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Modernism and Magic

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A Thesis Submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA by
Research

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Introduction

This dissertation will look at how modernist writers incorporated the idea of fraud into their work through the use of popular culture spectacles. A range of scholars such as art critic Michael Fried's *Art and Objecthood* (1967), philosophers like Stanley Cavell's 'Music Decomposed' (1965) and literary critics like Leonard Diepeveen's in 'Learning From Philistines: Suspicion, Refusing to Read and the Rise of Dubious Modernisms' (2008) have noted that modernism was often accused of being fraudulent. The modernist era saw its fair share of controversies of this kind: the most obvious and most notorious was probably Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* which went out of its way to provoke debate as to whether it constituted a work of sculpture or a prank. Many key texts in the modernist canon such as T.S Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) were accused of being frauds or hoaxes by early critics. Diepeveen notes that Herbert Palmer suggested that *The Waste Land* was 'the most stupendous literary hoax since Adam' (Diepeveen quoting Palmer, 2008: N.P). There has always been the underlying accusation that modernism is not really art or literature.

Interestingly enough, at the same time many popular cultural entertainment spectacles like mediums, magicians, somnambulists, fasters and freak show performers were all subject to allegations of fraud. Mediums had an especially interesting relationship to fraud as most of its stars were exposed as having achieved their spectacles through fraud on at least one occasion. The founders of spiritualism, the Fox sisters, actually confessed to being fakes at one point, although they quickly retracted this and then resumed their careers as mediums. The sisters started spiritualism in 1848 in Hydesdale, America when the sisters, Katie and Margaret played a prank on their family by creating a

series of mysterious banging and rapping, purported to be the ghost of a pedlar who had been murdered. The sisters claimed to be able to communicate with the spirit through a simple code. Managed by their eldest sister Leah in 1849 the sisters performed at Barnum's American Museum (During: 2002). The sisters' engagement by the legendary impresario Phineas Taylor Barnum made them vulnerable to suspicions of fraud, since their 'gift' had become an act performed for wealth and fame. Barnum's American Museum also exhibited freak performers and other attractions. Simone Natale suggests that many 'nineteenth century spectacular features actively exploited and encouraged the public to form a personal opinion about the authenticity of the attractions' through encouraging debate in newspapers. She suggests that Barnum was an example of this as he would 'supply newspapers with evidence either for or against the authenticity of his attractions, to stimulate rumour and debate' (2011: 246). The Fox sisters were quickly accused of being frauds and of having achieved the rapping through clicking their joints. This was something that they would admit to as adults (During, 2002).

One of the most interesting things about spiritualism and mediums is how anyone was ever convinced that they were real since they were related to and similar to other spectacles and were performed in the same places as them. A medium's relationship to fraud is complicated by the similarities between their act and a magician's performance. The performances of early mediums, like the Davenport brothers, closely resembled a magician's act. The Davenport brothers were the first mediums to turn spiritualism into an elaborate show (Pearsall, 2004). A Davenport séance included having the brothers tied up and placed into a 'spirit cabinet' supposedly to prove that the brothers could not cheat and then musical instruments would play, bells would ring and spirit hands would appear (Lamb, 1976. Lamont, 2006). It has been claimed by

Houdini, amongst others, that the Davenport brothers themselves never claimed that their phenomena were accomplished by spirits but that they allowed others who worked for them like William Fay and their lecturer Reverend Ferguson to claim it (Steinmeyer, 2005).

The debate over fraud would have been a topical one as there was conflict between mediums and magicians as magicians were engaged in exposing mediums as fakes. Houdini is probably remembered as being the most anti-spiritualist magician, but many other magicians were also anti-spiritualist including George Melies, John Nevil Maskelyne and Harry Kellar (During, 2002 and Steinmeyer, 2005). Maskelyne along with his partner Cooke billed themselves as 'The royal illusionists and anti-spiritualists' (Dawes, 1979: 158). One of the homes of British magic, the London Polytechnic, was also anti-spiritualist. During suggests that: 'Many of the Polytechnic's elaborate magic shows were designed to expose the techniques by which spiritualists created their supernatural effects... Here, more than anywhere, entertainment magic became an instrument of popular secularism and maintained the task of demystification' (2002: 149).

Many magicians were inspired by mediumship and incorporated elements of it into their act. Both mediums and magicians relied on the same techniques. The competition between spiritualist mediums and magicians 'energised' each other as they 'shared techniques, theatres and, sometimes even personnel' (During, 2002: 152). Prior to becoming a performer in his own right the magician Harry Kellar worked as a 'general manager' for the Davenports for two years (Steinmeyer, 2005: 166). As part of his duties he performed as William Davenport's understudy. He had also previously worked for other acts who were engaged in exposing the Davenports. After leaving the Davenports

he briefly collaborated with William Fay the Davenports' manager (Steinmeyer, 2005). This suggests that the line between these two acts was not stable.

The key differences between a medium's and a magician's act is how the act is presented and what they claim. Peter Lamont suggests that 'frame analysis' is relevant to exploring the differences between mediums and magicians as a magician might frame one of his tricks as a 'genuine psychic event' and frame analysis shows how this is both substantively and contextually different from a medium who routinely frames their act in similar terms. Lamont claims that: 'Magic clearly involves fabrication since there is an intentional effort to induce a false belief about what is going on, but this is typically only the case within the frame of the trick itself' (2006: 24). Mediums, on the other hand, claim that their performance is genuine and authentic. The claim to be authentic means that the medium was 'seen as being neither responsible or in control of what was happening' as a medium in contrast to a 'magician, was not supposed to have any powers; he or she was merely a conduit through which external forces might work' (Lamont, 2006: 26). The need for a medium to be seen as passive is related to another key difference between magicians and mediums which is that they were divided by gender: while there were some female magicians, magicians were predominantly male. Equally while there were male mediums, mediumship itself was gendered as being feminine, with women thought to make better mediums as they were passive and lacking in will (Wolffram, 2009). Another difference between mediums and magicians is that mediums, especially if they performed privately, could show that contacting the spirits was difficult and at times failed to produce anything, whereas a magician normally has to perform everything with ease to avoid the trick being seen as a failure (Lamont, 2006).

