Deformity, Death, Decay: The Use of the Early Modern Freak as *Memento Mori*

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Abstract

This thesis investigates imagery of the nonnormative and grotesque body in early modern Europe and its use in destabilizing understandings of life and death. Focusing on the case study of conjoined/parasitic twins Lazarus and Joannes Baptista Colloredo, I suggest that the nonnormative or "freakish" body has been historically used as a living *memento mori* –an object of contemplation intended to remind able-bodied viewers of the inevitability of mortality. Drawing on disability scholarship and death philosophy, I ground my work through visual and comparative analysis of 16th- and 17th-century images of both "freaks" and *memento mori.* The insights of Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (*Rabelais and His World*) inform my analysis. Bakhtin writes of the early modern grotesque body that it "reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming…the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis." In other words, the grotesque has the potential to call into question seemingly stable categories such as life and death. My research thus aims to provide a critical, intersectional and compassionate history of how disabled persons were framed through the macabre and the mortuary.

Ce mémoire est une étude de l'imagerie du corps non-normatif et grotesque du début de l'Europe moderne et de son effet déstabilisateur sur les conceptions contemporaines de la vie et de la mort. En me penchant sur le cas des jumeaux conjoints / parasites Lazarus et Joannes Baptista Colloredo, je suggère que le corps non-normatif ou anormal était utilisé historiquement comme memento mori vivant, c'est-à-dire comme un objet de contemplation destiné à rappeler aux spectateurs non-handicapés l'inévitabilité de leur mortalité. En m'appuyant sur la philosophie de la mort et la recherche sur le handicap, j'effectue une analyse visuelle et comparative d'images des 16ème et 17ème siècles représentant à la fois les monstres et les memento mori. Les réflexions du critique littéraire russe Mikhail Bakhtin (*Rabelais et son monde*) éclairent mon analyse. Bakhtine écrit à propos du corps grotesque moderne qu'il "reflète un phénomène en transformation, une métamorphose encore inachevée de mort et de naissance, de croissance et de devenir… l'ancien et le nouveau, le mourant et le procréateur, le début et la fin de la métamorphose." En d'autres termes, le grotesque a le potentiel de remettre en question des catégories dites stables telles que la vie et la mort. Ma recherche vise ainsi à fournir une narration à la fois critique, intersectionnelle et empreinte de compassion de la manière dont les personnes handicapées étaient présentées par l'intermédiaire des catégories du macabre et du mortuaire.

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Introduction

"When man awaits the new spring, the new year, with joyful impatience, he does not suspect that he is eagerly awaiting his own death."
-Leonardo Da Vinci

"Bodies have all the explanatory power of minds."
– Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*

In Eric McCormack's 1992 novel about a series of mysterious deaths, *The Mysterium,* he writes that the human body is "nothing but a food supply for a million maggots...they're camped inside of us, all our lives. Look in a mirror, and you see them skulking around just under the skin."[1] Beneath the surface, the body assumes a grotesque reminder — that death and decay can neither be hidden nor wished away. Or, in the words of Allan Hepburn, "The death drive deforms everyone; our deaths written into our flesh, we view the body as a monstrous perversion of ideal existence."[2] Death is often perceived to be like a monster, a perverse force that provokes anxiety, while the human body acts as its own form of *memento mori,* an object of contemplation that says, "Remember: you too will die."

As each body comprises a different form, functionality, beauty, and ugliness, the way that it is used and regarded as embodying and representing mortal anxieties varies. In the 17th century, the public touring and display of disabled and deformed people became an increasingly

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[1]Eric McCormack, *The Mysterium: A Novel of Deconstruction* (Toronto: Penguin Press, 2016), 202.
[2] Allan Hepburn, "Monstrous Bodies: Freakish Forms and Strange Conceptions in the First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women," *ARIEL* 33, no. 3 (October 2002): 134.

popular form of entertainment across Europe. Simultaneously, cabinets of curiosities and natural science museums across Europe began to include *memento mori* images and artefacts in their collections. These were often exhibited along with anomalous bodies. As a result, those born with perceived dysfunction or distortion, such as the visibly disabled, were viewed as urgent death-reminders. In what follows, I will explore how the non-normative human form was taken up as a *memento mori* in 17th-century practices of displaying "freaks" as powerful reminders of how death is contained within every body.

This project locates a framework for viewing 17th-century non-normative and "freakish" human bodies in the *memento mori* traditions of the previous century. Through an examination of visual materials such as prints, broadsides, paintings and medical illustrations, as well as primary-source texts, I suggest that integral to the creation of Early Modern marvels is a manipulation of the non-normative body to be something that sparks mortuary contemplation for its witnesses through its defiance of assumptions about the divisions between life and death. With a specific focus on the culture of spectacle employed by Early Modern "shows of wonder" and touring "freaks", my research combines visual analysis with disability studies, performance theory and death philosophy. I look particularly at the fascinating lives of the touring Colloredo twins, who act as a touchstone case study through which to locate overarching debates and themes in freakery scholarship. Their journey in both textual and visual primary sources guides my argument. Drawing on a wide range of scholarship on freakery, disability, the grotesque, the macabre, and the medical, this work aims to offer a critical and sensitive approach to the representational use (and abuse) of people living with anomalous bodies.[3]

[3] It is necessary here to note that the term "disability" holds many intricacies and debates of use. Contemporary scholars generally recognize two primary uses of the term:

This thesis focuses on the 17th century as a transitional era in teratology, marking a shift from Renaissance understandings of *memento mori* and marvelous bodies to the eventual rise of the popular Victorian freak show. However, I assert that while the body itself has never been a stable category, what has been consistent is the attempt to sort and classify the anomalous and unexpected. As Susan Stewart claims in her influential work, "On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection":

> We want to know what is the body and what is not, and it is in the domain of ritual and the carnival grotesque that we see this boundary confused and ultimately redefined. Bakhtin has characterized the grotesque body as a 'body in the act of becoming.' The grotesque body undergoes a hyperbolization of the bowels, the genital organs, the mouth, and the anus. All these convexities and orifices have a common characteristic: it is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome: there is an interchange and an interorientation.[4]

This impulse for categorization, interchange and interorientation, especially when regarding the human body in extreme or unconventional configurations, is inextricably connected to attitudes to mortality. The nonnormative or "freak" body, therefore, acts as a locus that sparks anxieties and reflections on mortality, particularly for an intended audience of able-bodied viewers.

For her concept of the grotesque, Stewart draws on the acclaimed work of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, who is a key theorist for my project. In *Rabelais and His World*,

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I. In reference to physical of mental attributes that are generally viewed as needing to be "fixed", known as the medical model.
II. In reference to limitations that are imposed upon individuals by the limitations of existing in an ableist society, known as the social model.

In the course of this thesis, I am generally referring to "disabled persons' in alignment with the social model, as it views disability as cultural, ideological and physical.

[4] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 105.

Bakhtin crafts an influential theory about the cultural perception of the grotesque body in the Early Modern period. He writes that it "reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming…the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis."[5] Indeed, critical to the grotesque and the monstrous is the conjoining of these seemingly contrasting forces: men/women, human/animal, and living/dead.[6] The grotesque rejects and blurs neat categories, propelling its witnesses to reflect upon what is certain: that all creatures born will eventually die. Visual representations of anomalous bodies, as situated through able-bodied lenses, thus reveal an ongoing anxiety over the breaking of binaries and assumed categories of differentiation. The monstrous or freakish body (the linguistic and conceptual differences between which will be detailed further in this study) is grotesque and intriguing precisely because it blurs and subverts, muddies and challenges.

The Early Modern period was rife with tales of fantastical creatures, metaphysical philosophy and increasing interest in viewing the nonnormative human body: there was widespread fascination with paradoxical forces of the bizarre. Anatomical discourse emerged in the Renaissance with a newfound focus on the observation and dissection of the body, and alongside the burgeoning possibilities of printmaking technology, images of the grotesque and

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[5] Mikhail Michajlovič Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 48.

[6] As Daston and Park note, the categories of gender as we conceive of them today did not exist in the same form in the 16th and 17th centuries. In the context of this essay, I refer to the dominant colonial European understanding of gender, which is both binary and bodily.
[Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 2001) 425]

nonnormative body can be found in broadsides and books, ballads and treatises. Summarizes Bondeson in his essay, "The Isle-Brewers Conjoined Twins of 1680":

> In the 17th and 18th centuries, short pamphlets or 'broadsides' were an important source of information and were eagerly bought by both high and low. Quite a large proportion of them dealt with monstrous birth, and such monster broadsides seem to have been a most popular literary genre during many years.[7]

These prints showcase imagined and exaggerated images of deformed bodies, fantastical animal-human hybrids, and medical graphics. Such representations betray a deep-seated anxiety over the slippage of categories. As Barbara Benedict states, "Monsters and curiosities present the possibility that no order or value can encompass all phenomena."[8] In a period of rapid scientific discovery and widespread attempts to classify nature, anxiety over conflicting conceptual binaries makes itself manifest in the viewing of other humans' marvelous and freakish bodies.

The role of marvelous bodies in art and anatomy from the Early Modern to Victorian periods has been the subject of much scholarly work. Particularly noteworthy is the touchstone study, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, by historians of science Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park. It explores how European naturalists used objects and oddities to position themselves in relation to the natural world. The authors argue that the "order of nature" "was defined largely by what or who was excluded."[9] In this way, teratology, the study of monsters, played a crucial role in scientific attempts to order and categorize the natural world. They further establish their

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[7] Jan Bondeson, *The Two-Headed Boy: And Other Medical Marvels* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 2.
[8] Barbara Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 13.
[9] Daston and Park, *Wonders,* 350.

argument in terms of a struggle between Protestant reformers — who viewed monsters and marvels as signs of God's wrath at sinful human behavior — and burgeoning scientific approaches that attempted to diminish the perceived religious implications of such oddities. Daston and Park locate this debate in the broadsides and prints that permeated popular culture and which broke down barriers of literacy and access to scientific debates by ordinary Europeans. Ultimately, by the mid-18th century, unusual births and spectacular bodies were met with a predominantly secular approach. Say Daston and Park:

> In the early years of the reformation, the tendency to treat monsters as prodigies—frightening signs of God's wrath dependent ultimately or solely upon his will—was almost universal. By the end of the seventeenth century, only the most popular forms of literature—ballads, broadsides and the occasional religious pamphlet—treated monsters in this way.[10]

The broadsides and pamphlets focused on by Daston, Park, and Bondeson are tangible materials that reveal the varying historical and visual approaches to monstrosity and oddity throughout the period. Many of them are in folios at print rooms, inside cabinets at medical museums and galleries, or tucked away in rare book libraries: a small part of the history of the subversive and strange. Gathered from a variety of sources, a number of 16th- and 17th-century broadsides are the focus of much of this project.

Many of the broadsides give insights into contemporaneous practices surrounding the viewing and exhibition of monstrous bodies. Bioethicist and literary scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has argued that "freak culture" began to emerge in the late 17th century as a "structured cultural ritual that seized upon any deviation from the typical, embellishing and intensifying it to produce a human spectacle whose every somatic feature was laden with

[10] Daston and Park, *Wonders*, 54.

significance before the gaping spectator."[11] In other words, she locates the particularities of freakery in the act of watching, or in the "spectacle." Indeed, spectacle was an important element of the grotesque, macabre, and abject. Stewart similarly claims that the freak must be linked to "certain forms of the pornography of distance,"[12] foregrounding the act of looking as being imperative to the construction of freakhood. These definitions of Stewart and Thomson are the ones that I find most convincing and which inform my argument. The observation of, interaction with, and subsequent visual documentation of the anomalous body are necessary parts of creating and maintaining the "freak." This grounding in the "pornography of distance" is additionally integral to distinguishing between the terms "freak" and "monster", as will be defined more specifically in Section One.

Worries and uncertainties over death and the body make themselves known in images and stories documenting the nonnormative, or freakish, body. This is the anxiety that my study aims to explore. Art that has been traditionally deemed "grotesque," "macabre," or more colloquially, simply "disturbing" is part of a symbolic system that expresses metaphysical anxieties about what lurks beneath the surface of the body. Through drawing attention to the ways in which persons with anomalous bodies have been used as touchstones for able-bodied dialogues on death, dying and decay, I posit that the uncanny body has been catalogued as a *memento mori* for its witnesses. This work is not an attempt to medicalize nor romanticize the history of those who are or have been designated as disabled, deformed, monstrous and freakish. Rather, it is a critical study of how nonnormative bodies have been used by able-bodied viewers

[11] Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 5.
[12] Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, 110.

as tools and objects of self-reflection and meditation, a practice that erases the personhood and lived experience of those put on display.[13]

In Section One, I introduce the case study of conjoined/parasitic twins Lazarus and Joannes Baptista Colloredo, who lead my thesis' argument. Using their remarkable story as a starting point, I briefly set out the historical context of Early Modern monster studies and outline the dominant scholarship on the teratology of the time. In doing so, I clarify the symbolic and linguistic differences between the "monstrous" and the "freakish", and how these distinctions are essential to understanding how the nonnormative human body was transformed into an object of able-bodied spectacle and analysis in the 17th century.

