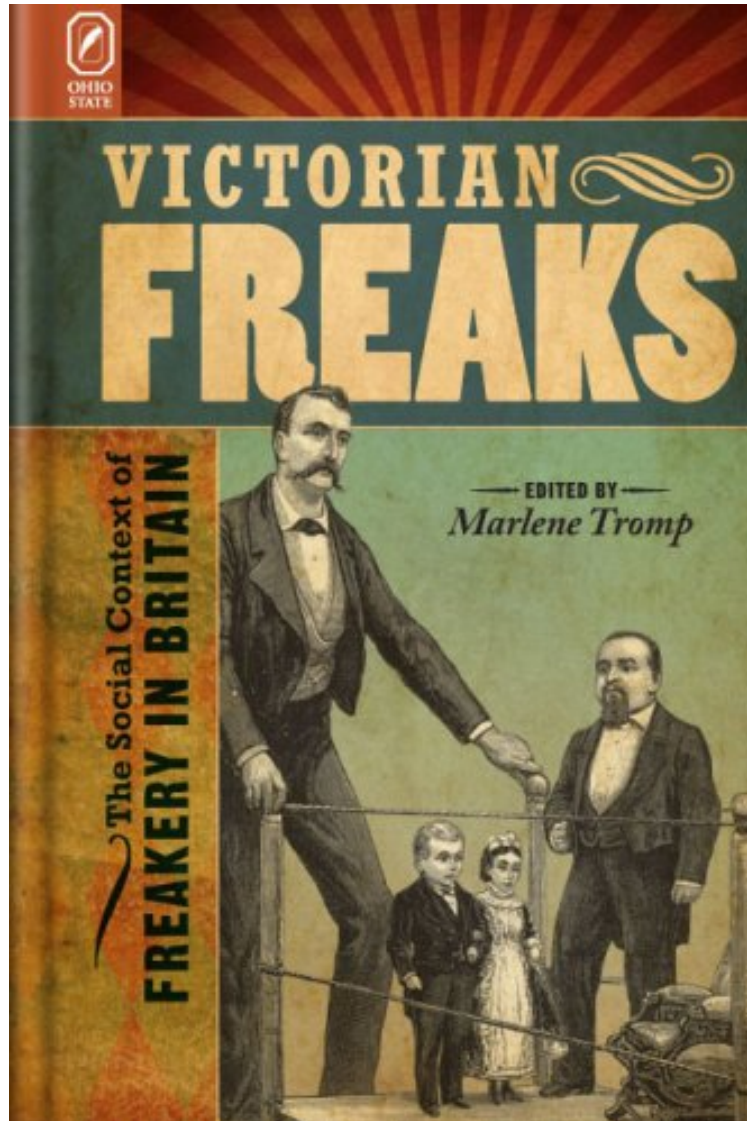


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Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain

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From Ohio State University Press : **Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain:

While freaks have captivated our imagination since well before the nineteenth century, the Victorians flocked to shows featuring dancing dwarves, bearded ladies, missing links, and six-legged sheep. Indeed, this period has been described

by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson as the epoch of consolidation for freakery: an era of social change, enormously popular freak shows, and taxonomic frenzy. *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, edited by Marlene Tromp, turns to that rich nexus, examining the struggle over definitions of freakery and the unstable and sometimes conflicting ways in which freakery was understood and deployed. As the first study centralizing British culture, this collection discusses figures as varied as Joseph Merrick, The Elephant Man; Daniel Lambert, King of the Fat Men; Julia Pastrana, The Bear Woman; and Laloo The Marvellous Indian Boy and his embedded, parasitic twin. The *Victorian Freaks* contributors examine Victorian culture through the lens of freakery, reading the production of the freak against the landscape of capitalist consumption, the medical community, and the politics of empire, sexuality, and art. Collectively, these essays ask how freakery engaged with notions of normalcy and with its Victorian cultural context.

While there has been extensive work on American freak shows, less had been done on the significance of the freak in England. Scholars and students gain much insight from the essayists' invocations of disability studies as a model for thinking about freakishness and freakishness as a model for contemplating disability. *Victorian Freaks* will therefore be a welcome addition to the growing body of works on freaks and disability studies from a literary perspective. Elsie Michie, associate professor of English, Louisiana State University