Mediums, unlike magicians, as they claimed their performance was authentic, were open to being accused of fraud. To attempt to prove their mediumship, some mediums allowed themselves to be studied by those who had an interest in psychical research. In England, The Society for Psychical Research was founded in 1882, founding members included: Henry Sidgwick, Frederic Myers and Edmund Gurney (Lehman, 2009). The SPR sometimes hired magicians to help with investigations and some investigators were amateur conjurers themselves (Lehman, 2009. Kalush and Sloman, 2006). In France this phenomenon was studied by men like Charles Richet, Camille Flammarion and Allen Kardec. Kardec was regarded as being the father of spiritualism in France and was the founder of Société Parisienne Des Études Spiritiques (SPES) in 1858 (Lachapelle, 2009). These men studied mediums like Eva Carrière and Eusaphia Palladino. In Germany psychical research was dominated by parapsychologist Albert von Schrenck-Notzing. In 1914 he published a book about his experimentation on Carrière and another medium Stannislava P. Heather Wolffram's *Stepchildren of Science: Psychical Research and Parapsychology in Germany* (2009) suggests that psychical research and parapsychology in Germany are 'best understood as border sciences' (17). Schrenck-Notzing was a leading figure in German psychical research, partly because he was independently wealthy and able to fund his own research. He was also able to build his own laboratory and hire mediums on a contract. Schrenck-Notzing differed from other psychical researchers as he believed that the phenomenon was caused by the medium's will rather than spirits. Wolffram suggests that the German societies established to study mediums, unlike the British Society for Psychical Research, failed to attract as many 'well-known scientists' to them. She explains that this is because some of the English scientists were independently wealthy and so free to pursue their interests whereas in

Germany 'scientific research... was carried out almost exclusively in universities'. This meant that researchers in Germany were dependent on the universities for a career (2009: 57-58).

Psychical researchers in attempts to try to eliminate fraud from the proceedings began to do bodily searches on mediums and took other precautions (Wolffram, 2009). The interest in attempting to study mediumship through scientific means meant that the focus of interest in the phenomenon shifted to mediums who produced 'physical phenomena' like ectoplasm, rather than mediums who produced 'intellectual phenomena' like automatic writing (Lachapelle, 2009: 118, 29). Beckman suggests that mediums in the 'early decades of the twentieth century' were 'distinguish[ed]... from [their] predecessors' through the 'production of... ectoplasm' and by the use of 'scientific apparatus that came to play a central role in the spiritualist séance' (2003: 77). Ectoplasm was a new manifestation by mediums. The term ectoplasm referred to a 'mysterious white substance that mediums emitted (Beckman, 2003: 77). The term was coined by the Charles Richet for Eusapia Palladino's manifestations (Lachapelle, 2009). The voyeuristic aspect to mediumship that mediums were exposed to and in some cases exploited relates them to freak show performers. The production of ectoplasm also makes mediums like freak show performers as it puts the emphasis on the medium's body. Wolffram notes that: 'The sexual nature of the physical phenomena was also highlighted by its connection with the reproductive organs. Ectoplasm was often seen to issue from the breasts and vagina of the medium' (2009, 196). It has been noticed that the performance of mediums also resembled 'sexual intercourse and childbirth' (Wolffram, 2009: 196). Gustave Geley on seeing one of Carrière manifestations compared it to 'nature's failure to always produce perfect specimens at birth resulting in the

occasional monstrosity' (Hazelgrove, 2002: 163). This relates the production of ectoplasm with giving birth to a freak of nature.

Mediums are also connected to the freak show through the role voyeurism took in their popularity. Leslie Fielder suggests that: 'All freaks are perceived to one degree or another as erotic' (1978: 137). He also suggests that some people have seen the interest in the freak show as being like pornography. Sex was also part of the séance from its inception. In its early incarnation as table rapping people were concerned about young men and women holding hands in the dark (Lachapelle, 2009). Mediums with the production of ectoplasm raised the stakes as some performed while only partially dressed and were sometimes photographed nude. The medium Mina 'Margery' Crandon performed séances while wearing only a robe to facilitate the appearance of ectoplasm from between her legs. Her husband also showed nude photographs of her to researchers taken while she was supposedly in a trance (Kalush and Sloman, 2006). Other mediums were also photographed by psychological researchers. Maria Warner notes that the photographs taken of Eva C during the séances with Schrenck-Notzing in Munich 'resemble the photographs of the Bellocq or other specialties in clandestine erotica.' She goes on to suggest that: 'Sometimes wearing a blindfold, sometimes gagged, sometimes undressed, Eva C. and Stanislaw P. make disturbingly fetishized and erotic figures' (2006: 295). There was an element of voyeurism inherent in these séances. Eva C. was searched, in front of Schrenck-Notzing before the production of her phenomena, by Juliette Bisson including rectal and vaginal searches. Kalush and Sloman add that: 'the whole procedure was so enjoyable for Eva that she often stripped nude at the *end* of the séance and demanded another full-on gynecological exam' (2006: 419). In some researchers' minds mediums were related to 'lesbian activity' (Hazelgrove, 2000: 180). A number

of psychical researchers had relationships with the mediums they were meant to be observing which calls into question their ability to be objective (Hazelgrove, 2002).

Mediums were also occasionally accused of being able to produce their phenomenon through some kind of abnormality. Harry Houdini believed that Eusapia Palladino's ability to produce air from a scar on her forehead may have been abnormality in the same vein as a 'dime museum performer' who was able to blow up a balloon through his eyes and another who could 'blow' air 'through a never-healed fracture at the back of his head' (Silverman, 1996: 319). The psychical researcher Harry Price after he became convinced that the medium Helen Duncan was fraudulent, hypothesised that she had a second stomach like a cow, allowing her to regurgitate 'objects' at will (Hazelgrove, 2002: 213). It was also suggested by Grant H. Code to Walter Franklin Prince that the medium Mina Crandon's husband Dr Le Roy Goddard Crandon had 'surgically altered her vaginal opening to allow for the production of bigger apports in the séance room' (Polidoro, 2001. Kalush and Sloman, 2006: 554). This observation was based on her refusal to submit to being physically searched prior to her séances. These accusations directly relate fraud to deformity.

The early part of twentieth century was a 'volatile period' in the history of the freak show as it changed from being a 'highly profitable form of entertainment to a reviled one' (Fahy, 2006:13). One factor in the decline in the interest of the exhibition of human exhibits was an increased understanding of medical conditions and the labelling of them. Another was the growing popularity of cinema. The freak show was the exhibition of human exhibits who were considered to be unusual in some way. Robert Bogdan suggests that there are

four categories of freak show performers. A 'born freak' was someone who was born with a 'physical anomaly' like a dwarf or a giant; a 'self-made freak' was a performer who had done something 'unusual enough for exhibition' like a tattooed person. A 'novelty act' was used to describe an act like a snake charmer or sword swallower. These acts crucially were not considered to be fraudulent by the freak show community. The term 'gaffed freak' was used by insiders to describe performers whose deformities was faked. The idea that someone can be a 'self-made freak' suggests something significant about the freak show, that it is not enough for a performer to have a physical difference to make them a freak and that there is something else going on (1996: 24-25).

