and distant, yet were also popularly familiar through imperial efforts. These descriptions were included for the British audiences who were invited to attend the circus and they reflect an assumed popular interest in the origin-defining details of freaks from within the British Empire and beyond.

Regardless of the tactics being used in the different pieces, the protest returned the prodigies' important position in the press. Once again readers were reminded of their curiosity for human wonders. Whether the protest represented a genuine bone of contention with the human curiosities or was just a clever publicity stunt, it was successful in reminding the English public of their longstanding relationship with, and interest in, abnormal bodies and strengthened the association of Barnum's legacy with the entertainment. The extra attention paid to the prodigies furthered the recognition of their central place in the popular entertainment scene in Britain. Through the Barnum and Bailey Circus, the prodigies were constructed in a manner to suit British tastes. At the same time it promoted Barnum's legacy as a superior force in circus and freak show culture.

### **An Example of the Provincial Success: In Torquay for One Day Only!<sup>50</sup>**

During the summer of 1899, the Barnum and Bailey Circus made its last tour of Great Britain before it set off for Europe. Almost two years after Bailey had brought the show over on his own, the circus continued to attract large audiences wherever it went. A look at the reviews of its visit to Torquay, in the southwest of England, provides a study of the reactions the familiar circus was able to produce even in a reserved coastal community, with the prodigies remaining one of the main attractions.

Before the circus opened its tent for the mass audiences, the show made a point of giving the local community a glimpse of all that would be on offer during its stay. The first order of business, as had been the show's practice for all of its tours, was to excite audiences before the circus's arrival. A few weeks before the show was due to be in Torquay the bill posters came "and in an incredibly short space of time they converted the bill posting stations, unoccupied shops, and in fact every corner available, into a series of object lessons in natural

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<sup>50</sup> For this section I am indebted to Ros Leveridge for the wealth of information she supplied on late-nineteenth-century Torquay and its newspapers.

history, equestrianism, gymnastics, etc.” (“Barnum’s Great Show” n.p.). Not only were they able to cover Torquay with the “artistically printed posters”, but, also, “carriages were employed to take the large sheets into the whole of the surrounding towns and villages which were treated in like fashion” (“Barnum’s Great Show” n.p.). Here, the bill posting itself became an event worthy of recognition in the newspaper, boosting the show’s audience potential. Just as audiences made their way from all over the country to view previous exhibitions of the show at London’s Olympia, so, too, were rural audiences expected to travel for the circus’s local visit. When the circus was at Llandudno, as was discussed above, extra excursion trains were arranged and “fifteen thousand people availed themselves of the opportunity [including Torquay residents]. This, of course, was independent of residents in the locality” (“Barnum’s Great Show” n.p.). With plenty of prior notice the Barnum and Bailey circus was able to secure vast audiences for all of the locations along its tour, and Torquay would be no exception.

Along with the visual advertising placed throughout the town, the circus also benefited from the promotion of their show in the press. There were the large illustrated advertisements announcing the upcoming exhibition as well as mentions made by the newspaper journalists. It was unusual for Torquay papers to run elaborate ads on any entertainment, so the fact that the circus advertised with almost a full-page spread demonstrates the novelty of this great circus coming to the town. Also, there were a number of entertainments that were restricted from showing in Torquay which further emphasises the acceptance of this circus as a reputable amusement.<sup>51</sup> These elaborate ads included all the essential information about prices, times and the location, as well as illustrations and hyperbolic descriptions of the show’s contents. “The World’s Largest, Grandest Best Amusement Institution” involving “3 Circuses, 2 Stages” “1000 Wonders” and “2 Menageries” boasted to be “Truthful Moral. Instructive” and “The Real Source Of All The Best Amusement Ideas” (“Notices” n.p.). Among the various acts to be viewed in the show there would also be an hour for audiences to take in the menageries, the “Stupendous Collection of Living Human Prodigies” and “Curious Human Beings from Everywhere” prior to the performance (“Notices” n.p.). Audiences were also advised to “Watch for the Street Parade with the 40 Horse Team and Columbus Pageant” (“Notices” n.p.). Members of the Torquay Liberal Club had the opportunity to experience some of these promised sights prior to the circus’s visit. “Those who participated in this week’s excursion to Cardiff, and were able to attend Barnum and Bailey’s Show, which was giving performances there,” returned to Devon to “report in glowing terms of the exhibition which is due to visit Torquay on July 1st” (“Barnum and Bailey’s” 23 Jun. n.p.). Even those who were unable to view

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<sup>51</sup> For more information on Torquay entertainment culture at the end of the nineteenth century see Rosalind Leveridge, “‘Limelights and Shadows’: Popular and Visual Culture in South West England, 1880-1914”. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 2011.

the circus paid witness to the elaborate street parade prior to the show's opening. This free glimpse of the show's spoils was a performance in itself, called the "'Return of Columbus to Barcelona'", which included "a reproduction of the great discoverer, the ambassadors of the time, with the nobles, courtiers, and chivalry of 400 years ago, and a wondrous 40-horse team" ("Barnum and Bailey's" 23 Jun. n.p.). Whether it was the show's promoters or local residents reporting their experiences, Barnum and Bailey's Circus received plenty of valuable attention and promotion in the weeks leading up to its visit, with anticipation for the street parade, in particular, being one of the show's most successful advertising ploys.

Similar to the circus's initial arrival in England, there was much interest in the transport of the extensive show. The interest was recognised by the management as the advertisements informed readers that the show travelled "Using its own 70 specially-constructed Railway Cars, each Car nearly 60ft. long" with "a Daily Expense of £1,500" ("Notices" n.p.). The local paper also demonstrated the popular fascination with the manoeuvring of this large show as it gave a detailed account of the routes to be taken by the trains. "Owing to the lack of siding accommodation at Torre Station, only two trains containing the artistes and employee [sic] and the elephants and camels, will run in there" and the other two trains were to stop at Newton Abbot and "be brought by road to the Brickfield" in enough time to be able to take part in the street parade ("Barnum and Bailey's" 30 Jun. 8). Since "most of the animals have to come from Newton, take part in the parade, and the two performances, and then return to Newton the same night, this route is considered to be sufficiently long" ("Barnum and Bailey's" 30 Jun. 8). The lengths taken by the circus to exhibit for the single day in Torquay were noticed by the local media and reported accordingly. This fascination in the movement of the circus was not unique to Torquay (as an article in the *Ludgate* showed when it described the operation of moving the circus and tenting around the Midlands during the 1898 tour (Jones 399–408)). Signified in this fascination with the tedious details of the show's journey was the local appreciation for the efforts made by the famous entertainment.

Days before the circus was due in Torquay one of the local papers made a final attempt to lure pleasure-seekers to the show. Published without a listed author, the article appears to have been written by one of the promoters because it reads like an extended advertisement for the circus, detailing the various sights to be witnessed. "Short of a visit by Royalty," the author claimed, "nothing could be calculated to flutter the inhabitants of Torquay more than a visit by the 'greatest show on earth'—Messrs. Barnum and Bailey's world-renowned pageant, exhibition, and circus" ("The Greatest Show on Earth" 6). Placed next to routine articles on local matters (such as a recent cricket match and a trial concerning local water supply) and broader news issues, the article appears to be intended as another item of impartial local interest. The flattering language of the piece, however, is reminiscent of

Barnum's language indicates its author to be either a loyal fan of the circus or one of the show's representatives. The gives particulars of the scale of the company and the large amount of food consumed by just the animals over the span of a year, before describing the amusements in store for visitors to the Torquay exhibition. Finally, the article finishes with a description and order of acts included in the street procession prior to the show. While other reports on the circus, as discussed above, tended to give a complimentary account of the entertainment, there was usually some amount of opinion fed into them. But, in this article, the author is preoccupied with promoting the sheer enormity of the enterprise and the pleasure to be gained from attending the massive entertainment. Approaching potential audiences under the auspices of a regular newspaper report, this piece cleverly pulls readers to the show and convinces them that an amusement on such a grand scale must be worthy of their patronage, demonstrating the continuance of Barnum's legacy even in rural locations.

Following the circus's appearance in Torquay, two reviews were printed in the local newspapers. Although the circus was only present for one day, the reports illustrate the buzz created by the show and its immense popularity. With two different approaches these articles complement each other and give an excellent overview of the event and the local community's response.

In the *Torquay Times* the circus is portrayed as a sound amusement for adults, but an overwhelming experience for children. Feeling himself to be an inadequate judge of the circus, the reporter recruited a boy "for assistance—one who has been dreaming of the show each night since the first announcement appeared, has talked of scarcely anything else between school hours, [. . . and since he] has read up the subject so closely should be of some assistance when an article has to be written" (Quill and The Boy n.p.). Instead of an ordinary report on the show, the article turns into a conversation where the author gives his measured account of the show with occasional interruptions from the boy. When the boy is extended the opportunity to voice his recollections of the show, the article directly voices the pleasure of the show, until the author reverts back to his own calmer perspective. The wonder elicited from audience members viewing the freaks and other exhibits prior to the performance demonstrates the impact of the viewer's age on their response to the show. The boyish delight in the circus, and the freaks in particular, shown here reflects the print representation of the boyhood fascination with freaks discussed in chapter one.

Upon entering the exhibition space, the boy "with the assurance of a man of 50" began his inspection of the curious sights (Quill and The Boy n.p.). Shocked by the boy's comfort with the displays, the author remarks, "He actually had the temerity to shake hands with Hassan Ali, the 7ft. 11in. Egyptian giant, and if I had not checked him he would certainly have endeavoured to get on terms of sociability with Jo-Jo the human skye-terrier and Lalloo

the double bodied Hindu boy" (Quill and The Boy n.p.). Since the boy had "devoured every scrap of reading" on the circus and its exhibits, this interaction displays the effectiveness of printed material on Barnum's freak audiences. In fact, the boy knew the official guide so well he had prepared himself with treats for the menagerie animals and was so sure of the tiger, Tom's, pleasure at being stroked he "would have tried the stroking business if one would have permitted him to do so" (Quill and The Boy n.p.). The difference between the two viewers' approach to the freaks highlights the emphasis placed on the interest of boys in freaks.

Remonstrating with the author for being shy, the boy gives his own account of the prodigies:

If you want to write an article about these curious people you must get to know them. I can remember every one, but I must say I have my preferences. I didn't care about the Lightning Calculators or the people who wrote with their toes because they had no arms. They reminded me too much of school. What I liked best was the hard-headed man who had a chunk—yes, he said 'chunk'—of stone cracked on his head, the bearded lady, the sword swallower, the elastic skinned man, the human pincushion, and the tattooed man and woman. I have one or two dots of India ink on my arm already and a chum of mine is going to 'prick in' an anchor on one arm and a snake on the other, exactly like they have, and I guess I won't squeak over the operation. (Quill and The Boy n.p.)

This blurb is the longest section given to the boy's language and the author cuts him off to make room for the rest of the attractions. The playful exchange between the boy and the author provides a light-hearted account of the show, while simultaneously highlighting the freaks as the main attraction. It also allows the *Torquay Times* to distance itself, an adult publication, from the boyish charms of the show.

The boy's excitement from seeing the freaks in the flesh can be contrasted with another reporter's impression of the Torquay exhibition. In his article on the circus's visit, "The Bard" comments that the "prodigies, doubtless, are a very wonderful collection, but it irked one to gaze at some of the monstrosities" (The Bard n.p.). Rather than linger on the unusual physicalities of some of the prodigies this reporter explained that "the greatest crowd seemed to gather round the lightning calculator, who gave demonstrations of a remarkable power to solve almost any arithmetical problem instantly" (The Bard n.p.). Once he had been thoroughly impressed by the skills of this performer "[I]t was with some relief" that the journalist was able to turn "to the cages of the animal, which, however strange, were not monstrosities, but normal specimens of their kind" (The Bard n.p.). While the boy in the previous article exemplified a childish fascination in freaks, the adults in each article express a discomfort felt when viewing the prodigies, particularly those displaying their visible physical difference. Yet,



this discomfort does not prevent the freaks from becoming a point of interest in the articles, implying the journalists' need to present this well-known attraction within the circus.

Another point linking the two reports together was the mutual respect for the organisation and smooth deployment of the circus. Even with the multitude of acts on display, The Bard felt "[t]he management was far and away the most striking feature; to style it perfection is no less than it deserves" (The Bard n.p.). Crow Quill admitted that throughout the hour and a half long performance he "could do little else during that time but marvel at the magnificent organisation, the immense number of clever artistes, and the splendidly conditioned horses" (Quill and the Boy n.p.). These responses, in conjunction with the boy's delight illustrate how the show was truly designed to please the full range of its audiences. While all of the freaks on display may not have been to everyone's taste, particularly for the more conservative audience members attending the circus, they were an accepted part of the entertainment as a whole due, in part, to the respectable and tidy manner in which the show was run. Bailey had set out on the circus's second visit to the country to provide an amusement catering for all tastes and Torquay offers just one example of his success.

### **Conclusion**

Anthony Hippisley Coxe declares "There is no special circus-going public. The wise are there no less than the foolish, and the young no more than the old" (Coxe 19). Barnum and Bailey's enterprise sought to adhere to this conception and draw diverse crowds from any walk of life. In constantly reiterating the tastefulness of their show, the proprietors furthered the impression of freaks being an entertainment to be enjoyed by all. Intricately tied into this presentation of freaks was Barnum's history and image as a freak collector and showman. His previous exhibitions in the United Kingdom had left an impression on popular entertainment practices and his continuous sensationalising of freaks bound his name to the display of extraordinary bodies. So, when the Greatest Show on Earth came to the Olympia the anticipation built around the freaks and their regular promotion throughout the visit exalted Barnum's legacy further.

When the circus returned at the end of the century, Barnum's legacy was still strong in the print representations of the show. Throughout this visit the freaks were regularly mentioned or even featured in print pieces, usually still being referred to as Barnum's collection. Playing into the tradition of popular interest in freaks the circus enhanced not only the print attention given to the extraordinary bodies, but also the size of the collection itself. As with the print representations discussed in the first chapter, the generativity of the Barnum and Bailey freaks during the second visit was expressed through their multiple and varied

representations. In the various techniques used to promote and discuss the freaks remained strands of Barnum's showman language and style. The continued interest and acceptance of the freak entertainment highlights the results of Barnum's generative efforts in promoting his legacy as the provider of a great and instructive amusement for audiences of all ages and classes.

### Chapter Three: Problematizing Unscientific Interest in Freaks

[...] the prominence of medicine has lain only in small measures in its ability to make the sick well. (Porter 6)

When compared to documented historical freak exhibitions, an 1899 article in the *Speaker* contends, “even the great [Barnum and Bailey’s] undertaking at Olympia becomes insignificant” (“Freaks” 172). Despite the influx of interest in freaks throughout the Victorian period, this article dwells on historical accounts of extraordinary bodies which show that the “morbid interest in the abnormal on the part of the masses is as old as the masses themselves” (“Freaks” 171). However, historic scientific works show that this fascination went beyond simply providing entertainment for the lay curious. Indeed, “Even at the present day medical treatises are much given to dilating upon freaks in greater detail than is necessary for purposes of useful instruction” (“Freaks” 172). This article acknowledges the shared interest between popular and scientific cultures in freaks and points to the broad appeal of extraordinary bodies in the late nineteenth century, with the learned fascination in freaks often stretching beyond the remit of the discipline’s needs. Yet, this shared interest was also a source of tension due to the ability of freaks to cross cultural borders.

While it was this versatility of freaks that made them generatively useful for individuals, like Barnum, and various other sectors within nineteenth-century society, it was also problematic. As this chapter aims to show, the broad appeal of freaks and their generativity was sometimes regarded as a threat in need of control and it was often the medical community that claimed or was given regulatory power. Medicine exercised its control over the consumption of freakish bodies in its everyday activities, like society meetings, which were exclusive to those in the discipline. At the same time, medicine played the part of an expert authority called upon by other social regulators, like the courts. Christopher Lawrence has argued that “The decades after the mid-nineteenth century witnessed the medical profession, especially its elite, consolidate its position as a significant order in Victorian society” and that it was more in the “everyday workings of medical practice [...] than when it had an overt policing role” that the profession became a “significant constructor of the Victorian world” (C. Lawrence, *Medicine in the Making of Modern Britain, 1700-1920* 45, 46). So, both the everyday activities and the regulatory roles medicine adopted contributed to its professionalization and its integration into late nineteenth-century society as an authoritative power. This is demonstrated both in the discipline’s attempts to police popular freak encounters as well as the commonplace professional usage of freaks in medicine. In their own generative uses of freaks, medical practitioners sought to build their knowledge of the body,

but, at the same time, they needed to distance their subjects and practices from those of the popular pastime of the freak show in order to strengthen medicine's professional status. But these intensions made the exhibition of freaks in popular culture problematic, while arguably similar practices in medical culture often went unquestioned.

Julia Pastrana, the "Nondescript", who was popularly exhibited as a living freak in London in 1857 and as an embalmed specimen in 1862, provides a relatively well known mid-century example of this cross-cultural interest.<sup>52</sup> Both her performances in life and her posthumous exhibition attracted audiences and print attention from popular and medical cultures in England. She was of short stature, suffered from hypertrichosis and an oral condition which enlarged her gums, extending the position of her lips.<sup>53</sup> During her life Pastrana had toured extensively around Europe and with the intervention of Professor Sokolov of Moscow University, Pastrana's show-life continued after her death. Having bought the bodies of both Pastrana and her son (both had passed away shortly after the birth) from her showman and husband Theodore Lent, Sokolov tried an experimental embalming process to preserve the bodies in a lifelike manner (Sokolov 468). Professor Sokolov explained to his medical audience, "I have used the word 'embalmed' because it is one which is usually employed in such cases; but it does not convey a correct impression of the nature of the substances which I used in order to arrest the progress of decomposition and to preserve the body in its entirety" (Sokolov 468). His experimentation on this freak body had validated a new means of preservation which had potential to benefit museums with anatomical collections. Unlike other preservation techniques, the popularizer of science Frank Buckland claimed, both corpses retained their colour and texture giving them the appearance "exactly like an exceedingly good portrait in wax" (Buckland, *CNH: Fourth Series* 41). And, Janet Browne and Sharon Messenger concur, photographs of Julia's corpse support the "opinion that the embalming techniques were just as remarkable as Pastrana herself" (Browne and Messenger 159). Upon hearing of this successful transformation of his deceased family Lent regained ownership of the bodies and returned to England in 1862 to begin another tour with his curious exhibits.

In their natural appearance the corpses were deemed suitable for public consumption in much the same manner as waxworks, while their innovative preservation captured the interest of scientific audiences. An article popularising the display of Pastrana's embalmed

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<sup>52</sup> See notice for the exhibition of her body quoting F. T. Buckland: "Specimen of Embalming", in EPH499B, Wellcome Library, London. For further studies on Julia Pastrana see, C. H. Gylseth and L. O. Toverud. Trans. Donald Tumasonis. *Julia Pastrana: The Tragic Story of the Victorian Ape Woman* (Stroud, Eng.: Sutton, 2004) and R. Stern, "Our Bear Women, Ourselves: Affiliating with Julia Pastrana", *Victorian Freaks*, Ed. Marlene Tromp, (Columbus: Ohio UP, 2008), 200-33.

<sup>53</sup> Her condition has been retrospectively diagnosed as congenital, generalized hypertrichosis terminalis and gingival hyperplasia (Bondeson and Miles 198-212).

corpse appeared in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* accompanied by a full-page engraving (“Miss Julia Pastrana, The Nondescript” 135–136). Following the pattern of most freak exhibitions the article emphasised the words of scientific gentlemen, even directly quoting Frank Buckland, to strengthen the legitimacy of the exhibition. Further, the engraving depicts both a man and a woman visiting the display, hinting at the suitable audiences for this sight. Rebecca Stern has argued that the engraving served as an instructive warning to female viewers with Pastrana’s body being “a lesson to the visiting public about the monstrous spectacle all women have the potential to become” (Stern 216). Like the exhibition itself the representation of Pastrana’s corpse becomes generative through the flexibility in its interpretation. Her lifeless display, Browne and Messenger observe, “made it easier for spectators to gaze without embarrassment” and “far easier for medical men to examine and discuss her body parts” (Browne and Messenger 159). In life and death her body simultaneously served as a public curiosity and as a specimen for investigation by the learned disciplines. Thus, in spite of her popular appeal, Pastrana also attracted the attention of scientific and medical practitioners and she remains the property of a medical institution to this day.<sup>54</sup>

While Pastrana’s case provides an early example of the dual interest popular and scientific cultures had in freak bodies, with both the popular and medical press reporting on the display of her embalmed corpse, there is more emphasis in her case on the instructive nature of the popular consumption than in many later accounts of freaks. As the century progressed, there was an increased tendency to question the appropriateness of freak exhibitions for popular audiences. The case of Barnum, discussed in the previous chapter, demonstrates how some freak shows continued to be promoted as instructive, tasteful amusements. However, the idea that freaks had instructive value for popular audiences was not universal, and many challenges to these claims came from the medical community.

The following pages will first examine some freak cases demonstrating this tension between popular and medical cultures at the end of the nineteenth century, found in the popular press. In some instances the popular press berated the public taste for freaks, while other articles indicate attempts made by social authorities to limit freak exhibitions. Medicine contributed to this discussion on the appropriate audiences for freak shows, as in the case of Joseph Merrick. Further, reports on legal proceedings involving freaks demonstrate how the authoritative role medicine played was communicated to popular press readers. Next, this chapter will turn to cases in medical print media showing how the profession represented and perceived its own practices involving freakish bodies. Within the medical journals the professional and communal goals of medicine were reinforced. The discipline sought to

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<sup>54</sup> Pastrana’s remains are at the National Hospital of Oslo, but are not available for public viewing.

maintain a public image of authoritative knowledge and extensive, if not exclusive, access to extraordinary corporeality in order to concretize and expand this knowledge. Medicine problematized the popular freak encounter in order to justify its own uses of freaks. However, despite the self-imposed belief in the medical profession's superiority over lay observers, there is some comparability between popular and medical practices involving freakish bodies. Although the medical community problematized the popular engagement with freaks, in some ways it participated in the same practices. In both the representation of medicine as a regulatory power and as a superior source of knowledge, the profession utilised existing flexibility in the interpretation of freakish bodies to serve the generative ends of medicine.

### **Contesting the Popular Consumption of Freaks**

Whereas the last two chapters have illustrated the popular press's promotion of freaks, there was some condemnation of the popularity of freak shows within this material too. For example, an 1893 article in the *Dart: The Birmingham Pictorial*, attacked "the enormous number of travelling showmen making a living by exhibiting so-called freaks of nature" and those who went to view them (Voyager 6). The author begins by reprimanding the displays as "a degrading influence at work amongst our lower classes", and follows by stating that the "evil [is not] confined to the lower classes; the middle classes have their more refined barbarians, and the upper classes are touched with the same complaint" (Voyager 6). In this piece, the amusement of the freak show is likened to that of a boxing match or dangerous wild animal acts. All are considered base and distasteful forms of entertainment by the author and the attending audiences as well as the proprietors are accused of maintaining the popularity of these entertainments. In this sense, the generativity of freaks is represented as leading to negative outcomes.

Although the author was clearly distressed by these shows receiving any form of clientele, the majority of blame is placed on the showmen. One particularly disturbing display for the author was of a "balloon-headed baby. [. . .] a weakly, idiotic-looking child suffering from water on the brain, having its head swollen to three times its natural size, with great veins running from the centre of the forehead extended to their utmost capacity!" (Voyager 6). Throughout the exhibition its mother tried to calm the uncomfortable, wailing child while the showman explained that the infant was teething. Repulsed by the whole affair the journalist exclaimed: "the spectacle sickened me of two healthy young people gaining a livelihood by exhibiting a diseased child" and worried over the consequential "effect on the quantity of young girls who pay to see the monstrosity" indicating his fear over the risk of maternal impressions (Voyager 6). As this incident and the handful of other acts mentioned in

the article highlight, these cheap entertainments were deemed detrimental to all participants except the money-hungry exhibitors, especially the future children to be born to the female gazers. The maternal impressions theory, where disturbing sights or incidents witnessed by a pregnant woman mark the developing foetus, had been debated by medicine throughout the century, and will be discussed in more detail later. Here, the author's own belief in this theory is one part of his condemnation of the exhibition of freakish bodies; the other has to do with the wellbeing of the baby on display. Therefore, the exhibition of this young freak is deemed dangerous for those on both sides of the encounter. This concern reflects medical sentiment against the popular engagement with extraordinary bodies, which tended to emphasize the popular audience's inability to interpret the displays from a learned position, and which denigrated the showman's gain from this transaction.

In the case of the "diseased child" the author was not alone in his displeasure with the showman. About a month after this article was published in the *Dart*, the *Manchester Guardian* reported that the showman was "fined £5 at Leeds for cruelty to a ten months' old baby" and "the child's mother was fined £1" ("It Was Not in the Fiji Islands" 5). Fining the exhibitors had the twofold result of preventing further harm to the exhibited child and the potential audiences, as well as shaming those who indulged in producing or viewing such exhibitions. Showing a sickly being was not the showman's intention. Generally, showmen "took great pains to establish that they were not exhibiting a diseased or unhealthy body" as the lively acts of Millie Christine and the Tiger Lady's advertised beauty discussed in the first chapter imply (Durbach 26).<sup>55</sup> But, that is not to say that all shows were up to this standard and most likely there were a number of parents and showmen exploiting poorly children. On an undated handbill for the exhibition of another large-headed girl, this one seven years old, a patron to the show had handwritten that she was "probably hydrocephalous – she was generally lying down, and seemed heavy and sleepy" ("7 Year Old Child." Handbill. recto). Again, this child did not appear content with her circumstances, nor did she appear healthy to the audience. Shows of this type gave ammunition to the opposition to freak exhibitions and the attendance of sensitive audiences to such displays. The generative results in such cases were deemed problematic due to the negative impact they could have on exhibited children and impressionable audience members. Child freaks rarely fared well in these situations and, even though there were protective laws in place for children by the 1890s, intervention sometimes came too late. While the welfare of freaks was rarely at the heart of medical concern, since the profession readily indulged in gazing upon anomalous bodies in various contexts, medicine still played its part in the regulation of the shows.

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<sup>55</sup> See Durbach's Introduction in *Spectacle of Deformity* for her differentiation between freak shows and the display of disability as otherness (Durbach 14–21).

