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Social Agency of Sideshow Performers in Literature and Film: An Analysis of Panoptic, Clinical, and Educative Gaze Constructs

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SOCIAL AGENCY OF SIDESHOW PERFORMERS IN LITERATURE AND FILM: AN ANALYSIS OF PANOPTIC, CLINICAL, AND EDUCATIVE GAZE CONSTRUCTS

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Title: Social Agency of Sideshow Performers in Literature and Film:
An Analysis of Panoptic, Clinical, and Educative Gaze Constructs

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This study of literature and film is one of the triumphs over obstacles by sideshow performers with rare physical afflictions, commonly known as "freaks." These people provide great opportunities for understanding those outside normative culture. Many have used their physical conditions to educate the public, which has been the function of sideshow since its inception. In fact, cultural analysis through gaze theory supports the argument that freaks are not merely objects of the gaze to be considered as victims. Instead, it suggests that members of mainstream society can learn about ourselves in our reactions to these performers; learn to respect people who are considered "other;" and accept these differences with understanding and compassion for those who do not pity themselves. I will examine three paradigms of the gaze both in sideshow literature and film depictions, by which I consider the negative and positive readings of these constructs: panoptic, clinical, and educative.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation two-fold: firstly, to my late mother, Paula Kathleen Raymond, who passed away after many years of living with Dissociative Disorder, otherwise known as Multiple Personality Disorder; secondly, to the sideshow performers who contributed to the heart of this work. Perhaps my mother's difficult life, which led her to live outside of mainstream society, is what really began this process. In addition, individuals who also live outside mainstream and who have contributed their time, interviews, arts, and friendships include: Mat Fraser, aka Seal Boy; Jason Black, aka The Black Scorpion; Noel Benedetti, aka Ballyhoo Betty; and sideshow historian and working act, Todd Robbins. I consider myself privileged and enlightened to have worked with these performers and count them as friends. I know that my work with these individuals would have made Mom proud, as she surely understood the challenges that accompany those of us who cannot or will not adhere to normative society.

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FOREWORD

This study is one of the triumphs over obstacles by sideshow performers with rare physical afflictions, commonly known as "freaks." These people provide great opportunities for understanding those outside normative culture. Many have used their physical conditions to educate the public, which has been the function of sideshow since its inception. In fact, cultural analysis through gaze theory supports the argument that freaks are not merely objects of the gaze to be considered as victims. Instead, it suggests that members of mainstream society can learn about ourselves in our reactions to these performers; learn to respect people who are considered "other;" and accept these differences with understanding and compassion for those who do not pity themselves. I will examine three paradigms of the gaze both in sideshow literature and film depictions, by which I consider the negative and positive readings of these constructs. The first two are the panoptic and clinical, which reference Foucaultian representations of Jeremy Bentham's design[1]. In this study, I progress from voyeurs in the clinic to voyeurs in Moreau's famed "paradise" in the 1996 film *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. Moreau's gaze turns vile as he becomes infested with the God-complex and seeks to control the uncontrollable: the chaos of mankind. Michael Foucault focused on the clinical gaze by which he theorized the medical and cultural needs associated with the clinic. This gaze is deemed justifiable by societal norms, given that physicians seek to help their patients and do so first by categorizing illnesses and in this case, deformities and then assessing how to manage disabilities. But, in the panoptic form, it became a distanced gaze that sought control of its object.

Moreau did not recognize that the gaze is also educative and not simply controlling. My study will show how in our reactions to current sideshow performers and films, the spectator is both the viewer and receiver of that viewing action, as they will see something of themselves in

these mediums. I will construct this argument by employing disability and diversity studies. In gazing upon these freaks, the viewer/reader evolves from the typified, often horrified spectator to an individual who appreciates him/herself within these gazes, within each film. Ultimately, the reader finds comfort and a sense of empowerment through the study of these films. What might seem like subjugation of "other" has actually become a text that encourages more cultural diversity, acceptance of our own shortcomings, and the unification of those who have used their physical challenges for the benefit of society through education and entertainment.

Sideshows provide platforms for freaks to create their own history. My dissertation examines how sideshow performers possess a sense of agency and do not simply suffer as objects of the gaze, whether they are on stage or in film. Through fieldwork in personal interviews of sideshow performers, I have completed a short documentary (*Look Upon Me* 2010); in my interviews with Todd Robbins, famed sideshow performer and historian, Jason Black (The Black Scorpion) and Mat Fraser (Seal Boy), what I have learned is that these sideshow performers have the same hopes, fears, and challenges as members of mainstream society. Growing up different either by choice (tattooed freaks, sword swallowers, etc.) or with physically challenged bodies (human anomalies) has shaped them, made them stronger and surer of themselves. Being bullied in school or teased and stared at wherever they go, Jason and Mat have found a sense of family in the sideshow and enjoy using their painful experiences as fuel by which they perform and enlighten those who learn to appreciate them through the gaze. The differences between their childhood experiences and their adulthood performances are that they exhibit themselves by choice and own the power of the gaze as performers, and they get paid to do so. They can choose to exhibit or not, and through this exchange of viewing, they actually provide a more educative platform for audiences to communicate with them, rather than

simply stare in awe at their special bodies.

I use several documentaries as secondary sources in addition to my own: *Mutter Museum: Strange Medical Mysteries* (2009); *American Carney: True Tales from the Circus Sideshow* (2006); *Bally-Master* (2007); *Freak Show* (2008). In other chapters, I will explain how commercial films have also done more to empower rather than objectify these performers by examining *Freaks,* (Tod Browning 1932); *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (John Frankenheimer, 1997); *The Elephant Man* (David Lynch, 1980); and *Fur: An Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus* (Steven Shainberg 2006). In these films, we can learn to recognize the power of the gaze as both reciprocal and transcendent, and we learn more about ourselves and how we respond to those who exhibit themselves through stage and film. Additionally, when we use film as a means of human connection, we learn from others' reactions to the gaze as well. "These films articulate an overriding concern as to what impact widespread use of this technology will have on an engineered individual's sense of self-identity and on our identity as a species" (Kirby et. al 265). Michel Foucault in his *Order of Things* defines a reciprocal balance between the spectator and the spectacle that is rewarding, reflexive, and researchable (3-16). In each fictional film I focus on the exchange of voyeur and exhibitionist through the use of shot/reverse shot as especially powerful. Viewers are forced into recognition of how similar we are in how we show love, hatred, and fear—even if we have different bodies. One film critic, Laura Mulvey, has addressed this recognition in her "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" as follows: "There are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at" (as qtd. in Penley 58). We are able to view through this specific technique as though we are both spectator and spectacle, joining us with the characters in these films. Through our investigation of sideshow we will find a better understanding of what

makes us simultaneously unique as well as united as members of the collective.

Throughout my study of sideshow performers, I have continually asked whether we simply enjoy viewing different bodies, or do we feel a sense of security and power knowing some of us were born “normal"? What I have learned is that by understanding the function of the gaze as presented in film in its panoptic, clinical, and educational paradigms, we can learn not only about the performers’ lives, but also about how our own can be enriched by this knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

"Curiosity still sells. State fairs and new sideshows occasionally feature human oddities…Even freakish animals have had their fifteen minutes" *(Hartzman 5).*

WHY SIDESHOW IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY?

When asked, "why do this kind of research," I think back on my own life. I was not born with flippers for arms; I was not a sword swallower; I did not run away with the circus. So, why conduct research centered on sideshow performers on stage and in film? For those of us who had difficult childhood experiences—in my case my mother had dissociative disorder, my father had post-traumatic stress disorder, and my step-father had schizophrenia—we are the children of chaos. We lived a sideshow of our own, yet we often did not benefit from the family, camaraderie, or profit that sideshow performers enjoy. The circus would have been a welcome place for those of us who have never quite fit into any particular group of people. Even as I write my dissertation I grapple with the status quo, the world of academia and the expectations of what a dissertation should look and read like. I struggle to fit inside of the normative culture, and at every turn, I find that someone or something is trying to reign me in and fit me inside the proverbial box. I find myself engaged in self-reflection as much as fieldwork and academic research on this project. It is my hope that after this journey, I will not only give a positive voice to sideshow in the twenty-first century, but that those who share my inability to become situated in mainstream society will enjoy this approach to academic inquiry even though sideshow research is not only marginalized within the circus scholarship in academia, but also an extremely esoteric approach to completing a viable dissertation.

Historically, the human body and the spirit of humanity have been diagrammed, dissected, vivisected, and studied since before the nineteenth century, but we must credit Circus Sideshow during this period with the inception of scientific and medical lectures that followed performers' pitch cards, describing the rare physical deformities these individuals endured. Rather than give up and live off the handouts of the wealthy or live in workhouses as slaves, sideshow performers situated themselves within society in the vein of popular culture known as entertainment. Often, their families were approached and offered money to take their anomalous children and place them in circus sideshows. In such way, these individuals found new families, a sense of community, and a means of income. Clearly, sideshow gave purpose and often enriched those who were entertained by these individuals who refused to live in self-pity—certainly, this goal was not always achieved, as many viewers probably remained prejudiced or cruel—rather, they enjoyed travel, fame, and in some cases, great fortune. Thusly, sideshow study is a new way to read bodies of difference using gaze paradigms and disability studies.

Sideshow provided a space for the spectacle and the spectator—a reciprocal event that allowed the gaze in the name of medical and scientific fascination. Sideshow has long occupied a liminal space between what is socially acceptable and beautiful, and what is socially abhorrent and ugly. In his *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*, John F. Kasson gives this explanation:

> As in traditional carnivals and fairs, the grotesque was prominently represented, symbolizing the exaggerated and excessive character of Coney Island as a whole. Midgets, giants, fat ladies, and ape-men were both stigmatized and honored as freaks…Their grotesque presences heightened the visitors' sense that they had penetrated a marvelous realm of transformation…[and that t]he popular distorting

mirrors furnished the illusion that the spectators themselves had become freaks. (50-3)

But why study sideshow now in the twenty-first century—especially on the eve of amazing scientific and medical advances in cures of certain anomalous conditions? "Increased medical knowledge has led to fewer births of freaks, or to corrections of their abnormalities, and to the diagnosis of certain birth defects…[and] the new attitude of political correctness made it wrong to stare at and profit from human oddities," says Marc Hartzman (4). Moreover, why study sideshow now when clearly we have technological entertainment via virtual worlds of avatars, music on our Ipods, and through cyber-space searches? What could sideshow possibly add to this techno-savvy popular culture immersed in instant gratification? Why do they still exist and why should we study them now?

Before we begin our discussion of these questions, it is necessary to define the three gaze constructs by which we will review literature and film in this study. Although other theorists have already defined the three gaze constructs I am working with, we can add more layers to these gazes with new cultural readings. The panoptic (institutional) gaze is used in chapter one and it intersects with the clinical (medical) gaze in chapter two. Both gazes offer positive and negative readings for viewers. In chapter three we utilize the educative gaze (reciprocal) to at times dislocate previous readings of sideshow performers and at other times intersect new ways to consider using sideshow as a means to educate and enlighten. In the forward, readers were briefly introduced to Laura Mulvey, feminist film critic. While her work is esteemed by many, I only use her work in brief to establish that there is, in fact, a gaze experience that takes place during spectatorship that at first may seem to be a one-dimensional gaze: the viewer gazes upon figures on the silver screen or on stage. However, she neglects discussion concerning the

returned gaze experience: that of reciprocity and educational inquiry (Mulvey as qtd. in Penley 58-68) . Performers have far more agency than she affords them in her work; performers return the gaze whether panoptic, clinical, or educational. Consequently, there are different kinds of gazes that may be considered individually within each reading of film and/or live sideshow, or this gaze experience may involve a combination of the three gazes as I have mentioned. In addition, the gaze may be positive, negative, or both as we will see in our discussions of chosen films and literature. Therefore, the gaze is not always exploitative, but it does challenge viewers to consider the various levels and dimensions that it can afford. In order to develop truer, deeper human connections, we need to understand how to use these gaze constructs in liberal and educational ways rather than accepting what we see in literal terms. We are all round characters on humanity's stage after all.

Perhaps the perspective of a current sideshow performer may help to answer some of these questions about the relevance of sideshow with current audiences, and can assist in our evaluation of one gaze example. In an e-view with famed Noel Benedetti, aka Ballyhoo Betty, I asked her what her most rewarding experience as a working act and/or "made freak" was, in her time as a fire-eater for the sideshow. She answered by discussing the term "freak," how she categorizes herself within that definition, and how audiences respond to her:

> I do not think "freak," or "made freak" for that matter, is a negative term. For my personal use, I use the phrase "freak" to refer to anyone with a physical abnormality who chooses to display themselves in public, and I'm not the only one who subscribes to that definition, particularly in the sideshow tradition. As much as I would be proud to claim the "made freak" status, I do not believe that

> my level of tattoo coverage sincerely grants that status. There certainly was a time, not too long ago, that it would, but today, I consider myself a working act. We are certainly not living in the golden age of sideshow, and as a working act, I receive a wide variety of responses, ranging from total disgust to complete awe. The most offensive reactions come from those who assume sideshow arts are for the uneducated, untalented or depraved. Those unfortunate encounters, however, are more than compensated by the positive experiences I've had with other audiences. Aside from musical acts, people are relatively sheltered from live entertainment today and so people are typically unaware of the very visceral chemistry that can exist between performer and viewer. During a live sideshow, there is an interaction taking place, unlike the unidirectional consumption of most mass media, such as television. This dynamic often takes people by surprise, and you can see their eyes light up in response to this confrontation. Those are by far the most rewarding moments of this work. More often than not, these magical encounters occur with children who are somehow awakened by watching these bizarre acts and they walk away seeming somehow transformed. (Online Interview 2011)

Given her broad response, it is clear to me that there is still much cultural work to be contributed by the amazing theories in disability studies, animal studies, and Michel Foucault's concept of the gaze. I begin my study with a brief introduction to disability studies.

Benedetti mentions the "chemistry that can exist between performer and viewer" (2011). One of the foremost critics of disability studies is Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, who has contributed much in her works *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* and

Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature. She maintains:

> The disabled figure speaks to this tension between uniqueness and uniformity. On the one hand, the disabled figure is a sign for the body that refuses to be governed and cannot carry out the will of self-determination. On the other hand, the extraordinary body is nonconformity incarnate. In a sense then, the disabled figure has the potential to inspire with its irreverent individuality and to threaten with its violation of equality. (*Extraordinary Bodies* 44)

According to my interpretation of this text, the continued study of the "unique" body is essential to understand the inquiry that the body proffers; for if the body is designed as a working machine of genetic structure and systems, but becomes deformed or is born as such, our sense of a systematic order of things is challenged, leaving us unsettled. "As the limits of the body are refigured, the modes by which […we] conceptualize the body and identity also undergo transformation. The body as interface disturbs established notions of what constitutes the material body, undermining the fixity of meaning attributed to an embodied identity" (Toffoletti 131). Thus, I offer that we can enjoy these bodies of difference as uniquely structured rather than misshapen or unlovely. In fact, I say the body that is deformed is more interesting because it refuses, as Thomson maintains, to succumb to the status quo. I can identify with that, as it seems nearly impossible for me to adhere to stabilized structures or formulaic considerations. In my interviews with sideshow performers, I have found that they have embraced their differences and enjoy exhibiting themselves as beautiful, interesting, talented performers.

In addition, the use of critical animal studies, known as CAS, is a newer theory that has gained recognition by the PMLA. They dedicated an entire issue to the two major schools of thought within this theory: animal rights and animal/personage sensibilities in literary studies. To this end, I utilize Donna Haraway's text, specifically in her text *When Species Meet*, in which she argues that we are not necessarily that different than our animal pets, and that bioethics plays a huge role in how we interpret the hierarchy of being regarding these creatures. I also work with H.G. Wells' ideas of vivisection and personhood in his novel *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and in the 1996 film adaptation. In the sideshow, it is traditionally relevant to use animal names that depict the various body differences of these performers such as lizard-boy or in Moreau's case, the beast-men. Haraway's comparisons of human and animal species—or hybridity—proves useful to my analysis of Moreau's Frankensteinesque creations.

Integral to both theories, I also include gaze ideology as per Michel Foucault's work—namely *The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Order of Things*, as he investigates the use of the clinic, treatment and seclusion, and panoptic design of the hospital. The three types of gaze I focus on are panoptic (or institutional), clinical (or medical), and educative (interactive). The use of his discussion of the power of the gaze will be essential throughout this study. Additionally, as Mary Louise Pratt in "Art of the Contact Zone" has asserted, sometimes these gazes do intersect or embody both positive and negative responses for viewers. This contact zone concept is evident as we navigate through our discussion of literature and films that depict these three gaze examples. Pratt states: "[This]…term… refer[s] to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power [panoptic]…[.] In the same way that the gazes may seem to "clash" and viewers may "grapple with" their own responses to the films we will study, educators will also "grapple with" how to

teach these gaze concepts in meaningful, enlightening discussions about sideshow performers and how they are perceived in literature, film, and on stage (Bartholomae and Petroksky 326-348). For we use of sight perhaps more keenly than any other, and this is most appropriate for a study involving films of sideshow (as per the foreword), freakdom, and hybridity for the most visceral stimulation. Although Donna Haraway theorizes mostly about the concept of personhood as it relates to human-machine hybridism, her work also can be used to summarize how we utilize the gaze in relation to human-animal hybrids. She states in "A Manifesto for Cyborgs:"

> …[W]e are all chimeras[2], theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs…The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation. (Badmington and Thomas 325)

If we interpret cyborg to mean dualistic, then we are all both spectator and spectacle, animal and human, freak and normative. It is through these theories that I continue the cultural work of sideshow study, infusing scientific, medical, and filmic representations of these wonderfully unique people.

Therefore, my focus is on current sideshow performers and how they position themselves in mainstream society. The use of body consumerism became evident at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century, as modern industry influenced cultural perception of those injured in factories and work houses. In order to understand our current fascination of the odd or unusual, and the human anomaly, we must also consider historical artifacts and discourses that afford the foundational element to this phenomenon of the entertainment industry, especially as envisioned within the film industry. As cultural critic Lennard J. Davis has noted, "[t]he film industry has

been obsessed with the depiction of the disabled body from the earliest silent films. The blind, the deaf, the physically disabled were singled out from the very beginning of cinema" (as qtd. in Fraser and Greco 177-8). Thus, mainstream society has historically been fixated on those who were different in some way; this has not changed in our current social climate. Consequently, one can still enjoy a day at Coney Island by taking a short subway ride out of New York City.

In the course of this study I will discuss the gaze between film spectator and actors as well as between sideshow audiences and performers by using *The Order of Things: An Archeology of Human Sciences* and *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception.* I will specifically discuss Foucault's concepts of the socio-political gaze in this chapter, and focus on the clinical gaze in chapter two. Although Foucault's work has been utilized by many literary critics, I will continue to work with the panoptic paradigm in reference to the gaze. Cultural critics such as Robert Bogdan and Rachel Adams offer criticism regarding the negative aspects voyeurism. My purpose is to provide an extension beyond simply reading the body as socio-political study. I hope to bring a sense of "humanity" to this study by incorporating my view that the human experience is shared and that the idea of "one of us" applies to all of humanity and not just the disabled sideshow performers in Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932). For example, in *Freaks*, the gaze is both political and social—we experience a behind the scenes look into the lives of sideshow performers and how mainstream society has subjugated them, only to find that these performers actually had the upper-hand after all, and were a cohesive subculture, bonded by their physical differences (Denzin 44-45).

In *Freaks* we gain a new understanding of the plight of sideshow freaks, who although they may not have had agency in mainstreamed society, bonded together. In turn, we bond with them as they seek social justice when one of them is harmed. Browning is careful here not to

create sympathy, but rather empathy: while the viewer does not condone their method of social retribution, s/he can at least understand why they go to such extreme measures. I will utilize leading Disabilities Studies critics such as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson and Sharon Snyder to add another layer of discourse that relates to the socio-political issues surrounding this depiction of sideshow performers.

Even though many depictions of sideshow performers have been negative, the question has always been, "who are the real freaks or deviants?" Was it the sideshow freaks that embody the grotesque, or the American spectator, who paid their dime to see ten acts in one? For example, "[c]ircus workers referred to noncircus folk as 'outsiders,' 'gillies,' or 'rubes,' and frequently mentioned in their autobiographies that they were only comfortable with other show folk" (Janet Davis 72). In an odd twist, we can surmise that sideshow freaks did not always perceive themselves as the outsiders, but rather it was the normative or dominant culture, which saw them as freakish. Let us consider Laura Mulvey as she notes, "[a]s an advanced representation system, the cinema poses questions of the ways the unconscious (formed by the dominant order) structures ways of seeing and pleasure in looking" (as qtd. in Penley 57). Although there is always a "dominant order" as in mainstream society, we may create new meaning through viewing bodies of difference. Still, is it even necessary to assign cultural labels in a new understanding of the human experience pertaining to sideshow in film? I will contemplate this question as I consider more research.

Since this concept has already been covered by these critics, I will shed new light upon the subject and dig deeper into ontological considerations and what really drives us to the gaze when given the opportunity to look away. Similarly, part of the human experience is understanding why we turn to physically deformed actors as cultural markers in our own social

evolution and understanding. In some way, we can use film as a medium by which we discover internal truths and challenge ourselves to evaluate what we might do in similar situations: would we do harm to others, or would we simply walk away if the fictional trapeze artist took advantage of us? What truly connects or repulses us from each other, as in the film when the freaks chant, "we accept you…one of us" and Cleopatra (trapeze artist) exclaims, "You—dirty, slimy, freaks!" (Skal, *The Monster Show* 149)? Perhaps even if we cannot identify with "freaks," as in Cleopatra's case, we can at least find a sense of emotional transformation—that we are fortunate not to be physically challenged—yet that we are freaks in other ways, such as our inability to accept others who are different than us.

Sideshow production has now shifted in value. While still used for entertainment and education, sideshow is now more of a nostalgic look into the past—into the nineteenth century value system of human beings presented for profit. Much of disability studies seeks to demythologize the concept of amusement for profit in this context, and thus, beyond the golden age of sideshows, we have less use for them in current society. One reason for this current stigma is the exploitative nature of some early sideshow entrepreneurs. Of course, there are still those who value sideshow as a rich, historic, and cultural experience, filled with fantastic people who have found their true calling in performance—whether modern vaudeville or revamped ten-in-one shows. As indicated by my source inclusions, there are still plenty of critics conducting cultural work on circus history, and the discourse is still open, which is inviting and encouraging for new scholars.

Much scholarship exists for the film *Freaks*. In my view, the performers show humanity more honestly because they are socially flawed and embrace their physical differences, while mainstream society justifies its need to exert power over those who are either physically different

or socially inept. Similarly, our culture has embraced beauty as a "perfect" depiction of the human body—going to any extreme to reconfigure through medical surgery, magazine airbrushing, or complete physical makeovers. In *Freaks*, the "normal" humans become the truer "freaks" because they do not share this "humanity" or human experience of empathy; instead they exude narcissism as they parade through the circus tent. Therefore, my study of *Freaks* will focus on the human experience of the dichotomy of freak-human through the function of sideshow performers. Director Tod Browning creates a sideshow staging with actual human anomalies, or "freaks" as they were labeled. I will discuss how the normative culture actually becomes more physically and socially unattractive than the culture of those with physical deformities due to their evil acts of greed and attempted murder. The line between human and freak is blurred not within the sideshow performers, but rather through the "norms."

What I will leave my readers with is a new perspective on how we interpret the sideshow through the medium of film and the exploration of actual sideshows still in existence, as well as modern cabinets of curiosity. Even though I cannot answer the question of what it truly means to be human through the vantage point of spectator or spectacle, research is often rewarding simply for the sake of the journey. In this journey, I hope to enlighten readers as to the significance of sideshow, to experience these core films as a spectrum of human hybrids and anomalies, and to leave them with a documentary that will invite more curiosity for the sideshows that continue to provide a significant function for the human spirit.

Once we establish the panoptic gaze patterns we continue the discussion of disability studies and clinical gaze as a platform for the sanitized stage. As such, I will provide discourse for one of the most recognized films of the 1980s, David Lynch's *The Elephant Man* by using Foucault's work, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception.* Once I moved

past the initial shock of Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man's features, and the pity I felt for the painful existence he lived, I was able to understand how enduring the human spirit can be—even in the tumultuous turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century arena and numerous medical conditions. This gaze becomes far more clinical than that of the previously discussed films in that viewers learn to view the main character as both a specimen in the sideshow underground world and the clinical setting of the medical lecture (Denzin 44-47). It is in this film that we see the portrayal of a sideshow proprietor who abuses his "freak;" an atrocity addressed by Robert Bogdan in *Freak Show* (1-21). However, my focus will not be on the cases of abuse, but rather on the use of the gaze between spectator and spectacle. Since other disabilities studies and cultural critics have already laid the groundwork for the discussion of abused sideshow performers, my work will contribute through the use of the *medical* gaze as an alternate form of staging and spectacle. In keeping with the clinical gaze, I will also discuss some medical terminology, as it is essential in understanding exactly how difficult simple tasks were for Joseph Merrick, who was on exhibit during the 1890s fin de siècle.[3]

To this end, Francis Galton's studies on eugenics[4] will only serve as a minor notation concerning the film, as I will not attempt to cover the idea of "good breeding" (the idea that only certain blood lines are worth procreation) or "xenophobia" (fear/hatred/ignorance about other cultures) discourse; but rather, I will utilize Galton's work to assist in analysis of "maternal impressions" (the theory that women who saw or were frightened by monstrous visuals would give birth to infants exhibiting like features) as indicated in *The Elephant Man*. I will also review several articles from the PMLA volume collection of Animal Studies, which will assist in navigating the very thin biological line between freak-human, and human-animal: "Literary Animal Agents," by Susan McHugh and "Animals, Anomalies, and Inorganic Others," by Rosi

Braidotti. These readings provide interesting, new cultural critiques of the marriage between humans and animals in literary studies, as well as various textual depictions of the theory. I will also review the acclaimed text by Michael Howell and Peter Ford, *The True History of the Elephant Man* to decipher factual information in contrast to what we learn from the real Dr. Treaves's findings and Lynch's film narrative of Merrick's life. It is through interpreting his life and how he perceived himself as a valuable member of society with agency that we see his humanity in a positive light, despite the fact that he was on display most of his adult life.

As Philip K. Wilson has discussed, "[s]omewhat paradoxically, as technological advances steer many to gaze deeper into the hitherto invisible, twisted ladder of our genetic code, others have diverted their gaze toward the skin, the most outwardly visible layer of the physical body" ("Eighteenth Century 'Monsters'…" 1). Wilson establishes that the maternal mark (or impression) is a "recognizable marking peculiar to their deviancy" (1). Because Joseph Merrick's body was so severely marked, he was considered more than a "freak" with a deformity; he was directly linked to the animal he supposedly resembled, and that had frightened his mother before she gave birth: an elephant. In an effort to fully appreciate what Merrick endured, we begin our discussion with medical and scientific background necessary to navigate through the aforementioned texts. Many of the individual diseases or malformations of the body that are identified in these texts must first be understood through our ancestral perceptions of them. For example, these individuals were originally termed monsters, as per historical religious terminology; Rosamond Purcell offers a clear definition of the monster, given that monstrous births historically were rejected, thought as sent by God or gods as "jokes," punishments, or warnings:

> Truly the word "monster" comes from *monstrare*, "to show," although the Romans long associated the word with the Latin *monestro,* a derivative of the verb *monere*, "to warn strongly…[thus] we also call *monsters* those who are less than human but somehow, apparently, other than animals—beings caught in a complex netherworld of belonging only to themselves, but never, no matter how close, to us. (Purcell15)

Superstitions and folklore, such as maternal imprinting in Joseph Merrick's case, were becoming less regarded in science and medical discourse and began to shift into mythology studies, where the concept really began. Since the beginning of recorded myths—even in Christianity—there have always been depictions of anomalous figures. In Genesis of the Old Testament, for example, Esau is described as "a hairy man"—perhaps indicating an early example of hypertricosis (Genesis 27: 11). In addition, the writer of the book of Ezekiel gives a detailed description of hybrid creatures:

> …Also out of the midst thereof *came* the likeness of four living creatures. And this *was* their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet *were* straight feet; and the sole of their feet *was* like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. And *they had* the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides…Their wings *were* joined one to another…they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. (Ezekiel 1:5-10)

Although vivid in description, the writer(s) of these biblical passages have chosen not to use terms like "monstrous" or "detestable," if we consider that the translation is accurate from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

However, it is necessary for the purposes of this discussion to include the idea of monstrous births, because even in current cultural studies, we describe "others" with either physical or psychological malformations to be "monsters." Purcell has examined maternal imprinting as such: "[I]t was not until the end of the eighteenth century that teratology, the medical study of the structure of human monsters, became a science" (59). Yet we can turn to another critic for a unique perspective on monstrosity as perhaps an elevated form of the human condition, if we choose to accept the term at all in reference to bodies of difference. Georges Canguilhem asserts that, "[t]he monstrous is an instance of the marvelous in reverse, but it is, nonetheless, an instance of the marvelous. On the one hand, it is troubling: life is less sure of itself than we might have thought. On the other, it adds to life's value: since life is capable of failure, all its successes are failures avoided" (as qtd. in Fraser and Greco 188). Therefore, if we embrace those bodies of difference as not failures, but rather reminders of what humans are capable of, then we can learn to accept that deformities may in fact be nature's reminder that we are all fallible, incapable of perfection. Perfection may become less the norm or significant than its counterpart: imperfection. The human body in its imperfection becomes more interesting, more beautiful as a body of difference.

