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Monday *The Herald*; Tuesday the Victoria
(Re)Packaging, and (Re)Presenting the Celebrated and the Notorious on the Popular Stage

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Like its British counterpart, music hall, American vaudeville is general regarded, not only as on e of the most successful of our early 'culture industries', and a wholly indigenous one as well, but unfortunately as little more than a 'timeout' from reality[1]. Variously described as 'the national relaxation,' 'the fun garden of show business' and a 'complete characterization of a pleasantly gullible, (unsophisticated), clowning America,' the turn of the century vaudeville show carefully skirted social questions or matters of importance or challenge[2]. Instead, in the opinion of vaudeville historian, John DiMeglio, the patron was encouraged to relax and was to be spoon-fed laughs and assorted delights because vaudeville was expected to provide something innocent for everyone's taste[3]. Thus, viewed conventionally, vaudeville was though to be the vast intellectual and ideological wasteland of its day – a simpleminded, straightforward, innocuous form of mass entertainment geared to a socially mixed clientele proudly meritocratic in its selection of acts, thoroughly sanitized and 'liberated' from questionable messages or images, and complex only in the structuring of its bill; yet the same institution was capable of eliciting reviews like the following – of singing duo, Conrad and Graham – which appeared in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* in 1912.

The theater isn't a museum of horrors. It isn't a morgue for the exhibition of shame-faced down-and-outers who have achieved notoriety by transgressing the laws of man (and often God). It shouldn't be a refuge for persons or no particular talents who have become well known names to newspaper readers (for their various misdeeds). The theater isn't a kind of police court where moral lepers should be exposed to the morbid crowd that goes to stare and feast those instincts that are relics of the jungle… [Why do we permit] the theater, one of the most efficacious pulpits for the preaching of culture…to be degraded into a forum…for the two girls who were mixed up in an unsavory affair that demanded the police[4].

To some, such moral outrage directed at two simple 'chirpers' – as vaudevillians labeled female singers – may seem extreme and unwarranted to the point of cruelty; but, to one critic at least, vaudeville was clearly not as monolithic, at least in the responses it evoked, as most maintained and could possibly even be construed as having been squarely in the cultural 'thick of things'[5].

Surprisingly, the offending act was neither a foulmouthed comedian, nor a cooch dancer, nor even one of the myriad Salomés who took the stage after 1909 to received the multitude's applause and the magistrates' warrants; rather, it was what vaudevillians derisively dubbed a 'freak act'. This was an act which consisted of presenting, irrespective of talent, individuals who had been branded – and hence validated – by the newspapers as either a 'notorious person' or a celebrity (the latter, in Daniel Boorstin's lexicon, being anyone who is well known for their 'well-knowness').[6] As practiced by theatre managers as diverse in their tastes, interests and ideologies as Willie Hammerstein, known in show business circles as a maverick, and Benjamin Franklin Keith, who played no small role in sanitizing variety entertainment in order to make it suitable for – and saleable to – the masses, the operational philosophy of the freak act was astonishingly simple. Acting upon the premise, freely borrowed from P.T. Barnum, that normal people weren't worth exhibiting, enterprising managers raided the front pages of New York's

dailies, with an eye toward hiring, repackaging and then headlining anyone they thought was capable of arousing enough public interest to guarantee a filled theatre[7]. It was assumed, and accepted, that the acts thus contracted would most likely be pitiful; but it was hoped that before spectators could dismantle the hype and ascertain the poor quality of the headlining freak act, the remainder of the bill would have been thoroughly advertised, word of mouth generated and people who normally didn't patronize vaudeville might have been attracted.[8]