The case of a young freak that died shortly after exhibition was reported in the *Liverpool Mercury* in 1895 after the parents were convicted of manslaughter. In this case, the role of the medical man as a regulatory power is made clear. The 1889 Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children prohibited the performance of children under the age of ten for profit, even in places licensed for public entertainment. In circumstances where it had been “shown to the satisfaction of a petty sessional court [...] that proper provision has been made to secure the health and kind treatment of any children proposed to be employed thereat” then children over the age of seven would be allowed to perform for profit (*Prevention of Cruelty* 3). But the child in this freak display was only eight months old when she passed away and a medical man was called upon for his expert opinion on the detrimental effect the show had on the freakish child. The post-mortem examination found her to be twenty inches long with a weight of only four pounds. Dr A. J. Lowe, who had performed the examination, testified that the “exposure of the child to public exhibition had damaged its health” but “would not go so far as to say that the exhibition of the child had caused its death” (“Death of a Midget Child” 3). Further, the doctor stated that “in his opinion, the child was constitutionally unhealthy, and would not have lived to a good age” regardless (“Death of a Midget Child” 3). The doctor’s opinion here serves as leading evidence that the child was not suited to a life of exhibition due to her health. His testimony on the child’s delicate state of health emphasised the role of medicine in regulating the entertainment world. While Lowe acknowledges that the child would have had a short life even if she had not been shown as a freak, his statement on her condition draws attention to the parents’ irresponsibility in exhibiting rather than seeking treatment for their child. The doctor’s position as a regulatory power in this case is enforced through his testimony on the damage caused by the exhibition lifestyle, implying the need to control those who perpetuated the trade as well as those subjected to it. His expert opinion problematizes the display practices; since the child here was in the care of her parents, it was their behaviour that needed regulation.

The parents pleaded that they had only exhibited their daughter as a freak because her father had been dismissed from his job and had been advised that “they had better do so rather than they should starve” (“Death of a Midget Child” 3). Even with limited hours and performance days the show would not have been allowed as the proprietor admitted “he had not got a justice’s order to exhibit the child” (“Death of a Midget Child” 3). Prior to her death the baby had been found to be in a poor state of health by an Inspector Ball from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. At this point in time, the NSPCC were able to intervene in situations where they found children to be cruelly treated, so even if the child had lived the parents would probably have received a fine for ill treatment. However, the inspector had not acted on his disturbing findings prior to giving his evidence against the parents in this



trial. In this case the medical expertise problematizes the freak show and reinforces the dangers of public exhibition, but is only able to retrospectively support lawful restriction and control of freak display.

Attempts to limit the popular consumption of freaks were consequently moves to restrict the generative use of freaks by popular audiences and freak showmen. For instance, several print accounts of the English showman Tom Norman demonstrate authoritative challenges to his freak exhibitions, the most famous being that of “The Elephant Man”. In the *Manchester Guardian* the showman fined for the display of the balloon-headed baby is noted as the “Silver King” which was Tom Norman’s show name (“It Was Not in the Fiji Islands” 5). As well as this charge he appears to have had a number of other disputes concerning his various acts throughout his career. In an 1888 “WANTED” notice in the *Era*, Norman warns, “Kind regards to all pals. Enemies take a big back” implying that trouble must have been stirring around his recent shows (Norman, “Wanted Living Novelties” 18). Then, in 1891, he wrote a letter to the editor of the paper explaining the reasons for his incarceration at Pentonville Prison, stating that he believed he had only been fined once for causing an obstruction and had intended to appeal when summoned, but, in fact, he received thirteen summonses at once. All the same he had decided to “open the premises again, for one performance only” with trust that he would “receive the support of all showmen and others that are believers in the motto, ‘Live and let live;’ for, once stopped in London, provincial towns are sure to follow suit” (Norman, “To the Editor” 17). These short articles suggest the extent to which Norman had to battle against opposition to his trade from varied regulatory powers.

Due to the itinerant nature of freak shows and the small scale of many of them, showmen were often able to avoid the intervention of public authorities. When the courts did get involved, however, proceedings rarely ruled in favour of the freak show proprietor. In these instances medicine often served as an expert witness for verification of the facts. As shown in the cases above, the charges were usually brought against the showmen or owners of the freaks. When children were involved, especially later in the century, freak shows faced even further complications and opposition. While the appropriateness of viewing freaks was occasionally brought under scrutiny, it was the exhibitors and their profit from the discomfort of the freaks which caused the greatest upset. There was opposition to the use of freaks for the personal gains of showmen and one method to limit these encounters was to regulate the showmen. Various social sectors took advantage of freak generativity for different ends, but the most problematic encounters came when freaks were in the hands of showmen.

Intervention from the law, with the support of medical authority, meant restrictions could be placed on popular freak exhibitions, reinforcing medicine’s role as a regulatory power. Another method, which was actively pursued by medicine throughout the century, was to problematize

the encounter itself by stressing the inability for lay audiences to interpret and engage with freaks in an appropriate manner. This also allowed medicine to justify its own practices and boast of the profession's capabilities as a knowledgeable authority in Victorian society.

### **Popularizing Medicine as a Freak Authority: The Case of Joseph Merrick**

It was Tom Norman, again, whose famous exhibition of the "Elephant Man", Joseph Merrick, came to be one of the most popularised examples of medicine's condemnation of freak shows.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, Norman was never directly named in popular print articles on Merrick. Instead, as shown in the *Illustrated Police News*, it was acknowledged that Merrick "attempted to make a living by exhibiting himself under the circumstances perhaps the most pitiable form of bread-winning possible to conceive" ("The World It Is Said" 2). It was the idea that such a situation had been allowed to occur which became the most abhorrent element of the case. Indeed, when Merrick went into the care of the London Hospital, sometime after "the police stopped the exhibition of his deformities as against public decency", the chairman F.C. Carr Gomm wrote to the editor of the *Times*, appealing to the readers on Merrick's behalf (Gomm 6). Rather than lingering on Merrick's show life, the emphasis was placed on rousing public sympathy and encouraging contributions towards his maintenance in the hospital. Even though he acknowledged that the police were responsible for stopping the show, Gomm painted the medical community as Merrick's liberators. So, in disparaging the showman's generative use of Merrick, Gomm used Merrick's case for the generativity of medicine.

The perceived indignity of the freak show, by comparison to medical investigations, was highlighted in the chairman's reassurances to donors that the hospital would "prevent [Merrick's] 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 [*italics added*]" (Gomm 10). He even went so far as to point readers towards an issue of the *British Medical Journal* with Merrick's case should they wish to know further particulars on his deformity. The caveat in Gomm's claim of Merrick's newfound immunity from exhibition denotes the distinction made between popular and medical audiences and their respective display practices. By removing Merrick from the public arena to the medical and openly informing readers of the *Times* that science would satiate its curiosity in Merrick's condition, Gomm also professes the superiority of the medical gaze. Not only was

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<sup>56</sup> Rather than attempt a comprehensive history of Merrick (which has received much attention), I use his case here to demonstrate the distinctions made between popular and medical audiences. For more on Merrick's life see: Michael Howell and Peter Ford, *The True History of the Elephant Man*, London: Allison and Busby, 1983; and, Peter W. Graham and Fritz H. Oehlschlaeger, *Articulating the Elephant Man: Joseph Merrick and His Interpreters*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992.

medical curiosity legitimized in this correspondence, but it was further exalted by the appeal to the wider population for financial support of this work. Whether or not Merrick's life improved following this move from business to charity has been contested, but the London Hospital's superficial adoption of Merrick made him generatively useful for the profession by fostering the image of medicine as a charitable, caring profession concerned for freakish individuals.<sup>57</sup>

Gomm advocated medical scrutiny as a harmless means of freak consumption and reiterated that it was safer to view Merrick's body through medical representations. Just as showmen had long appealed to medical authorities, to science more generally, or even to nobility to authenticate their exhibitions as instructive amusements, so too did Gomm justify the curious gaze Merrick was subjected to in his new environment. While the medical interpretation and representation of freaks will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, Merrick's case shows the important distinction made between the use of freaks for popular and medical audiences. Gomm's letters inviting investment from sympathetic audiences for Merrick's support also present an alternate method of the consumption of freaks through monetary exchange. Nadja Durbach contends that the members of high society who were permitted to visit with Merrick did so through a transformed "commercial transaction" in that "it was only the elite, whose philanthropy paid for Merrick's upkeep, who were entitled to see him in the hospital" (Durbach 55). Further, she has argued that the "hospital itself was complicit in commodifying Merrick's monstrosity" and the surgeon Treves "not only exhibited Merrick's strange body, but later he also circulated his image as a photographic souvenir" (Durbach 41). Merrick's medical team did not imply that they could cure his condition; instead they strove to provide him with living quarters in which he could receive select visitors and be readily available for further medical investigation. His removal from the popular entertainment scene did not mark the end of his exhibition career; it simply changed the ways he was observed.

The necessity of medical intervention for the benefit of freaks is further stressed in responses to Gomm's initial appeal. One reader explained his own interactions with a nineteen-year-old boy, Albert Britnell, who was "only 3ft. 6in. in height, abnormally fat, and of weak intellect" and who "like Merrick, has occasionally been exhibited for money" (Poulton 7). Poulton pitied Britnell's circumstances and had unsuccessfully endeavoured to find him a suitable place. Since Gomm had made it clear that the London Hospital had made an exception

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<sup>57</sup> For more on this debate see Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, 337-357; Johanna Shapiro, "Young Doctors Come to See the Elephant Man," *Peering Behind the Curtain: Disability, Illness, and the Extraordinary Body in Contemporary Theatre*, ed. Thomas Fahy, and Kimball King, (New York: Routledge, 2002) 84-92; and, Christine Ferguson, "Elephant Talk: Language and Enfranchisement in the Merrick Case," *Victorian Freaks*, Ed. Marlene Tromp, (Columbus: Ohio UP, 2008) 114-133.

in housing Merrick, Poulton suggests the “foundation of an institution where the most terribly afflicted of humanity might have their life-long miseries alleviated” (Gomm 10; Poulton 7). Britnell and Merrick are portrayed as “poor sufferers” in need of a place tucked away from the general population to the restricted gaze of medical spectators. In answer to Poulton’s appeal the Resident Medical Superintendent at the Earlswood Asylum, C. S. W. Cobbold, points out that his institution and “other ‘idiot asylums’” are particularly suited for this purpose (Cobbold 4). He explains that the 1886 Idiots Act meant that those diagnosed as “‘imbecile[s]’”, who previously “were not thought ‘bad enough’ to be sent to an idiot asylum”, could now enter these institutions “upon a very simple form of certificate” (Cobbold 4). Therefore, many freaks who were deemed “incapable of being educated in an ordinary school”, like Merrick and Britnell, could now be diagnosed as imbeciles and sent to an asylum (Cobbold 4).

What is notable about this exchange encouraging medical and authoritative intervention is that it is presented in the pages of a popular newspaper. Here, medical practitioners are represented as official figures in the care and control over freaks. The popular freak encounter through monetary exchange is portrayed as a crude form of entertainment, while the access to these bodies for medicine is unchallenged and seen as necessary. Even in the inquest following Joseph Merrick’s death the medical opinion goes unquestioned in the coroner’s report and was quickly accepted by the jury (“Death of ‘The Elephant Man’” 6). Merrick’s case exemplifies the superior status of medicine represented in popular accounts of freak and medical encounters. In claiming authoritative rights over freakish bodies medicine attempted to distance its practices from those accessible to the lay public and these portrayals in the popular press from medical figures, Gomm and Cobbold, reflect this effort.

The inclusion of medicine in the lay press, whether the material referred to freaks or other health concerns, was often discussed in the medical press. Amongst the profession this was a contested issue. The cases above demonstrate how medical practitioners were often represented as respectable authoritative figures that could (and should) mediate popular encounters with freaks. In this sense, freaks were generatively useful to the popular image of medicine due to their contribution to the profession’s preferred image. However, the crossover of medicine and popular culture also had the potential to damage the reputation of the discipline as a learned authority. As Lawrence notes, it was in the everyday activities of medicine that its recognition as a social authority came to be, so both the popular and medical press representations had a role in the creation of this image (C. Lawrence, *Medicine in the Making of Modern Britain, 1700-1920* 45–46).

### Jurisdiction of the Medical Press

The elitism of medical discussion and language is evident in the medical journal commentary on the inclusion of medical terms in the popular press. Whether it was the editorials claiming “the limits of good taste and professional propriety are exceeded” when medical details appeared in the lay press, or even correspondents writing of the “holy horror” at the thought of the public reading “medical details at the breakfast table” there was a clear protest against the public exposure to excessive medical knowledge (“London: Saturday, November 28, 1891” 1231; “The Lay Press and Medical Research” 1354). Medicine sought the image of an elite, respectable discipline and the exposure of too much medical jargon in the popular press gave lay readers access to restricted knowledge.

There was some discrepancy in the reactions to the public engagement with such information with some finding it an offence of concern and others an entertaining simplification of complicated subjects better suited for professional consideration. In the popular treatment of “the leprosy question”, for example, the *British Medical Journal* found it “amusing to note the inaccurate information and dogmatic assertions” in the lay press, and the *Lancet* was similarly thrilled by a “wonderful little paragraph” found in the popular press on eczema which “contain[s] facts startlingly novel and marvellously expressed” (“The Lay Press And Leprosy” 749; “Medical Knowledge in the Lay Press” 1340). By contrast, another piece in the *British Medical Journal* “regret[s] the unfortunate vogue attained by the subject [of Fuchsine Bodies] in the lay press, and the fatuous anticipations there developed” (Hare 489). Also, a piece in the *Lancet* criticized a doctor’s writing on cancer for a popular publication and his inclusion “of so much that is technical [...] that it will either be passed over by the readers of the journal in question, or be productive of much confusion in their minds” (“The Vulgarisation of Medical Science” 89). Yet, another piece acknowledges that some health issues are of “such great national and international consequence that the newspapers cannot be expected to abstain altogether from discussing them” (“Medical Articles in Lay Press” 949). While there was fear and amusement over the simplification of medical issues, it was also understood that medicine needed an accessible presence in the public mind to maintain its professional image.

As this small sampling is all from 1890 or 1891, a point when universities had specialized medical courses and the discipline had defined itself as a profession, these concerns were largely dedicated to the maintenance of a respectable professional status, avoiding any inaccuracies in articles attributed to experts in the discipline. Thus, the worry over the spillage of medical knowledge into popular culture was not just about the possible loss of medicine’s elite status, but also the inability of lay press readers to properly understand the technical material. If the lay public misunderstood complicated, technical health conditions

and treatments, the results of misunderstandings or inaccurate representations would reflect poorly on the profession as a whole. Medicine was not keen on the potential effects public engagement would have, so the inclusion of extensive detail on medical conditions was highly criticised. Indeed, it was deemed preferable “if many of the so-called medical articles that appear in our lay papers were suppressed” (“Medical Science in the Lay Press” 410).

Even within the scientific sphere, W. H. Brock argues, medical language and representation was limited, often restricted to exchanges on public health concerns. Yet, Brock also relays a “rare example of a medical man urging an ‘increased acquaintance on the part of the public with medical and physiological principles’” in the 1860 case of Thomas Mayo, the President of the Royal College of Physicians (Brock 81). Mayo presented his argument to the Royal Institution for the wider engagement in the learned disciplines, since “Cooperation between doctor and patient was essential if success was to be achieved; and this was only possible if a well-informed public made sensible choices” (Brock 80). As the above examples make clear, Mayo’s position was an exception, with the general consensus being that the public should be aware of the benefit and contribution medicine made to society, but without direct advice or technical jargon. Similar to the later criticisms in medical journals on doctors contributing to the non-medical press, Dr William Henry Stone’s 1872 columns in the *English Mechanic* received “violent attacks” and “accusations that he was offering a free medical service” from the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* (Brock 84). Brock’s study on the interaction of medicine and the scientific press infers that medical men generally kept abreast of scientific news and developments, but scientific periodicals usually resisted, or were discouraged from, disseminating information on medicine. So, even within other learned circles, medicine was made an exclusive field of knowledge solely for the discussion of those in the profession.

This need for authority over all medical discussions is another point of interest in the medical exchange with the popular freak show. While the discipline battled with medical seepages into popular media it was apparently fine with borrowing freaks from popular culture for scrutiny and recontextualisation within the technical and professional parameters of medical journals. The next chapter will explore three particular cases where popularly exhibited freaks were recontextualised in the medical journal setting for purposes of legacy creation, but the remainder of this chapter will discuss the problematization, rather than the reattribution, of freakish bodies for the generative purposes of medicine. In order to provide a broad scope of medical audiences, I will primarily refer to pieces from the *British Medical Journal* and the *Lancet*. These two medical weeklies, aimed at all medical practitioners rather than particular specialists, competed in reporting items of professional importance and “socio-

medical” concern, and maintained high circulation numbers throughout the nineteenth century (Bartrip 138).

Medical journals were a crucial form of communication within the practice of medicine. Andrew King has recognised that the “specialist press was central to the definition and professionalization of medicine” giving many doctors “extra income as well as a professional identity” (King, “Medicine and Journalism” 407). In fact, W. F. Bynum and Janice C. Wilson contend, “occupational pluralism was a central feature of medical life in Victorian Britain” and many of the medical men who “achieved professional success in medicine had editorial stints in their background” (W. F. Bynum and J. C. Wilson 41). Within the printed pages, doctors could share their cases, keep up to date with the transactions of the various medical societies, re-read notable lectures and keep abreast of recent debates. These debates could range from methodological topics of medical diagnosis and treatment to wider discussions concerning the perception of medicine in society. Reports on cases notable for their rarity or for their advancement on current practices were common features within the pages of medical journals and help portray the communal spirit of medicine in its days of professionalization. In fact, it has been shown that generally medical case reports from the mid to late nineteenth century were reflective of the “interpersonal relations within the community” and made a significant contribution to the “group identity” of doctors (Taavitsainen and Pahta 72). When shared as articles within the journal pages these case reports reflect a communal effort to maintain medicine’s image and practices for the future of the profession. Medical journals provided a forum for “professional consolidation” throughout the Victorian period (W. F. Bynum and J. C. Wilson 31). In other words, the journals were spaces for the cultural generativity of medicine.

In the move towards professionalization, the style and form of medical journalism underwent some significant unifying developments. Whether the various reports were reprints of lectures or initially written as articles, they shared “similar linguistic features” that placed the author at the forefront of the narrative with little subjective input from the patient (Taavitsainen and Pahta 65). As the century progressed even the doctor’s voice would “wane” as the “language shift[ed] to the passive voice and focus[ed] on behaviors” (Atkinson 346; Hurwitz, “Form and Representation” 229).<sup>58</sup> Another important shift to note is the increased inclusion of “*multiple instances* of similar medical events [emphasis in original]” (Atkinson 362). With the “comparison of one case with the written accounts of others, case reports

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<sup>58</sup> The studies of Taavitsainen and Pahta, Atkinson, and Hurwitz (2007) each span a significant amount of material across large time frames, so their findings relating to the latter part of the nineteenth century are based on small samples. Each study considers different sources for the examination of medical linguistics, but there is an agreement across all three works demonstrating the influence of contemporary medical practices on the rhetoric in medical writing.

provide vital orientation and contextualization” (Hurwitz, “Form and Representation” 217). This move, in particular, demonstrates changes in practices as the number of hospital spaces increased and doctors increasingly inhabited a shared medical environment. The medical journal was equally representative of communal practice and knowledge exchange. Further, the inclusion of multiple instances of one condition, whether as a collection of recent cases or a reference to those available in literature, was a means to create a normative model of that specific condition. Therefore, the shared space of the medical journal helped found and support standardized methods in the observation, categorization and treatment of anomalous conditions, making the efforts in medical journalism pertinent to the discussion of medicine and freaks.

Lisa Kochanek has illustrated the way mid-century cases of freaks within the *British Medical Journal* and the *Lancet* sought to fill a void within medical practice by creating “clinical monstrosity” and “a methodical system of deciphering and representing monstrous corporal space” (Kochanek 230, 231). Referring to cases of deformity discussed within the journals, Kochanek demonstrates the concerted efforts to represent the “medical gaze as distinct from every other form of looking” (Kochanek 227). By distinguishing medical interactions with freaks, the popular engagement could be problematized. However, in spite of these efforts, clinical reportage of freaks at the end of the century still betrayed the “influence of cultural thinking on medicine”, such as, in the continued circulation of the maternal impressions theory (Kochanek 241).

Medical journals disclose the lack of a fully-formed clinical discourse in the textual and visual portrayals of deformity, drawing on descriptors and iconographies established by showmen. There was also significant variation in the level of patient narrative that was included, even as there was a move towards the use of multiple cases to explain and diagnose the variations of each condition. With freak conditions this meant drawing on older cases, constituting case histories for individuals from evidence that stemmed from their subjection to the gaze of exhibition-going audiences. These references to freak legacies are reminiscent of the articles discussed in the first chapter which also drew on freak history found in public discourse. Thus, medical journals were important spaces for the communal generativity of the medical profession. At the same time, they reveal that the embeddedness of freaks in popular culture complicated the medical problematization of freak exhibition, since medicine, too, generatively used and exhibited freakish bodies.



### Maternal Impressions and Teratology

Despite the attempts made to distinguish the medical engagement with freaks from other modes, the journals reveal that medicine not only often relied on popular entertainment for freak legacies, but sometimes also shared in popular historical beliefs. While freak shows openly promoted the maternal impressions theory to popular audiences, many medical men denounced the idea in favour of scientific explanations. By the late nineteenth century Teratology, being the scientific study of both plant and animal abnormal formations, was a recognised part of scientific medicine. However, the point at which deformity occurred and consequently the proper mode for the classification of deformities was still contested, and the belief in maternal impressions contributed to this debate. Bertram Windle, John Bland Sutton and John Ballantyne, for example, were three end-of-the-century doctors with different specialties who sought to dispel this anachronistic belief by arguing that deformities often occurred before the supposed instance of impression (Windle, "On Certain Early Malformations of the Embryo" 436–453; Windle, "Monsters And Teratology" 669; Bland-Sutton, "On a Parasitic Foetus" 24–25; Bland-Sutton, *Tumours*; Ballantyne, *Manual: The Embryo*; Ballantyne, *Manual: The Foetus*). Yet, even as late as 1891 the *Lancet* noted "That any influence, such as fear, grief, or sudden fright, which so often causes disturbances of function, if not actual disease, in a pregnant woman should also produce very profound disturbance upon the child *in utero* is on the face of it extremely probable" ("Maternal Impressions" 1179). In perpetuating the idea of maternal impressions medicine could further discourage the popular interaction with freaks as a preventative medical measure, while disbelief in the theory justified the withdrawal of freaks from the popular sphere for investigative purposes. Either side of the maternal impressions debate fuelled the medical problematization of popular freak encounters and generatively bolstered the reputation of medicine. While the complex history of the debate on the theory of maternal impressions in nineteenth-century scientific circles warrants a solitary study, its ongoing presence at the end of the century is relevant in the discussion of freaks in medicine and medical journals due to its simultaneous commonality in freak show narratives.<sup>59</sup>

Freaks became generatively useful in promoting the image of medicine as an authoritative profession regardless of the stance taken on maternal impressions. Ideas surrounding the formation of freakish bodies in the womb, both folklore and scientific theories, varied widely within the medical field, to the point that Gould and Pyle decided to

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<sup>59</sup> See Heather McHold, "Diagnosing Difference: The Scientific, Medical and Popular Engagement with Monstrosity in Victorian Britain," PhD Thesis, Northwestern University, 2002; Dennis Todd, *Imagining Monsters: Miscreations of the Self in Eighteenth-Century England*, Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995; and, Marie Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1993.

“attempt no scientific discussion of causation or embryological derivation of the monster, contenting ourselves with simple history and description” in their collection of medical accounts on anomalous bodies (166). Despite many works claiming the implausibility of maternal impressions, contributors to both the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* continued to justify their experiences of monstrous births through this theory in the late decades of the nineteenth century. As one reader wrote to the *Lancet*, “If it is true that maternal impressions do influence the development of the foetus in utero, then such sickening specimens of maimed or deformed humanity as are frequently seen in our streets should not be allowed to make the most of their deformities for the purpose of begging. Neither should such persons be used for exhibition at places of public entertainment” (Chapman 853). Chapman was not alone in his concern for the public exhibition of monstrosity and his reasoning would justify what Bates terms a “medical monopoly” of anomalous bodies (Bates, “Indecent and Demoralising” 2). From this point of view freakish bodies were thought to create further cases of monstrosity for medical practitioners to handle. However, the opposite opinion was that “supporters of the maternal impression doctrine cannot show how physical influence in the mother may influence the development of the child” and “as a rule, monstrosities can be traced to more definite sources” (“Maternal Impressions” 1322). Further, manuals for medical practice relied on the recent advances of knowledge made through embryology and disputed the claims of maternal impressions, especially as “the assigned cause often happens at a period of pregnancy when the malformation must have been already present” (Coats and Sutherland 33). If encounters with abnormal bodies or even mothers bearing a physical deformity could impress these differences onto growing foetuses then medicine would have a need to control freakish reproduction, but medicine would also need full access to these bodies if it was to disprove this theory.

John William Ballantyne was considered one of the “modern authorities” on monstrous births and dedicated much of his manuals on antenatal development to the study of teratology (“Maternal Impressions” 1322). In his 1902, *Manual of Antenatal Pathology and Hygiene: The Embryo*, he explained that the “pathology of the embryo is practically synonymous with the subject of Teratology” and could be approached in three ways:

a simple description may be given of the various monstrosities, with regard to their anatomy, physiology, social and economic results, and the like; or teratological phenomena may be used for the purpose of explaining embryological problems or as a means of clearing up difficulties in the domain of foetal physiology; or, finally, the whole subject may be approached from the side of causation, and attention be focused upon the genetic aspects of abnormal formations. While not neglecting the first and second methods of

study, I have endeavoured to specialise the third plan; for, after all, the most important matter is to reach a solution of the problem of causation, because, if that be reached, there begins to be hope that preventative treatment may be discovered. (Ballantyne, *Manual: The Embryo* v)

Therefore, Ballantyne's approach to teratology supported the need for medicine to access and study freakish bodies. Freaks were a resource for the development of scientific knowledge. Just as the insertion of medical details in the popular press, discussed above, was largely regarded as an irresponsible act of medical men, so too was the continued popular access to freaks. Maternal impressions was one theory that problematized the popular encounter with freaks while it exalted the necessity of medical intervention.

At the same time, the long-standing debate shows that medicine struggled to fully extract its practices and logic from the public sphere. Being a rich source of specimens, the freak show provided generative opportunities to establish the superior knowledge and status of the medical profession. So, rather than solely trying to distinguish its own practices from those of popular entertainment, medicine attempted to problematize popular encounters with subjects better suited to specialist discourse.

