# Lusus Naturae, Folklore, and Display in the Nineteenth Century in the United States

By

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Abstract

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Exhibitions of lusus naturae were at the height of popularity during the nineteenth century in the United States and reveal how popular culture reflects emerging themes in folklore. This study takes an interdisciplinary approach by examining these exhibitions as a *process*, where an interdependent relationship based on the knowledge of familiar folk narratives is formed between the latent performer (seller), the pitchman (lecturer), the performer (display), and the audience. The presentation, marketing, and reception of these entertaining and unusual exhibitions are analogous to various forms of folklore, and therefore function in the same manner as folklore.

The interaction and experience with these living motifs are defined as *motif ostension*. Motif ostension evoked whole stories from fragments of information given to the audience directly or indirectly, allowing the audience to employ their own unique knowledge to add context to the narrative. The interest in these displays permeated through gender, age, and social classes in early America, allowing these displays to use folklore to negotiate a plethora of newly emerging issues under the guise of entertainment and education. The use of motif ostension was an integral form of social expression during the nineteenth century; it pushed the boundaries of folklore, and showed how folklore could be at the root of one of the most popular and influential forms of entertainment in the history of the United States.

for Alan Dundes

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

# LUSUS NATURAE, FOLKLORE, AND DISPLAY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY IN THE UNITED STATES

## CHAPTER 1
## INTRODUCTION

### OUTLINE & METHOD

This study employs a diachronic and synchronic approach, using interdisciplinary methods to better understand how and why folklore manifests into popular entertainment in the United States in the nineteenth century. The strategy for addressing a rather large subject matter will begin by forming a perimeter around a general time period between the 1840s and the 1880s, defining "exhibit" as an unusual display primarily used as a form of entertainment, although possibly didactic in nature, which features *lusus naturae* (living bodies, wax replicas, or automata).

Traditional studies of *lusus naturae* in early American exhibitions often approach the subject of "freakery" by exploring the construction of these displays from only one perspective (performer, seller, or patron). This study takes an interdisciplinary approach by examining these exhibitions as a *process*, where an interdependent relationship based on the knowledge of familiar folk narratives is formed between the latent performer (seller), the pitchman (lecturer), the performer (display), and the audience (patron), and demonstrates that the presentation, marketing, and reception of these entertaining and unusual exhibitions are analogous to various forms of folklore, and therefore function in the same manner as folklore. The use of primary source material including, but not limited to, newspapers, broadsides, diaries, advertisements, pamphlets, and pitchcards will be used to contextualize and describe these exhibitions, while theories from varying disciplines will be drawn upon in the analysis.

By recognizing the prevalent use of folklore in nineteenth century America, particularly concerning amusements and leisure, we can begin to understand why the American public found such intrigue in images of simultaneous wonder and aberrance, and how the interaction with these displays allowed the public to negotiate a plethora of newly emerging issues under the guise of entertainment and education.

### ASSUMPTIONS & LIMITATIONS

The study of folklore as a discipline has spawned the debate of definitions, methods, and techniques. Scholars debate what American folklore is (or isn't), what methods to apply, if and what the theories are, what discipline it is under (literature vs. anthropology vs. its own), what content should be printed, and what parts are considered valid. It is no wonder that the general public is confused about what folklore it, and why folklore has always been under scrutiny as a discipline of its own. The American Folklore Society defines folklore as "the traditional art, literature, knowledge, and practice that is disseminated largely through oral communication and behavioral example," and I will use this definition of folklore.

I have also chosen to use the term *lusus naturae* rather than "freak" for the following reasons. I find that the use of this term derived from wonder and the term was used to describe natural phenomena in a non-derogatory manner. The term can be used for any natural object including vegetables and all living beings.[1] Lusus naturae were also seen as fascinating rather than demonic, for example, *The Naturalist's Library* [1850's], notes, "A still more wonderful lusus naturae lately existed in the person of a bicephalous girl..."[2]

The use of the term "freak" as a was first used in the mid-nineteenth century and derives from the term "freak of nature." The first use of the term freak as a colloquial moniker for lusus naturae on display is often dated to the late nineteenth century. Showman Edward Hingston, for example, facetiously suggested he advertise his ruined half melted wax Circassian woman as a "freak of nature," in his book "The Genial Showman" (1870), and the *San Francisco Chronicle* (1884) featured an article titled "Funny Freaks."[3] The author suggests that tattooed people, phony Circassian girls who wear wigs, and "African fellows they advertise as Ashante chiefs freaks, [sic]" are simply curiosities, whereas the "spotted boy," and "two-headed, four-legged girl" are freaks.[4] During this era, the difference between a "curiosity" and "freak" was often based on two factors: truthful representations and real physical abnormalities. Freaks were usually considered to have congenital abnormalities and were usually not man-made, whereas curiosities could be invented. Rosemary Garland-Thompson believes the "word freak meant whimsical more than monstrous."[5] These distinctions, however, were flexible and certainly not fixed. Performers with disabilities preferred to be called *prodigies*, and Barnum circumvented this phrase by using terms such as 'Parliament of Peculiar Puzzling Physical Phenomena and Prodigies, Colossal Continental Congress of Curious Creatures, Weird and Winsome Wonders of the Wide, Wide World, and Peerless Prodigies of Physical Phenomena and Great Presentation of Marvelous Living Human Curiosities."[6]

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[1] John Adams Tarbell, *The sources of health and the prevention of disease: or, Mental and physical hygiene*, (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1850), 148.

[2] Augustus A. Gould, ed., *The naturalist's library; containing scientific and popular descriptions of man, quadrupeds, birds, fishes, reptiles and insects; comp. from the works of Cuvier, Griffith, Richardson ... and other writers on natural history. Arranged according to the classification of Stark,* (New York: E. Kearny, 185-?), 66.

[3] Full title "Funny Freaks. What Can Be Found in Dime Museums. Curiosities Vs. Freaks. The Hairy Woman, the Fat Girl, the German Dwarfs and the Two-Headed Girl…"

[4] The article continues with the headline "What Freaks Are" and asks "Why do you use the term 'freak''? "Because we are 'freaks,' ain't we?" See *San Francisco Chronicle* December 1, 1884, 4.

[5] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Seeing the Disabled: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography," in *The New Disability History*, ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 349.

[6] Marc Hartzman, *American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performer,* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 21.

I have used the term *lusus nature*, and occasionally freak, when referring to displays regardless of whether they were truly natural. In many cases, the proprietor was responsible for procuring and often fabricating *lusus naturae* using mendacious methods. I am using this term, because these exhibitions were presented to the public as real (and therefore legitimate) *lusus nature*, and the public *believed* these displays were truly lusus naturae.[7] During the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries, the term freak did not carry the stigma it has today, and freaks were considered to be almost non-human. It was as if a visible anomaly, physical abnormality, or unusual malady, could transform someone into a liminal, uncategorizable state. In a revealing statement, the last sentence of the aforementioned article reads, "There's a great deal of human nature in freaks, after all."

In addition to the notorious term freak, numerous terms were used to describe unusual displays in the nineteenth century, including: oddity, human enigma, deviant member of society, monster, monstrosity, wonder, curiosity, freak, savage, exotic, human anomaly, mutant, abnormality, human oddity, prodigy, malformation, portent, primitive, very special people, *phenomenes*, grotesque body, etc.[8] Some of these terms may also be used in this study on occasion as deemed appropriate.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF VENUES

There were many opportunities for the general public to encounter an exhibition of lusus naturae. Most museums, traveling shows, cabinets of curiosities, expositions, world fairs, circuses, carnivals, midways, and sideshows showcased unusual human beings, or automata, for public amusement and profit in the nineteenth century in the United States. Early anthropology museums in America inadvertently influenced the style, content, and approach to future venues showcasing curiosities. In 1890, the *Journal of American Folk-Lore* published a proposal to create a "Folk-Lore Museum." The proposed folklore museum would have incorporated objects, which were not ordinarily collected, yet illustrated customs, myths, and superstitions. *The Journal of American Folk-lore* also stated that the "increased public interest in collecting strange and rare and curious objects is one through which much of this same lore may be accounted for."[9] A "folk-lore" museum was never actually created, but collections of objects considered to be in the domain of folklore were often showcased (e.g. games, playing cards, and ritual objects) in traditional anthropological museums, and nineteenth century anthropology museums and folklore collections (oral and material) both shared the same goal of preserving vanishing traditions.

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[7] These displays were marketed to the public under a variety of terms including, lusus naturae, freak, curiosity, etc. The public used and understood the term *lusus naturae* to refer to something unusual (such as a freak of nature).

[8] "Very Special People" refers to Frederick Drimmer's book of the same title. See *Very Special People*, (New York: Amjon Publishers, 1973). For a lengthier discussion on names see Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths & Images of the Secret Self*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 13-36.

[9] See "Folk-Lore Museums," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 3, No. 11 (Oct. – Dec., 1890): 312.

The sites of presentation, display, and reception of *lusus naturae* are extremely useful modes for understanding those who attended these exhibitions, why the public chose this particular form of amusement, why this form of entertainment flourished during the nineteenth century, and how the audience responded. The venues of the greatest influence often had five characteristics. First, they were sites of popular entertainment and amusement in the United States, particularly in urban areas in the nineteenth century. Second, they were sites of frequent exhibition and mass spectatorship. The presentation, exhibition, and display of lusus naturae and the anticipation and promotion of new lusus naturae were among the most successful exhibits for these venues. Third, these venues framed the lusus nature within a narrative. That is, a narrative was shaped by the visual presentation (clothes, scenery, performance) of the display, lectures, written word, advertisements (such as banners and posters) as well as purposeful distributed information about the display. Fourth, these venues touted a didactic experience, providing patrons with a form of amusement legitimated by a museum-like setting. The experience was reinforced by historical and scientific evidence and veiled by a sense of legitimacy and truth. The museum setting provided the opportunity to offer "lectures" and thus narratives about the object, or human, on display. Edward Hingston wrote, "Mr. Barnum set the example, and all showmen in the States follow it, to have a lecture explanatory of whatever curiosity they may please to exhibit. A lecturer or two, able to describe an object of interest, and tell a few good stories about it, was always found to be of advantage in the Old Museum of New York."[10] The stories told by lecturers helped create a narrative surrounding the display, which is a vital aspect of this study. Unlike visits to national parks or strolls along the boulevard, dime museums and exhibition halls charged admission. In order to increase profits, most venues began appealing to men, women, and children, which was a new strategy in Victorian-era amusements. The heterogeneous clientele created a neoteric environment, which challenged existing notions of amusement and morals.[11] Venues that exhibited the five qualities stated above will be discussed in the following section.

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[10] Edward Hingston, *The Genial Showman, Being reminiscences of the life of Artemus Ward and pictures of a showman's career in the western world*, (London: J.C. Hotten, 1871), 47.

[11] See John Kasson, *Rudeness & Civility: Manners in Nineteenth Century Urban America,* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990). John F. Kasson also discusses early American amusements and social conditions in *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 3-9. Janet M. Davis, *The Circus Age: Culture & Society Under the American Big Top,* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 34-35. See also Lawrence W. Levine*, Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America,* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1990) Edward P. Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979), 12-14.

EARLY MUSEUMS

Traveling shows, cabinets of curiosities, museums, and dime museums, were all similar venues that developed in America from the late 18th century and into the early 20th century. In the West, curiosity museums have been dated as far back as 1550, although they peaked in the 16th-17th centuries.[12] In America, the beginning of curiosity museum displays spurred from the merging of two prominent groups. In 1769, *the American Philosophical Society* and the *American Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge* joined together to form *The American Philosophical Society, held at Philadelphia, for promoting useful Knowledge* (henceforth *APS*).[13] This union was based on the premise of the "advancement of useful knowledge" and sought to improve American methods of industry and ingenuity.[14] Much like the impetus for early folklore collectors, the *APS* focused on preservation. Curators, for example, were required to "take charge of, and preserve, all Specimens of natural Productions, whether of the ANIMAL, VEGETABLE or FOSSIL Kingdom; [and] all Models of Machines and Instruments…"[15] Early collections of unique and "exotic" items began as early as 1772 with a display of Native American Indian snowshoes and a blanket.[16] During the early years of the *APS,* items were accumulated, not collected. Members of the Society, or the general public, sent many of the unusual items in, to be examined by "learned men," which eventually resulted in a significant accumulation of artifacts. The collection was severely neglected during the American Revolution and in 1789, when *APS* finally moved into a building of its own, there was an attempt to organize the acquisitions.[17] By 1793, the *APS* became known as a "national museum, library and scientific academy."[18]

The popularity of artificial curiosities was rivaled by nature, and by the end of the 18th century, natural exhibitions such as the mammoth proved to be the most popular exhibits. Soon, however, nationalism began to take its grip upon the people, and patriotic items, such as locks of George Washington's hair or Scudder's Naval Panorama, which was shown in conjunction with the anniversary of American Independence, gained in popularity.[19] Charles W. Peale, for example, provided a host of amusements to satisfy both patriotic and scientific patrons, although his American Museum, formed in 1786,

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[12] Edward P. Alexander, *Museums In Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, (Tennessee, 1979), 41.
[13] Whitfield J. Bell, "The Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society" In Walter Muir Whitehill, *Cabinet of curiosities: five episodes in the Revolution of American museums*, (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1967), 3.
[14] *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 1 (Jan.1, 1769-Jan.1, 1771): iii.
[15] Ibid. Emphasis in original.
[16] Presented by James Dickinson. See Whitfield J. Bell, *The Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1967), 5.
[17] Until 1789, the Philosophical Society had no official meeting place and often met by renting various rooms and locations. Whitfield J. Bell, *The Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1967), 7.
[18] Ibid, 8.
[19] *Columbian*, Vol. V, Issue 1424, June 21, 1814.

began with very few items: a war cap and cloak made of feathers, bark cloth, an East India Bow and Arrow, a Sea Feather, Porcupine Quill, among other relatively benign objects.[20] Peale began the tradition that gave American museums a "distinctly eclectic character" and his "assemblage of curiosities at points strained his ideal of "rational amusement" and the orderly reflection of the great Book of Nature."[21]

Five years later he moved and expanded his museum to a wing of the *APS* hall and acted as curator and resident caretaker for the *APS* museum, and by 1804, Peale moved his museum next door to the State House and continued expanding his museum well into the nineteenth century.[22] Human displays of unique, abnormal, or medically intriguing qualities were gaining momentum in the wake of scientific discovery, and Peale, although fascinated by the natural sciences, realized the growing popularity of curious human objects and featured an albino, but was heavily criticized for the "frivolous attention" his exhibit brought.[23] Peale's Museum continued to focus on curious exhibits of nature, but with increasing rent, administrative problems, and the death of Peale, the museum began to take a more ostentatious turn and eventually went bankrupt.[24] Greenhalgh suggests that there was an intellectual shift due to the acceptance of anthropology as a discipline in the late nineteenth century, which permitted expositions to focus on human display.[25] From 1861-1865, the Civil War appeared to have little effect on the types of leisure amusements Americans indulged in, particularly in the South.[26] The War did, however, affect theater ticket prices, which allowed for the popular support of secular amusements.[27]

DIME MUSUEMS

The days of renting small storefronts and buildings for exhibitions soon came to an end and curators were beginning to open permanent and more elaborate institutions. Sideshows were often considered bawdy and crude compared to the new impressive museums, and most Americans preferred to transform themselves into upper class

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[20] *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser,* Issue 3292, August 19, 1789, 3.
[21] John Kasson, *Rudeness & Civility: Manners in Nineteenth Century Urban America.* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 217.
[22] Whitfield J. Bell "The Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society" In Walter Muir Whitehill, *Cabinet of curiosities: five episodes in the Revolution of American museums*, (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1967), 12.
[23] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 29.
[24] See Charles Coleman Sellers, "Peale's Museum," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 43 (1953) and "Peale's Museum and "The New Museum Idea." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 124 (Feb. 29, 1980): 25-34.
[25] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 86.
[26] Patricia C. Click, *The Spirit of the Times: Amusements in Nineteenth Century Baltimore, Norfolk, and Richmond,* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 2.
[27] Ibid, 6, 52.

patrons. These traveling shows were often very small in company and were comprised of individuals who were regularly exhibited in museums. Museums such as Peale's were often referred to as Dime Museums because of the typical cost of admission.[28] Lambert describes these museums as "generally three or four stories in height.[29] The first floor was a regular Variety Theater, second floor a conglomeration of curios from all parts of the world and curiosities of natural history, freaks, etc., third floor performing freaks, novelties, stuffed birds, etc., fourth floor wild and tame stuffed animals and games of chance..." Lambert later writes, "The [curio] halls of the museums was a place for the publicity and exhibition of anything in the world that was curious, novel, scientific or entertaining. There were freaks of human nature and of the animal kingdom, especially, monstrosities of all kinds. The more blood curdling, barbarous and repulsive were the freaks the more eager they were to exhibit them."[30] However, not all museums chose to exhibit horrifying novelties.

Some museums, such as William Clark's Museum (1816-1838) focused heavily on archeological artifacts,[31] but most focused on scientific display. In 1810, John Scudder opened a museum of curiosities that would later become Barnum's American Museum in 1841. Even before the mainstream interest in science, Scudder's Museum attempted to combine education and entertainment so that his museum appealed to a "liberal and enlightened public." A newspaper advertisement from the *Evening Post* praises this approach and reads: "To blend instruction with entertainment should be the object of every place of public entertainment; and in no place can the young mind be more benefited than at the [Scudder's] museum."[32] Scudder expanded his collection, concentrating mainly on zoological specimens and housed a variety of animals, as well as curiosities, such as the bed curtains of Mary Queen of Scots.[33]

The Market Museum in Boston (1804-1822) was one of the earliest museums to feature humans, albeit in wax form. Human displays began to grow in popularity after Scudder's death in 1821, when his son John Scudder Jr. took over the American Museum and "began to provide variety acts and freak shows" in order to encourage business, particularly away from Peale's museum.[34] Cabinets of curiosities transformed into dime

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[28] Barnum is often credited as starting the first Dime Museum (The American Museum, 1841), but Peale and Scudder laid the foundation for Barnum's didactic approach to entertainment.

[29] William Lambert, *Show Life in America*, (Georgia: W. Delavoye, 1925), 159.

[30] Ibid.

[31] John C. Ewers, "William Clark's Indian Museum in St. Louis 1816-1838" In Walter Muir Whitehill, *Cabinet of curiosities: five episodes in the Revolution of American museums*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 49-72.

[32] *Evening Post*, October 16, 1810.

[33] See Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America*, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 18. In John Scudder, *A Companion to the American Museum,* (New York: G.F. Hopkins, 1823).

[34] Ibid, 18-19. To avoid demonstrating an overwhelming amount of what George Yúdice calls "postmodern finger flexing", I will no longer use quotes with the term freak, but will use it freely according to Robert Bogdan's (1988) notion that freaks are made rather than born. Thompson notes, "[n]ot until 1847 did the word [freak] become synonymous

museums, and entertainment became the goal rather than purely education. Dime museums offered an "inexpensive and unrestricted admission policy [which] made them accessible to the masses, and their popularity grew explosively from 1860 to 1900."[35] In 1841, Phineas T. Barnum emerged with his version of the American Museum—featuring anatomically correct wax figures, beasts, and freaks. Museums and curio halls, most notably Barnum's American Museum, often provided a place for various human attractions to work during the winter season.[36]

Although Barnum considered his circus to be a traveling museum, there was always debate regarding the legitimacy of this title.[37] *The Daily Cleveland Herald*, for example, (1856) placed suspecting quotation marks around the word "museum" and "showman" when referring to Barnum's endeavors.[38] Barnum's New American Museum was destroyed by fire in 1865, the same year President Lincoln was assassinated and the Civil War ended. Barnum quickly rebuilt a New American Museum—ironically it was also ravaged by fire in 1868.[39] After the destruction of both American Museums, Barnum took his show on the road in 1871 and teamed up with James Baily, continuing his wildly successful collection of human acts (freaks) with the traveling circus.[40] Dime Museums continued to grow in abundance until they peaked in the United States in the 1880s and 1890s.

LYCEUM

Oratory was another form of popular entertainment in the United States throughout the nineteenth century. Lyceums were lecture halls that were often used as a didactic entertainment venue, particularly in the mid nineteenth century. Josiah Holbrook founded the Lyceum Movement in the United States in 1826 and "by the late 1840s, a public lecture was expected to entertain as well as instruct and inspire."[41] *Putnam*

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with human corporeal anomaly. See George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*, (London 2005), 42; Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, (New York, 1996).

[35] Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America*, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 8.

[36] Eventually, the decline in these museums limited many to work only the summer season. See William Lambert, *Show Life in America*, (Georgia, 1925), 152.

[37] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 41.

[38] "Mr. P.T. Barnum's Troubles," *The Daily Cleveland Herald*, Issue 20. Col. A, Thursday, January 24, 1856.

[39] Edward P. Alexander, *Museums In Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums,* (Tennessee, 1979), 49-50.

[40] Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination*, (Chicago, 2001), 11.

[41] Donald M. Scott, "The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," *The Journal of American History,* Vol. 66, No. 4 (Mar., 1980): 802.

*Monthly* even defined the lyceum as "the American Theatre."[42] Historian Donald M. Scott reminds us that the during this period, Americans had a "seemingly insatiable craving" for "useful knowledge" and that between 1840 and 1860 there were more than 3,000 advertised lectures.[43]

Much like early museums and exhibition halls, lyceums were touted for their secular, inclusive, and non-partisan nature and "Josiah Holbrook himself had gloried in the non-partisan character of his lyceums..."[44] People of all backgrounds were drawn to these lectures as curiosity played an integral role in the most popular lectures and "[f]irm interest remained in what might be called curious knowledge—the exotic, bizarre, and wondrous." The audience was not interested in just hearing facts but wanted lecturers to "place their particular topic or kind of knowledge in a broad, interpretive context."[45]

Barnum evidently wanted to take advantage of the interest in the unusual and requested to have "a judicious man go ahead and arrange with *Lyceums*, so that I am paid as much as $50 to $100 per lecture, or have a share of receipts which will amount to that."[46] Museum proprietors like Barnum satiated public interest in science, nature, and curiosities, and "the lyceum circuit attracted lecturers on science, while independent entrepreneurs displayed live animals, mineral specimens, and rarities in small towns across the country, capitalizing on public curiosity about natural objects."[47] Although these venues did not normally display lusus naturae, the subject was discussed either directly or indirectly. Lyceum culture helped shape the public's notion of nature and science, which ultimately involved their interaction with and observation of lusus naturae as a didactic form of amusement.

## EXPOSITIONS & WORLD'S FAIRS

International expositions grew out of a European tradition that began in 1851 at the Crystal Palace in London. Since this time, the term exposition and world's fair are often used synonymously, the latter usually involving a more international perspective. Raymond Corbey describes world's fairs or international expositions as "very large-scale

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[42] This was in contrast to similar European forms of entertainment. See Donald M. Scott, "The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth Century America" *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 66. No. 4 (Mar., 1980): 791.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Vern Wagner, "The Lecture Lyceum and the Problem of Controversy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan. 1954): 122. Wagner also notes that "George William Curtis wrote that because the mixed audience at lyceum lectures were of all political and religious views, lecturers discussed Hamlet," 125.

[45] Donald M. Scott, "The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (Mar., 1980): 802.

[46] *The Liberator*, Issue 24: 96, Friday, June 15, 1855. The idea that Barnum would give a lecture on "the science of humbug" was thought to be a newspaper joke, but it appears that Barnum was actually interested in pursuing this topic. See "Mr. Barnum," *Farmer's Cabinet,* Vol. 53, 1854, 3, 24.

[47] Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, "Curiosities and Cabinets: Natural History Museums and Education on the Antebellum Campus," *Isis,* Vol. 79: 3, (Sep., 1988): 407.

happenings that combined features of trade and industrial fairs, carnival, music festivals, political manifestations, museums, and art galleries."[48]

The first large international exposition in the United States was the *Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations* held in New York in 1853.[49] Like most early expositions, the showcase was on recent industrial achievements in categories such as: machines, philosophical instruments, paper and stationary, wearing apparel, glass, etc.[50] The exposition was a financial failure and Don Wilmeth notes that "even P.T. Barnum, America's most successful impresario, failed to save the venture." The 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, is considered to be the first official World's Fair in the United States, but it was not until the 1878 at the Exposition Universelle in Paris that humans from non-Western cultures were exhibited with great success. The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago featured 400 natives from Senegal, Java, Tahiti, and Egypt. These living exhibits of exotic, unusual, and foreign people became an integral part of expositions. Both the architecture of the temporary buildings at these expositions and the familiar reoccurring folk motifs, further allowed the public to escape to lands of fantasy and legend.[51]

## MIDWAY

The American midway began at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where "Midway" originated from the term *Midway Plaisance*, or the strip of land that ran the length of the fair outside the exposition halls at the Columbian Exposition, although the origins of the layout have been traced back to European traditions including the medieval carnival as well as the seventeenth-century pleasure garden of England and France.[52] Rides, various forms of games and entertainment, as well as food booths, and displays of oddities lined the midway for all future world's fairs, and the midway was

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[48] Raymond Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930," *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (August 1993): 339.

[49] The earliest exposition was the annual (1829-1897) American Institute Fair in New York, but it was much smaller in scope.

[50] "Official Catalogue of the New-York Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations" New York: George P. Putnam & Co., 1853. Also, Nelson Graburn has shown that both the Canadian pavilion of 1987 and the 1851 World's Fair exhibited "native" artifacts and nature, such as canoes, moose, along with the latest technology (steam engines, the "Canada Arm" of the space shuttle. See Nelson Graburn, "Natives and High Tech: Canadian National Symbols at World's Fairs, 1851-1986." Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Kroeber Anthropological Society, Berkeley March 7, 1987.

[51] For more on the architecture of the Centennial Exhibition, see Jeffery Howe, "A 'Monster Edifice': Ambivalence, Appropriation, and the Forging of Cultural Identity at the Centennial Exhibition," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography,* Vol. 126, No. 4 (Oct., 2002): 635-650.

[52] Don B. Wilmeth, *Variety Entertainment and Outdoor Amusements: A Reference Guide*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 25.

called the "grittiest and most commercial part of the Fair."[53] The World's Columbian Exposition featured a plethora of living humans including "the Samoan, Javanese, Dahomeyan and other 'native villages'..."[54] Soon after the Exposition, the term midway was used liberally to define any outdoor area which included a variety of games, rides, and exhibits. These later exhibits usually featured humans, who were not only foreign and exotic, but also had physical abnormalities.

## CARNIVAL

Carnival historian Joe McKennon defines the carnival as "a collective amusement organization consisting of various shows, riding devices, free acts, exhibitions, and gaming and catering concessions."[55] McKennon also notes "There is no need to confuse a circus with a carnival under any circumstances. A carnival can, and often does, have a complete circus as one of the shows on its midway. By no alchemy worked by a master of circus logistics can a circus carry a carnival. If it could be done, the organization would become a fast moving carnival."[56] McKennon uses the term midway to describe the activity that occurs within the perimeter of the carnival, and not just world's fairs. As McKennon previously mentioned, circuses can be an aspect of a carnival, and equally, a sideshow could be an aspect of either a carnival or circus.

## CIRCUS

In 1793, seventeen years before the birth of the notorious circus proprietor P.T. Barnum, Americans in Philadelphia were treated to their first circus experience when John Bill Ricketts arrived on the scene from London with his "Equestrian Performance." Ricketts's circus took advantage of the current public interest in horsemanship and featured acrobats and skilled riders.[57] Animals, particularly horses, played a crucial role in these first American circuses, and in 1795 in Philadelphia, Ricketts "built his famous "New Amphitheatre" containing both a riding ring and a stage …"[58] Menageries, which featured a variety of animals such as elephants, camels, lions, and polar bears, originally developed in competition with circuses, but soon the differences became less distinct and by 1813 the first traveling menagerie traveled through New York.[59] By 1825 canvas tents were used and soon became the standard circus structure for housing large audiences— a

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[53] Rosemarie Bank, "Representing History: Performing the Columbian Exposition," *Theatre Journal,* Volume 54. No. 4. (December 2002): 589-606.
[54] Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: 2004), 219.
[55] Joe McKennon, *A Pictorial History of the American Carnival,* Vol. 1 (Ohio: Popular Press, 1972), 19.
[56] Ibid.
[57] *General Advertiser*, Issue 663, November 10, 1792, 3.
[58] LaVahn G. Hoh and William H. Rough. *Step Right Up! The Adventures of Circus in America*, (Virginia: Betterway Puglications, 1990), 55.
[59] Ibid, 57, and "The Circus in America Timeline," *Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities*, 2004.

design that allowed portability and convenience to traveling venues. It kept circuses moving into new towns and ultimately shortened the time a venue remained to as little as one day. Soon, even the smallest towns were visited by various circuses and entertainers and the public could choose between local and more distant amusements, but major cities like New York had circuses "since the days of Ricketts."[60]

In terms of content, Barnum's early circus endeavors were much like sideshows. For example, his (1851-52) "Barnum's Asiatic Caravan, Museum and Menagerie" and "P.T. Barnum's Grand Colossal Museum and Menagerie" (1854-55), featured "Mr. Nellis, the man without arms" as well as "wild beasts, a Museum of wonders, Gen. Tom Thumb, &c., &c..."[61] Although Barnum was briefly involved in circuses from 1851-1855, he did not become seriously involved until his retirement 1871 when he joined William C. Coup and Dan Castello in "a new enterprise with the profitable but unwieldy title, the *P.T. Barnum Museum, Menagerie, and Circus, International Zoological Garden, Polytechnic Institute and Hippodrome*"[62]

In 1871, Barnum continued his lengthy descriptions and aptly titled his traveling circus, "Barnum's Great Traveling World's Fair, consisting of Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, Hippodrome, Gallery of Statuary and Fine Arts, Polytechnic Institute, Zoological Garden, and 100,000 Curiosities, Combined with Dan Castello's, Sig Sebastian's, and Mr. D'Atelie's Grand Triple Equestrian and Hippodromatic Exposition." The importance of the circus to the American public cannot be emphasized enough. Roslyn Poignant writes, "Before the movies, the circus was probably the most influential instruments of mass culture in shaping public attitudes, through an extraordinary range of linked representational activities associated with publication and performance."[63]

## SIDESHOW

The American sideshow existed primarily as a supplement to circuses, world's fairs, carnivals, and travelling fairs, and is typically defined as "an auxiliary or under-canvas show attached to a midway (or at a circus)..." with frequent exhibitions of "freaks or human oddities..."[64] The term is considered to have originated around 1850, although the exact origin remains a subject of speculation.[65] The Online Etymology Dictionary

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[60] LaVahn G. Hoh and William H. Rough. *Step Right Up! The Adventures of Circus in America*, (Virginia: Betterway Puglications, 1990), 57.
[61] *Weekly Eagle*, Volume IV, Issue 101: 3, July 28, 1851 and "Barnum's Asiatic Caravan" *Farmer's Cabinet*, Vol. 49, Issue 46: 3, June 26, 1851.
[62] LaVahn G. Hoh and William H. Rough. *Step Right Up! The Adventures of Circus in America*, 60.
[63] Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 82.
[64] Don B. Wilmeth, *Variety Entertainment and Outdoor Amusements: A Reference Guide*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 23. See also See Stuart Thayer's article in the March-April 1992 issue of *Bandwagon*, "Out-Side Shows."
[65] Don B. Wilmeth, scholar of theater and English, dates the first sideshow at around 1904, 50 years after Barnum's traveling exhibitions.

reads "sideshow—1855, apparently a coinage of P.T. Barnum's, from side + show (n.)."[66] Perhaps this origin stems from P.T. Barnum's 1855 biography, where Barnum refers to his "side shows" as temporary enterprises.[67]

Barnum was regularly presenting human oddities as exhibits in his American Museum (from the time he opened in 1841) and brought many of his exhibits with him on his first brief circus enterprise (1851-1855). As a result, the traveling shows that flanked the periphery of many circus tents, showcased human oddities, just like Barnum's American Museum. The characteristics of the sideshow usually involve both lusus naturae of some manner as a supplement to a dominant show.

## FREAK SHOW

The freak show was simply another term to describe a sideshow act, which specifically featured strange, unusual, and usually deformed individuals, both born and self made. The freak show was almost always connected to a larger venue (i.e. sideshow, circus, carnival) and existed well before the use the word "freak" or "freak show" came into existence. Rosemary Garland Thompson writes, "The freak show is a spectacle, a cultural performance that gives primacy to visual apprehension in creating symbolic codes and institutionalizes the relationship between the spectacle and the spectators."[68] The freak show, as an element of a circus, carnival, or fair was one of the primary places where humans with abnormalities were displayed for amusement during the nineteenth century in the United States.

## SUMMARY

There are other venues that exhibited human lusus naturae, such as amusement and seaside parks.[69] These later incarnations of carnivals, circuses, and sideshows,

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[66] Dictionary.com. Online Etymology Dictionary. Douglas Harper, Historian. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sideshow (accessed September 09, 2011).

[67] Phineas T. Barnum, *The Life of P.T. Barnum*, (New York: Redfield, 1855) Reprint, (Illinois: University of Illinois, 2000) 344. See also R.L. Parkison, "A report of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Baily Circus Sideshow 1919-1956," June 7, 1971, at Archives of Circus World Museum, Baraboo, WI documented in Farrah J. Mateen and Christopher J. Boes "Pinheads" The Exhibition of Neurologic Disorders at "The Greatest Show on Earth," *Neurology*, 75, November 30, 2010.

[68] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary bodies: Figuring physical disability in America culture and literature*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 60.

[69] The American amusement park began with Sea Lion Amusement Park (1895), Steeplechase Park (1897), Luna Park (1903), and Dreamland (1904), all were located in the Coney Island area. Similar to the Midway, these theme parks were extensions of entertainment at World's Fairs and Expositions. For a detailed list of sources on American seaside resorts and amusement areas, see Don B. Wilmeth's, *Variety Entertainment and Outdoor Amusements: A Reference Guide*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 37-38. John Kasson, *Amusing the Million,* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

although important, existed outside the temporal framework of this study and will therefore not be included in this survey. In summary, the distinctions between these terms are flexible and many of these venues are not mutually exclusive. The size, location, and specifications (such as having a "ring," under a "canvas tent," or part of a larger venue) of these venues are the identifying factors rather than the actual content, and these venues existed independently of one another (See Figure 1).