We have consciously evolved from our Medieval acceptance that God has punished us with human "monstrosities"—unnatural births. We have also evolved in our comprehension of sacred text analysis as we progressed in science and medicine; we have become more inclined to understand that anomalous births were not from ill-fated births or superstitious maternal

imprinting. We used this curiosity to create medical prevention of these deformities and one of the means to this end was to catalogue our findings, as one can visit the Mutter Museum to see the specimens that are still used for medical study today. We often categorize what we do not fully understand or accept so as to make some sense of the unexplainable.

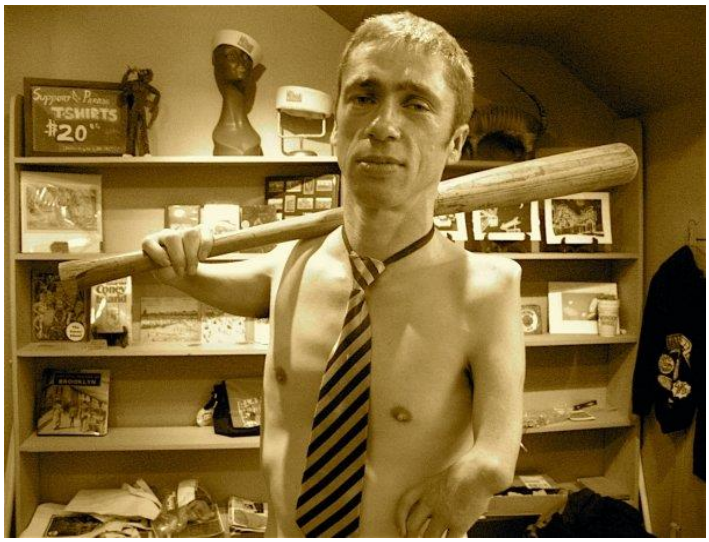

Fig. 1 Freak Show "Pitch Card"

One of the means by which we categorized anomalies was through the collection, preservation, and study of cabinets of curiosity. These were encased specimens—usually of medical anomalies in nature—which were collected, catalogued, and viewed by collectors, physicians, and in some cases, by royalty. For example, "[i]n the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, natural history repositories and medical museums still resembled the old-fashioned cabinet of curiosities" (Bondeson vii). One such collector was the eighteenth century John Hunter, who garnered a collection of "more than thirteen thousand preparations" (186-7). His collection still resides at the Royal College of Surgeons in London as the Hunterian Museum collection of specimens. Thusly, as we evolved from our curiosity, we became aware of the possibilities of human existence in terms of bodies of difference.

Yet for all of our research, many before us became "collectors" of the abnormal, such as Catherine de Medici, who actually attempted "breeding a race of miniature humans;" or, Peter the Great of Russian, who "staged a wedding between two dwarfs" who were later ridiculed like court jesters and forced to serve the court (Leroi 179). We still must ask the question, why do we need to look upon those who are outside of the "norm" of physical beauty or form? Although born of curiosity, and perhaps even later, altruistic medicine, we continue our fascination with those who are still considered physically unattractive or asymmetrical human beings. In fact, a visit to the Mutter Museum in Philadelphia begs the patrons to view numerous catalogued malformed fetuses, skulls, and even full skeletons of a giant and a dwarf (*The Mutter Museum: Strange Medical Mysteries*). Similarly, *The Body Worlds* exhibit, currently housed in the same city, invites us to not only look upon, but in some cases, to touch the plasticated cadavers to satisfy our curiosity.

We cannot be faulted, though, as it can be cathartic to look upon these figures. Some of us remain repulsed, yet many noteworthy film critics credit our need to be voyeurs is critical, as well as unavoidable, such as Steven Shaviro. He asserts: "Film is a vivid medium, and it is important to talk about how it arouses corporeal reactions of desire and fear, pleasure and disgust, fascination and shame" (preface). One such critic agrees with the function of film as cathartic:

> By tapping into a visual curiosity and desire for novelty, attractions draw upon what Augustine, at the beginning of the fifth century, called *curiositas* in his catalogue of the "lust of the eyes." In contrast to visual *voluptas* (pleasure), *curiositas* avoids the beautiful and goes after its exact opposite "simply because

> of the lust to find out and to know." *Curiositas* draws the viewer towards unbeautiful sights, such as a mangled corpse, and "because of this disease of curiosity monsters and anything out of the ordinary are put on show in our theatres." For Augustine, *curiositas* led not only to a fascination with seeing, but a desire for knowledge for its own sake, ending in the perversions of magic and science. (Gunning as qtd. in Braudy and Cohen 871)

As a matter of ethics in our viewing practices, how do we justify our need to see the ugly and accept it as aesthetically pleasing? Is it possible to value curiosity even when it conflicts with what we are taught as children: "Don't stare! Treat others as you would be treated. If you cross your eyes they may stay that way!" We are constantly admonished to accept those in the human brotherhood as they are, yet we are also encouraged by film to look upon the unlovely—perhaps to purge ourselves of our own prejudices and to recognize them as human. And yet, "[i]f people have a concept of the ideal, then all human beings fall below that standard and so exist in varying degrees of imperfection" conjectures Lennard Davis, disabilities studies theorist (Snyder, Brueggemann, and Garland-Thomson 100). In keeping with the ideology that we *need* to visit the horrific spectacle of deformity, debasement, and deviance, we can agree that it is in essence, a necessary evil to gawk at those outside of the beautiful "normative" culture.

In chapter three, I will therefore reference Nick Bastile's *American Carny: True Tales from the Circus Sideshow* (2006 featuring Todd Robbins, sideshow historian). In addition, I will note Gary Beeber's *Bally-Master* (2007), featuring Scott Baker, a sideshow "barker" at Coney Island, and A & E's *Freak Show* (2008). Each of these documentaries describes sideshow history, audience reception, and cultural relevance. The fact that there was a documentary produced three consecutive years by different videographers gives validity to the notion that

there has been resurgence in sideshow interest by spectators, scholars, and historians. These films provide excellent perspective of twenty-first century sideshow performers, and bridge the gap between stage and cinema performance as documentary genre.

And lastly, I will include my own documentary research, as I comment on the materials and interviews I gathered at Coney Island, Sideshows by the Seashore: *Look Upon Me* (2010). My documentary features Todd Robbins, Mat Fraser, and Jason Black, as well as footage from Coney Island such as the artful sideshow posters, recorded outside "talkers," and the Sideshows by the Seashore venue. My research would be incomplete if I did not include my pictures and observations from visiting the famous Mutter Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for a more scientific look at the odd and unusual cabinets of curiosity as a "bonus feature" in my documentary. In each of these films, the viewer is offered a private session with these performers, and is free to contemplate their emotional responses to viewing bodies of difference. In a sense, viewers are given permission to view in the privacy of their own homes, with narration that encompasses the vast importance of sideshow in America. Viewers may be less concerned with perceived voyeurism—that is, staring at deformed individuals at an exhibition—and more engaged in the historical value of the venue.

As the sideshow continues to "go on," although with new political correctness and cultural acceptance. As a symbol of the American Dream, as they set up the big top "flying Old Glory," we are reminded of the significance that the circus and sideshow have held in our country (34). Sideshow has negotiated space for its performers, who although portrayed and in some cases were social deviants, found a home under that same flag. They were free to travel, perform, and earn income. Is that not the same dream we all share, and yet we are not called deviant? "Freaks are inherently mutable…[.] They do come and go, their arrival typically

greeted with far more sensationalistic fanfare than their departure. When they go, we are left with the capacities of imagination and memory to conjure up new freaks," states cultural critic, Rachel Adams (58-9). While she summarizes our discussion profoundly, let us return to the idea that deviance of social norms is in a constant state of flux. Who knows, perhaps in the twenty-first century as the American Dream continues to evolve, we will be the freaks and they will be the "norms."

My focus is on current sideshow performers and how they position themselves in mainstream society. In order to understand our current fascination of the odd or unusual, and the human anomaly, we must also consider historical artifacts and discourses that afford the foundational element to this phenomenon of the entertainment industry, especially as envisioned within the film industry. Thus, mainstream society has historically been fixated on those who were different in some way; this has not changed in our current social climate. Fortunately, one can still enjoy a day at Coney Island by taking a short subway ride out of New York City. It still houses many of the same rides, game booths, and concessions, and the ten-in-one Sideshow by the Seashore and one cannot help but recall film scenes depicting various sideshow performers. Ultimately, readers will understand the value of sideshow performance as depicted in film and on stage (as well as through Barnum's pitch cards) and will begin to question their own prejudices about bodies of difference as I have through the study of these warm and fascinating people. Through sharing in their trials and triumphs, we become better as a society—negotiating space and the gaze in a way that is inviting and challenging.

I will leave my readers with a summary of my field and literary research, as well as speculations for the future of this field of study. We will consider a new perspective on how we interpret the sideshow through the mediums of film and literature, and the exploration of

sideshows still in existence. Even though I cannot answer the question of what it truly means to be human through the vantage point of spectator or spectacle, research itself is often rewarding, especially when referencing so many fine works of fiction and film. In this journey, I hope to enlighten readers as to the significance of history and literature about sideshow, to experience these core films as a spectrum of human hybrids and anomalies, and to leave them with a documentary that will invite more curiosity for the sideshows that continue to provide a significant function for the human spirit. By embracing others' differences, we become more in tune with our own spheres of existence and grow as a diverse society.

CHAPTER ONE

PANOPTIC GAZE CONSIDERATIONS: HISTORY, FICTION AND *FREAKS*

Fig. 2 Carousel Horse 1

"A key feature of using the gaze as an analytic of power/knowledge is the inference that the subject is formed through a combination of gazes" (Sobe 6).

BACKGROUND DISABILITY STUDIES AND GAZE THEORY

We can learn about ourselves from our encounters with bodies of difference in their roles as sideshow performers and exhibits. Many deformed individuals have adapted to their body limitations and used their condition to educate the public as to how we can all become more tolerant about our differences and embrace the fact that each of us can offer something of value for the common good. While some activists may see their exhibition as politically incorrect in light of the 1970s and more recent 1990s Americans with Disabilities Acts, a more enlightened position is one that can appreciate these physically challenged people as performers rather than as freaks. A foundational film that shows both positive and negative aspects of the panoptic gaze construct is *Freaks* (1932). We begin the study with this film and its treatment of sideshow

performers and mainstream society using the gaze construct. First, we review the progression of the how we have viewed bodies of difference historically.

We begin by reviewing how we have socially evolved from our Medieval acceptance that God punishes people with human "monstrosities"—unnatural births. As we progressed in science and medicine, we became more inclined to understand that anomalous births were not from ill-fate or superstition, such as maternal impressions: "As scientific explanation eclipsed religious mystery to become the authoritative cultural narrative of modernity, the exceptional body began increasingly to be represented in clinical terms as pathology, and the monstrous body moved from the freak show stage into the medical theatre" (Garland-Thomson 2). One example of the earliest diagnosis of bodies born with animal characteristics refers to maternal impressions. For example, as Bill Bynum has noted in "Maternal Impressions:"

> …one hairy young girl was assumed to result from her mother's fascination with the picture of a hirsute saint in her bedroom . Joseph Merrick, the so-called Elephant Man immortalized by Sir Frederick Treves, always believed his affliction had been caused by the fact that his mother was almost trampled by an elephant while carrying him. (898)

We used this curiosity with bodies of difference to create medical prevention of these deformities and one of the means to this end was to catalogue our findings. Famous "collectors" of the abnormal include Catherine de Medici, who actually attempted "breeding a race of miniature humans;" and Peter the Great of Russia, who "staged a wedding between two dwarfs," who were later ridiculed like court jesters and forced to serve the court (Leroi 179).

Social evolution has in fact, changed the ideology of the original sideshow. An example of a modern adaptation of the original sideshow is the Body Worlds exhibit, which is an

anatomical museum and some would argue, like a sideshow. This exhibit has appeared in many cities all over the world, including Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Patrons can spend an afternoon viewing plasticated bodies, that have been carefully preserved and placed in various live-action poses. As in previous criticism of sideshow, some skeptics have considered the exhibit in poor taste and as such, have linked it in a negative response to the exhibition of freaks:

> In Europe the exhibition hall venue and more obvious consumer orientation rendered Body Worlds an 'event', an updated side- or freak show that flaunted its own sensationalism and used controversy as the most reliable of marketing tools. But the background of discussion and disapproval presented each individual consumer with a range of possible judgments, among which s/he could choose (Schulte-Sasse 373).

Yet the exhibit provides a valuable, visceral opportunity for medical students to study the nervous system or circulatory system in great detail. Similarly, sideshow is currently viewed as entertainment and in some cases education, as we will see in chapter three. Medical students can still view the sideshow anomalies under the educational construct. It seems that society more readily accepts the sideshow and/or other anatomical exhibits if presented with an educational objective; thus the end justifies the means.

But the history of this venue has always been one of contention. For example, even though the sideshow had popularity in the 1800s, there was conflicting discourse in relation to this leisure activity. In mid-century, various church groups created booklets such as *The Circus* (1840) by the American Sunday School Union of Philadelphia. In this document the union discloses "evils of the traveling life" and in Connecticut, at least twenty years later, the rhetoric extended into legislation again. Some circuses and midways were expressly disallowed from

entering certain communities: "Town ordinances, including taxes and prohibitive restrictions, existed throughout the history of the amusement industry" (Bogdan 78-80). Clearly, not everyone thought that the circus performed a unique function providing entertainment, medical mysteries, and scientific developments.

One force that opposed the exhibition of freaks was our own government as noted by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson: "Societies encoded their collective prejudices in segregation legislation, such as the common U.S. 'ugly laws' of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that banned visibly disabled people from appearing in public spaces" (*Extraordinary Bodies* 35). It is difficult to accept that our country actually had laws ostracizing those who were deemed unattractive by the normative culture. In "Diseased, Maimed, Mutilated: Categorizations of Disability and an Ugly Law[5] in Late Nineteenth-Century Chicago," Adrienne Phelps Coco relays the 1881 ordinance of the City Council, which reads:

> Any person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed, so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object, or an improper person to be allowed in or on the streets, highways, thoroughfares or public places in this city, shall not therein or thereon expose himself or herself to public view, under the penalty of one dollar for each offense. On the conviction of any person for a violation of this section, if it shall seem proper and just, the fine provided for may be suspended, and such person detained at the police station, where he shall be well cared for, until he can be committed to the county poor house. (article 1612, The Municipal Code Chicago: Laws of Illinois Relating to the City of Chicago)[5]

Although shocking to the modern reader, this "ugly law" appears before the turn of the nineteenth century, when many new exciting ideas were coming to light regarding studies of mutations, physical disorders, and freak shows. As in various stages of our American history, we see that progress is often juxtaposed with the normative culture imposing oppression from its position of power. This issue represents another way our social consciousness was fragmented in a time when our country was still seeking to live up to its stated principles.

But, eventually, sideshows survived because their economic benefits outweighed social oppression. In the nineteenth century the sideshow was offered in many locations both on the road and in permanent establishments and thus, created an atmosphere of economic competition. Sideshow performers especially brought in commerce, and thus, gained a certain kind of power exchange within the circus as a whole. As circus outfits grew from one to three rings, the production and need for human anomalies grew, even requiring agents, who also took their "cut" along with the outfit managers. Still the performers did very well, had a sense of family, and gained recognizable fame. Therefore, since it was affordable entertainment, in its "golden era," of 1870-1920, "the circus was the major organization of popular amusement for rural Americans" (40). In the cities, of course, were the world's fair exhibitions and the dime museums for the masses.

Kenneth Little also describes how society has made sideshow performers objects of the gaze. He states that:

> The circus and the circus artist, like the marginals that Foucault discusses, are positioned literally and figuratively on the periphery, placed beyond the immediate comprehension of the "normal" person on the street, in this sense invisible to, or, outside the bounds of the normal. This strategic positioning and

> surveillance strategy enables disciplinary society to represent the circus and the artist as other, with little contradiction from other discourse strategies. This fixes both circus and artist as a stable identity, as "transgressive." Transgressive social experience can then be accounted for and socially managed or regulated unproblematically. It is through this positioning of circus and artist as other that the disciplinary society attempts to objectify and master them, to bring them under the control of surveillance, to make them visible. (as qtd. in Little)

Even though it may seem invasive at times and reproachable to those who are uncomfortable with the concept of gazing, my argument is that there are positive outcomes from the gaze. Within a human innate curiosity, where would we be in the field of medical experimentation and genetic studies? Furthermore, we must recognize the performers' ability to return the gaze, a major element in the films under study here. Specifically, Moreau provides an example of someone attempting to use the panoptic design in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. Before doing so, we should consider the progression of the American entertainment industry before discussing the film adaptation. It is essential to trace the evolution of the gaze experience so that we may hopefully not return to the subjugation of sideshow performers, as Moreau subjugated his hybrids, but rather view them with acceptance and respect as artists who choose to exhibit themselves.

Disabilities studies theorist, Lennard J. Davis observes that, " [v]alue is tied to the ability to earn money. If one's body is productive, it is not disabled" (Fraser and Greco 170). Thus, it is clear that the function of the sideshow was not only for leisure and entertainment, but also served as a means by which these individuals could earn a decent living. Who else would hire a "half-boy" or "living torso," such as Johnny Eck, who was born missing the entire lower half of

his body. At least in the sideshow he could perform at the piano and do acrobatics or stunts by walking on his hands (Nickell 133). He was a useful member of society and found an economic niche in which he could survive financially and socially amongst his sideshow family. In addition, the sideshow freak offered for the community a type of inspiration: if these circus folk could find meaning and purpose in their lives under these circumstances, then it is possible for even the most destitute to find the same as part of the interconnectedness of the human experience.

Thus, the body becomes a "consumer package," as theorized by cultural critic, Jean Baudrillard. New historicists define the body as an artifact; the same is true for cultural critics: "The body is a cultural fact. Now, in any culture whatsoever, the mode of organization of the relation to the body reflects the mode of organization of the relation to things and of social order" (Fraser and Greco 277). Jean Baudrillard is stating that given the historical-cultural value of the body, all aspects of human existence can be measured juxtaposed with the human body. Understanding that the body is both a commoditized object and a cultural "fact," we must also note further, that cultural and new historical critics who write about the body or disability studies in general have a common interest in its economic function. What cultural critics assert is that,

> …the current structures of production/consumption induce in the subject a dual practice, linked to a split (but profoundly interdependent) representation of his/her own body: the representation of the body as **capital** and as **fetish** (or consumer object). In both cases, it is important that, far from the body being denied or left out of account, there is deliberate *investment* in it (in the two scenes, economic and psychical, of the term). (277)

What Baudrillard considers to be an economic negotiation of the exchange of power from body to public and the reversal of that exchange, is that both parties need each other in order to function. However, since history is in a constant state of flux, there is no constant sense of the social constructs. Consequently, not all bodies function in the same way, but that does not negate that bodies of difference are just as valuable as normative bodies. The physical body is not for mere entertainment and economic consumption as Baudrillard asserts, but it is also useful for educational purposes as we will see in chapter three. For example, we will investigate the usefulness of the physical body as a means of understanding the past representations of disability in terms of sideshow exploitation, as well as our present and future cultural work in interpreting how the body is used to return the gaze—to move beyond the panoptic and clinical perspectives and into the educational relevance of performers' sense of self and agency juxtaposed with spectator reception.

In continuing the work that others have contributed to, it is important to keep in mind that although the context may change by which we exchange power, the modes are often the same—the same "formulas" for entertainment venues will continue—whether on stage, under the big top, or at the cinema. As Ian Hunter states, in "cultural studies…[t]he aesthetic is seen as partial in relation to the spheres of labor and politics, where humanity takes shape in the processes of securing its material existence and governing itself" (Grossberg et. al. 347) Therefore, the aesthetic functions as a means to an end—that humanity is able to find prosperity and civility, or in other words, a beautiful existence. However, in nature, not all elements are beautiful by normative standards. We must make room for the unlovely—the less attractive aspects of human existence as well. We need balance of differences; diversity creates a collage of humanity that embodies its own kind of beauty. As Foucault states in *The Order of Things*:

> [M]an, in fact, can be revealed only when bound to a previously existing historicity: he is never contemporaneous with that origin which is outlined through the time of things even as it eludes the gaze; when he tries to define himself as a living being, he can uncover his own beginning only against the background of a life which itself began long before him. (330)

As our culture is historically tied to an ethnocentric identity, we can only attempt to increase our knowledge and understanding of the human experience in relation to bodies of difference.

But we still must ask the question, why do we need to look upon those who are outside of the "norm" of physical beauty or form? Although born of curiosity, and perhaps even later, altruistic medicine, we continue our fascination with those who are still considered less than perfect human beings. The aforementioned popular *Body Worlds* travelling exhibit, invites us to not only look upon, but in some cases, to touch plasticated cadavers to satisfy our curiosity. In the 1700-1800s, medical advances and scientific theories provided the idea that viewing freaks can be not only a source of control but also of knowledge. Michel Foucault traces the progression of "case studies" in the medical field in his *The Birth of the Clinic*. Foucault describes the function of the clinical gaze as that which, "circulates within an enclosed space…controlled only by itself [;]…it distributes to daily experience the knowledge that it has borrowed from afar and of which it has made itself both the point of concentration and the centre of diffusion" (30-1). This center "of concentration" and "diffusion" is the panoptic design that Foucault discusses in Jeremy Bentham's original penitentiary construct in *Discipline & Punish* (195-228). This mechanism, the panopticon, serves as a means by which physicians can examine patients under the ordered fashion of scientific inquiry—unless that physician exploits

his/her patient in so doing. Foucault conveys the positive aspects of the clinical gaze in this passage of *Discipline & Punish*:

> The examination as the fixing, at once ritual and "scientific," or individual differences, as the pinning down of each individual in his own particularity…clearly indicates the appearance of a new modality of power in which each individual receives as his status his own individuality, and in which he is linked by his status to the features, the measurements, the gaps, the "marks" [or deformities] that characterize him and make him a "case." (192)

Whether the physician or clinician chooses to exploit his/her patient (or case as in our later discussion of *Doctor Moreau*), the design of this gaze was intentioned for the growth of knowledge within the human sciences or what we now term social sciences. This totalizing gaze may seem invasive, but in this context, we can see the fruits of discovery and the celebration of bodies of difference.

In fact, a little known fact about Jeremy Bentham, whom Foucault studied extensively for his panoptic design of the prison system's central tower, is that he desired to be the object of the gaze as well. Bentham "caused his own scandal when he provided in his will for the dissection, preservation, and display of his own corpse….The body crowned with a wax replica of Bentham's head is contained in a…display case" (Pierson as qtd. in Jespersen et. al. 94). Although it may seem morbid, Bentham was one of the first great men to give his body to science and perhaps we would not have the option of doing so had he not been such a proponent of this kind of exhibition. Bentham believed in the panoptic design beyond the prison construct and extended his concept by donating his own body for the panoptic gaze, which later becomes a clinical gaze as per the discussion in chapter two. Similarly, Gunther von Hagens' *Body Worlds,*

provides an enlightening experience—as do the casted molds of Chang and Eng, Barnum's famous Siamese Twins at the Philadelphia Mutter Museum exhibit, one of many exhibits to be discussed in chapter three. In my experience, these exhibitions have not held the grotesque fascination for me that I had originally expected, but rather, I have been educated and inspired by what we have accomplished in these anatomical studies that have been afforded to the public.

HISTORIC RELEVANCE OF ENTERTAINMENT PRECEDING THE SILVER SCREEN

As we have discussed, the history of sideshow reception shows a progress from fascination of religious punishment for sins committed by the parents of freaks, to medical lectures explaining anomalous births and the supposed need to prevent them through scientific experimentation and study. According to Robert Bogdan in *Freak Show*, "[b]y becoming attached to museums…and later to circuses, showmen and exhibits were incorporated into a burgeoning industry, the popular amusement industry" (30). By the time P.T. Barnum exhibited freaks at his American Museum, patrons were willing to accept this form of voyeurism as respectable entertainment. The cultural climate of pre-Industrial Revolution American popular culture is best presented by critic LeRoy Ashby in his comprehensive study of entertainment and leisure from 1830 to the present. Ashby locates the turn of the century cultural milieu, which embodies entertainment as well as techno-scientific discoveries of the late 1800s and early 1900s:

> Against a backdrop of wrenching change, citizens understandably worried about making sense of what was happening all around them. Rapid technological developments, ranging from railroads and steamboats to the telegraph and new methods of printing newspapers, were revolutionizing communication and

> transportation. Industrialization and the emerging free-labor market made social positions and personal finances more tenuous and fluid. Rapidly growing cities filled the streets with anonymous strangers. The era's voracious land speculation hinged on the credibility of promoters, just as the flood of paper money rested on creditors' faith. What could individuals believe? How could they understand the workings of new technology [and leisure]. (35).

In Europe, the term fin de siècle was used to define the end of the 1800s. During the last decade of this era, especially in England, we see print culture coming to life. As more citizens became literate, and as the bourgeoning middle class rose to success, there was more time for leisure activities such as reading, outdoor activities, and music. As any European trends seem to cross the ocean, in America, the same cultural shift was taking place. Part of that shift allowed for easier travel, as in the invention of the railroad system in the mid-1800s. These developments helped unite circuses and sideshows. Janet Davis explains, "The railroad eventually enabled the circus to become transcontinental entertainment, but early railroad circuses had no menagerie, sideshow, or street parade because constant rail travel was difficult and expensive" (19). It seems everyone was renegotiating physical space and cultural exchanges from the mid-1800s-1890s.

L'ART POUR L'ART[6]

In addition to the advent of railroads and leisure time for Americans, European concepts and artistic notions became popular in the United States. Artists and writers like Aubrey Beardsley and Oscar Wilde became known as major contributors of this ideal of "art for art's sake" and were two of the most popular "dandies" of the time. The European explosion of literary and artistic movements shaped perception of the sideshow during the fin de siècle, which

also became popularized in America. The group of writers and artists most associated with this new movement were known as the Aesthetes and Decadents, who sought to move away from cultural expectations and instead, embraced the possibilities of what literature, art, and other entertainment could be outside of the cultural mainstream. Looking at art and recognizing it for its visceral aesthetics without pre-conceived notions about what art should look like is one interpretation of the movement. Arthur Symons, a critic during this era, explains to a degree what the decadent writers hoped to achieve in his "The Decadent Movement in Literature:" "an intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity in research, and over-subtilizing refinement upon refinement, a spiritual and moral perversity" (as qtd. in Beckson 135). What this definition suggests is that society was ready for a liberated approach to all aspects of human experiences—a change that would open more doors to human anomalies.

In addition, as part of the decadence of the age, aesthetic ideology was shifting to reflect "art for art's sake." An example of viewing the body as a canvas for artistic expression is given by Max Beerbohm, cultural critic of the time. Beerbohm discussed the use of the artifice as a positive aspect of culture in cosmetics, as a painter uses paint to create something beautiful that imitates life. In his "A Defense of Cosmetics," (1894) he advises that, "It is the times that can perfect us, not we the times, and so let all of us wisely acquiesce" (as qtd. in Beckson 48). Beerbohm's opinion shows a shift in cultural perspective from the early 1800s, in which society focused on useful objects, rather than mere decoration or entertainment. Similar to art, if we consider the body a canvas, then it becomes representative of an age. Just as history repeats itself, the Aesthetic and Decadent Movement provided a safe place for creative minds to work and study without critical judgment, as they were seen as some of the greatest minds of the era (save Wilde's later trial for practicing homosexuality, but that is another study altogether).

Instead, they were predominately seen as innovators of new ideas and means of expression in the same way that Victorian society embraced freaks at sideshow exhibits. Both this movement and sideshows provided a safe, respectable zone for the gaze to take place, and both educated and entertained.

In addition, upper class patrons chose to embrace the notion that science and morality played simultaneously with education and entertainment. Through bombastic talkers of sideshows, the patrons recognize the respectable nature of this visceral aesthetic, as these talkers dressed like proper dandies and spoke like authoritative clergy with conviction. The medical explanations of human anomalies entertained, but also provided educational speeches about various medical and/or social issues associated with human anomalies. Some of these lectures were placed on pitch cards that the performers would sell after their exhibition. Patrons could rest assured that they were not abnormal like these individuals, and that the medical field would grow to prevent further anomalous births. In addition, the middle and lower classes came for the same reasons, but perhaps were even more intrigued by the sideshows because they understood the value of a dollar and what it meant for the performers to be able to work for an income, rather than being placed in poor houses or institutions. All classes were a part of this panoptic gaze that set them apart from the sideshow anomalies.

Although there have always been conflicting discourses present as to the critical rejection or societal acceptance of sideshow, what may have begun as a voyeuristic pleasure began to shift into scientific or medical justification for viewing those who were physically different. As time progressed from the 1840s-1890s, social reformers tried to shut down sideshows, which they believed to be indecent. One such church group "published booklets containing anti-amusement world propaganda" (Bogdan 78). Essentially, church groups spoke against the lifestyle of the

travelling circus, citing its supposed evil characteristics. Some of these protests against sideshows and the big top began to infiltrate state legislatures. But for all the criticism of travelling circus performers, many chose to stay in the sideshow because they were able to find family, income, and fame. Ward Hall, famed sideshow talker and entrepreneur, fought legislation as recently as 1969, "when World Fair Shows opened in North Bay Village, Florida [and] the freaks were forbidden to appear, the prohibition being based on a 1921 state law that classed them with pornography" (Mannix 49). In general, freaks felt that those in normative culture had no right to rob them of their means to a happy existence in the sideshow. In fact, in personal conversations with Mat Fraser and Jason Black, featured in chapter three, I have learned that they both currently work in the sideshow and are actively involved in disability studies. Fraser gives university lectures and performs in British stage productions, television programs, and film productions. Jason Black is currently writing a children's book with a disabled main character. The performers themselves advocated for the right to earn a living as such, and see no end in sight for their sideshow performances.

