Victorian Freaks

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In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, consideration of freaks, monsters, and prodigies confounded human and animal categories. The nineteenth century saw these categorizations find their “natural” places as the developing sciences and the influence of Darwin reduced the controversies to questions of taxonomy. In spite of the seemingly clear demarcations in the system and the interest in categorization, the presentation of animals on stage still often blurred the boundaries between animal and human. Though the nineteenth century was awash with curious creatures both exhibited and performing—the volume of animal exhibitions, as well as the exhibition of the ethnographic freak in association with animals is well documented—contemporary criticism regarding the freak has sidelined the animal almost entirely. In the place of careful study, the presence of humans on the same stage as animals is often simply understood as a priori condemning the human to the realm of the beast. Moreover, little attention has been paid to the fact that the beasts in question were not simply six-legged sheep or other “abnormal” births but also healthy, “normal” animals. There are many ways in which animal enfreakment played a role in notions of human normalcy—the presence of the animal in the human, prominent in the exhibition practices of Barnum and most famously the Elephant Man,

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WHITE WINGS AND SIX-LEGGED MUTTONS

The Freakish Animal

TIMOTHY NEIL
for example. In this essay I will concentrate on the animal itself in the human context and consequences of its exhibition. I argue that the exhibition of animals in the nineteenth century revealed aspects of the process of enfreakment and norming and provided a context conducive to the exhibition of human freaks, due to the enfreakment of animal exhibition and performance itself.⁶

In the first part of this essay I provide a brief overview of the development of nineteenth-century animal entertainments. This is followed by a discussion of a variety of these events, with an analysis of the often blurry boundary between the human and the animal and the implications of such slippage. The final section develops the discussion through a more detailed analysis of both the mechanics and the ethics of animal exhibition and enfreakment and its relationship to freakery overall.

**Performing and Exhibited:**
*Deciphering the Animal, Locating the Human*

The presentation of animals in both the public and private sphere was a result of historical practice, changing technologies, and increasing leisure opportunities. There is a long relationship between humans and animals. Animals were central to all human activity, not just in agricultural practices. Even as the urban centers grew, animals played an important role—in spite of the increasing success at harnessing water power and eventually steam power—and animal traction for freight continued to increase well into the twentieth century.⁷ Throughout the Victorian period, people were intimately connected to animals.

This intimacy continued in animal exhibitions for entertainment. During the late eighteenth century, the practice of visiting static menageries such as the Tower Menagerie in London combined with existing traditions of animal exhibition on the fairground and in various temporary locales and found expression in the traveling menageries. These popular, itinerant exhibitions of animals moved around the country either as part of the fair or independently. Traveling menageries drew wagons into a rectangle with a single entrance point, often very ornate, on one side. The exhibition space was a semipermeable arrangement that invited audience participation—something enhanced by the noisy arrival of the menageries in town, itself an aspect of their performance. Contemporaneously with the opening of Astley’s Amphitheatre in London in 1768, the circus developed a mixture of skilled horsemanship
and clowning, making humans a part of the animal show, as well as the audience. From the 1830s onward, imitating the successes of American animal trainer Van Amburgh,⁸ animal tamers entered the arena, forming the triple axis characteristic of nineteenth- and twentieth-century circus: trained and tamed animals, human acrobatics, and clowning. Although the circus originally referred to the building, it came metonymically to refer to the show itself.

Itinerant circuses developed throughout the nineteenth century, distinguished from the menageries principally through the inclusion of human performances without animals, although this separation of the two spectacles was not consistent, with many menagerie owners turning to the circus and later the zoo. Many traveling circuses included a “circus menagerie” as well, implying a static display of animals, while traveling menageries often used performance as a central part of their presentation. The growth of the circus⁹ as a permanent popular entertainment venue through the efforts of entrepreneurs such as Frederick “Charles” Hengler¹⁰ saw a process through which performing animals entered the “human” spaces that would become the music hall circuit and later vaudeville. The period also saw the growth in popularity of the Zoological Garden as a venue for exhibition and in some cases performance, with, as a result of the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, the appearance of world’s fairs as exhibition centers. Animal exhibition in the Victorian period saw continual growth and development, and it regularly connected humans and animals in a multitude of ways.