### **Medical Encounters with Silenced Freaks**

Although medicine strove to differentiate its language and interpretation from those presented in popular print, the exhibition of freakish bodies was a shared practice in the two spheres. Distinguishing the art of the profession from public entertainment practices was a challenge medicine could not easily overcome, but often attempted through the use of dead freak bodies. In their afterlives freaks were often permanently transformed by the medical profession into scientific specimens. Not only did the preserved specimens indicate scientific authority over the bodies through the preservation processes, they also conveyed the control medicine held over posthumous understandings of freaks through the discipline's ability to interpret the dead freaks. In using deceased freaks, the reinterpretation procedure was arguably much easier for the medical man as he could not be challenged by his source. However, as with objects within any collection or museum, it should not be "assume[d] that objects and their meaning are frozen once they join a collection" (Alberti, "Objects and the Museum" 567). Preserved specimens became objects for perpetual reinterpretation, requiring medicine to limit popular encounters if these interpretations were to be controlled and scientific.

The example of Julia Pastrana, discussed above, demonstrates the flexibility of preserved freak bodies to serve the generativity of both popular and scientific cultures. The

printed and physical afterlives of freaks became important sites of reference in the development of medical knowledge in the latter part of the Victorian era. Bearing this in mind one doctor, who oversaw the birth of triplets – two being conjoined twins, explains how he “took the prodigies to the studio of a photographer, where I had them photographed in three different positions, which clearly shows the point of union” (Clements 755). While preserving freak bodies in text, image or specimen was increasingly important to medicine, living cases, such as Joseph Merrick, continued to be brought before scientific audiences in society meetings. In these modes of museum and society meeting display medicine paralleled the popular exhibition practices that it sought to problematize and limit. The appropriation of popular subjects to the restricted medical sphere was a means to strengthen the public perception of medicine and promote its legacy.

### **Anatomy Museums**

The eighteenth-century surgeon John Hunter, who will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, famously collected and prepared anatomical specimens throughout his life. These were estimated to have amounted to over 13,000 specimens by the time of his passing. One of Hunter’s biographers remarked that Hunter’s interests extended past the use of specimens in medical training and on top of his “specimens illustrating comparative anatomy or physiology [...] He added to them, by the work of his own hands, or by incessant expenditure of money, thousands of preparations in human anatomy, and in pathology; skulls of all nations, stuffed animals, fossils” (Paget 248). The size and diversity of this collection addressed both the practical need to study anatomy as well as recreational interests in natural history. Once under the care of the Royal College of Surgeons, Hunter’s collection was regulated by the professional body and constituted a medical museum, so the lay public were not admitted into the museum.<sup>60</sup>

However, throughout the century there were several popular anatomical museums that were accessible to the public “marketed variously as teaching facilities for medical professionals, diversionary entertainments for the middle classes, and educational opportunities for the working classes” (Stephens, “Pathologizing Leaky Male Bodies” 428).<sup>61</sup> Here, visitors were presented a “heterogeneous collection of displays, including gross

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<sup>60</sup> Alberti discusses the discrepancy between the access to public museums and specialized or medical museums in the nineteenth century and their “attempts to condition the very experience of the visit” (Alberti, “The Museum Affect” 380).

<sup>61</sup> Stephens cites museums other than Kahn’s that were both outside of London and lasted until the twenty-first century (Stephens, “Pathologizing Leaky Male Bodies” 428). However, other sources such as Bates contest that anatomical museums had been completely shut down in England by the 1870s (Bates, “Indecent and Demoralising” 2).

pathology exhibits, skeletal remains, anatomical waxworks, and bottled ‘monstrosities’” (Stephens, “Pathologizing Leaky Male Bodies” 428–9). Of the popular commercial museums, Dr. Kahn’s Anatomical and Pathological Museum, set up in 1851, was perhaps the most famous. Unfortunately for the proprietor, who initially won the support for his museum from the medical community, “[a]fter 22 years, and several bizarre legal cases, opposition from self-appointed representatives of the medical profession and anti-vice campaigners forced it to close” under the 1857 Obscene Publications Act (Bates, “Dr Kahn’s Museum” 618). Indeed, the Act “branded all public display of anatomical specimens as potentially obscene” (Bates, “Dr Kahn’s Museum” 618). While at first the profession had shown support for Kahn’s proposed efforts to acquaint the public with the “Laws of Health and the detrimental effects of neglecting them” this was later withdrawn (Kahn qtd. in Stephens 430). This can be attributed to the medical profession’s increased objection to the unlicensed health advice being given to museum patrons and reflects the sentiment expressed in the medical journals against the dissemination of medical discourse in the popular sphere. As with the cases discussed above, medical men allied with the regulators of the law to prevent and control the widespread engagement with freakish bodies. While suitable for the consumption of curious medical minds, freakish formations were again made problematic when presented in the public domain.

Under the Medical Registration Act of 1858 only licensed professionals were entitled to give health advice and this had been the presiding factor in the closure of Kahn’s museum. But, there was tension within the discipline due to the challenging of older traditions in medical training and practice by the establishment of specialist hospitals. While they contributed to the prestige of the expert, hospitals allowed “consultant surgeons and physicians [...] to dominate the profession” (N. Parry and J. Parry 139). In closing anatomy museums doctors could at least unite in their authority over the body. A. W. Bates explains:

The medical profession’s labelling of public anatomy museums as obscene can be seen as a strategy for creating a medical monopoly of anatomy by categorizing it as knowledge from which laypeople could be excluded on moral grounds. Under English obscenity laws, professionals, by virtue of their education, social background and character, were deemed impervious to influences that could corrupt the weaker-minded public. By the 1870s, the practice of anatomy was the hurdle that initiated, and sometimes deterred, entrants to the medical profession. Though it enhanced the reputation of medical men as professional and dispassionate observers (Bates, “Indecent and Demoralising” 2).

Through this practice medicine established the perception of its cold objectivity otherwise referred to as the “medical gaze”. By forcing the closure of popular anatomy museums, medicine was attempting to limit understandings of the body that were not regulated by them directly; therefore, promoting a unified medical profession and dominating the generative use of preserved freaks. Rather than allow potential comparisons between the specimens in anatomical museums and freak shows, medicine drew on its authoritative power to keep popular audiences at a distance. This emphasis on the scientific nature of anatomical specimens and their suitability only for learned audiences further problematized the exposure of similar subjects in popular exhibitions.

Despite the closure of popular museums such as Kahn’s, many specimens, particularly bottled monstrosities or “pickled punks”, continued to circulate for public consumption. This trend highlights the contradictory relationship medicine held with popular entertainment. Medicine sought both access and control over the bodies presenting unique anatomies in exhibition culture. The extent to which either control was taken or access was granted varied considerably, but all instances point to the conflation of medicine and the freak show in the nineteenth century. Generally, the anatomical specimens that continued to be available to popular audiences in the latter part of the nineteenth century were preserved freaks. Most commonly they would tour as part of a collection either with living freaks or other objects deemed to be “curiosities”. There was no shortage of such items in England as cabinets of curiosities had had a long history. Indeed, “in the 1820s, possession of a museum worth more than £500 was suggested as a prerequisite for an anatomy teacher to be recognized by the College of Surgeons” (Bates, “Indecent and Demoralising” 5). Many of the touring exhibitions were similar to the Hunterian collection in that they would also comprise of anatomical and natural specimens. For the most part these spectacular displays of items that would usually reside within medical jurisdiction were uninterrupted by challenges from medicine, unless such an objection would grant an opportunity to exercise authority or expertise.

An 1893 case of a preserved pair of conjoined twins provides one example of the dispute over ownership of freak specimens. In this instance a showman, by the name of Robins, left a pair of preserved boys in a broken case at a lodging house in the Torquay area. The methylated spirits preserving them had leaked, causing the bodies to enter a state of decomposition. Due to the “disagreeable smell” this created, the lodging manager contacted the police and Robins was summoned to an inquest (“Strange Discovery” n.p.). What is interesting about this particular case is that the Coroner leading the inquest was only interested in Robins’s dealings with the twins once decomposition had begun for when the “bodies were in a state of preservation that [was] another matter” and “no offense was committed”. However, since Robins had not taken measures to ensure the bodies were

“properly buried” once the case had cracked, initiating the decomposition, his actions were brought into question with a peripheral interest in the death of the twins and his acquisition of them. Two doctors were called on for evidence in the inquest. Dr. Eales was questioned before the jury to verify that the smell elicited from the decomposing bodies and in that state they were “dangerous to the public health”. The other man was Dr. Cook of Birmingham (not physically present at the inquest) who had written both the birth and death certificates for Edmund and Harry Freeman (the twin boys) in November 1887 and had determined the cause of death to have been “asthenia”. In his summary the Coroner referred to this evidence Dr. Cook had written. He had confirmed that they had “died three days after birth” but “[t]here was no evidence to show what became of them afterwards. They had got into a showman’s hands, but how they did not know” (“Strange Discovery” n.p.). Dr. Eales’ evidence in this incident amounted to expertise on the proper handling of preserved specimens and the dangers of decomposing bodies. His use to the inquest was quite clear and allowed him to act as the representative of a responsible body of medicine.

Dr. Cook’s evidence, on the other hand, extended beyond his confirmation of the twins’ birth and death to the precarious divide between medical and popular exhibition cultures. During his evidence the showman indicated that he had “bought the certificate” at the same time as the twins and that there had been “an article in the *Lancet* about them” (“Strange Discovery” n.p.). For Cook, the twins had provided an opportunity for his exposure in the medical community, due to the interest in their rare condition, but the means of his recognition had also benefitted the showman. Cook’s expertise had authenticated the anomaly for popular exhibition purposes since Robins used much the same evidence from Cook that would subsequently be presented to the court for the control of these exhibition practices. Thus, Cook’s evidence simultaneously supported regulatory powers, show practices and the generativity of medicine through the confirmation of medical authority and expert knowledge.

### **Medical Exhibitions of Monstrous Specimens**

Dr. Cook’s relationship with the twins also brings into consideration the exhibition of curious bodies within the profession. Medicine regularly demonstrated its authoritative knowledge of freaks in private medical society meetings. Just under two weeks after the death of the twins, Cook took the opportunity to participate in the meeting of the Midland Medical Society by giving a presentation on the twins. A very short summary of his case and the others shown within the meeting were given in the *Lancet*, as was normal practice. In fact most medical societies were given space to share their proceedings as well as being included in the

calendar of upcoming events in the issue preceding their meeting.<sup>62</sup> The reports usually list the cases brought before the society, giving brief details of each including any significant discussion that may have been provoked by the presentation. The Freeman boys were presented thus:

Mr. H. S. Cook showed a case of foetal monstrosity: male twins joined together from the ensiform cartilage to the umbilicus. The mother was delivered naturally, the presentation of the first being a vertex and the second a footling. One lived two days and a half, and the other three. They were both fed with milk, both micturated, but only one had a motion. The living child, after the death of the other, was so feeble that any operation of separation was out of the question. ("Midland Medical Society" 1271)

While the summary indicates that the twins were not presented as a preserved specimen before the Society, Cook certainly still made use of his brief encounter with them in raising his own profile. The summary shows that Cook's case was taken at face value without eliciting further conversation on the twins or the condition. As will be later discussed, the birth of double monsters was not a common occurrence, yet neither was it completely unknown. Rather, the survival of conjoined twins was the oddity and the separation of twins would have definitely secured greater recognition for Cook. All the same, in just this brief summary Cook had attached his name to a rare case that would be circulated nationally as part of the Society's report.

Both the *British Medical Journal* and the *Lancet* reserved a section of their periodical for the inclusion of regional and national society reports, printing a few each week. Indeed, the *BMJ* even "employed three men to cover the meetings of the London medical societies" (Bartrip 138). Yet, as shown by Cook's presentation, medical societies existed and met throughout the nation. The small account of Cook's local case was typical practice. Members could present on any cases they felt worthy of the attention of their peers and freakish bodies were often included. Therefore, medical legacy-building through the use of freaks was a national, widespread preoccupation, and, as shown in the reports from larger societies, it impacted practices at every level. Since the society meetings were restricted to its members, and the reports appeared in the medical press, the freakish bodies were being generatively used for the promotion of the profession to those within it. Like the regular popular print representations of freaks, medical representations led to further presentations of freakish bodies. Unlike popular encounters with these bodies, however, the exhibition of freakish corporeality did not need to be justified.

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<sup>62</sup> This was also normal practice in the *British Medical Journal*.



In another report, Professor John Cleland made use of a specimen and even alluded to his entire collection. In his presidential address to the Section of Anatomy and Physiology of the British Medical Association he “dwelt upon the interest and importance of teratology as exemplifying the influence of natural laws working in unnatural or unusual circumstances” (“The Sections” 317). He argued against the reliance on maternal impressions and “showed, in illustration of this, an anncephalic monster” whose condition was “attributable rather to dropsy of the cerebro-spinal axis” than to the mother’s shock at seeing the “cervical vertebra of a horse, so painted as to resemble a clergyman with uplifted arms and head seated upon the trunk” (“The Sections” 317). In concluding on the value of monstrosities as “illustrations of the action of natural laws” Cleland also “referred to his preparations, both human and comparative, normal, abnormal, and, pathological, numbering 441 specimens, displayed in an adjoining room” (“The Sections” 317). While Cleland clearly had more visibility than Cook did in his presentation, the results are similar. His thoughts on the subject of teratology and his collection of specimens would now be known by an audience beyond those in attendance. Medical societies were a valuable resource in fostering the medical community and uplifting the profession, but the added support of medical journals meant an even wider dispersal of knowledge and opinion within the discipline.

The reports from the societies also bring attention to the exhibition of living specimens during the meetings. In their description these instances were represented very similarly to the exhibition of preserved specimens or other case presentations. Aside from the short statement at the top of the report it would be difficult to tell apart the cases that were exhibited live before the members and those that were brought before the society through the doctor’s representations. For example, Dr. Cook “showed” his case to the Midland Medical Society, but there is no further indication that this was through anything more than his oral representation. In a report from the Harveian Society, “Exhibition of Living Specimens” is stated under the title, yet the rest of the language would make it difficult to decipher the difference between the representation of the cases at this meeting and those at the Midland Medical Society. In five of the nine cases at the Harveian meeting, the doctors “showed” their patients, two “exhibited”, one “brought forward” and one “sent” (“Harveian Society” 654). The descriptive language in these reports is limited and seems primarily intended to list everything included in the meetings, rather than provide explicit details for those not in attendance. As with Cook’s presentation of conjoined twins, a couple of cases in this Harveian Society meeting were reminiscent of freak show exhibitions in the showcasing of a three-month-old with a third leg and a sixteen-year-old with elephantiasis. Yet, the point of their being living freakish bodies brought to stand before members of the society was unremarkable in the report. In their

ability to serve the generative purposes of the profession, this medical equivalent to freak exhibitions appears an assumed right of the discipline.

Instances of freakish bodies being brought before the medical societies were common practice and were not limited to particular societies or regions. For example, in a meeting of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland, dedicated to cases involving Caesarean Section, Dr. Macan detailed the success of the procedure in the case of a dwarf, “which was, as far as he could learn, the only successful case ever performed in Ireland” (“Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland” 755). This case allowed praise of a medical triumph even with the added difficulty of performing the procedure on an abnormal body. Back in London, Dr. Barlow “showed a little ‘Woodlouse-shaped’ Child” before the Clinical Society of London (“Clinical” 24 Oct. 924). Here, the woodlouse comparison was provided in the representation: “It walked on its elbows and knees and its mode of progression was not unlike that of a woodlouse” (“Clinical” 24 Oct. 924). In this case it was also noted that Dr. Wilson had shown a similar specimen two years earlier, providing a context for its consideration. Both the large national societies and smaller local organisations normalised the representation of freakish bodies as ordinary specimens in their meetings.

However, in a report from “an ordinary” meeting of the Clinical Society of London, the exhibition of living patients is emphasised. Again, some of the specimens have conditions which might be seen in the freak show, such as Acromegaly and “Sporadic Cretinism” (“Clinical” 14 Feb. 404). As with the Harveian Society example the “Exhibition of Living Specimens” was noted in the subtitle, and reiterated further down that “[t]he following living specimens were [...] demonstrated” after the President’s opening remarks (“Clinical” 14 Feb. 404). In this report less information was given for the exhibited patients with each of the seven specimens receiving a single sentence of description, and only one had his condition further elucidated with notes read out later in the meeting. Similar to the other meetings, the same introductory verbs were used for the displays. The significant difference in this meeting was the disturbance caused by the presence of patients as a “Dr. Glover called attention to the inconvenience arising from patients being present during the discussion of their cases” at the end of the meeting (“Clinical” 14 Feb. 406). The President responded with the assurance “that this would be quite obviated when they removed to their larger rooms” and the Secretary requested “early notice of any cases they might intend to exhibit” (“Clinical” 14 Feb. 406). The close proximity of patients was problematic to the professionals and needed to be controlled in future events. No further indication was made as to the most troubling aspect of the presence of living specimens and it simply may have been the strain to fit additional bodies in the space. With a later meeting also including living specimens, making no reference to the problem of their presence, it would appear the problem was mitigated by the change in rooms

("Clinical" 9 May 1072–1073). Yet, the comment is also worth considering for its indication of medical authority over these bodies. The doctors needed the patients' bodies in order to share the experience of the disorders presented in each, but were not necessarily open to the patients being privy to the thoughts behind their scrutiny. In the notes on the Clinical Society meetings the only discussions represented were those arising from the cases presented without living bodies suggesting a possible discomfort in the intellectual contemplation of disease before the lay public (here, the patients). The society meetings, like the journals, were spaces for the exchange of knowledge within the profession and it was intended to keep such knowledge within these borders. From within the profession the "advantages of medical societies in aiding individual medical workers and so benefiting the community" was readily acknowledged ("Hunterian Society" 654). In the same manner that the anatomy museums could be justifiably closed to the public so too could the exhibitions at the society meetings. It was within these confines that the medical community sought to strengthen its practices, with the objective of bringing only the beneficial results of these private exchanges to the population at large.

Beyond the reports from society meetings freakish bodies regularly graced the pages of the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*. Indeed, the *British Medical Journal* remarked on its own "great abundance of teratological material" including "many fine illustrations of monsters", all of which "must not and cannot be allowed to run to waste" ("Monsters and Teratology" 441). Freakish formations, or monsters, were deemed valuable and necessary for the continued development of the profession and were therefore justified material for medical journals. For instance, a case report submitted to the *Lancet* detailed the birth of a "monstrosity" who's "face resembled that of a frog" (Armstrong 657). The child's vertebrae had not fused and in the illustration accompanying the report and the back appears to be split in two parts. This report simply states the facts of the case and provides a sketch for the readers' benefit. In keeping with the ambiguity still surrounding maternal impressions the doctor noted, "there was no history of shock or fright during pregnancy" (Armstrong 657). Armstrong's case is one example of many that medical men regularly shared for the consideration of their peers. Both exhibited freaks and bodies with freakish deformities (living or deceased) were presented in the journals for the scrutiny of their monstrous formations. As this case shows, the cause of deformity and abnormalities were still unknown, so medicine continued to appropriate freakish bodies as specimens for research. These freaks, therefore, served the generativity of the medical profession by providing sources for the improvement and confirmation of medical knowledge.

## Conclusion

Due to the flexibility in their interpretation freaks appealed to both popular and medical audiences. When freaks appeared before medical audiences in society meetings or in journals, the spectators and their method of consuming the extraordinary sights were not questioned. Yet, as demonstrated here, the appropriateness of spectators and showmen for popular freak exhibitions were often challenged by social authorities. Due to its own role as a negotiator of freakish bodies, medicine became a credible supporter, and often instigator, for the restriction of freak viewership. In this position of authoritative power medicine exercised control over freak exhibitions by supporting other institutions policing the displays as well as appropriating freakish corporeality as a subject primarily for medical inquiry. In problematizing the popular freak encounter, medicine sought to distinguish its own engagement with freakish bodies. Further, medicine's pursuit of professionalization boosted the importance of medical journals for the consolidation of its members, excusing the inclusion of freak representations in the journals as necessary specimens for the development of medical knowledge. The various print portrayals of medicine, both popular and medical, presented in this chapter illustrate the perceived superiority of the profession in freak encounters. Through both policing and interpreting of freakish bodies, freaks provided a means for the generativity, or legacy-making, of medicine as an expert profession.

The next chapter will present three particular case studies where popular performing freaks were repositioned in medical journals as specimens of study. However, even in these learned depictions attempting to appropriate the generativity of freaks for the exaltation of medicine, the freaks are riddled with their show presentations and the legacy of former freaks.

## Chapter Four: Freaks for Medical Legacy

[...] culture is not an adversary but a collaborator. It offers a ride to the future in exchange for a human face to concretize its symbols. The individual weaves an aspect of himself into a tapestry of meaning that has extension and continuity. He becomes the voice of a tradition larger than himself, and the tradition flows through him to the young. In this way culture carries on. (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* 15)

In 1898, an article in the *British Medical Journal* introduced the case of a boy with a third leg, after first reminding readers of a few well-known freak cases with supernumerary limbs. Before introducing the details of this patient, the author first refers to the “celebrated Laloo” whose “portrait is familiar to us, as it has been reproduced in numerous textbooks” as well as the “celebrated Dos Santos” and the “*dame à quatre jambes* [italics in original]” (“Posterior Dichotomy” 1528).<sup>63</sup> In each reference the author also notes the name of the doctor who presented the freak case to his peers. This short case study presents a common feature in medical journal representations of freaks: the use of freak legacies to contextualise a new freakish case. Further, the article acknowledges the generativity of popular freaks for individual doctors showing that doctors’ names continued to be associated with the anomalous bodies they brought before their professional colleagues. As this chapter will show, there was a tradition of celebrating select individual doctors’ legacies in medicine. Certain medical figures, such as the eighteenth-century surgeon, John Hunter, came to stand as representatives of the triumphs of medical culture and as a means to promote the medical profession as a social authority. The extraordinary accomplishments attributed to medical heroes like Hunter, I argue, fostered a tradition of spectacular medicine whereby extraordinary cases became generatively productive opportunities for late nineteenth-century doctors. As the previous chapters have shown, freaks captured the interest of both the medical and popular spheres, and medical authority was enacted on their bodies in both of these spaces. Therefore, past and present freak show performers and their narratives were ideal cases for the exaltation of medical legacy.

There is a long history to medicine’s affiliation with the freak show. Pamphlets and souvenir programmes of freak shows often contained the words of supposedly reputable men of science to verify the condition of the freak and explain it to popular audiences, although these were not always accurate representations. In some cases, freak show promoters would take advantage of the interests of learned men and presume to credit statements to their name without permission. The surgeon and naturalist Francis Buckland protested one such

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<sup>63</sup> For further discussion of Laloo see Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, p.58-88; for Dos Santos see Kochanek, “Reframing the Freak: From Sideshow to Science”, p. 227-243.

instance of “flaming handbills” for the exhibition of Joseph Brice “in which my name was printed in huge red letters as the authority for the measurements of the giant”, pointing out to his readers that “these bills were distributed without my knowledge or permission, and I am in no way responsible for the statements made” (Buckland, *CNH: Fourth Series* 8). In other cases however, such as in the biographies sold during the ‘Siamese’ Twins’ (Chang and Eng Bunker) exhibition, full reports by medical men would be included in the promotional material.<sup>64</sup> This common tactic demonstrates the direct influence of medicine on the freak show, but this was a two-way exchange. While freak show promoters were quite happy to borrow from the learned professions in order to promote their trade, medical practitioners were also in the habit of borrowing knowledge on freaks found in popular culture to further their own work. The written accounts and legacies of historic freaks often made their way into reports and articles within medical journals. A range of accounts, from a few lines to full articles concerning current freaks on display would appear within the pages of the *British Medical Journal* and the *Lancet*.

Freaks and their legacies in the medical community served different generative ends than in the popular entertainment context, often participating in specialties such as embryology, obstetrics and orthopaedics, among others. While the humanizing aspects of freaks were often commented on in the popular accounts of the shows (even if just for the contrast between their ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ qualities) these were often overlooked or treated as secondary evidence only worth brief mentions in medical studies. Freak subjects presented the extremes of diseases and abnormalities that medicine was (and in some cases still is) trying to understand. They helped set the boundaries and fill in the blanks of developing taxonomies. As with their place within popular culture, freaks were subjects of vested interest beyond the initial curiosity arising from their appearance. For medicine, freaks were not necessarily people with illnesses in need of correction, but they were opportunities for unusual diagnoses and living examples of rare conditions. In the style of changing medical practices which aimed to focus more on the symptoms of a patient’s condition than on the patient, medical writings on freaks also sought to distance freaks from their conditions. Yet, in the attempt to normalise freaks and represent them just as bodies presenting unusual deformities or diseases, medicine furthered the individualisation of freaks and perpetuated freak legacies. Further, with the tradition of legacy within medicine already in place, nineteenth-century medical interactions with freaks provided opportunities for the reassertion of existing taxonomies and the establishment of new examples of medical superiority.

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<sup>64</sup> See J. Startin, “A Proposal for Effecting Their Separation.” *The Siamese Twins Chang and Eng: A Biographical Sketch*. [1869], Human Freaks 2 (91), John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 22-28.

Late century interactions between British medical and entertainment cultures draw upon longstanding traditions in earlier medical practices and the merging of science and medicine. Of great significance is the history and development of dissection and anatomical preservation in medical education and training. This practice was not only of consequence for the development of pathology, but also signifies the notable influence of natural history in the study of anatomy and, indeed, of freaks. Specimens from these practices were usually kept in the personal collections of doctors and genteel naturalists, or were displayed in anatomical museums. These collections sought to represent the inner and outer workings of bodies, often comparing the anatomy of animals to that of humans, or of normative to non-normative specimens. As well as being particularly relevant to the professional study of bodies and diseases, anatomy museums were also open to the general public, suggesting that the fascination with the internal workings of the body went beyond the learned communities.<sup>65</sup> Chapter three has discussed the regulatory measures taken to restrict audiences for anatomical collections, but earlier developments in anatomical preservation illustrate the important infusion of popular science into medicine. A key figure in these developments was the eighteenth-century surgeon, John Hunter, whose interest in natural history drove him to build an immense collection of freakish and normal specimens. Further, as George Weisz has shown, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, scientific advancements “were particularly pertinent in the medical domain, whose practitioners thought of themselves as belonging to the larger community of science” (Weisz 539). So, from the late eighteenth century through to the end of the nineteenth it remains useful to consider the medical field in light of its relationship with natural history and scientific culture, despite medicine’s efforts to establish itself as an exclusive, elite profession.