Section Two directly analyzes images and accounts of viewing the twins, who toured widely across Europe in the 17th century. Although multiple scholars have researched and recounted their strange and wonderful journey, a close tracking of their representations in medical treatises and books of wonders shows curious inaccuracies in the previously accepted details of their lives. The twins, like many other historical "freaks", will not ever have their lives recounted with accuracy. Rather, what lives on are stories in which they have been immortalized, collapsing and subverting a linear experience from life to death. Examination of their extraordinary journey and the visual materials that represent them make abundantly clear the association that they – and other touring wonders – have with *memento mori* traditions.

The final section of this thesis looks at traditional *memento mori* images and the varying ways that they guide viewers to contemplate mortality in the 16th and 17th centuries.

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[13] My work is particularly indebted to the disability, feminist, and race scholarship of Tobin Siebers' *Disability Aesthetics*, Rana Hogarth's *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Difference in the Atlantic World, 1780-1840* and Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies*.

Cross-comparison of the language and imagery used by *memento mori* with those used to represent the freakish body helps to elucidate the deep conceptual and visual similarities between the two. This study spans multiple regions of Europe, drawing on images made in Germany, France, Italy, and the Netherlands, in order to link the various ways that touring "wonder" or "freak" shows may have been viewed and framed in the multiple regions they visited. While some of the touring persons, objects and images have journeys that are able to be cleanly mapped, others exist in geographic limbo, the significance of which is further outlined in Section Three.

Bakhtin states: "Life is shown in its twofold contradictory process; it is the epitome of incompleteness. And such is precisely the appeal and intrigue of the freak."[14] The contradictory processes of living and dying are brought together in the nonnormative human body. And, to draw on the work of contemporary disability scholarship: we are all only temporarily able-bodied and, moreover, temporarily alive.[15] *Memento mori:* remember you will die, regardless of what form you live in.

[14] Bakhtin, *Rabelais,* 50.

[15] According to Robert McRuer, "Everyone is virtually disabled, both in the sense that able-bodied norms are 'intrinsically impossible to embody fully' and in the sense that able-bodied status is always temporary, disability being the one category that all people will embody if they live long enough." See Robert McRuer, "Compulsory Able-bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence," in *The Disability Studies Reader,* ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2006), 305-306.

Section One: Differentiating Freaks from Monsters

In 1617, Lazarus Colloredo was born in Genoa, Italy. Or, more precisely, the twins Lazarus and Joannes Baptista[16] were born into a life of spectacle and confusion, fascination and fear. Protruding laterally from the breast of Lazarus was his twin brother, whose malformed body lived partially inside Lazarus and partially in the external world. Deemed a "parasitic twin" by the medical community, Joannes Baptista occupies a strange space of in-betweenness in the texts, images and songs about him that permeate 17th-century medical journals and broadsheets. Although baptized and christened individually in infancy,[17] the twins' symbiotic relationship and physical/mental intertwinement gave rise to questions regarding the nature of the human soul, how best to define a life, and the endless possibilities of form within the human body. Likely in large part due to Lazarus's excellent literacy and performance showmanship and the twins' good health, they toured widely across Europe and are well-documented in ballads and broadsides exclaiming over their appearance and theorizing about their religious and political significance. These texts and images, which showcase revulsion and fascination, respect and disgust, represent a small fraction of the performance and visual history preoccupied with the abnormal body. Mediated through the lenses of able-bodied viewers and examiners, the Colloredo twins provide a historical case study that interweaves visual and anatomical histories with death studies and theological interpretations.

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[16] He is nominally referred to in various texts as John Baptiste, Joannis Baptist, and several other variations of "John the Baptist".

[17] Karen Jillings, "Monstrosity as Spectacle: The Two Inseparable Brothers' European Tour of the 1630s and 1640s," *Popular Entertainment Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011): 59.

The case of the Colloredos is in many ways a contradictory and complex exception to a wide tendency to reduce the atypical human into a freakish object. In the vast majority of sources documenting nonnormatively-bodied people, the language used is grotesque and reductionist. Oftentimes, the text describing the deformed or disabled people removes any names, pronouns or other human characteristics, instead referring to the body in question as simply "it", or "the monster". These linguistic implications are significant. This reduction of a living person to a body with neither personality nor identity reflects the objectifying gaze of the able-bodied. Although evident in many attributed texts and images, this point of view is especially striking when found in loose broadsides, ballad sheets, and advertisements, many of which were anonymously produced. The removal of the creator's identity contributes to the view that anomalous persons exist in isolation and without relationships to the normative world, other than when they are performing as objects of scrutiny. Reduced to a nameless and pronoun-less creature, the monstrous body is often diminished into thingness.

Stewart speaks to the integral role that "thingness" plays in creating and maintaining freakery. Recalling carnival shows featuring the grotesque, and emphasizing the nature of spectacle, she argues:

> The spectacle exists in an outside at both its origin and ending. There is no question that there is a gap between the object and its viewer. The spectacle functions to avoid contamination: 'stand back, ladies and gentlemen, what you are about to see will shock and amaze you.' And at the same time, the spectacle assumes a singular direction. In contrast to the reciprocal gaze of carnival and festival, the spectacle assumes that the object is blinded; only the audience sees.[18]

[18] Susan Stewart, *On Longing,* 108.

The non-reciprocal gaze that Stewart calls attention to involves a distancing of the "object" and simultaneously, an aestheticization of it. The human-thing is displayed and dressed, positioned and curated as an artefact in a living exhibition. Each of their actions are in accordance with the specific narrative that they, or their showmasters, are trying to sell. That is, through careful planning of the performance and explicit narrative, the viewer is instructed and guided how to frame the distance between themselves and the other. Yet, simultaneously, in order to deeply engage the audience's emotions, the "freak" must be in some way be observable as "human", and not framed as a pure or wholly inhuman monster.[19]

The case of the Colloredo twins intertwines these dual designations of freakery and humanity. Lazarus is quoted as having thoughts, worries and emotions of his own, and of living a full life outside of tours and shows, allegedly marrying in the mid-17th century and fathering two healthy children.[20] During his touring days, which lasted until at least 1647, he was his own showman, distributing advertisements and promoting his own act across Europe.[21] His twin, Joannes Baptista, on the other hand, is openly referred to as a "thing" and a parasite; an unfortunate appendage to Lazarus's body.[22] Their experience brings up questions of how to validate what a human life is. Says Nadja Dubrach, *"*the multiple ways in which conjoined twins were theorised thus reveals considerable interest in what constituted a person, the boundary

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19 "The spectacle is a social relation between people that is mediated by images … [R]eal life is materially invaded by the contemplation of the spectacle, and ends up absorbing it and aligning itself with it." [Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle, English Translation* (London: Black & Red, 1977), 7–8.]

[20] Bondeson, *Two-headed Boy,* xix.

[21] Bondeson, *Two-headed Boy,* 5.

[22] Although the vast majority of accounts of their story name Lazarus as the full-grown twin, in a collection of popular ballads written between 1624 and 1693, entitled *The Pack of Autolycus*, Lazarus is said to be the parasitic brother.

between the self and other, and the relationship between mind and body."[23] And, as I suggest, they additionally reveal an interest in and uncertainty about what constitutes life versus death, and the anxiety that this intellectual limbo provokes.[24] Although mediated through the voices of the artists and physicians who documented their lives, the Colleredo brothers' story nonetheless allows contemporary readers a rare glimpse into the lived experiences of those designated "freaks" in the Early Modern period. Their meandering history in both primary source images and secondary texts acts as a touchstone case to illustrate and ground larger discussions of freakery, spectacle and *memento mori.*

One of the things that makes the Colleredo twins an ideal case for close analysis is a detailed document written by Danish anatomist Thomas Bartholinus in 1654. His description was subsequently reproduced, appearing in Fortunio Liceti's *De Monstris* of 1665, a special issue of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1777, and even later in the 19th-century wonder book, *Kirby's Wonderful and Eccentric Museum*. As it provides invaluable insight into the twins, I offer it in full:

> I saw, saith Bartholinus, Lazarus Colloredo, the Genoese, first at Copenhagen, after at Basil, when he was twenty-eight years of age, but in both places with amazement. This Lazarus had a little brother growing out at his breast, who was in that posture born with him. If I mistake not, the bone, called xyphoides, in both of them grew together; his left foot along hung downwards; he had two arms but only three fingers upon each hand: some appearance there was of the secret parts: he moved his hands ears and lips, and had

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[23] Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 65.

[24] In her spectacular work "Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection", Julia Kristeva says that to inquire into the abject is in part to ask, "How can I be without border?" (4), recognizing the slipperiness of categories quintessential to the the grotesque, and the interactions between containment of body and mind. She goes on to say that the "'subject' and 'object' push each other away, confront each other, collapse, and start again—inseparable, contaminated, condemned, at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable: abject." (18) [Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982)]

> a little beating in the breast. This little brother voids no excrements but by the mouth, nose, and ears, and is nourished by that which the greater takes: he has distinct animal and vital parts from the greater, since he sleeps, sweats, and moves when the other wakes, rests and sweats not. Both received their names at the font; the greater that of Lazarus, and the other that of Johannes Baptista. The natural bowels, as the liver, spleen, &c. are the same in both. Johannes Baptista hath his eyes for the most part shut: his breath small, so that holding a feather at his mouth it scarcely moves, but holding the hand there we find a small and warm breath. His mouth is usually open, and wet with spittle; his head is bigger than that of Lazarus, but deformed; his hair hanging down while his face is in an upright posture. Both have beards; that of Baptista is neglected, but that of Lazarus very neat. Lazarus is of a just stature, a decent body, courteous deportment, and gallantly attired: he covers the body of his brother with his cloak, nor would you think a monster lay within at your first discourse with him. He seemed always of a constant mind, unless that now and then he was solicitous as to his end, for he feared the death of his brother, presaging that when it came to pass, he should also expire with the stench and putrefaction of his body; and therefore he took greater care of his brother than himself.[25]

Accompanying the 1645 text is a spectacular printed image of the Colleredos (Fig. 1). In it, Lazarus has curled hair, cleanly combed and accompanied by the neat beard mentioned by Bartholinus. He stands upright, head held high, and his eyes peer outward towards his viewer. Falling from his shoulders is an elaborate cape, beaded and heavy. It is from beneath the folds of this cape that Joannes Baptista emerges, bulging and deformed. Joannes Baptista appears to be naked and his bare chest and legs contrast with the dark fabric of Lazarus's clothing (although, how does one define nakedness in a body without genitalia? What does it mean to be unclothed without a body that is sexualized, and one that is unattached to social norms?). Around Joannes Baptista's neck is a ruff or necklace, dividing his overly large head from his atrophied body, and making it seem precariously attached to the malformed body. His eyes are closed and his expression void. Together, the text and image showcase contrasting forces attached to a singular

[25] Account by Thomas Bartholinus (1654), trans. J. Greene, *Gentleman's Magazine* 47 (December 1777).

mobile body: the intelligent and the insensible, the well-groomed and the naked, the acceptable and the intolerable, and the living and the dead. Joannes Baptista, Bartholinus notes, seems to breathe only shallowly, a small warm breath that can move a feather but not sustain his body.

Here, Bartholinus's description and the accompanying image (whose engraver is uncredited), showcase the particular performativity of Lazarus and Joannes Baptista. Tucked beneath his oversized coat, he was able to interact with "normative" society undetected, choosing to reveal what lurked beneath his clothing at his own leisure.[26] In 1642, they performed in Scotland as part of a tour across the provinces. During the twins' time in Aberdeen, Scottish historian John Spalding wrote the following account:

> He had his portraiture with the monster drawin, and hung out at his lodging, to the view of the people. The one seruand had ane trumpettour who soundit at suche tyme as the people sould cum and sie this monster, who flocked aboundantlie into his lodging. The uther seruand receaved the moneyis fra ilk persone for his sight, sum less sum mair. And efter there wes so muche collectit as culd be gottin, he with his seruandis, schortlie left the toun, and went southuard agane.[27]

During this visit, Lazarus would talk to the crowd eloquently, drinking with them and collecting their money before pulling back his clothing to reveal his brother. While spectators may have

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[26] It should be iterated here, however, that the "choice" Lazarus had was limited by his positionality in society and his atypical body. David Gerber, in his sensitive examination, "The Careers of People Exhibited," recognizes the complexities in consent and choice under oppressive systems (such as ableism and/or racism). As he rightly points out: "If an individual consents, by virtue of what appear to be acts of free choice, to being degraded, exploited or oppressed, does that act of consent end the moral problem that the situation seems to constitute?" See David Gerber, "The Careers of People Exhibited: The Problem of Volition and Valorization", *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 38.