The traveling menageries are perhaps the most appropriate focus in the study of Victorian animal exhibition, as they combined elements of the static menageries with itinerant fairground traditions (which by the early twentieth century had developed a structure that had much in common with zoos and the circus), so my discussion focuses primarily on these, though I do attend to the other forms of exhibition as well. Several examples come from Wombwell’s Menagerie (later Bostock and Wombwell), the traveling menagerie that came to epitomize itinerant displays of animals in the Victorian period.¹¹ By the time of his death, its founder, George Wombwell, had become a household name the length and breadth of Britain.¹² Indeed, his popularity gives some sense of the significant social presence of animal exhibition. Other examples come from the variety theater where performing animals were hugely popular, forming part of practically every program. These latter acts grew more numerous toward the end of the 1800s as the density of entertainment rapidly developed.
The enormous popularity of these acts is striking in itself, and in the way they parallel the growth of the human freak show. In both, the attempt to establish clear boundaries between the freak and the human is disrupted, and this disruption is often embodied in the blurring of the human and animal. As one commentator wrote of an animal performance: “It is a peculiar happiness to me . . . as an Adventurer, that I sally forth in an age which emulates those heroick times of old, when nothing was pleasing but what was unnatural. . . . That the intellectual faculties of brutes may be exerted beyond the narrow limits which we have hitherto assigned to their capacities, I saw sufficient proof in Mrs Midnight’s dogs and monkies. Man differs less from beasts in general, than these seem to approach man in rationality.” Written in 1751 upon seeing a company of performing dogs and monkeys, this piece displays an irony typical of writing about performing animals. The butt of the humor is the human to whom the animal corresponds briefly during performance and to whom the commentator makes reference after the performance. This same blurring of boundaries is offered in a multitude of ways in the following extract, published some 150 years later:

Impelled, perhaps, primarily by the undesirable but unavoidable necessity of providing himself with one or more meals a day, and after that by a genuine interest in a most fascinating pursuit, man has discovered that certain members of that section of animate society which he is pleased to call the lower animals may be successfully taught by his superior intellect to emulate the pursuits of his lighter fancy. And not only this—he has found that some of them actually take an interest, nay more, a positive pleasure in forsaking, under his tuition both the traditions and the postures of their race, and that, too, for the sake of making, or at any rate enlivening, a human holiday.

Here we see what might be called the “animal” needs of man mentioned first, in his requirements for food, and even when these bodily interests are satisfied, man turns again to the animal for his entertainment, drawing close to animals in his leisure time. This is not the only way in which the line between them is blurred. These animals themselves cross the boundaries of human/animal when they are taught to take on the postures of humans. When the animal undermined “natural” animal states and became more “human,” it softened the line between the human and the animal, and between the normative and nonnormative as well.
Part I: Marketing and Consuming Freakery

Performance by animals also acted metaphorically to connect the human and animal. As one contemporary critic noted, “Throughout history there have been animal performances. Elephants were made to dance in the train of Roman victors. The study of our popular entertainments here at home leads one to the very church door. Wild beasts were first employed, in the way of amusement, in the mystery plays, illustrating the creation of the world.”15 Always a part of the human drama, the animal comes to seem an indispensable part of human life—and even the social issues that humans perceive as being solely their province. Composed by a longtime aficionado of lion taming, the piece continues with references to “Hanno, the Carthaginian general” and later “Mark Anthony [driving] a pair of lions round the arena.” These pieces demonstrate the role animals played in dramatizing and speaking to imperial projects.