In order to understand the generative use of freaks and freak legacies by the medical profession in the late decades of the nineteenth century this chapter will first contextualise the medical tradition of legacy with the example of Hunter before examining three particular freak cases. These case studies will demonstrate medicine’s use of physical and written legacies in the diagnosis and treatment of freak conditions. At the same time these cases will show that while existing legacies were used, amended and added to, some medical practitioners were also aware of their own part and insertion into the newly formed legacies being created for contemporary freaks. In this way, doctors participated in the entertainment world of the freak

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<sup>65</sup> See A. W. Bates, “‘Indecent and Demoralising Representations’: Public Anatomy Museum in mid-Victorian England.” *Medical History*. 52 (2008): 1-22; Samuel J.M. M. Alberti, “Placing nature: natural history collections and their owners in nineteenth-century provincial England.” *British Journal for the History of Science*. 35.3 (2002): 291-311; and Samuel J. M. M. Alberti, “The Museum Affect: Visiting Collections of Anatomy and Natural History.” Eds. Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman. *Science in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2007. 371-403.

show, embodying aspects of showmanship by claiming superiority in their ability to interpret freak bodies of the past, present and future. For some medical men, the afterlife of a freak provided an opportunity for the development of their own legacy. Therefore, a freak could be discovered within the world of popular culture, then extracted for the scrutiny of the learned professions, allowing one or two names to be attached to the freak's story, to later be returned to popular society for the continuation and dissemination of this adjusted freak legacy. The afterlife of the freak show was as important (if not more so) for medicine as it was for the entertainment itself.

Victorian medicine could not advance by studying living cases alone. Within medical accounts freaks occupied an awkward continuum: they related to past and current freaks and had the potential to impact the lives of future freaks. In part, this had to do with the format of medical case studies drawing on previous records to explain current cases. But this was also the result of recent methods of medical training: practices of dissection, embalming, preservation and the presentation of freaks in anatomical museums alongside other healthy and diseased specimens had put medical practitioners in a position of authority over deformed and anomalous bodies, living or deceased. As in the presentation styles of some freak shows, anatomical museums had the ability to incite notions of wonder and disgust in patrons (Alberti, "The Museum Affect" 387–393). Even when the museums began closing their doors to public audiences, their continued use for the development of medical knowledge and training also continued the ownership of and curiosity concerning freak bodies.

Victoria Carroll has shown in her work on natural history museums that the interpretation of a museum object is dependent on the knowledge and experience of the viewer (Carroll, "Natural History on Display" 271–300). In a similar way, Kathryn Hunter has argued in her work on medical narratives, that "medicine is (as it has always been) a practical body of knowledge" which is "grounded in subjective knowledge" (K. M. Hunter xviii, xx). Despite doctors considering the symptoms of illness from an apparently objective accumulation of knowledge, medicine is ultimately "an interpretative activity" combining the doctor's subjective response with his "understanding of a particular patient" (K. M. Hunter xx). Thus, while the museum setting for freak specimens may have presented them as dehumanised objects, they still tended to provoke highly subjective responses, often citing preconceived narratives of freak bodies. For example, in viewing the skeleton of a giant or dwarf within an anatomical museum for medical training, the doctor's interpretation would be informed by both his knowledge of the condition's effect on anatomical structures and his previous experience or encounters with similar bodies. These previous encounters or experiences in the nineteenth century were likely to have occurred within a freak show setting. Taking this into consideration, the specimens in anatomical museums and the presentation of



freak conditions and bodies become especially poignant. They help illustrate the continuation of older interpretations of freak bodies, despite the discoveries and developments in modern practices.

Interestingly, it was not just the physical remnants of freaks that proved useful to medicine. Despite the attempts of medicine to regard patients primarily as specimens, popular freak narratives were often used to supplement missing case histories for freak patients. The discipline's reliance on public freak bodies and freak show history for information problematized the depersonalization of freak bodies and specimens. Separating the "story of the body from the story of the person" in freak cases was difficult and Y. Michael Barilan contends, "the more the stories mirror each other, the more problematic the use of the body becomes" (Barilan 198). In this way freak bodies were valuable to the advancement of medical knowledge, yet they challenged its authority.

This relationship between medicine and the freak show is underpinned by the concept of legacy. Medical men sought to firmly establish a respected discipline, and themselves within it, which would carry enough weight to continue and prosper. One of the various tactics used in the nineteenth century and beyond to control the image of the emerging profession was through the developing selection and education process which, Parry and Parry explain "stressed character and the cult of the gentleman" (N. Parry and J. Parry 131). However, Weisz illustrates the resistance, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century, in British medicine to allow emerging specialisms (as was happening in other parts of the world). Eventually the "thirst for professional unity [. . .] spread widely and encouraged compromises that everyone could live with" (Weisz 573). In the history of Western medical practice British medicine was an aberration in its simultaneous desire for exclusivity and unity, but the importance of community was significant. One way the medical community came together was through a common respect for the history of British medicine. Therefore, in the professional development of medicine that took place during the nineteenth century the historical accomplishments in the field became increasingly important in laying its foundations as an informed and reliable profession. Highlighting the positive impact of medicine's achievements on society was one method to shape the public reception of the discipline.

Through the figure of eighteenth-century surgeon and natural historian, John Hunter, it is possible to interpret one example of generativity within nineteenth-century medical practice through the attachment of successful methods and ideals to his name. Despite his awkward position amongst his colleagues in life, Hunter became a heroic symbol and the representative "voice of a tradition" in death (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* 15). Hunter's legacy came to represent the shared ideals of medical culture. Although Hunter did dissect and preserve some freak specimens, his history is particularly relevant to the study of freaks

because of the posthumous exaltation of his legacy. Within medical culture Hunter's legacy provided an important context for later medical uses of freaks: his figure symbolised the integration of science into medicine; his extensive anatomical collection exemplified the continuous value of deceased bodies for medical study; and, the reiteration of Hunter's legacy throughout the nineteenth century marked his work and accomplishments as extraordinary, setting a standard for future individuals seeking cultural recognition. His legacy, therefore, laid a foundation for the generative exaltation of both communal medical practice and individual successes.

### **John Hunter – The Building of Medical Legacy**

In his 1930 Hunterian Oration, Ernest W. Hey Groves remarks on John Hunter's greatness by citing Thomas Carlyle: "'For consider,' as Carlyle says, 'what mere time will do in such cases; how if a man was great when living, he becomes tenfold greater when dead'" (Groves 395). Groves uses his lecture to trace trends in the Hunterian Orations since their inception in 1814, reminding his audience that they were founded "in honour of surgery and in memory of men by whose labours it has been advanced" (Groves 387–389). In this sense, the orations themselves were set in place as a platform for medical generativity, using John Hunter as the figurehead. Through his legacy the medical community established a means to commemorate greatness from historical and contemporary times. Along with the praise for Hunter's achievements these talks also discuss the accomplishments of other eminent figures in surgery and eulogise the loss of notable members in the time between orations. Throughout the nineteenth century, these lectures had repeatedly affirmed Hunter as representative of the superior objectives of medicine and his position as an inspiration for future generations. Hunter became an ideal that could be read and embodied by individuals to justify their own contribution to the field and continue the discipline's culture and values. In reference to the tradition of Hunterian worship, Groves remarks: "Even if we admit that orations are but empty words, there exists a far more vital evidence that the torch of inspired enthusiasm has been faithfully handed down from his day until now" (Groves 396). The ideals of enthusiastic search and discovery become the symbols of Hunter's legacy, and these are meant for emulation by his successors. Thus, Hunter's successors benefitted not only from the ideals of his legacy but also from their encounter with his inspiration.

By adopting Hunter as a figurehead, medicine, as a professional community, also benefitted. His legacy provided a generative emblem for the shared values of the continuous "scientific pursuit of truth", as well as establishing the value of legacy in the medical profession (Groves 396). Groves' employment of Carlyle's words provides a fitting context for the nineteenth-century exaltation of Hunter. In her analysis of Carlyle's work, Garofalo has shown

how hero worship permitted the exercise of authority: “The leader has already passed away but his followers continue to bend before him, thus earning the right to rule other men and to create new passionate communities of followers” (Garofalo 306). It was through the collective agreement on Hunter’s status as a medical hero that his life efforts became important. Hunter’s legacy claims that he was a difficult person to be around due to his devotion to his work, rather like a medical version of George Eliot’s tireless researcher, Casaubon. Unlike Casaubon however, the remnants of Hunter’s work were praised after his death when his character was exalted to heroic status. Although he reputedly struggled to partake in his own community in life, a community was founded in Hunter’s name and he came to symbolize the ideals of the medical profession in death.

The development of morbid pathology and comparative anatomy, which benefitted strongly from Hunter’s work in surgery and natural history, are useful fields to consider in the discussion of freaks and medicine. Not only were these areas enriched from consideration of the extreme physiologies of freaks, but also from Hunter’s dissection and preservation of their deceased bodies in his collection. Hunter’s case also presents with clarity the importance of legacy in the medical community. Applying his skills in the dissection and presentation of dead animals, John Hunter developed similar methods of dissection and preservation of human bodies which would form an important part of his medical legacy. As Simon Chaplin has shown, “By aligning the medical practice of human dissection with the dissection of animal bodies John Hunter actively reshaped the boundaries of what might be considered the ‘natural’ interests of the surgeon-anatomist” (Chaplin 136). His exceptional skills became useful in the training and education of new medical practitioners through comparative anatomy. His home, incorporating a whole section dedicated to medical dissection, preservation and anatomical display, became an integral learning space for doctors in late eighteenth-century London.<sup>66</sup> Therefore the circulation of Hunter’s legacy in nineteenth-century medicine justified both the efforts of medical men to propagate their own legacies as well as the use of living and dead freaks for the continued growth of medical knowledge. Even though freaks were not a large feature of Hunter’s history, his heroic status made legacy a permissible and desirable outcome of agentic and communal generative efforts in medicine, and Hunter will be discussed here to contextualise this concept in the profession. However, it should also be noted that Hunter’s collection of anatomical specimens did include several freakish exhibits, and the exhibition of preserved specimens in museums and society meetings, discussed in the previous chapter, derived from the culture of preservation and collection to which Hunter had made a significant contribution.

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<sup>66</sup> For a full history of the teaching spaces in both John and William Hunter’s homes see G. C. Peachey “The Thomas Vicary Lecture on the Homes of the Hunters.” *Lancet*. 211 (1928): 360-7.

Before John Hunter made a name for himself his brother William Hunter had already established his career as a private anatomy teacher in London (Chaplin 137; Beekman 501–2).<sup>67</sup> In 1748 John Hunter moved from Edinburgh to London to learn from his brother. Later, once he had been trained, Hunter joined his brother in teaching anatomy and giving lectures. As a result of this practice, the Hunters were seen as “the most influential figures of their generation, forming the transition between the early eighteenth-century anatomy school proprietors and the great teaching hospital entrepreneurs of the early nineteenth century” (Richardson 39). But John Hunter also pursued his personal interests as a naturalist extending his dissecting skills onto animals for his own curiosity as well as for others.<sup>68</sup> Although Hunter’s status as a naturalist primarily rested on his dissection and preservation of animal specimens, these interests influenced his work as a surgeon-anatomist.<sup>69</sup> As Chaplin explains, Hunter sought “to integrate the study of external features and the ‘mode of life’ with internal structure... This approach mirrored Hunter’s view of medicine, in which he sought to correlate the ‘natural history’ of the patient – gained through clinical observation – with normal and morbid anatomical structures elucidated through dissection” (139). This integrated mode of studying and understanding the body by comparing normal, abnormal, human and animal anatomies (therefore blending scientific technique with medical practice) and his insatiable appetite for dissection was the foundation of Hunter’s legacy.

Both Hunter’s extensive work as an anatomist preserving thousands of human and animal specimens and the legacy he built through this work are forerunners for later attempts at fame made by Victorian doctors dealing with freak conditions. The Hunterian tradition, which largely refers to his use of comparative anatomy and the application of the scientific method in medicine, credits Hunter with overwhelming influence in the development of medical practice. L.S. Jacyna has traced the repetition of Hunter’s achievements in combining “science with medical practice and the realization of the importance of comparative studies” throughout the nineteenth century as they appeared in biographies and orations (93). The longevity of this practice is still evident over 200 years after Hunter’s death in 1793. In the 2005 Hunterian Oration given at the Royal College of Surgeons the speaker notes Hunter’s

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<sup>67</sup> For detailed histories on John Hunter’s life and work see Wendy Moore, *The Knife Man: The Extraordinary Life and Times of John Hunter, Father of Modern Surgery*. London: Bantam Press, 2005; and G. Peachey, *A Memoir of William and John Hunter*. Plymouth: William Brendon, 1924.

<sup>68</sup> On Hunter’s collection and display of animal specimens see Jessie Dobson, “John Hunter’s Animals.” *Journal of the History of Medicine*. 17.4 (1962): 479-486.

<sup>69</sup> There was some debate surrounding the notion of the expert and non-expert naturalist or field naturalist versus the sedentary naturalist. See Jean-Marc Drouin, and, Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent. “Nature for the People.” *Cultures of Natural History*. Ed. N. Jardine, et al. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 408- 425; and Dorinda Outram. “New Spaces in Natural History.” *Cultures of Natural History*. Ed. N. Jardine, J. A. Secord and E. C. Spary. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 249-265.

many “contributions to surgery including the development of the scientific approach. . . [being] the first person to have used evidence-based medicine. . . [linking] pathological changes and surgical procedures. . . [and teaching] routine postoperative monitoring and the importance of recording outcome and sharing results,” (Galasko 87). This follows the long tradition of reverence for Hunter and his techniques that was instituted in the Victorian period.

Even when authors point to Hunter’s weaknesses this information only serves as a brief reminder of the fallible human side of the legendary figure rather than as criticism. When describing Hunter’s capacity for organic learning Fenwick Beekman explains that “Hunter’s aversion to seeking knowledge from books, occasionally resulted in his advancing claims to discoveries that others had already reported” (513–514). However, these instances were easily forgiven in light of the achievements in Hunter’s “remarkable career as a natural biologist, physiologist, and surgeon” (514). A late nineteenth-century surgeon, Stephen Paget, follows a similar pattern in his 1897 biography of Hunter. Although Paget does discuss some of Hunter’s shortcomings, such as his extravagant spending on the accumulation and display of specimens which left his family with very little to live on after his death, his praise for the triumphs Hunter achieved through his multifaceted skills far outweigh his mishaps. One example is in the description of the technique John Hunter developed to assist in operations on aneurysms which “saved thousands of limbs and lives, [and] was the result of work in many fields of thought; in it he united a whole multitude of facts from anatomy, physiology, clinical experience, *post mortem* examinations, and experiments on animals; it remains one of the best deductions ever made in surgical practice [*italics in original*]” (Paget 172). This praise, written just over a century after his death, echoed the common professional sentiment present throughout the period. Even less laudatory features of Hunter’s career in accounts of his legacy are often given as irrelevant passing thoughts or as reasonable human frailties to be expected from a hero.<sup>70</sup>

Records of Hunter’s life imply that his greatness was not recognised in his life and demonstrate the later communal efforts of the medical community to establish his legacy. For instance, at the time of Hunter’s death in 1793, it would seem that his personal qualities had hampered the recognition of his achievements from the dominant medical community. Indeed, Peachey claims, “It was suggested in the public press that his statue should be placed in St. Paul’s by the side of Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and John Howard; but in the

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<sup>70</sup> What is particularly notable in these appraisals, however, is that some sources contest the historical evidence of Hunter’s greatness in his day. In a 1928 lecture G. C. Peachey claimed that “honours were showered upon [Hunter]” around the time he became Surgeon Extraordinary to the King, but he also states that “all the evidence goes to show that Hunter’s genius was unrecognised by his contemporaries”(366). Peachey cites several occasions in Hunter’s life when his moody disposition and pride in his work caused him to be at odds with his colleagues, even causing an irreparable breakdown between him and his brother William.

event he was buried in the vaults of St. Martin-in-the-Fields attended by his relations and some of his oldest medical friends”(Peachey 366–7). Even as a member of the Court of Assistants (the governing council of the Corporation of Surgeons) Hunter’s death met with “no resolution of regret or of condolence” from the formal surgical body (Owen 419). No fortune was left for Hunter’s family to live off after his death, just his anatomical collection which was only bought by the government in 1799 for £15,000. Later that same year the Corporation of Surgeons agreed to take control over the collection, but only began funding its conservation, which until then had been faithfully cared for by William Clift since 1793, in 1800 after becoming the Royal College of Surgeons. Then, it was another six years until construction for a museum and library began and was finally complete in 1813 (Paget 240–6). Hunter’s extensive collection is repeatedly noted as a valuable part of his legacy, yet there was a significant delay in the recognition of its value. Further, it was not until 1859 that Hunter would be honoured with a memorial acknowledging his work. Rather than Hunter creating his own legacy, like Barnum did, it seems that his successors would sculpt his image for themselves when personality no longer stood in the way. While the fact of Hunter’s work was evidenced in his writing and his museum the delay in promoting his legacy speaks more strongly to his significance for later medical men. Nonetheless, the completion of the museum at the Royal College of Surgeons and the establishment of the Hunterian Orations contributed to the definition of medicine, and surgery in particular, as a discipline rich with extraordinary and heroic accomplishments, and this helped to create its professional status later in the century, with John Hunter at the forefront of this representation.

### **Immortalization of Hunter’s Legacy and the Benevolence of Medicine**

The regular reiterations of John Hunter’s achievements confirm the importance of his legacy to the communal generativity of medicine. In highlighting Hunter’s career and making his work exceptional the medical community found “a human face to concretize its symbols” (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* 15). Not only was his extensive anatomical collection promoted to a prominent position within medical culture, but Hunter was also repositioned in the medical community through a memorial statue in the Royal College of Surgeons and his interment in Westminster Abbey. This reconfiguration of Hunter’s legacy to suit the contemporary motives of the medical community both exalts the practice of anatomical preservation (of normal and abnormal specimens) and reflects the profession’s ability to appropriate select details when making use of an individual’s legacy (a practice emulated in the use of freak legacies as will be shown through the case studies later in this chapter).

An eminent figure influenced by Hunter and instrumental in the exposure of Hunter’s legacy is Francis Buckland. Significantly, Buckland regularly interacted with freaks and the freak

show in his career as a popularizer of science. Buckland trained in the same hospital where John Hunter had worked as a surgeon and was “taught by his father to regard Hunter’s memory with enormous respect” (Lightman, “Lecturing in the Spatial Economy of Science” 110). Buckland also formed a connection with Richard Owen who “was widely regarded as having inherited Hunter’s mantle” working as an assistant curator of the Hunterian Museum from 1827 and as curator between 1842 - 1856 and was also a significant figure in nineteenth-century Natural History (“Lecturing in the Spatial Economy of Science” 110). Regarded by some as the “highlight of [Buckland’s] medical career was his discovery of John Hunter’s coffin” that “led to Hunter’s belated interment in Westminster Abbey” (B. Bynum 2131). Buckland wrote in detail of his experience searching in the vaults of St. Martin-in-the-Field’s for John Hunter’s coffin as well as his later journey to Hunter’s country home in Earl’s Court (Buckland, *CNH: Third Series* 215–237). These accounts exemplify Buckland’s personal admiration for Hunter and the values that Hunter represented to the medical community at large. While Buckland’s discovery of Hunter’s coffin prompted his reinterment in Westminster Abbey and sparked anew Hunterian hero-worship within the medical profession, Buckland also took the opportunity to extend knowledge of Hunter’s significance to his popular audiences. Within the chapter on his search for Hunter’s coffin Buckland reprinted a biography he wrote for *Leisure Hour* in 1865. To introduce Hunter’s impact on his readers’ lives he states: “Without slighting the labours of other great surgeons and anatomists, it may be confidently affirmed that there is not a man, woman, or child among us who, when struck by the sting of disease, and receiving relief from the art of medicine, does not directly or indirectly receive relief to his suffering from the discoveries of John Hunter” (Buckland, *CNH: Third Series* 216). Through Buckland, Hunter’s legacy was extended beyond the medical sphere and into the popular, an important move for a profession establishing itself as a social authority.

Once Buckland had announced his discovery of Hunter’s remains early in 1859, the Royal College of Surgeons took responsibility for the interment in Westminster Abbey which was accompanied by a suitable ceremony and later followed with the erection of a memorial statue of Hunter. Later, Buckland’s efforts were rewarded by a silver medal from the Leeds School of Medicine and gratitude from the Royal College of Surgeons in the form of thirteen volumes of “handsomely-bound books” containing the entire Hunterian Museum catalogue (Buckland, *CNH: Third Series* 235). But Buckland insisted he was grateful for the “high privilege” of venerating Hunter’s legacy, allowing “our founder once more [...] to live and move among us” (Buckland, *CNH: Third Series* 237). The case of Hunter’s body illustrates the renewal of belief in the significance of the surgeon’s contribution to medicine as well as the importance of hero worship and propagation of legacy to the discipline.

During the period between the finding of Hunter's remains and the erection of his statue aggrandizements of his legacy regularly appeared in both the *British Medical Journal* and the *Lancet*. Aside from serving as active reminders of John Hunter's contribution to medicine, these frequent notices also functioned as a call to arms in exalting the "profession [to] the status it ought to occupy, as conservators of the public weal" (Webber 317). Praise for Hunter also accommodated the opportunity to affirm the importance of the medical profession within Victorian society. As one author felt: "It would be well, we think, now and then to draw public attention to the departed great ones of our profession, who have left, like John Hunter, such deep 'impressions on the sands of time'" ("Our Illustrious Dead" 230). Further, the author calls for Hunter's reinterment to begin with "a solemn procession of the followers of our art, bearing, amid the ceaseless stream of life that flows along Charing Cross, the remains of one who, 'being dead, yet liveth' in the memory of all civilised nations" ("Our Illustrious Dead" 230). A formal parade would attract public notice and respect not only for Hunter's magnificence, but also for those who follow in his wake. Alluding to Hunter's remains as "one who, 'being dead, yet liveth'" is reminiscent of a biblical verse where Jesus offers everlasting life to his believers: "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26 KJV). Also, reference is often made to Hunter's "ever-renewed labour, both of mind and body" and devotion to his work ("Statue of John Hunter" 376). For this he is credited as "one of the lights of the world, whom Divine Providence from time to time raises up as 'interpreters' of His laws" ("Statue of John Hunter" 377). These sentiments convey religious zeal concerning the efforts of John Hunter that was never apparent during his life. While his devotion to medicine is claimed to have ultimately taken his life (he is said to have died due to the long-term complications of a venereal disease he had injected himself with early in life), the notion of religion is largely absent from his work. Therefore, it would seem that his Victorian mourners chose to attribute Divine Providence to his life's work and his dedication to it in order to consecrate his heroic status and consequently the medical profession's noble purpose. Hunter's study of anatomy was said to have bestowed "knowledge of how all 'live, and move, and have their being'; thereby raising the minds of his fellow-creatures to a proper and just conception of the infinite wisdom and beneficence of their Omnipotent Creator!" (Webber 316-7). In memorialising Hunter as a prophetic hero medical men could justify their profession beyond the practical evidence of its benefit to mankind and represent the spiritual connection their profession gave in understanding the intricate workings of the body. Hunter's interment in Westminster



Abbey placed him among historic nobles, symbolically asserting medicine's place in the same Divine category.<sup>71</sup>

While all appear to have been in agreement on Hunter's contributions and the need to honour and continue his legacy, there was some dispute regarding the appropriate manner in which this should be performed. One proposition for the promotion of Hunter's legacy was to erect a statue of Hunter in a public place as a visible reminder of his contribution to medicine ("Statue of John Hunter" 376–378; "Statue of Hunter" 191; "London: Saturday, August 25" 194). However, the opposition to the statue felt that memorials "are, by themselves, insufficient marks of honour", because the "greatest honour, we think, that can be paid to any one who has signalised himself for the good of his fellow-men is to promote the object which he had in view during his life" and this could be done through scholarships ("How Do We Best" 626). Whereas a statue would provide a physical tribute to Hunter's legacy, a scholarship allowed new practitioners to embody the practices credited to Hunter's legacy. As one author put it, "His greatness must continue to expand until the limits of the science of life and organization, of which he was the founder, have been attained, and until all the beneficent applications to the art of healing of which it is capable have been made" ("London: Saturday April 2" 350). So, in August of 1859 when the Hunter Statue Committee announced that a marble statue of Hunter would be erected within the Royal College of Surgeons and the surplus funds would be allocated to the provision of scholarships in comparative anatomy there were mixed reactions in the medical journals ("How Do We Best" 626; "Statue of Hunter" 191; "London: Saturday, August 25" 194). The scholarship scheme was appreciated for its generative repercussions, but some members in the medical community were disappointed by the placement of the statue.

Both sides wished for public recognition of their celebrated dignitary, but diverged on whether it was better gained from a symbolic memorial or through the accreditation of future medical successes to Hunter's legacy. What is clear on both parts, however, is that the discipline was in favour of receiving general appreciation of its worth and beneficence to mankind. In memorialising and boasting the achievements of particular notables medicine aimed to gain a creditable, professional status. It was through the public recognition of the worth of legacies, such as John Hunter, not just to the medical field but to the population at large, that legacy became a valuable form of capital in medicine. Legacy could generate further

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<sup>71</sup> In the self-congratulation of the Royal College of Surgeons in respectably honouring their hero, occasional comments would be made on the need of the Royal College of Physicians to follow suit by removing the remains of seventeenth-century physician William Harvey (who discovered the function of the heart and circulatory system) from a small church in Hempsted, Essex to a more prestigious resting place.

legacies and recognition for professional accomplishments.<sup>72</sup> Campaigning for the memorialisation (both through the statue and the scholarship) of Hunter's contribution to the wellbeing of the general population was an attempt to broaden the worshipping audience. With this generative model set in place nineteenth-century medical practice could propagate its own legacy.