Under the freak act banner, countless bank robbers, murderers, boxers, suffragettes, channel swimmers, marathon runners, aviators, ball players, and evangelists made their vaudeville debuts. Carrie Nation was a freak; so too was Diamond Jim Brady; as were Lady Duff Gordon, babe Ruth, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Mrs. La Salle Corbell Pickett, widow of Civil War General George E. Pickett.[9] The aforementioned duet, Conrad and Graham, billed variously as 'The Shooting Stars' and 'The Shooting Showgirls', qualified as a freak act because their vaudeville bookings were due, not to their vocal talents, but rather to their having repeatedly shot millionaire W.E.D. Stokes during an altercation laced with more than a whiff of illicit love and extortion.[10] In the pages that follow, I intend to employ this single phenomenon, the vaudeville freak act, to open new possibilities for examining the definitional politics that swirled around the designation 'freak', and the changes that were taking place in the exhibition of humans, especially the physiologically abnormal, at the end of the nineteenth century. In addition, I intend to explore the cultural meanings of celebrity and notoriety; and to reveal that vaudeville's characteristic polyphony, born of the gradual appropriation of an entertainment form with its roots in working class culture, by middle class businessmen. These men, claiming to represent 'refined' sensibilities and increased cultural authority, rendered vaudeville's message ambiguous and hence potentially subversive of, not only the mythologized vision of the entertainment detailed earlier, but hegemonic norms as well.

In vaudeville historiography, the designation 'freak', a category conventionally reserved for those humans afflicted with physiological, mental or behavioral anomalies, causes undue difficulty and confusion. Why should we, the question is asked, group performers who were defined principally by what they were, with those who were distinguished ostensibly by what they did? The trail to a suitable answer leads through the relatively narrow domain of the 'politics of definition' to the broader field of cultural change, an area where Stuart Hall's ideas about cultural transformations are instructive. To Hall, the concept, cultural change, is both vague and misleading, being a

Polite euphemism for the process by which some cultural forms and practices are driven out of the centre of popular life, actively marginalized. Rather than simply falling into disuse through the Long March to modernization [Hall contends that] things are actively pushed aside, so that something can take their place.[11]

Working class variety is transformed into – and displaced by – vaudeville; the mini is replaced with the micro; the ragtop convertible has regained popularity and hence is once again being manufactured; and cinematic tough guys in the John Wayne mould are replaced by the 'more fragile and self interested brand of film heroism' of Tom Cruise and Bruce Willis, at least if the *New York Times* is to be believed.[12] To return to Hall's dynamics of cultural change, the operative words in his scheme, 'actively pushed aside', serve to shift his emphasis from cultural change as a passive, almost dehumanized evolution of norms and institutions to cultural changes as the 'active destruction of particular ways of life.'[13] In doing this, Hall allows us to focus on the various processes and interactive forces which claimed a role and a take in reworking the nineteenth-century definition of freakishness.

In tracing the decline of the standard circus, carnival or dime museum freak show in his recent book, Robert Bogdan, without actually crediting Hall, nevertheless illustrates his concept of active marginalization.[14] He – and Leslie Fiedler before him[15] - maintains, *lusus naturae* (so-called freaks of nature, sometimes called God's mistakes or God's jokes) have always held a fascination for man. The Roman emperors Tiberius, Augustus and the infamous Heliogabalus, allegedly owned dwarfs; monsters and other physiological anomalies appeare with surprising regularity in both medical and non-medical treatises from the early Renaissance to the late nineteenth century; and freaks of mythological proportions routinely 'people' children's literature. However, the commodification of disability, the practice of exhibiting human oddities for profit is generally considered to have been predominantly a Victorian phenomenon, the result of a cultural transformation in its own right.[16]

The public display of 'living curiosities' in America pre-dates the American Revolution by nearly half a century. Usually, the simple advertisement, '*To the Curious*', was sufficient to attract a crowd of eighteenth-century Americans who,

…were vulnerable to any tale a showman might tell about the origin of the strange creatures they paid to gawk at…The state of science and the Jacksonian frame of mind which so relished trickery provided an excellent opportunity for emerging showmen to [offer] presentations that were in some cases half-truths and in others out and out lies.[17]

