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THE LIFE WRITING OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY
"DWARFS" AND "GIANTS"

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**BIOGRAPHIES OF SCALE: THE LIFE WRITING OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY
“DWARFS” AND “GIANTS”**

By

Kerry A. Duff

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

BIOGRAPHIES OF SCALE: THE LIFE WRITING OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY “DWARFS” AND “GIANTS”

By

Kerry A. Duff

Autobiography has traditionally been viewed as the genre in which exceptional men narrate the story of their lives, a literary form that both relies upon and reproduces the notion of the unique and autonomous self. This study charts the paradoxes that arise when other exceptional individuals, those categorized as “freaks,” “prodigies,” and “anomalies,” enter the public realm of self-representation. Such individuals were considered exceptional not by dint of their achievement, but due to the perceived singularity of their anomalous bodies. The appeal of the corporeally extraordinary not only fed a culture of freak exhibition, but also generated an outpouring of case studies, biographies, memoirs, and autobiographical narratives that discursively constituted these individuals. While immensely popular during this period, the autobiographies have been largely neglected by literary and cultural scholars.

Reading the life writing of those labeled as “midgets” and “giants” in the nineteenth century, this study argues that these narratives are valuable not only as performances of enfreaked selfhood, but as texts that highlight and fracture the logic behind the production of the democratic subject, pushing the limits of autobiography as the literary form of the exceptional man. “Freaks” were the exception, those that stood out against the average, and yet their nonstandard bodies undermined their perceived capacity for selfhood. Hence, while these autobiographies share a common strategy of arguing for inclusion via narratives of normativity, they are also limited by the specific

requirement that they produce *extraordinary* subjects. Thus these narratives reproduce the paradox of freak subjectivity, a paradox that demands both normativity (likeness) and exceptionality (difference).

The analysis of the various modes in which selfhood is produced is situated within an examination of the tropes of the miniature and the gigantic. Reading across a wide range of texts—dime novels, medical and ethnological reports, articles from the popular press, and the writings of Cornelius Mathews, Mark Twain, and Edgar Allan Poe—these chapters draw attention to the overlapping figurations of the miniature and gigantic through which the dwarf and giant self emerge and which they, in turn, reproduce in variable ways. While making manifest the way the autobiographies participate within the cultural preoccupations of the period—debates over racial degeneration, manhood and national stature—such an examination also highlights the specificity of particular forms of enfreakment, countering the double bind of disability in which the enfreaked subject is deployed as a generalized figure of otherness.

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For Jay

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Introduction: Measuring Significance

I

Autobiography has traditionally been viewed as the form in which great men tell the story of their lives and which both relies upon and reproduces the democratic notion of the unique and autonomous self. Indeed, it has a special relationship to the makings of an American identity, for as Sidonie Smith writes, "Autobiographical narratives, their citation, and their recitation have historically been one means through which the imagined community that was and is America constitutes itself on a daily basis as American" (4). It also embodies, in more than one way, the paradox of liberal humanism, but especially in the manner that its democratic impetus suggests that all may write, yet its history suggests that some autobiographies are more deserving of the name than others; some lives are more important than other lives. Both impetuses are at work in the nineteenth century, which saw an outpouring of autobiographical narratives from many quarters, but which still demanded different truth claims from certain autobiographies, while easily according the seals of authenticity and significance to those "exceptional," or "Great Men" who wrote the stories of their lives. Autobiography speaks to individuality and thus, supposedly, to every citizen, and yet autobiography also, and especially in its more celebrated form, the memoir, demands exceptionality and the claim of broader relevance.

According to Foucault, the nineteenth century witnessed the substitution of the "individuality of the memorable man" for that of the "calculable man," that ordinary individual, who now became visible as s/he was subjected to the scientifico-disciplinary mechanisms at work in the new distribution of power. This period also witnessed the celebration of the *l'homme moyen* by Adolphe Quetelet, the Belgian mathematician and astronomer, who, in his application of statistics to social phenomena, claimed that this "average man" represented the best, morally, physically, and intellectually, of

civilization.¹ For Quetelet, all variation, whether height or intelligence, was in fact error arranged along a bell curve, which thus placed the average man as the ideal or most perfect type.² Francis Galton, however, using Quetelet's method of applying the error curve to social phenomena, came to the inverse conclusion, arguing that the average represented all that was mediocre in culture, and that therefore the exceptional man was

¹ Quetelet came to these conclusions specifically via his studies on human stature and proportion. Having observed that like the observations of the stars, the measurements of an individual's height would likewise distribute themselves along the error curve, he then argued, using his studies on the chest size of Scottish soldiers and heights of young Frenchmen, that this curve could be applied to groups of individuals. Just as "true height" is established through multiple measurements, so could the "true average man" be calculated through the distribution of groups of men, who would be imperfect copies of this ideal. And, he did mean copies, for Quetelet viewed diversity as error, a deviation from an archetypal true type. As Canguilhem explains in his reading of biometric research in physiology, the "average" seems to be directly capable of objective definition and so there is an attempt to join the "norm" to it, even when it is claimed that they are kept apart. See "Norm and Average" in *The Normal and the Pathological*. For biographical and detailed statistical information, see Porter's *The Rise of Statistical Thinking*.

² This new use of variation thus brought the unusual within the natural, but also produced it as "erroneously" unlike the average and ideal. Speaking of the two kinds of limits that he saw at work in the curve, Quetelet wrote in the preface to the *People's Edition of On Man*:

The first limits comprise within them the qualities which deviate more or less from the mean, without attracting attention by excess on one side or the other. When the deviations become greater, they constitute the extraordinary class, having itself its limits, on the outer verge of which are things preternatural, or monstrosities. Thus, the men who fall, in respect of height, outside of the ordinary limits, are giants and dwarfs; and if the excess or the deficiency of height surpasses the extraordinary limits, they may be regarded as monstrosities" (13).

The freak then is brought within the grasp of science, which transformed the freak from monster to human, but which also made him the object of that knowledge. Such a move thus objectifies and simultaneously offers a chance for subjectivity, perfectly illustrating the way in which the emergence of the subject depends upon its very subordination to power.

to be celebrated, the average and below average to be weeded out through a program of eugenics.³

Galton's theories then bring us back to the specifically American version of the lives of "Great Men," Emerson's "Representative Men," who were to serve as present and future models for the American citizen. While these men were to be great, they were also to be representative, to be "participant": "the constituency determines the vote of the representative" (619). But such logic often falls apart, as it highlighted in in the tension generated by Emerson's desire not to delineate these men as a "caste" apart, but his revulsion at "enormous populations" who "are disgusting, like moving cheese, like hills of ants, or fleas -- the more, the worse" (615). As Paige Baty points out, while Emerson's project "erects human monuments, it also casts the unexceptional, 'massified' subject in the part of historical extra: one is either a rare individual or a flea" (89).⁴

³ Like Quetelet, Galton used experiments in stature and specifically called upon the example of height to explain error law in his first book *Hereditary Genius* (1869), with the implication that this particular example of the error curve was the one that the reader was most familiar with. Also of significance is the fact that he acquired his data through the sale of a questionnaire in the form of a book, which individuals then filled out and returned to Galton, becoming eligible to enter a lottery for 500 pounds. Here we have the perfect example of the disciplining of the subject via the personal narrative, a disciplining which is not simply imposed from above, but which enlists the subject in the recitation of particular types of identity as a means for regulation and control. See Porter and *Pictures of Health*.

⁴ Baty's work in *American Monroe* also speaks to "representative characters," cultural figures that "exist at the intersection of cultural production and consumption, circulating in specific times and places where they are made to mediate values to a given community" (9). In this, she differs from Emerson, who stressed the representative man's educational value and exemplary value. While sharing a similar role in cultural mediation, the figure of the freak is also different from Baty's representative character, because, with the exception of such figures as "General Tom Thumb," freaks were often mediated as interchangeable commodities. In other words, while Marilyn Monroe becomes commodity, the figure retains a certain specificity. As will be demonstrated, the freak usually came to matter through a less individualized structure of subjectivity; often gaining significance simply as the smallest or largest individual.

Alongside these focal points of the century -- the calculable man, the average man, the exceptional man, the representative man -- we must also place the corporeally extraordinary individual, for the nineteenth century was the heyday of both the freak show and the scientific study of the pathological. The appeal of these individuals was their corporeal exceptionality, and this was also the justification for the outpouring of case studies, biographies, memoirs, lives, and sketches that discursively produced these individuals. If exceptionality was the requirement for traditional autobiography, how might we consider these freak narratives? How do these marginalized texts fit within the paradox that demands both normativity (*likeness*) and exceptionality (*difference*) as the grounds for self-representation? This study attempts to answer these questions through an examination of the biographies and autobiographies of a select group of these individuals, those who performed as giants and midgets in the nineteenth century. Of especial interest is the manner in which these texts foreground the exclusionary logic at work in the production of the standard subject of democracy, a foregrounding that is doubled by its performance within that standard text of liberal individualism, the autobiography.

As Joan Scott points out, the term "individual" has various and contradictory meanings:

On the one hand, the individual is the abstract prototype for the human; on the other, the individual is a unique being, a distinct person, different from all others of its species. The first definition was often employed in political theory as the basis for the claim (made in France by Enlightenment philosophers and revolutionary politicians) that there were natural and universal rights (to liberty, property, happiness) that gave men a common claim to the political rights of the citizen. . . . The second definition was present when philosophers as different as Diderot and Rousseau articulated a notion of a unique self and specified its uniqueness by its differentiation from an other. (5)

As Scott argues this ambiguity had significant implications for certain human beings -- women, for example -- precisely because its denotation of commonality was based on a shared trait of being different from every other individual and thus required a relationship

of contrast --difference-- which was deployed to exclude particular groups as not-quite-individuals, but more importantly which required the very production of these groups in order to function. Scott's work focuses on the exclusion of women from this project and the strategies they enlisted as a means to work through this paradox, but this concealment of the way difference functions in the production of the prototypical individual also had meaning for the enfreaked subject. The freak was represented as exceptional and nonstandard based on the visual evidence of his/her body and thus was also excluded in various ways from the democratic project.

Rosemary Garland Thomson has outlined the way the freak or disabled figure both legitimizes the standard democratic subject and disturbs the process by which that subject is normalized. The American Ideal, she explains, is structured by four interrelated principles -- self-government, self-determination, autonomy, and progress-- all of which rely upon a stable body that is the neutral instrument of the individual will (42). The disabled body, she claims, "stands for the self gone out of control, individualism run rampant: . it mocks the notion of the body as a compliant instrument of the limitless will and appears in the cultural imagination as ungovernable, recalcitrant, flaunting its difference as if to refute the fantasy of sameness implicit in the notion of equality" (43). If this body threatens the dream of self government and self determination, then it also, she continues, challenges the dream of autonomy or self-reliance, "not so much because it is helpless, but rather because it is imagined as having been altered by forces outside the self" (45). Autonomy requires that the subject remains immune to external forces and that it is able to maintain a stable, inviolate self that then constitutes the notion of possessive individualism, but the corporeally disabled or extraordinary represents "property badly managed, a fortress inadequately defended" (45). This is then connected to the fourth principle which underwrites the democratic ideal -- progress: "The life of a well-governed, self-determined man is imagined as a narrative of progress on which Protestant perfectionism, the doctrine of success, and the concept of self-improvement all

depend But the disabled figure flies in the face of this ideal, renouncing with its very existence the fiction of self-improvement and at the same time presenting the ultimate challenge to perfection and progress" (46).

The way in which the freak disturbs this last ideological principle is, of course, especially to be noted in the autobiography, for progress is its structuring form, generating the question of how one narrates the life of an "individual" whose very being resists the story that must be told? As we shall see, the answer lies in the liminal location of the freak, for that individual does not ultimately and absolutely challenge these principles, exists not as absolute other, but on the fluctuating boundaries between normality and monstrosity, human and animal, difference and conformity. As such, the autobiographies of these individuals most often attempt to find some ground on which to claim the right to normality, subjectivity, which must be made to establish the writing of autobiography in the first place. Thus the interest of these texts is not that they present a challenge, but that they embody the very paradox of liberal humanism, "that the principle of equality implies sameness of condition, while the promise of freedom suggests that potential for uniqueness" (Thomson 43). As Thomson argues, "the freak's extraordinariness invoked the tensions between uniqueness and uniformity, particularity and generality, randomness and predictability, exception and rule, by extending the former so far as to disrupt the latter" (66). Specifically, the freak pushed the limits of the definition of autobiography as the literary form of the "exceptional man." Freaks were the exception, those that stood out against the average, the common herd, and yet their nonstandard bodies undermined their perceived capacity for selfhood. Moreover, as I will argue throughout this study, the freak's very claim to fame and justification for writing an autobiography was her/his extraordinariness. Hence, while the autobiographies under examination share a common strategy of arguing for normality, ordinariness, they are also limited by the specific requirement that they produce extraordinary subjects. In much the same way as the talk shows of the 1980's and 1990's, these autobiographies demand that

their subjects go over and beyond what one would expect from the ordinary citizen, precisely in order to have any value.⁵ This then raises important questions about agency. What does it mean that in order to represent one's self one must prove difference from the reader? Is this a potentially liberating strategy, or one that simply replicates the disempowering dynamics at work in other areas of the enfreaked individual's experience? The disjointed nature of the texts -- which argue both for normality and strangeness -- prove an interesting mix, but the rhetorical strategies at work to negotiate this contradiction are of even greater interest.

The focus on the life writing of those who were enfreaked as midgets, dwarfs, and giants was determined partially by the dominance of autobiographical texts by these individuals, a fact that raises an important issue in regard to specificity. While Thomson's *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* brought together a collection of essays that analyzed individual freaks within their historical specificity, there is still a tendency within scholarship on the freak to homogenize that figure, as if every enfreaked individual lived his/her body in identical fashion. This study not only challenges the notion that the freak signified ahistorically as a transgressive figure, but that all freaks existed as exploited objects, caged and silenced by the side show or museum. One of the first conclusions that arises from an analysis of these autobiographies is that the midget and giant most often lived their lives at the top of a social and economic hierarchy of enfreaked subjects. Midgets and giants not only had access to better living conditions, but had greater access to self representation. Indeed, these texts illustrate how the construction of subjectivity necessarily involves the production of difference that further

⁵ As Thomas Couser and others have argued, this bind continues to haunt the discourse of disability, which has been, as Mitchell and Snyder point out, "largely defined by the genre of autobiography" (*The Body* 10). Since disability is usually the "hook" that determines the autobiography, these disability self narratives often run the "risk of reducing autobiography to case study -- reifying disability and thus reinforcing marginalization" (Couser *Recovering* 183). Subjects are often forced into success stories, triumph plots, or "saintly suffering" (Mitchell and Snyder *The Body* 10).

served to buttress this hierarchy, a hierarchy that located the midget and giant further to the top by constructing them as less strange, more human, than other enfreaked individuals.

Another reason for this focus on the small and large is that the notion of measurement is a significant cultural feature of this period and is intrinsically linked to two other features of the United States in the nineteenth century: the freak show and the case study, that form of profiling which is interwoven with the autobiography. Bodily measurements -- height, weight, size of limbs, etc. -- were implicit to the freak show spiel in its production of the enfreaked subject, but they were also implicit to Foucault's figure of modern individuality -- the calculable man. Writing on the new political anatomy of the body that was implemented in the late eighteenth century with the development of a disciplinary regime, Foucault argues that this moment witnessed "the transition from historico-ritual mechanisms for the formation of individuality to the scientifico-disciplinary mechanisms, when the normal took over from the ancestral, and measurement from status, thus substituting for the individuality of the memorable man that of the calculable man" (193). Individuality therefore becomes the marker of the "calculable" or ordinary man rather than those possessing power or privilege, and this new visibility is precisely the way in which the individual is subjected within disciplinary power. In a disciplinary regime, power is anonymous and functions through the production, surveillance, and regulation of increasingly marked and individualized bodies. These individualizing mechanisms now at work turn more towards the child, rather than the adult, the patient rather than the healthy man, the madman rather than the normal, and the delinquent rather than the non-delinquent. Thus, Foucault, argues, "when one wishes to individualize the healthy, normal, and law-abiding adult, it is always by asking him how much of the child he has in him, what secret madness lies within him, what fundamental crime he has dreamt of committing" (193).

The mechanism of disciplinary power that effects this individualizing and subjection is the examination, specifically the "case study." As Foucault writes, this new disciplinary writing marked a change from the form of "life writing" of the preceding centuries:

For a long time ordinary individuality -- the everyday individuality of everybody -- remained below the threshold of description. To be looked at, observed, described in detail, followed from day to day by an uninterrupted writing was a privilege. The chronicle of man, the account of his life, his historiography, written as he lived out his life formed part of the rituals of power. The disciplinary methods reversed this relation, lowered the threshold of describable individuality and made of this description a means of control and a method of domination. . . . And this new descriptibility is all the more marked in that the disciplinary framework is a strict one: the child, the patient, the madman, the prisoner, were to become, with increasing ease from the eighteenth century and according to a curve which is that of the mechanisms of discipline, the object of individual descriptions and biographical accounts. This turning of real lives into writing is no longer a procedure of heroization; it functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection. (191-2)

The phenomena of the freak autobiography thus emerges from the increased production of lives of ordinary individuality, the case study, and the outpouring of lives of great and exceptional men, the autobiography, which helped establish an American national identity. It is indebted to both forms and illustrates the complexities of subject formation, a process which is neither wholly empowering or disempowering.

My understanding of this subject is informed by Foucault and Judith Butler's reworking of Foucault's notion of *assujettissement* in *Bodies that Matter* and *The Psychic Life of Power*. In that last work, Butler posits the tropological figure of the turn to configure the problematic of the way the subject is enacted through its subjection or subordination to power. This trope highlights the quandary of "how the subject takes in the power by which it is inaugurated," since we must refer to a figure which does not yet exist (the problem of referentiality) and the question of resistance, if the subject's autonomy is effected by its very subordination to power (*Psychic* 4). Butler theorizes through this by reminding us that power works through the continual reiteration of its

conditions, in specific, through the continual reiteration of regulatory norms, and that “the subject is precisely the site of such reiteration” (*Psychic* 16). In other words, subjection is never complete, and it is this compelled reiteration, “which does not consolidate that dissociated unity, the subject, but which proliferates effects” which offers the possibility for the undermining of normalization (*Psychic* 93):

a subject only remains a subject through a reiteration or rearticulation of itself as a subject, and this dependency of the subject on repetition for coherence may constitute that subject’s incoherence, its incomplete character. This repetition or, better, iterability thus becomes the non-place of subversion, the possibility of a re-embodying of the subjectivating norm that can redirect its normativity. (*Psychic* 99).

If we therefore take the example of the freak autobiography as arising partially from the case study, there is no reason to simply see the autobiography as entirely reproducing the regulatory norms that objectify and subject the subject, but as a reiteration that may offer a possibility of exceeding, yet not escaping, the power by which agency is enabled through subjection.⁶

Foucault and Butler also come into play in my understanding of how some bodies -- women, freaks, for example -- are materialized in ways that others are not as part of the production of the invisible normative body, but how likewise some bodies come to “matter,” to signify, more than others. This latter is based on the notion that the process by which subjects are formed works through “an exclusionary matrix” thus requiring “the

⁶ It is through an analysis of this exceeding that Butler attempts to rejoin the discourse of power (Foucault) with the discourse of psychoanalysis (Lacan) by positing a theory of passionate attachment to our subordination and reintroducing the notion of loss within a theory of subjection that includes an understanding of the psyche as a place of ambivalence, but one which is derived from prior social operations.

simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings who are not yet 'subjects,' but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject" (*Bodies* 3). Specifically, enfreaked bodies are very much materialized as bodies on display -- indeed, it is often the body that is all that "counts" -- but they are materialized in such a way that they fail to matter fully as subjects. They are thus not wholly culturally unintelligible -- nineteenth-century culture clearly has some understanding of what the freak is -- but neither are they fully intelligible. They are not inhuman, but rather "not as human as." This then functions in two ways. First, they act as boundaries that serve to demarcate the space of what Thomson call the "normate," the veiled subject position of cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others" (*Extraordinary* 8). Second, as beings which fail to fully materialize through a reiteration of regulatory norms, they return to haunt the subject, threatening to expose the process by which that coherent being is produced. Hence, we can understand the freak as part of the process by which the normative subject is produced through the reiteration of regulatory norms -- whether that be particular narratives of race, class, gender, or sexuality -- and as a figure that, through failure, threatens the dissolution of the subject and the ideologies or norms through which s/he is enacted.

To push this further, the freak is not simply the utterly abnormal or abject and s/he is not a hybrid figure in any simplistic understanding of that term, as if the freak is fixed in time as part human, part inhuman. The humanity of the freak is sometimes in play, and at times his/her inhumanity is foregrounded. This is the very way in which the freak can potentially disrupt the fixity of regulatory norms, as s/he is always an intelligible failure of materialization as subject: "almost, but not quite." Such an understanding requires not only an analysis that pays attention to the specific way in which individuals are enfreaked -- whether as conjoined twin, midget, or hermaphrodite -- *and* one that examines how a particular freak is produced in a variety of different places, sometimes as more normative than at others. Too often the freak is understood as an entirely ambivalent, abject figure,

but these autobiographies illustrate how some freaks were produced as less abject than others and that certain freaks, in particular places, resided much closer to the domain of the normative than previous scholarship has allowed.⁷

My thesis is therefore generated by Butler's question, "which bodies come to matter -- and why?" (xii). What this study seeks to do is to examine particular freak autobiographies --those of the small and large bodied-- for what they can tell us about the process by which a midget or giant comes to *matter* as such, paying attention to the way in which these autobiographical texts attempt to reproduce the freak as full subject, one who matters, *and* reproduce that subject as one who matters too much (as freak in contrast to the invisible standard subject). I argue that these texts reiterate regulatory norms, thus reproducing master narratives of race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, and so forth, in the production of their subjects, but also occasioning fissures and cracks in those narratives through that very reiteration. Just as freak subjectivity in these texts illustrates a failure to materialize fully as normative subject, so does the reproduction of such narratives fail to materialize *in toto*. It is thus part of my argument that these texts then have significance not just for what they can tell us about freak subjectivity, but about nineteenth-century ideologies of, for example, masculinity, domesticity, pity, race, and nationality. As sites through which these narratives are reproduced, these texts reveal how ideology is deployed, contested, buttressed, and fractured. Specifically, the paradox of individuality and normality that is key to these narratives relate to the two larger cultural anxieties that Thomson highlights: 1) the fear of nonconformity generated by increased social taxonomizing; and 2) anxiety over the loss of individuality in the face of widespread standardization. While the freak is differently situated than those more

⁷ While Fielder is the best example of this theorizing of the freak as absolute other, more recent scholarship, even while noting the ambivalence of representations, does not emphasize the way in which ambivalence occurs through a "normalizing" of the freak as much as through the ambivalent way s/he legitimizes master narratives of race, for example.

standard subjects -- a point that will be elaborated on in the analysis of each biography -- the contradictions involved in signifying freak subjectivity exaggerate and highlight larger contradictions that the texts' readers also engaged: how does one come to be of significance?

Focusing on the enfreakment⁸ and subject-making of those who were perceived as midgets, dwarfs, and giants requires an intertextual analysis of the tropes, metaphors, and narratives that served as the discursive material from which these individuals emerge and which they reproduce in variable ways. I will thus be employing a variety of different texts: medical and anthropological articles from the popular press, newspaper reports, novels, short stories, advertisements, and third-person biographies. While recognizing the limits to the possibilities of particular discursive selves, I do not argue that one discourse fully creates or determines another. In this methodology, I take a similar stand to Kali Israel in *Names and Stories: Emilia Dilke and Victorian Culture*. In this work, Israel attempts to examine the stories and texts that constitute Emilia Dilke, delineating multiple representations in their relations to each other, but she refuses to "force judgments about priorities," "emphasizing the mobility of tropes and themes" and drawing attention to "historically overlapping vocabularies and textual mirrorings (16).⁹

⁸ The term "enfreakment" was coined by David Hevey and used widely by Thomson. It refers generally to the social construction of the freak and has specific relevance to the way the freak show exaggerates particular bodily differences, but also collapses all differences into a general category of irreducible difference. As Thomson explains,

at the same time that enfreakment elaborately foregrounds specific bodily eccentricities, it also collapses all those differences into a "freakery," a single amorphous category of corporeal otherness. By constituting the freak as an icon of generalized embodied deviance, the exhibitions also simultaneously reinscribed gender, race, sexual aberrance, ethnicity, and disability as inextricable yet particular exclusionary systems legitimated by bodily variation--all represented by the single multivalent figure of the freak" (*Freakery* 10).

⁹ This study is also similar to Israel's focus in *Names and Stories*. While I am interested in the issue of "extraordinariness," she examines exceptionality and the way it trades both on difference and gratifying uniqueness.

The point then is not to locate the origins of a source for particular figurations of self, but to consider the intertextuality of that figuring.

Given the focus on the giant and the dwarf or midget, two tropes I will be considering in great detail will be the miniature and the gigantic. In this, I am heavily indebted to Susan Stewart's *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. In this invaluable analysis of everyday objects, Stewart makes the argument that the miniature may be taken as a "metaphor for the interior space and time of the bourgeois subject," while the gigantic works as a "metaphor for the abstract authority of the state and the collective, public life" (xii). The miniature thus functions as nostalgia, generating a desire for the lost scenes of childhood and serves to reinforce notions of a perfectly enclosed interiority. The gigantic, removed from its role as a signifier of the dangerous overabundance of nature, functions to construct narratives of identity for nations. Consequently, "we find the miniature at the origin of private, individual history, but we find the gigantic at the origin of public and natural history" (71). Using Stewart's multi-layered thesis, Chapters One and Four will attempt to understand the workings of the miniature and gigantic through some particular examples, such as the nineteenth century obsession with dolls, toys, and giant relics, the Cardiff giant hoax, and the use of both the miniature and gigantic in the works of Cornelius Mathews, a writer who self-consciously set out to create a specifically American identity. These chapters will serve as background to the focus on the corporeal miniature and gigantic that are the focus of the rest of the study.

As, I will argue, these various narratives of the miniature and gigantic, share much with those that produce both miniature and gigantic bodies. If the miniature, like the child, served to develop notions of a self enclosed interiority, small-bodied adults functioned as similar sites upon which questions and concerns about the possibilities of self and race could be negotiated. But, whereas theories of the child were beginning to

move away from the notion of children as simply small-scale adults, these midgets and dwarfs were predominately imagined as miniature adults, and thus there were different as well as similar dynamics at work in their representation. While the precocious child, to which the exhibition of midgets is indebted, did indeed blur the boundaries between adult and child, raising questions about the limits between the two, the midget actually called attention to the difference, occasioning questions about the limits of life and growth: how small could a human be before he ceased being human? This is the midget as prodigy or freak, hence the interest in proving whether the performer was truly intelligent, really an adult, or was simply performing by rote. As Lori Merish argues, however, a “cuteness aesthetic,” identifying the midget with the child and calling upon maternal proprietorship, also served to refamiliarize the freak, bringing him/her back within the human “family,” and thus it partially elided cultural difference. The dwarf, whose “out-of-proportion” limbs conjured up notions of the grotesque, resisted this domestication, and, unlike the perfectly-proportioned midget, was racialized as an atavistic throwback, a hybrid being signifying both age and childishness. Therefore, while the midget arose from narratives of childhood and the family, the dwarf as “missing link” signified historical time and was produced within discourses of “the Family of Man.”

Giants also were associated with the past, but more firmly with the beginnings of the human race and were often deployed in producing “imagined communities.” Chapter Four examines how narratives of the gigantic were deployed in the service of constructing an American identity through the production of a mythic past that could rival Europe’s. Produced as evidence of American exceptionalism, gigantic features and relics also functioned within a teleological narrative of progress and manifest destiny in which the gigantic is continually produced as a threat to be vanquished, to be dismembered and then re-membered as proof of superior national manhood. Chapter Five looks at the way giant bodies posed problems for this narrative because of their potentiality for miniaturizing the standard white male body, occasioning anxiety about national stature. As we shall see,

one solution was to represent the giant as an imbecilic and inefficient subject of labor. Another is found within narratives of medical abduction, in which giants figure as the object of desire for doctors obsessed with literally dismembering the gigantic body for the purposes of dissection. Here we see the same productive logic at work in which giant bodies prove both threatening and yet essential as objects that legitimate the discipline and its categorization of the normal and pathological. The relationship between medical discourse and the representation of the gigantic body within the dime novel and freak show are then explored. What is of particular interest is the way the competitive exhibition of giants demanded the production of the extreme and yet was forced to engage with the medical discourse which had represented the extreme as unhealthy. Thus, managers often proved the extraordinariness of their particular exhibition precisely through the theme of healthy moderation, again revealing the complex interplay of exceptionalism and normality.

Chapters Two, Three, and Six look specifically at the autobiographies of these midgets and giants, those works specifically purporting to be by the subject's own hand, in order to examine the various ways in which subjectivity was produced amidst these narratives of size. This raises methodological and theoretical questions about how autobiography is to be defined in this study, an important question given the changes the field of autobiographical studies has undergone in the last thirty years. The poststructuralist critiques that have transformed the discipline have been well documented.¹⁰ The notion of genre, referentiality, and the belief in a unique, autonomous, and unified subject have been challenged by the contention that the subject is constituted through the operations of difference within language. While this study makes a certain argument about autobiography, it is less concerned with entering the debate about ontology and referentiality, than examining the types of discursive

¹⁰ For summaries see Couser's *Altered Egos* and Gilmore's "The Mark of Autobiography: Postmodernism, Autobiography, and Genre."

constructions of selfhood negotiated in these texts. In doing so, I thus work with the thesis that autobiography does not offer any greater opportunity towards referentiality than other types of texts, that it is marked by collaboration, that the self produced is a provisional and contingent one, and that autobiography has always challenged generic classification due to what Leigh Gilmore calls "its specific weirdness," the way that it falls outside both fiction and history (6). Indeed, it would be hard to make any other case given the materials at hand, for they foreground the problems inherent in beliefs about autobiography's special relationship to truth. These narratives of self signify, for example, that they are memoirs and autobiographies, and yet their production is intrinsically wrapped up with the exhibition itself. They were often sold by the manager during the exhibit, and many of them use a "cut and paste" method, lifting anecdotes and entire passages from earlier "biographies." Sold as advertisements to the show or as souvenirs to take home (private exhibitions of a freak's private life) these little booklets are marked by the demands of freak exhibition -- profit and audience expectations -- and driven by, as Thomson notes, "commercial hyperbole" (7 *Extraordinary*).¹¹

Indeed, these texts have either been dismissed as "ghostwritten" or as material from which to discuss the representation of the corporeal body in exhibition. While this study will deploy them for use in the latter type of analysis, it will more importantly treat them as autobiographical texts, not so that we may grope towards some understanding of the authentic self, but in order to raise questions about the discursive production of the freak self and about how this may be connected to wider cultural concerns. To dismiss them as exploitative advertisements on the part of managers is to fall back into many of the

¹¹ These texts can be viewed as souvenirs in the sense that they were sold to supplement the experience of the freak show, but, as Stewart points out, souvenirs provide a narrative of origins of the possessor, not the object. The autobiographies do not function in quite the same way as matchbooks, ashtrays, or other objects that signify to the tourist's experience. They contain their own narrative of origin, which points to the way they partially resist consumer appropriation "within the privatized view of the individual subject." (138).

same traps, such as a search for an original, authentic self and troubling genre classification. To afford them serious rhetorical analysis is to further the political impetus of freak and disability studies. One might well ask, why we should accept that P.T. Barnum's autobiography, which is itself a collection of texts that rewrite each other and which revolves around the notion of the hoax, deserves serious critical attention, and yet these do not.¹² The same could be said of Mark Twain's autobiography, which undermines and challenges the conventions of autobiography.¹³ I suspect that these texts have garnered attention due to the troubling, but nonetheless obstinate belief that they are more "literary" due to their self-conscious playfulness. Placed within a teleological narrative of autobiography by great men, the summation makes some sense, but ignores the benefits that have accrued from the effort to expand the autobiographical field to include a wider range of texts. Sidonie Smith notes that we are constantly telling our stories and consuming others' on an everyday basis, pointing to family albums, medical history forms, personal ads, and various "profiles." Although, she is speaking of this historical moment, the same holds true, if not to same dizzying degree, of the nineteenth century, which witnessed the development of institutional bureaucracy and the case study. Expanding the terrain of what counts as autobiography, allows us to pay attention to the

¹² I have made a conscious choice to omit a discussion of P.T. Barnum's autobiographies from this study. The choice is a political one, since, while I do not demand that these texts be give serious attention based on the notion that they are expressions of the authentic selves of marginalized individuals, this project is partially a recovery effort. So much of our popular understanding of various enfreaked individuals comes from Barnum's texts, that I believe that it is important to highlight other sources in order to enrich scholarship on freakery in the nineteenth century. For analyses of Barnum see Fretz's "P.T. Barnum's Theatrical Selfhood," A.H. Saxon's *P.T. Barnum, the Legend and the Man*, Neil Harris' *Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum*, and Thomas Couser's "Pros and Cons" in *Altered Egos*. While part of the emphasis in Barnum scholarship focuses on truth claims and the selling of the self, the autobiographies function in a different fashion from these freak personal narratives, as the Barnum self narrative sells itself through the revealing of hoaxes and the seeming desire to spin out the question of truth.

¹³ For a discussion of Twain's parodying, see Couser's "False 'Ts': Mark Twain's Pseudonymous Autobiography" in *Altered Egos*.

complexities of personal storytelling, the way it is both an opportunity to speak as subject and a process that is “enmeshed in the technologies of selfhood dispersed across a heterogeneous field of institutional locations,” which regulate and reform the subject by offering only certain types of “legible subjectivity” (Smith 10-1). Placing the lifewriting alongside other texts and charting the various “scripts” available for the large and small-bodied, this study will look to moments of ambivalence and contradiction that suggest negotiation as well as disciplining in the production of the freak self.

II

This study situates itself within and engages recent work in disability and freak studies, fields which are related and have benefited from feminist, queer, and critical race projects. Too often, however, the disabled or enfreaked body has been overlooked in such projects, or has been deployed as the ultimate other against which self-identified groups assert and claim an identity. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder call this the “representational double bind of disability,” explaining that disability often “metamorphoses into the signifier of ‘race, class, gender, and sexuality,’” on the one hand, but then “also serves as the raw material out of which other socially disempowered communities make themselves visible” (*The Body* 6). Such moves are problematic for a number of obvious reasons, but, primarily, they miss the benefits that can accrue from examinations of the freak, for as Grosz argues, the freak is an ambiguous being who disrupts *all* categories and oppositions used to define Self against Other:

They occupy the impossible middle ground between the oppositions dividing the human from the animal (Jo-Jo, the dog-faced boy; Percilla, the monkey girl; Emmitt, the alligator-skinned boy; the “wild man” or “geek”), one being from another (conjoined twins, “double-bodies wonders,” two-headed or multiple-limbed beings), nature from culture (feral children, the “wild men of Borneo”), one sex from the other (the bearded lady, hermaphrodites, Joseph-Josephines, or Victor-Victorias), adults from children (dwarfs and midgets), humans and gods (giants), and the living and the dead (human skeletons). (57)

If we resist the impulse to simply tack on “disability” to the long list of identity categories -- race, class, gender, sexuality, and so forth -- analyses of the freak and the “dis-abled”

can help us understand the complicated and variable constitutive nature of such categories, enriching scholarship in a plethora of areas.¹⁴

As Thomson defines it, “disability is an overarching and in some ways artificial category that encompasses congenital and acquired physical differences, mental illnesses, fatal and progressive diseases, temporary and permanent injuries, and a wide range of bodily characteristics considered disfiguring, such as scars, birthmarks, unusual proportions, or obesity (*Extraordinary* 13). It is also a “reading of bodily particularities in the context of social power relations” (*Extraordinary* 6). The freak is a particular manifestation of the disabled body, whose display for profit offered two narratives that were of significance for the nineteenth century, as Thomson argues. First, such displays secured the boundaries of the standard spectator by delineating the abnormal from the normal, but, second, they offered a counternarrative of “peculiarity as eminence” (*Extraordinary* 17). In this they harked back to an older mode of the freak as marvel, but also engaged with modern ideologies of the normal and the standard. As Thomson argues, freak shows thus became “ritual sites where the uncertain polity could anxiously contemplate the new parameters of embodiment” that had been wrought by such cultural transformations as mass production and standardization, on the one hand, and immigration, feminism, and emancipation, on the other (11). Freak shows thus offered the spectator two types of reassuring fantasies: one that reinforced his sense of bodily integrity and autonomy and one that assuaged cultural fears that the world had become over-standardized.

The historical particularity involved in reading the freak in this manner points to why purely psychoanalytic readings of the freak or ones that deploy a simplistic, transhistorical notion of Bakhtin’s grotesque body do not adequately address the question

¹⁴ Douglas Baynton points out one example in his essay “Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History,” analyzing how disability functioned to “lower the threshold for exclusion” in immigration practices.

of how and why the freak came to matter at a certain period of time. As Bakhtin writes, the medieval carnival with its grotesque body is a very different kind of affair from the freak show, which functioned through a separation of freak and spectator: “carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between acts and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people, they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people” (7). Certainly, as he explains, traces of the grotesque body continue onward from the medieval period, such as the tropes of exaggeration, ambivalence, and dismemberment, but they are transformed and deployed for different purposes. To theorize the freak show and its grotesque bodies as a site of working-class carnival is to misread the class, race, and gender politics at work and to obscure the often horrific exploitation of certain individuals. Likewise, while certain psychoanalytic mechanisms, such as identification, abjection, and fetishization, have enormously aided the project of freak studies, their exclusive use, as Rachel Adams argues, “threatens to universalize phenomena that are historically and culturally variable” (8).¹⁵ I thus follow Butler, but, specifically, Anne McClintock’s lead in deploying a “situated psychoanalysis” alongside a methodology that calls upon poststructuralism and feminism in my readings of particular historical texts.¹⁶

To reiterate then, this study examines the production of subjectivity in the autobiographies of midgets and giants from the late eighteenth century to the beginnings of the twentieth. Its range follows the trajectory of the freak show as it gained in

¹⁵ In *Sideshow USA*, Adams analyzes twentieth century manifestations of the freak.

¹⁶ In *Imperial Leather*, McClintock writes, “psychic processes of abjection (fetishism, disavowal, the uncanny) are not the same as political processes of abjection (ethnic genocide, mass removals, prostitute ‘clean ups’). These comprise interdependent but also distinct dimensions of abjection that do not constitute the transhistorical replication of a single, universal form (let alone the transcendent phallus), but rather emerge as interrelated if contradictory elements of an immensely intricate process of social and psychic formation” (72-3).

importance in the mid-century (becoming in some sense incorporated, as is evidenced by large-scale organizations such as Barnum's museum) and then gradually began to decline after the turn of the century. Bogdan attributes this decline to competition from other forms of amusement and the medicalization of human differences; while Thomson primarily pinpoints the middle-class disavowal of the freak show and the way discourses of sentimentality recast awe into pity (*Freakery*). Nonetheless, by the twentieth century the large-scale freak exhibition was gradually becoming dispersed across a number of different sites and was increasingly relegated from its central place in American culture to the margins. Such a trajectory partially shapes the subjects of the autobiographies. Hence, the earliest -- *The Memoirs of the Celebrated Dwarf, Joseph Boruwlaski* (1792) -- presents a subject who relies on his aristocratic patrons for support, illustrating an older model of freak exhibition. The autobiographies of Captain Van Buren Bates and Lavinia Warren Stratton, who exhibited at the height of the freak show's popularity, on the other hand, are full of details about museum engagements and foreign travel. The last text, the *History of the World's Greatest Midgets, Major N.G.W. Winner and Wife* [1904], illustrates the decline of the dime museum in its description of Winner's self-exhibition primarily for the purpose of advertising small businesses. These texts then work in different ways to produce their subjects. I not only attempt to pay attention to these shifts, but to locate them amidst the changing concerns, issues, and narratives of the nineteenth century.

Chapter One: The Miniature, the Child, and the Small-bodied

Though still like a baby to look at, no doubt,
He will talk and will sing, and he dances about, . . .
Just the same as he would if quite big he had been;
Such a wonderful creature there never was seen.

The young Prince of Wales was delighted to see
Tiny Tom so much older, yet shorter than he;
And both the Princesses declared 'twas quite droll,
For they thought he was only a dressed-up live doll
General Tom Thumb (1845?)

The representation of the small-bodied adult, the midget and dwarf, in the nineteenth century was most often articulated through two overlapping discourses of the miniature and the child. Midgets and dwarfs were most often imagined as childlike, as perfectly miniaturized versions of the standard-sized adult (the midget), or as the inverse, a shrunken grotesque caricature (the dwarf). This chapter will begin with an examination of these figures -- the miniature object and the child -- in order that we may understand the construction of the small-bodied adult. Such an examination will rely heavily on Susan Stewart's innovative work, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*.

As stated in the Introduction, Stewart's main thesis is that the miniature is deployed as a "metaphor for the interior space and time of the bourgeois subject" (xii). As a metaphor for interiority, the miniature is thus produced as a self-enclosed space that offers the observer a transcendent view of the miniature, but refuses any possibility of entrance into that space and time. The miniature is therefore bound up with a sense of loss and is intricately connected to nostalgia, representing a unrecoverable time of childhood or authenticity. As Stewart writes, we "find the miniature at the origin of private, individual history," an argument that points to the miniature's relationship to the search for origins and interiority, and its function in the definition and consolidation of the middle-class (71).¹ But the miniature also presents a paradox in that it evokes the

¹ The miniature is one of the metaphors by which the boundaries between public and private are expressed, a key notion in the self-definition of the middle class. The

mechanical and the copy (“a miniature version of”), as well as the artisanal and unique. We might think here of the tiny furniture and other accoutrements of the doll house that signify craftsmanship and yet are mass produced for a public nostalgic for pre-industrial labor and craft. As Stewart argues, this paradox is held in balance by the miniature's erasure of labor and relocation of the object to the world of play. Nevertheless, it also points to the potential instability of the miniature; that it is an uneasy, overdetermined site of cultural meaning. One particular threat to the miniature is contamination: the possibility that its role as the guarantor of the borders between inside and outside, private and public, can be undermined. Such a threat is often represented as the destruction of the miniature's perfect proportions, for the miniature must present a world that is, to the very last detail, a diminutive version of our own. Lack of proportion suggests a contamination from that larger world and propels the miniature into the grotesque, a hybrid object of mixture. As we shall see, this threat is at work in the distinction between two categories of the small-bodied adult: the midget and the dwarf.

The figure of the child shares much with the miniature: its deployment as a metaphor of interiority, for example. And it too is produced as an overdetermined object of fantasy prone to instability and thus regulation. The analysis will thus move to an examination of the relationship between the production of the miniature, the child, and the small-bodied adult, exploring the following overlapping questions: 1) What does the representation of the small-bodied share with the first two and how is it produced differently?; 2) What are the differences between various representations of the small-bodied adult?; 3) How do these representations reinforce and contravene cultural

miniature as object of collection is also a fundamental expression of bourgeois definition and colonial perspective. As Didier Maleuvre writes: “Collecting is a way of taking possession of the world” and “this has the effect of making the home the center of a wide temporal and geographic circle at the core of which the world is encapsulated in miniature form. The home thus becomes the domestic keeper of all things far and near, the center of gravity of ownership at the basis of the bourgeois world” (115).

narratives of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and so forth?; 4) What is at stake in the production of the midget and dwarf: what anxieties does it allay, what fantasies does it reproduce?; and 5) how does the pattern of desire and repulsion, disavowal and identification, work in the specific case of these enfreaked bodies?

I The Miniature and the Child

As we have stated, a “miniature” conjures up images of craftsmanship, tiny artisanal detail, yet the miniature is also a copy, a replica of something or someone, miniaturized to perfect scale. One of the most popular miniature objects of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the miniature painting, that tiny portrait, often worn in a locket and prized as a keepsake of sentimental value that both faithfully replicated and idealized the original. Although this traditional form continued to be fashionable, in the first half of the nineteenth century, larger square miniatures, which mimicked the style of larger paintings and which could be publicly exhibited, gradually gained ascendancy (Bolton-Smith 6, Johnson 23). In some way then the miniature could be said to have lost its sentimental, private value because it was no longer predominately worn about the body. This value was maintained, however, by the tendency to enclose it within a case and within the space of the middle-class parlor. Hence, the miniature continued to retain its role as the nostalgic keepsake *par excellence* of bourgeois domesticity.

The miniature was decidedly gendered in relation to other forms of painting. “The superior brilliancy and delicacy of water color, the greater refinement which seemed essential to the tracing of minuter outlines, and the idealizing beauty which had become established as one of its elements — since it was an axiom it should exclude all the harsher lines and shadings that are proper to the face — gave to the miniature a charm with many that was not shared by the robuster portrait” writes the author of a piece on miniature-painting in 1874 (“Miscellany” 727). A feminine, dainty genre, miniature painting was taken as an idealizing form, but the miniature was also praised for its ability

to reproduce the original perfectly in a smaller form. In fact, in the second quarter of the century, the miniature moved to a more realistic style even before the daguerreotype, seen as its direct competitor, was invented in 1839. What is significant then is that the story told retrospectively juxtaposes the truth told by the ideal in the miniature against the truth told by the realistic reproduction of the photograph in a nostalgic narrative of a lost art:

I scarcely need remind my reader that miniature-painting, as a pursuit, was annihilated by photography. I confess I am not one of those who are perfectly content with this result. Admitting all the advantages of the latter in respect to cheapness and ease of production, I find it difficult to think that its grim and severe reality, its sudden and unexpected revelation of human ugliness, and its inability to soften it with the faintest gleam of mind or feeling, make it preferable to a process which in able hands at least was always capable of giving us sufficient truth of feature, combined with some glow of grace and beauty, and some refining light of soul.

("Miscellany" 727)

As this excerpt illustrates, even though the miniature had already moved to a realistic style, it was retrospectively idealized as a lost art form, vanquished by its competitor, the harsh medium of photography.²

This nostalgia was in effect doubled, for the miniature already works by metonymy. As the above article explains, "its very name became the synonym of some lost or cherished treasure; it was the chosen companion of memory" (727). If the form is lost, the miniature now signifies nostalgia for a nostalgic item, a memento of a memento,

² This sense of nostalgia surrounding the miniature can be documented at the turn of the century when there was a renewal of interest in the form as part of the Arts and Crafts movement's reaction to industrialization; yet, as the quotation illustrates, one can already chart a nostalgic idealization of the miniature by the 1870's.

calling back the simpler times of the ante-bellum era. This doubling is exemplified in an 1872 short story published in *Harper's* entitled "The Story of a Miniature" (Davy). Like the miniature sets of dolls within dolls, this piece is written as a story within another narrative. The frame itself is already set in the past (late eighteenth century) and the enframed romance is set even further back in the days before the Revolution. The miniature itself is both the sign by which the reader knows a historical romance will be told and a sign within the frame story that the old French soldier will reminisce and tell a tale of a more idyllic time, the enframed narrative. A sign both of the absence and presence of the past, the miniature evokes a post-lapsarian tone that had particular meaning in relation to the United States' own recent war. As an article reporting on the new rage for miniatures at the end of the century illustrates, the miniature in this postwar period evokes a nostalgia for a nostalgic item that can no longer quite recall the original: "although we have some clever and careful artists in our midst, the brilliant and charming work of others of a by-gone day is by no means equaled" ("The Rage" 1).