[27] John Spalding, *Memorials of the Troubles in Scotland and in England, I624-I645* (Aberdeen, I850-51), x-xii.

"flocked abundantlie" to see the monster, they were guided through not only a viewing of Joannes Baptista, but also a performance by Lazarus. Bogdon notes that,

> In a way Colleredo combined the roles of freak and showman: he applied for a license to show his monster, advertised it well and spoke courteously to the audience. In turn, the audience treated him well and made him a wealthy man, but they pinched and slapped his semiconscious brother to make him give his shrill cry.[28]

Lazarus, therefore, was treated as a person, who was conversed with and was allowed to express desires and agency.

In stark contrast to Lazarus's relative status of respect and agency, Joannes Baptista was treated as an object of ridicule, disgust and fascination by viewers, and was subject to their cruel prodding and physical manipulation of his body. Able to feel some kind of pain, and noted for having "a kind of life",[29] Joannes Baptista's body, attached and sustained by Lazarus's, is treated as an uncertain object, suspended between the spaces of the living and the dead from his perch upon Lazarus's chest. This space of uncertainty held by the Colleredos' body/bodies is significant in exemplifying how they were regarded as living *memento mori*. In order to articulate this fully, it is necessary to first define and distinguish between freakery and monstrosity, as well as introduce some key themes and theories in teratology.

Efforts to define and make sense of the non-normative body are never set nor stable. In the Renaissance, the words "monsters" and "prodigies" were employed to describe persons born with any number of anomalous features. The most comprehensive text on the subject is

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[28] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), x–xi.
[29] Karen Jillings, *Monstrosity as Spectacle*, 58.

barber-surgeon Ambroise Paré's 1558 work, *De Monstris et Prodigies* (fig. 2), a quintessential reference in the field of teratology. Paré uses the term "monster" to describe a linguistic, visual, and conceptual collapse between the impossible and the probable. Throughout Paré's work, accurate descriptions of non-normative human bodies are placed alongside stories and images of fantasy beings like dog-women and mermaids. A single page from the book shows this type of juxtaposition. A detailed anatomical observation of European conjoined twins is presented on a page adjacent to racialized descriptions of dark, hairy, humanoid "beasts" allegedly encountered in the Americas.

In short, the term "monster" is used throughout Paré's work to describe any exotic, unusual, or anomalous body, whether imagined or observed. Stemming from the Latin root "*Monstra,*" meaning "to warn", monsters are linked in etymology and ideology with the sinister effect that they have upon those who view them. For Paré, who suggests that monsters are born as physical manifestations or warnings of God's divine wrath at human sin,[30] the use of the word "monster" to describe both real and imagined encounters with anomalous persons, animals, and creatures draws attention towards the panic evoked by nonnormative bodies. Indeed, says Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in his essay *Monster Culture (Seven Theses)*,

> The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary), giving them life and an uncanny independence. The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the monstrum is etymologically, 'that which reveals', 'that which warns', a gylph that seeks a hierophant. Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it

[30] Paré lists thirteen causes of monsters, ranging from "too much seed" to simply the "imagination", yet each of these causes are related back to the "judgment of God, who permits fathers and mothers to produce such abominations from the disorder that they make in copulation, like brutish beasts, in which their appetite guides them." (Paré, 3-4)

is always a displacement.[31]

"Monsters" then, do not have to be grounded in reality. According to American literary critic and essayist Leslie Fiedler, in his 1978 book *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self*, this is a quintessential differentiation to make between the monstrous and the freakish.[32] He claims that monsters are fantastical projections found in novels, in art, and in film, that do not originate from the observation of nature. Although they may be composites of various extraordinary cases, they do not reflect an actual body or encounter, but rather, an imaginative potential. Freaks, on the other hand, inspire "supernatural terror and natural sympathy" precisely because they are products of nature, not imagination.[33] That is, when a viewer look at freaks, they see some part of themselves.

The transition from all anomalous bodies being called "monsters" in the 16th century to the eventual rise of the "freak" occurred alongside the increasingly secular and medicalized approaches to the body in the 17th century. The shifting focus from the metaphorical and prophetic implications of the monstrous towards the scientific examination and popular observation of the freakish marks an increasing grounding of teratology in the real human body. By the "real", I mean actual children born with remarkable bodies or conditions, rather than

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[31] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture: Seven Theses," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 2.

[32] Fiedler's text should be read with a deeply critical gaze. His language choices and lack of race or gender sensitivity to the lived experiences of the people he is discussing contribute to the culture of exploitation and othering of those with disabilities. Despite this, he is still referred to consistently as a pinnacle scholar in "freak" studies. I hope to avoid contributing to the genre in a way that perpetuates these same issues. Rather, I recognize and challenge the historical dismissal and appropriation of the lived experience of those designated, "freakish", "monstrous", or "other" and who lived/live under systems of ableism and systemic oppression.

[33] Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1979), 24.

imagined or composite creatures. Although many "freaks" have forcibly had their deformities or particularities exaggerated in images and accounts of their bodies, there nonetheless remains a living human body at the core of the often exploitative discourse that frames them.[34] One of the effects of this historical shift to real bodies is that there are legitimate stories, lives, and experiences, such as those of the Colleredo brothers, which inform the imagery of anomalous bodies in the 17th century.

Although the freak is generally linked to a recognition of humanity more clearly than the monster, discourse and imagery around freakery does not necessarily (and largely doesn't) reflect the experiences of a person being displayed or observed. Rather, designation to the category of the "freak" is estranged from the individual experience and identity of people deemed nonnormative, or living with a condition. Sociologist Robert Bogdan writes "freak is not a quality that belongs to a person on display. It is something that we create: a perspective, a set of practices – a social construction."[35] Here he resists any physiological determination of freakishness, instead recognizing how it is constructed through category-making outside of the individual's experience. The touring lives of Lazarus and Joannes Baptista, in their uncommonly detailed documentation, clearly articulate this division.[36] As the twins' history reveals, the body itself is not the same as the discourse that surrounds the body.

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[34] For example, P.T. Barnum, one of the best known 19th-century circus organizers and exploiters of the touring human "freak show", would give "giants" shoes with hidden lifts, or pad the bodies of the touring "fat men". See P.T. Barnum, *P.T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman* (New York: Chelsea House, 1983), 70.

[35] Bogdan, *Two-headed boy,* x–xi.

[36]Some of the scholars referenced in this text do not rely on the same distinctions. Although I find these linguistic distinctions important and necessary in a discussion of the nonnormative body, the language used by contemporary scholars is often slippery, with many people using "monster" and "freak" interchangeably to describe any anomalous body historically displayed.

Section Two: Becoming Object

The inclusion of conjoined twins among European wonder and monster books dates to as early as 1062, with Roger of Wendover recalling a double-limbed "female monster" living in Normandy who was conjoined at the navel. Paré's text mentions multiple sets of conjoined twins, including a pair born in 1486 near Heidelberg that he exclaims had differing genitalia from one another.[37] And just a few years later, in 1580, famed essayist Michel de Montaigne wrote "Of a Monstrous Child", where he remembers viewing "this double body and several limbs"[38] in a pair of fourteen-month-old children.[39] Several more examples in both child and adult form may be found in Liceti's 1665 edition of his illustrated manuscript, "Monsters" (Fig. 3, 4).[40] In short, conjoined twins appear in many variant Early Modern texts, sometimes billed as "monstrous" or "freakish", and at other times simply catalogued in passing as remarkable occurrences.

Repeatedly, in the history of freaks, it has been assumed that they exist only as objects and that therefore, they cannot and do not return the gaze of their viewers. Barbara M. Benedict,

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[37] Paré, *On monsters*, 8.

[38] Michel de Montaigne, *Works of Michel de Montaigne,* trans. William Hazlitt and O.W. Wight (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1875), 115.

[39] Montaigne's writing on monstrous bodies offers an empathetic and wondrous understanding of bodily difference. While he sees prodigies as being more monstrous than those who have bodily deformities, as they are invented by the imagination and therefore "irrational," he recognizes deformed persons as natural possibilities and therefore states that they should not be subject to any moral judgement. In "Of a Monstrous Child", he writes, "what we call monsters are not so to God, who sees in the immensity of his work the infinity of forms that he has comprised in it," and further, "from his infinite wisdom there proceeds nothing but that is good and ordinary and regular; but we do not see its arrangement and relationship" (654); his short essay " On Cripples" concludes that "I have seen no more evident monstrosity and miracle in the world than myself." (787)

[40] Fortunio Liceti, *De Monstris* (Amstelodami : Sumptibus Andreae Frisii, 1665).

for example, states that a key component of the curiosity felt witnessing the anomalous is found in the question of how a curious person becomes a curious object.[41] In the case of the Colloredo brothers, this question is responded to both visually and conceptually. The objecthood of the "freak" is seen in how Joannes Baptista was treated and regarded, while Lazarus is contrastingly spoken about in terms of his livelihood and intellect. Hence, within their shared body, they are simultaneously regarded as person and as object.

As living persons that defy expectations of the "normative", visual documentation of the Colloredo twins' spectacular bodies/body provide insight into anxieties about the boundaries between animate/inanimate, normal/abnormal, beauty/ugliness, soul/body and, ultimately, life/death. Bondeson calls attention to how remarkable their story is, even within the history of conjoined twins. He says:

> Conjoined twins are the result of imperfect splitting of a fertilized ovum and the site of conjunction depends on which part of the splitting has not occured. Lazarus and Joannes Baptista Collerado represent one of the very few convincing cases of viable omphalopagus parasiticus twins (who lived).[42]

The words in parentheses here (who lived) iterate the challenges of piecing together a history of marginalized persons such as the disabled and deformed, and the gentle surprise provoked by the twins' survival. Many persons born with disabilities died in infancy or childhood, while those who lived into adulthood may have been subject to either isolation or harsh exploitation. And, as articulated earlier, those who were in the public eye were likely to have their existences documented only in terms of their freakishness rather than their personhood.

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[41] Benedict, *Curiosity*, 2.
[42] Bondeson, *Two-headed Boy,* xvi.

This tendency of "normative" (or, more accurately, dominant) people writing the histories of the marginalized is not only relevant in disability studies, but also in its many intersections with race and gender.[43] The relevance of race to the idea of the "freak" is particular necessary when discussing the European Early Modern, an era of widespread imperialism and colonial violence. In ethnographic writings, such as travelers' tales of the so-called "new world" as well as lyrical ballads detailing the habits and appearances of foreigners, curiosity hinges on challenging assumptions of previously accepted ideas. Indeed, the curiosity itself derives from an assumption that there is a normative mode of existence, identity, and image.

The Colloredo twins, as anomalies born to a middle-class white European family, were particularly noted for their ability to blend into everyday society. Under Bogdan's distinctions of various freak categories, they are representative of the "aggrandized", as opposed to the "exotic". Their display did not prey on fear, as the exotic does, but rather focused on intellectual variables and the fact that they were born into societal "normalcy". As Bogdan claims, aggrandized performers are figures that reproduce and embody dominant qualities of value within dominant society. Contrastingly, exoticized "freaks" are more radically "othered" and part of their appeal is based in the racialized: "interest in the culturally strange, the primitive, the exotic, the bestial".[44] These distinctions are helpful to bear in mind when discussing those deemed "freakish" in order to examine critically the ways that race and colonialism have played into ideological

[43] This is referred to as the "dominant narrative", which tends to generalize the lived experiences of people and groups within the dominant culture. Subsequently, myth-making and history-writing is done alongside the metanarratives created among dominant culture: i.e. that whiteness is the "norm" and that other races must adapt in order to succeed.
[44] Bogdan, 105.

constructions of nonnormativity. Lazarus and Joannes Baptista's popularity, legacy, self-direction, and mobility is tied, in part, to their status as "aggrandized" wonders.

Curiosity instigates a myth-making process through which categories of identity are created and maintained, while also being challenged and subverted. The positioning of the curious "object" outside of the curious self acts to contain threats of difference through the categories of normative and extraordinary. When anomalies occur within familiar categories of identity such as "European" (as is the case for this project's scope), they are regarded with more anxiety than when they occur within the already-established "Other" (for example, in that period, "African" or "exotic"). While part of the allure of exoticism is, as Nadja Durbac argues, that the meanings attached to particular monsters could be reshaped "precisely because the consumers of these texts rarely had the opportunity to see the body in question itself,"[45] touring bodies in Europe, which were positioned to be seen, hinged on a different allure: that of self-reflection and identity-making. Hence, a nonnormative form being born from a standardized body, such as a European woman's, urged its witnesses to reflect on the construction of difference within whiteness and nationalism, rather than outside of it. Such was the case for the Colleredo brothers.