This was certainly a lesson learned early by the legendary showman P.T. Barnum, who achieved success in exhibiting fake freaks like Joyce Heth and the Fegee Mermaid. In their 'shady' enterprises, showmen were aided by teratologists, scientists who studied monsters and other physiological anomalies, who were interested in scientifically classifying *lusus naturae*. From the outset, human curiosities were common features of the various proprietary museums that dotted urban landscapes. Following the lead of such museums as Peale's New York Museum, Barnum's American Museum and Moses Kimball's Boston Museum, by the mid nineteenth century even the smallest museums were advertising dwarf children, albinos, conjoined twins, people with excess hair and the like in their institutions.[18]

By 1880, freaks, heretofore confined to the museums on the Bowery and the lower regions of Broadway, were first exhibited within the boundaries of the Rialto, the theatrical centre of New York. By the end of the decade, three separate museums – Bunnell's, Huber's and Meade's Midget Hall – located near the center of theatrical activity at Union Square, were exhibiting their oddities to countless thousands of spectators. Of these, Bunnell's and Huber's were true proprietary museums with two or more floors devoted to showing the owner's collection of humans, and grisly or bizarre items such as human heads in formaldehyde. Both museums also contained a 'Theatorium' where variety entertainments were staged continuously from opening to closing time. The third museum, Meade's Midget Hall, was simply a space for exhibiting 'little people'.[19] When the Rialto moved to its current location at Times Square, the museums likewise moved uptown; however, by this time, zoological and anthropological freaks, the traditional *lusus naturae*, were beginning to fall out of favor and were relegated to appearing in less 'respectable' venues like travelling circuses.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the practice of displaying humans with abnormalities – what in the rhetoric of one spectator was described as making 'public sport' of gawking at others' infirmities – was first subjected to increased public scrutiny and then openly targeted for freeform. During the first decade of the twentieth century, disability rights activists, in such publications as *The Nation* and *The Scientific American Supplement*, began to speak openly of 'the pornography of disability' and to designate the freak show an 'intolerable

anachronism'.[20] During roughly the same time period, the medical profession, which, due to scientific curiosity, had earlier sanctioned and legitimated the display of human anomalies, actively sought to demystify freakishness. As studies in the field of deviance and medicalization document, the medical profession, by disseminating results of the most recent discoveries in the areas of genetics, endocrinology, nutrition, surgery and x-ray technology, was able to gradually transform – some might say reduce – freakishness from some sort of 'hideous otherness' to the merely pathological and therefore comprehensible.[21] Simultaneously, freaks themselves, seeking to be assimilated into 'normal' society and insisting on being called 'talent', 'performers' or 'entertainers', staged walkouts to protest at the designation, freak.[22]

As a result of such 'active reworking' of freakishness, plus the labors of anthropologists who, through their publications and illustrated lectures, had similarly shattered the mystique of peoples from distant lands (Zulus, aborigines, wild men from Borneo, and the like), the American people were re-educated to believe that 'nice people don't go to freak shows', and the term, freak, was liberated from its strict ties to the physically grotesque and was thus free to be expanded to include other cultural phenomena.

If the traditional freak show exploited the 'otherness' of the exhibited, vaudeville freak acts capitalized upon the exactly [sic] the opposite. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the image of the classical 'hero on horseback' had been gradually displaced by prototypes of Andy Warhol's 'everyman' who was destined to be famous for fifteen minutes. As a result, Americans had grown to expect that the central figures in their novels, short stories, histories, dramas and everyday intrigues would, like them, be 'specimens of the average' – in other words, mirror images of themselves, albeit slightly enlarged. Aware of this, vaudeville managers, in order to encourage what they deemed was the necessary degree of identification with the performer – regardless of whether they were celebrated or notorious – routinely exploited, magnified and often manufactured the similarity between the performer and the spectator.[23]

This is precisely the point which American historian Peter Buckley stresses in his description of P.T. Barnum's promotion of Jenny Lind, considered to be the archetypal celebrity.[24] Barnum, Buckley notes, in publicizing Lind during her famous 1850 American tour, deliberately increased her accessibility to the public by hyping her charitable nature and deeds, and heightening her 'commonness', while at the same time, methodically obliterating her 'otherness' – her foreign roots. Granted, Barnum's sponsorship of Lind, following as it did one year after the disastrous Astor Place riot which had unmistakable nationalist and class overtones, was motivated by a desire to protect his investment in a potentially hostile market place. Nevertheless, as a tangential benefit, Barnum learned a valuable lesson: that the 'celebrity can only reign in contexts where there is a feeling or relationship of equality between performers and the people.'[25]