It is no surprise that we see an increase in nostalgia in the later part of the century, for the increase in mass production not only generated more nostalgic items to be produced, but also fueled itself through nostalgia. As Stewart argues, absence is the "generating mechanism of desire":

The nostalgic is enamored of distance, not of the referent itself. Nostalgia cannot be sustained without loss. For the nostalgic to reach his or her goal of closing the gap between resemblance and identity, *lived* experience would have to take place, an erasure of the gap between sign and signified, an experience which would cancel out the desire that is nostalgia's reason for existence (22,145).

Nostalgic items both advertise their ability to recall the past and yet signal their failure to do so precisely through their very designation as nostalgic objects (items very much of the

present). Thus consumption of nostalgic products must by its very nature fail to fill the gap created by desire for the past, generating more nostalgia, and thus more consumption.

The miniature object was the perfect item for nostalgic production, not only because of its history as such, but due to its very form, for like imagined childhood, what it offers can never be experienced unmediated. Its tiny proportions refuse entrance to our too-large forms and it can only be experienced voyeuristically. As Stewart argues, “the observer is offered a transcendent and simultaneous view of the miniature, yet is trapped outside the possibility of lived reality of the miniature” (66). The miniature offers an experience of a perfectly uncontaminated world, yet we can never enter that world without destroying and erasing the object we desire to gain. The example that of course comes to mind here is our experience with the doll house, that tiny detailed space which fascinates adults more than the children it is ostensibly built for.

Indeed, items of childhood, like the doll house, were as popular for adults of the nineteenth century as they are today. It was this century that refined the meaning, place, and usage of the toy, and perhaps none was as popular as the doll, that mass produced item which copied the human form in miniature. In ante-bellum America, dolls were usually made at home and were seen as serving primarily utilitarian purposes — teaching sewing, for example. After the war, there was a shift from domestic production to conspicuous consumption, and as industrial production increased and nurseries became more important as organized spaces of amusement and education, dolls became tools for feminine socialization in middle-class values and rituals.³ By playing with dolls, girls were expected to imitate gendered middle-class rituals, such as tea parties, shopping, and visiting, and, as if to promise what the girls could expect later, these dolls were bought wardrobes of clothes and other accouterments of fashion. Indeed, by the late nineteenth

³ My discussion of the nineteenth century culture of dolls is largely indebted to Miriam Formanek-Brunell's *Made to Play House: Dolls and the Commercialization of American Girlhood, 1830-1930*.

century, dolls had become completely unlike the earlier “homemade” versions and their finery often rivaled that of their owners. However, just as in the ante-bellum years when the price of dolls meant that they were more valued by adults than children, girls perversely preferred to play with rag dolls, leaving their elegant miniature counterparts to languish amongst the luxurious settings built to scale. Objects of display rather than of play, these miniatures seem to have been more important to adults, fulfilling their fantasies of childhood and prescribing the culture’s gender and class difference.

Miriam Formanek-Brunell, who has written extensively on the culture of dolls in the nineteenth century, argues that gender dynamics were also at work in the production of dolls and that this had a specific effect on what the doll became. As the production of dolls gradually moved from the realm of the home to that of the factory, male inventors who owned patents for doll parts increasingly put an emphasis on animating the doll, having it perform mechanical tricks, such as walking and talking. Edison, for example, applied his newly invented phonographs to dolls: “My talking doll” he claimed is as “nearly perfect as machinery can be” (41). But children often regarded these mechanical dolls, which mimicked physical movement as their inanimate predecessors had reproduced the human form, as unnatural and rather frightening, a point illustrated in the turn-of-the-century British novel *The Child’s Mind*:

The parents wound it up, and it ran across the floor towards the child. There was something threatening in its gait and almost diabolical in its noisy gesticulations, so that the child shrank from it as it hastened drunkenly in her direction. It came close to one of her feet, and she could have almost shrieked with terror, but ere it reached her, it fell over on its side in attempting the figure eight, and groaning out the last few minutes of its brief life. . . . The parents laughed hysterically but the child sat solemnly in the centre of her nursery floor, and did not even smile. Though she was glad that her parents were so happy, the ingenuity of the toy frightened her. She was too young as yet to understand how and why the thing moved and ran and shook its arms. For her there was an appalling reality in its movements, and when the angry buzzing against the skirting board at length ceased, she heaved a big sigh of relief. (Qtd. in Formanek 59).

But it was not only children who reacted negatively to these dolls. By the end of the century, many parents also inveighed against the materialism and artifice these miniature well-dressed automatons introduced to the nursery. As Formanek-Brunell writes, ‘these toys became a favorite target among those increasingly dissatisfied with what the expanded consumer market had to offer’ and they looked back longingly to the simpler times of more wholesome toys (60). This dual response -- the celebration and rejection of such dolls -- echoes a similar reaction to larger mechanical machines, industry, and the increase in mechanized labor. While some continued to exult in the United States’ status as the world leader in industry and laud industry’s role in further refining civilization, others expressed anxiety over increased mechanization, standardization, and over-refinement. Significantly, childhood was one of the most important sites upon which these debates and anxieties were played out. While it seems at first glance that the image of the sentimental and angelic Victorian child was well established, childhood during this period was a highly contested and over-determined site of cultural engagement.

According to T. J. Jackson Lears, two tendencies dominated popular late-Victorian images of the child: a “liberal Protestant nostalgia for innocent sincerity and a primitivist veneration for vitality.” The first tendency worked along the lines of re-creation:

Deriving from long-standing Protestant anxieties about commercial prosperity and from the romantic heritage of the ‘Ode,’ nostalgia for childish innocence was readily assailable to the dominant culture and social arrangements; it concentrated on the past but eased adjustment to the present and future by providing a temporary, after-hours escape from the rigors of bourgeois adulthood. The innocent child was a vision of psychic wholeness, a ‘simple, genuine self’ in a world where selfhood had become problematic and sincerity seemed obsolete. (146)

This tendency is exemplified by the late nineteenth-century adult fascination with miniature yachts, railroads, and doll houses, for these objects are not only toys, the possessions of the child, but recreate a miniature world, a space and time apart from the instability and rigors of everyday life and represent a supposedly simpler time and place. The miniature is the perfect form by which to recoup childhood for the purposes of re-creating the self, without disturbing the hegemony of the capitalist industrial system, as it exists in a separate space and time from that of everyday life. Stewart makes this point in regard to model trains and ships, “models of the products of mechanized labor,” explaining that these “toys are nostalgic in a fundamental sense, for they completely transform the mode of production of the original as they miniaturize it: they produce a representation of a product of alienated labor, a representation which is itself constructed by artisanal labor” (58). “The triumph of the model-maker,” she continues, “is that he or she has produced the object completely from hand, from the beginning assembly to the ‘finishing touches’” (58). In the nineteenth century, then, we see a paradoxical veneration for artisanal production and uniqueness at the same time as a celebration of the machine and mass production, precisely because of the latter’s magical ability to erase the mechanical labor which produces and creates the space for nostalgic pre-industrial recreation and amusement. This further explains the appeal of the miniature in its mechanized form; it is not only a dream of childhood, but a fantasy of invisible labor, the possibility of living forever in the miniature world of childhood.

The miniature’s paradoxical relationship to industry is perfectly illustrated in an 1870 article from *Appleton’s Journal* entitled the “The Watch as a Growth of Industry.” The watch is the keeper of modern industrial time, yet also a miniature clock, evoking images of craftsmanship and detail. It is a highly personal item — a clock miniaturized so as to be worn on the body -- but it is also an article of mass production. In this article on the American Watch Factory, there is an attempt to pull these contradictory themes

together in a celebration of American ingenuity and industrial efficiency, a not surprising endeavor given that the article is little less than an in-depth advertisement for the company. The piece begins by decrying the previous state of the watch industry, an industry dominated by Europe and Switzerland, in particular. The division of labor, it argues, has been taken to its utmost extent, but this has led to inferior work and the industry is now faced with an everincreasing deterioration of manufacture, if it does not progress to the next logical stage. Division of labor at this early stage is not able to deal with the complexity of the object to be produced:

The watch is a highly-complex thing, and the due performance of its functions depends upon the perfect coordination of its parts. Each piece is brought to the rigorous test of exact cooperation with a whole system of other pieces . . . But, when a hundred different personalities of hand-labor have been stamped upon these parts, it is mechanically impossible that they should come together with the precision and perfection that the mechanism requires. . . . It is obvious, therefore, that mere division of labor cannot produce a perfect result, while the further it is carried the greater are the chances of error and imperfection (31).

Due to the very complexity of the object, which one would think would demand artisan hand-labor, efficient cooperation is required and personality shunned. Indeed, the labor should reflect the way the watch itself works.

This deterioration in the industry led to “endless deceptive practices,” “systemic imposture,” and “fraudulent commerce.” The watches were all appearance and were shams in the sense that they did not function perfectly. Significantly, we see no anxiety that the watches are in fact mass-produced copies; copy carries no negative connotation. There is no yearning for authenticity, for a watch is true if it works, and fraudulent if it doesn’t. What matters is the perfect duplication of parts. And what was required to fix this deplorable state of affairs was the “American spirit.” In Europe, “the despotism of

the conservative spirit, the dominance of hereditary habits, the cheapness and competitions of labor, and the ignorance and stolidity of factory operatives—all combined to prevent that final perfection of the industry which consisted in the unification of its multiplied processes” (31). What that spirit created was a unification of processes under the machine. Thus we have the American watch-factory , a “vast mechanical organism” which produces watches (by use of machines and by turning its labor force into a machine) “ with a uniformity and perfection which have at once and forever antiquated all previous methods of the production” (32). The advantage of relying on machines is explained through the transcendent view they possess:

What is called the *personal equation* of telescopic and microscopic observers, is simply that source of error, in looking sharply at a fine object, which yields different results with different persons, which depends upon temperament, varies with the period of life, and has to be discounted in individual cases in order to arrive at the exact truth. Now watch-work in the precision it requires, takes us beyond this range of nervous aberration; it is, if one may so speak, trans-visual and trans-tactual, so that the only way to get rid of errors is to get rid of personality itself. This is precisely what the American Watch Company does: it commits the whole work to machinery, and thus secures the accuracy and uniformity that machinery alone can confer. The adjustment of parts is made with mathematical precision far beyond the reach of unassisted sense (32).

Hence, the machine offers a way to manipulate and enter the miniature. It serves as a mediation between the worker and the miniature world, previously inaccessible without damage and destruction. In this case, the fact that the machine only serves to throw up one more obstacle and abstract us one more step from the miniature is not of issue. Indeed, it seems as if nostalgia for that pre-industrial culture is nonexistent: “The old watch-maker disappears and the whole art is resolved into the construction of correlated

and unified machinery on a very extended scale” (32). And the author lauds the fact that this process fits in seamlessly with the wider culture of incorporation at work, for if the “minutest part” of a watch fails, the owner can write and get “an exact duplicate of the failing piece”: “Thus in its highest stage of development, this complex and beautiful industry has itself become integrated with the highest and most comprehensive agencies of modern civilization” (34).

And yet nostalgia is at work here also, for the watch is celebrated, advertised as linking us to our past and to our personal genealogies because it is the perfect object “for transmission in families” (35). Americans, unlike Europeans, might have too little feeling for the past, but they do have the “lesser family mementos”: “The American watch has eminent claims as the true republican heirloom — a triumph of industry in an age of industry, it symbolizes the progress and dignity of labor; a product of American enterprise, it is associated with the sentiment of patriotism; moderate in cost, it is accessible to the body of the people, and thoroughly made, it is prepared for a lengthened future” (35). This product offers complete fulfillment of the nostalgic desire. Moreover, though it is an article of mass production, the factory is itself celebrated as an idyllic feudal village:

on one side is the beautiful river, on the other an elegant park surrounded by the neat cottages of the workmen, while the quadrangle within, with its summer-house and fountain, is filled with neatly-kept shrubbery. Even the engine-room, usually a grimy and greasy den, is here a spacious conservatory crowded with all varieties of plants, and festooned with flowers. In fact, the whole aspect and spirit of the place betray the intelligent sympathy of the managers with their large family of working-people, men, women, and children. (36)

Mass production, the machine, and craftsmanship coexist precisely because of the slippage between “authentic” as unique and “authentic” as that which functions, which is

not a sham. Nowhere is the modernist anxiety over copies addressed, because copies only carry a negative connotation when they don't meet the ideal, and that ideal is the American Watch Factory watch.

If some did not notice any trick of suture at work in bridging the gap between authentic and replication, modern industrial time and a pre-lapsarian nostalgic fantasy of feudal and agricultural labor, many others did. This brings us back to the second tendency Lears argues is at work in the obsession with the child — primitivist vitality — for, unlike nostalgic veneration in which industry coexisted peacefully with the temporary escape the fantasy of childhood offered, it registers a growing unease with bourgeois industrial culture and an over-refined civilization:

Persistent primitivism generated different notions about childhood with more complex social meanings. When vitality joined sincerity, the child's image provided a focus for revitalization rather than escape. In fantasies of childlike energy, the self was not only made whole but made vigorous. The exaltation of childhood merged with the cult of the strenuous life. (146)

The child study theorist G. Stanley Hall was the primary proponent of this notion of the child as a reservoir of vitality that could reinvigorate a degenerate social body. Hall worried that modern children were becoming 'miniature adults' and thus argued for a theory of recapitulation in which children repeated the primitive experiences of their ancestors, a "getting back to their roots" as a way to create vigorous adults. Indeed, children (and more specifically boys) had special access to this more virile primitivism. This theory, as Gail Bederman explains, enabled Hall to move beyond the "neurasthenic paradox," which had posited that bodily weakness was the inescapable characteristic of civilization, while strength was that of savagery and barbarism (91-2). Hall reconciled this dualism through the theory of recapitulation in which the boy literally had to advance through the stages of progress his ancestors had taken as a normal part of his own

development. As Bederman argues, such a move allowed the white middle-class male to appropriate both manly civilization and virile masculinity as the defining characteristics of his race's superiority, assuaging middle class anxiety about racial degeneration due to the effects of "overcivilization."

However, such a solution only meant that the child became increasingly identified as a site upon which to regulate the correct trajectory of linear progress. Sexuality, which Hall eventually came to see as an intrinsic part of adolescence, something that could be channeled rather than repressed, was still an ever present threat in the form of that other disease of civilization, masturbation. Sexual energy had to be carefully husbanded and promiscuity avoided or premature degeneration would result. Far from being a resource that society could confidently rely on to cure the perceived degeneration of the race, the child became an additional source of anxiety, located, significantly, within the borders of white middle-class culture. Moreover, this reconfiguration of the child as primitive did not eclipse the more popular notion of the child as a source of purity and innocence, but existed alongside it in an uneasy relationship, and this had important implications for the issue of race and the question of human origins. As Cora Kaplan points out in "'A Heterogeneous Thing'," both configurations -- the pale fairy-like child as the idealized essence of whiteness and the identification of the child with the savage as an undeveloped hybrid creature in contrast to the adult -- can be traced in mid-century protofeminist literature. She argues that the "bourgeois child became the imaginary site of a cultural accident: the crossroads where incommensurable narratives, inassimilable political histories, collided head on," for the child was "both a deformation and idealization of the origins and differences of the human," a figure of both savage heterogeneous origins and exaggerated pure faery whiteness 180).

The child had also become increasingly important to the field of physiology, and cell theory, in particular. This new field of science, which had originally held to an organizational vision that had emphasized preformation in which living beings simply

grew larger, now began to concentrate on the question of growth and development. As Carolyn Steedman explains in her work on the development of the association of the figure of the child with the interiorized self, growth was perceived as the revelation of the nineteenth century and also a mystery that needed to be elucidated. This new turn meant an increased focus on child development in child care and physicians' manuals and a configuring of the child as "living evidence" of an individual's past development. While "littleness," in general, and the child, in specific, had long been associated with interiority, such a configuration further contributed to the deployment of the child as a way to express interiority, "the depths of historicity within individuals, the historicity that was 'linked to them, essentially'" (12). But this physiological model also implied growth's ineluctable conclusion and primary requirement -- molecular death -- which thus contributed to the association of childhood with loss. A partial solution, Steedman argues, was provided by psychoanalysis, which posited that though lost, childhood left behind memories and traces in an interior space where individual history was released from time.

The child, therefore, like the miniature, was a figure by which interiority and nostalgia was theorized and expressed. Both functioned as fantasies by which a culture could imagine a notion of self, the private space of domesticity, the past, and a less complicated time and space for escape and/or revitalization. Both were overdetermined figures and performed a variety of cultural work that was often contradictory. Sometimes, this contradiction is almost seamlessly sutured, but, at others, the gaps are evident from the labor of definition and regulation that surrounds these figures. The next question, then, is how did these narratives work in the production of the small-bodied adult? What did the production of the midget and dwarf body share with the figures of the miniature and the child?

As we shall see, one important requirement of the miniature was very much at work in the delineation of the midget body in contrast to the dwarf. Harmony and

proportion were celebrated as appealing qualities of certain midget bodies, allowing them to be more easily domesticated as charming children or at least as tiny dolls. The retention of the proportion meant that the viewer could more easily recognize and identify the midget as just like himself, moving the midget from monstrosity to a more central position within the boundaries of normativity. This domestication called upon narratives of nostalgia and aesthetics of the "cute." However, while miniaturization allowed for this domestication, the fascination with the midget also involved the juxtaposition of categories. The midget was constructed as neither fully child, nor adult, almost normal, but not quite, an animated doll, but also human.

We might think of this as the difference between "passing" and a form of transvestism. As Anne McClintock explains, while different forms of "mimicry deploy ambiguity in different ways," "transvestism often involves the flagrant *exhibition* of ambiguity (the hairy knee under the silk skirt); indeed much of the scandal of transvestism resides in its theatrical parading of *identity as difference*. Passing, by contrast, more often involves the careful masking of ambiguity: *difference as identity*" (65). Managers of these "curiosities" needed to carefully maintain the ambiguity -- are they children mimicking adults or adults mimicking children? -- which increased the fascination and created a comic effect.⁴ This form of mimicry both resembles and differs from Homi Bhabha's theory of colonial mimicry and ambivalence. While we can understand the midget as humanoid mimicking the speech and behavior of the "standard" human being, "*as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite,*" it is often not clear exactly what is being performed or "mimicked" (86). Thus, while we can

⁴ Sometimes this mimicry was doubled, as in the case of General Tom Thumb's "blackening up" for the role of the slave boy Tom Tit in *Dred*, a play that was performed in Barnum's Lecture Room. Here the Black male body is ridiculed through its representation by the aggrandized midget, who is simultaneously ridiculed in his role as court jester for Barnum's "normate" audience. For an analysis of the racial, class, and gender politics staged in the Lecture Room, see Adams (116-163).

note the construction of the midget as childlike, we simultaneously see an emphasis on the fact that this miniature individual is not a child, but an adult. Indeed, it was a common practice to add years to a midget's real age and to use this as an accusation against other managers in order to advertise one's own curiosity as the smallest human being in the world.⁵ The fascination lay, as it did in cell theory, with discovering the absolute limits of size by which a being still qualified as human: how small could a human become before s/he ceased to be human? Consequently, the issue of fraud was of great significance. An article on dwarfs, for example, sarcastically points out that

Whenever the supply of dwarfs for show or other purposes has fallen short of the demand, various recipes have been propounded for manufacturing them; it is to be hoped, with little success. Many of the popular jockeys in this country may be described as dwarfs, and the growth of boys intended for that profession is checked by a weakening process known as "sweating," however, calculated to put large sums of money into the victim's pocket. ("Dwarfiana" 80)

Such "dwarfs" are not authentic or of interest, because they are actually boys and the means by which they attain their small size are not natural.

We also see a corresponding obsession with the question of intelligence.

Frequently accusations were made that certain midgets were "frauds" and "fakes," that

⁵ Barnum was actually guilty of this type of hoax, adding seven years to Tom Thumb's age when he first exhibited him. As he explains, had he "announced him as only five years of age it would have been impossible to excite the interest or awaken the curiosity of the public" (*Barnum's Own Story* 134). Barnum also immediately took him in hand and trained him to act as an adult. We thus see that the exhibition of the midget as child/adult was variable and often complicated. The fascination and comic effect seems to have arisen from the audiences understanding that midgets seemed liked children, but were not, and seemed like adults but could not quite pull that role off either. Hence, the manager needed to simultaneously heighten and juxtapose both childlike and adult characteristics. However, in the case, of child midgets, the adult qualities had to be emphasized more than the childlike, or the midget ceased being a "curiosity," a strange hybrid, and became simply a child.

they were simply parroting back the answers their managers had instilled in them by rote. The public desired neither a child nor "automaton," which was the term often used to describe those of "feeble intelligence." The feeble-minded midget was literally viewed as a non-human mechanical object lacking the vital spark that marked humanity, and, as such, was of little interest to the public in sharp contrast to other modes of exhibiting freaks in which lack of intelligence furthered the "authenticity" of exhibition.⁶

We can see this latter mode of exhibition at work in the construction of certain dwarfs, who, due to their "inharmonious" bodies, ethnic background, or because they suffered from a mental disorder, were exhibited as living specimens of the theory of recapitulation. Unlike the bourgeois child, however, who would "naturally" progress from savagery to civilized state, these small-bodied adults were exhibited as missing links, frozen in time, who literally archived the race's arrested development. Unlike midgets who were required to evidence talents and intelligence, these individuals were simply required to stand mute as doctors gave evidence of their authenticity. However, even in the case of midgets, proof of intelligence could provoke a dual response; both fascination and fear or disgust. Such a response is evident in quotation from the *Literary Gazette* in an article entitled "Women in Miniature" in which the midget, produced as animated doll, evokes the contradictory reaction many had to that miniature toy:

'A tolerable-sized doll,' says a writer in the *Literary Gazette* of the time, 'acting and speaking, would not astonish us so much -- for nature is, in this instance, far more wonderful than art would be. Only imagine a creature about half as large as a newly-born infant, perfect in all parts and

⁶ The exhibition of certain individuals in the exotic mode, for example, exaggerated the freak's lack of language skills and intelligence, focusing on his or her animal-like qualities. Barnum's "What Is It" exemplifies this difference from the midget. While the point in exhibiting William Henry Johnson, a mentally handicapped African-American, was to generate a sense of ambiguity -- is it human or animal? -- it leaned to a much greater degree to the side of bestiality in its construction of his body. For an analysis of Johnson's exhibition see Cook.

lineaments, uttering words in a strange and unearthly voice, understanding what you say, and replying to your questions. . . Here is the pigmy of your superstition in actual life; here is the pigmy of ancient mythology brought down to your own day' (755).

The following discussion will examine various examples of this deployment of miniaturization and the figure of the child in the production of the midget and dwarf, noting how the construction of the small-bodied differs from as well as engages the host of conflicting meanings that surround these two modes of representation. We might think forward, however, to the question of interiority, which is an intrinsic part of the configuration of both the child and miniature. If these two modes of representation so important to the construction of the midget were invested with a fantasy of a self-enclosed interiority, what occurs when those individuals demand an interiority, a personal history for themselves? As we shall see in the next chapter, those who wrote their own life histories most often attempt to refute their representation as miniatures or as children, demanding that they be seen as fully-formed individual subjects, not as *versions* of something else. These arguments for normativity, however, themselves partake of the very representations they attempt to refute, leading to a reiteration, a recitation of exhibition, which offers up both a further enclosing of the subject within the exhibition s/he seeks to escape and a strategic alternative to the midget as miniature object (doll) or child.

II Corporeal Miniatures: Dwarfs and Midgets

Biographical, literary, and scientific accounts of dwarfs and midgets fill the newspapers and periodicals of the nineteenth century, jostling for space alongside descriptions of burglaries, elections, and lynchings. Those of small stature had long been held as objects of wonder and as evidence of divine will, but with the advent of the nineteenth century, these individuals were now shaped by the ascendancy of the

marketplace and scientific explanation. From monstrosities and king's fools they were transformed into pathological or ethnological types as commodities in a vast industry of amusement and as specimens in the authorization and consolidation of various disciplines.

Two general notions govern the popular representation of dwarfs and midgets in this century: the figure of the individual anomaly and the exotic notion of a race of dwarfs, perpetuated by an imperialist fascination with that exotic fantasy space of unexplored territory and shaped by travel accounts and early ethnography. These two modes of representation often overlapped, as is demonstrated by another structure of representation described by Robert Bogdan. Rather than individual and group, Bogdan defines two modes of exhibition: the exotic and the aggrandized. In the exotic mode, "the person received an identity that appealed to people's interest in the culturally strange, the primitive, the bestial, the exotic" (28). The aggrandized mode reverses this emphasis on inferiority, and exaggerates the person's achievements, social position, and talents: "Those displayed in the aggrandized mode tended to be presented as physically normal, or even superior, in all ways, except for the particular anomaly that was their alleged reason for fame" (30). It also contained a strong degree of farce, which was created through the attribution of pretentious sounding titles and accomplishments. While the exotic mode relied on imperialist science, the aggrandized relied on teratology — the study of human "monsters," or medical specialties. Race is therefore a significant factor in the division between these two categories. Gould and Pyle also make this distinction in their "encyclopedic collection of rare and extraordinary cases," *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine* (1896). The chapter on dwarfs, for example, opens with a discussion of "pygmies" and then creates a new heading for "intellectual dwarfs," the latter meaning those of American and European descent, who, not surprisingly, possess "extraordinary intelligence," an attribute that is presumably lacking from those in the former (337).

Bogdan's categories, however, are complicated and slippery. For example, regardless of ethnicity, achondroplastic dwarfs, who tend to have heads and limbs out of proportion with their trunks, were exhibited in the exotic mode, but hypopituitary dwarfs (midgerts), who tended to be well-proportioned, were exhibited in the aggrandized mode.⁷ Moreover, some people were displayed in the exotic mode in the earlier part of their careers and then displayed in the aggrandized later on in life. Thus the hierarchy of human beings based on variations in body type cannot be completely subsumed by a racial hierarchy, as if race was the sole determining factor within the hierarchy of freaks. Furthermore, this indicates that the categories were neither fixed, nor stable, even though scientists worked hard to pin them down in encyclopedias, journals, and pamphlets. We must conclude that race and body variation worked together in mutually constitutive and variable ways.

As discussed previously the concept of growth was the primary physiological focus in the nineteenth century. This focus, as Steedman argues, was often figured through the child, but it was also theorized through the figures of the dwarf and giant, as exemplified by an 1891 *New York Times* article entitled "Why we Grow or do not, One of the Interesting Problems of Human Life: The Mechanism of Increase in Dimensions-- Hindered and Perverted Nutrition--Giants, Dwarfs, and 'Living Skeletons.'" Scientists debated about the causes of Dwarfism. Some argued for the traditional view of "maternal impression," which threw the burden of responsibility on the mother. Frederick Baylis, for example, explains that "the morbid imagination of women, improper nursing, and various infant maladies, whose origin it would be difficult to determine may reasonably be regarded as among the most obvious causes of stunted growth" (754). As Bogdan points out, this theory of maternal impression was "alive and well in late-nineteenth

⁷ Ablon points out how dwarfs have tended to be the subject of sweeping generalizations, most often placed into two categories -- the hypopituitary and achondroplastic -- "despite the fact that there are almost 100 types of dwarfism differing widely among themselves and in some cases even within types" (13).

century America,” (110) and happily coexisted alongside other theories, such as lack of nutrition. With the new interest in cell theory, many maintained that growth or lack of it had to do with the multiplication of cells in conjunction with proper nutrition and the correct working of the nervous system.⁸ As Bogdan explains, “Before 1900 little was known about genetics and the endocrine system. Teratology was primarily a science of classification” (111). This meant that the public felt as comfortable making diagnoses as the doctors. However, with “the rediscovery of Mendel’s genetic principles, the development of the eugenics movement, and advanced understanding of the thyroid and pituitary glands, freaks increasingly became the subject of newspaper articles which described them as being ‘sick’ and as belonging in the domain of physicians, not of public speculation” (Bogdan 111). As we shall see, the beginnings of such a move can be charted in the late nineteenth-century debates over the question of “racial” dwarfs: whether dwarfs were pathological or actually members of a separate race of human beings.

A Race of Pygmies

The myth of a dwarf race somehow existing just beyond the borders of western explored territory has a long history. With the nineteenth century, this fantasy was fulfilled by travelers’ reports of pygmy tribes in Central Africa. At first, the public was suspicious, but with Stanley’s accounts of tribes inhabiting the forests of equatorial Africa, their existence was finally established and the 1890’s witnessed a flood of stories and anthropological debates. As the title of Stanley’s book, *In Darkest Africa*, suggests, discussions of these tribes were shaped by the discourses of evolution and race. For the scientist and for the general public, they were viewed as a “degenerate family, exhibiting the most primitive state of culture” (“The Dwarfs of Africa” 211).

⁸ See “Why we Grow or do not.”

In an article published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1891, however, Stanley begins by attempting to counter the more racist claims about primitivity, degeneracy, and non-human status. Describing the types of questions he encounters in "civilized lands" about the status of the pygmy, he answers that "Truly, I see no difference between the civilized man and the pygmy!" and that readers "must relieve their minds of the Darwinian theory, avoid coupling man with the ape, and banish all thoughts of the fictitious small-brained progenitor supposed to be existing somewhere on land submerged since the eocene period" (3-4). The pigmies, he argues, "are the equals of about fifty percent of the modern inhabitants of any great American city of to-day" and their lack of civilization must be attributed to the fact that they have been continually disposed of their lands through waves of migration (4). Indeed, Stanley has a great affection for these "undersized creatures" and felt great "reverence" when he first encountered "the pigmy Adam and his female consort in the wild Eden of Avatiko," but, he does believe they are a lower race and thus has no compunction about "capturing specimens" for his own study. One such captured specimen was a chief's wife who soon proved Stanley's thesis about her race's intelligence by quietly submitting to servitude and performing "the duties of a domestic as the most industrious, willing, and cheerful English charwoman or maid" (13). This, says Stanley, justifies "us in the assertion that the very lowest of African humanity is as capable of improvement as the children of Europeans," highlighting the racism and class bias of the previous admiring statements, for the comparison between the pygmies and "fifty percent of the modern inhabitants of any great American city" points more to the racialization of the working classes than praise of the pygmies' intelligence (13).

Shaped by class, gender, and race difference, his explanations obviously call upon "the children of the race" analogy, but what makes this discussion different from ones discussing Africans in general is the tone of amusement and affection used in discussing the pygmies, as if they are actual, not simply symbolic children. This patronizing tone was of course used often in discussing exoticized others, but here it is predominant, and

nowhere is there any sense of fear or threat. In fact, Stanley constantly has to recur to the fighting ability of these “manikins” which many have underestimated to their cost, as if aware that his subject matter lacks the necessary element of danger necessary for any travel account. It is as if their tiny size allows them to be almost domesticated under the guise of family feeling.⁹

A. B. Lloyd’s *In Dwarf Land and Cannibal Country: A Record of Travel and Discovery in Central Africa* (1899) manifests the same tone at work in Stanley’s account and adds a sense of the faery, which, while it exoticizes, also, strangely, “whitens.” The forest, for example, is described as “wild,” “unearthly,” and “creepy,” as if the pygmies exist in a fantastic space and time. Then, in a combination of metaphors (the small as faery; the small as savage), Lloyd recalls how he almost shot a pygmy under the impression that he was a gorilla and was suddenly surprised by the appearance of a “tiny figure”: “For a moment I was completely taken aback ; it was like being in fairyland and having visits paid to one by the fairies themselves” (309). “I was very amazed,” he continues, “at the smart way in which he (“the little man”) answered my questions,” most of which were answered with “marvelous intelligence” (310). When he finally encounters a group of pygmy women, he is further surprised, for “they were very comely little creatures” who apparently possessed their full share of maternal feeling. As he attempts to separate a mother from her child, she removes him from out of his reach, occasioning the comment: “She was only a pygmy, but she had a mother’s heart” (323).

These dwarf races were a favorite topic for the periodicals, and throughout the 1890’s, in debates played out in the more popular press, as well as scientific circles, we

⁹ A similar tone is manifested in an article announcing the arrival in Europe of two “pygmies from the primeval forests of Central Africa.” Physically, they are described as “well-proportioned,” with small hands, “the forearm and wrist being prettily shaped.” Their behavior is “infantile, will, and shy, but without timidity.” However, while the article produces the two as adorable children, it also states that “Their eyes, though large and lustrous, have less expression than the ugly eyes of a monkey” (“Two Genuine Dwarfs”).

see an obsession with claiming certain groups as racial dwarfs and an ever increasing distinction between that mode of dwarfism and that of the individual anomaly.¹⁰ That the latter did not transmit size to their offspring, while the former did, was the distinction which defined the racial dwarf. R. G. Halliburton, for example, uses discussions on European dwarfs from a meeting of the Ninth Oriental Congress in London as further proof that dwarf tribes existed in Southern Morocco. First he labels European dwarfs as nonracial and then divides them into two groups: “true dwarfs who differ from their race only in size, and dwarfs from rickets who are stunted, and generally malformed and feeble” (17). Since neither of these classes passes on size to its offspring, the Moroccan tribes must be quite different and thus were racial dwarfs. Later, Halliburton took the discussion further and claimed that even in Europe one could find racial dwarfs. This particular debate highlights the entire quarrel over and for the dwarf as object of scientific study. It centered on whether or not cretinism was a disease which caused dwarfism. If one agreed that it was, then there were no dwarf races, or, at least, only certain groups could be considered as such. If it was not a disease that caused dwarfism, then, by default, racial dwarfs existed. Cretinism was defined by Gould as a disease caused by the absence or loss of function of the thyroid from drinking lime water and signaled by the existence of goiters (570-2). MacRitchie, a colleague of Halliburton, in an attempt to prove that the Nanos living in the Pyrennes were a dwarf race, claimed that few had the requisite goiters and argued that if dwarf characteristics were an outward sign of cretinism, a disease caused by the environment, other individuals living in that area would display similar characteristics (Starr 421). Halliburton himself attacked the cretinism

¹⁰ This fascination with the possibility of a race of dwarfs was also manifested in a curiosity about dwarf sexuality and whether they could be bred together to create a race. An article entitled “Dwarfiana,” for example, describes how Catherine de Medici and the wife of one of the Electors of Brandenburg “collected as many of both sexes as they could get together, with the object of breeding a race of them” (78). The fascination with dwarf or midget sexuality is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

theory wholesale, calling it “hasty” (Starr 421). He first claimed, in an attack against those who maintained that all dwarfs were diseased (nonracial), that the Denga tribes manifested no signs of goiters, so that they could not be cretins, and thus were racial dwarfs. He then argued that even the European dwarfs were racial in character by claiming that cretinism was not the cause of dwarfism, but simply a symptom:

“Cretinism in the *Pyrenees* and Alps, it seems to me is racial in its character and is not a disease, but a symptom of decadence in a moribund race of dwarfs, who, in the recesses of mountains, are slowly going through the process of dying out through failing vitality, just as many centuries ago their race must have died out in the plains of Europe and Asia” (Starr 422).

The debate was more than academic for the savants involved, as it would determine which discipline would gain the dwarf as its object of study: anthropologists who took race as their focus, or medical scientists who focused on the pathological individual. However for the individuals with most at stake either category categorized them as low on the totem pole of humanity, for they were either representatives of a degenerate and/or primitive race or diseased cretins.

Pathology and Ethnography: The “Aztec Children”

This debate over provenance was played out with the same deplorable results, upon the bodies of two Central Americans who were exhibited as the Aztec children. “Bartola” and “Maximo” were first exhibited in New York in 1849 as representatives of the “lost race of the Aztecs” and, as Nigel Rothfels demonstrates, became the site upon which theories of evolution and recapitulation were formulated and debated. The two were exhibited as evidence of the missing link concept in nineteenth century versions of evolutionary theory; that is, they represented the connecting link between human and ape. Early scientific opinion, although denying that these children were from a race of dwarfs since it was known that they belonged “to some of the mixed tribes of Indians inhabiting

Central America,” actually aided in the presentation of the children as members of a race which provided the missing link (Warren 21). J. Mason Warren, for example, who examined the children in 1851, implies throughout his report that they resemble something in between human and animal:

The resemblance these children bear to some of the lower order of animals, especially those of the Simian tribe is quite remarkable; and we are reminded of Lamarck’s theory of the gradual development of the human being from the lower created orders, and the transformation of the quadrumana into the bimana. In regard to their relation to their relation to the quadrumana, we observed in the boy an approximation to the frontal crest of the orang; the supraorbital ridges, and the parietal and occipital crests of the adult chimpanzee: the projecting jaws, the elongated forearm and its semiflexed position; finally the stoop of the whole body, with the air and appearance, forcibly reminds us of the monkey. (18)

As time went on many scientists dismissed the idea that missing link races could be found through future exploration, and instead of concentrating on finding lost tribes, many took up the theory of recapitulation. Drawing upon some evolutionary theory, recapitulation, advocated by the German scientist Ernst Haeckel, posited that every individual organism contained within itself the race’s evolutionary history; ontogeny recapitulated phylogeny. Thus, it was possible to find particular individuals in which the process of evolution had been arrested and who then exhibited the traits of a certain stage in the history of man; one could read the history of race in the individual. Since “Bartola” and “Maxima” had been diagnosed as microcephalics, they offered the perfect example of arrested development by which to study recapitulated traits, and they were to suffer throughout their lives from the intrusion of scientists, measuring their skulls, limbs, and spines. Even when these theories were challenged, scientists still retained an interest in the pair. Significantly, Rudolf Virchow, who had always defined the pair within the

paradigm of pathology rather than race, chose to categorize them as examples of freaked cultures, rather than individual monstrosities, in his report to the Berlin Anthropological Society in 1891. This, as Nigel Rothfels points out, was contrary to his earlier conclusions and only further perpetuated their representation as “living Aztecs.” Whilst there was debate, apparently any racial theories could be written upon the bodies of these “specimens.”¹¹ And while this shows the fluidity of racial theories in both the realm of popular culture and that of the scientific community, it also shows the pervasiveness of race as essential difference from whiteness and as a component even in pathology. For example, even when the pair were used as examples of disease, they were described in terms that denoted and connoted non-whiteness, and these were taken as signs of pathology. Moreover, those individuals of small stature who were exhibited as pathological examples were predominately nonwhite. And finally, dwarfs regardless of ethnicity were usually racialized; their nonstandard proportions being read as signs of non-whiteness and their supposedly wizened faces in conjunction with their tiny stature making them some sort of hybrid creature, neither perfectly miniature, nor perfectly gigantic.

The Individual Dwarf

Stories and accounts in the more popular newspapers and periodicals of the time perpetuated the notion of the individual dwarf as an anomalous creature. Whether in accounts of individuals exhibited or in fiction, dwarfs, as opposed to midgets, were usually presented as exotic throwbacks with monkey-like characteristics who connoted an

¹¹ The same could be said to be true about Johnson, who, while not specifically referred to as dwarf, most likely suffered from microcephaly, a disorder which causes sub-optimal development of the brain and often arrested development. Indeed, illustrations depict him as much smaller in stature than the adult spectators that surround him. Small stature no doubt aided in Barnum's exhibition of Johnson as a "missing link," hybrid, and "nondescript."

“out of time” quality. In an account of a dwarf baby from the *Lady’s Miscellany*, June 15, 1811, for example, the reader is given the place and date of birth, the dimensions of the body, and then a short description: “The structure of the body is entirely complete except the external parts of generation which exhibited some marks of deformity. The visage of this sport of nature, bears the marks of extreme old age, with the strongest resemblance of a mamomet exhibiting an appearance at the same time as frightful as strange” (“A Dwarf”). Neither completely human nor animal, child nor adult, savage nor white, the individual dwarf occupied a strange position on the teleological scheme which overlay the history of the individual over that of the human race; indeed, the dwarf challenged its schematization by pushing its analogies to the limit. If nonwhite races corresponded to the individual child and the white race to the adult, the dwarf troubled the analogy through exaggeration by belonging to both analogous schemes: he was both small like the child and “not quite white” like the “savage.” The appearance of great age further troubled the schematization, as did the fact that, unlike pygmies, the individual dwarf did not quite belong to any definite race.

Fiction portrayed the individual dwarf as predominately male. He was typically offered two roles -- grotesquely comic or diabolically evil -- and in both was deployed as a marker of racial othering. In “Dukrah the Dwarf,” for example, the very inclusion of the dwarf is part of the exoticization of Baghdad, a space and time of fairy tale removed from the everyday world of the industrial west. Unlike the deformed, comic character of Dukrah, Kobbolotozo of *The Last of the Huggermuggers* is a twisted, revengeful villain, a shoemaker who relies for his characterization on the anti-Semitic figure of the bitter and miserly Jew. Size and body shape are specifically linked to race and connote moral value in this tale that constantly plays with contrasts in scale. Little Jacket, the young hero, is a small boy who sails to sea and lands on an island where he eventually befriends the Huggermuggers, the last of the giant race. Huggermugger and his wife are the very embodiment of bourgeois domesticity, and though larger than their small friend, they are

simply larger copies. Kobboltozo, though somewhat larger than Small Jacket and much smaller than the giants, is a “crooked little dwarf,” out of proportion to the other characters both in body shape and moral valence.

Similarly, Dirk Peters of Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* is produced as a racialized dwarf, a “hybrid” born of a fur-trader and an “indian woman of the tribe of the Upsarokas” (38). As one of the murderous mutineers, Peters is first described in terms overtly denoting his hybrid status, that of a creature somewhere between man and animal:

He was short in stature, not more than four feet eight inches high, but his limbs were of Herculean mould. His hands, especially were so enormously thick and broad as hardly to retain a human shape. . . . His head was equally deformed, being of immense size, with an indentation on the crown (like that of most negroes) and entirely bald. To conceal this latter deficiency, which did not proceed from old age, he usually wore a wig formed of any hair-like material which presented itself--occasionally the skin of a spanish dog or American grizzly bear. . . . the teeth were exceedingly long and protruding, and never even partially covered, in any instance, by the lips. (38-9)

Short, but having the limbs of a larger man, not old, but with the signs of age, neither wholly white, Native American, Black, animal, nor human, Peters is repeatedly described throughout the first half of the story as “the hybrid” and used to signify the horror and danger confronting Pym. However, as the tale moves to the events depicting the “savages” of Tsalal, this marker of non-whiteness is gradually called by name, and then transformed into “white man” when Pym describes himself and Peters as “the only living white men upon the island” (151).

There is no doubt that Peters fits into the tale's complicated racial politics and its oft debated tropes of color, difference, and the convertibility of identity.¹² In one reading, Peters contributes to the tale's reproduction of racial difference. As grotesque dwarf, Pym embodies the horror of miscegenation and is only transformed, "domesticated," by the appearance of the more savage Tsalalians, "the most barborous, subtle, and blood thirsty wretches that ever contaminated the face of the globe" (145). However, the character also points to the narrative's simultaneous undermining of racial difference, its illustration of the performativity of race and identity. If we return to the initial description of Peters, for example, one notes that his racial otherness is put together out of bits and pieces of various racial, ethnic, and even animal identities. While this patchwork in one sense underlines his status as racial hybrid, it also draws attention to the fluidity and theatricality of appearance. We are told that Peters has an immense head "with an indentation on the crown (like that of most negroes)," but this contradicts the text's previous explanation of his racial heritage which stated that he was born of an Indian woman and a (presumably) white fur trader. Moreover, while the description of his long, protruding teeth signifies a certain bestiality, his hair is specifically not depicted as animal-like, but as actually animal *and* detachable, "a wig formed from any hair-like material which presented itself -- occasionally the skin of a Spanish dog or American grizzly bear." We must also consider the question of his fluid transformation from racial other to white man. This transformation is further heightened by his depiction in the preface as "half-bred Indian" incapable of asserting the truth of Pym's tale and as reliable individual in the final Note, who is said to most likely guarantee that truth and "afford material for a conclusion of Mr. Pym's account" (176). As Teresa Goddu argues, this text may reproduce racial difference, but it is simultaneously a narrative of "racial

¹² For two analyses of the tale's "racial convertibility" see Joan Dayan's "Romance and Race" and Teresa Goddu's "The Ghost of Race: Edgar Allan Poe and the Southern Gothic."

convertibility" in which Poe's position on race cannot easily be determined. What this means for the figure of the dwarf then is that, while deployed to signify the borders between black, white, animal, human, he is not configured as some sort of stable median between races or species, but is endlessly relocated as those borders change. Hence, while he embodies the line of the frontier, defining the outlines of difference, he also embodies the instability of that line, moving from racialized other to white and back again as the circumstances of the narrative demand.

In the dime novel, *Long Shot; or the Dwarf Guide*, dwarfism is again deployed as a marker of the line between whites and Native Americans, but this time through a reliance on the aggrandized or comic mode. We first meet Nick Gnarl as the "pigmy companion of Kit Swift ("Long Shot"), the romantic hero of the tale. Unlike the "tall, brave, and handsome" Swift, Gnarl's "head was large, and strangely disproportionate to his body" and his "forehead was low, broad, and wrinkled like that of a monkey" (Warren 14). His primary role is to play the comic sidekick, bumbling, but valiant. However, in this tale, which plays with the titillating theme of miscegenation, he is also used to further demarcate the space between white and Indian. On one side of the racial divide are ranged Mary Ward, her father, "a celebrated Indian fighter," and Swift; on the other, Mark Wylde, half white, half Indian, who desires to marry Mary and gain her fortune, and the Osages, a tribe bent on murdering Mary's father and marrying her off to their chief's son. In a harrowing scene of threatened torture and death, Mary is first threatened with marrying the chief's son, to which both daughter and father reply that she should sooner be tomahawked than submit to becoming the "wife of a red-skin." She is then made to choose between saving her father's life and marrying Wylde, or watching her father be tortured to death. Her father urges her to "hold out" and Swift watches from a tree, "resolved to wait and see if the girl's love for him was strong enough to stand this fearful test" (63). But the ordeal is too much for Mary, and, at the last minute, she agrees to marry Wylde. Swift bitterly resolves to give her up, and decides that, after he has freed

her from Wylde, he will “retire to some dismal spot . . . to spend the remainder of his days” (68). But Swift has underestimated Mary, who, rescued from Wylde, informs him that she was planning on killing herself after she had fulfilled the promise wrung out of her. All is well, for each member of the white race has passed the test and refused to betray the race. As Slotkin writes, “We do not perceive what the difference between Indian and white cultures and characters is unless we see what happens to those who try to cross the border” (91). But, these tests are distinctly gendered: a man must never engage in conspiracy with the Indians against “his brethren,” nor show fear that would weaken the pride of his race, and a woman must never engage in sexual relations with those tainted by red blood. That the sexual edict does not hold true for the white male is thematized by Ward’s lost love, an Indian maiden who is taken from him by Swift’s father, and his admiration for the physical charms of Wilola, the “belle of the Osage tribe,” whom he watches voyeuristically through the shrubbery.

The delineations of race and gender are formulaic, but what is different is the inclusion of Gnarl as a figure, who, situated on the border between those who cannot engage in cross-race relations, further underscores the line drawn between the two. Gnarl is born of French parents, so it is clear that he carries “no cross,” and he is also looked upon as a “trusty little friend,” by the whites. He does, however, skirt dangerously close to the Indian. He displays, for example, the same vanity “that is natural to savage tribes” and he also is banned from relations with Mary. “If I were only free,” he mutters, imprisoned and unable to save Mary. “I should be delighted to rescue that girl and make her my wife” he continues. But Gnarl is not free in any way to engage in relations with the young white virgin, and he is saved from having to be killed off as a potential threat simply because we understand how ludicrous his pretensions are: “the self-conceit of this little fellow was very great, still, from its very ridiculousness, there was about it nothing offensive” (74). In this aggrandized mode of presentation we again see the move towards

a domestication, which, by deflating the threat of the other, invalidates the need for strict racial demarcation, while allowing for its play undercover.