The study of human spectacle has been explored through numerous disciplines, particularly in the fields of anthropology, folklore, disability studies, performance studies, and tourism studies. It is important to remember that the general public did not often come into contact with non-human forms of lusus naturae in their daily lives. Although it was possible for the average nineteenth century American to come across an anomalous human outside of an exhibition hall, it was still a very scarce occurrence. Literary and disability scholar Sue Schweik points out that there were many laws and ordinances that kept the nineteenth century American public from viewing physical deformities or grotesque bodies.[70] As a result, as the interest in anomalous objects, including human, grew, it became nearly impossible for the general public to view lusus naturae without evoking a freak show context.

Most scholarly approaches to this subject focus on the object or display rather than the viewer, with little or no attention paid to the interdependent relationship with the seller (or proprietor, storyteller, and latent performer). Traditional studies of the display of lusus naturae have been limited to a specific academic discipline, which limits the scope of the study as well as the capacity to fully understand the trend of exhibiting lusus naturae for profit from a multi directional perspective. This section examines some of the ways that scholars have studied human curiosities on display in the United States, and how this study differs from these traditional approaches.[71]

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[70] See Susan M. Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

[71] This is not intended to be a chronological or comprehensive account of all scholarly methods of studying humans on display. Subsequent chapters will introduce methods, theories, and approaches from various scholars and disciplines as they relate to the discussion.

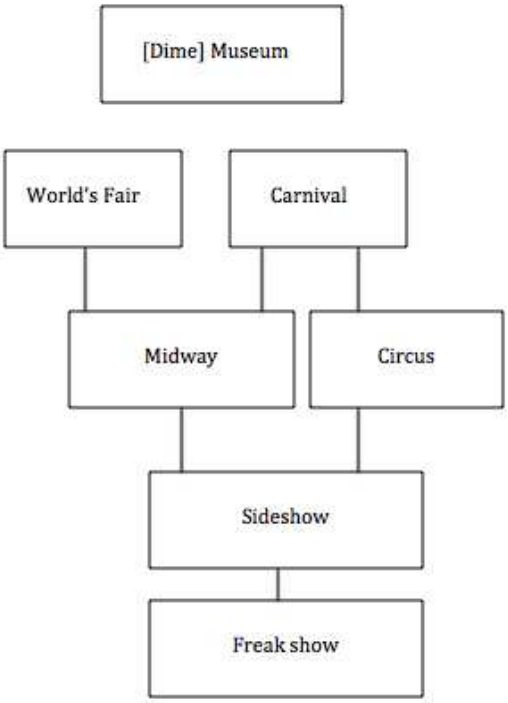


Fig. 1 prominent places where lusus naturae were exhibited 1830-1880

## TRADITIONAL APPROACHES

## THE MONSTER AND THE WONDER

Most scholars of lusus naturae reference the border between human and non-human form in their research. Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park have produced a significant study on the history of wonder and the display and reception of marvels and monsters from the 12th century throughout Europe.[72] For Daston and Park, the viewing of lusus naturae went through "three successive stages [of interpretations and emotions]– horror, pleasure, and repugnance—which overlapped and coexisted during much of the early modern period, although each had its own rhythm and dynamic."[73] By the early nineteenth century, individuals familiar with the legends of monsters, were compelled by the notion of witnessing a living being that was essentially only partially human. The term monster was often used to describe a naturally occurring phenomenon, portent, or providence, rather than a ruse or self-made monster. Rosemary Garland-Thompson, for

[72] Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park's study on wonder focuses on a period between 1150-1750. See Daston, Lorraine. *Wonders and the Order of Nature*. New York: Zone Books, 1998.
[73] Ibid, 176.

example, states, "[a]uthentic monsters are born, never made."[74] The study of teratology, or monsters, existed in Greek and Roman times and into the early nineteenth century, and during this era, most explorations of the monstrous used science to explain these bodies in terms of medical conditions.[75]

M.J.B Gardin Dumesnil's 1825 edition of Latin synonyms designates portentum, ostentum, and monstrum, as synonyms and more specifically refers to them as *"particular prodigies*."[76] Dumesnil also writes "Monstrum, *a monster, or anything that is against or besides the common course of nature. An ox with a horse's head would be monstrum*."[77] The theme of the human/animal hybrid appears a great deal, and Leslie Fiedler asserts that whether the meaning of monster "derives from *moneo*, meaning to warn, or *monstro*, meaning to show forth, the implication is the same: human abnormalities are the products not of a whim of nature but of the design of Providence."[78] Foucault suggests that humans, unless combined with animals, are not considered *monstrum*, but that the "expressions *portentum* and *ostentum* will designate a simple abnormality, and that of *monstrum* will be applied exclusively to any being which does not have human form."[79]

The displays of humans with abnormalities (whether mummified, waxed, or skeletonized) were extremely popular exhibitions, but humans who were considered to have animal characteristics (or to literally be part animal) proved exceedingly popular. For Foucault, the defining aspect of a monster is "the blending, the mixture of two species," such as an animal with another animal's head; the "mixture of two realms," which could be the man with the head of an ox; the "mixture of two individuals," such as a person with two heads and one body or two bodies and one head; or "the mixture of two sexes, as a hermaphrodite; or the "mixture of forms, the person with no arms nor legs is like a snake."[80]

The understanding of lusus naturae as wonder and monstrosity is rooted in tradition and folklore. C.J.S. Thompson writes, "Extraordinary creatures of human and animal form enter into many of the mythological fables, and monsters possessing two or more heads and beings of gigantic stature, figure in the stories and fairy-tales of nearly

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[74] Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, *Staring: How We Look*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 178.
[75] See George M. Gould and Walter L. Pyle, *Anomalies and Curiosites of Medicine*, (New York: Bell Publishing Company, 1896).
[76] M.J.B. Gardin Dumesnil, *Latin Synonyms, with Their Different Significations: and Examples Taken From the Best Latin Authors*, Translated into English with Additions and Corrections, by The Rev. J.M. Gosset, Third Ed., (London: George B. Whittaker, Ave-Maria Lane; Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, and J. Duncan, Paternoster Row; J. Cuthell, Holborn; and J. Nunn, Great Queen Street, 1825), 466.
[77] Ibid.
[78] This has also been noted by Susan Stewart in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 108.
[79] Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France 1974-1975*, (UK: Verso, 2003), 76.
[80] Ibid.

every country."[81] Interestingly, Thompson's book *The History and Lore of Freaks* (1996) was originally published as The *Mystery and Lore of Monsters* in 1930. The change from "mystery" to "history" appears to legitimize the contents by associating the anomaly with historical truth, and equally, the change from "monster" to "freak" indicates a cultural change in the social construction of these anomalous bodies.

Rosemary Garland-Thompson recognizes the interactive aspect of display in relation to the viewer, the starer, and the monstrous body.[82] Garland-Thomson describes the visual rhetoric involved when one gazes at a photograph of a disabled figure and suggests that the wondrous as a visual rhetoric is historically the oldest mode of representing disability, and that modernity secularized the wonder into stereotypes such as the "supercrip." Ultimately, this visual rhetoric "directs the viewer to look up in awe of difference" by "positioning the disabled figure as the exception to human capability."[83]

## DISABILITY AND NORMALITY

Modern disability scholars have explored exhibitions featuring (human) lusus naturae from interesting perspectives.[84] Rosemarie Thomson writes, "From folktales and classical myths to modern and postmodern 'grotesques,' the disabled body is almost always a freakish spectacle presented by the mediating narrative voice."[85] The disabled body is often associated with the marginalized, the defective, and the "other." Medicalization often deflected the curiosity of the general public from the realm of wonder to that of error, and scholars such as Leonard Cassuto assert that through science, the freak is in essence "solved" with the doctor playing the role of the detective and disability as the "crime."[86]

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[81] C.J.S. Thompson, *The History and Lore of Freaks*, (London: Williams & Norgate Ltd, 1996), 17. First published as The History and Lore of Monsters, 1931.

[82] Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, *Staring: How We Look*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7. For a discussion on shaping and directing the gaze into a mutual look, see Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings*, (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1999).

[83] Thomson also presents the rhetoric of the realistic, which can be used as a way to "warn viewers against becoming disabled." Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Seeing the Disabled: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography" in *The New Disability History*, Ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 341, 346.

[84] The Disability Rights Movement began in the 1970's, encouraged by examples of the Civil rights movement and women's rights movements. The discourse on disability is too huge and encompassing to address at this point. The scholarship that has been completed on this topic is integral to understanding both sides of the experience and could eventually be applied to further the premise of this study.

[85] Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 10.

[86] Cassuto is referring here to Oliver Sacks.

The display of the marginalized is a characteristic of American exhibitions.[87] Roslyn Poignant writes "The presentation of the exotic 'other' in association with the anomalous 'other' appears to have been much more marked in America than Europe."[88] John Williams-Searle attributes this to the "uniquely American ideas of democracy" because "[t]he freak show helped establish boundaries of social inclusion, allowing spectators to quell their status anxieties by gazing at people whose actual bodies had been defined as essentially un-American."[89] Susan Stewart suggests that the "freak of nature" is actually a "freak of culture," which implies that there was something distinctly American about viewing these types of exhibits as amusement, albeit didactic in form.[90]

Disabled performers have been seen as reflecting current social and cultural climates in much the same way as circulating folklore is said to reflect the same. Petra Küppers, for example, suggests that the disabled performer is "a sign of her times: a point in modernity when extraordinary bodies have a currency as lifestyle accessories, when any shock or alienation value is eroded by the ubiquity of difference that is consumed and repackaged."[91] This study sees the performer as an instantiation of a folk motif, and therefore a (usually) familiar subject that acts in much the same way as folklore. Circulating folklore, for example, is said to directly reflect current issues occurring in a particular society.

Many scholars have noted the absence of pity "as a mode of presentation" in freak show type exhibitions, although Garland-Thompson believes that in regard to photographs of disabled people, "The rhetoric of sentiment diminishes that [disabled] figure to evoke pity, inspiration, and frequent contributions."[92] This absence of pity has been seen by some scholars as particularly contradictory. For example, Tobin Siebers, a literary and cultural critic who specializes in disability theory writes: "It is easy to

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[87] Roslyn Poignant cross references "freaks" with "marginalized people" in her index. *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 297.

[88] Ibid, 265.

[89] John Williams-Searle, "Cold Charity: Manhood, Brotherhood, and the Transformation of Disability, 1870-1900," in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 179.

[90] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 109. This has also been noted by Rosemary Garland Thompson in *Extraordinary bodies: Figuring physical disability in America culture and literature*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

[91] Petra Küppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3.

[92] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 277; Susan M. Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 103; Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Seeing the Disabled: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography" in *The New Disability History*, ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 341.

mythologize disability as an advantage. Disabled bodies are so unusual and bend the rules of representation to such extremes that they must mean something extraordinary."[93]

The relationship between freak shows and human abnormalities developed so strongly in the nineteenth century, that even people with disabilities who were not on display for entertainment or profit were often seen through the lens of the freak show. Scholars have commented that the American public, though heterogeneous in many ways, was normalized in relation to the abnormal bodies on display.[94] Susan Stewart suggests that displays like freak shows "normalize" the viewer as much as they mark the freak as an aberration."[95]

As Lennard J. Davis notes, the use of the concept "normal," "normalcy," "normality," "norm," "average," "abnormal"—all entered the European languages rather late in human history, and that the "word 'norm,' in the modern sense, has only been in use since around 1855, and 'normality' and 'normalcy' appeared in 1849 and 1857 respectively….[I]t is possible to date the coming into consciousness in English of an idea of 'the norm' over the period 1840-1860."[96] D.C. Baynton suggests that the modern concept of normality came about in the nineteenth century and that during this period "…the concept of natural was to a great extent displaced or subsumed by the concept of normality."[97] John Williams-Searle writes "Spectators—middle-class gawkers, self-described rubes, anyone with the price of a ticket—used the sideshow to displace anxieties about their own identities, projecting their fears onto an exhibited person with a disability and thereby creating and policing the boundaries of normality.[98]

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[93] Tobin Siebers, "Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body," *American Literary History*, Vol. 13: 4, (Winder, 2001).

[94] Foucault often refers to Roman law in his discussion of the monstrous and suggests that the law, either civil, canon, or legal, is the very thing that causes a "transgression of natural limits." Foucault later suggests "the difference between disability and monstrosity is revealed at the meeting point, the point of friction…Disability may well be something that upsets the natural order, but disability is not monstrosity because it has a place in civil or canon law." Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France 1974-1975*, (UK: Verso, 2003), 63-64.

[95] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 109.

[96] Lennard J. Davis, "Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century" in *The Disability Studies Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3-16.

[97] D.C. Baynton, "Disability & the Justification of Enequality in American History" in *New Disability History: American Perspectives*, Ed. P. Longmore & L Umansky, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 35.

[98] John Williams-Searle, "Cold Charity: Manhood, Brotherhood, and the Transformation of Disability, 1870-1900." in in *New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. P. Longmore & L Umansky, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 178.

## FREAKERY, THE EXOTIC, AND THE CULTURAL "OTHER"

The term freak as a noun stands as a highly charged term that describes, not only a disfigured body, but also inevitably one that is tied to display for profit and amusement. Leslie Fiedler's seminal work, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret* Self, opened the door to scholarship on this subject. Fiedler's work is particularly related to the premise of this study. Fiedler extensively notes the relationship between freaks and mythology, but fails to use folklore scholarship to strengthen his argument. This study, in a sense, takes aspects of Fiedler's study much further by using an interdisciplinary discourse with folklore as the principal tool. While Fiedler probes the archetypical aspects of the freak, this study explores the relationship between particular displays and the audience.

Robert Bogdan's work on the freak show is significant to this study because he explores the context of freakery from the perspective of "presenting human oddities for amusement and profit."[99] Bogdan argues that all freaks are an elaborate social construction and it was the aggrandized and exotic presentation that created the freak. In most cases, unusual individuals from distant lands proved to be the most successful exhibits. Their act could be billed as both unique and exotic—doubling the curiosity factor. Poet and literary critic, Susan Stewart writes, "We may find the freak inextricably tied to the cultural other..."[100]

In a move that evokes the biblical stories of Noah's Ark, P.T. Barnum developed the *Ethnological Congress of Barbarous and Savage Tribes* (1894) and urged American consuls, and anthropological institutions, to bring back "a collection, in pairs or otherwise, of all the uncivilized races in existence...to astonish, interest and instruct [the American public]."[101] The exotic spectacle was portrayed as a vestigial entity of a time past, and the entrance to this temporal space was often the payment of a coin. Once inside, the spectator fell prey to the images inside, and these exoticized individuals were often displayed among a group of people with various physical abnormalities.

Barnum's request for pairs of "uncivilized races" was accompanied by the request for "those who possess extraordinary peculiarities such as giants, dwarfs, singular disfigurements of the person, dexterity in the use of weapons, dancing, singing, juggling, unusual feats of strength or agility etc,"[102] and he exhibited "freaks,"[103] "hideous tribes,"[104] and "100 superstitious, Idolatrous, Pagan-Worshipping Heathens"[105] alongside those with mental disabilities. Exhibitions that juxtaposed exotic and disabled individual insinuated a forced relationship between mental disability and otherness. Poignant writes, "Barnum was not alone in propagating the idea that geographical marginality equated

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[99] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
[100] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (London, 1993), 109.
[101] Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 87.
[102] Ibid, 58.
[103] *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Vol. CX, April 2, 1884, 3.
[104] *The Sun*, Vol. XCIV, Issue 149, May 8, 1884, 1.
[105] *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Vol. CX, April 8, 1884, 8.

with the social marginality of the physically and mentally impaired...Not only were the congenitally impaired shown together with the exotic indigenous, the latter were described in the language of impairment—as 'deformed', with 'distorted' features, and lacking proper speech."[106] This study takes an alternative, yet parallel approach. I suggest that the reason these exotic individuals were shown alongside those with disabilities was not necessarily merely to degrade the former, but because the subject matter resonated with the viewer, as folkloric in nature. Foreigners such as the "Australian cannibals," the "Ferocious Zulus," the "Extraordinary Todars," or the "Wild Men of Borneo" were advertised as having the "already well-established visual stereotype of cannibal savagery."[107] The topic of cannibalism is found throughout the Motif-Index, with over 117 motifs relating to the topic of cannibals and cannibalism.

Many of these displays correspond to specific motifs, which strengthen the premise that it was the familiarity of these motifs that helped to draw in the public. For example, The Wild Men of Borneo (Motif G11.1 *Cannibal dwarfs*), The Australian Cannibals (Motif *G11.18 Cannibal tribe*), or The Extraordinary Todars (Motif G11.14 *Jungle-man as cannibal)* all have analogous motifs.[108] With the understanding of the relationship between display and motif, comes an entirely different perspective to the study of humans with abnormalities outside traditional approaches.

Rosemary Garland Thompson uses the exotic as one of her noted aspects of visual rhetoric, which "presents disabled figures as alien, often sensationalized, eroticized, or entertaining in their difference."[109] Thompson suggests that self-made 'freaks' can invoke the exotic mode of representation. That is, one does not have to be both disabled and exotic, but the mere labeling of exotic-ness is enough to deem someone disabled and therefore allow the person to be viewed as a disabled figure.[110] For Thompson, individuals with a physical disability (real or self-made) were alienated (and therefore seen as exotic) via presentation, not the other way around. This study views "freakery" as another, *visual rhetoric,* to use Thompson's term. That is, the "exotic other" can be presented and seen in the same manner as the disabled without actually having a physical abnormality. This perspective merely places the focus on something other than the disability. The usual scholarly approaches to the freak show focuses on the disability of the performer first and foremost, and although the subject of disability is still a large and

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[106] See Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, (Chicago, 1988); Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 84.
[107] Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 265.
[108] Motifs taken from Stith Thompson, *Motif-index of folk-literature : a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends*, Revised and enlarged edition, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955-1958).
[109] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Seeing the Disabled: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography" in *The New Disability History*, ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 341.
[110] Ibid, 358.

important aspect, this study suggests that there is something else framing and shaping the criterion and popularity of the human display for amusement.

## AS ETHNOGRAPHIC OBJECT

The American Exhibitions, like the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, claimed the purpose of the villages was strictly educational. Animal trainer Carl Hagenbeck was considered the originator of exhibiting foreign peoples, and by 1890, one of the principal traditions of exhibiting foreign people involved claims of ethnographic authenticity.[111] The science of ethnology was gaining popularity in the mid nineteenth century, and by the early 20th century Franz Boas introduced cultural relativism, which consequently slowly began to erode these earlier notions of primitive cultures.[112]

Museum researcher, Paul Greenhalgh, identifies an exact period, 1889-1914, when exhibitions all over the world showcased humans, and suggests that, in this era, "objects were seen to be less interesting than human beings, and through the medium of display, humans were transformed into objects."[113] These nineteenth century American displays of lusus naturae were often what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimlett describes as *in situ*, a notion that "entails metonymy and mimesis: the object is a part that stands in a contiguous relation to an absent whole that mayor may not be re-created," while simultaneously attempting to be *in context*.[114]

In the same year that Barnum died, 1891, Boas and Putnam began organizing anthropological human displays for the upcoming Chicago Exposition. The resulting exposition displayed Native Americans as a "primitive foreign race" while any person of color was denied any part in the Fair.[115] Fair exhibitions also depicted extraordinary individuals as both mundane and sensational. John Urry explains that the "visual gaze renders extraordinary activities that otherwise would be mundane." For example, Kirshenblatt-Gimlett's book *Destination Culture* showcases a cartoon from the Chicago

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[111] Curtis M. Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," *In Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, (Washington: 1991), 246. Hinsley notes that in 1878, Jacobson toured with the Lapps and in 1880, his tour of Labrador Eskimos all died of small pox

[112] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, (Chicago, 1988), 177.

[113] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 82.

[114] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimlett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 19-21. See also Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, (New York: Schocken, 1976).

[115] It was not until 1936 that the Texas Centennial built a Hall of Negro Life, but only to show that people of color could be a valuable economic resource. Paul Greenhalgh's *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, 98, 100

Sunday Herald, 17 September 1893, which reads "Great Excitement—Indian Lady Throwing Out Bathwater."[116]

Many scholars who study human exhibitions have noted the public's familiarity with strangeness. Rosemarie Garland Thomson, for example, writes, "Using imagery and symbols managers and promoters knew the public would respond to, they created a public identity for the person that was being exhibited that would have the widest appeal, and thereby would collect the most dimes."[117] Scholars have yet to identify *why* the public responded to particular images and symbols, and this study addresses this question.

## AMERICAN FOLKLORISTICS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

William K. McNeil's lengthy dissertation entitled "A History of American Folklore Scholarship Before 1908" gives insight into some of the earliest examples of written folklore.[118] McNeil begins with some of the more notable characters of the past, including John Josselyn (1638-1675), Increase (1639-1723) and Cotton Mather (1663-1728), and Meriwether Lewis (1774-1809) and William Clark (1770-1838)—but he does so with caution. McNeil suggests that folklore collections prior to the eighteenth century "can be placed in one of two categories: either they were intentional projects made haphazardly or systematic efforts that were unintentionally folkloristic," but the real problem, he notes, is that "there was no real theoretical basis underlying the works that were produced."[119] The proclaimed lack of a theoretical foundation is not confined to a historical past, and has, in fact, been remarked upon well into the 20th century, which suggest that the problems noted by McNeil have never really diminished—even after nearly 300 years.[120]

But even with this caveat, McNeil considers much of this early travel literature the foundation of current folklore studies. His uncertainty towards early folklore collections wanes at times—asserting that James Adair's *History of American Indians*

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[116] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimlett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 48.

[117] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, 25.

[118] See Pane's On the Antiquities of the Indians (1496), Josselyn's New England Rarities (1672), and An Account of Two Voyages (1674), Increase Mather's Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences (1684), and Cotton Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana (1702).

[119] William K. McNeil, *A History of American Folklore Scholarship Before 1908*, Vol. 1, Dissertation, Indiana University, 1980, 19.

[120] In 1948, Stith Thomson remarks on the relative "amateurish" quality of previous collections, and more recently, Alan Dundes commented on the lack of theory and the inundation of amateurs into the field. See Stith Thompson's "The Future of Folklore Research in the United States," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 93, No. 3, (Jun. 10, 1949) and Alan Dundes's "Folkloristics in the Twenty-First Century (AFS Invited Presidential Plenary Address, 2004)" *Journal of American Folklore* 118(470): 385-408.

(1775) is one of the earliest examples of applied folklore. McNeil also suggests that Cotton Mather's goals and methodology are parallel to those of modern studies of tradition, while also reminding us that Mather was no folklorist.[121]

Because the techniques of early collectors were not necessarily analogous to modern methods, it is difficult for present day folklorists to use this material to gain insight into the context of the material. Alan Dundes, for example, believed that early folklore was treated as "rare exotica, metaphorically speaking, to have a pin stuck through them and mounted in a display archival case such that is almost impossible to imagine the folklore items were ever alive."[122]

The concern for the vanishing nature of oral traditions in America has been noted by Scotsman Hugh Miller in 1835, and with this concern came considerable collections of ballads, tales, and folk beliefs. Even though nineteenth century folklore collections contained virtually the same material (except labeled as "popular antiquities" or "popular literature"), much of the dialogue takes place after the founding of the American Folklore Society in 1888, and on occasion, the conversation begins in 1846 when William John Thoms coined the term *folklore*. It is not as if American folklore did not exist before this term was used— the material simply had a different name.

Scholarship techniques took center stage in the mid nineteenth century, and continue to hold the attention of folklore scholars today. In America, the first Ph.D. in anthropology was given from Clark University in 1892, and the first Ph.D. in folklore was given in Indiana University in 1953. With over 60 years in the lead, it is no wonder that folklore has paddled in the wake of anthropology for so long. Rosemary Levy Zumwalt's *American Folklore Scholarship* gives a detailed and lengthy discussion of the "schism" between anthropological and literary folklorists. Her study is rooted in the debates and methods of folklore in an academic context (mainly a divide between disciplinary approaches) with little commentary on folklore collections before the late nineteenth century.

Zumwalt suggests that the divide between anthropological and literary folklorists became less apparent as professional folklore took root and argues that professionalism and scientism was the eminent cause of the divide (and eventually what closed the divide). The argument seems to lie on whether anthropology was considered a legitimate scientific discipline rather than whether folklore itself was scientific. As a result, the legitimacy of folklore was indirectly at stake merely because of the relationship between folklore and anthropology. Zumwalt does not attempt to define what American folklore is, but merely limits her discussion to those who studied and resided in the United States. By default, American folklore was defined by who was telling it, not necessarily by what was being told.[123]

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[121] William K. McNeil, *A History of American Folklore Scholarship Before 1908*, Vol. 1, Dissertation, Indiana University, 1980, 12.

[122] Alan Dundes "Folkloristics in the Twenty-First Century" (AFS Invited Presidential Plenary Address, 2004).

[123] Dorson would argue that American folklore is not independent from European folklore, while other scholars might consider particular African-American and Native American influences as forming a particularly American folklore.

At the turn of the century the classification of the "folk" was dominating the discussion and the American Indian, for example, was no longer considered a legitimate topic of study. The question of who the folk were (marginal vs. inclusive), and whether folklore encompassed traditional lifeways or merely verbal art, reflected a time when there was a need to place folklore in an academic discipline. The motives of early collectors are often criticized and the fruits of their labor deemed defective. Modern scholars frequently ask: Was the collector an "amateur"? Was he prejudiced against particular members of society? Did the collector bowdlerize the tales? Was he receiving earnings for the materials? The answers were almost invariably yes in regards to early American folklore, whereas current scholarship techniques advise that folklore should be collected by professional scholars who are trained in their field of study, the collector is expected to remain neutral and unprejudiced, the collector should not alter the material in any manner (including derogatory remarks), and whether or not to provide compensation, or to be compensated for, the collection of folklore is still an ongoing debate.[124]

Even by today's standards, many approaches to analyzing folklore (including psychoanalytic and historic-geographic methods) did not come without their share of criticism. In 1948, Stith Thompson suggested that the future of folklore should involve three steps; collection, organization, and analysis, although Thompson does not elaborate much on his third point regarding the interpretation of folklore.[125] The interdisciplinary nature of this research employs methodologies and theories from folkoristics as well as other disciplines in order to elucidate and demonstrate the significance of folklore in society.[126] These displays of lusus naturae existed in much the same way as the oral narratives, which were collected during this era, and these "narratives" were "curated" and "created" by various impresarios of oddities. Identifying particular displays as instances of active folk motifs, will add to the abundance of nineteenth century folklore data, allowing for new methods of interpretation and discovery.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

This study is loosely set between 1840 and 1893. This time frame begins when Barnum acquired the American Museum and ends with the World's Columbian Exposition. In 1830, the average American was sixteen years old, and as a result, popular

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[124] Recent research attempts to set forth studies that are based on geographic boundaries, or methods for collection and analysis, and current trends lean towards specific folklore theory and independent folklore departments at Universities. For methods on collection, see Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Tradition and The Verbal Arts: Guide to Research Practices*, (London: Routledge, 1992).

[125] Stith Thompson, "The Future of Folklore Research in the United States," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 93, No. 3, (Jun. 10, 1949), 244.

[126] Dan Ben-Amos, for example, remarks that the use of other discipline's theoretical frameworks is reflection of the low status of Folklore in the University. Dan Ben-Amos, "A History of Folklore Studies—Why Do We Need It? *Journal of Folklore Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 1/2 Special Issue: American Folklore Historiography, (Jun.-Aug., 1973): b117.

forms of entertainment and amusement often corresponded with "youthful activities."[127] During the greater part of the nineteenth century, Americans found entertainment in an array of amusements such as: theater, gaming, exhibitions, lectures, clubs, and horse racing. Leonard Cassuto believes that "the racially divided American society of the 1840's nurtured the freak show which took root and thrived in troubled soil."[128] The nineteenth century is often considered to be "a period of significant mobilization against working-class profane and disorderly conduct."[129] We can see this in a number of instances, including the 1886 Haymarket Labor Riots and the 1894 Pullman Strike,[130] both in Chicago. In order to show that Chicago had, literally, risen out of the ashes of the Great Fire of 1871, and less overtly to show a certain degree of normality had returned to the city, the 1893 Columbian Exposition was held in Chicago.[131] Although small traveling venues held carnivals and sideshows in rural areas, the major metropolitan areas often housed the most extravagant and popular exhibition halls, museums, and theaters, which exhibited lusus naturae and therefore play a large part in this specific study.

During this time, the interest in folklore was widespread and fear of losing oral traditions to modernity motivated scholars and others to collect folktales, ballads, and folk beliefs. In fact, the original intent of the American Museum, which exhibited countless displays of lusus naturae was to "Preserve and Collect," the exact same impetus for the establishment of the American Folklore Society in 1888.[132] The nineteenth century marked a time when curators, showmen, and scholars found interest in applying scientific discoveries to anthropological specimens. During the period of this study, exhibitions of lusus naturae grew intensely and reached an apogee in the late nineteenth century. It is no coincidence that the Pulitzer Prize winner Robert Bruce Lee's *The Launching of Modern American Science 1846-1876* concentrates on a subset of these years. During this period, the Smithsonian was founded in 1846, Barnum's Museum was founded in 1841, the American Folklore Society was founded in 1888, the word folklore was first coined in 1846, and the use of the term "normality" was first used in the

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[127] Jack Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life: 1790-1840*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 11.

[128] Leonard Cassuto, ""What an Object He Would Have Made of Me!"" In *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, (New York: 1996), 244.

[129] Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange, "The Traveling Show Menace: Contested Regulation in Turn-of-the-Century Ontario," *Law and Society Review* (1995), 640.

[130] See Almont Lindsey, "Paternalism and the Pullman Strike" *The American Historical Review*, 44 (Jan. 1939): 272-289.

[131] But even the Exposition was not free from the turmoil of labor issues and political unrest as the mayor of Chicago, Carter Harrison, was murdered in the parlor of his home on the closing night of America's second World's Fair. See Edward M Burke, "Lunatics and Anarchists: Political Homicide in Chicago," *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 92 (Spring - Summer 2002): 792.

[132] Bill Brown asserts "Historians of the American press, though, explain the sensationalism of the 1890's as a response to the craving for excitement that the Civil War had provoked…" Bill Brown (The Material Unconscious) takes this from Hazel Dicken-Garcia in *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth Century America*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 90.

1850s.[133] The reason for the popularity and persistence of this type of entertainment can be understood by exploring how and why all these factors came to be in approximately the same historical time frame, and how this affected the American public's abundant interest in the subject of lusus naturae.

## SUMMARY

Chapter 2 discusses the use of folklore and introduces the Motif-Index as a major source of supplemental evidence showing how particular exhibitions can be seen as physical instantiations of folk motifs. Examples of human displays that correspond with various motifs are given at length. This chapter provides the data which is the foundation for this study.

Chapter 3 introduces the concept of motif ostension in relation to exhibitions of lusus naturae for entertainment and examines the connection between folkloristics and the display, marketing, and reception of human exhibitions in nineteenth century America. Showmen are introduced as bearers of tradition and motif ostension is discussed in relation to nostalgia and tradition. The marketing of instantiations of folk motifs, including pamphlets and pitches, is shown to parallel folk narrative structure, and displays of lusus naturae are discussed in relationship with tourism and semiotics. The existence of circulating folklore in literature was a significant factor which influenced popular culture and showmen's choices.

Chapter 4 examines the audience's position as an active or passive bearer of tradition and explores the presentation of lusus naturae from the observer's perspective. The presentation of exhibitions of lusus nature are examined in scientific context, and both the audience and performer exist in a liminal space. Irish lore is discussed as an example of intentional motif ostension found within a specific population.

Chapter 5 summarizes why the nineteenth century American public responded to exhibitions of lusus naturae with intrigue, repulsion, and fascination. As manifestations of living motifs, displays of lusus naturae function as folklore, and can be used as vehicles for expression in this era. This chapter examines Bascom's functions of folklore, and how the bodies on display existed in the liminal space between reality and lore. A discussion of limitations and future suggestions closes the study.

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[133] Robert V. Bruce, *The Launching of Modern American Science, 1846-1876,* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988).

# CHAPTER 2
# FOLK MOTIFS AND EXHIBITION: DATA

## THE USE OF FOLKLORE

To some degree, promoters, patrons, and the performers themselves were aware of the connection between lore and display. Ward Hall, a modern day P.T. Barnum writes,

> People love giants, midgets, and fat people. Because this is the fairy tale. Jack Sprat ate no fat, his wife would eat no lean, Jack and the Beanstalk, the little people of *Gulliver's Travels*. These are stories people have been told when they were small children. It's much easier to sell an attraction that you can paint the pretty picture about, rather than something gruesome….The world's smallest married couple. Why, they're so tiny, so cute, you'd want to hold them in the palm of your hand. It's much easier to sell the pretty picture.[134]

Literary critic, Leslie Fiedler writes, "Tom Thumb, Barnum hoped, would evoke in his audience childhood memories of the old ballad. In Arthur's time, Tom Thumb did live, as well as fairy tales starring miniature Giant-killers like..Thumbkin."[135] Fiedler is the author of one of the earliest examinations of sideshow otherness. He uses myths to explain parallels or "historical origins" of sideshow displays as if mythological origins, particularly Greek mythology, were a necessary precursor to these displays.[136] In fact, Fiedler suggests Europeans found it especially easy to believe in creatures who had prototypes in pre-Christian European mythologies or who resembled monsters.[137]

Most humans exhibitions did not stand idle on display but exhibited an unusual skill—similar to Motif F660 *Remarkable Skill*. Dime Museums also used these terms…… Stanhope & Epstean's New Dime Museum in Chicago referred to its four floors as "WONDERLAND" and advertised human exhibits such as "The Camel Child," "The Turtle Boy," and "The Mexican Wild Boy."[138]

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[134] Marc Hartzman, *American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers*, (New York: Penguin, 2005), 127.

[135] See Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths & Images of the Secret Self,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 64.

[136] Even in his more recent works, Fiedler frequently uses the term "myth" when the term "legend" would be more appropriate. For example, see "Mythicizing the Unspeakable" *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 103, No. 410 (Oct.-Dec., 1990): 390-39. Nonetheless, *Freaks*, is a valuable work which is rarely referenced by folklorists, even though at its core, it is one of the few contemporary examinations that link displays of monsters and myth.