Ultimately, the court decided "that 'one who is handicapped must be allowed a reasonable chance to earn a living'" (49). In support of the freaks' agency and right to exhibit themselves, Melvin Burkhart,[7] the most noted human blockhead (a performer who hammered sharp objects into the head), defended Otis Jordan (a.k.a. Frog Boy) and his right to exhibit himself: "The sideshow gave incapable people an outlet to earn" (Hornberger 170). Therefore, what right does anyone in mainstream society have to decide the fate of sideshow performers? More importantly viewers may reflect on their own nature, uneasily recognizing a similarity to ones shaped in the liminal space between human and animal or human and nonhuman being. Rachel Adams has examined this recognition, as we view freaks and they return our gaze,

"…[reminding] us that the things they want and do are not so very unusual after all. . . . relationships between self and other, sameness and difference, are at the heart of our most fundamental sense of identity, both individual and collective" (228). This summarizes the reciprocity that can occur between the gazes of performers and audiences.

BARNUM FACILITATES THE GAZE

One entertainment entrepreneur who played an integral role in the integration of sideshow as a viable vocation was Phineas Taylor Barnum, who was both touted for his business sense and care of his sideshow performers, as well as loathed for some of his hoaxes or "gaffs" (fake anomalies). Yet how can we fault him completely, as he gave a home and income to those who were otherwise institutionalized or unemployable? He managed to merge cultural commodities with scientific discoveries in his American Museum in New York City in the 1850s. By calling it a museum, he validated the cultural significance of his collections and created a medical/scientific space for both low and high brow entertainment seekers and entertainers. He included human "freaks," "waxworks, displays of armor and weapons, and live animals. The huge menagerie eventually included exotic creatures…even whales" (Ashby 33). Barnum offered more than entertainment, though. Barnum also gave freaks security.

As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, cultural critic and monster theorist has asserted: "At the level of cultural formation and social reality, the monster is rejected, 'shut away,' and made safe, while at the same time it plays freely in the very realm in which it is exiled and enclosed…[from] the normal, dominant culture" (266). Barnum offered more than *curios*, he offered something for everyone—for every class. Furthermore, "[b]y highlighting ostensible human anomaly of every sort and combination, Barnum's exhibits challenged audiences not only to classify and explain what they saw, but to relate the performance to themselves, to American individual and

collective identity" (Garland-Thomson *Extraordinary Bodies* 58). One such documented physician who we will discuss in chapter two was Fredrick Treaves, who attended to Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man.

SILVER SCREEN CATHARSIS

Film critic Rich Worland states the Aristotelian idea of catharsis, which serves as a framework by which we can evaluate film representations of the human experience through circus freaks, as such:

> Aristotle implied that art ought not be subject to censorship because by experiencing vicariously a range of events and emotions in an artwork—especially fear and pity—the reader/viewer was purged of the desire to act out any such natural but dangerous tendencies in the real world. For Aristotle the proper work of tragedy produced a purification (catharsis)…. The individual experience of catharsis through art functioned as a safety valve. (13)

Aristotle's particular attention to anti-censorship is particularly useful in the analysis of *Freaks,* which was banned for thirty years in Britain due to the subject matter, as Tod Browning scholar David Skal has noted (181). We also may live vicariously through these heroes/anti-heroes, or even villains, thus purifying our own conscience of guilt associated with the exploits and gratuitous actions portrayed in these films. Thus, the superhuman/freak serves a great purpose in our discourse to bridge the seemingly opposing figures of human and freak.

The question yet remains: is there catharsis for the unexpected heroes in these films? And do the viewers reach a cathartic climax as well? In viewing this film, viewers will not only learn to empathize with the freaks who are taken advantage of by the normative culture, but viewers will also understand how similar we all are when forced to defend ourselves and our way of life.

It is not far-reaching to note Tod Browning's *Freaks* as a controversial depiction of heroism. We want our heroes to be attractive, noble, and identifiable (1932). Yet Browning chooses to depict Hercules, the quintessential strong man of the outfit as a ridiculous, hyperbolic figure in an attempt to show how monstrous the beautiful are when juxtaposed next to the deformed "children" (anomalies or freaks) of the circus. He may be strong, but he lacks intellect, character, and the moral code of the "freaks." He is regularly ridiculed for his lack of stimulating conversation and lack of emotional depth, all the while worshipped for his seemingly super-human strength.

In the beginning scene, the sideshow talker announces, "We told you we had living, breathing monstrosities. You laughed at them, shuddered at them…and yet, but for the accident of birth…you might be even as they are" (1932). His viewers are admonished for their spectatorship; yet, they are encouraged to indulge in the ultimate gaze, to look upon a once beautiful woman, torn from her lofty nest on the trapeze and made a grotesque bird, squawking and molting like the "dirty, filthy freaks" she once loathed. Cultural critic Elizabeth Grosz offers a function for these outsiders for the viewer: "Freaks cross the borders that divide the subject from all ambiguities, interconnections, and reciprocal classifications, outside of or beyond the human" (as qtd. in Thomson 57). Since many boundaries are blurred, it makes sense that the smallest of all freaks, Hans, a wealthy midget, becomes the hero in this film despite his lack of heroic traits. For example, although he lacks physical strength he is rich in generosity of his wealth. He is heroic because of his tragic flaw—lust for a "normal-sized" woman and rejection of the midget to whom he has already professed his love. Yet, we are reminded of how others historically react to these malformed performers, regardless of our common humanity. One of the most critiqued scenes, "Children in the Forest," displays a game of "ring around the rosy" as

the most physically deformed entertain themselves. The landowner, Jean, is so repulsed when Madame Tetrallini, who cares for the most severely mentally or physically challenged freaks refers to them as "children" that he intones, "Children? They're monsters!" Rather than affording these performers the same simple pleasures as normative society, Jean debases their activity as monstrous. Ultimately, the viewer will recognize Jean's hate speech and empathize with the freaks—especially given their innocent play and laughter in this scene. Thus, the freaks are more human and the norm is viewed as inhumane.

Later in the film we understand the freaks' crime of deforming Cleo because of their code to protect one another from the "norms" who come to pay for a look at them, even though we may morally disagree with their method of punishment. When we realize that Cleo and Hercules aim to kill Hans and inherit his money, we begin to judge these "normal" characters and side with the freaks. Since Cleo broke this code and abused Hans' manhood, as well as the welfare of the freak community by mocking their deformities in a grotesque wedding feast celebration, she was made into a freak more deformed than any of the natural born anomalies. After killing Hercules and cutting Cleo, mutilating her beauty, she resembles a deformed duck, quacking in a make-shift nest rather than flying as the once graceful aerialist-dove. While this code debases the basic premise that these freaks are good people and not at all inhumane like the norms, the viewer may still be able to accept their choice to kill Hercules and maim Cleo to assure their very safety. Since the beginning of recorded history, humans have physically retaliated against cultures or religious sects that have either harmed our citizens or threatened our way of life. Thus, their revenge is in keeping with this human need to avenge wrongs committed on its weakest members, and is in line with the Aristotelian tragic plot: many will die, but a cathartic experience will take place when retribution is complete for the weak. "Browning's *Freaks* offers

a cathartic sideshow of modern hypocrisies and illusions" states David Skal, "a forbidden—and tantalizing—glimpse into the collective heart of darkness" (228). Rather than depicting freaks as objects of pity under the panoptic gaze, Browning merely shows their humanity and how similar they are to mainstream society—flaws and all. However, some critics have interpreted the climax as showing how "they are figures requiring our pity or horror, yet never entirely our empathy" (McRoy and Crucianelli 263). But is this not a typical reaction to the plight of an antihero?

In the end, there is a thunderstorm, which represents the rage welling within the family of freaks at the demise of one of their own. If we believe that fate has power over mankind, then each of these were destined to fulfill their roles in this telling tale of the darkness that lies within all humanity; we are powerless unless we believe we can choose whether or not we will follow or reject social codes that may/not conflict with our mores. Viewers are faced with heroes who function more like antiheroes, or villains depending upon the viewer's interpretation of their moral code of ethics. Yet, this scene creates the bridge between the freaks and us. We see our own deformed conceptions of what it really means to be human in an underworld that has lost its humanity and reveals that the norms are also freaks.

As discussed earlier, sideshow has provided a space where it is acceptable to stare and even engage in a reciprocal gaze with the performers on stage. When depictions of sideshow performers were introduced to the silver screen, the gaze continued; *Freaks* shows that the performers also possess the gaze within the film and are not object/victims. These performers are gazing at the mainstream individuals in the film and therefore, are able to determine that the protagonist and main character, *Hans*, is being led to his demise. As such, this film allows for social agency of freaks that had not yet been portrayed on the silver screen. The film serves as a

foundational example how the gaze construct works in the panoptic construct. Although Tod Browning's *Freaks* was met with severe distaste and controversy for nearly thirty years, I have chosen to include this well-researched film in my own dissertation. It is necessary to understand elements from this film and its reception to set the stage for further inquiry into films including sideshow such as *The Elephant Man* (David Lynch, 1980) or exploitative themes as in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (John Frankenheimer, 1997). On the shift from sideshow to silver screen, David Church writes:

> The social histories of cinema and the traditional freak show overlapped in the early twentieth century as the newer form of entertainment replaced the older one but retained many of the same unequal viewing dynamics. Echoing the freak show, an economic capitalization on the public's desire to see and know more about the possibilities of the body underlies the invention of cinema (Watson 72 as qtd. in Church). The body-as-cinematic-spectacle soon came to occupy a social space once held by the freak show, appealing to viewers who frequented the same lower cultural stratum (carnivals, amusement parks, dime museums, etc.). (5-6)

Church does not recognize the reciprocal gaze and the connection between freaks and viewers; therefore, my purpose is to provide an extension beyond reading the body as socio-political study.

I hope to bring a sense of "humanity" to this study by incorporating my view that the human experience is shared and that the idea of "one of us" –the unified mantra of the freaks—applies to all of humanity and not just the "disabled" sideshow performers in Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932). For example, in these films, the gaze is both political and social—we experience

a behind the scenes look into the lives of sideshow performers and Moreau's hybrid creations, and how mainstream society has subjugated them, only to find that these performers actually had the upper-hand after all, and were a cohesive subculture, bonded by their physical differences (Denzin 44-45). The sideshow performers in these films show us that the panopticon cannot subjugate circus and sideshow performers because they also possess the gaze.

Ultimately sideshows became a safe place for freaks to showcase not only their socially coded bodies, but also their unique talents (such as sword swallowing, intense physical flexibility, or musical talents). In famed Johnny Eck's case (John Eckhardt), "The Only Living Half Boy" (1911-1991), music, art, and gymnastics were but a few of his talents. Eckhardt was a main character in *Freaks*, but also exhibited himself in the sideshow. In Francine Hornberger's *Carney Folk: The World's Weirdest Sideshow Acts,* she describes what probably would have appeared on Eck's pitch cards. Fans of the film *Freaks* (Tod Browning, 1932) can easily spot him walking on his hands throughout the film.

> In addition to being a performer and an actor, Johnny Eck was a gifted painter, an artist, a musician, and a gymnast. Believe it or not, he loved auto racing and even raced his own car. In 1938 he climbed to the top of the Washington Monument on his hands. He was an enthusiastic storyteller, and, for most of his life, he was good tempered and charming, and displayed a gusto for living.… [He was] intelligent and adept [as well as] religious ... [and] graduated from a Baltimore college. (78-80)

What is most inspiring about Eck's life was his ability to do more than most able-bodied individuals in a lifetime—even with his physical limitations. His story shows the value of the human spirit and an individual's ability to overlook limitations and to dive into life with vigor

and purpose. One can imagine the impact he had on his audiences beyond the first impulse to gaze in contempt or disgust. Viewers surely must have been inspired by his many attributes, especially once he began to speak about his life and his interests, which was common in sideshow exhibitions of freaks. As in today's sideshow spectators, some were horrified or felt unsettled in viewing freaks, while others were in awe and enjoyed the exchange of the gaze.

I use the terms medical and clinical as interchangeable for the gaze construct in this study. The medical gaze studies the human form and its anomalies in the same way that the audience views its spectacle. Not only is the audience entertaining their curiosity by viewing, but they also may gain a better understanding of some aspect of society. In this way, the clinical gaze can be positive—that we learn through gazing rather than merely subjugating the object of this gaze. We also may learn something about ourselves as the gaze is returned from a spectacle on stage, or in an imagined moment of recognition between cinematic object and viewer.

This curiosity opened the field of study to forms of the body that fall short of the normative cultural expectation of symmetrical perfection. Perhaps this expectation of symmetry goes back to religious mythology such as the creation myth in which all in/animate beings are created methodically and with great precision; or, we may consider the flood myth in which God commands Noah and his family to gather two of every kind of creature. Why else would such a creator-destroyer require two of everything? Two eyes, ears, limbs, even some organs—clearly since the beginning of mythological explanations of the human existence we have long been fascinated by symmetry and unsettled by abstractions or imbalance in the universe. Whether the symbolic number "two" equates symmetry or not, the sense of order and categorization places the clinical gaze within a linear construct—one that highlights either negatively or positively—that allows for observation and contemplation.

FILMIC GAZE

We should be cautious as spectators of sideshow performers or films about these individuals who were once thought of as "medical cases." We are still part of the society that has employed the gaze to marginalize these people, so that we could feel better about our own normalcy. But there is another function of this medical gaze: that is our tendency toward it, and perhaps even catharsis. While some of us remain repulsed, many noteworthy film critics credit our need to be voyeurs necessary, as well as unavoidable, such as Steven Shaviro. He asserts, "Film is a vivid medium, and it is important to talk about how it arouses corporeal reactions of desire and fear, pleasure and disgust, fascination and shame" (preface). We can read Shaviro's statement as a description of our evolution in the reaction to sideshow performers in film: first, we view based on curiosity, then we either are intrigued or repulsed, and finally, we are in awe and ashamed of our reactions. This is a healthy progression of spectatorship, as it allows for an array of human emotion and does not discount the various stages of our reaction to what is not within our initial understanding: the anomalous. For without feeling a sense of shame at our initial reactions to sideshow performers, we cannot experience a cathartic realization that perfection is a slippery term at best and that none of us is without some blemish or flaw, like the aforementioned antiheros in *Freaks*. It is through this progression that we may experience a moment of purgation and then catharsis. Once we have satisfied our curiosity, we can then accept and pursue a better understanding of those who were previously subjugated by the gaze. If we do not look, do not anticipate, we simply meander through life with blinders and do not experience all that makes us human—including those who fall into the category of "other." Similarly, we may begin to shift our perspective to include those who were once perceived as

"ugly," to those who embody a new kind of "beauty." In this way, it is possible to value curiosity even when it conflicts with what we are taught as children: "Don't stare! Treat others as you would be treated. If you cross your eyes they may stay that way!" We are constantly admonished to accept those in the human brotherhood as they are, yet we are also encouraged by film to look upon the unlovely—perhaps to purge ourselves of our own prejudices and to accept that the binaries of good/evil, ugly/beautiful, and ab/normal have become blurred and no longer dominate cultural discourse. As disability studies critic Carol Poore observes:

> We [disability theorists] have rarely lived in situations that sustained efforts to create our own images [of human bodies]—images that would challenge negative stereotypes. However, in the last twenty years or so, the disability rights movement has created environments that enable just such cultural experiments in self-definition…Therefore, if we think that cultural representations are a significant factor in shaping perceptions of reality, it is central to our liberatory project to find or create images of disability that either show disabled people as ordinary or conceive of disability in entirely new, avant-garde ways. (as qtd. in Snyder et. al. 261-2)

In examining the aforementioned films, we will be able to perform a cultural reading of bodies of difference that is positive, rather than negative in representing socially constructed ideas about normative culture.

In my research, I seek to bridge the gap between the *us* and *them* mentality, and to bring more scholarship to the study of sideshow, which for me, is a very personal endeavor. It began for me simply because I was curious, and I will admit, very fascinated by people who *looked* different. As I grew older, my fascination shifted into pity. Fortunately, through education, I

became engrossed in everything outside of my quiet little existence. Long into my doctoral studies I found my way back to that sense of connection I felt with those who just could not fit into a societal/physical/cultural categorization. I wanted to understand, to give a voice, to honor those who have the courage to live as themselves, not as curiosities, but as performers with their own sense of agency. As disabilities scholar Roesmarie Garland Thomson notes:

> The disabled figure speaks to this tension between uniqueness and uniformity. On the one hand, the disabled figure is a sign for the body that refuses to be governed and cannot carry out the will of self-determination. On the other hand, the extraordinary body is nonconformity incarnate. In a sense then, the disabled figure has the potential to inspire with its irreverent individuality and to threaten with its violation of equality. (*Extraordinary Bodies* 44)

This seemingly paradoxical definition of a "disabled figure" provides the crux of my thesis: that those who are different both embody and deconstruct our preconceived notions about how we relate to one another and/or how we choose to accept or deny these individuals as viable members of our society.

Perhaps we can attribute our reactions to our need to catalog or encode both beings and objects, as we have learned in previous paragraphs:

> Disability, in this and other encounters, is a disruption in the visual, auditory, or perceptual field as it relates to the power of the gaze. As such, the disruption, the rebellion of the visual, must be regulated, rationalized, contained. Why the modern binary—normal/abnormal—must be maintained is a complex question. But we can begin by accounting for the desire to split bodies into two immutable

> categories: whole and incomplete, abled and disabled, normal and abnormal, functional and dysfunctional. (Lennard Davis as qtd. in Fraser and Greco, 168)

We are simultaneously curious and repelled (in some cases) by those who exhibit themselves for education and for profit. How other scholars have defined the term *freak* is quintessential in this discussion of binary opposition. "The freak is…neither unusually gifted nor unusually disadvantaged. He or she is not an object of *simple* admiration or pity, but is a being who is considered simultaneously and compulsively fascinating and repulsive, enticing and sickening" (Grosz as qtd. in Thomson *Freakery* 56). While this definition may be offensive to some, if we admit to ourselves that what repulses us often engages us in a deeply visceral way, then we become more open to scholarship that gives validity to what the modern sideshow performer has chosen as a vocation, and makes his/her deformity count for something more than a life filled with pain, rejection, and difficulty. In short, we can view what is seemingly negative as something incredibly positive that can offer insights on cultural and social evolution. We can become greater human beings with purpose if we learn to embrace all differences—physical and otherwise.

PANOPTIC GAZE AND CULTURAL RELATIVITY

There are very few sideshows across the nation now. I acknowledge a renewed popularity of working acts (sword swallowers, fire eaters) and/or made freaks (those with piercings, tattoos, etc.), but even the mention of sideshow freaks—especially in academia—creates a climate of intolerance. In our technologically advanced society, what chance does sideshow have when faced with new entertainments such as creating avatars, viewing reality television shows, or playing video games that look more like short films than games? We also have a better understanding of the human body and of its anatomical "wonders." In addition, the

social value of sideshow is still heavily disputed even among some circus historians, as I have found at the Popular Culture Association Conferences that I have attended. Circus panels rarely include sideshow materials, but that is slowly changing. As Robert Sugarman, my colleague at the Circus and Circus Culture panels at the PCA annual conference has mentioned, many circus historians have not studied sideshow extensively. It is time to overcome this failure. Raymond Williams' writes:

> Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressure of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land. …We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life—the common meanings; to mean the arts and learning—the special processes of discovery and creative effort. Some writers reserve the word for one or other of these senses; I insist on both, and on the significance of their conjunction. .. . Culture is ordinary, in every society and in every mind. (qtd. in Badmington and Thomas 83)

As such, given that the ordinary is, in fact, what is extraordinary about human beings, it is fitting that we investigate a group of humans who have been set apart from the global community in a way that has been at times exploitive, but also empowering. This complex juxtaposition of "freak-humans" is the very dichotomy by which we investigate the concept of hybridism in chapter two, for as Foucault examines in his *The Order of Things*: "It is the man-made sign that draws the dividing-line between man and animal; that transforms imagination into voluntary

memory, spontaneous attention into reflection, and instinct into rational knowledge" (62). Therefore, we must consider that our humanistic approach to categorizing all beings is inherent in our need to make sense of our physical world; however, this approach can only be useful if we reflect, research, and accept that not all physical "signs" cannot be designated as absolute, but rather the basis is in a constant state of flux.

As we have already determined, at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century, entertainment and leisure became more accessible for all classes. Newly developed machinery and technology made factories run more efficiently. Science and medicine continued progress and created classifications for and in some cases, treatment for certain diseases. The cultural milieu was open for discourse in so many socially constructed designs that it was an exciting time. Yet, consistently in a state of flux, there were conflicting discourses between the morally elite and the entrepreneurs of various forms of entertainment. For example, vaudeville was acceptable to the rising and middle classes, but for the elites, there was opera, orchestra, and other more "highbrow" entertainments. But what is most interesting about sideshow is that it seemed to *transcend* class strata, and, appealed to everyone for its visceral and even educational value (Bogdan 34). Pitch cards offered academic and/or historical material and were presented by human anomalies after their performances; even today one can attain these same keepsakes at Coney's Sideshows by the Seashore. Bogdan notes the significance of these pitch cards, as well as booklets that were sold at exhibits: "Medical testimonials and pronouncements were generally used as part of the status-enhanced presentation, and lengthy quotations by such experts sometimes appeared in the 'true life' booklets as well" (110). This tradition continues today, although with less medical discussion and more about the performers' lives. In fact, the performers I have interviewed have presented several pitch cards to me over the years we have

worked together on this research. Spectators from all walks of life could visit sideshows without remorse or ethical questions because ultimately many performers *chose* to join the sideshow.

Where else could they work without limbs or with other physical deformities? Surely no factory would risk employing such individuals, who were sometimes sold not by profiteers, but rather their own family members to the travelling circuses. Where else could these individuals make a fine living, reach popular fame, and have a sense of family? Where the mainstream workforce had failed them, the sideshow embraced their differences. Sideshow provided a means for physically challenged individuals to gain employment and a sense of family. While it is true that some performers were used as commodities rather than human beings earning an honest living, the majority found fame if not fortune in the industry. In addition, science was moving just as quickly as technology at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century. Because of advances in diagnoses, medical procedures, and cures for diseases, individuals born human anomalies became less abundant after 1900, but there were still those who were genetically predisposed to various disorders such as hypertrichosis, ectrodactyly, and phocomelia.[8]

We return to Kenneth Little's "Surveilling Cirque Archaos," as he relays that, "Foucault argues that ordering and positioning the morally transgressive is a modern social strategy of containment, regulation, and colonization. In his book on the prison, he explains that 'disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially, by arranging objects'" (Foucault *Discipline & Punish* 191 as qtd. "Surveilling" 15-27). Although Foucault does not specifically mention anomalies, he notes the value of separating ab/normal individuals. Granted he refers mostly to those who are visibly diseased, but the premise is clear. For the purpose of this study, the focus on the panoptic space of social controls in society (i.e. reformers placing the physically challenged in institutions) is most useful in discussing how physical space can replicate the

cultural climate regarding societal "ills." Circuses created a separate space for sideshow performers. Even the design of the circus, placing sideshows on the fringes of the big top, sets these performers apart from mainstream society. Foucault describes the centralized power (tower or in this case, the three-ring big top) as a safe place for observation: "This Panopticon, subtly arranged so that an observer may observe, at a glance, so many different individuals, also enables everyone to come and observe any of the observers. The seeing machine was once a sort of dark room into which individuals spied [like a peep hole]; it has become a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole" (207). The spectacle/spectator relationship is therefore a reciprocal practice.

However, in some cases, even though sideshow performers show humanity more honestly because they are socially flawed and embrace their physical differences, mainstream society justifies its need to exert power over those who are either physically different or socially inept by ignoring the fact that the performers also possess the gaze and make their own judgments. Similarly, our culture has embraced beauty as a "perfect" depiction of the human body—going to any extreme to reconfigure through medical surgery, magazine airbrushing, or complete physical makeovers to achieve that goal. Viewers therefore use the same prerogative about reforming their own appearance to make judgments on others. As Church writes, "In normative society, freakery is premised on unequal viewing and social relations. A nondisabled audience retains the power to subject a non-normative body…to the ableist gaze as entertaining spectacle, enjoying a mixture of shock, horror, wonder, and pity" (3-4). However, the sideshow performers I have interviewed have indicated that this gaze is less about shock and awe and more about a reciprocal experience between viewers and viewed. As we will see in chapter three, the gaze becomes a progression from initial amazement, to clinical or scientific wonder, to

educational or enlightening for viewers who are open to their message. Because freaks were considered outside of normative society, their place in the discourse of the nineteenth century was in regard to eugenic[9] considerations and altered perceptions of the human body as perfectly designed by a deity. Yet, they were never simply objects of the gaze but always returned that gaze.

MAN OR BEAST: BODIES OF DIFFERENCE

Noel Benedetti's ideas shed much light on my research, as I have conducted email interviews and met with her at the PCA conference. I asked her to discuss the significance of certain performers who choose to exhibit themselves with animal personae or names such as "the lobster boy" or "the dog-faced boy." Her response leans heavily on the historic relevance of animal naming for performers. She explained, "the human-animal hybrid naming strategy is a staple of the old sideshow world that many performers chose to reinvent for modern audiences...[p]eople seem to have always been intrigued by the possibility of human-animal hybrids. Legends of mermaids and centaurs date back thousands of years and while I cannot speak on behalf of the early anatomical wonders who labeled themselves as part animal, I suspect they [human sideshow anomalies] were (wisely) tapping into this timeless fascination" (Personal Interview 2011). For me, this gave a modern explanation to what I had already found in much of my historic references dealing with the sideshow and the Golden Age of the circus. Consistent with Noel Benedetti's perspective on "naming" choice, Circus Historian, Janet Davis offered this response about hybridity:

> I think that hybridity is at the center of the circus as a whole, and the sideshow specifically. In other words, the circus—in spectacular fashion—dives deeply into the question of categorization. Whether it be the highly disciplined big top

> performances of horses/bears/tigers/elephants/dogs/cats/monkeys/etc. dancing, or the physically animalized human performers at the sideshow like Jo-Jo [known as the dog-faced boy, had hypertrichosis], all center around the permeability of the human/animal divide. The act of choosing a name that evokes an animal personae is an acknowledgement (subconscious, or otherwise) of the circus's larger social power and cultural purpose. (Personal Interview, 2011)

Critical Animal Studies, also provides new scholarship on the connection between humans and animals, and how sideshow performers often choose animal names. This new scholarship is important because it distinguishes human and animal species as part of our cultural development; whereas, earlier studies focused on animal rights issues. Issues of hybridity, vivisection, and personhood have become part of the discourse, rather than just the focus on animal rights activism.

In this new focus, Critical Animal Studies critic, Rosi Braidotti, reminds us of our long association with animal characteristics. In her article, "Animals, Anomalies, and Inorganic Others," she poses this cultural reading:

> Humans have long used animals to mark the boundaries between fundamental categories of being and to spell out the social grammar of distinctions among species. This ontological function resulted in the metaphoric habit of composing a sort of moral and cognitive bestiary in which animals refer to values, norms, and morals. I propose that, instead of waxing lyrical about the nobleness of eagles, the deceit of foxes, or the humility of lambs, we acknowledge the centuries-old history and the subtlety of this animal glossary. (527-8)

Acknowledging that we have historically looked to animals as a means to establish what humans "are not," means that we can now understand what animals "are" to us. Primates are our ancestors, and aside from these personified attributes mentioned by Braidotti, which are superficial comparisons, we can begin to reevaluate how we characterize differences between species. It is important that we understand these differences before we can embrace them. For centuries we have looked at mythological creatures, such as chimeras, and placed them either above or below the status of humans. If we maintain that humans and animals are not to be valued based upon preconceived ideology and classification, then this idea of personhood becomes elusive. If we remove the lines of demarcation, personhood becomes a state of mind rather than a physical state of being, and perhaps there is room for hybridity in the twenty-first century. Perhaps we are ready to accept bodies of difference as examples of how similar the species are in terms of socialization and community.

In terms of scientific and medical discoveries, the moral dilemma of experimentation opens the discourse, but muddies the water as we consider that animals are used as such, but humans have rights of personhood. As provided by CAS critic Sherryl Vint:

> The use of animals in research on pharming (genetically engineering animals to produce useful pharmaceuticals) and xenotransplantation (the transplantation of living tissue from one species to another) requires that we hold the contradictory beliefs that animals are sufficiently like humans to provide useful biological matter, yet sufficiently unlike us that their slaughter in these pursuits is not an ethical issue. Pollution and conflicts over land use, in the so-called developing and developed nations alike, restrict refuges for animal life, yet at the same time movements are afoot to grant "person" status to some species and to shift legal

> discourse from pet-ownership to companion-guardianship. (*"The Animals in That Country"* par. 3)

By blurring the lines between species, the function of their purpose is called into question. Is it ethical to test on animals even if it means the prescribed notion of personhood will be perfected? Our quest to be perfect—to be physically symmetrical and fully functional implies that we are less than perfect as human beings. It implies there is something wrong with us and that we need to be reconstructed. The demarcation of animal and human is currently challenged in the medical field, as organ transplants from animals and humans are now taking place to save human lives. In addition, there are still heated debates in politics regarding personhood—when should we cease feeding tubes or breathing apparatuses for terminally ill patients? When does the brain function cease to be human? What justification do we have for killing animals to enhance humans' lifespans? Clearly, we have many considerations to explore as we navigate the slippery concept of personhood and how we maintain our humanity.