If Gnarl is banned from relations with the white heroine, he is thematically paired with another marginal character, the African-American slave of the villainous Mr. Wilkins. Sarah is also described as grotesque and simian-like: "a hideous-looking woman" with an "ugly visage, the forehead of which was low and wrinkled, while the lips protruded uncommonly even for a negress" (58). But, like Gnarl, she serves the white characters (she is a literal domestic), so while she is denied an active role in the system of exchange -- marriages and property exchange -- that dominates the white settlement, she is allowed to linger at its entrance, limning the borders of whiteness. These two border characters remain single, and, thus, unlike the reproducing Indian tribes, they are domesticated and rendered harmless as farcical characters. They are also configured as different from that other "hybrid" figure, Mark Wylde, whose very name connotes a bad seed turned wild. Here gender, corporeal variation, and race all come into play, for while the racial politics of slavery are assuaged by placing Sarah "out west" and by portraying her and Gnarl as simply mentally incapable of true betrayal, Wylde, as male, even if a "half-breed," poses much more of a threat. Women, African-Americans, and dwarfs apparently lack the masculine initiative and can be safely domesticated as liminal figures within the familial structure represented by Mary and Swift.

Like their counterparts in the dime museums and freak shows that abounded during this period, these fictional dwarfs are hypervisible texts upon which the reader is easily able to make the connection between stature, race, and morality. This corporeal exhibition is highlighted in Mark Twain's "The Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut" and Poe's "Hop-Frog." In the former, the narrator literally enacts the experience of the freak show in his own parlor, as he comes face to face with his dwarfed conscience embodied as a "shriveled, shabby dwarf" (641). Twain immediately refers to the familiarity of this corporeal text in the narrator's quick reading of its meaning:

Every feature and every inch of him was a trifle out of shape; and so, while one could not put his finger upon any particular part and say, "this is a conspicuous deformity," the spectator perceived that this little person was a deformity as a whole -- a vague, general, evenly-blended, nicely-adjusted deformity. There was a fox-like cunning in the face and the sharp little eyes, and also alertness and malice" (642).

But what he fails to read carefully and only dimly understands is that Twain has inverted the roles of the freak show by turning text into mirror: "And yet, this vile bit of human rubbish seemed to bear a sort of remote and ill-defined resemblance to me! It was dully perceptible in the mean form, the countenance, and even the clothes, gestures, manner, and attitudes of the creature. He was a far-fetched, dim suggestion of a burlesque upon me, a caricature of me in little" (642). While the story ostensibly serves as a comic allegory of a man's shrunken conscience, which he eventually murders, the politics of corporeal exhibition are implicitly raised as Twain flirts with the dynamics that made the freak show so appealing, for that spectacle worked not simply by *contrast* between self and other, but *identification with* that which was exhibited. It was the hybrid mix of strangeness and familiarity that determined the success of an exhibit, and Twain highlights this by explicitly showing the politics of reading in which we read ourselves upon the bodies of others. As the dwarf points out, the narrator is specifically to blame for his appearance, which was once "seven feet high and as pretty as a picture," but through vice has become moldy and deformed (647). The point is elaborated as the dwarf describes the various exhibitions of consciences he has attended in which he viewed giants and dwarfs of all sizes. Though satirically and humorously told, the story suggests that what is really on view in freak exhibitions across the country is the conscience of the spectator.

Poe's "Hop-Frog" also uses the reversal of exhibition roles for the purposes of satire. Sympathy for Hop-Frog, the court jester and fool, is built up immediately as the

narrator satirically describes the amusement and consolation the king derives from the dwarf's inability to walk as other men. And although Hop-Frog is described as repulsive and monkey-like, the moral is clear, didactically so, as he tricks the king and his advisors into dressing themselves up as "the Eight chained Ourang-Outangs" and hoists them up for show at the masquerade. Again, the act of looking and reading is highlighted as the dwarf examines the group, screaming "Leave them to *me*. I fancy *I* know them. If I only get a good look at them, I can soon tell who they are" (317). "I now see distinctly" he cries, as the crowd watches the spectacle of the burning masqueraders and he makes his grand exit. In this case, the dwarf even gets the girl, as Trippetta, the beautifully-proportioned dwarf, is rumored to have run off with him. And yet, while this story and Twain's satire problematize the facile reading of the dwarf body as inherently evil, the dwarf in exhibition, fiction, medicine, and ethnology more or less remained a hybrid creature whose small body became the border site at which the topography of the human was mapped and debated through the production of cultural difference.

Colonels, Captains, and Generals: the Aggrandized Midget

Dwarf is the general term the nineteenth century used to cover all those of small size, but many were exhibited as midgets and were distinguished from dwarfs in that they were viewed as being perfectly-proportioned, perfectly miniaturized (white) adults. If dwarfs were racialized as atavistic throwbacks, midgets were usually represented and exhibited in the aggrandized mode, a mode that elevated, patronized, and ridiculed the subject at the same time. If dwarfs, due to their size, were infrequently and only partially domesticated as children, midgets were an easier case, since they exhibited no sign of "deformity," nor "hybridity," except in their supposedly charming mixture of adult mannerisms and childlike bodies. Portrayed as delightful children or animated dolls, they usually operated in an entirely different world from dwarfs. They offered an innocent form of recreation and amusement, much like other miniature products, and were

presented as quite distinct from the monstrosities one viewed at the freak show. An 1890 *New York Times* article, reporting on the production of the Rosenfeld Brothers' Company, for example, quite clearly emphasizes their childlike and endearing qualities: "Several of the little people engaged in the performance are really clever, and all show the results of careful training. . . . Franz Ebert, the smallest member of the company -- about as tall and as chubby as an average child of six years -- is a delightful quaint and droll little fellow, with a face that is a comedy itself" ("Diminutive Actors"). The world of fun and games was the natural milieu of the midget, as another article illustrates: "The Colibris give a vaudeville entertainment lasting an hour and a quarter. It consists of musical specialties, singing in five languages, acrobatics, dancing, contortion acts, performances on the wire, gymnastics, and a pantomime with funny clowns, two trained lilliputian elephants, four shetland ponies, three carriages, and other features" ("Hammerstein's Latest Importation" 1896).

Midgets appealed to bourgeois spectators because they were adults, but supposedly looked like children. To heighten this cute mixture, they were given prestigious "large"-sounding names, such as "General," "Commodore," "Major," "Countess," "Princess," and "Queen," and advertised as possessing aristocratic accomplishments, such as speaking different languages, writing poetry, and painting. This aggrandizement also contained a strong element of farce, even ridicule, illustrating that the point of exhibition was not only to "cuten" their subject, but to play to the audience's perception that these adults could never quite meet the standards of true adulthood. Any midget actually attempting to be taken seriously as an adult was viewed as simply making himself ridiculous, a fact that the small-bodied often realized themselves and thus attempted to foreclose through a self-conscious exaggeration that proved they were in on the joke.¹³ This mock heroic mode then shows how the

¹³ A key disagreement in freak studies stems from this self-conscious parody. Bogdan writes that Stratton "played his presentation so as to reveal to the audience that he was as aware of the ludicrous poses he struck," adding that in this way "they were not

representation of the midget often differed from that of the miniature, for here the juxtaposition of aesthetic styles based upon notions of scale and significance are deliberately played with, leading not to a sense of the grotesque, the miniature contaminated, but to an increased appeal.

Lastly, these names, as Rosemary Garland Thomson argues, had specific historical significance in that they played off America's attempt to situate itself in relation to Europe:

The freak show offered those who identified themselves as the American common man a trivialized parody of the old order as well as a nostalgic respite from modern pressures toward standardization. . . . As an ironic celebrity, the freak seemed at once to burlesque, vitiate, reproduce, and bow down to an aristocracy that America rhetorically denigrated during its cultural oedipal phase. (*Extraordinary* 67)

Being both unique (nonstandard in size) and a copy (a miniaturized form of the American subject / the European aristocrat), the midget exemplified the paradox of the miniature and was similarly overdetermined.

III Midget Biography

Midgets were extremely popular as a form of entertainment and generated a vast amount of profit for their managers and for themselves. In order to both advertise the spectacle and increase the profit, short biographical sketches or "lives" were often distributed before, after, and during the exhibition. An analysis of a couple of these should illustrate in greater detail the dynamics of midget representation and serve as an introduction to the limits within which the midget autobiography was forced to work.

laughing at him; rather, they all laughed together" (152). Gerber takes him to task for this representation of Stratton, arguing that it avoids understanding the way he was trapped into playing this role: "Stratton himself thus appears not as a sad, unfulfilled figure, but as the huckster-charlatan that was the essence of General Tom Thumb" (52).

The Life and Adventures of the Burdett Twins (1881) is one of the best examples of the middle-class domestication of the midget through his/her representation as “cute” child. In her essay on cuteness and commodity aesthetics, Lori Merish argues that “cuteness” was part and parcel of the commercial entertainment of the freak show by which individuals were both domesticated within the human “family” and exhibited as commodities that appealed to a bourgeois maternal desire structured by the commercial market. Both, she explains, entail “a structure of identification, wanting to be *like* the cute -- or more exactly, wanting the cute to be just like the *self*” and thus what is at work in the aesthetics of cuteness illustrates the “double logic of identification, its fundamental inseparability from desire” (186). Such aesthetics both produce and assuage cultural difference by appropriating certain enfreaked individuals as adorable children against others, who, unlike midgets, could not easily be assimilated. Midgets were non-threatening due to their size and thus could easily be assimilated into a bourgeois patriarchal structure of hierarchy: identification worked easily in the case of spectators for midgets seemed to be miniature versions of themselves, whose only demand of the viewer was adoption within a familiar familial structure. Furthermore, as Merish points out the aesthetic had already disempowered and then transformed this freak into an object of pity, since it called upon the “merger of two different representational modes (and their corollary emotional structures): the mock heroic, in which the pretensions of the ‘low’ were satirically mocked; and the sentimental, in which the powerless were sympathized with and pitied” (191). The cuteness aesthetic thus called upon narratives of the miniature, such as fantasies of domesticity and interiority, and yet differed from that figure in that it involved a mixture of aesthetic notions of scale and proportion.

In the case of the twins, the cuteness factor is doubled because Fanny and Major Burdett are twins, one a boy and the other a girl. In fact, the work of the text is to portray the twins, who, at the writing of this third-person narrative, were adults, twenty-two years of age, as quintessential examples of boyhood and girlhood. While one of the points here

surely is to portray these midgets as “ordinary,” if small, members of the middle-class (not freaks), the larger aim is to domesticate them as a cuter commodity for public consumption, revealing an understanding of the public’s appetite for cute, small, non-threatening “freaks of nature.” The text does this through calling on gendered notions of Victorian childhood.

The narrative opens by immediately transforming these curiosity into non-threatening inhabitants of a miniature world. We are told that the Burdett twins “are two of the most symmetrically-formed little people upon the face of the globe; in fact, a perfect lady and gentleman in miniature” (1). They “are perfect in form and features, and not like most of the little folks now before the public, who have got either too large or too small a head, or feet and hands too large for their bodies, or are deformed in some way or other” (1). There is nothing grotesque here caused by disease or cross breeding; the twins are just like the reader, only miniaturized and, as such, must play the role of adorable children. In fact, the entire text is a recitation of the comic anecdotes of childish antics that fall along strict gender lines. For example, we are told that Fanny was “studious and never so happy as when at school, while Major had almost to be driven there, he being more fond of playing than being shut up in a schoolroom” (2). Fanny has a “gentle disposition and agreeable manners;” Major is “mischievous” and has a reputation for drowning pet cats and dogs, breaking windows, and other “schoolboy antics.” Fanny loves pets and cried when first exhibited, while Major “took to his new life as a curiosity, like a duck to water” (4).

The text also transforms the world which they inhabit — that of exhibition and menagerie — into a non-threatening place. In this world, the twins face off against mischievous animals who, like their little friends, have a penchant for playing tricks. An elephant grabs the Major’s “little dog” in response to Fanny teasing it; a leopard snatches the Major who escapes “with no more serious damage than the loss of his coat”; and a monkey, “up to all sorts of tricks, and a particular enemy of the Major’s,” grabs his

chance when the Major is sleeping and sets his coat on fire (8). This is the world of the circus seen from the stands, a set of comic acts by a pair of adorable tiny clowns and entertaining animals. The world of exhibition is domesticated into a children's farce through a theatricalizing of the personal sphere of these "curiosities" which avoids any awkward questions about exploitation. This history satisfies the curiosity of the reader who wishes for a glimpse of the real twins, a look behind the scenes, by packaging their personal life as a continuation of their public. Perfectly domesticated through bourgeois narratives of childhood and gender, the twins become ideal toys for adult consumption.

The *Life of Colonel Chaffin* (1844) emphasizes size in a different manner. In this biography, what is of concern is smallness and authenticity. Indeed, size matters a great deal, as the text evinces an obsession with claiming that Chaffin is both the smallest man alive and that he is absolutely authentic. The front page, for example, contains an illustration of Chaffin below large letters announcing that this is "AN EXACT PROFILE LIKENESS." Down the sides of the illustration, statements proclaim that Chaffin is "The Real Tom Thumb From the Old Dominion" and "The Smallest Man in the World!!!".

The text itself opens with a discussion of Chaffin's age and birth date (1825) and immediately takes the offensive by stating that "the object here is, to state the truth in every particular; truth being oftener stranger than fiction, without any intention of taking off or adding to his age, which might perhaps in some cases be an advantage in the exhibition of him, as a greater prodigy than he really is, by pretending he is some 10 or 15 years older" (1). This is no doubt, it continues, "often done by some, of the boy or baby Tom Thumbs dressed and taught parrot-like for the occasion" (1). These baby "Tom Thumbs" and Stratton (Barnum's Thumb) are the competition, against which the text will assert that Chaffin is the "Real Tom Thumb."¹⁴

¹⁴ Barnum himself writes in a letter to Moses Kimball in 1844 that "There are at least 20 General Tom Thumbs now exhibiting in various parts of England" (*Selected Letters* 30). He explains, however, that he is not in the least bit worried, since this "will only help the real critter" (30). Barnum frequently took this approach, viewing competition and others' scams as simply free advertisement.

After a description of his childhood and an assertion that he has enjoyed remarkable health (he is not a midget due to disease), the text discloses its first piece of evidence, a published letter by the Rev. Mr. Jeter: "I have seen the 'Living Skeleton,' I have seen an exact likeness of the Siamese Twins, in wax, but I have never seen any being in human form, nor indeed any other object, so wonderful, and so interesting, as this dwarf, and doubt whether the world has ever seen a full grown man so small" (4). We can assume from his statement that Jetter has never seen a midget, yet he has seen another enfreaked body (a *skeleton*) and a *likeness* of yet another enfreaked body, and these experiences establish him as an authority who can determine that Chaffin is the smallest dwarf. This interchangeability between original and likeness or copy is manifest in the press notices that fill the narrative, seemingly undermining the point which is to find and prove the original and real. Thus, while the *Delaware Gazette* proclaims that "The diminutive size of the celebrated 'Tom Thumb,' who is now convulsing the Court of St. James, does not equal that of Col. Chaffin" (9), The *Richmond Whig* reports that "The Col. is certainly the very impersonation of diminutiveness" and that "he is a diamond edition of Gen. Tom Thumb" (7).

A "distinguished member of the press" makes the matter even more confusing. At first he states that "there is no humbug of any kind about the dwarf, Col. Chaffin, whom I designate as the real 'American Tom Thumb.'" (11). But he then adds that Chaffin is the kind of character capable of the feats "set down to the credit of *the* Tom Thumb" (11). Here he means the mythic English Tom Thumb whose name was bestowed upon Stratton ("Barnum's Tom Thumb"), as if Stratton himself is a copy. So we now have another original — the English Tom Thumb. Chaffin gets the American title, while the original returns to England, but this original now proves the authenticity of Chaffin. Significantly, in proving the realness of Chaffin, the author must reverse Barnum's project of taking the real Tom Thumb (Stratton) from the United States to England, which was considered a

triumph in the ongoing battle to establish an original American identity as opposed to the pale copy of Europe epithet. But then the direction of comparison and authority is reversed once again when the article states that, even though its author previously doubted the existence of that character (the English mythic Tom Thumb), after seeing this “perfect man in miniature” (Chaffin), he believes in him and in the existence of “Lilliputians and Brobdignags, as described by Gulliver” (12). Here, Chaffin, the possibly fake Tom Thumb, authenticates himself and then serves as proof for every mythic dwarf ever written about, even though the point of the statement is to prove Chaffin’s originality by reference to other dwarfs. In other words, the text’s point is to prove the originality of one dwarf, and yet it can only do this by creating a more original dwarf against whom Chaffin can be described. The two dwarfs back each other up in their claims to authenticity and originality, but the reasoning is circular and far from stabilizing and arriving at the real Tom Thumb, the text only presents its readers with a proliferation of real Tom Thumbs.¹⁵ The suture at work here recalls the advertisement for the American Watch Factory. As in that case, where there was a slippage between “authentic” as “unique” and “authentic” as that which works, here we see a slippage

¹⁵ There are a number of anecdotes that illustrate the way the midget body was commodified and made interchangeable. Barnum explains in his autobiography, for example, how he was able to play on this issue of who was the “real” Tom Thumb, actually increasing interest through the public’s misplaced skepticism. Apparently, Commodore Nutt, a dwarf he “discovered” in 1861, looked so much like Thumb (Stratton) when he was younger that people refused to believe that Barnum was exhibiting a new dwarf and accused him of trying to pass off Stratton under a new name. Barnum realized with his usual acuity “that here was an opportunity to turn all doubts into hard cash” by bringing the two dwarfs together (329). However, the “sharp people who were determined ‘not to be humbugged, anyhow,’ still declared that Commodore Nutt was General Tom Thumb, and that the little fellow whom I was trying to pass off as Tom Thumb was no more like the general than he was like the man in the Moon” (330). While pointing up the way the public was so easily humbugged by their refusal to be humbugged, Barnum’s explanation only further exemplifies the way his industry of amusement commodified the midget body, making it almost a matter of indifference exactly who was exhibited. Significantly, Barnum describes Nutt as “almost a fac-simile of General Tom Thumb” (329).

between “real” as “unique” and “real” as proving customer satisfaction (Chaffin is the smallest man in the world). But, as we have seen, the suture is not seamless.

This contradiction between original and copy highlights the limits at work in the obsession with determining how small a being can be before he ceases to be human, an obsession that was by no means peculiar in an age determined to explore and establish the boundaries of what made a human being. While this being must show that he is a perfect miniature copy of a human being in every detail, he must also show that he does not just *copy* (i.e. repeat his lessons in a “parrot-like fashion) in order to prove that he is not a “humbug.” If his performance simply copies others, he is either a child, and thus not a midget, the smallest human being possible, or an idiot, of no interest, since he ceases to perfectly copy the standard human being. The fascination lies in discovering a creature that is just like “us,” but very definitely different from “us.”

Perhaps the more important point, however, is that size, not the individual human being, matters.¹⁶ Chaffin’s identity (his authenticity and originality) in this narrative is contingent upon proving himself the smallest man. Without such a characteristic he is literally de-subjectified, for it is his size that allows him space in the public world. And yet even if he can claim this, his hold is always uncertain — he can always be replaced, for it is not the individual Chaffin that is important, the text suggests, but the “smallest thing.” This is made evident by the *Herald*’s comment on Chaffin’s size: “Our old friend, Major Stevens, would make about three ‘sich,’ and even more so by the *Albany Microscope* in their article which describes Chaffin but is entitled “TOM THUMB!” and leads off by stating “The original American Tom Thumb, the smallest man of his age in

¹⁶ This dynamic of interchangeability and occlusion of the individual by the “fact” of smallness and its relationship to the dwarf’s paradoxical construction as unique is still at work today. Ablon explains that, while dwarfs are continually stared at and immediately recognized as unique individuals, “they are relegated to a strange kind of category without detail of face, body, or personality, which makes them as individuals almost interchangeable in the perceptions of the average-sized world” (82). “They are often,” she adds, “mistaken for the one or two other dwarfs that average-sized persons may have seen in their lifetimes” (82).

the world, is now exhibiting at the Museum” (10). Here the process of interchangeability is literalized. There is no effort to even make comparisons: Chaffin can be replaced by Stratton, as Stratton can be by Chaffin.

If the biographical sketches worked to produce the midget as childlike, a domesticated freak, and highlighted the commodification and thus potential interchangeability of the body, how did this affect the production of the midget self in the popular autobiographies that were likewise sold as advertisements for exhibition? How does one prove the most important issue of the autobiography, that the narrative is indeed a truthful reflection of the subject's life, if one has been denied representation as a standard subject (as child, as automaton, as both extraordinary and interchangeable)? If one has been driven to become the most extreme of a particular type of identity in order to retain subjectivity, how does one write a narrative that demands one share an affinity with the non-extraordinary reader? These questions, building from the previous analysis, will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

Small Matters: Negotiating Paradoxes in the Autobiographies of Dwarfs

I An Introduction to Freak Biography

In his classic work *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self*, Leslie Fiedler provided one of the first in-depth examinations of the cultural significance of the freak show, juxtaposing analyses of canonical literature with that of popular culture in an exploration of western culture's fascination, identification and repulsion with the physically anomalous body. Fiedler's study relies heavily on literary, medical, *and* biographical accounts of freaks, but he barely examines those narratives of self, explaining that "Official 'autobiographies' have always been circulated by their exhibitors, but these are invariably ghost written, a part of the act rather than a way of seeing beyond it" (274). This view is not unusual nor completely inaccurate, but it has tended to promote scholarship which focuses wholly on the construction of the freak as objectified other, rather than investigating the discursive production of the freak self.

Fiedler does not state the basis upon which he claims that these narratives are simply advertisement, part of the exhibition. If it is on the basis of subject matter and style, one would have to admit that they do not always fit the classic autobiographical form; feelings, sensibility, self reflection are not thematized to a great extent, and there is no doubt that they often smack of the hand bill or press release, filled with stories to excite the curiosity of the reader. This quality, however, is exactly what is so valuable about these texts, for they can tell us much about the construction of the freak self in all of its historical specificity. The following examination does not aim to see "beyond" the act, but to examine the performance of self *within the act*, postulating that every autobiography performs rather than reveals self. As Sidonie Smith writes, "in telling their stories, narrators take up models of identity that are culturally available. And by adopting ready-made narrative templates to structure experiential history, they take up culturally designated subjectivities" (9). This is not to ignore the material circumstances under

under which these narratives were produced. They were often written to further incite the curiosity of the public, to sell the self, and this characteristic will be of specific interest, but this is hardly a reason to dismiss them, cordoning them off from traditional autobiographies, supposedly written by authentic narrators transparently revealing their private selves. The point is not to prove that these narratives were indeed written by the individual named as the author, but to question why we are more suspicious of these narratives of self than others. A rhetorical analysis of the strategies at work in these texts yields interesting results, opening up the examination of what forms of subjectivity were available for the enfreaked individual and complicating the standard picture of the freak as the passive object of the scientific and commercial gaze.

In the last thirty years, we have seen an explosion of analysis and a concerted recovery of first-person narratives that were largely ignored since they neither fit the classic model of autobiography nor held much topical interest for academia. Therefore, it is rather strange that the freak biography has remained largely neglected. In analyzing these texts we can detect many characteristics specific to the experience of the enfreaked individual, but they also bear some general resemblance to the personal narratives of others on the margins of society, such as slaves, beggars, and convicts. In *The Unvarnished Truth*, Ann Fabian examines the life writings of many of these individuals and concludes that truth claims are of central importance. To understand the difference between these narratives and the classic model, we must first understand, as she argues, that these narratives were produced within a culture “that grants truth and authority to certain descriptions of experience and not to others” and thus they are constructed with specific rhetorical aims in mind (7). Such rhetorical aims are the justification of the truth of the teller’s tale and his/her right to tell the tale in the first place. While such aims are commonplaces of any autobiography, there is a certain intensity missing from the narratives of those individuals who are assured of being listened to by right of their gender, race, and class. Others must achieve these aims through devices that thoroughly

authenticate their narrative. The material circumstances of the writers also shape the more marginalized narratives, exposing a different series of purposes than those typically espoused in the classic model. Monetary considerations, for example, or the call to abolish slavery, were often taken as base motivations that biased the narrative, for the revealing of the private self was supposed to take place untouched by such public political concerns. Such intimations of bias had to be strategically resolved by the narrative.

Perhaps the most obvious similarity between the life writing of freaks, slaves, and beggars is the requirement that these texts rely heavily on authentication by “more reliable” witnesses, due to the lack of authority imputed to the teller. These witnesses, such as the abolitionists who introduce slave narratives, attest to and authorize the truth of the story told. Freak narratives are also characterized by this need for outside authority, but they are caught within a very specific type of bind due to their production within the culture of exhibition and its reputation for deluding the public through false representation. Given the public’s awareness of the confidence game, popularized so effectively by P.T. Barnum and elaborated upon in his own autobiography, the manager’s authorizing introduction could actually undermine the perceived truth of the narrative. It is true that the slave narrative also found itself in a similar bind, for the introduction by the white sponsor was often taken as an exaggeration of suffering in order to promote the cause, but the slave narrative could at least rely on a specific audience who would accept the authority of certain men. With the freak narrative the whole point was that the purchaser of the narrative was getting a “behind the scenes” glimpse, an inside scoop somehow “beyond” the confidence game of the exhibition. With this in mind, the manager’s endorsement could make the narrative seem simply one more advertisement, reflecting badly on the narrative it was supposed to authenticate.

What the freak narrative quite often relies upon for authentication is the “objective” reporting of medical men and journalists. Indeed, the cut and paste quality in

which first-person narrative is juxtaposed with medical reports and extracts from newspapers is an essential characteristic of the freak narrative, paradoxically giving us less of what we traditionally think of as life writing for the very purposes of sanctioning such a narrative. This characteristic is indeed part of the reason why the freak biography has been dismissed today. Moreover, this dependence on more reliable sources undermines at the same time as it justifies the subject's reliability as a credible witness who can participate in public discourse. Relying on others can underline the very lack of credibility of the subject, demanding perpetual justification of the right and ability to produce a representation of self. In fact, the matter is more complicated, for the especial appeal of the freak narrative is that this hybrid anomaly (who is both similar to, but not quite like the normate subject) is a thinking subject who can tell a tale from the vantage point of one who is not entirely human. In order to be believed, the text must prove that the narrator has sufficient intelligence, but it must also engage with the public's appetite for the strange, the exotic, the extraordinary.

This dilemma echoes that of slave narrators forced to deploy "authentic" language. As Frederick Douglas explains, fugitive slaves were in danger of being labeled impostors, if they sounded too "educated." "Better have a little of the plantation manner of speech," he is told for, "'tis not best that you seemed too learned" (362). Not meeting the expectations of the reader that slave dialect evidenced "truthfulness" could mean that the narrative was perceived as a fabrication. The freak narrative entailed similar problems, and narratives often begin with a heavy rhetorical dose of modesty, stressing that the subject would not have felt up to the task of writing the memoirs, if others had not imposed it as a duty. But like the bind posed by the reliance on others' authority, this too demanded the narrator walk a thin line. If the narration was to give a true picture of the self, the narrator had to appear artful enough to be able to fully represent her or himself.

One particular way the narrator of a “nonstandard” biography was called upon for full representation was the full recitation of the “facts” of his or her life. Many convict narratives, for example, organize the life story in the form of lists, which lent an air of authenticity to the narrative. This is true also for freak narratives of self, most of which begin with a stupefying account of family background (place and circumstances of birth, identity of parents, grandparents, their occupations, number, name, and bodily description of siblings, etc.). As William Andrews writes, the inclusion of these facts was not unusual, for it was part of the conventional autobiographical strategy:

To locate oneself at a particular point in the temporal continuum gave the autobiographer a uniqueness and a degree of self-knowledge that can only augment his status in the eyes of the reader. To speak of where one comes from is to imply that one belongs somewhere. And if one’s connectedness to the land helps establish one’s identity as part of something larger, the citing of family names and history simply reinforces this impression of connectedness. (27)

Andrews’ point in regard to slave narratives is that this listing is precisely what the slave could not always present to the reader because of the very nature of his or her circumstances. The freak autobiography does not often share this particular problem, since those who were able to produce these narratives were usually of less marginal status than those who were exhibited as exotic and monstrous freaks, and thus could produce these facts. Lest this suggest that the freak self-narrative was required to do no more than the conventional narrative, we must remember that details of the freak’s private life were viewed as public property and were far more open to suspicion than those of the standard subject. Furthermore, given the historical context of pathology and ethnography within which the enfreaked individual lived out his or her life, these lists of facts link the narrative to the “case study” in a rather disturbing fashion. Taking this background into consideration, this authenticating device thus seems to be operating in an entirely different

manner. To be sure, these facts help establish the freak as a worthy subject who has a right to participate in the public world of letters, but these facts were more often used as a way of authenticating the writer as a valid *object* of study. As most of these narratives come from the second half of the nineteenth century, one cannot deny that they are shaped by the convention of the “case study” and thus readers had certain expectations which had to be met, such as full physical description and measurements of each body part. In other words, the absolute demand for these lists was already prior to any benefit the freak gained from “connectedness.” In fact, they were part of a genre that insisted on illustrating differences as well as similarities between the “specimen” and the audience.

Another way to establish truth through “connectedness” was by appealing to a shared national identity, a move fraught with tensions similar to the dilemmas discussed above. As Fabian notes in regard to beggars’ self-narratives, “Each asserted a national identity in order to avoid questions about their ambiguous personal identity. . . . But American identity was a category as unstable as all the others—not something fixed and permanent, but something claimed and demonstrated” (42). Therefore, while fluidity allowed for a certain freedom in terms of negotiation, it also made for an unreliable source of justification. This negotiation also functioned in a way that produced difference as its side effect; thus, claims for national identity were made through very specific appeals to superior positions in regard to class, race, and gender.

The “matter” of corporeality is another principal ingredient in the structuring and rhetoric of marginal narratives of self, as is demonstrated by the public’s demand that the body serve as proof of authentication of the narrative. As Fabian writes in regard to the controversy surrounding James Williams, a fugitive slave who left for England and whose narrative was subsequently “proved unreliable,” “the further one descended the social scale in ante-bellum America, the more embodied and specific a tale had to be to be taken as true” (84-5). If this was the case for beggars and slaves, it was also the case for the freak, whose extraordinary body was the primary impetus for interest in the life story.

This is especially true, again, because of “humbuggery”: the production of exaggerated monstrosities, the deletion or addition of inches for the midget and giant. As Fiedler states, many of the freak narratives we have *were* part of the exhibition — body and text both packaged as part of the same experience. Spectators, for a little more money, could extend the experience of the exhibition by purchasing a short narrative of the freak as they left the show. Like the sale of *cartes de visites*, these narratives served as souvenirs and authenticating documents in themselves (they gave the facts that proved the optical experience was true), but the body was still required as an authenticating stamp. In other words, unlike the narratives of men of letters and political fame, the text required the body, so that the reader could “see for his or herself.”

That the reader was also entitled to interrogate the freak -- to ask questions, to try to catch the subject in a lie -- is evident from the frequent references to this experience in the narratives. Narrators often point to the humiliation and boring repetition of this particular aspect of the exhibition, but also make an effort to demonstrate that they eventually became used to the questioning and even leaned to enjoy it. These scenes of questioning provide further authentication of the narrative. As Fabian writes in regard to slave narratives, “Set down in print, like the scenes of transfer so important to criminal confession, scenes of interrogation reminded readers that a story had passed a test of authenticity” (85). These scenes also serve to instruct the reader in the proper behavior one should display at the exhibition — one should not ask insulting questions and one should be prepared if the freak is not forthcoming or becomes irritated. Far from connoting that the show is a humbug, these reactions show that the freak has already been wrung through the process of authentication and that the reader need not question further.

There are, then, many similarities between the freak self-narrative and those of other individuals who existed on the margins of society, especially the fugitive slave. Both the slave narrative and that of the freak, for example, are shaped by bodily difference: what does it mean to be black, small, gigantic, conjoined, and so forth, in a

world which adheres to a different standard for the human subject? And both revolve around the issues of truth and authentication. There are, however, important differences between the two. I have argued that corporeality marks both kinds of narratives, and operates in one way in a similar fashion -- the requirement that the material body authenticate the narrative. However, this corporeality also raises very different issues in slave narratives than it does in freak life writing. While recent scholarship on the nineteenth-century freak has worked to connect freak exhibition within the politics of slavery, pointing both to the way those politics shaped and were shaped by exhibition and to the fact that many freaks were indeed bought and sold as property, it is important to recognize that the freak was exploited in a different form of labor than the slave.¹ Freak exhibition deploys the individual in the labor of display in contrast to the physical labor of the slave. This has important ramifications for the life writing of these individuals. If the slave is concerned with securing the right to the profits of his own bodily labor as part of a narrative of manhood, the freak is often concerned with the fact that he cannot “work” or is perceived as not “working” as other men. As Thomson writes, “The American ideology of self-reliance combined with the Protestant work ethic have always engendered an anxious suspicion that disabled people -- as well as the poor -- may be malingerers, as the current debates over welfare reform indicate” (“Crippled” 137).

Another difference is that, while there is no doubt that the narrators of these biographies were exploited, their status as white men, however unstable, allowed them some profit from their exhibition. This then makes a difference in the purpose of the

¹ See Adams and Reiss. This situating of freak exhibition within a culture of slavery has been of great importance in changing the tone of freak scholarship. Analyses that illustrate the historical particularities at work in the production of differently enfreaked individuals and which stress the material circumstances under which they were produced correct a certain tendency in scholarship to produce these individuals as ahistorical literary figures of playful ambiguity.

narrative. Unlike most slave narratives, the freak narrative does not take as its purpose the overhaul of a political, economic, and social institution. Since these enfreaked individuals were economically invested in the freak industry, the narrative cannot wholeheartedly critique society; however it may rail against certain individuals who fail to recognize the manhood of its subject. Indeed, the very appeal of the freak biography was that it displayed the private life of an individual marked by corporeal difference, and its primary purpose was to increase the fame of that object of exhibition.

Having said that, the biographies discussed below display a certain strain of resistance against such limits or, at the very least, evince an attempt to translate them into more euphemistic terms. Indeed, a primary characteristic is the attempt to establish the “normality” of the narrator, to lift him out of the squalor and degradation of the freak show. Such attempts illustrate the importance of examining specific freak biographies, instead of conflating them under the rubric of exploitative advertisements, for there were perceived and material differences between the lives of different freaks. Midgets, for example, as “little gentleman,” usually occupied a rather different world than that of most freaks, a point attested to by the fact that the majority of freak narratives bear their name and one that is made much of in order to establish affinity with the reader.

The following analysis will examine the biographies of three individuals who were enfreaked as dwarfs or midgets, paying attention to the rhetorical strategies deployed to locate and authenticate the enfreaked individual as the normative subject of autobiography and the contradictions this generates in a narrative that traded on extraordinariness. A key problem these texts run into is the tautological link between biology and self. Borrowing Robert Murphy’s argument that people with disabilities suffer “a contamination of identity,” Mitchell and Snyder contend that this “socially defined experience of organismic contamination situates the disabled person as one who harbors more than just a physical/cognitive limitation or difference: disability infuses every aspect of his or her social being” (3). This link between biology and self cannot be unmoored, as in the case

of disease: “Since diseases ‘follow a *course*’ and therefore prove familiar and domesticated by virtue of a belief in their determinate status (i.e. the ability to confidently narrate their future) disability might be characterized as that which exceeds a culture’s predicative capacities and effective interventions” (3). This indeterminacy creates an “unpredictability within social narratives” and has serious ramifications for the autobiography which centers on the question of transformation and self improvement. As Thomson writes,

The life of a well-governed, self-determined man is imagined as a narrative of progress on which Protestant perfectionism, the doctrine of success, and the concept of self-improvement all depend. . . . But the disabled figure flies in the face of this ideal, renouncing with its very existence the fiction of self-improvement and at the same time presenting the ultimate challenge to perfection and progress. (*Extraordinary* 46)

The question then becomes how does one chart a trajectory of improvement so important to the construction of self? Male slave narratives relied on the trope of self liberation from bondage, the northern trajectory from slavery to freedom and manhood, but, as has been argued, the freak cannot deploy the trope of escape and freedom to prove self-determination.

While the contradictions created by disability’s resistance to transformation occasion an almost insoluble paradox within these narratives, the texts work to provide other evidence of self-determination. If they work differently than slave narratives however, they are also distinct from each other in the rhetorical strategies deployed to prove independence, manhood, and normativity. The impasses at play and the possibilities available change from the late eighteenth to and through the nineteenth century. If sensibility is one mode through which the dwarf Boruwlaski can lay claim to manhood, by the nineteenth century, we see Reuben Steere deploying the ideologies of American middle-class industriousness and Christian sentimentality. And by the turn of the

century, N.G.W. Winner dispenses with interiority all together and constructs a self along the lines of a hardheaded, independent businessman. These diverse strategies of self-authorization point again to the necessity for close reading of these rhetorical tactics, for they highlight the significant historical differences even among individuals enfreaked as a particular type of curiosity. Furthermore, they illustrate the way these texts are engaged with more the general concerns and discourses of particular historical periods.

II A Dwarf Rousseau: *The Memoirs of the Celebrated Dwarf, Joseph Boruwlaski, A Polish Gentleman*

Joseph Boruwlaski, favored by nature, possesses every qualification which constitutes a man; distinctly organized, healthful, well-made, only differing in size. It is this which renders him worthy of admiration. Thus, when we behold a small watch, we justly admire it as a masterpiece of workmanship, when, notwithstanding its diminutive appearance, we perceive [sic] it mark the hours, &c. with precision and regularity. [Preface to *The Memoirs of the Celebrated Dwarf, Joseph Boruwlaski* (1792)]

Joseph Boruwlaski was born in Polish Russia in 1739 and grew into a “perfectly formed” miniature child, a characteristic which is of prime importance, for it bestowed upon him the status of “midget,” even though the general term “dwarf” was used to describe him. At the age of nine, he was taken from his family and began his life as a “companion” of aristocratic ladies. As a boy, he traveled extensively with a Countess Humieska, but was later forced to leave her household when he refused to give up his engagement to a young lady whom she also patronized. Finding himself with decreasing opportunities for patronage and increasing family responsibilities, Boruwlaski published his memoirs in hopes of support. These memoirs were published in English in 1788 and were frequently republished in various forms and cited in essays on dwarfs in American and English periodicals.

The same period which produced Boruwlaski’s memoirs also produced a more famous narrative of self, one which many view as the first modern autobiography -- Jean Jacques Rousseau’s *Confessions*. At the beginning of this work, Rousseau claims that “this is the only portrait of a man, painted exactly according to nature and in all its truth,

that exists and will probably exist” (5). He then declares that “I want to show my fellow men a man in all the truth of nature; and this man is to be myself” (5). It is this emphasis on uniqueness and the claim that one can only truly represent this irreducible self through the confession of every thought and emotion that scholars take to be the defining quality that sets the *Confessions* apart from earlier memoir writing. Fitting with the new emphasis on sexuality as the key indicator of self, Rousseau’s history of feelings does not scruple to document his various romantic and sexual feelings and encounters throughout his life. In fact, he must document them, given his challenge to reveal everything in the name of truth.

Published a few years later, Boruwlaski’s *Memoirs* fit firmly into the cult of sensibility of the second half of the eighteenth century that Rousseau exemplifies. Unlike other freak personal narratives, Boruwlaski does not simply detail his path to public success and decline with accounts of various patrons and exhibitions, but describes his *feelings* about patronage and manhood, and most importantly, about the romantic encounters that, in Rousseauvian fashion, mark the defining moments in his life history. Unlike Rousseau, however, who wrote the *Confessions* to clear his reputation, Boruwlaski writes to support his family in the midst of declining patronage. Furthermore, while Boruwlaski’s text manifests an emphasis on individual feelings and thoughts (sensibility), this emphasis is made in order to demonstrate his *affinity* to men of standard size, and thus the text diverges from the Rousseauvian objective of establishing absolute uniqueness of self. As a dwarf in the eighteenth century subject to economic and social disadvantages, Boruwlaski is by definition marked as different. This difference must be negotiated carefully, for it is his sole claim to fame and thus possible income, but it can also mean rejection from the public world of letters. Such an outcome could have material consequences for an individual who is constantly threatened by the dreadful fate that awaited most individuals exhibited as “freaks of nature” when they no longer held the interest of the public.

The memoirs open with the usual gesture toward modesty, but also with a nod to the conventional understanding that those of small stature are imbecilic beings quite different from the standard pattern of manhood and humanity:

It is so uncommon to find reason and sentiment, with noble and delicate affections, in a man whom nature, as it were, could not make up, and who in size has the appearance of a child, that persuaded nobody would even take the trouble to cast an eye upon these Memoirs, I began to commit to paper some of the principal events of my life, by way of memorandums, for my own use, only to remind me of the different situations I had been in, to recal [*sic*] to my memory scenes too interesting, emotions too strong to die in oblivion. As the reflections which I shall have occasion to make can be interesting only to those who delight in following nature through all her different ways, who are wont to look upon beings of my stature as upon abortive half-grown individuals, kept far beneath other men, both in body and mind; and who, consequently, may be curious to see one of them assimilate himself to creatures of a common size, as to his views, affections, passions and ideas; I should not have taken the liberty of presenting them to the public, had not persons to whom I ought not to refuse any thing, imposed it upon me as a duty. (1-2)

Two points are of interest here. First, this opening emphasizes that it is the feelings and thoughts -- "his views, affections, passions, and ideas -- that will provide insight for the reader, with the corollary that it is these that make up the truth of the man. This is very much a Rousseauvian point. However, those feelings are the very means by which Boruwlaski can show that he has "assimilated" himself to those of more standard size. In other words, they are the proof in his attempt to prove that he is "normal," "ordinary," just like everyone else, which rather works against Rousseau's emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual. The second point is that Boruwlaski creates that affinity with "creatures of a common size" through the production of "abortive half-grown individuals, kept far beneath other men, both in body and mind." In other words, his argument for normativity will occur not only through proof that he has indeed "assimilated" himself, but proof that he is different from other dwarfs. While a common strategy in arguments for inclusion, such a move, as we shall see, is fraught with pitfalls.

After the introductory remarks, the text moves to the early history of Boruwlaski's life, but unlike the *Confessions*, little time is spent examining this period. An exploration of childhood was of great importance to Rousseau because it would determine the origins of self, how one's thoughts and feelings were first formed. In contrast, Boruwlaski's memoirs skim quickly over this stage of life, giving the requisite information about place of birth, parents' names, and the size of other siblings. One can speculate that there is less narrative focus on this stage of life because what is of importance to Boruwlaski is impressing upon the reader the skills, manners, and sensibility he developed under the tutelage of his patrons. In order to gain further patronage, Boruwlaski must show that he is renowned, courtly, talented, and gentleman-like. For one taken constantly as a child-man or toy, emphasizing childhood would be of little value.

The central drama of the memoirs begins with Boruwlaski's adoption at the age of fifteen by the Countess Humieska. Humieska easily persuades his first patron, the Starostina de Caorliz, to give up Boruwlaski by pointing out the dangers of maternal impression, insinuating that, since she is pregnant, she risks making her child a dwarf by keeping Boruwlaski constantly within her sight. Boruwlaski treats this change as an honor and one that he had some say in, writing that "I should deem myself happy to live under the protection of the countess, and would follow my inclination as much as my duty" (19). With his new patron, Boruwlaski traveled from Poland all across Europe, meeting royal and aristocratic personages upon whom he practiced his gallantry and courtesy. Like Rousseau, he was a particular favorite with the ladies and received much attention and many gifts.

Most of these accounts of royal and noble visits are related as if Boruwlaski was treated with honor and respect. Indeed the text seems insistent on emphasizing both his courtly attributes and his *acceptance* within aristocratic circles as a charming, intelligent, and talented young man, but the specter of difference repeatedly interposes itself as a

problem that needs to be addressed. It is as if the text, forced by the Rousseauvian injunction to tell all, to relate everything he felt and thought, must address those moments when difference was raised, and then must refute them in the interests of claiming sameness:

Those, however, would be much mistaken, who should imagine that, seduced by the repeated kindness bestowed on me, or wholly devoted to the pleasures afforded on me, I did not sometimes labour under painful feelings, or that I could always be unconscious of being, upon the whole, only looked upon by others as a doll, a little more perfect, it is true, and better organized than they commonly are, but, however, only as an animated toy. (31)

On one such occasion, the Countess and her friends were discussing the subject of dwarf reproduction and whether the progeny of two dwarfs would be dwarfs themselves or of the “common size.” The Countess puts forth that she had often thought about “joining” Boruwlaski with his sister, who was smaller than he was. As was discussed in the previous chapter, such speculations and experiments were by no means rare, but Boruwlaski relates that he wept at such comments and felt both horror and humiliation:

So strongly was I affected at the sort of contempt apparently implied in thus project of uniting me with my sister; from which I thought I had to conclude, not only that they believed themselves entitled to dispose of me without my advice, but even looked upon me as a being merely physical, without morality, on whom they might try experiments of every kind. (33)

It is almost impossible, given our knowledge of the manner in which midgets were perceived and treated, not to question Boruwlaski’s ultimate estimation of the Countess, who, he claims, denied she meant it seriously and whom he continues to honor, simply writing that “I only relate this event to show, that though still very young . . . yet I was so far improved, and had acquired so much experience, as to feel all the impressions

natural to those of my age” (33). Whether or not we can determine the truth of Boruwlaski’s position, what is of interest is the way the narrative addresses these moments and the fact that they are brought up in the first place. The primary strategy is to use them as proof that, like other men, Boruwlaski does think and feel. This makes sense for these are the traits that establish his right to manhood and respect. However, it should be noted that the text takes a certain risk in producing its subject’s normativity through these scenes of transgressive sexuality.

That these episodes also construct normative identity through difference is evident in another telling episode in which Boruwlaski is contrasted to the dwarf Bebe. While carefully describing Bebe’s physique in more complimentary terms than others, the text portrays Bebe as both the quintessential villainous dwarf and monstrous idiot. Significantly, the most extreme statement of contrast is put in the mouth of another, and hence it is the King of Poland who first notes it by saying, “you see, Bebe, what a difference there is between JOUJOU and you! He is amiable, cheerful, entertaining, and full of knowledge, whereas you are but a little machine” (41). This declaration maddens the jealous Bebe, who attempts to push Boruwlaski into the fire, an action for which he is severely punished. The narrative then relates how Bebe died shortly afterward and that “everybody attributed his death to his jealousy, and to the vexation which the difference, that was said to be between us, had given him” (43). This description positions Boruwlaski rather advantageously, for the difference is clearly to his benefit: he is unlike the typical dwarf, and yet he comes across as regretting the incident, sincerely pitying the poor Bebe. But if the text emphasizes difference, it also admits the close affinity between the two, declaring that Bebe “who (I am sorry to say it, for the honor of *our* species) had, both in his mind and way of thinking, all the defects commonly attributed to us” (39 *my italics*). In one way, admitting this “species” affinity head on allows the narrator to address and refute the presumed accusations that all dwarfs are defective -- assimilating and rebutting the argument of the other side -- but while this may work rhetorically, it is a

dangerous risk when the point is to de-emphasize the difference between himself and other men. Of course, one could argue that the sacrifice of Bebe is enough to situate Boruwlaski on the safe side of normative humanity, but the text moves again into dangerous territory by recouping Bebe in the interest of proving that dwarfs (all dwarfs) do have feelings, and thus are not simply toys. Hence, the narrator explains that he would not have related the episode, “but to remark, that the smallest of *our* stature does not prevent *us* from experiencing the power of passions” (43 *my italics*). The text then moves to difference again by emphasizing that feelings are not enough, and that control determines the distinction: “happily for me, when I have been the sport of them, they never inspired me with any thing contrary to humanity and the laws.”² To have portrayed Bebe as too much of a monster or imbecile would have risked looking immodestly triumphant, and, more importantly, could have undermined his own project of proving his “normality” as a dwarf. By using a combined strategy of difference and similarity, the text is able to show that 1) dwarfs are not machines, for they feel passions like everyone else, but 2) Boruwlaski is a “special” dwarf in that he is enough of a gentleman to be in control of them.

