

# The Victorian Freak Show

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the victorian freak show was at once mainstream and subversive spectacles of strange exotic and titillating bodies drew large middle class audiences in england throughout much of the nineteenth century and souvenir portraits of performing freaks even found their way into victorian family albums at the same time the imagery and practices of the freak show shocked victorian sensibilities and sparked controversy about both the boundaries of physical normalcy and morality in entertainment marketing tactics for the freak show often made use of common ideological assumptions compulsory female domesticity and british imperial authority for instance but reflected these ideas with the surreal distortion of a fun house mirror not surprisingly the popular fiction written for middle class victorian readers also calls upon imagery of extreme physical difference and the odd bodied characters that people nineteenth century fiction raise meaningful questions about the relationships between physical difference and the social expectations that shaped victorian life this book is primarily an aesthetic analysis of freak show imagery as it appears in victorian popular fiction including the works of charles dickens wilkie collins guy de maupassant florence marryat and lewis carroll it argues that in spite of a strong nineteenth century impulse to define and defend normalcy images of radical physical difference are often framed in surprisingly positive ways in victorian fiction the dwarves fat people and bearded ladies who intrude on the more conventional imagery of victorian novels serve to shift the meaning of those works main plots and characters sometimes sharpening satires of the nineteenth century

treatment of the poor or disabled sometimes offering new traits and behaviors as supplements for restrictive social norms book jacket

society has long been fascinated with the freakish shocking and strange in this book gary cross shows how freakish elements have been embedded in modern popular culture over the course of the 20th century despite the evident disenchantment with this once widespread cultural outlet exploring how the spectacle of freakishness conflicted with genteel culture he shows how the condemnation of the freak show by middle class america led to a transformation and merging of genteel and freak culture through the cute the camp and the creepy though the carnival and circus freak was marginalised by the 1960s and had largely disappeared by the 1980s forms of freakish culture survived and today appear in reality tv horror movies dark comedies and the popularity of tattoos freak show legacies will focus less on the individual freak as the other in society and more on the audience for the freakish and the transformation of wonder sensibility and sensitivity that this phenomenon entailed it will use the phenomenon of the freak to understand the transformation of american popular culture across the 20th century identify elements of the freak in popular culture both past and present and ask how it has prevailed despite its apparent unpopularity

the untold story of the victorian freak show and circus and the remarkable cast of characters who performed in them

there exist problematic attitudes and beliefs about dwarfism that have rarely been challenged but continue to construct people with dwarfism as an inferior group within society this book introduces the critical term midgetism which the author has coined to demonstrate that the socio cultural discrimination people with dwarfism experience is influenced by both heightism and ableism as a result it unpacks and challenges the problematic social assumptions that reinforce midgetism within society including the acceptability of midget entertainment and non normative space to demonstrate how particular spaces can either aid in reinforcing or challenge midgetism drawing on the tripartite model of disability this book demonstrates how midget entertainment is framed as a non normative positivism which makes it an acceptable form of employment using autocritical discourse analysis the book exposes examines and responds to excuses that are used to reinforce midgetism thus critiquing the numerous beliefs influenced by cultural representations of dwarfism such as people with dwarfism being acceptable figures of entertainment it will be of interest to all scholars and students of disability studies social history sociology and cultural geography

this book offers new readings and interpretations of the non normative narratives of freak show performers in the victorian period as they have been reimagined by contemporary fictions museum exhibitions and other aspects of the heritage experience the growth of scholarly interest in institutional histories has been mapped by a surge of neo victorian fiction about historical performers with disabilities supported by scholarship in response to these representations this study offers the first extensive analysis of the continued display of the bodies and artefacts of historical figures linked to the freak show and the significant theoretical connections between these displays and broader cultural and fictional representations it argues that museum displays archives

and fictional adaptations intersect through a much more complex and intriguing dialogue than has previously been identified shedding light on the way in which historical disability functions in the twenty first century

great britain is changing and so is europe the aim of this book therefore is to reflect upon the processes of re creation of art and literature within and against the backdrop of the shifting paradigms of the world as we know it at a time when the political relations between great britain europe and the rest of the world are being redefined this book examines the de construction of modern identities through the de codification of classical and contemporary mythologies

the first monograph on the construction and treatment of disability across britain and its empire from 1800 to 1914

neo victorian freakery explores the way in which contemporary fiction film and television has revisited the lives of nineteenth century freak show performers it locates the neo victorian freak show as a crucial forum for debating the politics of disability gender sexuality and race within the genre more broadly

it was meant to be paradise the stunning new thriller that readers are calling a real page turner and gripping and immersive thought provoking twisty and devastatingly plausible captivating one to get lost in heat book of the week

from the bestelling author of e comes a hilarious and moving novel of a very normal life becoming extraordinary

sydney race 1875 1960 lived nearly all his life in nottingham from his teenage years he was fascinated by entertainment and was a regular visitor to the theatre circus and the annual goose fair as well as the concerts and readings at the nottingham mechanics institution his journals for the period 1892 to 1900 represent his early reflections on performance from his very first visit to a theatre to the shows at the goose fair to henry irving ellen terry and the lesser luminaries of the portable theatres publisher s blurb

in the modern western world hundreds if not thousands of contagious ideas spread by word of mouth or through the media spells or memes make up contemporary culture and affect just about every aspect of our daily life some of the most powerful of these spells form the core of mesmerization in this highly visual publication the many facets of each spell are dissected and analysed within a unique graphic formula that exposes and encapsulates its meaning and purpose the most successful of such constructs are the creation of the media the image makers advertising executives newspaper editors creatives designers photographers and film producers who make up the ranks of the creative elite their dreams of affluence comfort and wellbeing are being emulated the world over more than we know they determine what we believe how we behave and think and control our decisions as to what gets made what gets seen what gets heard but there are cracks in this wonderland psychological disorders drug dependency obesity gun crime and social addictions are on the rise worldwide the gaping disparity between rich and poor nations religious unrest disease and famine resource scarcity and fears

over climate change head the agenda the influence and aspirations of our lifestyles are central to these issues how can we make headway in confronting our wider realities when we have an image machine that is totally at loggerheads with the need for restraint by revealing the collective power of these insidious cultural influences mesmerization is a challenge to the creative industry to those who control the motivational drivers underpinning the global psyche in their hands rests the ability to change and transform future behaviour this publication provides the catalyst

neo victorian freakery explores the way in which contemporary fiction film and television has revisited the lives of nineteenth century freak show performers it locates the neo victorian freak show as a crucial forum for debating the politics of disability gender sexuality and race within the genre more broadly

this interdisciplinary volume analyzes body worlds from a number of perspectives describing the legal ethical sociological and religious concerns which seem to accompany the exhibition as it travels the world *résumé de l éditeur*

a history of the british empire from an entirely fresh perspective more than shakespeare more than the invention of the railway it was empire which made britain into great britain by the early 20th century that empire covered around a quarter of the earth s surface and embraced more than a quarter of its inhabitants

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