Animal performance was frequently directly mimetic of human dramas, most clearly when animals were used to stage productions such as The Brute Tamer of Pompeii.16 In this way they provided an acting out of social concerns and drew humans and animals together again. Representing, picturing, or presenting the human world was a quality also evident in the traveling menageries as with the performing Elephant advertised at Wombwell’s Menagerie in Bristol:

MUSICAL PRODIGY

Of all Modern Prodigies certainly the most prodigious is the Royal Modern Musical Elephant at Wombwell’s which plays several popular airs and polkas, by Handel, not known to be by that immortal composer, a fact which beats “Creation” or any other Oratorio—or Menagerie—Glasgow Citizen17

The elephant/prodigy/musician indicates the way in which such performances crossed and recrossed the lines between the human and animal. Elements of narrative, like the one above, often informed the more static exhibitions, typically anthropomorphizing the animals and blurring the boundaries again, as is seen in menagerie catalogues where detailed natural histories of each animal are presented and structure the context.18 Advertisements also hinted at this phenomenon, as when the “Veteran Lion ‘WALLACE’” appeared at Halifax Fairground in 1902, some seventy-five years after Wallace had a mythical fight with bulldogs at Warwick.19 Not only is the lion a “veteran,” a characterization that makes little sense with an animal unless we think of it anthropomorphically, but the name “Wallace” was enough to evoke a recognizable
narrative that demonstrates the social significance of such performances to Victorians and their relationship to the mainstream.

Another common practice in animal performance was the presentation of tableaux, which were also likely to integrate humans and animals in disruptive ways. The Royal Italian Circus used trained animals to enact scenes from a military tribunal including the eventual simulated execution. The human performer, too, realized tableaux, often illustrating contemporary or historical events and personalities, while in the fairground shows the performer’s immobility invited spectators to gaze at a display of human flesh, much like a freak show. The animal tableau is typically represented by Van Amburgh as he is seen through the palette of Landseer, the lion lying down with the lamb. Scenes such as this were recreated many times in which beasts overcame their “natural” state—in this way creating an “unnatural” or “freakish” union, much like the marriage of the thin man and the fat lady. While the lion and lamb tableau was freakish, it critiqued the naturalness of social norms that said such commingling was impossible. Perhaps it was inevitable that freak animals functioned in this way, calling into question the social norms.

Lions and other felines feature large in Victorian entertainment, and their displays often disrupted the expected hierarchy of human over animal, calling into question the taxonomies in which they were placed. These animals took their places on stage creating the illusion of a pyramid and lay with mouths open as the trainer laid his or her head inside and paused momentarily. The barber shaved the keeper of the animals inside the lion’s cage and was applauded loudly upon his exit. These performances, however, were fraught with danger and disruption. For instance, at Wombwell’s Menagerie Wallace the lion attacked and ate the hand of the drunken Mr. Johnston, a night watchman, who tried to show Wallace to friends. Onstage, the cowed participants when “The Lion Queen Performs” were the overpowering victors in her eventual demise. While the animals were unconscious of social narrative in each instance, these stories commented on the instability of the power hierarchies: human/animal, “normative”/freak.

In another example, the trained dog, swinging freely on a trapeze, briefly assumes the postures of our race. “Place aux dames!—I ought to have introduced the ladies first. . . . The damsel on the trapeze is Mademoiselle Blanche, and she, by the way, if you take another look at her portrait, appears also to have mastered the art of performing the elevated kick with her tail in a style worthy of exciting the envy even of a skirt dancer without a tail. It took her nearly a year to learn this, and
a glance at the illustration on page 410 will show you how, clothed in her native charms, she began to acquire the really difficult art of which she is now a past mistress.”

Mademoiselle Blanche was a poodle, yet redolent of humanity. What was being recognized and gazed upon was human occupation of space through the body of the Other, disrupting the line between the human and poodle, the normative and enfreaked. Animals performed such human feats in more ways than one. A war hero, “the genuine bell ringing ape from Mafeking, who so ably assisted the gallant ‘B. P.’ in his famous 200 days-defence,” appeared regularly on Bostock and Wombwell’s Menagerie. The lions appear as ominous extras who refrain from slaughter in the novelty feat of the barber Mr. G. R. Parry, winning a wager by undertaking to “enter the lion’s cage and shave the keeper of the beasts.” Each of these instances suggests the tenuousness of human superiority and of the stability of the human/animal binary.