### **Hunter's Influence and Francis Buckland**

While Francis Buckland's discovery of John Hunter's remains contributed to the propagation of the eighteenth-century surgeon's medical legacy in the nineteenth century (and Buckland was remembered for this in the medical community), his own accomplishments highlight another aspect of Hunter's legacy: the bringing of medicine, in particular surgery, "into closer touch with science" (Paget 234). Anatomical study was a crucial part of medical training and Hunter's work had stressed the importance of comparative (human and animal) anatomy in understanding the functionality of the human body. His extensive anatomical collection left a timeless account of the "links of the chain of life" for future generations of medicine to peruse; for, "[w]ithout the knowledge of the structure and physiology of the lower members of the animal kingdom it would be difficult rightly to understand many functions of the human economy" (Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History* vi). The study of animal specimens crossed over into the realm of natural history which underwent its own transformation from an amateur or genteel practice into a popular and professional field during the nineteenth century.<sup>73</sup> From a young age Buckland was known for his interest in the workings of animal bodies with anecdotes of his eccentric habits of collecting and dissecting specimens as a schoolboy abounding in biographies on him.<sup>74</sup> In many ways, given his father's interest in geology, reverence for Hunter and friendship with Richard Owen, it is unsurprising that Buckland developed a taste for natural history. Buckland's involvement in medicine and his increased visibility with the reinterment of John Hunter exemplifies the intricate

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<sup>72</sup> There is also room here for consideration of the use of eponyms in medicine. For example, James Parkinson wrote an essay on his extensive observations of the Shaking Palsy in 1817, but was unable to designate its cause, anatomical location or treatment. Yet, the condition was later referred to as Parkinson's Disease (or *Maladie de Parkinson*) by Charcot and it is still known as this today (Hurwitz, "Watching and Walking"). This is another method of perpetuating the work of medical figures both within and outside of the profession.

<sup>73</sup> See Samuel J. M. M. Alberti "Amateurs and Professional in One County: Biology and Natural History in Late Victorian Yorkshire." *Journal of the History of Biology*. 34.1 (2001): 115-147; and John C. Waller. "Gentlemanly Men of Science: Sir Francis Galton and the Professionalization of the British Life-Sciences." *Journal of the History of Biology*. 34.1 (2001): 83-114.

<sup>74</sup> For more on Francis Buckland's life see: George C. Bompas, *Life of Frank Buckland*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1885; Timothy Collins, "From Anatomy to Zoophagy: A Biographical Note on Frank Buckland." *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*. 55 (2003): 91-109; and William E. Snell, "Frank Buckland – Medical Naturalist." *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*. 60.3 (1967): 291-6.

relationship shared between medical and other scientific men in the nineteenth century and their overlapping interests. Also, the case of Francis Buckland serves as an important example of the interaction between medicine and popular culture as he turned to exhibition culture for his research and sought to enlighten public audiences with scientific knowledge.

Through his own interests in natural history and his efforts to promote and popularize it, Buckland wrote on many popular mid-century freaks.<sup>75</sup> In his search for a complete range of normal and abnormal specimens, Hunter too had been a collector of freaks. The greatest illustration of this is the well-known story of Hunter's quest to acquire the skeleton of the exhibited giant Charles Byrne.<sup>76</sup> The tale states that Byrne was horrified by the thought of being dissected after his death especially as he was being pursued by several medical men. It is said he had paid an undertaker to protect his corpse to prevent this from happening, but after the giant's death Hunter made a better offer of £500 (Altick 42; Paget 89–90; Richardson 58; Dobson 199–206; Gould and Pyle 330–331). Hunter's acquisition of Byrne has become particularly notorious due to the surgeon's actions against Byrne's "expressed wish to be buried at sea to avoid being dissected by surgeons" (Richardson 58). In fact, Buckland chose not to include "how this skeleton was procured, or rather purloined" in his piece on the display because he worried "the story might not please some of [his] readers" (Buckland, *CNH: Fourth Series* 20). Despite Buckland's reverence for Hunter and the superior array of specimens within his museum, Buckland had a different relationship with freaks in his own day. He was known to regularly frequent freak shows, being invited to special sessions by some promoters and would fill his popular lectures with knowledge gleaned from such encounters (Lightman, "Lecturing in the Spatial Economy of Science" 109). While he did discuss details of their physical appearances, including measurements, Buckland was better known for befriending freaks rather than perceiving them purely as opportunities for scientific investigation.

One such case was the friendship between Buckland and the French Giant, Joseph Brice. When still in his military role Buckland caused a stir one morning when the men in the regiment "beheld Frank Buckland coming out of his quarters attended by Brice the French giant and a dwarf then exhibiting in London, who, being like Frank, off duty on a Sunday morning, had come to breakfast with him" (Bompas 113). Indeed Buckland even reminisced concerning his visits with Brice and the "great fun to see our great, tall Life-Guard Troopers stand by his side, or walk under his arm, and look *up* to him" (Buckland, *CNH: Fourth Series* 4).

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<sup>75</sup> Buckland, Francis. *Curiosities of Natural History: Fourth Series*. 1888. New York: Cosimo, 2008 and *Curiosities of Natural History: Third Series*. Second Edition. London: Richard Bentley, 1868.

<sup>76</sup> Charles Byrne has also been referred to as O'Brian and O'Brien. During Byrne's exhibition career in London there was another man exhibiting as the Irish giant O'Brien whose name was really Patrick Cotter. Jessie Dobson attempts to separate accounts of Byrne's life from Cotter's in *Descriptive Catalogue of the Physiological Series in the Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*. Part II. Livingstone: London, 1971. 199–206.

Buckland's interactions with Brice read as a genuine friendship, even though this came from his freak show interests. While he did include Brice in his writing on giants, the details are given from familiar interactions with the giant rather than just retelling the accounts from show pamphlets or medical examinations. Even the measurements of Brice, Buckland recalls, were only recorded "After I had known him some time" (Buckland, *CNH: Fourth Series* 5). This sort of representation of a giant was at odds with more traditional medical accounts of freak show performers. Buckland befriended Brice and wrote of him in familiar friendly terms, whereas his hero, Hunter, was more interested in the data and perpetuation of medical education that was to be gained from freak bodies such as Byrne's. While Buckland strove to disseminate scientific knowledge he was, perhaps unwittingly, also conveying the authority of scientific and medical professionals. From Hunter's takeover of Byrne's body to the personal freak show invites received by Buckland there are numerous instances throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries illustrating the authority assumed by medical science over anomalous bodies. The interaction with freaks also exemplifies the practice of spectacular medicine. As Alice Domurat Dreger contends, the continued display of Byrne's skeleton, despite the knowledge of it being against his wishes, "has little to do with the size and might of Byrne and everything to do with the size and might of surgeons" (Dreger, *One of Us* 136).<sup>77</sup> The same curiosity surrounding difference that drew medical and popular audiences to the exhibition of living freaks also drew audiences to the bodies of deceased freaks. In continuing to display or reference these bodies, medical men took possession of them and attached the authority of their profession over them.

John Hunter's case shows that the power of legacy was eminent in the profession during the nineteenth century. His example demonstrated the longevity of both personal skill and the profession's overall greatness. Hunter's perseverance in specimen collection and dissection at the expense of monetary and professional status in life, but posthumous celebration, served as an inspirational legacy for nineteenth-century doctors to live up to. Due to their extraordinary nature and potential attention they could attract, freak studies were alluring opportunities for those professionals seeking to increase their own cultural capital. Further, these cases exhibit the precarious authority medicine held over the abnormal body. While the profession sought to claim control over understandings of anomaly, it also relied on these same bodies lending themselves to this practice. In creating taxonomies, medicine relied on multiple examples: a method which, in itself, was at odds with anomaly. Therefore, the

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<sup>77</sup> The Hunterian Museum continues to display Byrne's skeleton and has refused requests for its repatriation and burial at sea "apparently on the grounds that [Byrne's] wishes cannot be proved in writing" (Alberti et al. 140).

discussions of any contemporary freaks were subject to the evidence provided by historical freaks and this was supplied by both professional and popular sources. These previous accounts of freaks were likely to contain longer biographies than later medical records and even the descriptions of the conditions were constructed according to the current discourses of medical knowledge which, of course, were “anything but static” (Karenberg and Moog 146). Utilising the accounts of historical freaks to further the contemporary medical study of freaks is a method referred to as “Retrospective Diagnostics” (143).<sup>78</sup> This technique allowed “scientific medicine to project its understanding of illness and health into the past thereby extending its power of interpretation to include the historical” (147). This problematic methodology could strengthen the taxonomical system, but the use of historical and living freaks could potentially weaken this authoritative process. Freaks challenged attempts to categorize them as the very feature that slotted them into a taxonomical category was often the same that created their construction of selfhood for the shows. Since “one’s identity is very grounded in the experience of one’s anatomy” the preservation of the anatomy of freaks after their passing was another instance of perpetuating and exaggerating the legacy of the individual freak (Dreger, “Jarring Bodies” 169). When relying on the literary or textual remains of freaks for study, medicine was compelled to consider the individuating factors of each which were entwined with their legacies. There was, therefore, a problematic tension between the desire to consider multiple cases of freaks in order to create a taxonomy, and the tendency of freak descriptions in both the popular and the medical press to individuate each case. This meant that medical interactions with freaks inadvertently incorporated the spectacularising modes of the freaks, often resulting in the presentation of freaks through the practice of spectacular medicine.

The remainder of this chapter will examine three particular cases of late nineteenth-century medical considerations of freaks to further demonstrate the intricacies of this relationship. These studies will be of the investigations made on the skeleton of the eighteenth-century giant Cornelius Magrath and two different sets of late nineteenth-century conjoined twins – Rosa and Josepha Blazek and Radica and Doodica. The usefulness and interpretation of freaks in medicine evolved during the nineteenth century, and the following examples will be considered for their value to medical practice in several ways: for the propagation of individual doctors’ legacies; for understandings or developments in the treatment of the particular conditions or medical procedures; for their addition to the library of cases on the condition; and, most significantly, for their contribution to the exaltation of medicine and its cultural legacy. While it would be difficult to decipher the true intentions

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<sup>78</sup> In Karenberg and Moog this concept is heavily criticized as a useless tool for either the study of history or disease, but this is in reference to works on Alexander the Great hundreds of years after his death.

behind individual doctors' encounters with freaks, the notion of legacy within the profession was certainly an established phenomenon and offers a productive mode of interpretation. It is definitely not to be presumed that legacy was the sole or even prevailing motive behind the practices of nineteenth-century medical men when dealing with freaks. Simply, freaks presented distinctive and often rare opportunities for the study of their conditions which consequently continued as remarkable cases in the annals of medicine. Due to the scarcity of cases, freak conditions, by their very nature, propagate legacy. Where known cases exist in large numbers, yet references to previous presentations of the condition are limited to those of popularly exhibited freaks (again, likely due to the prevalence of written documentation), the creation of legacy becomes an even more plausible explanation for the practices adopted by medicine.

### **Acromegaly and the Skeleton of Cornelius Magrath**

The skeleton of the giant, Cornelius Magrath, was still evoking medical curiosity over a century after his death. Born in the County of Tipperary, Ireland, in the 1730s, Magrath exhibited himself around Europe but returned to Ireland just before his death in 1760.<sup>79</sup> During his tour, Magrath had been seen and examined by several medical professionals (D. J. Cunningham, "On the Irish Giant" 556–557). Shortly following the giant's death his body was dissected and his skeleton was kept by the Trinity College Medical School Museum in Dublin.<sup>80</sup> Late in the nineteenth century the skeleton was moved to the Anthropological collection where Professor D. J. Cunningham encountered it and began his own research (D. J. Cunningham, "On the Irish Giant" 565). Once Cunningham had begun his study of Magrath's skeleton and its presentation of the medical condition of acromegaly, his findings were printed and shared in numerous scientific spaces.<sup>81</sup> In 1894, not long after Cunningham's initial presentation on his findings given at the Royal Irish Academy in 1891, H.R. Swanzey also presented his conclusions concerning Magrath's sight problems to the Academy (Swanzey 524–528). Both his skeleton and historical sources at their disposal enabled the (retrospective) diagnosis of Magrath's condition. In their claim to having a superior understanding of his body, Cunningham and Swanzey also sought to correct historical representations of Magrath in life. In effect, they sought to compliment their diagnosis with the reaffirmation of medical

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<sup>79</sup> As acknowledged by Eileen Kane, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact year of his birth due to conflicting accounts of his life (Kane 96).

<sup>80</sup> Magrath's skeleton is still part of the Trinity College Dublin Anatomy Museum.

<sup>81</sup> See D. J. Cunningham, 'The Skull and Some of the Other Bones of the Skeleton of Cornelius Magrath, Irish Giant', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 21 (1892), pp.40-1; 'Norwich Medico-Chirurgical Society', *British Medical Journal*, 2:2184 (8 November 1902), p.1536; D. J. Cunningham, 'Cornelius Magrath', *Man*, 3 (1903), pp. 49-50.

significance to freak show practices of any era. Despite the age of his skeleton, Magrath's remains not only gave medicine room to speculate concerning Magrath's condition, but also enabled medical writing and image-making to distinguish itself from earlier populist discourses.

Cunningham and Swanzy used Magrath's skeleton to enrich contemporary knowledge of acromegaly (a condition causing abnormal growth of the hands, feet and head) and the resultant impairments and deformities associated with this disease. Both of these scientific men were also keen to claim their authority over the giant by dispelling the misrepresentations of Magrath given in historical accounts. In opposition to the contemporary accounts of Magrath as an attractive man, Swanzy stated that "a study of the lower jaw and of the other bones of the face, and of those of the general skeleton, demonstrates that he must have had a forbidding countenance, with an ungainly figure, and knock-knees" (Swanzy 524).

Cunningham, too, was keen to contest any inferences in newspaper reports on Magrath's proportional structure by saying he "was not only 'clumsy made' but that in some respects he was positively deformed" (D. J. Cunningham, "On the Irish Giant" 260). While Cunningham was able to source several written accounts of Magrath's appearance, his use of an engraving depicting the giant's features demonstrates how his scientific objectivity was fashioned through his refuting of historical sources that were part of the puffery of popular exhibition practices (see Figure 14). In the engraving, Magrath stands next to a Prussian grenadier with his left arm held out at a right angle comfortably hovering above the grenadier's hat.<sup>82</sup>

Cunningham noted Magrath's "features are pleasing and regular" in the engraving, so it "cannot be considered as conveying any true idea of Magrath during life" because "his skull shows that he must have possessed a most repulsive face" (D. J. Cunningham, "On the Irish Giant" 561–2). Further, Cunningham remarked that due to the "condition known as 'knock-knee'" which Magrath's limb bones show him to have suffered, he "could not possibly extend his arm in the manner indicated in the drawing" ("On the Irish Giant" 562). However, unknown to Cunningham, the Venetian artist Pietro Longhi had painted a portrait of Magrath in the eighteenth century. Art historian Eileen Kane deems the painting to be the artist's corroboration of Cunningham's and Swanzy's diagnosis of acromegaly. In the painting she sees "something strange about his eyes", "a hint of knock-knees" and that Magrath "is not handsome, but he is built in proportion" (Kane 96). As with the engraving, Magrath has his left arm outstretched above the heads of people around him.

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<sup>82</sup> This pose continued to be a conventional one for giant freak show acts through to the end of the nineteenth century. For examples see photographs of Constantine and Hassan Ali in W. Hutchinson, "The Pituitary Gland as Factor in Acromegaly and Gigantism", *New York Medical Journal*, 72 (1900), p. 92. Also see "Photograph of 'Frederick the Great English Giant'", EPH499: 57, Wellcome Library, London.

While the representations of Magrath as a living performer and as a retrospectively diagnosed skeleton agree in some respects, there is a general disagreement on his flexibility and the symmetry of his appearance. Cunningham, in particular, was adamant that the depictions given in popular print were embellished, yet he relied on these accounts for biographical information. As Cunningham and Swanzy had no living patient from whom to draw a case history, these printed histories had to suffice. In clarifying the symptoms and presentation of the disease they were researching these men sought to correct the misconceptions reproduced of the once popular giant, but at the same time they selectively borrowed information to sketch their own history for Magrath.<sup>83</sup> In this way medicine was able to assert its authority over Magrath's condition, while actually contributing to the giant's freak legacy by extending it into the medical sphere.

Cunningham and Swanzy were not alone in their use of a famous giant for their investigations, nor for accessing the information from lifeless remains. In fact, as Wouter W. de Herder has pointed out, despite the term acromegaly only first being used in 1886, physicians as far back as 1567 had been giving "clear description[s] of the clinical picture of acromegaly" (de Herder 236). By the time the word became the accepted term for the condition, over twenty medical practitioners had published reports on disorders which could retrospectively be considered acromegaly (including Cunningham in 1879) with many using cases of popularly exhibited giants (de Herder 237). Around the same time as Cunningham and Swanzy presented their findings on Magrath, Charles L. Dana and Woods Hutchinson published separate reports on more recently exhibited giants and their autopsies in American medical journals. Dana had autopsied Santos Mamai, the "Peruvian Giant", and Woods the French giantess known as Lady Aama (Dana 725–738; Hutchinson 190–201).

But Cunningham sought to distinguish his study of Acromegaly apart from all other medical examinations of the bodies of giants, for "the skeleton of Magrath must be regarded as furnishing us with a case of unusual interest, not only on account of the general gigantic growth which is associated with the disease, but also because I believe that it is the oldest specimen of the kind in existence" (D. J. Cunningham, "On the Irish Giant" 555). Cunningham's research on acromegaly surpassed all others as his was attached to the oldest preserved legacy. Further, he was the first to perform a full analysis on this "marked example" of acromegaly as "it [had] never been properly described nor critically examined" and his work even proved the previously recorded measurements to be "grossly inaccurate" having been "apparently supplied chiefly with the view of outrivalling [sic] the dimensions of the skeleton

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<sup>83</sup> As demonstrated in chapter one, stories and accounts of famous freaks of the past were in circulation throughout the nineteenth century. Cunningham refers twice to one such source titled "Giants and Dwarfs" published in 1868 (D. J. Cunningham, "On the Irish Giant" 561, 568).



of another Irish giant, called Charles Byrne" ("On the Irish Giant" 553). The knowledge gleaned from past cases of freaks enriched the medical research conducted on living freaks with similar conditions late in the nineteenth century, but also enabled the profession to extend its authority back to the supposed dark ages, where popular curiosity, not to mention the freaks themselves, had been allowed to misconstrue the 'true' nature of their own bodies. Included in this retroactive extension of medical authority was the expansion of legacy. In attaching a corrected interpretation of illness to the story of a historical freak, Cunningham widened the influence of his work in medicine as well as that of contemporary medical knowledge. Yet, in correcting these popular narratives medicine also reattached freakishness to a neutral medical specimen, spectacularising the objective gaze.

The perception of Magrath as an Irish subject presents another point of consideration. In freak show performance and literature giants were often indicated by their country of origin. This is shown already by those previously mentioned in this chapter: Lady Aama the French Giantess, Santos Mamai the Peruvian Giant, Joseph Brice the French Giant, and both the Irish Giants, Charles Byrne and Cornelius Magrath. Magrath's history, as retold by Cunningham, does verify his origin as Ireland and his nationality bears significance to the interpretation of his acromegalic skeleton. One of the points of excessive growth in acromegaly is in the face. Cunningham describes the presentation thus: "The maxillary bones become greatly elongated, and the lower jaw enlarging in all directions may carry the lower range of teeth in front of the upper range – a condition which gives rise to a most forbidding expression of countenance" (D. J. Cunningham, "On the Irish Giant" 554). The elongated, protruding jaw, with a pronounced underbite and disagreeable appearance elicits a likeness to simian facial qualities. As extensive work on racialization in the Victorian period has shown, Africans and other non-Western people were commonly depicted as having simian facial features.<sup>84</sup> This comparison worked to portray what were believed to be the lower races as degenerates and to be closer to our evolutionary ancestors. In the latter part of the nineteenth century emphasis was increasingly placed on physiognomy through "anthropometrics, comparative anatomy, and composite photography rather than ethnographic explorations of linguistic and cultural difference to demonstrate the inferiority of non-Western peoples" (Durbach 167).<sup>85</sup> Nadja Durbach has convincingly argued that through the freak show, popular print and scientific practices in the nineteenth century the Irish were perceived "as a savage race that had more in common with African peoples than with their British counterparts" with

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<sup>84</sup> For this idea in the context of performance see Jane R. Goodall, *Performances and Evolution in the Age of Darwin: Out of the Natural Order*. London: Routledge, 2002; and Bernth Lindfors, *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999.

<sup>85</sup> See also Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*. London: Penguin, 1996.

Irish men even performing in the “fake African shows” (Durbach 167, 148). These notions of Irish primitiveness come through in the regular references made by Cunningham and Swanzy of Magrath’s forbidding countenance. Indeed one report on Cunningham’s presentation even notes how the projection of Magrath’s lower jaw makes the skull “resembl[e] the negro head” (“Magrath, the Irish Giant” 280).

The extension of the jaw and the visual effect this would have had on Magrath’s countenance is stressed more in his case than in other medical depictions of cases of acromegaly. For example the pathological evidence of acromegaly focused on the thickening of nerves and bones and the internal deformity, without great reference to the resultant facial appearance (“Pathological Anatomy of Acromegaly” 188).<sup>86</sup> In a case brought before the Clinical Society of London by Stephen Paget the “lengthening of the face, with overgrowth of the facial bones, especially the lower jaw” is referenced without the added opinion on the patient’s countenance as was done in Magrath’s case (“Clinical” 23 Jan. 253). Another “typical case” of acromegaly brought to the attention of *Lancet* readers was that of an exhibited giant simply mentioned by the name of “Goliath” without his nationality (Campbell 948). The doctor contributing the letter acknowledges confirmation of his diagnosis of acromegaly from Professor Virchow of Paris and a Dr. Kanthack of London and writes of the success achieved through treatment of arsenic, iron, strychnine and cod-liver oil: “His head, face, and hands are now considerably reduced in size, and his general health is much improved” (Campbell 948). In his ability to correct the abnormal growth this doctor removed the freakish character of “Goliath” and any need to include further freak show jargon. Indeed, by the end of this short letter the patient is able to return to his acceptable occupation: he was a “tailor by trade” and no longer needed the thimble which had been “specially made for him” (Campbell 948). In fact, in the extensive 1900 American publication *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine*, which claims to sum up nearly all medical literature written on the various conditions that suit the title, no reference is made to the unattractive nature of any of the giants discussed (Gould and Pyle 327–333).

The contrast between these medical contributions on acromegaly and Magrath’s highlights the importance of his Irish heritage to Cunningham’s re-presentation of him as bearing a disagreeable face despite the image depicted in historical accounts. The regular referencing of Magrath as the Irish giant, rather than just a skeletal case of acromegaly, further entwined Magrath’s forbidding features with his race and extended yet another aspect of late century scientific thought with his freak legacy. Through the “scientific racism” active in the

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<sup>86</sup> This piece refers to a presentation made by Morinesco before the International Medical Congress, but it should have been printed as Marinesco whom de Herder acknowledges as a significant figure in Pierre Marie’s (creator of the term acromegaly) research on the condition (de Herder 236).

latter part of the nineteenth century, Cunningham was able to reconstruct the image of Magrath as the Irish giant encompassing the contemporary view of the “Irish as ‘white negroes’” and project this concept into the past (Durbach 167, 164).

Cunningham’s ability to interpret Magrath’s freakishness as a degenerative racial quality also supported the learned gentleman’s future career and legacy. In 1904 Professor Cunningham assisted the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration with the assessment of the physical state of British citizens. From his work in anatomy and anthropology, bringing him into contact with normal and abnormal specimens, Cunningham was able to provide “scientific opinions of great value in their bearing on the subject-matter of the Committee’s investigations” (*Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee* 8). Cunningham’s experience allowed him to play a significant role in establishing the methodology to assess and record the state of the nation through a Central Anthropometric Bureau (*Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee* 8–13). Having been exposed to cases of extraordinary physiognomies alongside normal specimens Cunningham believed there to be a “*mean physical standard* [italics in original]” for the people of Great Britain that would provide a control for cases of deviation (*Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee* 8). Included in the tests would be a measurement of the “Degree of Pigmentation” which would “correct what might otherwise be erroneous deductions from racial peculiarities” (*Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee* 9). In Cunningham’s own assessment of Magrath the physical deviations presented in the skeleton were stressed without direct reference to Magrath’s Irish heritage. Yet, this concern was mitigated through the consistent naming of Magrath as the Irish Giant. The perceived racial differentiation between Irish and other British nationals could be taken into account with Cunningham’s new model since the results for England, Scotland and Ireland would each be mapped out separately.

Cunningham played an important part in the creation of the Inter-Departmental Committee’s physical survey, and this can be related back to his analysis of Magrath’s skeleton. While there were undoubtedly many medical men capable of reading anatomical specimens, Cunningham’s significant research on acromegaly through the freak giant with an indirect emphasis on his Irish heritage, highlighted his ability to designate national and racial signifiers. Through Magrath, Cunningham reconstructed a freak legacy to reflect contemporary medical views and attached his own legacy as an interpreter of deviant bodies to Magrath’s re-created legacy. Further, Cunningham’s acknowledgement of a mean standard against which to compare new measurements was a scientific practice promoted in the comparative anatomy work of John Hunter. Thus, Cunningham employed legacies of medical culture and freak legacies to further his own generative ends, as well as to promote medicine as an authoritative discipline able to assess the health and physical deterioration of Britain. Cunningham,

therefore, utilised and furthered the communal generativity of medicine as well as his own personal legacy through Magrath's freakish body.

### Curiosity of Conjoined Twins

In other cases, the existing medical conditions of contemporary freaks gave doctors and surgeons a different kind of opportunity to exercise authority over their bodies, and to attempt to distance the profession from freak show curiosity. A great deal of attention from popular and medical audiences gathered around the bodies of conjoined twins, or 'double monsters' as they were frequently called. Living cases were rare occurrences and due to their overwhelming attraction it is no surprise that most entered into exhibition culture. Earlier in the century the original 'Siamese Twins', Chang and Eng Bunker, had made several extensive visits throughout Europe and regularly appeared in the popular and medical press. Then around 1855 the American conjoined twins Millie Christine first made their appearance in Britain.<sup>87</sup> The combination of these two acts and the numerous visits both pairs made to the United Kingdom sustained an interest in joined bodies amongst medical and popular audiences alike. As Sarah Mitchell has shown, the original Siamese twins were a key case for the shifting practices in the study and classification of conjoined twins in the nineteenth century (Sarah Mitchell, "Exhibiting Monstrosity" 150–154; Sarah Mitchell, "From 'Monstrous' to 'Abnormal'" 53–72). Conjoined twins were notable in serving numerous scientific fields including teratology, obstetrics and anthropology, in their attempts to establish themselves as authoritative disciplines (McHold, "Diagnosing Difference" 122–360; Sarah Mitchell, "From 'Monstrous' to 'Abnormal'" 53–72). Questions on the personal and sexual lives of joined twins, causes of their formations and the possibilities of their separation arose from both the curious viewing public and medicine.<sup>88</sup> While medicine sought to distance its objective attention from popular curiosity the function and formation of conjoined bodies was a shared interest and therefore wrapped in spectacular representation. In the case of conjoined twins the show legacies were considerably difficult to remove for the generative purposes of medicine and would often remain when the bodies were appropriated to medical legacy.