The questions that the twins' bodies provoke, therefore, align with overarching queries about identity that permeate the dominant Colonial-Christian culture of 17th-century Europe. As they were born from a normative body, approaches to their significance come from an interior (emic) approach, rather than from exterior projections (etic). A question that preoccupies much discussion is whether or not they possessed two souls. This involves common Christian ideas of the mortality of the body and immortality of the soul. In the dominant ideology, the soul leaves

[45] Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 2.

the physical body at the moment of death, leaving the body to decay while the soul takes on a new life in an immaterial form.[46] In direct connection to these ideas, a 1639 broadside (fig. 5), which was accompanied by a crude engraving of the twins, states that:

> ...though having sense and feeling [the parasitic twin] is destitute of reason and understanding: whence me thinked a disputable question might arise, whether as they have distinct lives, so they are possessed of two soules; or have but one imparted betwixt them both. [47]

In the introduction to their book, *Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Mia Korpiola and Anu Lahtine state, "The Catholic theologians rejected the Aristotelian notion that '[o]f all terrible things, the death of the body is the most terrible' as the soul and its salvation were considered much more important. The death of the soul was, indeed, detestable." The unconventional or incomplete body, such as that of Joannes Baptista, then, could possibly play host to a full soul. Yet, to have a soul he must be fully human, in some capacity capable of the "reason and understanding" his brother possessed. If he had his own soul, separate from Lazarus's, then he was not simply a parasite.

These anxious questions over the state of the soul may have been of concern to those who studied and viewed the twins, but for Lazarus, the anxiety expressed is a more basic question of the physicality of survival. As recalled by Bartholinus, Lazarus "feared the death of his brother, presaging that when it came to pass, he should also expire with the stench and putrefaction of his body." Lazarus's own existence was imbued with a constant visible and physical reminder of the

[46] Mia Korpiola and Anu Lahtinen, *Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 13.
[47] Rollins, ed., *Pack of Autolycus*, 8.

body's eventual decay.[48] His brother, whose relationship to Lazarus we cannot fully understand nor make assumptions about, was grounded, at least in part, by the uncertainty felt by having a shared body, only part of which was under his own control. Did Lazarus feel a total control over his attached brother? Did he see this secondary being as separate, parasitic, a tumor he would have liked to wish away? When maintaining his brother's body, wiping it clean and tending to his wounds, was there a relationship of exchange, of emotion, of love? Did he feel the pinch of spectators' hands upon his brother's body? Did they share pain, or joy? The ambiguous body of the conjoined twin raises many questions that are impossible to answer.

Horror stories of conjoined twins do, indeed, often hinge on one party dying, and the other being stuck with a slow, traumatic and unstoppable decay. In Roger of Wendover's 1062 account of a "female monster" conjoined from the waist down, he alleges that one of the bodies died and the other lived for for three more years, still attached to her dead sister, before becoming overwhelmed and dying from the decay.[49] Or, in what is a more psychological horror, there are many tales of one of the conjoined twins being evil or sinister and committing a devastating crime. This second category has direct links to the Colloredo twins, as allegedly Lazarus committed a murder in France, yet was not subject to punishment due to the argument

[48] Kristeva says of the dead body that "The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. (4) For Lazarus and Joannes Baptiste, her poetic language is made literal, because self and death become intertwined in a single physical form, making any differentiation the twins may have held for each other mentally or spiritually distinct from the inevitability of their joined death.
[49] Bondeson, *Two-headed Boy,* 163.

that it would be cruel and illegal to punish his twin as well (according to a claim by French historian Henri Sauval).[50]

Whether or not the murder actually occurred is an open question. However, the extraordinary metaphysical, legal, and ethical quandaries their case raises are often exploited in sensationalist accounts of conjoined twins. The 1951 exploitation film *Chained for Life* by Harry Fraser, starring real conjoined twins Daisy and Violet Hilton, for example, darkly chronicles one twin's murder of her husband, while her conjoined sister is implicated as an unwilling accomplice (fig. 6). Even more disturbing is Robert Bloch's 1939 short story *Unheavenly Twin*, where parasitic twin Vomar slowly absorbs more and more of his brother's host body in a sick and cannibalistic embodiment of the imaginative horrors of a shared body, and the possibilities of reversal in the roles of provider/provided, host/parasite, animate/inanimate. Yet one does not have to turn to the 20th century to find a strange trail of assumptions, appropriations, and misattributions of the Colloredo twins' story.

As is the case with many attempts to track the history of monstrosity, there are contradictory dates and images, creating a winding and overlapping timeline. Elizabeth Bearden's work, *Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations*, provides the most extensive guide to tracking 17th-century images of the twins. She begins by recalling the second illustrated edition of Liceti's famed and intensely beautiful work, *De Monstrorum Caussis* (1634). In it, the Colloredo twins are featured in two illustrations—as

[50]According to Henri Sauval, during the Colloredos 1638 tour of France they spoke at length. Lazarus, after playing a game of handball in Paris, disclosed to Sauval that he had once killed a man with a hit to the head, and had subsequently been sentenced to death for the murder. However, he was able to evade the sentence through the claim that if he was killed, his innocent brother would be as well. See Bondeson, *Two-headed Boy,* ix-x.

children and as adults. Like many printed medical illustrations, both are copies of earlier images. The engraving of the youthful twins (fig. 7) is set alongside an image of another pair of (unnamed) twins conjoined at the torso. In painstaking detail, Lazarus and Joannes Baptista are shown in the nude, with Lazarus standing firmly, his strong legs in the classical *contrapposto* position. Attached to his abdomen is the malformed Joannes, who is shown vertically conjoined at the abdomen, with his arched back folded outwards and his head reaching towards the sky. Joannes is not imbued with notable facial features, nor does he have any arms. Rather, he is void of any expression of self at all. Italian art historian Luca Baratta describes the image as "two children, very idealized and corresponding with classical standards of beauty."[51] Staged without clothing or background, this early image shows the twins as medical subjects, without the performativity and spectacle that is present in later works.

Liceti's image is taken from an earlier print by Giovanni Battista de'Cavalieri, done in 1585 as part of his series *Opera nel a quale vie molti Mostri de tute le parti del mondo antichi et Moderni* (Monsters from all parts of the ancient and modern world) (Fig. 8). Bearden recognizes the challenge of tracing the use and reuse of printed images such as this, and says:

> Wonder book authors reproduce and repackage the main images of the twins, drawing attention to different details of their representations for different purposes, and their image has continued to circulate in teratological texts...these details align these twins well within the formal patterns of the monstrous chronotype, and their repetition across wonder books and across a variety of other monstrous media that I have cited here shows their interlacement and circulation in early modern print culture in meme-like fashion.[52]

[51] Elizabeth Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 218.
[52] Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds,* 222.

Given this interlacement, the inconsistencies in visual representations of the twins are a revealing, but not surprising, facet of their journey. Although created thirty-one years prior to the twins' birth (and indeed, de'Cavalieri himself passed away in 1597), the caption on de'Cavalieri's work mentions the Colloredo twins by name, stating:

> These two children are twins, alive, named Lazzaro and Giovanni Battista, and are sons of Battista Collereto and his wife Pellegrina, of the Church of Saint Bartholomew, on the Coast of Genua. The one who is taller and whole feeds, and nurtures the smaller, as you can see in this drawing. [53]

This caption creates a nonlinear story of the twins, where they are directly affiliated with an image that was drawn well before their birth.[54] As with many monstrous bodies, the accuracy of their experience exists separately from its visual history. Although these contradictions of dates and attributions make reproducing a clean narrative difficult, they reflect a larger theme of monstrosity. Lazzarini states that "They [freaks] are bodies that both signify a total loss of connection with reality while at the same time recalling it. In doing so they drag the viewer into another place where it is possible, by getting lost, to find signs…"[55] Through getting lost in the misaligned history of freakery, we are able to see how bodies were detached from persons, and imaginative ideals misaligned from lived experience. In the visual storytelling of the twins, they are quite literally catalogued as both alive and dead, with their names in print years before their birth, and with the caption stating that they are, indeed, "alive".

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[53] Translation of the caption is my own.
[54] There is a possibility that the work has been misattributed to de'Cavalieri and was in fact done by a later artist, but due to the widespread circulation and reproduction of printed image without signature nor date, it is unlikely that we will ever know.
[55] Elena Lazzarini, "Wonderful Creatures: Early Modern Perceptions of Deformed Bodies", *Oxford Art Journal* 34, No. 3 (October 2011): 421.

The de'Cavalieri print was possibly influenced by an earlier set of conjoined twins documented by Ambrose Paré in 1530 as a forty-year-old man with a headless parasitic body hanging 'like a pendulum' from his belly (Fig. 9) and then referenced by German anatomist Johann-Georg Schenck in 1609. One of these twins too was named Joannis Baptista, and is shown in two different prints in the treatise by Johann-Georg Schenck entitled *De Monstris*. This earlier set of conjoined twins is similarly shown twice in the text as nude children first, and then as elaborately clothed adults. The childhood portrait shows a small boy sitting naked on a bench with splayed legs (fig. 10). Between his limbs and extending outward from his chest is the body of his brother, who hangs with bent limbs, decapitated. The seated boy's contented face is handsome and well-formed, proportionate to the "host" body rather than the infant-like one that protrudes from him. Both his genitals and the buttocks of his brother are on display. In Schenck's second image of the adults they, like the Colloredos, are depicted fully clothed, with the larger twin pulling back his cloak to reveal the miniscule body of his brother (fig.11). While the actual formations of each case's bodies are different, the ways that they are visually represented – with their "deformities" carefully tucked away under the fabric of normativity – are eerily similar.

For Liceti, the differences depicted between the bodies of the twins in childhood and the second image of them in adulthood is of little concern. Much of his text appropriates and collages earlier works, with whole paragraphs directly lifted from diarists and anatomists such as Bartholinus. As his work makes use of secondary accounts of alleged monsters and marvels, the fact that there are two images under the Colloredos' names, despite their differing representation of the twins' anatomy, is of little surprise. As Daston and Park put forth, part of what is necessary in the creation and categorization of the "monstrous" body is a reliance on word of

mouth and others' interpretations. Although the "parasitic" bodies in Schenck and Cavalieri's images are in dramatically different positions to that of Joannes Baptista Collerado and, indeed, to one another, it is likely that these two differing stories and three differing images have been collapsed together. Without differentiating between the two Joanne/Joannis Baptises, born in the early 16th century and in 1616 respectively, it is possible that a later artist or archivist added the caption identifying the twins as the Colleredos to Cavalieri's image. Hence, dramatically different representations of male conjoined twins have all been catalogued under the Colleredo name, regardless of historical facts, like differing dates of birth. The specific identities of the people depicted does not seem to be of much interest.

Liceti's second image of the twins is accompanied by a near verbatim quotation of the passage of Bartholinus. In each of these re-produced images Lazarus is clothed fully and decadently, with Joannes Baptista's body acting as a disruptive presence in an otherwise normative scene. As Jillings states, an unknowing passerby "would have no suspicion of the monster underneath", due to the large cloak Lazarus wore.[56] The original broadside, printed for British bookseller Robert Milbourne in London, surrounds the pictorial engraving with four columns in verse, two in Latin flanking the image, and two in English below it (fig. 12). The second verse focuses on the issue of what lay ahead for their souls in the afterlife, querying:

> What ever they beleeve or know is nought,
> Unlesse the Pope do ratifie their thought:
> His yea, and nay, what ere the Scripture saith,
> Must be the standard Canon of their faith
> On him depends their soules, their faith, their all.

The first verse focuses more upon the bodies of the twins themselves, and the relationship

[56] Karen Jillings, *Monstrosity as Spectacle,* 56.

between them. It reads:

> A friend, a nurse, a mother to him, whom
> He beares and fosters at his tender wombe,
> The brothers health and life on brother lyes,
> The brothers ayle with brothers ayle complyes.
> Such brothers rare, such friendship wondrous rare,
> Such as the world can hardley shewe a paire.
> All the Spectators flocking to this scene,
> Wonder, and aske what may this wonder meane.

Of particular note is the claim that Lazarus "fosters at his tender wombe" the body of his brother. The linking of birth and the anomalous body here is not merely a poetic device, but one that speaks to broad concerns regarding the relationship between maternity and monstrosity.[57]

The conditions of Lazarus and Joannes Baptista's birth are not referenced, cited or examined in any of the surviving prints of or texts about the twins. Their parents, Baptista and Pellegrina Colloredo, lived in the parish of Saint Bartholomeus de Costa in Genoa and were healthy people who had several other children. One would think, therefore, that the birth of these extraordinary twins would have been noted as remarkable, one that undoubtedly was painful and long for their mother. Yet no texts mention the actual process of their birth or the reactions of their parents; nor do there seem to be any illustrations of the children in early infancy.[58] And yet, the womb and women's reproduction have a longstanding place in teratology studies, with Paré

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[57] From Adrienne Rich's poem *Planetarium*:

"A woman in the shape of a monster
a monster in the shape of a woman
the skies are full of them"

[Adrienne Rich, "Planetarium", *The Fact of a Doorframe: Selected Poems 1950-2001* (New York; Norton and Company, 2002)]

[58] There are, however, many illustrations of unnamed conjoined foetuses and babies around the time of their birth that could have been inspired or influenced by the Colloredo twins.

suggesting that conflicted maternal emotions and perverse ideas would manifest themselves physically in the birth of monstrous children. Like Paré, Aristotle, Liceti, and many others attempted to analyze how abnormality can emerge from the "normal" woman's body. However, the mysteries of the womb and the potential for life it holds remained a source of uncertainty throughout the Early Modern period.