Robert Bogdan argues that being a 'Freak' is a way of thinking about and presenting people – a frame of mind and a set of practices' (1996: 24). He tells the story of Jack Earl, a tall man, who was asked by Clyde Ingles, the manager of the Ringling Brother circus sideshow, 'how would you like to be a Giant?' (1996: 24). Bogdan suggests that this highlights that there is a distinction between being born with a deformity and being a freak. He identifies two modes of presenting a freak show performer: the 'aggrandised mode' and the 'exotic mode'. He defines the 'aggrandised mode' as being practices that show that the performer is prestigious which would include giving the performer a title as part of their stage name. The 'exotic mode' stressed the performer's difference. The performer 'received an identity that appealed to people's interest in the culturally strange, the primitive, the bestial, the exotic' (28). This was usually split along racial lines with non-whites being presented in the exotic mode. These promotional practices demonstrate one of the ways in which fraud can be seen in the freak show because even if the performer had a genuine deformity, they still relied on hyperbole, exaggeration and downright lies in the promotional material. One example of this is the famous dwarf

performer Charles Stratton who was discovered by the legendary showman P.T. Barnum. Stratton performed under the name General Tom Thumb. He began performing aged five at Barnum's American museum. Barnum lied about the performer's age, suggesting that Stratton was eleven on the billboard, as he realised that it was a more impressive claim since if he had given Stratton's real age 'some people might have objected that it was too early to tell he was actually a dwarf' (Drimmer, 1973: 157). Barnum also changed Stratton's birth place from America to England (Drimmer, 1973).

Thus, in the years when modernism was establishing itself, its experimental writers and artists were by no means the only ones facing indignant allegations of fraudulence: this was a charge being levelled at a range of other acts and performers. Critics such as Helen Sword's *Ghostwriting Modernism* (2002) and Leigh Wilson's *Modernism and Magic: Experiments with Spiritualism, Theosophy and the Occult* (2012) have established the influence of spiritualism on modernist writers. Simon During in *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (2002) argues that entertainment magic has 'helped shaped modern culture' but that because of its 'trivial[ity]' and lack of 'cultural weight' the significance of it has been ignored (2). What has not been discussed is how while modernist writers were being accused of being fraudulent they were also dealing with the issue of fraud in their work by writing about acts taken from vaudeville and the side show. Many key texts in modernism contain references to these types of acts. Highlighting the overlap of these different types of fraud is James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* which was itself accused of being a hoax but also seems to contain a reference to Houdini in the pun 'escapemaster-in-chief from all sorts of houdingplaces' (1939: 127). Houdini's biographer Kenneth Silverman uses this quotation in his biography of the magician. James Joyce also references the popular illusion Pepper's ghost

in *Ulysses* (1922). During the 'Lestrygonians' chapter Leopold Bloom thinks about an advert for a 'luminous crucifix' which he likens to the illusion 'Our saviour. Wake up in the dead of night and see him on the wall, hanging.

Pepper's ghost idea' (190). Pepper's ghost was a popular illusion that used a sheet of glass to produce the ghostly reflection of a hidden actor on the stage.

This thesis will argue that modernist writers, inspired by magicians' exposure of mediums as frauds, used the figure of the magician and other entertainment spectacles that revolve around fraud to explore and evaluate the controversies around spiritualism and fraudulence. Chapter one will look at how Thomas Mann's 'Mario and the Magician' (1929), Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow* (1921) and Djuna Barnes *Nightwood* (1936) all contain references to magicians, somnambulists and spiritualism but use them to different effects. They are concerned with how it is now not possible to distinguish between what is real or not. Chapter two will explore how *Crome Yellow* and Franz Kafka's 'A Hunger Artist' (1922) both use characters who are or claim to be engaged with fasting. It will look at the different types of fasting that they both include such as the fasting girl and exhibition faster. It will demonstrate that spectacle fasting was related to spiritualism. Chapter three will look at how all four texts contain elements and references to the freak show. Both 'Mario and the Magician' and 'A Hunger Artist' use a performer that can be connected to the freak show as the main character. *Nightwood* and *Crome Yellow* differ as they use the freak show element and its relationship to fraud to discuss how characters like Robin, Matthew O'Connor and Felix can be seen to perform in their own lives. Like the previous two chapters this chapter is interested in how the fraudulence found in these types of popular entertainments can be used to explore concerns about spiritualism.

Chapter One: Magicians and Spiritualism

The introduction established that the relationship between mediums and magicians was an adversarial one with many magicians engaged in exposing mediums as frauds. This chapter will use Thomas Mann's 'Mario and the Magician' (1929), Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936) and Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow* (1921) to explore how they incorporate ideas and elements taken from the performance of magicians, mediums and somnambulism. It will suggest that a magician's act, although it incorporates some of the same elements as a medium's performance, differs as 'secular magic's core caveat' is 'an implicit or explicit admission that any presented illusion or trick is indeed an illusion or trick' (During, 2002: 170). Mediums and somnambulists, however, claimed that their powers and performances were genuine. Somnambulists are related to mediums as at times some somnambulists would have 'acted as a clairvoyant and, for a price, would predict the future, find lost objects, or lost loved ones' and 'sometimes acted as mediums to contact the dead' (Hustvedt, 2012: 113). Lachapelle suggests that in the twentieth century although some somnambulists still practised 'the large majority of them had made the transition to mediumship' (2011: 14). This chapter will argue that Thomas Mann's *Mario and the Magician*, Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* and Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow* are all using magicians, mediums and somnambulists in order to create discussions about the will, and to engage with fakery and deception.

In Thomas Mann's 'Mario and the Magician' the magician Cavaliere Cipolla can be seen as a fraud as he presents his show as if he had genuine power over the audience. Cipolla incorporates hypnotism and mesmerism as part of his

illusions. The inclusion of these types of illusions blurs the line for the audience, and especially the narrator, between a magician's performance and that of a mesmerist. This can be seen in the text when the narrator suggests that Cipolla was a 'powerful hypnotist' who 'advertised himself as a prestidigitator on account of police regulations which would have prevented him from making his living by the exercise of his powers' (145). There was genuine debate and anxiety over the idea that hypnosis and mesmerism were real and left people vulnerable to having another person's will dominate them. Some doctors such as Jean Martin Charcot and others like Schrenck-Notzing believed that hypnosis or mesmerism should be restricted to professionals only and not be performed by laymen on stage (Hustvedt, 2012). There was also debate over who was susceptible to being hypnotised. Jean Martin Charcot believed that only those who suffered from hysteria were susceptible to hypnotism. In opposition to this view was the Nancy School who believed that anyone could be hypnotised (Hustvedt, 2012). Just how seriously the idea of hypnotism was taken is demonstrated by Annette Andrien's acquittal of her boyfriend's murder in 1901 in Liege, Belgium. It was claimed that Andrien's boyfriend had wanted to commit suicide and was able to compel Annette through mesmerism to do it for him (Lachapelle, 2011). This shows that there was a belief that someone could be made to do an act such as murder against their will. Thomas Mann was accused of being hypnotised or mesmerised by Christian Bruhn who suggested that Schrenck-Notzing had mesmerised Mann and other intellectuals at a series of séances in Munich (Wolfram, 2009).