[137] Fiedler goes so far to suggest that human malformations preceded and inspired the creation of mythic monsters. Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths & Images of the Secret Self,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 238.

[138] *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 3, 1885, 6. Original emphasis.

THE TALE- TYPE

In order to better understand the various functions and structure of folk narratives, scholars have developed various methods of categorizing small units of information. Folklorists, in particular, have developed various taxonomies for understanding folkloristic morphology.[139] In 1910, Antti Aarne published the Tale-Type index (*Verzeichnis der Märchentypen*), a method of categorizing tales in categories such as: Animal Tales (1-299), Fairy Tales (300-749), Religious Tales (750-849), Realistic Tales (850-999), Tales of the Stupid Ogre, Giant, or Devil (1000-1199), Anecdotes and Jokes (1200-1999), and Anecdotes (2000-2399). Stith Thompson revised and translated Aarne's Tale-Type Index into English in 1928, and Hans-Jörg Uther updated the Tale-Type Index in 2004.[140]

Stith Thompson defined the tale-type as "a traditional tale that has an independent existence. It may be told as a complete narrative, and it does not depend for its meaning on any other tale."[141] Hasan M. El-Shamy writes, "The term tale-type –a translation of the German *Märchentypen* [sic]—tends to be misleading; it may not be perceived as denoting a tale's kind, sort, or genre. A tale-type denoted a recurrent narrative typically told as a whole and is often found cross-culturally.[142] Thompson's tale types can simplistically be described as plots grouped by various topics.[143] The obsession over finding the origin of a particular version of a tale allowed the tale-type index to be become an indispensable tool for comparative analysis, such as Julius Krohn's historic-geographic method.[144] Because the type or tale-type is categorized by a central plot which

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[139] D.P. Rotunda, *Motif-Index of the Italian Novella in Prose*, Publications Folklore Series, No. 2, (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1924); J. Childers, *Motif-Index of the Cuentos of Juan de Timoneda*, No. 5, (Bloomingon: Indiana University Publications Folklore Series, 1948); and J.E. Keller, *Motif-Index of Mediaeval Spanish Exempla*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1949). In John E. Keller, "The Motif-Index," *South Atlantic Bulletin*, Vol. 17, No. 2, (Nov., 1951), 1, 6, 7.

[140] The motifs in Stith Thompson's revised index are referred to as AT motifs (or Aa-Th) and motifs in Uther's current revision are referred to as ATU motifs. See *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography. Based on the system of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, FF Communications no. 284–286, (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia), 2004. Three volumes; Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography,* The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, Helsinki, 1961.

[141] Stith Thompson, *The Folktale,* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1946), 415.

[142] El-Shamy, Hasan M., "Psychologically-Based Criteria for Classification by Motif and Tale Type," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Sept. – Dec., 1997): 234.

[143] The groups are now represented as: Animal tales; Fairy Tales; Religious Tales; Realistic Tales, or Novelles; Tales of the Stupid Ogre, Giant, or Devil; Anecdotes and Jokes; and Formula Tales. Note that these groups are further subdivided.

[144] Also referred to as "the comparative method or, especially outside the United States, the historical-geographic method, the Finnish method, and the typological method." from Thomas A. Green, *Folklore: an Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art,*

may contain several key elements (such as protagonist, action, or object), it has been criticized for its vagueness. Vladimir Propp, for example, "finds fault with ambiguities and overlaps in Aarne's index, making classification by type arbitrary and subjective… Like Propp, Dundes points out the ambiguity and arbitrariness inherent in the Tale Type Index, stating that classifying tales according to types is based upon "the subjective evaluation stable."[145] Uther suggests the main criticisms of tale-types are: 1) imprecision in the definition of motif and type; 2) the introduction of too many oiko types with minimal variants; 3) a one-sided orientation toward Europe; 4) insufficient integration of the available indices; 5) an exclusive orientation toward traditional genres, with no consideration of minor forms. In connection with the last point it is often pointed out that classification into types and into groups like animal tales, ordinary folktales, jokes and anecdotes, and formula tales would be quite different if done with regard to function.[146]

THE MOTIF

In 1955, Stith Thompson, expanded Aarne's Tale Type Index and created the Motif-Index, a collection of motifs from a variety of narratives, compiled into 6 separate volumes.[147] The motif is defined by Thompson as "the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition," and he differentiates three classes of motifs: actors, items, and incidents.[148] Although the motif can be seen as a smaller more specific (and memorable) aspect of a tale-type, the differences in tale-types and motifs can sometimes be indistinguishable. Several motifs strung together can produce a familiar tale-type, but when a tale-type consists of only one motif, scholars have noted the problem of distinguishing one from another. For example, some animal tales, jokes, and anecdotes are tale-types which consist of one motif. Thompson devised his numbering system to be "remotely similar to that used by the Library of Congress, so that the Index can be indefinitely expanded at any point."[149]

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(Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1997), 443.

[145] Robert A. Georges, "The Centrality in Folkloristics of Motif and Tale Type," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Sept.-Dec., 1997): 204.

[146] Hans-Jörg Uther, "Type- and Motif-Indices 1980-1995: An Inventory," *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (1996): 299-317.

[147] Expanded by Hans-Jörg Uther in 2004, the classification now reads as ATU. Stith Thompson, *The Folktale*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 415. See also Maria Leach, Ed. "Type." in *Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend.* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1950), 1137. Before the inception of Thompson's motifs, Richard Dorson first began comparing "folklore themes" in American legends such as Davy Crockett. See Dan Ben-Amos, "The Historical Folklore of Richard M. Dorson," *Journal of Folklore Research,* Vol. 26. No. 1, Special Issue: Richard M. Dorson's Views and Works: An Assessment (Jan.-Apr., 1989): 55.

[148] Stith Thompson, *The Folktale*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 415.

[149] Ibid, 425.

Even Thompson, the creator the motif index "admits to the impressionistic nature of the construct motif and arbitrariness of identifying and classifying narrative motifs."[150] Hasan El-Shamy suggests that the tale-type and motif are "like yard/inch or pound/ounce, inseparable units of measurement and data identification. Although both are applied mainly to folk-narrative, the concept of motif has greater potential of application to a broader spectrum of culture and society."[151] Dundes states "one of the key differences between a motif and a tale type is that all versions of a tale type are assumed to be genetically related, that is, they are assumed to be cognate, whereas all narratives listed under a motif heading may or may not be related." Dan Ben Amos suggests that the motif is a minimal narrative, and primarily a tool for managing the study of the Ur-form.[152]

Thompson defines the Motif-index of folk-literature as "a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends."[153] Thompson explains that the

> ideal was to bring together narrative elements from as many different fields of traditional fiction as possible. Tales and myths from primitive peoples everywhere, European and Oriental stories and ballads, local and explanatory legends, the well-known mythological cycles…The Motif-Index thus attempts to bring together material from everywhere and arrange it by a logical system. It makes no assumption that items listed next to each other have any genetic relationship, but only that they belong in neighboring logical categories. The classification is for the practical purpose of arranging and assorting narrative material so that it can be easily found.[154]

A motif must be something unusual or striking. It is not enough to give a motif of "buttocks" "person" or "throne" But instead, *speaking* buttocks, *extremely old* person, or *magic* throne. There must be something remarkable about a motif that allows it to persist. The motif is more valuable than a tale-type for organizing, classifying, and understanding the nature of early American displays as amusement because most motifs are categorized by the *dramatis personae*.

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[150] Robert A. Georges, "The Centrality in Folkloristics of Motif and Tale Type," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Sept.-Dec., 1997): 205.

[151] Hasan M. El-Shamy, "Psychologically-Based Criteria for Classification by Motif and Tale Type," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Sept. – Dec., 11997): 235.

[152]Alan Dundes, "The Motif-Index and the Tale Type Index: A Critique," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Sep. - Dec., 1997): 197. See Dan Ben-Amos, "The Concept of Motif in Folklore" in *Folklore Studies in the Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the Centenary Conference of the Folklore Society*, ed. Venetia J. Newall, (Great Britian: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1980).

[153] Full title of Stith Thompson, *Motif-index of folk-literature : a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends*. Revised and enlarged edition, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955-1958).

[154] Stith Thompson, *The Folktale*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 423-424.

The Motif-Index is also not without criticisms and concerns. Folklorist Alan Dundes points out the major arguments—the Eurocentrism of the data, the overlapping nature of the motifs, the focus on the protagonist rather than function, and censorship.[155] Structuralist Vladimir Propp criticized the motif index for ignoring the actions which often drive the tales.[156] While these concerns are all valid, they do not hinder the usefulness of motifs in this study for the following reasons. Thompson's entire collection is based primarily on European narrative, but the prevalence of similar motifs in American exhibitions simply reinforces the notion that patrons (such as European immigrants) were drawn to particularly European motifs.[157] Also, the overlapping nature of motifs reinforces the importance of these topics (eg. cannibalism, savage tribes) to the American public. The focus on the protagonist makes the Motif Index particularly useful for exposing visual snapshots of popular extraordinary beings on display in early America.

Thompson does not deny the overlapping nature of motifs and tale-types, yet he does not see it as a problem. Robert A. Georges explains that "experiences and events are noteworthy when they contrast with the usual, expected, or predictable and stimulate creative conceptualization as a consequence," and it is these noteworthy events that make people want to repeat and retell the "story."[158] The notion of the unusual, unexpected, and therefore, memorable event, makes the motif index an exceptional source for identifying elements of a folk narrative that the public finds worth remembering (or repeating). Also, the focus on the dramatis persona is particularly useful in this study, because it is not necessarily the action that is of importance, but rather the character. In fact, motifs which correspond to lusus naturae on display do not usually include an action.

Uther lists numerous contemporary international indices, which could compliment Thompson's Motif Index, as Thompson's motif-index remains at the crux to most contemporary indices. Uther writes, "New type- and motif-indices that document European narrative material continue existing indices, provide amendments, or identify

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[155] Dundes give extensive examples of the debates including criticisms by János Honti, Anna Birgitta Rooth, Bengt Holbek, Vladimir Propp, and Gerson Legman. See Alan Dundes, Alan, "The Motif-Index and the Tale Type Index: A Critique," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Sep. - Dec., 1997): 196. Regardless of their concerns, Dundes, among other prominent folklorists, believed that the "the six-volume Motif-Index of Folk Literature and the Aarne-Thompson tale type index constitute two of the most valuable tools in the professional folklorist's arsenal of aids for analysis." Hans-Jörg Uther, *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (1996): 299-317.

[156] Propp, in turn, analyzed tales based on his 31 *functions,* a much smaller group than the thousands of motifs, although, Propp was also criticized for ignoring the oral aspect of the tales (e.g. verbal cues, tone) Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1968).

[157] Thompson focuses on Irish, Icelandic, Italian, French Spanish, British, African, West Indian and American folktales

[158] Robert A. Georges, "The Centrality in Folkloristics of Motif and Tale Type," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Sept.-Dec., 1997): 206. See also Robert A. Georges, "The Universality of the Tale-Type as Concept and Construct," *Western Folklore,* Vol. 42, No. 1 (Jan., 1983): 21-28.

new genres."[159] Because it would be nearly impossible to compare motifs across these various indices, this study remains rooted in Thompson's seminal work. However, the examination of various international motif indices could prove quite interesting for exploring specific ethnic and cultural interest in particular exhibitions.

This chapter examines the association between folk narratives and early American attractions by viewing exhibits as physical instantiations of folklore motifs as previously defined. The focus on motifs, rather than tale-types, is imperative because early American exhibits often closely resembled folk motifs, not merely by possessing qualities of a particular motif, but also in function. Exhibitions that featured recognizable motifs were often the most successful. The connections between folklore and displays of lusus naturae are numerous to say the least. Whenever a human was on display, the focus was placed on the narrative which surrounded the display (such as the pamphlets, descriptions, photographs, and information provided by the lecturer), but when there was a material object on display, the focus was on the object itself. As a result, for living exhibitions, the narrative became a critical part of the display.

My purpose is not to say that *only* those familiar with a particular motif may have found it interesting, but instead to present the possibility that the majority of the paying public had an affinity for motifs that featured remarkable beings, even if they were not familiar with a corresponding narrative. The objective is not to assert that all motifs are accounted for in Thompson's motif-index, or that all American exhibitions have an analogous counterpart in the motif-index. The real objective is to show that there is a connection between lore and display in nineteenth century American amusement.[160] This study shows there are literally hundreds of corresponding human exhibits that parallel specific motifs (See Appendix). For example, Motif F511.1.3 *Person with animal face* and the exhibition of Julia Pastrana; Motif F516.1 *Armless people* and Charles Tripp, the "armless wonder"; Motif F521.1 *Man covered with hair like animal-* and Jo-Jo the Dog Faced Boy; Motif F535 *Pygmy. Remarkably small man*, and General Tom Thumb; Motif F551 *Remarkable Feet* and Fanny Mills the Ohio Big Foot Girl; Motif F517.1.5 *Person with Knees Backwards* and Ella Harper, the Camel Girl.

The object/human on display could be alive or dead, but it exists in our reality, rather than in another time or place—a crucial element in drawing in the crowds. Barnum advertised his exhibitions as being "real" and "living" as if to tap into the public desire to experience fairytales and stories of wonder. For example, an advertisement in the March 9,1864 issue of the *New York Times* promotes, "The Splendid New Drama—with its gorgeous scenery, brilliant costumes, illuminated fountains, with *real* water, *living* fairies….The Giants, Dwarfs and multitudes of other *living* novelties will also contribute to the amusement of the crowds."[161] The instantiations of various folk motifs allowed the viewer to experience folklore with the price of a ticket.

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[159] Uther is critical of many of these new indices, but remarks that importance of these indices to further the study of narrative studies. Hans-Jörg Uther, "Type- and Motif-Indices 1980-1995: An Inventory," *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (1996): 307-308.

[160] One could take this premise to another level by exploring contemporary lore and display to see if this phenomenon still occurs and why.

[161] My emphasis.

The majority of this chapter is based in Appendix 1 as an extensive listing of various motifs and corresponding exhibits. In order to give context to the notion of exhibits as instantiations of folk motifs, a few of the most popular exhibits will be elaborated on. Because the purpose is to show parallels between popular folk motifs and exhibitions of lusus naturae, the following section is organized and labeled by the exhibit's specific characteristic, usually physical.

## DISPLAYS AS INSTANTIATIONS OF FOLK MOTIFS

### CONJOINED TWINS

Perhaps one of the most infamous and successful display of lusus naturae would be Chang and Eng (May 11, 1811-January 17, 1874), the original 'Siamese Twins.' Born in Siam (now Thailand), King Rama II sentenced them to death out of fear that they were an omen of disaster.[162] But after a lack of adversity, they were no longer deemed harmful and were allowed to live and eventually came to America (1829) to exhibit their bodies for money. They were exhibited throughout the United States from about 1824-1839 and again, with their children, in 1860. It is important to note that the term "Siamese Twin" is documented in the motif index, which means that Chang and Eng were an obvious reference to Thompson when he labeled the material. The exhibition of conjoined twins can be seen as a physical instantiation of Thompson's Motif F523 *Two persons with bodies joined Siamese twins*.[163] Conjoined twins were seen as lusus naturae, and therefore as an aspect of nature that was intriguing. Many of these exhibits were prefaced by terms like "wonderful" and "amazing" in advertisements, heralding a similarity to wonder tales and folk narratives.

For example, one of the earliest newspaper advertisements reads "*Wonderful Production of Nature*. The Siamese Twins, for a Few Days Only."[164] The conjoined "St. Benoit Twins" were also billed as "wonderful," and they were only seven months old when they were exhibited at the New York Aquarium in 1878.[165] Another newspaper advertisement reads "the St. Benoit twins have proved such an attraction to the medical profession that they will be continued on exhibition until the interest abates."[166] The interest in the twins abated, but not in folklore, because 8 months later the New York Aquarium replaced the St. Benoit Twins with the "overwhelming success of Little Red Riding Hood."[167]

Conjoined twins, as well as most exhibits of humans with abnormalities, were billed as both flawed and perfect. The infant St. Benoit twins were also said to be "both

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[162] King Rama II's full name is Phra Bat Somdet Phra Poramenthramaha Isarasundhorn Phra Buddha Loetla Nabhalai. He ruled from 1809-1824.
[163] Motif F523 is listed in Thompson's Motif-Index as an Irish Myth.
[164] My emphasis. *Baltimore Patriot*, Volume XXXVII April 26, 1831, 3.
[165] Amusements, *New York Times*, June 23, 1878, 7.
[166] Amusements, *New York Times*, July 21, 1878.
[167] The Benoit Twins were then exhibited at G.B. Bunnell's American Museum of "Famous Curiosities." Classified Ad-No title, *New York Times*, February 23, 1879, 11.

pretty little babies, not the dwarfed and puny creatures that are usually exhibited."[168] Another advertisement reads "The Siamese Twins Outdone…There are now on exhibition in New York, a couple of Virginia born twin mulatto children, perfectly formed and united together…forming a continuity of surface and flesh, one individual…Their limbs, backs, heads, eyes and features of each are prefect, and even beautiful."[169] Other conjoined twins were advertised in comparison to Chang and Eng with headlines such as "An Amazing Freak of Nature" in the *New Orleans Bee*, followed by a description of a "pair of twins…far more extraordinary and interesting than that of the Siamese Twins…They will no doubt be visited by thousands, and will be a special object of investigation to the medical faculty."[170] Sometimes conjoined twins were billed as a single entity, like Millie-Christine who was billed as "The Double-Headed Woman," which parallels motifs T551.2 *Child born with two heads*, F511.0.2.1 *Two-headed person*, and F511.0.2 *person with more than one head*.

Similar motifs were also successfully exhibited, such as Motif F516 *Person unusual to his arms* and F516.2 *People with many arms* when a child with two bodies and three arms was on exhibition in New York in 1858.[171] By February 1879, the twins were displayed at G.B. Bunnell's American Museum as "The Two-Headed Child" as "attractive novelties" and "rare wonders."[172] Conjoined twins were highly coveted by showmen who were eager to market these individuals as fascinating lusus naturae.

## WILD HAIRY PEOPLE

Wild, hairy, and animal-like people are a staple in Thompson's Motif-Index. Fiedler writes "Sometimes furry Freaks are called by such mythological names as the "Wild Man of Borneo" or the "Missing Link."[173] Although the interest in exotic living curiosities from overseas occurred in the early 1840s, it was the influential arrival of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), which aroused a certain interest in the quest to find the "missing link." By the 1870s, it was not unusual to find newspaper articles exclaiming headlines such as, "The Lowest Type of Humanity," and in this instance, the article resumes,

> On the island of Borneo has been found a certain race of wild creatures…They are dark, wrinkled, and hairy. They construct no habitation, form no families, scarcely associate together, sleep in caves and trees, feed on snakes and vermin, on ants, eggs, and on each other…They turn up a human face to gaze at their

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[168] "The Siamese Twins Outdone," *New York Times*, June 23, 1878, 7. Apparently this headline was quite popular as it was used in 1835, 1870, 1874, 1878, and 1882.
[169] "The Siamese Twins Outdone," *New Hampshire Sentinel*, Vol. XXXVII, Issue 46, November 12, 1835, 4.
[170] "An Amazing Freak of Nature," *Barre Patriot*, Vol X, Issue 37, March 24, 1854, 1.
[171] "News and other Items," *The Pittsfield Sun*, Volume LIX, Issue 3036: 3, November 25, 1858.
[172] *New York Times*, February 27, 1879, 7.
[173] Even with Fiedler's misleading use of the term "mythological" he notices there is folklore involved.

> captors, and females show instincts of modesty; and, in fine these wretched beings are men.[174]

The Motif F567 *Wild man. Man lives alone in wood like beast* resonates. The wild creature is not only wild, but "scarcely associates" with other creatures. In every instance of monstrosity and display, the fact that the monster exhibits human features is the ultimate determining factor in distinguishing whether these beings are men. Not only were "Wild Men" exhibited as amusement, but they also made headlines such as "A late Haverhill paper gives the following wonderful account of a wild man of the woods, *caught* last week in that town."[175]

William Henry Johnson, who was also known as "Zip the What is it," "Missing Link," and "Man Monkey," was also considered to be half human. His medical condition, microcephaly, affected his appearance, resulting in a reduced head circumference. Johnson's appearance was significantly altered so that he traversed into the animal world, "[Barnum] had his head shaved—except for a small tuft of hair on top—and dressed him in a furry suit to promote the Missing Link concept."[176] The *Illustrated Catalogue and Guide Book to Barnum's American Museum* gives the following description:

> What is it?—A very singular creature, possessing alike the features and characteristics of both man and brute. He was found in the interior of Africa in a perfectly natural state, roving about like a monkey or Orang Outang. He was captured with great difficulty, and brought to this country, where he has been exhibited over a year without the least abatement in the public interest. While his face, hands, and arms are distinctly human, his head, feet and legs are more like the Orang Outang, indicating his mixed ancestry."[177]

Because he was not covered in hair, or did not exhibit obvious animal-like features, his appearance was distorted just enough to make him an enigma, while at the same time suggesting a familiar narrative. As in most folk motifs, a human quality, usually physical, is often present in "monsters." The orangutan is also often billed as "The Wild Man of the Woods" as the origin of the word derives from the Malay words "orang" which means human and "hutan" which means forest, thus translating into man of the woods. This description is often taken literally when making compelling headlines.[178] "[W]hen brought here at first [the What is it?] refused all food except raw

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[174] *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 1872, 3.
[175] "Haverhill Mr. Frink," *New Hampshire Gazette,* Vol. LXXI, Issue 40: 4, August 22, 1826.
[176] Marc Hartzman, *American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers*, (New York: Penguin, 2005), 49. James Cook, *Arts of Deception,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).
[177] Phineas T. Barnum, *An Illustrated Catalogue and Guide Book to Barnum's American Museum,* (New York: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck and Thomas, 1860).
[178] "Miscellany from the Table Book," *Salem Gazette,* Vol. X, Issue 33: 1, April 24, 1832.

meat. Now it will eat fruit, cakes and almost any article of food eaten by human beings but prefers flesh dressed very rare" and the *New York Herald* states that "it was captured by a party of adventurers" and it was "the only survivor [of three captured oddities]."[179]

The profuse occurrence of cannibalism in the motif index is rivaled by the implication of cannibalism by "savage" humans on exhibit. The popularity of tales containing motifs of cannibals is evident as there are over 100 motifs relating to cannibals in the motif index (G10-G100). Equally, the "wild men" on display are often touted as being cannibals. For example, The Wild Men of Borneo, The Australian, and The Extraordinary Todars were all marketed as cannibals, which are related to motifs such as G11.18 *Cannibal tribe*, and G11.14 *Jungle-man as cannibal*. Advertisements often sensationalized these exhibits with headlines such as "A Tribe of Male and Female Australian Cannibals…Gorge Themselves Upon Each other's Flesh."

The Wild Men of Borneo, were sometimes billed as cannibals, Waino and Pelutano, or the "Little" Wild Men of Borneo and they were known as "one of the best side-shows in the country and reported to be valued by their owner, Mr. Warrer, of Weston, Mass., at $50,000."[180] These exhibitions also related to Motif G11.1 *Cannibal dwarfs* and F529.8 *Monkey-like little people*.[181] "Little" wild people were also exhibited with much success, such as The "What Is It?" which was advertised as standing about 4 feet high and weighing 50 pounds.[182] The *Illustrated Catalogue and Guide Book to Barnum's American Museum* advertises "The Two Living Aztec Children" with great detail.[183] In 1852, "The Aztecs" were on display in New York, with an advertisement detailing "These curious little people from central America, scarce two feet in hight [sic], weighing only 37 pounds—one 10, the other 17 years of age—heretofore deemed fabulous or extinct—unseen by civilized nations, and unequaled as living curiosities of a pigmy race, for size, form, and character.." The Aztec Children were also questionably advertised as "Aztec Pigmies."[184] Evidence of the awareness between exhibitions of lusus naturae and familiar motifs is revealed when a writer in the (1852) *New York Time*s refers to the "Aztec Children" as "little elves" but notes that "they are human beings and they are not freaks of nature, but specimens of a dwindled, minnikin race, *who almost realize in bodily form our idea of the 'brownies,' 'bogles,' and other fanciful creations of a more superstitious age*."[185] The evidence exposing the public's association with lore and display continues as one writer describes the Aztec Children, "To me these *tiny fairies in human form* seem as inexplicable as did the "weird Sisters" to Banquo and

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[179] "What Is It?," *New York Tribune*, March 1, 1860.
[180] Miscellaneous, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 16, 1873, 2.
[181] Also related, Motif B600 *Marriage of person to animal*, Percilla Lauther Bejano (also known as "The Hairy Girl" or "The Monkey Girl") and husband Emmitt Bejano ("The Alligator-Skinned Man") often billed themselves as "The World's Strangest Married Couple." See Francine Hornberger, *Carny Folk,* (New York: Citadel Press Books, 2005), 196.
[182] "What Is It?," *New York Herald,* March 19, 1860.
[183] Phineas T. Barnum*, An Illustrated Catalogue and Guide Book to Barnum's American Museum,* (New York: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck and Thomas, 1860).
[184] "The Aztec Children," *New York Daily Times*, Jan 31, 1852, 4.
[185] My emphasis.

Macbeth, and like the latter, I can only say, as I behold them," Speak, if you can, what are you."[186] The Wild Men were also said to have "long, sharp teeth" (Motif G88 *Cannibal has long tooth and long nail*, Motif F544.3.5 *Remarkably long teeth)*

One of the most popular sideshow acts involved the "geek," who was usually a person without any physical or psychological disability (often a drunk) in desperate need of money, and who could subsequently be convinced to eat live chickens, dogs, or other small animals.[187] The geek act was remarkably popular, and can be seen as a symbolic depiction of civilized man turned savage. This act played upon the spectator's fear and fascination regarding the ability to cross the boundary of civilization and enter the world of savages. The spectator aspired to see the savage become assimilated, and the spectacle also allowed the viewer to feel mentally and physically superior to the "actor." Geeks were also depicted as feral and animalistic, yet they were not usually dressed as animals. Instead, geeks were usually dressed in average, often tattered clothes and acted as wild animals. Geeks also were also similar to motifs and "sometimes [Geeks] reenact the roles attributed to those mythological beings, biting off the heads of living chickens or rats and bolting them down raw, like Singh's Amala and Kamala."[188]

Pitchmen often used motifs and folk narrative patterns to shape their speeches. During a preconference session at the 1981 Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics conference, Fred "Doc" Bloodgood, considered one of the last living medicine show pitchman, gave a presentation of one of his sideshow pitches originally recorded in 1928. A transcript of his presentation recounts his description of Neola, a "strange and curious animal that lived in the center of a deep dark cave." Doc Bloodgood continues to describe her eyes that "glare just like two red-hot coals of fire" and that the shape of her head "tapers at the top just like that of a coconut….she doesn't speak any language. Doesn't know any creed. Neither walks nor talks, just creeps and crawls…"[189] There are several motifs found in Bloodgood's pitch, such as Motif F541.1.3 *Eyes of live coals,*[190] F512ff *Person Unusual as to his eyes*, *T585.5.1 Child born with hairy mane*, *F521.1.1* Woman with animal hair, F511.1*.3 Person with animal face*, 521.1 *Man covered with hair like animal*, and F511.1.3.1 *Person with face of ape*.[191]

Because families were often brought to America to be displayed in groups, it was convenient to advertise them as cannibal tribes.[192] The goal (for those like Barnum) was to show a recreation of a 'typical' cannibal (or billed likewise) village. Families and

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[186] My emphasis. "The Aztec Children," *New York Daily Times*, 4, Jan 31, 1852.
[187] "The word is reputed to have originated with a man named Wagner of Charleston, Virginia, whose hideous snake-eating act made him famous." (Maurer 1931:331)
[188] Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths & Images of the Secret Self,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 162.
[189] Fred 'Doc" Bloodgood, "The Medicine and Sideshow Pitches," In *Analyzing Discourse: Text and Talk* by Deborah Tannen, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1982), 381.
[190] R. *Kleinere Schriften* Köhler, ed. J. Bolte, 3 vols, (Weimar: E. Felber, 1898-1900), 403.
[191] These motifs also parallel Lionel the Lion Faced Man and Jo Jo the Dog Faced boy.
[192] Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 10.

villages averaging from 50-200 people would be transported to these exhibition villages, given food and clothes, and would live for six months on the site of the exposition.[193] The display of the Dahomeyan Villagers in the Columbian Exposition (1893) was one of the largest groups to be transplanted to the United States and displayed as "savages." The success of wild tribes of men became so popular, that many of the "savages" were simply, "[l]ocals dressed in outrageous costumes and portrayed as authentic representatives of exotic non-Western tribes."[194]

Beginning in 1882, Barnum began organizing what would become the *Ethnological Congress of Savage and Barbarous Tribes*. Barnum wrote to various American consulates around the world, "Dear Sir, I desire to carry out as far as possible an idea I have entertained, of forming a collection, in pairs or otherwise of all the uncivilized races in existance [sic] …My aim is to exhibit to the American public not only human beings of different races, but also, when practicable, those who possess extraordinary peculiarities, such as giants, dwarfs, singular disfigurements of the person…In any case a group of 3 to 6 or even 10 would be as novel….inanimate objects I do not desire."[195] Barnum's Congress featured a plethora of "wild" and "savage" people such as the "Barbarians from the Woods of Papau," "Cannibals from Australian Tribes," and "Warlike Afghans from the Hindu Kush."[196] Individuals were transformed by showmen and marketed as savage, animal-like, cannibals, with the intention of enticing patrons with familiar lore.

GIANTS

Extremely tall people were often exhibited in ways that would evoke familiar narratives of giants into the minds of the paying public. Advertisements almost always treated these 'giants' as real manifestations of motif F531 *Giant*. Also related, ogres are classified in the motif index comprising over 500 motifs (G10-G699) including G10-G99 *Cannibals and Cannibalism*; G100-G199 *Giant Ogres*. As if to reinforce the notion that giants, as in fairytales and legends, exist among us, they were usually marketed with a sobriquet related to a genuine geographical origin. There were "French Giants,"[197] the "American Giantess,"[198] Noah Orr, the Ohio Giant, Anna Swan the Nova Scotia Giantess,

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[193] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 83.
[194] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, (Chicago, 1988), 176.
[195] Letter in Permanent Administrative Files, Smithsonian Institution Archives, In Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle,* (London 2004), 58.
[196] *Frank Leslie's Illustrated* Newspaper, Issue 1, 544, Saturday, April 25, 1885. The Congress was described as "The Zulus, Nubians, and New-Zealand cannibals are now travelling around the United States, and the Hottentot, Malay, and Bushmen representatives will soon arrive. The Island of Borneo will be represented by the famous wild man." "Women with Wooden Lips," *New York Times,* October 7, 1883, 3.
[197] "Amusements this evening," *New York Times*, January 4, 1864, 4.
[198] Exhibited at Barnum's Museum, *New York Daily Times*, March 19, 1855, 8.

Andrew Harsen, the Norwegian giant,[199] the "Maine Giantess,"[200] and the "Arab Giant."[201] Sometimes age became the emphasis and giants were marketed as "infant giants"[202] or "giant boys and girls."[203] A newspaper advertisement titled "A Gigantic Marriage" illustrates the wedding of a giant and giantess and discusses these individuals as if they were truly manifestations of familiar lore, "Giants are known to be weak, especially in the knees; and *from the days of Polyphemus they have always been very susceptible of the tender passion*. But poor Polyphemus could cast but a single sheep's eye, and couldn't find anybody taller than Galatea upon whom to cast it. Our giant who was this morning married in our royal parish was more fortunate. He and his giantess met—at a public exhibition—and loved."[204]

The public was continually reminded of the lore behind the displays of giants. In 1854, *The New York Daily Times* ran an article on the front page titled "The Ancient Giants of Finland" and declares "Before the French—so runs the Legend—there were the Giants; a good while before…and so we may form some near guess as to when the Finnish Giants went away. For their legacy—so runs the legend—they left the immeasurable masses of ore which were their prodigiously hot ovens and stoves, but which are known to the tiny race of their successors as inexhaustible iron mines."[205] Promoters like Barnum intentionally publicized an association between exhibitions of giants via with giants in folklore, which allowed writers and advertisers the opportunity to take advantage of this connection. *Puck*, one of the earliest American humor magazines, published an article titled "Mythology Made Easy: The Wanderings of Ulysses," which reads "Barnum offered Polyphemus a handsome salary to travel with his greatest show, billed as the strongest man in the world: The giant refused the offer saying that he could not disgrace his family."[206]

Nineteenth century publications like *The Albion* often featured articles on giants and other lusus naturae. F.T. Buckland reminds his readers of some of the biblical references to giants such as "There were giants in the earth;" "We saw giants, the sons of Anak;" "Og, King of Bashan, remained of the remnant of giants;" "Bashan, called the Land of Giants;" "The lot of Judah at the Valley of Giants," &c.,&c" The author also states that giants were seen as rarities and wonders of the age, "some commenters have gone so far as to say that these "Nephilim" or giants were not so much giants in physical statures as great atheists and monsters of impiety, rapine, and all wickedness."[207] This view is rarely seen in nineteenth century exhibitions of giants, because giants were

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[199] *New York Daily Times*, December 14, 1865, 7.
[200] *New York Daily Times*, April 25, 1855, 5.
[201] *Pittsfield Sun*, Vol LIX, Issue 3051, March 10, 1859, 2.
[202] "The Giant Baby," *Vanity Fair*, June 9, 1860, 382.
[203] *New York Times*, December 19, 1863, 10.
[204] My emphasis. "A Gigantic Marriage," *Chicago Tribune*, July 5, 1871, 3.
[205] *New York Daily Times*, July 17, 1854, 1.
[206] "Mythology Made Easy," *Puck,* March 24, 1880, 36.
[207] "Giants in General," *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics and Literature*, July 5, 1862.

associated with strength.[208] Sometimes giants were described as ogres, who are also the subject of hundreds of motifs in the Motif-Index (G. OGRES G10-699). Barnum even featured a performance showcasing a giant and the tiny Commodore Nutt billed as "Ogre and the Dwarf."[209] Giants and dwarfs were such a popular subject, many of Barnum's advertisements were reduced to the phrase "Giants, dwarfs, 100,000 curiosities."[210]

LITTLE PEOPLE

One of the most popular exhibitions in the United States during the nineteenth century involved little people. I would argue that this is because of the significance of this motif in popular folklore, particularly among European immigrants who comprised most of the audience at these exhibits. Thompson's Motif F451 *Dwarf* (Underground spirit),[211] Motif F535 *Pygmy* (Remarkably small man), Motif F530 *Remarkably large or small men,* and Motif F535 *thumbling* all come into play here. In exhibits, little people were often referred to as "dwarves," which bring to mind images from fairy tales, notably Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's collection, or adaptations thereof. Dwarves, fairies, and trolls in European fairy tale context are not considered to be human. In traditional European folk narratives, it is not uncommon to find dwarves presented as remarkably old (See also Motif F571 *Extremely old person*). Bogdan noted that "young children who were presented as dwarfs were said to be older than they actually were," and P.T. Barnum openly admitted to this deceit, announcing in his autobiography that he advertised Charles Stratton (General Tom Thumb) as 11 years of age when he was actually 5 years old.[212] There are several motifs that are specific to age and little people such as: F451.2.5.1 *Dwarfs have old face*, 451.3.12 *Dwarfs are intelligent*, and F451.5.1.7 *Dwarfs serve*.[213] Susan Stewart remarks that "by the Victorian Age, the domestication of the fairy is complete and the English fairy becomes inextricably linked to the enduring creation of the Victorian fantastic: the fairylike child."[214]

Little people remained among the most popular exhibits throughout the nineteenth century and continued to draw in crowds in the twentieth century. In 1904, Dreamland, a theme park at Coney Island, opened an attraction called "Lilliputia" (also known as "The

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[208] There were instances when they are marketed as ghoulish. "A Ghoulish Giant," *The Daily Inter Ocean*, Issue 290, Thursday, February 16, 1882, 5.
[209] "There were Giants in Those Days," *Chicago Tribune,* April 28, 1862, 2.
[210] Amusements this Evening, *New York Times,* January 18, 1866.
[211] The dwarf, especially in Northern Europe, is considered an underground spirit. He is to be distinguished from the other conception of dwarf, viz., a very small person, pigmy, or thumbling.
[212] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 97. Phineas T. Barnum, *The Life of P.T. Barnum*, (New York: Redfield, 1855; Illinois: University of Illinois, 2000), 243.
[213] Motif F451.2.5.1 *Dwarfs have old face*. Is noted as having a Finnish-Swedish and German existence and F451.3.12 *Dwarfs are intelligent* and F451.5.1.7 *Dwarfs serve mortals* are both Irish myths.
[214] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection,* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), 113.