In fact, pregnancy, reproduction and the womb are among the most common tropes employed by the genres of horror and the grotesque. As Bakhtin claims, "The earthly element of terror is the womb, the bodily grave, but it flowers with delight and a new life."[59] The womb is seen as a bodily grave that produces life because to give birth is to make what has been internal external. Further, the processes of pregnancy and birth entail being part of an observable show with an uncertain ending.[60] Throughout Western history and into the present day, women's bodies are often reduced to their reproductive function, and simultaneously feared for their power. It comes as no surprise then, that the act of giving birth to a nonnormative child is regarded with suspicion and anxiety. Rose Marie San Juan says that during the Early Modern period, "the morally dubious female body is always already infested with worms, always in a state of organic corruptibility, both physical and moral."[61] That is, within the potential to give birth is also the ability to carry and create death. Indeed, only has to look at early midwifery

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[59] Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 92.

[60] For a contemporary continuation of these anxieties, one only has to explore the horror movie genre. While Roman Polanksi's *Rosemary's Baby* is likely the most popular film to come to mind - where a young innocent waif famously played by Mia Farrow is burdened by Satan's child - other works such as the 2016 independent production *Antibirth,* written and directed by Danny Perez abjects these troupes even further, with a grotesque and terrifying explosion of the womb.

[61] Rose Marie San Juan, "The Turn of the Skull: Andreas Vesalius and the early modern Memento Mori," *Art History* 35:5 (November 2012): 19.

books and images to see this manifest in visual metaphor, with wombs often depicted as splayed flowers (fig. 13). As Samuel Beckett famously writes in *Waiting for Godot*, "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more."[62]

Mortality and sin are brought together in the biblical figure of Eve. In a time of dominant and pervasive Christian ideology, Eve's daughters continued to be marked by their foremother's original sin. Moreover, women are linked generally to monsters due to what Marie-Hélène Huet identifies as being on "the same side, the side of dissimilarity."[63] That is, both women and monsters are seen as deviations from the normative body, which is defined contextually as European, male, white, and gender-normative.

In 17th century European cultural epicentres, such as Italy, France and the Netherlands, the assumed role of women was to raise children. Hence, when and if there was a perceived failure to produce "proper" offspring (which included not bearing sons), the expectations of and attempts to control women were radically betrayed. The monstrous process of unfolding, that of the interior becoming external as Bakhtin so poetically points out, is made clear when a women gives birth to a nonnormative body. On such occasions, multiple people are involved in acts that exist at the border of life and death. The mother undeniably endures so much pain that both she and those around her may believe that she will not survive.[64] Simultaneously, the nonnormative child, should they be born living, defies expectations of what it looks like to be human. Like the pregnant body, the freakish lurks on a boundary between visibility and invisibility, inspiring both fear and awe by virtue of its uncertainty. In the moments prior to and in the midst of birth, the

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[62] Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, 59.
[63] Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 3.
[64] A.W. Bates, *Emblematic Monsters: Unnatural Conceptions and Deformed Births in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2016), 9.

nonnormative child may be both interior and exterior, living and dead. Unlike the normatively-bodied child, who moves towards a more stable relationship to the categories once born, the nonnormative body may not be granted the same autonomy. As we have seen, this was expressed by the language used to discuss the Colloredos throughout their adult lives.

The mention of the "wombe" in Milbourne's broadside correlates directly with the twins' larger medical history and observations. In Paris a few years prior, French physicians declared the Colloredos to be a "two-fold" body, meaning that the support Joannes Baptista received from Lazarus was through vessels that were likened to an umbilical cord. Indeed, another text likens the twins' bodies to "the image of a mother caught in mid-delivery", and another just a few years later describes Lazarus as having to "bear and foster his twin at his tender wombe." Later, this analogy was again used by the poet John Cleveland, who named Lazarus, "The Italian Monster pregnant with his Brother."[65] Lazarus's body, therefore, was seen as a womb in the act of unburdening itself. He is referred to as both the mother of his own brother and the provider to his parasite. Their relationship is one of tenderness and survival, and simultaneously destruction and death. In order to live, and not become subject to the "putrefaction" sure to take over his body should Joannes Baptista die, Lazarus must care for his twin as a mother would care for the infant at her breast, protecting him from the world. Observed and documented repeatedly as embodying an image of birth, the Colloredo twins showcase the body in the act of being, simultaneously, the womb and the grave. They embody the anxiety probably felt by spectators: that to be born means that you will die, and that every body is in a constant state of slow decay. Says Bakhtin, "One of

[65]Mark Thornton Burnett, *Constructing Monsters in Shakespeare's Drama and Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 97.

the fundamental tendencies of the grotesque image of the body is to show two bodies in one: the one giving birth and dying, the other conceived, generated, and born."[66]

As the twins toured, they were recorded in their abnormality and their wonder, in their simultaneously capacity for conversation and for their devastating half-lives. Meanwhile able-bodied viewers, artists, and anatomists catalogued the Colleredos, like so many other freaks, as *memento mori*. The body as artwork, as image, and in representation is the focus of this study. In order to recognize and unpack the ways that grotesque and nonnormative bodies have been used to remind viewers of their own mortality, we must look to more typical and widely-acknowledged images of *memento mori.* Stewart says:

> We must also consider these images of the grotesque body precisely as images or representations. Like any art form, they effect a representation and transformation of their subject. Yet to make from the body a work of art involves the creation of a supplement or extension. The work of art as costume, mask, and disguise differs significantly from the work of art as external object. The body is paraded, put on display, in time as well as in space; most often those contexts in which it appears are structured so that there is little or no division between participants and audience. The distance between the artwork, the artist, and the audience is thereby collapsed doubly; the body is the work, and there is reciprocity between individuals/works rather than unilinear distance between work and observer.[67]

The distance between the audience and artwork, as articulated by Stewart, is collapsed through the observation of a body as object, which metaphysically joins the questions of self/other. Bearing in mind the remarkable case of the Colleredo twins, I turn now to the tradition of *memento mori* and its mortuary philosophies.

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[66] Balktin, *Rabelais*, 50.
[67] Stewart, *On Longing,* 107.

Section Three: Techniques of *Memento Mori*

The ambiguous interaction between the freak as object and the freak as human is one of the core uncertainties that spectacle relies on in order to subvert expectations of the viewer. Allan Hepburn says of freakery that it

> ...begins in bodily difference, then extends into the psychic life of 'normalcy' where difference becomes internalized (I am a freak) or repudiated (I am not a freak). It excuses out-of-control anxiety {I'm freaking out). Such monstrosity depends on the exhibition of difference.[68]

That is, what the viewer is not (abnormal) and what the spectacle is not (normal), requires a clear differentiation between self and other. Art historian Sandra Ferdman says that there is a "mirror discourse where the I defines itself through the other."[69] And, as freaks and not monsters, human viewers must confront their similarities to as well as their differences from what they are looking at; it is "through these bodies, the viewer can experience a feeling that will hardly ever be granted elsewhere; here he/she can come into contact with the most base and unspeakable instincts and fears of the soul."[70] In order to respond to this claim, we must ask, "what are some of the most base fears of the human soul?"

In his 1973 book of psychology and philosophy, *The Denial of Death*, Ernest Becker draws on the work of Kierkegaard and Freud, Brown and Rank, arguing that the human collective is ultimately an elaborate defense mechanism in response to our knowledge of our own

[68] Hepburn, *Freakish Forms*, 136.
[69] Ferdman, *Conquering Marvels*, 488.
[70] Lazzarini, *Wonderful Creatures*, 421

mortality. It is this knowledge, according to Becker, that drives us from the very bottom of our souls, and that separates man from animal. He says:

> The animals don't know that death is happening and continue grazing placidly while others drop alongside them. The knowledge of death is reflective and conceptual, and animals are spared it. They live and they disappear with the same thoughtlessness: a few minutes of fear, a few seconds of anguish, and it is over. But to live a whole lifetime with the fate of death haunting one's dreams and even the most sun-filled days—that's something else.[71]

The self-awareness he speaks of, of knowing and having "the fate of death haunting one's dreams", is compared to a monster: "What does it mean to be a self-conscious animal? The idea is ludicrous, if it is not monstrous. It means to know that one is food for worms."[72] If we accept Becker's argument and agree (as I do), that it is through knowledge of our own undeniable mortality that we self-define and motivate ourselves, then the insights of Italian Renaissance scholar Elena Lazzarini about the "base fears" sparked by observing monsters can be related to our fear of death[73]. That is, by defining the self through the other, we are also defining and examining our own demise and decay. In attempting to find signifiers of birth and death upon the

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[71] Becker, 27.

[72] Becker, 87.

[73] Virginia Woolf's essay "The Death of a Moth" comes to mind when reading Becker. In it, she recalls witnessing a moth unknowingly learn of death while the knowing human observes. Woolf writes:

...the unmistakable tokens of death showed themselves. The body relaxed, and instantly grew stiff. The struggle was over. The insignificant little creature now knew death. As I looked at the dead moth, this minute wayside triumph of so great a force over so mean an antagonist filled me with wonder. Just as life had been strange a few minutes before, so death was now as strange. The moth having righted himself now lay most decently and uncomplainingly composed. O yes, he seemed to say, death is stronger than I am.

[Virginia Woolf*, The Death of the Moth : and Other Essays. (New York :Harcourt, Brace and company, 1942.)*, 10)]

bodies of the Colleredo brothers, there is a simultaneous attempt to locate the same within ourselves.

Memento mori, a Latin phrase meaning "remember you will die", became shorthand for a host of visual imagery and cultural objects that referenced death and the fleetingness of life.[74] Although the term *memento mori* was not widely used until the mid-sixteenth century, similarly foreboding statements and images are found throughout Medieval and early Renaissance allegory.[75] The concept is rooted in the Stoic philosophy of classical antiquity, and the idea that the central task of philosophy is to ask "about nothing else but dying and being dead."[76] This idea permeated the letters of Seneca and the works of Plato, and often had a celebratory tone: *nunc est bibendum* / now is the time to drink.[77] In the Medieval and Early Modern context of Christian ideology, *memento mori* took on a moralizing and guiding purpose, with greater emphasis on divine judgement and the prospects for salvation of the soul bringing death to the forefront of religious and philosophical debate.[78]

The changing relationship of Western mortuary approaches and artistic representations of death/death-reminders draws attention to how the perception of death is culturally relative. Says Paul Koudounaris in his wide-ranging book, *Memento Mori: The Dead Among Us,* "The act of dying can be defined simply as the cessation of life, but what we call death-meaning here, a

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[74] The earliest documented use of *memento mori* appears to be English, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, 1554, "*Euery day my Sonne, Memento Mori And watt not quhen, nor quhare yt thow sal wend."* (D. Lindsay, Dialog Experience & Courteour IV. sig. Qviiiv)
[75] Suzanne Karr Schmidt, "Memento Mori: The Deadly Art of Interaction," *Push Me, Pull You* (May 2011): 269
[76] Plato, *Phaedo*, 64.
[77] In his 1580 essay, "That to Study Philosophy Is to Learn to Die" Michel de Montaigne reiterates this approach, stating that "dying...is the greatest work we have to do". *Works of Michelle de Montaigne*, 124.
[78] Rowena Loverance, *Christian Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 61.

concept that encompasses the questions and anxieties that arise due to the idea of mortality – is a complex intellectual construction."[79] In a similar spirit to Koudaunaris, Bakhtin states of the grotesque that it is "noncanonical by its very nature."[80] Hence, much like the grotesque body itself, the interpretation of death is not stable, but ebbs and flows in its meanings in relation to its surroundings.