Cipolla exploits these fears in his performance by framing his performance and illusions as being a battle of will between him and the subject of the trick. Cipolla's framing of his tricks as being a battle of will between him and the audience raises the question of whether or not this is a genuine desire to

dominate or just a clever gimmick to stage his act. Cipolla tells the audience that he was unable to fight in the war because of his disability: 'it is perforce with my mental and spiritual parts that I conquer life – which after all only means conquering oneself' (130). Critics like Macintyre and Meyers have suggested that Schopenhauer was an influence on 'Mario and the Magician'. Schopenhauer in *The Will and the World* (1818) suggests that it is the will that forms the motives and character of an individual, not his circumstances, so that 'a wicked man' might demonstrate it in 'petty injustices, cowardly tricks, and low villainy' such as Cipolla does, as a stage magician 'or as a conqueror [who] oppresses nations' (1969: 138-139). Cipolla establishes his ability to dominate the audience with his first trick. Cipolla uses hypnotism to force the man referred to as the giovanotto into sticking his tongue out at the audience. Cipolla sets this up as being a contest of will when he asks the man:

Is it possible you have ever not done what you liked – or even, maybe, what you didn't like?... that might be a pleasant change for you, to divide up the willing and the doing and stop tackling both jobs at once (129).

In this instance Cipolla is distinguishing between the desire to do an action and the actual performance of an action. He is suggesting to the audience his ability to force the man to do an action against his will. Cipolla continues with this theme: when the young man protests that he would not stick out his tongue as it is rude and shows a bad upbringing, Cipolla tells him that 'You would only be *doing* it' (128). Leneaux suggests that 'Cipolla convinces his audience that if one does something without wanting it or willing it, one is not responsible for the action' (1985: 334). This divide between wanting do an action and the doing of it, implies that a person like Cipolla can force another

into doing something. Both somnambulism and mediumship treat will in the same ways as both spectacles suggest that while in a trance state the somnambulist or medium was subject to someone else's will.

Somnambulism was identified as one of the three stages of hysteria by Jean-Martin Charcot. In 1885 Charcot experimented with mesmerism on hysterics at the 'psychiatric asylum of Salpêtrière' (Lehman, 2009: 36). Hysterics while in the somnambulant phase were highly susceptible to the suggestions that their doctors made to them. The doctors at Salpêtrière would have their charges perform a series of stunts, sometimes for an audience made up of notable writers and intellectuals. One of the stunts that was performed involved having one of the hysterics hypnotised into being as stiff as a board and laying her out between two chairs (Hustvedt, 2012). Hustvedt states that this 'spectacular stunt [was] borrowed from entertainment hypnotists' (2012: 119-202). One stage mesmerist who also used this trick was Alfred Dhont who performed under the name Donato. Hustvedt suggests that: 'Donato and other showmen did everything that they could to minimise the differences between their acts and medical hypnosis, borrowing techniques and terminology from the neurologist, and costuming themselves and their subject to look like doctor and patient, even advertising their shows as being "à la Salpêtrière"' (2012: 108). This suggests how the medical profession and entertainment hypnotists borrowed from each other. It is also suggestive of the relationship between mediums and magicians, as doctors like Charcot had to believe or claim that that the lay hypnotists were also authentic. Psychological researchers often claimed that magicians were mediums but unaware of it to account for their ability to perform the same effects as mediums (Kalush and Sloman, 2006).

This same stunt is also featured as one of the tricks that Cipolla performs in 'Mario and the Magician'. The narrator suggests that Cipolla puts a man who has previously volunteered and had been 'susceptible' into 'the condition known as a deep trance and extended his insensible body by neck and feet across the backs of two chairs' (146). Cipolla sits on the insensible volunteer to demonstrate his dominance over the audience. Cipolla will later make this man the first of the audience to start to dance. The narrator suggests:

The master had but to look at him, when this young man would fling himself back as though struck by lightning, place his hand at his sides, and fall into a state of military somnambulism, in which it was plain to any eye that he was open to the most absurd suggestion that might be made to him (149).

By analysing Cipolla alongside these other types of performance and magicians it can be seen that his act is fraudulent or at least the narrator misreads it as being authentic. Stage magicians quickly incorporated mesmerism and hypnotism into their acts. Simon During states that magicians had 'by the 1880s' incorporated 'hypnotism' as 'an autonomous genre in magic assemblage' (2002: 152). He also notes that when magicians performed hypnotism they used: 'Confederates... to play the part of hypnotists' subjects. Their antics were central to the show: publicly tortured and humiliated, they courageously pretended to be oblivious to their pain and embarrassment' (During, 2002: 152). Stage magicians' use of confederates implies that Cipolla is also using confederates to produce his show. The narrator suggests that the man who volunteers for this trick has previously been a subject and has been shown to be 'a particularly susceptible one' (146). Cipolla's repeated use of

some of the same audience members could be read as suggesting that he is also employing confederates in the crowd.

The idea that Cipolla is employing confederates in the audience can be seen with his interactions with the giovanotto who is targeted repeatedly at key points in the performance. Cipolla initially targets him because the giovanotto wishes him 'Bueno Sera' after Cipolla arrives late on stage (129). The giovanotto is also given crippling stomach ache when he speaks out again after Cipolla has invited two men onto the stage to write down some numbers. These men claim to be unable to write. The narrator adds that this might be because they want to 'make [a] game of Cipolla' (133). This encounter threatens to disrupt Cipolla's performance. Cipolla starts to rant and insult the people of Torre Di Venere. The giovanotto speaks out to defend them and is given a stomach ache. One reading of this is that Cipolla is targeting members of the audience who stand up to him to instil fear. Another is that the giovanotto is a paid confederate of Cipolla who is feeding the performer lines and information. Supporting the idea that the giovanotto is a confederate of Cipolla's is the role that he plays in the encounter between Cipolla and Mario which ultimately leads to Cipolla's death. In this encounter the giovanotto confirms some of Cipolla statements by laughing. He laughs when Cipolla suggests that Mario is popular with the girls of Torre. He also confirms that Mario is in love by laughing. It is also the giovanotto who shouts out that the name of the girl Mario is infatuated with is Silvestra. This suggests that the giovanotto is part of the performance and is helping out when it becomes difficult.

The narrator, at times, suggests that elements of Cipolla's act are accomplished through trickery. When Cipolla deduces that Signora Angiolieri

had worked for the actress Eleanora Duse as a wardrobe mistress and that they were close friends, the narrator suggests that Cipolla could have learned that information earlier in the day either by paying someone or through making enquiries. The narrator although he acknowledges at times that Cipolla is accomplishing his act through trickery seems to try to convince the reader that this is not the case with the giovanotto. After Cipolla's initial encounter with the giovanotto the narrator suggests that: 'One might have assumed that the giovanotto was merely the chosen butt of Cipolla's customary sallies, had not the very pointed witticisms betrayed a genuine antagonism' (131). In this instance the narrator by acknowledging and then dismissing that this is just part of Cipolla's usual show makes himself sound more reliable. The narrator, by acknowledging that parts of Cipolla's performance are achieved through deception, presents himself as being rational and sceptical. This means that a reader is more likely to accept his judgement. It was a common for psychical researchers and other people who were interested in mediumship to suggest that they had been sceptical at first but they had been converted by seeing phenomena (Lamont, 2006). Although, some might have been genuinely converted by what they had seen, the admission of initially being sceptical adds more authenticity to their belief.