Ideas surrounding the formation of joined bodies in the womb varied widely within the medical field. Yet, as the debate generally weighed against the belief in maternal impressions (as discussed in chapter three) this was not the guise under which control was sought. Rather the medical curiosity focused on the inner workings of living freaks and particularly of conjoined twins, since the answers to their formation were often thought to be found here.

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<sup>87</sup> For further history on Millie Christine see J. Martel, *Millie-Christine: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 2000).

<sup>88</sup> Alice Domurat Dreger's *One of Us* explores the continued fascination held in joined bodies through to the twenty-first century.

The extent to which conjoined twins were unified and the ability of these bodies to function spurred the medical community's desire for unrestricted access to their bodies. Conjoined freaks had a generative value to medical investigations: their bodies could explain the origin of their formation and with this came the development of preventative measures. By understanding the point of union and sexual formation of conjoined pairs medicine could expand its knowledge base and work to prevent or treat the condition. Having that level of control and management over freak bodies would be another means to reaffirm the genius of medicine, further strengthening the profession's legacy as a respected force in society. Those who were able to contribute to these efforts also stood a chance of establishing their own personal legacies. However, to reach the level of knowledge it sought, the science of medicine needed unlimited access to the bodies in question using both living and deceased models. This meant medicine had to equip itself with the textual and physical remains of public freak shows and their inherent legacies, as well as engage with contemporary spectacular displays of conjoined freaks.

In 1871, for example, Millie Christine held an opening reception at Willis's Rooms, London, especially for eminent medical practitioners and the press to interview and examine the twins. It is important to note that there was commercial benefit for the twins in organising such a reception, since it was widely-reported and the standing of the physicians present confirmed that, as the *Daily News* put it, "There is no deception here" ("An Extraordinary Exhibition" 3). This simple account shows the pattern in the medical freak show exchange. In feeding the medical library of cases through knowledge obtained in the examination of Millie Christine, the medical professions sought to separate themselves from freak show culture. Yet, by partaking in the orchestrated event and authenticating the anomaly, medicine gave its professional support to the exhibition of Millie Christine. Medicine's professional input would contribute to the satisfaction of paying visitors that the bodies before them did indeed exemplify a true freak of nature.

### **Obstetrics and the Blazek Twins**

The conjoined twins, Rosa and Josepha Blazek, were first exhibited in England in 1880 at two years of age.<sup>89</sup> The girls were joined together at their pelvic region and therefore described as pygopagous twins. During their initial and subsequent visits the Blazek twins received and, to a degree, catered to the attention from learned societies and medical practitioners. Since the union of pygopagous twins was based at the intimate areas of the body

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<sup>89</sup> During their 1880 exhibition the girls were referred to as Rosalie and Josepha Blazet, but in later life and after their death the twins were more commonly called Rosa and Josepha Blazek.

medical discussion on people of this formation was largely concerned with sexual formation and function. Perhaps this focus on pygopagous twins was also, in part, because medicine sought to disperse the prurient curiosity provoked by freak show concerning their sexuality (Durbach 58–88). The Blazek sisters would continue to problematize medical control over freak bodies throughout their lives, as medical interaction would always occur after the unique episodes in their lives. With the Blazeks medicine would have to assert its professional standing through explanations of proceedings it had not witnessed first-hand. Through physical examinations and second-hand reports medicine would construct a scientific understanding of the Blazeks that stood apart from the freak show, but which had largely been the product of conjecture. As with other popular freaks, medicine removed the girls from their performance context to consider them as medical subjects; but the absence of medical men from the important events in the Blazeks' lives meant the narratives, and subsequent legacy, for the twins were the generative creations of medical practitioners.

The information obtained in any medical interactions with freaks was widely circulated in both the medical and popular spheres, creating both freaks and medical legacies. For instance, during the 1871 London exhibition of Millie Christine, the “Two Headed Nightingale”, an author in the *Lancet* borrowed from previously printed reports on examinations of the girls to give a detailed summary of the facts on their joining parts (“Misses Millie and Christine” 725–726). When Rosa and Josepha made their 1880 London appearance the various reports all agreed on the details of their birth and union. This information originated from one source: Dr Auguste Breisky, who had examined the girls soon after their birth (Breisky recto). Throughout Rosa and Josepha's lives both medical and promotional material would continue to refer to this original report on the formation of their bodies, further exemplifying the way knowledge criss-crossed between medicine and the freak show. While medical communities concentrated on the intimate aspects of the union that were hidden in the girls' public display, “the great public is debarred (and properly too) from knowledge thereof” (*The Pygopagi Twins* 3). The programme for their exhibition could only hint at the “features” and “information” that were only suitable for the consideration of those in the “learned professions”, but still made use of Breisky's examination by including a subdued version of his report on the back of the programme (*The Pygopagi Twins* 3). The information shared in the programme from Breisky's report fed into the reviews and notices which appeared in the popular press regarding the show.<sup>90</sup> However, Breisky's examination also informed the accounts which circulated amongst the learned professions (“Pygopagi” 822). It thus became especially significant for the medical

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<sup>90</sup> See “The Pygopagi Twins”, *Era*, 2199 (14 Nov 1880), p.5; “Egyptian Hall”, *Times*, (12 Nov 1880), p. 6; “The Playgoer”, *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 1002 (20 Nov 1880), p. 330-1; “The Pygopagi Twins”, [12 Nov 1880], SC/GL/ENT/065 (verso), London Metropolitan Archives.

profession to separate its practices and assert its authority over this condition by re-presenting the twins within scientific discourses, and differentiating the twins' medical legacy from their popular representations. In the case of the Blazeks this was possible in relation to the girls' living bodies and through the profession's prior knowledge of similar cases.

Early medical reports of the Blazeks' condition made regular references to two other famous cases of pygopagous twins: Millie Christine and a famous eighteenth-century case of Hungarian pygopagous twins, Helen and Judith.<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, popular accounts made less of the connection between the Blazeks and their Hungarian counterparts, but the similarity of their formation to that of Millie Christine was commonly acknowledged. In fact one 1881 review on entertainments of the age set the Blazeks and Millie Christine apart from any conjoined freaks of the past, saying none "rose to the sublime height of a 'Two-Headed Nightingale,' or the 'Pygopagi,' which were reserved to us as the culminating triumphs of the Victorian era" ("Sight-Seeing" 426). Just as Cornelius Magrath served medical knowledge over a hundred years after his death, so too did Helen and Judith. While Magrath continued to have a tangible physical form for nineteenth-century investigations, in the case of Helen and Judith medical practitioners had to rely solely on the documented history. This reliance on the past in medical study is telling not just of the scarcity of living pygopagous twin cases, but also highlights the different approaches to freak legacies in medicine. As there was no evidence to the contrary, medicine had to be satisfied with its own recorded knowledge on pygopagi from the case of Helen and Judith. In this way, Rosa and Josepha lived in the shadow of the Hungarian sisters' legacy and offered medicine a generative opportunity to fill a century long void in the practical study of pygopagous twins. Due to the nature of their connection this meant these examinations and reports exposed the Blazeks' most intimate regions.

The initial interest shown by British medical men in both the nature of the Blazeks' formation and the functionality of their organs came to a full circle in their later lives. When the girls first came to Britain in 1880, Dr W. S. Playfair exhibited them before the Obstetrical Society of London, of which he was President (Playfair, "Conjoined Twins" 265–266).<sup>92</sup> As with the popular accounts of the Blazeks, the majority of the case history and details of their condition had already been provided through other sources, so the focus of this presentation was to fit the condition of the Blazeks into the Society's interests. Apart from the concentration on the girls' pelvic region, this presentation also considered the nature of their birth. Playfair opened his presentation and justified the success of their birth by situating the

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<sup>91</sup> Martell cites Dr Pancoast's enthusiasm when examining Millie Christine in 1871 as they were the only reported adult case of pygopagous twins since Helen and Judith (Martell 147–148).

<sup>92</sup> Also see the very similar reports of this meeting given in "Obstetrical Society of London", *Lancet*, 117:2992 (1 Jan 1881), pp. 15-6 and "Reports of Societies" *BMJ*, 1: 1044 (1 Jan 1881), p.15.

Blazeks in their monstrous category, citing the classification system he had adopted in a paper previously presented before the Society (Playfair, "Mechanism and Management" 300–312). Rosa and Josepha were in the second of his four categories, that is, the class characterized by "Two nearly separate bodies united back to back by the sacrum and lower part of the spinal column" (Playfair, "Mechanism and Management" 302). What is notable in both his initial 1866 report on the births of double monsters and his presentation of Rosa and Josepha is, once more, the legacy of exhibited freaks within this field of knowledge and his suggested taxonomy. Both presentations refer to Helen and Judith, and the latter report also mentions Millie Christine (Playfair, "Mechanism and Management" 307; Playfair, "Conjoined Twins" 266). In fact, Playfair even justifies his report on the birthing of double monsters through popular culture. Due to previous authors of obstetric works believing the births of double monsters to be "such an unusual event" they are written of as "more a matter of curiosity than of real practical importance" (Playfair, "Mechanism and Management" 300). But, Playfair confirms that the "frequent occurrence of such monstrosities in all our museums, and the very numerous cases that are scattered through our periodical literature, are sufficient to show that they are not so very rare as we might be inclined to imagine" (Playfair, "Mechanism and Management" 300–301). By making the twins' case just one of many, Playfair attempts to separate the girls from the popular show world and place them in an unsensational medical taxonomy. Playfair borrowed these well-known figures from the freak show and reconfigured their presentation to suit the concerns of his medical society.

By considering these unusual bodies for their medical value, practitioners created their own 'expert' and authoritative accounts of the freaks and their attributes, making use of spectacular bodies for medical generativity. Playfair's taxonomy of conjoined twins, applied to the field of obstetrics, confirms what Heather McHold calls Victorian medicine's "dedication to rational methodologies" (McHold, "Diagnosing Difference" 150). In an effort to assert the medical profession as a reliable authority these categorisations became increasingly important. So, too, was the ability for medicine to access these bodies to further specify their classification system. As freaks captured the attention of scientific and popular audiences alike, it was easy for medical men to refer to accounts of famous contemporary and past examples of rare anatomies. Yet, without access to numerous cases of monstrosity it was difficult for medicine to establish a definitive system of categorization. In a sense, the taxonomical categorisation of conjoined twins was a form of communal generativity in that it placed freaks within a scientifically-managed medical narrative circulated amongst the profession.

Further, reports on the medical events in the Blazeks' lives also provided generative opportunities for members of the profession. For example, the first *British Medical Journal* article on the Blazeks explained that the girls were delivered only by a midwife because "When



the medical man who was sent for arrived, the birth had been completed" ("Pygopagi" 822). Therefore the report given by Playfair was based on the distanced account of the birth provided by Breisky. Breisky's own report which included Rosa and Josepha's entrance into the world could have been based on the midwife's, the unnamed medical man's or even the mother's account of the birth. Alternatively, the description of the labour and presentation of the girls could have even been conjecture made into authority. Just as freak showmen would adapt narratives to suit their purpose, so too could medicine, arguably making the medical representation of freaks dangerously akin to the realm of popular entertainment. With this methodology the medical men were able to attach their names to the freak legacy, making the twins' birth an instance of agentic generativity for Breisky and Playfair.

Although Rosa and Josepha survived both birth and the delicate early days of their lives, many double monsters did not, making it even more difficult to expand the field of knowledge on these anomalies. So, as "the condition was not diagnosed before birth, this was, in a sense, an argument for the presence of trained medical men at all cases of childbirth" (Sarah Mitchell, "From 'Monstrous' to 'Abnormal'" 67). To acquire sufficient knowledge and to control the interpretation of freaks, medicine would need access to bodies from the start of every life and where this was not possible, the profession would have to represent its authority through a presumed knowledge of every situation. It is no surprise then, that thirty years after this introduction of Rosa and Josepha, medical interest in their formation was reignited when Rosa gave birth to a baby boy.

Whereas the twins were born at home with just a midwife in attendance, Rosa's son was born in Prague's General Hospital, thus fulfilling the medical community's desire for unrestricted access to monstrous bodies. Yet, like the situation of their birth, the medical man who was called to attend the delivery did not make it in time. Indeed all the medical reports that came from the hospital had to "obscure the embarrassing fact that no one knew exactly how the delivery had happened" (Sills, Vrbikova, and Kastratovic-Kotlica 1399).<sup>93</sup> In fact, the local medical community responsible for the supervision of the birth had to wrestle with the newspaper that "simply invented" information they were not given and with outside experts coming in to "take control in the Blazek aftermath" (1400). One of these experts was Professor Friedrich Schauta of Austria who claimed in a lecture: "It is self-evident that I did not enter this case for its sensational aspects, but purely in the scientific spirit, with the realization that history required an exact record of this phenomenal birth" (qtd. in Sills, Vrbikova, & Kastratovic-Kotlica 1400). Schauta's language revealingly echoes popular justifications in presenting and reproducing freak cases. Clearly the desire for individual legacy in medicine and

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<sup>93</sup> I rely heavily on the evidence of this provided by Sills, Vrbikova and Kastratovic-Kotlica as they were able to access and interpret sources on these events in their original languages.

the attraction of freak cases in this endeavour extended past Britain. However, it is worth noting that by all accounts Schauta was successful in attaching his name as an expert in the Blazek's case since the British report from the Vienna correspondent refers to his evidence. The other significant name that was credited in the reports and in later accounts of the Blazek's life and medical history was Dr. Trunecek who published his observations from his examination of the twins twelve days after the birth ("The Accouchement of Rosa" 1313). So, information was dispersed throughout the medical community, but the facts could only be based on post-delivery examinations. As with the announcements of their youthful arrival in London, the British medical press detailed the women's reproductive organs, only now there was more evidence of their functionality ("The Accouchement of Rosa" 1313–1314; "Vienna: A Unique Obstetrical Event" 1652). While the birth of Rosa's son would, no doubt, have caused the excitement of medical practitioners even if they had not been exhibited freaks, Britain's prior familiarity with the pair meant the news of this birth was given to an informed audience. Already the Blazek women filled a particular position within the field of knowledge on double monsters, but Rosa's surprise pregnancy and delivery furthered their cultural value to medicine (as represented by the European doctors' attempts to attach their names to the case). While the baby had grown in Rosa's uterus, the *Lancet* noted that "the mother and her twin sister felt the pain of labour alike" and "both women [had] milk in their breasts" ("Vienna: A Unique Obstetrical Event" 1652). The circumstances of this birth continued the medical curiosity surrounding the formation of conjoined twins and the desire for regular access to their bodies.

Further confusion remained concerning the sexual formation of Rosa and Josepha's bodies due to the contradictions found within the different medical accounts in circulation; all were supposedly based on examinations. The union or independence of the girls' genitourinary organs was mentioned in most discussions, this being considered "of the first importance in the history of monsters" ("The Double Monster Rosa-Josepha Blazek" 892). While there is a continuum of agreement on the presence of one anus (believed to separate further in the bodies), one clitoris and one urethra (leading to two separate bladders), the vagina was disputed. Yet this was not an open dispute, rather the supposed facts just varied in reports. In Breisky's early account he wrote of the "vaginal orifices, lying close together and separated by a longitudinal *septum* [emphasis original]", therefore indicating two vaginas (Breisky recto). Reports in the British medical press during this early visit simply echoed Breisky's account and presented no differing information. Then in 1891 the Blazeks exhibited in Paris and a correspondent for the *Lancet* wrote a "summary" of an article on the twins written by Dr. Marcel Baudouin based on "information furnished by Dr. Isch-Wall" ("Paris: A New Teratological Curiosity" 152). Despite being based on such filtered information, this

report was quite certain of its facts. Here, it was confirmed that there were “two vaginæ, *distinctly* separated from each other by a complete partition [italics added]” (“Paris: A New Teratological Curiosity” 152). Also, in this report a comparison is made to the vaginal formations of both Millie Christine and Helen and Judith. Helen and Judith were said to have had one vagina “bifurcated at a little distance higher up”, but doctors were of two opinions on Millie Christine with Pancoast claiming the twins to have a singular vagina while Ramsbotham “maintained that there were two vaginæ” (“Paris: A New Teratological Curiosity” 152). As with Rosa and Josepha, Millie Christine had presented a recent opportunity for the tangible examination of pygopagous twins, so it was more likely for there to be variance in opinion on them than on the formation of Helen and Judith. When Rosa and Josepha were brought to the fore of obstetrical curiosity through the birth of Rosa’s son, the conflicting descriptions of their genitals began. While the *British Medical Journal* makes no distinct statements on the twins having two vaginas it is implied by the note that during labour the “septum of the vagina was extensively torn”, yet later the “common vaginal orifice” is mentioned (“The Accouchement of Rosa” 1314). Whereas the *Lancet*’s report on the birth directly stated that the twins only have “one vagina, into which two uterine canals open”, but that they have “two orifices of the uretharæ” (“Vienna: A Unique Obstetrical Event”). Due to the lack of medical intervention in the birth of Rosa’s son and the tearing that had occurred during the delivery it may be that the notion of there being one or two vaginas had changed according to the post-delivery appearance.

This confusion of facts on the shared regions of the twins’ bodies was problematic and fed the curiosity as to “whether there were two souls in one body, or two bodies with one soul, as far as sexual matters were concerned” (“A Problem of Personality” 1397).<sup>94</sup> This question of the relation between body, soul and sexual desire was too complex for medicine to dismiss with any certainty. Sir John Bland-Sutton, who wrote on several late nineteenth-century freaks, followed the evidence showing the Blazeks to have a single “genital canal” but believed the twins to be independent in tastes and “sexual inclination” with Rosa’s conception being “in consequence of falling in love with her manager” (Bland-Sutton, *Tumours* 502–503). Here, again, the statements made by the medical man are based on conjecture. Even with differing inclinations if there was a single vagina then Josepha was “a participant in a bizarre ménage à trois” and if there were two vaginas she was still “a perpetual voyeur” of her sister’s intimate encounters (Durbach 83). Either scenario was problematic. By the unintentional ambiguity created by the medical profession, the question could not be answered. In fact, even at the time of their death in 1922 there was a delay in their autopsy due to “legal

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<sup>94</sup> Durbach also discusses the popular and medical contemplation of the sex lives of conjoined twins in Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, p. 70-88.

questions regarding which of the twins had given birth to the child” (Sills, Vrbikova, and Kastratovic-Kotlica 140). In this instance the profession’s inability to agree conclusively on the formation of the pygopagous twins and the agreement that separation would be “an impracticable surgical operation” obviated their responsibility over the allowance of acts that some deemed to be indecent (Bland-Sutton, “Rosa-Josepha” 772). Despite these disagreements Rosa and Josepha, and their subsequent legacy, remained sites of interest for medicine and the obfuscation of facts in their case allowed the Blazeks to be used for the agentic generativity of medical men like Schauta and Bland-Sutton.

During their early lives Rosa and Josepha provided medical professionals with a case from which they could consider the birthing of monsters and they later became the first example of a delivery (possibly) from a shared birth canal. After their death, Rosa and Josepha continued to be discussed by medicine not only for comparison with other conjoined twins of their type, but also for their unique contribution to obstetrical and embryological studies. The Blazeks had been introduced to London and its medical community at a very young age and had done so through the legacy of twins from the past, but after the birth of Rosa’s son the twins were assured to have an afterlife in medicine which would continue long after their bodies were gone, and which would remain the principle means of defining their legacy. In an attempt to assert the legacy of the profession medicine retrospectively claimed authority over this unique obstetrical event despite being wholly absent from it. Therefore, as the names that sought association with the birth were still only able to provide second-hand accounts, the case of the Blazeks served the generativity of the culture of the profession and its status of superiority in the knowledge of pygopagous twins.

### **Correcting Conjoined Twins – Radica and Doodica**

In the regular fashion of discussing conjoined twins as specimens within a class of anomalies, the English doctor John Bland-Sutton considered the death of several famous pairs of joined twins when he wrote of Rosa and Josepha’s deaths in 1922 (Bland-Sutton, “Rosa-Josepha” 772). When considering the deaths of Chang and Eng Bunker, he reminded readers of another pair known to British medical audiences: the girls known as the Orissa twins, Radica and Doodica. The Orissa sisters were first introduced to British audiences in 1893 (“The Orissa Twin Sisters” 1176; *Zaeo’s Latest Wonder* 3; A. Wilson, “Science Jottings” 15). Like Chang and Eng the girls were united by a band in the chest region of their bodies. Significantly the girls’ origin was referenced in their show title as the Orissa twins, but in medical descriptions this was a trivial feature. In opposition to the late century representation of Magrath and the weight his nationality held in the explanation of his presentation of acromegaly, neither the

Blazeks nor Radica and Doodica were scrutinized for racial representations. Considering the circulation of racial concern in popular and scientific culture at the end of the century the lack of medical acknowledgement of these features in these conjoined twins suggests the focused efforts of medicine to distance and depersonalize the girls so that they might be considered purely for their anomaly. Radica and Doodica received regular comparisons to Chang and Eng whose own origin had led to the coining of 'Siamese Twins' to represent their condition. This absence of concern in the girls' origin further demonstrates the strength of the medical gaze in their case as it diagnosed and scrutinized the correctable element of their beings. Their race was inherent and unchangeable, but their freakishness could be altered.

Radica and Doodica's potential for correction through medical intervention was the defining feature of their medical legacy. The twins became of particular interest to medicine when, in 1902, the French physician, Dr Eugene Doyen performed surgery to separate them. The separation of Radica and Doodica was the ultimate manipulation of their freakishness, staking a claim for medical authority over freak bodies and establishing a medical legacy for Doyen. While the surgery itself was a success, Doodica had been ill with tuberculosis prior to the operation, this being the main reason for its urgency, and she died shortly after the separation. Radica did recover from the operation, but had already contracted tuberculosis and died the following year. As with Rosa and Josepha, the legacy of other famous conjoined twins played an important role in medical discussions of Radica and Doodica. To stake its claim over these joined bodies, medicine once again drew upon its own accumulated authority, frequently referring to the knowledge acquired from the autopsy of Chang and Eng.

In contrast to the interest shown in the gynaecological functions of the Blazeks' bodies, reports on the Orissa twins focused on their adjoining band. In the *British Medical Journal*, an 1893 article introduced the girls, explained the details of their "connecting link" for the majority of the piece and finished with a brief mention of their case history and birth ("The Orissa Twin Sisters" 1176). To further illustrate the girls' condition the article was accompanied by a recent promotional photograph, demonstrating the blurring of popular and medical spheres in freak cases. Excusing the lack of information regarding the twins' present condition, the piece claimed "examination is very difficult, owing to the fact that the children, although very good and appearing very happy, greatly dislike being touched" ("The Orissa Twin Sisters" 1176). This attention to the band joining the two girls reflected the discipline's primary interest in conjoined twins of this nature: to assess the extent of their connection and decide how to remove that bond. As Bland-Sutton later contested, "Evidence is available to prove that in all cases of conjoined twins each twin is physiologically a distinct individual", so it was reasonable that the idea of separation "excites the inquisitiveness of the world at large" (Bland-Sutton, *Tumours* 505, 504). Here, Bland-Sutton situates medical curiosity alongside popular interest,

but in highlighting the common interest in the distinctiveness of conjoined twins he also underwrites medical intervention with public support.

For the medical community the separation of famous twins would not only further the status of their expertise on anomalous bodies, but would also acknowledge their ability to control and fundamentally reshape perceptions of problematic physiologies. José van Dijk has suggested that, with the use of new visualizing technologies such as X-Rays, which helped make possible the separation of conjoined twins, “The medical profession’s effort to ‘save’ the freak, rather than the freak himself, became the center of attention” (van Dijk 541). Here, again, the generation of the medical legacy outweighs the importance of the central figure. In much the same way that the act of hero worship for John Hunter was more important than his claims to heroic status, the performance of medical heroics in correcting a freak of nature was more significant than the result of these actions.

Nearly twenty years before the Orissa twins’ London exhibition, the autopsy of Chang and Eng Bunker had dealt almost exclusively with their adjoining flesh so that medicine could be enlightened of the extent to which this bond existed.<sup>95</sup> Throughout their lives the idea of separation had remained a constant possibility, with medical proposals even appearing in their promotional material.<sup>96</sup> But Chang and Eng “did not wish to be separated” and due to the state of surgical practices during their lifetime, “several eminent surgeons advised against it, and therein all parties acted very wisely” (“The Separation of Xiphopagous Twins” 466). However, by 1902 medical practices were more advanced, so when Radica and Doodica became very ill during their winter season in Paris with Barnum and Bailey’s circus the separation became possible, with the hope “to save at least one twin” (“The Separation of Xiphopagous Twins” 465).<sup>97</sup> The dissection of Chang and Eng had confirmed the suspicion that their livers were linked within the adjoining band (“Archives of Forensic Sciences” 260). Therefore, prior to the separation of Radica and Doodica, the extent to which their inner organs were connected was assessed through the introduction of “methylene blue” in one twin and then later testing the quantity of the substance which was found in urine from both girls (“The Separation of Xiphopagous Twins” 466). Also, just as Chang was concluded to be the “weaker half” in his pairing, it was found after the surgery and death of Doodica and by the “great degree of feebleness exhibited by Radica” that her organism had relied heavily on the “arterial blood from her sister” (“Archives of Forensic Sciences” 259; “Radica and Doodica” 1145). Each case

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<sup>95</sup> Significantly, Chang and Eng were never fully separated in their autopsy as they had requested in their wills (Dreger, *One of Us* 25).

<sup>96</sup> See note 64.

<sup>97</sup> While this article stated that Doodica had been diagnosed with tuberculosis peritonitis prior to the separation, a piece in the *Lancet* noted Radica as being the consumptive twin (“Paris: The Separation of Radica and Doodica” 482).

exhibited a favoured half in the strength of its bodily processes, but it was only through death that this could be determined. In this sense, the operation was informed not only by the immediate evidence of the girls' bodies, but also by the knowledge obtained from the deceased bodies of the famous Siamese Twins.