Midget City"), a scaled replica of Nuremberg, Germany, populated by 300 little people in a permanent municipality.[215] Similarly, the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, ironically titled A Century of Progress International Exposition" featured the "Midget City," which housed about two hundred little people. (Related motifs F210 *Fairyland*, F219.1 *Fairies dwell in the next country*) Also, it was common for proprietors to employ giants to walk through these various "Midget Cities" in order to create a greater juxtaposition of small and large, an action that parallels motif F531.6.3.2 *Giant lives in fairyland*.[216] "Lilliputia" and "Midget City" were both architecturally similar to traditional European castles, which parallels Motif F222 *Fairy Castle*.

One critic writes, "Decidedly the most successful speculation which he ever undertook was the exhibition of Tom Thumb."[217] Profits from six weeks of exhibiting Tom Thumb were recorded at $14,000. "The aggregate of profits made by him out of that unfortunate little monstrosity, is not far from a hundred thousand dollars."[218] The exhibition of Tom Thumb was so successful, it became common for proprietors to simply put "dwarf" on their exhibition roster in order to entice an audience.[219] Besides Tom Thumb, there were many successful exhibitions of little people in the nineteenth century including: the Lilliputian King, Carrie Akers the fleshy midget, Che-Mah the Chinese Dwarf, Lucy Zarate, Hop o' My Thumb, the Nova Scotia midget, Admiral Dot, Count Primo Magri, Count Rosebud, Baron Littlefinger, General Mite, Lucia Zarate the Mexican Lilliputian, Commodore Foote, Charles and Eliza Nestel, Nicholi the little Russian Prince, Commodore Nutt, Jennie Quigley the Scottish Queen, Lavinia Warren, and many more.[220]

In addition to dwarves and pygmies, the Motif-Index has a category F200-F699 *Marvelous Creatures*, in which F200-F399 *Fairies and Elves* are listed. Over two

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[215] The 1933 Midget City was organized by Samuel Gumpertz, the "godfather of the freak" See Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America*, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 128.

[216] It is important to note that this motif, as well as nearly all examples I have given, is documented as a popular Irish motif.

[217] "Speculations on Barnum, The Museum, &c." An English Traveller [sic], *The Literary World,* Vol 210, *February* 8, 1851, 115.

[218] "Mr. Barnum; American Museum; Tom Thumb," *Morning News,* Vol. 1, Issue 143, April 28, 1845, 2.

[219] *New York Times*, March 28, 1865, 7.

[220] See in order: *New York Daily Times,* February 9, 1854, 8; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 5, 1885, 6; for Che-Mah see "Dwarfs," *San Francisco Chronicle,* March 2, 1884, 6 and "Che-Mah, the Dwarf," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, *May* 21, 1881, 7; For Lucy Zarate, and Hop o' My Thumb see: "Dwarfs," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 6, March 2, 1884; *San Francisco Chronicle,* June 4, 1870, 3; "A Marriage of Midgets," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* 2, April 7, 1885; for Baron Little Finger and Count Rosebud see *New York Times,* January 30, 1879, 7; for General Mite and Lucia Zarate see *The Washington Post,* January 2, 1879, 4; for Commodore Foot and Eliza Nestel see *Chicago Daily Tribune,* May 3, 1885, 6; "Eagles Plan Carnival," *The Washington Post,* April 25, 1909, 16; *New York Times,* February 3, 1862, 5; *Chicago Daily Tribune,* January 21, 1877, 16; *New York Times,* January 19, 1863, 7.

hundred "fairy" motifs are categorized in the Motif index. Numerous little people were marketed as "fairy like" and "child like" which parallel Motif F239.4.2 *Fairies are the size of small children,* and *F239.4.3 Fairy is tiny*. Eliza Nestel, for example, the wife of the famous Commodore Foote, was billed as "The Fairy Queen."[221] An advertisement for Lavinia Warren, the wife of the late General Tom Thumb, read "Everybody rushing headlong to SEE THE FAIRY, MISS LAVINIA WARREN, MISS LAVINA WARREN."[222]

REMARKABLE HAIR

Similar to Motif F555 *Remarkable Hair* and F555.3 *Very Long Hair*, Circassian women such as Zalumma Agra (the 'Circassian Beauty') were said to resemble "the embodiment of white racial purity, as a kind of counternarrative to the black exoticism represented by other show types," and "[Zalumma's] specially frizzed hair and provocative clothing signaled her own exotic sexuality."[223] Barnum often portrayed Circassian women as the ideal beauty, although highly sexualized. These women were sometimes called "moss haired" resulting in a stereotype that compelled many women who were exhibited as a Circassian to purchase wigs to complete their costume.[224]

Other instances of exhibitions of remarkable hair, and Motif *F521.1.1 Woman with animal hair*, include Belle (or Bella) Carter, "The Dashing Kentucky Horse-Woman—The Living Lady with a Horse's Mane," who had a patch of long hair which grew out of a mole on her back.[225] The Seven Sutherland (or Southerland) Sisters charmed audiences with their extraordinary long hair in the late nineteenth century. The sisters were advertised as the "Long-Haired Wonders" and had a collective total of 36.5 ft. between them.[226] The Sisters soon began producing and marketing a successful "Hair Grower and Scalp Cleaner" to both men and women.[227] Motif F521.1 *Man covered with*

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[221] Hartzman, Marc. *American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers,* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 75-76.
[222] *New York Times* January 19, 1863, 7. Original emphasis.
[223] Roslyn Poignant notes "that this racialist fantasy...claimed its 'scientific' authority from Professor Friedrich Blumenbach's designation of the white races as Caucasian." Poignant, Roslyn. *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*. London: Yale University Press, 2004, 88. Circassian Families were also exhibited at Barnum's Museum. *New York Times* August 21, 1865, 4.
[224] "The "Freaks" of the Circus" *The Washington Post* May 12, 1907, 2.
[225] She was exhibited at Epstean's New Dime Museum. See *Chicago Daily Tribune December* 30, 1890, 3 also, in 1932, Colon T. Updike was exhibited cabinet photos and in Ripley's Believe it or Not with a similar condition.
[226] They were exhibited at Kohl & Middleton's West Side Dime Museum. *Chicago Daily Tribune* January 28, 1884, 8.
[227] Headlines often read, "A Woman's Crowning Glory is Her Hair" For Sale by the Seven Sutherland Sisters. *Chicago Daily Tribune* April 12, 1888, 7 and *New York Times* March 27, 1887, 2. Sometimes headlines read "A Man's Crowning Glory is His Hair" as in *Chicago Daily Tribune* August 12, 1888, 6. The Sutherlands were believed to have "made millions over the course of several decades." See Marc Hartzman, *American*

*hair like animal* and *T585.5.1 Child born with hairy mane* resonates with Fedor Jeftichew (JoJo the Dog-Faced Boy) and Stephan Bibrowski (Lionel the Lion-Faced Man), who both suffered from hirsutism and were entirely covered in hair.

EXTREMELY OLD PERSON

Motif F571 *Extremely old person*—Six years before his legendary American Museum, Barnum began his career exhibiting the alleged 161 year old nursemaid to the infant George Washington. Barnum took Heth on tour and she was also exhibited at Niblo's Garden in New York beginning in 1835 and until her passing in 1836. Heth's age intrigued audiences so much that after her death Barnum organized a public autopsy in front of 1,500 paying spectators to prove Heth's age.[228]

SPOTTED PEOPLE

Motif T465.4 *Children spotted like leopards after bestiality;* Motif G303.4.8.9 *Devil spotted*—The "Spotted Boys" featured "the dermatological condition that medical discourse termed vitiligo to fashion an engaging alien for the viewers' amusement and amazement—and for the showman's profit."[229] Also, in 1888, the "Spotted People of Peru" were exhibited at Kohl & Middleton's South Side Dime Museum in Chicago.[230]

MATERNAL IMPRESSION

Motif T550.4 *Monstrous Birth because mother sees horrible sight* closely resembles Maternal Impression or Maternal Imprinting, which was believed to be a legitimate medical explanation for monstrous or malformed beings. It was believed that if a pregnant woman visually experienced something, usually frightful or unusual, the infant could possess traits which directly reflected the pregnant mother's experience. The results could be as trivial as a birthmark, or as serious as a mental or physical abnormality. British Medical Journal (1875) tells the story of a woman who gave birth to a child with three legs and a parasitic twin, and when the woman was told that her child was deformed, she replied: "I thought it would not be all right; for I was frightened, at

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*Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers,* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 41.

[228] It was proven that Heth was only about 80 years old. Harriet Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*, (New York: Doubleday, 2007). For more on Heth, see Cook, *Arts of Deception* and Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*.

[229] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, "Seeing the Disabled: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography," in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 343-344. Spotted children were noted in "Sleighing to the Circus," *New York Times,* 2, March 16, 1888.

[230] *Chicago Daily Tribune,* October 22, 1888, 3.

Limpsfield fair, by two men outside a show, who kept hugging each other closely and posturing. I was frightened by them, but could not keep my eyes off them."

E. Shepard writes on the topic, suggesting that an armless and legless child was the result of the mother who had watched the butchering of hogs. Shepard also hypothesizes that "The mother of Napoleon engaged herself in military tactics and planted ante-natal desires and determinations in her offspring."[231] Interestingly, the nineteenth century editions of the *British Medical Journal* give numerous accounts of this phenomenon, and only an English reference is given for Motif T550.4 *Monstrous Birth because mother sees horrible sight* in Thompson's Motif-Index.[232] The fear of maternal impression even affected the exhibits that featured monstrous beings. Chang and Eng, for example, were exhibited all over Europe, but were denied entrance into France because of the fear that their presence could cause deformities in the unborn and would "have a disastrous effect upon pregnant women."[233] Motif T554 *Woman gives birth to animal* is exemplified in the case of Mary Toft of England, who, in the early 18th century, claimed to have given birth to rabbits. Of course, her claim was eventually revealed as a hoax, but it had persisted under the well believed notion that she gave birth to parts of animals because she was fascinated by a rabbit she saw during her pregnancy.[234] A contemporary example, Grady Stiles Jr, better known as Lobster Boy, was believed to be a result of when his pregnant mother's fainting at the sight of her husband's exceptionally large catch of the day.

Maternal impression was cited as the cause of Che Mah, the Chinese Dwarf's small size. A Newspaper article titled "Dwarfs: Some Information About Their Peculiarities" reads, "His mother while walking through the streets of Ningpo was greatly shocked and frightened by seeing a very small child crushed to death by the falling of a tree. She was greatly affected and when Che Mah was born, shortly afterward, he bore a most striking resemblance in face and figure to the little one that was killed. The child killed was but 2 years old and Che Mah has never grown larger than a child of that age."[235]

For folklorists, Maternal Impression sometimes exists under the umbrella of "pregnancy folklore," and much study has revealed the importance of these beliefs and how they can act as an indicator of cultural and societal issues. The nineteenth century woman shows us that Victorian England was not privy to homosexual behavior; the 20th

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[231] E. Shepard, *Fads, Fakes, Freaks, Frauds and Fools*, (Indiana: The Commercial Service Company, 1923), 119-120.

[232] Stith Thompson, *Motif-index of folk-literature: a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends*, Revised and enlarged edition, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955-1958.

[233] Kay Hunter, *Duet for a Lifetime: The Story of the Original Siamese Twins*, (New York: Coward-McCann, 1964), 60.

[234] Stith Thompson, *Motif-index of folk-literature: a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends*, Revised and enlarged edition, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955-1958). See Type 441.

[235] "Dwarfs," *San Francisco Chronicle,* March 2, 1884, 6.

century woman who watched the butchering of hogs reveals the importance of gender expectations; and the comment regarding Napoleon's military tactics attempts to blame his tyrannical behavior and ravages of war on the female. Acts that defied expectations of appropriate moral behavior were demonstrated through exhibition pamphlets, and, lecturers.[236]

## WAX PEOPLE, LIVING STATUES

Essentially, displays of lusus naturae, whether a human, a wax figure, or an automaton, were subjected to the same processes and audience reception as the living displays and there are those, like Susan Stewart who would argue that it does not matter whether the spectacle is dead or alive.[237]

During the late 18th century, automata were introduced to American Exhibits. Interestingly, the first "foreigners" exhibited in America often had no pulse. For example, an exhibition in 1790 advertises a "Speaking Figure…consisting of CHINESE and ITALIAN SHADES with the most elegant SCENES, Transparent SCENERY, and other Decorations adapted to different Pieces."[238] Americans did not begin manufacturing automata as frequently or as skilled as many of the French and German automata makers, and as a result, most of the traveling exhibits featured foreign machines. For example, the French automata acrobats of Mr. L'Aiftocrate were exhibited in Philadelphia in 1795 and the "Chinese Automaton Figure" performed "feats on the rope" in Rhode Island in 1796.[239] Most often, the mechanical exhibitions fetched a higher price than natural curiosities, and soon became known as "artificial curiosities." These early automata featured moving parts and were remarkably detailed in construction, astonishing patrons and subsequently corresponding to Motif D1620 *Magic Automata. Statues that act as if alive,* and D1268 *Magic Statue*.[240] By the early nineteenth century, mechanical living statues were commonplace, and many corresponded to Motif D435.1.1 *Transformation: statue comes to life,* such as the work of Mr. Frimbey in 1831 which was described as "No semblance of life presented itself; all was motionless and still, until the spring, as it were, was touched, which set this wonderful machine in motion.."[241]

Wax figures (as well as mummies) emerged again in the 1900s, and were also exhibited as freaks, such as "The Embalmed Bandit", "The Stone Man", "The Amazing Petrified Man," Floyd Collins, John Wilkes Booth, Notorious Marie O'Day, and Mr. Dinsmoor to name a few.[242] The early nineteenth century exhibits were soon complicated

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[236] The corresponding motifs further explain the possible existence of such creatures, for example, Motif T465.4 *Children are spotted like leopards as result of bestiality* and Motif T465.5 *Pig born with head like that of man as a result of bestiality*, are, according to Thompson, both particular to the United States.

[237] See Susan Stewart*, On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, London, 1993.

[238] Emphasis in original. *New York Daily Gazette*, January 4, 1790, 3.

[239] See Messrs L'Egalite*, A New Entertainmen*t, (Providence: Bennett Wheeler, 1796).

[240] "Ossified" men and women might also parallel these motifs.

[241] "Living Statue," *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal,* November 22, 1831, 5.

[242] Quigley, Christine, "Mummy Dearest" in James Taylor and Kathleen Kotcher,

by "innovation and novelty,"[243] and new forms, such as waxworks, gained popularity, although not without criticism.[244] Dorfeuille quickly took advantage, and at the peak of the wax craze, he established his "Chamber of Horrors"[245] and said his acquisitions must "excite the emotions, not titillate the intellect."[246] Grotesque life sized wax figures were displayed in models of Dante's Divine Comedy and Milton's Paradise Lost, and the Museum of "The Regions" featured images of Dante's Purgatory.[247] Mythical images of heaven and hell were juxtaposed with displays of 'Sleeping Beauty,'[248] but perhaps because of the clergy's interest in using the depictions of hell for religious justification, the more grotesque and frightening displays were most successful. A small exhibition hall in Haverhill, Massachusetts advertised "18 Wax Figures as large as Life," including Siamese Twins and an American Dwarf.[249]

The Boston Museum advertised the New Hall of Wax Statuary 1851, which featured wax figures that "are so natural and lifelike as to mock reality, and lead the beholder to doubt whether the figures do not actually live and breathe." Some of the featured figures included Christ's Last Supper, The Prodigal Son, The Crucifixion, the Siamese Twins, Massacre by Pirates, and the Horrors of Slavery.[250]

In many cases, wax figures, or mannequins, were preferred even when living people were available. For example, in 1876 at the first official World's Fair, in Philadelphia, wax Indians were preferred over living people, perhaps making it easier to show inanimate figures as "immoral savages."[251] Living statues, or living tableaux, was a common attraction in the United States during the mid nineteenth century.[252] Even Charles Stratton (General Tom Thumb) was billed as GRECIAN STATUES and posed as

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*"Shocked and Amazed" On & Off the Midway,* (Connecticut, 2002), 205-211.

[243] Whitfield J. Bell, "The Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society," In Whitehill, Walter Muir, *Cabinet of curiosities: five episodes in the Revolution of American museums*. (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1967), 84.

[244] Franz Boas, for example, hated them, and considered them to be "ghastly". See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimlett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 39.

[245] Whitfield J. Bell, "The Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society," In Whitehill, Walter Muir, *Cabinet of curiosities: five episodes in the Revolution of American museums*. (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1967), 85.

[246] Ibid, 88.

[247] For more details on Dorfeuille's collection or the Western museums see M.H. Dunlop, "Curiosities Too Numerous to Mention: Early Regionalism and Cincinnati's Western Museum," *American Quarterly*, 36: 4 (Autumn, 1984): 524-548.

[248] Whitfield J. Bell, "The Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society," In Whitehill, Walter Muir, *Cabinet of curiosities: five episodes in the Revolution of American museums*. (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1967), 86.

[249] *Essex Gazette*, Volume IX, Issue 18, October 25, 1834, 3.

[250] *The Barre Patriot,* Vol. 7, Issue 30, February 7, 1851, 4.

[251] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 100.

[252] "Living Statue," *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, (*November 22, 1831): 5, 15. Metta V. Fuller, "The Living Statue," *Home Journal,* (Nov 11, 1848): 1.

"The Discus Thrower, Ajax, Cincinnatus, Samson, Hercules, the Dying Gladiator, and other athletes whose size was an amusing contrast to his littleness."[253] Miss Anderson performed as a living statue in "Pygmalian and Galatea" at Booth's Theatre in 1882.[254] Living Statues were commonly billed as such. The Hippotheatron in New York (1865) and Wood's Museum (1874) advertised "living statues."[255] Related Motifs: J1800 *One thing mistaken for another-miscellaneous;* J1809 *Other things with mistaken identities;* F990 *Inanimate objects act as if living;* J1794 *Statue mistaken for living original*.

The evidence associating circulating folklore and popular exhibits in the nineteenth century in the United States is extensive, and accounts for the great degree of popularity of this form of amusement. Those who witnessed these events were able to experience these displays as instantiations of familiar folk motifs within a recognizable context.

[253] Alice Curtis Desmond, *Barnum Presents General Tom Thumb*, (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1954), 62.
[254] *Puck,* 331, January 25, 1882.
[255] *New York Times,* October 19, 1865, 7 and *New York Times,* September 19, 1874, 6.

# CHAPTER 3
# FOLKLORE AS EXHIBITION: MARKETING

## MOTIF OSTENSION

The term *ostension* was introduced by semiotician and philosopher Umberto Eco as the most "elementary act of *active* signification." Eco cites, "Ostension occurs when a given object or event produced by nature or human action (intentionally or unintentionally and existing in a world of facts as a fact among facts) is 'picked up' by someone and *shown* as the expression of the class of which it is a member."[256] Eco gives an example of two friends getting ready for a party: If one friend asked the other, "How should I dress for this event?" and the friend responded by showing his tie and jacket while saying "like this." The latter would be signifying by ostension. For Eco, ostension is not simply recognizing a sign, but a performing it, typically in cases of metonymy and synecdoche.

Instances of metonymy and synecdoche are also observed in theatrical ostension. For example, the presence of a single tombstone may suggest a cemetery, or a gurney may signify a hospital. Theatrical ostension often focuses on the mise-en-scène, but may also refer to verbal signs.[257] Folklorists Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi appropriated the term ostension to describe real-life actions influenced by legends, or legends we live.[258] Dégh and Vázsonyi believe that although "the showing of an action by showing the action itself or by another action" might be recognized as acting, ostensive action is not acting because "actors intend to create illusion, not delusion.[259] Dégh suggests "An orally told story can also be *acted out* dramatically, using redundant signs, gestures, and mimics.."[260] For Dégh, *acted out* simply means producing physical gestures in order to communicate the plot of a legend rather than acting to impersonate and deceive.

At this point, I would like to introduce the concept of *motif ostension*, an idea that expands upon the definition of ostension often used by folklorists. Dégh touches upon this idea as she defines the process of ostension, "The recipients are the script writers, editors, directors, narrators, and actors in one person, who will convert the legend—or create the legend—on the basis of what their conduits have passed on to them. The material may be a full-blown legend, *a motif,* a reference, a name, or any small provocative ingredient."[261] A motif, by Thompson's definition, is a remarkable and

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[256] Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics,* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1976), 224-225. See also Umberto Eco, "Semiotics of Theatrical Performance," *The Drama Review,* Vol. 21, No. 1, (March, 1977): 110.

[257] For a discussion of ostension and theater, see Patricia Dorval, "Towards a Stylistics of the Modes of Ostension," *Theatre Research International,* 18 (1993): 206-214.

[258] "Does the Word "Dog" Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend-Telling," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol 20, No 1 (May, 1983): 5-34.

[259] Ibid, 7-8.

[260] Original emphasis. Linda Degh, *Legend and Belief*, (Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2001), 423.

[261] My emphasis. Ibid.

memorable instance in a tale, and although Dégh recognizes that a motif alone may be reproduced by ostension, she does not elaborate on this idea, but rather focuses on the reenactment of entire legends. I define *motif ostension* as the real life occurrence of a particular folk motif. There are a few points to consider:

1. One must have the information to recognize *motif ostension*.
2. *Motif ostension* exists within varying contexts.

The actor, lecturer, or latent performer (showman) may or may not be aware of the relationship between the existence of a motif and his or her performance. I would like to suggest that in the case of *motif ostension*, the writers (showmen), narrators (lecturers or pitchmen), and actors (lusus naturae) may be separate individuals involved in performing the same motif. Impresarios, showmen, and remarkably, even the performers themselves may be latent performers. Shrewd showman had the ability to recognize popular interest as well as create interest in new subject matters. The most successful exhibits of lusus naturae captured the interest of the heterogeneous nineteenth century American public, and often featured folkloric elements. Public interest in best selling books and theater often influenced a curator's choices. Barnum, for example, was inspired by stories of Tom Thumb when he branded Charles Stratton with the sobriquet General Tom Thumb.[262] Barnum knew the public would be interested in a witnessing a real-life manifestation of a familiar character, but he was not aware that he was marketing Thompson's Motif F451 *Dwarf* (Underground spirit), Motif F535 *Pygmy* (Remarkably small man), Motif F530 *Remarkably large or small men,* or Motif F535 *thumbling,* since the motif-index first appeared in 1955.

While the showman may have intentionally enticed the audience to draw parallels between familiar folklore and the exhibition on display, the performer may not have been aware of his/her place as an instantiation of a folk motif for varying reasons. The performer might not be familiar with the motif he or she is analogous to because of cultural differences, as many of the performers chosen by showmen were exotic others from distant lands. Also, the performer would likely be focused on his or her act because these displays of lusus naturae did not stand idle as patrons gazed upon them. Feats of daring and skill doubled the curiosity factor and helped legitimize acts for reasons other than inciting mere gawking.

In order to recognize motif ostension, performers, showmen, lecturers, and patrons, must have some previous knowledge to recognize the sign(s) involved. This, however, does not mean one has to recognize motif ostension for it to exist. Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein criticized the idea of the semiotic mode of sign production, ostension, noting that one must already have some knowledge of the language to

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[262] In 1827, Major Stevens, a little person, had already assumed the character of Tom Thumb at the Bowery Theatre in New York, but with much criticism and little success. The *Daily National Intelligencer* reviewed Major Steven's performance referring to him as an "odd little personage" with a "peculiar babyish whining tone, ad added much to the ludicrousness of the performance." Barnum followed in 1842 with his extraordinary success marketing General Tom Thumb. See *Daily National Intelligencer,* 4539, Tuesday, August 14, 1827.

recognize the information.[263] Wittgenstein believed that "ostensive definition can be variously interpreted in *every* case."[264]

Motif ostension exists in much the same way. Because the manifestation of a motif does not involve an entire narrative, but only a remarkable element, each observer may interpret an instance of motif ostension in an entirely different way depending on the information he or she previously possessed. Thus, the meaning of an instantiation of a folk motif will vary for each person involved. The showman might intend to frame an exhibit in a particular context, but the audience might perceive it quite differently. An exhibit of a little person like Tom Thumb might conjure images of fairies in one patron and trolls in another. Whether repulsed or attracted to an exhibit, the audience was often intrigued enough to purchase a ticket in order to satiate their own curiosity. Observers are most likely not consciously aware they are experiencing motif ostension. In most cases, there was a feeling of familiarity and nostalgia, which attracted an observer to the occurrence. Motif ostension can also be a form of interactive communication between a showman, performer, and/or observer.[265]

The idea of motif ostension, although similar to Dégh and Vázsonyi's version of ostension, is quite different. The difference here is the acting out of memorable *elements* of familiar tales (motifs) in *varying context*, rather than one full narrative or legend. Motif ostension allows the audience to experience and interpret a living motif in a way that makes sense to him or her. A lecturer's words, a banner, a story learned in youth, a photograph, pitchcard, or pamphlet may give context to a particular motif. Instances of synecdoche are also frequently present in the case of motif ostension, as each presentation of a motif is often a substitute for an entire story, or even a variety of motifs. An exhibition of a little person, for example, might suggest a reference to a general theme of fairies, which encompasses hundreds of motifs (F200-F399 *Fairies and Elves*). The showman may attempt to suggest this and the observers may respond appropriately, or the observers may find this connection independently of the showman's intentions.

Ostension as defined by Dégh and Vázsonyi does not give room for interpretation because a legend is acted out *in full*. Unlike ostension as defined by Dégh, motif ostension is a phenomenon that does *not* appear to lessen through time. Dégh and Vázsonyi believe that "the phenomenon of legend-telling by ostension has become more frequent in our time than ever before, and we attributed this mostly to the special effect of the mass media." Motif ostension also collapses the categories of pseudo-ostension and proto-ostension. Bogdan has pointed out that "the few who have written about the sideshow, mainly popular historians, answer the question by concentrating on the physical characteristics of those exhibited. They organize the chapters of their books like medical textbooks. Headings include such topics as: little people (dwarfs and midgets),

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[263] See Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations, (*New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973).

[264] Stuart Shanker, Editor, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: From Philosophical Investigations to On Certainty: Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy*, (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 95.

[265] This is in contrast to Dégh and Vázsonyi's notion of ostension. They write "At this point there is little said of the role ostension plays In folklore communication." Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, "Does the Word "Dog" Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend-Telling," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (May, 1983): 7.

giants, hairy people, human skeletons, armless and legless wonders, pinheads, fat people, albinos, Siamese twins, people with extra limbs, half men/half women, people with skin disorders, tattooed people, and anatomical wonders.[266] Bogdan's list seems indistinguishable from folk motifs, F535 *Pygmy. Remarkably small man*; F531 *Giant*; F521.1 *Man covered with hair like animal*; F516.1 *Armless people*; Motif F523 *Two persons with bodies joined Siamese twins*; F547.2 *Hermaphrodite*; T551 *Child with extraordinary members* (limbs), which is why I argue that these topics continue to resurface for a reason. Subsequent chapters will address these motifs as instantiations of folk motifs and address the functions and reception of this phenomenon without the necessity to distinguish these headings as Bogdan has suggested so many others have approached the subject.

## THE IMPRESARIO AS ACTIVE BEARER

Nineteenth century American exhibition halls and museums often featured a haphazard assortment of curiosities, paintings, historical objects, lecturers, and performers, organized and promoted by a notorious showman. Rented exhibition halls, museums, and other venues that featured lusus naturae advertised primarily in the amusement section of a local newspaper. Marketing was critical to the success of a venue, and these impresarios of curiosities vied for their readers' attention, often advertising exclusivity by prefacing their attractions with adjectives like "the biggest" "the most" "the greatest" and "the only."

Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1878-1952), comparative folklore scholar, is considered one of the great contributors to folkloristics, the study of folklore as an academic discipline.[267] Von Sydow's interest in the transmission of folklore, inspired him to coin the terms "active" and "passive bearers." He defines active bearers as those "who keep tradition alive and transmit it," whereas passive bearers "have indeed heard of what a certain tradition contains, and may perhaps, when questioned, recollect part of it, but do nothing themselves to spread it or keep it alive."[268] The showman and the lecturer (or seller) of lusus naturae may be the same person, as these titles are not mutually exclusive. However, the importance of this section rests on two factors, the ability to spread tradition(s), which includes hiring others to do so, and the possession of a particular repertoire (several narratives).[269] Barnum, for example, employed numerous lecturers to

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[266] Robert Bogdan, "The Social Construction of Freaks" in Rosemarie Garland Thomson's *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body.*

[267] Alan Dundes, for example, writes, "perhaps no scholar was more creative and imaginative than Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1878-1952) of Sweden." Alan Dundes, *International Folkloristics: Classic Contributions by the Founders of Folklore,* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 137.

[268] C.W. von Sydow, "On the Spread of Tradition," in Selected Papers on Folklore, ed. Laurits Bødker, (Copenhagen, 1948), 12-13.

[269] Equally, the person on display, may have also given speeches to the audience regarding his or her own personal narrative, which could theoretically place him or her in the active bearer category. While performers, or lusus naturae on display, may have various accounts they tell to patrons, the focus is on one principal narrative.

captivate audiences by giving alluring narratives about a particular exhibition. The notion of the impresario as an active bearer includes those who were employed by the showman as an instrument of his/her repertoire.

According to von Sydow, an active bearer must actively spread tradition(s), a phrase that implies the process of transmitting folklore. The question regarding the nature of tradition and its meaning, particularly to folkloristics, has been discussed by some of the earliest folklore theorists. Folklorist Dan Ben Amos endeavored to demystify the concept of tradition into *seven strands*, and points out that folklorists have regularly used the terms *lore* and *tradition* synonymously with one another, and although definitions of tradition are diverse and often criticized, the term remains a "symbol of and for folklore."[270] Von Sydow's definition of an active bearer of tradition can therefore be defined as an individual who [intentionally] perpetuate the spread of folklore.[271] Showmen can also, at times, become passive bearers. Von Sydow writes, "An active bearer may become passive for various reasons…An active teller of tales will become a passive bearer of folk-tale tradition when nobody cares to listen to him any longer and this may happen for various reasons."[272] A showman's repertoire is shaped by current interest in popular culture, the audience's reception, and available performers. Once a showman no longer provided the audience with exhibitions and consequent narratives, he became a passive bearer.

## TRADITION & AUTHENTICITY

Because active bearers must propagate tradition, the theory that showmen can act as active bearers rests on the notion that motif ostension is analogous to a form of tradition. Edward Shils believes that a person is impelled to modify a tradition because it is not good enough for him. He speaks of these changes as "enrichments of the stock" and as "improvements" to a particular tradition. Shils refers to the "superior" human mind, and the *need* to change. According to Shils, it is the inexhaustibility of the universe that allows the human mind to find a discrepancy, flaw, or defect in a tradition. It is when the universe, or some part of it, ceases to be interesting that tradition remains stagnant, and it is the infinite nature of the universe that facilitates the changes in a

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[270] For a complete discussion on tradition from a folklorist's perspective, see Dan Ben-Amos, "The Seven Strands of *Tradition*: Varieties in Its Meaning in American Folklore Studies," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 21, No. 2/3, Culture, Tradition, Identity Conference, March 26-28, 1984 (May-Dec., 1984): 97-131.

[271] Von Sydow does not mention the awareness of the active bearer's intentions. The implication is suggested simply because those who actively transmit folklore, are usually aware that they are doing so. However, in the case of showmen, awareness is not only apparent, but necessary to the success of the exhibition. Von Sydow believes that tradition "does not spread by itself but is moved and transferred by human bearers. Thus, his work calls for a shift in focus from the superorganic transmission of folk traditions to the transmitters of these items." See Thomas Green's Encyclopedia of beliefs, customs, tales, music, and art, Volume 1.