If self control is the key marker of difference between men and “abortive” dwarfs like Bebe, the text soon reverses this definition in its description of Boruwlaski’s passionate love adventures, rendering the gratification of passion as a natural characteristic of “mankind.” All through the narrative, Boruwlaski, in Rousseauvian fashion, has related how the most important and influential relationships he has had have been those with women, but as he grows older, he begins to feel the “natural” stirrings of a more sexual kind, the accounting of which is specifically designed to illustrate how much he feels as other men: “These emotions, quite new to me, had their charms; and perhaps,

² Here Bebe exemplifies Thomson’s argument that “the disabled body stands for the self gone out control,” as “recalcitrant, flaunting its difference as if to refute the fantasy of sameness implicit in the notion of equality” (*Extraordinary* 43).

I had been happier, if I could have been contented with experiencing them, without seeking how to gratify desires which every day grew more pressing. Unhappily, such as resistance is not in the nature of man” (65). Here the narrator clearly seeks to identify with the tendencies of other men, but he also implies that his size affects the gratification of these desires. In a move that is similar to the one author Radclyffe Hall made in claiming that “inverts” are biological freaks, but at least deserve pity and acceptance, Boruwlaski admits the freakishness of his size, but emphasizes that this does not make him any less of a man³:

How much was my mind mortified on reflecting upon my stature, which I considered as an insurmountable obstacle to the happiness I longed for with so much ardour! What! Said I to myself; the most reserved women take me upon their lap! They embrace me, they bestow upon me the most tender caresses, they use me like a child! It was not an easy matter to make my pride agree with my desires. The farther I was from having the common size of other men, the more lively I wished that difference might be forgotten, and that I might be treated like them. (66-7).

Having gained the reader’s sympathy, the text then reveals how the “curiosity” of women adds to the humiliation he feels. His first love affair, for example, involved an actress who allowed Boruwlaski to pay his compliments, only to publicly ridicule him afterwards. Boruwlaski asks the reader to excuse the relation of his indiscretion because “in writing these memoirs, I not only mean to describe my size and its proportions, I would likewise follow the unfolding of my sentiments, the affections of my soul” (71). Like Rousseau he believes that the truth must be told as completely as possible: “I would speak openly; rather tell what I felt than what I did, and demonstrate that, if I can upbraid nature with having refused me a body like that of other men, she has made me

³ For a discussion of Hall’s position, see Whitlock, Backus, Newton, and Stimpson.

ample amends, by endowing me with a sensibility.” His confession of his weaknesses -- his humiliation, his “wantonness,” and his disregard of the feelings of his patroness -- illustrate both the authenticity of this narration of self, since he is allowing the reader into his full confidence, and that he is a man in the full sense of the word.

After learning his lesson in romance, Boruwlaski returns to his patroness and attempts to live by simply showing his gratitude for all that she has done for him, but he is again to be disturbed by his passions when he falls in love with a young woman whom the Countess takes under her wing. This episode is of great importance, and Boruwlaski’s feelings and thoughts about overcoming Isalina’s “prejudices” as regards his size are documented in detail, but it is also another situation in which risk is involved. It must be proven that Boruwlaski is as other men, and yet the description of his rebellion against the strictures of his patroness must be carefully told, as the point of the narrative is to gain subscriptions and patronage from other aristocratic benefactors. The first step therefore is to make a distinction between the love he feels for Isalina and the “tumultuous sensations” which had disturbed him before. Thus, the episode is told as one of high romance and melodrama, involving lovers separated by the cruelty of their elders and a passion that overrides all obstacles.⁴ In fact, the story is related in true romantic form through the inclusion of the love letters sent between Isalina and her lover. These refute all of her arguments against the marriage and present reasons why his love for her must be obeyed over and above the respect he owes his patron. Eventually Boruwlaski gained his point and, consequently, a wife and a large family.

Whether it was his marriage or his declining popularity as the pet of aristocrats, in order to support his family, Boruwlaski was soon forced to lower his expectations as to his future career. Patronage was declining and he found that he was slipping gradually

⁴ Later accounts dismissed this tale of true love. Wilson, for example, writes that “It is not improbable that her acquiescence was in great measure determined by the prospect of the royal favor, as well as by the apprehension that she should never have a better offer, since their amour had become the public talk of the city” (19).

into the career of public exhibition, a move that he describes with much distaste: "I was at that time very far from thinking that, through necessity of providing for the most essential wants of life, I should be obliged to expose myself to view for money. The education I had received, the manner in which I had lived 'till now, contributed to make me look upon this resource as beneath me" (168-9). The remainder of the narrative consists of a description of his various troubles and glowing accounts of patrons who have helped him along the way. Separated from his family in order to find new sources of income through traveling abroad, he relates in agonizing detail the change in his fortunes. Even though a few patrons aid him in his efforts to avoid public exhibition, he soon is forced to discover that the humiliation of being picked up like a child by various aristocrats is nothing to that of having to give concerts for money. Eventually, even public exhibition of his talents fails, and he finds himself having to literally make an exhibition of himself "first at one guinea, then at five shillings, then at half-a-crown" (211).

The last effort to turn back the tide of his fortunes is to write a life history, and, at this point, the narrative self-referentially concludes. This conclusion begins with a justification of Boruwlaski's decisions and a defense of the sensibility upon which they were made: "On examining my heart, I have still found in it the same sentiments, the same source from whence arose my pleasures, my errors, and misfortunes, -- and following this current have discovered a very comfortable truth: -- that a man of feeling never regrets those actions which originate from tenderness of sentiment, when unaccompanied by self-reproach" (239). He then makes a plea that having opened his heart up to public view, that public will "compassionate the fate of a being, stamped by nature herself on the coin of the marvellous" whose life has been shaped by an "excess of sensibility." He admits his mistakes, but as a man, he argues, he is entitled to such patronage, specifically since he denied the opportunity of working to support his family as a man should: "Had I been formed like other mortals, I could, like most of

them, have subsisted by industry and labour; but my stature has irrevocably excluded me from the common circle of society” (247). This last plea more than anything else marks the final tone of the narrative, which suggests a sense of failure to make the difference embodied as small stature a nonessential one. The plea registers a claim to some sort of affinity, but it is overshadowed by the large difference of size. Why does the text resort to a piteous recognition of difference when all through the attempt has been to argue that Boruwlaski deserves patronage based on his affinity to others, his shared masculinity and class?

In answering the question, we might summarize some of the points already suggested and push them a little further in order to explore the strategies a text would take to make the argument for affinity and the discursive limits within which it would be working. First is the Rousseauvian model with the injunction to tell all -- humiliations as well as triumphs, feelings, emotions, as well as acts -- in order to prove to the reader that this is a true reflection of the self. This would force the admittance of difference, but it also allows the text to assimilate arguments against affinity posed by others and to refute them, rhetorically posing a conflict that could be then shown to be resolved.

Furthermore, by including these episodes, the narrative again succeeds in that they illustrate Boruwlaski's depth of feeling — his ability to sense the degradation and humiliation of not being treated as a gentleman. In other words, the argument being made is that only a gentleman would feel as he does by being treated as if his size was a matter of exclusion. Since one could say that the argument succeeds in part because of this strategy, this does not quite explain the sense of failure in the text's movement to a claim of affinity.

Another reading might point out how the narrative is forced to continually return to episodes of difference because Boruwlaski as a marginal subject is already presupposed as different and thus is caught up in the bind inherent in universalist discourses of individualism. Joan Scott calls this bind a paradox and describes how it limited the

feminist movement's claim to equality precisely because it was a constitutive element of that very movement: "Feminism was a protest against women's political exclusion; its goal was to eliminate 'sexual difference' in politics, but it had to make its claims on behalf of 'women' (who were discursively produced through 'sexual difference'). To the extent that it acted for 'women,' feminism produced the 'sexual difference' it sought to eliminate" (3). Although her argument is made on the basis of sexual difference and politics, in particular, -- the way the very discursive politics which produced feminism also equated individuality with masculinity--the situation Scott describes is analogous to Boruwlaski's. To take Scott's words, Boruwlaski's argument is a protest against exclusion; its goal is to exclude or at least downplay "bodily difference," but it has to make its claim on behalf of "dwarfs" (who were discursively produced through "bodily difference"); to the extent that it acts for "dwarfs," the argument of the *Memoirs* produces the "bodily difference" it seeks to eliminate.

It could be argued that sexual difference was very much a part of marking difference and constituting the political subject, whereas "dwarfs" had little to do with it. We must remember, however, that it was bodily difference that underlay the sexual difference argument -- marked corporeal differences between the sexes that were believed to determine whether one was able to reason or not. Moreover, the political subject was constituted on the basis of individualism, that which signified fundamental sameness (because we share a commonality, we all have rights) and uniqueness (this uniqueness proves I am an individual), which required a relation of contrast, hence the growth of interest in and study of what constituted a human being. Enfreaked individuals, women, children, the poor, and racialized groups all became specimens for this examination which dovetailed with the construction of the prototypical (white, male) human individual who was entitled to political, social, and economic rights. Dwarfs, as we have seen, were crucial tools for marking difference in the debate over what constituted a human being along the lines of the animate/inanimate (toy), adult/child, and European/"savage." Thus,

one could argue that the specter of bodily difference continually recurs in Boruwlaski's *Memoirs*, because the liberal humanist discourses upon which it makes its argument for affinity have already constituted him as other. Moreover, the conditions under which the text was produced force a return to the question of difference because the narrator must continually justify his very right to produce an authentic narrative of self.

This reading predicates the failure of the text's argument on the ideological and material field in which it was produced, but we could push this conclusion further, by shifting the focus from what seems to be the text's primary argument to that very field and to the operations of the text itself. The text seems to operate as if difference "slips in," but perhaps the mark of difference is actually essential to the operations of the text. In other words, first we might ask whether there would be a point to the text if Boruwlaski was proven to be a subject the "same as everybody else"? The point of the autobiographical narrative, and especially that which calls itself a memoir, is that the subject is somehow worthy of interest precisely because he is different. In this reading of the text's operations, what the text attempts to obscure is not the fact of difference, but the conditions of its production: the midget as a commodity (whether of a corporeal or textual form) sold as an object of curiosity specifically because of difference from the norm. The text has its own ideological workings, and that is to *present* as its purpose a successful argument for sameness, while at the same time continually keeping the debate open through illustrations of difference. Both sameness and difference are essential to the text in order for it to continue to operate. The more difference that is admitted, the more the text needs to counter it with affinity through a textual continuation of the argument.

This shifting structure of sameness and difference necessary to the text can be better explained if we look at the way this very conjunction is part of the freak show aesthetic which operated, as we have argued, by both identification and rejection. The freak, that exotic other, provoked interest not simply by his or her divergence from the standard, but also by his likeness: the same, but different; different, but the same. In

fact, Barnum's mode of operation in which he asked the spectator to judge whether the spectacle was real or humbug, human or animal is predicated on this aesthetic in which the shifting balance of affinity and difference is never absolutely determined, but presented so that the spectator can engage in a continual game of attempting to pinpoint the truth. In the case of the *Memoirs*, there is no masterful Barnum spinning out the game, but a text which, by reason of the discursive field which produced it, insures that affinity be kept in check by difference. While we can say that perhaps all autobiographical selves are shaped by the discourse of individualism which rests on the paradox of uniqueness and commonality, it is made hypervisible in the case of the autobiographical enfreaked self, because the paradox does not allow them to constitute a standard self, as in the case of the white male and standard-sized subject, but tosses them continually between the two poles, inciting ever more curiosity for the textual subject.

III Christian Sentimentality and Bourgeois Self-Reliance: *Sketch of a Life of Colonel R.A. Steere and Wife*

The *Sketch of the Life, Personal Appearance, Character and Manners of Col. R.A. Steere and Wife* (1883) moves us from the aristocratic circles of Europe to the heyday of freak exhibition in the United States and from the romantic sensibility of the late eighteenth century to the ideologies of sentimentality and individualism at play in the hustle and bustle of the industrial nineteenth century. As Thomson argues, the freak show's golden age occurred specifically with the context of America's swift and chaotic modernization. As she explains,

In response to the tensions of modernity, the ancient practice of interpreting extraordinary bodies not only shifted toward the secular and the rational, but it flourished as never before within the expanding marketplace, institutionalized under the banner of the freak show.

Especially in Victorian America, the exhibition of freaks exploded into a

public ritual that bonded a sundering polity together in the collective act of looking. In a turbulent era of social and material change, the spectacle of the extraordinary body stimulated curiosity, ignited speculation, provoked titillation, furnished novelty, filled coffers, confirmed commonalty, and certified national identity. (*Freakery* 4)

This is the period when we begin to see the circulation of “personalities” through the small, but growing phenomena of mass media, that mass reproduction and commodification of “unique” and “extraordinary” individuals. It is the period of standardization, urbanization, new work patterns, and the development of leisure time and its complement, the amusement industry. The Steere narrative reflects these changes both in the manner in which Steere and his wife are exhibited as midgets and in its deployment of specifically nineteenth-century American ideologies. Like Boruwlaski, Steere evinces the proper gentlemanly disdain for public exhibition, but the sensibility that he calls upon relies less on the eighteenth-century mode and more on the bourgeois sentiments of self-reliance and Christian piety.

Steere was born in Gloucester, Rhode Island in 1838 to parents of “ordinary size,” “temperate and industrious farmers” (3). As he grew older, people began to call him “a second Tom Thumb.” Unlike Chaffin who, according to his biography, thrived on the competition, the appellation made Steere extremely unhappy as he was “anxious to be as large as men in general.” Striking a note of Christian resignation, he writes, “But, alas! I lived to learn that my wishes and sorrowful reflections could avail me nothing, and I must try to be happy and contented with my lot, whatever it might be” (3). Shunning offers to exhibit, Steere went into business, selling farm products and then managing a fifty acre farm. It wasn’t until the age of thirty-one that, prompted by a “desire to see a little of the world,” he accepted an offer from the manager of a museum connected with a circus (5). What is notable throughout the narrative is the way the text works to accommodate this “extraordinary” aspect with the dignified tone of an ordinary American citizen

anxious to live as a solid member of the middle class. Thus Steere describes not only his dislike of exhibition, but also attempts to dignify it through a reversal of the gaze between himself and the public: “At first, it was very hard for me to sit and be started at, and have so many personal questions asked, but it soon passed away, and I have often had much enjoyment in studying human nature, and marking the difference in talk and appearance of one State with that of another” (5). After a few years of the business, Steere became so disgusted that he returned to farming for a few years, but being “besieged” with many offers from showmen, he returned to exhibition.

Steere’s description of his wife’s background is also colored by an attempt to dignify the “extraordinary” aspects of her experience through the theme of Christian fortitude in adversity. Here we have a Dickensian tale of poverty, fatherless children, a mother struggling to keep her family together, and an eldest daughter playing the role of selfless heroine, entering the glaring light of public exhibition for the survival of the domestic unit. Myers, we are told, was born in North Bend, Indiana in 1853, but, soon after, her father died, and three weeks later the home was lost through fire, leaving them without means of support. When her mother’s second husband died, they were again left in poor circumstances, and the children were obliged to separate and find work. Finally, “after years of toil, her mother, who is an energetic and persevering woman” managed to purchase a small bit of land and build a home for herself and her children (8). Myers was of great assistance to her mother, but “as she advanced to womanhood [she] began to be anxious to do something more for herself and her mother, who had always been a kind and loving parent, and had worked hard to make a comfortable home for her family” (9). Consequently, she accepted an offer from a museum connected with G. G. Grady’s circus, but not without misgivings and heroic struggles to conquer modesty: “It seemed a terrible undertaking for one so small and unused to the world, to start off without a protective friend — and, is, in fact, an instance without a parallel in this particular — but she trusted that by conducting herself properly she could do it, and make *some* friends

who would respect and protect her, which indeed proved true” (9). She did do well and was able to build a new house for her mother, but “this was not all that the loyal-hearted little daughter was prompted to do for her family,” for she turned over almost all of her salary during her six years of travel to her family. The sketch ends in further compliments that stress her womanliness, modesty, kindness, and fortitude: “although easily affected by the sufferings and misfortunes of others, and with a heart overflowing with sympathy, she yet possesses the *nerve* and the *will* to endure, or do for others what many of larger physical proportions would shrink from” (11). Like the “some” italicized in the quotation above, the italicization of “nerve” and “will” in conjunction with the tone of defiance reveal an expectation of the reader’s reaction to Myers divergence from proper gender and class roles.

Myer’s biography is followed by a discussion of the pair’s meeting, courtship, and marriage, fleshed out, as is usual in freak personal narratives, with newspaper excerpts of the wedding. The narrative then closes with a strangely abrupt address to the reader, which asserts that the Winners should not be viewed as small children, but as adults who can take care of themselves : “Now kind reader, I have no doubt that by this time you have formed an opinion of us. You have seen how extensively we have both traveled, managing our own affairs, making our own contracts, and attending to our own financial arrangements; traveling without parent or agent, proving without a doubt that we are quite capable of taking care of ourselves. . . . We are both happy and contented with our lot” (20). This demand that they not be pitied, is then followed by verse which almost undermines the former address in its reference to their “affliction”:

Now, kind readers, try my motto,
Which has always proved so true,
And remember it is “Do unto others
As you’d have them to do you.”

And in case it should not bring you
All that you might wish to gain,
Think of those who are afflicted
As we are, -- then try again.

This plea calls upon a new mode of representing disability, one that emphasized both Christian suffering and self-reliance, and one that was intricately connected to the reform movement and the discourse of sentimentality. As Thomson argues in her analyses of “Sentimental Spectacles of Sympathy” in nineteenth-century American women’s writing, the reform movement centered on controlling, reforming, and rescuing the body; the pathetic sufferer made visible by the disabled body serving as a central object of rhetorical appeal.⁵ Its key strategy was sentimentality, the “dual prescription of emotional connection and moral responsibility,” and, specifically, the discourse of sympathy (131). As Thomson explains, the

pathetic sufferer whose body testifies to its own misery is thus the most effective rhetorical vehicle with which the feminine reform movement might solicit both fine sentiments and a humanitarian impulse, as well as confirm itself as sympathetic because the physically disabled figure most closely fits the stereotypical script of the pathetic sufferer, such figures often appear within this complex matrix of domesticity, sentimentality, reform, and women’s writing. (138)

⁵ Bodgan argues that this discourse of pity was rarely used in the freak show because it “did not draw or please crowds” (277). While I agree that the large freak exhibitions tended not to rely on the notion of suffering, we most definitely see it a play in other representations of the extraordinary or disabled body, and I would speculate that it was used in smaller exhibitions. For example, a mid-century handbill advertising the life of the dwarf Isaiah Hatch in the form of a song (“The Little Man”), asks the audience to “listen to my mournful story,” a tale of “a foul disease” that “spoiled a manly form,” of “Five dear sisters” and a mother dead, and of a father left blind. It ends by asking “Men who’ve made a prosperous journey” to “Keep the pilgrim on his way.” The sheet was sold for five cents.

While the disabled figure is deployed as object of rescue and needed to suffer visibly in order to elicit sympathy, too much helplessness, the sense that suffering might prove intractable to reform and rescue, opened up a thorough critique of society's, and the reform movement's, understanding of disability as a biological and individual matter. As Thomson writes, "Social reform was the national equivalent of individualism's doctrine of self-reliance and self-improvement," regardless of the ideology of separate spheres. Hence the disabled figure had to be amenable to rehabilitation and evince a desire for self-improvement, or, at the very least, a Christian resignation to suffering. A perfect example of this "obedient" sufferer is "the extraordinary little girl" of "The Industrious and Contented Dwarf." Sarah Lee, the dwarf heroine of the tale, is defined as "extraordinary" "not because she was very wise, or very learned, or very rich, or very handsome; but because she was very good" (261). As the piece announces, in an opening, which echoes Steere's plea, she is to serve as an example for the child reader: "we trust if there be one child inclined to murmur at her own little troubles and disappointments, she will endeavor to profit by the example of this humble, cheerful, industrious girl" (261). The tale relates the story of Sarah's unceasing exertions to support her sickly mother, aged grandmother, and little brother. While disabled (she is described as the size of a child of six and has "mishapen" hands and feet) she is able to find a type of labor -- sewing -- that will support her family; the point being that anyone can be industrious if one puts one's mind to it. Even so, Sarah is sometimes bothered by rude remarks made about her body, until her dying mother advises her on "the true light" in which she should view her "misfortune" (267). This scene allows the text to offer up its moral, a message of Christian obedience to God's will and the virtue of "usefulness":

[O]ur lot is cast by One who cannot err; therefore, whatever He appoints for us must be best for us and we ought cheerfully to submit to it.

Besides, it really is of little consequence what is the appearance of the outward, if all be right within. Happiness depends more upon the state of

mind, than upon external circumstances. Strive to gather knowledge from every source within your reach; faithfully improve your time, opportunities, and talents; cultivate an humble, submissive, and cheerful temper; always endeavor to make yourself useful; and you will be more respectable, more beloved, and far happier, than mere beauty could possibly make you. (267-8)

Sarah follows her advice and is able to exert herself, support her family, and rise above her grief at her mother's death. She thus serves as the perfectly obedient "cripple," an object of pity, but one who assuages the reader's anxiety, by transforming her woes through Christian suffering into profitability and contentment. She does not even trouble the reader's sensibility by causing an unpleasant train of thought by marrying, being perfectly content to grow old surrounded by her brother's family.

If we return to Steere's use of the discourses of pity and self-reliance, we find, however, that the disjunction between these two is underscored when deployed by the "pathetic sufferer" himself. This "pity plea" could be read in a similar fashion to the operations of the Boruwlaski text -- the necessity of failure in claims to affinity — but, here, I want to highlight how the operations of the argument not only fracture the midget claim to affinity, but also the bourgeois ideology the argument is based upon. The two addresses to the reader (do not pity us for we do not require it; pity and admire us for our fortitude through suffering) exemplify the two means by which the argument attempts to assert a dignified subject (the positive assertion of middle-class behavior, thoughts and feelings, such as self reliance and the affirmation of Christian sentiments of fortitude through suffering) but these do not quite harmonize and thus open up cracks in the very bourgeois ideology that the argument calls upon. What the argument tries to refute is the extraordinary aspect of the Steeres' life. It does so by calling upon a variety of bourgeois clichés in order to claim a position within the middle-class, but this overemphasis expresses itself as contradiction, for to be a member of the middle-class is not about

Christian deportment and fortitude, but about an economic position that allows one to avoid circumstances that demand extraordinary Christian fortitude. In other words, the narrative's heavy reliance on middle-class principles, not only reveals the contradictions in the Steeres' life, but in an ideology that claims self-reliance and Christian fortitude as the provenance of the middle-class. What it illuminates is the process by which the middle class sustains itself ideologically, assuming contradictory qualities that are really employed in opposite ways: dignity as a positive descriptive quality of the class and fortitude preached to others which then also becomes a defining quality of the class. When this freak narrative accepts the assumption at face value, bringing both qualities into play as defining characteristics in order to claim a position within that class, the argument goes awry. The very attempt to illustrate how Steere and Myers adhere to every principle of bourgeois ideology only further points to the fact that they are not of that class, but midgets living an extraordinary life as curiosities.

Having argued this, we must remember that instability or contradiction can also allow for negotiation of position; that is, the very contradictions of bourgeois ideology allowed the Steeres' to at least call upon its various aspects to represent their position, to describe their lives as lived within the middle class, even if the representation was not quite seamless. This, however, is a rather different position than the one in which contemporary poet, essayist, and disability activist Eli Clare locates herself when she declaims "PISS ON PITY," illustrating again the historical specificity of disabled subjectivity⁶

⁶ Clare herself, however, along with other disability scholars, notes the pernicious prevalence of this discourse of pity in contemporary representations of the disabled body. As Mitchell and Snyder argue, "Disability acts as a shorthand method of securing emotional responses from audiences because pathos, pity, and abhorrence have proved to be an integral part of the historical baggage of our understanding of disability. Repetitious associations between these more superficial emotive responses and the differences of physical and cognitive anomalies segregate disabled individuals as the exotic specimens of our most pervasive cultural narratives" (*The Body* 17).

IV Winner and Wife: A Business Model for Traveling Salesmen

The History of the World's Greatest Midgets, Major N.G.W. Winner and Wife, (1904) itself dramatizes the variability of freak subjectivity. As the title suggests, it admits quite openly to being a promotion piece; there is none of the concern with the possible vulgarity of self-promotion and exhibition. Significantly, however, this text presents itself as very much the individual effort of Major Winner. There is no publishing information except for the Winners' permanent address, placed prominently at the front and repeated on the inside cover. The opening page addresses the reader with the information that "If you should desire one of our double photographs, cabinet size, and one of these books, send 25 cents in two cent stamps and you will receive the same by return mail." Instead of the autobiography of sensibility or suffering and self-reliance, what we have here is a first-person history very much influenced by the developments of the last century in advertising particular to the culture of entertainment. This is a piece that blatantly admits its commercial purposes, and, indeed, the self that is produced in the history is neither the European man of sensibility or the middle-class American gentleman, but the Yankee businessman.

Although the text is largely in the first-person, it does begin in the third person and uses the cut and paste method, opening with short biographical sketches of Winner and his wife Mary that are then followed by a description of their wedding quite obviously lifted from a newspaper. In some sense, the descriptions lend authority to the history by identifying the midgets and testifying to their fame, but one gets the sense that these pieces were added not for the primary purpose of authentication, but as if they were simply part of an earlier promotional package that Winner added to in order to sell another product for profit. This is in no way to suggest that somehow this narrative is somehow less "truthful" because of its commercial aims than that of Boruwlaski. Indeed, the blatancy of the packaging and purpose blur the distinction between autobiography and advertisement in a way that fits the theoretical aim of this examination to follow the

various discursive productions of self, rather than to seek the essential freak self. Moreover, we must remember that Boruwlaski was himself writing for money, even if he did not advertise it quite so blatantly. This unabashed commercialism, however, does force us to examine how this makes the history different from that of Boruwlaski's *Memoirs* and to ask what type of self is produced in a first-person advertisement.

The third-person sketches that open the narrative follow the typical format of the freak biography. The reader is given the details of Winner's birth and family, with the usual emphasis on the non-racial quality of his background: Winner was born in 1869 to parents who were not simply of standard size, but were actually larger; all of the other family members were of ordinary size, including Winner. At the age of six months, he developed spinal meningitis and brain fever, illustrating that his lack of growth was due to disease rather than heredity. We are then told that he worked hard at school and went into business, opening up a confectionery and tobacco store. Later, he was approached by a representative of the Ringling Brothers and commenced a life of exhibition. He is described as a "temperance man," an "anti-tobacconist," a member of the Knights of Pythias, and as measuring 36 inches at 35 years of age.

The sketch of Mary Winner is decidedly shorter. She was born in Leetonia, Ohio in 1878 and had rickets in childhood, presumably the cause of her diminutive height. Upon the death of her mother, she went to live with her relatives in Mason, Michigan, and "nothing eventful occurred in her life until the celebrated wedding, Feb. 3 1896" (3). She is described as measuring 35 inches at 26 years of age. The newspaper account that follows is a short account of the wedding with the usual description of the bride and groom's outfits and details that emphasize the diminutive qualities of the couple.

The rest of the text is written in the first person and is entitled "Our Trip to Canada." This section is a blow for blow account of everyday life as a traveling midget, and smacks of the day journal. What is most interesting about this piece is the detailed description of the way in which Winner conducts business for himself. The husband and

wife do not have a manager and do not attach themselves to any circus or museum. They earn a living by making their own engagements with various shoe and clothing stores; their part of the bargain being to sit in the shop and attract business. Dates, times, appointments, meals, and hotels are described in great detail, but one is most struck with the business ingenuity of its subject. If delayed by trains, for example, and stuck somewhere on the way to his destination, Winner employs the time to scout out new opportunities at various stores. He is also not adverse to refusing to fulfill his part of the deal, if it does not meet his requirements. In Hamilton, for example, the manager of a clothing store wants the pair to sit in the window instead of in the back of the store where they usually sit due to the winter temperatures. "I told him we did not work that way," writes Winner, describing how he went over the manager's head to the owner at the company headquarters where he achieves his goal. The pair fulfilled their engagement by sitting in the back where it was warmer and more comfortable.

Other examples of various conflicts and irritations are told with the usual dryness, even those in which the issue of body size is introduced. For example, in Hamilton, the narrator relates how he was forced to carry a rawhide whip "on the account of the children being so unruly" and how he used it against one young boy who had accosted him by pelting him with snowballs:

I caught the young fellow just making a snow ball, and without saying a word I gave him a cut around the bare neck. He did not like it very well, you can guess, and stepped up to me and said that if I were not so small he would kick me so and so. I told him to go ahead with it if he wished and see who would get the worst of it before we got through. I told him that if a young man like him did not know any more than to snow-ball a little man that was walking along and minding his own business, I would teach him something. At that I started on to the hotel and the crowd that had

gathered kept the young man back, so I don't know what became of him.

We closed Saturday night, having exhibited ten days. (13-4)

In this plain recital of the facts, there is no commentary about the humiliations of being small, no pleas to the reader. There is also very little of the aggrandized tone that usually accompanies the narration of "little men" triumphing over other small creatures. This factual tone presents Winner as an ordinary businessman who may encounter additional irritations, but who deals with them with the minimum amount of fuss. Nowhere in the narrative is there any overt attempt at establishing "normality," nor is there much recognition of difference. Affinity with the reader is established not through a self-conscious presentation of Winner as a simple businessman, but through the *presumption* that the reader already knows that. The narrator assumes that what interests the reader is not the private life of a midget, but the experienced comments of a businessman who has traveled and worked in Canada. What this implied reader is interested in is a travel guide that can recommend the best hotels and restaurants and can point out which ones attempt to take advantage of American travelers:

We stopped while in the city at the Poncksey Hotel. I have said before it was not supposed to be the highest priced hotel in the city, but they were known to set the best table. We had a very pleasant room while there, so if anyone who reads this ever goes that way you will know where you can stop" (9); "We have stopped at a good many private boarding houses and hotels, but the proprietors of this hotel were the biggest cranks I ever saw. If any reader goes to this city [Owen Sound, Ontario], he better stop elsewhere" (15); "While we were in this city [Berlin, Ontario] we stopped at the leading hotel, the Walper House, and occupied a nice quiet room on the fourth floor. If any of you ever stop at this hotel you certainly will be treated well, for Mr. Walper is just like a father to everyone" (17).

After twelve pages of such comments, the text ends abruptly, leaving the reader's expectations of an autobiography unfulfilled by simply stating that "We did quite well in Canada, but we did not like the ways of lots of the people. Some of them are about 10 to 15 years behind the times" (17). In this manner, the text of the *History* plays a rather clever deception on the reader, who, led by the advertising title of the history, expects an exaggerated narrative of the private life of a freak. Actually what s/he gets is closer to the conventional understanding of the truth for there is no humbug here, no tales of fantastic births or exotic locales; it is simply an everyday account of the life of a rather savvy individual who exhibits himself as "Major Winner, the World's Greatest Midget." The genre blurring of the piece — travel guide or memoir — which in some ways undermines its status as an autobiography in the classic sense, ironically aids in the presentation of an enfreaked self that is quite ordinary: affinity is established by noncompliance to the rules of a narrative of interiority.

From the analysis of these three texts, we can conclude that midget self-representation is usually based upon a paradox, one that both debars the midget from entrance into the world of "normality" and allows him or her access, precarious and transitory access, but access nonetheless. What seems to underlie this paradox is an operation which works not so much by a self/other dialectic, but by a model relying on "degrees of deviance from the norm." This model positioned the midget as deviant along a number of lines — race, sexuality, class, etc. — but also as less deviant than other individuals. The production of norms which posits the white bourgeois male as the standard is no doubt performed through the construction of little gentlemen midgets and their positioning on a continuum of difference, but the ideologies this construction called upon often reflected back upon the midget, allowing for negotiation "up the scale." This model is not overtly addressed in the Winner narrative, but it underlies the narrative nonetheless. For example, Winner's narrative, like the other two, justifies bourgeois norms of patriarchal hierarchy by subsuming his wife's biography within his own. This

assumption of class, gender, and sexual normativity then proves his own normativity even as a nonstandard human being on the basis of bodily difference.

That Winner's text does not overtly engage in negotiating degrees of difference and sameness illustrates, by way of contrast, a certain characteristic quality of the marginal narrative of self. Winner's narrative avoids the paradox of individualism by avoiding interiority itself; the other two by the very terms of autobiography, which demand a narrative that constructs an identity, encounter the pitfalls of such a discursive production. Winner's narrative, in other words, simply ignores the questions demanded: 1) who are you?; and 2) by what right do you construct and present this narrative? Identity is not produced in the confessional mode traditional to autobiography, but through a redirection of the reader's gaze to other objects of interest.

This paradox will be further explored in the next chapter, as we turn to the autobiography of the one female dwarf known to have left an autobiography. This chapter will also consider the question of gender in more detail. As we have seen, midget biography relies on the production of difference in its argument for affinity and its production of self. Race, class, sexuality, and body variation all come into play, but gender is a significant factor in that the major concern has been the question of manhood and self-reliance. Both the principles of democracy and a Protestant work ethic demand that citizens prove usefulness and self-determination, and their conjunction with the production of self are evidenced by the biographies' engagement with these ideologies, but, if women, are positioned as "dependents," what does this mean for the female freak self? As we have seen in "The Industrious and Contented Dwarf," "usefulness" is required of women also, but the stakes are, of course, quite different. We will also consider how gender comes into play, given the gendered metaphor of the miniature, which feminizes as it diminutizes its subject. If male midgets demonstrate subjectivity through proving that they are neither children nor simply pretty dolls to be petted and played with, how does this affect the construction of a "woman in miniature," who must

also prove she is capable of self-representation, but must additionally adhere to normative notions of femininity?

Chapter Three

Gender, Sexuality, and the Miniature Body: *The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb*

I Femininity and the Miniature Body

As P. T. Barnum's most famous female dwarf, Lavinia Warren Stratton ("Mrs. General Tom Thumb") appeared frequently at his American Museum in New York, as a popular "curiosity" in his large collection of animals, freaks, humbugs, and "savages." Around the turn of the century, Warren sat down to commit her memories to paper. The result was an autobiography describing her childhood, career, marriages, and relationship with Barnum. Although Warren was one of many "tiny princesses" who exhibited throughout the nineteenth century, her autobiography is unusual in that most autobiographies penned by midgets were male-authored. We might ask then what difference gender makes; what strategies does the text use to position its narrator as ordinary, extraordinary, the same, or different, in its construction of a *female* midget self?

Warren is similar to the other three writers in that, as a white woman of "respectable American stock" who exhibited herself as part of Barnum's menagerie of exotics, she walked a thin line between freakery and normality, circus life and middle-class respectability. Her dwarf body disrupted nineteenth century mappings of race, nationality, gender, and class, since its "abnormality" defined her as other along any of these lines, in direct opposition to the way she was marked based on family background, race, and class — a perfect illustration of the blurring and shifting of supposedly fixed categories. Likewise, in this *Autobiography*, one can observe the subject's own positioning among this tangled mapping and examine how, in the attempt to open up a space for herself through the insertion of hegemonic discourses, she resurrects the naturalized categories her body had disrupted in the first place.

Warren's autobiography is different from the others in its presentation of size. While the male narratives played up manhood as a defining characteristic of affinity in

order to de-emphasize small stature, Warren's text often constructs femininity *as* and *through* smallness. Indeed, physical descriptions of her body are a key element of the memoirs, and thus she often relies heavily on others' accounts. In Chapter Three, for example, she quotes directly from Barnum's own autobiography in order to include a description of his first meeting with her: "I found her to be a most intelligent and refined young lady, well educated and an accomplished, beautiful and perfectly developed women in miniature" (50). Immediately following are clippings from various newspapers that describe her first "reception" in New York:

This woman in miniature is 21 years of age, weighs 29 pounds, and measures 32 inches in height. She enjoys excellent health—has a symmetrical form, and a perfect physical development. She has a full, round, dimpled face, and her fine black eyes fairly sparkle when she becomes interested in conversation. She moves about the drawing room with the grace and dignity of a queen, and yet she is entirely devoid of affectation, is modest and lady-like in her deportment.

All were paying court to a very beautiful and exceedingly symmetrical, a remarkably well-developed, and an absolutely choice specimen of feminine humanity, whose silken tresses beautified and adorned a head, the top of which was not quite thirty-two inches from the floor. In other words, we saw a miniature woman—aye, and the queen of them. Her face is bright and sweet, her eyes brilliant and intelligent, her form faultless, and her manners that of the woman of the world.

We found Miss Warren to be one of the most extraordinary little ladies at any time seen in this age of extraordinary beings. She is . . . beautifully developed in physical form and has a great mental aptitude. Her size is so small that a baby-chair is quite large enough for her to sit upon. She has dark, rich, waving hair, large brilliant and intelligent eyes, and an exquisitely modeled neck and shoulders. Her bust would be a study for a sculptor, and the symmetry [*sic*] of her form is such that were she of average size she would be one of the handsomest of women.¹

Echoing Barnum's comments, these clips build a descriptive narrative which portrays Warren as small, but beautiful; tiny, but "exceedingly symmetrical"; miniature, but

¹ *NY Tribune* Dec. 23, 1862, *NY Times*, *ibid.*, *NY Commercial Advertiser* (in *Autobiography*).

enjoying “perfect health”; extraordinary, but of “great mental aptitude.” She is an “absolutely choice specimen of feminine humanity,” and if she “were of average size she would be one of the handsomest of women.” Her appeal and “non-freakishness” lies in the “cute” for she is presented as a charming toy, a doll that replicates in miniature the measurements and qualities of the ideal woman. Her “abnormality” is subsumed by making her “one of us,” for she is perfectly proportionate, but her size is, at the same time, exaggerated in order that we may enact this process of domestication, pulling her off the street and into the drawing room. In fact, her size in a certain way adds to the extreme femininity upon which the text can make a claim for “normality,” for, unlike the male dwarf who is emasculated by miniaturization, she becomes hyper-feminized, countering the fact of unladylike public exhibition. Indeed, through this feminization, we can also note the dynamics of class shaping the aesthetic of feminine beauty. This use of bourgeois ideals of beauty and grace furthers both her domestication and positioning as “non-freak.” It is this tension between small size denoting the extraordinary, the non-womanly, and miniaturization as connoting hyperfeminization that the text works to negotiate. Juxtaposed with the clippings which emphasize her small femininity, for example, is a account of her meeting with Stephen Douglas in which she describes his disrespectful familiarity in attempting to kiss her: “I instinctively drew back, feeling my face suffused with blushes. It seemed impossible to make people at first understand that I was not a child; that being a woman I had the womanly instinct of shrinking from a form of familiarity which in the case of a child of my size would have been as natural as it was permissible’ (44-5). In like manner, she immediately takes on the issue of size being linked to other traits, describing her comic encounter with a man who refused to believe that her adult conversational skills were not simply humbug — dialogue arranged to deceive the public. The man’s argument is based on the typical nineteenth century argument that brain size reflected intelligence. The reply given by Sylvester Bleeker, her

friend and manager, makes this skeptic a figure of fun, and the episode is presented by Warren as a humorous example of people's ignorance.

Throughout the autobiography, then, the reader is asked to identify with Warren's position as a sane and intelligent documentarian, someone just like him or herself. This positioning is gained not only by distancing herself from stereotypical traits and asking the reader to identify through humor, but also by constructing herself in relation to others. Even in the newspaper descriptions, which contain much that she must have found offensive, she is able to find tools that allow her to position herself as "normal." Calling upon bourgeois ideals of feminine beauty, Warren at least could point to her faultless form and graceful beauty as a way to hierarchically position herself over and against the category of freak (dwarf). Class, ethnicity, and nationality also come into play when one investigates the other narratives and hierarchies Warren uses as tools for "uplift," for she constructs herself both as a perfect specimen of womanhood and as a bourgeois, patriotic American with a solid Anglo-Saxon genealogy. The Warrens, she notes, "occupy conspicuous positions in our country's history," and she is able to trace her "pedigree directly back through Richard Warren of the Mayflower to Reginald de Warren, son of William, Earl of Warren, and his wife Isobel, daughter of Hugh the 'Great'" (33). The Earl of Warren, we are told further, "married Gundreda, daughter of William the Conquer[or]," and this, she notes, should be enough to prove her English and American nationality. Following the genealogy is a long description of her respectable Massachusetts upbringing and education that lead to her final career as a "public character."

Before Barnum "discovered" her, she exhibited on her cousin's floating museum and toured the South. Even in this, she is careful to note that her parents were reluctant to let her participate and only agreed when her cousin assured them that she would be under his personal supervision. There is no doubt that she was one of the "curiosities" in this museum, and its similarity to dime show museums and side shows cannot have escaped

her. Perhaps to counter this she discusses her visits with General Grant and Stephen Douglas. Such visits with other “public characters” become the backbone of the autobiography and serve to add an air of gentility to exhibition. Like Boruwlaski, Warren portrays all of these meetings as social ones between equals, and does not mention the money that was, of course, exchanged to pay for these private exhibitions. Thus she received “callers” such as General McClellan, was “visited” by the Lord Ward, Earl of Derby, the King of Benares, and His Royal Highness the Maharajah of Vizianagram, opened levees, held receptions, and “received an invitation from President Lincoln and wife to visit them at the White House” (61). The picture presented is that of a society woman and her successes as a lion of the aristocratic and fashionable world. The sideshow element is completely erased from this picture and replaced with descriptions of her experiences as a seasoned traveler of the world. Indeed this is the stated reason for the publication of her memoirs: “I have felt my that my public life and experiences have been so varied and in a sense unusual; my travel so extensive, embracing Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, and America; my association with many of the most prominent personages in this and foreign countries so intimate; and my career so full of incident that my autobiography might be both interesting and amusing” (29). Warren has had the opportunity to travel to foreign places and observe strange and wondrous things, and thus she offers up the *Autobiography* as a collection of her observations of *others* for those not as lucky as herself.

This manipulation and reversing of the gaze from her extraordinary body to others’ is one of Warren’s most effective strategies. Describing her travels, for example, she writes that :

Our party not being “personally conducted,” we no doubt had better opportunities than most tourists of being shown objects and localities from the fact that we were, if I may use the term, “curiosities” ourselves; and the knowledge, widespread, that we had been favored by royalty appeared to

act as an “open sesame” everywhere, and all were anxious to please and interest us. Finding in me an eager inquirer into the nature and history of all that was exhibited to us flattered and made them more eager to open and show the contents of their choicest treasure houses.” (80)²

Here, she acknowledges that her value lies in being a “curiosity,” but she quickly moves on, so that the reader’s gaze, like hers, is directed at the exotic sights that have been revealed due to her privileged status. Warren repeats this strategy throughout the description of her travels and calls upon imperialist narratives that position her in direct opposition to the “Orientals” “Indian savages,” “Mahommedans,” and wild animals she encounters. Out West, it is the “redskin savage” that provides the fodder for thrilling adventures; in China, the “narrow-eyed natives,” and in Ceylon, their “Musselman” guide provides minstrel show amusement: ““Dam fool! Dey tink dat ting eat –dam fool, ha! Ha! Ha!” (138). In fact, Warren’s rhetoric is remarkably similar in tone to that which would have been used to describe her own body in a medical journal or museum pamphlet:

. . . for the first time we saw a noble specimen of the red man. I had seen numerous Indians before who did not exactly fill my Cooperized ideals. I had a fancy that a cake of Ivory soap, a hairbrush and some perfumery might improve matters. This one was tall, splendidly proportioned and straight as an arrow, his skin of a clear copper color and his features finely chiseled As he crossed our path he did not deign a glance but, looking straight before him, stalked proudly by. His whole appearance

² Most of the description of Warren’s tour around the world relies heavily on her manager’s (Sylvester Bleeker) account, *General Tom Thumb’s Three Years’ Tour Around the World*, and so it could be argued that these were not truly Warren’s opinions. This, however, is beside the point when reading these descriptions as tools that the text uses to position its subject. If Warren has appropriated Bleeker’s words, this is simply another case of Warren employing narratives imbued with authority to create her own authoritative position.

was in such striking contrast with the filthy degenerate-looking beings we had seen that we gazed in admiration upon him as a true type of the pure American Indian before contact with the whites had reduced them to their present, degraded level. (103)

As Warren describes this “specimen,” she poses herself as an expert, one who can tell the difference between different “types,” and one who is familiar with the language of Darwinism, the racialized discourse of hygiene, and the concept of the “Noble Savage.” It is not *her* body that is on display, but this “true type of the pure American Indian.” Indeed, the reader who expects to get a peek at a “freak’s private life will be sorely disappointed, for after the first couple of chapters, it is not the “freak” that provides the spectacle, but the exotic other. Here again, the category of freakery is opened up to reveal numerous hierarchies that cut across race and body variation. However, these hierarchies are also unstable, for what adds poignancy to Warren’s hegemonic discourse, is the fact that, in most cases, a midget such as herself would have been placed alongside these other “specimens” as yet another curiosity in a menagerie of exotics. Thus Warren’s use of imperialist narratives both reveals the reification of boundaries and highlights the anxiety that surrounds them -- the dissolution of self into other.

In opposition to this use of hegemonic discourse (directing the gaze from self to other), are the instances in which Warren reveals a certain sympathy for the “specimen” objectified for her benefit. Thus she describes her embarrassment at being offered a “beautiful mulatto girl” as gift from a wealthy plantation owner (176) and writes of the indignity involved in renaming American Indians with “Anglo-Saxon” names: “this persistent ‘calling names’ when addressing Indians lowers our standard of civility, though fortunately in his pride of race the Indian doesn’t recognize the possibility of any loss of self-respect” (106). This later qualification, in fact, is perilously similar to Warren’s own stance on being renamed: “Mrs. General Tom Thumb,” the “Countess Magri,” “The Little Queen of Beauty.” Here, as in the other biographies, the text flirts with a rather

risky recognition: might not the reader assume that she too, like the “Indian,” is unaware of the patronizing ridicule involved, or, is this a covert statement of self-awareness in that she also “doesn’t recognize the possibility of any loss of self-respect”? If the latter, this is an unusual gesture in that it posits the subject’s normativity through affinity with the abject, rather than through a distinction of difference. In the end, these instances verge dangerously close, but Warren’s sympathy never directly posits an outright empathy. Although the reader can speculate why Warren would find the renaming distasteful, she is careful to pose her argument in terms of “us” and “them” and return to more humorous and thrilling descriptions of that “mysterious” exotic.