The prospect of separation for conjoined twins was an important part of the narrative of their lives and deaths; it was another way in which disparate cases could be interrelated and for Victorian medicine to promote its authority and skill. While the reports on the Orissa Twins' separation in the *Lancet* came in short instalments, with details focused on the twins and their operation, in the *British Medical Journal* the surgery was represented by an article covering nearly two full columns, but Radica and Doodica took up comparatively little of this space ("Paris: The Separation of Radica and Doodica" 482; "Paris: The Death of Doodica" 557; "Radica and Doodica" 1145; "The Separation of Xiphopagous Twins" 465–466). The piece spends more time discussing the nature of double monsters, mentioning previously performed separations, and discussing the lives and union of Chang and Eng, than it does on the actual operation on the Orissa Twins. The shape of this article stresses the profession's ability to reshape understandings of freak bodies.

For Doyen, who had performed the operation on Radica and Doodica, the separation was "a grand advertisement" and he never "refused to be interviewed" ("Paris: The Separation of Radica and Doodica" 482). During the operation cinematograph films were taken which Doyen later used in presentations he gave before various learned societies ("Berlin: The German Surgical Congress" 1360; "Doyen (Paris)" 987). Doyen's separation of Radica and Doodica provides another example where medicine continued to use the freak body as a site for the sustained knowledge and development of the discipline even after death. Tellingly though, while Doyen sought to utilise the cinematograph for educative and scientific ends, insisting that the films be presented with an instructive narrative, he discovered that copies of his filmed operations, including the separation of Radica and Doodica, had been sold to a showman and exhibited much like the traditional freak show (van Dijck 544–545). Indeed, the circulation of these films in lay and professional environments "served every purpose except as an instructional tool" (van Dijck 545). Even in the afterlife of freaks, it seems that the boundaries between medicine and popular entertainment could remain uncomfortably permeable and difficult to enforce.

Despite the leak of Doyen's films into the public realm, he was still considered a suitable candidate for praise in upholding the medical supremacy over freak bodies, securing his legacy. A few months after his separation of Radica and Doodica the *British Medical Journal* reported that a similar operation had been performed by Dr. Chapot-Prévost in Rio de Janeiro two years earlier. Although the journal acknowledges that "Doyen noted this case and gave full

credit to the Brazilian surgeon”, Chapot-Prévost “clearly a man of business” sought greater recognition for his case as he felt it was “more difficult than that undertaken by M. Doyen” (“Record-Beating” 1360). After detailing the Brazilian doctor’s claims the journal finally concedes that “from a teratological point of view he holds the record” but, “as far as risk and results are concerned, he and M. Doyen may divide the crown”, especially since Chapot-Prévost had “had a dangerous healthy structure to divide” and Doyen “operated when a perilous complication existed” (“Record-Beating” 1360). While neither surgeon represented the British medical culture, the journal seems to proffer its allegiance to Doyen, perhaps either through his proximity or, more convincingly, due to Radica and Doodica’s history in Britain. The twins had visited when they were young and more recently as part of the Barnum and Bailey circus, so the medical community was more likely to be familiar with their presentation of conjoinment than that of the twins in Brazil. Therefore, Doyen had operated his medical skill, and the brilliance of the profession, on freak bodies the British medical community had an affinity with. This acceptance of Doyen’s heroic status over freak bodies was further verified four years later when the doctor himself had to be operated on for appendicitis. In congratulating the surgeon on his recovery the journal again praised him as “the hero of so many a bloody battle against disease, the separator of united twins” (“M. Doyen’s Experiences” 161). Doyen’s achievement in twin separation surgery and the explicit details of it he had shared through his lectures and reports had made the British medical community privy to the key of correcting freak formations. In this transfer of knowledge medicine could claim communal responsibility for such successes and look to future cases as similar opportunities for the exercise of knowledge. While Doyen’s post-operative methods of sharing his success may have been enacted with the intention of agentic generativity and perpetuation of his personal legacy, his image was also able to contribute to the communal generativity of the brilliance of the medical profession.

### Conclusion

Doyen, Schauta and Cunningham all represent attempts of individual doctors to propagate their own legacies within medicine through the performance of freak cases. Sir John Bland-Sutton who wrote extensively on the embryology of conjoined and parasitic twins also did so through famous exhibited freaks.<sup>98</sup> Yet none of these names were to become celebrated as significant contributors to advances in practice. Rather, it is the contributions to the freak cases they exposed, coupled with other renowned cases, and the information gleaned from

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<sup>98</sup> See Durbach for an in-depth discussion of Bland-Sutton’s contribution to the understanding of the formation of parasitic twins through Lalloo (58–88).



these anomalies that left lasting impressions. In fact, Rosa Blazek's case is still the only known delivery from a pygopagous twin.<sup>99</sup> While John Hunter (unknowingly) set the precedent in medicine for a lasting legacy his example was difficult to emulate. Even through the exploration of important and unusual cases, medical men could not secure individual legacies for their heroics. Instead their part in the exaltation of the profession and the establishment of the discipline's superior knowledge was the generative result of their freak work. Through the singularity of freak conditions and perpetuation of their legacies medicine was able to affirm its status as a profession.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, there was a regular trend in medical literature to acknowledge the existence of numerous cases of monstrous conditions, yet medicine persisted in turning to popularly exhibited freaks for many of its examples. Medical experts sought access to monstrous bodies in order to develop their field and, as shown by the freak cases which have been discussed above, once the discipline had been granted access to the living bodies their authority on the condition was presumed to prolong this right over the bodies after death. With constant references to previous freak cases, medicine continued to assert this authority over new presentations of similar conditions. But, in perpetuating freak legacies medicine did more than enrich its own field: it provided a site for the continuation of freak show practices. While some freaks, like Julia Pastrana, were still popularly exhibited after their death, most were removed from the freak show circuit. Generally, when posthumous examinations of unusual anatomies took place, they were carried out by members of the medical profession. So, during their lifetime freaks fluctuated between being popular performers and medical subjects, but in their afterlife they were primarily the objects of medical authority.

Once categorized and recorded, such interpretations of freak bodies created further opportunities for the medical profession to stamp its authority on the public domain, seeking to redirect and redeploy the force of freak spectacle in order to achieve its own disciplinary ends. In the course of discussion at Chang and Eng's autopsy in 1874 it was noted that "records of about four hundred monsters have now been collected in books and journals" ("Archives of Forensic Sciences" 263). In their extensive, profusely illustrated, and highly popular 1900 collection, *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine*, George Gould and Walter Pyle explained their intentions in the most spectacular terms, to "summarize and to arrange in order the

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<sup>99</sup> There is a pair of conjoined twins, not pygopagous, whose lower regions are shared, that are said to have given birth in 1993. However, the only information I have been able to find on these twins has come from highly-sensationalised television and internet sources which each given different surnames for the women ("My Shocking Story - Human Spider Sisters"; "Ganga and Jamuna Mondal"; "Spider Sisters"). I have been unable to locate articles about the twins or the birth of the child in medical journals.

records of the most curious, bizarre, and abnormal cases that are found in medical literature of all ages and all languages” (Gould and Pyle 2). Unsurprisingly, given this oratorical opening, the collection was filled with cases of popular freaks. To some extent, such works represented the culmination of the piecemeal nineteenth-century acquisition of new freak bodies within the discursive apparatus of medicine. However, like the panoply of famous living freaks assembled by Barnum and Bailey’s Greatest Show on Earth in the late nineteenth century, print anthologies of freakish bodies assembled for the medical profession were not only intended as taxonomies, but also presented the spectacle of medicine itself to an increasingly broad readership. More than a mere methodology or profession, medicine was presented within such volumes as a grand, secure principle underlying and explaining this deluge of challenging, distracting bodies. Thus the medical discipline not only claimed unrestricted access and knowledge of the freak bodies after death, but it also manipulated, reconfigured, and anthologized these legacies in order to immortalize scientific authority and curiosity. In a bid to secure the legacy of the profession and exalt the overall status of its members, medicine utilized freak bodies and legacies as propagators of generativity.

## Thesis Conclusion

In 1877, a short story appeared in *Tinsley's Magazine* called "A Freak of Nature" ("A Freak of Nature" 654–663).<sup>100</sup> This short fiction nicely brings together the key concepts argued in this thesis. The tale centres around a Dr Barton, the local physician for the quiet hamlet of "Barnum", who "had a fierce passion for freaks of Nature" and went to great lengths to collect monstrous specimens ("A Freak of Nature" 654). Since Barton was the primary physician, there "was scarcely a junior member of the Barnum community whom he had not 'assisted' into the world", consequently meaning he usually had instant access to new freakish specimens in the region ("A Freak of Nature" 654). Due to a series of misunderstandings and the spreading of rumours around the village by Mrs Tittle and Mrs Tattle, the Doctor becomes angry with his nephew. He believes his nephew, whom the Doctor had trained in the medical profession, to have assisted in the birth of a stillborn monstrosity with three noses and to have sent the specimen off to London to gain professional recognition rather than share it with his uncle. When the fallacy of the tale is revealed at the end of the story the nephew explains that he had sent an item off to London: a wax statuette of the doctor "with two supporting figures emblematical of medicine and surgery" made as a surprise for Dr Barton's upcoming jubilee day ("A Freak of Nature" 663). Then the story concludes with the doctor's apology for his rash behaviour as a consequence of hearing the "monstrously impossible tale of the three-nosed child" ("A Freak of Nature" 663). The printing and storyline of this fiction encapsulate the main themes explored in this thesis: the prevalence of freaks in popular print, the attachment of Barnum's legacy to freaks, the medical authority exercised over freak bodies and the building of medical legacy through freaks. Since the story was printed in a magazine for popular readership, it also portrays the medical fascination with freaks as a familiar concept. Freak representations created and added to existing legacies through the end of the nineteenth century and beyond.

This thesis has argued that freaks were familiar to the Victorian public and served the generativity of popular and medical culture within late nineteenth-century society. The mainstream status of freaks was supported by regular print representations appearing in a range of publications. This prevalence of print allowed freak histories to become familiar and these legacies were then able to be productive for various groups, or cultures, in late Victorian society, namely: showmen, lay audiences and readers, individual doctors and the medical

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<sup>100</sup> This article was sourced from the *Proquest British Periodicals* digitized collection which cites the magazine title as the *Novel Review* (1867-1892). However, the *Waterloo Directory* notes that the *Novel Review* was incorporated with *Tinsley's Magazine* at some point in its run from 1867-1892 ("Tinsley's Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly" 1). The cover page for this particular issue has the title *Tinsley's Magazine*.

profession as a collective. Each of the chapters in this thesis has explored the generativity of freaks (in other words, the productivity of freaks in terms of legacy-building) for one or more of these cultures.

### **Summary**

Chapter one demonstrated the prevalence of freak legacies in popular print throughout the nineteenth century. Appearing in a diverse range of publications, from eccentric biographies to general interest newspapers to late-century boys' magazines, allowed different social groups to represent freaks in a manner suitable to their audience. This chapter showed that freaks were not only generative for popular audiences, but for the continuation of freak representations themselves. Through regular reproduction and repeated references to historical freaks the culture of freak show entertainment was prolonged and, arguably, encouraged, making freaks generative for both the freak show and their audiences.

Chapter two presented a case study on the Barnum phenomenon in Britain at the end of the century. Barnum was a highly generative person constantly promoting his own legacy. By encouraging and manipulating print representations of himself and his entertainments Barnum achieved a mythological persona. In both visits the Barnum and Bailey circus made to the United Kingdom at the end of the nineteenth century, Barnum was portrayed as a master of entertainment and the ultimate showman of freaks. This chapter illustrated the extent to which this image was forged and then posthumously concretized in the circus's British exhibitions. Barnum's case is particularly relevant to the demonstration of the generativity of freaks because of the centrality of freaks to Barnum's image, despite their marginal position in the circus. The freak exhibitions in the circus were a sideshow entertainment, but frequently held a prominent position in reviews and advertisements for the show and in recollections of Barnum's history with British audiences. Barnum's portrayal as a dominant force in the exhibition of freaks was sustained after his death through the continued attachment of his name to freak performers, making them Barnum's freaks.

The third chapter introduced the precarious relationship between the medical profession and freak shows through authoritative attempts to restrict audiences and appropriate freak bodies to medicine. This section demonstrated medicine's compliance with the law in order to problematize the popular exhibition and consumption of freakish bodies. Within the journals, medical practitioners often made the case for the withdrawal of medical knowledge from the public sphere, yet when it came to understanding anomalous physical presentations medicine needed to interact with popular practices. Medical journals show how the medical profession regularly and unapologetically made use of freaks for the profession's own generative ends. For instance, debates on maternal impressions and the formation of

freakish conditions was a field of enquiry that required access to freak bodies. In gaining access and sharing investigative results medical practices were often quite similar to popular freak exhibition techniques. This concept was further explored in the final chapter.

The fourth and final chapter explored the tradition of legacy in medicine, as shown through the figurehead of John Hunter, before discussing the generativity of freaks for medicine in three late nineteenth-century cases. These cases show how freaks and their legacies were employed for the generative ambitions of medical men. Further, these cases demonstrate the generativity of freaks for freaks, in that medicine relied on its own catalogue of knowledge to decipher the presentation of a condition, and this knowledge for freakish conditions often came from previous medical encounters with popular freaks.

As these chapters have shown, freaks drew attention from scientific and popular audiences alike. This shared interest in freakish bodies illuminates the interrelatedness of popular and scientific culture in the nineteenth century which has been explored in other work, such as Bernard Lightman's (*Lightman, Victorian Popularizers of Science*). The versatile interest in freaks reveals the true generativity of their representations. Previous freak studies, such as Tromp and Durbach's, have interpreted the symbols of Victorian culture written on the freak body and this thesis has furthered that idea by separating and further establishing the contingent cultures of freak representations (Tromp; Durbach). Rather than gathering multiple and unrelated sources to exemplify the representation of a particular Victorian belief through the freak body, this thesis has examined freak representations through the lens of specific cultures within Victorian society: popular audiences/readers (in particular women and boys), showmen (primarily Barnum), doctors and the medical profession. Freaks were not only malleable in their ability to take on different meanings, but also had the flexibility to move between disparate sectors and serve the differing needs and generativity of these groups (or cultures). Yet, the multiplicity of freak representations signifies the mainstream status of freaks in the nineteenth century. This examination of freaks has focused on popular and medical representations in the late nineteenth century, in particular, because of the fluidity of scientific and popular spheres in this period, and the continued medical usage of popularly exhibited freaks despite the emergence of medicine as a distinct profession. The combination of these factors underscores the generativity of freaks and freak legacies.

### Concerns

Using the concept of generativity, which is primarily used for life narrative and psycho-sociological analysis, to interpret late nineteenth-century freak representations has provided a new means for understanding the widespread engagement with freaks. While applying the framework of generativity to a historical, text-based analysis does result in some

alterations from its intended methodology (i.e. analysing evidence from ethnographic and life-history interviews, etc), the concept remains the same. Generativity is a way for individuals or communities of people to leave a mark after death through the “vehicle of culture” (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* 269). Freaks, I have argued, were that cultural means through which individuals and sectors in Victorian society were able to establish and propagate legacies. Rather than applying generativity to the personal, first-hand accounts of individuals, evidence of the generativity of freaks has instead been found through the continuation and repetition of their legacies in print over a long period of time. While Barnum and Joseph Merrick exemplify individual cases of freak-related legacies, the majority of examples discussed here implicate the generative use of freaks to project ideas and practices, (such as the attendance of boys to freak shows) or the image of whole groups (like the medical profession) into the future. Most significant, however, is the generativity of freaks for freaks, as contemporary freaks continued to be related to their predecessors in print representations. Generativity, for this study, has been removed from its usual environment and its application to personal, autobiographical histories and has been adapted to interpret textual, agentic and communal representations of freaks. Ultimately, generativity is a productive means to leave a “stamp on the future” or leave a legacy and, as this thesis has argued, freaks were a common and versatile means to achieve this purpose (Kotre, *Outliving the Self* 7).

An important concern that has been raised throughout the process of this study is that of accuracy and agency in freak representations. Within freak narratives, it is likely that very little, if any, of the information derives from fact. In fact, the first-hand account of the freak void of any promotional motives seems to be wholly absent. Various authors have taken different approaches to filling this gap. For instance, Joanne Martell’s biography on Millie Christine and Christopher Hals Gylseth and Lars Toverud’s biography of Julia Pastrana both present emotive and sympathetic accounts of the performers’ lives (Martell; Gylseth and Toverud). Both of these works acknowledge the fame acquired by the freak performers, but do so through a lens of pity for the hardships they faced. This method of placing modern-day sentiment into the freak narrative (often appropriated as the freak’s own response to the situations she faces) does less to reclaim the freak’s agency than it does to reveal the author’s own feelings. In a sense, this style of narrative continues the generativity of freak legacies as they are adapted to the author’s needs.

Alternatively, Robert Bogdan has argued that the freak show was a preferable lifestyle for performers due to the economic gains they achieved from the shows (Bogdan, *Freak Show*; Bogdan, “The Social Construction of Freaks” 23–37). This contention has been countered, most notably, by David Gerber who challenges Bogdan’s “reluctance to see the situation in light of the fact that those (showmen, human exhibits, and the audience) involved had vastly unequal

powers to effect the course of their lives” (Gerber 47). Gerber posits that the performance lifestyle should not be seen as preferable since freak performers did not have alternative choices that would provide equal means. This debate leads into further questions surrounding the morality of freak shows which has largely been taken up by disability studies (discussed in the introduction). While the rights and living standards of those with physicalities which fall outside of the hegemony are significant ethical and moral concerns, projecting them into the past reveals no greater insight of the subjective experience of freaks than Bogdan’s position does. Rather, the bulk of freak show studies, regardless of which approach they take, confirm the void of personal freak narratives. Basing evidence of the comforts or sufferings of nineteenth-century freak performers primarily on conjecture (since freak remains – textual and material – were preserved with motives) only further exploits the generativity of freaks as their histories are appropriated to present-day narratives.

The agency of individual freaks has neither been ignored nor denied, but, admittedly, it has gone unquestioned in this thesis because of the difficulty in obtaining first-hand accounts. For instance, cases in the third chapter show that some exhibited freaks suffered horrendous conditions, but these representations were found in reports on legal proceedings. Other presentations, particularly popular accounts, such as those discussed in chapter one, refer to the wealth and status freaks achieved, but these are often promoting or justifying attendance to the shows. Through generativity these variances reflect the diverse motivations implied in the context of freak representations.

This thesis has attempted to explore freak histories within the context of their preservation. As with the case of Barnum’s legacy, the separation of fact from fiction is irrelevant. Here, the freak legacies have been considered for their contextual preservation and the implications of these contexts. However, this is not to claim greater accuracy in recounting freak histories or superiority over previous analyses. Past freak work, including those mentioned above, all adds value to the rich field of freak show history. Instead, this study has demonstrated the fluidity of freaks within their cultural contexts and some of the various generative ends they served. Yet, as acknowledged by Zilber, Tuval-Mashaich and Liebllich, “context is dynamic, socially and politically embedded, and ever evolving” and in any one narrative “there seems to be no limit to relevant contexts” because of the embeddedness of each context within another (Zilber, Tuval-Mashiach, and Liebllich 1049). So, even in the attempt of this study to consider the generativity of freaks within a context for a particular group it is accepted that the contexts interpreted were the author’s choice rather than the singular contexts of the representations.

The generativity of freaks has been analyzed through their representations in print media. In the Victorian era print was a popular format for communication and the spreading of

knowledge amongst a broad audience spectrum. Therefore, analysing the representation of freaks through their various manifestations in this medium allows for the consideration of numerous cultures in nineteenth-century society. The diversity of publications with freak representations implies their widespread appeal and the generative use. Print media is a form which caters to the tastes of its audiences and provides a textual preservation of cultural interests. Therefore, the prevalence of freaks in print is a record not only of their mainstream status, but also of their generative popularity.

### **Continuation of the Freak Show**

The legacy of freaks has continued through the twentieth- and into our present twenty-first-century society, taking on new formations and meanings in their representations. In some cases, the history of the freak show has been perceived as a demeaning exploitation of people with deformities and disabilities, spurring creative work on these histories, particularly by disabled theatre groups and actors (Conroy 341–354; Kuppers 31–48). These works often claim authority over the experience of freaks and present audiences with fictionalised, subjective accounts of freak performers. On the other hand, newer versions of the freak show have emerged, again claiming freak show history as their own (Stephens, “Twenty-First Century Freak Show”; Skinner 250–263). Many, but not all, of the freaks performing within these shows present acquired freakish abilities, such as sword-swallowing and full-body tattoos. In both types of modern freak show presentation, the performers reclaim the title of freak in accordance with their interpretation of freak show history, consequently furthering freak generativity.

Within modern-day media representations of freaks, discussing both historical and current, there is a continued practice of sensationalization and appropriation of freak generativity. For instance, in July 2011 the British newspaper the *Independent* reported recent medical findings on Joseph Merrick’s condition: Proteus syndrome. The article, discussing the benefit of recent genetic discoveries, is accompanied by an arguably superfluous photograph of Merrick. Further, the piece concludes with a quote from the director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, emphasising the excellence of medicine in light of this discovery: “This rare disorder has been the focus of curiosity and medical observation for decades, but until now, has never been medically explained. With the analysis reported here, patients and families who face this condition have hope for future therapies” (Laurence 7). Here, Merrick’s body continues to be generative for scientific inquiry and the exaltation of medicine.

In the internet version of another British newspaper, *Mail Online*, an article was posted in March 2011 that was reminiscent of nineteenth-century articles on freaks. Here, the journalist writes of Rick Genest, a man covered with tattoos, which “make his body resemble a



decomposing corpse”, and the piece is illustrated with several photographs (Roberts 1). He had recently gained public attention through his roles in a popular music video and a fashion show in Paris. The article relays details from an interview with Genest’s mother to normalise the freak in a similar tone to Goddard’s 1898 “Even as You and I” article (discussed in chapter 2): “Despite his unconventional lifestyle, his mother said she is proud of her son” (Roberts 12). Further, the piece explains Genest’s desire “to extend his gruesome body art”, but adds, “whatever he does, Genest will still be welcomed home” (Roberts 26, 27). This article adheres to Victorian journalistic conventions of highlighting the perceived normal aspects of a freak’s life to further sensationalise their freakish difference.

While there are numerous issues in present-day freak usage which are worthy of discussion and investigation, (e.g. those concerning the differences in the dissemination of images and information through textual, audio-visual and digital media) these two examples point to the continuation of some Victorian freak tropes. These two articles derive from publications aimed at different audiences, so their freak inclusions work to different purposes. The promotion of medical excellence through Merrick’s skeleton and the sensationalization of Genest both demonstrate the continued generative use of freakish bodies for readers of mainstream, general interest newspapers, albeit of different calibres.

There are numerous ways to relate the nineteenth-century freak show to present-day practices and concerns. Beyond the theatrical and journalistic attempts mentioned above, audiences can also experience freaks at places such as China’s “Dwarf Empire” in Kunming; or rock-legend Alice Cooper’s Halloween concerts which incorporate his hand-picked freak show; or even, as Matthew Sweet describes, television audiences consume freaks from the comfort of their own home “as twenty-first century showmen lead a fresh parade of freaks into their living rooms” (Horton; Foster; R. Murray, “Alice Cooper Halloween Shows”; Sweet 154). Altogether, these examples show the true longevity of freak narratives. The versatility of freaks and their legacies for Victorian culture is still evident in freak discourse and, due to their generativity, these narratives continue to be adapted and manipulated to suit the aims of exhibitors and spectators.

Also, medical and scientific journals show the continuance of professional fascination in freak bodies and legacies by providing retrospective articles on historical, medical interactions with freaks (Al Rabeeah 1000–1004; Spitz 814–819; Bondeson and Allen 426–434; Sills, Vrbikova, and Kastratovic-Kotlica 1396–1402). These sources demonstrate the persistence of some of the nineteenth-century medical debates; for instance, those concerning the classification and individuality of conjoined twins (Raffensperger 249–255; M. Q. Bratton and Chetwynd 279–285; C. D. Murray, “The Experience of Body Boundaries by Siamese Twins” 117–130; Rowena 941–944). Over one-hundred years after the separation of Radica and

Doodica it seems that medicine still struggles to take a collective, decisive approach to joined bodies and perpetuates the freak narratives circulating in popular and medical spheres in the nineteenth century.

This thesis has adapted the concept of generativity for the exploration of freak representations in late nineteenth-century media and medicine. The multiplicity and consistency of freak representations in popular and medical print throughout the period demonstrates the familiar and mainstream status of freaks in Victorian society. Due to the generativity of freaks, their legacies were created and continually represented in various forms. The sustained use of freak show narrative and representations into the twenty-first century (with the extent of this only being hinted at above), is a testament to the true generativity of freaks and their Victorian legacy. Therefore, generativity has been a valuable analytical tool because of the multiple readings of the late nineteenth-century engagement with freaks it provides, as well as the explanation it gives for the prolonged and widespread use of freaks.

## Appendix: Illustrations



JAMES PORO.

**Figure 1.**

From Caulfield, *Lives and Portraits*, between pages 172-173.