[272] C.W. von Sydow, "On the Spread of Tradition," in Selected Papers on Folklore, ed. Laurits Bødker (Copenhagen, 1948), 15.

tradition. In other words, tradition cannot change nor grow, when there is nothing left to experience. Shils describes the "defect" as something that lies dormant inside a tradition from the time of its birth, waiting to be discovered by the "critical intelligence" or changed by a "charismatic figure."[273]

A charismatic impresario of oddities, like Barnum, acted as a storyteller who was aware of the current state of traditional culture. This traditional culture, or lore, reflected the interests of those attending these exhibits. In a sense, Barnum was shaping his narratives to include pre-existing and familiar versions of motifs known to his patrons, and he was simultaneously catering to and cultivating audience interest. As discussed in Chapter 2, motifs of *Marvelous Creatures* (F200-F1099) were the popular choice among impresarios. Exhibitions that paralleled these motifs, not only drew in crowds, but also helped stimulate stories of giants, dwarves, and other wondrous beings during this era. Von Sydow believed that "each tradition has its own bearers," a notion that can undoubtedly reveal an impresario of lusus naturae as an active bearer of legends and folktales.[274] The active staging, promoting, and advertising of displays that bear a strong resemblance to folk narratives (which include specific folk motifs) can be equated to spreading tradition.

Impresarios of oddities had the power to revitalize and shape the public's interest in folklore. Because these showmen curated their exhibitions to simultaneously create innovative and unique displays and to cater to the tastes of his audience, the results reflected current concerns, as well as attempted to create new interests. Barnum was infamous for having his exhibits perform mythic roles, and Barnum himself was even perceived as a mythical figure.[275] An English traveler commented on Barnum's success and celebrity status, thus: "The rise of this illustrious person, like that of some of his fellows, would seem to be veiled in obscurity. Whether he rose to fame on a fabulous griffin, or reached the wished-for goal on the back of an eight-legged horse, must remain matter of conjecture."[276]

The line between showmen and museum curators was often blurred. In fact, as the popularity of didactic museums grew, these two professions became nearly synonymous with one another, often to the dismay of serious curators.[277] Both professions focused on disseminating knowledge (lore) and collecting and preserving material curiosities in public, although showmen often implied the latter. Showmen like Barnum experienced pecuniary success, and their influence on the American public was substantial. In his 1854 autobiography *The Life of P.T. Barnum*, Barnum bragged about the abundance of

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[273] Edward Shils, *Tradition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
[274] C.W. von Sydow, "On the Spread of Tradition," in Selected Papers on Folklore, ed. Laurits Bødker (Copenhagen, 1948), 12.
[275] Justin Wintle ed. *Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture 1800-1914*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 30.
[276] "Speculations on Barnum, The Museum, &c." An English Traveller [sic]. *The Literary World,* Vol 210, 115, February 8, 1851.
[277] For example, *The Nation* published "A Word About Museums" (July 27, 1865), which heavily criticized Barnum's museum, stating "Barnum's Museum is gone at last.... Its memory is not pleasant. It pandered to the most foolish curiosity and to the most morbid appetite for the marvelous."

editorial notices that featured his first major successful exhibition, Joice Heth, the elderly woman he claimed was George Washington's 161 year old nursemaid. *The New York Spirit of the Times* compared Heth to the legend of the Wandering Jew, and the impersonation of time in the primer. Nineteenth century showmen also had distinct repertoires, and just as active bearers of oral narratives would exchange stories, many showmen swapped exhibitions in order to keep their line up fresh and exciting.

Letting critics independently speculate on the relationship between exhibitions with folklore allowed the exhibit to resonate mnemonically to the public, making Barnum, and other showmen, quasi-bearers of traditions. Dan Ben Amos writes in regards to von Sydow's notion of active and passive bearers, "[M]ost studies of individual narrators and singers focus on their oral literary repertoire and social function, and not on their contribution to the dissemination of tales and songs."[278] By recognizing showmen as possible active bearers, future studies can focus not only on the repertoire and social function of an active bearer, but explore how these showmen contributed to the popularity of particular motifs in folklore trends.

## FOLKLORISM & NOSTALGIA

Motif ostension involves the transmission of tradition, but the genuine or spurious nature of the tradition is not imperative, and in fact, the presence of fakelore, folklorism, or invented traditions indicates an active interest with particular motifs.[279] Historian Eric Hobsbawm believes that the study of the invented tradition is interdisciplinary.[280] By itself, motif ostension is with little meaning, as its significance is understood when it is examined from within the context in which it exists. Folklorism has been defined as "visually and aurally striking or aesthetically pleasing folk materials, such as costume, festive performance, music, and art (but also foods) that lend themselves to being extracted from their initial contexts and put to new uses for different, often larger audiences."[281]

The existence of folklorism stems from a widespread interest in authenticity of the folk material involved. That is, the more popular and intriguing, the more a particular piece of folk material is used for new uses such as advertising and propaganda, and the

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[278] "The Seven Strands of *Tradition*: Varieties in Its Meaning in American Folklore Studies" *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 21, No. 2/3, Culture, Tradition, Identity Conference, March 26-28, 1984 (May-Dec., 1984): 119.

[279] The question regarding whether certain traditions are geniuine or spurious has been discussed at length by Handler and Linnekin. Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious," *The Journal of American Folklore,* Vol. 97, No. 385 (Jul.-Sep., 1984): 273-290.

[280] "It is a field of study which brings together historians, social anthropologists and a variety of other workers in the human sciences, and cannot adequately be pursued without such collaboration." Eric Hobsbawm, ed. *The Invention of Tradition,* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 14.

[281] *Folklorism* is also referred to as *folklorismus* (German) and *fol'klorizm* (Russian). Thomas A. Green, *Folklore: an Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art, (*Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1997), 337.

more the authenticity of the lore is questioned. The term folklorism was used in Russia from the 1930s, but contemporary folklore scholars give much of the credit to Hans Moser for bringing it to the forefront of folklore research in 1962.[282] Moser defined folklorism as "second-hand mediation and presentation of folk culture," and identified three forms of folklorism, "the performance of folk culture away from its original local context, *the playful imitation of popular motifs* by another social class, and the invention and creation of folklore from different purposes outside any known tradition."[283] According to Moser, folklorism implies imitation, copy, or repurposing of folklore by others, but this does not automatically deem the folk material unauthentic.

Moser indicates that the imitation of popular motifs can be a form of folklorism, but he also implies that this imitation is conscious. Contemporary folklorist Guntis Šmidchens also believes that folklorism is "best defined functionally, denoting the conscious use of folklore as a symbol of ethnic, regional, or national culture."[284] The deliberate reproduction of folklore is often associated with sanctioned propaganda and/or commercialism. Soviet folklorists like Viktor Gusev often tied folklorism to official ideologies such as government and state entities, whereas Western scholars like Moser and Bausinger associated folklorism with commercial contexts.[285] The extent to which nineteenth century showmen who touted instances of familiar motifs featuring lusus naturae realized they were repurposing folklore may be a subject for speculation, but there is evidence that showman knew the popularity of "fairy stories" and lore in general and wanted entice customers using similar imagery.

The term *fakelore*, coined by folklorist Richard Dorson, is sometimes used interchangeably with folklorism. Dorson himself uses the term *folklorismus* (folklorism) synonymously with fakelore and defines fakelore as "the presentation of spurious and synthetic writings under the claim that they are genuine folklore."[286] The question of intent in both folklorism and fakelore is obscured by the focus on authenticity and the reproduction of folklore, but most scholars agree that folklorism is not necessarily misleading, whereas fakelore is consciously manufactured and presented as genuine folklore. Both terms, however, refer to folklore outside of the normal context in which it would be found, and therefore both are applicable to the occurrence of motif ostension in nineteenth century exhibitions of lusus naturae.

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[282] See Guntis Šmidchens, "Folklorism Revisited," *Journal of Folklore Research,* Vol. 36, No. 1, (1999): 52. Hans Moser, "Vom Folklorismus in unserer Zeit*" Zeitchrift für Volkskunde,* 58: 177-209. Voigt suggests a modern form of folklorism which he calls *new folklorism* or *neo-folklorism*. Vilmos Voigt, "Confines of Literature, Folklore, and Folklorism" *Neohelicon*, VII 2, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980): 131.

[283] My emphasis. See Venetia J. Newall, "The Adaptation of Folklore and Tradition (Folklorismus), *Folklore,* Vol. 98, ii, (1987): 131 and Hans Moser, "Vom Folklorismus in unserer Zeit*" Zeitchrift für Volkskunde,* 58: 177-209

[284] Guntis Šmidchens, "Folklorism Revisited," *Journal of Folklore Research,* Vol. 36, No. 1, (1999): 64.

[285] Ibid, 53.

[286] Richard Dorson, *American Folklore and the Historian,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 9. Dorson first discussed this term in "Folklore and Fake Lore," *American Mercury,* 70, (March, 1950): 335-343.

In order for motif ostension to persist, either intentionally or unintentionally, there must be a desire to see the subject matter. Folklorist Venetia J. Newall points out that the association between folklorism and nostalgia are "closely linked"[287] Not only were motifs repurposed for amusement, but they enticed the audience by evoking a sense of nostalgia. Nineteenth century exhibitions of lusus naturae may have transported members of the audience into what anthropologist Kathleen Stewart calls "fantasy environments to roam around in."[288] Environments that encapsulate an ideological utopian reality are at the nexus of nostalgia, and the desire for nostalgia is often associated with a sense of discontent and longing.[289] Nineteenth century instances of motif ostension created milieus charged by nostalgia, imbued with folklore in the guise of folklorism, and provided patrons with the opportunity to experience secular tourism as a form of amusement and education. The appearance of motifs in early American exhibitions, whether authentic, reproduced, or recreated, attracted local urban crowds, as well as those living in rural areas. Folklorist Alan Dundes, for instance, believed that it might be impossible for folklorism to be discussed apart from tourism.[290]

TOURISM

Tourism had already gained popularity in Europe by the 1790s, and travel, particularly among the English, to the scenic countryside was extremely widespread among upper class Europeans. [291] America, on the other hand, suffered from poor roads, and a lack of convenient forms of transportation, and as a result, Americans did not

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[287] Venetia J. Newall, "The Adaptation of Folklore and Tradition (Folklorismus)" *Folklore,* Vol. 98, ii, (1987): 140.

[288] Kathleen Stewart, "Nostalgia: A Polemic," *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Aug.,1988): 232.

[289] Poet and critic Susan Stewart, for example, describes nostalgia as "a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience," and Kathleen Stewart refers to nostalgia as "a painful homesickness that generates desire…" Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection,* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), 23 and Kathleen Stewart, "Nostalgia: A Polemic," *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.3, No.3 (Aug.,1988): 228.

[290] *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 21, no 2/3, 207.

[291] John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 1989), 3. Catherine Cocks reminds us that, in America, the term tourist was first noted in the 1800's. See Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 5. I have found an occurrence of the term 'tourist' as early as 1801. John Corry refers to the tourist in his book. "The life of George Washington, late president and commander in chief of the armies of the United States of America interspersed with biographical anecdotes of the most eminent men who effected the American Revolution." Corry uses the term and credits the word to "Vide Smyth's Tour in the United States of America, vol, 11, p. 148.

embrace tourism until the early nineteenth century.[292] The invention of the electric motor in 1821, the construction of turnpikes, steamboats, canals, and better roads allowed for the rapid growth of cities and eventually tourism on a larger scale.[293] It was not until the 1820s and 1830s that Americans began exploring natural wonders as tourist destinations. John Sears, for example, suggests that Americans turned to tourism and travel because it satiated the need to visit sacred, yet secular, places, and equally to establish a national culture (and identity) that was closely tied to nature.[294] Those who visited these various attractions often referred to themselves as "pilgrims," and visited tourist sites such as Niagara Falls, Mammoth Cave, The Connecticut and Hudson river valleys, the Willey House, and Yosemite, as well as cemeteries, asylums, and parks.[295]

During the early years of the Republic, tourism existed as mostly endeavors to visit various museums and exhibitions in local towns or neighboring cities, but by the mid nineteenth century, the railroad became the standard choice of travel providing passengers with the option of long distance and overnight excursions, and later with the invention of the Pullman Sleeping Car, passengers could travel in further comfort. Major urban centers such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia remained the epicenters for dime museums and exhibition halls, and although most of the patrons were from the city, tourists from rural areas also attended these exhibitions. John Sears believes that Barnum's miniature working model of Niagara Falls was presented to tourists in much the same way as natural tourist destinations such as Niagara Falls. That is, "The spectacle as a whole was supposed to awe the tourist, and its grandeur provided an ever-present context in which to examine its various parts."[296]

The study of tourism as an academic discipline in America is a fairly recent development, which was legitimized by the first edition of *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* published in 1977.[297] While it is true that both folklore and tourism studies are two seemingly distinct underdogs of anthropology, these two areas of study become inseparable once folklorism and/or fakelore is introduced, and there is a great similarity in the academic view of tourism and folklore. Anthropologist Nelson Graburn writes, "Tourist behavior and aspirations are direct or indirect indicators of what

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[292] Museums and exhibit halls, like Peale's "Transparent Perspective Views," seemed to offer a plentitude of opportunities for Americans to "travel" virtually to distant and unfamiliar lands. These "moving pictures" allowed a spectator to view the countryside at night, see an elegant building in the rain, or watch water cascade in motion down a water-wheel. *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser,* 4, January 28, 1791. Other scenes exhibited in the American Museum included a "timid deer," "a crawling badger," "a grey American fox," and "flexible snakes." *National Advocate*, Vol. 1V. Issue 1146, August 17, 1816.
[293] John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 1989), 3-4.
[294] Ibid, 3-6.
[295] Ibid, 5.
[296] Ibid, 29.
[297] Valene L. Smith, *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, Second edition, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), IX. The first credited article on tourism is given to Theron Nunez, who in 1963, published the article "Tourism, Tradition, and Acculturation: Weekendismo in a Mexican Village" in *Ethnology*.

is significant and meaningful in peoples' lives, of their self-perceptions, their class or group identity, and their social aspirations,"[298] and John Sears believes that "tourism played a powerful role in America's invention of itself as a culture." [299] Similarly, eminent folklorist Alan Dundes states, "Folklore furnishes a socially sanctioned outlet for cultural pressure points and individual anxieties."[300] Thompson defines a motif as an extraordinary element of a tale, and Robinson points out that there must be an extraordinary element involved with tourism.[301]

Much like the impetus for transmitting folklore, there are social and cultural motivations for choosing a particular leisure tourist activity. Nineteenth century tourists were often able to "travel" to a different class, or socialize amongst men, women, and children during a time in American where gender, class, and age distinctions were prevalent. These motivations were particular to each individual tourist, much like interest in specific elements of folklore. Current debates over tourist behavior and roles have spawned tourist typologies that categorize tourists into: organized mass tourist, individual tourist, the explorer, and the drifter.[302] However, the most compelling reasons for tourism were often centered in folklore.

Tourism studies in America often focused on travelers in Europe rather than North America. The closeness of international borders allowed visitors to traverse into foreign lands quite easily, whereas the vastness of the United States makes international travel less common. Dime museums, exhibition halls, world's fairs, and later circuses, were all popular tourist destinations for both local and rural visitors. The Columbian Exposition attracted over 27 million visitors at a time when the population of the United States was only about 67 million. Expositions became destinations or excursions for the American public, and "public curiosity about other peoples, mediated by the terms of the marketplace, produced an early form of touristic consumption."[303]

Most of the larger expositions share the same basic elements that attracted viewers to dime museums during the mid to late nineteenth century. That is, the patron sought authenticity as well as the exotic, and his/her expectations became embodied in the experience. Dean MacCannell, author of the quintessential book on tourism *The Tourist*, believes that all tourists seek authenticity.[304] Cultural geographer Peter Jackson comments on the thorny question of authenticity while suggesting that, "tourists seek an 'authentic'

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[298] Nelson Graburn, "The Anthropology of Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol 10, (1983): 29.
[299] John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the nineteenth Century,* (Oxford, 1989), 4.
[300] Alan Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1980), x.
[301] H. Robinson, *A Geography of Tourism*, (Plymouth: Macdonald & Evans, 1976), 157.
[302] Valene L. Smith, *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, Second edition, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989). Cohen, Erik. Toward a Sociology of International Tourism. Soc. Res. 39. 1. 164-82.
[303] Curtis M. Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* (Washington 1991), 363.
[304] Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class,* (New York: Schocken, 1976).

experience of other places, even when they know such authenticity to have been 'staged' specifically for their benefit,[305] or where a new generation of 'post-tourists' may actually delight in inauthenticity, willingly suspending disbelief for the temporary enjoyment of the 'exotic'."[306]

John Urry writes, "Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered."[307] Urry goes on to suggest that this anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, etc. This chapter demonstrates the connectedness between aspects of popular culture, such as literature, and the use of folklore. I would propose that it is also manifestations of folklore (such as a familiar tale, or a motif) that provides the public with the "anticipation" Urry speaks of.

In the form of folklore, stories and exhibitions of lusus naturae were able to mask or address larger issues, giving the American public the opportunity to negotiate through newly emerging concerns. The use of folklore allowed these exhibitions to be a specific form of entertainment in nineteenth century America where the public came together regardless of age, gender, or class. The audience, however, was not the only one to experience this form of liminality. The performers themselves were often in a liminal state (e.g. half human/half monster, part fantasy, part reality, part man/woman, or part magical being), and often experienced a similar form of communitas.

John Sears argues that tourist attractions "offered diverse attractions under umbrella of unifying spectacle."[308] Most sideshows featured the "Ten-in-One", which consisted of at least ten performers with various deformities and skills in a constant cycle of acts. The Ten-in-One promised ten acts for the price of one, and more importantly boasted "no waiting." The spectator could enter at any given point in the show and when the cycle of acts eventually rotated back to the act in which they entered, they would leave. At first, the viewer appeared to be surrounded by a seemingly unrelated group of freaks, but soon found a connection between these acts—somehow they all appeared to fit together. Referring to American vacations, Gottlieb believes tourists desire the inversion of the everyday. "The middle-class tourist will seek to be a 'peasant for a day' while the lower middle-class tourist will seek to be 'king/queen for a day'."[309]

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[305] Peter Jackson, "Commodity Cultures: The Traffic in Things," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 24 (1999): 100. See also Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist,* (London, 1989).

[306] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 1990).

[307] Ibid, 3.

[308] John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the nineteenth Century,* (Oxford, 1989), 27.

[309] Those exhibited could perform complex dances, play instruments with great skill, speak multiple languages, and throw boomerangs with precision. In fact, Americans were compelled to learn these feats, and a boomerang craze, for example, swept the nation with one toy company selling 11,000 boomerangs in 1888. Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 91, 138. Originally in the *Daily Alta*, February 26, 1888. John Urry, *The*

SEMIOTICS

Semiotic studies exist at the intersection of folkloristics, folklorism, and tourism, and some scholars have suggested, "Folklore *is* semiosis."[310] The idea of motif ostension in and of itself necessitates a recognizable sign, but each observer interprets the signs uniquely.[311] Sociologist John Urry writes, "The gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs."[312] Motif ostension, in a semiotic sense, is similar to the *token*. Umberto Eco refers to tokens as replicas of the same type and "signs whose tokens, even though produced according to a type, possess a certain quality of material uniqueness."[313] Similarly, there may be multiple physical manifestations of a particular motif, such as the presentation of various little people (General Tom Thumb and Admiral Dot, for example) as Motif 451 *Dwarf* or Motif 530 *Remarkably large or small men*.

More specifically, instances of motif ostension resemble the type-token.[314] Philosopher Walter Benjamin pointed out that we often see countless reproductions of an original type before we see an original.[315] Nineteenth century patrons, for example, were inundated with posters, broadsides, and repeated newspaper advertisements all literally and/or figuratively replicating a motif in print, through illustration, description, and printed matter. Russian linguist Roman Jakobson's model of the functions of language can be used to show how the relationship between the seller and patron in nineteenth century American displays of lusus naturae is a form of communication (see Figure 2).[316]

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*Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 1990), 11. A. Gottlieb, "Americans vacations," *Annals of Tourism Research*, 9: 165-87.

[310] Janet L. Langlois, "Folklore and Semiotics: An Introduction," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 22. No. 2/3, *Folklore and Semiotics,* (May-Dec., 1985): 77.

[311] In her earlier work with Vázsonyi, Dégh believes that "It is common knowledge, however, that pure ostension exists more in theory than in reality as much as pure signs do not exist in reality." In her more recent work, Dégh suggests that legend reenactments are performed by narrators by "pure *ostension*." Linda Dégh, *Legend and Belief*, (Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2001), 423 and "Does the Word "Dog" Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend-Telling," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (May, 1983): 7.

[312] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 1990), 3.

[313] Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics,* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 50. See Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics,* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1976), 178.

[314] Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Volume I, paragraph 191, 1903 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

[315] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" 1935

[316] Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics." Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry. Vol. 3 of Selected Writings. (The Hague: Mouton, 1981): 18-51.

The tourist may first see a representation of the site— a marker.[317] Images in pitchcards, broadsides, and pamphlets reinforced the notion that, indeed, these displays were something to see, and the large banners that hung outside the entrances of sideshow tents and exhibition acted as tourist site marker. The sensational slogans in daily newspapers, and later, the bright colored banners, act as markers, as well as the words of the barkers, pitchmen, and lecturers. Even the dimes, the entrance fee for dime museums, were signs indicating to the patron there is "something I need to see." The 10 in 1 proved exceptionally useful because it offered a variety of visual displays. Dean MacCannell believes tourist attractions are signs and tourists can become disappointed when the sight involvement and marker are different.[318] Barnum, for example, the father of the term humbug, often used misleading signs to entice the tourist, and sometimes, the site, although an instance of motif ostension, is not what was expected. Also, particular signs indicated something extraordinary even when the attraction itself was mundane.[319]

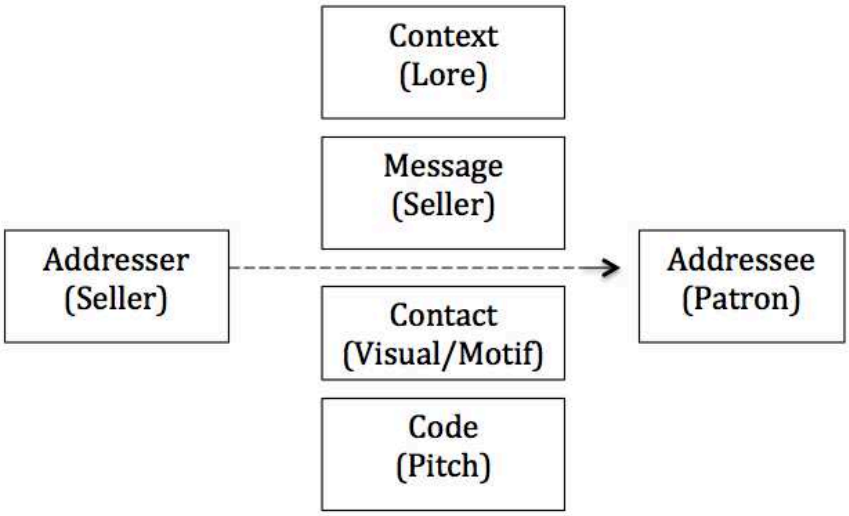


Fig. 2. The use of semiotics in the marketing and reception of exhibitions of nineteenth century lusus naturae

[317] Claude F. Jacobs, "Folk for Whom? Tourist Guidebooks, Local Color, and the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans," *The Journal of American Folklore,* Vol. 114, No. 453 (Summer, 2001): 311. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class,* (New York: Schocken, 1976), 110.
[318] Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class,* (New York: Schocken, 1976), 109.
[319] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze,* (London 1990), 12. This happened quite frequently in World's Fairs, and other venues that showcased exotic performers.

Jonathan Culler points out that without markers, a site "could not be experienced as authentic."[320] Most nineteenth century printed matter literally used words such as "authentic," "real," and "living" in conjunction with the exhibit of lusus naturae. MacCannell discusses the stages of site sacralization and suggests that sites go through a naming phase, framing and elevation phase, enshrinement, mechanical reproduction, and social reproduction. According to MacCannell, a site cannot be a tourist attraction until it is named, and tourist attractions are "an empirical relationship between a tourist, a sight, and a marker."[321] Even photographs of performers were a form of signifying practice structured by planning, staging, and selecting the photographs to reproduce.[322]

SOUVENIRS

In the nineteenth century, the curtain may have been pulled off the once mysterious mythological explanations for these oddities, but it was just as quickly cloaked by the mysteries of medical terminology. Pamphlets, posters and photographs of these individuals were accompanied with lengthy, detailed, and often bogus, descriptions of their medical ailments. These scientific descriptions were often riddled with medical jargon and ridiculous explanations, but, nonetheless, managed once again to mystify the public. The science of physiognomy, or the act of judging human character from facial features, was popularized in the early nineteenth century with the invention of the Physiognotrace (invented in 1803) and was yet another way to propagate notions of racial (and bodily) superiority.[323]

Souvenir pamphlets were offered to the public after the (side) show or exhibit, and with the payment of a coin, visitors were provided with a glimpse of esoteric knowledge regarding the human display. Thompson notes that "an illustrated, printed narrative pamphlet almost always accompanied the actual exhibit, authenticating the freak with a 'true life' story and medical testimonies that served as both advertisement and souvenir, augmenting the pitchman's oral spiel."[324] These pamphlets contained extravagant life stories of sideshow performers, provided scientific explanations for various maladies, and placed the spectator in an intellectually and physically superior light.

Poignant believes that these nineteenth century living exhibits and their show-space "became a site where science and popular culture were entangled, and where a

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[320] Jonathan Culler, *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 8.
[321] MacCannell, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class.* New York: Schocken, 1976. p. 41.
[322] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 1990), 138.
[323] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimlett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 38.
[324] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary bodies: Figuring physical disability in America culture and literature*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 61.

potent mix of stereotypic ideas about race was brewed."[325] Science and anthropology were shaping the "the discourse about the differences between human types, ranking them on a ladder of cultural stages that placed the hunter-gather societies like the 'Patagonians, Eskimos, Bushmen, Veddas, Laplanders, Australians' at the lowest level of human development."[326] Cassuto harks back to a time when American race relations were abounding and suggests, "It was this racially divided American society of the 1840s that nurtured the freak show, which quickly took root and thrived in its troubled soil."[327] Once the seeds of unrest were laid, the success of promoting racially inferior peoples became undeniably related to the introduction of "scientific knowledge" to the people. The publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) influenced the way human exhibitions were framed. Such an example was a young girl from the Australian Palm Islands who was billed as the "missing link" and went by the name "the Ape Girl", "Princess Tagarah" and "Sussy.[328] Julia Pastrana, a Mexican Indian woman whose body was covered with "thick black hair" was first exhibited in New York's Gothic Hall in 1854 and remained such an object of both wonder and curiosity, her embalmed body (along with her child) was displayed from 1860-1993.[329] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson notes how her body "radically violated expectations of how human beings should appear" and visibly illustrated the "discursive shift from prodigy to pathology." [330]

Teratology was also a growing trend, and with it came depictions of humans with abnormalities as creations of God rather than the monsters of early mythology.[331] This of course further roused the curiosity of those seeking to understand nonstandard bodies on a more spiritual level. When souvenirs were involved, and they usually were, it did not matter whether the tourist was a local, or someone who traveled a great distance. Americans wanted proof of their educational, grotesque, or fascinating experience. After a show, there was often the opportunity to purchase a small inexpensive souvenir. The old pamphlets were shortened to fit on a postcard-sized paper and with a photograph on one side and a "story" on the other. These souvenirs became known as pitchcards. Pitchcards were often the main source of income for many of the performers, mostly benefiting from the fads of the times. During this period, it has been noted that Americans suffered from "a compulsion to collect photographs," and freaks were among

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[325] Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 124-125.
[326] Ibid, 119.
[327] Leonard Cassuto, "'What an Object He Would Have Made of Me!'" In *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, (New York, 1996), 244-245.
[328] Poignant, Roslyn. *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*. London: Yale University Press, 2004, 83.
[329] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Making Freaks: Visual Rhetorics and the Spectacle of Julia Pastrana" in Cohen and Weiss, *Thinking the Limits of the Body*, (SUNY Press, 2003), 129, 137.
[330] Ibid.
[331] For an brief and interesting account of the history of teratology, See Mark V. Barrow's "A Brief History of Teratology to the Early 20th Century," in *Teratology* 4 (May 2005): 119-130.

the favored subjects.[332] One could almost always find a photo album on the coffee table of a Victorian home, and in its pages; one would most likely find a collection of various human prodigies.[333]

Those on display often autographed personal notes on these souvenirs which often attempted to show them as an "able body," while the photograph itself almost always exaggerated and accentuated the individual's abnormality (or disability) by either juxtaposing them with extreme opposites or by placing them in costume and scenery that exemplified their "stage character." In addition, the living exhibits were often shown as a nuclear family. In one photograph, Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren (both little people) were shown posing with a baby (without any abnormalities) in order to emulate the nuclear family.[334] Hinsely tells us of a photograph featuring the newborn Arab boy (born at the Chicago exposition), which was exceptionally popular because of the representation of the nuclear family.[335] The life stories of the performer did not always have, to use Charlotte Linde's term, a high "reportability." Linde suggests that one of the criteria for including a story one's life story is that it contains an event that is unusual, but in the case of "commodified otherness," the events described could be seen as "unusual" only in regards to their physical abnormality or talent.[336]

By the 1880s even prestigious photography studios specialized in photographing human oddities.[337] These photographs were often altered and exaggerated either directly on the photograph or by adding props. Sometimes costumes were peculiarly fabricated as in the example of three Australian Aboriginals dressed in clothes that were "much finer than would have been worn customarily."[338] Lionel "The Lion Faced Boy" (sometimes the "dog faced boy") was frequently shown wearing a "upper-class or even aristocratic clothing in stately and educated poses."[339] Even the "Wild Men of Borneo" were shown, at times, wearing strange costumes and standing in particularly rehearsed (Western) poses. The Rousseauian myth of the "noble savage" was shattered and pieced together as these individuals were simultaneously displayed as "headhunters" as well as family

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[332] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, (Chicago, 1988), 11.
[333] Ibid, 12.
[334] Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination,* (Chicago 2001), 116.
[335] Curtis M. Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893, in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* (Washington 1991), 359-360.
[336] Charlotte Linde, *Life Stories*, (New York, 1993), 21-22.
[337] Bogdan mentions Mathew Brady, who was "famous for his Lincoln portraits and his striking visual chronicle of the Civil War." See Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, (Chicago, 1988), 12.
[338] Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 73.
[339] Nigel, Rothfels, "Aztecs, Aborigines, and Ape-People" in Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, (New York, 1996), 170; Daniel P. Mannix, *Freaks: We Who Are Not As Others*, (San Francisco, 1990), 87.

oriented individuals (who also were subjected to the daily grind of performing household chores, raising a family, or obtaining food).

In 1893, the American Engraving Company of Chicago published *Midway Types: A Book of Illustrated Lessons About the People of the Midway Plaisance World's Fair 1893*. This book attempted to categorize the different physiological and cultural types of exhibitions and these telling images, "served to alleviate anxieties about class differences and other frictions of society, to convince the Parisian that really these other types were merely 'harmless oddballs.'"[340] With a glimpse of humanity in these individuals, one could witness hope in "civilizing" them. And with this hope came the possibility of continued public interest, more ticket sales, and the spectator's own conjecture regarding when the spectacle would transform and for how long the spectacle would remain a "savage." Sometimes, this transformation would deliberately be made visible to the public. For example, the "Missing Link", or "Ape Girl" was photographed adorned in a "primitive" leather costume, leaning casually against a wooden prop imbedded with jungle foliage, standing before a painted backdrop of a Western countryside, and wearing Western boots.[341]

## NARRATOLOGY & DISPLAY

The narrative structure of the presentation of lusus naturae can be critically examined using thematic and modal forms of narratology. Structuralist approaches are particularly useful from an interdisciplinary perspective. Critical Studies scholar, Ellen Seiter, demonstrates that semiotics and structuralism are ways of finding connections between various academic disciplines, and literary theorist Mieke Bal declares a profound interdisciplinary interaction between narratology and anthropology.[342] Bal defines fabula as a series of events that are caused or experienced by actors, and uses the example of Tom Thumb to show how people may be familiar with different *versions* of stories (or different "texts").[343] Bal also suggests that the "notion of fabula can benefit from interdisciplinary work, but only if one leaves behind the question of how an image tells a predetermined story, in favor of asking what story the visual representation produces, thereby thoroughly modifying its pre-textual 'source'."[344] Patrons experiencing motif ostension also relate their experience of a particular image to various *versions* of a story. The display becomes a narrative in which the viewer completes the story.

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[340] Meg Armstrong, "'A Jumble of Foreignness:' The Subline Musayums of Nineteenth Century Fairs and Expositions." *Cultural Critique*, No. 23 (Winter, 1992-1993): 209.
[341] Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 122.
[342] Ellen Seiter, "Semiotics, Structuralism, and Television," *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*, (University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Mieke Bal, "The Point of Narratology," *Poetics Today*, Vol. 11. No. 4, Narratology Revisited II (Winter, 1990): 731.
[343] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 5-6.
[344] Mieke Bal, "The Point of Narratology," *Poetics Today*, Vol. 11. No. 4, Narratology Revisited II (Winter, 1990): 744.

Gerald Prince and Arlene Noble remark that misleading facts told by a narrator may not be deemed spurious if established in the narrative universe. If the truth does not necessarily depend on the diegetic status of the narrator, cases of motif ostension allow the suspension of factual judgment by observers during the interaction or experience.[345] Upon interacting and experiencing a display of lusus naturae, patrons may find themselves entering a narrative, or fictional world shaped by preconceived stories containing motifs, and engaged by the words of the narrator (lecturer, pamphlet, or the performer him/herself). If a display of lusus naturae can become an instance of motif ostension, it would follow that each instance would occur within the frame of a folk narrative. A visual motif can be the basis for an entire tale-type, and like written and oral narratives, a visual narrative can also be made up of several motifs. Prince also defines diegesis, in terms of narratology, as the telling of a story by a narrator.[346] Nineteenth century showmen, lecturers, and performers also presented a story to the audience in conjunction with a visual motif by the use of a pitchman, pamphlet, or the actor/performer him or herself engaging with the audience.