Equally intriguing was the dramatic rise, during roughly the same period, in the market value of the central figures in spectacular crimes, a phenomenon Buckley attributes partly to revised expectations for newsreporting in the Penny Press and the wholesale redefinition of the nature of the news itself. Encouraged by Hearst, Pulitzer and others of like mind,

> …calamities, murders, political intrigue and celebrations emerged as newsworthy items. For the first time, the extremes of social life from the elite style of the Brevoort's costume ball to the horrors of the 'Tombs' became open to continuous narration.
> And the central actors in the sad and sordid dramas that made front page headlines became 'hot' commodities.[26]

While moralists might decry this fascination with the darker side of man's constitution and hope to dissuade and hope to dissuade us from our morbid – many would say sinful – attraction to crime, social scientists defend this tendency as natural and inevitable, noting that 'crime is one of the oldest, most perennial topics of public interest'.[27] As K.T. Erikson reminds us, 'confrontations between deviant offenders and the agents of control [have] always attracted a good deal of attention' and most likely always will.[28] Indeed, recent research by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies echoes Erickson's contention, suggesting explanations for the intrinsic newsworthiness of illicit activities and arguing for their commercial value.[29] Crime, the researches claim, invariably possesses distinctive qualities that render it dramatic and hence a 'natural' news category: it is always unpredictable, unexpected, disruptive of the social order and of the consensual moral framework, and a break in the routine. Like it or not, they conclude, 'society is fascinated by [the] endless unfolding drama between order and disorder, consensus and dissensus'.[30] But, of course, long before Erikson and the Birmingham Centre discovered the inherently newsworthy and stage worthy nature of crime, vaudeville showmen had become aware that adjectives like 'unpredictable', 'unusual', and 'disruptive' were readily convertible into cash when used on broadsides and in advertisements in the daily newspapers.

While this examination may partially explain the appeal of freak acts, it does nothing to advance insight into vaudeville's role as a message-bearing institution to answer the question, 'what exactly is being communicated during a vaudeville show?' Conventional consensus on this issue is exceedingly clear: as summarized by Albert McLean, the American vaudeville show, through its foregrounding of images of success, improvement and social mobility, appealed to and objectified the underlying aspirations of its clientele. McLean argues that vaudeville, in offering representations of upward mobility in its star system – or more precisely, the 'star as conspicuous consumer' – its pervasive aura of glamour, its lavish theatres – often called palaces – its flamboyant costumes, and its astronomical salaries, overly worshipped success and glorified the making of money.[31]

Unchallenged, McLean's view of vaudeville as a 'glorified and idealized version of the life toward which all aspired' stands as a value consensus that served to reinforce working class ambitions and support visions of an economically open society.[32] Pursued further, however, the message circulated – at least by the freak act – was considerably less encouraging. Certainly, in 1900 it was still possible for the average man to achieve upward mobility, potentially to attain national prominence and wealth, but – and this is the hidden message of the freak act – success was less likely to result from sound character and hard [work] than from the freak occurrence or sheer chance. This increased reliance upon luck as a principal means – possibly even *the* principal means – of upward mobility, 'suggests a providential rather than a meritocratic explanation of success'.[33]

The role of the popular, however, is not restricted to solely serving as a so called 'mirror held up to nature' – to being merely reflective of social change; indeed, current research in popular culture in general and in popular entertainment in particular, supports this.[34] Both Peter Bailey in his social history of British Music Hall and Eric Lott in his study of the politics of the American minstrel show, envision the popular as a

...sphere characterized by cultural forms of social and political conflict, neither…entirely the "social control" of the ruling class nor the "class expression" of the "dominated". Because the popular is always produced, capitalized, it is hardly some unfettered timeout from political pressures, a space of pure "leisure".[35]