At other times, the narrator demonstrates an underlying belief in the phenomena. This can be demonstrated when Cipolla performs a series of tricks involving finding possessions that the audience has hidden amongst themselves, the narrator suggests that Cipolla is using 'small tricks and manual dexterity to help out his natural talents' (140). The narrator implies that he has had previous experience of the occult: he claims that those who practise things like mesmerism or mediumship have the 'human tendency... to help themselves out with humbuggery, though, after all, the humbuggery is no

disproof whatever of the genuineness of the other elements in the dubious amalgam' (140). This suggests that the narrator believes that Cipolla, rather than being a magician who is claiming to have powers to enhance his tricks and performance, is someone with genuine abilities using the tricks of a magician to enhance his reputation. This mimics some spiritualists' real beliefs as many psychical researchers would often claim that mediums would resort to trickery on occasion if they were unable to make contact with the spirits (Lachapelle, 2011). This was also conveniently the perfect excuse when a medium was detected in fraud (Lehman, 2009). Arthur Conan Doyle and others also suggested that magicians such as Houdini and Maskelyne must have mediumistic abilities without being aware of it and that this explained their ability to achieve the same feats as mediums (During, 2002).

The narrator at times uses the language of spiritualism and mediumship. He appears to have some awareness or experience of them. During the trick in which Cipolla, while blindfolded, searches for items that the audience has hidden between themselves, the narrator suggests that these more benign tricks are 'parlour games – the kind based on certain powers which in human nature are high or else lower than that human reason: on intuition and 'magnetic' transmission; in short a low type of manifestation' (140). This suggests that the narrator believes that Cipolla has some kind of low level clairvoyant ability. The narrator also suggests that Cipolla is: 'the most powerful hypnotist I have ever seen in my life'. This implies that he has previously seen other types of this kind of performance. Previous experience of this kind of performance, along with the earlier tricks with the giovanotto, would influence the way the narrator interprets events. Amy Lehman suggests that previous experiences of séances and theatre affects the way that an audience interprets the events as they know what to expect and then

interpret the phenomena in that way. Lehman writes: 'That the predisposition of individual spectators (and the group as a whole) not only affect their response, but actually help create the meaning of a performance' (2009: 89). This suggests that the audiences of mediums and magicians were active participants in creating the effects and meaning of these types of performance. Lehman suggests that this alters the perception of the 'spectators of séance phenomena' as it means that they were not just incredulous viewers but 'crucial participants' for interpreting events. She continues: 'The spectator shares responsibility for... what happens during the performance, even, to some degree if that performance is based on trickery or fraud' (90).

The idea that the audience and the narrator are partly responsible for the events that occur in Cipolla's act is interesting as some members of the audience become part of the performance. The narrator suggests that it is his own interest in seeing what happens next that drives him and his wife to stay and watch the rest of the performance rather than leave at the interval. After the interval Cipolla's act starts to be more humiliating to the participants. The potentially cruellest trick is performed on the narrator's landlady Signora Angiolieri and her husband. Cipolla hypnotises Signora Angiolieri into following him while her husband calls to her. She is oblivious to her husband calling her name. She is 'moonstruck, deaf, enslaved' as she walks towards Cipolla ignoring or not hearing her husband calling to her (148). The narrator states that Signora Angiolieri 'would have followed her master, had he so willed it to the ends of the earth' (148). The narrator claims that Cipolla 'had spied out her ethereal lack of resistance to his power' earlier in the performance (147) and that Cipolla 'bewitched' her out of her seat to follow him. The narrator also accepts that this is part of Cipolla's stage craft as he says that Cipolla has Signor Angiolieri call his wife's name 'in order to enhance the effect' of the

trick (147). Cipolla's power over Signora Angiolieri seems absolute and the tension is created by having her husband calling her 'to rouse... everything in his spouse's soul which could shield her virtue against the evil assaults of magic' (147). This scene seems like it is out of a horror film. It casts Cipolla as having an almost supernatural power. One of the biggest fears that people had of mesmerism was that it could be used as a 'disturbing means of control' that could be used by sexual predators (Lehman, 2009: 37).

The potential for sexual exploitation is implied in both the encounters with Signora Angiolieri and Mario. In the stunt with Mario, Cipolla hypnotises Mario into thinking that he, Cipolla, is Silvestra and then encourages Mario to kiss him on the cheek. This is what leads to Cipolla's death. The shooting of Cipolla by Mario is problematic, as Bridges argues it does not seem to be convincingly motivated. Bridges dismisses the argument that it is the exposure of Mario's feelings for Silvestra that causes him to shoot Cipolla as, he points out, it already seems to be widely known by the locals. Bridges also points out that if it is the humiliation that Mario suffers that justifies his murder of Cipolla then Signora Angiolieri or her husband would have more motivation as Bridges suggests that she is seeing her friend and former employer Elenora Duse when she is hypnotised and that this could potentially be seen as being more humiliating as it implies a same sex relationship for which she is willing to leave her husband (1991). This illusion with Signora Angiolieri which precedes the encounter with Mario also mirrors it: it undermines a reading that Mario shoots Cipolla in a homophobic attack for being made to kiss a man, even if he did it while under the belief that Cipolla was a woman as again the scenario with Signora Angiolieri would be more humiliating as she leaves her husband's side for another woman.

Critics such as Bridges and Geulen have noted that there is a homoerotic subtext in 'Mario and the Magician'. Geulen states that: 'the encounter between Mario and Cipolla gains its tension from the implicit, but always only implicit, suggestion of a homoerotic encounter' (1996: 21). Bridges claims that Cipolla rather than 'imposing *his will* on' the audience members is instead revealing 'their innermost desires from the psychological constraints that culture has imposed on them' (504). He writes that:

Cipolla's deception reveals to the young man that he too is susceptible to the homoerotic enticement of another man. In this final dramatic scene, Mario discovers if not his own homosexuality, then at least his complicity in an illicit passion (Bridges, 1991: 512).

Supporting this reading is the beliefs that were held about mediumship and over who was susceptible to being hypnotised. Cipolla, with the exception of Signora Angiolieri and another woman, targets the men in the audience to be the subject of his tricks or illusions. This is unusual as it was generally thought that women were more susceptible to being put into a trance state. Women were also believed to be more susceptible to spirits and mediums trance because their 'wills were weak or easily supplanted' (Wolffram, 2009: 159). Wolffram suggests that: 'Homosexuality was seen by many observers as a requisite of male mediumship, which was understood as sexual inversion' (2009: 159). Many male mediums would channel female spirits which would allow them to express a repressed side of themselves. Female mediums also channelled spirits of the opposite sex. This could imply that Mario is meant to be read as having homosexual leanings. This is an uncomfortable reading as it means that Mario has just shot an entertainment magician for revealing that he, Mario, is sexually attracted to men.