There are as many folklorists who find categorizing folk narratives into defined genres as complicating as those who find it useful, but the usefulness of such classification is divulged when narratives function and present themselves in similar ways.[347] Instances of motif ostension in nineteenth century exhibitions exist at the axis of narrative and performance, and although showmen attempt to intentionally shape the viewer's experience through planned context (and the creation of a narrative), factors such as idiosyncratic responses allow the viewer to alter the given narrative according to his or her previous knowledge. In this view, showmen often frame displays of lusus naturae within narratives of legends (fabulates), belief stories, and memorates in order to create a sense of historical importance and may also use fairy tales and folk tales to construct a place of fantasy.[348] These genres are by no means mutually exclusive and sometimes a showman will create a story that might be considered uncategorizable by a folklorist. Dégh has commented on the creative aspect of the creation of folklore by declaring that

> The legend performer may select a whole set, a type, one or more unique pieces, a string of motifs, one motif, or may simply affirm the existence of magic without

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[345] Gerald and Arlene Noble Prince, "Narratology, Narrative, and Meaning," *Poetics Today*, VOl. 12, No. 3 (Autumn, 1991): 548.

[346] Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

[347] Some of the major forms of narrative folklore include: myths, legends, folktales, and fairy tales. Alan Dundes gives an extensive list in *The Study of Folklore*, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), 3. Elliot Oring Discusses Dundes' choices in *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction,* (Utah: Utah University Press, 1986), 3-18.

[348] Linda Dégh has written a comprehensive book on the topic of legend. See *Legend and Belief*, (Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2001). Donald Ward has written on the difference between belief story and belief legend in "Genre Morphology of Legendry: Belief Story versus Belief Legend," *Western Folklore*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (July, 1991): 296-303.

> conveying any specific content…Personal selection and combination of several motifs is not only a behavior, but is obviously a creative act. And because all motifs are traditional and well known, there is no other way of creation than to choose from what is available.[349]

Showmen were quick to assemble narratives which contained popular motifs, whether fairytale, folktale, legend, or other genre of folk narrative. To the showmen, these genres had no boundaries—giants from folktales could be found roaming the streets of popular legends and magic helpers or dwarves might interact with a modern day celebrity (e.g. General Tom Thumb and the Queen of England).

The legend has been defined at great length by folklorist Timothy Tangherlini as "a short (mono) episodic, traditional, highly ecotypified historicized narrative performed in a conversational mode, reflecting on a psychological level a symbolic representation of folk belief and collective experiences and serving as a reaffirmation of commonly held values of the group to whose tradition it belongs." Folklorist Linda Dégh takes a straightforward approach and simply states that tales cannot be true, and the legend can be.[350] One of the most important elements of legends is that they are believable and based in our reality. The fabulate was coined by C.W. von Sydow in 1934 and refers to a form of a migratory legend told principally for entertainment. The fabulate is in contrast to the memorate, which is a narrative told from personal experience.[351] Lusus naturae were part of a larger narrative that thrived on personal experience and belief. The legend, and more particularly the fabulate, allowed both the showman (lecturer or pitchman) and the viewer to engage in a narrative on a personal level. Almost every display of lusus naturae was marketed as "living" and "real," and as a result, believability was invariably involved.

The popularity of modern Fairy tales is often attributed to the Brothers Grimm and their publication of *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (1812). For folklorists, fairy tales are narratives that often contain magical helpers, complex tasks, and occur in a place outside our own temporal and physical spatiality, and when used for contextual purposes alongside motif ostension, the showman were able conjure images of dwarves (General Tom Thumb), giants (Chang the Chinese giant), and strange creatures (fejee mermaid), luring viewers into a fantasy world, yet based in our reality.

## PITCHES

Throughout the mid nineteenth century in America, exhibits of lusus naturae were accompanied by additional information, usually in the form of a captivating narrative told by a pitchman, lecturer, printed pamphlet, or the performer him, or herself. Whether told orally or read by the viewer in a broadside, the words created an additional narrative,

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[349] Dégh, Linda. *Legend and Belief.* Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2001, 421.
[350] Tangherlini, "'It Happened Not Too Far from Here...': A Survey of Legend Theory and Characterization" *Western Folklore* 49.4 (October 1990:371-390): 85. Dégh, Linda. *Legend and Belief.* Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2001, 6.
[351] von Sydow, Carl Wilhelm. *Selected Papers on Folklore. (*New York: Arno Press, [1948] 1978). Thomas A. Green, *Folklore: An Encyclopedia on Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art.* Vol. 1. A-H. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1997), 274.

which framed the exhibit and gave context to the display. Amanda Zeitlin describes the art of the sideshow carnival pitchman:

> The pitchman tells the audience how to look at what they are going to see. The talkers' language of expectation evokes pictures deeply rooted in the imagination, of half men/half animals, of half men/half women, mythological creatures, pictures which are far richer than anything the pitchman could possibly show the audience. It is the talkers who transforms a man with a skin disease into an Elephant Boy, with the "rough, tough, shaggy, baggy hide of an elephant"' or a young man with buck teeth into Kokomo the Mule Face boy, having the "lower jaws, the protruding teeth that look and resemble that of a mule.[352]

The pitchmen not only evoked a sense of folkloric familiarity, but the words were often structured like traditional sermons and recited per cola et commata. The use of biblical cadence, as Daniel Melia remarks, "provide the authority of religion and oblique reference to the mystery (and wonders) of the Bible."[353] In an article on the infamous pitchman Fred "Doc" Bloodgood, Deborah Tannen proposes that the structure of the pitch "make[s] use of repeated rhythmic patterns, sound play, and specific details to create immediacy and vivid imagery—features found in poetry, both oral and written."[354] Doc Bloodgood himself said, "[A] successful pitch always made use of repeated rhythmic patterns and word play. People expected a certain sound, just as they did with an auctioneer. And they also expected specific details to establish a sense of authenticity…I always tried to use alliteration and euphonious phrases."[355] The pitch is an integral part of exhibition, as it lures in the audience by giving a mental picture of the images to soon follow.

EPIC LAWS

Pitchmen are, in a sense, simultaneously selling the unknown and familiar, and because much of their material is based in folklore, the patterns in their oral spiels and written pamphlets also follow folk narrative patterns. Danish folklorist Axel Olrik found that traditional folktales followed patterns that he referred to as "epic laws."[356] Olrik noticed that regardless of narrative preference, "storytellers have a tendency to observe

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[352] Amanda Dargan Zeitlin, "American talkers: The art of the sideshow carnival pitchman and other itinerant showmen and vendors," Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, In *Dissertations & Theses: A&I* [database on-line]; available from http://www.proquest.com (publication number AAT 9235221; accessed July 9, 2011), 5

[353] personal email corrensponcdence.

[354] Fred 'Doc" Bloodgood, "The Medicine and Sideshow Pitches," In Deborah Tannen, *Analyzing Discourse: Text and Talk,* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1982), 371.

[355] Brooks McNamara, "Talking," *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 31. No. 2, (Summer 1987): 49.

[356] Axel Olrik's epic "laws" are particularly useful because they are not bound by folklore genre and are applicable to myth, folktale, legend, etc.

certain practices in composition and style that are generally common to large areas and different categories of narratives, including most of the European narrative tradition."[357] Some of Olrik's epic laws are: The Law of Opening and the Law of Closing, the Law of Repetition, The Law of Two to a Scene, Unity of Plot, the Law of Concentration on a Leading Character, the Law of Contrast, the Law of Twins, the Law of the Single Strand, and the Use of Tableaux Scenes.

Olrik's laws can be applied to the narratives surrounding displays of lusus naturae and instances of motif ostension. The Law of Twins, for example, can be found in exhibitions featuring conjoined twins like Chang and Eng. Olrik stated that if twins are present, they are usually subject to the Law of Contrast (one introverted, one extraverted, for example). As with most siblings, conjoined twins often have distinct personalities, but following Olrik's law of contrast, their characteristics were especially exaggerated in advertisements. The *New York Daily Times* (1852), for example, writes "It is also generally admitted that there is a marked difference in the systems and temperaments of the gentlemen…"[358] and *The Chicago Daily Tribune* (1873) reported, "If Chang and Eng, the Siamese twins, should get intoxicated, what a picture it would make. We should probably see Chang high and Eng raving."[359] Rosa and Josefa Blasek, two famous female conjoined twins, were advertised as "New Freaks in Twins, Bohemian Sisters Stranger Than the Siamese. Distinct in Individuality." The advertisement gives lengthy elaborations of their "distinct individualities."[360]

In folklore, particularly mythology, twins were often portrayed as enemies and/or opposites (male/female, sun/moon). Leslie Fiedler gives the prototype of the *enemy twin brother*, and most likely referring to Chang and Eng, he notes that "Chroniclers of actual Siamese Twins have adapted this aspect of the myth, portraying male pairs in particular as opposite in temperament and taste."[361] Exhibitors, such as Barnum, often advertised the uncanny juxtaposition of weak vs. strong and little vs. big, much like Olrik's law of contrast. Showmen also used terms such as General or Admiral and dressed his tiny marvels as persons with great strength or military prowess. Waino and Plutano were advertised as "The Little Wild Men of Borneo" who possessed of marvelous strength and [were] mere Dwarfs."[362]

## LITERATURE & FOLKLORE

Stith Thompson believed that folklore "is a subject which comes in between literature and anthropology."[363] Folklore was originally thought to be traditional

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[357] Axel Olrik, *Principles for Oral Narrative Research*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992), 41.
[358] The Siamese Twins, *New York Daily Times*, November 24, 1852, 7.
[359] *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 7, 1873, 10.
[360] "New Freaks in Twins" Special Correspondence of the Washington Post, *The Washington Post*, December 9, 1904, 3.
[361] Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths & Images of the Secret Self,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 204.
[362] *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 25, 1885, 6.
[363] Stith Thompson, "Folklore at Midcentury," *Midwest Folklore* 1, (1951): 12.

information that was transmitted orally, but contemporary folklorists agree that this information can also be communicated through the written word. The introduction of print dramatically changed the study, collection, and preservation of folklore. Eighteenth century collections of Western folklore focused on collecting and documenting the ethnographies of curious new cultures (travel literature), and/or explaining unusual occurrences in a religious light (providences) rather than to preserve a fading past, and many writers were frequently influenced by popular culture resulting in the manifestation of popular folk motifs into novels and ephemera.

During the 1840s – 1880s, folklore data was often disseminated through print publications such as newspapers, broadsides, chapbooks, almanacs, and pamphlets with bowdlerized versions of legends, folktales, and fairytales often appearing in books.[364] Many works of fiction were structured similarly to folk narratives, and it was not unusual for popular fiction to be inspired by, or contain trace elements of folklore data. Washington Irving, for example, suggested that Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's collection of American Indian oral narratives be used to "provide a distinctive flair to American literature."[365] Nathaniel Hawthorne rewrote Greek myths in his *A Wonder-book for Girls and Boys* (1852) and Hawthorne's short story "The Great Carbuncle" was based on an Indian legend.

Victorian print culture in America was heavily influenced by journalism, and more particularly sensationalism.[366] Strange stories of "monsters" like Chang and Eng and other folk motifs were some of the most popular tales, and even Mark Twain was so enamored by conjoined twins, Chang and Eng, he wrote "Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins (1869)." Twain, however, was no stranger to folklore or sensationalism, as he was one of the charter members of the American Folklore Society (established in 1888) and a friend and fan of Barnum (who was 25 years his senior).[367] During the peak of Chang and Eng's first career wave, Robert Graves and Hanna Gould published popular poems about Siamese twins, but the most popular publication on the topic was acclaimed English author Edward Bulwer-Lytton's "*The Siamese Twins. A tale of the Times*" written in 1831.[368] Although published in London, Bulwer's tale circulated widely in the United

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[364] Jim Cullen believes that popular fictional narratives "appeared in three formats between 1840's and 1890's: the story paper, the dime novel, and the cheap library." Jim Cullen, ed. *Popular Culture in American History,* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2001), 82.

[365] William K. McNeil, *A History of American Folklore Scholarship Before 1908.* Vol. 1 Dissertation, (Indiana University, 1980), 111. During the early nineteenth century, Schoolcraft, with the help of his brothers-in-law William and George Johnston, collected narratives at meetings, through lectures and surveys.

[366] Matthew Rubery, "Victorian Print Culture, Journalism and the Novel," *Literature Compass,* Volume 7, Issue 4, (April 2010): 290–300.

[367] It is even suspected that some of Twains stories were written around P.T. Barnum's character. Regarding Twain's "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court" see Hamlin Hill, "Barnum, Bridgeport ant The Connecticut Yankee," *American Quarterly* 16 (Winter): 615-616.

[368] Edward Bulwer Lytton, *The Siamese Twins: A Satirical Tale of the Times with Other Poems,* (New York: J & J Harper, 1831). Graves writes "Siamese twins: one, maddened

States and refers to the protagonists as "monster boys," who are conspicuously named Chang and Ching.[369]

Bulwer's poem mimics the real lives of Chang and Eng, with two major differences, the protagonists are named Chang and *Ching* and eventually become separated through surgery. The poet was criticized for using the popularity of the twins to sell his book. For example, a few months after publication one critic writes "The title of his poem seems to have been seized upon as one which at present would be likely to make the book sell; and it bears marks of haste in the composition. [370] Even Bulwer's poem "narrates [Chang and Eng's] dissimilarity of disposition."[371]

Most interesting, is the frontispiece from the book (see Figure 3). The illustration places the conjoined twins, who are obvious doppelgangers for Chang and Eng, inside the realm of a Greek myth alongside Ares the Olympian God of War. The illustration depicts a bat, which is often perceived as an omen of evil. Similarly, at birth, the real life Chang and Eng were also considered to be a portent of misfortune. The large serpent looming above the twins may be a representation of the mythical Greek serpent (Ismenian Dragon), which is said to have emerged from an extraordinary land, and is described in the story of Oedipus as a land producing strange monsters and prodigies.[372] The illustration uses the familiar connection between Siamese Twins (Motif F523 *Two persons with bodies joined. Siamese twins)* and Greek myth to further attract the public, and presents the conjoined twins as a familiar motif in an appropriate context.
Daston and Park comment on the narrative conventions from the 16th century, which often accompany accounts of monsters. "Details of place and date and often names of parents and witnesses unfailingly appeared," and Daston suggests this is to lend truth and authenticity "apparently anticipating skepticism on the part of readers."[373] The term lusus naturae usually referred to something that was not entirely human, but possessed human characteristics. James Fenimore Cooper, for example, uses the term lusus naturae in his short story "The Water-witch" (1830) to describe a group of less desirable individuals who did not seem human in character.[374]

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by the other's moral bigotry, Resolved at length to misbehave And drink them both into the grave." Hanna Flagg Gould, "To the Siamese Twins. Poems by Miss H.F. Gould," (Boston: Hilliard, Gray & Co, 1839), 54 *Literature Online* (1996).

[369] "The Siamese Twins," *The Philadelphia Album and Ladies' Literary Literary Portfolio*, 117, Vol. 5, Issue 15, April 9, 1831.

[370] "Siamese Twins," *Atkinson's Casket*, No. 7, 326, (Jul 1831).

[371] "The Siamese Twins," *The Philadelphia Album and Ladies' Literary Literary Portfolio*, 117, Vol. 5, Issue 15, April 9, 1831.

[372] *Seneca, Oedipus 725 ff (trans. Miller) (Roman tragedy C1st A.D.):* "Our land [Thebes] has e'er produced strange monsters: either a serpent [the Ismenian Drakog], rising from the valley's depths…. The wanderer [Kadmos] quaked at prodigies so strange, and fearfully awaited the assault of the new-born folk"

[373] Lorraine Daston, *Wonders and the order of nature*, (New York: Zone Books; Cambridge, Mass.: Distributed by MIT Press, 1998), 191.

[374] James Fenimore Cooper, *The Works of J. Fenimore Cooper; The Water-witch; or, The Skimmer of the seas; a tale ...* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1852), 354.


**Figure 3**

Inspired by the tale of Tom Thumb among other stories of miniature and giant people, Hans Christian Anderson's Thumbelina (Tommelise) was published in Denmark in 1835 and translated into English in 1846 by Mary Howitt. Howitt bowdlerized the texts and many other translations, versions, and adaptations started to surface in the mid to late nineteenth century in America. Admiral Dot, Commodore Nutt, and General Tom Thumb (Motif F451 *Dwarf* ) were all exhibited by Barnum during this period with great success, and showmen often exhibited unusual people who represented familiar motifs found in novels and newspaper serials in print.

PSEUDO-EVENTS & HEROES

Many exhibitions, particularly of lusus naturae, were presented as folklore and allowed the public to experience folklore on an interactive level (motif ostension). Showmen used the most popular subject matters to entice the audience, and often

decorated and presented performers as doppelgangers of motifs found in printed folklore (novels, newspapers, chapbooks, and serials). Just as folklore can allow the expression of deep-rooted anxieties about society, the attendance of these exhibitions allowed visitors to experience strange, curious, and inappropriate subject matters under the guise of rational amusements. Ultimately, exhibitions could be presented in a context that suited the showman's narrative style.

Marketing an exhibition of lusus naturae incorporated various strategies, and Barnum had one of the most creative and successful approaches. Historian and writer Daniel Boorstin calls Barnum "the first modern master of pseudo-events." Boorstin defines the pseudo-event as a planned happening that is created primarily for the purpose of being reported or reproduced, and suggests that heroes can become celebrities as a human pseudo-event.[375] Boorstin proposes that the synthetic creation of "fame" can lead to celebrity status, but that celebrity-worship and hero-worship should not be confused—a celebrity can be made, but we can't make a celebrity a hero.[376] Boorstin believes that in the United States there has been a decline of the "folk" and the rise of the "mass," and he alludes to the decline of folklore production and the increase of mass media.

> While the folk created heroes, the mass can only look and listen for them. It is waiting to be shown and told…the folk had a universe of its own creation, its own world of giants and dwarfs, magicians and witches. The mass lives in the very different fantasy world of pseudo-events.[377]

Boorstin does not consider that popular forms of entertainment, such as nineteenth century exhibitions of lusus nature, and the subsequent marketing of these exhibitions, can be marketed and presented *as folklore* and experienced as motif ostension. Instances of motif ostension encompass both folk heroes and mass culture. The heroes turned celebrities are indeed the giants, dwarfs, magicians, and witches that Boorstin speaks of.

Performers of the most successful exhibitions during this era were believed to be heroes in the eyes of the public. Motif A526.7 *Culture hero performs remarkable feats of strength and skill* can be seen to represent most of Barnum's performers as they were considered to be "the most talented performers" and often received as heroes.[378] Commodore Nutt, for instance, was called "the diminutive hero of Barnum's Museum," and General Tom Thumb was also referred to as a "miniature hero."[379]

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[375] Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America,* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).
[376] Ibid, 48.
[377] Ibid.
[378] *Hudson River Chronicle,* Vol. 8, Issue 10, December 17, 1844, 3.
[379] Amusements, *New York Times*, March 10, 1862, 5 and "Departure of Tom Thumb for America," *Morning News,* Vol. 3. Issue 95, March 1, 1847, 2.

# CHAPTER 4
# FOLKLORE AND EXPERIENCE: RECEPTION

## PATRONS AS ACTIVE AND PASSIVE BEARERS

As discussed in Chapter 3, showmen and curators of exhibitions of lusus naturae can be considered active bearers of tradition. Each impresario was infamous for his carefully curated bevy of performers and narratives. Equally, as observers of folklore, visitors of these exhibitions can also be considered as active and passive bearers. As previously defined by von Sydow, active bearers keep tradition alive by transmitting it, and passive bearers do nothing to spread tradition or keep it alive.[380] Kenneth Goldstein reminds us that the folk are not simply divided into active and passive bearers, and even Von Sydow believes that "[Among the peasantry] one person may be active as regards certain traditions, and passive in respect of others, indeed entirely without certain other traditions. A carrier of tradition is thus active only as regards part of his stock, being passive in so far as perhaps the major part is concerned."[381]

After viewing an exhibition of lusus naturae, the patron may choose to spread the lore surrounding a display at an exhibition or let the experience die. Barnum's exhibitions became synonymous with personal experience tales and motif ostension. The men in Zenas T. Haines's barracks acted out their own version of one of Barnum's successful acts (Motif G11.11.1 *Albino twins cannibals*), as Haines writes, "The 'Albino Family,' with head-dresses of frayed ropes, was an exceedingly clever take-off of Barnum's curious beings at the Aquarial Gardens."[382] The re-enacting of the Albino Family reveals the men involved as active bearers of tradition.

Sightings of strange and unusual beings were also frequently published in newspapers, such as the "Wild Man, Monkey, Sea-Serpent, or Some Thing Else" seen by the citizen Patrick C. Flournoy in 1831. Flournoy's account describes an encounter with a creature whose tail was tied to the limb of a tree, and had long and flowing hair to his waist, one central eye in the center of his forehead (Motif J1494 *wood spirit gigantic with one eye in center of forehead)*, a body covered with hair and feathers (Motif F521.2 *people with feathers,* Motif F232.5 *Fairies have hairy bodies*, Motif F521.1 *Man*

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[380] C.W. von Sydow, "On the Spread of Tradition," in Selected Papers on Folklore, ed. Laurits Bødker, (Copenhagen, 1948), 12-13.

[381] Kenneth Goldstein, "On the Application of the Concepts of Active and Inactive Traditions to the Study of Repertory," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 84, No. 331, Towards New Perspectives in Folklore (Jan.-Mar.,1971): 62-67. See C.W. von Sydow, "On the Spread of Tradition," in Selected Papers on Folklore, ed. Laurits Bødker, (Copenhagen, 1948), 15.

[382] Zenas T Haines, 1830-1900, Letter from Zenas T. Haines, March 4, 1863, in Letters from the Forty-fourth Regiment M.V.M.: A Record of the Experience of a Nine Month's Regiment in the Department of North Carolina in 1862-3, (Boston, MA: Herald Job Office, 1863), 121.

*covered with hair like animal)*, and feet that resembled a bear (Motif G365 *Ogre monstrous as to feet,* F517.1 *person unusual as to his feet)*.[383] A few examples of corresponding motifs have been annotated, showing the correlation between interaction with unusual beings, lore, and exhibitions that feature similar oddities.

Patrons and showmen, like Barnum, often used motifs, or remarkable elements of tales, as the basis for new narratives. Franz Boas remarked on the uniqueness of American folklore stating, "The analysis of American material, on the other hand, demonstrates that complex stories are new, that there is little cohesion between the component elements, and that the really old parts of tales are the incidents and a few simple plots."[384] Narratives were an integral part of the viewing experience, and the nineteenth century public became accustomed to reading narratives (in labels, pamphlets, broadsides, and photographs), which accompanied various attractions. David L. Day, a visitor to Barnum's museum in 1863, writes in his diary, "Strolling around up stairs we came to the mummy cabinet…I looked around to find some biographies of these people but could not…. I wanted to suggest to Mr. Barnum that if he would hang a biography on every one of these mummies it would be the most taking thing he ever had, not excepting the What-is-it."[385]

As mentioned above, visitors often purchased a souvenir photograph, pamphlet, or pitchcard (a photograph combined with a short descriptive text at the bottom) to keep in their photograph albums for sharing with visitors. Most of the middle to upper class public in nineteenth century United States had a collection of photographs in their visiting room, many of which were not necessarily of family or friends, but photographs of unusual and exotic people viewed at various dime museums.[386] Photographic collections of these types of displays were all the rage, and may have acted as evidence of the visitor's repertoire.

Pentikainen and Dégh suggest people should be considered as having multiple folklore repertoires not just one because "repertoires must be conceptualized as emergent and dynamic rather than closed and static."[387] Showmen had a repertory of exhibits, and

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[383] "Munchausen Revived," *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, Vol. XLII, Issue 6, February 5, 1831, 2. Motifs from Stith Thompson's *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography. Based on the system of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, FF Communications no. 284–286, (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004).

[384] Franz Boas, "The Development of Folk-Tales and Myths," *The Scientific Monthly,* Vol. 3, No. 4, (October 1916): 340.

[385] David L. Day, "Diary of David L. Day," December, 1863, in My Diary of Rambles with the 25th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, (Milford, MA: King & Billings Printers, 1884), 106.

[386] John Urry comments on the nature of photography, "To have visual knowledge of an object is in part to have power, even if only momentarily, over it. Photography tames the object of the gaze, the most striking examples being of exotic cultures." in *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 1990): 138-139.

[387] Robert A. Georges, "The Concept of "Repertoire" in Folkloristics, *Western Folklore*, Vol. 53, No. 4, (Oct., 1994): 317.

patrons had a repertory of narratives based on exhibits featuring lusus naturae—either based on personal experience, transmitted facts, or both. Besides classifying people into categories such as active and passive bearers, Carl W. von Sydow also defined the *memorate* as someone's "own, purely personal experiences."[388] Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi write extensively on this topic, referring to the memorate as a "banished genre."[389] Dégh and Vázsonyi believe that the memorate is not only difficult to classify, but "[f]or a long time, memorates were not even recorded because they did not fit into any recognized folklore category."[390] According to folklorist Lauri Honko, the memorate is the prelude to the legend, or fabulate.[391]

The stories told after visiting P.T. Barnum's museum or like establishment often followed patterns of the memorate such as "This happened to me,' "I saw it with my own eyes," "I heard it from my father, it happened to him," or "A good friend of mine told it, he saw it himself."[392] Because the experience at a dime museum often involved motif ostension, and happened within a narrative context, it functioned, transmitted, and was received like folklore. Collected photographs of lusus naturae on display could be one gauge of the size of a visitor's repertory, assuming each photograph was associated with a memory. However, many patrons who could not afford to purchase photographs or pamphlets may have actively discussed their experience with others.

## PRESENTATION & RECEPTION

The obvious goal of impresarios of oddities was to profit from the entertainment business. In order to be successful, it was imperative that showmen had their finger on the pulse of popular culture. Moral values of the amusement industry were the backbone of didactic entertainment in the nineteenth century in America. Barnum developed a threefold plan for a successful museum, which involved creating a safe environment for women and children, consistently changing the exhibits, and promoting the museum as an educational experience.[393] The welcoming of both women and children in a didactic museum setting allowed this form of entertainment to rapidly gain in popularity.[394]

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[388] Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi. "The Memorate and Proto-Memorate," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 87, No. 345 (Jul.-Sept., 1974): 225. Carl von Sydow "Kategotien der Prosa-Volksdichtung," published in *Volkskundliche Gaben John Meier zum siebzigsten Geburtstage dargebracht* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1934): 253-268.

[389] Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi. "The Memorate and Proto-Memorate," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 87, No. 345 (Jul.-Sept., 1974): 226.

[390] Ibid, 233.

[391] Lauri Honko, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs," *Journal of the Folklore Institute I_* (1965), 18. Once a memorate is told to another, who repeats it, it becomes a memory legend, or *Erinnerungssage*.

[392] Linda and Andrew Vázsonyi Dégh, "The Memorate and Proto-Memorate," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 87. No. 345 (Jul.-Sept., 1974): 227.

[393] Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America*, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 144.

[394] Barnum's museum "offered multiple attractions that promised to educate and uplift, as well as entertain, its middle-and working-class clientele." Rachel Adams, *Sideshow*

In 1876, Edward P. Hingston published a book titled *The Genial Showman: Being Reminiscences of the Life of Artemus Ward*. In his book, he discusses the museum in America, which he describes as "a place of amusement, where-in there shall be a theatre, some wax figures, a giant and a dwarf or two, a jumble of pictures, and a few live snakes…The mainstay of the "Museum" [in America] is the "live art," that is, the theatrical performance, the precocious mannikins, or the intellectual dogs and monkeys."[395] Many museums were mimicking Barnum's methods. After both of Barnum's museums were destroyed by fire, Brunnell's museum became known "as the home to the dwarfs and giants."[396]

The line between visitor and performer is one of the most important, and obvious, aspects of the display of lusus naturae. Susan Stewart writes, "The viewer of the spectacle is absolutely aware of the distance between self and spectacle.... there is no question that there is a gap between the object [freak] and the viewer."[397] Stewart later defines this gap as a separation, or even hesitation, between the chatter of the 'talker' and the appearance of the freak.[398] Historian Curtis Hinsley suggests the line between the visitor and performer spaces is always evident, and sometimes quite simple, such as a fence, chain, rope, or bench row, and the placement of the spectator and spectacle is a physical and ideological construction.[399] He further proposes that the camera is to the modern tourist as the fence is to the Victorian spectator—for self-definition and distancing.[400]

The goal of display is to distance the viewer and place them in a socially constructed position of authority. In his acclaimed study of freaks, Leslie Fiedler writes,

> [There is nothing] novel about the mode of presentation, so that after a minute or two we do not know in what town we are, or at what point in our lives. The human oddities on the show are never displayed on our level—the level of reality and the street outside. Most often they stand against a curtain on a draped platform, to which we have to look up...sometimes they are placed in a railed "pit," into which we have to look down...[401]

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*U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination,* (Chicago, 2001), 11.

[395] Edward Hingston, *The Genial Showman, Being reminiscences of the life of Artemus Ward and pictures of a showman's career in the western world,* (London: J.C. Hotten, 1871), 18.

[396] Amusements, *New York Times,* August 21, 1881, 7.

[397] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (London 1993), 108.

[398] Ibid, 109.

[399] Curtis M. Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago," 1893, In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* (Washington, 1991), 357-358.

[400] Ibid, 358.

[401] Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths & Images of the Secret Self*, (New York, 1978), 282-283.

The pit shows almost always featured a 'geek' show, a cannibal act, or a crazed savage, whereas the balcony shows regularly featured human oddities and acts of talent.[402] These expose the space of performance as a result and reflection of socially constructed views of others. If these exhibits are seen as instances of motif ostension, there is more to be discovered. The audience was told narratives of the onerous capture of those on display while gazing down at cannibals (or wild men), and participants could literally imagine themselves within the narrative in a place of discovery and power.

Expositions often touted an "experience" rather than a show.[403] The Midway, a term taken from the 1893 Columbian Exposition, is often the home of the sideshow, the spectacle, and the commodification of culture. Hinsley describes the Midway, "The eyes of the Midway are those of the *flâneur*, the stroller through the street arcade of human differences, whose experience is not the holistic, integrated ideal of the anthropologist but the segmented, seriatim fleetingness of the modern tourist 'just passing through.'"[404] However, both on and off the midway, Fairs often "celebrated the ascension of civilized power over nature and primitives."[405] Hinsely points out that by 1890, two traditions of human display were established. The first, the Hagenbeck type, usually made claims to ethnographic authenticity and the second, the Barnum type, often displayed human freaks and oddities.[406] These two forms of show were not mutually exclusive and exhibits often contained both elements. Of course, the more educational exhibits attempted to keep voyeuristic appeal in the shadow of their scientific objective, but nonetheless managed to attract the attention of plenty of tourists both near and far.

SCIENTIFIC PRESENTATION

Many Americans often felt a sense of inferiority towards Europe, particularly regarding museum formation. Art historian Paul Greenhalgh writes, "The obsession with the authenticity of the object and the rationale for its collection in science, not in plunder, would soon encourage and justify the acquiring of objects from all over the world by Western museums."[407] Bell notes that European guests often commented that American museums were frequently showing exhibits that were not only scientific but were also mere novelty and that the "museum appeared to many visitors to be only a meaningless

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[402] Pit-show is defined as "An exhibition of freaks displayed in a "pit" built of boards or canvas, around the top of which is a walk for the customers," D.W. Maurer, "Carnival Cant: A Glossary of Circus and Carnival Slang," *American Speech,* Vol. 6, No. 5, (June, 1931): 334.

[403] See Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 191-193.

[404] Curtis M. Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893, In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* (Washington 1991), 356.

[405] Ibid, 345.

[406] Ibid.

[407] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 88.

and useless clutter."[408] The Society attempted to include more "scientific" items, but a lack of space, curators, archiving techniques, and interest, resulted in a description of the *American Philosophical Society Museum* as "an old-fashioned eighteenth-century cabinet of undifferentiated curiosities."[409]

Organizing the displays remained a problem, as there was realistically no obvious way to arrange displays of human abnormalities and unknown curiosities. As a result, both dead and living objects were arbitrarily organized by a vast range of methods (although some more subjective than others) such as: size, temporal, regional, cross-cultural, or specific medical conditions. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimlett writes, "Nineteenth century advocates of scientific approaches to museum exhibition complained repeatedly about collections of curiosities that were displayed without systematic arrangement."[410] The Ohio Show-Stop attempted to correct previous conceptions regarding haphazard organization and announced a "greater variety of specimens, a neater and more classical arrangement of curiosities than any institution of its kind and age in the United States."[411]

Kirshenblatt-Gimlett warns us that "There is danger that theatrical spectacle will displace scientific seriousness, that the artifice of the installation will overwhelm ethnographic artifact and curatorial intention."[412] Yet, the "public apathy toward non-dramatic scientific exhibits [at the Ohio Show-Stop]" was cured when Dorfeuille took over the museum in 1823, which became known as "the age of hokum." Expositions became "refined" extensions of the early traveling shows. Hinsely, for example, refers to expositions as "carnivals of the industrial age."[413] Sideshows remained concentrated on narratives of the fantastic, while expositions continued to focus on "progress." In expositions, human oddities existed as the foundation of new knowledge both scientific and anthropological. One such example can be seen in the live display of ceremonial Filipino Bontoc Igorot dancers at the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle. Vaughan writes, "Promoters [of the Igorot dancers] ignored government warnings against emphasizing the savage spectacle, applying an academic veneer to the exhibit by offering college anthropology courses in "The Growth of Cultural Evolution Around the

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[408] Whitfield J. Bell, "The Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society," In Whitehill, Walter Muir, *Cabinet of curiosities: five episodes in the Revolution of American museums*, (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1967), 21-22.
[409] Ibid, 23.
[410] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimlett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 26.
[411] Louis Leonard Tucker, "Ohio Show-Shop, The Western Museum of Cincinnati 1820-1867." In *Cabinet of curiosities: five episodes in the Revolution of American museums*, (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1967), 81 from *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette,* September 30, 1823.
[412] Ibid.
[413] Curtis M. Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893, In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* (Washington, 1991), 344.