In this scheme, the popular which includes entertainment, is viewed as neither a fully autonomous nor an externally determined field, but rather the ground or site of cultural differences, tensions, and struggles.[36]

It shouldn't be too difficult to envision vaudeville in these terms as a site of conflict, as contested terrain; all that's required is to retrace its evolution from its origins in working class concert saloons to its later incarnation as family amusements presented in lavish 'palaces' – a transition from class culture to mass culture and to remember the men who effected that change. Almost from its inception, variety was targeted by the clergy, by social reformers and by a group which Howard Becker as labeled, 'moral entrepreneurs'. This last group represents the men and women who, having discovered the commercial value of decency, actively promoted and disseminated their moral views.[37] This loose coalition set out to elevate the morals of the stage by eliminating – or publicly suppressing – those lower class ideas and behaviour which they deemed annoying, wasteful, immoral or even threatening and dangerous.[38] In doing so, they capitalized upon existing middle class precepts that emphasized the development of self discipline as the means to social progress, a belief that in turn justified their regarding themselves as 'barbarian', uncontrollable and in need of moral education.

Perhaps no one typified the breed of moral entrepreneurs who endeavored to purify the variety stage and to constrain lower class tastes and behaviour better than B.F. Keith, who, 'like impresarios before him, such as Barnum, mastered and [then] exploited a rhetoric of cultural refinement and moral elevation to legitimate a new kind of theatre', in this case a theatre free from 'vulgarisms and coarseness'.[39] Aware that realizing a thoroughly 'cleansed' form of variety entertainment would invariably entail a prolonged struggle for supremacy of tastes and would eventually require the total eradication of all demonstrative behaviour in the gallery and pit, Keith instituted a policy of constraints which included establishing a rigid set of standards and controls – including the threat of blacklisting – for all acts on his circuit, and he embarked upon an active campaign to educate audiences in matters of proper decorum and attention to the stage. In the latter effort, Keith personally lectured audiences from the stage on proper theatre etiquette, distributed literature outlining appropriate conduct, and hired ushers to 'teach' correct demeanour and, since any moral or educational institution reserves the right to expel the incorrigible, to serve as 'bouncers'.[40]

Keith's quest for respectability spanned his entire career in show business and exerted a tremendous moral force upon all of vaudeville; yet ironically, despite his Herculean efforts to create 'cleanliness and order' throughout the industry, Keith's actual accomplishments fell far short of his well publicized expectations. While he succeeded in banning acts containing obscenity or ridiculing disability, and in promoting the uplifting and respectably – which included 'tasteful' freak acts – most vaudeville fare fell into to some sort of 'moral middle ground'. This suggests that some of Keith's policy of containment encountered resistance or full scale opposition and consequently was rejected outright; while the remainder was subjected to a process of negotiation and had, in the process, been diluted or 'transmutated'.[41]

As participants in a complex dialectic, then, entrepreneurs bent upon appropriating 'the assets of conventional middle class morality and placing them on a cash basis,' continually walked a fine line between extremes of morality or taste, with a number of acts invariably eluding self censorship to reach the stage containing mixed messages.[42] Not even acts as seemingly value free as Harry Houdini's routines, dependent as they were upon escape from various social constraints – handcuffs, jail cells, strait jackets, and the like – could be considered devoid of political significance. Given these dynamics, freak acts, which had already been

invested with a tremendous degree of social power by the newspapers, required careful handling if managers were to find a safe middle ground for their shows. In promoting figures like Evelyn Nesbit Thaw – considered the freak act of all time – or Conrad and Graham who had become notorious overnight, managers were forced to invest considerable effort and print in order to 'sanitize' the act. In truth, there was little to sanitize in Nesbit's act, which consisted simply of her daughter dancing with a performer named Jack Clifford. There was nothing particularly risqué about the dances and the act garnered reviews that ranged from noting that the act was 'a pretty but not sensational one' to Nesbit's 'dancing is charming and her act with Jack Clifford [is] one of the best of its kind'.[43] What needed 'cleaning up' was Nesbit's reputation as the 'girl on the red velvet swing', the teenage mistress of 49 year old Stanford White.

