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Monsters, Marvels, and Medicine: A “Disturbingly Informative” Exploration of the Mütter Museum and the Monstrous on Display

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Introduction

Among the dimly lit and crowded glass cases that cradle wet specimens in chemically-induced states of suspension and bald human skulls staring emptily outward, the visitor to the Mütter Museum steps into a world of morbid curiosity that changed the course of medicine in the United States in the nineteenth century. The Museum's history, purpose, and function, though at times oppositional and divergent, unite in the momentary and physical space of the Museum's main gallery where the present-day viewer meets odd and unusual human specimens long preserved, where the nineteenth-century notion of the monstrous is reimagined by the twenty-first century visitor, and where the antiquated museum becomes modern.

Dr. Thomas Mütter, one of Philadelphia's most prominent nineteenth-century surgeons established the Museum in 1858 as a repository for the collection of his medical curiosities. Mütter donated his extensive collection to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia at the time of his death, and the Museum remains now a staunchly Victorian institution, emblematic of contemporary scientific innovation and natural curiosity. Mütter aimed to establish his collection in Philadelphia and, in doing so, secured for himself a prestigious legacy as one of the leading plastic surgeons of his time with one of the most extensive collections of medical "oddities" in the world. The Mütter Museum is now one of the leading museums in Philadelphia, following in the city's tradition of grand scientific institutions, and one of the most visited medical oddity collections.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Philadelphia was the epicenter of learning and curiosity in the United States. Philadelphia houses the first public hospital, the first medical library, and the first surgical theater in the nation, all centered at Pennsylvania Hospital

established in 1751.[1] Likewise, the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine (now named the Perelman School of Medicine) is the oldest medical institute in the United States.[2] It remained "the defining medical institution for Philadelphia" until 1824 when Dr. George McClellan, himself a graduate of University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, established Jefferson College Medical School, where Dr. Mütter later chaired the Department of Surgery.[3] Philadelphia's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reputation as a center of science, technology, and medicine, stems from an innate curiosity which drove, and continues to drive, the city's institutions. It is no small wonder that Philadelphia attracted the young Thomas Dent Mütter as the place to begin his medical education, develop his surgical career, and leave his legacy.

Now, placed squarely in the center of Philadelphia between the Museum of Art and the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University campuses, the Mütter Museum stands stoically still in the midst of traffic and new construction, a banner depicting a skull from the Joseph Hyrtl collection and the Museum's motto, "Disturbingly Informative," emblazoned in dark and ghostly font hanging from the neoclassical façade of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Inside the Museum, the collection is snuggly housed and displayed in the original 1858 oak-and-glass cabinets, which convey a sense of stepping into the past. The specimens, systematically organized and classified by body part, disease, and deformity, display to the visitor a foreign epistemology: how physicians and surgeons in Mütter's time thought about anatomy and physiology, and more importantly, how they envisioned monsters, or anomalous bodies.

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[1] Nancy Moses, "Pessaries," in *Lost in the Museum: Buried Treasures and the Stories They Tell* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008), 64.
[2] Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels* (New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 2014), 49.
[3] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, 50.

Though the Mütter Museum opened only two decades after P.T. Barnum's American Museum of curiosities and oddities in New York City, and though its opening coincided with the rise in popularity of the traveling circus, the Mütter Museum stood in stark contrast to the world of curious entertainment and human spectacle that institutions like circuses and freak shows aimed to provide. Rather, the Museum's original purpose was to serve medical students and physicians exclusively as a pedagogical resource. In the Articles of Agreement between Dr. Mütter and the College of Physicians, it states that:

> free access to the Museum and preparations shall be given to every regular graduate in Medicine and to every student of medicine without charge or fee…[and] other persons may be admitted on the presentation of a ticket bearing upon it the signature of any Fellow of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.[4]

Though some members of the public were allowed to visit Mütter's collection, it was by expressed invitation only and presumably on limited occasions. Otherwise, the Museum was exclusively open to medical students and fellows of the college. Fellows and lecturers from the medical schools in the area used the collection as a tool for lectures and lessons just as Mütter did during his lifetime. It was not until the 1930s or 1940s that the general, non-medical public began visiting the Museum and the museum transitioned from catering primarily to members of the medical field to members of the general population.

Likewise, the Museum balanced precariously between the Early Modern phenomenon of "cabinets of curiosity" or *Wunderkammern* and the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century modernization of medicine. The Museum represents the moment of transformation in the medical field that reconstructed patients, transforming them from oddities to normal members of

[4] The Articles of Agreement even stipulate that tables, chairs, and writing materials must be available at all times for students to use while observing the collection; "Articles of Agreement between Thomas Dent Mütter and The College of Physicians of Philadelphia," *The Historical Medical Library*, (Philadelphia: College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 1858).

society, from monsters to humans—an act which directly opposed the purpose and aims of Barnum's American Museum and travelling circus.

The Mütter Museum, though, fails to function in the twenty-first century as it was intended to in the nineteenth: as an educational institution with the sole purpose of serving those studying anatomy, physiology, and pathology. Now open to the general public and one of the most visited tourist attractions in Philadelphia, it acts as a historical artifact in and of itself with its perfectly preserved nineteenth-century curatorial style and encourages the same sort of morbid curiosity towards human disfigurement and deformity that freak shows and the like cultivated at the height of their popularity. Though public perceptions of the Museum have changed as its purpose has changed, the Mütter Museum remains a critical piece of Philadelphia's medical tradition and an integral part of its history both as an ark of historically significant human specimens and as a transitional space of history itself.

This peculiar Museum inhabits multiple identities at once: a modern museum, a relic of the nineteenth century, an event venue, a tool for medical knowledge at the cusp of modern medicine, a library of medical history, a cabinet of curiosities, and a modern freak show. Each visitor experiences the space differently and brings to it his or her own perceptions, assumptions, and sense of self. My first experience of the Museum reinforced my own non-normativity. I visited it as many do: on a free afternoon.

My oldest brother, Aaron, takes me as a teenager of sixteen or so. He is so excited to share with me one of his favorite museums in Philadelphia, the museum where he would eventually host his wedding. To my brother, the Mütter Museum always had an academic bent. He had studied it in class at the University of Pennsylvania and considered it a fascinating institution for ethnographic and sociological discussion. I enter the museum with the same sort

of excitement: My big brother is showing me his Philadelphia! The Museum is not what I had expected. I experience the Museum entirely differently than he does. To me, the Mütter Museum is a visceral space, a place where I must physically confront the hidden deformities I harbor within my own body and the scars that concealed them.

I was born with hydrocephalus, a congenital brain malformation that prevents my brain from processing spinal fluid correctly. Hydrocephalus, I learn at the Mütter, is a relatively common and mysterious condition. There are many more like me, many of whom have suffered and died from it, and many of whom are on display in the Museum. The Mütter Museum has a large collection of hydrocephalic skeletons and skulls. One specimen in particular catches my eye. It is the plaster cast of a man's bulbous head. The label reads:

> *James Cardinal, aged 29, was admitted into Guy's Hospital, London, December 1st, 1824. He had hydrocephali. His body was normally formed, but his head was twice the size it should be. His forehead was prominent and his eyes had a lengthened appearance. He was born at Coggeshall in Essex, March 2nd, 1795. His head was larger than natural and had a pulpy feel.*[5]

I identify with him. His enlarged skull reminds me of my own pre-surgery photographs. His symptoms and difficulties reinforce my own fears for myself. Only two years before, I had had emergency brain surgery. The end of the tube that drains fluid from my brain had become detached and had lodged itself in my hip, causing a buildup of fluid in my brain, debilitating pain, slowed speech, and a fever. It was only the first surgery I had had since I was a toddler, which is remarkably rare for people born with hydrocephalus, and it made me realize how unstable my health was and has been my whole life. I was scared and paranoid and have been ever since. James Cardinal is the only adult with hydrocephalus whom I have ever encountered.

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[5] Museum label for *James Cardinal, Plaster Cast*, Philadelphia, PA, The Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, January 3, 2018.

I feel guilt and sadness for this man who suffered and died while I live relatively healthfully with the help of modern medicine. And yet, I do not feel safe. I feel like James Cardinal.

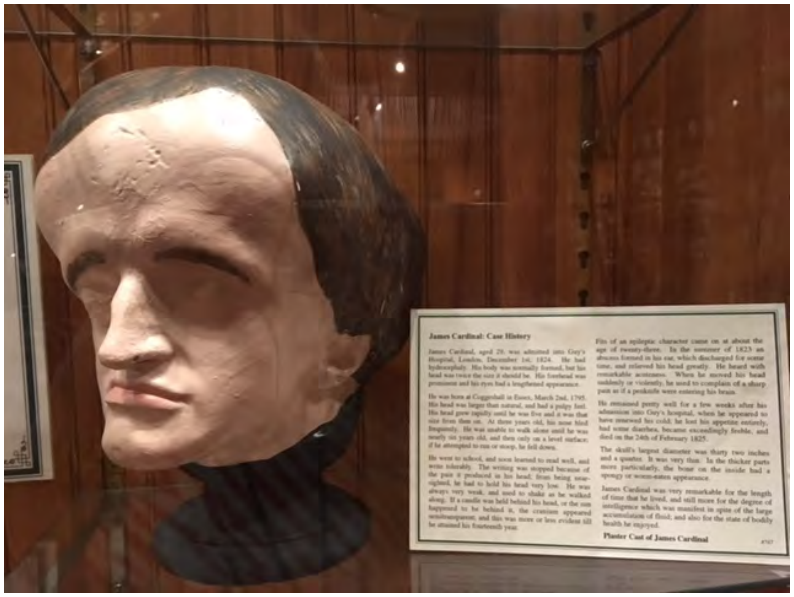

Figure 1 James Cardinal, photograph, 2018.

Afterwards, I will research hydrocephalus on the internet and only escalate my lingering sense of foreboding. I realize that up until that point I had not really asked any questions, but rather accepted hydrocephalus as a not-too-serious part of my medical history. Now, I feel like I am a ticking time bomb, waiting to burst and suffer more surgeries, more scars, more pain.

Years later I will revisit Cardinal's plaster cast and notice for the first time a small detail in his exhibit label. It describes his pain —"sharp pain as if a pen-knife were entering his brain"— and it is the same pain I have experienced many times in my life, most recently just before my last surgery, though I used to describe it as a "medieval spike-ball digging into the back of my skull" (now I know it's called a mace).[6] *I had never known anyone who felt the same way I did. Though pain is such a subjective thing, I no longer feel alone in my experiences and*

[6] Ibid.

all my pain seems justified by association. I no longer feel objectified, but rather at one with every specimen in the Museum.

While researching for this paper, I spent extensive time in the Museum and its library. As a researcher, I did not feel like one of the specimens as I had as a visitor. Instead, I experienced the space as a silent observer, noticing not just the specimens and the way they were displayed, but also the other visitors and their reactions. I watched teenagers huddle around the mega-colon and giggle, adults test their height against that of the acromegalic skeleton, and the volunteer docent excitedly tell attentive visitors all about every specimen in the Civil War medicine section in great detail. Later, I would experience the Museum in yet another way, as a guest at my brother's wedding. Then, I wandered animatedly around the space teaching my family and friends about the specimens I am particularly fond of. The space had transformed entirely from an oppressive space where I felt othered, to one in which I could observe and think critically, to one in which I could enjoy the Museum with my friends and family. In my multiple roles, I have experienced the Mütter Museum from various perspectives, exemplifying that the Museum takes on several identities all at once.

Only by exploring the Mütter Museum, its collection, its past, and its present can one gauge what it was, what it is, and how it functions as a museum institution today. This essay will act as a guide through the Museum and its multiple identities—as a museum of medical oddities, an educational institution, a recreational experience, and a twenty-first century museum—highlighting where those identities become inextricably entangled. First, I will define the "monstrous" and the transformation of the idea of the monstrous as it emerges out of the Middle Ages into the early modern European consciousness. Most of Dr. Mütter's collection consists of specimens that would have been considered "monsters" in nineteenth century medical jargon,

whereas Mütter's goal in collecting such specimens was to eradicate deformity through plastic surgery; in essence, he aspired to eradicate physical deformity, or monsters, altogether. His collection exemplifies a transformative moment in thinking about the "monstrous" at the advent of modern medicine, and yet the systems of observation, examination, and classification developed in the Early Modern period provided the language with which Mütter defined and explained deformities and their causes in the nineteenth century.

The following section will look at the evolution of the exploration and curation of nature in *Wunderkammern*, the institutional ancestor of medical oddity museums such as the Mütter Museum. *Wunderkammern* traditionally presented nature—stuffed animals, dried plants, and minerals—to not only explore and explain the natural world but also to curate the intersection of art and nature, marking cabinets of curiosity as personal galleries of entertainment. The Mütter Museum, like most twenty-first century museums must cater to a similar aspect of entertainment in its galleries, even as the use of monstrous bodies for entertainment crosses into a realm all too similar to that of freak shows and circuses.

The third section will consider the history of monsters as entertainment and the rise and fall of P.T. Barnum's American Museum and subsequent freak shows in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, comparing the ways in which entertainment and medicine reimagine monsters and to what end. And finally, I will analyze the Mütter Museum as it functions today: as an institution of education and leisure, a petrified remnant of the nineteenth century, and a space where the specimens cannot speak for themselves.

The presence of public perception is paramount to this paper. This paper will examine not only the Mütter Museum as an institution of multiple identities and functions and its parallels to contemporaneous institutions of learning and entertainment, but it will also focus on the public

perception of the display of monsters. Just as museums and circuses have changed over time, so too have the opinions, judgements, and beliefs of the visiting public evolved. Public perception influences the way the Mütter Museum presents itself and its specimens, which in turn reifies the way visitors receive it.

The Mütter Museum and the Monstrous

The first thing I notice upon entering the museum was the faint smell of chemicals in the air and the dimly lit cabinets that seem too numerous and too close together; it is suffocating. The sense of suffocation lingers and even escalates as I descend down a steep and narrow staircase into the lower level of the main gallery. I immediately notice a display to my right that exhibits several skeletons and bodies preserved in jars. These are the only other hydrocephalic bodies I have ever seen. I recognize in them the same engorged, bulbous skulls, swollen by the buildup of fluid in the brain that appear in my own baby pictures. The stillborn fetuses and babies that never lived more than a few days make me suddenly and unexpectedly confront an image of myself that I never had before, a kind of false-self, a view of what could have been. Locked behind glass cabinets, the fetuses stuck in glass jars full of formaldehyde and skeletons suspended by invisible wires, as dissimilar as they are from my own body, make me feel more like them than like my brother standing next to me. He, in his healthy, unscarred body walks through the museum without seeing himself in it. I cannot. I feel othered and objectified as if I were the one on display.

I leave the museum with a deep sense of despair. I am surprised that my brother does not notice. Unlike me, he remembers when I was born; He remembers the medical apparati keeping me alive, the tubes and wires; He remembers having to put on scrubs and gloves before holding me for the first time after my first surgery at only a few days old; He remembers my family worrying over me, even though he probably did not understand why. And yet, he does not recognize me in those specimens. He hardly even noticed them. I realize that my experience of the Museum is subjective, but I am somehow angry at my brother for taking me there and not

seeing it as I do, I am angry at the museum for making me feel this way, and I am angry that I survived and others did not.