As such, part of the cultural work that I hope to complete is in response to the current field of bioethics in relation to biotechnological advances. "Genetic manipulation of plants and animals to produce everything from plastic to drugs is commonplace, and research continues into fusing biology and technology at the level of the computer chip, thoroughly breaching the old distinctions among human, animal, and machine" (Vint). Perhaps we will see cures to diseases, but at what cost? I hope that we do not follow Moreau in his quest to perfect the human race by experimenting on human beings. As we will see in chapter two, his experiments and practice of vivisection failed miserably and he learned in the end that nature will do its own will—regardless of our intrusion or manipulation. We need to understand where we are heading, and where to draw the line in genetic mutations and chimera productions. Further, we must contemplate the

use of the word "personhood" as per CAS and learn from films that investigate what was once science fiction and has become reality.

THE GROTESQUE: BODIES OF DIFFERENCE

Part of what makes us human beings is our curiosity. But what propels our interest in the creation of the odd or fantastic—especially in works of cinema? What is this human fascination with the unseemly and the grotesque? Americans have a long history of enjoying human anomalies, strange exotic animals, and bizarre death-defying feats. One need only consider the popularity of *Ripley's Believe it Or Not* museum, still active in New York City. No matter what social mores and accepted behaviors we have been taught as children, we continue to look—perhaps even stare—at those who are unmistakably different. The grotesque figure has been represented in various mediums dating to our earliest cave paintings. This figure serves to communicate the value in bodies of difference, as "[the] grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body" (Bakhtin as qtd. in Fraser and Greco 92). One can scarcely tour Europe without sighting fantastic gargoyles and contorted faces in gallery exhibits or in architecture, much of which came to port with our diverse immigrants' influences. As Nathaniel Knaebel ponders the very notion of circus consumption in the form of the grotesque in his collection *Step Right Up*, he poses this question: "Do they validate our precarious understanding of our own normalcy, or do they offer a splendid, sordid inside-out look at our own twisted inner workings?" (x). It seems fitting that we begin a brief discussion on the grotesque with his very question.

The grotesque represents ideas, people, fears, and of course, some art mediums. It really is a working definition in this sense, as it changes in meaning between cultures and theorists. Let

us then consider that the grotesque in this study will include human figures who are physically different in some way. More specifically, the grotesque is that which the general populous may find abhorrent, yet cannot look away without peeking. It is the twisted body, the socially inept, the unstable mind–and we are all its deviant spectators. *American Carnival* critic, Philip McGowan has defined that the sideshow is: "…the grotesque on display, a displacing of the abnormal and the Other in exhibits of difference…[and]…Coney Island provid[ed] distorted versions of the self [such as the funny mirrors one can still use that are housed at the Coney Island Museum] that shared entertainment space with displayed versions of distorted Others…[.]" (51). In the past, grotesque figures were examined as outside of social norms—whether physically, socially, or psychologically. Yet, each age will vary in reactions to malformed individuals, however these individuals choose to portray themselves. In our time, with sideshows barely in existence, we must look more to films to understand what we can learn through the reciprocal gaze of ourselves and these performers.

CONCLUSION

In the next chapter, we will discuss how sideshow has been presented in three specific films that represent the clinical gaze: *The Elephant Man* (1980) and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1996), and *Fur: An Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus* (2006). *The Elephant Man* explores sideshow as a cultural artifact by which we consider the value system of human beings presented for profit and/or experimentation for scientific inquiry; whereas, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* presents the abuse of scientific inquiry—when the clinical gaze has looked too deeply and therefore the viewer becomes detached from the subject of study. Lastly, *Fur* represents the connection between the panoptic/voyeuristic gaze and the clinical/medical gaze, as viewers recognize that the character of Diane suffers from a social affliction and her lover, Lionel suffers

from hypertrichosis. In addition, much of disability studies seeks to demythologize the concept of amusement for profit in this context, and thus, beyond the golden age of sideshows, and it appears we have less use for them in current society. We shall see in chapter three that there is still room for sideshows through the educational gaze.

CHAPTER TWO

CLINICAL GAZE MEDICAL MENAGERIE: *THE ELEPHANT MAN, THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU,* AND *FUR: AN IMAGINARY PORTRAIT OF DIANE ARBUS*

Fig. 3 Carousel Horse 2

"While the natural philosophers were experimenting with the interaction of matter and motion, the body and its 'spark of life,' the moral philosophers were continuing their interrogation of the interaction between matter and mind, the body and its self-consciousness."
~Judith Wilt

TRACING SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY AND BODY DISCOURSE

The birth of science and medical inquiry moved the discourse from religion into the secular realm. It is through this discourse that we can trace the evolution of medical knowledge and the construct of the human body in various physical forms. In viewing *The Elephan Man* (1980), we see the natural progression of Joseph Carey Merrick's time with the sideshow and in the medical clinic with Dr. Frederick Treves. Although Merrick was on display on both the stage and in the clinical environment, we see examples of both the positive and negative gaze constructs of the panoptic and clinical constructs. We also review *The Island of Doctor Moreau*

(1996) and focus on the hybridity of the human/animal; the mad scientist/philosopher attempts to create a tamer human being ironically by using vivisection of animal genes and clearly fails. Lastly, we examine *Fur: An Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus* (2006) as an example of the gaze construct between characters, as they recognize they are both spectators and spectacle in the film.

Although many theorists in the field have tackled difficult ethical subjects such as experimentation, exploitation, and examination of human subjects, we are only in the twenty-first century accrediting the study as a valid cultural discourse worth investigating further. In all three films, the following material shows us how we can connect the films within the gaze construct:

> …the fundamental change in cultural perceptions [that] has been neither clearly progress nor regression, but merely a conversion of wondrous, ominous pre-Enlightenment monsters to fascinating freaks on circus stages and, finally, to medical cases that fade into hospitals, physicians' texts, and specimen shelves. (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 79)

Cultural critics and works as *Special Cases* by Rosamond Purcell and *All the World's a Fair* by Robert Rydell offer perspectives on the expositions and cabinets of curiosities for new scientific theories, experiments, inventions, and medical discussions. Similarly, Daniel Mannix discusses cultural and medical insight specific to the sideshow circuit in his *Freaks: We Who are Not as Others.* Two examples of scientific inquiry in terms of mysterious diseases and human anomalies are in the strange account Mary Toft in *The Girl Who Gave Birth to Rabbits: A True Medical Mystery* by writer Clifford Pickover, as well as writers Michael Howell's and Peter Ford's excellent overview of the life of Joseph Carey Merrick in *The True History of the*

Elephant Man. Both offer insight into our perception of the film *The Elephant Man* and the minor role of Animal Studies in our cultural discourse.

Although a fascinating figure, why continue to study the case of Joseph Merrick in the twenty-first century? For me this is a personal journey. I have never been satisfied with the assumption that what mainstream society deems as beautiful or ugly is appropriate. In my view, those who are physiologically different are far lovelier, more interesting than those of us who were born anatomically "correct." While some individuals do suffer with various anomalous challenges, many others have used their physical differences to enjoy life, to educate the public, and to stand out among those who are content to be "normal" and in my mind, lack creative minds. Rosamond Purcell sums up my reasoning as such:

> When an anomalous person enters a room, the "average" human tend that such an encounter is a daily occurrence. No one asks—"Hey, so what does it feel like to be a crippled dwarf in a room full of the rest of us 'normal giants'?" Children often speak up: What is wrong with that boy? Why does that man look like that? The children are told to be silent, and their parents apologize. Where does the sense of suffocation come from? Alone, in the company of a dwarf, a giant, or conjoined twins, a single person of average stature and traditional configuration must relinquish the cherished position of being normal. Even a single Quasimodo may force the abdication of all biologically average persons from center stage. The rest of humanity, in his presence, exists on the edge of things—out on the rim of his very old world. (146)

This existence on the fringes of society is a liminal space that can be filled by the gaze experience of bodies of difference. As previously mentioned in the introduction, I have long been not only fascinated by bodies of difference, but I have also been more concerned as an educator with how the normative culture gazes with a mixture of shame and contentment—contentment because they (the viewers) are normal figures who do not have to "be like those people." The gaze began with negative connotations as we originally gazed for curiosity, secularized horror, and religious judgment. As we shifted our gaze to the medical and scientific arenas, we can easily trace the social evolution of this gaze. As Michel Foucault has provided, "The Panopticon is a privileged place for experiments on men, and for analyzing with complete certainty the transformations that may be obtained from them…[and it] functions as a kind of laboratory of power" (Discipline & Punish 204). But does this privileged place justify what Moreau does to his island race for the sake of common good? Let us investigate further.

As we consider the powerful hold that maternal impressions had on both the educated and those who relied upon superstitious explanations for human anomalies, we turn to Rosamond Purcell: "In the sixteenth century, the surgeon Ambroise Pare' wrote, 'We will note in passing how dangerous it is to disturb a pregnant woman, to show her or to remind her of some food which she cannot enjoy immediately, and indeed to show them animals, or even pictures of them, when they are deformed and monstrous.' Women were also to take care that foreign animals like tapeworms and small dragons not enter the body in the form of seed and be expelled as full-grown nastiness" (as qtd. in Purcell 60). Along with ancient superstitious notions and explanations as to why some infants were born with severe anomalies, either religious or mythological concerns were raised. As per social evolution, we see that anomalous births were later explained using scientific discourse, reasoning, and experimentation. In the case of Joseph

Merrick, not only was his mother feared to have encountered a reprehensible instance of the gaze, but she therefore produced an offspring of that gaze. Thus, we see that the gaze has both negative and later, positive consequences for the viewer in that Merrick was (and is) an inspiration to those who cared for him in his final years with Dr. Treaves. Yet, one must consider that illness and unsanitary conditions, as well as unsafe factory working conditions, were a part of the landscape of Victorian England. Additionally, while his mother loved her children, she was crippled, Joseph grew into his deformities (for he was "born a perfect baby"), and her daughter was crippled; thus, clearly they were genetically predisposed for various diseases and/or malformations, which negates the theory of maternal impressions (Howell and Ford 42-6).

Moving away from religious representations of monsters and their cultural function into the new science at the end of the eighteenth century of *teratology*, "the medical study of the structure of human monsters" was founded by Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (Purcell 59). As a result of these new ideas attributed to monsters, during the nineteenth century, the discourse continues in world's fair exhibitions such as the Chicago, San Francisco, and abroad, the Crystal Palace. Unfortunately, eugenics became a new science in the nineteenth century; one that was heavily promoted during these fairs, which often included huge sections of space dedicated to various races and their study such as the "Race Betterment Foundation." These exhibits included aboriginal tribes in full dress and enacting various rites of passage for spectators. Under the umbrella of education, spectators were encouraged to roam amidst the "exhibits" to better understand the differences between race, intelligence, and culture (Rydell 221-225). Yet not all research was ethnocentric.

Many new machines and medical advancements were exhibited at these fairs: "Scientific explanations about natural and social phenomena became increasingly authoritative, and the

exposition planners enhanced and drew upon the prestige of science to make the presentation of America's progress more convincing" (Rydell 5). Consequently, participants in these exhibitions were not for mere entertainment, as "scientists at the Smithsonian" and "federal officials" showed an interest in utilizing this large-scale cultural medium (7). However, the didacticism of the religious representations of monsters carried into this "progress," as "Wilbur O. Atwater of the Agriculture Department" implored, "[l]et the exposition be a display, not merely of material products, but of the teachings of science and experience as regard their value, importance and use" (as qtd. in Rydell 7). He sought to make the fairgoers hungry for education, not just leisure and commerce. In fact, he felt exhibits should be "… also and pre-eminently an exposition of the principles which underlie our national and individual welfare, our material, intellectual and moral status…," rather than merely a collection of shows or shops (7). As Rydell indicates, "science and salvation seemed to march hand in hand" so that clearly, the moral and ethical issues of the day allowed for much controversy within the scientific and medical communities. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has this to offer:

> Thus, the fundamental change in cultural perceptions has been neither clearly progress nor regression, but merely a conversion of wondrous, ominous pre-Enlightenment monsters to fascinating freaks on circus stages and, finally, to medical cases that fade into hospitals, physicians' texts, and specimen shelves. In the nineteenth and early twentieth-century America, freak shows produced a generalized icon of corporeal and cultural otherness that verified the sociopolitical status quo and the figure of the unmarked normate…" (*Extraordinary Bodies* Garland-Thomson 79-80).

In the conflicting cultural discourse that both promotes and negates the function and value of the gaze, it is difficult for some cultural critics to decide whether the sideshow spectacle—even if it is a medical exhibition—is progressive or regressive. Perhaps Garland-Thomson synthesizes the dizzying discourse to represent our need to create a kind of cultural baseline by which we "read" freaks of any kind against the mainstreamed normative, albeit fluctuating criterion by which we measure the spectacle/specimen.

It was at these world's fairs that we explored many discoveries as to how the human body not only looked, but also functioned. For example, in an effort to better preserve new life, one interesting invention of the fin de siècle was the incubator by Dr. Martin Couney in 1890. He could not find investors or institutions to fund his project, so he decided to work outside of science and medicine. He turned to Coney Island and exhibited his machine calling it "incubator babies…as part of the freak show" (Mannix 111). This invention is the quintessential example of the interchangeable facets of cultural discourse and medical inquiry in that it both functioned in the realm of the clinical gaze (as we still utilize the invention today), as well as in the arena of sideshow exhibition. Fortunately for premature infants, the machine worked and was literally used on the premises. In fact, science and medicine often worked hand in hand with the freak show exhibits—whether or not these agencies intended to do so. What the public wanted was a show, and the circus circuit could provide it, as well as the World Fairs. Perhaps the elite and rising middle classes would be able to afford formal medical lectures, but the working class certainly could not (Garland-Thomson10-13). As the Industrial Revolution developed, so did leisure and entertainment; thus, there was a home for the side show freak performer. Often these freaks had pitch cards which gave exaggerated descriptions of their origins. There was either a "professor,"[9] or outside "talker" who would invite the masses to "see" the freak of nature and

gaze in wonder. While it may seem seedy, it was a way to educate the public on various disorders, as well as create income, fame, and family for those freaks of the sideshow.

What is most interesting is that most of these nineteenth century performers had substantial physical deformities—more than in today's sideshows, which include more working acts and made freaks than actual human anomalies. Some of these performers had dwarfism, gigantism (caused by overactive pituitary glands), or were conjoined twins (Mannix 19, 37-63). Purcell notes several diseases that would have been exhibited in the sideshows at the world's fairs like hydrocephaly (water on brain), elephantiasis (severe enlargement), and hirsute condition (hair covers body) just to name a few (89, 122,128-9). Can we consider that Charles Darwin understood some of these disorders and perhaps tried to warn us of the future of humans if we continued to overpopulate and practice ill-breeding? He is of course known for his *Origin of the Species*, but let us turn to *The Decent of Man*, as he discusses the very issue of population control. Charles Darwin cautioned if we continue populating irresponsibly, then the "reckless, the vicious and otherwise inferior members of society [will increase] at a quicker rate than the better class of men, the nation will retrograde…[therefore; n]atural selection follows from the struggle for existence[.]" (as qtd. in Wilt 292, 294). It is interesting that population control and choice "breeding" are current topics in medical ethics discourse in an age when we have so many birth control options and can produced "designer babies." Certainly his grandfather, Erasmus Darwin could not have imagined how far we have progressed in his ideas of electromagnetic or reanimation phenomenon; we have electrolysis and defibrillators to reanimate or revive (Wilt 280-285). Although the world's fairs may have included some forms of human exploitation of races, these venues also contributed to our current knowledge of anomalies and life-saving machines.

Freaks of nature or natural occurrences in nature have long fascinated humans. Laura Mulvey describes this fascination as curiosity. "Curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world" (as qtd. in Penley 59). From an ontological perspective, it is relevant to look at two distinct representations of human anomalies: one woman produces rabbits, while a man becomes more elephant-like; thus, the beast and the human have joined into what religious leaders would have called God's curses or abominations. In the first example, Mary Toft, an eighteenth century poor Englishwoman, whose tale today would either be featured on Discovery Channel's medical mysteries series, or on a popular reality television show. She had no known deformities, but she did have an odd fetish for rabbits. So strange was this case that King George I ordered an investigation (Pickover 34). John Howard, a well-known "mid-wife and obstetrician" refused to believe her story until he actually delivered the remains of her miscarriage: a rabbit head. In fact, he continued to deliver dead rabbit fetuses and finally presented these to the Royal Society (41-3). One of the most noted investigators of this anomaly was Nathanael St. Andre, court anatomist. He was unconvinced that these were natural births, but rather preternatural (48-58). The king, still unsatisfied with the research, sent Cyriacus Ahlers, "a German surgeon, to investigate further" (74). He suspected that this was, in fact, a contrived birth—his proof was that the parts of the rabbits had been cut rather than ripped apart in the womb. His findings were met with antagonism from Howard and Andre, who hoped to lay claim to the unnatural phenomenon (76). Of course she finally confessed, saying she had "so good a living that [she] should never want as long as [she] lived" and that she was forced into the hoax by various people; she had actually placed these rabbit parts into her body (Pickover 159).

Strange and repulsive as her story is, we have continued to enjoy abnormalities in our culture. The tabloids and reality television programming have certainly continued the work of Mary Toft in the unusual anomalous sightings and bizarre fetishes some admit to enjoying. One such fetish that has progressed from the nineteenth through the twenty-first century is the study of physical deformities. As previously discussed, the circus sideshow played an essential role in providing the masses with entertainment, but it also created a new audience: the medical profession. What we can ascertain from Joseph Carey Merrick's life is still fragmented. He lived such a horrific and anguished life that is a wonder he lived into his early twenties. His own father ousted him because he could not produce adequate income for the family; Merrick eventually was placed in a workhouse, which was the equivalent of the worst prison in America, and he finally had to turn to the sideshow (Howell and Ford 1-13, 42-64). His story is well-known even now—play productions, a film, and numerous accounts have been created based on his life. What is it that fascinates us? Is it our strange obsession of viewing those who are different, the seemingly queer or abnormal? Or is it because we are fascinated by the endurance of the human body to suffer such pain? In an effort to understand our fascination of the human experience as it relates to Animal Studies, as well as discovering whether or not John Merrick actually exhibited his own agency in the film *The Elephant Man*, it is necessary to understand the true life of Joseph Merrick.

In recent years a new critical theory has emerged: CAS, or Critical Animal Studies. At first glance it may appear that this is merely a nod to animal rights activism, or the use of animals within literary studies, but it is much more than that. This theory allows for research in controversial issues such as hybridism, vivisection, and genetics. Using CAS helps us define hybridity as it pertains to literary and especially in this study, film depictions of individuals who

either adopt animal names because of their physical similarities. While scientific research in biotechnology has proven successful in organ development, cures for diseases, and fertility improvement, it has also sparked complex discourse and cultural work in the field. This extends to literary and film studies, as there are not only ethical and moral considerations, but also ambiguity between the human/animal and/or the human/freak dichotomy: "In a fiction where no character is 'simply' human, human status is highly problematic…Monsters have always defined the limits of community in Western imaginations" ("A Manifesto…" as qtd. in Badmington and Thomas 347). If our cultural definition of human or monster has shifted in Western culture, it is only because we first acknowledged differences in human beings in the first place before we could catalogue and then redefine the human experience. Haraway continues this theory, as she recognizes our early fascination of *others*: "Unseparated twins and hermaphrodites were the confused human material in early modern France who grounded discourse on the natural and supernatural, medical and legal, portents and diseases—all crucial to establishing modern identity" (347). Specifically in *The Elephant Man*, the preconceived notion of *maternal imprinting* was believed to be the reason for the plight of Joseph Merrick, famed Elephant Man.

What is the significance of this naming and more importantly, what are the ramifications of sideshow performers using these names for the stage. Does it change the cultural reading of the gaze? Certainly for John Merrick (name in film) the name not only created an image of who he was, but also gave him the classification of a hybrid: half animal/half human or as some may note, a true "freak" of nature. We again turn to Donna Haraway in "The Promises of Monsters," as she investigates the distinction between (if any) human and nonhuman forms. She asserts that, "[h]uman beings use names to point to themselves and other actors and easily mistake the names for the things. These same humans also think the traces of inscription devises are like

names—pointers to things, such that the inscriptions and the things can be enrolled in dramas of substitution and inversion" (as qtd. in Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 313). We may also return to Michel Foucault's ideas about the panoptic gaze for his explanation of animal significance in ordering our universe. "The Panopticon is a royal menagerie; the animal is replaced by man, individual distribution by specific grouping and the king by the machinery of a furtive power" (*Discipline & Punish* 203). If we ascribe to the notion that we are all part of this great chain of being and if one part of the construct falls short, another either usurps its power or assists to recreate a new kind of restorative power—at least that is my hope for humanity, albeit idealistic.

Unfortunately, Merrick actually felt more comfortable in the sideshow circuit as an exhibit rather than under Dr. Treaves care in the London Hospital. He tells his proprietor that, "he did not mind….being displayed discreetly and decently when he was being paid, but over there 'I was stripped naked, and felt like an animal in a cattle market'" (Howell and Ford 77). What Treaves does do for Merrick and for medical research purposes, is to catalogue his diseases. Treaves presented his "case" at The Pathological Society of London that included "pathologists, surgeons and physicians…society's members…associated with the realms of biology and the related sciences" (Howell and Ford 22-6). What Treaves defined as "congenital deformity" was later theorized by dermatologist Dr. Henry Radcliffe Crocker and noted in his dissertation as, "a rare group of disorders termed as *dermatolysis* (a loosened or pendulous condition of the skin) and *pachydermatocoele* (a condition where tumours arise from an overgrowth of skin)…[as well as] a deformity of the bones" (Howell and Ford 28-9). Merrick later died in his sleep just at the beginning of the fin de siècle, in 1890; the cause of death was reported as, "asphyxia and suffocation…[and possibly] dislocation of the neck" (151). The

disease is now termed as Proteus Syndrome and is described in detail in "Proteus Syndrome: A Case Report:"

> Proteus syndrome is a rare, sporadically occurring hamartomatous disorder with complex multi-system involvement and wide clinical variability. Clinical characteristics include craniofacial abnormalities; asymmetrical overgrowth of the trunk, limbs, and digits; lipomas; and vascular malformations. Cystic lung disease is noted in approximately 10 per cent of patients. These cystic malformations may lead to cystic pulmonary emphysema, which may cause significant morbidity for the patient. (Zusan, Smith, and Parker par. 1)

At least by the end, he knew what he suffered from, and that he would never be cured but could have a better quality of life under Treaves' s care.

Central to understanding Merrick's life both on/off screen, is how he is portrayed by John Hurt. This actor adopts the supposed mannerisms, speech impediments, and sensibilities that biographers have described of Joseph Merrick. In doing so, Hurt ascribes humanity to the role that is lacking in the sideshow circuit with his proprietor, Mr. Bytes, who refers to him as a "creature," beats him mercilessly, and uses him as a "meal ticket." In fact, in the film Bytes perpetuates this idea of animal-man by exhibiting him as such, and forcing him to do typical elephant circus tricks such as turning in a circle on a stool. When he becomes enraged at "his treasure," he cages him with primates. Through this action not only does this connect Merrick with our ancestral animal, but it also objectifies him as nothing more than a part of a circus menagerie. In the same scene the dwarfs and midgets are engaged in adoration of a miniature menagerie of figurines, which signifies how vulnerable and small we humans are in the grand scheme of the universe; additionally, these miniature figurines point to Merrick's portrayal as

naïve and innocent. In reality, the true-life Merrick juxtaposed with his unbelievable comprehension of what it means to be human is multifarious, as we both love and destroy, are innocent and experienced, and such binary oppositions are what makes the human race so complex. Perhaps this is what separates us from the animals (menagerie) after all—that we humans are capable in distinguishing right from wrong on a cognitive level.

Science and medicine have evolved on so many levels since the cases of Mary Toft and Joseph Carey Merrick. Had either lived in the twentieth century to the present, perhaps Toft's fraud would have been discovered sooner. Certainly obstetricians would have conducted sonograms before the investigation became a media "circus." Merrick would have been diagnosed earlier, even at birth by way of the same procedure. Perhaps early detection would have assisted surgeons, scientists, and researchers to at least keep the tumors, bone deformities, and skin disease manageable. The quality of life would have been improved and instead of science and medicine abusing the entrusted power, by genetic mutations and experimentation as we do now, these sad subjects would have endured less anguish in their short lifespan. If we are careful and treat disease with ethical consideration of new discoveries, advancements, and technologies, the future may very well be more manageable for human anomalies.

REPRESENTATION OF JOSEPH CAREY MERRICK IN FILM

Based on the original story of Joseph Carey Merrick, the character evokes pity and admiration simultaneously, as he suffers with severe physical deformity. Merrick had what we now call Proteus, and it "is very rare, known from no more than sixty people worldwide" and aside from the symptoms of distorted limb growth, short life expectancy, "outgrowths of bone and soft connective tissue…crenulated skin…[and] many odd tumors to which they are prone becomes malignant" (Leroi 205-206). Upon initial reaction, the viewer is at first repulsed and

then so flooded with an array of human emotion, that it is impossible to look away. Why make a film like this? Aside from giving a voice to the now deceased Merrick, we need to view him because it reminds us of our own imperfections—our own anguish and fear of the many diseases that have yet to be eradicated through medical science and technological advances. More importantly, Merrick represents what is best in us and reminds us that we can find it in the people and places most often scorned. Merrick was kind, forgiving, and gentle, and while we are reminded of his physical imperfections by way of the clinical gaze, we are also reminded of his attributes and courage. His supposed date of death is 1890, which would open doors for the medical community to further research in such strange, horrific cases as Merrick's. Yet can we justify studying these human subjects for the sake of humanity if it means we must first objectify them? A pointed scene exemplifying this very conflict between the shared human experience of viewing and the ethical practices of medicine and research is during the medical lecture that Dr. Treaves holds for his colleagues (1980). Although we can tout his humanitarian efforts in securing Merrick's safety from the abuses of the seedy sideshow, and in offering free medical care, he simply transports him from the stage to the laboratory.

For example, as Treaves shows his newest medical anomaly, he asks that the curtains be pulled back (staging), and Merrick be stripped to show the various stages of deformity he has endured. The mise en scene construction allows the viewer to be included in this medical spectacle; we are privy to what the physicians view simultaneously and thus, share in their amazement (or disgust), all the while conscious that the lecture is being filmed within the framed narrative of Lynch's scene. As Oliver Sacks contemplates disability studies, he offers: "The medical profession, the scientific emphasis effaces individuality more often than it distinguishes it…[thus] the patient becomes little more than a vessel for the condition being studied" (Snyder

et. al. 124). In fact, little is said of Merrick as a human being, as Treaves lectures that there are "fibrous tumors that cover 90% of the body" (Dir. Lynch). As we gawk in fear that potentially, this could have been one of us born so malformed, we later consider former sideshow manager, Bytes, and his heated words with Treaves, who will not return his "man:" "You wanted the freak to show to those doctor chums of yours, to make a name for yourself" (Dir. Lynch). Of course in the end Treaves does consider that he may well have objectified Merrick, and hopes he has done enough to make Merrick's last days rewarding. We can identify with Treaves, in that we also have viewed Merrick's most intimate moments for our entertainment—or perhaps we would rather consider ourselves as curious about all human experiences, no matter how painful to watch. It is fitting in the final scene, as Merrick's spirit ascends, that we are left with the image of his mother's eyes peering over him in death; we are reminded that we have been watching, too. In the film bonus features, John Hurt is quoted as considering that, "if you can manage to get to the end of *The Elephant Man* without being moved…I don't think you'd be someone I'd want to know" (Dir. Lynch, *Bonus Features*). Thus, our experience in viewing this film should move us in some way, although Hurt has not defined how or to what degree.

Psychiatry, law enforcement, medical profession, religion, entertainment, and education are represented in this film as faulty social constructs by which we often blindly place our trust. We see how the individual identity can become lost in the group consciousness that often accompanies these institutions. Additionally, "[i]dentification (of the spectator with the protagonist, or with the gaze of the camera) leads to a loss of control, a shattering of the ego" (Shapiro 155). Yet after the personal ego is deconstructed by these mechanisms, the individual can then embrace a shared experience within this collective so that autonomy is possible at a higher level. As such, we can overcome our fears by shattering the ego to rebuild it. Osterweil

and Baumflek have concluded, "[f]or to actually believe in our shared humanity with the bodies on display is to admit to oneself the unspeakable spectacle of exploitation in which one has…willingly participated…[.]" (Jespersen et. al. 257). The outcome is two-fold: we see the human experience through the monstrous, freakish, and deformed, and we simply indulge in thrills as we gaze, trying to understand our own humanity.