In Nesbit's case, promoter Willie Hammerstein was unusually fortunate in that his star came to him neatly 'wrapped' in the pages of the *New York Times*, a newspaper with an unimpeachable reputation whose motto was 'All the news that's fit to print'. Not satisfied with the *Times* endorsement alone, however, Hammerstein marketed Nesbit by representing her as having participated in a real-life melodrama in which she had been cast as the virginal victim, Stanford White as the high living philanderer and despoiler of young women, and Harry Thaw (deranged as he was) as the hero who avenged the heroine's loss of honour in armed confrontation with the villain.[44] In less dramatic fashion, public sympathy was generated for Conrad and Graham by likewise portraying them as two unfortunate working girls who, through no fault of their own, became the prey of W.E.D. Stokes, the unscrupulous man of wealth.[45]

If publicity generated for and by Evelyn Nesbit's appearance at Hammerstein's Victoria served to publicly elevate her moral standing, promotion of evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson's vaudeville debut achieved exactly the opposite effect. Like Nesbit, McPherson, one of America's most renowned evangelists, came to Broadway with a reputation and an already polished 'act'. A celebrated preacher known to her followers as 'Sister Aimee' since her teens, McPherson achieved celebrity status in the 1920s through a combination of the public display of her religiosity and 'show business'. Her services, whether conducted in her Angelus Temple in Los Angeles – a 5300 seat auditorium topped by a lighted cross that could be seen over fifty miles – in tents or in theatres, was described as being 'alive with music, storytelling, speaking in tongues, narration of visions, and theatrical presentations of biblical stories.'.[46] According to newspaper accounts, her Broadway show different little from her Los Angeles and road shows; after the audience had been serenaded by a 'brass band that would have done credit to Barnum and Bailey' and following the appearances of adagio dancers and a 'seal-like' juggler, Sister Aimee appeared in front of a stained glass window, which a stage hand had fortuitously found in the theatre storage room, to narrate stories of how she had found religion and the trials and labours that followed. After roughly a half hour, McPherson ended her storytelling with the proclamation that her current mission was to 'go into the highways and lanes seeking to win straying souls to the cause of Christ'.[47] The 'highway' that she had in mind in September 1934 was Broadway.

In the weeks which preceded her appearance at New York's Capitol Theatre, deadlines dwelt, not upon her religious teachings or the mission which had brought her to Broadway, but instead upon her unusually acrimonious separation and impeding divorce from her performer husband, Dave 'What a Man', Hutton.[48] While token references to Sister Aimee's Gospel reminded the public that she was a woman of God, impresario Major Edward Bowes, in a public relations campaign that came to be known as 'selling Aimee to the scoffers', drew attention to the star's sexuality. Bowes was unwittingly assisted in his endeavour to deflect attention from

McPherson's soul to her body by New York's dailies which gleefully reported that she had appeared at a public function 'with fingernails stained scarlet, hair blindingly blond and wearing a white satin creation [that was characterized as] sexy, but Episcopalian', and depicted her as 'the only woman ever to walk across the Mojave in dancing pumps.'[49] It was remarks such as these that ultimately rendered McPherson increasingly ambiguous in represent her as much siren as saint. Taken out of her ecclesiastical robes and desanctified in the eyes of the paying public, McPherson became accessible to socially mixed audiences and hence became a marketable commodity. Thus, in separate cases, vaudeville entrepreneurs repackaged the 'already well known' and, in the process, that which threatened to undermine dominant mores or normative behavior was constrained; while the already sanctioned was sullied a bit. In neither event, did the product disseminated remain totally safe, morally untainted and message free.