It would be difficult for a modern visitor to walk into the main gallery of the Mütter Museum and not gawk at the peculiar deformities on display. Most of the specimens are terribly disfigured—from enormous tumors, to syphilitic lesions; from microcephaly to acromegaly and dwarfism. The first specimen one encounters is the infamous "Soap Lady," the partially-decayed corpse of a young woman exhumed in Philadelphia and said to have died in the 1830s. Her skin decomposed in a particular way so as to form a soap-like fatty substance called adipocere, from which her nickname derives.[7] Her jaw juts grotesquely agape as if in a hollow scream reminiscent of the Edvard Munch painting, greeting the visitor with a combination of pain and ludicrousness. Just behind her, a portrait of Dr. Mütter himself regally surveys the visitors as they shuffle into the narrow corridor between the "Soap-Lady's" Snow White-esque glass coffin and the railing from which one can glimpse the entire gallery beyond and below. Thomas Dent Mütter overlooks his legacy, a collection of monstrous specimens that both fascinated and confounded him throughout his life.

Born to John Mutter, a first-generation Scotsman, and Lucinda Gillies of the prestigious American family, Thomas D. Mütter grew up a sickly child in the American South.[8] Orphaned at

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[7] "The Soap Lady," *The Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia*, November 30, 2017, http://muttermuseum.org/exhibitions/the-soap-lady/.

[8] Note the lack of the umlaut (¨) above the "u" in the name John Mutter. According to his biographer Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz, Dr. Mütter changed the spelling of his name during his time studying surgery in Paris as a young man. However, his close friend, competitor, and colleague, Joseph Pancoast, wrote in his lecture honoring Mütter's memory after his death, that Mütter's ancestors "emigrated from Germany to Scotland." Likewise, in another obituary published in "The Medical and Surgical Reporter: A Weekly Journal," R.J. Levis states that "Dr. Mütter's early progenitors were Hollanders…who settled in Scotland, near Glasgow, soon after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in the year 1685, which was followed by so much religious

Figure 2.“The Soap Lady.”[9]

an early age, he was raised as a ward of Robert Wormeley “Colonel” Carter, a wealthy landowner and slaveholder in Virginia.[10] At only seventeen years of age, Dr. Mütter began his education as a medical student at the University of Pennsylvania. After earning his degree, which was not a requirement for a practicing physician in early-nineteenth-century Philadelphia, Mütter traveled to Paris, a city at the forefront of surgery on the international stage. According to Mütter’s biographer, Cristin O’Keefe Aptowicz, French citizens received free medical treatment within the city of Paris at the time of Mütter’s arrival.[11] The multiplicity of hospitals available to Parisians for a myriad of specific maladies offered Mütter and his contemporaries a rare

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proscription.” The change in the spelling of his name seems to indicate a desire to appear more worldly, more prestigious, and reconstruct himself as an active participant in the grander European heritage of knowledge, innovation, and scientific discovery.

[9] “The Soap Lady Photograph.” The Mütter Museum, Philadelphia. From: The Mütter Museum, muttermuseum.org (accessed December 1, 2017). Courtesy of the Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians.

[10] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter’s Marvels*, 26-46.

[11] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter’s Marvels*, 13.

opportunity for specialized, hands-on apprenticeships that remained unavailable in the United States. In fact, most cities at the time still made the acquisition of a human body for dissection illegal in educational institutions, but Paris made cadavers available and easily accessible for its schools and hospitals. The Hôtel Dieu, where Mütter studied, collected an extraordinary number of unclaimed cadavers for dissection, making it one of the most favored hospitals in the world for surgical and anatomical apprenticeships.[12]

In his *The Birth of the Clinic* (1975), Michel Foucault rails against the false narrative of the history of anatomy that came about in the nineteenth century concerning gothic bodysnatching for the secreting of anatomical study.[13] He writes, "there was no shortage of corpses in the eighteenth century, no need to rob graves or to perform anatomical black masses; one was already in the full light of dissection."[14] Foucault asserts that the illusionary dark mythos of anatomical study before the nineteenth century arose as a result of the necessity to "[circumvent], slowly and prudently, one major obstacle, the opposition of religion, morality,

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[12] Dora B. Weiner and Michael J. Sauter, *Osiris* 18, (2003), 25.

[13] Foucault wrote exclusively of France, and so his interpretation is not universal. Body-snatching was a great moral and legal conflict of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that caused upheaval in the United States and Britain especially. In 1788, New York suffered a Doctors' Riot against the illegal acquisition of cadavers; see Whitfield J. Bell, "Doctors' Riot, New York, 1788," *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine,* 1501-1503. In Britain, the infamous case of Burke and Hare caused an uproar which influenced the passing of the Anatomy Act of 1832. The case involved two Irishmen, William Burke and William Hare, who murdered sixteen individuals and sold their cadavers to an Edinburgh anatomist for examination; see Lisa Rosner, *The Anatomy Murders,* 1-8. The Anatomy Act of 1832 gave medical institutions access to cadavers of unclaimed individuals in hospitals and workhouses for the use of educational purposes; see Helen MacDonald, "Procuring Corpses," https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2706054/. Though Foucault's argument against the mythos of cadaver acquisition before the nineteenth century is not universal, it is relevant for my purposes as Dr. Mütter apprenticed in Paris where Foucault focuses his theory of the changing medical epistemologies at the turn of the nineteenth century.

[14] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 125.

and stubborn prejudice to the opening up of corpses" that continued well into the era of modern medicine.[15] By perpetuating the myth of an oppositional force, that of conflicting morality, the anatomist brought the cadaver from the darkness into the light of scientific discovery and knowledge. To study a corpse was no longer morally corrupt, but rather the only way to know the interiority of the living being. Post-Revolution Paris provided the perfect political and social environment in which anatomical study could take place unhindered. The enforced and accepted system of using unclaimed bodies from Paris's many hospitals as cadavers for study allowed the French city to become a hub of experimental clinical medicine, and to make extraordinary advancements in the treatment of the living. As Foucault writes, "It is from the height of death that one can see and analyse [sic] organic dependences and pathological sequences."[16] By systemizing the acquisition and allocation of the unclaimed dead, Paris became the most prestigious city in Europe for surgical study.

In Paris, Dr. Mutter studied under the illustrious Baron Guillaume Dupuytren at the Hôtel-Dieu.[17] Dupuytren, his work, and the overarching wonderment of surgery drew Mütter to the Hôtel-Dieu where he struggled with the art of surgical technique, specializing in *radical surgery* or plastic surgery. As Mütter's friend and colleague, Joseph Pancoast wrote of him, "He had seen the great domain of plastic surgery revived from its olden relics, and its principles applied by the surgeons of Paris…to the relief or diminution of the myriads of deformities."[18] His fascination with plastic surgery and with the deformation and disfigurement of the human

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[15] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 124.
[16] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 144.
[17] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, 18.
[18] Joseph Pancoast, "A Discourse Commemorative of the Late Professor T.D. Mütter, M.D., LL.D." (1859). *Jefferson Biographies.* Paper 8. http://jdc.jefferson.edu/jeffbiographies/8. 22.

body shaped the style and content of the collection which would eventually become the Mütter Museum at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. As Aptowicz puts it, plastic surgery was not "physically necessary to save their [the patients'] lives; rather, they were done so that the patient might have the gift of living a better, normal life."[19] The patients on Dr. Mütter's table in the surgical theater at the Jefferson College Medical School did not necessarily have life threatening conditions in terms of their corporeal existence, but instead suffered the ridicule of a society bound to fear, abhor, or gawk at their physical circumstances. People with physical deformities often did not conform to societal norms or were not granted access to normative society, which included barring them from work, marriage and romance, parenthood, and physical and social mobility. In the Victorian era, the term "monster" not only defined a physical medical condition, but also constrained one as a social "other," an idea reinforced in contemporary popular culture by literary characters such as Shelley's Frankenstein, Hugo's Quasimodo, and Dickens' Tiny Tim. By surgically altering his patients' physical deformities and disabilities, Dr. Mütter gave them the opportunity for social normalcy previously denied them, turning the monster into the person.[20]

Though the word "monster" now evokes images of zombies, werewolves, and vampires, it used to describe those born with or those who developed physical deformities due to injury or

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[19] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, 20.

[20] Ableism and the negative attitudes towards people with disabilities and physical deformities remain a socio-cultural struggle today. Though legislation and much of popular culture have worked to counter the discrimination and obstacles people with disabilities and deformities might face, the stigmas and assumptions surrounding bodily anomalies persists. Likewise, the desire to eradicate deformity through surgical alteration is not restricted to the nineteenth century and the modernization of medicine. If anything, the medical advancements made in the past hundred and fifty years have allowed more people to surgical remove or alter their physical forms for health and aesthetic reasons, ultimately eliminating many of the "monsters" that still sit in the College of Physicians of Philadelphia as a part of Mütter's collection.

disease. Teratology, a term coined by Isidore Geoffrey St. Hilaire in the nineteenth century, meaning the study of monsters, encompassed an entire professional field of medicine, one in which Dr. Mütter had special interest.[21] The idea of the monstrous and the developed study of teratology emerged out of the idea of a physical and corporeal "Other." As Foucault writes, the "Other" is "that which, for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded."[22] The term "monster" evolved from the Latin word "*monere* (to warn), to *monstrum* (that which is worthy of warning), to *monstrare* (to point to that which is worthy of warning)."[23] In much of the medieval period and well into the Early Modern era the monstrous acted as an omen or warning in the multiple apocalyptic moments of social, political, and religious unrest. As Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park write in their decisive book, *Wonders and the Order of Nature,* "They [monsters] were suspensions of [the natural] order, signs of God's wrath and warnings of further punishment; the appropriate reaction was not pleased and appreciative wonder, but horror, anxiety, and fear."[24] Monsters, whether real or apocryphal, manifested as disfigured or dangerous creatures with multiple limbs, animalistic features, or both sexual organs. These monsters made tangible the fears and anxieties felt by pre-modern Europeans and represented a world of divine unknowns on earth.

With cultural and religious influence going back to antiquity, monsters acted as ill omens of an apocalyptic moment. Demonic creatures and monstrous births signaled the coming wrath of God in response to sin. Sin, both collective and individual, required God's punishment and

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[21] Chrissie Perella, "Teratoloy: 'Monster' as a medical term," *Historical Medical Library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia*.
[22] Michel Foucault, preface to *The Order of Things*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xxiv.
[23] Introduction to *Monstrous Bodies/Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 3.
[24] Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150-1750,* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), 51.

ultimately, the reformation of the sinner. Daston and Park complicate the idea of monsters signaling God's wrath:

> The monster itself was a paradoxical product of God's mercy, an alert and a warning issued to allow sinners one last chance to reform themselves and avert the catastrophe to come. Because such catastrophes were communal, Christians usually interpreted monsters as signaling not individual but collective sin; it is for this reason that they rarely blamed the monster's parents, still less the monster itself.[25]

Medieval Europeans could not separate the natural physical deformities from the spectacular events.

Similarly, the link between monsters and divine intervention became inextricable. The monster demonstrated a community's failure to follow fully the tenets of a Christian life and acted as a warning to reform the communities in which monsters were born, or they were used as evidence of God's grace in places far removed from the monsters. A contemporary example was the monster of Ravenna. Chronicled by Ambroise Paré (1510-1590), a French surgeon who wrote the decisive sixteenth-century treatise on monsters, *Des Monstres et Prodiges* (*On Monsters and Marvels*), the monster of Ravenna was a clear example of "the pure will of God [meant] to warn us of the misfortunes with which we are threatened, of some great disorder, and also that the ordinary course of Nature seemed to be twisted."[26] According to Paré, the misguided war waged by Pope Julius II against King Louis XII of France, known as the War of the League of Cambrai (1508-1516), resulted in the Battle of Ravenna (1512) which occurred when Paré was a child. Soon after the battle, reports of the Ravenna monster surfaced: a child "born having a horn on its head, two wings, and a single foot similar to that of a bird of prey, at

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[25] Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 181.
[26] Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 6.

the knee joint an eye, and participating in the *natures* [sexual organs] of both male and female."[27] To Paré, the Ravenna monster acted as a warning of God's disapproval of the Pope's war and gave credence to an already-apocalyptic moment.

Figure 3. "Figure of a winged monster"[28]

Paré's treatise, *Des Monstres,* appeared on the cusp of an epistemological shift in the way that people, both lay and scholar, thought about monsters, transforming them from apocalyptic portents to pathological subjects. Paré dichotomized the monster as he saw it in opposition to a "marvel." To Paré, "Monsters are things that appear outside the course of Nature;"[29] Paré's

[27] Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, 6.
[28] "Figure of a winged monster," print, in On Monsters and Marvels. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
[29] Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, 3.

monsters were often human children born with congenital deformities or adults who suffered injury or physical symptoms of inexplicable diseases. On the other hand, "Marvels are [also] things which happen that are completely against nature," such as human's giving birth to another animal, a hybrid animal, or an unexplainable and unknown creature.[30]

Medieval Europeans imagined non-European races and peoples, as well as hybrid humans, as monsters because of their otherness. Europeans rationalized their fear of the unknown world and misunderstanding of other peoples, cultures, and languages they encountered by creating a binary opposition in which the unknown was "Other" and against nature. John Mandeville, a self-identifying young knight from St. Albans,[31] regales his readership with a travel narrative of his journeys east where he encounters a number of "monsters and folk disfigured, some without heads, some with great ears, some with one eye, some giants, some with horses' feet, and many other diverse shape against kind"[32] and some with "but one foot…so large, that it shadoweth all the body against the sun, when they will lie and rest them."[33] *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* not only highlights his adventures with diverse people to the east, but also conveys the social, economic, political, and religious concerns of late medieval Europe in the west.

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[30] *Des Monstres* also includes chapters on marine monsters, flying monsters, terrestrial monsters, and celestial monsters. With the exception of the celestial monster, Paré refers to foreign and mysterious animal species as "monsters" in order to label them as unknown and fearsome.
[31] The true identity of the author is unknown, though that is how he identifies himself.
[32] Sir John Mandeville, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (London, Macmillan & Co., 1915), 145.
[33] Ibid., 105.