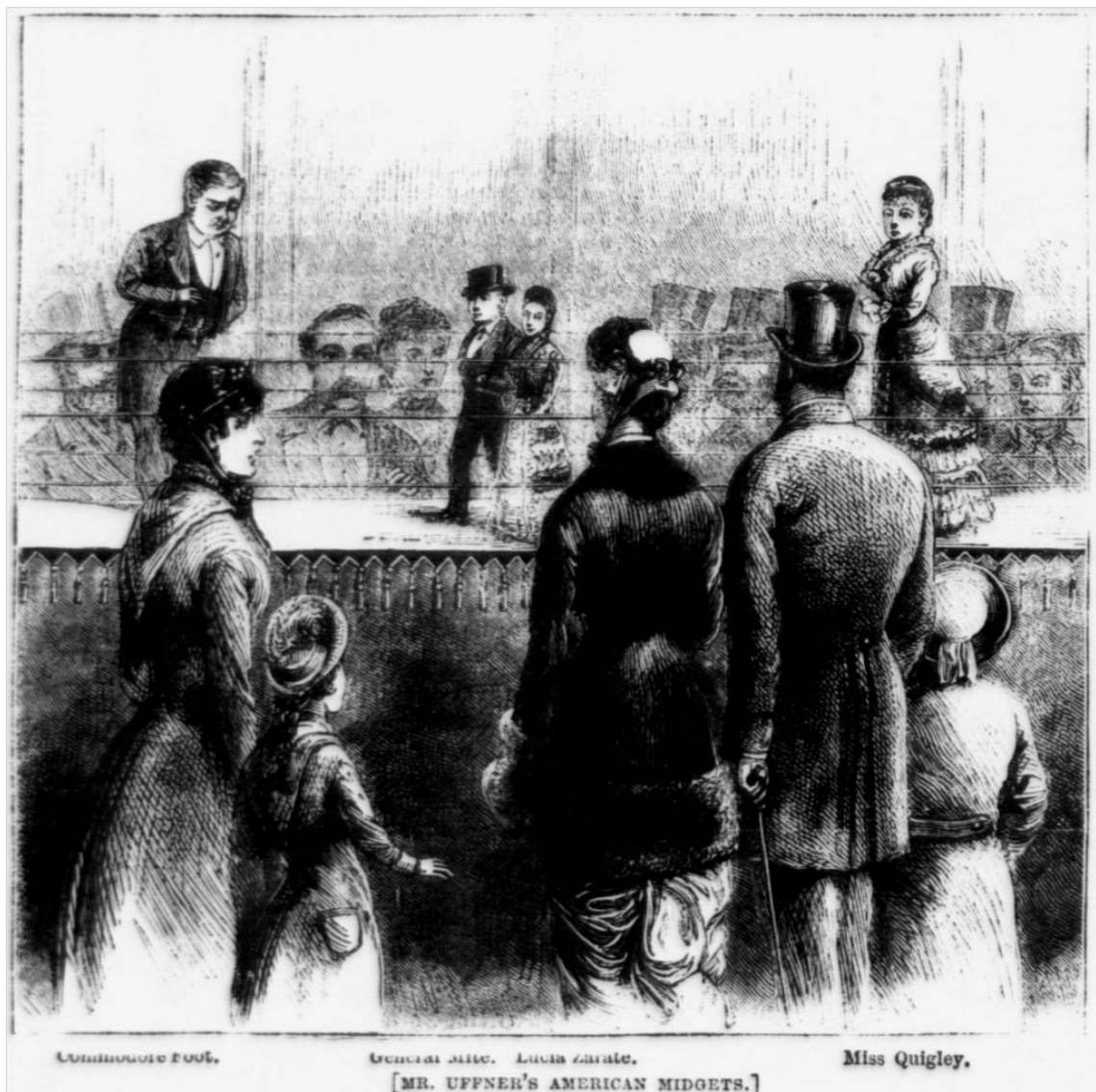


**JAMES PORO,**

(Born at Genoa 1686.)

**Figure 2.**

From Caulfield, *Portraits, Memoirs and characters*, between pages 134-135.



**Figure 3.**  
"The Midgets." *London Journal*, 5 Feb. 1881: 92.



Printed by Froth, Green, Moor Street

## THE "MIDGETS" AT THE MASONIC HALL.

INSTITUTION BY THE "OWL" ADMIT.

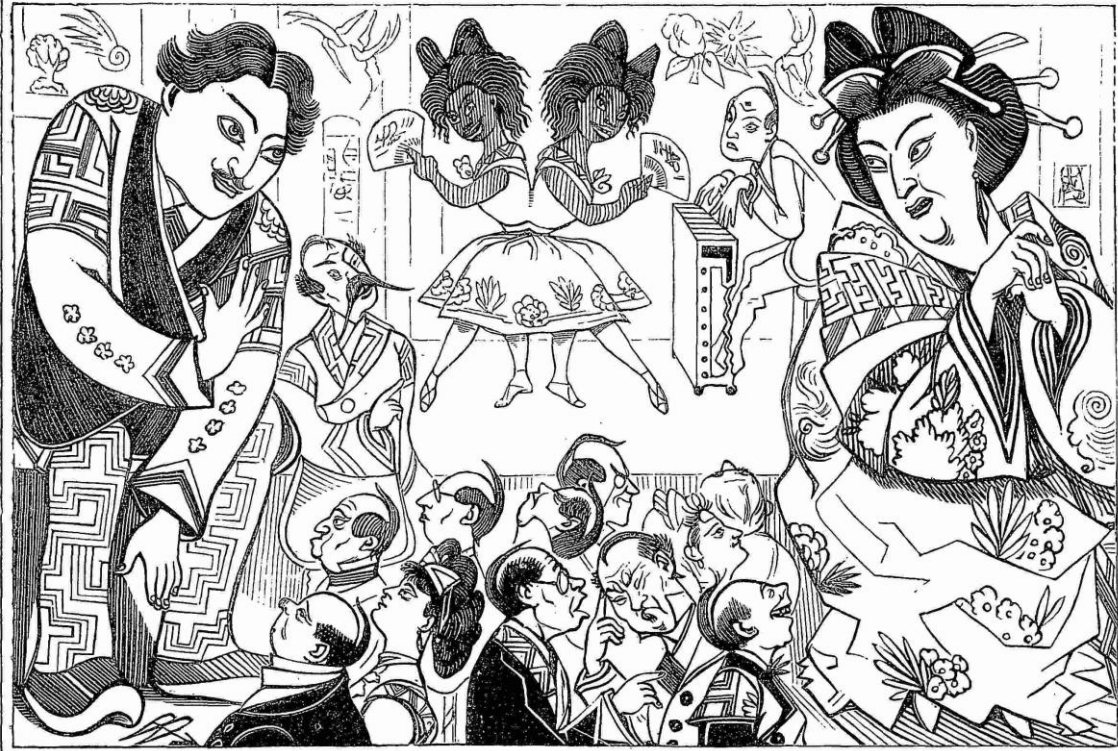
Figure 4.

"Notes about the Midgets." *Owl: A journal of wit and wisdom*, 12 Dec. 1884: 8.



**Figure 5.**  
 Millie Christine are in the bottom left-hand corner.  
*Illustrated Police News* 3 June 1871: f.p.





**Figure 6.**

Illustration accompanying "A Two-Headed Nightingale." *Fun* 10 Jun. 1871: 238.





MARRIAGE OF CAPTAIN DATES AND MISS SWAN (THE KENTUCKY GIANT AND THE NOVA-SCOTIAN GIANTESSE) AT ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH.



**Figure 7.**

"A Giant's Wedding." *Penny Illustrated Paper* 24 Jun. 1871: 385.



**Figure 8.**

"The Giants' Wedding." *Harper's Bazar* 29 June 1871: 477.

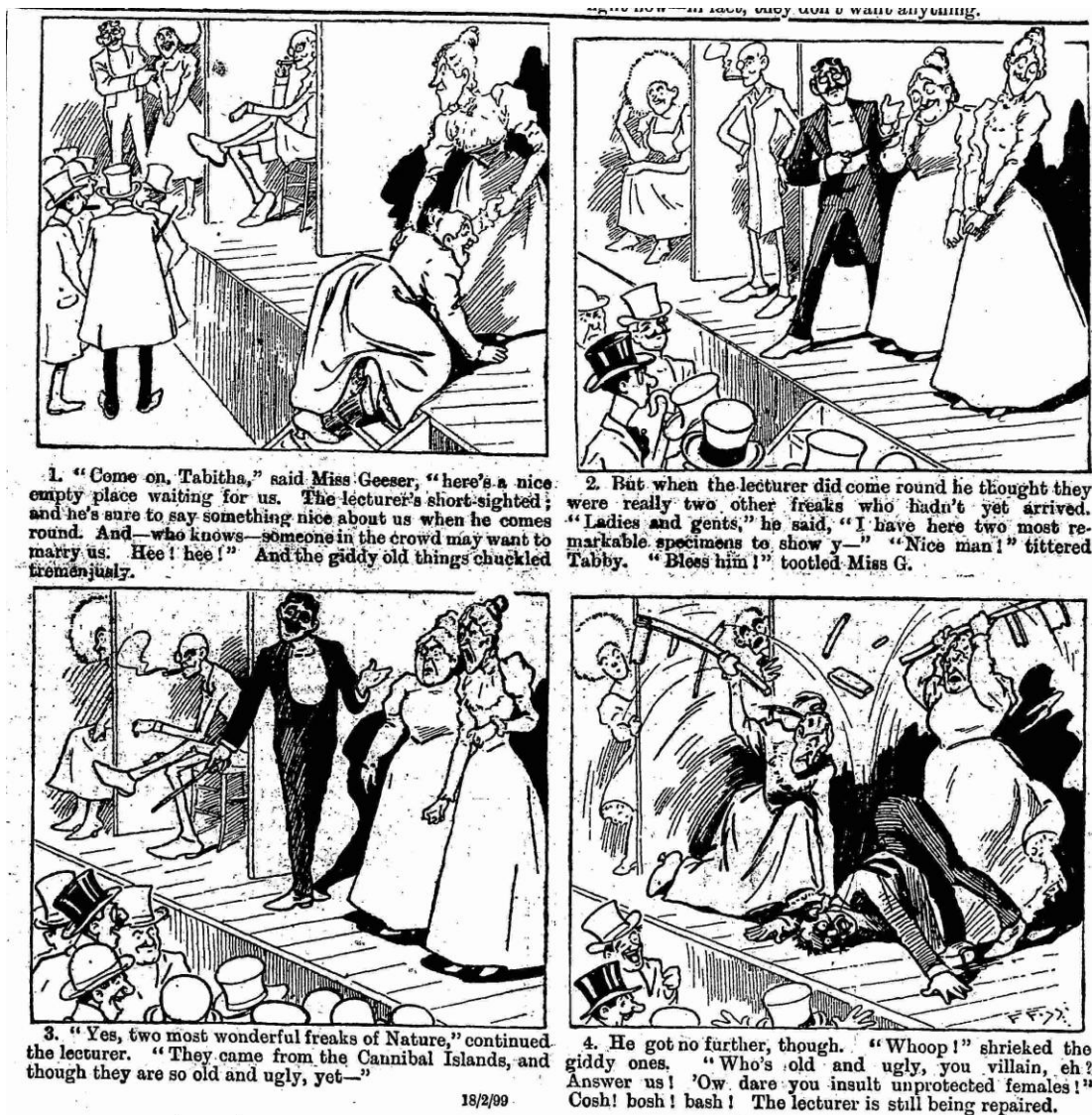


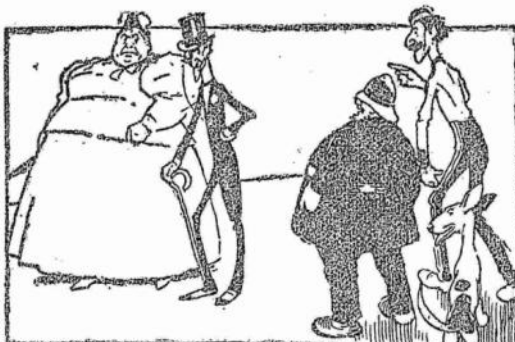
Figure 9.

"Come on Tabitha." Untitled comic. *Illustrated Chips* 18 Feb. 1899: 5.

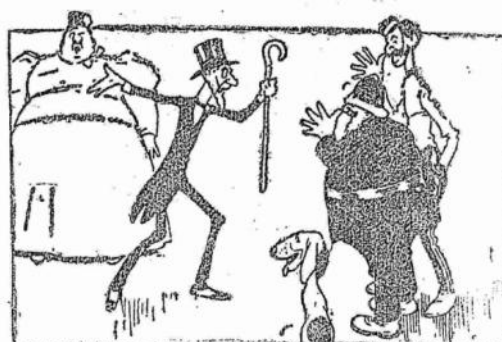
# OUR FUNNY PAGE.

## THE ADVENTURES OF LANKY LARRY THE LANCER AND BLOATED BILL THE BOBBY.

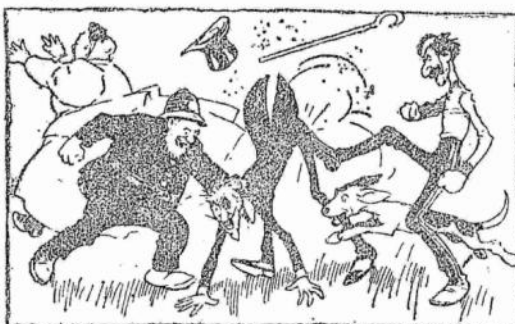
(By kind permission of the Editor of the COMIC HOME JOURNAL this series will be continued on this page every week.)



1. "Anuvver little fake like that lion business," remarked Lanky Larry to Bloated Bill, as they strolled along one day, "would set us up for life." "That's a dead cert," returned Bloated Bill. "But—'Ullo, 'oo's this?" "Fat Woman and Skeleton Dude from Barnum's," said Lanky Larry. "Yah! wot a pair!"



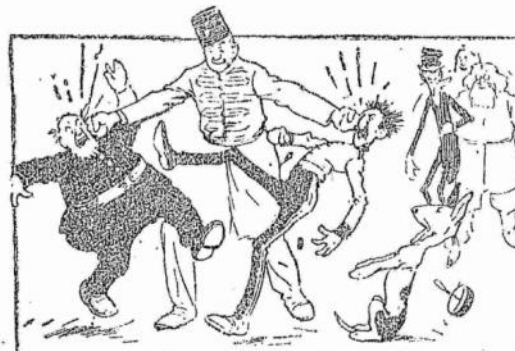
2. But the Skeleton Dude had overheard them, and rushed up to demand an apology. "Apology be blowed!" said Lanky Larry. "You go 'ome and git a bottle of fat-producer," said Bloated Bill. "And anuvver of anti-fat for the old gull!" murmured Lanky Larry. But the Dude's blood was up, and he went for the pals.



3. Only the worst of it was the pals were two to one, and they started giving the Dude beans. "'Ere's fur you!" chuckled Lanky Larry, as he lashed out with his foot. Wallop! "Ain't he bony, though?" grinned Bloated Bill, setting to work with his fists. "Help!" shouted the Skeleton Dude.



4. And help it was. For in a jiffy the Dog-faced Man came tearing round the corner, and the next moment, with a growl and a snarl, he had leapt on to the pals, and choked them off pretty smartly. "We'd better make tracks," said Lanky Larry; "I don't like the looks of 'im." "Right y'are!" muttered Bloated Bill. "I don't want 'idrophoby."



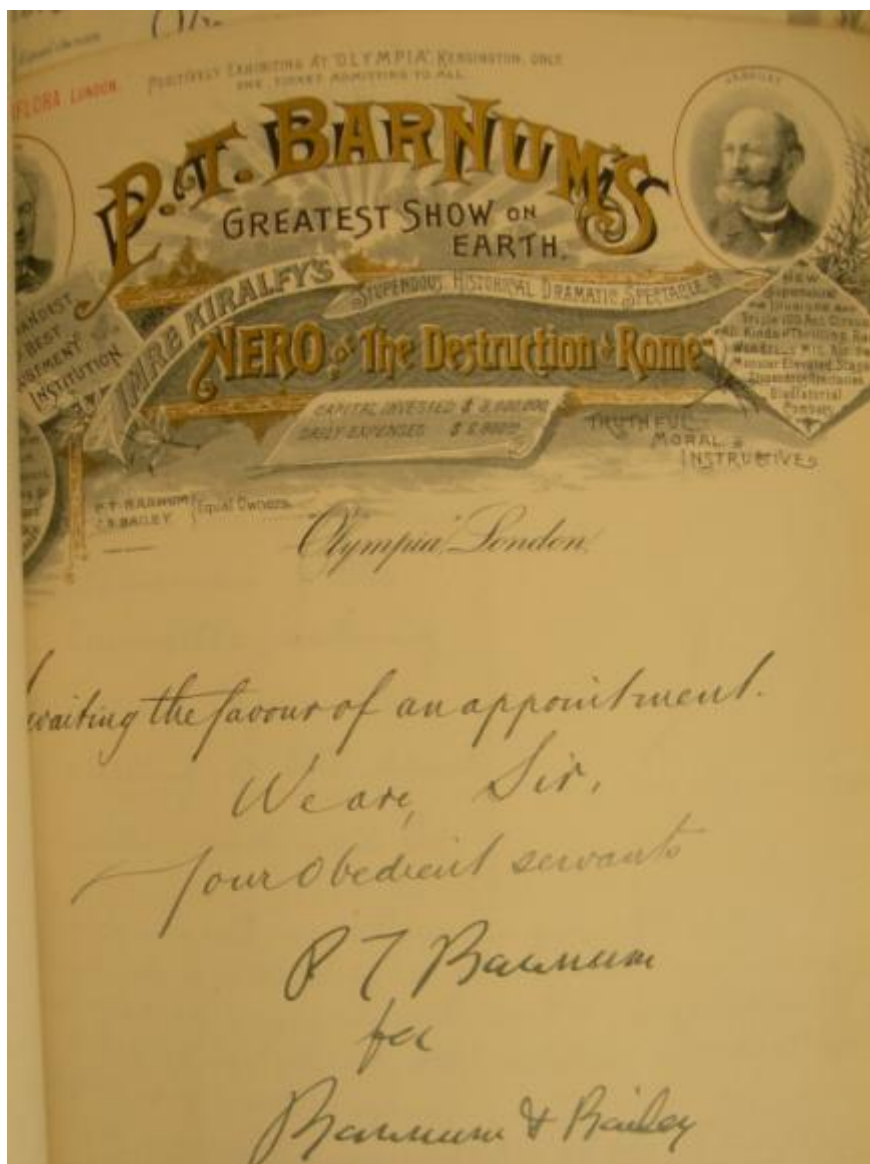
5. But it was too late; for before Lanky Larry and Bloated Bill could get away, up stalked the Giant, and with a biff! bang! slooshier! he sent both the pals flying. "Yow! 'tain't fair!" yelled Lanky Larry. "I never 'it you, you giraffe!" "Yer coward!" screamed Bloated Bill, "to 'it a little feller 'arf yer size!"



6. Then the fun began, for the other Freaks had all come up by this time, and the Armless Wonder did a little boxing practice with his legs. And then the Fat Woman took a comfortable seat on the pals' heads. "This'll teach yer better manners," she said with a smile. And the pals couldn't say a word, for they were just about squeezed to bits.

Printed and Published by the Proprietors at 24, Tudor Street, London, E.C.

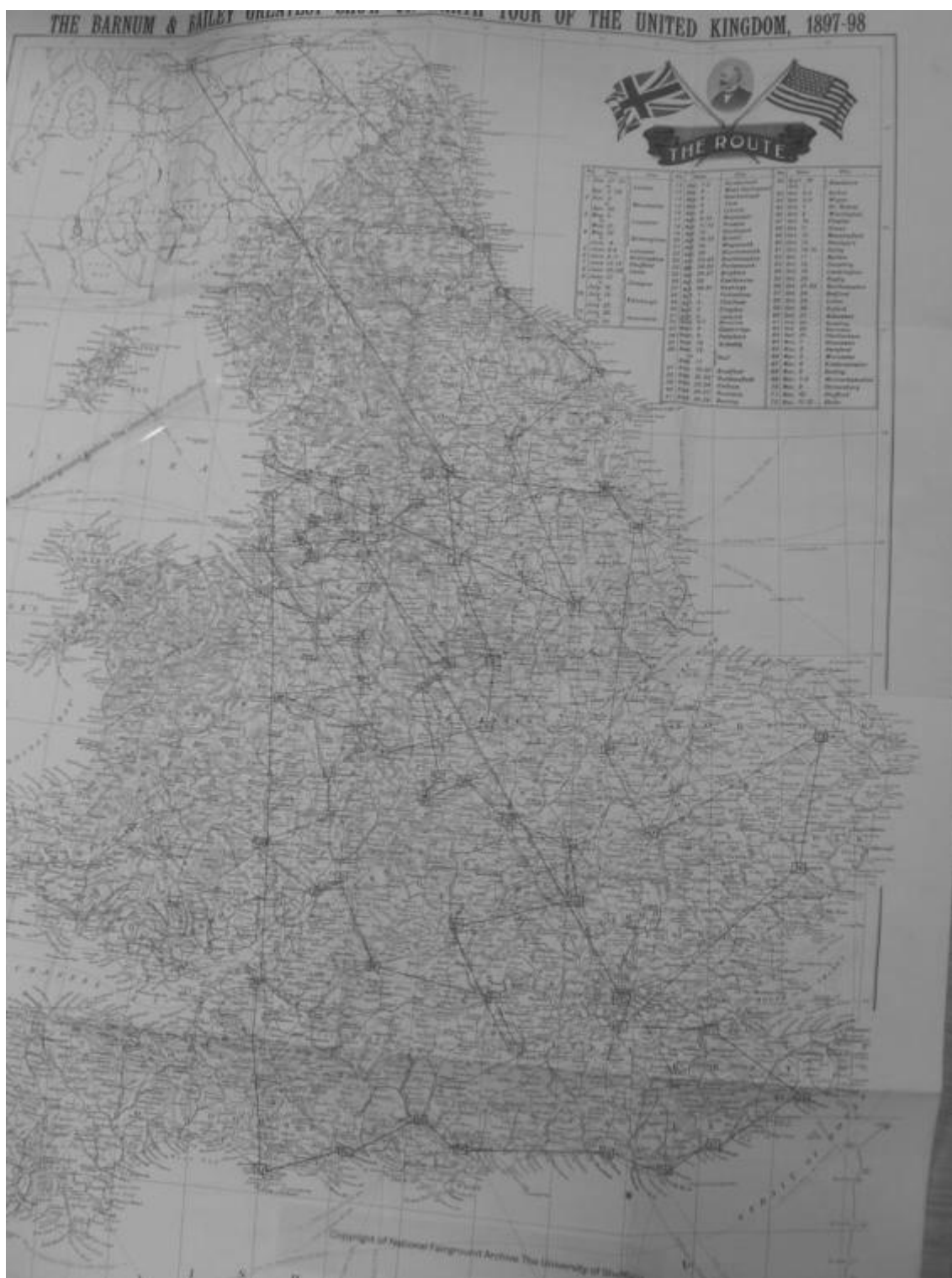
Figure 10.  
"Our Funny Page." *Marvel* 4 Jun. 1898: 15.



**Figure 11.**

Barnum and Bailey Circus Letterhead, c.1889.

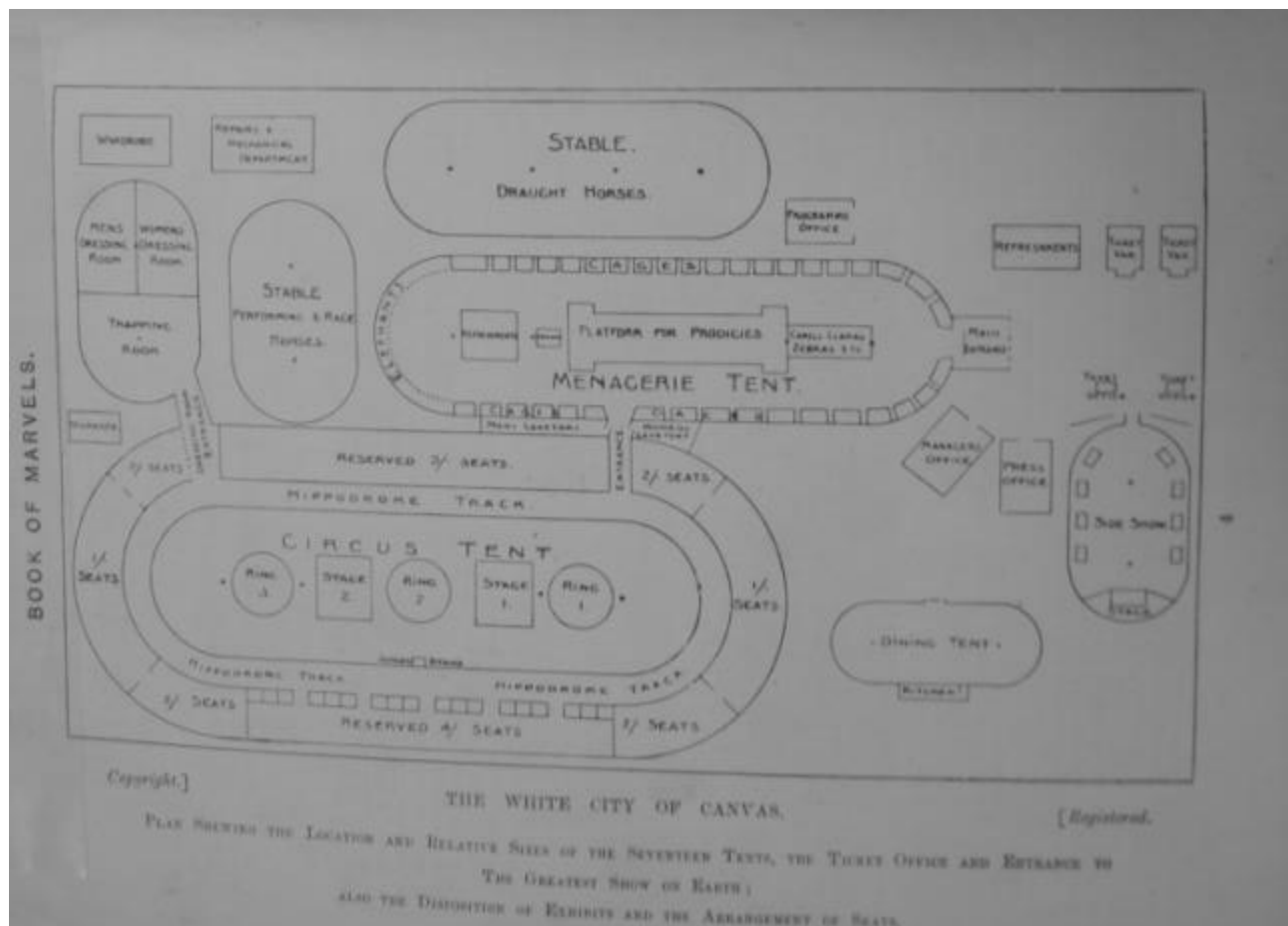
From London County Council Theatre Committee Papers, Olympia 1887-1895. London Metropolitan Archive. LCC/MIN/10866.



**Figure 12.**

Tour Map from: "A Few Interesting Facts Regarding the Tour of the United Kingdom of Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth 1897-8." National Fairground Archive, Sheffield. NFA BARN/2114





**Figure 13.**

Layout of tents during 1899 tenting tour.

Dean, Clarence L. *Book of Marvels in the Barnum and Bailey Greatest Show on Earth with Full Descriptions of the Human Prodigies and Rare Animals*. London: Barnum and Bailey Ltd., 1899. 4.

National Fairground Archive, Sheffield.



**Figure 14.**

Cornelius Magrath from Cunningham, D. J. "On the Irish Giant, Cornelius Magrath." *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* 29.16 (1887): 561.



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