The account of her travels through Asia, India, and Europe makes up a large part of the autobiography. The last section is a brief description of a few episodes from Warren’s later life. She mentions her husband’s death and marriage to her second husband, Count Magri, and speaks of her decision not to retire, but, typically, nothing is said about the subsequent decline in her career and finances. Stratton (“Tom Thumb”) died in 1883 and left little of the couple’s vast fortune. After her marriage to the Count in 1885, she toured with the Lilliputian Opera company and matters began to look brighter.³ But as the public lost interest, the Count and Countess were forced to open their house in Bridgeport, billing it as the “Tom Thumb House.” They also opened an ice-cream parlor. In 1893, Warren appeared at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago and played at the Great Chicago Museum, a dime museum that was quite beneath the level of respectability of Barnum’s American Museum. From here, she moved to Coney Island and a sideshow in the Dreamland Amusement Park. She died in 1919 and was buried in Bridgeport next to Stratton.

II Sexuality and the Miniature Body

³ Roth and Cromie provide the details of the later part of Warren’s life (66-9).

A significant part of Warren's autobiography and one of her primary claims to fame was her marriage to Stratton. Of course, in the description of the wedding, the text uses many of the same tools as are employed throughout the work, but isolating this section allows us to ask more general questions about the miniature and sexuality, questions that have been hinted at throughout the previous analyses. Perhaps the most important question pertains to why sexuality is made hypervisible and then strangely avoided in representations of the dwarf and midget? Why is there a celebration of midget marriages and yet a paucity of detail about the children of dwarf or midget unions? Boruwlaski mentions his growing family as a reason why he must lower himself through exhibition, pygmy children are discussed in ethnographic accounts, and Warren, as will be discussed, was exhibited as part of a happy bourgeois family consisting of herself, her husband, and a baby, but elsewhere the narrative of the small-bodied either ends with marriage or leaves the dwarf as a solitary character.

Of course, there are complications involved in reproduction and child bearing. Achondroplastic dwarfs, those with legs, arms, and heads out of proportion to their torsos, give birth to achondroplastic children fifty percent of the time when one parent is achondroplastic and seventy five percent if both parents are achondroplastic, but there is still the chance of giving birth to an average-sized child, and delivery is always by Cesarean section (Ablon 61). For midgets there are increased difficulties, as the child will usually be of average-size. One can imagine how these difficulties would be magnified in the period under examination given the state of medical technology in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, many male dwarfs are impotent or lose potency much earlier than average-sized individuals (Fielder 51, Drimmer 239). However, while biological explanations partially explain the relative absence of dwarf or midget reproduction, there does seem to be something more at stake when we analyze the specifically cultural construction of the midget or dwarf.

To take a case in point we may turn to one of Dickens' most beloved and sentimental novels, *The Old Curiosity Shop*. This work revolves around the tension created by two examples of the small-bodied: that most sacred of Victorian children, little Nell, and Daniel Quilp, the villainous dwarf who nefariously pursues the young girl and who is often considered the novel's true protagonist. Quilp is cruel and spiteful, comic, hideously malformed, and is repetitively described as monkey-like; all in all, the perfect stereotype of the grotesque dwarf. Unlike many other such characters, however, Quilp is actually married, and not simply to another grotesque character, but to "a pretty little, mild-spoken, blue-eyed woman" who lives in terror of her husband. While dwarfs, like African-American men, were considered extremely concupiscent, especially in regard to white women, such a union in a sentimental melodrama is highly unusual, and it smacks of the titillating themes of freakish sexuality and miscegenation. What was Dickens playing at in including such prurient material? Of course, one could say that it is simply the fairy tale mating of ogre and princess, but Dickens is not content with heightening this pairing through hints of sexual violence, but actually allows the dwarf to make horrifying advances to little Nell herself. Consider the following dialogue:

'You look very pretty to-day, Nelly, charmingly pretty. Are you tired, Nelly?'

'No, sir. I'm in a hurry to get back, for he will be anxious while I am away.'

'There's no hurry, little Nell, no hurry at all,' said Quilp. 'How should you like to be my number two, Nelly?'

'To be what, sir?'

'My number two, Nelly; my second; my Mrs. Quilp,' said the dwarf.

The child looked frightened, but seemed not to understand him, which Mr. Quilp observing, hastened to explain his meaning more distinctly.

'To be Mrs. Quilp the second, when Mrs. Quilp the first is dead, sweet Nell,' said Quilp, wrinkling up his eyes and luring her towards him with his bent forefinger, 'to be my wife, my little cherry-cheeked, red-lipped wife.' (45)

Nell escapes this time, but she is continually shadowed by the lecherous villain, who even discusses her charms with her old grandfather, suggesting that he too has a sexual interest in the child. Seeing the kiss between the two, for example, Quilp remarks, “what a nice kiss that was--just upon the rosy part. What a capital kiss!” (72). Nell retires quickly while Quilp looks after her “with an admiring leer” and then falls to “complimenting the old man upon her charms” (72):

‘Such a pretty, blooming, modest little bud, neighbour,’ said Quilp, nursing his short leg, and making his eyes twinkle very much; ‘such a chubby, rosy, cosy, little Nell!’ ‘She’s so,’ said Quilp, speaking very slowly and feigning to be quite absorbed in the subject, ‘so small, so compact, so beautifully modelled, so fair, with such blue veins and such a transparent skin and such little feet, and such winning ways--but bless me, you’re nervous! ‘I swear to you that I had no idea old blood ran so fast or kept so warm. I thought it was sluggish in its course, and cool, quite cool. I am pretty sure it ought to be. (73)

The horror here is provoked by the threat of miscegenation embodied in the leering Quilp. This is made overt by the dwarf’s lingering on each point of Nell’s physical attributes of whiteness -- “so fair, with such blue veins and such transparent skin” -- in juxtaposition with the racialized description of the grotesque, monkey-like Quilp. It is also heightened by the threat of cross-generational incest: Quilp’s winking suggestion that Nell’s grandfather is sexually aroused by the description. While this furthers the portrayal of Quilp as quintessentially and grotesquely evil, it also casts a rather lurid light on a relationship that it would seem must be necessarily kept pure in that Nell and her grandfather flee hand in hand, sleeping under bushes and relying solely on each other throughout the rest of the novel. This suggestion of something “not quite right” in the relationship is repeated in the description of the horrible change in the old man as he gives in to his addiction to gambling, and is hinted at in the opening of the novel by the

narrator who is deeply troubled by the sense that Nell's young innocence is threatened by the "decay and old age" that surrounds her (14).

Both of these anxieties -- cross racial and cross generational desire -- are embodied within an aesthetic of the small. If Quilp denotes non-whiteness in that his dwarfed body ruins the proportions of both the standard and the miniature, Nell represents the perfectly small, "compact," and enclosed miniature. What threatens her is not only the grotesque racialized body of Quilp, but indeed any penetration of that enclosed space. Penetration is contamination, for the miniature, the child, the white body, and the domestic space only exist as such if the boundaries are kept secure and the proportions of that space balanced. The breaking open of that space would propel Little Nell, that heavenly and fairy-like child, into the world of lived sexuality and realism. That is why even Kit, the droll companion of her London childhood, must keep his romantic dreams of Nell at the level of the chivalrous. Indeed, Kit can be said to prefigure and shadow the more grotesque Quilp, for early on he is described as odd, comical, and out of proportion in comparison with the physical perfection of the angelic Nell: "a shock-headed shambling awkward lad with an uncommonly wide mouth, very red cheeks, a turned-up nose, and certainly the most comical expression of face I ever saw" (7). Although he assumes a certain gravity and nobility as Quilp takes on more and more of the grotesque, Nell is denied him, and the threat is neutralized by a more appropriate marriage between Kit and a woman more his age, size, and class, the housemaid Barbara. Things are likewise "put back into proportion" by Nell's assumption into heaven, the ultimate achievement of the miniature in that she attains transcendence and de-materialization, and Quilp's ignominious death. Dickens thus heightens his tale of good and evil by titillating the reader with themes of grotesque sexuality, but draws back from the real horror. Desire is never fully satisfied, named, nor given material proof of; to do so would be to embody it through literal reproduction. But Quilp produces no

hybrid children. The reader is only titillated by the prospect of that grotesque body engaged in sexual relations with the very white bodies of Mrs. Quilp and Nell.

Forbidden desire both haunts and drives this narrative, and one could argue that the barely concealed threat of such desire registers an anxiety over boundaries, a constant working through of what it means to be white, child, adult, female, and ultimately human, but this working through encompasses more than simply anxiety, for the threat heightens the tone of horror necessary to such a melodrama. It is not simply that the miniature is threatened, but that the miniature incites such desire, and the narrative is impelled by it. The text is constantly circling the unspoken and forbidden act, teasingly drawing near without ever satisfying, which is precisely the seductive act of the miniature: to titillate the viewer with hints of space behind the corners, to draw the viewer in, only to arrest him or her as s/he seeks to move beyond the visual. We could say, therefore, that the child as miniature represents both a containment of desire -- the child is defined as an asexual being and thus serves as a self-contained category by which to make further definitions -- and an incitement to desire in that very containment, which itself serves to demarcate boundaries, even as it offers the fantasy of transgressing them.

The racial and sexual dynamics of this novel in its presentation of the miniaturized child as a site of threatened whiteness and the dwarf as grotesque, racialized other offer a perfect illustration of nineteenth century aesthetics of the small in regard to the body. As Robert Young argues, "Nineteenth century theories of race did not just consist of essentializing differentiations between self and other; they were also about a fascination with people having sex-interminable, adulterating, aleatory, illicit, inter-racial sex" and thus dwarfs were not only rendered as racial others, but also registered the threat of miscegenation (181). Indeed, sexuality comprised a central part of the freak show aesthetic in general. As Elizabeth Grosz writes,

the initial reaction to the freakish and the monstrous is a perverse kind of sexual curiosity. People think to themselves: 'How do they do *it*?' What

kind of sex lives are available to Siamese twins, hermaphrodites, bearded ladies, and midgets? There is a certain morbid speculation about what it would be like to be with such persons, or worse, to be them. . . . The perverse pleasure of voyeurism and identification is counterbalanced by horror at the blurring of identities (sexual, corporeal, personal) that witness our chaotic and insecure identities. Freaks traverse the very boundaries that secure the 'normal' subject in its given identity and sexuality" (64).

But, as we have seen illustrated by Dickens' novel and *The Dwarf Guide*, the dime novel discussed in the first chapter, cross-racial desire is never fully manifested in the case of dwarfs. The threat is contained through the presentation of dwarfs as loners or through a ban on reproduction, and thus fears of race degeneration are allayed. In the cases where dwarfs did have children, as in the races of dwarfs discussed in Chapter One, the threat was contained by the work of ethnography, its categorization of those dwarf tribes as harmless, moribund, and geographically separated from white Europe and the United States.

The case of midgets and sexuality is somewhat different. As we have seen, midgets were usually exhibited in an aggrandized mode that called upon an aesthetic of the cute. Such an aesthetic served to de-sexualize and domesticate midgets as cute, adorable children, the playthings of middle-class women and children. Divested of their freakishness and established as miniature (white) gentlemen and ladies, their venue was the Victorian parlor, not the side show. When the miniature is physically embodied though, materiality does trouble the transcendent nature of the miniature, inciting desire, even if it is simply manifested voyeuristically. If this is true for the child, this is especially true in regard to the midget, whose adulthood is constantly juxtaposed against childlike characteristics.

This problem is addressed and partially contained through the midget marriage, an extremely popular form of amusement in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Throughout this period, these miniature weddings were reported in as much detail as political events, murders, and international news, and were often dramatized in midget performances on the stage. The most famous wedding was, of course, that between Lavinia Warren and General Tom Stratton in 1863. Publicized by Barnum, the match was the social event of the season and inspired the hugely popular fad of “Tom Thumb Weddings” in which children were “married” with all the pomp and circumstance that would attend one between adults. Weddings between other individuals who performed as freaks sometimes did occur, but it was the midget marriage that managers used to gain publicity and profits and that most interested the public. We might ask then what made this particular form of freak marriage so popular, and what cultural work was performed by miniaturizing this social ritual?

Perhaps the popularity lay in the way the miniature wedding was structured to appeal to a feminine audience. As Lori Merish argues, the midget wedding carved out a space for feminine mass spectatorship by its reliance on the aesthetic of cuteness, an aesthetic that grafted “commodity desire onto a middle-class structure of familial, expressly maternal emotion” (186). Unlike the dingy halls of the dime museum with its “vulgar” crowds and “indecent” exhibitions, the Thumb wedding was a domestic spectacle in both its celebration of the bourgeois marriage ritual and its representation of the participants as adorable dolls. It heightened the process of domestication already at work in the representation of midgets by bringing them further into the folds of middle-class culture. As Merish writes,

The Tom Thumb Wedding . . . counters the ‘freak’s’ transgression of biological law with the imposition of cultural law. Focusing on the marriage ceremony, the primary site in middle-class culture where the body is inscribed by law and situated within a nexus of social and property relations, the Tom Thumb Wedding enacts the translation of the physical body into the social body. (194)

What is particularly contained in this domestication is sexuality. A wedding of any sort, of course, attempts this regulation, but it is doubled in a miniature wedding, for it is produced as a “toy wedding” fit for a bourgeois audience of mothers and children. Moreover, as Stewart argues, the miniature ceremony is an “exaggeration of an ideal of the wedding,” a model partaking of the miniature’s detachment from the time and space of lived reality. That Warren’s wedding is a quintessential example of the process of domestication at work in the representation of the midget is undeniable, but the success of that process may have been overestimated by Stewart and Merish, for many responded to the event with horror. This suggests that either the marriage could not quite perform a purification of the freak show, or that it was never constructed to in the first place.

What most dissenters found distasteful was the blending of the world of the dime museums with that of bourgeois law and ritual: the enactment of a freak show within the very site of all that was sacred, New York’s Grace Church.⁴ One individual wrote an indignant letter to Dr. Taylor, who presided at the wedding, complaining of being prevented from occupying his pew due to “the marriage of mountebanks” (Barnum, *Struggles* 309-10). Another angry New Yorker attempted to blackmail Barnum by publishing a pamphlet entitled “Priest and Pigmies” that claimed that his museum and the church were one and the same institution (Werner 60). Yet another wrote in her diary that

our Episcopal Church has disgraced herself by marrying them in such pomp in Grace Church. There could not have been more done had they been some distinguished personages. Poor Brown, the sexton, was so disgusted that he would not be present. . . . Another lady told me that Dr.

⁴ Adams’ work on Barnum’s baby shows, exhibitions, and advertising is an excellent analysis of the way the Museum disrupted, re-drew, and reified boundaries along a variety of axes.

Taylor received \$500 for the use of the church, which now I think is on a par with Barnum's Museum.⁵

The editors at the *Herald* were so upset that they printed a long protest:

How this match was arranged, we do not care to know; but we are informed that it is to be consummated at Grace Church to-morrow with all the display of a fashionable wedding. Of course, we have no objections to the marriage, and no desire to forbid the bans. Miss Warren is a woman and Tom Thumb is a man, no matter how small they might be, and they have as good a right to be wedded as any other man and woman. . . . We do object, however, to Barnum's share in the transaction. . . . The marriage vows ought not to be trifled with for the interest of a showman. The exhibition of Miss Warren at the Museum, the display of Miss Warren's wedding dress, Tom Thumb's wedding shirt, Miss Warren's wedding shoes, and Tom Thumb's wedding stockings in store windows on Broadway, and all the other details of Barnum's management of this matter, are offensive to delicacy, decorum, modesty, and good taste. Why should men and women be so much more eager to see Miss Warren after she was engaged to Tom Thumb than before? What class of ideas did Barnum appeal to when he advertised her engagement so extensively? One had only to listen to the conversation of silly countrymen and countrywomen as they stood gaping at the "little Queen of Beauty," or to open his ears to the numerous jokes in circulation upon the subject, in order to receive a sufficient answer to these questions. What Barnum will do when the wedding is over nobody can tell. Doubtless he intends to exhibit the couple after the marriage ceremony. There will be a crowd to see the little people married, and certainly there would be a greater crowd to see them encouched.⁶

What is of especial interest here is that, although the paper frequently repeats its claim that it is Barnum's involvement they find distasteful, not Warren and Stratton's marriage, the very repetition and denial seems to suggest that their distaste lies elsewhere; and that it is precisely sexuality that, in the eyes of the editors, made up the wedding's appeal. Of course, all of these complaints evince an anxiety over the blurring of the line

⁵ The *Diary of Maria Lydig Daly* (qtd. in Roth and Cromis 47).

⁶ Qtd. in Werner 267. It should be noted that the *Herald* and Barnum had a long standing enmity (see Barnum's chapter "Bennett and the *Herald*"). this might partially explain the vehemence of the attack against Barnum, but does not detract from the argument that the protest reveals cultural anxiety.

between the working class and its interests (Barnum's Museum) and the middle class and its interests (the Church). Indeed, Barnum was notorious for this type of confusion and his Museum has been viewed by modern scholars as a primary site of contestation over the boundaries of class, gender, and race. What the protesters are worried about is Barnum's mob literally and metaphorically invading their space, and such a worry also reflects anxiety over gender, for as the above letter demonstrates, the audience at the event was made up and packaged to male members of the lower classes, as well as to middle class women and children. Despite the feminization of amusement during this period that Merish refers to, there were still concerns over whether dime museums, exhibitions, and circuses were appropriate places for women. Thus, Barnum the Showman is the first to be accused, for his involvement signals confusion, but there is also a sense that the anxiety is triggered by the "freaks" themselves invading the church. In this, it is hard to extricate whether it is a class concern — Stratton and Warren's association with side shows and carnivals — or whether it is a concern over a transgression of biological boundaries — "freaks" should not reproduce, let alone, engage in sex. Class and biological concerns seem to be working together, and perhaps are mutually constitutive.

We should also take up the article's disgust as to the display of Stratton and Warren's clothes and the jokes it points to as supplying the answer to the question of appeal. In its remarks about the display of dress, shirt, shoes, and stockings there seems to run an underlying theme of overexposure: the public exposure of the very articles designed to protect the body from the public gaze, which then points to the body undressed. Indeed, in the logic of the argument, these articles function as metonyms for Warren and Stratton's bodies.⁷ Their display reconstructs those bodies in detail through a

⁷ We might also add that these articles also seem to function as metonyms for Warren and Stratton's identities, pointing again to the interchangeability involved in the reproduction of the "smallest human being in the world." That this commodification is still at work is evident from the continued popularity of clothing items belonging to the

process of outlining of form, and thus point to the pornographic appeal of the spectacle. This is made evident by the additional comments about the spectators' conversations and the "numerous jokes in circulation." Clearly, according to the *Herald*, the public perceived the wedding as a titillating exhibition -- "There will be a crowd to see the little people married, and certainly there would be a greater crowd to see them encouched" -- and thus sexuality was highlighted rather than contained. Moreover, what Barnum was trading on was not simply a voyeuristic display of sexualized bodies, but one involving "perverse" bodies, hence the fetishization of the articles of clothing removed from the freak's body and put into public circulation.⁸ What the article highlights is that those clothes, usually deployed as props to emphasize the affinity between subject and freak, now leave the freak body in all of its difference, an exposure which reenacts exactly what is at stake in the process of identification--the excess disavowed to produce the normative body.

The horror and fascination involved in this identification, however, must be specifically explicated within the representational mode in which Stratton and Warren were exhibited--the miniature. Stewart's comment that "the miniature world remains perfect and uncontaminated by the grotesque so long as its absolute boundaries are maintained" helps to clarify the *Herald's* outcry, if we take those boundaries to refer to Warren's body (68). For example, as long as Warren remains just enough of a woman and just enough of a child, the boundaries remain and she can be brought in to the

two. For example, Warren's wedding shoes are on exhibit at the Smithsonian and her corset is on display at the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida.

⁸ I use the term "fetish" here in a broader sense than simply as phallic substitute. As McClintock argues, "Refusing the narrow scene of phallic universalism allows one to open fetishism to far more powerful and intricate genealogies that would include both psychoanalytic insights (disavowal, displacement, emotional investment and so on), as well as nuanced historical narratives of cultural difference and diversity (185). The fetish here acts to "cover" up the difference evoked by the freak body, but more importantly embodies the ambiguity (the disavowal and recognition) at work in the relationship between spectator and freak.

bourgeois world, but in marrying Stratton she disrupts her status as a miniature, by bringing up the specter of the boundless female body, a body that can be penetrated and can reproduce. Gender, thus, works against Warren doubly, for that specter cannot even be banished through marriage; she must remain celibate.

We might further investigate the outcry's relationship to the dynamics of the miniature aesthetic in regard to the mechanical doll -- the animated miniature. As Stewart writes, "We are thrilled and frightened by the mechanical toy because it presents the possibility of a self-invoking fiction, a fiction which exists independent of human signifying processes. Here is the dream of the impeccable robot that has haunted the West at least since the advent of the industrial revolution" (57). The fear of the automaton, she adds, is of course, that it could displace the position of its author (60). Midget sexuality not only raises fears about cross-racial identification and desire, but the possibility of midget children, which upsets the dynamics of power within the aesthetic of the cute and displaces the role of both the manager who constructs the spectacle and the consumer. It is no coincidence that the grotesque qualities of Bebe, the dwarf described in Boruwlaski's narrative, are attributed by G. H. Wilson in his *Wonderful Characters* (1800) to the onset of puberty (adulthood). Bebe was supposedly well-proportioned (a midget) until the age of fifteen:

But the efforts of nature, as he advanced to the age of puberty, were prejudicial to him. The juices had before been equally distributed throughout his whole frame. The age of manhood disturbed this harmony, enervated his already frail and weakly frame, impoverished his blood and exhausted his nerves. His powers diminished, the spine of his back became curved, his head inclined, his legs wasted, one of his shoulder-bones projected, and his nose encreased [*sic*] in size. Bebe lost his cheerfulness, and became a valetudinarian. (12)

Sexuality literally destroys harmony; the miniature becomes dwarf. This fear that attaches itself even to the domesticated miniature being dovetails with racial and class anxieties, for the threat that is raised is prolific reproduction of a race or species that threatens the position of the white middle class from within its very borders.

If we now turn to Warren's account of the wedding, we find that it is clearly meant as a rebuttal to those who viewed the marriage as a transgression. The account is plainly structured so as to emphasize Warren's "normality" and respectability. Most of the description of the courtship and marriage is borrowed from outside sources, as if to confirm that, if not an ordinary wedding, it was at least not an "abnormal" one. Barnum in his own autobiography claimed that he did not create the romance in order to make money, and, as if to reiterate her claim that the match was made for love and to add a sense of objectivity, Warren uses his description of the courtship, simply adding her own reconfirmation of Barnum's claim.⁹ The description of the wedding itself is lifted from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* and includes a long list of the gifts received from such notables as Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Mrs. Lincoln, and Mrs. Astor, as well as the reception at the Metropolitan Hotel. The autobiography thus uses the aggrandized mode of exhibition for its own purposes, emphasizing the "superiority" comprised within the mode, while ignoring the ridicule it also embodies. Moreover, it refuses to give much space to the outcry that was generated. The only mention, for example, involves a letter of protest written to Dr. Taylor, who officiated at the wedding. The letter is placed alongside his reply, which clearly pokes fun at the outraged writer and concludes by stating that the wedding was as "touchingly solemn as a wedding can possibly be

⁹ Barnum's exact relationship with these performers is hard to determine. In his autobiography, he treats them with a mixture of condescension and amusement, but, at times, it is clear that some sort of friendship existed between them. In Warren's autobiography, she portrays the dwarfs' friendship with Barnum as a long-standing one based upon mutual respect. In Barnum's private letters, however, they are often discussed as little more than curious objects to be exploited for profit. See, for example "Letter 9" in Saxon.

rendered” and was “most emphatically a high triumph of Christian civilization” (60). In this way the autobiography, reshapes the events for the reader, constructing a picture of a fairy tale, but respectable romance.

In his own account of the wedding, Barnum wrote that it

was by no means an unnatural circumstance that I should be suspected of having instigated and brought about the marriage of Tom Thumb with Lavinia Warren. Had I done this, I should at this day have felt no regrets, for it has proved, in an eminent degree, one of the ‘happy marriages.’ I only say, what is known to all of their immediate friends, that from the first to last their engagement was an affair of the heart—a case of ‘love at first sight’—that the attachment was mutual, and that it only grows with the lapse of time. But I had neither part nor lot in instigating or in occasioning the marriage. (293-4)

He does, however, freely admit that the financial gains from the announcement of the wedding were tremendous — daily receipts at the Museum were frequently over three thousand dollars — and that this encouraged him to milk the free advertising for all it was worth (*Struggles* 307-8). Furthermore, even *Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, which usually acted as a mouthpiece for Barnum, hinted at the fortunate coincidence of a marriage between two midgets, both of whom were in the employ of Barnum: “Barnum, in his new character as matchmaker to the Lilliputians, is reaping the reward of his philanthropy. Thousands rush to the Museum to see the affianced bride of Tom Thumb . . . What a fortunate thing that there should be a Miss Lavinia Warren for a Mr. Tom Thumb!” (“The Idler About Town” 303). The showman was also not averse to making use of the rumors claiming that Warren’s sister Minnie, who by this time was also under contract to Barnum as a midget, was to marry yet another of Barnum’s dwarfs, Commodore Nutt. Nutt, however, had apparently been a rival for Warren’s hand and, losing out to Stratton, had not taken the opportunity to engage her younger sister’s.

Barnum was walking a thin line in this business endeavor, but, by calling upon the public's desire for the "cute" and desire for titillation (simultaneously producing the other as safe and frightening), he profited immensely, which is perhaps why he helped advertise the hoax in which Warren gave birth to a baby, completing the dwarf family. On December 5, 1863, it was publicized that she had given birth to a daughter, and photographs of the Strattons with a child were taken at the Brady studio, clearly captioned as "Gen. Tom Thumb, wife, and child." Alice Curtis Desmond reports that this hoax was enacted again during their tour with Barnum's "Greatest Show on Earth" in 1881. In 1901, Warren came out with the truth, stating that she had never had a baby and that it had been borrowed from a foundling home.¹⁰ Of course, as the baby grew, it was necessary to exchange it for a smaller one, for, it easily threatened to outgrow the Strattons. Thus they "exhibited English babies in England; French babies in France; and German babies in Germany" ("Tom Thumb's Baby"). When the hoax became too difficult to maintain, it was announced that the child had died of inflammation of the brain (Desmond 320). This hoax, like the marriage, clearly seems to have functioned by "working" the tension between domestication — a cute dwarf family — and transgression, but both cases raise the question of agency, for Warren obviously participated in both the staging of the wedding and the deception.

Perhaps it is not strange that Warren makes no mention of the hoax nor the fact that she was childless. In a comment on the 1881 tour she merely states that "It was not to our liking and at the end of the season we withdrew and again resumed our usual travel" (169). Warren would have been forty at this time and Stratton forty-three. What

¹⁰ The ongoing success of the hoax, however, is attested by a letter written in 1946 by Edna Bump, the wife of Warren's nephew, correcting the *New York Times*' statement that Warren had given birth to a daughter. Either the word did not get out, or, as in the usual Barnumesque stunt, telling "the truth" only made people believe more strongly in the original claim. The mistake is still being corrected in 1954 (see Desmond 320).

seems even more incongruous is that Warren's sister Minnie, with whom she was particularly close, had died of complications in childbirth in 1878. Counter to popular opinion, Minnie Warren had not married Commodore Nutt, but a diminutive Englishman named Major Edward Newell. The marriage took place in 1877 and soon after Minnie was seen making baby clothes, using a doll's pattern. She clearly expected to give birth to a midget child, but the baby weighed almost six pounds, and both died after an extremely painful delivery. Lavinia makes no mention of the birth, simply stating the date of her death and writing that "It proved one of the greatest trials of my life to go again before the public without her Even now I do not find it easy to speak of it" (169).

Grief may explain why such a significant event in her life is accorded so little space, but one is still struck by the significant silence regarding children. Clearly the text could not admit to her role in the Barnum baby hoax, illustrating the great difference between what was allowable for Barnum in his autobiography and Warren. Barnum, for example, glories in relating how he pulled the wool over the eyes of the public time and time again, but, as a woman and as a "curiosity," Warren did not have the same latitude. An admission of participation would undermine her credibility as a reliable narrator of her private life, and moreover, would destroy her reputation for bourgeois respectability that the text is so eager to establish. Details about childbearing, whether actual or humbug, would have been considered distasteful by her audience. This is not only a function of her gender, but is due to the uneasy position she occupied as a domesticated freak. Her two marriages may be discussed, but any mention of children, whether as to the hoax, her sister's death, or to her own childlessness, would have raised the specter of perverse sexuality and difference. Domesticity, in her case, is a discourse that must be carefully negotiated, and sexuality, a sign of difference, uniformly suppressed. If during this period sexuality and corporeality had become the signs by which one came to know the individual self, they also marked the "type," a particular example which stood for a

more general class of subjects marked off from the norm. While Rousseau could gain from disclosure both on the level of unique individuality and typology -- his uniqueness only further established his position as a standard subject of democracy to which group he already belonged and typified -- full disclosure for Warren would mark her as "freak," a type of a particularly marginalized class of individuals. Difference she had by nature of being other, but uniqueness she could neither assert nor affirm as she did not belong to that more fortunate group which claimed individualism as a trait of its own. These were the parameters which limited the discursive construction of gendered, enfreaked subjectivity.

Chapter Four

National Giants: The Gigantic and American Myth-Making

“There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God had relations with the daughters of men, who bore children to them.” *Genesis* 6:4

“It is good for us to have that part of our nature which connects us with far-off times, awakened and kindled. A decaying bone, and old helmet, a mouldering fragment of wall or hearthstone, may call us back into centuries that are gone, and make us feel our kindred with generations buried long ago.” *Behemoth* 132-3

“This is not a thing contrived of man, but is the face of one who once lived like all on earth, the very image and child of God,” declaimed a member of the clergy upon first viewing what appeared to be a petrified giant buried deep in the ground in Onondaga County, New York (McKinney 10). His conclusion was far from the truth, but he was hardly in the minority, for, in the months surrounding the discovery and tour of what came to be called the “Cardiff Giant,” “the great wonder of the Nineteenth century,” at least one half of general opinion declared that a petrified body of a giant had indeed been uncovered, the other half asserting that it was a statue of ancient origins. The giant was found on the farm of William C. Newell on October 16, 1869 by men he had employed to dig a well. While the diggers proceeded to clean off the figure, what they took as “a big Injun,” a large crowd gathered, and Newell’s economic fortunes took a sharp turn upwards when he realized the large profits to be made via exhibition (McKinney 8). Newell eventually sold three quarters share of the giant to three Syracuse businessman and hired Colonel J. W. Wood, the famed showman, as manager. The extremely popular exhibition was then taken to Syracuse in order to increase revenues.

The first examinations of this gigantic figure by “men of science” attested to its great age, sparking a raging debate in the newspapers as to whether the giant was an ancient statue of non-Indian origin or a petrified man. As to the former, none believed that it could be of Native American origin, given the figure’s “Caucasian features” and the commonly-held assumption that Native Americans could not possibly have designed something of such noble and harmonious proportions. Stories circled about a Welsh coin

being discovered in the debris, leading some to claim the giant as evidence that the Welsh had colonized America in the eleventh century. Others followed the theories of Alexander McWhortor of the Yale Divinity School who claimed that it was a Phoenician idol. Those on the other side argued that it could not possibly be a statue given the lack of pedestal, the strangely contorted position of the limbs, and the improbability of a statue being transported to and then buried in such a spot. Biblical literalists claimed it supported their exegetical and nationalistic interpretations that the American landscape had indeed bred "giants in those days." Stories then started circulating that the Onondagas believed that it was the "petrified body of a gigantic Indian prophet, who flourished many centuries ago, and who foretold the coming of the pale-faces" (*American Goliath* 18).¹ Hardly anyone considered the possibility of a hoax, and, even after Andrew White, president of Cornell University and paleontologist O. C. Marsh of Yale declared the figure to be a fake, the debate still raged and crowds continued to pay for the privilege of viewing the wonder. In fact, other rumors started to circulate about a mysterious lumber wagon which had been seen traveling through the countryside, carrying a heavy cargo and about two Chicago sculptors who claimed that they had been paid to carve a statue out of an enormous block of stone, but these stories seemed no more believable than any of the others, especially in the face of the publications that were appearing daily and which limited the debate to the petrified or ancient statue positions. Yale's debunking only seemed to increase people's interest.

The greatest blow to the figure's income-generating power was Barnum who, stymied in his efforts to "rent" the figure for three months, paid to have a copy of the

¹ Although this rumor was incorrect, given the fact that the Cardiff giant was manufactured as a hoax, Vine Deloria in *Red Earth, White Lies* argues that there are both ethical and theoretical reasons for paying attention to Native American accounts of the past. Indian accounts, he explains, tell of both large men and large animals and their subsequent destruction. Instead of the "overkill" theory as an explanation for the destruction of megafauna, such accounts suggest a more persuasive explanation, he argues, pointing to a dramatic change in atmospheric composition.

original made, which he then exhibited in Wood's Museum in New York, advertising the "counterfeit" as the original and the "original" in Syracuse as the counterfeit. Since Barnum was overwhelmingly successful in New York in putting the original exhibition out of business, Newell's giant was forced to move to Boston where it did enjoy some success. Ralph Waldo Emerson, for example, declared it to be "beyond his depth, astonishing, and undoubtedly ancient" and Cyrus Cobb, artist and sculptor, asserted that any man who called the giant a humbug "simply declared himself a fool" (Stockwell 200-1). But the deception was soon discovered, and George Hull, a tobacconist of Binghampton, New York, admitted that he had perpetuated the hoax in an effort to put one over on the Reverend Turk of Ackley, Iowa, who had engaged him in an argument about the former existence of giants. Wishing to show up "the extreme gullibility of the world in matters where the Bible could be cited as evidence," he had procured a suitable block of stone, engaged two Chicago sculptors to create a giant "fossil-man," and had it buried on his relative's land (Stockwell 197).²

By far the most fascinating point in this whole story is the question of why so many were duped, even in the face of scientific opinion that showed that the figure was of recent origin. A partial explanation can be found in the spirit of national skepticism that swept the country during this period. As Neil Harris explains, Americans were suspicious of experts and specialists, given to believing in their own powers of skepticism and understanding, as well as thoroughly enjoying the chance to test out these skills against

² According to Stockwell, Hull went on to perpetuate yet another hoax in the Colorado Stone Man. This hoax was supposed to represent a petrified man and, as Hull supposedly put it, to "set the scientific men quarreling as to the origin of man, and throw the religious world into a vortex of doubt and controversy" (201). As Hull's comments demonstrate anxiety was not the sole cultural reaction to the new Darwinian ideas awash in the public press. Barnum aided Hull in this endeavor, but it proved to be a less popular and convincing humbug than the Cardiff giant -- although not enough to stop William Ruddock of Thornton, Michigan from attempting the same trick with "Pine River Man."

Twain satirizes the public's folly regarding such hoaxes in "The Petrified Man." Significantly, the original frontispiece illustration depicts the "Petrified Man" as an "Indian" thumbing his nose at his white "discoverers."

possible hoaxes and humbugs, a propensity that often led to increased credulity, rather than the inverse. Another answer is that the giant was unintentionally exhibited with the same sort of "realism effect" that James W. Cook argues aided many of Barnum's enterprises, and that it inadvertently benefited from the exhibitory trick of expose by creating a "perpetual uncertainty" that increased the desire of the democratic viewer to see for himself (15-8). Perhaps the best explanation, however, is simply the prevalence of the belief that the landscape of the United States was littered with relics of an ancient and gigantic civilization. Indeed, stories of recently unearthed gigantic skeletons filled the newspapers and were a popular topic in both the nonfiction and fiction of the day. Added to this, we must also consider Andrew White's contemptuous explanation of the hoax's success in which he remarked that "there was evidently a 'joy in believing'" and that the figure "had become so entwined with [the public's] beliefs and their interests that at last they came to abhor any doubts regarding it" (White 465-485). Americans wanted to believe and *could* believe in the petrified giant because it fit so easily into what had become a familiar narrative, one in which the American landscape daily showed evidence of American exceptionalism.³ Petrified giants, or even ancient giant statues, bestowed an American identity that projected back into the past, as well as the future, and thus could finally rival that of Europe's, and these exceptional and extraordinary features perfectly fitted the bill as objects around which narratives of national origins could be built. As John Sears argues, in his work on tourism, the enormous features of the American landscape seemed to demand a narrative of origins:

If the mythic appeal of the Big Trees derived in large part from their great age, which seemed to put their origin at the beginning of Western history, part of the mythic appeal of Yosemite sprang from the tremendous forces

³ Reports of the excavation of giant (and dwarf) skeletons were quite frequent in newspapers and magazines. See "Gigantic Skeleton" and "The Wisdom of Our Ancestors" 501.

that people imagined must have been responsible for its existence. As in the case of Mammoth Cave, Yosemite appeared to be a special creation, requiring a marvelous explanation, and scientific theories about its origin functioned as creation myths. (147)

As Sears' argument suggests, the connection between the gigantic, the mythic past, and the natural landscape permeates Western myth and folklore. We "find the miniature at the origin of private, individual history," writes Stewart, "but we find the gigantic at the origin of public and natural history," for the "gigantic becomes an explanation for the environment, a figure on the interface between the natural and the human" (71). This aspect of the gigantic is illustrated in the numerous stories, such as those involving giant causeways and huge boulders, in which the exploits of giants explain local geographical features: "All the legends are closely related in the relief of the locality where the story is told. The legend always finds a visible, obvious support in the physical setting; the dismembered, scattered, or flattened body of the giant is discovered in the natural landscape" (Bakhtin 342). As Stewart argues, these stories correspond to other accounts in which races of giants originally inhabited the earth, races from which present-day man has degenerated. Giants, then, are located both in the past and within "nature." If the "miniature 'works,' coordinating the social, animating a model universe, the gigantic unleashes a vast and 'natural' creativity that bears within it the capacity for (self-)destruction," and "while the miniature represents a mental world of proportion, control, and balance, the gigantic presents a physical world of disorder and disproportion" (Stewart 73, 74). The gigantic is thus represented as a threatening force which functions over and above us, enveloping and consuming. Unlike the miniature, the gigantic can only be glimpsed partially, and it is this characteristic that engenders the threat. Indeed, as Stewart points out, "the gigantic transforms the body into miniature, especially pointing to the body's 'toylike' and insignificant' aspects" (71). It is thus constructed as a

force of terror, sharing qualities with the sublime in the same way in which we can link the miniature to the picturesque, that "transformation of nature into art" (74-8).

The gigantic, though, also comes to serve the interests of the state, as Stewart argues, for while it plays a role in the carnival grotesque, it is also "appropriated by the state and its institutions and put on parade with great seriousness, not as a representative of the material life of the body, but as a symbol of the abstract social formations making up life in the city" (81). Monumental statues and gigantic skyscrapers, for example, attest to state and corporate authority; the monumental statue pointing backward to the "Great Men" who founded the nation, and the skyscraper engendering awe, while offering a transcendent perspective to a select few.

As this chapter will demonstrate, representations of the gigantic in nineteenth-century culture follow these more general patterns, but they are also historically specific. Within a national myth-making, the gigantic is produced as that which must be overcome, an almost insurmountable force, which is then vanquished or appropriated, fragmented into pieces to be digested and reproduced within a narrative of American greatness. We might think, for example, of nineteenth-century landscape painting, which attempted to capture the sublime enormity of the American continent only to suggest its ultimate taming, attesting both to American greatness and to the predestined triumph of man over nature. This narrative of struggle and dismemberment can be described as what Lauren Berlant terms a "national fantasy." Such fantasies are generated by the "National Symbolic," that field which "aims to link regulation to desire, harnessing affect to political life" (5). According to Berlant, national fantasies serve this aim and "designate how national culture becomes local -- through the images, narratives, monuments, and sites that circulate through personal/collective consciousness" (5). As a "monumental image," the gigantic was an important metaphor by which an American founding myth and identity was produced, transmitted, and debated.

Its deployment, however, shifted through the century. This change can be partially tied to a shift in the ways, as Philip Deloria puts it, Americans played with and with being “Indian.” As he explains in his analysis of Lewis Henry Morgan’s use of “Indians” as literary inspiration and then as ethnographic objects, the project “eventually turned from nostalgia toward rationalized, objective scientific investigation. Fictional creation gave way to the compiling of factual knowledge” (73). Deloria notes that Morgan moved “From identities imagined in the context of patriotic nationalism” to “identities that were the product of a quest for the authentic and the real,” reflecting “deep-seated social and cultural anxieties” about modernity (73, 94). This chapter, and the next, illustrate this change in tack, but also map out a shift that is more specific to the use of the gigantic. As previously stated, in the first half of the century, the gigantic served as one mode through which a collective national identity was generated through its association with an indigenous American culture and an exceptional American landscape, and its figuring as that which could be overcome and assimilated. By mid-century however, the gigantic is deployed less confidently, serving as a site upon which anxieties and hopes about the possibilities of nationhood and its corollary, manhood, were played out. By the later part of the century, these anxieties were literally embodied in the gigantic body and the debates that surrounded it: was the “race,” the “nation” degenerating in stature?

The first stage and the beginnings of the second will be charted in this chapter through an examination of the “Mound-Builder” myth and the work of Cornelius Mathews. Mathews might seem a strange choice, given his current marginal status in American literary scholarship, but as an author expressly involved in the literary project to create a national identity and as the author of two works which are dominated by the metaphor of size, his value is twofold. Moreover, his work demonstrates nicely the way in which the second stage of the shift overlaps with the first, suggesting that anxiety was already implicit much earlier on despite the confident handling of the gigantic and the

“Indian” for national purposes. It is my hope that this foregrounding of a writer defined as “minor” in the canon of great literary men will prove of additional value in illustrating the significance of his work for those interested in the myriad ways in which nationalism is gendered and racialized.

I National Myth Building: “The Mound-Builders”

American settlers in the Ohio valley and amateur natural historians had long been aware of the existence of the giant mounds that lay scattered from Western New York through the Midwest, but it was the nineteenth century that made these features so famous.⁴ As Scott Michaelsen writes, accounts of the Mound-Builder culture were primarily structured by anthropology’s “who” question (166). At the beginning of the century, scholars held one of two views on the origins of the mounds. Some sided with the Reverend James Madison, who asserted that the mounds and other earthworks had been built by the ancestors of the contemporary Indians of the mound regions (Silverberg 48). Others held to the theories of the Reverend Thaddeus M. Harris, who argued that they were too elaborate an engineering feat to have been the work of Native American Indians, and that, therefore, they must have been built by some higher race of beings. This race was often believed to be related to the Toltecs of Mexico; the Mound-Builder culture building their creations in the Ohio Valley and then moving south into Mexico to perfect their skills (Silverberg 48-9). Others subscribed to the “lost race” theory attributing the mounds to the Israelites or the Vikings.

Even more so than the gigantic sequoias or peaks of Yosemite, these mounds were of tremendous national interest because they gave the new nation a history, a sense of place in the scheme of world civilizations. As Silverberg writes, the “discovery of the mounds of North America provided a link to Herodotus and Homer, to Rome and the

⁴ I am indebted in my discussion of the development of the Mound-Builder myth to Silverberg’s account.

Vikings, to England's barrows, to all the mounds of Europe and Asia that had been known so long. In a stroke, North America was joined to the world's past, and no longer floated tradition free and timeless" (6). At a time of nation building, these relics assured Americans that their landscape equaled, if not rivaled, that of Europe's. European settlers were also engaged in a war against the indigenous population of that landscape, so it was also of importance to establish that these relics did not belong to them, but to an earlier civilization that the Native American Indians had displaced, just as they in turn were being displaced by waves of American settlers. Hence as the century progressed, the balance of opinion moved toward the latter theory that Native American Indians could not possibly have built the mounds, and speculation grew ever wilder. As Silverberg writes, the "dream of a lost prehistoric race in the American heartland was profoundly satisfying; and if the vanished ones had been giants, or white men, or Israelites, or Danes, or Toltecs, or giant white Jewish Toltec Vikings, so much the better" (57). So much the better, as long as they were not Indian. As Michaelsen notes, "The Indians could not be (that is, were not) narrated into the massively influential theory that history as such was composed of the rise and fall of great nations. The Indians, it was said, did not rise or fall; they merely squatted on a land destined for greater things" (167).

Many of the mounds were small, but some were rather large, and the theory that they had been built by a race of large-sized beings had long been a popular one. In 1819, John Heckewelder released his work on the history, manners, and customs of the Indians of Pennsylvania and gave further credence to this notion. In an essay published in the first volume of *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society*, Heckewelder described a traditional account of a war that had been fought between the Delawares and the Ohio Mound-Builders, or *Tallegewi*. "Many wonderful things are told of this famous people" wrote Heckewelder: "They are said to have been remarkably tall and stout, and there is a tradition that there were giants among them, people of a much larger size than the tallest of the Lenape" (Qtd. In Silverberg 54).

Heckewelder's work was used by a few to claim the mounds as Indian, but mainly it seemed to support the other side, and thus the search for a giant race began, an element that further romanticized and ennobled the myth.

This myth-making did not occur only within the province of gentleman scholars, but was popularized in poetry and novels. In *Centeola; or, The Maid of the Mounds*, for example, Daniel Pierce Thompson created a melodramatic romance in which the Mound-Builders were the ancestors of the Aztecs. The New Hampshire poet Sarah J. Hale in "The Genius of Oblivion" (1823) imagined them as fugitives from the Phoenician city of Tyre. And, the New England poet William Cullen Bryant composed two poems on the Mound-Builders—"Thanatopsis" (1817) and "The Prairies" (1832). What is important is that these works not only established a great and noble past for the United States, but that they were imbued with a thrilling and nostalgic sense of decayed grandeur and age that could be imaginatively enjoyed by the reader, but which did not threaten the preeminence and claims of the white race. Bryant's "The Prairies," for example evokes an image of the Mound-Builders as a powerful but long forgotten civilization:

Are they here--

The dead of other days?--and did the dust
Of these fair solitudes once stir with life
And burn with passion? Let the mighty mounds
That overlook the river, or that rise
In the dim forest crowded with old oaks,
Answer. A race, that long has passed away,
Built them;--a disciplined and populous race
Heaped, with long toil, the earth, while yet the Greek
Was hewing the Penttelicus to forms
Of symmetry, and rearing on its rock
The glittering Parthenon. (39-50)

This idealized vision of the past gives way to the present, in which "All is gone; / All save the piles of earth that hold their bones," (65-6) and the speaker now hears

The sound of that advancing multitude
Which soon shall fill these deserts. From the ground
Comes up the laugh of children, the soft voice
Of maidens, and the sweet and solemn hymn
Of Sabbath worshippers. (116-20)

The notion of displacement is thus naturalized as an ongoing cycle of life. America has its mighty past to establish it as an equal of any nation of the Old World, but this past is fragmented, found in relics that can be pieced together to create a vision of the past which serves U.S. interests and enables resettlement. As Scott Michaelsen argues, "the mourning of mutability obscures a reading of history as a series of conquests. Civilizations fall naturally, under their own weight, typically due to their inevitable lassitude or decadence when mighty and prosperous" (169).

Another writer who was overtly concerned with literary nationalism and who was fascinated with both the stories of the Mound-Builders, as well as the symbolic possibilities of the gigantic, was Cornelius Mathews, originator of the "Young America" party and founder of the American Copyright Club. Two of Mathews' works are structured by the metaphor of the gigantic, and thus a more in-depth examination of these pieces will prove useful in the analysis of how representations of the gigantic in nineteenth century culture functioned.