This being the case, the 'struggle for power and cultural authority within theatrical space', which Lawrence Levine maintains had been largely resolved in legitimate theatre by the twentieth century, continued unabated in America's variety theatres and vaudeville remained 'contested terrain', resistant to a bifurcation into 'high culture' and 'low culture' until its eventual displacement by movies and radio.[50]

Once solely the domain of the Penny Press and the popular stage, the celebrated and notorious, having been fully appropriated by mass culture during the course of the last century, today are everywhere – on Oprah and Jerry Springer, on Wheaties box tops and in Pepsi advertisements, on billboards, and of course, in tabloids devoted exclusively to their exploits. Some contemporary observers – those denied historical perspective – might regard this 'merchandising of the self' as unique; to the culture industry, however, it's simply business as usual.

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[1] Peter Bailey, 'Custom, Capital and Culture in the Victorian Music Hall' in *Popular Culture and Custom in Ninteenth-Century England*, ed Robert D. Storch (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp 180-81; Don B. Wilmeth, *Variety Entertainment and Outdoor Amusements* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 130-34.

[2] Douglas Gilbert, *American Vaudeville: Its Life and Times* (New York: Dover Publications, 1940), p. 3; Joe Laurie Jr., *Vaudeville, from the Honky-tonks to the Palace* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), pp. 3-7; Charles W. Stein, *American Vaudeville as Seen by Its Contemporaries* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1984), pp. XI-XV.

[3] John E. DiMeglio, Vaudeville U.S.A. (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green UP, 1973), p. 6.

[4] Archie Bell, 'And It's the Year A.D. 1912,' *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 19 February 1912.

[5] Albert F. McLean Jr., *American Vaudeville as Ritual* (Lexington, KY: U of Kentucky P, 1965); and Robert W. Snyder, *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[6] Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Athenaeum, 1985), pp. 57-61. Much to the alarm of moralists, the Salomé craze had swept through vaudeville in 1909 until nearly every big-time theatre had a Salomé. The fad was ultimately quashed through the combined efforts of the pulpit and the courts.

[7] Ralph Pendleton, ed., *The Theatre of Robert Edmond Jones* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1958), p. 28; Neil Harris, Humbug: *The Art of P.T. Barnum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 27.

[8] Nellie Revel, 'The Passing of the Freak Act,' in *Theatre Magazine*, 19 June 1914, pp/ 293-94, 316-17; Paul Murray, 'The Value of Freaks,' in *Variety*, 20 December 1912, p. 37; Frederick E. Snyder, 'Theatre in a Package,' in *Theatre Survey* 12 (May 1971), pp. 34-45; Anthony Slide, *The Vaudevillians* (Westport, CT: Arlington House, 1981), pp. 58-60. Joe Laurie Jr., (*Vaudeville*, pp/ 214-25) refers to acts like sword swallowers, snake charmers, contortionists and related performers as 'odd' acts to distinguish them from freak acts.

[9] Slide, *The Vaudevillians*, pp. 58-60; Laurie, *Vaudeville*, pp. 214-25; Charles Samuels and Louise Samuels, *Once Upon a Stage: The Merry World of Vaudeville* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co.m 1974), pp. 238-40.

[10] "Freak Acts" – In and Out,' in *Variety*, 23 December 1911, p. 41.

[11] Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing "the Popular"', in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 227-31.