There was often an emphasis on the exotic animal whose origins confounded the emergent taxonomist, like the racial others encountered in colonization. The categories offered were frequently disruptive—just as unstable as those employed in descriptions of the colonized subject. The advertisement that read, “Also, just added, a fine specimen of the CHACMA, or ‘New Man Monkey’” indicates this confounding of terms. As other essays in this collection indicate, these strained categories participated in larger social shifts. In the later years a more general dissemination of categories of natural science nurtured an exhibition practice based on exceptions to recognized normality, and these “animal freaks” accentuated this phenomenon: “[Wombwell’s exhibited] many novelties of ‘animal nature’ absolutely unique of their kind. Firstly, there is the handsome pure milk-white ‘Yankee’ horse, possessing mane and tail of the actual combined length of 40 feet, the posters are said to give a true idea of this striking animal curiosity, which alone will attract many to the show. Then comes a giant cart horse, 21 hands (84 inches high), miniature horse, 6 hands, or 24 inches high, giant mule, 19 hands, and a miniature mule 24 inches high, a hairless, or India rubber skinned mare from Kruger Land.” Animals whose bodies did not equate with the norm, for example, sheep with six legs, could be exhibited as novelties in sideshows at fairs either dead or alive. In fact, so frequent was the former that showmen would advertise their novelties as “alive” in order to overcome suspicion. All of these exhibits undermined the clean categories that seemed to be offered by science, calling both the taxonomy and its creators into question.
The exhibited animal, whether freak or not, was removed from the wild and lodged into a context of human concerns. Medieval and Renaissance theology and philosophy, with their roots in the Bible and Aristotle, were anthropocentric, but the modern period can be characterized as anthropomorphic, attributing human personality to the impersonal, irrational, and even animal. While this does not mean the human has been replaced as the central fact of the universe, this concept is at the center of Lévi-Strauss’s proposal that “animals are good to think with.” In this sense animals provide a ready technology with which we may discuss our ideas about far more than sentience itself. The animal, in these moments, invokes disparate responses. The resonance of the animal, the profundity of the echo, makes it malleable. Animals are what we make of them: idealized, they may be conducive to an ethical humanism or, as brute beast of creation, a “model of disorder.” This flexibility has made them even more available as a means of speaking to human social concerns.

Both performance and exhibition are understood as passive as far as the animal is concerned—in other words, the critical debate over the performer’s willingness to take the stage drawn out by Robert Bogdan and David Gerber does not apply in the same way to animals as human subjects, nor does it allow us to view animals as active participants. This construction, however, does not account for the complex relationship between humans and animals. Nor does it attend to the precarious nature of many of the acts—the possibility, the inevitability even, that the animal would behave outside the script and disrupt the display. In this way, the animal retained a kind of “agency” in the process and served the social function of drawing in an audience and engaging the public in dialogue about the animal/freak. Bostock, for example, admitted that an attack on the trainer provided good publicity, echoing P. T. Barnum’s attempts to create controversy surrounding the human freaks in his shows to draw in an audience. The role of the animal, the parallels to the human freak show, and the relationship between the animal and human suggest to us that we may need to reexamine the use of the concept of freakery with regard to animals.

The Animal as Freak

The other essays in this collection demonstrate how catholic the use of the term “freak” is. However, unless they display marked variation
from their type, animals are not generally classed as freaks. It would perhaps be seen as pejorative or unsympathetic, in part because animals are implicitly understood to be present solely through the intervention of human agency. Here I have suggested, foremost, that the categories of human and animal are not clear, that the system of taxonomy in the natural sciences establishes the fluidity of the animal/human category. Second, animals were often situated in very human contexts. When elephants performed and boa constrictors behaved, both were far removed from the environment in which they originated and were physically and socially installed in a human environment. Moreover, they required other kinds of human intervention, like narrative explanation. In ever greater detail, as the old narratives became familiar and the exotic became commonplace, animals were enfreaked for their show value. More and more, animals became freaks, invoking “amazement and moments of a particular gaze . . . [a] momentary dreaming.”