Mathews was born in 1817, and early on in his literary career he manifested a concern with literary nationalism. Though satirized and criticized by many of his contemporaries, he was vehement in his cause to create an American literature that would engage American themes and landscapes. This, he believed, like many others, was an absolute necessity in order that the United States could prosper and build up an identity separate from that of England. In *Behemoth, A Legend of the Mound-Builders*, Mathews

attempts to construct an epic out of the American landscape and its prehistoric past. The story follows the Mound-Builders in their battles against a giant mastodon which threatens the destruction of their civilization, and, as Allen F. Stein points out, makes full use of the most basic elements of the epic genre. We thus encounter a dramatic landscape of heroic proportions, a race of heroes, an epic focus on the deeds of one particular hero upon whose shoulders rests the destiny of the entire civilization, and a monster of almost supernatural dimensions and powers, all described in an inflated, often bombastic style as befits a plot of epic size.

Mathews justifies his generic choice in the Preface, which lays out his argument for the use of the American landscape as a fit topic for a native literature. The American landscape where the Mound-Builders once lived, he writes, seems to his

untravell'd eyes as beautiful as any thing he can read of Athens, of cloudless Italy, or the sunny France. . . . There is enough here for author and reader if they be of strong minds and true hearts. A green forest or a swelling mound is to them as glorious as a Grecian temple; and they are so simple as to be well nigh as much affected by the sight of a proud old oak in decay near at home, as by the story of a baronial castle tottering to fall three thousand miles off. (v)

America possesses its own treasures, and Mathews' plan is "to make those gigantic relics, which are found scattered throughout this country, subservient to the purposes of imagination" (Preface iii). Moreover, this imagination is to be unfettered by responsibility to historical accuracy or question of rightful heritage, for mystery still veils the history of these relics, and thus the road is clear for an appropriation of indigenous relics: "Here we can enjoy a spectacle of which the imagination is chief architect, where no vulgar circumstance intrudes, and where the actors are heroic and all the decorations in the highest style the fancy chooses to furnish" (132). "It matters not to us whether they dwelt under a monarchical or popular form of polity" he goes on to say, for

it is enough for us to know, and enough for our humanity to inquire, that they existed, toiled, felt and suffered; that to them fell, in these pleasant regions, their portion of the common heritage of our race, and that around these ancient hearth-stones, washed to light on the banks of the far western rivers, once gossiped and enjoyed life, a nation that has utterly faded away. We are moved deeply in looking upon their mortuary remains—those disinterred and stately skeletons—for we know they once were men . . .

(Preface iv-v)

Distance ensures that these relics are open to claims of ownership and also transforms them into non-threatening objects, fragments of a past that can be safely and nostalgically consumed.

Given this thesis about the rights of imagination, it is ironic that this work is filled with footnotes consisting of long excerpts from scholars on the mounds. The creation of national myths for a young country apparently requires much justification as to rights and authenticity. The anxiety, however, does not seem to revolve around the question of whether the United States can claim this indigenous past as its own, for the text expresses a certain confidence in this quarter. Rather, the uncertainty appears to arise out of the question of whether or not these relics truly can support a myth and whether they suggest a civilization grand enough to compete with that of Europe. There is, for example, a strong emphasis in the text on the Anglo-Saxon, Greco-Roman, and Christian qualities of this putative native culture. More striking is the issue of "manhood," which drives the narrative and through which the question of whether this race is "worthy" enough is explored. Racial degeneration (or progress) is specifically figured through masculinity, and significantly, this construction of gender revolves around the question of size. This emphasis on degeneration, manhood, race, and nationalism points not only to the "mutability" argument that naturalized conquest and appropriation, but can also be taken as an early indicator of anxiety, one that highlights the instability within the ideology of

naturalized mutability. This anxiety is twofold. First, is the anxiety over whether this culture is “worthy” enough for American identification and assimilation; whether it’s potential degeneration doesn’t point to something rotten at the core that might reflect badly on an American identity. Second, is the anxiety such a trope forces to the fore: not only whether the United States is bound to degenerate likewise, but whether it already has, thus foreclosing on its national destiny.

Behemoth opens upon a landscape of majestic and epic proportions reminiscent of the canvases of the Hudson River School, a group of American artists who shared a similar agenda of portraying the grandeur and even sublimity of the American landscape:

Upon the summit of a mountain which beetled in the remote west over the dwellings and defenses of a race long since vanished, stood, at the close of a midsummer’s day, a gigantic shape whose vastness darkened the whole vale beneath. The sunset purpled the mountain-top, and crimsoned with its deep, gorgeous tints the broad occident; and as the huge figure leaned against it, it seemed like a mighty image cut from the solid peak itself, and framed against the sky. (1)

While the scenery in this description is depicted as magnificent, even awe-inspiring, it is the rendering of the mastodon which fulfills the proper requirements of the sublime. So huge his “vastness darkened the whole vale,” the creature cannot truly be depicted and what we are forced to encounter is the terrifying image of a “gigantic shape.” Indeed, with one strange exception, it is not until the climatic conclusion that we are given *any* detailed description of the mastodon. Throughout the story, we, like the characters, only understand its size through glimpses -- “shadowy outlines,” the “boundless bulk”-- or through its movements — the path of destruction the monster leaves in its wake.

At one point, the Mound-Builder army does gain the height and distance to view the beast “sporting in the ocean,” but accurate description again falls before the abstract language of the sublime, for the beast presents “in the grandeur and vastness of his

repose, a monumental image of Eternal Quiet. Bronze nor marble have ever been wrought into sculpture as grand and sublime as the motionless shape of that mighty Brute resting on the sea” (53). Even this transcendent vision is incomplete, since part of the beast lies hidden underwater. As he moves to the shore and comes closer, it is only via the description of his movement — “as he came up majestically from the water, a chasm ensued as if the Pacific shrunk from its limits” -- that we can attempt to comprehend his shape and size (53). And, as if to further underline the inadequacy of human vision to behold the size and grandeur of the beast, we are given the abstracted telescopic image of “his small and burning eye,” which deflects the gaze of the men and turns it back upon the army itself “as it stood out conspicuously on the height” (53).

The gigantic mastodon strikes terror in the hearts of the Mound-Builders as an almost supernatural force, and yet he is, at the same time, a brutal force of nature that must be overcome so that the landscape can be put to its proper and foreordained use. This landscape is also depicted as enormous and awe-inspiring, but it speaks of manifest destiny, as Mathews makes clear when he compares the sublimity of the landscape with that of the beast:

The boundlessness of those mighty meadows was in itself calculated to strike an awe through the bosom of the advancing army; before it lay—the Map of the Infinite: a vast table on which, as on the tables of stone the fingers of an omnipotent had written Majesty, Power and Eternity. Contemplations like these were sufficient in themselves to fill the mind of the armed host with feelings of awe and humility, but, when over the immense prairie, they saw evidences that something had passed which for the moment rivalled Deity; more palpable in its manifestations, nearer in its visible strength, and less merciful in its might; when the tracks about them and the desert solitude which Behemoth had created became thus clearly apparent, they shrunk within themselves . . . (50-1)

The most important issue this metaphor of size conveys is whether the Mound-Builders will "shrink" from battle and decline as a civilization or overcome their enemy and justify their claim to settle this awesome landscape. Mathews' descriptions of the culture, the character of its people, and its fortresses make it clear that the Mound-Builders should be worthy of this venture. Concerned with emphasizing the high level of civilization of this American heritage, Mathews depicts the Mound-Builder culture as an empire of massive buildings, technology, and religious tendencies. Indeed, he puts forth the tentative claim that their religion may have even been semi-Christian. Thus, for example, in his detailed description of how the Mound-Builders bury their dead, he writes that "on their now pulseless breasts lie polished pieces of copper *in the form of the cross*," querying whether it can "be possible that those antique warriors were Christian men? That, among them, they thus cherished trophies of the Crucifixion, and upheld the ark of that reverend creed? Or, at least some fragments of the holy structure obscurely delivered over to them by paternal or patriarchal hands?" (15-6).

At the time at which the narrative begins, however, the Mound-Builders have gradually fallen into decline, and thus the question is whether the race will be destroyed or whether it can repeat the heroic deeds of its ancestors, "a majestic race of heroes, moulded of Nature's noblest clay," who had vanquished an entire race of gigantic beasts. This issue of decline is specifically rendered through the metaphors of size and gender: "This mighty and puissant nation, whose strength was that of a giant and whose glory rivalled the sun, was stricken by terror into a feeble and child-like old age. All its proportions were diminished; its heart was shrunk . . ."; "A wide populace was wasting away from a robust and manly vigor into a pale and shadow-like decrepitude. Day by day the august majesty of a prosperous and ambitious nations dwindled into a shrunken and counterfeit image of itself" (24, 81-2). With manliness and youth linked to the gigantic, and cowardice, degeneration, and the counterfeit linked to the small, the question of the narrative literally becomes whether this nation is "man enough" to take on the mammoth

and claim the land. Only one man steps forth, the hero Bokulla, a giant among giants, who convinces his people that this is the question:

A new spirit, or rather the ghost of the old and exiled one, had returned to the nation, and they now saw before them, unless they resumed their manhood and generously exerted strength and council, ages of desolation and fear for themselves and their children. Were they men and should no hazard be dared, no toil nor peril encountered to break the massive despotism that held them to the earth? Were they the possessors of a land sublime . . . ? (29)

Undoubtedly this call was directed also at Mathews' fellow countrymen, who, in his mind, still labored spiritually and intellectually under the yoke of Europe. Thus, this narrative of national manhood not only aided in the myth-making which would provide an American identity through origins, but would also provide a teleology for the future -- a model for American expansion. Like the Mound-Builders before them, the men of the United States had been blessed with a land of extraordinary potential, and it was time to dare the hazard and encounter the toil and peril which would liberate them from the shadow of Europe and subjugate the land to their purposes. But as the questions themselves demonstrate, this was by no means a foregone conclusion.

While the text makes this issue its prime focus, halfway through the novel there is a curious shift in tone and a suspension of the plot line as a more diminutive and, significantly, less epic character is introduced. Representations of the miniature or the gigantic almost always demand the appearance of their opposite, and here too the small makes its appearance as a foil to the gigantic: "the same emergency which elicited the resources of Bokulla's large and fruitful mind, also drew out the vagaries and absurdities of a puny intellect, Kluckhatch by name" (65).⁵ Since the gigantic here is specifically tied

⁵ A point illustrated by the frequency of giant / dwarf pairings in exhibition and in illustrations and photographs. Both are exaggerations according to a culturally

to the heroic and to the notion of race, preliminary descriptions of this dwarf, the “crafty plotter,” follow conventional characterizations of the dwarf as a morally bankrupt atavistic being:

He had a low forehead with prominent cheek bones, and a broad full-moon face with large eyes, in which idiocy and self-conceit predominated, though they were occasionally enlivened with an expression of mirth and good-fellowship . . . On the crown of his head, to complete his garniture, Kluckhatch bore a cap of conical figure . . . Attached to the sides of the cap were two large ear-flaps of deer-skin, or that of some other indigenous animal, made to cover ears as large. (66)

Here, Kluckhatch embodies every stereotype of the dwarf — sly and potentially dangerous, but absurd, out-of-proportion, vain, and comic. This mixture reflects the text’s handling of his character, for, though at first it appears that the dwarf will play the role of an evil schemer, plotting Bokulla’s downfall, we are then given a strangely comic scene in which Kluckhatch tries to battle the Mastodon alone. After the abstract epic language of the preceding episodes, this scene seems designed for comic relief. The dwarf attempts to climb atop the creature’s massive back by means of a ladder, but the mastodon lifts him up with his trunk and deposits him unharmed into a pool of stagnant water where he is stared at by a household of quizzing crows. What is strange is the swift transformation of Kluckhatch from evil and dangerous schemer to clown and corollary transformation of the mammoth, a beast so large and awful that not even the most heroic can stand up to him, into circus elephant. Indeed, as the creature watches the antics of the dwarf his eyes even “twinkle.” A revolutionary in his insistence that the under-appreciated and much ridiculed American scene should be given significance, made to matter, through amplification, Mathews here seems to be following the traditional

constructed scale of measurement that is perceived as a fact of nature. The pairing seems to offer the “normate” the reassurance of the “standard” body’s boundaries on both sides of the scale.

conventions of "aesthetic size," in which small things demand a more comic and informal tone, in contrast to the abstract epic language of the battle between "men" and monster. Once again, the dwarf is produced as comic foil in the construction of standard manhood.

Indeed, Kluckhatch receives very little notice after his death scene, which seems to have been designed solely to explain the fact that a dwarf skeleton had been excavated from one of the mounds. Such a discovery required explanation, if Mathews' fictive vision of a heroic race of gigantic "real" men was to be successful. After his death scene, the narrative soon returns to its early tone of high drama, charting the gradual defeat of the Mound-Builders. Although Bokulla never loses his courage and leads his people heroically, all of his plans come to naught, and the people again grow despondent and become indifferent to what seems their predestined doom.

Even man's technology fails as the Mound-Builders' giant machines of war are smashed to pieces by Behemoth. Mathews' point seems to be that while technology is man's particular birthright, there is an even more important quality that justifies his rule over nature. In fact, at one point, the text aligns Behemoth with engineering, rather than the men themselves: "Was man, who thus out-lasted seas, and stars, and mountains, to be crushed at last by mere brutal enginery and corporal strength" (26). The implication is that man must draw upon some other resource, and during Bokulla's "vision quest," we discover that this more profound quality is Divine aid, justifying man's sense of manifest destiny. Thus, wretched and weary, Bokulla is given a vision of "a conflict mightier than any that his mortal eyes had ever witnessed" in the midst of which "one mighty Figure, neither of man nor of angel, stood chained, and in a deep and fearful voice, cried to the heavens for succor" (93). After this vision of a vague Messianic / Promethan figure, Bokulla discovers Behemoth's lair. His discovery changes the fortunes of the Mound-Builders, for returning to the "amphitheater" they obtain a bird's eye view of the mammoth which allows them to encompass him both visually and literally. The story ends with the containment of the beast within his lair and his slow and agonizing death.

Man thus triumphs, but significantly only when he is able to gain a transcendent vision of the gigantic that encompasses and miniaturizes what before had been an impossibly huge and terrifying force. Mathews' closing statements in the end notes evidence the contemporary intent of this production of the gigantic for the purposes of a fictive battle of strength and eventual triumph:

As our own history assumes a prouder and loftier crest in the noonday concourse and throng of nations, she will more fondly and reverently cast back her regards toward the first fountains of her origin. Is it too much a pastime of the fancy to believe that, as Americans, in the progress of time, attain the stature of a generous manhood, they will more affectionately grasp the shadowy hand extended to them by that dead old nation that built the mounds. (131-2)

II National Myth Building: The Gigantic and the City

Mathews continued this work of national myth building in another novel entitled *Big Abel and The Little Manhattan* published six years later (1845). Unlike *Behemoth*, in *Big Abel*, Mathews attempted to create an allegorical epic of the present, although the past was also of symbolic importance. As Allen Stein points out, the work describes "the two great opposing forces — the kinship with a heroic past and the commitments to an essentially commercial present" which Mathews saw as constituting "the American psyche" (51). Significantly, Mathews chooses to embody the first, that progressive, civilized "present" in the character of Big Abel, descendent of the English Henry Hudson, while the past is literally cut down to size and embodied in Little Manhattan, the pathetic remnant of the once thriving "Manhattanese" tribe who originally inhabited the island. If *Behemoth* illustrates how the gigantic relics of another culture could be appropriated as a usable past in America's myth making, then calling upon many of the same narratives, *Big Abel and Little Manhattan* brings the present to the foreground and demonstrates how

the civilizing progress of the United States can be celebrated and then naturalized *vis a vis* the appropriation of the past as romantic loss.

Mathews' ostensible aim was to illustrate how an American landscape was worthy of literary treatment and to provide a panoramic view of New York. He accomplishes this through the plot device by which Big Abel and Little Manhattan spend a week dividing up the island, which they both claim through their respective ancestors. We first encounter the two when Lankey Fogle ("Little Manhattan") arrives for a rendezvous with Big Abel at the Tower, that "great white tower" described as "rising, ghost-like, in the air, and holding all the neighborhood in subjection to its repose and supernatural port" (1). Mathews' description of this massive architectural feature as the "Ghost of New York" which "haunts" the Big City serves to create a sense of the sublime and invests this American urban landscape with a romantic past. Significantly, while Lankey is alarmed at "how wickedly and wilfully, cool and self-possessed, that old white ghost of a Tower held itself," Big Abel, rising up from the shadows, in a parody of the opening of *Behemoth*, is perfectly at ease and ready to begin the process of claiming his share. As the Tower's indifference to Lankey foreshadows, Big Abel may be comically depicted, but he is the new man, destined to take the city as his natural right, while Lankey and the past he represents are doomed to fade into oblivion. Accordingly, Lankey is described as "a little man" oversized by his own faded clothes, while Big Abel is portrayed as "a goodly figure to look on: a tall square person" wearing "a new blue coat, brass-buttoned" and boots that "whispered in a pleasant creak of the shop they had lately left" (9).

Big Abel is quite obviously a prosperous man, and this prefigures his claiming of trade and the numerous shops which make up the city. Indeed, he quickly learns the importance of this strategy in making his claims; for while he looks to the future and what it will mean to possess these areas of the city, Lankey searches solely for signs of the past and is ultimately cheated due to his lack of vision. And this representation, while romanticizing Little Manhattan as a representative of nature (an "old dark wood, whose

leaves are still”) in contrast to the civilizing force of Big Abel, clearly revolves around the issue of “proper use,” a point to which Little Manhattan remains naively indifferent (38).⁶ Thus, while, Big Abel claims all of the modern thriving market places and businesses, Lankey claims Potter’s Field, because it was an old Indian burial ground, an area Big Abel is perfectly willing to cede since it is simply a “waste ground” with a “few idle trees, ” ”mouldering bones,” and “old flinty arrowheads” (24). Lankey sees differently, “for out of the dark” a vision comes to him of “dusky men who bore to grassy hillocks there, a warrior with his bow, a maiden in her long black tress, a prophet in his cunning robe, and laid them down” (25). Such episodes conjure up a romantic image of the city’s Indian past, but, significantly, this past is articulated solely through dark visions and moldy fragments that sharply contrast with the sparkling, lively scenes that Big Abel claims for his own. These dismembered fragments of the past are thus made available for a re-membering out of which the text can celebrate the New America.⁷ And this process occurs, not simply at the expense of, but actually *through* the romantic sadness that is evoked by these Indian relics, for they add the necessary luster to this fledgling civilization in its competition with the Old World.

⁶ Significantly, one of the few areas of “civilization” that Little Manhattan is given as his own is Barnum’s museum of wild and wondrous creatures. This short scene also foreshadows the obvious conclusion of the contest between the “Big” and the “Little Man” in its description of the painted exterior of the museum which depicts “the Giant, full-length upon his canvass, going to take the dwarf: you see the little fellow quite well if you carry a spy-glass: by way of a pinch of snuff” (47).

⁷ An example of the way in which fragments and wholeness are deployed in the production of a monumental, idealized symbol of the nation is offered by Berlant, who discusses how the public relations campaign to give the statue of liberty a “face lift” aimed to generate national anxiety over the dissolution of a national symbol. The possibility that the statue could become dismembered manifested a “collective sensation of almost physical vulnerability” due to the understanding that the “statue’s stability as a point of national identity depends on her body being indivisible, like America” (23,24): “By passing into citizenship through inscription in the National Symbolic of the body politic that expresses her/him, the citizen reaches another plane of existence, a whole, unassailable body, whose translation into totality mimics the nation’s permeable yet impervious spaces” (24).

The process by which the text is able to perform this fragmentation and then remembering is laid bare in scenes in which Little Manhattan, seeing precious little evidence of his culture's presence in the city, asserts the rights to certain areas based on the fragmentary testimony of certain commercial signs. He attempts, for example, to make claims based on the pathetic evidence of cigar store Indians and "a tawny Indian on a sign, with a store of herbs at the window," recollecting "that once in this hollow was kept a famous Indian revel" (57). These signs evoke visions of the past for Little Manhattan, but the purpose is, again, to naturalize the white man's predestined progress, while romanticizing that very destiny. Little Manhattan is clearly a man out of time -- a man who misreads these commercial signs, misunderstanding that they signify not his culture, but the appropriation and production of "Indian-ness." He is depicted as a man disadvantaged by his limited focus on pictorial signs, in contrast to Big Abel's use of legal documents. Even when it appears that such a focus might actually gain him a larger part of the city than Big Abel had imagined, as if he had, through blind luck, stumbled on the way to read the city, he is stymied. For instance, when he attempts to make a gigantic claim based upon the evidence of the numerous cigar store Indians, Big Abel is able to negate his proof by pointing out a monument that he asserts is dedicated to his ancestor Henry Hudson and which significantly miniaturizes Little Manhattan's Indians: "A Pole of Liberty: a brave big Pole: that looked about the neighborhood high over house-tops and church-steeple too: while Lankey's little Indian (Red-Legs, so he called him) cowered upon the ground" (76).

These scenes of Little Manhattan's loss in the face of Big Abel's larger vision and grasp appear to operate as critiques of the text's vision of the teleological progress of the white race, both in their elicitation of sympathy for Little Manhattan and in their underlining of the way that progress is achieved through the pointed reference to the objectification of Indian culture as a means to sell products. This latter fixation is a rather jarring note in a text which usually cloaks its commodifications through an excess of

romance, a point which is made especially evident in a scene in which the particular commercial sign is embodied by a "Giant Boot" hanging outside a shop. On seeing this sign, Little Manhattan recalls an Indian village that once stood on the spot and where, instead of a giant boot, "trophies hung upon the trees" (21). Here we literally have the body cut to pieces, commodified, and appropriated for the purposes of the commercial present. Stein simply notes that Mathews wants us to understand that "an area can be picturesque because of what it once was as well as what it is now" and that this scene seems to point to "the banality of the contemporary, commercial world," in contrast to what is being lost (76). He is on the right track with this last comment, but he misses an important point. Such a nod to the implied profundity of "Indian" culture neither opposes nor critiques the novel's vision. It does not threaten the logic of the text, because this seeming critique is actually already resolved. It is resolved since we as readers can safely recognize this "banality" precisely because what is "Indian" has already been reproduced as fragment, as something lost. In other words, while the scene threatens to lay bare the mechanism by which Mathews can both glorify the past and naturalize the white man's progress, its potential critique of that progress simply reproduces the text's operations by which "Indian-ness" is produced as inevitable loss in the service of a naturalization of white civilization's progress. A Native American culture is not expropriated here, for, like the gigantic, "Indian-ness" is a function of the text in its ideological construction of a symbol through which the past can be seen to point towards the progressive triumph of the white man. Loss comprises an intrinsic part of that ideological purpose, rather than a critique of it.

This continual production of loss and revival of the gigantic in the service of the construction of a new national identity is also at work in the final scene when the characters climb to the top of the Banking-House roof to celebrate the conclusion of the city's division, Abel "with a high and cheery spirit" and Little Manhattan "with a tinge of sadness in his voice" (86). After Big Abel's health is drunk and his speech over, "Big

Abel walked the roof as though it had been the very top and ridge of all the world” and “called the company to look upon the city (his city, now; in the full stream of his brisk spirits)” (90). As he looks on triumphantly, taking in his city through a bird's eye view, Little Manhattan smokes silently and Mathews asks “did no thought then cross thy spirit of the little part thou heldst in all the shadowy and lighted world? That all they share in it, was in thy old heathen fancy of things gone by . . . a gloomy hollow (worth naught to none but thee), a crooked way, a few dumb Indians at a trader’s door” (91). Big Abel has won the contest, and his success is demonstrated in his ability to encompass this gigantic city within his gaze. As we have noted, representations of the gigantic usually emphasize partial and imperfect vision, but, as Stewart points out, “the nineteenth- and twentieth century obsessions with science, technology, and the occupation of the sky” signify both “an abstract transcendence above and beyond the viewer and the possibility that the viewer can unveil the giant, can find the machinery hidden in the god and approach a transcendent view of the city himself or herself” (90). And, as she adds, this is specifically a “corporate impulse,” the desire for “absolute authority” (90). Here the gigantic is laid out at the feet of the new American businessman, a conquering hero, heralding a new world order.

However, as we have mentioned, this narrative requires the constant production and resurrection of the gigantic in order to drive the teleological trajectory towards progress, and so while Big Abel dominates the city at this moment, the text clearly indicates that it will continually require a strong master in order to be a productive site. The city too is represented as giant, vital and growing and (significantly) male and reproductive:

Westward! Another city back of that. East! He took up Brooklyn in his thoughts, even as a little child; and bade him look into his Father’s face — the city’s! Then Williamsburgh. Then wheeling round — What more? A score of towns Then suddenly he started all unto their feet and bade

them to behold! A light far far away — upon the heights of Harlaem kindled there at Big Abel's prompting. Towards that the city springs, and leaps, and takes such mighty strides, that nothing can be or make a bar to him (90-1).

Here we have a dream of masculine power and self sufficiency, the desire for ultimate authority and knowledge, and one that demands the continual presence of a worthy adversary, since contest attests to and justifies this specific form of authority. In comparison to both this city and its master, Little Manhattan is feminized, portrayed as weak, small. "The city grows; but you decline, I fear" states the narrator, leaving the reader with the vision of "Big Abel with the heart of twenty giants, the leader of it all" and "the great City setting forth toward the mighty Future he is called to fill!" (92, 93). The city in this last scene is figured as a fitting arena for the testing of American manhood and thus also of the national worth. Mathews' construction of the city as gigantic confidently projects a narrative whose future points toward the continual triumph of the new man, who relentlessly gazes ever further in his quest to transform nature into productive civilization.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the city had come to be seen as a less healthy environment for the American male. A crisis ensued in which the urban environment was believed to have produced a generation of neurotic and feminized young men. Rapid industrialization and urbanization, went the argument, had produced a "class of robotic workers and a new class of 'brain workers,'" who had exhausted themselves through "over-civilization" and had lost touch with the physical exertion required of the masculine body (Kimmel 20). This "nerve weakness," or neurasthenia, argued the physician George Beard was the evolutionary outcome of civilization, and thus, as Barbara Will argues was viewed as both a "debilitating disease and as the very condition of the modern American subject" (88). Nonetheless, neurasthenia raised troubling questions about racial and class degeneration, especially when the healthy and strong

male body was figured in medical and sociological discourses as working-class or racially other.

As we shall see, the production of the corporeal gigantic was intricately wrapped up in these concerns of white middle-class men, at the same time that it called upon the narratives of the gigantic discussed above. Thus, for example, we will again see the preoccupation with nationhood, race, manhood, and size played out through the representation of the gigantic body, as well as the themes of dismemberment and fragmentation. However, while both medical experts and freak show entrepreneurs relied on the constant supply of gigantic bodies, the representation of those bodies in scientific debates over racial stature is quite different from that produced by freak biographies. While the gigantic body is used quite confidently by Mathews in his national myth-building in the first half of the century, the living giant created a more troubling question for scientists in the second half worried about racial degeneration. Freak biographies, preoccupied with their own struggles to produce an “authentic” self, worked between these two poles, evoking the association of the giant with the past, but avoiding the question of present race degeneration; producing the giant as a sign of national health and hyper masculinity, but defensively offering proofs of the individual's health and mental state. These concerns are then again addressed in the texts identified as autobiographies, an examination of which follows in Chapter Six.

Chapter Five

Size Matters: Manhood, Race, and the Gigantic Body

The following chapter describes the shift in the deployment of the gigantic from its role in national myth-building to a site upon which notions of race, class, and national degeneration are inscribed. The giant body in the second half of the nineteenth century is represented as both strong and healthy, proof of national superiority, and as a weak and impotent. These dual representations have to do with a new masculine bodily ideal that is emerging during this period and with fears that the “disease” of degeneration was plaguing the nation’s manhood. I turn first to dime novels whose titles suggest that the lead roles will be played by gigantic men, examining the way these positive images of the large body can be tied to the emergence of a new ideal body type and how they are qualified by class factors. This section is also concerned with issues of race, specifically in regard to the figure of the “noble savage.” Here we can detect the shift Philip Deloria speaks of -- the use of the “Vanishing Indian” as a figure of truth and authenticity in opposition to the modernity’s over civilization. When this new representation is merged with the figure of the giant in the dime novel, it generates all sorts of interesting effects and fissures in regard to the ideology of middle class manhood.

The second section investigates the representation of giants in other types of texts and situations, and examines how the gigantic body prompted debates about “stature” and the possible degeneration of “the race.” Here again, we note the deployment of the “noble savage,” by those who believed that the white middle-class male was indeed falling prey to the modern disease of over civilization; the other side, deploying race by pointing to the smaller stature of non-Europeans as proof that white men remained the most physically superior race of human beings. This anxiety generated by giants is also partially resolved by pathologizing the giant. While popular and traditional imaginings of giants usually emphasized their hypersexuality, doctors often portrayed them as weak, impotent, and infirm, calling upon another strain in the traditional representation of

giants. I will then look at how this theme of antagonism between doctors and giants is manifested in narratives of abduction and dismemberment.

The last section will move to the popular exhibition of giants through an analysis of third-person biographies that were sold as advertisements for the show. These lives tended, like the dime novel, to construct giants as powerful figures, but they also engage with the strain of thought that imagined them as weak and infirm. This combination is figured through competitive arguments that a particular giant is the best, the tallest, the most authentic -- and thus worth the customer's money--ironically, because he is the most moderate and thus the most healthy. Uniqueness and extraordinariness are thus proven by moderation, balance, and normativity, revealing a similarity to the emphasis in the miniature on perfect proportion, symmetry, and harmony. Another theme ties the giant to tourism and the landscape in its representation of the giant as a natural example of national exceptionalism. I conclude with the biography of two "fat giants" and the biography of a female giant, exploring the difference made by these varied renderings of the prototypical male giant.

I Dime Novels and Giant Heroes

As Gail Bederman and others have argued, a cultural reconfiguration of manhood occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. The self-restraint and moral manliness embodied in the lean and wiry middle-class "gentleman" were no longer seen as indicators of healthy manhood, and the large, powerful body emerged as both a working class and middle class ideal.¹ This ideal had been popularized earlier in popular fiction such as the dime novel, in which masculine young "giants" fought to clear the landscape of British redcoats, "savages," and crooks. In novels like *Giant Pete*, *The Patriot*, *Red-Ax*, *the Indian Giant*, and *Wenona*, *The Giant Chief of St. Regis*, these powerfully-built

¹ For an analysis of an earlier "intensified ideology of manhood" in the works of Melville, Hawthorne, Emerson, Douglas, Thoreau, and Whitman, see Leverenz, who argues that these writers were reacting to the new entrepreneurial model of manhood.

men offered a construction of manhood that specifically tied large bodies to moral good and normative masculinity. If this is the case, it would seem that the reconfiguration of masculinity was occurring earlier than scholars had believed, and would suggest that the gigantic body of the freak show giant shared a closer relation to the ideal rather than to the abnormal body.

However, while these heroic dime novel giants reveal that the ideal body was more varied, we cannot quite view them as evidence of an earlier transformation in the ideal from gentlemanly figure to virile muscular primitive, nor that the gigantic body was taken as the norm. There are two reasons for this qualification: first, these bodies are most definitely marked by class and race; and secondly, while the titles of these novels suggest that the heroic ideal will be represented by the giant, the narratives usually shift focus to the older heroic model of the smaller gentleman, casting the giant in a supporting role as the loyal companion who helps his captain win his battles and gain the girl. In *Giant Pete the Patriot* (1865), for example, we are first introduced to what we take to be our hero, Pete Francis, the "Virginian Sampson." Francis is described as "a man whom nature had endowed with wonderful physical gifts": "In stature he was about six feet two inches, and of corresponding girth. His shoulders would have done credit to the Farnese hercules, and his strong arms would have done good service in any emergency" (Hamilton 9). Through the introductory skirmishes and exploits, we learn that he is a member of a small band of American rebels fighting the English, but we soon understand that, while admirable, Francis is not our main protagonist; that role is played by his noble friend and commander, the aptly monikered Tom *Manly*. Francis is loyal, strong, brave, and has a native wit in life-and-death situations, and he is given a decent share of the narrative focus, but his primary role is supporting the smaller Manly as soldier and bodyguard of Manly's love, the beautiful Emily Chester.

Francis and Manly exemplify the paired male characters (the trusty "yeoman" and the "soldier-aristocrat") that Richard Slotkin argues are an inherent part of the Cooperian

code that assuages potential problems in the Jeffersonian theory of democracy. As Slotkin explains, "yeoman" characters "are distinctly plebeian, but in their moral character show all the appropriate responses to the racial and sexual tests": "Their love objects are women of the appropriate class; and superior women (or men) evoke in them attitudes of deference" (103). The "soldier-aristocrat," on the other hand, reconciles the "democratic imperative of 'career open to talents' with a social subordination to the landed gentry" (103). Such a character provides the solution because he is detached from a framework of actual aristocratic birth, but embodies certain traditional features of the aristocrat. He thus buttresses the ideology that such an identity is available to all who have a "natural endowment" (103). While both of these examples of manhood are contrasted favorably with the cowardly Lawrie Campbell, a Tory, who threatens to marry Emily against her will, it is clear that the giant "yeoman" has not quite replaced the gentleman. What seems to be occurring is an emergence of admiration for the powerful large body, buttressed and shaped by the older notion of the heroic American artisan, but one that has not quite shifted from class-bound notions of appropriate action and place.

That we might have the early beginnings of that shift to a reconfiguration of manhood as virile and powerful, however, is made evident in another novel *Wenona, The Giant Chief of St. Regis* (1868). Although, again, the hero who gets the girl is not the giant, but a much smaller man, Wenona is given a surprising amount of narrative focus and almost eclipses any activities on the part of the ostensible hero. That this admiration for a newer ideal of manhood seems to be occurring against the formula of the typical dime novel is brought into starker evidence by the fact that this giant is Indian, a corporeal mark against his playing a starring role. Wenona, for example, is initially described as a "noble specimen of the human race" (Hamilton 13), "a splendid type of the animal man," which would seem to construct him along the traditional lines of "noble savage," a formulaic characterization that would in no way challenge the existing power structure of the dime novel (17). However, his presence soon dominates the narrative.

He first comes on the scene when he saves Elsie Dayton, the heroine of tale, from a wild bear. On witnessing this heroic exploit, Dan Ellis, the "Yankee scout," is flabbergasted: "That he should peril his life for a woman of his own race would not have surprised him. But for a white girl and a stranger!" (20). Indeed, due to Wenona's brave exploits and chivalrous conduct, Dan is forced to recognize that "he's an Injin; but, for all that, he's a man" (36). The scout comes to have the utmost respect and admiration for Wenona, a reaction shared by the middle-class hero, Tom Osbourne, and by Elsie; in fact, this recognition of Wenona's superior characteristics signifies their own nobility and gender normativity. Dan, for example, is also described as a "noble specimen of manhood," while Elsie is a perfect example of brave womanhood, "beautiful, spirited, and talented," and Tom is "a brave man, a favorite officer in his regiment" and "a man of 'quality'" (38). Indeed, it is the characters who do not fulfill the requirements of real manhood that fail to see Wenona's nobility and fear and hate him: Caesar the cowardly slave and Nathan Downing, the scheming friend of Tom, who desires Elsie and betrays the settlers. Downing, as a white male, is not portrayed as cowardly like Caesar, but he is cruel, lacks chivalry, and preys on those weaker than himself, indicating a degenerate manhood. Physical descriptions, in fact, suggest his effeminacy: "his dress was a little finer than that of his fellows. The hand which held the rifle at the 'trail' was white as a woman's" (42).²

However, while Tom recognizes Wenona's manhood, he fails to recognize the lack of it in his friend Downing, a lack which Elsie, Dan, and Wenona see instantly. It is this mistake and the subsequent betrayal that he must learn from before he can be produced as worthy of Elsie. Wenona is therefore the ideal by which Tom tests his manhood. Given their frequent meetings, his many rescues of the heroine, and their

² This increased admiration for the "Indian" and focus on white degeneracy reflects the general tendency of the dime novel by the 1870's to replace, as Bill Brown argues, "Indian savagery" with "white greed" as "the most familiar source of villainy" (34).

mutual admiration, the initial pairing actually moves toward a romance between Elsie and Wenona. At one point, Tom teases her for her admiration of Wenona's chivalry, accusing her of being "half in love with the chief," and her reply verges surprisingly close to a transgression of the color line: "In good earnest, I would sooner be accused of loving a man like that, than such a man, for example, as Nathan Downing I consider this poor Indian superior to him in all that constitutes true manhood" (39).

While, however, we are asked to admire this giant character, the text makes it clear through the more villainous actions of the Indians under Wenona's command that he is a rather singular Indian. Elsie's defense of Wenona illustrates this qualification: "No matter if he were ten thousand times an Indian, when he forsook the training of years in an Indian village, and followed the impulses of a noble heart to succor one of a race whom, with good reason, he hates, I for one, am no longer his enemy" (42). Wenona is portrayed as a fit example of natural manhood -- one worthy of the American landscape -- but, as the narrative draws to a close, it is assumed that he and his tribe will be superseded by white civilization. Elsie marries Tom, and Wenona disappears into the wilderness, exemplifying the Cooperian thesis that Indian extinction is an inevitable and natural outcome of frontier expansion. Hence race, like class in *Giant Pete*, in the end, supersedes the potential dominance of a different type of body as the signifier of true manhood.

That we see a simultaneous challenge to and resurrection of the middle-class male body should not surprise us, for as Bederman has argued, the discourses of civilization proved an effective tool for assuming both "primitive masculinity" and "civilized manliness" as the prerogative of the white middle-class male. White men by dint of their gender shared with all men, a primitive masculinity that set them apart from women, but white men, by dint of their race, differed from men of other races in their evolutionary achievement of manly civilization. Thus, while more primitive types of masculinity embodied in the gigantic body of the class and racial other are celebrated in these two

novels, white middle-class manhood *naturally* assumes first place precisely because it can assume both qualities. Having said that, these narratives do evince a certain lack of control in producing an ideology of civilized manhood. The middle-class hero gets the girl in both plots, but, in *Wenona*, the resolution seems strangely forced after the celebration of the gigantic Indian body as the epitome of manhood. And this has especial resonance in the analysis of the freak show giant. As curiosities and freaks, did they stand outside this admiration for the large body, or did this shift play into modes of exhibition?

II A Question of Stature

In considering the representation of these exhibited individuals, Robert Bogdan's modes of exhibition -- the exotic and the aggrandized -- work as well in the case of the giant as they do for the dwarf, but, like the representation of that smaller figure, the categorizations of race and individual also come into play.³ Giants as individuals were often presented in the aggrandized mode, dressed up as soldiers and given military-sounding titles, and they were also exhibited in the exotic mode as warrior princes. Race sometimes determined this distinction, but as Bogdan points out, exhibitionary modes were fluid. One rather tall individual, for example, was exhibited as an exotic Zulu warrior and then cast as an aggrandized military figure (113). As with dwarfs, however, race played a less fluid role in the production of *races* of giants. Like the pygmies, the "Giant Patagonians," for example, were usually exhibited precisely to illustrate the superiority of the white race, and in particular white manhood. In the 1904 Olympics in St. Louis, these "giants" pitted their athletic skills against Olympic "standards," and while they did well in launching stones from a leather sling shot called the bola, they were

³ I will be primarily referring to the giant as male in this analysis in order to highlight the manner in which representations of the giant figured in debates over what constituted healthy manhood. In the case of the exhibited female giants, who were much rarer, representation was shaped specifically by these discourses on masculinity.

deemed inept in the high jump (Carlson 24). As Lew Carlson, notes, the "possibility that white Americans might suffer poor performances in such strange events as bolo throwing or tree climbing evidently did not enter the minds of those recorders who were seeking support for racial notions of superiority which they already took for granted" (25).

While the exhibition by race of both the small and large bodied shared similar purposes, there were different dynamics at work in the construction of the giant. Most importantly, giants were larger than the average man, and so they worked less readily within teleological schemes that showed a gradual increase in stature from the past to the present and from savagery to civilization. The Patagonians could not so easily be presented as the wild children of the human race, perfect examples to point to in showing the superiority of the civilized white male. Indeed, while signifiers of "savagery" were always at hand to insure that exhibition made the right point, the racial giant risked miniaturizing the white man in much the same way as the ethnographic photograph of the white hunter/explorer towering over the pygmy. And, while the idea of "giants in our past" worked wonders for American national myth-building, the idea that men were much smaller than in the past raised concerns which dovetailed with anxieties about civilization, over-refinement, and degeneration.

Thus the "discovery" of races of giants and the exhibition of individual giants in the amusement industry and in medical circles generated a debate about stature, manhood, and civilization. Did giants represent a past race of superior manhood? Were they living examples of the size the Anglo-European race used to attain? Were giants of the non-white races proof that whites were degenerating?⁴ On one side, were those argued that

⁴ This debate continued through the twentieth century, as Fiedler has pointed out. An early twentieth century anthropologist, for example, argued that giants born to standard-sized parents were caused by "the emergence of recessive traits inherited from a race of giants with whom Homo Sapiens must have mated before recorded history began" (Fiedler 101). And, as late as 1969, scholars were debating this issue, as evidenced by *Les Geants et le mystere des origines* which argues that European giants are members of a highly developed civilization from Atlantis. This giant civilization, it elaborates, built

human stature within the white race had been decreasing. One writer in an 1856 article entitled “Degeneracy of Stature” declared that:

With due reference to Young America, it must be confessed that our people are deteriorating in stature. The traditionary fact that “there were giants in those days,” becomes more and more marvelous. . . . We remember our grandfathers as men of commanding height, and full figure, and stern port. Our fathers slightly trimmed down the pattern. The young men of to-day have dwindled not a little. A few days since, we saw the students of ----- College, in a collective body, and, with but few exceptions, they looked dwarfed in stature. Not a quarter of a century since, such a body of young men would have averaged a number of feet in height, exceeding that of the present exceptions. . . . [Man] has been degenerating in that majesty of physical manliness, which has been the admiration of sculptors, painters, bards, and common eyes, in all the ages. We shrink from picturing the physique of the generations to come. Will they be dwarfs actual, pigmies, or fays? (Talmon 201)

Talmon continues execrating the “modern improvements of civilization,” and the “mad spirit of times,” which he believes have caused this deterioration. He specifically links this problem to the artificiality of modern times and modern ways of living, for real giants, both in mental and physical stature, must be allowed to arise *naturally* as they did in the past:

The people of a newly-settled country, where art, luxuries, and consequently competition, are introduced sparsely and leisurely, are of large and handsome physical symmetry. . . . They take time think [*sic*], to grow, and to live. They work slowly, but more often surely. Magnificent

Stonehenge and many other megalithic structures, but was eventually exploited and destroyed by a shorter barbarian race from which contemporary Europeans are descended (Fiedler 102).

results follow--rare, indeed, but only the more grandly conspicuous. They turn out but few master minds in a century, but these are genuine Had any one of the great statesmen, whose bodily presence is no more with us, been reared in one of the modern cities, according to the most model mode, he would no more have attained to the stature of a full man, in any sense, than the plant of the conservatory can rival the noble tree of the forest. (201)

In a thematic reversal of *Big Abel and Little Manhattan*, and only eleven years later, here the city breeds midgets, while the natural landscape produces giants. Indeed, it is the Indian who is the perfect example of manhood:

Before me is a picture of Red Jacke, the great Indian chief. His mien is truly awe-inspiring. There is mark in every line, strength in every relief. His bond and thews and nerve must have been wrought of the iron of life. Who can behold this son of the forest, this red Apollo Belvidere, and not admire? Imagination pictures that this being was made to hug ferocious bears to destruction, to wrench out the eye-teeth of rattlesnakes with agility of Hercules, and to take long moonlight excursions Let not my reader turn from this sketch with horror. A true Indian athlete, en rapporte with mysteries of the mountains, the ledges, the forests, and the Great Spirit, is no contemptible study for the most fastidious. (201)

Unlike the case, earlier in the century, in the example of the Mound-Builders, where indigenous giants were whitened in order to create a mythic American past, the American Giant, the exemplar of American manhood, is now the noble Indian savage. This transformation is mainly effected through the “vanishing” ideology which projected the “Indian” into the past, allowing for his deployment in critiques of white culture, as here the figure is used to exhort white middle-class men to more muscular manliness.

Others, on the opposing side of the debate, likewise looked to other races to determine whether or not the “human” race had declined, positioning non-whites as living proof of the past in a scheme which reinforced the overlaying of teleological time and geography. Thus the writer of an article titled “Is the Human Stature Diminishing?” proclaimed “That man has not degenerated in stature in consequence of the effects of civilization is clear; because the inhabitants of savage countries, as the natives of America, Africa, Australia, or South Sea Islands, do not exceed us in size.” Another writes, “Those people who exclaim against the modern degeneracy of our race, do not know what they are talking about. The well-fed Teuton, or his first cousin the Anglo-Saxon, is an overmatch for any barbarian, where physical strength and endurance are the tests” (“About Giants” 365).

One way in which this anxiety over stature was resolved was by constructing a picture of the giant as a good-natured, but mentally slow and physically weak individual. This minimized the miniaturizing effect he had on average-sized men, in much the same way as that which allayed anxieties over the supposed hypermasculinity of African-American men by transforming them into slowwitted, amiable “Sambos.” While it is true that the very tallest giants (those over eight feet) sometimes suffer from pituitary “defects,” underdevelopment of the thyroid, and other medical conditions, we should not accept this pronouncement of imbecility as unmarked by ideological valence. There was a reason why article after article set up their pronouncements on all giants (and most were nowhere near eight feet) by rhetorically stating that unlike the fairy tale giant, who was savage and powerful, the present day giant was weak, infirm, amiable, but slow. This typing of the giants as paradoxically diminished beings had everything to do with the fact that the metaphor of size signified weakness or force, childhood or adulthood. At a time when the traditional order was being undermined by working women, immigration, and labor unrest, giants posed a significant problem by miniaturizing the white middle-class male, who had been taken both for so long as the standard and the ideal.

Thus, for example, “About Giants” (1870) states that “It is a great misfortune to be a giant. The symmetry of the form is not maintained, the physical strength is not proportionate, and the intellect partakes of these infirmities. Giants, consequently, have never been conspicuous in the prize-ring, have been incapable of protracted labor, have exhibited feeble intellects, and have never attained to great age” (365).⁵ And in an article on the giant Ona of Patagonia (1900), the writer makes sure to describe the tribe’s insufficient mental capacities, not as a general sign of racial savagery, but as an attribute particular to *gigantic* savages:

The mental equipment of the Ona is by no means equal to his splendid physical development. . . . The home life, the house, the clothing-- everything portrays this lack of progressive skill. Instead of the children being well dressed and well cared for, as is the rule among savage races, they are mostly naked, poorly fed, badly trained, and altogether neglected, not because of lack of paternal love, but because of the mental lethargy of the people. (Cook 725)

This “mental lethargy” is further expressed in their language, which he describes as “choking, spasmodic”: The Ona “hacks and coughs and grunts, distorting his face momentarily in the most inhuman manner, and then passes on to the next stumbling block” (725).

⁵ This emphasis on symmetry and the impossibility of it being maintained in large size calls upon an earlier argument. In a 1797 article, for example, the writer, citing Galileo, explains that “what appears very well in models, may be very weak and infirm, or even fall to pieces by its own weight, when it comes to be executed in large dimensions according to the model” (“History of the Giants” 294). He adds that “there are necessary limits in the operation of nature and art, which they cannot surpass in magnitude” (294). However, unlike later medical explanations, he points out that this argument can “never be conclusive; because, along with an increase of stature in any animal, we must always suppose a proportional increase in the cohesion of the parts of the body” (294).