Figure 4. "A dog-headed man, seated, violently gesturing with his hands, and conversing in empathetic barks"[34]

Mandeville's *Travels* is not the only account of eastern monsters and marvels from the early Age of Exploration that we have. The legend of the Cynocephali, a human-dog hybrid race in India first discussed in Megasthenes's writing from the 4th century BC, remained in European memory through travel literature, such as that of Marco Polo (1254-1324) in the thirteenth century.[35] In *The Travels of Marco Polo,* Polo describes the people of the island of Angamanain (Andaman Islands) as having "heads like dogs, and teeth and eyes likewise; in fact, in the face they are all just like big mastiff dogs!"[36] The misunderstanding and hybridization of other

[34] This image of the Cynocephali comes from the Nuremberg Chronicle (1493) and references earlier authors and their perception of the Cynocephali from India, which perhaps influenced Polo's own experiences and perceptions while travelling: "Pliny, Augustine and Isidore have written of variously shaped people, of whom mention will be made hereafter. In India are people with the heads of dogs, who bark when they speak. They sustain themselves by catching birds and clothe themselves in the skins of animals." "A dog-headed man, seated, violently gesturing with his hands, and conversing in empathetic barks," print, in *Nuremberg Chronicle,* XIIr. Beloit, WI: Morse Library, Beloit College, 2003.
[35] "Kynokephaloi," Theoi, accessed April 3, 2018. http://www.theoi.com/Phylos/Kunokephaloi.html.
[36] Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo,* ed. Henri Cordier, trans. Henry Yule (Adelaide: eBooks@Adelaide, 2014), III.13, https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/p/polo/marco/travels/book3.13.html.

peoples bolstered an oppositional binary—an "us-versus-them" narrative—that insulated and legitimized European society and culture compared to the rest of the world.

Likewise, during the Reformation the dissemination of images of hybrid creatures reinforced the otherness of the Catholic Church amongst Lutherans by catering to and heightening religious anxieties of the perceived apocalyptic moment. Though images of hybrid monsters coincided with Paré's treatise, the fear of monsters mobilized the spread of monstrous rumors and linked inextricably to the spiritual crises of the moment. For example, Lutheran images from the sixteenth century emphasized the inhuman nature of the Catholic Church and acted as portents for the corruption of not only the souls of the population but also the disfigurement of the corporeal Christian body. Most famous among these images are Philipp Melanchthon's "Woodcut of Papal Ass of Rome" and "Woodcut of Monk-Calf of Saxony," two anthropomorphized images of supposedly real monstrous animals born just before and during the Reformation era that were used by Melanchthon as propaganda against the Catholic Church. The "Papal Ass" depicts a monster found on the banks of the Tiber River after the flood of 1496 which Martin Luther and Melanchthon used for their own purposes. R. Po-Chia Hsia presents the Lutheran interpretation of the "Papal Ass" in the following way:

> The monster has the head of a donkey instead of having Christ as its head; the misshapen body is that of the Church; its scales signify the secular powers; the elephantine hand represents ecclesiastical repression while the other, human hand signifies pretensions to secular power; the claws and hoof of the monster also signify its pretension to both secular and spiritual powers; the feminine breasts and belly signify the sensuality of the cardinals and the ecclesiastical elites; the old man at the back represents a dying regime, with the dragon's head signifying the use of ecclesiastical bans as threats.[37]

[37] R. Po-Chia Hsia, "A Time for Monsters: Monstrous Births, Propaganda, and the German Reformation," in *Monstrous Bodies/Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 77.

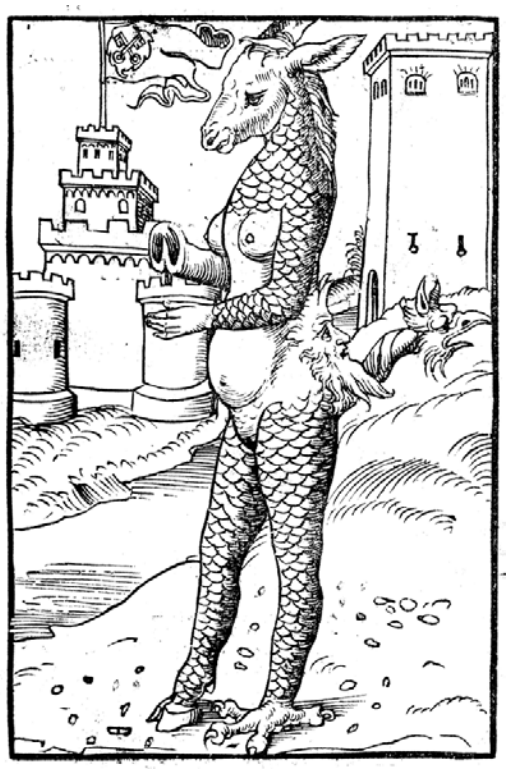

Figure 5. "The Papal Ass of Rome"[38]

The image conveys the very real sixteenth-century conception that the manifestation of spiritual and theological digressions could be imposed upon the physical body. The disjointedness of the hybrid features and limbs symbolizes a disjointedness in the Church.

The second image, the Monk-Calf, described as a "portent for the depravity of the monastic estate," appears amorphous and grotesquely muscular, "blind and [preaching] with an outstretched tongue; his huge ear [signifying] the tyranny of the sacrament of confession; and his still neck the rigidity of the monkish estate."[39] This creature, though solely and definitively a

[38] Philipp Melanchthon, "The Papal Ass of Rome," 1523, print, in Deuttung der zwo grewlichen Figuren : Bapstesels zu Rom, vnd Munchkalbs zu Freyberg jn Meyssen funden / Philippus Melanchthon, Doct. Martinus Luther. Image provided courtesy of the Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.
[39] Hsia, "A Time for Monsters: Monstrous Births, Propaganda, and the German Reformation," 80.

calf, anthropomorphically portrays the Church's faults through its exaggerated features and subsequent amplified senses, similar to the

Figure 6."Monk-Calf of Freyburg,"[40]

wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood" whose enlarged predatory features highlight its dangerous nature. Paré later chronicled the Monk-Calf in *Des Monstres* as an actual monster born in the Saxon village of Stecquer, "having four feet of an ox; its eyes, mouth and nose similar to a calf, having on top its head a red flesh, in a round shape; [and] another behind, similar to a monk's hood, and having its thighs mangled."[41] Though Paré does not explicitly mention that the monster is human, it is implied by the surrounding examples given and by the title of the chapter: "An Example of Monsters That Are Created Through the Imagination."[42]

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[40] Philipp Melanchthon, "Monk-Calf of Freyburg," 1523, print, in Deuttung der zwo grewlichen Figuren : Bapstesels zu Rom, vnd Munchkalbs zu Freyberg jn Meyssen funden / Philippus Melanchthon, Doct. Martinus Luther. Image provided courtesy of the Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.
[41] Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, 41.
[42] Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, 38.

Figure 7. "Figure of a very hideous monster having the hands and feet of an ox, and other very monstrous things"[43]

The appearance of the Monk-Calf as both an image of propaganda and ill omens, and as an early example of medical inquiry and exploration just a few decades later, exemplifies the shifting episteme and culture surrounding monsters.

For Luther and Melanchthon, the Monk-Calf acted as a visceral and emotive image codified by the late medieval Zeitgeist surrounding monsters and superstitious omens that fueled their agenda because they understood that monsters could not be extricated from the signs and omens they represented and vice versa. Nevertheless, one cannot disqualify contemporary scholars throughout Europe who sought to decipher the world around them through other means of explanation. Paré for example takes the same image of the Monk-Calf and de-codifies it, strips it of its superstition, and offers a proto-scientific explanation for its appearance. He postulates, in agreement with Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Empedocles, that "ardent and obstinate imagination [impression] that the mother might receive at the moment she conceived—through some object,

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[43] *"Figure of a very hideous monster having the hands and feet of an ox, and other very monstrous things,"* print, in On Monsters and Marvels. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

or fantastic dream," caused monstrous, hybrid births.[44] Though Paré's assertion is false, the fact that he provides an explanation backed by classical medicine turns the monster away from the monstrous towards "[seeking] out the secrets of nature," a precursor to modern science.[45]

Paré's categorization of monsters and marvels lasted well into the Enlightenment, though by the seventeenth century, the vocabulary of monsters had changed slightly. The term monster encompassed a wide range of beings later categorized as the "natural" and the "unnatural monster" (or "spiritual monster").[46] The "unnatural monster" such as demons and devils embodied religious anxieties and were promptly shunted from the post-Cartesian discourse on natural philosophy and human physiology. Natural philosophers rejected the hybrid animal-human monsters as "unnatural" and dispelled Paré's assumptions that the hybrid naturally occurs as a result of the bestial mating of "sodomites" and "atheists."[47]

Regardless of Paré's faults, one cannot completely discredit *Des Monstres.* In fact, Paré was one of the first to try to extricate the monster from the fear and anxiety that appeared in the Zeitgeist of Europe. Instead, he attempts to systematize the world of monsters and marvels to establish order and explain with reason and logic the laws of nature that create such creatures. Out of his research, he formed a simple list of the causes of monsters:

> The first is the glory of God.
> The second, his wrath.
> The third, too great a quantity of seed.
> The fourth, too little a quantity.
> The fifth, the imagination.
> The sixth, the narrowness or smallness of the womb.
> The seventh, the indecent posture of the mother, as when being pregnant she has sat too long with her legs crossed, or pressed against her womb.

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[44] Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, 38.
[45] Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, 38.
[46] Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of our Worst Fears*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 149.
[47] Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of our Worst Fears*, 145.

> The eighth, through a fall, or blows struck against the womb of the mother, being with child.
> The ninth, through hereditary or accidental illnesses.
> The tenth, through rotten or corrupt seed.
> The eleventh through mixture or mingling of the seed.
> The twelfth, through the artifice of wicked spital beggars.
> The thirteenth, through Demons and Devils.[48]

Though many of the causes Paré listed were steeped in superstition and divine intervention, the majority were not and could, according to Paré, be proved through observation. The proto-scientific means by which he went about his research set the precedent for the epistemological shift that would develop further in the following centuries.

The philosophers, physicians, and surgeons who succeeded Paré inherited a model of curiosity that no longer relied on fear, but instead sought scientific explanations. At the same time Paré wrote his *Des Monstres,* Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) printed his *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543), a compilation of detailed and expertly artistic prints of human anatomy. *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* revolutionized perceptions of the human form and "established with startling suddenness the beginning of modern observational science and research."[49] Though trained in classical medicine, Vesalius's work rejects Galenic anatomy and instead embraces observation-based study and reproduces it onto the printed page, which in itself was a radical act. According to J. B. deC. M. Saunders and Charles D. O'Malley, sixteenth century anatomists opposed the representation of anatomy through detailed drawings and diagrams as tools for study, "on the grounds that this had not been done in classical times and would degrade scholarship."[50] Not only did Vesalius provide a collection of anatomical drawings

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[48] Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, 4.
[49] J.B. deC. M. Saunders and Charles D. O'Malley, introduction to *The Illustrations from the Works of Andreas Vesalius of Brussels*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1973), 9.
[50] J.B. deC. M. Saunders and Charles D. O'Malley, introduction to *The Illustrations from the Works of Andreas Vesalius of Brussels*, 16.

and diagrams, but the level of detail he provided was unlike anything else in Europe, and was printed for the purpose of mass-production and dissemination. In *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* Vesalius introduced a new template of the human body in its most normalized form from which all mutations and deformities, "natural monsters," could be measured. *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* not only advanced the study of human anatomy and physiology, but also pathology in providing the basis for defining abnormality.

Figure 8. "Humani corporis ossium caeteris quas sustinent partibus liberorum suaque sede positorum ex latere delineatio"[51]

In the growing world of natural philosophy and anatomy of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, the "natural monster" underwent a radical transformation from a feared signal of divine intentions to an unfortunate and fascinating specimen of the natural world gone awry. According to Stephen T. Asma, the "natural monster" represented the deviation from the natural order that consequently revealed the laws of nature through scientific observation:

[51] Andreas Vesalius. "Humani corporis ossium caeteris quas sustinent partibus liberorum suaque sede positorum ex latere delineatio." The College of Physicians of Philadelphia Digital Library. Accessed January 8, 2018. http://www.cppdigitallibrary.org/item.

> Simply put, the human body, now conceptualized as an elegant machine, became increasingly anatomized, analyzed, and understood. And the pathologies of that body, the monsters, became an important means by which the new surgeons and physicians could limn the *normal* laws of nature.[52]

The "natural monster" now codified the laws of nature through its otherness. Among the first Enlightenment philosophers too attempt to understand the laws of nature, Descartes imagined the human body as a machine. Asma situates Descartes's *Discourse on Method* as a "mechanical analysis" of the human body. In it, Descartes writes, that the human "machine made by the hands of God...is incomparably better arranged, and adequate to movements more admirable than is any machine of human invention, but still it is just a machine."[53] Descartes's cold, calculated assertions arise from the development of advanced automata in the seventeenth century with the very lifelike ability of movement. Descartes equated the perfect design and engineering of lifelike automata to actual life, conflating new discoveries made about the function of the human body and its organs, muscles, and circulation to the inner workings of a machine that could be systematically understood. Descartes's systematized understanding of the human body maintained a sense of awe in the perfection of God's work. As medicine modernized, the body became not a perfect specimen of God's divine architecture, but a "space of origin and of distribution of disease: a space whose lines, volumes, surfaces, and routes are laid down, in accordance with a now familiar geometry, by the anatomical atlas."[54] Descartes's imaginings began to build the "now familiar geometry, the anatomical atlas" that brought the body into modernity.

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[52] Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of our Worst Fears*, 149.
[53] Renée Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason, and Seeking the Truth in the Sciences*, Part V (Adelaide: eBooks@Adelaide, 2014), https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/d/descartes/rene/d44dm/index.html.
[54] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 1.

At the same time that Descartes postulated on manmade forms and the human form itself, a schism between scientific thought and religion began to sever the ties between the celestial and the terrestrial. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a rediscovery of nature as a terrestrial law in its own right, meant to be studied and understood. Essentially, the seventeenth century ushered in the singular, fundamental element of modern science: observation. Enlightenment thinkers were able to actively explore and observe the natural world rather than to passively accept deviations from the norm as divine interventions. According to Foucault, "once one has removed the obstacles erected to reason by theories and to the senses by the imagination," one can truly observe the visible world.[55] As he writes, "Observation is logic."[56] The anomalous body, as an irregularity of the natural world, became a subject of curiosity and scientific inquiry in the same way and at the same time that international exploration and colonization made new biological, ethnic, and technological discoveries objects of study. As Daston and Park put it, the monster, therefore, was no longer associated with fear, but with curiosity.[57]

It was out of this new scientific tradition that Dr. Thomas D. Mütter emerged in Paris as an ambitious and adventurous plastic surgeon in Paris. Dr. Mütter's goal, and the goal of plastic surgery as a whole, was to reinvent the idea of the monstrous. As Aptowicz explains:

> Patients of *les operations plastiques*…were often too aware of their lot in life: that of a monster. It was inescapable. They hid their faces when walking down the street. They took cover in back rooms, excused themselves when there were knocks at the door. They saw how children howled at the sight of them. They understood the half a life they were condemned to live and the envy they couldn't help but feel towards others—whole people who didn't realize how lucky they were to wear the label *human*.[58]

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[55] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 107.
[56] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 108.
[57] Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 176.
[58] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, 20.