We might resist such a characterization, believing that our contemporary taxonomy, which separates animals and humans and marks out our species as discrete, is the recognition of a natural law. Indeed, the contrary position, that biological species are not natural kinds, seems to deny scientific rationalism. However, it is faithful to the precepts of Darwinism, which suggests that “since species evolve . . . they should be treated not as classes whose members satisfy some fixed set of conditions—not even a vague cluster of them—but as lineages, lines of descent, strings of imperfect copies of predecessors.” The sense that we as humans are wholly separated from the other animals, as well as from the inanimate, is a convenience contrived to account for the complexity and perhaps the implausibility of thinking in Darwinian epochs. Where the moral and political effects of thinking that any biological human population is less than “human” have been catastrophic, the corollary has been that it is equally unthinkable that a nonbiologically human population be considered human. Still, the undeniable fluidity of the taxonomic process and the slipperiness of the human/animal categories have allowed this to occur. The enormous cultural variation in the construction of the animal both underscores and reveals the instability of the categories. Another corroborating fact is the way in which human groups have often regraded new groups they have encountered, labeling them (both human and nonhuman) as nonhuman and “other.” What this suggests, however, is that “human” may more usefully function as a folk taxonomy than a scientific class.

In spite of this slipperiness, the role of animals has not been recog-
nized in critical studies of culture and freakery. Placing animals in the category of “freaks” allows us to acknowledge the complex position they take in the process of enfreakment and to flesh out their significance. The animal in the cage or ring could be none other than a freak—the figure of fear, indifference, amusement, ridicule, cruelty, admiration, or pity, but also a figure of potential social power. Animals can be given life beyond their cages and a role beyond suffering; their significance can be interrogated. Studying animals can aid us in our ability to imagine ourselves “in forms other than this [one in which we currently exist, and which] seems to require that [we are] not quite identical with this bodily organism.” 40 This power to imagine ourselves differently made the animal particularly significant. We can begin to understand how when we look at the way in which the animal was positioned in the nineteenth century. The animal had always been close to humans, and the Victorian period saw this proximity taken out of the workplace and given a spectacular role: entertainment. As freaks of nature, animals were exhibited for their exotic or rare qualities; as freaks of culture, they dramatized the slippery line between human and animal, a phenomenon with social effects.

The Spectacle of Animal Performance

The animal performs with the human literally in the background—when absent, there can be no performance. The leopard cowers, but only from the trainer, and the lioness can only escape from the show when there is a person from whom to escape. Performance and exhibition create possibility that the zebra, in flesh and blood, takes part in the social, its agency choreographed but not completely controlled. The show was not simply a cage, but an arena intimate to human concerns.

For there was Polito, with condors from Quito,
And serpents from Ceylon, and apes from Japan,
Whose sly-demure faces, as often the case is,
Is like, very like, the arch hypocrite man;

And six legged muttons [sheep] hear this, you gluttons,
And calves, double headed, and ducks, with one leg,
And the learned dog Toby, who gave me the go by,
So well could the creature tell fortunes and beg. 41
In this poem celebrating the visit to Bristol of Polito’s traveling menagerie in 1845, the themes of this essay emerge: the animal’s “humanity” is recognized and partially mediated through humor; we are urged to recognize our normality in contrast to the animal freaks, but also to call it into question when we hear of the human agency of Toby. Human narrative, here, was the key to comprehension. Performance and exhibition, like the moon, pulled an inevitable narrative tide. The animals stood before the trainer, the tamer, or the lecturer and were gazed upon by the spectator on the shore. This spectacle is the spectacle of the freak—the observed, the one defying category, the one that narrative alone will reveal, the one that demands the attention of the spectator, the prop to the storyteller. The images and stories of exhibited and performing nonhuman animals are washed up by this tide, left high and dry by most critical narratives.

The freak is not born freak but made freak by a particular gaze; the exhibited animal was the receptor of that gaze, as a novelty or performed as such, with the human always in the foreground, capturing, revealing, cajoling, and laughing, present in a passive imperative. Imperfect in their humanity, yet resonant with human traits—including their lack of power—the animals were mired in their species. They both invited rapprochement and denied its possibility. We assume the animal has no say in the matter of performance. The human, even when offered no choice, is, like the gladiator or the courtesan, honored with a voice. The animal has no such option. The modern usage of the term “freak” and its assumption of alternative seeing and its honoring of difference must be extended to exhibited animals and their performances.