Pacific."[414] This new fascination with science and culture extended well into other Western countries, and it has been recorded that in Europe, youths were only admitted to a popular sideshow that featured anatomical waxworks if they claimed they were medical students.[415] The infant conjoined "St. Benoit Twins" were successfully on display at the New York aquarium under the guise of science. In fact, it was written that "The Aquarium is rapidly becoming a museum of natural history, the learned monkeys and dogs perform every afternoon."[416]

In the case of Al Tomaini "Giant Boy," mythical origins about giants were replaced by a modern "Lesson in Glands." Science allowed a reimagining of the body—that of sameness and homogeneity,[417] and in the case of "Julee—Juliane" (the Hermaphrodite), science replaced myth by transforming him/her into an extraordinary being and transcending his/her origins beyond myths such as the one told by the Greek poet, Aristophanes—that man was originally created as both man and women in one body.

During the late nineteenth century, the organization of villages on the midway in world's fairs and expositions held in America were calculated attempts at demonstrating Darwinian theory. Greenhalgh notes, "The first Fairs in the twentieth century became obsessed with evolutionary theory in an attempt to give scientific credence to the legalized racism present everywhere in American society. The [Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo (1901)] was the extreme case, where the layout of the whole site was intended to show the visitor the shift from low levels of humanity to higher ones. It was hoped the visitor would sense the evolutionary flow of mankind as he/she walked through the Fair."[418]

Visitors employed scientific claims with authority, and as a result science was accepted as authoritative. This new knowledge transformed the meaning of 'authenticity' from that of traditional to that of scientific validity. If an act could be "scientifically" proven to be true, then it was authentic, and subsequently, "scientific" and "authentic" were used interchangeably. In this space, taboos could be transcended and psychological constructions of identity were based solely on the lack of normality.

## LIMINALITY

Arnold van Gennep referred to *liminality* as one aspect (rites of transition) in what he defines as "the rites of passage."[419] For Gennep, rites of passage may include, but are not limited to births, initiations, marriage, ordinations and other significant life moments.

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[414] Christopher A Vaughan, "Ogling Igorots: The Politics and Commerce of Exhibiting Cultural Otherness, 1898-1913," In *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, Ed. Rosemarie Garland Thomson, (New York 1996), 231.
[415] Disher, M. Willson, *Fairs, Circuses and Music Halls* (London 1942), 36.
[416] "Amusements," *New York Times*, July 21, 1878.
[417] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, (New York, 1996), 12.
[418] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 102.
[419] Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, (London: Routledge, [1909] 2004).

Anthropologist Victor Turner expands on van Gennep's model and states that "liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial."[420] According to Turner, during a liminal period, the structure of a society often goes through a period of *communitas* (community) where normal societal laws are temporarily suspended. Turner also used the term *liminal* to describe a phenomenon found in religious rituals, but preferred the term *liminoid* when referring to secular rituals, which he believed were found in complex societies.[421] The widespread appeal of familiar motifs on display sanctioned the integration of the heterogeneous American audience, and essentially the patrons, regardless of age, class or gender, were the "folk." Liminality and communitas occurs in the performers, the audience, and the space itself (see figure 4).

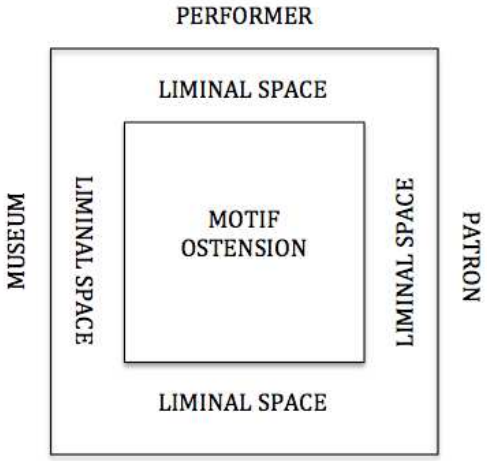


Figure 4. Liminality and Motif Ostension

## THE PERFORMER

The performer (object of display) often exists in a liminal state, whether half human/half monster, part fantasy, part reality, part man/woman, or part magical being. The radically diverse individuals on display as lusus naturae were citizens of their own (freak) culture, not only within the borders of the exhibition, but among citizens outside this territory as well. Those on display had their own folk group that resulted in a form of cultural citizenship. For those outside this sphere, the idea that freaks possess a form of

[420] Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas" in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Strucuture,* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969), 95.
[421] Turner refers to the industrial world as complex societies. See Victor Turner, "Variations on a Theme of Liminality," In *Secular Ritual*, S. Moore and B. Myerhoff, eds, (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977): 27-41.

cultural citizenship only increased the need to group these individuals as others. Otherness, in this sense, was a combination of both physical abnormalities and non-western ethnicities. As a result, freaks of all types were assimilated into a pan-freak culture. Andrew Apter's critique of the Pan-African representation of Africa suggests a homogeneous and unified culture,[422] and freaks, too, are also susceptible to the ever-popular blanket freak designation, and in essence, these individuals were fashioned together in a quasi-freak diaspora.

Spectators could attend a sideshow or exhibit and view individuals from a variety of ethnicities. For example, Lia Graf a little person from Germany, Lionel "the Lion-Faced Boy" from Russia, Madame Clofullia "the Bearded Lady of Switzerland," Frank Lentini "the Three Legged Man" from Siracusa, Sicily, Mortado "the Human Fountain" from Germany, Pip and Flip "Twins from Yucatan" (Although actually born in Georgia, USA), and countless others.[423] It was not merely their physical abnormalities that constituted their otherness, but a combination of their individual ethnic backgrounds, abnormalities, talent, or ethnicity.

The collectiveness of freaks allow for a certain degree of cultural citizenship. Most scholars, when describing the "commodification of otherness" refer to representations of race and gender, but for many freaks on display, it was the *fabricated* race (giants, monkey people or alligator people) or gender (the 'half man/half woman' or 'Zip the what is it?') that brought them together.[424] While many of these living exhibitions displayed individuals of foreign ethnicities, it was often the physical abnormality, "primitiveness," or unusual talent that was presented—all of which were neither a race nor an ethnicity. As living instantiations of folk motifs, every individual on display at venues that showcased lusus naturae indirectly became a member of a folk group, which existed in a liminal space.

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[422] Andrew Apter, "The Pan-African Nation: Oil-Money and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria," *Public Culture,* 8 (1996): 441-466.

[423] Daniel P. Mannix, *Freaks: We Who Are Not As Others*, (San Francisco, 1990), 28, 87; Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago, 2001), 30, 222; James Taylor, "Shocked and Amazed," *On and Off the Midway*, 6 (Baltimore 2001), 1; James Taylor and Kathleen Kotcher, *"Shocked and Amazed" On & Off the Midway,* (Connecticut 2002), 49. These individuals, although from different ethnic backgrounds, experienced their own cultural citizenship. Toby Miller suggests that cultural citizenship should take into consideration political, economic, and cultural concerns, all of which these commodified individuals partake in. Toby Miller suggests that cultural citizenship should take into consideration political, economic, and cultural concerns, all of which these commodified individuals partake in. See James Taylor, "Shocked and Amazed," *On and Off the Midway*, 6, (Baltimore, 2001).

[424] Sociologist Bell Hooks, for example, studied the exploitation of the black female body through the 'commodification of otherness,' and Joseba Gabilando also examines 'commodification of otherness' in the construction of Basque identity and Spanish culture. See Bell Hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, (Cambridge 1992); Joseba Gabilondo, *Archaeology of Global Desire: New Hollywood, Spectacle Hegemony, and the Commodification of Otherness*, Forthcoming; Joseba Gabilondo, *Empire and Terror: Nationalism/Postnationalism In the New Millennium*, (Nevada 2005).

THE PATRON

The popularity of the educational museum did not remain tethered to the East coast, but grew as quickly as the Nation. Western states, like Ohio, provided destinations that rivaled the East coast. The "Ohio Show-Stop" (1820-1867) in Cincinnati became a must-see destination in the mid-West. Perhaps some of the success of the Ohio Show-Stop is due to a prolific amount of both wealthy and working class patrons. Andrea Dennett suggests that the Southern cities were "out of the museum loop" mainly because they were "part of a slave-oriented culture, [and] they did not have the thriving working-class population needed to support the dime museum industry."[425]

Similar to a pilgrimage where upper and lower class citizens intermingle, working class and wealthy patrons viewed and enjoyed dime museums in the same space, and issues such as social class were de-emphasized and a social structure of *communitas* was formed. Sears suggests that the nineteenth century public museum, the exposition, and the popular resort

> offered diverse attractions under the umbrella of a unifying spectacle, functioned as instruments of the mass consumption of culture, and provided a democratic stage on which the obscure and famous could share the same experience and where, increasingly as the century progressed, members of all classes could mingle as they would also do at Coney Island.[426]

Expositions, Dime Museums, and circuses provided a place for men, women, and children to frequent. Although small traveling venues and sideshows were still predominantly for men, mainly due to the "exotic" and "erotic" nature of many shows.[427]

The earliest exhibitions in the United States were usually centered on industrialization and progress (of machinery), which ultimately focused on male-related occupations and focus.[428] The line between entertainment and education continued to reveal issues of morality, gender, and class. Until this point, educational establishments,

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[425] Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America*, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), xii.

[426] John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 1989), 18.

[427] Even in the most 'scientific' displays, females were depicted as highly sexualized.

[428] One of the first major Expositions to be held in the United States, the American Institute Fair, was held annually in New York from 1829-1897. The American Institute Fair featured new and innovative American manufactured items and machines, as well as unique, pricey, and high quality items, which often invoked curiosity in those who could not afford such luxuries. Once again, the emphasis was placed on the attendance of men, and women were seen as an appendage. An advertisement in the New York Courier (1829) reads, "[t]he public generally were not permitted to enter [the American Institute Fair] without [tickets]. These were put at a low rate, 25 cents each, including any number of ladies, so as to afford every rank in society an opportunity to gratify their laudable curiosity." *The Pittsfield Sun,* Vol.XXX, Issue 1519, October 29, 1829, 1.

and societies, catered mainly to men, but with the coming of science and the fusion of entertainment, new approaches had to be made. Peale, for example, "wanted his museum to appeal to all classes, the illiterate and the scholarly, adults as well as children, and both men and women. The motto of the museum, inscribed above the building's entrance, was "whoso would learn Wisdom, let him enter here!"[429] Peale's generous invitation to women and children may have been provoked by the period of reform (1830-1850) in the antebellum United States—a particular moment in history when women's rights, activism on all levels, and the need to secularize and embrace morality permeated American society.

Education often justified hokum and even the most virtuous Americans could find legitimacy to their curiosity. John Sears suggests that natural tourist destinations were nondenominational and equally neither a male or female space, which contributed to the popularity of such destinations, but dime museums also transformed into nonsecular tourist destinations that catered to a wider audience.[430] When referring to tourism, John Urry comments on the existence of communitas and states, 'There is a license for permissive and playful 'non-serious' behavior and the encouragement of a relatively unconstrained 'communitas' or social togetherness."[431] The nineteenth century audience experienced a fantasy world filled with living motifs and wondrous narratives, which allowed them to enter into a liminal space with one another.

## THE LOCATION

Dime museums and exhibitions run by showmen like Barnum often advertised the space as a place to "learn," to "educate," and to be "amused." These buildings functioned didactically and can be seen as a liminal place—outside of a university, theater, or performance hall. In her book, *Victorian Science and The Architecture of Display*, Carla Yanni remarks that "[Philosopher Krzysztof Pomian] theorizes that the *Wunderkammer* existed in a liminal realm between religion and science, where curiosities spoke to elite visitors about the secrets of nature."[432] Just like the European wunderkammer of 17th and 18th centuries, the nineteenth century dime museums, exhibition halls, circuses, and World's Fairs all existed in the nexus of entertainment and education. As didactic venues of amusement, they automatically transported visitors into a liminal space once inside.

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[429] Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America*, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 13.

[430] Jack Larkin gives the following description, "The earliest American circus audiences were not, as they became much later, gatherings of families with excited children in tow, but adult and primarily male. The shows were clearly part of a masculine world whose boundaries were defined by liquor and the possibility of violence." See Jack Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life 1790-1840*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1988). John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 1989), 8.

[431] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 1990).

[432] Carla Yanni, *Nature's Museums: Victorian Science and the Architecture of Display,* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 16.

RECEPTION: IRISH MOTIFS

The nineteenth century American public found great interest in exhibitions of lusus naturae. Although many members of society were highly critical of such displays, most of the general population was intrigued enough to purchase a ticket. The lure of these exhibits, as argued earlier, is based on the existence of motif ostension. There are perhaps innumerable perspectives to explore, each being correct from a particular vantage point, but one cannot deny the prolific connection with the presentation of European lore and the attendance of European immigrants. Cynthia Wu remarks, "The fact remains that nineteenth century freak shows were populated largely by immigrants and the working classes."[433] In 1877, during the peak of the Depression, the statute of California gave the commissioner of immigration the authority to refuse entry to any immigrant who appears to be

> lunatic, idiotic, deaf, dumb, blind, crippled, or infirm, and is not accompanied by relatives who are able and willing to support him, or is likely to become a public charge, or has been a pauper in any other country, or is, from sickness or disease, existing either at the time of sailing from the port of departure, or at the time of his arrival in the state, a public charge, or likely soon to become so, or is a convicted criminal, or a lewd or debauched woman…

In addition, any person who was to pay a bond to allow entry to such a person had to take full responsibility for expenses "incurred for the relief, support, or care of such persons for two years thereafter."[434] These laws made it extremely difficult for those with disabilities, or diseases that caused physical abnormalities, to enter the United States. Immigrants from Asia or the Middle East were particularly targeted, and often operated with a different criterion than those from the West. Because of the burden of responsibility and finances, it was often only those who would become human displays under the "care" of wealthy showmen like Barnum and Hagenbeck, who managed to make it ashore.

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[433] Cynthia Wu, "The Siamese Twins in Late-Nineteenth Century Narratives of Conflict and Reconciliation," *American Literature*, Volume 80, No. 1, (Duke University Press, 2008): 32.

[434] For example, Chy Lung, a Chinese citizen, arrived in San Francisco by vessel, and was subsequently charged and held for being a "lewd and debauched" woman. U.S. Congress. Joint Select Committee To Investigate Chinese Immigration U.S. Congress. Senate Report. Serial Set Vol., No. 1734, Session Vol. No. 3. 44th Congress, 2nd Session. S.Rpt. 689, February 27, 1877: 1164-1165. In 1891 this statute was amended by adding: 1. A person likely to become a public charge; 2. A person suffering from a loathsome disease; 3. A polygamist; 4. Any person whose ticket or passage is paid for with the money of another… See the Report of the Select Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, and Testimony taken by the Committee on Immigration of the Senate and the Select Committee on Immigration and Naturalization of the House of Representatives under concurrent resolution of March 12, 1890. Reported to the House by Mr. Owen, of Indiana, January 15, 1891.

Visitors reacted to displays of lusus naturae in a variety of ways. Because most human exhibitions interacted with the public and were on display for long periods of time, many were tired and exhausted. Eventually, human curiosities were often stereotyped as possessing a certain disposition or appearance. A published interview with a two-headed girl reads," Expecting to find a melancholy Siamese twin monstrosity, the reporter was agreeably surprised to find two girls joined in one, cheerful, refined and cultivated. The haggard, worn expression which, as a rule, the faces of the curiosities of humanity wear was entirely absent."[435] Those on display were often judged with a sweeping generalization, leading to further segregation among ethnic groups deemed exotic or abnormal.

The presence of Irish in major U.S. cities during this period is evident. The Irish Famine resulted in heavy Irish immigration to the United States in the mid nineteenth century. In 1841, there were an estimated three million inhabitants of Irish birth or descent, and According to the U.S. Census of 1850, 26% of New York City's total population were Irish born.[436] Other major cities such as Chicago also had a large Irish population. In 1851, for example, The Irish National Fair held in Chicago promised to be "one of the largest conventions that have ever assembled in any State."[437]

The masses of Irish immigrants were not veiled from the vice of money-making as publications, theaters, and exhibitions were all catering to the Irish public. Early American publications are riddled with commentary on Irish folklore, and popular books such as Handerahan, the Irish Fairy-man and Legends of Carrick were considered quite remarkable.[438] Theatrical performances often overtly advertised towards the Irish public. Barnum, for example, featured "The charming Irish Comedienne and Vocalist, Miss Kathleen O'neil, in Songs, Stories, of "Ould Ireland."[439] And numerous plays with Irish themes, such as: "Our Irish Cousin—This best of all the race of Cousins,"[440] "Irish Dragoon,"[441] "The Irish Haymaker,"[442] the "Irish Tiger,"[443] "Irish Assurance."[444]

Many of the theaters openly advertised towards Irish patrons, partly because the shows were limited, rotated frequently, were confined to a restricted time span, and held a finite amount of people. Museums, on the other hand, were open daily and needed to

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[435] "The Two-Headed Girl," A Reporter's Talk With the Most Remarkable of Damsels, *The Washington Post*, June 26, 1881, 3.
[436] "The Irish Census," *The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature*, August 1851, 4,23; Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, "The New York Irish," (New York: John Hopkins University Press, 1996).
[437] *Chicago Tribune*, January 28, 1864, 4.
[438] See *New York Daily Times*, November 8, 1854, 4. Articles such as "The Ancient Giants of Finland" were also mentioned and received popularity in local newspapers. For example, see *New York Daily Times*, July 17, 1854, 1.
[439] *New York Daily Times*, October 24, 1865, 7.
[440] *New York Daily Times*, April 2, 1859, 8.
[441] *New York Daily Times*, June 20, 1853, 5.
[442] *New York Daily Times*, November 13, 1857.
[443] At Wallack's Theatre, *New York Daily Times*, April 26, 1853, 4 and still playing in 1866. See *New York Times*, April 30, 1866, 5.
[444] *New York Times*, May 7, 1858, 4.

attract a large cross section of the population in order to stay open. Because Irish communities were akin to plebeians of the United States, and museums and exhibit halls were regarded as middle class arenas, blatant Irish themes would have been detrimental to business. Therefore, it was not necessarily the display that was overtly Irish, but the folk motif it represented.

A writer in the *Chicago Tribune* (1887) commenting on the lack of Irish fairy lore in the United States that affirmed that immigrants coming to America "did not bring any fairies or goblins, kobolds, trolls or brownies with them" and wrote, "whatever came over in the Mayflower, there were certainly no fairies there." The same author suggests the immigrants felt sorrow at "having left all their fairies behind them," but there were some indications (fairy rings on the ground—later to be explained by science) there could be native fairies or that Irish fairies also sent colonists to America.[445] Another writer, in 1873, suggests that "Fairies will not flourish in the neighborhood of railway stations, national schools, or…union workhouses."[446]

This brings about the question of whether fairies can exist in America, and if they do, are they native or colonist beings? Panoramas were common in nineteenth century America, and patrons could "virtually" visit foreign lands, major cities, and different eras by placing themselves in a panoramic scene. Among these, Irish landscapes were not uncommon. It could be said that artificial Irish terrain was able to accommodate fairy folk and other wondrous beings. I would like to suggest here that mermaids, giants, and other creatures from Irish folklore were manifested in museums, displays, and exhibits. One of Barnum's dramas was billed as having gorgeous scenery, brilliant costumes, illuminated fountains, with real water, living fairies,"[447] and another advertised as having "Fairy Scenes."[448]

According to the Irish, fairy men and women are occasionally visible to mortals, and phantoms or spirits would assume the shape of superhuman beauty or ugliness.[449] Displays of human oddities did precisely this, that is, display the two extreme ends of the spectrum—superhuman beauty or ugliness. The "Grotesque" and "Strange" were exhibited alongside "The Prettiest Circassian Girls Ever Seen."[450] The dichotomy between magnificence and monstrous is a common theme in folk narrative and also conforms to Olrik's *Law of Contrast*.[451]

Mermen, merwomen, and mermaids were considered "among the graceful folk-lore fauna of Ireland."[452] Themes of giants, dwarves and mermaids permeated early American exhibits. The "fejee mermaid" was often featured alongside a "giantess" and a

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[445] "Footfalls of Fairies: Folk-Lore of the Old World Transplanted in the New," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 3, 1887, 9.
[446] *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 16, 1873, 5.
[447] *New York Times*, March 9, 1964, 8.
[448] *New York Times*, March 23,1891, 7.
[449] *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 16, 1873, 5.
[450] *New York Times*, September 12, 1865, 7.
[451] Axel Olrik, *Principles for Oral Narrative Research*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992.
[452] *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 16, 1873, 5.

"dwarf lady."[453] Giants were uniquely referred to, and their respective origins were almost always mentioned as if to discern from an anticipated type of giant (e.g. Irish). "Goshen, the Giant"[454], "Noah Ore the Ohio Giant," "Anna Swan the Nova Scotia Giantess," "Andrew Harsen the Norwegian Giant,"[455] "the American Giantess,"[456] "The Great French Giant"[457] and "The Giant Boy and Girl"[458] were among the many advertised giants. Liliputian cities inhabited by "little people" closely imitate the Motif F210 "Fairyland," a subject often found in Irish lore. Susan Stewart writes, "The Irish tradition held that the fairies were shape-shifters, appearing at will as stately full-sized or giant figures or as small figures."[459] Audiences were enticed by plays with familiar folk motifs, but did not require exact replicas of their favorite narratives to be satisfied. Barnum's Museum, for example, exhibited Mr. Maeder's version "Red Riding Hood" which is touted as being as "little like the nursery legend from which it derives its title as possible."[460]

Barnum also exhibited a pantomimic "representation of the interesting legend of Mother Goose and her Golden Egg. The Egg is found to be full of meat, and Mother Goose hatches a bright new one every evening."[461] Also, the Broadway Theatre and Barnum's Museum, both in New York, simultaneously showed the "fairy spectacle" of Cinderella.[462] I would like to posit that the presence of these "folk beings" in various exhibits satiated the Irish population's desire to participate and relay supernatural and wonder tales. At the very least, it appears that these displays fascinated and lured the viewer who felt an affinity between the display and his/her personal repertoire of folklore.

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[453] See *New York Daily Times*, April 25, 1855, 5; *The New York Daily Times*, May 16, 1855, and *New York Times*, March 28, 1865, for example.
[454] See *The Washington Post*, September 20, 1879, 3.
[455] "At Barnum's Museum," *New York Times*, December 14, 1865, 7.
[456] "At Barnum's Museum," *New York Daily Times*, March 19, 1855, 8.
[457] "At Barnum's Museum," *New York Times*, January 4, 1864, 4.
[458] *New York Times*, December 19, 1863, 10.
[459] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection,* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), 185.
[460] *New York Times*, February 13, 1868, 4.
[461] *New York Times*, August 27, 1867, 4.
[462] *New York Times*, January 5, 1857, 4.

# CHAPTER 5
# CONCLUSION

## RETROSPECT

The nineteenth century American public responded to exhibitions of lusus naturae with intrigue, repulsion, and fascination. On the surface, this form of didactic amusement appealed to all classes, ages, and genders. Marketed as a moral form of entertainment suitable for women and children, showmen, especially Barnum, took this form of entertainment to an entirely new level. Between 1840-1880, exhibitions of lusus naturae in dime museums reached the apogee of popularity in major urban cities. Visitors from rural areas began to travel to large cities to attend these exhibitions, and tourism began to shift from natural destinations to man made destinations. Anthropologist Nelson Graburn states, "Styles of tourism may be leading indicators of fundamental changes which are taking place in a class or national culture, changes which may be latent in the more restricting institutions of the everyday world, because tourism is that short section of life in which people believe they are free to exercise their fantasies, to challenge their physical and cultural selves, and to expand their horizons."

Showmen, to some degree, consciously implied connections to folk motifs. Barnum's advertisements often invited the public into a world of folklore and fantasy. In one advertisement, Barnum featured the "Black Crook Transformations, Mythology in Miniature," and "The Miniature Car of Crœsus, drawn by a Fairy Team of Twenty Pigmy Ponies"[463] The narrative of mythology which Barnum propagated was further established by reproducing the myth of Crœsus in miniature. Barnum's miniaturization of mythology, including Crœsus's carriage, is in an instance of motif ostension in a fantasy narrative formulated from known folklore and re-appropriated by drawing on already popular motifs (Such as general Tom Thumb, Admiral Dot, and Fairy Cities— Motif F210 *Fairyland,* F222 *Fairy Castle,* F239.4.2 *Fairies are the size of small children,* and *F239.4.3 Fairy is tiny.)*

Tiny "tableaux" were commonly featured in dime museums. General Tom Thumb, for example performed as a statue of Cupid, in which "his size and form being so perfect for that representation, that he looks as if he had just been removed from an Italian image-board." When he performs as Samson carrying off the gates of Gaza, "the spectator for the moment loses the idea of the diminutive size of the representation of the *strong* man, so perfect is the representation."[464] Susan Stewart calls upon Alex Olrik's

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[463] The Black Crook was a highly successful piece of musical theatre that featured extravagant scenes of fantasy and myth. *Norwich Aurora*, Issue 21, Friday, May 19, 1876.

[464] From *Sketch of Life, Personal Appearance, Character, and Manners, of Charles S. Stratton, The Man in Miniature, Known as General Tom Thumb, Twenty-Eight Inches High, and Weighing Only Fifteen Pounds. With Some Account of Remarkable Dwarfs, Giants, and Other Human Phenomena, of Ancient and Modern Times*, (New York: John W. Amerman, 1856). Also, *General Tom Thumb's Songs* (New York: Van Norden and

observation of the tableau, remarking on the "lingering actions—which also play a large role in sculpture—possess the singular power of being able to etch themselves in one's memory," and suggests the tableau "effectively speaks to the distance between the context at hand and the narrated context; it is possible only through representation, since it offers a complete closure of a text framed off from the ongoing reality that surrounds it."[465] Susan Stewart refers to these instances as "still shots" and suggests that the miniature, in particular, offers a world frozen and generalized in time. Both Stewart and Olrik noticed the occurrence of "memorable images" that linger in the mind of the reader or observer, but they do not comment on the presence of instantiations of folk motifs into popular culture. By recognizing motif ostension, we can see the layering or compounding of popular motifs, which explains how the success of miniature people, like General Tom Thumb, were marketed and they functioned in society in much the same manner as folklore.

## INTERPRETATION

During the nineteenth century, traditional forms of folklore data were being collected and published, but instances of motif ostension went unnoticed. In a statement which mirrors the words of folklorists, Nelson Graburn asserts that "tourist behavior and aspirations are direct or indirect indicators of what is significant and meaningful in peoples' lives, of their self-perceptions, their class or group identity, and their social aspirations."[466] Dorson believed that it was imperative for scholars, particularly folklorists and historians, to study the folklore collected and published in early America as a way to further understand this historical period. He writes, "the vital folklore and especially the legends of a given period in American history reflect the main concerns and values, tensions, and anxieties, goals and drives of the period."[467] Both tourism studies and folkloristics are tools to further understand cultural and social aspects within a society. By recognizing instantiations of folklore, or motif ostension, the gaps between performance and folk narrative diminish, and connections between tourism, amusement, and lore become evident.

Because most displays of lusus naturae were presented as folklore, they were also believed to be analogous to folklore. Just as folklore was being collected throughout the nineteenth century, so were instantiations of folk motifs. In 1902, Sidney O. Addy commented on the state of collecting folklore, "I cannot help expressing my surprise at the little attention which is paid to the collection of the folklore of our own country. It

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Amerman, 1847) reprinted in James W. Cook, Ed. *The Colossal P.T. Barnum Reader*, (Illinois: University of Illinois, 2005), 118.

[465] Axel Olrik, *Principles for Oral Narrative Research*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992). Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection,* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), 48.

[466] Nelson Graburn, "The Anthropology of Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol 10 (1983): 29.

[467] Richard Dorson, *America in Legend: Folklore from the Colonial Period to the Present,* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973).

appears to be assumed by everybody that there is nothing to collect."[468] Barnum's *Ethnological Congress of Barbarous and Savage Tribes* (1894) was an attempt to collect in pairs "all the uncivilized races in existence," in much the same manner as collections of folklore, and he too, focused on foreign, and exotic people for his collection.[469]

Patrons associated an instance of motif ostension within both the context provided by the showman, performer, and space, as well as his or her own attributions to the particular motif, making every experience compelling and unique. The study of folklore data usually remains restricted to the field of folkloristics, while the study of the function of folklore within the context of a society often extends through various disciplines, sometimes without the acknowledgement that the material is actually folklore. Many scholars have suggested that interdisciplinary methods are the only way to fully understand the various functions of folklore.

## FUNCTIONS OF FOLKLORE

When applied to these instantiations of folk motifs, folklore theories and studies such as Bascom's classical four functions of folklore can illuminate the study of display from an entirely new perspective. Narratives surrounding a motif on display, not only follow forms of folklore, but they function in the same manner as folklore, and theories once reserved for oral narratives and literature can be applied to this form of entertainment to better understand the function of this form of didactic entertainment. Although published in 1954, Folklorist William Bascom's publication on the four functions of folklore (escape, validation, education, social control) continues to be relevant and is generally accepted by contemporary folklorists as noteworthy observations on the role of folklore in society.[470]

The recognition of motif ostension assumes the existence of folklore as memorable motifs, existing in varying context in the real world. By using Bascom's functions to examine motif ostension, new insights into how American amusements functioned as a means of expression can be revealed. Early American amusements, particularly dime museums, showcased a variety of unusual objects and exotic people, all which resonated with familiar motifs and functioned in much the same way as traditional folklore. Bascom believed folklore let people escape from repressions imposed on them by society.[471]

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[468] Sidney O. Addy, Charlotte S. Burne, William Crooke, Walter Skeat, C.G. Seligmann, and John Roscoe, "The Collection of Folklore," *Folklore*, Vol. 13. No. 3 (Sept. 29, 1902): 297-313.

[469] Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 87.

[470] William Bascom, "Four Functions of Folklore," *The Journal of American Folklore,* Vol. 67, No. 266 (Oct.-Dec., 1954): 333-349.

[471] Bascom asserts that folklore "reveals man's frustrations and attempts to escape in fantasy from repressions imposed upon him by society, whether these repressions be sexual or otherwise and whether they result from taboos on incest or polygamy, or from a taboo on laughing at a person afflicted by yaws." Bascom's second function suggests folklore is used to validate culture when "dissatisfaction with or skepticism of an

Patrons were able to view and interact with human oddities that were exotic, curious, and otherwise inaccessible. For example, the relationship between conjoined twins, such as Chang and Eng and Millie and Christine (Motif F523 *Two persons with bodies joined Siamese twins)*, challenged the Victorian public's notion of privacy and space.[472] In his article about Barnum's marketing success of Joice Heth (Motif F571 *Extremely old person)*, Benjamin Reiss suggests that there was a desire to "see one's idols tainted by the grotesque."[473]

Folklorist Simon Bronner believes that, "Victorians prescribed healthy doses of fantasy and exoticism in folklore to balance the nervousness and monotony of public industrial life."[474] The outlet for creating a fantasy environment was manifested in sideshows and other venues that exhibited lusus naturae. Maurice Willson Disher, an authority on the circus in the Victorian era believed that the sideshow is "the mirror of our inner selves. Here are things ugly, curios, admirable and beautiful, each warranted to stir some primal emotion."[475] Once instances of motif ostension are recognized, exhibits featuring instantiations of folk motifs can be understood as channels of expression, which function in much the same way as folk narratives.

Bascom believed folklore was used to validate culture when "dissatisfaction with or skepticism of an accepted pattern is expressed or doubts about it arise, whether it be sacred or secular…"[476] Under the guise of science and education and in the form of familiar narratives, the general public engaged in knowledge and actions that would have otherwise been an inappropriate and unacceptable form of entertainment. Thomson writes, "Because [freak] bodies are rare, unique, material, and confounding of cultural categories, they function as magnets to which culture secures its anxieties, questions, and needs at any given moment."[477] Exhibited peoples in world's fairs, and larger exhibition halls were confined "within a precisely circumscribed part of the exhibition space, which represented their world; the boundary between this world and that of the citizens visiting and inspecting them, between wildness and civility, nature and culture, had to be

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accepted pattern is expressed or doubts about it arise, whether it be sacred or secular…" Bascom's third function states that folklore "plays a role in education, particularly, but not exclusively, in non-literate societies." Bascom's fourth function suggests that, "folklore fulfills the important but often overlooked function of maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of behavior. William Bascom, "Four Functions of Folklore," *The Journal of American Folklore,* Vol. 67, No. 266 (Oct.-Dec., 1954): 333-349.

[472] Motif F523 is listed in Thompson's Motif-Index as an Irish Myth.

[473] Benjamin Reiss, "P.T. Barnum, Joice Heth and Antebellum Spectacles of Race," *American Quarterly,* Vol. 51, No. 1 (March 1999): 88.

[474] Simon J. Bronner, *Following Tradition,* (Utah: Utah State University Press, 1998), 97.

[475] Maurice Willson Disher, *Fairs, Circuses and Music Halls,* (London, 1942).

[476] William Bascom, "Four Functions of Folklore," *The Journal of American Folklore,* Vol. 67, No. 266 (Oct.-Dec., 1954): 333-349.

[477] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, (New York, 1996), 2.

respected unconditionally."[478] Motifs such as F567.1 *Wild Woman*, F568 *Naked Tribe,* F567 *Wild man lives alone in wood like a beast,* and F535 *Pygmies,* often paralleled those on display and allowed the viewer to see the exhibit as a narrative, rather than an obvious mode for expressing social issues and concerns. The boundaries between spectator and performer further reinforced the narrative allowing the viewer to separate the display from the present time and space.

The third function regards folklore as a pedagogic device, which reinforces morals and values. Bascom notes "characters in folktales and myths may do things that are prohibited or regarded as shocking in daily life." This allows the public to escape from conventional socially sanctioned behavior. The intimate relationship between conjoined twins and their wives, for example, challenged social expectations regarding moral behavior such as polygamy. Equally, hermaphrodites (Motif F547.2 *Hermaphrodite)* and Circassian beauties (Motif F555 *Remarkable Hair)* often performed in risqué costumes and exposed themselves in ways that would otherwise be deemed improper. Spectators could witness otherwise forbidden acts and as a result, reinforce proper societal behavior—almost always the antithesis of these performances.