[12] Janet Maslin, 'Summer's Heroes: More Guts than Glory', *New York Times*, 22 July 1990, B19.
[13] Hall, 'Deconstructing the Popular', pp. 227-40.
[14] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 62-68.
[15] Fielder, Leslie. *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978).
[16] Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 1-21; Leslie Fiedler, Freaks, pp. 13-36.
[17] Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 27, 31
[18] Ibid., pp. 25-35; Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America* (New York: New York UP, 1997), pp. 1-9
[19] John W. Frick, *New York's First Theatrical Center: The Rialto at Union Square* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 93.
[20] 'Circus and Museum Freaks, Curiosities of Pathology', *Scientific American Supplement*, 4 April 1908, p. 222; 'Amusements at the Abnormal', *The Nation*, 1908, pp. 254-55.
[21] Peter Conrad and Joseph W. Schneider, *Deviance and Medicalization: From Badness to Sickness* (St. Louis: The C.V. Mosby Company, 1980), pp. 1-37; Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 62-68.
[22] Clipping, 'Billed as "Freaks", Side Show Folk Do Walkout', nd, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library, Lincoln Center; Bogdan, *Freak Show*, pp. 62-68.
[23] Boorstin, The Image, pp. 45-76; Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: the Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), pp. 271-84.
[24] Peter, George Buckley, 'To the Opera House: Culture and Society in New York City, 1820-1860', PhD dissertation (State University at Stoneybrook, 1984), pp. 469-540.
[25] Ibid., pp. 501-2
[26] Ibid., p. 361; Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1967), pp. 88-106.
[27] Stuart Hall et al., 'Newsmaking and Crime', *Stenciled Occasional Paper* presented to NACRO Conference on 'Crime and the Media', January 1975, pp. 2-3.
[28] K.T. Erikson, cited in Hall, et al., 'Newsmaking and Crime', p. 2.
[29] Ibid., pp. 1-18.
[30] Ibid., pp. 1-2.
[31] McLean, *Vaudeville as Ritual*, pp. 7-10.
[32] Ibid., p. 10.
[33] Bailey, 'Custom, Capital and Culture', p. 194.
[34] Ibid., pp. 180-208; Eric Lott, 'The Seeming Counterfeit: Racial Politics and Early Black-face Minstresly', paper presented to the Carter G. Woodson Institute for Afro-American and African Studies, University of Virginia, 14 November 1989.
[35] Lott, 'Seeming Counterfeit', p, 5.
[36] Richard Johnson, 'What is Cultural Studies Anyway?' in *Social Text*, 16 (1986/87), p. 39.
[37] Howard Becker cited in Conrad and Schneider, *Deviance and Medicalization,* pp. 22-23.
[38] Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1981), pp. 68-80.
[39] Snyder, *Voice of the City*, p. 30; McLean, *Vaudeville*, pp. 60-101; Stein, *American Vaudeville as Seen*, 17-21; Robert C. Allen, 'B.F.Keith and the Origins of American Vaudeville', in *Theatre Survey* 21 (November 1980), pp. 105-15; Snyder, 'Theatre in a Package', pp. 34-34; Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 196.
[40] Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow, pp. 195-97.
[41] Hall, 'Deconstructing the Popular'; T.J. Jackson Lears, 'The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities', in *American Historical Review* 90 (June 1985), pp. 567-95; Snyder, *Voice of the City*, p. 34.
[42] Admittedly, there are dangers associated with a dialectical view of cultural change – becoming fixated on the struggle between oppressors and the oppressed, or attributing a single mentality to large institutions – but such an approach nevertheless serves to focus attention upon those processes in the popular realm by which new modes of cultural production were or were not generated. In the case of vaudeville, the managers' realization that all values were negotiable, and hence fluid, contributed to the moral ambivalence of the institution, to the continual tension between 'rough ' and 'refined' tastes and to what Robert Snyder argues was vaudeville's most complex problem: how to retain the electricity of variety while providing a 'clean' bill.
[43] Newspaper clippings, n.d., Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

[44] Michael Macdonald Mooney, *Evelyn Nesbit and Stanford White: Love and Death in the Gilded Ages* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1976); 'Evelyn Thaw in Atlanta Raps Preachers as her Critics', clipping, n.d., Billy Rose Theatre Collection; 'Evelyn Nesbit's Untold Story', *Sunday News*, 10 June 1934; Slide, *The Vaudevillians*, pp. 149-51.
[45] Unidentified clipping, 23 December 1911, Billy Rose Theatre Collection.
[46] Miscellaneous newspaper clippings, n.d., Billy Rose Theatre Collection.
[47] Newspaper clippings, n.d., Billy Rose Theatre Collection; Kevin E. Stilley, 'Aimee Semple McPherson', in *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes (New York: Oxford University Oress, 1999), pp. 181-83
[48] *New York Herald*, 25 Sept 1934.
[49] Newspaper clippings, n.d., Billy Rose Theatre Collection.
[50] Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, pp. 66-68, 85-256.