The theory and method of performing plastic surgery was to "reconstruct or repair parts of the body by primarily using materials from the patient's own body," therefore allowing the deformed aspects of the body to be reformed by the normal. Mütter specialized in fusing cleft palates and grafting scar tissue on burn victims, treating both those born with congenital deformities and those who suffered physical disfigurements from accidents and injuries. Pancoast wrote of Mütter in his commemorative introductory lecture, "He felt it a glorious thing to be able to rescue a patient from present suffering or impending danger, when everything else had failed, by the achievement of a successful surgical operation."[59]

Mütter deconstructed the idea of the monster in society. By removing the monstrousness, Mütter revealed the very human person beneath flesh and bone. In one account Aptowicz reflects on Mütter's caring demeanor and sensitivity towards a patient whose face was split entirely in half, including the back of the throat. Dexterously, Mütter rejoined the two halves of the palatal tissue in order that the patient's mouth might appear and function normally. Apparently, after the surgery, Mütter revealed a man entirely normalized: "Where others once saw a monster, Mutter thought, he had revealed the man."[60] Though Aptowicz's sentiment seems to suppose more than is evidenced, a major aspect of modern medicine in the nineteenth century in Foucault's theory of modern clinics is the inextricability of the patient from his or her disease. Though modern medicine also systematized disease by creating a collective of patients in order to understand disease, so that the "individual in question was not so much a sick person as the endlessly reproducible pathological fact to be found in all patients suffering in a similar way," the

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[59] Joseph Pancoast, "A Discourse Commemorative of the Late Professor T.D. Mütter, M.D., LL.D." (1859). *Jefferson Biographies.* Paper 8. http://jdc.jefferson.edu/jeffbiographies/8. 22.
[60] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, 65.

individual participated in the relationship between the physician—or in this case, the surgeon—and the disease by embodying the disease as the disease embodied him or her.[61] In other words, "The patient is the rediscovered portrait of the disease; he is disease itself, with shadow and relief, modulations, nuances, depth; and when describing the disease, the doctor must strive to restore this living density."[62] Mütter left a legacy which conveys that he was even more empathetic and attentive than the norm, as his colleague's writings would suggest. Pancoast wrote:

> My recollection serves me with many a scene, and numerous scattered incidents on such occasions, both in public and private practice, where all our sympathies, and sometimes our regrets, were awakened, which displayed his sensitive and even affectionate character in all its varied features.[63]

Regardless of Mütter's ethical and emotional intentions, his initiatives—of performing restorative surgeries that benefitted the lives of everyday monsters—participated in the deconstruction of the ancient episteme surrounding the permanency and symbolism of the anomalous body that was simultaneously occurring throughout the medical world.

Mütter revealed the humanity of his patients not only through his surgical endeavors, but also through his pre- and post-operative treatment that aimed to care for both the physical and the emotional. According to a memoir written in the "The Medical and Surgical Reporter" by a Dr. R.J. Levis, Mütter "appeared often at operations to be painfully sympathetic with the suffering patient."[64] He "was the first to use ether for its anesthetic effect in [Philadelphia], and did much

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[61] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 97.
[62] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 15
[63] Pancoast, "A Discourse Commemorative of the Late Professor T.D. Mütter, M.D., LL.D.," 23.
[64] R.J. Levis, "Memoir of Thomas D. Mütter, M.D.," *The Medical and Surgical Reporter: A Weekly Journal*, ed. S.W. Butler, M.D. and R.J. Levis, M.D. v. II (Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1859), 113.

towards its general introduction."[65] He pioneered the use of ether in surgeries, though ether was widely disputed and eventually forbidden by Jefferson College for the foreseeable future. Ether posed a particular quandary for the medical community. On the one hand, ether allowed for a more painless surgical process and safer procedures; on the other, the patient could not participate in that process. Traditionally, patients entered surgeries without any anesthesia, even often without any pain relief whatsoever. Despite the ethical dilemma pre-anesthesia surgeries created, surgeons actually preferred an awake and alert patient to an unconscious one for the simple reason that the surgeon could adjust what he did based on the patient's reaction. Surgeons urged their patients to communicate physical sensations and demonstrate movement and ability for as long as they remained conscious. Patients suffered greatly, enduring considerable pain, and, often, losing consciousness or going into fatal shock during the procedure. It was for this reason that surgeons had to perform surgeries as quickly as possible before the advent of the controlled anesthetic. Mütter's surgeries were known to be quite quick (his ambidexterity allowed him to work almost twice as fast as the average surgeon), often only ten minutes or so. Nevertheless, Mütter recognized that the next innovation surgery should universally explore was anesthesia.

Mütter's advocacy for ether truly was in the best interest of the patient. Not only did he promote humane operative procedures, Mütter also intended to champion post-operative care. He proposed that the College purchase additional building space and establish a hospital where patients might have beds to recover and where surgeons might have more room and more opportunity to operate. Still, the proposed plan never came to fruition. It seems as though Dr. Mütter spent much of his career attempting to advance the ethics of medical practices in

[65] R.J. Levis, "Memoir of Thomas D. Mütter, M.D.," 116.

Philadelphia, and, yet, he failed in everything but instilling in his students a sense of duty and responsibility for their patients. He "taught [his students] that the patients who flocked to the clinic for care were not to be defined by their diseases, or their injuries, or their deformities. They were not mysteries to be solved or cases to add to the docket. They were people—humans."[66] It is evident in his lectures that the "alleviation of human suffering and the preservation of human life" was paramount, and that even the deformed and the monstrous deserved the best care.[67]

The Mütter Museum now attempts to humanize the anomalous body through death as he once did through in life. The Museum preserves the vitality of many of the specimens through exhibition labels that describe the life and illness of the specimen's owner. One of the most gripping stories told by the Museum's labels is that of Harry Eastlack, a young man who suffered from Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva, a genetic mutation that causes tissue to fuse into bone. He suffered extreme discomfort for most of his life as his spine and jaw slowly ossified by the time he was fifteen years old. Eastlack's skeleton—angled awkwardly to one side with bones and tissue fused together in unnatural places—and a series of photographs taken throughout his life now appear as a part of the Museum's main exhibition, though his remains were not a part of Mütter's original collection. Eastlack chose to donate his skeleton to the Museum in the hopes that scientists might use it as a tool to discover a cure for the rare and misunderstood disease.

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[66] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, 266.
[67] Thomas D. Mütter, M.D., "An Introductory Lecture to the Course on the Principles and Practice of Surgery, in Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia," *On Improvements in Surgery*, (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Thompson, 1842), 7.

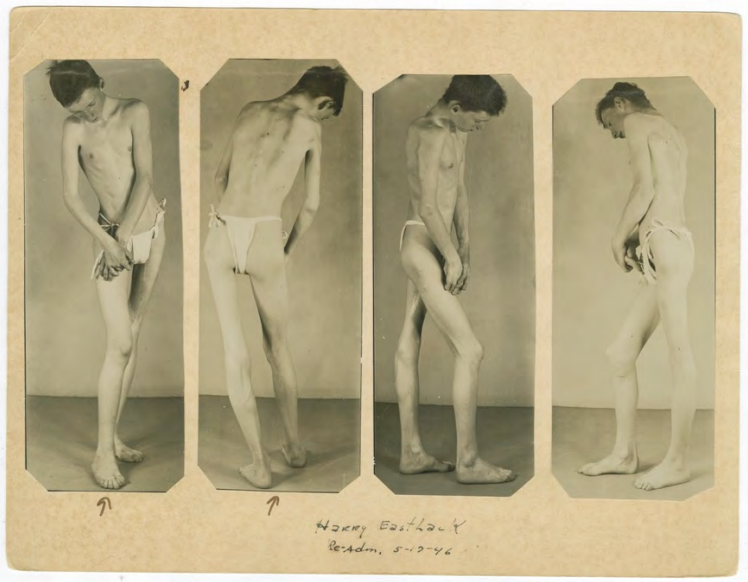

Figure 9. "Harry Eastlack, age 13"[68]

The Museum easily humanizes Harry Eastlack because he died well after the Museum opened (1973), donated his remains by his own volition, and had a well-documented progressive illness. Most of the other specimen in the main exhibition, however, cannot provide such a heart-wrenching story of life and death through text, even as the remains themselves tell their own story. From a medical and scientific standpoint, remains provide valuable information regardless of the story attached: the remains themselves become the story. In dying, what remains is the individual. In Foucault's theory of the clinic, death separates the person from the disease and creates a space in which the disease can be observed and studied separately from the individual who inhabits the pathologized body. The separation of the individual from his or her disease reifies their sense of self independent from their physical abnormalities, while at the same, it amplifies the voice of the dead because the experience of the living body can only be truly perceived by others after death. Foucault writes:

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[68] "Harry Eastlack, age 13," 1946, photograph, The College of Physicians of Philadelphia Digital Library, accessed December 2, 2017, http://www.cppdigitallibrary.org/items/show/4417.

> An obstinate relation to death prescribes to the universal its singular face, and lends to each individual the power of being heard forever; the individual owes to death a meaning that does not cease with him.[69]

Each specimen becomes individualized and immortalized in its use for the exploration and advancement of medicine.

And yet, in the current museum context, the purpose of the specimen is momentarily stripped away. The specimen becomes an *object* of visitor's gaze rather than the *subject* of scientific study. The specimens without extensive exhibition labels like Harry Eastlack, then, are anonymized and stripped of their individuality. Mütter collected specimens because of their individual peculiarity, and so to have the people who lived and died and contributed to scientific exploration stripped of their role and their identity by the gaze of the modern museum visitor, goes against the original purpose of collection. For through collection, one makes sense of things: one makes order.

[69] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 197.

The Mütter Museum and the Wunderkammern

Walking into the neoclassical entrance hall, I am ushered past the door to the main exhibition gallery of the Mütter Museum, through the rope barrier barring visitors entrance, and up the marble staircase. Passing the statue of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine, I find an imposing second floor made up of three large rooms: two function as lecture halls, where my brother and his wife would eventually hold their wedding ceremony and reception, and one functions as a library, filled to the brim with old textbooks on surgery and pathology, as well as several tomes on the history of medicine. Portraits of robed old men hang above all three wood-paneled rooms, watching over the College of Physicians. Somewhere among these paintings I would later find a portrait of my great-great uncle, the first Jewish president of the College.

Despite the cool, crisp air—a welcome change from the thick humidity of the Philadelphia summer—and what I thought would be a sanctuary away from the Museum, I find myself uncomfortable in the College of Physician's Historical Medical Library: I am not a medical student, so the majority of the libraries resources are of little use to me; I am not a Wood Scholar, a graduate student who received a grant from the College to study the history of medicine (though actual Wood Scholars thought I might be); And worst of all, I do not know what I am looking for or how to find it. I begin with the Museum Catalogues from 1849-1851 (Mütter's original collection) and 1884-1981. Though the 1849-1851 catalogue is a feather pamphlet that has mostly fallen apart, the 1884-1981 catalogue is an enormous leather-bound book with a combination of typed and handwritten notes and articles piled on top of each other, a veritable palimpsest from generations of curators. I quickly realize that the catalogues are the written instruments through which the curators throughout the history of the College of Physicians and the Mütter Museum have been trying to make sense of the vast and diverse

collections they have acquired through various and sometimes unknown means. They are trying to make order out of an existing array of objects just as I, alone and unguided in the unfamiliar landscape of the enormous archive, am trying to find order and significance in the primary sources at my disposal.

Overwhelmed, I skim the seemingly endless pages of the catalogues trying desperately to find some pattern with which to make sense of my emotions and experiences in Museum downstairs. I soon find myself reading through the catalogues with a renewed sense of wonder and interest in the specimens so neatly laid out on the page. Without the curated space of the Museum and its claustrophobia-inducing wooden cabinets and dim lighting, I am able to meticulously and almost objectively observe the specimens as the curators do. I no longer find myself in the specimens. They have become sanitized, Latinized nomenclature and medical terminology, a language of medicine that I grew up hearing spoken at the dinner table between my parents who both work in the medical field. I understood the specimens from a new perspective, as if I were indeed a medical student or a Wood Scholar thinking broadly about the patterns of the human body.

Though the intrinsic nature of the Other, of the monster, is "at once interior and foreign," the intrinsic nature of order is that of the Same, "of that which, for a given culture, is both dispersed and related, therefore to be distinguished by kinds and to be collected together into identities."[70] By collecting specimens of anomalous bodies, Mütter made order of them and therefore began to understand them. When Mütter arrived at Jefferson College Medical School, where he chaired the Department of Surgery, he stored his fledgling collection in the College's

[70] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xxiv.

"anatomical museum." Though meant as a storage room for professors' lecture materials, the "anatomical museum" housed Mütter's first fascinating findings:

> "intestines pulled from cholera victims; a human heart that had been slowly transforming into bone; cancerous livers, lungs, kidneys, and spines; a cancerous testicle so enlarged by its disease that a special case had to be built to contain it; tumors sliced from noses, throats, eyeballs, and breasts; a finger so brutally ripped from its hand that only a flexor tendon remained attached; a human foot showcasing a horrific compound fracture of the ankle, which had been dried and prepared so that it looked like a wax model…but wasn't; the withered heart of a ten-year-old boy whose limbs turned blue because of his body's inability to hold on to oxygen; a wax cast of a hermaphrodite;"[71]

And, of course, one of the most prominent and prized objects in his collection today: the wax model of a woman with a large calcified horn growing from her forehead and downward parallel to her nose, the widow known as Madame Dimanche, whose case Mütter encountered in Paris. To Mütter, the act of collecting did not anonymize the people whose remains became objects of study. Rather, their identity and their experiences gave him a better understanding of disease. And, as objects of study, individuals receive the "power of being heard forever" in modern medicine.[72] That is to say that they, as individuals, contribute constantly and immortally to the future practice of medicine.

Mütter began his collection not only as a means by which his students could study the monsters they would one day treat but also as a means to establish himself as a great surgeon. Mütter believed that "it is [the physician's] bounden duty diligently and carefully to investigate the nature and worth of these additions, and endeavor at the same time to contribute [his] own mite towards the elucidation of difficulties, or the improvement of [his] art."[73] For Mütter this

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[71] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, 87.
[72] Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 197.
[73] Thomas D. Mütter, "Charge to the Graduates of Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia," (Philadelphia: T.K. and P.G. Collins, 1851), 15.

Figure 10. "Wax model of Madame Dimanche"[74]

meant that the measure of one's success as a surgeon lay not only in one's achievements in the surgical theater but also in the collection of specimens which indicates a wealth of knowledge and prowess. Though Mütter desired to improve surgical methods during his own lifetime, he also harbored an ambition beyond that. Pancoast wrote that "He was desirous of extending his reputation beyond his lifetime along the records of science."[75] To Mütter's credit, his ambition followed the tradition of European scholar-surgeons such as his mentor, Dupuytren. After his death, Dupuytren left his collection of medical specimens to the University of Paris, then known

[74] "Wax model of Madame Dimanche." Wax. The Mütter Museum, Philadelphia. From: The Mütter Museum, muttermuseum.org (accessed December 1, 2017). Courtesy of the Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians.
[75] Pancoast, "A Discourse Commemorative of the Late Professor T.D. Mütter, M.D., LL.D.," 23.

as the Museum of Pathological Anatomy.[76] The collection and the legacy honored Dupuytren, and Mütter desired the same sort of admiration from the Philadelphia medical community.