My own reading contradicts this as it argues that Cipolla is preying on Signora Angiolieri and Mario's private feelings and emotions, exploiting and exposing them in much the same way that mediums preyed on their client's desire to see their loved ones. Prior to hypnotising Mario, Cipolla tells him that there is a difference between being made to suffer for love and 'mak[ing] yourself suffer' which is what he says that Mario is doing with Silvestra (155). Cipolla while pretending to be Silvestra also tells Mario 'I love thee' (150) thus giving Mario false hope that Silvestra loves him in return and then taking it away again when the illusion ends. Some mediums convinced their sitters that they were genuine by producing a physical manifestation of a loved one. This was achieved by having an actor play the role of the spirit and relied on the sitters desire to see their loved one to overcome any rational objections. The sitters, like Mario, saw what they wanted to see (Finn, 2009).

'Mario and the Magician' uses the figure of the magician to debate whether or not phenomena like mesmerism and mediumship were real. The narrator of 'Mario and the Magician' changes his mind throughout the text as to whether or not Cipolla is a fraud. Cipolla's act combines elements of both a medium's and a magician's performance making his actual intentions unclear. The next text that will be discussed *Nightwood* differs from 'Mario and the Magician' as rather than dealing with an actual performer who is a magician or a somnambulist, it applies these terms metaphorically to two of the characters to suggest the roles in which they play in the text. It also shows both Matthew O'Connor and Robin Vote as frauds. Robin is in a sense exploiting the feelings of her lovers in the same way that Cipolla exploits the feelings of Mario and Signora Angiolieri.

Matthew O'Connor is likened to a magician when he wakes the sleeping somnambulist Robin Vote by throwing water in her face and suggesting that someone slaps her wrists. After this O'Connor makes:

The movements common to the 'dumbfounder' or man of magic; the gestures of one who, in preparing the audience for a miracle, must pretend that there is nothing to hide, the whole purpose that of making the back and elbows move in a 'series of honesties', while in reality the most flagrant part of the hoax is being prepared (32).

The purpose of O'Connor's performance is to apply 'a few drops from a perfume bottle' along with a 'dusting' of powder and some 'rouge' to himself and to disguise his stealing some of Robin's money (32). O'Connor is described in the terms of a magician as he acts as a confidant to the other characters about Robin and all his attempts to explain her just further mystify rather than make anything clearer. O'Connor refers to himself as 'the greatest liar this side of the moon' (122). O'Connor's admission of lying suggests that like a magician his deceptions are known in the same way that fraudulence is an acknowledged part of a magician's performance. O'Connor's being likened to a magician also suggests that he acts as a counterpart to Robin's somnambulist.

In *Nightwood* it is suggested that Robin is a somnambulist. This is used as a way of explaining her erratic behaviour and her indifference to her lovers. Robin is first seen passed out on a bed in the chapter 'La Somnambule'. By labelling Robin as a 'Born somnambulist' the text infers that she is either in a trance or a sleep walker (31). The claim that she is somnambulant also implies that Robin, like one of Cipolla's victims or subjects has no will of her own. The text suggests this when Robin accepts Felix's proposal as if her 'life held no

violation for refusal' (38). After she marries Felix Robin takes 'to going out; wandering the countryside; to train travel, to other cities, alone and engrossed. Once not having returned for three days... she walked in late at night and said she had been half-way to Berlin (41). The claim that Robin is in a somnambulatory trance is a fraudulent one as it is more likely that she is passed out drunk in the hotel room.

Nightwood by fraudulently connecting Robin to somnambulism also suggests a connection between Robin and spiritualist mediums. Somnambulists were related to mediums as many went on to become mediums when mediumship became popular (Lachapelle, 2011). Marcus argues that for some people 'somnambulism' like mediumship 'proved the existence of the human spirit, the collective unconscious, or God' (241). She also notes that the use of La Somnambule as a sobriquet for Robin is to relate her to the heroine of Bellini's play *La Somnambula* which 'was written to prove the existence of the soul to atheists and rationalists. People are not simply "living statues," material automatons, it was argued, but animated by spirit' (1991: 241). In *Nightwood* there are other references to spiritualism. At a party at Jenny's house the Marchesa implies that all the guests apart from Robin would be reincarnated but that Robin had 'come to the end of her existence and would return no more' (64). This further suggests that Robin is an outsider who is apart from other people. The text repeatedly implies that Robin is 'outside the human type' (131). In the chapter 'The Possessed' Jenny believes that Robin is having 'sensuous communion with unclean spirits' after she follows her and sees her talking to herself or small animals. This demonstrates an attempt to make sense of Robin's behaviour and continues the idea that she is not responsible for it by claiming that Robin is possessed.

Nora, like Jenny, also fraudulently represents Robin's behaviour by telling Matthew O'Connor that her waking Robin had had a detrimental effect on Robin. She tells him that she 'used to think... that people just went to sleep, or if they did not go to sleep, that they were themselves, but now... now I see that the night does something to a person's identity, even when they are asleep' (72). Nora continues to suggest the importance of sleep to Robin's identity or Nora's ideas about Robin's identity: in 'Go Down Matthew' she tells O'Connor that 'she was asleep and I struck her awake. I saw her come awake and turn befouled before me, she who had managed in that sleep to keep whole' (131). Nora by suggesting that waking Robin out of sleep or her trance has an effect on her personality is referring back to the idea that Robin is a somnambulist. She also admits that Robin was only hers when she was passed out drunk. Nora's insistence that some of their problems come from Robin's need to sleep gives her some control over the situation because it suggests that if she has just left Robin alone that they would still be together. The conflict between Nora and Robin comes from Nora's desire for a monogamous relationship while Robin appears to want to continue to live the life of a free spirited bohemian. This is suggested during one of Robin and Nora's arguments when Robin tells Nora: 'You make me feel dirty and tired and old' after Nora has tried to stop someone from touching Robin (130). After this Robin speaks to a 'poor wretched beggar of a whore' to whom Robin insists Nora give some money. Robin states that: "They are all God-forsaken, and you most of all, because they don't want you to have your happiness. They don't want you to have your drink. Well, here, drink! I give you money and permission! These women - they are all like her," she said with fury. "They are all good – they want to save us' (130). In this encounter it seems like Robin is talking about herself and that Robin believes that she is God-forsaken. Robin's drinking and

her dalliances are her happiness and solace. It is Nora's judgement that makes her feel guilty. *Nightwood* depicts Robin as a somnambulist euphemistically to refer to her alcoholism as the way in which an alcoholic passes out is not too dissimilar to a somnambulist's trance. Both of these conditions also effect an individual's will as an alcoholic, like a somnambulist is not in control when they are passed out.