While early Medieval *memento mori* tended to be present specifically in funerary rituals and mortuary spaces, by the early Renaissance *memento mori*-themed art and objects became increasingly prominent in still-life paintings, prints and common household objects. One such object was the clock, which holds its own foreboding sense of mortality and which would occasionally have etched into it macabre inscriptions like *ultima forsan* (perhaps the last hour) or *vulnerant omnes, ultima necat* (they all wound, and the last kills). Such timepieces could be used to reference the owner's or viewer's own impending death, as well as the death of Christ and his resurrection. Acting in juxtaposition to the emergence of Renaissance humanism, objects such as these and other *memento mori* images served to emphasize the fleetingness of human accomplishments and earthly pleasures, and invited viewers to focus on the prospect of a rewarding afterlife.[81]

Simultaneously, as outlined earlier in this study, new anatomical discourses and colonial traveler tales were increasingly being disseminated across Europe, raising questions regarding whose bodies were capable of heavenly ascension and how the physical form of a mortal body affects existence in the afterlife. Buoyed by cabinets of curiosities and collection culture,

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[79] Paul Koudounaris, *Memento Mori: The Dead Among Us* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 18.
[80] Bakhtin, *Rabelais,* 54.
[81] Kouraunaris, *Memento Mori,* 10-12.

memento mori became increasingly secularized by the late 17th century, acting as a stand-in for not only Christian approaches to the afterlife, but also as tools for non-religious contemplation of death, dying, and decay. In a parallel development to 17th-century attitudes regarding the monstrous and ugly, where views on bodily deformity shifted "from a metaphysical distortion of God's creation to a material irregularity generated by a blindly impersonal universe", approaches to death became measured in increasingly secular ways.[82] As print scholar and curator Suzanne Karr Schmidt states in her 2011 essay, "Memento Mori: The Deadly Art of Interaction", "The *memento mori* remained an effective, pervasive and truly universal warning, regardless of the viewer's faith."[83] Early Modern *memento mori* could thus be used to reference Christ and, indeed, were taken up in theological discourse, particularly in discussions of the role of purgatory within Protestantism, as well as in nondenominational considerations of death.[84]

In the extensive text *The Summons of Memento Mori on the Medieval and Renaissance Stage*, which focuses on British theatrical representations and performances of death from the Middle Ages into the 17th century, author Phoebe S. Spinrad says the following:

> When the human mind is faced with the incomprehensible, with chaos or destruction on too vast a scale to be absorbed, the natural impulse is to make the concept more familiar so that it can be dealt with; paradoxically, the closer a thing can be brought, the more it can be distanced.[85]

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[82] Naomi Baker, *Plain Ugly: The Unattractive Body in Early Modern Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 12.
[83] Schmidt, *Memento Mori,* 294.
[84] Kouraunaris, *Memento Mori,* 22.
[85] Phoebe S. Spinrad, *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage* (Columbus: Ohio State Press, 1987), 13.

The language used here is deeply similar to that of Stewart, Garland-Thompson, and other writers on freakery and disability. It is only through identification with a thing that we are able to define our distance and difference from it. Again, the "I" defines the other.

Memento mori and death representation in the visual arts employed several techniques to speak to this concurrent identification and dissociation. One of the most common methods of inserting *memento mori* into pictorial representations was through the inclusion of human skulls or hourglasses hidden in the work. Particularly inventive are seventeenth-century Dutch still life paintings which place visual reminders of decay and time alongside vibrant flowers, fruits, and vegetables (Fig. 14). Sometimes called *vanitas* still lifes, such paintings showcase gatherings of objects emphasizing the transience of mortal life and the futility of worldly goods and pleasure. Some of the common symbols included are extinguished candles, skulls, soap bubbles, wilting flowers, musical instruments, and objects of secular knowledge such as maps and mathematical books.

In distinction to these elegant paintings, printed material of *memento mori* tended towards the more blatantly grotesque. In particular, the rise of *danse macabre* woodcuts in the mid-16th century subverted expectations of artistic beauty and openly depicted crude and disturbing figures (Fig. 15). Says Schmidt of these prints: "whether he [Death] danced, leered out from under a skirt, or revolved … the burrowing reptiles infesting his worldly victims suggest that death had become a most lively concept indeed."[86] Rather than representing death subtly, indirectly, and symbolically, as with *vanitas* paintings, the printed *memento mori* found in broadsides and pamphlets do not quietly announce themselves.

[86] Schmidt, *Memento Mori,* 293.

Despite their many aesthetic differences, each of these genres of *memento mori* depict death as a disruptive force in the scene, reminding viewers of all that is hidden beneath the surface of normality. Death becomes a character as well as concept in these works, as he inserts himself into scenes with an unsettling presence. Given the presence of death, we are reminded that the vibrant flowers in a glass vase have no choice but to wilt and that philosophical and scholarly contemplation cannot save us from bodily demise.

In both painting and print, death is shown in disguise. While *vanitas* paintings use symbolic objects to veil and unveil mortal contemplation, *danse macabre* and the like show anthropomorphic figures of death masquerading among the living. This continued tendency of artists to play with the possibilities of concealing and revealing death is one of the key elements that links the use of *memento mori* to the framing of non-normative and freakish bodies. German artist Hans Holbein was renowned for his large collection of *dance macabre* engravings as well as his traditional oil paintings. He is the creator of one of the most famous *memento mori* works of the 16th century, *The Ambassadors* (Fig. 16). Painted in 1533, Holbein's oil-on-wood work embodies multiple genres of painting. In addition to being a double portrait of Jean de Dinteville (French ambassador to the court of Henry VIII) and Georges de Selve (bishop of Laveur), the painting contains classic *vanitas* still life elements of meticulous and beautifully displayed artefacts. Between the standing men are shelves that hold a collection of objects, including multiple books, a globe, a quadrant, a polyhedral sundial, and a stringed lyre. Brought together, the artefacts resemble a shelf in a cabinet of wonders and evoke both contemplation and entertainment. Yet, despite his subjects' dignified portrayal and the rich coloured fabrics and furs they wear, Holbein's painting is not merely a representation of two worldly men. Rather, it is a

performative work of art that requires the movement of the viewer in order to reveal the hidden presence of death.[87]

In the bottom-foreground of the painting is an oblong white skull, rendered in anamorphic perspective as a visual puzzle. The viewer must approach the painting from high on the right-hand side, or low on the left one, in order to see the form reveal itself as an accurate rendering of a human skull (figs. 17, 18). Holbein's perspectival experiment draws attention to the limitations of a single perspective and to the boundaries of human vision. The skull covers the middle of the foreground, yet is obscure unless viewed correctly, from the far side of the painting, making it known that death lurks in plain sight at all times, regardless of whether or not you are able to identify its presence. In a comparable way to how Lazarus Colloredo was both showman and object in his self-directed displays of his and his brother's body/bodies, the *memento mori* in Holbein's work, by requiring viewers to examine the skull from multiple angles, shows a death that is "both the actor and acted upon."[88] More simply, death hides in plain sight amongst the living figures and collectable objects, revealing itself only through interactive motion. As Kate Bomford has argued, Holbein's portrait serves as a "mirror of mortality", echoing the language used by Ferdman in her discussion of the "mirror discourse of feakery."[89]

Likewise, the performance and mobility of many Early Modern *memento mori* visual and material works readily relate to Stewart's theory of the "pornography of difference". Necessary to the contemplation of *memento mori* is a witnessing of forms moving from living to dead and a

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[87]As with macabre Medieval sculptures which set in motion a "deadly striptease" by requiring their viewers to move around their three-dimensional bodies, Holbein's work necessitates a similar interaction. See Schmidt, *Memento Mori,* 272.
[88] Spinrad, *The Summons of Death,* 60.
[89] Ferdman, *Conquering Marvels,* 488.

collapse of what is perceived to be animate/inanimate. In Holbein's work, this is made obvious by his choreography of the painting's viewers. In printed *memento mori* images, however, different techniques make use of the possibilities of the paper-and-ink medium. In particular, anatomy flap prints that invited physical interaction from their onlookers offered a literal contrast between life and death. Engravings that include beautiful detailed clothing covering up skeletons, worms, and grotesque bodies were particularly widespread, particularly in *memento mori* and *danse macabre* prints. Rather than necessitating their viewers to move around the work in order to reveal the presence of death, these images use printed flaps to invite interaction with the art and to reveal the lurking presence of death.[90]

An illustrative example is the engraving *Frau Welt* (Fig. 19), created by German artist Matthias Greuter in 1595.[91] The flap engraving showcases the lavishly dressed Frau Welt (Lady World) surrounded by cherubs, romantic nude figures, and detailed foliage.[92] When first encountered, the work appears to be a traditional portrait print, with the Latin text above her head reading "all flesh is grass, and all glory is as fleeting as the flowers of the field." To either side of Frau Welt are Adam and Eve, who cover their bodies in knowing shame, suggesting their loss of innocence. Between them, Frau Welt's index finger points beneath her skirt, disappearing partially beneath its folds and alerting her viewers to the flap's presence. Once the skirts have

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[90] See for example, the revolutionary anatomical treatise of Andreas Vesalius, which made use of printed flaps and interactive illustrations in order to allow readers to uncover and dissect the human body themselves. Multiple editions of his work were published throughout Europe well into the 17th century, and remain some of the most influential anatomical texts to be published. See A. Carlino, "Paper Bodies: A Catalogue of Anatomical Fugitive Sheets 1538-1687", *Medical History* supplement 19 (1999), 2.

[91] According to Schmidt, German artist Matthias Greuter's prints showcase "the continued popularity of the memento mori into the Counter Reformation and the next century." See Schmidt, *Memento Mori,* 282.

[92] Although born in Germany, Greuter worked for most of his career in Rome.

been lifted, a sinister image of mortal knowledge is revealed on the page beneath. Hidden within her many petticoats, beads and buttons, the woman's body has rotted away, leaving only skeletal legs that are nude, bowed and framing a human skull upon a wooden coffin between their knees. Said by Schmidt to be an "illusionistic sleight of hand", these flap prints showcase the inherent interactivity of *memento mori.*[93]

While the lifting of skirts in flap prints seems to be an eroticized technique reserved largely for depictions of women, representations of men in *memento mori* prints would often showcase the revealing of death beneath cloaks. Dutch engraver and painter Lucas van Leyden's 1519 print, *Portrait of Young Man with a Skull*, is a a classic Renaissance image of *memento mori* (Fig. 20). In this beautiful engraving, Leyden has etched the figure of a young man from the waist up. Standing alone, the man wears an elaborate feathered hat under which luxurious curls fall to his chin. His head is turned downwards to his left. Layered in finely engraved fabrics, from the torso upwards the image is stately and classically elegant. Like Frau Welt, however, the unnamed man draws attention to the discordant presence in the work with his index finger pointing towards the open folds of his cloak. Rather than necessitating that the viewer lift the fabric, as Greuter did, Leyden engraves a skull peeking halfway out from the figure's torso. Cradled through fabric in his left arm, the skull sits weightily against the man's chest.

With his spectacular clothing hiding an incomplete human body, Leyden's *Young Man* distinctly resembles later illustrations of the Colloredo twins. In one unattributed and undated image of the twins, Lazarus, much like Leyden's anonymous sitter, extends his index finger towards Joannes Baptista, using the gesture to draw the viewer's eyes towards the head of his

[93] Schmidt, *Memento Mori,* 288.

brother, revealed by the held-back cloak (fig. 21). Like Lazarus, the young man performs in order to expose the disruptive presence of an anomalous body. Leyden's subject gazes out of frame, his expression somber. Combined with the gestural index finger, the print's scene extends beyond its staging, suggesting another person or persons who are out of view. In this Renaissance *memento mori*, death is casually revealed, and sits directly against the body of someone living.

The life and personhood of Joannes Baptista deserves to be and should be validated, much like the lives of so many persons considered freakish, monstrous, and deformed to the present day. However, illustrated and textual histories have reduced him to "thingness", much like the skull held against the young man's body. Illustrated, documented, and represented as embodying death and encouraging mortuary contemplation, the violent reduction of deformed people into representative objecthood is an undeniable part of the history linking freakery to *memento mori*. The conceptual collapse and blurring of perceived categories pointed to by Stewart, Bakhtin, and others articulates how the grotesque and abject is intimately related to the fields of both death philosophy and disability studies.

Bakhtin states of the grotesque body that "It is dying and as yet unfinished; the body stands on the threshold of the grave and the crib. No longer is there one body, nor are there as yet two."[94] He additionally says, in direct reference to the 17th-century grotesque, that its "images present simultaneously the two poles of becoming: that which is receding and dying, and that which is being born; they show two bodies in one, the budding and the division of the living cell."[95] In a state of becoming and unbecoming, the Lazarus twins' bodies certainly generate

[94] Bakhtin, *Rabelais,* 50.
[95] Bakhtin, *Rabelais,* 76.

similar anxieties of the grotesque. Referred to as a mother in birth, a brother in care, and a host to decay, Lazarus's body and story reflects an unfinished metamorphosis and an undefined role. Joannes Baptista, in turn, is seen both being born and dying, existing upon the "threshold of the grave and the crib". When viewed through able-bodied lenses, nonnormative bodies of the Early Modern, like those of the Colloredo twins, are showcased through the grotesque anxiety of impending death, becoming living embodiments of *memento mori.*

Conclusion

This thesis has focused on the intersections and interactions between *memento mori* and the display of nonnormative bodies in Early Modern Europe. The close relationship between death studies and freakery, however, expands far beyond the 17th century. Throughout Britain in the 18th century, for example, anxieties over grave-robbing became widespread, with anatomists and curators particularly interested in gathering the remains of nonnormative persons. In one of the most disturbing and famous cases, the "giant" Charles Bryne (1761-1783) spent much of his last living days attempting to ensure that his body would not be collected by the surgeon John Hunter. Hunter, who engaged in collecting rare "specimens" for his private museum, would attend Bryne's shows, gazing at the performer, resulting in him being "scared half out of scant wits by that malign presence who sat patiently at each of his shows, like a *living memento mori* among the curious outlookers."[96] Here the role of "living memento mori" is assigned to the spectator and collector, the able-bodied John Hunter. Yet the impending death in question, and the inevitable reduction into thingness and display, remains that of the freak.