As both these examples make clear, the point is not simply to show that the giant is unintelligent in comparison with the white, middle-class male, but that he is also less capable of feats of strength and labor. Indeed, the particular anxiety indicated in such texts seems to surround the issue of work and efficiency. While describing the giant as “physically weak, personally amiable, and not over-intelligent” and “inactive, often feeble, and never evil-minded” (184, 185), Charles L. Dana, Professor of Diseases of the Mind and Nervous System at the New York Post-Graduate Hospital, also argued that “There will never be a race of giants; nor is it desirable” because “The most efficient work can be got from a medium-sized human machine, as physics and physiology show. Well-fed races, living in good climatic conditions, tend to become a little larger as the generations pass by, but this increase is slight and has, in most races, ceased to exist” (185). Indeed, since the gigantic body was an inefficient machine, an “undocile” body, it was discursively constructed as abnormal and unhealthy: “It follows from my view of the case that gigantism is not a desirable thing, and may be considered even unsanitary and a legitimate object of attack on the part of students of preventive medicine. They should discourage giants and try to find a way of stopping the terrific impetus to nutrition which the boy of thirteen to sixteen experiences when gigantism sets in” (185). Here again, the concept of productivity, as it is tied to the ideology of American Individualism, is used to bar the “giant” from subjectivity and citizenry, but it is now given a particular scientific spin.

Dana’s claims indicate that giants, like dwarfs, were objectified by the medical gaze just as much as they were by the amusement-seeking general public. A favorite scientific topic was the cause of gigantism -- how it should be thought of given the century’s rejection of the “superstitious” explanation of freaks as miracles and signs of God’s will. Popular scientific articles in the early 1870’s were still locating the cause in “vital forces” and nutrition:

Why there should be a deviation of the law of development in a family, raising one to seven or eight feet, which occasionally occurs as a marked phenomenon, is a physiological mystery. With respects to dwarfs, it is admitted that an arrest of growth is in consequence of the sudden suspension of the appropriation of nutrition to the tissues. Why it happens in any case is quite as much of a mystery as the other. Science has proposed no method for unclogging the vital wheels. The function of furnishing the cells with material elements for expansion is forever suspended in some, while in others there is an infusion of vital force that carries on the enlargement of the whole body into gigantic proportions. ("Giants and Dwarfs" 678)

This extraordinary growth, while not considered outside nature's workings, was most definitely regarded as an error. Consequently, while the giants of the Old Testament were admitted as truthful evidence, they were, "as though in violation of a natural law," deemed "predestined to an early extinction" (ibid. 678): "No efforts are able to reproduce or rear into existence such abnormal specimens of manhood. The experiment has been tried, but it was a fruitless enterprise. Nature is persistent, and triumphs at last, however ingenious, extended, or varied our schemes for essentially modifying or thwarting her operations" (678).

Another article concurs with this theory of natural law:

we may reasonably refuse to believe in any such ideas of the 'sports' of Nature. So far from abnormalities in animals and plants being produced as the result of undetermined 'freaks' on the part of Nature, these unwonted conditions can be shown to result from the operation of laws as binding and as inexorable in their sway as those which rule the physical universe at large. ("On Giants" 335)

Here we have an exemplification of the scientific drive behind “the law of error”: to bring all anomaly into the realm of scientific law, order, and rationality. And yet, variation is still defined as the breaking of laws governing normal development. As George Canguilhem argues in his groundbreaking work *The Normal and the Pathological*, “normal” by no means meant a simple qualitative difference from the abnormal, but was ambiguous, designating “both the habitual state of the organs, and their ideal” (126). Thus the freak may no longer be defined as “unnatural,” but the classification of “error” and “abnormality” produces them as non-ideal and actually brings them under greater surveillance as science works to comprehend, to encompass, all phenomena within its scope.

By the 1890’s, scientists were moving away from nutritional arguments as the basis for “gigantism” to focus on the pituitary gland. Thus Dana, in his analysis of a “Peruvian Giant” who came under his “observation” as a specimen of gigantism and acromegaly (a disease causing enormous growth of the hands, feet, face, and chest), notes that after the individual died “there was found a little gland known as the pituitary body, enlarged to many times its original size” (179). From this he argues that this gland could be responsible for gigantism as well as acromegaly, and thus “gigantism was only a form of nervous disease,” giants being “not simply freaks,” but “victims of a neurosis or nervous disorder” (179). Again, while demystifying the giant as monster, these medical discoveries, which now brought him within the range of scientific explanation, did not avail the now pathologized individual. Indeed, now medical evidence could show that not only was the giant weaker and less mentally competent than the average man, he was also neurotic -- a victim of a disease to be corrected or “a legitimate object of attack on the part of students of preventive medicine.”

This scientific delineation of giants as weak and infirm also aided in alleviating another anxiety that was linked to the large stature of the giant. Traditionally giants, like African-American men, were presumed to possess large genitalia and an enormous sex

drive, another sign by which the gigantic body was masculinized, as opposed to the feminized childlike body of the midget. Fiedler, for example, points to the story of an eighteenth-century giant, Thomas Hall, whose giant sex, even while a child, amazed his fellow villagers and terrified young girls. According to Dr. Dawkes, at the age of two, his limp penis measured $3 \frac{3}{10}$ inches in length and $2 \frac{7}{10}$ inches in circumference, a marvel which so intrigued the soldiers billeted in the neighborhood that they would ply him with alcohol and attempt to procure an erection. Thomas died at five years old, his tombstone, even in death, objectifying his claim to fame: “Not *One* Year Old, Had the Signs of MANHOOD; Not *Three* . . . Endued with Uncommon Strength, A just Proportion of *Parts*” (qtd. in Fiedler 119). Fiedler also relates the story of the giant Patrick Byrne (“O’Brian”), who was pursued by Dr. Graham, an early sexologist, in an attempt to involve him in the advertisement of the “Royal Patagonian Bed.” This bed apparently oscillated in time to music and would produce a “superior ecstasy . . . never before thought of in this world” (Qtd. in Fiedler 112). One can easily imagine why Graham desired to test it out on the “largest living male in England.” Byrne, however, declined to participate.

This association of gigantism with hypersexuality was sometimes referred to overtly, but, at others, through sly references to the size of the hand, foot, or boot size. Patrick Cotter, for instance, is described by G. H. Wilson in his *Wonderful Characters* as “proportionably lusty. His hand from the commencement of the palm to the extremity of the middle finger, measured twelve inches, and his shoe was seventeen inches long” (20). Indeed, like boot size, the hand often functioned metonymically for the enfreaked giant. Thus, for example, at the back of *The Life of Monsr. Louis Jacques, The French Giant*, we find an intriguing advertisement that announces that one can buy plaster of Paris models of Jacques’ hands -- “one open, one clenching a baton, and one holding three apples.” Illustration in giant biographies commonly depict the giant calmly balancing a child in the palm of his hand or using the hand to signify the difference in height between

himself and others. Of course, the hand serves as a frequent basis of measurement, but the sexual connotations are unavoidable, reminding us of Bakhtin's grotesque body.⁶ Like the convexities and orifices that Bakhtin points to in the carnival grotesque, the giant hand was also exaggerated and fragmented from the whole body. But, if these corporeal features share a common characteristic in that "it is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome" (Bakhtin 317), the hand, points both to "interchange" between bodies and to its impossibility, for the hand as penis signifies interpenetration, but that giant hand also suggests the inaccessibility of that body miniaturized by its presence. It therefore both threatens a transgression of boundaries and simultaneously reifies them; the calm, classical poses adding to this reification, while the fingers teasingly point to the possibility that boundaries can be penetrated.

Like the Black male body, imagined as primitive, highly sexual, virile, and an engine of brute force, the gigantic body signaled a hypermasculinity, and, as such, threatened standard notions of manhood. If the Black body was disciplined through chains, forced labor, whippings, and lynchings, the gigantic body was disciplined through medical exhibition — enfreaked and pathologized as childlike and impotent. Indeed, in the narratives surrounding late eighteenth-century giants, a predominant theme is the strange relationship between giants and doctors: the almost obsessive fascination for giant bodies on the part of doctors and the subsequent fear and dread these medical men engendered in giants. In many narratives about giants, doctors are depicted as obsessed with obtaining the bodies of giants, to literally and figuratively, through dissection, "cut them down to size." This passion for acquiring "anomalous" bodies is indeed one that applied across the board. As Thomson writes,

extraordinary bodies have been so compelling — so *valuable* as bodies throughout human history that whether they were alive or dead had little

⁶ McClintock notes the class and sexual dynamics at work in the fetishization of hands in the diaries of Arthur J. Munby.

consequence. If live exhibition was enhanced by animation and performance, the display of the dead prodigy embalmed as spectacle, pickled as specimen, or textualized as an anatomical drawing derived from dissection was equally profitable, and often more readable and manipulable. (*Extraordinary* 57)

Joyce Heth, for example, Barnum's first successful exhibition, was exhibited both alive and dead. The autopsy that was performed was a carefully planned media event designed to wring out the last bit of money that could be made from Heth, and the doctor's willingness to participate can be understood from his history of high profile anatomical examinations.⁷ Julia Pastrana, billed as the "Ugliest Woman in the World," suffered a similar fate. Her body and that of her stillborn child were embalmed and then publicly exhibited for profit by her husband and manager. And then there is perhaps the most famous of these horrifying tales -- the case of Sartje Baartman, who was exhibited as the "Hottentot Venus."⁸ After suffering the objectification and fragmentation of her body through the focus on her buttocks and labia in exhibition, when she died, Georges Cuvier dissected her body, literally dismembering the parts of scientific interest, and presented her excised genitals to the scientific community.

While, however, this final objectification of the enfreaked individual, this transformation of people into things, was common generally, there is no doubt that sources make an especial emphasis in the case of giants. This is additionally significant, given the racial and gender politics which are manifest in the above three examples, when we consider the fact that these giants were identified as white men. G. H. Wilson, for

⁷ For a thorough analysis of Heth's exhibition see Benjamin Reiss' *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America*.

⁸ One of the best examinations of the racial and gendered politics of Baartman's exhibition is Sander Gilman's "The Hottentot and the Prostitute" in *Difference and Pathology*.

example, describes how Cotter laid elaborate plans to ensure that the doctors would not steal his body after he died. Wilson writes that, "The leaden coffin in which his body was enclosed measured nine feet two inches, and the wooden case four inches more. To prevent any attempt to disturb his remains, of which he had the greatest horror, his grave was sunk to the depth of twelve feet in solid rock, and such precautions were taken as effectually to render abortive either violence or stratagem" (33). As Fiedler notes, he was probably motivated by the disturbing story of the giant Cornelius McGrath whose corpse was stolen by the students of Trinity College on the very day it was to have been waked and then dissected by the students' teachers (111). His bones are still on display in the museum at Trinity.

That this type of narrative had become legendary is evident in a comic article from 1872 called "Talking to a Giant." I reproduce a large excerpt of this story, as it touches on a number of the themes discussed in this analysis. The article is structured as a conversation between a reporter and a giant, who discuss a number of the characteristics of a giant's life. While boasting of his popularity with the public, the giant character suddenly changes tack midstream and bemoans the fact that "some requires me utter dead." "Skeletons," he explains "with a shudder":

Ain't it enough that I am delighting and astounding a critical public every day, that they must be exacting after my death? A reputation such as mine, I know must exist in all times, and I have already a biography out with cuts which must forever preserve my memory This morning at the matinee, a party comes out of the audience. He was dressed in a kind of seedy black with a white cravat on. . . . I knew he would be amazed with me, and so he was, but he kept bothering me with questions, such as the public have no right to ask. It was about my heart: did I ever have pains there, and how much my pulse beat, and other things of the most searching kind. . . . I had made up my mind he was in the exhibiting business and wanted me. I asked him, 'Was he in that line?' He kind of smiled and showed his teeth, and says he, 'Not of your kind.' Finally said he, 'Look here, my friend; you are the object of my life. I am a professor of osteology -- that's bones, you know -- in the biggest college out west. An opposition concern in the state, of no standing, is drawing all our students from us. They are always bragging about their collection. They have a

dwarf there -- it's authentic, no humbug about it -- that's the smallest in the world, and they advertise that far and wide. . . . Now to take the shine out of that concern, we are determined, cost what it may, to have the biggest specimen on record. Now I know you wouldn't mind it a bit, if after a while all nice and polished, elegantly prepared, you were an infinite source of pride to us and the institution in a neat glass case, with your name and age and size on it alongside of the megasauros. . . . "What! dead?" I asked. "Just so . . ." . "It is," he went on to say "the most flattering tribute I could pay to your size."

As this story illustrates, the public was fully alert to the macabre aspects of medical science and its similarity to freak exhibition. That the giant mistakes the professor's object is not surprising, given medical science's competitive drive to possess the most extraordinary bodies -- whether the smallest or the largest -- and the way it instituted and authenticated itself through possession of the best objects. Profit, as the article satirically points out, was also a factor, just as it was in the freak show market.

Perhaps the most famous tale of giant bodily abduction, and one that the above story is most probably indebted to, is that involving Byrne and James Hunter, the famous surgeon. Hunter shadowed Byrne relentlessly, even showing up at his shows, as if to make sure that he would have first rights to the corpse. Terrified, Byrne paid to have his body encased in a lead coffin and to then have it dropped in the sea to ensure that his remains would not be profaned by Hunter's knife. Hunter won the chase, however, by paying off the men involved, and the coffin that went into the sea contained only Byrne's clothes. Fiedler adds an extra rather gruesome detail by noting that in a painting of Hunter in his operating theater by Joshua Reynolds, one can make out Byrne's thighbone hanging in the background, a horrific example of the doctor's success and the final transformation of human into thing, whole into fragment. Like the moldy fragments of the imagined virile civilization of America's Indian past used to construct a discourse of American identity and destiny, this thighbone likewise signals the final colonization of the threatening gigantic male body: its dismembering and re-membering for the purposes of producing a scientific discourse thoroughly invested in establishing and protecting the

normative status of the middle-class, white male body against threats posed by the larger stature of these white men.

This dismembering is also a gendering of the gigantic body, as Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum point out in *Defects: Engendering the Modern Body*. In discussing John Hunter's pursuit and abduction of Byrne's body and Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-8), they argue that

these twin narratives of illicit desire, abduction, and bodily possession reveal an uncanny alliance between monstrosity and femininity, between scientific truth and sentimental fiction, an alliance based on a common fascination with the anomalous. . . . Whether the anomaly be the exceptionally virtuous heroine or the exceptionally tall man, both the libertine and the surgeon unite in a common curiosity -- a scientific mission tinged with supernatural wonder and sexual impotency -- to see beneath the surface of apparent mystery. (15)

In both cases, they add, "curiosity aims to destroy what it seeks by reducing anomaly -- through dissection's revelations -- to the norm" (15). While it may not be the case that the aim is to entirely reduce the anomaly to the norm -- after all, it is as extraordinary spectacle that the dissected pieces are of importance -- this argument underlines the emasculation at work. It also points to the desire operating in these narratives, but again it misstates the way this strange economy of desire functions in regard to the medical community and giants. While seemingly the impulse is solely to contain the anomalous body that threatens systems of classification and/or middle-class notions of manhood, this community actually thrived upon the constant stream of anomalies as the justification for its very existence. We thus see a movement of desire to both dismember and produce the anomalous body, a simultaneous logic akin to the repulsion and desire, objectification and identification at play in the dynamics of the freak show. Thus, here again, even in this literal destruction and appropriation of the lived physical body, we see a productive logic

functioning: the anomalous gigantic body as a necessary element in the construction of various medical fields.

III Biographies and Giant Exhibition

The representation of giants within the freak show was shaped by the imagery, concerns, and themes discussed above in regard both to the general representation of the gigantic and to the gigantic body in folklore, popular fiction, and medical discourses. However, while the scientific community projected an image of the giant as weak and impotent, freak shows tended to construct the giant as powerful and strong, tapping into the same trajectory of growing admiration for the large powerful male body that was functioning in the dime novel. Thus, one of the most common representations of the gigantic body was the giant as soldier or warrior. As we noted in Bogdan's example of the same individual being presented at different times as both exotic Zulu warrior and aggrandized military man, race was a semi-fluid factor in this presentation of the hypermasculine soldier giant. However, particular giants were just as likely to be exhibited in more rigid displays of race, in athletic competitions, like the St. Louis Olympics, designed to illustrate the Patagonians' weakness in contrast to that of the Anglo-Saxon. Hence "Homegrown" or at least white giants were especially prized as examples of both superior manhood and racial superiority, as is illustrated in an article cited in the *Memoirs of Robert Hales, the Norfolk Giant* (1848):

A MAN THAT IS A MAN.—If any one has a curiosity to see a full blown specimen of manhood—a figure that realizes the Fouriete conception of the ultimate of bones and brawn, which affords a basis for the imagination to build upon when striving to embody the possibilities of our fleshy existence—let him, or her, as the case may be, call upon Lord Hales, at the American Museum. (12)

While strong virile manhood was important, in the case of ‘aggrandized’ or non-racialized giants, examples of a civilized nature were also imperative. Consequently, as in the exhibition of midgets, a common strategy in representation was to emphasize the individual’s gentleman-like characteristics. Such a construction served both to aggrandize the giant, positioning him higher in the hierarchy of freaks, and to create a teasing tension between the extraordinary and ordinary qualities of the individual on display. Another similarity with midget exhibition was the obsession with size, only, with giants, the point obviously was to produce the “Tallest Man” alive. Barnum, for example, famously declared that he would show no giant under the size of seven and a half feet. To be of significance then, one had to prove the extreme. As with the midget, this also meant that a subject's identity was often dependent on competing for and fulfilling a pre-assigned category. There were, for example, three contestants for the title of the "Irish Giant": Cornelius McGrath, Patrick Cotter, and James (Charles) Byrne. What makes matters more confusing is that the latter two also exhibited under the name O'Brien, both vying for the right to the ancient royal title. Hence, as is discussed below, identity is produced in these biographical narratives through an emphasis on both normativity ("healthiness," "authenticity," "autonomy") and singularity ("tallest," "most authentic," "healthiest," etc.).

The Healthy Gentleman Giant: The Life of Monsr. Louis Jacques

The Life of Monsr. Louis Jacques, The French Giant, published in 1822, provides a prime example of the way these two different emphases are interconnected in biographical representation. The question of authenticity and self-authorization, so important in the competitive world of giant and midget exhibition, is immediately addressed by the title page which states that the work is “Translated in part from some curious manuscripts in his own hand-writing.” This question of authenticity is then further outlined in the "Introductory Remarks" in which the debate over historical giants

is engaged as a way to prove that Jacques, unlike other contemporary giants, is neither a freak nor a fake. First comes the argument that gigantic stature was both normal and manly: “longevity was, no doubt, in proportion with such strength of body, and strength of mind must have been the natural consequence of a length of years employed in manly exercise, untainted with intemperance” (6). Of course, “now the man who exceeds seven feet is reckoned a prodigy” and “few, even of that stature, now possess the strength of a man of five feet eight or nine inches” and the “reason is clear, they overgrow their strength, and become either, from want of exercise or proper management, unwieldy, burdensome, and often deformed” (6-7). Thus, in order to position Jacques as preeminent, the writer calls upon the nostalgia of a prelapsarian manhood to both argue for the gigantic as healthy and manly and to show Jacques’ uniqueness amongst contemporary giants — most are deformed anomalies. And if they are not freaks, they are fakes: “Many men have been exhibited as Giants, whose real height possessed nothing at all extraordinary for they were either “made up” or “raised on platforms” (7). This “is the paltry deception of many who frequent fairs and low places of that sort,” those who “have the impudence to exhibit as Giants, for the mere sake of plunder” (7). But not “so the subject of these Memoirs, M. Louis JACQUES, whose height is SEVEN FEET FOUR INCHES, and whose strength is beyond all imagination, owing probably to the exercise he has taken in his country, and his moderate living” (8). “Moderation” is the key term here, for the argument rhetorically produces Jacques as the preeminent giant (tallest, strongest, or most “real, etc.), ironically, by positioning him as the moderate mean. If on one side we have the freakish giants, individuals who have overgrown their strength (too big) and on the other, ordinary-sized men who use deception to become giants (too small), in the middle between these limits, we have Jacques, who is just right.

This theme of healthy moderation is tied to the text’s presentation of Jacques as a gentleman giant. After the introductory remarks, for example, the text moves to a discussion of Jacques’ family background and childhood. We are told that “His father is

an Officer of the Forest Guards, and Comptroller of the Sale of Timber” and that “he is one of the most respectable men of the town in which he lives, and has been twenty-six years Mayor of Neuville” (9). “At nine months,” Jacques “could run about and was very strong and healthy” and “at the age of nine he commenced that sort of exercise most likely to develop his strength and increase his growth--shooting and hunting” (10). “As to his education,” he “received a tolerable good one, and is naturally fond of books, and has a desire to improve himself in useful and polite knowledge, he is particularly partial to music, and can dance very well” (11). As a healthy young gentleman Jacques had no intention to exhibit himself, “but having so many pressing offers, he at last consented, not from motives of interest so much as to enable himself to visit different countries and satisfy public curiosity, in the end to realise the means of living respectably, and making the latter days of his respectable father happy” (12-3). Indeed, it “is not his intention to exhibit himself at fairs or any other than the large towns where he intends only to stay a short time, as he is aware that the respectability of the Exhibition should be particularly attended to, and every precaution has been taken to avoid deception of any kind” (16). As to his health now, “it is true that his strength is not quite so great now as it was two months back, but that may be easily accounted for, by the change of climate and diet as well as by the confinement itself” (16). He “has never suffered the slightest illness, and is now two-and-twenty without having attained his full growth”; “His appetite is no greater than an ordinary man’s; he eats moderately and drinks but little” and he exercises every day, walking twelve miles “without any sort of fatigue” (13,14, 15).

This portrait of propriety, proportion, and moderation is buttressed by the conclusion of the text, which gives a short synopsis of other giants in order to show that most were weaker than Jacques or used trickery to gain height. Thus we are told that O’Brian was “so infirm and weak it was not without pain that he could rise; he was not well proportioned” (17-8); that “Mr. O’Burn was a very powerful man; but ill proportioned and latterly very weak” (18); that “Mr. Bradley measured seven feet two inches . . . was of

a bad proportion, and far from an agreeable physiognomy, of ill health and weakly constitution" (18-9]; and that "Mr. Toler measured six feet eight inches; but used cork soles, a platform, and other deceptions" and was "of bad proportion, extremely disgusting, and died of consumption (19). In summary, then, in this picture of Jacques, we can see the way the text not only reacts to more negative medical representations of the giants, but how it actually uses them to construct Jacques as extraordinary, unlike other giants, specifically by emphasizing the theme of moderation to produce a picture of healthy manhood.

Tourism and the Giant Soldier

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the gigantic features of the American landscape played a key role in the production of an American identity. The gigantic peaks, trees, waterfalls, and caverns that dotted the landscape seemed further evidence of the exceptional and extraordinary nature of the American experience. Celebrated in painting, literature, and photography, these features were gradually constructed as tourist attractions, sites of amusement and national pride. The growth of tourism then functioned in much the same way as the freak show, especially when we consider how the latter produced its "stars" as national prodigies, one-of-a-kind sensations that could not be seen anywhere else on earth. These sites of amusement and leisure can also be connected through their similar emphasis on measurement. As Sears argues, this obsession with measurement was specifically connected to a colonizing impulse:

The emphasis on assessing the size of objects at Yosemite appears closely tied to the mapping and measuring activities which were being carried out throughout the world in the second half of the nineteenth century, and very extensively in the American West where the various government surveys prepared the way for settlement and exploitation of the region's natural resources. The presentation of measurements and the comparison of

objects according to their size are the common matter of guidebooks. In one sense such statistics are tourist trivia, similar in their appeal to the weight of the fat lady at the circus. More significantly, they function, paradoxically both as a means of bringing extraordinary phenomena within a rational framework and of certifying that tourists are in the presence of something which transcends their familiar world. Measurement is the point where science and tourism meet and wed. For the scientists measurement is an essential step in the accurate description of an object and a basis for determining its nature and origin. For tourists measurement is the means of validating an object's uniqueness. (137)

Sears makes two very important points here in terms of the analysis of freak exhibition and biography. First, he pinpoints the paradoxical nature of the exhibition of the extraordinary: the way in which measurement of an extraordinary phenomenon is a way of bringing it “within a rational framework,” or in other words, making the freakish legible for the very purpose of attesting to its extraordinariness. This paradox recalls the scientific explanations of physical anomaly in which science declares it can understand and contain freaks within its taxonomies, yet still categorizes them as deviant, anomalous, or erroneous. There is also something similar to our analysis of the way the gigantic functioned as a necessary antagonist of man, to be conquered and yet to be continually reproduced in order to further the workings of a teleological system of national destiny. Here extraordinary features of the landscape and extraordinary human beings are mapped and measured, controlled, but their very worth is in their ability to constantly threaten the system which made them legible in the first place. And significantly, this power to disturb is not found outside the measuring gaze — a supranatural quality — but is actually conferred by that gaze which produces it through numbers.

The second important point is Sears' connection of the tourist guide book with the freak biography, for the two have much in common. Many freak biographies, in fact,

bear a striking resemblance to the guide book or travel narrative, frequently making it difficult to discern which is the primary focus. One such text is *The Cape Breton Giant: a Truthful Memoir* (1899), which, in spite of its title is not simply a biography of Angus MacAskill, but a travel guide of Cape Breton, combining anecdotes from MacAskill's life with a geography and history of the island. Written by a local school teacher, the text is an advertisement for the area, and MacAskill is positioned as one of the main attractions:

[I]t may be remarked that, as the climate of our island is grand, that it is reasonable to suppose that MacAskill, the hero of our tale owed some of his size and strength to his being bred here for the most part. Yes, our island is conducive to the growth of humanity. A visit to us will convince anyone of this. While all admit that our hero was by far the greatest of all, the average Cape Bretonian is little less than a giant, comparatively speaking. (Gillis 16)

While the author's logic may seem rather clumsy, it is important to remember that this period attributed much to the effect of geography on racial development. Canada was as proud of its ability to produce strong and extraordinary men as its neighbor, and obviously viewed such prodigies as sufficient reason for attracting visitors. That there was even quite a competitive spirit is made clear in a statement in which the biography casts a shadow of doubt on the measurements of America's "great men.":

The people of the United States, generally speaking, love their country and their countrymen to a remarkable degree. This is not unreasonable, for their country is a great one, and they have had their great men. But some Americans go so far as to ignore the idea that there are countries and men in other longitudes and latitudes as great as theirs.

The above remark is intended to warn the reader to be cautious in weighing the patriotic effusions of our friends 'over the border.' Let the

Canadian study neutral statistics, and then decide for himself about the comparative greatness of the United States. (72)

It is also important to point out that MacAskill is specifically represented as a man of Herculean strength, power being as significant as height in what makes him such a wonder. This suggests that, while the medical community at this time predominately categorized giants as impotent and infirm abnormalities, and even though the “strong man” had emerged as a separate type of exhibition from the giant, there still was a tendency in popular culture to couple largeness with strength. Furthermore, the text is intent on portraying MacAskill as a homegrown, “natural” giant, produced less through a freak of nature or through American trickery than through the proper workings of nature in a climate beneficial to physical development. Thus his feats are described as “real, and devoid of all trickery, jugglery, and sleight of hand” and MacAskill as “a giant of nature, who never attended a gymnasium” (44). The Cape Breton air, it seems, naturally produces such fine specimens of manhood as MacAskill.

The *Biographical History and Adventures of Col. Routh Goshan* (1870) makes no such claims for Jerusalem where Goshan was born, but it too is a strange mix of travel narrative and biography. Indeed, the biographical details of Goshan’s life often seem to be simply opportunities for the writer to insert travel narratives about the places Goshan visited, such as Oregon, the South Sea islands, and Mexico. While the Cape Breton text connects the extraordinary individual with an extraordinary landscape in order to encourage tourism, the emphasis in Goshan’s life seems to be a common sense understanding that one curiosity deserves to be supplemented by others. In this, the biography is similar to biographies of freaks who were exhibited in the exotic mode and whose narratives thus demanded sketches of their “native habitat.”

The difference between this narrative and those of exoticized freaks, however, is that Goshan, even as an “Arab,” is not presented as an exotic, but as an example of the “Gentleman Soldier” giant. Indeed, this narrative often reads like a dime novel in its

admiration for the physique and bravery of its hero and the gusto with which it relates his heroic exploits. We are told, for example, that when Goshan fought in the Mexican service against the French, the enemy required an entire regiment to capture him and that his imprisonment was but temporary, for he was able to make a magnificent and daring escape. Hence, while the narrative makes sure to emphasize his gentleman-like qualities — he was educated at a military school in Dublin and speaks seven languages — its primary focus is the perfect male physique on display. Describing his career in the Turkish & Austrian army, for example, the text declares that:

his stalwart form was ever foremost in the fight, and his body repeatedly proved a vulnerable mark for the bullets of the enemy. Perhaps the most remarkable characteristic of the Colonel is his exquisite symmetry of form. No model ever used by a sculptor could be more accurate and harmonious in outline than the body of this colossal yet amiable and charming gentleman. His vast expanse of chest gives token of herculean strength, while his dark proud eyes, and short upper lip, give unmistakable proof of the proud race from which he sprung. (22)

The text is also replete with illustrations that portray Goshan as man above all others. The plate entitled “Battle of Inkerman,” for example, depicts Goshan towering over a regiment of soldiers as he points with his sword, giving the order to fire the canon. Indeed, the other men in the picture are quite miniaturized and barely reach his waist. We are given a full illustration of the way in which the gigantic miniaturizes what we have come to think of as standard and the way the miniature is subsequently represented as automaton or toy. This latter quality is emphasized by the stiff portrayal of the soldiers and the sketchiness of their facial features, in sharp contrast to more realistically rendered Goshan. This miniaturizing effect is again emphasized in “When Captain Goshan Lead the Charge at the Battle of Solferno.” Here, Goshan, at the front of his regiment, faces off against the opposing cavalry, a pose that places him squarely in the center of the frame,

flanked by much smaller men and horses. Interestingly, his horse is drawn in proportion to his body, making his form the standard by which all the others are made unnaturally small. A third illustration depicts Goshan placed next to a standard-sized woman, holding a young girl in the palm of his large hand. Significantly, here the illustration avoids the miniaturizing effects of the former illustrations, allowing the standard-sized females to stand as they are. The underlying assumption seems to be that Goshan would naturally tower over women and girls. The point in this illustration is to convey the more kindly male giant, the gentleman soldier, who, while a brutal, powerful force in war, is gentle with women and children in the private space of the home. As all three illustrations show, Goshan, more than any other giant, is represented as both the model and standard male, by which men may judge themselves, not as “normate” to freak, but as inferior to ideal.

“Fat” Giants: *The Lives of John and Mary Powers*

While not all giants were represented like Goshan, they did, for the most part, gain from the association of size with strength, even men whose corpulence seemed to rival their great height. Men and women who were enfreaked as “fats” have less of a history as curiosities than giants and dwarfs, who became the pets or singular bodyguards of various European kings and aristocrats. Indeed, as Fiedler notes, many of those rulers themselves were known for their corpulence, and it is not until the late eighteenth century that the “Fat Man” became enfreaked and exhibited on the freak show circuit (127-8). Individuals enfreaked as “fats” were usually represented, like giants, as amiable, although this quality was emphasized more, calling upon the commonplace assumption that corpulence and jolliness went hand in hand. From the late nineteenth into the twentieth century, this representation of the “Jolly Fat” was transformed into the ridiculous, as freak presentation itself became more whimsical, more overt about its fabrications and exaggerations. As Bogdan argues, during this time period, the “presentation of extremely obese exhibits

came closest to a purely mocking mode,” containing elements of farce, ridicule, and humor: “People who weighed over five hundred pounds took on names such as ‘Tiny Brown,’ ‘Baby Ruth,’ ‘Alpine,’ Jolly Trixie,’ and ‘Dolly Dimples.’ Huge women wore dainty, little girl’s outfits, danced soft shoe, and chuckled” (114).

Besides the changes at work within freak exhibition, we can perhaps also tie this increased emphasis on mockery and ridicule to the campaigns against “fat” which begin at the turn of the century and gain force through the twentieth.⁹ Prior to this movement, corpulent men and women had been presented in a more mixed mode that compounded “fatness” with “giganticism” and strength, and which, while containing elements of the humorous (as most freak exhibitions do), was much more driven to competitive measurement. In other words, there was less differentiation between the “fat man” and the gigantic man, for an individual was often exhibited as both, and the emphasis was on producing the largest man of a particular state or of the entire country, rather than self-consciously mocking freak exhibition through the ridiculous. While the association between obesity and idleness was viewed as a commonplace, there was less fervor about this than in the twentieth century and less of connection made between obesity and ill health. Fatness, in other words, had not quite become pathologized, and this is perhaps the reason why we see the merging of the giant and the fat man.

A case in point is John Powers, who traveled in Barnum’s “Museum, Menagerie, and Hypodrome.” Although weighing five hundred and twenty-five pounds, Powers was titled the “Giant Boy,” and much was made of his great height (he was reputed to stand at six feet, four and half inches). Accordingly, this 1873 biography focuses on growth and largeness, rather than simply obesity:

Without doubt he is the largest and heaviest boy of his age, not alone in America, but probably in the whole known world and as such he is

⁹ For an analysis of this turning point in which “fat” became a cultural target see Part I of Peter Stearn’s *Fat History*.

acknowledged by all showmen. History never recorded such an immense growth and development of the human body, in such an incredibly short time--and, it was left to the present age to produce such a grand specimen of the genus homo, that forces all giants of fairy land to dwindle down to mere pigmies and dwarfs. (9)

Here too we see the competitive aim to establish Powers as the "largest and heaviest boy," "not alone in America, but probably in the whole known world." Such statements, while containing hints of satire, still illustrate a certain patriotic and serious intent to produce Powers as an American Wonder.

This nationalistic impulse is also made evident in the description of Powers' parentage and ancestry. When "England and their allies, the Savages, endeavored to wrest from our country the palm of liberty and peace which the immortal men of '76 had gained for themselves and their future descendants," we are told, Powers' father "rallied as one of the first gallantly under the dear old flag and went cheerfully where his country and duty called him" (3). His son, we are to conclude, is doing his part by growing into the largest boy in the country. The biography is replete with measurements -- weight, height, calf, thigh, hips, waist, breast, glove, hat, and boot size -- to prove this. Powers becomes even more of a national treasure because his sister is, likewise, the heaviest woman in America:

And now, dear reader, comes the most wonderful part of our sketch, such an incomprehensible and extraordinary freak of nature as has perhaps never been equaled or surpassed in the history of the world. Behold a sister, by nearly two hundred pounds, the heaviest woman on this continent and a brother, the largest boy of his age in America, who, the two alone weigh more than their other seven brothers and one sister combined, for Master John and his sister, Mary Jane, pull down the scales

at 1307 pounds, while the aggregate weight of the other eight does not exceed 1249 pounds. (6)

While these various measurements emphasize Powers' gargantuan size, the text makes sure to depict Powers, like Jacques, as moderate and healthy. Thus we are told that he is "of a strong and healthy constitution" and that "he has so far withstood the dangerous temptations of strong drink and dissolute habits and remained a good boy . . . He is very moderate in his eating" (12). Such claims foreground the construction of authenticity through moderation, as if weakness and disease somehow invalidate the wondrous nature of the curiosity. To be a "real" giant, in this line of argument, one cannot be of an entirely different nature from the spectator (diseased and truly abnormal), but must share in the qualities that make up the standard human being. The appeal is then engendered by the fascinating difference in size. Thus newspaper excerpts are included that depict obesity as a healthy solidity, rather than an enervating weakness. One notes, for example, that "He requested us to feel his body, and his flesh we found to be as solid as if he had been through [*sic*] course of gymnastic training" (26).

The representation of Powers' sister Mary likewise emphasizes this gigantic "healthiness." Even though she was billed as "Barnum's Fat Lady," the biography also refers to her as a "giant," describing her as "very moderate, and very temperate in every respect" and noting that "One would hardly believe how little nourishment such a heavy person needs and takes" (11). Indeed, her great size is specifically produced as a sign of a healthy constitution. When she was a young child, we are told, "she was very weak and delicate," but "hardly had she entered upon her sixth year when suddenly a miraculous and astounding change came over her nature and her whole system. Her health became strong and vigorous and her quick and extraordinary growth and incredible gain of weight called forth the utmost astonishment of . . . every person who happened to see this wonderful child" (6-7). As we can see from this statement, obesity is still viewed as

something wondrous that occurs naturally, rather than an individual failing which can be corrected through self-exertion.

Although touted as a perfectly healthy specimen, Mary Powers' life was still that of a curiosity who was publicly exhibited, and her life seems to have been full of humiliations and setbacks; regardless of the positive spin the biography puts on her life. When she was exhibiting at Barnum's museum, for instance, she was caught in the fire that burned that establishment to the ground. Although she managed to escape, she lost everything (\$1,800 in clothes and \$367 in money). She was also deprived of her employment, and the small amount allotted to her by a benefit for the victims did not cover her boarding and clothes, the latter demanding a huge outlay considering her size. Although Barnum soon gathered up some of his "curiosities" for a short tour, after its conclusion, she was compelled to shift for herself. "Bamboozled" by the next manager, she then suffered the humiliation and pain of breaking through the berth of a riverboat. This accident was repeated on another tour when she broke through a box designed to help her into a wagon and was badly hurt. The inclusion of these last two incidents in the biography seems designed to again showcase her immense size and also as possibly humorous anecdotes, but the humiliation must have been horrific. This, of course, raises questions about the difference gender made in the representation and experience of the "fat giant." While Fiedler writes that "excessive fatness seems archetypically female, and monstrous skinniness male" and that "Fat ladies are, in short, the most erotically appealing of all freaks" (134, 131-2), such statements are, as Rachel Adams, points out, a reflection of the way his "own desires form the basis for his theory of natural human drives" (152). His version of psychoanalytic criticism, besides, fails to account for the way the culture was gradually coming to admire slender female bodies in contrast to the larger male bodily ideal. The gigantic female body, therefore, was more of a disturbing anomaly than an erotically charged archetype that returns us to "the superabundance of female flesh which *we* remember from *our* first [love]" (Fiedler 131; *emph. added*).

Sylvia Hardy: The Womanly Giant

If the giant was gendered as a male phenomenon, how was the female giant, or “giantess,” presented? Though rare, female giants were indeed exhibited throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Anna Swan, the “Nova Scotia Giantess,” for example, was one of Barnum’s most famous “curiosities.” Another famous female giant was Sylvia Hardy, born in 1827 and billed as the “Maine Giantess” in her 1856 biography. Hardy was born in 1824, in Wilton, Maine, to Jane Dolley and John Hardy, a “peaceful and independent farmer” (10). Though cared for by numerous local families, Hardy seems to have been forced into public exhibition out of financial necessity mainly due to the loss of her father, adopted parents, and stepfather. While hardly suffering the humiliations encountered by enfreaked individuals displayed in the lowest spheres of exhibition, she did, as her biography relates, suffer extreme mortification given the public display of her enormous size. Exhibited in the “respectable” mode, Hardy’s presentation was shaped by the uneasy combination of nineteenth-century femininity and corporeal largeness. If the latter signified masculinity, it also pointed to a certain racialization of her white body in that a perceived lack of sexual differentiation was often used as an indicator of non-white racial primitivity. Given these obstacles to respectability, Hardy’s biography is of interest for the way it works to produce gender conformity within the

¹⁰ The gendered production of the “giant” often meant that female giants simply weren’t recognized as such, as is pointed out in an *New York Daily Tribune* article from 1897, which ties the recent exhibition of Ella Ewing to “advances” women in are making “into almost every station that was formerly occupied exclusively by men”: “If you have seen Miss Ella Ewing, the giantess of the Barnum and Bailey show, you possibly thought that she was simply an overgrown country woman, not beautiful or shapely, or particularly interesting. Yet if you look at her carefully and are familiar with the subject, it must occur to you that she is rather a good example of a giants, as giants go. She does not lack much of being as tall as the best giants of history, and what makes it more remarkable is that she is a woman. For not only is the average stature of women less than that of men, but the records show many more giants hitherto than giantesses” (“Giants of Story”).

limits set by Hardy's "unfeminine" body. This gender conformity was necessary because like most white giants, Hardy was not presented as an exotic, but as an American phenomenon "The Wonder of America." Respectability was thus key, even if it was only to provide contrast with her extraordinary height.

The *Biography* opens with a philosophical reflection on human curiosity about the freakish body, couched in language which links that body to the gigantic features of the natural landscape:

Though the investigation of nature is one of the most interesting, and, at the same time, one of the deepest and most mysterious of studies in which the human mind can engage, yet it is her wild and unusual freaks which chain the mind with astonishment and admiration. The rippling rivulet and waterfall are passed by unheeded; it is the Niagara, nature's great monstrosity, which stirs the heart of man, making it to beat with admiration and wonder at the sublimity of the scene before him. (5)

Here again is the rhetoric which links tourism with freak exhibition, but the argument works to tie them even closer together by making the familiar argument that geography shapes physical and mental type:

There is in the elements of our nature a perpetual connection with the accompaniments of its first developments; the mental and the physical nature of individuals ever assimilate with the nature of their parent soil and the impressions thereon received. Search the history of the world from its commencement down to the present day, and you will find that the inhabitants of those different portions are in close connection, both physically and mentally, with the countries that they occupy. (7)

And, Hardy is no exception, argues the text, making the connection between wild primitivity, the sublime, and the gigantic:

The most powerful men, physically, have always been born in countries darkened by mountains and savage forests. Thus it was with the subject of our biography. She was born and educated among the mountains, where the turf is covered with rude beauty, rocks and wilderness piled in bold and inimitable shapes of savage grandeur, tinged with the hues of untold centuries, and over which awe-inspiring storms oft swept, with thunder in their train. (8)

Indeed, she was born in “one of the back frontier towns” of Maine situated “on the very dividing line between civilization on the one hand and the dark and gloomy forests of the North on the other” (8). Thus Hardy is presented as the familiar border figure, the freak who resides on the boundaries between the freakish and the ordinary, the wild and civilization. But this representation is predominately a masculine one: the giant as representative of the wild forces of nature.

As if to recoup Hardy’s feminine identity, the narrator next introduces a more sentimental tone:

Mankind do not always gaze upon these wild vagaries of nature which now and then we see developed among the human race, with such feelings as they ought. They seem to forget that they are of the same race of themselves; that they are entitled to as much respect and honor as the most symmetrical form which the world affords. Gentle reader, if ever such feelings have found a lodging in your heart, harbor them not for a moment, for it is not the rare and beauteous form alone, which always carries with it the most benevolent and generous soul Such is the disposition of her whose brief biography we are about to write; never did a more generous, Christian soul live. (6)

This last phrase -- a “generous, Christian soul”-- exemplifies how the text works out a position for Hardy along gendered lines. Deploying the discourses of domesticity and

maternity, she is portrayed as the gentle spinster nurse, possessing all of the feminine tendency towards selflessness and desire to care for others, “woman enough,” but not the type to marry or produce her own family. She is described, for example, as “seven feet and four inches at the present time, weighing three hundred and eighty-one pounds,” and as “massively proportioned, robust, matronly in appearance, not fleshy, but on the contrary, remarkably symmetrical in figure” (15). Given Hardy’s “unfeminine” form, this seems to have been the best the text could do. “Miss Hardy,” it declares with careful qualification, “has *many* of those qualities which adorn her sex, and which will recommend her to the confidence and society of all” (16 *my italics*). An almost tragic figure, Hardy must resign herself to devoting her life to other women’s families, “doing many kind acts of mercy” “with ready hand and willing heart” (13). She is far from a romantic figure, but “Her disposition is mild and gentle” (16), as the phrenologist’s report confirms:

It is almost impossible to conceive of a brain more unevenly developed than hers; some of the organs are exceedingly small and have limited influence in character, while others are immensely large and controlling. All the selfish faculties are comparatively small, making her frank and open-hearted and devoid of deception; she has no ambition for display; hope, spirituality, sense of guilt and devotional feelings, are only moderate qualities. She is not able to mimic others or imitate, but simply develops her own tone of mind; attachment to place and love of children is strong; has comparatively an affectionate disposition, but does not love the society of gentlemen. (17-8)

Sexuality, a primary characteristic of the giant, is thus entirely erased for the purpose of gender conformity. The combination of large size as an indicator of hypersexuality and the white female body seems to have been a too volatile combination, and the text ends with a rather evocative image that exemplifies this reconfiguration of

the giant body by transforming the hand, the signifier of sexuality, into cradle: "We are assured that she never as nurse, takes the infant in her arms, but always holds it in her hand. Placing the head upon the ends of her fingers, its feet extend towards the wrist, and with the thumb and little finger elevated, she forms an ample and admirable cradle, the length of her hand being equal to the whole length of an infant" (22).

Though the biographies of giants comfortably allude to mothers who give birth to giants, there is little reference made to female giants bearing their own children. Domestication could only go so far, it seems, and reproduction was a risky topic. There is one exception, as we shall see in the following chapter, but even the tragedy of her attempt at maternity is given little space in the narrative. While representations of male giants revolved around the question of what stature meant for masculinity and national health, the female giant existed uneasily on the borders of that question.

Chapter Six

Four Narratives of Gigantic Manhood: The Life Writing of Hales, Bates, Shields, and Chang

This final chapter will examine the autobiographies of four individuals who exhibited as giants during the nineteenth century: Robert Hales, Martin Van Buren Bates, Gus Shields, and Chang "Wo Gow." While each text constructs a self via different versions of manhood and articulates race and class in different ways, all four reveal the importance of gender in constructing the freak autobiographical subject, a subject who was, more often than not, male. A case in point is the way the life history of the subject's wife is enfolded within the male subject's narrative, aiding in the construction of a normative masculine identity via the ideology of possessive individualism. Consequently, a discussion of giant weddings will introduce the analysis of the texts, for these marriages illustrate the ways in which gendered subjectivity was established and, moreover, point to the ambivalence that is at work in freak subjectivity, the blurring of what is experience, what is exhibition and the boundaries between private and public, interiority and performance.

This ambivalence is brought to the foreground by the last autobiography, that of Chang, in its blatant orientalism and exaggerated construction of a "Chinese Giant." Since it has been categorized as one of the most obvious cases of ghostwritten freak autobiographies, it serves as the test case of this project's methodology of reading for the discursive construction of subjectivity and experience. It has been the argument throughout that this type of analysis is a more effective political and theoretical strategy than simply demanding a place for these works on the basis of what Joan Scott calls the "authority of experience."¹ Such an analysis does not describe the actual experience of the enfreaked individual, reading life from life writing, but, as Scott argues, examines the

¹ "Experience" in *Feminists Theorize the Political*.

historical processes that discursively constitute and differently position subjects. This is not to blur distinctions between various representations, for the very point is to understand the biographies as auto-ontological discursive productions.

The Chang biography is also an appropriate text with which to conclude in that the analysis illustrates the two modes in which I have been reading these texts. At times, I have pointed out the way that particular texts construct their subjects as markers of difference and how arguments that might appear to challenge the fixity of these constructions are re-enclosed within the ideological working of the text. In other places, I have looked for the ways reiteration can displace that fixity, examining instabilities in the text where particular ideologies of race, class, gender, sexuality, and corporeal difference work less in a mutually constitutive fashion, but instead create contradictions within and between various ideologies. I therefore offer two readings of the production of Chang: one that focuses on the biography in all of its imperialist and antifeminist rhetorical maneuvering and another that uses what we could take as an even more "suspicious" rendering of Chang precisely in order to displace the "oriental" subject asserted by the authority of the autobiography.