Robin saying that she gives permission to the prostitute echoes what Felix tells O'Connor about Robin that she 'always seemed to be searching for someone to tell her that she was innocent' he continues, 'There are some people... who must get permission to live, and if the Baronin finds no-one to give her that permission, she will make an innocence for herself; a fearful sort of primitive innocence. It may be considered, "depraved" by our generation, but our generation does not know everything (106). This is Felix's attempt to explain Robin. Felix's belief that Robin will make a 'primitive innocence' for herself suggests that part of her identity is constructed. Bombaci argues that Robin's aimless wandering and participation in the café life of various cities can be seen as an invented identity of 'wilful deviance' (2006: 79). The idea that Robin's bohemian identity is a self-constructed one relates to concerns at the time. Gill writes that the 'eccentricity' of the Bohemians 'could be feigned for a variety of reasons' and one of the common ones was 'the urge to discomfort particular categories of people, primarily the bourgeoisie. Bourgeois spectators were particularly infuriated by situations in which they were unable to decide whether behaviour was sincere or feigned' (2009: 202). This suggests that not only is the representation of Robin as a somnambulist a false one but that Robin is engaged on some level in performing in her real life even though she does not claim any of these identities for herself. It implies that her bohemian lifestyle is equally inauthentic and this is shown by the repeated use of

references to performers, like somnambulists and circus performers who are also fraudulent.

Nightwood is preoccupied with the idea that people are performing in their day-to-day lives and that they exhibit different behaviour when they think that no-one is watching them. This can be seen in the description of O'Connor when he is not aware that he is being watched by Felix:

The Baron was shocked to observe, in the few seconds before the doctor saw him, that he seemed old, older than his fifty odd years would account for. He moved slowly as if he were dragging water; his knees which one seldom noticed because he was usually seated, sagged. His dark shaved chin was lowered as if in a melancholy that had no beginning or end. The Baron hailed him, and instantly the doctor threw off his unobserved self, as one hides hastily a secret life (98-99).

This implies that O'Connor's bombastic persona is, like Robin's adoption of the bohemian lifestyle, fraudulent and is used to disguise himself. Earlier in the text Felix notices that there is 'melancholy hidden beneath every jest and malediction that the doctor uttered' (35). The idea that people perform in public and that they have an 'unobserved self' which is different to how other people see them is a re-occurring theme in *Nightwood*. It is also interesting given how often Robin is followed and watched by the other characters when she is unaware that they are there and their rejection of this identity. Both Nora and Jenny at times follow Robin and Felix admits to leaving cafés after seeing that she was there before him.

Nightwood has shown that modernist writers as well as writing about actual performers also used these figures metaphorically. *Nightwood* is preoccupied by the idea that people like Robin can be seen to be performing in real life. The

text represents Robin fraudulently as being a somnambulist to explain her eccentric behaviour. The use of these labels to describe the way in which people perform in their everyday life can also be seen in *Crome Yellow*. *Crome Yellow* like *Nightwood* is engaged with talking about eccentrics who are committing fraudulent acts and are performing parts in their everyday life.

Crome Yellow applies both the idea of a somnambulist and a magician in Denis Stone. Denis is a writer who presents himself as rational and cynical but when he is confronted with Anne and Grombault together, he is described as being 'stood...like a somnambulist' (162). The text by using somnambulism as a way of describing the effect on Denis of seeing the woman he believes he is in love with, being with someone else, suggests that there is something that remains illogical about everyone when they are in love. It is also implying that there is something fraudulent about Denis's claim that he is in love with Anne. Denis's feelings are really just an infatuation. Denis's infatuation with Anne is like Robin's alcoholism as they both affect the will in the same way that somnambulism does; they make the sufferer feel powerless. Denis, himself states that there is a relationship between writers and magicians as he claims that 'literary men' are the 'descendants' of magicians, as writers, like magicians use language to 'invoke emotions out of empty minds. He suggests that it is 'the test for the literary mind... the feeling of magic, the sense that words have power. The technical, verbal part of literature is simply a development of magic... with fitted harmonious words the magician summoned rabbits out of empty hats and spirits from the elements' (115-116). This connection between magicians and writers suggests that there is something fraudulent and deceptive about writers and writing through their ability to create emotions in their readers out of nothing. This also suggests that Denis has been able to talk

himself into thinking that he is in love with Anne. Denis, like Mario and Robin's lovers, makes himself suffer for love rather than the other way round.

Denis's aligning of writers with magicians also relates writers to another connection, many magicians were anti-spiritualist and were engaged with exposing mediums through their own performances. Denis presents himself as being cynical about the other characters' interest in spiritualism. In his initial meeting with Priscilla Wimbush, as she tells him about her interests in spiritualism he is fascinated by her 'orange coiffure' which he tries to decide if it is hennaed or 'was it one of those complete Transformations one sees in the advertisements?' (8). Denis is also reminded of an advertisement when he speaks to Barbecue-Smith who tells him that the secret to writing is inspiration which is accessed through the 'subconscious' (28). Barbecue-Smith uses automatic writing and self-hypnosis to tap into his subconscious. Denis thinks that this makes Barbecue-Smith sound like an advert 'Nestles milk... before Inspiration and after' when he launches into a spiel about the importance of 'Inspiration' (27). Denis being reminded of advertisements during these encounters contrasts the spiritual with the commercial and implies that there is not much difference between the two. There is a suggestion that Barbecue-Smith is using the angle of spiritualism to sell his work. Prior to writing these books Barbecue-Smith was a struggling journalist. There were also debates over the authenticity of automatic writing which was utilised by both spiritualists to get in touch with the spirits and the Avant Garde to unleash the unconscious (Sword, 2002).

The spiritualism shown in *Crome Yellow*, in contrast to 'Mario and the Magician', is not being taken seriously. Spiritualism for characters like Priscilla Wimbush is just a new entertainment. The text suggests that after losing a lot

of money at gambling she now spends all of her time at Crome where she uses elements of spiritualism for consolation. While talking to Denis she compares her new life to her old life. She suggests that her old life was: 'just running about. Lunch, tea, dinner, theatre, supper. Everyday' (7). She contrasts that with her new interests: 'I have the stars... I have the Infinite to keep in tune with... and then there is the next world and all the spirits, and one's Aura, and Mrs Eddy and saying you're not ill and the Christian Mysteries and Mrs Besant' (7). The new interests are just a new way of filling up time and do not sound that different from her old way of life. Priscilla also uses spiritualism and horoscopes to predict the winners of the races. This contrast between something as materialistic as racing and the aims of spiritualism demonstrates that Priscilla does not take it seriously. Spiritualism for Priscilla is just part of a constructed identity that suggests her eccentricity. Although Priscilla is engaged in creating an identity for herself through her interest in spiritualism she does not claim to have any abilities herself. The text suggests that Priscilla had never 'seen a vision of spirit or succeeded in establishing any communication with the Spirit World. She had to be content with the reported experiences of others' (92). She does not suspect that this is because the other characters, like Barbecue-Smith and Ivor Lombard who claim to have had these experiences are faking them. The performative nature of mediumship and other spectacles is suggested in *Crome Yellow* during the fair when the guests perform as the attractions. Mr Scogan volunteers to perform as a fortune teller for the village fair. He bills himself as 'Madam Seosotris, The Sorceress of Ecbantana' (148). While performing as a fortune teller he reads the fortune of a young woman who he attempts to trick into meeting himself at a later date by reading her fortune.