In the context of modern performances by trained elephants, attention has been drawn to the way in which compelling circus animals to “perform human” makes them into freak animals. In his discussion of performing elephants in Cottle’s Circus, Carmeli notes that human presence is implied in the elephants’ bodies’ movement and display. This anthropomorphism is one aspect of the play; another is the importance of the similarity of all circus acts: “What the spectators expect in the circus animals acts are not the routines’ particularities, but the human presence betrayed in them all.” It is this human presence, seen through the body of the animal, that is central to the idea of the freakish animal. As with the human freak, it is through the context of exhibition and presentation itself that the freak is made. Seen in this light, both exhibition of and performance by animals can be understood as constructing them as freaks, and studying the particular contexts of freakery in the nineteenth century will give us more insight into the period overall.
Conclusion

In the Italian folktale "The King of the Animals," a young girl, Stella, is tempted by a handsome youth who persuades her to live in a mysterious castle surrounded by a beautiful park stocked with all sorts of animals, including dogs, cats, donkeys, hens, and giant toads. They sound like a group of people all talking at once. For several months she lives in the castle waited upon by invisible servants until one fateful day she learns that her young man, whom she only sees briefly each morning, is none other than the King of the Animals, and he intends to devour her. She plots her escape but is obliged to bring about his death. No sooner has he fallen than all the animals change back to their true form: kings, queens, and princes alike.45

Many will wish that such could be the destiny of the exhibited and performing animals whose lives in the beautiful park of Victorian entertainment were so rudely constrained. That they should find their liberation as human beings would be particularly appropriate, destined as they were to embody particular human attributes, attitudes, and postures in their working life. The spectacle of a performing dog pushing a pram containing a dressed cat is perhaps an unpalatable icon. In spite of this, our modern sensibility of the nonhuman, our assumption of the entire natural world as our totemic right, is imperial and self-aggrandizing.

In this essay I argue that we see the “freakish animal” based, in part, upon the centrality of human narrative in animal performance and exhibition in the Victorian period. Is it thus to be understood as a category of the animal itself or of the exhibitor and the audience? Drawing an analogy between zoo visitors in front of the primate enclosures, archaeologist Cornelius Holtorf recognizes the struggle to define “precisely what it means to be human and where the human-animal boundary can be drawn in time and space.” The limits of the cage materialize the human-animal boundary with the Victorian zoo displaying “animals [that] were visually near but physically separate.” Moreover, Darwin’s revelation of common ancestry and an increased understanding of the complex social organization of both the higher and lower animals left the nineteenth century “coming to terms with this new, and sometimes threatening, proximity of animals.”46

A paradox of the modern condition is that we no longer wish to see animals behind bars, as performers or exhibits—unless they act out the modern condition as is the case with wildlife documentaries and wildlife parks and in the documenting of cruelty. The bounded animal in an
exhibition booth, upon a stage, in a ring, or behind bars plays an ontology in flux. Human physical supremacy seems ascendant in this case, but the animal, too, was gaining ground through this very knowledge. The spectacle, the playing of life in remove, was to bring the animal to the forefront of consciousness.

In a recent article, “The Animal Other,” Donald Turner proposes that notions of civility be extended to animals—not on account of human-generated empathy but rather because ethical imperatives can be seen as emanating from the beings themselves. Both nonhuman animals and humans have ethics. The “structural asymmetry” that exists between humans and animals should be respected, not abused. The willingness to consider that animals, both exhibited and performing, partake of the very human category of freaks is to acknowledge that there is a genuine continuum from the human to the nonhuman animal, and to see the stability of all those categories upset. We need to recognize freaks in the past and heed freaks in the present. The human capacity to make worlds, to create physical structure and rules that affect others, is the capacity that produces freaks. If we fail to acknowledge their place as freaks, we fail also to acknowledge the social politics of their enfreakment and the corollaries it provides to human enfreakment.