In Janet Davis' *The Circus Age: Culture and Society Under the American Big Top*, she mentions a certain indignity in gazing. I asked for her to expand on her statement as such: "Unlike sideshow of old…Guinness [the book including world records] enables the audience to gaze at these amazing bodies from a distance, outside the ostensible realm of indignity" (233). In an online interview with Davis, one of my questions was: "Could you further elaborate on the concept of this *gaze* and how it differs from one of 'indignity,'" to which she responded extensively. Her discussion of the gaze here is especially useful to this study:

> This contemporary gaze is medicalized (to borrow from Robert Bogdan) because it relies upon professional doctors and scientists to "explain" one's condition by way of their exclusive training and knowledge, rather than taking seriously folkloric explanations of bodily difference—or, for that matter, the showman's blustery rhetorical flourishes. Although there is currently a renaissance in live sideshow entertainments, our culture still often shames the act of gazing at actual living bodies. Mediums of looking are also critical in defining this contemporary gaze: while the gaze is a constant feature in photographs, film (especially reality TV shows), print, and live performance, each involves its own form of engagement—or disengagement, as the case may be. Live performance—depending on the venue and the physical distance between performer and

> audience—typically offers the most intimate and direct form of contact. "Indignity" here is a historically specific term that speaks to a historical moment when the sideshow became socially suspect. The advent of the stare as shameful is an artifact of modernity—in other words, staring and looking at live bodies became morally suspect at approximately the same time that the body became the exclusive province of science. I prefaced this observation with "ostensible" to acknowledge the ways in which looking as cultural practice is historically situated—and conditioned by different media technologies at different historical moments. (Personal Interview 2011)

For that reason, it seems that each historically situated cultural artifact and/or expectation is not contingent upon the social evolution of society, but rather, the gaze simply takes on a new meaning, rather than establishing cultural change. But how do we recognize this gaze when referencing specific moments in the film? Furthermore, how to we rectify our own gaze at bodies of difference, such as in the case of Joseph Merrick?

Director David Lynch understood the complexity of the freak. In *The Elephant Man* (1980) he illuminates levels of spectatorship that occur in viewing a popularized freak. Lynch highlights human frailty while showcasing the human spirit. With Lynchian nuances--such as superimposition, non-diegetic devices, and dark, shadowy figures—the audience immediately recognizes the work as the kind of pastiche of dramatic, experimental, and period films by which Lynch has become most recognized. The film follows the basic Aristotelian plot development for a dramatic tragedy, and its story based closely on the life of the real Elephant Man, Joseph Merrick. In the screenplay, his name is changed to John Merrick, and in the film he is played by John Hurt. In addition, Lynch's use of lighting and soundscapes create the Victorian landscape

set in black and white. Gas lights, steam engines, the gong of a clock—these all contribute to the bustle of 1890s London. What is most alluring about this film, aside from the compelling story of Merrick's life, is the challenge of conventional narration. This experimental film allows the viewer to transcend time and space with superimposed images and Lynch's trademark cumulous clouds to transition scenes, which give other-worldly surrealism to the film.

But Merrick is not a hero in this film, but rather, a victim who did not know his own self-worth, were it not for Dr. Frederick Treaves, played by Anthony Hopkins. Treaves is the hero. He rescues a decrepit individual, but has a heroic flaw or *hamartia* because he enjoys the fame and status accrued by his anatomical study of Merrick. Treaves also takes part in a hero's journey in which he begins with curiosity, is moved to empathy, and then has a moment of recognition when he asks himself why he has helped Merrick after all. The incident that propels the story occurs when the Elephant Man exhibit is shut down and labeled as indecent for patrons to view. There is rising action, in which our hero seeks Merrick, finds him, and begins to study/care for Merrick. As Treaves begins treatment (although there is no cure for the many deformities, bone disorders, and pungent tumors that grow on Merrick), Merrick's spirits improve, but his owner, Mr. Bytes (played by Freddie Jones) realizes that he needs John Merrick in order to make a living in the sideshow, consistently referring to him as his "treasure." This is one example of the negative aspects of exhibition—when an agent or showman begins to view the freak as property rather than human. The climax occurs when Merrick makes his way back to Treaves after Bytes has tried to exhibit him again in Europe. As we approach the end of the film, falling action occurs as Merrick finds himself at the theatre enjoying a performance, completing his small scale model of a cathedral, and learning from Treaves that he will never be

cured. Our resolution is bitter-sweet as with all tragedies, as Merrick finally lays his head to rest as "normal" people do, thus dying from asphyxiation.

There are other classical characters in this film such as a wise, old crone, Nurse Mothershead (played by Wendy Hiller), with her no-nonsense honesty and attention to detail. She advises Treaves at one point to stop allowing socialites to take tea with Merrick, as she feels he is being exploited yet again. In fact, it is her cautioning and Bytes' accusations (as we shall see later) that cause Treaves to check his flaw. Treaves is the traditional hero, and our typified villain seems to be everyman—all who have contributed to Merrick's suffering. He was born of suffering as we turn to the first scene in the film.

The opening scene offers a scenario of maternal imprint, a theory that we discussed in the introduction, by which Merrick's mother is frightened by elephants presumably at a circus, which foreshadows that Merrick will later be a part of the sideshow. The idea of maternal imprint was common in the late Victorian Period. Although this was not a theory that Lynch hypothesized, it shows his attempt to stay true to the period. He included this opening scene to show viewers what society accepted as folk-wisdom prior to discussions about genetic considerations. This also gives viewers a nudge to accept the same idea, thereby confronting our attitudes from the beginning. Merrick is born to resemble what his proprietor will later deem a half-elephant/half-man. We view this scene in slow motion with non-diegetic sounds such as carnival music and the chugging of what seems to be a locomotive (but we later learn it is workmen at a furnace). It is clear that Lynch used sounds that represented the Industrial Revolution such as the chugging of the furnace and mechanical tinkering that took place in Treaves' operating room. In addition, the birth of progress and technological advances, which incidentally take place in the bowels of buildings and factories, parallels the birth of Merrick,

born out of the lower region of his mother's body on the uncomfortable, filthy ground. His birth symbolizes Darwin's "survival of the fittest," that against all odds Merrick fights to be born out of the bowels of his mother's torment—a fight he will continue as he attempts to become a part of the human race proper. These sounds outside a slow-motion shot are immediately recognizable as Lynch's stylistic approach to blurring fantasy and reality, his trademark indicating that the subconscious mind is never far removed from our fantasies or our daily realities. The dream sequences, which will be discussed later, contribute to this blurred perspective. We are also met by diegetic sound within the shot, such as the muffled roar of the elephants with the image of his mother's silent screams. We see a photo of his mother—first a close-up of her gentle eyes, then the camera shot pans down to her silent, but lovely mouth. The viewer feels the juxtaposition of a mythical, past experience against the reality that Merrick was simply a victim of genetic malformations. The past blurs with the future of the furnace churning away in the future that is filled with industrial progress, but slow in medical advancement and pre-natal care. His mother's voice is silenced—that is, until we hear her calling to John on his literal death bed. In the same way that he has accepted his inevitable, yet untimely death, she has found peace in the afterlife and has been watching and waiting for him all along.

In the same way, Treaves' voice is silenced as he first sees Merrick in the dank, dark corners of a basement, where he and Bytes reside with a boy (probably an orphaned assistant). The doctor has searched for this exhibit since it was shut down. A young boy finds it and relays the message to Treaves, who does not share his secret search with fellow surgeons. A long, tracking-shot follows Dr. Treaves as he walks the Bowery in search of the Elephant Man exhibit—a backdrop of Victorian London working classes bustling about. A lonely dog follows Treaves for a while, reminding the viewer that our animal instincts are never far behind us

humans. When he reaches the exhibit, Treaves seems hesitant at first —as though he is rethinking his choice to view Merrick. It is his moment of hesitation that allows the viewer to feel the same angst of curiosity mingled with fear. Lynch uses a zoom-in head shot when Treaves first steps out of the shadow and into the light to see the Elephant Man. In this moment, amidst mise-en-scene of seedy entertainment, the viewers recognize that Treaves has travelled to the bowels of London to find his specimen.

Just as Treaves' face is first hidden by shadows, when Bytes' exhibit is shut down earlier in the film, we only see half of his face when he is speaking to Merrick behind the sideshow banner: "On the move again…my treasure" (1980). Although we recognize that Merrick is his meal ticket, in that tiny moment in the film we can possibly see Bytes as a sympathetic character, as he speaks gently to his charge. Similarly, when Treaves first views Merrick, he allows one teardrop to fall on his cheek during this encounter. We learn later that they will both benefit from Merrick's condition. After all, Bytes is not the first to employ a panoptic gaze on Merrick. One may argue that Bytes was merely capitalizing on what society was already engaged in via the panopticon. The controlled stare of passersby, the crowds who flocked to see Bytes' "treasure"—the panopticon was already in place before Bytes arrived and Treaves became Merrick's caregiver (1980). Yet, these examples of half-shadowed faces point to the significance of the doppelgänger in all of us: we often only show or know a part of ourselves in the public sphere and as such, show only half of who we really are to others. These men—although one can argue that they have self-serving motives—are merely products of their species in that they have negative and positive characteristics. Humans are complex beings, often incapable of realizing our potential. As a result, we often mask aspects of ourselves that we are not comfortable sharing.

A second viewing affords Treaves with more agency over the situation, as it takes place in his office at the London Hospital and without the presence of Bytes; therefore, the gaze has merged from panoptic into clinical. When Treaves first interviews Merrick alone, shot/reverse shot provides the viewer with both Treaves' and Merrick's points of view. Merrick still wears the sack with eye holes as Treaves attempts to interview his new patient. We do not see from inside Merrick's mask yet; we merely view the one-way exchange between Treaves, who speaks, and Merrick, who only responds by wheezing and deeply breathing. The viewer feels Treaves' frustration with his patient's silence, but also understands Merrick's fear at being away from the only place he knows, in a dank basement with Bytes. It is interesting that the doctor does not seem to mind that he has not yet heard Merrick speak before he chooses to share his anatomy with his colleagues. Treaves accepts that his relationship with this new patient will be one of silent study, which reminds the viewer of Mrs. Merrick's silent screams in the first scene. We see Treaves, although initially moved at the first sight of Merrick's deformities, now views his patient as a clinical phenomenon. As the film progresses, we see a paternal relationship built out of his initial need to understand Merrick's physiology. However, before the two develop a father-son relationship, Merrick is a specimen for Treaves, although he does hope he can treat Merrick with the kindness of civilized society, which is far more than Bytes ever offered Merrick.

When Merrick is displayed before the London College Society of Surgeons, the camera shot fades in and viewers are met with the glaring spotlight. Lynch thus allows viewers a first-hand perspective of what Merrick would soon experience. In this scene, we continue viewing Merrick as Victorians would have, impersonally and indirectly. He is revealed from behind hospital dressing curtains—a parallel of the revelation scene with Bytes. The audience expects to

see Merrick revealed as well, but we have only the physicians' reactions to Merrick's body, as we see him only as a silhouette figure, large pointer rods used to point out the most disturbing anatomical deformities on his body. Dr. Treaves tells his audience that Merrick's "genitals [are] entirely intact." Apparently, Victorians (with their immense concerns with sex) would have been curious about this fact. Although it is hard to consider what partially intact genitals would be, Treaves feels compelled to emphasize this point. The impact on his listeners probably would have been paradoxical; they would have recognized that no woman will make love to this man. They would be unable to move past the distorted and enormous head or the many pustule sores that covered his body. Clearly, the fact that his genitals are "normal" may be seen as a warning to the Victorian audience, who would abhor reproduction with such a man—good breeding was thought of as a sacred science at the time. What would happen if Merrick were to breed? Would his offspring develop like symptoms? Certainly, the scientific community would have understood the impact of that statement. Yet, the presence of his testicles also confirms his status as a man.

Later, as Treaves and his colleague, Dr. Fox (John Standing) view Merrick exiting the hospital and boarding a carriage, the tilt shot allows the viewer to see Merrick from the physicians' superior perspective—peering from above through large windows—looking down upon the sad figure. This scene is reminiscent of teaching hospitals that allow new surgeons to view difficult surgical procedures in glass balconies above the operating room. The viewer's expectation that a surgical procedure is "touch and go" can be compared to Merrick's respiratory condition as treatable, but not curable. We know that he will die soon and that Treaves can do very little to make him physically comfortable.

Throughout the film, the periodic gong of a large watch tower clock is a constant reminder that Merrick's time on this earth is limited and that a panoptic view is always present. The clock strikes just after Treaves settles Merrick into his room, and again it wakes Merrick out of a sound sleep. In both instances, the clock gong foreshadows angst for Merrick—the first gong signifies the nurse entering and scaring him with her horrified screams—the second precedes the night porter's first look at Merrick and his promise to come back with ulterior motives. This diegetic sound is a reminder to Merrick that for all the good he may experience, there is always someone/something lurking around the corner to make his life miserable. He is always watched whether or not he is exhibited in the sideshow, medically treated at the hospital, or taunted by the night porter and his entourage. Yet, the clinical view proves to be no less exploitative.

Another example of sound is Lynch's non-diegetic use of carnival music. Although many circus or carnival tunes are played on the calliope, Lynch has chosen to distort this music—almost creating the sound of a broken toy piano. The music becomes a symbol of Merrick's pain at the hand of those in the sideshow—an obvious removal of childhood nostalgia originally intended for circus sideshow performances. This carnival music accompanies any moment at which Merrick is exploited in the film—an indication that both public and scientific communities have had a hand in his exploitation—even though Treaves was altruistic in his intentions. We hear the carnival theme music at the start of the open credits and as Treaves looks for the Freak Show signage in the opening scene, as he looks for Merrick's booth. The music plays as Merrick first leaves Treaves' office after their initial interview and examination. Incidentally, when Treaves' colleague asks him if Merrick is mentally stable, Treaves initially states that he is "a complete imbecile" as the music follows the carriage down the road, Merrick

tucked inside (1980). Later we see that Treaves changes his opinion of Merrick's ability to communicate. We also hear this music whenever the night porter brings a group of voyeurs to gawk at Merrick in his quarters. Otherwise happy music has a dark tone not only because it represents terrifying moments for Merrick, but also given that the composition is comprised of many minor chords.

Unfortunately for Merrick, once he leaves the hospital for the first time and is back in Bytes' care, he is beaten unmercifully. Clearly Bytes feels the threat of Merrick leaving him—and with Merrick gone he loses his income. Yet Treaves is able to convince Bytes that Merrick would best be in his care—and threatens to alert the authorities of this physical abuse. Merrick then returns to the hospital for treatment. Viewers have yet to see Merrick's face in full view. The first glimpse of Merrick's face that is afforded to the audience is when a nurse enters his room with breakfast, unaware of what she will face upon entrance. Their eyes meet and we have a medium close-up shot of her horror, matched with Merrick's fear. They return each other's terrified screams, as her dishes crash to the floor, like a shattered mirror refracting and distorting an image. The audience finally sees Merrick's face and shares in either terror or pity as he is finally revealed. In a short documentary feature following the film, the producer, director, and make-up artist are described as having made the decision to wait for this revelation—it would be more effective in the finished product because we would first see Merrick as a human being in suffering, rather than a horrifying monstrosity once revealed. Also, the hope was that the viewer would be fascinated by the make-up in black and white, because color would terrorize viewers rather than evoke pity for the character. What is most interesting is that in doing so, the period film did resemble late-Victorian setting, and allowed the viewer to contemplate Merrick without the cartoonish coloring or caricature-like ballooning of his forehead. This was a decision that

would later pay off, as the film was nominated for eight Oscars. While late-Victorian England was bustling and filled with color, art, and new fashions, it was contrasted by the dark sky penetrated by stacks of smoke from factories, and unsanitary conditions in the streets. In viewing period photography (black and white), it has become clear to this viewer that the realities of life for the working class were bleak, starkly contrasting that of the rising middle class and elitist luxuries or material wealth. Lynch's use of black and white captures this sense of the times.

In another tension-filled scene after Merrick has been at the hospital for some time, Treaves and Bytes meet on the stairs to Merrick's attic room and argue about who should keep him. Bytes reminds Treaves that he is no better than the showman—he also exhibits Merrick for his colleagues—whereas Bytes does so in the public eye in the sideshow. This is a moment of recognition for Treaves, who up until this time had seen his work as altruistic. He begins to question himself, even asking his wife, "Am I a good man, or am I a bad man" to which she responds that Merrick now has a full life and would not have had any happiness were it not for him. The shot/reverse shot sequence between Mrs. and Dr. Treaves shows the viewer that Treaves has begun to see Merrick as a human being and less of a specimen for his studies. The viewer begins to question Treaves' motives here, too, as Bytes has reminded us that the doctor has "profited" in recognition, publications, and increased patient loads (1980). But as the film progresses, the viewer begins to see that Treaves grows to love Merrick as a kind of son—that he genuinely tries to give Merrick a good life even though he can never cure him. We come to understand that Treaves is, in fact, not exploiting Merrick as Bytes and others have done, but rather trying to research his condition and make Merrick's life more bearable. Both have received some kind of profit off the back of Merrick's twisted body, but Treaves' grows beyond

that. In one of the final scenes when Merrick is returned to the hospital after Bytes has taken Merrick in the middle of the night to Europe, Treaves embraces him like a long-lost son, further indicating that he has grown closer to Merrick as a person, not a patient. Treaves begins to look at Merrick as a friend—even taking him to the theatre and his own home. The first look he had of Merrick at the sideshow was one of pity, then the panoptic/clinical gaze brought Merrick into the medical limelight, and finally, he has earned a place by his new father-figure and friend.

When Merrick and Treaves "run lines" in preparation for Carr Gomm's visit (the hospital governor played by John Gielgud), they communicate like father and son, working out pronunciation and diction of words that Treaves thought were unknown and unattainable to Merrick. This one-one exchange is depicted in shot/reverse shot, allowing the viewer to move between characters and experience this touching moment of instruction. At first it seems Treaves is impatient with his pupil until he realizes that Merrick can speak and understand him. Once Treaves and Carr Gomm realize that Merrick is not mute, both men seem to soften as there is now hope for Merrick to become part of society, even though nothing can be done to improve his physiology. This same exchange takes place when famed actress, Mrs. Kendall (Anne Bancroft), visits Merrick and they run-lines from *Romeo and Juliet*—an ironic moment by which we realize Merrick will never know true romance with a lady, but he can experience it vicariously through Mrs. Kendall's gift of Shakespeare and the theatre production he later views. When she tells him he is not an elephant man, that he is gentle and kind, he sheds a single tear, mirroring Treaves' reaction upon first viewing him.

Another use of shot/reverse shot occurs when Lynch shifts from the proper theatre (high-brow) to the Bowery pub (low-brow). Lynch carefully distinguishes between classes and reinforces the idea that sideshow really was for both high/low brow entertainments. Since

originally sideshow was meant for educational purposes, all classes would have enjoyed viewing the spectacles. However, given that Bytes uses Merrick for exploitation, the sideshow in this case is presented in a negative light; whereas the menagerie at the theatre provided clean entertainment that caused no exploitation (and a space in which Merrick may return the gaze). But Lynch makes this a difficult transition for the viewer; he expects us to see the theatre excursion in two ways: first, we are meant to understand the theatre as a safe place verses the seedier sideshow that Bytes promoted, and second, we see that Merrick receives applause—but for what? Is he part of the menagerie that has earned applause or is he being patronized by the members of high-brow society? Given that Lynch typically veers off the path of linear narrative and delves into abstract ideas, it is not clear how the viewer should feel about these modes of entertainment. This unsettled perspective contributes to the complexity of the film and the clinical gaze which entails both altruistic and voyeuristic aspects. In a parallel between the audience applauding Merrick at the theatre and the bowery crowd jeering at him, we see that both classes have the chance to gaze on Merrick in the panoptic design—be it in the theatre balcony or in his own quarters. The use of shot/reverse shot between the theatre audience and Merrick, as well as the pub crowd and Merrick give the viewer that Merrick is always the subject of the gaze—whether positive or negative in nature and that he is also one who returns the gaze.

In addition to the juxtaposition of lower and higher classes, the middle class began to take a seat at the theatre of the panoptic. Yet the entertainment industry was only part of the cultural milieu of the time. As Victorian critic Richard D. Altick asserts, "[i]t was the middle-class orientation and code of values that lent the Victorian social climate its distinctive flavor" (28). Yet the rise of the middle class did not determine all cultural changes. At the end of the nineteenth century, entertainment and leisure became more possible for all classes. Newly

developed machinery and technology made factories run more efficiently. Science and medicine continued progress and created classifications for and in some cases, treatment for certain diseases. The cultural milieu became more fluid, which also produced great confusion and concern. American popular culture critic, LeRoy Ashby, sets the stage in his comprehensive study of entertainment and leisure from 1830 to the present. In his *With Amusement for All*, he locates the turn of the century cultural milieu:

> Against a backdrop of wrenching change, citizens understandably worried about making sense of what was happening all around them. Rapid technological developments, ranging from railroads and steamboats to the telegraph and new methods of printing newspapers, were revolutionizing communication and transportation. Industrialization and the emerging free-labor market made social positions and personal finances more tenuous and fluid. Rapidly growing cities filled the streets with anonymous strangers. The era's voracious land speculation hinged on the credibility of promoters, just as the flood of paper money rested on creditors' faith. What could individuals believe? How could they understand the workings of new technology [and leisure]? (35)

Certainly part of the confusing discourse lay in negotiating space, exchanges, and ideas amidst the clamor of new and relevant discoveries. For example, the upper class, particularly the "Knickerbockers," feared democracy. They worried about the degeneracy of the lower and rising middle classes (58-9). Yet as the middle class continued to rise, the lower or "working" classes—those destined to work in factories and to live in slums— saw little of the benefits of progress and democracy (Altick 33-8). Factory work could be dangerous and until reform acts were passed, these workers did not enjoy fruits of their labor; however, they did enjoy what

leisure time they had with "lower brow" amusements that the "Knickerbockers" certainly viewed with disdain.

Consequently, we can view Lynch's film as a representation of the contrast between the elites (the wealthy who visited Merrick in his chambers) and the lower "orders" (who barge into his chambers late at night to terrorize him). The night porter (played by Michael Elphick), also abuses Merrick for his own profit. He takes money from street people who enter Merrick's room, forces alcohol down his throat, and makes him kiss a prostitute. In showing the lower class in this light, Lynch has created empathy for the wealthy visitors who, while they may be trying to attain social recognition for doing so, have come to Merrick in charity of their time. In this way, the film allows the viewer to draw conclusions about class distinctions with more complexity than the Marxian binaries of the "haves" and the "have-nots."

In terms of a family that Merrick attains with Treaves and the hospital staff, we can see that Mr. and Mrs. Treaves have become surrogate parents, adopting Merrick from the abusive father in Bytes. Mrs. Kendall also steps in as a kindly aunt, opening a new world of "proper" entertainment to Merrick in the theatre. Nurse Mothershead and Mr. Carr Gomm become social advocates for Merrick—ensuring that he is safe, treated, and loved. Of course it certainly helped his cause to have Queen Victoria approve his in permanent stay at the hospital as his new home. Merrick also enjoys the warmth of a woman's kindness when he is invited into the Treaves family home. When Merrick meets Mrs. Treaves (Hannah Gordon) at tea time in her home, Merrick weeps because he has never enjoyed a woman's kind words—at least not since his mother. He apologizes, saying, "I'm sorry I made a spectacle of myself." This is both heartwarming and disconcerting, because we realize he never had any agency in exhibiting himself up until he was given a permanent home at the hospital. In his visit, he realizes that

"normal" families enjoy warmth and companionship—which he receives from his hospital family. In his new home, he has visitors.

But not all was well in the hospital home, as the night porter appears in Merrick's window, reminding him that there will always be those who exploit him. Merrick is innocently constructing a cardboard model of the cathedral across from his room. Although he has never seen the entire building, he works from his creativity and constructs an object of beauty. He seems determined to complete a project that exemplifies beauty, as he is not viewed as such. When he is left alone with his thoughts, he sees his reflection in the window and is forced to contemplate his appearance, as is the audience who can see from his point of view, the reflected image. In this moment, the audience is forced to see Merrick as he sees himself, wretched. Yet, we also see a figure who is beautiful in so many other ways. Merrick sees himself for who he is physically in that moment of his reflection in the window. This moment changes our view of Merrick's image from one of scrutiny to one of admiration.

Consequently, the theme that threads this film together seamlessly is that the clinical gaze helps viewers construct meaning, while simultaneously creating moments of recognition that we all must face our reflections and who we truly are as human beings. One example is a close-up shot of the eye hole in Merrick's head sack (mask). In the scene following a discussion between Treaves and Nurse Mothershead about whether or not his visitors mean to gawk or mean to welcome him into society, Merrick has fallen asleep. As we view his upright body propped by many pillows, the camera zooms into the eye hole of his mask, hanging by his bed. We drift into Merrick's dream-state, which is really a nightmare with his mother's death sequence that we see in the beginning scene of the film. At the end of the nightmare he is shown his image in a mirror and is started awake by the gong of the clock. Lynch shoots from inside/outside the mask,

showing how Merrick is both within/without mainstream society, which also harkens back to the blur between fantasy and reality. The viewer follows the entrance into this black hole; we are invited into darkness momentarily. Perhaps this stylistic approach by Lynch affords the viewer to take a step back, have a visual break, and refocus, so as not to be too overwhelmed by the images in this film. The viewer may also consider how difficult it must have been for Merrick to see without peripheral vision, as the eye holes do not allow for panoramic viewing. Additionally, we see the reaction of the public, who stare at Merrick and scowl, afraid of what may be under the sack—afraid of what they *cannot* see. In these pinhole shots, we are able to construct the kind of view that Merrick must have had: that of isolation and fear of rejection. We are moved as viewers to consider who we are in this exchange of the gaze.

In a later scene Merrick gazes gently at his own reflection, as the night porter returns to parade the pub patrons in a fit of debauchery. They show him a mirror, and again, he is put in his place and checked for feeling slightly more human than these people would allow him to feel. He comes out of his fantasy and back into the cruel reality that he is seen only for his appearance by many—not by his inner beauty. It is at this point in the film that Bytes, who lingers as the crowd leaves, takes Merrick back to the European sideshow circuit, where he becomes increasingly ill and depressed. He is not a part of the gaze; he is the object. In the same way, the viewer will feel angst and discomfort during this unreciprocated gaze experience.

As we have discussed *Freaks* in the introduction, we can now see a similar parallel between scenes in this film and in Tod Browning's film: the sideshow performers exhibit solidarity and choose to send Merrick away from Bytes and his beating stick. This band is led by a dwarf, a dog-faced boy, and a giant—and they decide to take Merrick out of the monkey cage (perhaps a nod to Darwin's popular theories of the time) Bytes has shoved him into, and lead him

to a ship headed for London. Merrick makes the long journey home and is accosted once again by the masses—he tries to leave King's Cross rail station, but is finally cornered like the solitary dog that earlier followed Treaves in the Bowery. The mise-en-scene of this particular shot pulls the theme of the film together as Merrick cries aloud, "I am not an animal; I am a human being" and all are checked for their survival of the fittest mentality (Lynch 1980). We experience another example of shot/reverse shot as Lynch shows both the mob expressions and Merrick's horror at being hunted like an animal. When the crowd removes his mask and sees his face (the camera pans to their faces as we see their mixed expressions), they realize their own shame (or disgust) at chasing this obviously physically challenged man; thusly, Merrick reverses the focus onto their own prejudices as we see from his point of view their reactions. It is in this very moment that we see Merrick as the spectator and not the spectacle; he sees the crowd for their weakness—for their judgment and their lack of charity, as they have hunted him like an animal. He gains control of the gaze in this moment, as he reacts to the crowd in the same way they have reacted to him all his life—in condescension as he questions why they are chasing him. It is only fitting that the police show to keep order and peace—agents of the ultimate panoptic design. However, in this case, the panoptic is positive, as they police take Merrick home to the hospital.

Against all odds, Merrick finds his way home to London. When Nurse Mothershead announces that Merrick has returned, Treaves rushes to him and embraces him in a fatherly hug. It is at this juncture that Merrick does take hold of his agency, as later he attends the theatre by Mrs. Kendall's invitation. He is placed in a panopticon, a place of power in the royalty balcony, above even the elites in the theatre seats below. He is joined by Dr. Treaves, Nurse Mothershead, and the Princess of Wales among others. In a burst of unexpected applause, it is clear that Merrick finally receives his recognition as a man worth knowing, rather than simply

being gawked at by patrons. He is awarded a standing ovation and the performance by others—not he—is dedicated to him. He finally is applauded for his personage, and not for the exhibition of his body.

In the final scene, his small-scale model cathedral is completed. Merrick seems to be suffering from a migraine as he leans forward. Lynch chooses to depict him as the archetypal Christ figure, since the lines Merrick utters are, "It is done," mirroring Christ's last words on the cross. This man's story taught us all something—that against all physical odds and societal expectations, John (Joseph) Merrick was able to live a kind, gentle life, and never blamed anyone else for his unhappiness. He prepares his bed—this time, pulling the extra pillows he needs to prop him while he sleeps (otherwise he would have died by asphyxiation). Lynchian devices such as Mrs. Merrick's face superimposed onto the moon hangs high in the starry sky, as we see John Merrick finally lay his head to rest as "normal" people do. Just as the picture that hangs above his bed, he lays like the subject sleeping. While some viewers may condemn his choice to sleep flat on his pillow knowing that it may kill him as suicide, we also empathize with his weary body and soul, as he finally finds peace and eternal rest. We understand that he has served a purpose in society, that he has taught others to see him as a man of gentle nature rather than a monster whom they should fear. His gentle soul escapes his body, and we see the flutter of delicate lace curtains, symbolizing his soul exiting the room; we are filled with the sadness of loss. In this way, he dies knowing he is loved and respected, and that he can let go of his body that cannot be cured. He can live on in another place and perhaps join his mother, and we are grateful he will suffer no more.