The opportunity arose for Mütter to donate his collection for perpetuity sooner than anticipated. At only forty-five years of age, he began to decline in health after years of stoically suffering chronic illness.[77] In preparation for his imminent death, Mütter resigned his post at Jefferson College and offered his collection to the Medical School.[78] Unable to house and care for such an elaborate collection, the College declined. As stirrings of anxiety and doubt set in, Mütter finally turned to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, who agreed to take his collection.[79] Founded in 1787, the College of Physicians acted not as an educational institution, but rather as an organization of medical professionals.[80] The College's original mission, "to advance the science of medicine and to thereby lessen human misery," aligns extraordinarily well with Mütter's aims of leaving a legacy that would continue to nurture medical advancement for the good of the patient.[81] Under the Articles of Agreement set out by Thomas Dent Mütter and the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Mütter would:

> convey to, and place under the guardianship of [the College], the pathological collection at present owned by him, for the purpose of serving as the basis for a Museum to be denominated "The Mütter Museum, founded by Thomas Dent Mütter, M.D., L.L.D, A.D. 1858. Eighteen Hundred and fifty eight" as soon as

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[76] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, 230.
[77] Ibid., 222.
[78] Ibid., 282.
[79] Ibid,, 276-283.
[80] As a personal anecdote, my great-great uncle, George Blumstein, was believed to be the first Jewish president of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. He left behind a collection of new data on human mold allergies, and after his death, his colleagues and my grandmother's dear aunt Molly, donated funds to sponsor multiple collections of historical medical documents in his name.
[81] "About: What is the College of Physicians of Philadelphia?" *The College of Physicians of Philadelphia*, accessed October 16, 2017, http://www.collegeofphysicians.org/about-us.

> [the College] shall have erected a building suitable for the reception of the said collection.[82]

Under Mütter's conditions, the College would receive the 1,700 specimens and items that made up the collection[83] with the stipulation that the College must build a fireproof building to house the collection within five years.[84] In addition, Mütter endowed the Museum with three thousand dollars to maintain the Museum for the first few years.

The Mütter Museum echoes Musée Dupuytren in its veneration of medical advancement as well as the surgeon who founded the collection. Mütter's ambition for his collection and consequential legacy, therefore, was not unfounded. Rather, the Mütter collection follows closely in the footsteps of the *Wunderkammern*, or cabinet of curiosities. For, what is an anatomical museum but the successor, and extension, of the magnificent cabinets of curiosity that bedecked the palatial halls of Early Modern European castles and manors. *Wunderkammern* famously intersected art with nature through a kind of curated performance, as microcosms of the world. The *Wunderkammern*'s own ancestors—the medieval churches that housed relics, jewels, and legendary exotica, and the Italian *studioli* of the late Middle Ages that housed personal collections of art and antiquities—set the precedent for the intersection of curiosity and curation, making the act of collecting an art (a sentiment which Mütter himself would develop in the nineteenth century).[85] Despite their reputation for extravagance and art, the *Wunderkammern* ushered in a kind of systematic exploration and glorification of the natural world. The

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[82] "Articles of Agreement."
[83] Nancy Moses, "Pessaries," 64.
[84] "Articles of Agreement."
[85] Philipp Blom, *To Have and to Hold: An Intimate History of Collectors and Collecting*, (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2003), 16-17.

Wunderkammern that emerged venerated the beauty of nature and the scientific precision of curation.

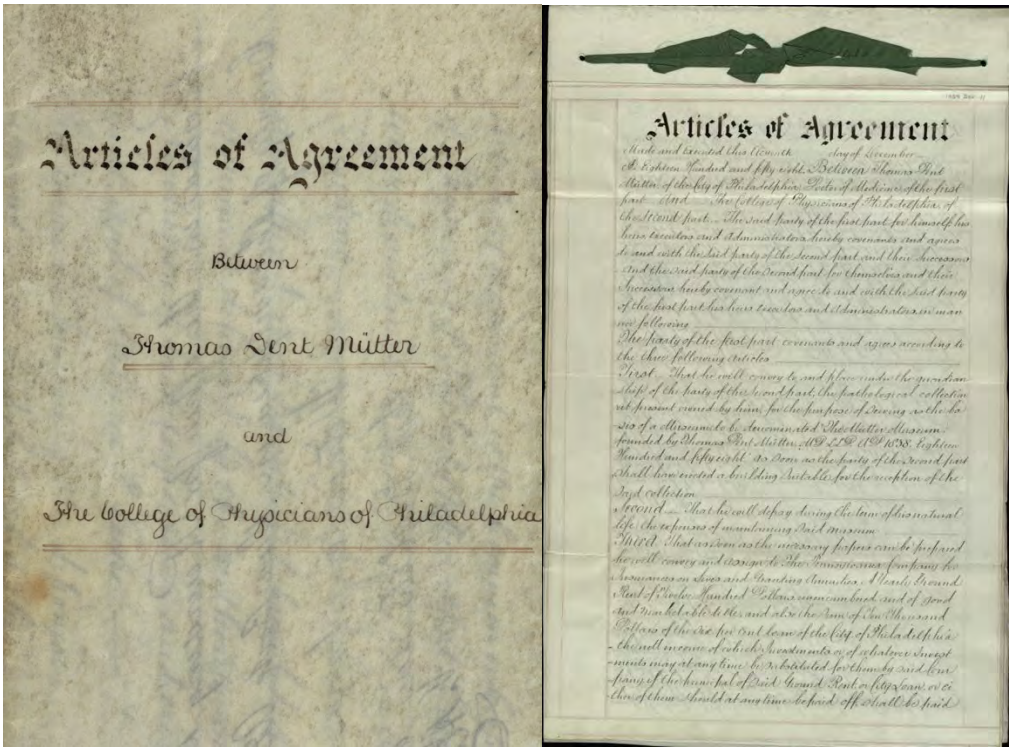

Figure 11. Articles of Agreement between Thomas Dent Mütter and The College of Physicians of Philadelphia.[86]

The *Wunderkammern*, primarily private collections belonging to European nobility, symbolized wealth and worldliness through the collection of decadent art and artifacts. Cabinets of curiosity created and catered to the insatiable European desire for wonders and marvels that *Wunderkammern* fascinated Europe's nobility, creating a craze Daston and Park call the "cult of the wondrous."[87] Owning and curating collections became a popular symbol of wealth, worldliness, and sophistication. King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden (r. 1611-1632) and Rudolph II, Holy Roman Emperor (r. 1576-1612) in particular developed the most illustrious collections

[86] "Articles of Agreement between Thomas Dent Mütter and The College of Physicians of Philadelphia."1858. Scan. The Historical Medical Library, College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Philadelphia. Courtesy of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.
[87] Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 260.

of art, antiquities, and exotic natural specimens of the *Wunderkammern* tradition. Their collections of paintings, sculptures, jewels and gems, plants, and taxidermy "first mingled and ultimately merged" the realms of nature and art.[88] In fact, the artifacts often displayed in *Wunderkammern* combined art and nature in masterful ways, such as carvings of ivory or tortoiseshell.

The combination of art and nature created a microcosm of wonder and marvel within the private realm over which the owner had full power. *Wunderkammern* often housed specimens procured through trade and exploration from around the world. By the seventeenth century, when *Wunderkammern* reached their height in popularity, Europeans had already explored and settled trade satellites in much of the New World, Asia, and Africa. Therefore, *Wunderkammern* not only displayed the wealth of the owner but also signified the political and economic influence that that individual held in the wider world. Likewise, cabinets conveyed the owner's power over the worlds of art and nature. By buying and curating art, the collector portrayed his or her own patronage and artistic aesthetic. The same can be said of nature. *Wunderkammern* often held the most sought-after specimens of the natural world outside of Europe such as stuffed alligators, narwhal horns (then proclaimed to be unicorn horns), and ivory. By the simple action of owning and displaying these items as important, the collector made them marvelous. The collector then not only made the *Wunderkammern* marvelous, but in its making, made him- or herself marvelous as well.

The rich and powerful of Europe, therefore, greatly desired to create their own *Wunderkammern*. Through the varying displays of wealth, artistry, cultural awareness, and scientific interest, cabinets of curiosity performed the symbols of grandeur and power that

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[88] Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 260.

reflected back onto their patrons. Most of the royal *Wunderkammern* throughout Europe were collections acquired from other collectors, artists, merchants, and physicians that had some intrinsic peculiarity or uniqueness such as that of Frederik Ruysch (1638-1731). Ruysch, a Dutch apothecary and physician, practiced the art of human preparations (preservative techniques), and created out of his anatomical study a true intersection of art and physiology. He preserved human specimen through several techniques including embalming with alcohol, wax, and even air. He was known for his human anatomical specimens that were so well preserved as to appear living. His expert preparations demonstrated not only a fascination with the processes and pathologies of the human body, but also the art of making the body immortal:

> The emphasis thus lay on Ruysch's handiwork, his skill, his 'art'. Although the collection reflected his search for answers to scientific questions— and could be used to answer such questions, at least when Ruysch could find the preparation he was looking for— it was largely an end in itself.[89]

Ruysch often arranged his specimens in artful ways, curating a tableau of emotion and action with human body parts as the subjects. Likewise, Ruysch had a series of catalogues made of his collection. These catalogues included illustrations by Cornelis Huyberts similar to Figure 11, which depicts a *tableau non vivant* made almost entirely out of human remains. The tableau portrays three fetal skeletons of about four months old in positions of lamentation and grief standing atop a rock "composed of bladder-, kidney-, and gall-stones, a few of which had been removed from an eighty-year-old woman" as well as blood vessels and bronchial tubes.[90] Many of Ruysch's specimens were displayed in such morbid and macabre tableaus. Others were wet specimens delicately preserved in jars of alcohol and other chemicals to appear romantically

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[89] L. Kooijmans, *Death Defied: The Anatomy Lessons of Frederik Ruysch*, (Boston: BRILL, 2010), Accessed January 4, 2018, ProQuest Ebook Central, 270.
[90] L. Kooijmans, *Death Defied*, 270-272.

suspended in time. Many of Ruysch's specimens appear similar to those in the Mütter Museum today, not only because of similar preparation techniques, but because of the artistic care and morbid curiosity which gives the collection a kind of macabre performativity in its use and unique display of human remains. In fact, the Historical Medical Library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia possesses the original catalogue of Ruysch's collection, *Thesaurus Anatomicus*, in which Figure 11 appears, and reference to his collection is made in the main exhibition of the Mütter Museum.

During his own lifetime, Ruysch kept his vast and strange collection in his own museum in Amsterdam which he opened to the public for a fee. It was the first true anatomical museum of its kind, from which modern anatomical museums such as the Mütter are descended: it offered public access to medical knowledge and tastefully catered to morbid curiosity.[91] Visitors came from all over the world to view the artful postures of death that Ruysch's ten cabinets of curiosity displayed, including Europe's famous, rich, and royal.[92] In fact, Peter the Great of Russia visited the museum, took great interest in it, and bought the entire collection from Ruysch. The collection now resides among other international collections of art and science in the Kunstkamera, Russia's first public museum "intended to promote science and learning," which opened after the Czar's death.[93]

Though the initial purpose of the extravagant displays in *Wunderkammern* was to entertain and impress guests, they also signaled a new way of thinking about the cabinets of curiosity, ushering in a desire for public learning and scientific inquiry. Despite the fantastic art

[91] L. Kooijmans, *Death Defied*, 177.
[92] L. Kooijmans, *Death Defied*, 241.
[93] L. Kooijmans, *Death Defied*, 344.

of collection conveyed in the *Wunderkammern*, cabinets of curiosity also systematically domesticated the wonder and marvel of the natural world by giving it order through curation.

Figure 12. "A composition of three fetal skeletons"[94]

As Foucault describes, the eighteenth century saw the development of new spaces for curating the natural world: herbariums, collections, and gardens.[95] Plant and animal specimens from around the world came together in the same space and were thus analyzed and understood in relation to one another. Collectors curated the structures by which they were able to understand the world. These highly subjective structures of nature in spaces of curiosity likewise allowed for the emergence of language to codify and classify the natural world. Foucault writes:

> By limiting and filtering the visible, structure enables it to be transcribed into language. It permits the visibility of the animal or plant to pass over in its entirety into the discourse that receives it. And ultimately, perhaps, it may manage to reconstitute itself in visible form by means of words.[96]

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[94] Cornelis Huyberts, "A composition of three fetal skeletons." 1721. Print, 36x32cm. From Frederik Ruysch, Thesaurus Anatomicus Decimus.
[95] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 131.
[96] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 135.

By giving language to nature, collectors simultaneously manufactured the possibility for discourse, for shared understanding and collective study of nature.

The shift towards scientific inquiry made the collection and curation of *Wunderkammern* ideal for the study of nature, whether human, animal, plant, or geological, and made scientific inquiry just as desirable to governments, royalty, and the societally influential, as classical art and other displays of wealth. One of the most famous examples is that of Hans Sloane (1660-1753). Sloane's enormous collection of art, plants, animals, and ethnological artifacts filled two Bloomsbury townhouses and a manor house in Chelsea. He became one of the most influential men of science (President of the College of Physicians of London in 1719 and President of the Royal Society in 1727)[97] and society in London during his lifetime as a result of his monumental collection and the connections it afforded him.

Sloane began collecting in 1687 on a journey to Jamaica where he acquired over eight hundred plant and other specimens. Following that trip, he engaged in the thriving collecting culture in London and beyond, acquiring objects from his friends and medical patients as well as other collectors from around the world.[98] Sloane's became one of the defining collections of British learning when, upon his death, the government acquired the collection and established the British Museum in 1753. His collection of twenty-three hundred coins and medals, fifty thousand books, prints, and manuscripts, an herbarium, and over one thousand antiquities became the basis

[97] "Sir Hans Sloane," *The British Museum*, accessed December 20, 2017, http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/the_museums_story/general_history/sir_hans_sloane.aspx.
[98] Ibid.

for public inquiry, curiosity, and access to scientific, historical, and cultural knowledge in London in the eighteenth century.[99]

Two collectors and physicians contemporary to Hans Sloane, William (1718-1783) and John Hunter (1728-1793) not only acquired a myriad of royal collections but also established two of the world's leading institutions of medical history in the world. William Hunter, the eldest of the two brothers, was the leading surgeon in Glasgow during his lifetime and his collection of medical instruments became what is now the Hunterian Museum at the University of Glasgow. His brother, on the other hand, joined the Royal Society in 1767 and began collecting natural specimens and medical oddities during his tenure as a surgeon and established his own museum during his lifetime.[100] John Hunter's collection included "14,000 preparations of more than 500 different species of plants and animals."[101] Like the Mütter Museum, the Hunterian Museum became the basis for a collection in a medical college. In 1799, the Royal College of Surgeons in London received the Hunterian Museum as a gift from the British government.[102] Today, the Hunterian in London comprises one of the largest collections of human and non-human specimens, and along with the Mütter Museum, conserves the history of human anatomy and pathology. The two museums are often compared as the two most prominent medical museums in the world.