I Weddings and Giant Wives

If Sylvia Hardy's unfeminine gigantic body "outsized" her chances of marriage, other gigantic women did marry by "choosing" partners of their own size. Indeed, giant weddings were just as popular an exhibition as those between midgets, but this in itself points to the interweaving of the private and public in the lives of these individuals. The 1883 marriage of Patrick William O'Brien, "The Irish Giant," and Christina D. Dunz, the "German Giantess," for example, was witnessed by an "immense concourse of people" including the city mayor and council, "the Aztecs, dwarfs, Indians, and the snake charmer" ("A Wedding in High Life"). Outside the church, "the crowd gathered in such numbers as to obstruct traffic in spite of the efforts of a large police force." The reception

was held at the city museum where the guests dined on a gigantic feast, including a wedding cake measuring nine feet in circumference and a giant loaf of bread five feet in length.

Another popular wedding was that of Robert Hales, the English Quaker Giant and Elizabeth Simpson, the Quaker Giantess. The introduction to the autobiography of Hales discussed below, is really an excerpt from the *N.Y. Organ* entitled "Marriage in High Life" which details the wedding between the two. According to this article, Hales met his future wife at the American Museum under Barnum's aegis, a not unusual incident, given the profits Barnum made from freak marriages. Indeed, the wedding took place at the museum in the famous lecture hall. The *Organ's* brief description of the wedding points to this confluence of profit and sentiment:

The English Quaker Giant and Giantess, Miss Elizabeth Simpson, who together have been on exhibition for several weeks, to the astonishment of thousands, having agreed upon a more intimate union than a mere business relation, were publicly married in the Lecture Room by Justice McGrath, at the close of the evening's entertainment.

An immense crowd had been drawn to the place by the previous announcement of the wedding. Every seat and standing place was full, and the most lively interest, and at the same time entire decorum was manifested by the curious spectators. (3)

The article is an obvious puff piece for Barnum, and, despite its efforts to describe the wedding as a decorous, solidly middle-class event, there is no doubt that spectators paid to witness the wedding and that it was the dramatic conclusion of -- i.e. part and parcel of -- the evening's entertainment. One is left wondering what this display meant for the couple: was this extremely public event the best they could hope for given financial considerations and their previous life experiences as freak show giants, or did the public

nature of the wedding make sense given their roles as celebrities? In his memoirs, Hales plays down this public aspect in the interest of romance:

[A]n 'Irish Diamond,' in the person of a lovely and amiable Quakeress lady, of 21 years, near eight feet, weighing 337 lbs, presented herself at the American Museum for exhibition. She was well calculated to make an impression, and I was not long in her agreeable society, before I felt I was conquered for the first time. I experienced more forcibly than ever, the truth of the saying, "It is not good for man to be alone." My heart leaped into her service, and I determined to enlist under the banner of Matrimony, and enter the United States. I declared my intention to the young lady who nothing loath, smiled a sweet consent, and blushing consented or be mistaken by me; and on Saturday, the 17th of February, I was made happy in the possession of my charming bride: and our marriage was duly recorded by his honor Justice McGrath. (10-11)

Significantly, even though the memoirs are entitled the memoirs of both parties, this is as much information that we receive about Simpson, and the event of the marriage simply serves to conclude the memoirs.

Perhaps the most famous giant marriage was that between Anna Swan, the Nova Scotia Giantess, and the Kentucky Giant Captain Van Buren Bates. Swan was famous in her own right, but only as *Barnum's* most famous giant. While she must have benefited from being exhibited in the aggrandized mode, she shared the experience of the rest of Barnum's curiosities, narrowly escaping being burned to death three times in fires at the American Museum.² Her fortunes, however, looked up when she met Bates, and they were married in St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London in 1871. While obviously part of a publicity stunt, their wedding guests were of a more select crowd, recalling the private

² See Drimmer 286-8.

levees Thumb and Warren held for the British aristocracy. Both the groom and the bride received wedding gifts from Queen Victoria, and they were then guests of the Princess of Wales at Marlborough House. Their wedding tour, however, was as much about business as personal pleasure, even though Bates in his autobiography describes it as a typical honeymoon.

According to various accounts, Bates and Swan had always longed for a more private life and after further traveling they were able to settle quietly in Ohio, where they built their dream house, a home built to scale. The ceilings were twelve to fourteen feet high, doorways were 8 1/2 feet high, and furnishings were scaled to fit the couple's stature (Drimmer 291). Swan's attempts to have children however, eluded her. She had already lost a daughter in 1872: the child, weighing eighteen pounds and measuring 27 inches, had died at birth (Drimmer 293). In 1878, the giantess was once again pregnant, and, on January 15, 1879, she began to feel labor pains. Late in the afternoon of the eighteenth, her water broke and the baby's head appeared. The circumference of the head measured nineteen inches, promising an extremely large child, but Swan's abdominal muscles ceased their action and the baby was caught by its shoulders. The doctor called in another physician to help, and on January 19, the baby boy was born. According to Bates, "He was 28 inches tall, weighed twenty-two pound perfect in every respect" and "looked like an ordinary child of six months" (12). Tragically, he lived less than a day and was buried in Mound Hill Cemetery in the family plot beneath a stone inscribed "Babe." Maternity, the final cap to domesticity, eluded Swan. Her childbearing years were over and she died less than ten years later. According to Fiedler, her grave is marked by a standard-sized marble statue of a woman that bears the inscription "I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness" (117). Swan's story exemplifies the ambivalent nature of life as an exhibited giant woman. Displayed in the aggrandized mode, which, at least, ensured some chance of achieving the dream of middle-class life, and encouraged to expect that she could at last live the life of an ordinary young woman--wedding, husband, farm, and

family--maternity and privacy escaped her. She resumed public touring as a giantess in 1880, and a plaster model was made of the child, which was then exhibited at the Cleveland Health Museum. Even a century later, representations of Swan avoid an analysis of the social processes at work that mark(ed) her as culturally visible and deny/ied her the shelter of the “neutral space of normalcy,” preferring to reenact the dynamics of exhibition (*Extraordinary* 8). Fiedler, for example, reiterates the sexism inherent in the exhibition of the large-bodied woman and refuses to engage with his subject as anything other than freakish object, or representation of what the gigantic as archetype means to him:

There is, however, something inescapably comic in the notion of so huge a body kneeling to pray -- just as there is in trying to imagine her playing, as she did, Lady Macbeth knee-deep in 'normals,' or being hauled out by mechanical hoist from the burning timbers of Barnum's Museum. Not that I do not believe in her pain or terror or religious devotion or her right to play whatever role she chose on stage or off; merely that I am helplessly aware of how her size must have travestied whatever she attempted. (117)

Besides the way these comments reproduce Fiedler's troubling use of freaks -- as “rich terrain for exploring personal desires and anxieties” (Adams 153) -- we might also note that it is Swan's story, not one of the many *male* giants he discusses, that he selects as his case to illustrate “our” inability to emotionally connect with these individuals. If gendered notions of appropriate piety and victimhood are at work in this 1978 work, one can imagine the constant reminders she received during her lifetime that she was not quite as other women.

If Swan's marriage was a mixture of personal commitment and publicity enhancement given her career as giantess, other giant marriages were purely for show. Like those between midgets, giant marriages were profit-makers for managers because of the public's delight in watching the nonstandard human being participate in one of the

most ordinary and yet sacred rituals of "normal" life. The juxtaposition of abnormality and normality, the slight transgression of the standard, appealed far more than the wholly monstrous. Indeed it was this gap that exhibitors made most of in their spiel. Thus, when the exhibition of a particular individual and his or her talents was growing stale, one could always conjure up a wedding to reawaken curiosity, a curiosity, as we have mentioned, that was not without hints of the prurient. Gus Shields, discussed below, makes much of the sanctity of marriage as an indicator of difference between white men and Indians, but his giant brother's marriage to a woman billed as the German Giantess was most likely a publicity stunt. According to Bogdan, immediately after the Shields exhibited, another couple appeared on the circuit who billed themselves as Patrick and Annie O'Brien, "The Irish Giant and Giantess." This is probably the O'Briens mentioned in the article on the 1883 marriage whose wedding was enhanced by gigantic items of food. Nonetheless, Bogdan argues that this same Mrs. O'Brien was in actual fact Mrs. Shields. "Whether we have here an early case of spouse swapping, mere name swapping, or remarriage," he writes, "is difficult to determine. Her change in nationality does, however, show that some form of skullduggery was at play" (208).

The subject of the last autobiography was probably engaged in similar "skullduggery," although it was most likely the invention of his British manager. Chang "The Oriental Giant" was exhibited in London with his wife, the "Lady Chang, the Small-Footed Golden Lily of the East" in 1866. The autobiography sold at the exhibition makes much of the romance of the marriage as if to contrast it with the usual oriental imagery that stood in for China -- female slavery to husbands who acted as despotic tyrants. The narrative relates how Chang first met his future wife, "King Foo," while worshipping at a temple:

when I learned that her father and mother were both dead, and that she had no one in the world to care for now, and that she found relief in restlessness; and when she knew my heart, and saw my gentleness, she

ceased to fear the tallness of my body. So, putting our sorrows and our joys together, weeping with each other over the past, and rejoicing that good chance had caused our meeting, shortly we wed, and now we drink ecstasy from the same overflowing cup of joy. (10)

Although Chang describes a romantic encounter in this paragraph, the exhibition makes a great point of wifely obedience, a point that had significance given the gains made by the suffragette movement at this time. Accordingly, Chang points out that his marriage was unusual, "romantic" because matches were usually arranged by the parties' parents. He claims that his marriage works, however, because "filial piety" is his wife's "constant practice," adding "*if we were all filial the world would be at peace*" (10). Such a stance allows Chang and his wife to represent the proper relations between all married couples, British included, but as a matter of fact, it is highly doubtful whether the "fair King Foo" was actually his wife at all. The later biography, *Life of Chang* (1882), makes no reference to any marriage, and the woman was most likely one of the unfortunate Chinese individuals who were exhibited in England, alongside other "oriental curios," such as vases, fans, and screens. In fact, Catherine Pagani, in her article on Chinese exhibitions in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century, makes reference to a certain 'Celestial Belle' Pwan-Ye-Koo,' who was known for her "golden water-lily bound feet," a feature that is likewise highly advertised in the exhibition of Chang's wife, "The Small-Footed Golden Lily of the East" (38). This is the only other possible reference to "King Foo," and, after the 1866 exhibition, she disappears from view.

Marriage then seems to have been both a possibility for those enfreaked as giants and one of the key features of exhibition. In both cases, however, we can note the way in which the wife, previously exhibited as the property of her manager, is transferred, at the very least, as part of the act, to the ownership of her husband, whose possession of wife serves to establish his normativity and thus subjectivity. None of the wives under consideration, whether legal or theatrical, have left autobiographies, and this is significant

whether we deem that the narratives were written by their subjects or ghostwritten by the manager. In either case, once married, the female freaks' biography is subsumed under the husband's. Even Anna Swan, one of the most famous giants of her age, takes the supporting role to her less famous husband. Freak autobiography is thus a highly gendered act in this period, and it is not surprising then that the four giant autobiographies under consideration manifest a decided interest in displaying the signs of appropriate manhood. Having said this, each illustrates a different meaning of what it meant to be a man in this period, revealing a variety of possibilities in the construction of male giant subjectivity.

II The Memoirs of Robert Hales

The Memoirs of Robert Hales, the English Quaker Giant, and his Wife, the Quaker Giantess (1849) is an obvious rewrite of an earlier pamphlet titled the *Memoirs of Robert Hales, The Norfolk Giant* (1848), but it is produced in the first-person. The earlier pamphlet is a waggish narrative full of anecdotal stories about Hales designed to cram in as many puns about the subject's stature as possible. Thus the text opens with the familiar play on "Great Men":

England has long been rendered famous by its great men -- Historians -- Sculptors--Painters, and Poets have all eulogised them, and it now becomes the delightful task of the present compiler to poutray [sic], as faithfully [sic] and correctly as possible, the career of one of its more stalwart and elevated sons.

There is a natural desire implanted in the human mind to know something of every individual who has in any way risen above his fellow-men. Our hero has not, like Alexander, Caesar, or Napoleon, over-run or disturbed the world; nevertheless, it may be said of him without hyperbole, that he is

an extraordinary man, THE GREATEST MAN alive, and as such,
demands more than ordinary consideration. (3-4)

While making these witticisms at the expense of its subject, the text is simultaneously concerned to illustrate how the subject participates in this spirit of puns and witticisms, proving that he breaks the stereotype of the imbecilic giant:

The Giant (supported by the authority of the greatest phrenologists in the kingdom,) gives a direct contradiction to the prevalent opinion, that excessive bulkiness and great stature are a general sign of weak intellect and stupidity; his daily conversations with visitors clearly demonstrates that he has a greater portion of intellectual capacity than falls to the lot of many; in fact, there are thousands who have been so delighted with his converse that they have visited him 'again and again,' and expressed themselves pleased with his fund of wit and inexhaustible good nature.

The following anecdotes will show the clever way in which the Giant adapts himself to the society of all ranks and classes. (5)

These anecdotes include Hales' good-natured performance of "I am The Giant King!" at a dinner for a Marquis who invited "several other noblemen to meet the "Greatest Man in Europe," his humorous portrayal of a threatening giant in a situation in which a man "forced" himself into the exhibition room, and other situations in which Hales obligingly played to the public instead of taking offense.

The 1849 first-person narrative includes all of these stories, rearranging the order and changing the wording slightly, but reciting basically the same narrative. What is new is the opening, which takes a more serious tone and the closing which briefly relates how he met and married his wife. This sandwiching of the 1848 narrative puts a rather interesting spin on the issues of humor, performance, and perspective, to which a reading of the introduction becomes crucial:

It is a difficult task, and by no means a pleasant one, for a man to write of himself, more especially, as it is said, we never 'see ourselves, as others see us.'

And it is no easy manner, to convey to the vision of another scenes and occurrences, as one's self has been accustomed to view them. Motive is the ruling power; few write without it; though the world at large, may not care a straw, they are amused.

In giving the following simple outline of my life, up to the present time, I follow no established rule, launch into no arguments or digressions, deciding, that a plain unvarnished tale of facts, will be better received, and be more likely, to answer the end, and motive I have in view, that of profit to others, and my self. (5)

This introduction, while calling upon the standard language of autobiographical openings, is rather interesting in its direct reference to the issues of perspective and amusement given the subject's career as curiosity. The first paragraph seems full of self-consciousness about the public's amused view of an exhibiting giant. And, particularly significant is the second sentence of the middle paragraph, which uses the standard move of admitting motive in order to convince the reader of the honesty of the writer, but then strangely adds the statement about the "world at large" not caring "a straw," a rather pointed comment aimed at Hales' customers. When these comments are brought to the fore they undercut the presentation of Hales as a good-natured curiosity ready to enter the spirit of fun and perform as the jolly punning giant.

The description of his early life and ambitions, which comes before the anecdotes lifted from the early text, also adds to this destabilization. Speaking of how he began "to experience the restless desires of manhood," Hales writes that "Glimpses of the future would appear, decked in gay and glorious colors, bewitching to an ardent temperament like mine. I sighed for a change, for the busy excitement of life. Its hopes and fears alike

had their charms, for the wild wayward fancy of the boy-man" (6). These hopes and fears led him not to exhibition, but to the "dangers of the sea":

Hours, I have sat entranced, listening to the glowing descriptions of an old salt, who lived in the neighborhood, until my imagination became so fired, that one night under cover of darkness, I hid in a bundle some clothes, and not without experiencing an indefinable feeling of sadness, I bade adieu to the pleasant scenes of my childhood, an ark of security, which I was forsaking, to launch on the troubled waters of life. (6)

While conventional, such language is markedly different from that describing Hales' interaction with the public. The text situates Hales as a typical "boy-man," who hopes and fears like any other "normal" boy his age. Upon reaching a port town, Hales entered the service, spending three and half years at sea on board the H. M. Revenue Cutter the *Ranger*. He then commenced a "traveling career" with his sister Mary, who measured seven feet two inches in height. After briefly describing her death in 1842, the text then moves into the anecdotes, establishing a different tone from that describing his previous hopes and ambitions. The text ends with a description of his meeting with and marriage to Simpson, establishing his credentials as a productive member of society in possession of a wife and career. This wedding, exemplifying the interdependence of the private and public aspects of the giant's subject position, is a fitting end for this disjointed narrative which has dispersed Hales as subject across a variety of roles.

III The Scholarly Soldier: Captain Martin Van Buren Bates

The 1868 *Historical Sketch of Captain Martin Van Buren Bates and Mrs. Bates, Formerly Anna Swan* is yet another example of gender and possessive individualism coming to play in the autobiographical production of the enfreaked male self. However, while Hales' narrative manifests a rather messy cut and paste mode of presentation, this later work is decidedly organized. The sketch is divided into five sections. The first

three cover the details of Bates and his wife's lives -- "My Wife and Her Early History"; "Boy, Soldier and Man"; "Marriage and Royal Honors" -- while the last two sections discuss giants in history and their feats of strength. The text immediately presents itself as a scholarly piece of work:

In presenting this little account of two remarkable people, I would have the public accept it, as far it relates to the history of those it treats of, as a matter of fact. The impressions conveyed in the account given of those which come to us as historical facts have been carefully weighed, and if I differ from the historian it is because I believe that I am correct in statements made. Constituted by an All Wise Providence larger than ordinary men, I have given the study of physical development all the consideration, which time and money that I have possessed, has enabled me to accomplish. (2)

This preface, in which there is no apology to the reader about the subject's poor abilities as a writer nor reference to "plain unvarnished tales," sets the tone for the rest of the sketch, for unlike Hales' *Memoirs* and other freak biographies, Bates makes no argument for normativity. Like the Winner narrative discussed in Chapter Two, the text simply presents its subject as if this is assumed. The couple's height is described as an "extraordinary development," but there is no sense that this might require a defensive argument about intelligence or conformity. Indeed, it is precisely because he has attained this height that Bates positions himself as an authority on matters of "extraordinary development," even against "the historian."

Such an assumption of normative manhood, rather than freak, shows up in many of the details of Bates' life. The son of a slave owner, he was apparently promoted to the rank of captain through service in the confederate army, rather than by the being assigned an aggrandized title by an exhibitor. These details are discussed in the "Boy, Soldier and Man," where healthy athleticism is emphasized. "My army experience," Bates writes,

"served to bring into active use every muscle of the body and to enable me to endure hardship" (7).

After leaving the army, and finding his "immense proportions" "the object of wonder," he decided to exhibit himself as a curiosity "for want of anything better to do" (7). From 1865 onwards he traveled through the United States and Canada and then accepted an offer to tour in Europe, where he met his wife. "Marriage and Royal Honors" details the usual receptions and private levees engaged in by the aggrandized subject. There is no reference to Bates' wooing of Swan. Fitting the sparse, dignified tone of the rest of the text, this section simply states that they met and then describes their wedding in 1871 at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The pair continued to exhibit through Britain and then returned to the States, where Bates, having "decided to become a farmer," purchased a farm in Ohio.

The brevity with which the memoir touches on private matters depicts its subject as a rather dignified man, concerned as much as possible with keeping part of his life reasonably private. Indeed, it seems that Bates and Swan were less interested in enjoying the glamorous show life than Lavinia Warren and Tom Thumb (Bogdan 207). Warren did, however, frequently visit the two after her husband's death (Bogdan 207, Drimmer 293-4). While keeping in touch with many of their friends and acquaintances from their career in exhibition, Bates and Swan attempted to live a life that was as private and ordinary as possible. She took an active role in her church, while the captain stocked his farm with cattle and horses.

The last two sections move away from the personal to accounts of mythical and historical giants, opening with the statement that "I had always held that man was not degenerate physically, and in order to convince myself that such was well-founded, I commenced the study of the subject" (12). Bates' tone is that of the skeptical scholar, and he dismisses accounts of races of giants. For example, commenting upon, "scriptural giants," he writes: "When looked at properly [they] do not present evidence of many

remarkable men. The Hebrew words nephilim and giborim, which occur several times in the Book of Genesis and which was translated giants, might as well be translated bearded, cruel or violent men. Goliath is only [sic] one whose height is given, and no one can state correctly what a cubit is in our measurement" (13). Likewise, he writes that "Ancient giants whose remains in a fossil condition are said to have been exhumed, have had all the benefit of scientific examination and have proven to have been the bones of megatheric or mastrodonic monsters" (14). A note of competition, however, creeps into his scholarly tone when he discusses more recent giants. Claiming that he has measured himself against the skeleton of the giant Murphy and the Chinese giant Chang and citing the evidence of Dickens, Bates declares that he is "the tallest man who has lived in our three centuries" and that his wife is the "tallest women who has ever lived." This note of competitive showmanship is additionally interesting because Swan was apparently a few inches taller than her husband, making her, by Bates' own claims, the tallest human being (Drimmer 291).

The section closes with a statement that illustrates the influence of the medical debates on racial stature and degeneration. Striking a positive note, it declares "While I claim that we are the tallest couple that has ever existed I live in hope of seeing a continual development of body. There is no reason why physical growth should not keep pace with mental growth. I believe that both will advance so that in centuries to come we shall be looked upon as dwarfs when compared to the physical and mental giants of the future" (16). The *Sketch* itself closes on a note of "healthy moderation": "I have, during my life, abstained from the use of intoxicating liquors or stimulants of any kind. He who would obtain strength, either of mind or body, should be temperate in all things."

IV Frontier Manhood: "The Texas Giants"

A Biographical Sketch of the Four Texan Giants, The Shields Brothers (1884?) by Guss Shields produces a rather different type of masculinity from Bates' gentleman soldier and

scholar. This narrative celebrates a rugged frontier masculinity. The text constructs the Shields brothers as red-blooded American males whose gigantic height befits the "cowboy" state in which they were born and raised. The biography opens, for example, with the familiar modest claim about ability, but which puts a spin on education, presenting it as antithetical to plain speech and truthful statements: "In presenting the reader this little history of myself and brothers, it will be remembered that persons reared in a frontier country, such as Texas, are not expected to be blessed with an education sufficient to be able to give a glowing account of themselves as it would be with one well educated" (1). The text next makes the usual move to assure the reader that the biography is authentic by admitting its lack of imagination and simplicity, but it does so specifically in reference to the more exotic captivity narrative and through indirect reference to the wild tales told of the west in the dime novel:

Never having attempted anything of the kind before, it will, probably, be the more interesting, from the fact that you are now reading the writer's first attempt at anything of the kind, and you can thereby assure yourself that he will deal in facts only, as he has neither the power nor the will to excite the reader's imagination by glowing descriptions of Indian massacres, of which he was the only one of the family who survived, and, after several years of captivity, made good his escape, or something of the kind; but it is my intention, as before stated, to give you the naked facts as they are. (1)

This emphasis on the ordinary seems to have less to do with arguing for normativity than for celebrating the rugged frontier man, whose self-assured unpretentious ordinariness is in direct contrast to the "citified" educated gentleman. Accordingly, the text emphasizes the Shields' farming background and frontier education. Writing that the brothers were accustomed to hard labor, Shields explains that their father did give them "a chance to gain a limited education," but adds that "some of us did not improve our chance to

much advantage, being of a rather wild turn of mind, choosing the open air of the health-giving prairies in preference to the solitude of the log cabin schoolhouse" (3). This disclaimer provides an opening for Shields' description of the mischievous pranks of one of these healthy young giants and a way to add some local color by describing the log cabin schoolhouse in great detail.

However, this construction of healthy frontier manhood in contrast to the Eastern educated gentleman is actually quite exaggerated, because the text also relates how the narrator took on several positions as a school teacher. Indeed, public exhibition is described as just one among many careers that the brothers take up. Shade Shield, for example, was a successful farmer, who then tried his hand at the "saloon business." He grew tired of this and (in a significant turn of phrase) then "took the show-business fever" and joined his two brothers in New York. Gus Shields worked in a brickyard, learned blacksmithing, taught, and was elected to County Commissioner before he decided to exhibit. None of the brothers seem to have been forced into exhibition because it was the only career open to them. Indeed, "show business" does seem to be a more appropriate term for their exhibition, as an 1880 newspaper article quoting Jack Shields' manager illustrates:

[W]e are training him to be a giant, and we think that he will grow to be the tallest man in the business. He needs watching having been accustomed all his life to lower himself to talk to his companions, and to allow his arms to hang loosely by his side, and to spread out his legs, he is yet raw and awkward for the giant business; but now he is getting to hold his head up and keep his feet together and throw his shoulders back, to keep himself in shape, to take flesh and get more height. (Qtd. in Bogdan 114)

While it is clear that the manager is training Shields, these comments place the giant in a position closer to that of the strongman, who needs to train to accomplish feats, rather

than that of the exhibited curiosity. Although such "training" has a long history in the exhibition of giants, it is significant that the manager makes such "amplifications" of the act public.

As was mentioned earlier, the text makes a direct connection in its introduction to the dime novel by way of contrast. The connection is again made in the conclusion to the biographical pamphlet, which mentions "a few facts" concerning the "so-called 'noble red man' of the West" and the "Texas Cowboy." While, as we have seen, these autobiographical narratives seem to demand a description of place and setting, the point here is to call upon the glamour of narratives of the wild west, while giving an insider's perspective in order to set the record straight. Thus, the reader is told that the "Indian" is a "much overrated brute" who "procures his wife, or more properly his slave, by purchase, or, as by white captives, by force of arms, and disposes of her in the same manner" (8). This was a common argument used to show the supposed brutality of uncivilized races and is juxtaposed to Shields' attitude toward women and the marriage vow. The text makes a great point of honoring the Shields' mother and describes how three out of the four brothers were married at the time the pamphlet was published. Indeed, he somewhat coyly warns the "young lady" reader not to "fall in love with the writer of this, for, the fact is, I am a married man, possessing, as I think, one of the fairest of the fair sex" (7). What is interesting here is the way the readers' attention is drawn away from the extraordinary aspects of the giant's body to that of a more exotic other.

Like the image of the noble red man, the picture of the cowboy as "a rough, rollicking, swearing daredevil, anxious to get some person's blood" is also inaccurate and is misrepresented "by the ignorant scribblers who so often write him up," Shields claims (8). Rather, he "is as gentle as any man, looks like a very modest fellow, and acts the same way" (8). "We ask our Northern friends to act slow in believing the bloodcurdling stories often printed in their home papers and assigned to the depraved acts of cowboys" concludes Shields. While sympathetic, this description likewise draws attention to other

objects worthy of the readers attention. However, there is no sense in this narrative that this is required in order to de-emphasize the freakish and position the subject as more like the reader. An assumption runs through the text that its subject is as normal as the reader and actually more interesting, due to his experiences, and, perhaps, more virile, due to his background. Shields is produced as a specimen of the frontier, but one that is representative of all that is exceptional about America. He is the true American type. While this has much to do with the fact that he exhibited as giant, rather than conjoined twin or dwarf, race is also an important factor, as is evidenced by the next autobiography.

V Orientalism and the *Autobiography of Chang, the Great Chinese Giant*

Bemoaning the circumstances that "Giants survive for us primarily not in literature or on canvas, but in the dusty display cases of medical museums," Fiedler mentions the *Autobiography of Chang, the Great Chinese Giant*, only to dismiss the text as "ghostwritten" "in a pseudo-Oriental style so palpably fraudulent that it gives no real sense of his plight" (114). This narrative, published in 1866, is indeed a prototypical example of orientalism, constructing its subject as an inscrutable Confucian scholar. Nevertheless, as we have argued throughout, the text is still worthy of rhetorical analysis for what it can reveal about the discursive production and performance of the enfreaked self. Its uneasy status, moreover, raises interesting questions about locating the subject and the performance of race. If, for example, "Mr. Marquis Chisholm," Chang's manager, is the ghostwriter behind the scenes, what does it mean that a Englishman has produced a text which purports to give an "Oriental's" opinion and views of England? What cultural work is occurring when one masquerades as a Chinese male performing as an "Oriental"? And what does it mean that later in life, Chang self-exhibited as the "Celebrated Giant," transforming his English seaside villa into an Oriental bazaar from which he sold "real Chinese tea" and "oriental curios"? I argue that, while these questions point to the limits imposed on Chang's negotiation of a cultural identity, they also point to an interface and

exchange of cultural performances that suggests a certain ambivalence in the colonial discourse of the Orient.

Chang was exhibited in 1866 at the Egyptian Hall in London. Occurring six years after the end of the second Opium War, two years after the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion, and on the fifteenth anniversary of the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, this was a significant date in terms of the exhibition of all things Chinese. While interest in Chinese art had flourished in the 1840's at the time of the First Opium War, by the next decade, such interest had faded, and objects were displayed in a bric-brac fashion designed to enhance imperialist notions of Chinese atrophy in contrast to the progress of British civilization³ The exhibition, furthermore, occurred only one year after the triumphant return of General Charles Gordon, dubbed "Chinese Gordon" by an enthusiastic public, in honor of his role in the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion. British military manhood had triumphed over the cruel, barbarous Chinese hordes and they had learned to submit, relinquishing their anti-European aggression. Instead of patronizing appreciation, sensationalism in exhibition had taken center stage, and this was more often expressed in the exhibition of human beings rather than objects. The Chang exhibition was no exception, as it was designed as a representative sampling or living archive of the Orient. Exhibited alongside Chang was the "Lady Chang, the small-footed Golden Lily of the East," "Chung Mow The Tartar Rebel Dwarf," "Ah Ying, Lady Chang's 'Amah'," Woo Kwan Toon, Compradore," and "Sing Ah Loo, Shroff." Chisholm also entertained the audience with a musical program which offered a "truthful as well as effective illustration of the peculiarities of Chinese music."

Chang's role was that of gentle giant and "Asiatic sage." Newspapers accounts focused upon his intelligent looks, dignity, and scholarly attainments and emphasized his

³ See Pagani for a discussion of the vicissitudes of Chinese art in Britain from the 1830's-1850's.

difference from the usual exhibition of curiosities. Thus the *Weekly Times* wrote: "He moves in a stately manner, and there is also a certain magnified refinement, quite in accordance with his size, which commands more respect than is usually accorded to similar physical phenomena. His deportment, too, smacks of the gentleman" (18).⁴ However, while represented as "a gentleman and a scholar," Chang was still produced within the discourse of orientalism. Indeed, this very emphasis on scholarship and intelligence was seen as further evidence of "that mild Oriental wisdom" which was a specific element to Orientalism. Moreover, the combination of gigantic size and Chinese ethnicity seemed to inevitably generate an image of menacing inscrutability and idolatry. The *Daily News*, for example, described him as "a gigantic heathen idol which had been suddenly endowed with life" (17). The *Morning Advertiser* wrote that "he looked like some gigantic Chinese joss or idol" (19) and *The Daily Telegraph* declared:

It is not so much that Chang is one of the largest men of modern times, as that the effect of his extraordinary stature is somehow very strongly brought out, making him really appear as belonging to a distinct race of beings. Part of this effect may be due to his well-proportioned figure, part to his large, bare, juvenile Mongol face, and part to the silence of one who does not understand, and who is not understood by, those among whom he sits towering like a more than unusually good-looking image out of a joss-house. (17)

Through the harmony and proportion of his limbs, Chang attains both the grandeur and petrification of the Cardiff giant and other monumental statues that the west could appreciate in that they resembled western aesthetic ideals. This monumentalizing and mythologizing, as we have seen, is a specific quality of the gigantic racial other, and it is

⁴ All newspaper accounts are taken from the last section of the *Autobiography of Chang*.

also specific to orientalism. As Said writes, "The very possibility of development, transformation, human movement -- in the deepest sense of the world -- is denied the Orient and the Oriental. As a known and ultimately an immobilized or unproductive quality, they come to be identified with a bad sort of eternality: hence, when the Orient is being approved, such phrases as 'the wisdom of the East'" (208). This "eternality" points to the cultural, temporal, and geographical distance implicit in Orientalist discourse.

Thus, Said adds that

The relation between Orientalist and Orient was essentially hermeneutical: standing before a distant, barely intelligible civilization or cultural monument, the Orientalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically portraying, inwardly grasping the hard to reach object. Yet the Orientalist remained outside the Orient, which however much it was to appear intelligible, remained beyond the Occident. (222)

Nonetheless, while cheerfully reproducing the formulaic description of Chang as inscrutable idol, the *Spectator* makes a surprising declaration that at first seems to lessen that distance between viewer and Oriental object: "He is so youthful, so well-proportioned, so handsome in figure, that he rather strikes you as supplying the natural standard of the human form, than as embodying any great deviation from that standard" (18). This summation is echoed by *The Age we Live in*, which opines that Chang is "as perfect a representation of man on a gigantic scale as the anatomist could wish" (19). This statement, however, reincorporates the notion of distance, for even if Chang suggests the standard form, less a deviation than a model, he is still produced as the *object* of the anatomist's desire. Accordingly, the *Spectator* concludes that "We seem to see again the majesty and calm tranquillity of those calm idols in the Assyrian Court of the Crystal Palace" (18). While Chang is distinguished from the usual freakish monstrosity, this distinction can take place only because the Orient has already been archived, exhibited, and translated by scholars and art historians. Thus, like the Hellenic statue, perceived to

be utterly unlike the degenerated figure of the modern Greek, Chang's form can be admired, like those Assyrian "idols," precisely because of his static exhibition: "the silence of one who does not understand, and who is not understood by, those among whom he sits."

While Chang was to play the role of the gentle giant and "Asiatic sage," Chung Mow performed as comic foil, entertaining the audience with his clownish ferociousness and boastful addresses and relieving the solemnity of Chang's exhibition. Chung Mow provided the comedy of the dwarf, a figure that, as has been argued, was already racialized as exotic other. "Such another little lump of unadulterated fun never rolled in a chair" declared the *Daily Telegraph* (22). "Thirty years old, *twenty-eight inches high*, a Chinese rebel in politics, grotesque in face and figure, and a humorist in amusements" wrote the *Daily News*, adding that Mow "is the convivalist of the party; he swaggers round too, and shakes hands in a funnily-bumptious fashion, and is to his dignified and vast friend Chang what a low comedian is to the classic professor of tragedy" (22). Deploying the title "Tartar Rebel," Mow's comic exhibition also transformed the threat of Chinese aggression into farce. The autobiography even suggests that Mow's political allegiance stems from the humiliations he suffered due to his small size.

If Mow added the sense of grotesque and comedic, Lady Chang offered a "glimpse" of oriental womanhood. "As a lily growing at the base of some majestic tree, so is Chang's wife -- weakness and strength, fragility beside a form like Jupiter Tonans" wrote the *Westminister Times* (22). "A charming little wife" concluded the *News*. While Chang made visible the famed Confucian sagacity of the Oriental, his wife exemplified "woman's condition" in China, which for Europeans meant the fascinating topics of arranged marriages and foot binding, topics that called upon, what Suvendrini Perera terms, the "vocabulary of oriental misogyny." This vocabulary constructed the oriental male as sensual sultan who despotically ruled over a harem of enslaved oriental women and was most often used as a metaphor for the exploration and critique of certain aspects

of western life. In this exhibition, Lady Chang's bound feet are used as shorthand for this discourse, with newspapers focusing primarily on this part of her body in their descriptions of this "small-footed celestial." Calling upon the sexual metaphors of unveiling that are also intrinsic to this orientalist discourse, the *Daily Telegraph* noted that "She is aged eighteen and though modest, not to say shy, will consent to exhibit her mite of a foot, which is the true 'golden lily' in shape, size, and uselessness" (21).

While, as Joyce Zonana argues, such imagery was often used within western feminist discourses that analyzed domestic relations at home, in Lady Chang's presentation we find a more conservative agenda that, far from critiquing white male despotism, is actually a no-so-veiled threat of violence against the feminist cause. This threat has especial significance given the debates over women's rights during this period. 1866, the year the autobiography was published, witnessed the presentation and defeat of the amendment to the Reform Act that would have given women the vote (Wojtczak). Moreover, Queen Victoria's popularity rating was at an all time low during this period (Cody). The anti-feminist strain of the autobiography is evident in one of the songs, included in the autobiography as one of the pieces performed by the troupe. "Ching Chang Chow, The Vixen Queen of Peking" is a comic piece which tells of the ostensible origins of the practice of female foot binding. The first verse begins with a description of this vixen queen who scolds and rails at her husband, ending with the lines: "She haunted him, she taunted him, / She nicknamed him 'Old Woman King,' / And people said, 'How can he rule / A realm and not a wife.'" The chorus then addresses the audience with the moral of the story: "Oh! Ladies, take a warning from the fate of Ching Chang Chow." The second verse continues the tale of this wifely disobedience, describing the queen's mistake in reacting to her husband's indifference with insubordination. Deciding that "She'd conquer him, *she'd rule the realm*" and that "her sex should claim supremacy, and / No longer be the slaves of man," "This naughty queen, this woman bold" flies upon him,

kicking and scratching and calling him "a thousand such unmanly names." The chorus again warns western women of their possible fate before commencing the final verse:

And then uprose the king, called his councillors around him
And spoke, 'I do command you to write down this new law :
'In future let no woman stand
Against her lord in anger;
Cramp her feet, bind them, crush them,
So that by our touch she fall."
Oh ! women of the west, I pray,
A lesson take from my poor song,
Lest like the vixen queen, you lead
A most unhappy life.
For, from that day, the Emperor Tung
Renown'd has been o'er all the land,
So well he ruled the nation,
And so well he ruled his wife."

Indeed, the entire autobiography seems to be a celebration of male imperialism in the spheres of gender and geography, as evidenced by the title page, which announces in large letters that the pamphlet also contains Chang's "celebrated Ode on the Crystal Palace." The Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851 had been an exercise in consumer imperialism and a celebration of industrial progress. As Anne McClintock argues, it embodied the tropes of progress, the Family of Man, panoptical time, and anachronistic space, all combined in a spectacle that offered the mass consumption of time and geography (56-7). As she writes, "Seated about the circular observation-tower of the panorama, spectators consumed the moving views that swept before them indulging the illusion of traveling a speed through the world. The panorama inverted the panoptical principle and put it at the disposal of consumer pleasure, converting panoptical

surveillance into commodity spectacle -- the consumption of the globe by voyeurs" (58). China was represented within this spectacle by an assortment of odds and ends that located it within that anachronistic space shared by other races positioned at the beginning of the trajectory of historical progress. Its offerings were viewed as a reflection of a static culture locked in the pre-modern past, which refused to gain from the opportunities offered by British influence

This exhibition and its celebration of the West is the central trope of Chang's autobiography. While containing some biographical details, the trajectory of the short narrative is really directed towards Chang's eventual arrival in Britain, where he is finally able to satisfy his wish to gaze on its "towering edifices," such as the Crystal Palace and deliver his ode. When his father is on his death bed, for example, he commands his son to "Go, let your mission be, when I am gone, to travel up and down throughout the world, and write a book of the strange sights you see in other lands" (8). And upon reaching Shanghai, Chang writes that he looked for the first time

upon the Western's face, and saw with wonder the palaces your merchant-princes there have built. I saw that the face was kind, and in a little time I learned to my great joy, that his hand was open and his heart was good; and at once I said, 'I will travel to the country that send forth such men, so full of enterprise.' This was my fate--I say my fate--yet, I believe that fate is much of man's own making. (9)

According to the pamphlet, Chang and his companions left Shanghai and arrived in England in 1865, there to behold "the white cliffs" of that "heaven-conferred country" (12). Here the narrative ends with a plea to the British reader that "your country ever continue at peace with mine" and a paean to British civilization that focuses on the height of its buildings as an introduction to Chang's "Ode on the Crystal Palace." Thus, Chang includes a poem from "a learned countryman" of his who visited England: "The houses are so lofty that you may pluck the stars"; "The towering edifices rise story above story /

In all the stateliness of splendid mansions" (12). Chang adds to his compatriot's praises when he writes that given England's mild climate, "you are permitted to exceed us in the grandeur of your cities, by allowing space for the display of your prominent buildings" and that he often peers "at the steeple of your loftiest temple (St. Paul's)," adding that "until I beheld it I had not dreamt that the hands of mortal man had raised . . . a structure so near reaching to the heavens where our saints and sages dwell" (13).

The Ode also deploys the architectural metaphor as a means of contrasting civilizations. It opens on the stereotypical "grand edifices" of Chang's homeland, "The Pagoda, the Joss-house, and the Palace of the Mandarins" and hints at the possibility of "the degeneration of the people / The Silence of Decay" (13-4). Positioned against these exotic edifices embellished with "variegated colors and devices" is the transparent crystal palace:

I had heard that the palaces of England were replete with grandeur,
But there is no word in my poor eastern language fit to express
The light and sparkling splendour of this great edifice
Of clear, transparent crystal.

I am told that it was the pride of him who was but lately your almost king,
And it is surely worthy his revered name, were he twice the king of your
great western nation. (14)

Here the transparency of this symbol of modern industrial progress is juxtaposed with the opacity, inscrutability, and age of Chinese culture. The ode offers up China in order to weave a nationalist narrative celebrating British manhood, but, as McClintock argues, the Crystal Palace did not simply present the world for the easy consumption of British spectators, for in this "glass seeing-machine," "these imperial monarchs-of-all-they-survey" presented their own "immobile backs to the observation of others" (58). The erasure of class issues, the compensation of racial superiority for class subordination, she continues, was the dream proffered by the national narrative of the exhibition (59).

Similar dynamics are at work in the Chang exhibition in its display of a Chinese civilization in submission to the superiority of British manhood, a manhood based in racial and national inclusion, ostensibly without reference to class. However, while playing up the exoticism and anachronistic features of Chinese civilization, this exhibition meanwhile reflects back upon the spectators, reinforcing traditional gender and class roles. Its representation of the submissive oriental female produces a narrative of British civilization in contrast to the barbarous Chinese treatment of women, but at the same time engenders a cross-racial desire, producing a community along gender lines. This is then reinforced by the battle between the sexes encapsulated in the opening song, which suggests a universality to relations between the genders that cuts across class lines and which offers a dire warning to those who would seek to overthrow traditional gender roles. Furthermore, the admiring tone taken in regard to Chang and the class-stratified conservative civilization he represents, in addition to the historical background which shapes the narrative and which points to the inevitable reassertment of conservative political and social systems, demand a politically conservative identification from the spectator. Like the 1851 Crystal Palace exhibition, the Chang exhibition offers up commodity spectacle as a democratic endeavor -- all who can afford to pay the sixpence entrance fee may then engage in a voyeuristic consumption of Chinese exoticism -- which actually demands the subordination of the spectators themselves to a social and political system based upon class and gender difference.

The freak subjectivity produced in this 1866 autobiography is an extreme example of the intertextuality of all autobiography; the orientalist self performed here is indebted to the narratives of imperialism, nationalism, and gender and class subordination of the geographical and historical context in which it is enacted. The performative quality of subjectivity has been a theoretical underpinning of this study from the start, and so we must avoid any nostalgic speculation as to who the real Chang was. Having said this, it is crucial to recognize the racial dynamics at work which shape what can be said, what

stories can be told in particular life writing, and it is of value to search elsewhere for different productions of Chang.

From an 1882 *Life of Chang* and other documents, we know that Chang continued to exhibit. Two of his most important exhibitions were with Barnum, and, from Bluford Adams's analysis of the difference between the two, we can gather that Chang was increasingly objectified as oriental object. Adams explains that there was a definite change from the agenda of the first exhibition, Barnum's Great Roman Hippodrome of 1874-75 (the "Congress of Nations"), and the second, the Barnum & London Circus of the following decade (the "Ethnological Congress"):

The former show brought its white patrons in contact with the East through cross-racial desire and identification. The latter, in contrast, emphasized the racial barrier between white patron and non-Western performer. Whereas the Hippodrome framed its Orientals in empowering political categories such as nationality and monarchy, the Barnum & London Circus reduced non-Westerners to the status of "specimens" in an ethnological schema. (165)

This difference, he argues, is evident in the transformation in mode of exhibition of Chang Yu Sing. Whereas the dwarf Che Mah, presumably Chung Mow, had always been presented in the exotic mode, one which emphasized his "sinister intelligence" and comic self-conceit, previous exhibitions of Chang, while orientalized, had emphasized his cultural and intellectual attainments, describing him as a scholar, linguist, and gentleman. The 1884 Barnum and London advertising still emphasized Chang's intellectual attainments, but "at the official unveiling of the Ethnological Congress he was rescripted as 'THE GOLLIA[T]H OF HIS RACE AND THE TALLEST GIANT ALIVE'" (180). As Adams maintains, Chang was thus "reduced to bits of information about his body and race" and exploited as the raw material from which to construct the Oriental rather than as "the repository of knowledge" himself (180).

What then do we make of one of the last autobiographical documents we have about Chang after he had settled in England, which transforms his own house (a villa in Bournemouth that he renamed "Moyuen" after his birthplace) into an Oriental Bazaar and tearoom. This advertisement offers "new and Choice Assortments of ORIENTAL CURIOS, BRONZES SILKS & REAL CHINESE TEA," precisely the stereotypical bric-a-brac that had come to be expected in British exhibitions of Chinese objects⁵ In this final narrative of self, Chang presents himself as "the Celebrated Chinese Giant," credentialing himself in order to support the claim that his wares are *truly* Chinese, that the tea is "real." While the wares are those that had come to be viewed as synonymous with an English notion of China, suggesting the ease of global consumption, it is Chang himself, not an English manager or curator, who offers up these commodities to his English buyers. Is this a double masquerade, a parody of the performance that Chang enacted earlier? An appropriation of the oriental role constructed by Chisholm? An appropriation of the private and English home for its use as a theatrical presentation of English notions of "Chinese-ness"? Is this a clever mirroring back of what the Englishman wants to see, an ironic statement that all along it was really about what it meant to be English, or was the "oriental" simply the only subject position available?

On one hand, we could read this as the final travesty, the freak forced to perform his role and transform his private home into public theater right up until his death. Yet one account relates that he made a decent income from this career and was able to support his English-born wife and two sons, who attended a local school (*The Gentle Giant*). Here he found the quieter life he had wished for and was furthermore able to adapt his home to his size, installing high windows, raising the door lintels, and installing furniture made to size. Chang was also successful in keeping his burial secret, quite a *coup*, considering the fate of many of the freak show giants we have discussed.

⁵ Advertisement reproduced at *The Gentle Giant* site.

A more ambivalent reading would suggest that this advertisement exemplifies the discursive process of subjectivity in which the subject emerges from the montage of discursive configurations specifically available at a particular historical moment. While pointing to the constraints that limit the possibilities of freak subjectivity -- those restricting narratives of race, for example -- it also points to the fluidity within that narrow set of possibilities. There is no doubt that for the freak notions of inside/outside, interiority and public performance were more blurred, less available as distinct organizing categories of self and experience; yet as this discussion of certain enfreaked individuals reveals, we are not always left with the dismembered body of the freak dissected as object in someone else's story. While the distinction between stories is never clear, the self produced in any story always a performance. At the very least, these narratives of the freak self show that subjectivity as a performative act is a process of negotiation, neither wholly determined by master narratives, nor fully resistant to networks of power which establish the freak as deviant. To dismiss these texts as simply someone else's story may be partially valid in its attention to the way corporeal difference determined self representation, but it is also to reenact the objectification of the enfreaked individual and to misunderstand the complicated conditions under which all biography is produced.

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