[96] Garland-Thompson, *Freakery,* 112. Italics my own.

Indeed, despite making careful plans to be buried deeply and expressly attempting to protect his body from the prying hands of the curator, Bryne's body was pursued posthumously by Hunter. Sources recount that, after grabbing the body, "within minutes Hunter had chopped his remains into pieces and boiled away the flesh from the bones in his infamous kettle."[97] For years, both the kettle and the bones could be viewed at the Royal College of Surgeons in London. Although this particular case is extreme both in its cruelty and in its blatant disregard for ethical interaction with human remains, it speaks to the longstanding history of reducing the nonnormative form into an object of mortuary contemplation. Bryne went to the grave aware that his body was viewed as not his own but as a collectable object.

The case of conjoined twins Lazarus and Joannes Baptista Colleredo, and the visual and textual representations of their bodies and performances across Europe, has guided much of my argument. Through elucidating some of the inconsistencies in their visual history, and with an analysis of the language used to describe them in relation to the grotesque and mortuary, I suggested that within the creation and maintenance of the "freak", there is an attempt to relate the nonnormative body to anxieties over mortal contemplation.

The last section compared traditional images of *memento mori*, such as *vanitas* paintings and prints, with the pictorial and linguistic construction of freakery. By putting these images in conversation with each other, it becomes clear that they share deep similarities in both their visual qualities and their conceptual intentions.

Although the "freak show" as it was conceived throughout the Early Modern period has fallen out of popularity, with disability rights activists calling attention to the dehumanizing

[97] Garland-Thompson, *Freakery,* 112.

effects of such shows and advocating for access to employment and autonomy of identity, there persists nonetheless an active relationship between nonnormative bodies and mortuary inquiry. A dominant contemporary contributor to this discourse is the touring show "Bodyworlds", which was first established in 1995. (Fig. 22) The show features human remains encased in a liquid polymer (i.e. silicone rubber or polyester) and displayed to give viewers insight into the anatomy and physiology of the human body. This spectacle has been called "a globetrotting flay and display carnival", and a "cabaret of corpses."[98] Yet why, despite housing dominantly "normative" unsick bodies, has it been called a "freak show"?[99] Perhaps this can partially be answered by looking at the history of interactions between displays of death and freak shows. As my thesis has argued, the physical embodiment of death is something that has been historically relegated to those who live with nonnormative bodies. Although these plastinated figures are intended to represent standard physical functions of the body,[100] they themselves are grotesque, flayed, and have the "inward made outward". They are therefore evocative of longstanding perceptions of disability or deformity.

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[98] Durbach, *Skinless Wonders*, 45.

[99] Questions regarding how and from whom the bodies displayed in Bodyworlds have been collected are subject to much ethical debate. While some of the specimens were donated in wills, others have allegedly been gathered from "unclaimed" corpses in Chinese prisons and hospitals, as well as being linked to a Russian medical examiner who was convicted in 2005 for illegally selling the bodies of homeless people and prisoners. This further adds an element of racial exploitation and othering to the exhibition, despite claims from the Bodyworld's chief creator, Dr. Gunther von Hagens, that he obtains all bodies legally and never from unwilling or unknowing participants. (Neda Ulaby, "Origins of Exhibited Cadavers Questioned", NPR, August 11, 2006)

[100] Occasionally a sick or atypical body is part of the exhibition, such as a smokers' blackened lungs or a swollen gallbladder. However, the bodies' showcased are disproportionately of "functioning" systems.

Bahktin writes that the grotesque necessitates that something "lend a body to death."[101] Perhaps no statement can better summarize the manipulation and exploitation of deformed persons into the role of living *memento mori*. In the history of teratology, the creation of the "freak" has continually relied on the slipperiness of categories, particularly between the perceived binaries of life and death. In this way, people with atypical bodies often have their lives framed through mortuary anxieties, and are perceived as *memento mori* for their witnesses. This reduction is neither insignificant, nor a thing of the past. Visually and conceptually, people who are considered "freaks" have been forced to lend a body—their own—to death.

[101] Bahktin, *Rabelais,* 176.

Plate List

Fig. 1

Lazarus and Joannes Baptista Colloredo, from Thomas Bartholin, *Historarium Anatomicarum Rariorum Centuria* I et II (The Hague, 1654).

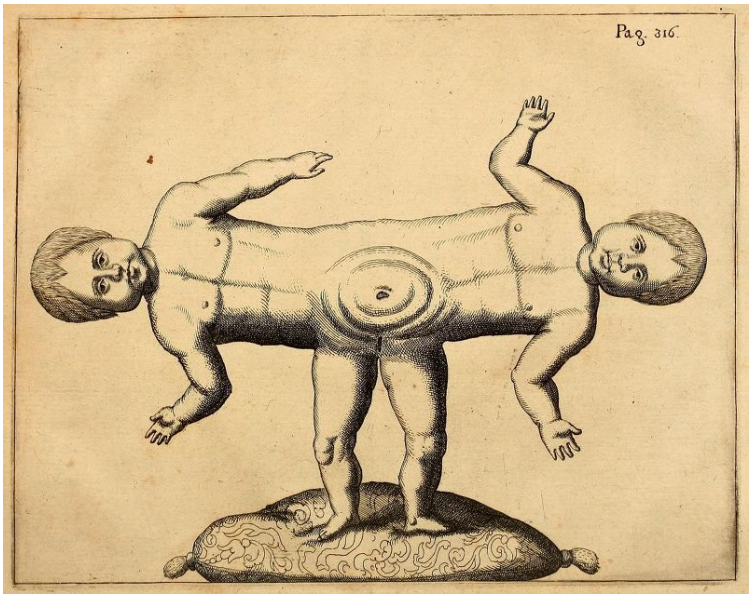
Fig. 2

Ambroise Paré, *Les œuures d'Ambroise Paré, conseiller, et premier chirurgien du roy* (Paris: Gabriel Buon, 1579), pp. 939–40. Wellcome Images L0079591.

Fig. 3

Fortunio Liceti, *Monsters* (1665).

Fig. 4



Fortunio Liceti, *Monsters* (1665)

Fig. 5

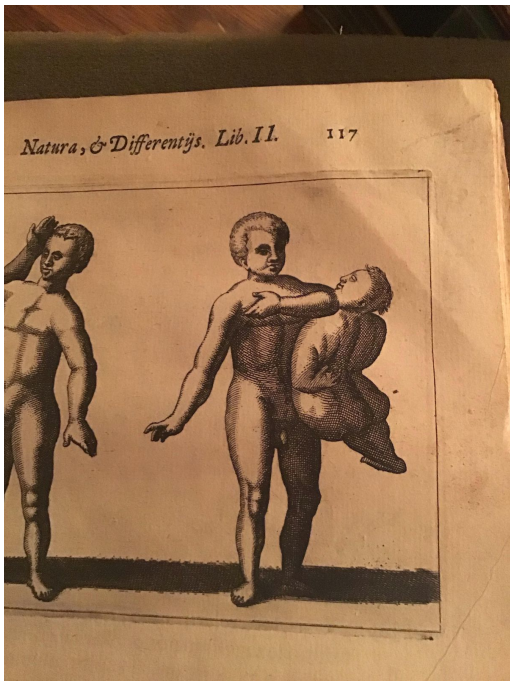
"The Two Inseparable Brothers" (London, 1637), repr. in *The Pack of Autolycus*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins (Cambridge, Mass., 1927; repr. 1969), p. 10.

Lazarus and Joannes Baptista Colloredo, from *The Pack of Autolysus*, ed. Rollins, pp. I0-II; (London, I640), repr. in Edmund William Ashbee

Fig. 6

Advertisement for Daisy and Violet Hilton at the Columbia Country Fair, Early 20th-century, from the Leslie Zemeckis Collection.

Fig. 7

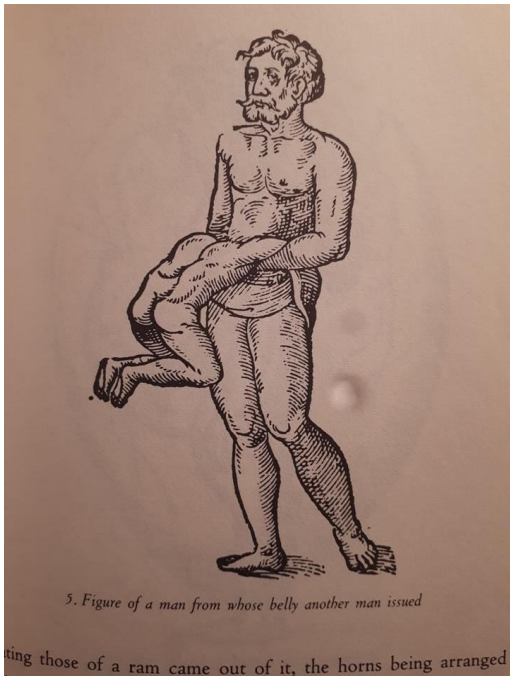


Allegedly Lazarus and Joannes Baptista Colloredo, Reproduced by Liciti in the 1634 edition of *De Monstrum* (original image not labelled with their names). Photo my own.

Fig. 8

Lazarus and Joannes Baptista Colloredo from the 1585 series *Monsters from all parts of the ancient and modern world*, by Giovanni Battista de' Cavalieri, print. Captioned as Lazarus and Joannes Baptiste of Genoa.

Fig. 9

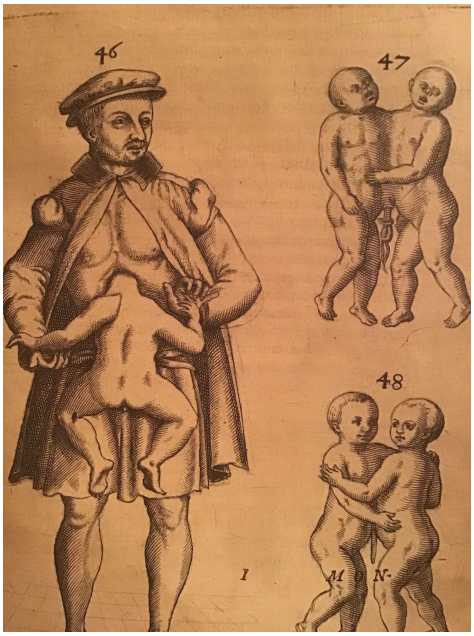


Ambroise Paré, *Monsters, 1583.* Photo my own.

Fig. 10

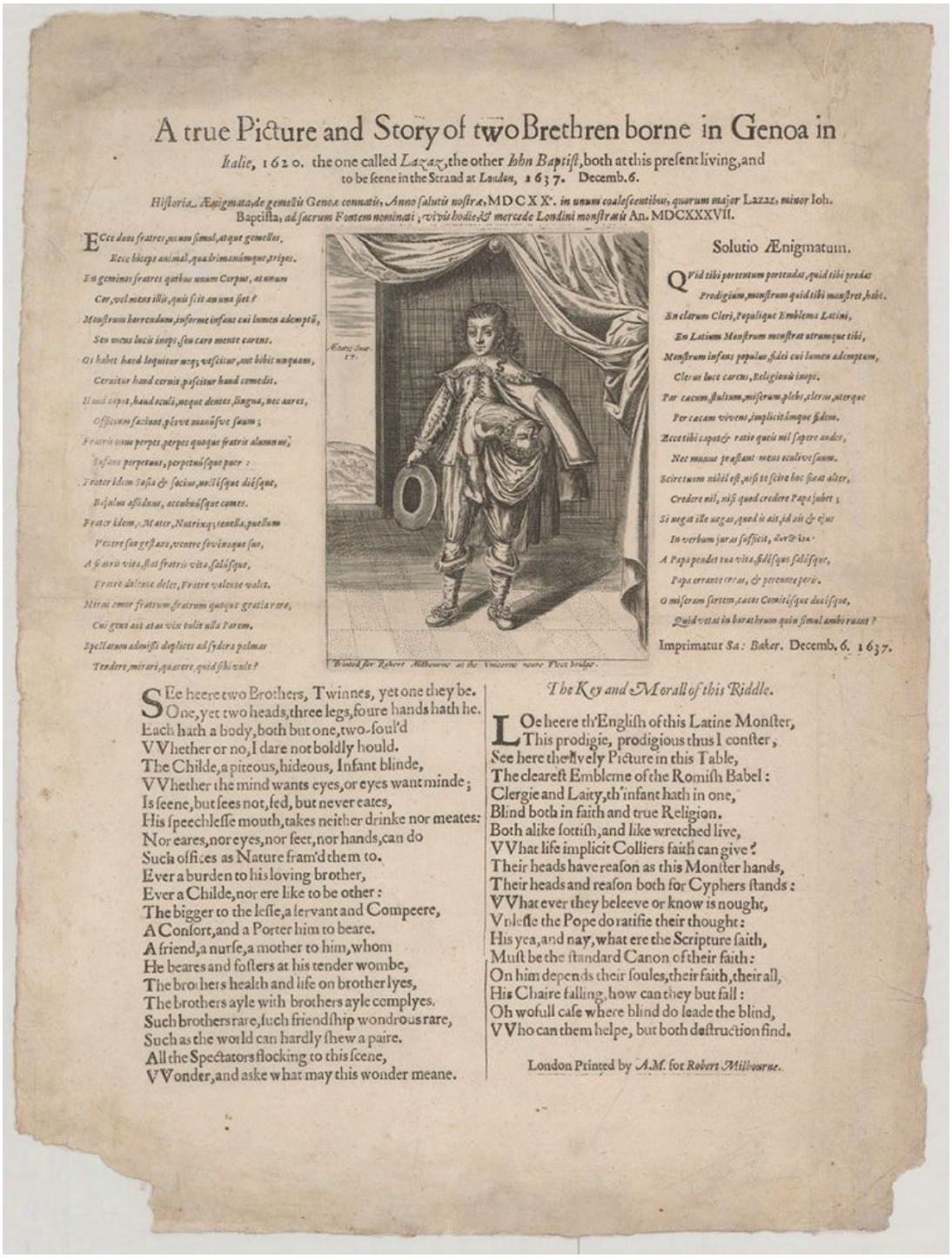
1555 in Johannes-Georg Schenck von Grafenberg's *Monstrorum historia memorabilis, monstrosa humanorum partuum miracula vivis exemplis, observationibus*, Frankfurt: Matthiae Beckeri, 1609.