MOREAU'S MUTANTS IN FILM REPRESENTATION

Next we look to human anomalies not born, but rather created by the scientific musings of H.G. Wells' character, Dr. Moreau. One of the foremost science fiction films intersecting both gaze theory and medical ethics is *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (John Frankenheimer 1996). The scientific discourse of the nineteenth century was ripe in theories, experimentation, and challenges to religious dogma. What is it in the heart of man that makes us want to create? Why do we have an incessant need to fix what is not broken, or to change what has always been ordered? Curiosity moves us to action as a species. More importantly, we have spent centuries manipulating, depleting, and debasing what was once a more fully evolved state of being. We have manipulated Nature and in some cases destroyed that state by ingesting chemicals or other means of scientific/medical experimentation. Let us consider this explanation, which brings to light these ethical concerns provoked by nineteenth century science and medicine:

> Rather than using vivisection [as in previous film versions], the 1996 Moreau manipulates DNA in order to create a new humanity, a genetically pure human race without the "destructive elements" embedded in the genomics of current humans. The biotechnological revolution over the last thirty years has raised many questions among bioethicists about the consequences of the liberal use of human gene-altering technologies. The film touches upon many of these questions: What represents a superior genome and who decides? What is the cost of losing human genetic diversity? Does genomic modification significantly impact behavioral traits? The confrontational piano scene in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, however, captures perfectly an ethical issue that pertains to our most

> fundamental beliefs about human nature. This issue is the dominant theme in recent films about human genome-altering technologies:[10] what impact does the manipulation of one's genome by other humans have on the nature of self-identity? (Kirby et. al. 263)

What H.G. Wells covered in his novel and what Frankenheimer relays in his film, is more than a tale of mad scientist and wild, vivisected beasts gone awry, regressing back to what they were intended to be in the first place. Moreau created new forms of hybrid animal-humans, but the religious ideology of the time asserted that animal and human were already perfect and not in need of vivisection. Additionally, if we do stay closer to our primate nature, or at least try to avoid elimination of it, we can better identify with our sideshow performers who embody the best of both species (man and animal) by showing cohabitation is more elevated socially than extermination of any species (as in their choice of animal names). Moreau tried to make his hybrids act as human as possible: walk upright, speak in human phonemes, and become vegetarians. Yet the reader/viewer cannot simply discount the work of Doctor Moreau (Marlon Brando). In the film, after all, he wins the Nobel Prize for scientific innovation, and although his methods may be as monstrous as his hybrid creations, he has altruistic goals such as no more human wars, killing, or feeding on flesh of any kind. In Moreau's assistant, Montgomery's (Val Kilmer) words, "Moreau wanted to change animals into humans and humans into gods" (1996). His capable assistant admits that the experiment has failed miserably, and in the end, regresses, requesting to go to "doggie heaven" (1996). As in *Freaks* (1932), we see humans regress to a primitive state, and the "freakish" anomalies elevated to higher human status because they question why those in normative culture have rejected them, God's creatures.

A significant example of this role reversal of the species occurs in the first scene. The opening scene is an extreme wide-angle, long shot—a panoramic of the ocean and its expanse. Several men appear to be shipwrecked on an emergency dinghy as a tiny visual in the expanse of the ocean. As the camera zooms in, the panoramic perspective shows the distance of the men from land/safety. Frankenheimer carefully places the characters in a small craft, days after their wreck, and the tension builds as they are without food, drinking water, and hope. It is no mistake that they are on the ocean, and that the film begins where we all began—in water. Subsequently, this setting equates these characters to the origins of all humans—struggling out of the depths of water and onto higher ground. If we subscribe to Darwin's theories, then we can accept that since our evolution began in the sea, it is only fitting that we begin there in this opening scene. This high-angle perspective also allows viewers to understand the severity of this panoptic gaze—that these human beings are at nature's whim, an internal theme throughout this film. The panoptic gaze parallels the clinical, as later we are introduced to Moreau's facility, which is gated, with a central tower, and with a broken radio transmission station (or was it broken on purpose to ensure no outside communication?). The film opens with three men fighting for power and the last clean drinking water on the dingy. They are the only survivors of a plane crash, and drift in anguish until one is left alive. Edward Douglas (David Thewlis) is the last remaining, and he describes the scene as such: "They fought like beasts, not men. I fought for my life, just as savagely as they did." In this self-preservation act, or survival of the fittest as per Charles Darwin's theory, we must ask ourselves if we can justify a human killing another in this situation as an exception to conventional prohibitions on murder.

Philosopher Thomas H. Huxley believes that this striving for dominance is essentially human. In "Evolution and Ethics," he states, "The struggle for existence tends to eliminate those

less fitted to adapt themselves to the circumstances of their existence" (as qtd. in Wilt 300). The hybrids on Moreau's island and the men on the rescue craft are prime examples of this survival. Furthermore, although what Douglas experiences on the island will be shocking, it does resemble a kind of alternate Eden, a place of Moreau's creation by which new hybrids of man-beast are produced through genetic engineering; the fittest survive despite Moreau's painful experiments. Through Douglas's vision we see a new kind of "specieism," one that tries to embrace only the good in man and beast—one that allows for no violence. Yet, Moreau and Montgomery tirelessly shock or drug the hybrids into submission and conduct medical experiments not unlike those of the Nazi medical regime. If we learned anything about what humans are capable of if given ultimate power over others, we must consider that history repeats itself and power in the wrong hands could lead to another historic catastrophe similar to what Hitler incited.

In consideration of the Nazi atrocities, how does Moreau's work with hybridism correlate with my research? Specifically, I am interested in the aspects of creating hybrid species, as well as the gaze by which we engage bodies of difference. The difference between what Hitler and Moreau conducted and what scientists are now experimenting with is that "specimens" were already a living, viable species; whereas, current experimentation exists only in the petri dish—as far as we know. Therefore, modern scientists do not appear to be playing God, but rather attempting to end various diseases. In addition to the scientific research, I am interested in how our species names and categorizes others; clearly Moreau is less concerned with naming. Donna Haraway writes:

> Human beings use names to point to themselves and other actors and easily mistake the names for the things. These same humans also think the traces of inscription devices are like names—pointers to things, such that the inscriptions

> and the things can be enrolled in dramas of substitution and inversion. (as qtd. in Grossberg et. al. 313)

We have long been obsessed with categorization of animals, plants, and even humans: good, evil, betwixt. Noting the unique perspective of this liminal space that is hybridity, I asked several participants in my interviews what they thought of this uniquely human need to "name" or define who we are and received some interesting responses. One of the most noteworthy modern sideshow performers, Mat Fraser, was more than willing to offer analysis. My question was in reference to CAS (Animal Studies) and why he chose the name Sealo the Seal Boy, a name previously used by Stanley Berent, a former sideshow freak. Fraser commented that, "it's traditional to allude to an animal in the showbiz/carnie marketing of freaks in sideshows…so one goes with the nearest resembling animal out there. Also, my condition is phocomelia, which means seal-like limbs…and Sealo the Seal Boy was the guy whose act I researched and have brought back as a piece of history." This of course makes literal sense, but I wondered if there was more to naming than nodding to sideshow's past or animalistic representations. Jason Black's genetic condition ectodactyly, is also known as the lobster-boy condition whereby his hand and feet are shaped as such. I received another interesting perspective from Jason Black, The Black Scorpion, who shares his ideas about fusing animal-human identities:

> Animals and insects are the angels and aliens of earth in my creative brain. So I guess I wanted the character to have a myth behind him. Plus I am not a fan of the last Lobster Boy [Grady Stiles, an abusive man who actually committed murder]. But in sideshow animal names build imagery in the audiences' heads of what they might expect from the Wolf Boy or the Lizard Man. But with the Black Scorpion they are unsure. (Personal Interview 2011)

Both responses are colorful and add nuance to the historical meaning behind animal naming in sideshow that goes beyond the performers' animal-like physical traits. Although it seems these performers should be insulted by such names reducing them to a lower state of species, rather than adopting that notion of shame, they have embraced their unique bodies of difference.

Others have commented on the mythology that allows for inventive naming. As previously noted, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson is a major contributor to "freak" studies. She offers that,

> [h]istory bears ample witness to this profound disquiet stirred in the human soul by bodies that stray from what is typical or predictable… . The presence of the anomalous human body, at once familiar and alien, has unfolded as well within the collective cultural consciousness into fanciful hybrids such as centaurs, griffins, satyrs, minotaurs, sphinxes, mermaids, and Cyclopes—all figures that are perhaps the mythical explanations for the startling bodies whose curious lineaments gesture toward other modes of being and confuse comforting distinctions between what is human and what is not. What seems clearest in all this, however, is that the extraordinary body is fundamental to the narrative by which we make sense of ourselves in our world. (*Freakery* 1)

If our culture did not value the lessons of mythology passed down through generations of human existence, then we would not have organized religion; for religion serves a purpose in this culture. If certain sects have no problem believing in angels, demons, even gods/goddesses, then why would we have difficulty examining the possibility that there may have also been hybrids? Is the scientific community more willing to accept mythological creatures as factual since we now see chimeras and other hybrid beings created in petri dishes? When discussing this concept

of hybridity with colleagues in the science department, it seems that there is no definitive answer as to whether or not we should be creating hybrids, as is the case with religious schools of thought. Why are we so consumed with the differences between what is un/human or ab/normal? As Jennifer Devere Brody states in "Deforming the Island Races," the idea of man as "a unique being situated, by God's glory, halfway between the beasts and the angels," was a nineteenth century a priori (as qtd. in Wilt 343). Therefore, hybrids would not easily be placed in the category of God's (the originator of the panoptic gaze) divine human or animal creations. Over time, we have become fixated on categorization through the clinical (scientific) gaze on these categories that may even pre-date the Great Chain of Being.

To further consider theoretical approaches to the animal naming of freaks, I returned to Janet Davis, a leading circus historian and author of *The Circus Age: Culture and Society Under the American Big Top*. I posed the same question I asked Fraser and Black; Janet Davis responded as follows:

> This contemporary gaze is medicalized (to borrow from Robert Bogdan) because it relies upon professional doctors and scientists to "explain" one's condition by way of their exclusive training and knowledge rather than taking seriously folkloric explanations of bodily difference—or, for that matter, the showman's blustery rhetorical flourishes. (Personal Interview 2011)

This response supports what we see in the responses of Mat Fraser and Jason Black. Not only is animal naming part of the sideshow tradition, but it is also a cultural artifact of semiotics: we have always turned to mythology to explain the unexplainable—even religious belief systems. While there are both positive and negative aspects to naming or "labeling" human beings, while Hitler chose to name human "specimens" by negative slurs in his plot to condemn various

ethnicities, in the case of Mat Fraser and Jason Black, they have chosen to ascribe to the positive aspects of sideshow naming. They do so not only to self-market, but also to provide a positive outlook on sideshow history and the good that may come from an entertaining name such as "Lobster Boy." It can bring awareness to the disorder of ectodactyly and what it was like for Black as a child growing up in a normative culture. The benefits of this kind of exposure are endless for our cultural discourse and for disability studies. For example, there are currently ad campaigns that feature disabled beauties and wheelchair-bound athletes—let alone the Special Olympics, which featured Mat Fraser playing back-up drums with the famed band Cold Play during the ceremonies.

Moreau, on the other hand, does not focus on naming, but rather on the function of his hybrids. His tactile approach to categorization or better yet, to blurring the lines between binary categories of man/human and beast/animal, has given a negative connotation to hybridity. There is therefore a conflict between Moreau's panoptic design and clinical research in terms of the gaze experience for both the characters in the film and the viewers. The juxtaposition of the film and the interviews with Black, Fraser, and Davis helps us understand both the positive and negative aspects of these gaze experiences and approaches to naming or categorizing what is human and what is animal.

In the same interview Davis discusses the idea of hybridity. I posed the question, "Can you comment on the importance of animal personae of sideshow performers (other than the traditional naming or because they "look like" animals as in Jo-Jo, Sealo, and Lobster Boy)? In other words, why else would they choose to be named as animals?" She responded,

> I think that hybridity is at the center of the circus as a whole, and the sideshow specifically. In other words, the circus—in spectacular fashion—dives deeply into

> the question of categorization. Whether it be the highly disciplined big top performances of horses/bears/tigers/elephants/dogs/cats/monkeys/etc. dancing, or the physically animalized human performers at the sideshow like Jo-Jo [performer who had hypertrichosis], all center around the permeability of the human/animal divide. The act of choosing a name that evokes animal personae is an acknowledgement (subconscious, or otherwise) of the circus's larger social power and cultural purpose. (2011)

Her response echoes what the sideshow performer participants had to say about animal naming in sideshow and leads me to ascertain that naming is a cultural artifact that is open for interpretation, related to scientific study and the clinical gaze, and is utilized cross-culturally. Naming has the power to educate while entertaining if in the hands of the performers themselves; otherwise, we run the risk of another Moreau or Hitler, who would use this power to socially define "others" according to their own ideologies rather than the common good and social agency of those being named.

But it is ultimately human curiosity that propels our investigation, contemplation, and experimentation with anomalous births. In an effort to fully understand our human need to name or categorize, we begin with curiosity but hopefully, as was my process in this study, we gain knowledge and wisdom in this investigation that affords us understanding and tolerance for those bodies of difference. In reference to Moreau's goals, Wells would have had working knowledge of Thomas Huxley's Romanes Lecture of 1904, "Evolution and Ethics." Wells "was a member of the Research Defense Society"[11] and was "troubled by the nature of so much physiological research: animals were being subjected to bizarre transplants, extra tails implanted on rats, a cat's leg sewn onto the stump of a dog's limb" (Lansbury as qtd. in Wilt 338). Frankenheimer

chooses not to address Huxley's work, but gives Moreau some resemblance to him by stating that he had won the Nobel Prize. Although Huxley did not receive the Nobel Prize, he did attain many awards and academic accolades in his lifetime. His attention to Darwin's theories certainly influenced scientific contemplation, but we cannot assume that his works or writings evoked vivisection—but rather contributed to the debate about the use of animals in scientific research. For example, "On the issue of vivisection Huxley was an outspoken defender of the practice, though he apparently did not feel comfortable using it in his own research" (Catlett 181). In contrast to these stewards of science, in the film we see Moreau depicted as an odd, albino-esque papal figure—a kind of "freak" in his own way who appears more of a religious figure than a man of science.

Rather than blessing his congregation of hybrid misfits, he administers pain through an electronic mechanism. Through this shock therapy, he teaches his animals to be even more human-like by inflicting pain, something humans have mastered through history. Moreau uses an electronic device to transmit a high voltage shock to disobedient hybrids; after he questions the hybrids he finds Lo-Mai, the leopard-man, defiant and in need of pain. He is later shot by a fellow hybrid—again survival of the fittest. Frankenheimer's visceral treatment of the scene in which Lo-Mai (Mark Dacascos) is punished for killing and eating a rabbit shows the God-complex in Moreau; after all, he (Moreau) creates a mini version of himself in Majai's character (Nelson Aquino de la Rosa), as he serves as Moreau's sidekick and never speaks in the film (Frankenheimer 1996). Clearly, anyone who defies Moreau will suffer the consequences.

This God-complex is played well by Brando as he is questioned about his methods by Douglas in the film. Once we learn that Douglas is working on A "Peace Treaty" for the United Nations (perhaps a historical reference to the Treaty of Versailles, which predates the era of this

film set in the twentieth century), viewers can recognize the irony of the opening fight scene on the rescue dingy. We initially receive a short introduction to the mysterious Moreau as Montgomery relates how he came to live on the island for seventeen years as he escorts Douglas to his lodging while staying on the island. As Montgomery shares, "Animal rights activists drove him from the states… [and Moreau] became obsessed with his work" (1996). Montgomery's statement parallels the work of Critical Animal Studies, which first deals with issues of animal rights and moral ethics in the treatment of animals, and second, the investigation of hybridism and categorization.

The references that Montgomery initially makes to the islanders as "others" clearly establishes the new race as he and Douglas first set foot on the island. When Douglas is first brought to the island, Montgomery is snide in his remark that the others will be "islanders," which will later foreshadow his response to the chaos of the islanders who realize they are horrible experiments of their "father." One cannot avoid the inference to Hitler's status as the *fuhrer* of Nazi Germany, where the heart of genetic experimentation and horrifying human experiments took place in the death camps. Although World War II had long since been removed from the social consciousness of American audiences, in the 1990s we began to see a new collective discourse in reference to genetic cloning and organ transplantation, debates which continue into the twenty-first century.

Just as the death camps were falsely termed "work-camps," Moreau's island is not the apparent paradise Douglas experiences when he first views Aissa (Fairuza Balk), who plays one of Moreau's adopted children (and is another victim of his experimentations). Other than Montgomery, she is the first inhabitant of the island that Douglas encounters. We view the backdrop of lush plant life, hear the chatter of micro-organisms in the forest in panoramic and

close-up shots through both Douglas's perspective, and the exotic music she dances to on the patio. With the hypnotic movement of her hips, Aissa becomes part of Douglas' voyeuristic pleasure (and ours). While Moreau's gaze is clearly clinical and panoptic (even on Aissa, as he is regulating her change to fully human from animal), Douglas and Montgomery seem to engage in a simpler gaze of pleasure that is less damaging or invasive than the clinical gaze. Through shot/reverse shot and extreme close-ups, we view through this gaze of Douglas as he views Aissa and Montgomery as he views both of them, reminding the viewer that Montgomery is a part of the panoptic and clinical gaze and will always be close-by, watching.

In another scene, Montgomery exhibits a far more panoptic gaze. Supposedly for Douglas' protection while on the island, he locks him in a guest room, making him a caged animal just like the animal specimens—even bars line the window pane. He will also eventually become an experiment as well, as his DNA samples were attained upon rescue from the dingy. We later learn that Moreau and Montgomery had intended all along to use Douglas's DNA to continue their research and vivisection experiments. Clearly, they personify the danger of too much power in science and medicine, and what can happen when a "mad scientist" puts his work before human beings. Moreau believed that mankind could become more elevated. As Huxley believed, "[m]an, the animal, in fact, has worked his way to the headship of the sentient world, and has become the superb animal which he is, in virtue of his success in the struggle for existence" (as qtd. in Wilt 298). The question posed is, *who will be the fittest in this quest of genetic mutations, vivisection, and DNA splicing?*

The first indication that man will win over beast-men is when Douglas is clever enough to break out of his caged room. He sneaks around the compound, finding Moreau listening to classical music (music does calm the beast within), which juxtaposes oddly with horrid howling

in the distance. As Douglas investigates, what he sees is an abomination in his eyes. It is some kind of hybrid camel-human giving birth. He notes the caged animals and failed experiments encased in formaldehyde in close-up, low-angle shots. One is reminded of the "pickled punks" one can view at the Mutter Museum. "Pickled Punks" is an old sideshow term and is found in nearly any text, novel, article, or sideshow historian's vocabulary. It refers to deformed fetuses that have been preserved "for science" and in some cases, for the "shock and awe" value of entertaining the masses (Mutter).

As Douglas runs away from this disturbing spectacle, Montgomery calls out to him in the dark forest and reminds him how unstable these experiments [hybrids] can be: "There's a lot of unstable phenomenon out there" (1996). Val Kilmer interprets the character of Montgomery, as sarcastic and even flippant in his dealings with Douglas throughout the film. This line foreshadows what will become of these hybrids—and of our protagonist unless he can get off this island. Montgomery seems to be noting that the abandoned unstable beings justify Moreau's work, in that if one person or few are made to suffer for the common good of mankind, then that is a price we all must pay.

As Aissa has joined Douglas in order to assist him in getting off the island, they come upon the leopard man, Lo-Mai (who is more leopard than man), lapping up water on all fours, and then the massacred rabbit. It becomes clear to him that the animal is behaving as an animal should, although it is against Moreau's "law" that forbids eating meat of any kind. The viewer sees Lo-Mai through long shots and close-ups, which shows his range of motion and animalistic instinct to run like a cat in the wild. Douglas and Aissa reach The Sayer of the Law (Ron Perlman), a Moses archetype, who reviews the commandments set forth by Moreau in an effort to keep the hybrid creations under control lest they revert to their basic instincts. Montgomery is

called a five-finger man and in this village of misfits, he sees many failed experiments of hybrids—deformed and not completely man or beast. "To walk on all fours, to suck up drink from stream, to go snuffling in the earth, to eat flesh or fish, to make love to more than one every which way…not the things that men do…we are men because the Father has made us men:" these words harken to Old Testament designations (for those familiar with Biblical analogies) and place Moreau in the self-imposed seat of panoptic and clinical gaze simply by way of fear of his punishment (pain inflicted through an electronic device). When Moreau enters the hybrid camp of his failed experiments, he looks much like the Pope returning to his followers, carried in a shaded vehicle, clothed in pure white. They are even expected to kiss his ring (rub against his hand) and bow to him upon arrival. Yet for all his experiments and intellect, we are reminded what happens when we disallow the baser instincts of beasts and humans—that inadvertently we will always return to the nature of our creation, to who/what we are meant to be regardless of science. Thus, the film reminds us of our own baser instincts and what we return to when laws and religious doctrine are used to condemn our basic desires as base and sinful. Most of us have an innate ability to note right and wrong, but for those who believe they have the right to shape our lives, the panopticon is always there to remind us.

In another crucial scene, when Douglas is first taken to this camp of misfits, the viewer will notice parallels with Treaves when he first sees Merrick's deformed body in *The Elephant Man* (1980) and the farmers when they come upon the deformed children of the freak show in *Freaks*. Moreau has been busy "manufacturing…children … [seeing them] as human when those children gaze back at [him]…[yet he] abandon[s] them as 'unhuman'" and sentences them to this "camp" (Wilt 3). In the scene to follow, Moreau's attempt to explain his work fails to impress Douglas, as he notes, "[t]he devil is that thing in human nature that compels us to

destroy and debase…I have seen the devil in my microscope and I have chained him…Lucifer…is no more." There is no doubt in the viewer's mind that for all Moreau's good intentions, he is still only a man himself, and is not capable of redesigning God's creation. In his use of the clinical gaze, Moreau is as limited as Treaves in his ability to change what nature has prescribed.

Whether we ascribe to religious doctrines or dogmatic scientific principles, we understand that Moreau treads on very dangerous ground because when man has too much power—be it political, medical, or physical—he will most likely become a dictator. History repeats itself and since the beginning of recorded history we see that dictators never flourish for the good of all, but rather for the good of one. Moreau is left nearly speechless when he responds to Hyena-Swine's (Daniel Rigney) question, "what am I?" He can only respond that they are all his children. Later when Montgomery is confronted for his part in these "abominations," he admits, "Things didn't work out"—an incredible understatement. He finally becomes insane and adopts Moreau's persona upon his death, only to be killed himself on a make-shift throne. Given the ultimate outcome of both Moreau and Montgomery, we are cautioned as viewers to remember that science and medical advances for the common good are only as good as the designers of these advances. Essentially, one should always consider the heart within the scientist, and that too much power—putting the work before the humans/animals that it is meant to heal—becomes an unsavory reminder of how ego can be destructive. If we begin to understand that animals own a kind of personhood just as humans do, then perhaps we can better develop a kinship between species, otherwise, we may well destroy what has taken centuries to improve and grow. When we embrace those with bodies of difference—human anomalies—we can learn much from them about ourselves and our own ability to adapt.

FUR AND PANOPTIC REPRESENTATION IN FILM

Fur: An Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus (Steven Shainberg 2006) provides a completely different socio-political gaze experience, as well as clinical, as we view the imaginary love affair between famed photographer Diane Arbus (Nicole Kidman) and sideshow performer Lionel Sweeny (Robert Downy Jr.). Sweeny's character is modeled after an actual sideshow figure, Stephan Bibrowski, whose stage name was Lionel the Lion-faced Man (Hornberger 138). The film blurs biographical information such as the Arbus family status and the inclusion of sideshow freaks peppered throughout the film. The socially awkward Arbus and the socially marginalized Sweeny-Lion-Faced Man continue the concept of human-freak dichotomy.

While the film offers a unique interpretation of Arbus's fascination with sideshow freaks and other human anomalies, it also offers the viewer a chance to understand how very "human," cultured, and sincere he is in comparison to the upper-class over-indulgent family that Arbus is born into; in fact, the freaks (as she called them) that she photographed were far more "normal" than the high society in New York in which her family was so absorbed, as portrayed in the film: gluttonous, extravagant, and perverse. Her family was privileged and they thought they were helping her by giving she and her husband work for their studio, but they facilitated her having to play the role of perfect wife and mother. She was not seen as a creative woman, but rather too fanciful who needed to be reined in. It is no surprise, then, that it takes former sideshow freak Lionel, who suffers from hypertrichosis but who is comfortable in who he is, to bring her out of her darkness and into the light of free thought and expression. He encourages her to take photos that would change lives; her husband encouraged it as a mere hobby (2006).

Although the film is a fictional account of Arbus' life, it does capture the visceral fascination she had with bodies of difference. The film is set in 1950s New York City and although it is shot as a drama with a lot of director's license in terms of Arbus' biography, it does have elements of the fantastic. For example, Lionel provides a secret skeleton key for Arbus to climb the spiral stairs to his obscure apartment; there is a connecting, hidden floor doorway from Lionel's apartment to Diane's; and when he first arrives at the upscale apartment building, he does so in the dark of night wearing a mask. The blending of realism and fantasy works in terms of allowing the viewer to accept Shainberg's vision: to present a love story portrayal of Diane Arbus' life outside her suburbian nightmare of conformity and excessive materialism.

Lionel therefore becomes her hero as "…he seduces her…[and] reveals to her—and us—that it's her own freakishness which holds the key to her art, and that her connection with the people she photographs will not be an act of sympathy, nor of exploitation, but of kinship" (Mullen 62). Thus in one of the final scenes of the film, we see her opening a gift from Lionel: an empty scrapbook waiting for her photographs (2006). It is in this moment that she realizes that Lionel, a man outside the social normative culture she was so accustomed to, was her true "normal" in that she was her best self when with him. One can argue that it is because of his body of difference and self-acceptance that she was able to accept herself by the end of the film. The power of the freak-human dichotomy is thusly embodied in their relationship albeit a fictional interpretation of Diane Arbus' relationship with sideshow folks at best.

While the film offers a unique interpretation of Arbus's fascination with sideshow freaks and other human anomalies, it also offers the viewer a chance to understand how very "human," cultured, and sincere he is in comparison to the upper-class over-indulgent family that Arbus is born into; in fact, the freaks (her term) she photographed were far more "normal" than the high

society in New York in which her family was so absorbed, as portrayed in the film: gluttonous, extravagant, and perverse. A text I use in studying this portrayal of Arbus's work is *Herbert's Freaks: The Rare-Book Dealer, The Times Square Talker, and the Lost Photos of Diane Arbus,* by Gregory Gibson. The author discusses Arbus's fixation with this dime-show exhibit, which not only featured actual "freaks" and working acts (those who perform freakish feats, but are not human anomalies), but also provided a safe place for her to document various performers in her photography. One subject of the real Diane Arbus was Eddie Carmel, "…the Jewish Giant, [who] was the World's Tallest Cowboy during his Herbert's gigs" (Gibson 29). It is clear that the gentleman portrayed, although nameless, in the film is meant to be this historic sideshow figure. Although much research has been conducted on Arbus' photography—especially some of the lost photos covered in Gibson's text—there is no documentation available that confirms her affair with Lionel.

In viewing *Fur*, the use of shot/reverse shot and characterization through point of view become essential elements of study as we recognize that the fictional Arbus is just as much a voyeur as the audiences who flocked to see the fictional Lionel in his early days as a sideshow performer. For example, in the first scene in which Diane and Lionel interact, she climbs a spiral staircase, an obvious metaphor for the dream-like fantasy she is about to embark on with her new acquaintance. This encounter is exemplified in shot/reverse shot between the two characters as they banter. With childish curiosity, Diane peers through the small peep hole in the door and is met by Lionel's gaze. The viewer experiences this secret meeting (all of Arbus' family are fast asleep) through pinhole point of view from both characters' perspectives. The audience becomes participatory in viewing their exhibitionism and in turn, we are all voyeurs. Photography is invasive if the participant is caught candid; but if the participant chooses to be viewed or

photographed, then there is a reciprocal gaze experience taking place that is both rewarding for the artist and the subject.

The panoptic gaze continues as Diane enjoys nightly escapades to meet sideshow freaks and transvestites while her family sleeps. There is even a sign above her youngest daughter's bed from Herbert's dime show exhibit (Shainberg 2006). Clearly, Lionel has become Diane's connection to the outside world—one that is more real and visceral than any of the canned photo shoots in the family's studio. As she enjoys conversing, photographing, and experiencing the underground world of her new friends, she later opens a ceiling door that connects her apartment to Lionel's, and invites her new-found freak acquaintances. In the scene in which these freaks descend from the opening in the studio ceiling, the viewer recognizes that rather than subjects of the gaze, they have become elevated above normative society from Diane's perspective. In fact, her husband and children gaze upward as the freaks climb down the precarious metal steps into Diane's home.

The motif of stairs in the film reminds viewers that Diane's conscious and unconscious state of mind have become one as her place in real-time diminishes the more she spends time with Lionel and his friends (i.e. Her family is left to fend for themselves at mealtime and in terms of a clean apartment.). Yet, the viewers will see that the freaks were not permitted to enter the apartment through the front door, but rather through an obscure opening in the apartment. On one hand, it may be more convenient for them to enter straight from Lionel's apartment, but on the other hand the panoptic gaze controls how normative society—especially those who shared the building with the upper-class Arbus—dictates prescribed socially acceptable spaces for those with bodies of difference. Since some may view these individuals as negative representations of humans, one can see that Shainberg purposefully chose to have them descend from above, as

those who were elevated socially rather than common men and women who enter the front door (2006). Lionel, has thusly become the first (most elevated literally and figuratively) priority in Diane's world, showing the viewer that the freak-human dichotomy in this film is of higher social and personal value than those who are economically situated as society's elites.