Bascom's fourth function of folklore, suggests folklore is an important means of applying social pressure and exercising social control. Narratives surrounding an instantiation of a folk motif could change and adapt to reflect current cultural situations, in much the same way as folk narratives. For example, five months before the Civil War began, a newspaper article reported, "a dreadful quarrel took place between the Siamese Twins at the American Museum, on the 7th inst. It seems that Chang, who is a North Carolinian and a Secessionist, had insisted upon painting the ligament black which binds them together. To this Eng objected, preferring the natural color; whereupon Chang resolved to "sever the union" with Eng, which he declared to be "no longer worth preserving." Eng, who is of a calmer temperament, finally persuaded him to wait…[479] The newspaper report concludes with a quote from a local doctor regarding the possibility of separation and says "the operation would be dangerous for both parties" and that "the union must and shall be preserved." The motif of conjoined twins was used to question a congenital connection between the North and South, and because this story was *only* printed in the *Chicago Tribune*, it clearly reflects the pro Union sentiment of Chicago. While some of the advertisements focused on the unity of conjoined twins, it was particularly, the Civil War era that frequently featured their opposite nature.[480]

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[478] Raymond Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930," *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (August 1993): 344.

[479] *Chicago Tribune*, November 16, 1860, 2.

[480] A contemporary article by Allison Pingree claims that Chang and Eng were symbolic of the Union of the United States and that they were, in fact, always advertised as working together, similar in temperament, and presented as one entity. Pingree's argument, however, should not be dismissed, as it only reinforces the manner in which these living narratives act as any other genre of folklore. That is, folklore changes and adapts to current cultural situations. Allison Pingree, "America's 'United Siamese Brothers:' Chang and Eng and Nineteenth Century Ideologies of Democracy and Domesticity," in *Monster Theory*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

BODIES AND PERFORMANCE

Many exhibitions of lusus naturae not only paralleled folk motifs visually, but also paralleled motifs of remarkable acts or skills. The combination of motifs doubled the interest and familiarity of the display and together formed the beginnings of a narrative. When describing the acts of the sideshow freaks, Fiedler was one of the few to notice a connection between bodies on display and folklore. He writes, "at the very least, [the freaks] move about, gimping, hopping, waddling, as they tell some half-legendary version of their origin and fate."[481] These grand allusions to mythical ancestry were often coupled with an unusual "talent" as the basis of the act. The performers did not just stand idly by onstage, but engaged in various acts of skill, strength, and humor—all which added to the narrative.

Otis Jordan, for example, was born with ossified limbs and grew to be a mere 31 inches in height. He propelled his body in a "hopping" motion by the use of his neck muscles, and was often dressed in costumes that concealed his limbs so that he could be billed as "Otis the Frog Boy".[482] His "act" was not just a display of his unique physique, (which could parallel: Motif D195 *Transformation: man to frog,* B177.2 *Magic frog,* B211.7.1 *Speaking frog,* B493 *Helpful frog,* B245.1 *King of frogs,* B645.1.2 *Marriage to person in frog form*) but involved a range of cigarette tricks including the difficult task of rolling, lighting, and smoking a cigarette using only his lips (Motif F660 *Remarkable skill).*[483]

The physical performance was essential to shaping the narrative, and usually incorporated additional motifs. The Wild Men of Borneo, for example, were described as having "mighty strength" and can "lift a stout man just as he were a shuttle-cock."[484] The "Wild Men," or sometimes "Little Men of Borneo" were billed as both mighty and small, which not surprisingly coincide with Motif F610.1 *Wild man of superhuman strength*, Motif F610.2 *Dwarf-hero of superhuman strength*, and Motif F253.1.1 *Fairies possess extraordinary strength*. These human displays were often shown in close proximity to various animals in order to establish imaginary and wondrous notions of a new (or old) human species.[485] As quickly as scientific explanations dominated the discussion of the human display, narratives of freaks shifted once again towards the marvelous. The life stories that once permeated small packets of paper were often centered on the loose yet implied connection to mythical figures. The Wild Men of Borneo were advertised as

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[481] Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths & Images of the Secret Self,* (New York 1978), 283.
[482] Fred Siegel, *TDR*, 35 (Winter, 1991), 113; Taylor 2002: 244.
[483] Because of continued disputes from the community regarding the exploitation and demeaning portrayal of disabled people, Otis eventually ended up at Coney Island and performed the same act under the more politically correct billing, "The Human Cigarette Factory." Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*, (Chicago, 1988), 1, 280-281. Fred Siegel, *TDR*, 35 (Winter 1991), 114.
[484] "Exhibition of Wild Men," *New York Daily Times,* August 7, 1854, 6.
[485] The beginnings of humans displayed alongside animals were rooted in 1878 when the Jardin d' Accalimation in Paris brought six Eskimos to be shown among the animals. See Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 86.

having a "heart on the back of the head—very beautiful, and only comes from mixing the blood of beast and man," which correlates to Motif B20 *Beast-men,* Motif F510 *Monstrous persons,* Motif B20.1 *Army of half-animals, half-men*.[486]

References to "savage," "primitive," and/or "cannibal" in American advertising was also closely tied to the notion of disability, and the use of motifs allowed the further propagation of this notion by suggesting a further connection between the display and familiar motifs. These individuals were exhibited as deficient and incapable, and their inability to adapt to American culture was often a justification for their lack of ability.[487] The Wild Men of Borneo were described as having "no brain, but an empty skull, without an organ for memory, or a place to put a thimble full of sense."[488]

These bodies, whether disabled or marginalized in some manner, were the epitome of early American work ethics. Whether armless, legless, blind, or conjoined, these bodies would always manage to perform in a narrative, which combined motifs to entice the audience with the most fascinating exhibitions. The legless would perform acrobatics, the armless would write calligraphy with their toes or shoot a bow and arrow, the blind would juggle knives, and the conjoined would play musical instruments.[489] Because motifs are categorized by both actors and actions, those on display could exist simultaneously as multiple motifs, including motifs F680 *remarkable skill,* F273 *Fairy shows remarkable skill,* F660 *remarkable skill,* F610 *Hero performs remarkable feats of strength and skill,* A526.7 *Culture hero performs remarkable feats of strength and skill*.

In regard to the freak, the shift from deviant to normal is not fixed—They ebb and flows into one another. It is the fluctuating space of uncertainty, or the anomalous boundary, between ordinary and peculiar, that allowed the public to become attracted to these human displays. And it is the ability to traverse these boundaries, combined with social constructions of society that resulted in the extraordinary depictions of the freaks. Thus, the successful marketing of those on display was achieved by placing a significant emphasis on this shifting border, and one's place in relation to it. Thompson suggests that the historical changes in "freak discourse genealogy" are framed within the cultural

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[486] "Exhibition of Wild Men," *New York Daily Times,* August 7, 1854, 6.

[487] Some of the largest and most revealing billings in this period are: the "Bestial Australian Cannibals", the "Ferocious Zulus", the "Wild Men of Borneo", and the "Pigmy Earthmen." See Roslyn Poignant, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, (London: Yale University Press, 2004). Saartjie Baartmann (the 'Hottentot Venus') and Zalumma Agra (the 'Circassian Beauty') were often depicted as abnormally risqué for the Victorian period.

[488] "Exhibition of Wild Men," *New York Daily Times,* August 7, 1854, 6.

[489] These bodies could also be compared to what Curtis Hinsley refers to as "raw materials." Martin-Barbero in his critique of Marxism, suggests that actors that do not represent the popular, such as invalids, are often in conflict with hegemony. But, this is not the case with lusus naturae. On the contrary, and quite ironically, what appeared to be the most 'useless bodies' were the exemplary models of American work ethics. Curtis M. Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display,* (Washington, 1991), 345. Martin-Barbero, *Communication, Culture, and Hegemony*, (London, 1987), 19.

imagination and reflect "a movement from a narrative of the marvelous to a narrative of the deviant.... In brief, wonder becomes error."[490]

## LIMITATIONS & SUGGESTIONS

It is no surprise that British historian Eric Hobswam found the period 1870-1914 a prolific time for what he calls "invented tradition" and "symbolic ritual practices that function to inculcate values and behavior patterns with signifying continuity with the past."[491] During this era, folklore traversed oral narratives, printed matter, and theatrical performances, all under the guise of entertainment. During periods of social change, notions of wonder were deeply embedded in public discourse. The tendency towards narratives of wonder during the early American period can be seen as both shaping and reflecting early American notions of the ideal and normal. Very early (12th century) displays of the grotesque body were often attributed to a mythical origin, and even a limited number of nineteenth century American sideshows advertised (although frequently unsuccessfully) freaks as marvelous mythical beings.[492] For example, Thompson suggests that it was "the wondrous monsters of antiquity who became the fascinating freaks of the nineteenth century."[493]

Sideshows became some of the most popular forms of entertainment while they seemed to push the boundaries of social acceptance. We could see the sideshow as, "a theater of guts; a viscerally titillating place where performers violate their bodies with spikes, swords, and fire and walk off the platform unharmed," but it was much more.[494] It was a space where two worlds managed to collide, and "the freak show expressed what Eric Lott calls "the racial unconscious," implicating cross-cutting desires for difference and superiority—but it also expressed a desire for sameness by identifying freaks as fellow humans."[495] Similarly to folklore, American amusements, "provided important outlets for social intercourse; consequently, issues of democracy, social status, cultural control, class division, and respectability were inextricably intertwined with the ongoing arguments about the propriety of amusement."[496] Lawrence Levine describes nineteenth century high culture, and writes,

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[490] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, (New York, 1996), 2-3.
[491] Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 263-307.
[492] For a mythical approach to freaks, see Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths & Images of the Secret Self,* (New York: Doubleday, 1978).
[493] Rosemarie Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 58.
[494] Fred Siegel, *TDR*, 35 (Winter 1991): 108.
[495] Leonard Cassuto, "'What an Object He Would Have Made of Me!'" In *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body,* (New York, 1996), 245.
[496] Partricia Click, *The Spirit of the Times: Amusements in Nineteenth Century Balitimore, Norfolk, and Richmond,* (Charlotesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 15.

> As long as they remained shared culture, the manner of their presentation and reception was determined in part by the market, that is, by the demands of the heterogeneous and therefore from the mixed audience and from the presence of other cultural genres; they were removed from the pressures of everyday economic and social life, and placed, significantly, in concert halls, opera houses, and museums that often resembled temples, to be perused, enjoyed and protected by the initiated—those who had the inclination, the leisure, and the knowledge to appreciate them.[497]

The use of folklore lured the audience, allowed the heterogeneous public to experience *communitas*, and allowed the most popular form of entertainment to exist as a vehicle for expression. The heterogeneous nineteenth century American public was enticed by diverse motifs, but the combination of several motifs, from primarily European cultures, provided the audience with enough information to find familiarity in the performance. Roger Abrahams, writing on the rhetorical theory of folklore, believes the "controlling power of folklore, the carrying out of its rhetorical intent, resides in the ability of the item and the performer to establish a sense of identity between a 'real' situation and its artificial embodiment. This sense of identity is engineered through the exercise of control, allowing the audience to relax at the same time it identifies with the projected situation."[498] Abrahams explains that the viewer feels relief when a "psychic distance" is created, allowing the audience to feel sufficiently removed from the situation, by, for example, creating an imaginary world.

The use of motifs in American amusements allowed commentary on real life issues under the pretext of folklore and entertainment. Joice Heth's advertisements surprisingly exhibited very little xenophobic commentary, but this does not, however, mean the public did not have issues with her exhibit. The parallels with motif F571 *Extremely old person* and dozens of motifs featuring old women as prophets and helpers, added to the narrative, which Barnum wove together. The result was a patriotic exhibition and an instance of motif ostension that appealed to the general public by simultaneously luring them in and repelling them with grotesque descriptions of her physicality. Heth and her disfigured body allowed the public to stare and indirectly comment on her racial features, while maintaining her place as a tie to a nostalgic past.

The future studies of motif ostension could certainly extend beyond the nineteenth century, and exhibitions of lusus naturae. Motif ostension could be studied as regional variants, or oicotypes.[499] For instance, Moses Kimball's Boston Museum and Barnum's American Museum in New York may have appeared, on the surface, to market similar motifs, but upon closer examination, they may have had varying public interest due to

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[497] Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America,* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1990), 230.
[498] Roger D. Abrahams, "Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore," *The Journal of American Folklore,* Vol. 81, No. 320 (Apr. –Jun., 1968): 144.
[499] C.W. von Sydow, "Geography and Folk-Tale Oicotypes," in *Selected Papers on Folklore,* (Copenhagen, 1948), 44-59.

regional differences.[500] Bascom believed that studies could further elaborate on the four functions of folklore and distinguish between "amusement, creative fantasy, and psychological escape."[501] Equally, motif ostension could be investigated in a specific situation to further understand how this phenomenon exists and changes with time.

A nineteenth century writer remarked that the American knows "nothing of Dime Museums except the outside," much like "the resident in Oxford never explores the interiors of the colleges."[502] Even without setting foot into a dime museum, the nineteenth century American public knew a great deal about what was inside. Folklore was used like a secret weapon, and spectators were shown what they *wanted* to see—what they *expected* to see. The spectators did not expect to confront notions of modernity, disability, or sexuality when they entered these spaces, nor did they realize they were always in dialog with these issues.

By using folklore as a key tool in unraveling complex issues, it is possible to examine how popular culture reflects emerging themes in folklore, how the leisure of various ethnic groups may reflect social class issues, how manifestations of wonder have permeated through social and ethnic classes in early America, and how the manifestation of folk narratives are used as a tool for expression (See Figure 5). Motif ostension evoked whole stories from snippets of information given to the audience directly or indirectly, and in turn, the audience supplemented with their own unique knowledge to complete the narrative. This phenomenon was an integral form of social expression during the nineteenth century; it pushed the boundaries of folklore, and showed how folklore was an integral part of one of the most popular and influential forms of entertainment in the history of the United States.

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[500] Barnum and Kimball were known to exchange their exhibitions in order to keep the public's interest.

[501] William Bascom, "Four Functions of Folklore," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 67. No. 266 (Oct.-Dec., 1954): 348.

[502] J.G. Wood, "Dime Museums: From a Naturalist's Point of View," *Atlantic Monthly,* Vol. 55, (June 1885): 759.

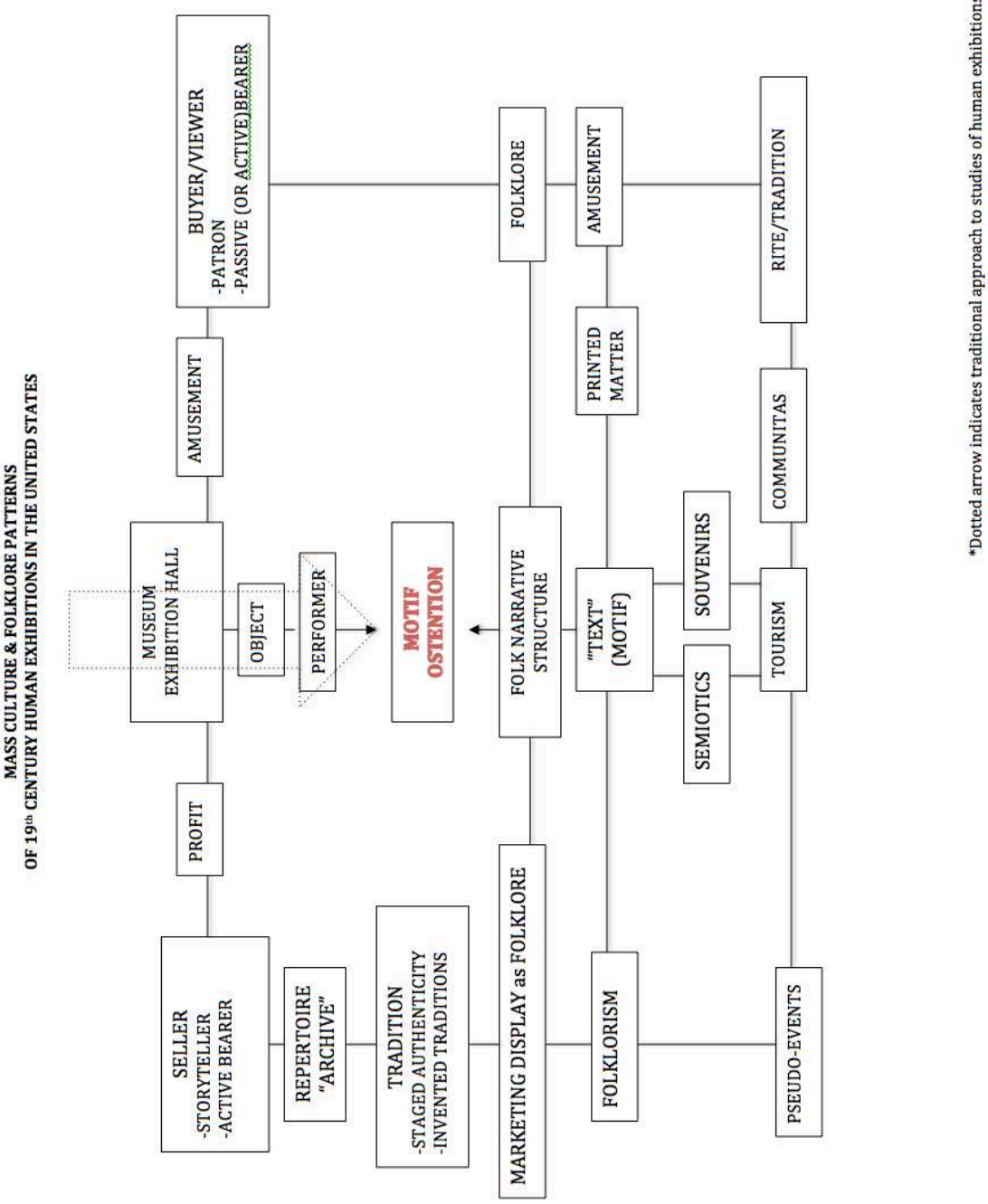


Figure 5. Mass Culture and Folklore Patterns of nineteenth Century Human Exhibitions in the United States

# APPENDIX

| Motif | Instantiation | Year(s) |
|---|---|---|
| A1301. *Men at first as large as giants*. | Various Giants (see F232.6) | |
| B20 *Beast-Men. Combinations of bestial and human form*.<br><br>Also, B29 *Beast-Men* | 1. Jo Jo the Dog Faced Boy<br>2. Wild Men of Borneo<br>3. Julia Pastrana | 1. 1884-1904<br>2. 1850-1905<br>3. 1854-1860 (and after her death into 20th century) |
| D1620 *Magic Automata*<br>D1268 *Magic Statue*<br>D435.1.1 Transformation: statue comes to life | Various Automata | |
| F123. *Journey to land of little men (pygmies)*. | 1. Chicago World's Fair "Midget City"<br>2. Dreamland "Lilliputia" | 1. 1933<br>2. 1904 |
| F167.2. *Dwarfs in otherworld*. (Cf. F451) | See F167.2 | |
| F167.3. *Giants in otherworld*. (Cf. F531) | Various giants often employed to walk through "Midget City" at Chicago World's Fair | 1933 |
| F232.4. *Fairies have long hair*. | See F555 *Remarkable Hair*<br>F555.3 *Very Long Hair* | |
| F167.11. *Monstrous creatures in otherworld*. | Various | |
| F232.5. *Fairies have hairy bodies*. | Wild Men of Borneo | 1850-1905 |

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|---|---|---|
| †F232.6. *Fairies as giants*. Irish myth: *Cross. | F530. Exceptionally large or small men.<br>F531 Giant<br>F531.0.4 *Giant Woman*<br>F531.1.0.1.1 *Beautiful Giants*<br>F531.1.0.2 *Hideous Giant*<br>F531.1.11 *Giants and giantesses dressed as human beings*.<br>F531.2.1 *Extremely tall giant*<br>F533 *Remarkably tall man* (woman) | |
| F233.8. *Fairies are brown and hairy*. (Cf. F232.5) | Wild Men of Borneo | 1850-1905 |
| F451.0.1. *Luchrupáin* (leprechauns) (as fairies) | See F451 *Dwarfs*<br>F451.2.1.1. *Dwarfs are small*. (Cf. F239.4.3, F441.5.1.) | |
| F451 *Dwarfs*<br>F451.2.1.1. *Dwarfs are small*. F239.4.3 *Dwarfs are small*<br>F441.5.1 *Wood-spirit tiny*.<br>F451.2.1.3 *Dwarf with small body and large head*.<br>F451.3. *Characteristics of dwarfs.*<br>F232.4.1. *Fairy as a small pretty girl with blond hair*.<br>F233.5. *Fairies have yellow (golden) hair (clothing)*. | 1. (Dwarf/309 pounds) Carrie Akers<br>2. Che-Mah the Chinese Dwarf<br>3. Admiral Dot<br>4. Count Primo Magri<br>5. Baron Ernesti Magri<br>6. Count Rosebud<br>7. Baron Littlefinger<br>8. General Mite<br>9. The Murray Midgets<br>10. Pauline Musters<br>11. Charles and Eliza Nestel<br>12. Nicholi, the Little Russian Prince<br>13. Commodore Nutt<br>14. Jennie Quigley, the Scottish Queen<br>15. General Tom Thumb<br>16. Lavinia Warren<br>17. Lucia Zarate, the Mexican Lilliputian<br>18. The Doll Family<br>19. Lilliputian King | 1.1860's<br>2. 1838-1926<br>3. 1864-1918<br>4-7. 1850's<br>8. 1864-?<br>9.1860's<br>10. 1876-1895<br>11.1840's-1937<br>12. 1870's<br>13. 1860's<br>14. 1851-1936<br>15. 1838-1883<br>16.1841-1919<br>17.1863-1889<br>18.1900's<br>19. 1850's |
| F511.0.2.1 *Two Headed Person*<br><br>F511.0.2. *Person with more than one head*.<br>(See also T551.1.2 *Child born with two heads)* | 1. Millie-Christine, the Two-Headed Nightingale<br>2. Chang and Eng<br>3. Tocci Twins | 1. 1851-1912<br>2. 1811-1874<br>3. 1875-1912 |

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|---|---|---|
| F511.1.3. *Person with animal face* | 1. Jo Jo the Dog-Faced Boy (see F521.1)<br>2. Lionel the Lion-Faced Man<br>3. Grace McDaniels "The Mule-Faced Woman"<br>4. Joseph Carey Merrick "The Elephant Man" | 1. 1868-1903<br>2. 1890-1932<br>3. 1935-1938<br>4. 1880's |
| F511.1.3.1. *Person with face of ape* | 1. Julia Pastrana "The Ape Woman" | 1. 1834-1860; 1918-2001 |
| F511.3. *Person with horns*.<br>F545.2.2. *Horns on forehead*. | 1. M.Dimanche<br>2. Miss Kizzie | 1. 1754-1846<br>2. 1902 |
| F516. *Person unusual as to his arms* | 1. Charles Tripp<br>2. Prince Randian | 1. 1870's-1910's<br>2. 1880's-1930's |
| F516.1. *Armless people* | 1. Ann E. Leak<br>2. Sanders K.G. Nellis<br>3. Mr. Nellis<br>4. Charles Tripp | 1. 1839<br>2. 1817-?<br>3. 1851<br>4. 1870's-1910's |
| F517.1. *Person Unusual as to his feet*.<br>F551. *Remarkable Feet* | 1. Fanny Mills, the Ohio Big Foot Girl<br>2. Sylvia Porter the Elephant Foot Girl | 1. 1860-1899<br>2. 1940's-1970's |
| F517.1.5 *Person with knees backwards* | Ella Harper, the Camel Girl | 1880's |
| F521.1 *Man covered with hair like animal*. | 1. William Henry Johnson (Zip, the What is it?) (See F567)<br>2. Krao, Darwin's Missing Link<br>3. Jo Jo the Dog-Faced Boy (see F511.1.3)<br>4. The Sacred Hairy Family of Burma, Mahphoon and Moung Phoset<br>5. Lionel "The man with the Lion's Mane" | 1. 1842-1926<br>2. 1880's-1900's<br>3. 1884-1904<br>4. 1886<br>5. 1900-1920's |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| F521.1.1. *Woman with animal hair*<br><br>F545.1.5.1. *Enormously fat woman with beard.* | 1. Madame Josephine Fortune Clofullia, The Bearded Lady of Geneva<br>2. Madame Baroness Sidonia De Barcsy<br>3. Madame Devere<br>4. Grace Gilbert<br>5. Annie Jones, the Esau Lady<br>6. Julia Pastrana, the Ugliest Woman in the World (See F511.1.3.1)<br>7. Percilla Bejano "Monkey Girl"<br>8. Burmese Hairy Family<br>Lionette "The Lion Face Girl"<br>9. Bella Carter "The Mare Woman" | 1. 1831-?<br>2. 1866-1976<br>3. 1842-?<br>4. 1876-1924<br>5. 1865-1902<br>6. 1834-1860; 1918-2001<br>7. 1870's-1880's<br>8. 1880's<br>9. 1891-1895 |
| Motif F222 *Fairy Castle* | Dreamland "Lilliputia" | 1904 |
| F523. *Two persons with bodies joined. Siamese twins.* | 1. Rosa and Josefa Blazek<br>2. Chang and Eng Bunker<br>3.The Tocci Brothers, Giacomo and Giovanni<br>4. Mary and Margaret Gibb, America's Siamese Twins<br>5. The Hilton Sisters, Daisy and Violet | 1. 1878-1922<br>2. 1811-1874<br>3. 1875-1912<br>4. 1912-1967<br>5. 1908-1969 |
| F525. *Person with half a body. As if body has been split in two* | 1. Johnny Eck the legless wonder<br>2. Eli Bowen the Legless Acrobat<br>3. Mademoiselle Gabrielle, the Living Half-Woman | 1. 1911-1991<br>2. 1844-1924<br>3. 1884-? |
| F526. *Person with Compound Body*. See also F523 *Two persons with bodies joined.* | Lalu | 1874-1905 |
| F527.3. *Blue man.* | The "Blue Man" | 1897 |
| F529.5. *Person with transparent body.* | 1. Transparent Man<br>2. Count Orloff | 1. 1892<br>2. 1880's |
| F529.4. *Person has small animal within his body.* | Lalu | 1874-1905 |
| F529.5 *Person with transparent body.* | Count Orloff, the only living Transparent and Ossified Man | 1864-1904 |

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|---|---|---|
| F529.7 *Boneless person* | M. Duverna | 1864 |
| F529.7.1 *Person without joints* | 1. Ella Harper, the Camel Girl<br>2. Jonathan R. Bass (ossified) | 1. 1886<br>2. 1830-1892 |
| F529.8. *Monkey-like little people.* | Percilla Bejano "Monkey Girl" | 1930's-1980 |
| F530. Exceptionally large or small men.<br>F531 Giant<br>F531.0.4 *Giant Woman*<br>F531.1.0.1.1 *Beautiful Giantess*<br>F531.1.0.2 *Hideous Giant*<br>F531.1.11 *Giants and giantesses dressed as human beings.*<br>F531.2.1 *Extremely tall giant*<br>F533 *Remarkably tall man* (woman) | 1.The Taughannock Giant (Hoax)<br>2. The Cardiff Giant (Hoax)<br>3. Chang the Chinese Giant<br>4. Willam Doss the Human Telescope<br>5.Martin Van Buren Bates<br>6. Anna Swan<br>7. Ella Ewing the Missouri Giantess<br>8. Colonel Ruth Goshen<br>9. Noah Orr, the Union County Giant<br>10. The Shields Brothers, The Texas Giants<br>11.John Aasen<br>12. Captain George Auger, the Cardiff Giant<br>13. Eddie Carmel, the Jewish Giant<br>14. Jack Earle, the Texas Giant<br>15. The Great Mexican Indian Giant | 1. 1879<br>2. 1869<br>3. 1845-1893<br>4. 1860-?<br>5. 1845-1919<br>6. 1846-1888<br>7. 1872-1913<br>8. 1824-1889<br>9. 1836-1882<br>10. 1850's-1860's<br>11. 1890-1938<br>12. 1882-1922<br>13. 1936-1972<br>14. 1906-1952<br>15. 1858 |
| F531.2.5 *Extremely fat giant* | 1. Hannah Battersby<br>2. Blanche Gray<br>3. Big Winnie Johnson<br>4. Chauncey Morlan<br>5. Dolly Dimples | 1. 1842-1889<br>2. 1866-1883<br>3. 1839-1888<br>4. 1869-1912<br>5. 1901-1982 |

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| F535 *Pygmy*. *Remarkably small man. Also called "dwarf"*<br><br>See also, Motif F239.4.2 *Fairies are the size of small children*<br><br>and *F239.4.3 Fairy is tiny* | 1. (Dwarf/309 pounds) Carrie Akers<br>2. Che-Mah the Chinese Dwarf<br>3. Admiral Dot<br>4. Count Primo Magri<br>5. Baron Ernesti Magri<br>6. Count Rosebud<br>7. Baron Littlefinger<br>8. General Mite<br>9. The Murray Midgets<br>10. Pauline Musters<br>11.Charles and Eliza Nestel<br>12. Nicholi, the Little Russian Prince<br>13. Commodore Nutt<br>14. Jennie Quigley, the Scottish Queen<br>15. General Tom Thumb<br>16. Lavinia Warren<br>17.Lucia Zarate, the Mexican Lilliputian<br>18. The Doll Family<br>19. Lilliputian King | 1. 1860's<br>2. 1838-1926<br>3. 1864-1918<br>4-7. 1850's<br>8. 1864-?<br>9. 1860's<br>10. 1876-1895<br>11. 1840's-1937<br>12. 1870's<br>13. 1860's<br>14. 1851-1936<br>15. 1838-1883<br>16. 1841-1919<br>17. 1863-1889<br>18. 1900's<br>19. 1850's |
| F545.2.2. *Horns on forehead*.<br>F511.3. *Person with horns*. | 1. M.Dimanche<br>2. Miss Kizzie | 1. 1754-1846<br>2. 1902 |
| F547.2 *Hermaphrodite* | 1.Albert-Alberta<br>2. Freda-Fred | 1. 1899-1963<br>2. 1908? |
| F555 *Remarkable Hair*<br><br>F555.3 *Very Long Hair* | 1. Circassian Beauties<br>2. Belle Carter (Hair in middle of her back like a ponytail)<br>3. Colon T. Updike (Hairy thicket from lower back 18" long)<br>4. Jo Jo the "Russian Dog Faced Boy"<br>5. Burmese Hairy Family<br>6. Bella Carter "The Mare Woman"<br>7. Seven Southerland (Sutherland) Sisters | 1. 1800's<br>2. 1800's<br>3. 1930's<br>4. 1884-1904<br>5. 1880's<br>6. 1891-1895 |
| F610 *Remarkably strong man* (Strong John) | Colonel Ruth Goshen (see F531 No.8) | |
| F610.2. *Dwarf-hero of superhuman strength* | Wild Men of Borneo | 1820's-1900's |

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| F567 *Wild man. Man lives alone in wood like a beast* | 1. The Winsted Wild Man (Hoax)<br>2. The Aztec Children (Maximo and Bartola)<br>3. William Henry Johnson (Zip, the What is it?) (See F521.1)<br>4. The Wild Men of Borneo, Waino and Plutano<br>5. Clico, the Wild Dancing South African Bushman<br>6. The Aztec Children, Maximo and Bartola | 1. 1895<br>2. 1840-1910's<br>3. 1842-1926<br>4. 1820's-1900's<br>5. 1857-1940<br>6. 1850's-1901 |
| F571 *Extremely old person*<br>F571.3. *Very old Woman* | Joice Heth | 1835 |
| F990 *Inanimate objects act as if living* | See also J1800 *One thing mistaken for another-miscellaneous;* J1809 *Other things with mistaken identities;* F990 *Inanimate objects act as if living;* J1794 *Statue mistaken for living original.*<br><br>Various wax figures and living statues | |
| G100. *Giant ogre.* | See F530. Exceptionally large or small men.<br>F531 Giant<br>F531.0.4 *Giant Woman*<br>F531.1.0.1.1 *Beautiful Giantes*<br>F531.1.0.2 *Hideous Giant*<br>F531.1.11 *Giants and giantesses dressed as human beings.*<br>F531.2.1 *Extremely tall giant*<br>F533 *Remarkably tall man* (woman) | |
| G10. *Cannibalism.*<br>G11.18 *Cannibal tribe*<br>G11.14 *Jungle-man as cannibal*<br>G11.2 *Cannibal giant*<br>G11.18 *Cannibal tribe.* | Various wild tribes:<br>Barbarians from the Woods of Papau<br>Cannibals from Australian Tribes<br>Warlike Afghans from the Hindu Kush | 1880's |
| G11.1 *Cannibal dwarfs.* | 1. Wild Men of Borneo<br>2. Mazimo and Bartola, the Aztec Children | 1. 1820's-1900's<br>2. 1880's |
| G11.11.1 *Albino twins with cannibal appetite.* | Wild Men of Borneo | 1820's-1900's |
| J1794 *"Statue mistaken for living original"* | General Tom Thumb | 1838-1883 |

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| T550.4. *Monstrous birth* because mother sees horrible sight. | Maternal Impression | |
| T551 Child with extraordinary members (limbs). | 1. Ella Harper, the Camel Girl<br>2. May-Joe<br>3. George Williams, the Turtle Boy | 1. 1873-?<br>2. 1909<br>3. 1859-? |
| T551.1. Child born without limbs | 1. Prince Randian<br>2. Charles Tripp | 1. 1889-1930's<br>2. 1870's-1910's |
| T551.2 Child born with two heads.<br>F511.0.2 *person with more than one head*<br>F511.0.2.1 *Two-Headed person* | 1. Millie-Christine<br>2. Chang and Eng | 1. 1851-1912<br>2. 1811-1874 |
| T572.2.5 *Abortion caused by fear* | See also T550.4 *Monstrous birth* | |
| T554.8 *Woman bears frog* | Child born in the form of a frog | 1. 1870 |
| T585.5.1 *Child born with hairy mane* | 1. Fedor Jeftichew (Jo Jo the Dog-Faced Boy)<br>2. Stephan Bibrowski (Lionel the Lion-Faced Man | 1. 1884-1904<br>2. 1900-1920's |

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