Fig. 11



1555 in Johannes-Georg Schenck von Grafenber's *Monstrorum historia memorabilis, monstrosa humanorum*, Frankfurt: Matthiae Beckeri, 1609

Fig. 12



A true Picture and Story of two Brethren borne in Genoa in

Italie, 1620. the one called *Lazaz*, the other *Iohn Baptiſt*, both at this preſent living, and to be ſeene in the Strand at *London*, 1637. Decemb. 6.

Hiſtoria. Ænigmata de gemellis Genoæ connatis, Anno ſalutis noſtræ, MDCXX. in unum coaleſcentibus, quorum major Lazaz, minor Ioh. Baptiſta, ad ſacrum Fontem nominati; vivis hodie & mercede Londini monſtrantur An. MDCXXXVII.

Ecce duos fratres, unum ſimul, atque gemellos,
Ecce biceps animal, quadrimanúmque tripes.
En geminos fratres quibus unum Corpus, at unum
Cor, vel mites illis, quis ſcit an una ſit?
Monſtrum horrendum, informe, infans cui lumen ademptum,
Sen vetus lucis inops, ſeu cæca mente carens.
Os habet haud loquitur nec, veſcitur, aut bibit unquam,
Ceruitur haud cernit, peſcitur haud comedit.
Haud capit, haud oculi, neque dentes lingua, nec aures,
Officium faciunt, pleve manúſve ſuum;
Fratris onus perpes perpes quoque fratris alumnus,
Infans perpetuus, perpetuúſque puer:
Frater idem Sotia & ſocius, miſſíſque déſque,
Baſilus aſſiduus, accubuíſque comes.
Frater idem, Mater, Nutrixq; tentilla, puellus
Pectore ſub geſtans, ventre fovénsque ſuo,
A ſi cæca vitæ, ſtat fratris vita, ſalúſque,
Fratre dulcis dolet, Fratre valente valet.
Mirari mores fratrum, fratrum quoque geſtia rare,
Cui gens aut ætas vix tulit ulla Parem.
Spectatum admiſſi deplicte ad ſydera palmas
Tendere, mirari, quæ tere, quid ſibi vult?

Printed for Robert Milbourne at the Unicorne neare Fleet bridge.

Solutio Ænigmatum.

Quid tibi portentum portendat, quid tibi prodat
Prodigium, monſtrum quid tibi monſtret, habet.
En clarum Cleri, Populique Emblema Latini,
En Latium Monſtrum monſtrat utrumque tibi,
Monſtrum infans populus, fidei cui lumen ademptum,
Clerus luce carens, Religionis inops.
Par cæcum ſtultum, miſerum plebs, clerus, que
Per cæcam vivens, implicit ímque fidem.
Ecce tibi capax ratio quæ nil ſapere audet,
Nec munus præſtant: meus oculive ſuum.
Scire tutum nihil eſt, niſi te ſcire hoc ſciat alter,
Credere nil, niſi quod credere Papa jubet;
Si negat ille negas, Quod ſi ait, ſit ait & ejus
In verbum jurat ſufficit, ecce Deus.
A Papa pendet tua vita, fidéſque ſalúſque,
Papa errante erras, & perimente perit.
O miſeram ſortem, cæcis Comitéſque ducíſque,
Quid vetat in barathrum quin ſimul ambo ruant?

Imprimatur *Sa: Baker.* Decemb. 6. 1637.

SEe heere two Brothers, Twinnes, yet one they be.
One, yet two heads, three legs, foure hands hath he.
Each hath a body, both but one, two-ſoul'd
VVhether or no, I dare not boldly hould.
The Childe, a piteous, hideous, Infant blinde,
VVhether the mind wants eyes, or eyes want minde;
Is ſeene, but ſees not, fed, but never eates,
His ſpeechleſſe mouth, takes neither drinke nor meates:
Nor eares, nor eyes, nor feet, nor hands, can do
Such offices as Nature fram'd them to.
Ever a burden to his loving brother,
Ever a Childe, nor ere like to be other:
The bigger to the leſſe, a ſervant and Compeere,
A Conſort, and a Porter him to beare.
A friend, a nurſe, a mother to him, whom
He beares and foſters at his tender wombe,
The brothers health and life on brother lyes,
The brothers ayle with brothers ayle complyes.
Such brothers rare, ſuch friendſhip wondrous rare,
Such as the world can hardly ſhew a paire.
All the Spectators flocking to this ſcene,
VVonder, and aske what may this wonder meane.

The Key and Morall of this Riddle.

LOe heere th'Engliſh of this Latine Monſter,
This prodigie, prodigious thus I conſter,
See here the lively Picture in this Table,
The cleareſt Emblеme of the Romiſh Babel:
Clergie and Laity, th'infant hath in one,
Blind both in faith and true Religion.
Both alike ſottiſh, and like wretched live,
VVhat life implicit Colliers faith can give?
Their heads have reaſon as this Monſter hands,
Their heads and reaſon both for Cyphers ſtands:
VVhat ever they beleeve or know is nought,
Vnleſſe the Pope do ratifie their thought:
His yea, and nay, what ere the Scripture ſaith,
Muſt be the ſtandard Canon of their faith:
On him depends their ſoules, their faith, their all,
His Chaire falling, how can they but fall:
Oh wofull caſe where blind do leade the blind,
VVho can them helpe, but both deſtruction find.

London Printed by *A.M.* for *Robert Milbourne.*

London: Printed by A[gustine].M[atthews]. for Robert Milbourne, 1637. Broadside on laid paper, 15” x 12.5” on sheet measuring 19” x 14”; title, engraved portrait measuring 6.75” x 5” with separate publication credit reading “Printed for Robert Milbourne at the Unicorn neare Fleet bridge,”

Fig. 13

Engraving from Jane Sharp, *The Midwive's Book*, 1671.

Fig. 14

Herman Steemwijck, *Vanitas,* 1640, oil on panel.

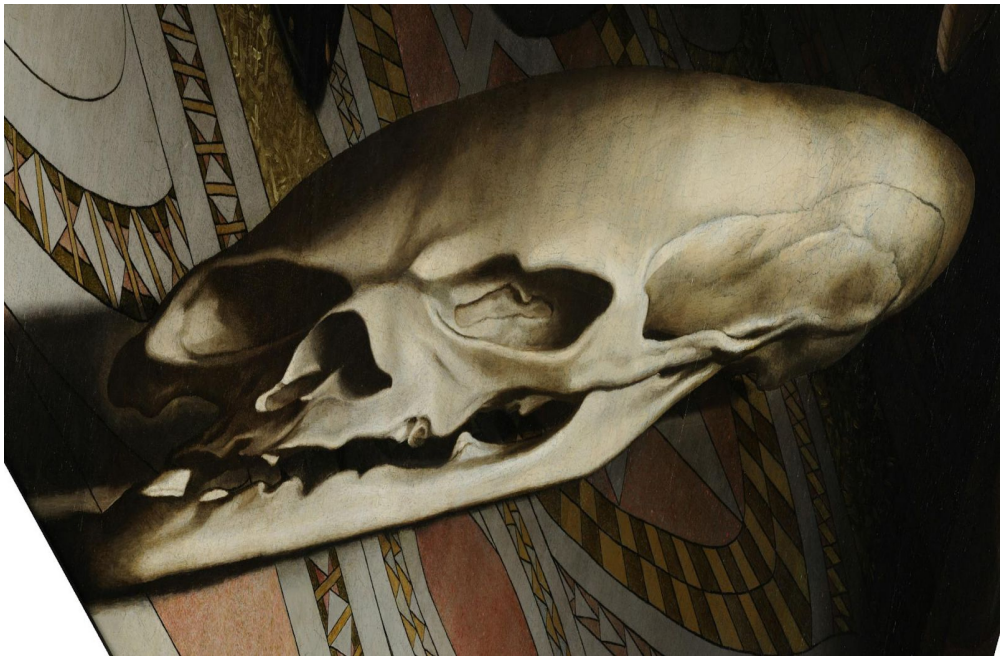
Fig. 15

Hans Holbien, The King, *Les simulachres and historiees faces de la mort, 1538.* Woodblock print.

Fig. 16

Hans Holbien, *The Ambassadors*,1533, Oil on canvas.

Fig. 17

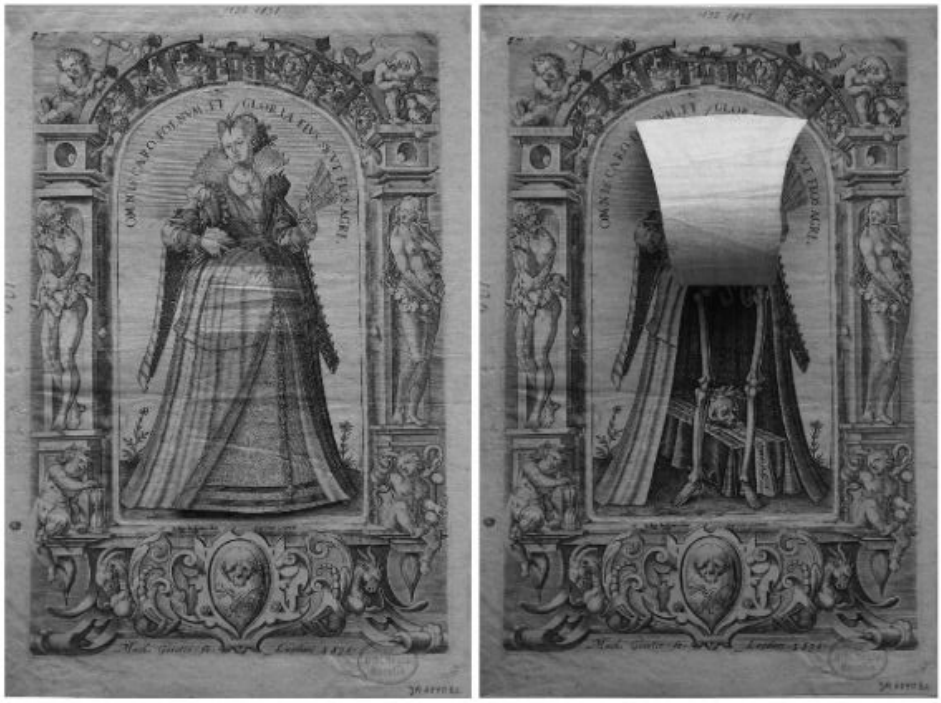


Details: Holbien's *The Ambassadors*

Fig. 18

Details: Holbien's The Ambassadors

Fig. 19



Matthias Geuter, *Frans Welt*, flap engraving, 1596.

Fig. 20

Lucas van Leyden, Netherlandish, "Young Man with a Skull," ca. 1519, engraving. Gift of Charles Pendexter. Bowdoin College Museum of Art.

Fig. 21

Lazarus and Joannes Baptiste Colloredo, from A.W. Bates, *Monstrous Bodies*, print.

Fig. 22

Images of plastination, from the *Bodyworlds* official website.

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