Eventually, Lionel becomes an inspiration for Diane to continue in her art form: photography. One of the final scenes ends as Diane asks to take his portrait. She ceremonially shaves his entire body at his request. Viewers may interpret this as shame for the freakishly long fur that covers his body, but the symbolism is less about his looking more "human" than it is about him being open and raw—showing the very nakedness for which he was born into the world. He chooses to commit suicide by drowning—returning to the proverbial watery womb. His body shaved, completely more human without his mane of hair, he walks into the ocean, with Diane watching from the shore. Diane does not return to her home and family; she, too chooses to remain nude at a nudist camp, in which she pursues her love of photography. Shainberg chooses not to include her own suicide, but instead he leaves us with mixed reaction to the ending of the film. The panoptic gaze is portrayed as both positive and negative in this film; the viewer is left to ponder the function of this gaze as well as where Lionel and Diane are situated within it (2006).

CONCLUSION

Readers may have found a new perspective of how we interpret the sideshow performer's message through the medium of film, literature, and the exploration of actual sideshows still in existence, as well as modern cabinets of curiosity. We have progressed significantly in our social evolution from exploitation to exploration of sideshow phenomenon. Even though we cannot answer esoteric questions such as what it truly means to be human through the vantage point of

spectator or spectacle, as I have previously noted research is often rewarding for the sake of the journey. Readers have been introduced to the significance of sideshow, to experience these core films as a spectrum of human experience, and will invite more curiosity for the sideshows that continue to provide a significant function for our culture. Yet we cannot forget the didactic message we received from failed experiments in hybridism, vivisection, or even photography: that there is a unique perspective that those who have anomalous conditions can give us, whether in film or on stage.

CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATIVE GAZE OF SIDESHOW IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:

AN ENLIGHTENING EXPERIENCE

Fig. 4 Carousel Horse 3

"Yet only through communication can human life hold meaning. The teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students' thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication"
(Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*).

NEW FACE OF EDUCATION

Chapter three is a continuation of gaze theory, but our focus shifts to the educational value of sideshow and how we can use this venue as a means of communication between students and instructors. We investigate how current sideshow performers position themselves in mainstream society. While they seek to gain employment as physical commodities, their social agency has evolved over time. As we have learned, the use of body consumerism became evident in the turn of the nineteenth century as modern media influenced cultural perception of

those injured in factories and work houses. In order to understand our current fascination of the odd or unusual, and the human anomaly, we must also consider historical artifacts and discourses that afford the foundational element to this phenomenon of the entertainment industry. In my understanding of the educative gaze, it can be experienced through film and literature using cultural critiques. We educators can then include our students in the gazing process as we discuss documentaries and classic films such as *Freaks* (1932). After viewing films depicting sideshow performers in both positive and negative roles, the students may discuss a variety of social issues such as censorship (as *Freaks* was banned in Great Britain for over thirty years); cultural egocentrism; progression of disability studies; normative cultural readings of beauty versus ugliness; and ethical considerations. If we follow Paulo Freire's ideology, that students and educators can both offer valid theories in cultural discourse, then the ivory tower becomes penetrable.

Subsequently, this educative gaze takes place when the instructor and student interact collaboratively and each returns the gaze as a means of communication. As we investigate documentary films and ethnographic materials from Coney Island and the Mutter Museum, we begin to see the educative value of the gaze construct. It is not enough simply to gaze, but we also need to engage in discourse to give meaning to the experience. Education should be less about standardized testing; it should be about making meaning and communicating with those who have bodies of difference. The opening quote of this chapter expresses this exchange of information between students and instructors. This is exactly what the educative gaze experience embodies, that we learn from each other and that this reciprocal exchange of ideas, analysis, and communication can be more fulfilling than simply memorizing information for an exam and achieving a grade for a course. The educative gaze, like the panoptic and clinical, explore both

positive and negative readings/viewings of bodies of difference. We need to trace these sometimes conflicting readings of sideshow in order to embrace the educative properties of the gaze construct.

Fig. 5 Todd Robbins Human Blockhead

Fig. 6 Mat Fraser Sideshow Performer and Disabilities Activist

In previous chapters there are several areas that we have explored when contemplating the validity of sideshow exploration in academia—entertainment, medicine, disability studies, and next, education. For me, incorporating disability studies into my cultural criticism in classes is analogous to what other critics have called the "third space." James C. Wilson and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson have defined this space in their essay, "Constructing a Third Space."[12] Although they utilize postcolonial criticism, they extend their concept to reflect a specific space within the educational system (302). This point is further illustrated as such:

> In describing a third-space pedagogy, we borrow from and rewrite the critical educator Paulo Freire's notion of the dialogic point of encounter. ..The concept of a transformative third-space classroom, in contrast, starts from the understanding that all of us move in and out of multiple subject positions that may be interconnected, overlapping, and conflicting… Moreover, as members of the same broad cultural community, we are also called into identification and disidentification with groups by many shared cultural and political forces. Instead of engaging in an exchange between two positions, then—for example, between disabled and nondisabled—the transformative classroom creates the conditions for all participants to enunciate and examine these multiple locations and social encodings. (as qtd. in Snyder et. al. 303)

This is exactly what I hope to achieve in my courses—that students will critically think outside of their own experiences and begin to accept bodies of difference as part of our normative culture. As an educator in a public institution, it is necessary to establish a curriculum that meets our accrediting agency requirements, as well as our mission, goals, and community service. However, given that I teach in higher education, I do have some latitude in terms of how I

present the curriculum as per my course outlines and pedagogic practices. As such, I have embraced Paulo Freire's work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and encourage my students to think critically, always challenge the status quo, and embrace all facets of learning. Since I began my doctoral studies I have employed Freire's ideology and have seen students move from knowledge to application of that knowledge. This "third-space" concept also employs Freire's work and as such, I have had the opportunity to see students join discourse that is beyond the junior college experience. Through frank discussions about disability, diversity, and community, I have integrated a new space that allows all voices to be heard from every walk of life. Is this not the essence of contemplating the human condition?

One theme that I embed in several of my courses is sideshow performers who happen to have physical disabilities or what I term in class discussions as *bodies of difference*. Disability study is a fairly new literary school of thought and is cross-disciplinary. Much of my research has exemplified how modern sideshow performers regard themselves as professionals in the entertainment industry. Specifically, sideshow performers Jason Black and Mat Fraser have chosen to exhibit themselves in the arena of the human anomaly not for the shock value, but rather for educational purposes—to invite the gaze and to contribute to disability studies.

THE BLACK SCORPION, THE SEAL BOY, AND BALLYHOO BETTY

Jason Black, aka the Black Scorpion, was born with *electrodactyly*, and Mat Fraser, aka The Seal Boy (tribute to Stanley Berent, the original Sealo The Seal Boy) was born with *phocomelia*. In Black's case, physical challenges are a result of heredity: "Ectodactyly, hereditary in the [Grady] Stiles family, was passed along to a new generation…[as t]he gene, which had run in the family since at least 1840, caused the baby's fingers as well as his toes to merge together, creating the appearance of claws at his hands and feet" (Hartzman 216). Grady

Stiles was first known as the Lobster Boy, and became infamous for murdering his daughter's fiancé and later, was killed for hire by his own family members as retribution for the physical, mental, and social abuses he had caused them (217-218). Even with his physical limitations, Jason Black entertains in the sideshow, travels to tell his story at Coney Island, and works as a camera operator for his local television station. In personal conversations and interviews with Jason Black, it is clear that he hopes to move his particular physical anomaly into a positive light, the opposite of his predecessor (2010). Educating the public as to his condition and how he manages it is the focus of his performances.

Jason Black's performances include walking on glass and introducing his puppet, which was designed to look exactly like him. He shares comedy with his audiences and offers his perspective on what it is like as a "Lobster Boy." Black also includes an act by which he wears gloves and appears to pound his fingers with a hammer—of course a gaff, as he really hits the metal chair beneath his hand. Aside from his more shocking acts, he is in the process of writing a children's book with a disabled main character, who is a super hero and is creating his own illustrations. There is certainly a market for this new educational literature for children. I teach ENG 210: Children's Literature and will include his book in my required reading for future courses. Alongside other texts that deal with controversial issues such as alternate family units (GLBT), divorced families, and books dealing with death, I think that his work will contribute to new discourse that educators need to embrace for future students and parents alike.

Fig. 7 Jason Black Sideshow Performer

In contrast to Jason Black's predecessor, Mat Fraser's inspiration was Sealo, Stanley Berent, who was a kind, jocular man who used his physical challenges to procure income. In the 1960s the anti-nausea medication, thalidomide sometimes caused the appearance of seal-like flippers. In both cases of Berent and Fraser, they were born "with no arms, only hands" (Hartzman 212). Against the public responses to freak shows and exploitation, Sealo felt he was entitled to earn a living that suited him (as noted in a previous chapter); similarly, Mat Fraser travels the world, educating society through live theatre, sideshow, and film productions. He hopes to bring awareness to disability studies and to continue to use his physical features to entertain while educating. In my documentary, *Look Upon Me* (2010), Mat explains that a good portion of those who enjoy entertainment venues are not interested in highbrow theatre or academic lectures, but they will attend the sideshow or view lowbrow films. This is why he works within many venues to educate the public—both in Great Britain and America.

Mat Fraser has been incremental to my research. We have kept a correspondence for several years, as I have with Jason Black. We have shared discussions, exchanged research, and

he has been a great support for this project. His work in disability studies playing roles as such in theatre works, as well as his work in ninja films such as *Unarmed but Dangerous* (Xavier Leret 2009), popular in Britain and *Devolving the Mutant, Mat Fraser's Live Art 1999-2011: from Societal Oppression to Personal Succession* (Edd Hobbs 2011). He also has done a lot of work in Burlesque with his new wife, Julie Atlas Muz, who is also a Burlesque performer at Coney Island and other venues.

Fraser has many acts that he performs at Coney such as: dancing with his prosthetic arms, which he discards in the finale in an attempt to show the audience how much better he can perform without these artificial limbs. He shows his expertise on the drums, treats his viewers to a few high kicks (he does have a Black Belt in martial arts after all), and of course, almost always includes a bit of Burlesque. It is clear that Fraser is certainly not willing to be viewed as someone suffering from a disability, but rather, as a performer who has embraced difficulty and created a spectacle that most "able-bodied" individuals could not perform. When I asked Mat Fraser why he chose to work at Coney Island's Sideshows by the Seashore he replied:

> All of my work is about disability. I work as an actor…playing disability roles…I do education work like lectures…but I also like to do sideshow because there's a certain section of the population…that ain't going to go to any of these other venues…[T]hen we get all the population on board…to say that disabled people have a right to entertain in whatever way they want. (*Lovely* 2010)

This response really supports the crux of my thesis: that sideshow is beneficial to modern audiences—especially regarding new research in disability studies and cultural studies. Individuals who do not enjoy attending traditional theatre performances or college lectures can instead view sideshow performances and see how disabled individuals have embraced their

bodies of difference and are willing to share their stories. Fraser's mother was part of the population of pregnant women who ingested thalidomide to avoid morning sickness. Instead of self-pity for how this drug changed his physiology, he instead turned his experiences into vignettes—even into a musical entitled *Thalidomide!! A Musical*. In this musical he features a wide range of emotions—anger, depression, and finally, self-acceptance (Phocomedia Productions 2006). The soundtrack makes an excellent addition to any college-level course in which educators hope to introduce disability studies or even diversity awareness.

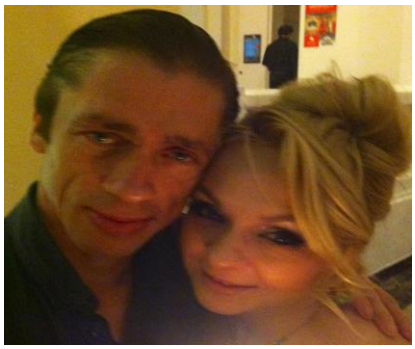

Fig. 8 Mat Fraser and wife Julie Altas Muz

Fig. 9 Mat Fraser "Seal Boy"

Black and Fraser exemplify what it means to be proud of their bodies of difference and bring positive light to the sideshow for the public. When I first met them after their sideshow performances at Coney Island in 2010 I was impressed by their candor and willingness to interview. I asked them why they chose to be in sideshow and their responses were enlightening. Jason Black's response supports the very nature of the educative gaze:

> I became part of the sideshow because I was interested in meeting other people who were born different…[I] wanted to meet others like me…so [I] joined the traveling show…[where there was] a familiarity…[and performers] seemed to know each other without discussing each other's past…[I] stuck with performing in the sideshow because it's a way for me to get a positive message out….to turn a preconceived negative into a positive…I think that's my biggest magic trick is to….change something that seems negative… to positive. With the economy the way it is I can't work like everyone else so this is the best kind of performing I can do without hurting my hands or feet any further. (*Look Upon Me* 2010)

He agreed to give this interview on camera and for my part, I shot and documented my experiences with these performers, and later had the pleasure of asking two guests to the Popular Culture Conference 2011 in San Antonio, Texas. Jason Black and Noel Benedetti attended; while Benedetti is not a "natural born freak," a term used in sideshow since its inception, she is a "made freak (tattoos, piercings)" and a "working act" (fire-eater and dancer, human pincushion), who has studied sideshow extensively (terms of current sideshow performers, such as Todd Robbins, *The Professor* 2010).

Fig. 10 Jason Black The "Black Scorpion" and Noel Benedetti "Ballyhoo Betty"

Additionally, I conducted an email interview with Benedetti, and when asked, "What is your most rewarding experience as a working act and/or 'made freak,'" she explained that she does not interpret the terms "freak" or "made freak" as negative. She notes that these terms have historically been used in sideshow. Benedetti shares that there are mixed reactions of the audience regarding her performances and that, "[t]he most offensive reactions come from those who assume sideshow arts are for the uneducated, untalented or depraved…however, [she is] more than compensated by the positive experiences…with other audiences" (Benedetti 2011). In fact, her "human pin-cushion" (seen above) and fire-eating/dancing acts are very popular at various festivals like *Burning Man*, which takes place in Nevada annually and includes many performance and fine arts acts and events. What I found especially enlightening in her response above was that she noted the range of audience reactions to sideshow. In discussing each of these performers' works, we can ascertain that although sideshow has been viewed as lowbrow

entertainment, that view can begin to shift in mainstream society as spectators grow in number, and as educators begin to look at sideshow as a valid platform for disability studies.

MEETING "PROFESSOR" TODD ROBBINS

I was in search of the oldest ten-in-one, Sideshows by the Seashore, and it did not disappoint. As I meandered around what is still standing as the infamous Wonder Wheel, a huge Ferris Wheel, I came to a freak exhibit. The recording acoustics bounced off the cement walk way as I followed the voice, encouraging me to gaze at the "World's Tiniest Woman." I paid my admission (still only a quarter) and peered into the booth to see all twenty-nine inches of her. She looked cozy in her little chair and what I noticed was that she was gazing at me, too. In that exchange or reciprocal gaze moment, I was at first uneasy, then welcomed the sensation of the returned gaze. As I peered in at her miniature world I wondered if she looked at me as a giant. Given that English was her second language, I was not even able to attain her name, so she remains known to me as her sideshow persona, "Tiniest Woman." Even though we did not communicate by way of much dialogue, we exchanged the gaze—a reciprocal experience that afforded both of us a sense of power and/or understanding. The gaze, then, became a replacement for language in this instance. That experience changed me and I continued my search for others like her who were comfortable in their bodies of difference.

I was later greeted with the pre-recorded admonitions of outside talker, Todd Robbins. He also was the Sideshow School "Professor" for many seasons, and he agreed to meet with me the day before I ventured to Coney Island. He was the sideshow professor at Coney for many summers, and then went on to work on other sideshow-related projects. We met in a café in New York City where he shared wonderful little stories of the performers he met along the way such as Melvin Burhart, who even attended his wedding (*Look Upon Me* 2010). We shared an hour

musing about the function of sideshow in the twenty-first century and how we can still learn from this kind of entertainment—this social institution. The first question I asked him was extremely esoteric, but who better to answer this question than one who has studied the history and function of sideshow extensively for the better part of his career?

When I asked Todd Robbins what he thought it meant to be a human being in the twenty-first century in reference to sideshow performances and their function in culture, his answer did not disappoint:

> So much of it has to do with the form /function…as a social convention as a part of American life. So much of life then was about suppressing the human spirit….as in back-breaking work on a farm and/or the sweat shops of New York. Religion also plays a role…work hard and then later you'll be rewarded. Coney Island was a place where people could blow off steam…experiencing something beyond [one's] own life. (*Look Upon Me* 2010)

I was impressed by his knowledge of American life before and after industrialization. I thought about how difficult life was then and how the sideshow functioned as a way to meet individuals outside the everyday experiences of working class Americans. Robbins explained the hierarchy of the sideshow performers, which is still commonly accepted among his contemporaries: made freaks (excessive piercings/tattoos, other physical enhancements); working acts (sword swallowers, glass eaters/walkers, human blockheads such as Todd Robbins); and born freaks (Mat Fraser, Jason Black, those born with bodies of difference). Clearly the term "freak" is not offensive to these performers, given their time with travelling freak shows and Coney's Sideshows by the Seashore. I then asked Robbins what specifically interested him about sideshow performers (*Look Upon Me* 2010).

His answer did not surprise me, as all the research I have encountered describes a camaraderie between sideshow performers that is unmistakable, even familial. Robbins relates that, "[t]here is a bond of experience. We see eye to eye…[there is a] camaraderie that is kind of wonderful. When you meet an old-timer there is this camaraderie and its great just sitting around telling stories…a rich, wonderful experience" (*Look Upon Me* 2010). This is something that I personally experienced at the Popular Culture Association Conference with Jason Black and Noel Benedetti. I saw this bond between them as sideshow performers. They seem to be great friends who respect each other's work and who believe in sideshow's place in the twenty-first century and beyond. They have committed a great part of their lives to travel, education, and research, and upon introducing them to the circus scholars at said conference, I noticed immediately how well they were received. In fact, Noel Benedetti has previously corresponded with the aforementioned circus historian, Janet Davis, who also presented at the conference.

In addition to discussing sideshow performers' relationships with each other, I asked Robbins about other ways in which sideshow has contributed to American consciousness. He specifically referenced religion briefly in an earlier quote, but further explained his reasoning. I have used this reasoning in my own Popular Culture course discussions, which is well-received by my students:

> There's many similarities between the freak show, politics, and religion…all of which tell a story to the people and get them to buy it. The difference between the three is that the freak show has never used fear—if you don't believe this something bad is going to happen…[Instead] if you don't believe it, you walk out of the show …and go on with your life. There is more honesty in Barnum's freak show than you'll ever find in politics or religion. (*Look Upon Me* 2010)

As I reflect on his last statement about the "honesty" of sideshow, I realize that as a society, Americans have historically been ashamed of this kind of honesty. Until sideshow came along, we were happy to lock away our disabled individuals in institutions or workhouses. If it were not for this venue, where would these individuals be now? Sideshow production has clearly paved the way for open discourse, research, and activism in disability studies. As we view sideshow's progression beyond Barnum's zenith, we see how performers are still in view and unashamed. If they are, then we should be, too as patrons.

American cultural milieu already accepts reality television programs and medical procedures on screen, so perhaps the sideshow will become recognized as a viable means of educating the public—especially since our culture is already predisposed to voyeurism. Once we became medically interested, the gaze shifted as per my discussion in chapter two. Yet for all of our progression we continue to muse over cultural expectations of normalcy and exploitation—even though sideshow performers have long since established their rightful place at the table of humanity—in addition to their right to earn a living as they choose.

CURRENT ACADEMIC RECEPTION

Even though we have progressed in our perception and accept ion of bodies of difference, there are those that still struggle with the gaze element of these performances. For example, I had an encounter with a colleague, a fellow professor, who exhibited discomfort in the gazing aspect of sideshow—specifically with those who have physical deformities. This individual shared with me that she felt uncomfortable staring at individuals with "disabilities," and even when I assured her that these individuals *choose* to embark upon careers in sideshow, she still felt uneasy. She was not alone. I had hoped to invite both Jason Black and Noel Benedetti for a *Celebration of Sideshow and Diversity* program I created. I had planned to include a full table of

medical terminology handouts, pamphlets describing the history of sideshow, and the "talker," Todd Robbins would be our "Sideshow Professor." Performers would explain their physical conditions, hand out signed pitch cards, and meet audience members to answer questions about why they choose to entertain and educate through sideshow performance.

There were two obstacles: the first was unavoidable because fortunately, Black was invited to take his show on the road and was no longer available; the second was avoidable and considerably disturbing. I was immediately asked to meet with one of our administrators and members of a diversity committee—one that I did not know existed at our small community college. I was asked to submit my materials to the committee for review. This was a program that I had worked on with our Student Activities Director and many others on campus and in our community for at least a year. Everything was in place: the venue, food truck, free musical act, free EMT/Fire Rescue on site (for glass walking/fire-eating), clowns, master of ceremonies, magician, and of course, our star performers. Sadly, the committee micro-managed my attempts at creating a positive sideshow exhibition for educational purposes. It is clear to me that archaic misconceptions about sideshow still exist. I have since joined the Diversity Committee and hope to give some credence to sideshow in the twenty-first century and its educational possibilities; however, my offer to chair the committee has been declined and we have yet reconvene.

In my view, what the college and community would have enjoyed was a new way of looking at sideshow through the educative gaze. Benedetti notes that,

> …people are typically unaware of the very visceral chemistry that can exist between performer and viewer. During a live sideshow, there is an interaction taking place...[which] takes people by surprise, and you can see their eyes light up in response to this confrontation. (Personal Interview 2011)

Yet, prejudice and fear often create a panoptic design that is both restraining, and constrictive of educational practices—especially pedagogic principles of progressive education. As one who subscribes to Paulo Freire's construct (problem-posing), I find it very difficult to comply with the regional status quo. One would not expect this in the twenty-first century, or in the field of education (*Pedagogy* 61-2). Yet, I had to cancel my program—not because it was mandated, but because when it was brought before the committee, individuals bowed their heads and became uneasy. Clearly there is still much cultural work to be done before mainstream society accepts sideshow as a viable educative experience. If the college could not accept the cultural relevance of sideshow, then certainly that would have set the stage for the community—for this small town values traditional mores, faith in God, and family values. Yet, says Benedetti, "these magical encounters occur with children who are somehow awakened by watching these bizarre acts and they walk away seeming somehow transformed" (2011). This is precisely what I had hoped our college and local community would experience.

Given these obstacles, one may ask, "Why bother?" What can we possibly learn about ourselves or others by visiting modern sideshow featuring Jason Black, Mat Fraser, or Noel Benedetti? Is it so that others will accept those with bodies of difference, as is the goal of Black's work in sideshow? Or is it to bring awareness to disability studies, as Mat Fraser has so carefully noted on stage at the Coney Island Sideshow by the Seashore (2010)? It may be, "in the right context, enlightening to experience this connection to our innate spirit of inquiry that we are so often denied in modern society" (Benedetti 2011). I prefer to accept sideshow as all of these aspects, melded to reflect the three-dimensional nature that sideshow affords through the gaze experience: one, we accept all into the normative culture; two, we appreciate bodies of difference

and what these individuals overcame to share their gifts with us; and three, we understand curiosity and enlightenment are necessary for the human spirit to prosper.

Fig. 11 Barcelona, Spain

SIDESHOW IN THE CLASSROOM

This experience with a rejected diversity program has moved me to continue the cultural work I began nearly four years ago. Sideshow has a place in the twenty-first century and beyond. Whether or not we find cures for various anomalous conditions, we may always refer to the history of sideshow and the performers who chose to bring it to the masses. I often refer to my research in sideshow in the classroom. Where I teach, our LPN/RN Degree program is in high demand. Certainly these students benefit in studies of bodies of difference.

As Patricia Pierson asserts, "those who ponder [anatomy] are truly curious about the nature of life and of the living. They are curious about the very central questions of the Humanities: what it means to be human, and what are the nature and scope of human dignity" (96). In my Humanities courses, I have embedded much of my research in several courses: Popular Culture, Introduction to Film, Film Aesthetics and Culture, and Composition II. But I am not the first to use sideshow as an educative experience in the discussion of disability studies.

David J. Connor and Lynne M. Bejoian have co-written an article in which they analyze how to teach disability awareness using films at various levels of elementary, middle, and secondary schools. While their focus is mainly on disability studies, they have chosen to use the medium of film by which they construct various narratives of the human condition through analysis, discussion, and lesson-planning for future instructors. The crux of their research asks the following: "With the overwhelming negative connotations of disability, how can people ever see disability as a natural part of human diversity, merely another bodily attribute, and one that we can frame in positive terms? In brief, how can we view disability as simply another way of being" (Connor and Bejoian par 1-2)? Their questions echo my concerns about how we currently view sideshow in mainstream society.

In both Popular Culture and Composition II, I have utilized A & E's *Freak Show* (2008), as well as Nick Bastile's *American Carny: True Tales from the Circus Sideshow* (2006 featuring Todd Robbins, sideshow historian). I also reference the documentary by Gary Beeber entitled *Bally-Master* (2007), featuring Scott Baker, a sideshow "talker" at Coney Island. These films provide excellent perspectives of twenty-first century sideshow performers, and bridge the gap between stage and cinema performance through the documentary genre. *Freak Show* is especially useful in relaying to students the historical context of the earliest performances, especially those relating to the "Wild West" and Buffalo Bill Cody shows. Students can view re-enactments of freak shows featuring human anomalies (including a sidekick dwarf as in the tradition) and wax heads/hands of various criminals who terrorized small town communities with theft and gun fights (A & E 2008). Additionally, *American Carny* (Bastile 2006) and *Bally-Master* (Beeber 2007) offer documentary-style interviews and footage with Todd Robbins and Scott Baker, both of whom have worked at Coney Island as talkers, sideshow working acts (glass

eating, sword swallowing, and much more!), and history "professors" of the field. Students are at first shocked by their feats, but this reaction quickly turns to amazement and wonder as they ask questions after our viewing sessions. They are impressed that individuals still make a living doing such acts and accept the social value that they embody for not only entertainment purposes, but for the educational, historic references throughout the documentaries.

Subsequently, I include my own documentary research, as I comment on the materials and interviews I gathered at Coney Island, Sideshows by the Seashore: *Look Upon Me* (2010). I show these documentaries in class and facilitate open discussions about students' initial reactions to seeing such performers/performances. Last semester I showed *Deforming*, which includes a short striptease by Mat Fraser. At first glance, one may perceive that there is no educational value of this kind of documentary—that it is gratuitous sexuality and has no place in academia. However, my students received it well. The documentary was a collection of vignettes that spanned over many of Fraser's performances. They had become acquainted with sideshow in Popular Culture, as I focused on the history of American entertainment, so it was no shock when I showed Fraser. I relayed to them that it would be explicit but it had a message. The message was clear: if Fraser was so comfortable with his body of difference—so much so that he could perform nude, then we certainly could be comfortable, too. What I leave my students with is the images to ponder and how they define beauty/ugliness. These discussions are ripe, multi-perspective, and worthy of academic pursuit.

Additionally, my research would be incomplete if I did not include my pictures and observations from visiting the famous Mutter Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for a more scientific look at the odd and unusual cabinets of curiosity as a "bonus feature" in my documentary. My students were able to view through a course which removed the social stigma

attached to sideshow performance. By viewing in a classroom setting, students were allowed to progress through various stages of the gaze: Panoptic (we discussed Michel Foucault's *Panopticon* in Composition II); Clinical, we discussed how the medical profession has evolved and the use of technology and genetic study to improve quality of life for sideshow performers; and we moved into the Educative or Reflective gaze—here is the most important stage in my opinion. The students could then apply all they had read, viewed, and discussed about sideshow and its cultural and sociological applications in a way that made sense to them in their own life experiences.

As mentioned, in my Pop Culture course my students trace the entertainment industry from the late 1800s to the present. As P.T. Barnum encouraged audiences to gaze upon bodies of difference, individuals could, according to disability studies critic Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "relate the performance to themselves, to American individual and collective identity" (58). I plan to use Critical Animal Studies in my literature courses as well. For example, in Fantastic Literature, I teach H.G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. Certainly discussions of vivisection have taken place, but I have yet to include in-depth analysis of hybridity and medical ethics. Susan McHugh observes that,

> [a]s literature becomes one of many locations for negotiating the representational problems of animals, forcing new questions about how literary histories bind animals that have linguistic forms…to the terms of human individuals, literary studies has a greater opportunity to intervene in the problems of species' mutating through xenotransplantation, genetic modification, and cloning, which appear to be changing the terms of life itself. (491)

McHugh makes a great observation in that as we continue to progress in our genetic studies, we may be forced to reconsider the definition of animal, or even human—to consider that new forms of being may be created as per Doctor Moreau's designs. And more importantly, her point is that literary critics can facilitate the discussion of complex issues such as these.