Like the Hunterian Museum, the Mütter Museum houses human specimens, organized by pathology to order the nature of monsters. Each jarred limb, wax model, and skeleton

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[99] Ibid.
[100] "William Hunter," *Royal College of Surgeons*, https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/museums-and-archives/hunterian-museum/about-us/william-hunter/.
[101] "John Hunter," *Royal College of Surgeons*, https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/museums-and-archives/hunterian-museum/about-us/john-hunter/.
[102] "History," *Royal College of Surgeons*, https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/museums-and-archives/hunterian-museum/about-us/history/.

synecdochically represents the entire whole of a diseased body and the entire population of a disease. Each specimen symbiotically defines its neighbor by itself, creating order out of proximity. Instead of trying to classify species, distinguishing them from one another, the Hunterian and the Mütter attempt to classify pathologies, to answer a very human question: What makes up a monster? The tumors and syphilitic sores and arched spines construct the definition of the human physiology in the same way that vertebrae and teeth and cranial lobes define species and subspecies of animals. In Mütter's case, defining the monstrous in medical terms extricated the disease from the person afflicted by it and fostered the idea that pathology and the physical body can be treated.

Medical oddity museums such as the Mütter do not only serve as libraries of medical knowledge and discovery. Like Ruysch's museum in Amsterdam, the Mütter Museum has an aspect of macabre entertainment in its pathological oddities and rarities that, if removed from the very academic building of the College of Physicians, would seem more like sideshow displays than objects of medical study. According to Aptowicz, Thomas Mütter was more than aware of the entertainment value his specimens held. His "Unusual specimens"

> were always an attraction to the general public, and it seemed a cruel irony to Mütter that people who suffered so greatly during their life were also stripped of their rightful humanity after their death. One could scarcely imagine a more cruel rejoinder to a life of painful forced isolation than to have one's corpse paraded in a sideshow.[103]

Whether or not Mütter actually acknowledged or even troubled himself with the idea that his specimens might one day provide morbid entertainment to the general public, the sentiment has certainly been a concern of the curators over the past century and a half. When Mütter first

[103] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, 282.

established his Museum with the College of Physicians, he gave special consideration to the intended audience of his collection. Written into the Articles of Agreement, Mütter allowed that

> free access to the Museum and preparations shall be given to every regular graduate in Medicine, and to Every student of Medicine without charge or fee…and that other persons may be admitted on the presentation of a ticket bearing upon it the signature of any Fellow of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia.[104]

Mütter anticipated and encouraged the use of his collection for study by actual and official students of medicine, though the Articles of Agreement do not necessarily allow the general public access to the collection of oddities. In fact, non-medical visitors did not gain general admission to the Museum until the 1930s and 1940s. The Museum saw a new rush of general public visitors, but no single event initiated this change in audience; The librarians at the College of Physicians could not find a single piece of concrete evidence as to when the Museum officially opened its doors to the public.[105] The easy transition from a private institution of study to a publicly-accessible institution of entertainment perhaps signals the transformation that most other museums of natural philosophy, natural history, and anatomy also underwent in the early- to mid-twentieth century: an accommodation for the change in museum culture from prestigious institutions of scholarship to family-friendly establishments for learning and fun. Despite the Mütter's public accessibility and growing popularization, the Museum preserves its own academic distinction and history from its architecture to the human artifacts it houses.

The Mütter Museum maintains its mid-nineteenth century cabinetry filled with specimens preserved over a century ago, its low lighting and lack of eye-catching audio/visual technologies, its palimpsestic labels written on top of each other over the years, and its haunting, quiet feel that

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[104] "Articles of Agreement."
[105] For this, I would like to thank Chrissie Perella, archivist at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia Historical Medical Library.

gives sanctuary to the traditional museum-going experience, as if in homage to both the austerity of medicine and its history as well as the human remains themselves. The Museum's former

Figure 13. "Mutter Museum."[106]

curator, Gretchen Worden, who dedicated decades to the Mütter and brought it to the forefront of discussions on Museum Studies in the 1980s and 1990s, said in an interview: "As a curator, my role is to present the evidence and let the others draw their own conclusions."[107] In other words, the objects speak for themselves; they draw interest from the general public because of a very human curiosity towards nonconforming others or anomalous bodies that does not require the extra flash and pizzazz that other kinds of museums might employ. For example, the Franklin Institute, though just a few blocks away from the Mütter, is one of the country's largest and most

[106] "Mutter Museum." Photograph. The Mütter Museum, Philadelphia. From: The Mütter Museum, muttermuseum.org (accessed January 5, 2018). Courtesy of the Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians.
[107] Nancy Moses, "Pessaries," 66.

interactive children's science museums. Its exhibitions and collections rely on visitor participation and play, including a giant model of a human heart large enough to walk through. The Mütter does not employ any of these modern museological tactics. Instead, its stark, narrow, and crowded exhibition halls reject interactive screens, holograms, videos, and dioramas, providing the visitor with low-lit shallow wooden cabinets and hand-written labels from the nineteenth century. The Mütter Museum's charm is not its curatorial flare but, as Worden suggests, rather the specimens themselves.

In fact, under Worden, the Museum saw record numbers of visitors, thirteen times the numbers it brought in before her tenure as curator and director.[108] More and more visitors come to the Museum looking for the slides of Einstein's brain, the so-called "mega-colon," or the plaster cast of Chang and Eng Bunker, P.T. Barnum's "Siamese Twins." Though the Museum advertises these specimens without sensationalist language on their guide map and website, the effect might as well be that of a circus showman highlighting his sideshow freaks because of the gawking reactions they receive. Visitors usually gravitate towards the amazing and famous specimens while passing others of greater medical and historical significance. The very fact that the Museum identifies itself by the entertainment value of its crowd-drawing specimen and artifacts strays from the foundation of Mütter's private collection, but it aligns with the most basic requirements of a twenty-first century museum: to bring in visitors and the revenue they provide. In order to continue to function as an institution in Philadelphia, to preserve the longevity of Dr. Mütter's legacy of medical innovation, the Mütter must continue to draw in crowds, and in doing so, must walk the very fine line between displaying its collection for education or for entertainment.

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[108] Nancy Moses, "Pessaries," 67.

The Mütter Museum's motto "Disturbingly Informative" suggests that the Museum is all too aware of the morbid curiosity of its visitors. The average visitor to the Museum is no longer a curious student of medicine or medical school lecturer, but rather a mother of two who brings her children on a Sunday afternoon, looking to gawk at famous medical oddities as a form of

Figure 14. "Mütter Museum Interior 1800s Postcard."[109]

educational entertainment, or "edutainment." In the twenty-first century museum, interactive technologies and edutainment drive the interests of the general public and competing museum institutions. Museums like the Franklin Institute rely on the interactive play that visitors of all ages look for in an afternoon outing. The criteria for modern museum institutions have changed, but the Mütter Museum has not changed with them. Nevertheless, it still provides that essential aspect of edutainment in its shock-value.

[109] "Mütter Museum Interior 1800s Postcard." 1890. Postcard. The Mütter Museum Store, Philadelphia. From: The Mütter Museum, muttermuseumstore.org (accessed January 5, 2018). Courtesy of the Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians.

Edutainment, first used by Walt Disney, describes the educational entertainment valued in the era of television, internet, and fully immersive virtual reality. The field of Museum Studies has grappled with the issue of edutainment since the opening of Disneyland and Historic Williamsburg.[110] These titanic institutions of edutainment in the United States provide access to easy-to-digest learning for laypeople alongside—if not overshadowed by—the guarantee of pleasure and amusement. The twenty-first century museum institution cannot thrive without an element of edutainment. Though most institutions are not as well-funded and vast as Disneyland, the expectation for visitor interaction, fun, and educational programming, drives the current museum industry. Therefore, because of the new standards of edutainment, most traditional nineteenth and early-twentieth century institutions are starting to become obsolete. Whereas the Franklin Institute has transformed itself into a modern museum and thrives as a national success, Drexel University's Academy of the Natural Sciences, which claims to be the oldest natural sciences institution in the Western Hemisphere (and which still exhibits stuffed animals in displays of their natural habitat), consistently ranks behind the Franklin Institute, and even sometimes the Mütter Museum, in lists of the most popular and most visited destinations in Philadelphia.[111] Though the Academy of Natural Sciences has recently installed several interactive exhibits, it remains one of the most traditional museums in the city.

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[110] Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 169.

[111] TripAdvisor's ranking of "Museums in Philadelphia" places the Franklin Institute at #8, the Mütter Museum at #12, and the Academy of Natural Sciences at #20. https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g60795-Activities-c49-Philadelphia_Pennsylvania.html. According to Visit Philadelphia, the Franklin Institute is the 10th most popular attraction in the city while the Academy of Natural Sciences is the 16th. http://www.visitphilly.com/articles/philadelphia/top-10-most-visited-attractions-in-philadelphia/.

When it comes to edutainment, the biggest question that institutions grapple with is this: should museums acquiesce to visitor expectations and provide edutainment in the form of immediate and immersive gratification? In a way, the Mütter Museum does provide immediate and immersive gratification. The austere building, the antiquated cabinetry, and the palimpsestic labels transport the visitor to an era of academia that no longer exists. Stepping into the Museum's main hall is like stepping directly into the past. Not only do visitors get to learn through the specimens, but also through the design and history of the institution itself. Through its peculiar layout and even more peculiar specimens, the Mütter Museum appears to have fit itself into a niche of edutainment without bending to pressures from competing institutions and conforming to twenty-first century expectations of what a museum should be.

Gretchen Worden was right: the specimens certainly speak for themselves and bring in visitors without any additional help from technology. Visitors come to gawk at the strange and disturbing with the same morbid curiosity that has drawn crowds to the public display of bodies for centuries. As much as the Mütter Museum attempts to carefully maintain its academic bent, it relies heavily on visitor perception. The Museum takes careful note of how it describes its specimen, trying replicate medical language while also making its labels easy to read for its diverse public. Instead of highlighting the plaster cast of Chang and Eng Bunker as "The Death Mask of P.T. Barnum's Amazing Siamese Twins" or something of the like, the website excerpt does not even mention Barnum and the twins' circus career. Instead, it removes the cast from the context of the twins' histories of exploitation:

> These conjoined twins were born in what is now Thailand in 1811. They came to the United States in 1829 to tour and speak. Eventually tiring of life as touring performers, they married sisters and bought adjacent farms in North Carolina in the early 1840s. When the brothers died in 1874, Fellows of The College of Physicians conducted the autopsy and arranged for the specimens to be

> transferred to the Museum. On display in the main Museum Gallery are their conjoined livers and the plaster death cast of their torsos.[112]

By presenting Chang and Eng as ordinary people with ordinary lives, the Museum attempts to humanize the twins in their very vulnerable position as objects of the visitors' gazes in a way that the twins perhaps did not experience in their own lifetimes. Nevertheless, the twins' fame

Figure 15. "Chang and Eng Bunker".[113]

precedes them, as many visitors go to the Mütter in order to see, first-hand, the legendary "Siamese Twins" who toured with the original huckster himself, P.T. Barnum. Though the purpose of the Museum is to educate, many of its specimens now serve as socially-acceptable twenty-first century freaks, gawked at and discussed similarly to how Barnum's Joice Heth or "Tom Thumb" would be. Though the Museum does not recognize its own complicity in the

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[112] "Cast and Livers of Chang and Eng Bunker," *The Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia,* accessed January 6, 2018, http://muttermuseum.org/exhibitions/cast-and-livers-of-chang-and-eng-bunker/.

[113] Chang and Eng Bunker. Photograph. The Mütter Museum, Philadelphia. From: The Mütter Museum, muttermuseum.org (accessed January 7, 2018). Courtesy of the Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians.

exploitation of bodies, it is certainly apparent that the Mütter survives and thrives on its visitors' morbid curiosity. The Mütter Museum has essentially replaced the contemporaneous travelling freak show craze of the nineteenth century.

The Mütter Museum and the Rise and Fall of the Freak Show

The first thing that I do upon arriving at the College of Physicians for my brother's wedding is head straight for the rope partition at the base of the marble staircase. Decked out in my evening gown and pearls, I am stopped by a security guard and asked, "Excuse me, miss. Are you here for the wedding?"

"Yes," I say, pointing to the dress. "And I know where I am going, thanks."

Confident as I am of my way around the College, it feels bizarre to find myself and my family dressed for a wedding while visitors still wander in and out of the Mütter Museum's main gallery, speaking in hushed tones and staring at us as if we were the ones on display. It is only four o'clock. By five, everyone is gone.

When I return to the entrance hall of the College, my brother is married, and I am giddy, grinning ear to ear. My family and I sip champagne and pose for photographs in a space that, just a few hours ago, held tourists from all over the world, and which is now bedecked with candles, floral arrangements, and sheepskin rugs. My cousins and family friends begin walking into the gallery. The rules of the Museum still apply. No food or drink. No photography. We politely file in and my cousins begin turning to me with their questions. Why does the Soap Lady look like that? What was Dr. Mütter like? What are those skulls over there? We spend a few minutes trying to read the labels on each skull in the John Hyrtl collection and open every drawer of the Chevalier Jackson collection of swallowed objects.

A few minutes later, I find myself telling my childhood babysitter and my cousin's best friend from high school all about my research, animatedly pointing to my favorite aspects of the exhibit, discussing some controversial ideas about the Museum, and detailing the stories behind each specimen and object we come across. Eventually, I end up next to the wall of hydrocephalic

specimens. Still acting as official tour guide and Museum interpreter, I excitedly point to James Cardinal's plaster cast and say, "See, this is what I looked like before my first surgery. My head took up more than half my body weight and I looked like an alien." They are shocked and mildly upset. I immediately regret it. On the one hand, I feel as though I am putting these specimens on display like a showman does a sideshow act. On the other, I can see these two women who have known me for most of my life have a similar reaction to James Cardinal's cast that I myself had on my first visit: a combination of disgust, despair, and worry. I turn their attention away from the wall back to the upper gallery and the entrance hall beyond where they have started serving hors d'oeuvres. We all need a drink.