Sheep with six legs or calves with two heads were not common and were pronounced novel; they were recognized as freaks. However, it is as freaks of culture, not of nature, that they should be understood. They were not evidence of natural or holy error but rather were floated in preserving jars as proof of normality and an assurance of social norms. The exception proves the rule. White Wings, a horse that traveled widely with Bostock and Wombwell’s Menagerie sporting an exceptionally long mane and tail, was not advertised as a freak but rather a novelty of animal nature. It is the contention of this essay that, like the hirsute Lionel, performing and exhibited animals such as White Wings were, regardless of their objective condition, freaks. Moreover, the slipperiness between the animal and human, between the freak and the norm, and the very process of enfreakment are evidenced in the condition of animal performer.

Contemporary critical studies are often concerned with freak as a social category that can be used subversively and can disrupt the sense of normativity. The animal freak, indeed the “normed” animal, deserves consideration in this conversation. There is no value in continuing the very categorizations of the Victorian epoch and refusing humans and nonhuman animals space in the same stable. Any discussion of exhibited and performing animals must avoid above all repeating this trope,
and any discussion of freakery in the nineteenth century must open the doors to discuss animal freaks as well as humans.

Notes


6. The scope of this essay does not allow the history of animal and human relations to be examined in detail but rather concentrates on the exhibition and performance. For the purposes of this essay these terms are used almost interchangeably, it being a central contention that the exhibited animal performed and the performing animal exhibited.


8. He was famously credited with introducing lion taming onto the stage.


12. Banbury Guardian, November 28, 1850. No one has done “so much to forward practically the study of natural history amongst the masses, for his menageries visited every fair and every town in the kingdom, and was everywhere popular.”

13. Thomas Frost, The Old Showmen, and the Old London Fairs, 2nd ed. (London: Tinsley Brothers), 169. The animals were brought by Ballard from Italy and exhibited on the Haymarket in Mrs. Midnight’s Oratory.


15. Harry Wilding, Lion Tamers and Lion Taming (The World’s Fair), March 28, 1925, 10.
17. *Clifton Chronicle and Directory* (June 3, 1868).
21. *The Blackpool Times* and *Fylde Observer* (June 24, 1905). Bostock’s animals at Blackpool appear in a show where no expense was “spared in making the animal arena one of the best extant for animal exhibition and performance.”
22. *Liverpool Daily Post* (April 8, 1901), 9, c. 3–4: “DARING FEAT OF A BARBER. SHAVING IN A CAGE OF LIONS. Mr G. R. Parry, a barber, carrying on business at Church Street, Flint, has just performed a daring feat and thereby won a wager. A menagerie is at present on exhibition in the town, and the intrepid barber undertook to enter the lion’s cage and shave the keeper of the beasts. A great crowd of spectators assembled to witness the operation, which was successfully performed on Thursday night, the barber plying his razor in a cool and businesslike way, amid the intense excitement of the onlookers. On emerging from the cage, he was loudly cheered.”
23. *Bristol Mercury* (September 13, 1831).
24. *The Coventry Herald and Observer* (June 8, 1849), 1. The Lion Queen, performing in Wombwell’s Menagerie, was to die mauled by her lions soon after.
25. Milton, 408.
29. *Doncaster Chronicle* (December 4, 1901), 5.
30. *World’s Fair*, June 15, 1907, 1
31. Thomas, 19.
32. Tapper, 51.
33. Editor’s note: see the introduction, the section titled “Dislocating the Freak: Social Ambiguity.”
39. Ibid., 27.
40. Ibid., 33.
41. “St James’s Fair: A Reminiscence,” poem by Inconnu, Bristol (September 1, 1845), Bristol Reference Library Collections.
42. Bogdan, 24.
44. Ibid., 9.


48. *Doncaster Chronicle* (December 4, 1901), 5: “VISIT TO DONCASTER OF THE ONLY AND ORIGINAL WOMBWELLS. This mammoth travelling ‘Zoo’ will visit Doncaster for one day, Monday, Oct 7, exhibiting in the Magdelene Square. Many changes have been added, and many novelties of ‘animal nature’ absolutely unique of their kind.”

49. Lionel the Lion Man traveled widely in the late 1800s.