Once we worked through what Janet Davis describes as shifting perspectives of sideshow, my students were able to speculate about how sideshow currently is viewed and/or appreciated/ rejected as a form of cultural entertainment and social norms. Clearly some critics still feel that sideshow has negative connotations, as did some of my colleagues, who noted that we need to consider the community's perception of sideshow (2012). Yet, that was the target audience—students and community members who had only known the negative aspects of sideshow history. Davis describes this new form of "freakery" thusly:

> Today's pop cultural standards of the ideal body have become scrupulously rigid. However, I would add that aesthetics of bodily beauty and difference are highly raced, classed, and gendered, which makes any kind of generalization about the beautiful body potentially suspect; nonetheless, here goes... While the sideshow aesthetic of tattoos, piercings, and colorful hair have been normalized into an act of edgy consumption, our cultural notions of the ideal body are extraordinarily rigid and intimately managed—the completely toned and hairless body (particularly for women) has given form to such terms as "skinny fat," and "muffin top," among others. Why have social standards of bodily perfection escalated to such a degree in which only the unobtainable airbrushed/photo shopped image is the standard? I think that this trend relates back to consumption. Ceaselessly unsatisfied consumers are more apt to keep buying and

> buying to achieve the unobtainable. Celebrity magazines have become increasingly body focused: body after baby, eating disordered bodies, pregnant bodies, plastic surgery, and so on… In addition, our cultural narratives of human perfectibility have generated additional narratives of bodily mutability and improvement—through discipline, industry, and good character. Moreover, surgery has become increasingly acceptable as a mode of bodily improvement, as well. (2011)

Consequently, we now see the shift in freakery to reflect that beauty as artificial, surface, and as Davis notes, mutable. It stands to reason that we can accept the body in a superficial, transformed state of being through plastic surgery and other means of self-mutilation, but we cannot seem to rectify the viewing of bodies of difference that are simply born as such. We are almost more willing to accept the façade rather than accept that some bodies simply are not symmetrically pleasing and therefore, viewed as unlovely. This idea of perfection as equal to beautiful is not only unattainable for most Americans (unaffordable, health risks, religious beliefs), but it is also unlike anything else in nature that is sometimes disordered. Out of chaos we evolved—not out of a construction carefully designed—that is if one subscribes to Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

In addition to the courses I have mentioned, I have had the benefit of creating special topics themes such as Magic Realism, B-Films, and the Horror genres; I have also included films by specific directors who choose to deal with subjects pertaining to those outside of normative culture such as David Lynch, Tim Burton, and Chris Carter. My students experienced that, "[t]he social histories of cinema and the traditional freak show overlapped in the early twentieth century as the newer form of entertainment replaced the older one but retained many of the same

unequal viewing dynamics" (Watson 72). In an effort to rectify this lack of the reciprocal gaze, we discuss how modern performers such as Jason Black and Mat Fraser have brought a new focus to bodies of difference and one that invites reciprocity—an exchange of power, knowledge, and ideas.

Some of my students have been so interested in sideshows that one of my former students will visit Coney with his family for a summer vacation spot, and will enjoy the ten-in-one.; another is attending the Popular Culture Conference 2013 with my colleague and I presenting her paper. This is encouraging for educators who chose to include disability studies, sociology, and history into their humanities courses; students may now take initiative and investigate on their own time outside of the classroom experience. Hopefully, the third-space pedagogy will become more accepted in other disciplines of higher education.

CONCLUSION

What I leave my students with is a new perspective on how we interpret the sideshow through the medium of film and the exploration of actual sideshows still in existence, as well as modern cabinets of curiosity, such as the Mutter Museum in Philadelphia. I hope to enlighten students as to the significance of sideshow, to experience these core films as a spectrum of human experience, and to leave them with a documentary that will invite more curiosity for the sideshows that continue to provide a space for bodies of difference. As such, "the films also prompt the abject body to be read as excessive, paradoxically entering the space of the viewer's identity through affective appeals that foreshorten the distance between spectator and spectacle by activating almost involuntary visceral responses to the corporeal abjection onscreen" (Church). Clearly there are many angles by which educators can use sideshow films to engage in body and/or spectator discourse. In fall 2013 I am introducing a special topics course entitled,

Film II: Aesthetic and Cultural Studies featuring Disability and the Human Experience. I plan to show horror films that include disabled individuals who have been depicted negatively, followed by up-lifting films that celebrate bodies of difference (as in Fraser's documentary). Although I cannot provide a campus-wide program, I can execute academic freedom in my own classroom.

AFTERWORD

"…he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (King James Bible, Isaiah 53: 2).

Although sideshow is still a source of controversy for some in our culture, I believe that there is still a place for this form of entertainment. If we continue to progress away from the panoptic gaze, refine the clinical gaze, and embrace the educative gaze, sideshow may become a powerful representation of the human spirit and our ability to rise above our adversities to enjoy diversity and creativity. I included the Bible scripture above not because I subscribe to any one belief system, but rather because this particular passage points to who Jesus Christ was physically—he was not attractive by our standards (or even by the standards of his people). His beauty came in the supposed sacrifice of his body for the redemption of mankind. Whether his persona is fictional or factual, the fact that we have made him physically attractive in most stained glass and/or statues in cathedrals shows our need to believe in something normatively beautiful, rather than something perceived as ugly.

That sense of beauty, of sacrifice far out-weighs the delight in looking at perfectly symmetrical faces, slim bodies, or athletic builds. This kind of beauty goes beyond physical form and into the heart of our very existence. If we begin to challenge our perception of what beauty is—even flip its meaning completely—then we will be able to see beauty as a state of mind rather than a superficial denotation. It is my hope that in the years to come sideshow performers, historians, and educators continue the cultural work that has been established in this study. As we embrace our differences, we will embrace bodies of difference and perhaps become less obsessed with the normative expectation of beauty.

The sense that there is purpose to this kind of study—one that focuses on field research and travel—is that there is still much to be done. We still have to construct a bridge from the gaze to disability studies, which will continue to develop with more serious scholarship. As I have mentioned, Georginia Kleege agrees in "Disabled Students Come Out" that, "[s]ocial evolution seldom follows a smoothly linear path. It can create discomfort and discord. It can raise more questions than it answers" (as qtd. in Snyder et.al. 316). In this anthology of disability studies, Brenda Jo Brueggemann shares her account of what it is like to teach with hearing impairment. The fact that she is employed, has added resources, and eager students shows that we have made great strides in the field ("Enabling Pedagogy" as qtd. in Snyder et.al. 317-36).

In addition to joining our newly founded Diversity Committee, I hope to offer an introductory humanities course that traces our social evolution in disability studies and representations in art, philosophy, literature, music, and social sciences. I will continue my work in this field and have enjoyed the journey. I have established some interesting theories, but more than that, I have grown and made some incredible friends along the way. The journey has been spectacular and the spectacle has become for me an experience as Todd Robbins relayed it: camaraderie as a "bond of experience" (2010). While I will never know the life of a sideshow performer with a body of physical difference, I can advocate and educate within the scope of disability studies and by forging more connections with the people who have inspired me to conduct this study.

Endnotes

[1] Jeremy Bentham was the originator of the panoptic design, as well as the father of Utilitarianism. He also wrote an essay entitled, " Auto-Icon; or Farther Uses of the Dead to the Living," in which he discusses the lack of human specimens available for scientific inquiry. In his time there was great controversy in terms of dissection; in fact, the Anatomy Act of 1832, by which the graves of the dead were protected by law from grave snatchers, who were gaining profit from these cadavers (as qtd. in Jespersen et. al. 94-6).

[2] In my extensive research, the chimera has moved beyond the ancient myth of hybrid human/animal. We have begun splicing human and animal genes to create hybrids that H.G. Wells could have only imagined. In essence, what Doctor Moreau accomplishes foreshadows the current movement to create hybrid organisms for scientific and medical experimentation and research (i.e.: the Human Genome Project). Information on this can be found at: http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human_Genome/home.shtml.

[3] Commonly known as the late Victorian Period of the 1890s: Aesthetics and Decadence artists such as Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, and Walter Benjamin were prominent figures. This is the end of an age—a more liberated time for those who had struggled with uniformity and cultural constraints.

[4] "Hair color and texture, it was discovered, as well as such unusual characteristics as excess toes and fingers, were inherited in a way that paralleled the pattern Mendel had discovered in peas…The weak, the imperfect, the social, mental, and physical misfits, they warned, would, if left unchecked, breed at such a rate as to outnumber the better breeding stock" (Bogdan 62). What is especially troubling for disability critics and sideshow scholars is that Mendel's findings suggested that we segregate "normal" society from these "degenerates." The utopian hope for proper breeding stock is not only against Nature's occasional call for chaos, but it also smacks of the euthanizing of less than desirable human beings. One cannot help but remember Hitler and his eugenic experiments in the death camps.

[5]"The 1881 Municipal Code of Chicago sanctioned the 'exhibition of monsters or freaks of nature' underneath a canvas tent as long as the proprietors of the show obtained the necessary permits. The freak show did not become subject to an ugly law until 1899, almost twenty years after Chicago's ugly law to specifically prohibit the display of people with disabilities in sideshows and dime museums…Unlike Chicago's ugly law, which remained on the books for nearly a century, the Illinois freak law was overturned within a year of its passage because it violated the right of the freak show performers to make contracts with their employers" (as qtd. in Coco 28). It is hard to believe that this code actually existed on the books. One can still download the document for review if interested. See works cited page.

[6] Art pour L'art is a French term, translating to "art for art's sake." The idea was conceptualized by French literary and art critics, but flooded into Britain in the 1890s. "Art for art's sake" is the usual English rendition of a French slogan, "l'art pour l'art", which was coined early in the nineteenth century by the French philosopher Victor Cousin and became a bohemian slogan during the nineteenth century" (*New World Encyclopedia*, N.p.). Essentially, art was important for its own sake—even if it entailed subversive imagery, degenerative ideas, or explored the heaping decadence of Aubrey Beardsley's work (extremely (porno)graphic, filled with sunflower and peacock images (as noted in Beckson's *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s*).

[7]"Melvin Burkhart, a legendary sideshow performer who billed himself as the Human Blockhead and proved it by hammering nails and spikes up his nose in front of millions of Americans in thousands of places -- from the 1939 World's Fair to countless dusty midways to the Coney Island boardwalk to an off-Broadway theater just last month -- died on Nov. 8 [2001] in a hospice in Sun City, Fla. He was 94, and always swore that it didn't hurt" (Martin). In all of my research, other performers have noted the kindness of this true entertainer. He was so versatile that he was able to perform many sideshow acts other than the Human Blockhead: "He swallowed swords, breathed with one lung at a time, exhibited different expressions on each side of his face, ate fire, rotated his stomach muscles in an act called 'the cement mixer,' survived an electric chair, wrestled snakes and performed excellent magic. Working for a one-ring circus during the Depression, he was 9 of its 14 acts" (Martin).

[8] The origin of the phocomelia disease is controversial in that some born with it before the 1950-60s had the disorder without the use of thalidomide. One has no arms, with hands that protrude from the shoulder area. "This condition was prominent in the 1950s and 1960s and was linked to expectant mothers who took thalidomide, a drug commonly prescribed to pregnant women to treat morning sickness and as a sleep aid. However, a high rate of birth defects caused its discontinuance for such use. Today, it's generally only prescribed to treat leprosy" (Hornberger 134-5). *Ectodactyly*: This is a hereditary disease that occurs "about once every 90,000 births" and results in the appearance of lobster-like claws for hands and feet; *hypertrichosis*: "a condition of excessive hirsuteness, which is typically hereditary and reportedly quite rare" (Hornberger 146; 160-1).

[9] Sideshow Professors are not unlike educational professors. They pass down historical and cultural content to their eager students, who then hopefully carry on the traditions of the sideshow arts. Robbins is one of the most internationally noted sideshow professors and still performs in his own shows eating glass and swallowing swords. He often was the outside talker brining in spectators to the ten-in-one Sideshows by the Seashore on Coney (*Look Upon Me* 2010).

[10] "The Human Genome Project (HGP) refers to the international 13-year effort, formally begun in October 1990 and completed in 2003, to discover all the estimated 20,000-25,000 human genes and make them accessible for further biological study. Another project goal was to determine the complete sequence of the 3 billion DNA subunits (bases in the human genome). As part of the HGP, parallel studies were carried out on selected model organisms such as bacterium *E. coli* and the mouse to help develop the technology and interpret human gene function. The DOE Human Genome Program and the NIH National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) together sponsored the U.S. Human Genome Project" (History of the Human Genome Project, genomics.energy.gov).

[11] "The Research Defense Society (RDS; London, UK), an organization representing doctors and scientists in the debate on the use of animals in research and testing, welcomes the greater openness that the FOI Act brings to discussions about animal research" (Festing and Wilkinson 526).

[12] Provided by James C. Wilson and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson in their essay "Constructing a Third Space: Disabilities Studies, the Teaching of English, and Institutional Transformation" (Snyder et. al. 296-307).

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APPENDIX A-MUTTER MUSEUM RESOURCES

The College of Physicians of Philadelphia
MÜTTER MUSEUM

Detailed Museum History

In 1849, Dr. Isaac Parrish suggested that the College of Physicians of Philadelphia start a museum of pathological anatomy to preserve valuable material that might otherwise be lost to science. The collection grew rapidly until 1852, when Dr. Parrish died and the collection entered a period of inactivity.

On May 20, 1856, Dr. Thomas Dent Mütter wrote to the College that he was retiring from teaching because of ill health and wished to offer the guardianship of his personal museum to the College of Physicians as the "body best qualified by the character of its members and the nature of its pursuits for undertaking the trust." A popular professor of surgery at Jefferson Medical College, Mütter had amassed a unique and valuable collection of anatomical and pathological materials for use in his classes. Accompanying the collection would be an endowment of $30,000, the income from which was to pay for the salaries of a curator, a lecturer, and for the care and enlargement of the museum. At the time the College was holding its meetings in rented quarters; Mütter specified that the College must erect a suitable fire-proof building within five years of signing the agreement.

Having long felt the need for its own facilities in order to accommodate its growing library, and acknowledging that Mütter's museum would be a worthy and appropriate addition, the College signed the agreement with Dr. Mütter in 1859, two months before he died at age 48. It then renewed its efforts to raise building funds and, in 1863, moved into its first real home at 13th and Locust Streets.

Dr. Mütter's collection of bones, wet specimens, plaster casts, wax and papier-mache models, dried preparations, and medical illustrations - over 1700 items in all - joined the 92 specimens from the College's earlier collection in the new quarters. Many of the items which today`s visitors find most memorable date from that time: the bladder stones removed from Chief Justice John Marshall by Dr. Philip Syng Physick; and the skeleton of a woman whose rib-cage was compressed by tight lacing.

Around this nucleus the museum grew rapidly, as desirable collections were purchased in Europe with funds from Mütter's endowment, and as other Fellows contributed interesting surgical and post-mortem specimens acquired from their hospital and private practices.

In 1874, the museum made several noteworthy additions to its collections. The autopsy of the 63-year-old Siamese Twins, Chang and Eng, was performed in the museum. Their bodies were returned to their home in North Carolina, but the College was allowed to keep their connected livers and a plaster cast of their torsos showing the band of skin and cartilage that joined them at the chest. That same year saw the culmination of the Museum Committee's negotiations with Professor Joseph Hyrtl of Vienna, resulting in the purchase of 139 skulls from Central and Eastern Europe.

In 1871, the College decided that the museum should begin collecting obsolete medical instruments as well. These now constitute the major part of the museum's acquisitions - items reflecting changes in the technology of medicine and memorabilia of present and past practitioners. Outstanding among them are Dr. Benjamin Rush's medicine chest; a wooden stethoscope said to have been made by the physician who invented it in 1816, Rene Laennec; Florence Nightingale's sewing kit; Marie Curie's quartz-piezo electrometer (personally presented to the College by Mme. Curie in 1921); and a full-scale model of the first successful heart-lung machine, designed and used in Philadelphia by Dr. John H. Gibbon Jr. in 1953.

Many of the collections reflect the interest and involvement of Philadelphia physicians in national and international affairs. In 1893, Philadelphia surgeon Dr. William W. Keen assisted in a secret operation on President Grover Cleveland for a cancerous growth on his left upper jaw. Unlike today's well-publicized presidential procedures, this took place on a private yacht steaming up Long Island Sound, supposedly taking the president on vacation. The full story of the operation was not revealed until Keen published it in the 1917 Saturday Evening Post, at which time he also presented the tumor and a laryngeal mirror and cheek retractor used in the operation to the College.

The Civil War brought specimens and photographs of battle injuries, sent from the Army Medical Museum in Washington D.C. (now the National Museum of Health and Medicine) in exchange for duplicate material from the Mütter to be used for the training of army surgeons. In 1865 a messenger from the Surgeon General conveyed to the museum a specimen connected with one of the nation's most tragic events. A "piece of the thorax of J. Wilkes Booth, assassin of President Lincoln", it had been removed at the autopsy conducted by Philadelphia surgeon Joseph Janvier Woodward.

The College continued to purchase collections and accept donations for both its library and museum. This created a persistent need for more space, and in 1908 the College began construction on a new home on 22nd Street, between Chestnut and Market. This handsome building epitomized in its marble halls and carved oak detailing the prestige and dignity of the medical profession. Portrait-lined rooms housed the lectures and social receptions of the College and of the other medical groups who rented the facilities for their monthly meetings, as they had in the old building.

The museum as it was first installed in the new space was in marked contrast to the elegant materials and furnishings of the rest of the building. It retained in its appearance a strong connection to the utilitarian medical museums typical of 19th century hospitals and medical schools. The 19th century cases, some of them eight feet tall, had redwood shelving on which the specimens and instruments were placed as close together as they could fit. They illustrated the fact that the museum's purpose lay not in the decorative display of selected artifacts, but in the organized assemblage of teaching materials which were to be available to the student or researcher as were books on a library shelf.

A major renovation of the exhibit areas took place in 1986. When the project was completed, the museum was fully air-conditioned, all of the exhibit cases had been refinished and reinstalled in the newly carpeted and painted galleries, and glass shelving replaced the redwood in tracklighted cases.

The College of Physicians of Philadelphia
19 South 22nd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-3097
Phone: 215-563-3737
FAX: 215-569-0356

RE: Regarding a visit

Brandon Zimmerman [bzimmerman@collegeofphysicians.org]

Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2009 8:54 AM

To: Mascia, Stacey

Hi Stacey,

Thank you for this info. We'll expect you at 1pm on May 27th. When you arrive and have received your admission badge please tell the front desk staff person that you've spoken with me and have received permission to photograph in the gallery. They will issue a photo badge and give you a form to fill out.

Only photographs will be allowed at this time. No video please.

If you have any further questions please feel free to e-mail me.

Thank you,

Brandon Zimmerman
Mütter Museum Administrative Coordinator and Designer
Manager, Rights and Reproductions
Mütter Museum
19 S 22nd St
Philadelphia PA 19103
bzimmerman@collphyphil.org
215-563-3737 ext. 244
www.muttermuseum.org

-----Original Message-----
From: Mascia, Stacey [mailto:smascia@nccc.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, May 05, 2009 1:17 PM
To: Brandon Zimmerman
Subject: RE: Regarding a visit

Hello,
I will be at the museum by 1 p.m. on May 27th if that is okay. I appreciate this opportunity and know that I can only photograph the specimens below. Is it possible for me to film instead of photograph? If not, I'll just bring my camera.
Sincerely,
Stacey
Stacey L. Mascia
Assistant Professor of English
North Country Community College
smascia@nccc.edu<mailto:smascia@nccc.edu>
(518) 483-4550 ext. 250

From: Brandon Zimmerman [bzimmerman@collegeofphysicians.org]
Sent: Monday, May 04, 2009 6:31 PM
To: Mascia, Stacey
Subject: RE: Regarding a visit

Hi Stacey,

The College of Physicians of Philadelphia
MÜTTER MUSEUM | HISTORICAL LIBRARY and WOOD INSTITUTE | PHILLY HEALTH INFO
KOOP COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER | BENJAMIN RUSH MEDICINAL PLANT GARDEN

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3.	Giant & Dwarf Specimens	

May 27, 2009
Date

Requestor

X
Date

X See Attached Email
The College of Physicians of Philadelphia

19 SOUTH TWENTY-SECOND STREET | PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103-3097 | PHONE: 215-563-3737 | FAX: 215-575-3499 | WWW.COLLPHYPHIL.ORG

APPENDIX B-PITCHARD EXAMPLES

APPENDIX C-INTERVIEW WITH JANET DAVIS, CIRCUS HISTORIAN

Janet Davis, author of *The Circus Age: Culture and Society Under the American Big Top*

Interview Questions for Janet Davis based on her~
The Circus Age: Culture & Society Under the American Big Top
(focused on chapter seven)

1. You mention how we have modernized the circus in large play lands such as Disney, Sea World, Las Vegas, et. al. You note: "Although the contemporary cultural landscape of the United States is nearly circus free, the fin-de-siècle railroad circus lives on in other ways" (230).
Question: In your assessment, what is the social function of the American sense of "play" or "escapism" in the aforementioned larger venues (and current Coney Island sideshows)?

I think that each of these venues offer fantastical visions of abundance and imagined mobility through (relatively!) low-cost acts of consumption. Because they are available to anyone who buys an admissions ticket, such mass cultural experiences also reinforce American exceptionalist mythologies of democratic access and classlessness—i.e. that one cannot be excluded on the basis of birth or social standing—even in the face of enduring social inequality. The social function of American play and escapism in these venues also relates to the display of human and animal bodies because they are sites of sentimental humanization and animalization through athletic spectacle, as well as the heteronormative rhetoric of the family and "proper" gender roles.

2. You mention various current popular televised and publications of medical anomalies. Guinness is cited as one of the examples: "Unlike sideshow of old…Guinness enables the audience to gaze at these amazing bodies from a distance, outside the ostensible realm of indignity" (233).
Question: Could you further elaborate on the concept of this gaze and how it differs from one of "indignity" (233)?

This contemporary gaze is medicalized (to borrow from Robert Bogdan) because it relies upon professional doctors and scientists to "explain" one's condition by way of their exclusive training and knowledge, rather than taking seriously folkloric explanations of bodily difference—or, for that matter, the showman's blustery rhetorical flourishes. Although there is currently a renaissance in live sideshow entertainments, our culture still often shames the act of gazing at actual living bodies. Mediums of looking are also critical in defining this contemporary gaze: while the gaze is a constant feature in photographs, film (especially reality TV shows), print, and live performance, each involves its own form of engagement—or disengagement, as the case may be. Live performance—depending on the venue and the physical distance between performer and audience—typically offers the most intimate and direct form of contact. "Indignity" here is a historically specific term that speaks to a historical moment when the sideshow became socially suspect. The advent of the stare as shameful is an artifact of modernity—in other words, staring and looking at live bodies became morally suspect at approximately the same time that the body became the exclusive province of science. I prefaced

this observation with "ostensible" to acknowledge the ways in which looking as cultural practice is historically situated—and conditioned by different media technologies at different historical moments.

3. I especially connect with the liminal space between freak/human and human/animal (much of Donna Haraway's work deals with this). You end your book with the statement that, "[t]he circus makes us take pause: to acknowledge the powerful and occasionally perilous relationship between people and animals…" (237). In Critical Animal Studies, a new form of literary theory, there are two distinct avenues of research: that of animal rights activism; and that of hybridism, biomedical research, and the fine line between animal and personhood.
Question: Can you comment on the importance of animal personae of sideshow performers (other than the traditional naming or because they "look like" animals as in Jo-Jo, Sealo, and Lobster Boy). In other words, why else would they choose to be named as animals (feel free to speculate)?

I think that hybridity is at the center of the circus as a whole, and the sideshow specifically. In other words, the circus—in spectacular fashion—dives deeply into the question of categorization. Whether it be the highly disciplined big top performances of horses/bears/tigers/elephants/dogs/cats/monkeys/etc dancing, or the physically animalized human performers at the sideshow like Jo-Jo, all center around the permeability of the human/animal divide. The act of choosing a name that evokes an animal personae is an acknowledgement (subconscious, or otherwise) of the circus's larger social power and cultural purpose.

4. Are you familiar with "The Ugly Laws" of Chicago in the early 1900s?
If not I've including a short bit about these laws; if so,
Question: If so, given our social progress, why do you think we currently exhibit our intolerance of different bodies that are not considered to be "beautiful or lovely" by today's standards?

Today's pop cultural standards of the ideal body have become scrupulously rigid. However, I would add that aesthetics of bodily beauty and difference are highly raced, classed, and gendered, which makes any kind of generalization about the beautiful body potentially suspect; nonetheless, here goes... While the sideshow aesthetic of tattoos, piercings, and colorful hair have been normalized into an act of edgy consumption, our cultural notions of the ideal body are extraordinarily rigid and intimately managed—the completely toned and hairless body (particularly for women) has given form to such terms as "skinny fat," and "muffin top," among others. Why have social standards of bodily perfection escalated to such a degree in which only the unobtainable airbrushed/photoshopped image is the standard? I think that this trend relates back to consumption. Ceaselessly unsatisfied consumers are more apt to keep buying and buying to achieve the unobtainable. Celebrity magazines have become increasingly body focused: body after baby, eating disordered bodies, pregnant bodies, plastic surgery, and so on… In addition, our cultural narratives of human perfectibility have generated additional narratives of bodily mutability and improvement—through discipline, industry, and good character. Moreover, surgery has become increasingly acceptable as a mode of bodily improvement, as well.

Janet M. Davis

Associate Professor of American Studies, History, and Women's and Gender Studies
University of Texas at Austin
1 University Station B7100
Austin, Texas 78712
Tel: 512-232-1848

APPENDIX D-INTERVIEW CONSENT FORMS

Consent Form
Doctoral Research at Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Ph.D. in Literature and Criticism

Dissertation Candidate: Stacey L. Mascia
Project: Short Educational Documentary Video involving Modern Circus/Sideshow Performers as part of a cultural phenomenon.
Short Narrative: *The purpose of this short film is both for educational study and for social awareness in terms of cultural perceptions of those with dis/abilities (what this critic now terms as unique abilities, which carries a positive connotation). The video includes live footage from a live interview with Sideshow working act and "professor", Todd Robbins; Coney Island and Sideshow by the Seashore performers; personal interviews with performers "Black Scorpion" (Jason Black) and "Seal Boy" (Mat Fraser); and original music by Seth Warden and Stacey L. Mascia.*
Researcher Expectations: The materials in this video will ***not*** be used for personal monetary gain and will ***not*** be used in any other venue other than to educate and inspire. Specifically, the dissertation candidate reserves the rights to the documentary as per the US copyright laws to ensure that no one else *other than the participants* may use the video for educational and/or cultural edification. Thus, the copyright is held by Stacey L. Mascia, with consent of the aforementioned participants, who may also use the materials for educational and/or cultural edification.

In signing below, I hereby agree to these terms and conditions and respect the educative value of both this document and the documentary.

Signature of Candidate:_____
Date:__1-29-13_____
Signature of Participant/Performer:____Noel Benedetti_____
Date:____1-30-2013_____

Created 2/19/10 SLM

Consent Form
Doctoral Research at Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Ph.D. in Literature and Criticism

Dissertation Candidate: Stacey L. Mascia
Project: Short Educational Documentary Video involving Modern Circus/Sideshow Performers as part of a cultural phenomenon.
Short Narrative: *The purpose of this short film is both for educational study and for social awareness in terms of cultural perceptions of those with dis/abilities (what this critic now terms as unique abilities, which carries a positive connotation). The video includes live footage from a live interview with Sideshow working act and "professor", Todd Robbins; Coney Island and Sideshow by the Seashore performers; personal interviews with performers "Black Scorpion" (Jason Black) and "Seal Boy" (Mat Fraser); and original music by Seth Warden and Stacey L. Mascia.*
Researcher Expectations: The materials in this video will ***not*** be used for personal monetary gain and will ***not*** be used in any other venue other than to educate and inspire. Specifically, the dissertation candidate reserves the rights to the documentary as per the US copyright laws to ensure that no one else *other than the participants* may use the video for educational and/or cultural edification. Thus, the copyright is held by Stacey L. Mascia, with consent of the aforementioned participants, who may also use the materials for educational and/or cultural edification.

In signing below, I hereby agree to these terms and conditions and respect the educative value of both this document and the documentary.
Signature of Candidate: Stacey L. Mascia
Date:
Signature of Participant/Performer:
Date: 1/29/13

Created 2/19/10 SLM

Re: Consent_Form

Mat Fraser [mat.fraser@virgin.net]

Sent: Friday, April 02, 2010 3:34 AM

To: Mascia, Stacey

On 29/3/10 04:22, "Kyle Nelso" <smascia@nccc.edu> wrote:

Consent Form
Doctoral Research at Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Ph.D. in Literature and Criticism

Dissertation Candidate: Stacey L. Mascia
Project: Short Educational Documentary Video involving Modern Circus/Sideshow Performers as part of a cultural phenomenon.
Short Narrative: *The purpose of this short film is both for educational study and for social awareness in terms of cultural perceptions of those with dis/abilities (what this critic now terms as unique abilities, which carries a positive connotation). The video includes live footage from a live interview with Sideshow working act and "professor", Todd Robbins; Coney Island and Sideshow by the Seashore performers; personal interviews with performers "Black Scorpion" (Jason Black) and "Seal Boy" (Mat Fraser); and original music by Seth Warden and Stacey L. Mascia.*
Researcher Expectations: The materials in this video will ***not*** be used for personal monetary gain and will ***not*** be used in any other venue other than to educate and inspire. Specifically, the dissertation candidate reserves the rights to the documentary as per the US copyright laws to ensure that no one else *other than the participants* may use the video for educational and/or cultural edification. Thus, the copyright is held by Stacey L. Mascia, with consent of the aforementioned participants, who may also use the materials for educational and/or cultural edification.

In signing below, I hereby agree to these terms and conditions and respect the educative value of both this document and the documentary.
Signature of Candidate:_____Stacey L. Mascia
Date:___2/19/10_____
Signature of Participant/Performer:____Mat Fraser_____
Date:____4.2.10_____

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Signature of Candidate:_____Stacey L. Mascia
Date:_____
Signature of Participant/Performer:_Jason Black_____
Date:__1/28/2013_____

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