Monsters have acted as objects of entertainment for centuries. As Neil Harris notes in his biography of P. T. Barnum, monsters served as royal entertainment going back to the time of the Pharaohs.[114] Though the Middle Ages saw a fear and sinfulness associated with monsters, the reproduction and representation of monsters also had a sort of salacious comedy to them. Daston and Park discuss anomalous bodies as travelling entertainments in the medieval British Isles and Florentine parents who exploited their own monstrous children for profit.[115] Despite the general fear surrounding monsters and monstrous births in the Middle Ages as discussed earlier, Daston and Park do not discuss monsters in the socio-political context in depth. In fact, historians have less conclusive evidence of pre-modern monsters as entertainment than they do of monsters as portents of disaster. Documentation of monsters in the Middle Ages comes almost exclusively from the educated elite, usually religious scholars, who closely followed the ancient traditions of

[114] Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum*, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), 43.
[115] Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 190.

classical philosophers such as Aristotle as well as the Bible which posited monsters in line with the two beasts of the Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation.[116] Later,

Later, images of Shakespeare's Bottom and Caliban come to mind as monstrosities of nature meant for comic relief—though in Caliban's case he acts as the tragic anti-hero as well as the source for vaudeville-esque physical comedy. Bottom's animal-human hybrid body embellishes the ridiculousness of his character, though when Quince first encounters Bottom, his first reaction is fear: "O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted. Pray, / masters! Fly, masters! Help!"[117] Confronted with confusion and fear Bottom makes perhaps the most telling remark of all teratology: "What do you see? You see an ass-head of your / own, do you?"[118] Bottom's appearance causes his friends to fear him, in turn making fools of themselves. The monster is not self-made, but rather socially constructed and confirmed by the people around him or her.

Shakespeare's monsters surely reinforced existing social constructions of monsters as villainous and comedic figures in society. Though monsters had likely always been signature entertainments in market towns and at festivals, the documentation for it truly and notably emerged during and after the rise of Shakespeare. In fact, the first known and most famous examples of monsters serving as entertainment in an official capacity emerged in the seventeenth century, just after Shakespeare's death. As Harris explains,

> These oddities served two functions. The more intelligent who were retained at courts, emphasized their masters' power and domination, much as the royal menageries testified to wealth and status. They were exotics, adding color to princely retinues. And the true monsters, items at side shows, fed public curiosity

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[116] Revelation 13:1-18 (NRSV).
[117] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, n.d.), accessed October 14, 2017, 3.1.105-106. www.folgerdigitaltexts.org.
[118] Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.1.118-119.

> (and cruelty). Gaping crowds of onlookers made sport with them, often taunting the creatures whose ties to humanity seemed so fragile.[119]

Perhaps the most famous example of monsters appearing in a royal court is in the case of the famous Velázquez painting, *Las Meninas* (1656), which depicts the Infanta Margret Theresa of Spain and her retinue. In it, a woman with dwarfism stares stolidly at the viewer in total honestly and vulnerability.

Velázquez found his fame by painting individuals with dwarfism with certain dignity and candidness. Betty M. Adelson writes that:

> Velázquez's approach differed radically, his style was loose and evocative, and he painted the handicapped as he did the royal family, with humanity, conveying his own recognition that these unfortunate creatures were as human as their masters. He respected their dignity as human beings and delineated their individual personalities.[120]

Through his art, Velázquez contradicts the degrading cultural stigmas surrounding dwarfism in the Spanish court by seriously examining dwarfs as subjects. Nevertheless, by making dwarfs the subject of his paintings he, in turn, makes them objects of the normative gaze. In a way, his paintings reinforced their position as objects of entertainment by painting them at all.

The use of monsters and other oddities as entertainment in marketplaces and festivals reinforced their strangeness and foreignness, while at the same time, it normalized a culture of cruelty and degradation towards them. The travelling performance troupes throughout Europe continued for centuries and paved the way for the emergence of the travelling circus industry in the early nineteenth century led by P.T. Barnum.

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[119] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 49.
[120] Betty M. Adelson, *The Lives of Dwarfs: Their Journey from Public Curiosity Toward Social Liberation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2005), 150.

Figure 16. "Las Meninas"[121]

P.T. Barnum, born to a relatively poor Connecticut family in 1810, began his career not as a circus showman, but rather as an exhibitionist who acquired existing acts and human exhibitions and magnified them, making them popular and profitable.[122] Many of his acts and human exhibitions were hoaxes, either physically or narratively. One of the first he acquired was Joice Heth, an elderly slave woman purported to be over 160 years old and George Washington's nursemaid. He purchased Heth in 1825 and toured her around the northeastern United States until her death in 1836.[123] From the start of his career, Barnum learned to master the arts of hoaxes and publicity including "the quick discovery, the barrage of rapid and unusual

[121] Diego Velazquez. "Las Meninas," 1556, Oil on canvas. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain. https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/las-meninas/9fdc7800-9ade-48b0-ab8b-edee94ea877f.
[122] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 9.
[123] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 21; 25.

information, the maximum exploitation of the local press, the planted lie and the indignant denial."[124] As Harris explains, "It was during Joice Heth's tour that Barnum first realized that an exhibitor did not have to guarantee truthfulness; all he had to do was possess probability and invite doubt. The public would be more excited by controversy than by conclusiveness."[125] After the eighteenth-century fascination with understanding the natural world, the public turned to human oddities as both forms of entertainment and the well sought-after explanations for the mysteries of life. In Joice Heth's case, she embodied the possibilities of immortality and living history.

Shortly after Joice Heth's death, Barnum sought a permanent location to house his miscellaneous oddities. In 1841, he purchased Scudder's American Museum in New York City and claimed it as his own.[126] Barnum's American Museum was not the first of its kind. There were numerous museums of oddities and miscellany in most of the major cities on the east coast of the United States, but Barnum's mastery of publicity made his museum one of the most visited attractions in the country. The American Museum exhibited a diverse amalgamation of wax figures, dioramas, natural history, living human specimens, performers, lectures, and travelling exhibitions. The American Museum parodied traditional natural history institutions by exhibiting many of its specimens under the guise of real natural phenomena. One of the most scandalous examples is that of the Fiji (or "Feejee") Mermaid, the skeleton of a fish with the body and hands of a monkey.[127] Barnum used the popularization of study and discipline of natural history in the public Zeitgeist to draw in crowds for the purported mermaid. Not only did

[124] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 23.
[125] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 23.
[126] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 30-33.
[127] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 63.

the mermaid pose as a new discovery in natural history and an oddity of the natural world, but also fulfilled stories, legends, and fairytales surrounding mermaids which had been passed down in the European American tradition. However, naturalists could not and would not endorse the Fiji Mermaid as real. Rather, Barnum learned, the controversy surrounding the specimen actually made it more and more popular to the public, and so he took advantage of the philosophical and scientific debates that circulated in the news.[128]

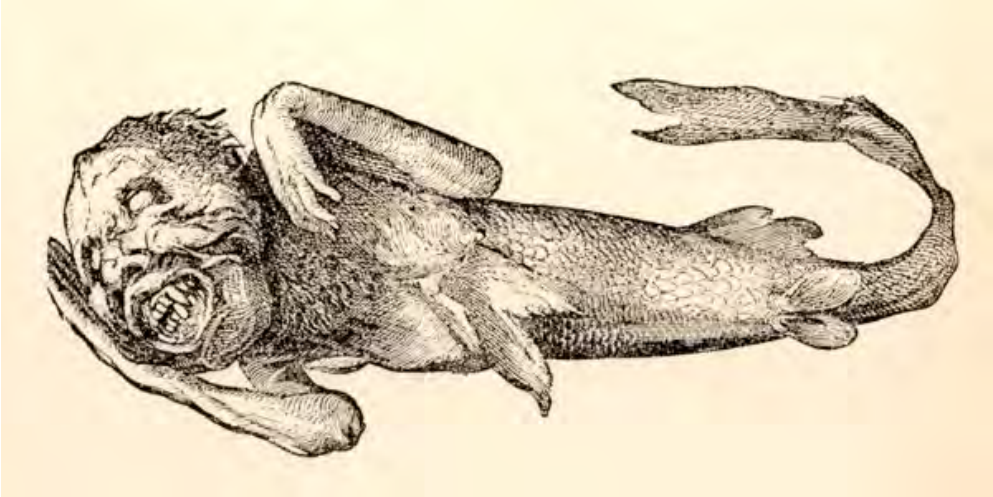

Figure 17. "Feejee Mermaid."[129]

The American Museum also became home to another of Barnum's human specimen, known as General Tom Thumb. Born Charles S. Stratton in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1838, Tom Thumb became known to the public for his unusually short stature: he was all of three feet and a quarter as an adult. "Despite contemporary labels, Stratton was not a dwarf; he was a midget. A malfunctioning pituitary gland had left him tiny but normally proportioned, lacking the deformities or misshapenness many associated with stunted growth."[130]

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[128] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 67.
[129] "Feejee Mermaid," illustration, The Museum of Hoaxes, accessed on January 6, 2018, http://hoaxes.org/archive/permalink/the_feejee_mermaid.
[130] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 49.

Figure 18. Charles Sherman Stratton, "General Tom Thumb"[131]

Barnum hired him as an act at the age of five, and for most of the rest of his life he made his fortune touring the world with Barnum and performing as various characters. He would sing, dance, dress in costumes, and do impersonations of famous historical figures. As Harris writes, "[Charles Stratton] was just the sort of oddity suited to an optimistic and benevolent society bent on showing Nature's bounty, not her nightmares."[132] He was not the macabre Fiji Mermaid, but rather a cheerful performer with a pleasant demeanor and an unusual, but not off-putting appearance. Stratton's physical abnormality and the attention it drew allowed him to create an act that was, for all intents and purposes, separate from himself. As Marlene Tromp and Karyn Valerius write in their introduction to *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, "Some performers were self-consciously complex in their presentation—and in a way

[131] Charles Sherman Stratton, "General Tom Thumb." Photograph. 1861. Public Domain.
[132] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 49.

that challenged the overt characterization offered by the freak show."[133] Charles Stratton was, according to historian David Gerber, one such performer. Not only did Stratton allegedly subvert cultural norms and expectations, but his act also provided him with a livelihood, which in and of itself an act of defiance against societal expectations.

Performing as a freak was one of the only socially acceptable careers open to him because of the limitations and stigmas attached to his size, as was and still is the case for many with physical deformities and abnormalities. Gerber discusses the challenges dwarfs faced in the workforce in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which relates to Stratton's own potential struggles based on his size:

> Many conventional public, adult roles remain closed to dwarfs, and they have experienced comprehensive employment discrimination. For want of alternatives, the entertainment industry has continued to loom large in the imagination of American dwarfs as a quick route to success, mostly because they were once featured in some vaudeville routines and sideshows and in bizarre roles in a few films, most notably as "munchkins" in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939).[134]

Evidently, the same circumstances that brought the many dwarfs to the set of *The Wizard of Oz* also brought Charles Stratton under Barnum's care. Gerber emphasizes that Stratton came from "working-class parents, people of narrow means," which heavily influenced their decision to allow him to join Barnum in New York at only the age of five.[135] Though Gerber also reiterates several times that the people Stratton encountered throughout his career treated him well, Gerber ultimately sees Stratton as "tragic, a prisoner of conditions over which he…had little control and

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[133] Marlene Tromp and Karyn Valerius, introduction to *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. Marlene Tromp (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2008), 11.
[134] David A. Gerber, "The 'Careers' of People Exhibited in Freak Shows: The Problem of Volition and Valorization," in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, (New York: NYU Press, 1996), 50.
[135] David A. Gerber, "The 'Careers' of People Exhibited," 51.

that both profited and humiliated him."[136] Despite the moral and ethical pitfalls of Stratton's circumstances and career, Barnum's freak show offered him a profitable life that would have otherwise been denied him. His act led to quite a bit of fame and fortune during his lifetime, allowing him to travel the world in luxury, meet Queen Victoria, and live a comfortable life.

Nevertheless, freakery is, at its core, a cultural construct that cannot be entirely swayed by subversion within the freak show. More likely, the audience takes away from the freak show exactly what it came with: culturally-informed prejudices, preconceptions, and constructions of normalness and entertainment. Additionally, ironic and subversive acts might work against their own purpose, thereby fulfilling and reinforcing the audience's existing cultural expectations. Stratton's fame came from the exploitation of his own body for entertainment and the profit it provided him. He and the later "Siamese Twins," Chang and Eng Bunker, made their livelihoods on the insatiable curiosity of the international public, a curiosity that manifested as objectification on a grand scale.

The Mütter Museum is also at the mercy of the cultural constructs of any given moment, which visitors bring with them into the museum. Since it opened to the public in the 1930s or 1940s, the Museum has displayed its specimens, "[presented] the evidence and let [visitors] draw their own conclusions."[137] The danger in presenting specimens without a culturally conscious narrative structure allows visitors to bring their own opinions and agendas to the Museum without entirely taking in the original purpose and message the collection provided and continues to provide. Though the Museum appeared at the transformative moment between the end of the *Wunderkammern* movement and the modernization of medicine, the Mütter also parallels the rise

[136] David A. Gerber, "The 'Careers' of People Exhibited," 51.
[137] Nancy Moses, "Pessaries," 66.

and fall of the freak show. The Museum emerged in Philadelphia in the same decade that Barnum's American Museum appeared in New York City, and opened its doors to the public around the same time that the popularity of circuses and freak shows waned significantly in the United States. The Mütter Museum replaced the culturally codified idea of the non-normative body in entertainment that Barnum had previously fulfilled with freak show acts. In fact, as Heather McHold notes in *Victorian Freaks*, modernized medicine provided fodder for the wonderment of circus freaks rather than disproving and dispelling their non-normativity.[138] The Mütter Museum capitalizes on the same curiosity and wonder surrounding the diverse forms of the human body that freak shows and Barnum's American Museum often did. The difference between the Mütter and freak shows is intentionality. As Aptowicz writes in her biography of Mütter, the doctor's intention was that of the advancement of science and medicine. In no way did Dr. Mütter intend for his collection to be the object of morbid attraction. Aptowicz writes:

> Unusual specimens—or medical oddities, as they are sometimes called—were always an attraction to the general public, and it seemed a cruel irony to Mütter that people who suffered so greatly in their life were also stripped of their rightful humanity after their death. One could scarcely imagine a more cruel rejoinder to a life of painful forced isolation than to have one's corpse paraded in a sideshow.[139]

Visitors do not always tour the Mütter Museum with the intention of gawking at skeletons, nor do they always leave having learned nothing but how numerous and disgusting human pathologies can be. Rather, the Museum's more recent campaign for morbid curiosity emphasizes the performativity of its specimens, which fosters the idea that, like in a freak show or the American Museum, Dr. Mütter's collection is meant to be observed, scrutinized, and even

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[138] Heather McHold, "Even as You and I," in *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. Marlene Tromp (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2008), 24.
[139] Aptowicz, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels*, 282.

gaped at. In fact, many of the aspects of the modern museum and the idea of edutainment come directly or indirectly from Barnum's American Museum.

Though Barnum's fame comes mostly from his travelling circus, his American Museum remains one of the most influential museums in American history. By parodying the highly academic natural history institutions born out the Enlightenment and the Age of Empire, the American Museum made museum-going a popular outing for the everyman. There, the public could have fun, feed their curiosity, and view curiosities and oddities that bordered on scandalous. According to Harris, the nineteenth-century museum had to compete with other "urban amusements" including "Giant panoramas of cities and historic events, small circuses, theatrical troupes, and touring artists."[140] Instead of competing with them, Barnum placed these amusements inside his museum, absorbing them into the realm of the curious and entertaining. Likewise, Harris posits theatres were in direct opposition to museums as socially-acceptable forms of entertainment. He states that "American Protestantism had long cherished antipathies toward the theater on religious, social, and economic grounds."[141] Instead, the more wholesome museum-goers could find theatrical entertainment in the lectures and programming at museums such as the American Museum.[142]

Medicine has always been performative and theatrical by nature, even in the way that it is taught using real human subjects. Surgery and autopsies have, for centuries, been spectacles for medical students and, often, the general public as well, which is why the setting for such events received the apt name "surgical theater." The surgical theater was often portrayed in medieval

[140] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 35.
[141] Neil Harris, *Humbug*, 36.
[142] Despite the American Museum's reputation as a collection of hoaxes, Barnum did provide some cultural and scientific exhibitions and programming which were not entirely fictional.

Figure 19. Title Page to the First Edition of the "De Humani Corporis Fabrica," 1543[143]

and Early Modern illustrations as a place of violence, beauty, and perverse entertainment, looked over by skeletons and a crowd of observing men. On the title page of Vesalius's work *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, he etched a chaotic scene of the surgical theater, with the cadaver of a young man splayed open and exposed in the foreground. While the physician attempts to teach his pupils, a crowd of men of various ages peer forward towards the body and discuss amongst themselves or wrestle with excited dogs. Above the whole scene sits a human skeleton, holding a

[143] Andreas Vesalius, "Title Page to the First Edition of the '*De Humani Corporis Fabrica,*'" in *The Illustrations from the Works of Andreas Vesalius of Brussels*, ed. J.B. deC. M. Saunders and Charles D. O'Malley, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1973), 43.

staff and leaning back as if laughing maniacally at the chaos around him. Vesalius's surgical theater appears more like the scandalous public theaters of the nineteenth century that Harris describes in *Humbug* than the cold, sterile operating rooms of modern medicine. However, our operating rooms are a relatively new phenomenon. Even during Dr. Mütter's lifetime surgical theaters maintained their theatricality and violence.

The nineteenth-century Philadelphian painter, Thomas Eakins painted two very similar scenes of surgical theaters. The first is *The Portrait of Samuel D. Gross* now known as *The Gross Clinic* (1875), a portrait of the venerable Philadelphian surgeon dressed in his daily suit and performing an leg amputation with the aid of his team of assistants.

Figure 20. Thomas Eakins, Portrait of Dr. Samuel D. Gross (The Gross Clinic). *1875. Oil on canvas. 243.8 x 198.1 cm.*

The patient's female relation sits adjacent to the doctor, shielding her eyes with her arms in a fit of fright, disgust, and worry, as the surgeons cut precisely into skin and bone. The scene is marked by the blood of the patient which spews from the open wound onto the surgeons' bare hands. The painting, which was made for the Jefferson College Medical School where Mütter taught, displays what was then considered the height of surgical ingenuity. The dramatic scene also portrays the urgency and heroism of surgery on the cusp of modern medicine, as Mütter and his colleagues were.

The second painting, *The Agnew Clinic* (1889), portrays Dr. David Hayes Agnew and his team of surgeons and a female nurse performing a mastectomy on a female patient who appears sedated. The presence of the female nurse, the sanitized white surgical gown, and the placid, yet curious onlookers, conveys a very different message about surgery than the previous painting. The new, modern version of surgery was sterile, calm, and calculated, without violence or showmanship of any kind. *The Agnew Clinic* was originally commissioned for the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, and is now on loan to the Philadelphia Museum of Art along with *The Gross Clinic* for the foreseeable future. The two portraits became infamous players in the rivalry between the two schools of medicine that began just before Dr. Mütter arrived at Jefferson College and continues to this day. But, for my purposes, the paintings narrate the medical innovations made in only a few decades, in which the surgical theater transformed from a place of performativity, violence, and chaos, into a place of cold, sanitized precision.

It can be presumed that in neither of Eakins's portraits were non-medical members of the public present with the exception of the patient's relation in *The Gross Clinic.* By the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the surgical theater no longer catered to the public, but rather turned inward to focus on the patients, surgeons, and medical students. Museums and museum lecture

Figure 21. Thomas Eakins, The Agnew Clinic*. 1889. Oil on canvas. 214 x 300 cm.*

halls, then, replaced the surgical theater with its displays of human and other animal anatomy and displays and discussions concerning new medical and scientific discoveries and technologies.

Though Barnum's American Museum bolstered the popularity of museum-going for the general public, his museum was not the first to attempt to bring the wonders of the natural world into the national narrative and tradition. American Museum Studies scholars and historians often cite Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia Museum as the first public museum of the United States' national history, wildlife, and art. The Philadelphia Museum began as a house museum of paintings by Peale himself, and later grew to inhabit the American Philosophical Society building and even Independence Hall where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were created. Peale's collection included a menagerie of living animals native to the

Figure 22. Charles Willson Peale, Artist in His Museum, *1822, Oil on canvas, 263.5 x 202.9 cm*[144]

continental U.S. such as grizzly bears and an American bald eagle,[145] as well as Native American artifacts, collections from Lewis and Clark's expedition, plant specimens from the Pacific islands, and Peale's enormous collection of portraits of famous American Revolutionary War heroes. Peale also hosted various programming in the museum such as lectures, musical performances, and displays of the latest technological inventions.[146]

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[144] Charles Willson Peale, *Artist in His Museum*, 1822, Oil on canvas, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, accessed January 13th, 2018, https://www.pafa.org/collection/artist-his-museum.
[145] Peale's American bald eagle is now stuffed and on display at the Philadelphia Portrait Gallery in the Second Bank of the United States. On a visit to the Portrait Gallery, a docent told me that legend says that Peale's bald eagle was the model for the United States' seal.
[146] Karie Diethorn, "Peale's Philadelphia Museum," *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, 2015, http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/peales-philadelphia-museum/#18556.

Peale faced steep competition as more and more museums opened throughout the east, including Barnum's American Museum, in the early nineteenth century. As a result, the Peales expanded their collection with satellite museums in Baltimore and New York, though neither were as successful as the original Philadelphia Museum. Peale's sons suggested expanding the original collection to include wonders, marvels, and anomalies to draw in crowds the way that the American Museum did, but Peale "vowed never to stoop to a level of low public entertainment."[147] The Philadelphia Museum eventually lost its profit and its collections were bought and redistributed to other collectors including P.T. Barnum. The remainder of the collection is housed in the Philadelphia Portrait Gallery at the Second Bank of the United States, a part of the National Park Service Independence National Historical Park, and in the American Philosophical Society archives. Despite its financial fall, the Philadelphia Museum remains one of the most influential museums of its kind in America, and its collections now span some of America's most prestigious institutions and museums. Whereas the American Museum taught the public to enjoy museum-going as a recreational and entertaining activity, the Philadelphia Museum imbued the public with a sense of national pride by providing a pedagogical and philosophical collection particular to United States and Philadelphia.

Philadelphia's reputation as a city dedicated to scholarship and learning did not detract from a desire for entertainment. The Philadelphia Museum provided entertaining exhibits, though none so sensational as that of the American Museum. Rather another institution in Philadelphia, contemporaneous to Mütter's original collection, provided sensationalist entertainment similar to how the Mütter functions now. The European Museum, modeled after the European institutions such as a Ruysch's morbid collection and more lighthearted museums

[147] Karie Diethorn, "Peale's Philadelphia Museum."

such as Madame Tussaud's waxworks in London, was essentially the foil to Mütter's collection at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Established in 1858, the same year as the Mütter Museum, the European Museum "was a public museum of anatomy, pathology, and ethnology for gentlemen only. Its exhibitions ranged from displays of fetal development to 'stomachs influenced by the use of liquors,' to instruments of torture."[148] The European Museum catered to "public interest in and curiosity about health and the human body," but as well as to the private curiosities of Victorian men with its "displays on the female generative organs that were guaranteed to be both instructive and titillating."[149] The European Museum sensationalized the human body while the Mütter Museum refused to do so by closing its doors to the non-medical public. The European Museum nevertheless advertised itself as a legitimate medical institution by publishing catalogues of its exhibits and offering "'free medical consultations.'"[150] While the Mütter Museum catered exclusively to medical students for the purpose of advancing medical technologies and treatments, the European Museum "may have functioned to convert museum patrons to paying patients."[151]

Now, however, with the European Museum lost to public memory and the Mütter Museum open to lay visitors, the latter institution offers the same kind of sensational view of the monstrous human body—especially those that are no longer common or obvious—that instructs and titillates, educates and entertains. The Mütter Museum today has been stripped of its historical context and may now be interpreted as more sensational than pedagogical. The Mütter Museum, like all the other institutions I have examined, reifies the visitor's sense of his or her

[148] Museum label for *The European Museum*, Philadelphia, PA, Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, January 3, 2018.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.

own normativity by providing the opportunity to gaze upon and objectify a de-subjected specimen. The danger in this is that we, as visitors, forget the advances we have made since 1858: we forget the experiences of those who have suffered and those who continue to suffer from deformities, disabilities, and abnormalities.

Conclusion

Among the dimly lit and crowded glass cases that cradle wet specimens in chemically-induced states of suspension and bald human skulls staring emptily outward, the visitor to the Mütter Museum steps into a private world of morbid curiosity that changed the course of medicine in the United States in the nineteenth century. After having examined the history of teratology, natural history museum, and nineteenth and twentieth century institutions of human spectacle, I must now return to the Mütter Museum as an institution meant to be subjectively experienced by the visitor. Throughout the process of researching and writing about the Mütter Museum, I asked friends, family, and acquaintances about their own experiences visiting the Museum. To some, the Mütter Museum is an interesting outing; for others, it is disturbing and uncomfortable; for still others it nostalgically reminds them of their own medical training. In my numerous visits, I have heard a myriad of reactions from cautiously curious whispers, to reverent murmurs, to stifled giggling. I have watched visitors buy souvenirs, likenesses of the human specimens, and sneak photographs with their favorite medical oddities while others leave the Museum silent and taciturn. The Mütter Museum is a subjective space. It creates for each visitor a different experience and invokes different emotions, depending on the visitor's own background and perception.

During one particular visit to the Mütter in January, I encountered the Museum's main exhibit in an entirely new way: I found myself influencing the experiences of those around me. I bring my second brother and his girlfriend to the Mütter with me because I have a sense of foreboding about this particular visit. I have to copy down the exhibit labels I plan to reference in this paper, knowing full well that I have to confront James Cardinal once again, as well as Harry Eastlack and Chang and Eng Bunker. It is January 2nd. The Museum has only just

reopened for the new year. I did not expect the gallery to be full, but it is, excessively so. I have to force my way past fellow visitors in an attempt to get to the labels I need to copy. I become frustrated by the slow, sloth-like crawl of the crowd, doing what I call the "museum walk."

When I finally reach my first label, I begin to copy it down in a little notebook with a pencil (pens are not usually allowed in museum galleries). It is tedious work and I keep getting jostled by fellow visitors. My brother suggests that I use my phone to record myself reading the labels aloud. It is more efficient, but it is also more disturbing. I begin reading aloud, "Nineteenth-century Philadelphia had other anatomical museums intended not for students of medicine but for the education and amusement of the public..." Suddenly, the group of British teenagers standing in front the label stop cracking jokes and giggling, and instead listen to me read the label. When I finish and move on to the next label, they whisper to each other and remain solemn for the rest of their tour of the exhibit.

I reach the case in which the plaster cast of Chang and Eng's bodies stand erect, below which their conjoined livers lie, chemically preserved. A couple in their early fifties stands directly in the way of the label, but they haven't even noticed it yet. Instead, they are discussing Chang and Eng's careers as freaks and showmen. "Excuse me," I say, trying to sound polite. "May I just see the label? I have to copy it down." They smile weakly, move over a few inches, and resume their discussion, fixed on the plaster cast.

I begin reading, "Plaster cast made from the bodies of Chang and Eng Bunker after their autopsy was performed in the Mütter Museum in 1874. Chang and Eng were the original Siamese Twins, though they were actually three quarters Chinese. The term is now popularly used for conjoined twins. They died on January 17th, 1874 in Mount Airy, North Carolina, where they had settled as farmers after spending much of their lives on exhibition tours. They married

sisters and raised a total of twenty-one children; one was the father of ten children, the other of eleven. They maintained separate households on separate farms, taking turns and spending a week at each house where one would be complete master during the period at his own place..."

The couple stops their discussion and turns to me to listen.

"My word, twenty-one children!" exclaims the woman. "How did they do that?" She is not exactly talking to me, but rather reacting to my reading the label aloud. It occurs to me that these two had not even noticed the label.

I smile at them politely and move on to the next label. How many of my fellow visitors do not read the labels at all, but rather only gaze at the specimens and make their own conclusions? How many visitors come out of the exhibit having only reinforced their own prejudices and ideas? Perhaps I influenced the experience of those two visitors. Perhaps I solemnized the experience of those British teenagers huddled together for a laugh. All I did was read aloud the labels they were not reading or taking notice of. And yet, reading aloud in some way forced those around me to pay attention, to listen, to observe differently.

My experience of the Mütter Museum is not a singular one. I have experienced it as a visitor, as a researcher, and most recently, as a guest of my brother's wedding. I have observed my closest friends and family walk through the Museum's main gallery, gazing upon the bodies I have studied so closely, leaning against the cabinets which are an essential part of the Museum's history, and remarking politely on the rare and repellent deformities and abnormalities on display. My experiences at the Mütter Museum depended greatly on my circumstances for being there and likewise have my opinions of the institution changed. I consider my first impressions the most important. An institution like the Mütter must rely on first impressions.

First and foremost, it is widely perceived as an educational institution. Its motto, "disturbingly informative," invites the visitor to take pleasure in its "disturbing" specimens. Visitors may exercise their morbid curiosity by gazing upon anomalous others. However, only normative people can have such a positive, unfettered experience. Though open to the public, the Mütter Museum struggles with American Disabilities Act regulations. Its main gallery is crowded by cabinets and display cases with narrow walkways and steep steps. The same gallery is dimly lit and the artifact labels are printed in small text, making the museum-going experience difficult for those hard of sight. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the Museum reinforces the normativity of those who walk through its galleries. It reifies the idea that those with physical deformities and abnormalities should be studied rather than accepted, should be objectified rather than given voice. And, though many have voluntary donated their bodies as specimens to the museum in the past half century for the advancement of medicine, the display of those specimens reifies their own abnormality. By displaying bodies, they become less normalized, less personified, less human. By not explicitly recognizing the humanity in each specimen—by putting the deformity before the person—the Museum is complicit in making freaks out of people. The objectification that I felt upon my first visit is dangerous. Because I appear normative to those around me, it is easy to forget that I do not view myself as such. If the only difference between me and the man in the museum is modern medicine, am I still my own pathology? Am I still my own failed physiology? And why do we gawk at those with obvious physical anomalies when many of us have been "fixed" by modern medicine, our deformities essentially eradicated? The Mütter Museum offers us the opportunity to ponder these questions and to discover for ourselves the answers only we can know in a space so complicated by history, by circumstances, and by our own subjectivity.

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