Another character in *Crome Yellow* who fraudulently claims to have mediumistic abilities is Ivor Lombard. Ivor is described as being 'a good amateur medium and telepathist, and had a considerable first-hand knowledge of the next world' (85). Ivor's mediumship is listed amongst his other accomplishments such as being able to sing, cook, paint and excelling at 'amateur theatricals' (85). This suggests that it is part of what makes him an entertaining guest and it is why he was invited to Crome. The reference to amateur dramatics shows that Ivor's mediumship is fraudulently done. Some of the spiritualist phenomena that Ivor produces are 'sketches of spirit life, made in the course of tranced tours through the other world' (91). These drawings have names such as 'portrait of an angel' or 'astral beings at play' (92). Spirit drawing, like automatic writing was meant to be done in a trance state with the spirit working through the medium to produce the work. The medium would be in a passive state. Ivor, in contrast, to Barbecue-Smith is not motivated to claim to be a medium because of money. Ivor already has 'wealth' and is 'perfectly independent' (85). Psychological researchers debated whether or not mediums should be able to accept money for their performances as it was believed that mediums who took payment were more likely to resort to fraud (Hazelgrove, 2000).

'Mario and the Magician', *Nightwood* and *Crome Yellow* all contain references to entertainment spectacles like magicians, somnambulists and mediums whose acts all involve will to explore fraudulence and deception. 'Mario and the Magician' uses the dynamic between a magician and a somnambulist to explore the anxiety that was felt over the possibility that someone could be compelled to do something against their will. This was a topical concern that would have been raised by the interest in mediumship and its predecessor somnambulists both who claimed to have no will. In his act. Cipolla

differentiates between the desire to perform an action and the actual doing of it and claims that he can force someone into doing something against their will. Cipolla deceives his audience or at least the narrator into believing that his performance is real by combining elements that would have been found in a magician's act with ones that would have been found in a mediums.

Nightwood like 'Mario and the Magician' uses the idea that a somnambulist can be compelled to do something against their will and uses it to imply that Robin is not responsible for her actions. It suggests that Robin as a somnambulist is not making an active decision when she takes up with and subsequently abandons her various lovers. This chapter has argued that this is a false claim and that it denies Robin any agency in making these decisions. *Nightwood* uses the image of Robin as a somnambulist to attempt to soften the loss that Felix, Nora and Jenny feel because of the end of their relationships with her and her infidelities by claiming that Robin had no choice in the matter. *Nightwood* shows that Felix, Nora and Jenny are making themselves suffer for love in the same way that Cipolla claims that Mario is as none of them ever actually have a clear perception of who Robin is. *Nightwood* also insinuates that Robin's bohemian lifestyle is no more authentic than the claim that she is a somnambulist.

Crome Yellow also uses the idea of somnambulism in relation to the effect of being either in love or infatuated. Denis is likened to a somnambulist after he has seen Anne and Grombauld together and mistakenly thinks that they are becoming an item. The depiction of Denis as a somnambulist contradicts his own image of himself as being like a magician and shows that Denis is as much of a performer as any of the other characters. Denis presents himself as being critical of the characters who are interested in spiritualism and by likening

himself to a magician suggests that he too is anti-spiritualist but the text by showing him as a somnambulist suggests that this is as much a pose and therefore fraudulent as any of the other characters eccentric behaviour.

Nightwood's Matthew O'Connor is also likened to a magician which also suggests that he is a fraud who through his stories and energetic speeches is like Robin and Denis performing a role.

Crome Yellow like *Nightwood* is interested in eccentric characters who are shown to be like performers through their interest in spiritualism. *Crome Yellow* as well as claiming that characters like Barbecue-Smith and Ivor are like performers also explores the different motives people have for being interested in spiritualism. Priscilla is interested in it because it is in fashion and she is bored; while Barbecue-Smith is taking advantage of the interest in it to sell his books. Ivor seems to be involved in it for his own amusement. *Crome Yellow* unlike 'Mario and the Magician' does not take spiritualism and mesmerism seriously as it is shown as being a harmless and pointless distraction to amuse wealthy eccentrics. In *Nightwood*, on the other hand, the presentation of Robin as a somnambulist is fraudulent but the pain of the characters that she has left, which is what lies behind this deceptive presentation, is genuine.

Chapter Two: Fasting and Spiritualism

The previous chapter has focused on how entertainment figures like magicians, somnambulists and mediums are being used in modernist texts. This chapter will move on from that and look at how the spectacle of fasting is being used to a similar effect. This chapter will cover two forms of popular fasting: fasting girls and exhibition fasters. These two categories, like mediums and magicians, were predominantly divided by gender. The term fasting girl was used to describe girls and women who claimed to have not needed to eat for a long period of times and when there was: 'ambiguity about the intention of the faster' (Brumberg, 1988: 61). Fasting girls were subject to the same discussions as mediums and somnambulists as some people claimed that their ability to fast was miraculous. Exhibition fasters on the other hand were mainly male (Goodlin, 2003). There was also a key distinction between what they claimed with the fast: while fasting girls claimed to fast for long periods of time, sometimes years, exhibition fasters would only fast for a certain amount of time and eat normally the rest of the time. This affected the presentation of their acts. Fasting girls, as their fast was meant to be miraculous, were unable to show that they found the fast difficult. Exhibition fasters, on the hand, because their performance was based around it being an endurance act and an act of will power to overcome the need to eat, were able admit to finding the fast to be a hardship (Gooldin, 2003). This chapter will use Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow* and Franz Kafka's 'A Hunger Artist' to argue that these two texts are using characters who are engaged with fasting, or claim to engage with fasting, because fasting was subject to the same debates as mediumship over

whether or not it was fraud and its meaning. It will suggest that it is being used to discuss the place of spirituality in modern life.

In *Crome Yellow* the Lapith sisters are shown to be frauds as they claim to not need to eat much and are then discovered eating in secret. The text details how little they eat at dinner with George noticing that Emmeline eats only: 'Two spoonfuls of soup, a morsel of fish, no bird, no meat, and three grapes – that was her whole dinner' (102). George also notices that her sisters Georgiana and Caroline are equally 'abstemious' (102). When questioned by George, over her lack of appetite, Emmeline tells George: 'Pray don't talk to me of eating... we find it so coarse, so unspiritual, my sisters and I. One can't think of one's soul while one is eating' (102). By claiming that their fast is spiritually motivated the Lapith sisters are implying that they are like fasting girls. Brumberg suggests that: 'Fasting girls were often interpreted and understood as exemplars of the Spiritualist quest for transcendence over the material body' (1988: 63). The Lapith sisters, crucially, do not claim that they do not need to eat anything. This resembles the claims of real fasting girls as critics often argued that their claims were hyperbolic, if not fraudulent, and when questioned found that fasting girls were often eating small amounts of some foods like fruit or nuts, but excluding meat and fish (Brumberg, 1988). In *Crome Yellow* the detailing of the small amounts that the sisters eat serves to make them look more ridiculous and hypocritical when they are discovered to be frauds by George as the disgust that they have shown for food is fraudulent and theatrical as they are shown not to just be eating but feasting.

The Lapith sisters are being used to satirise the real spectacle of fasting girls and that in turn is being used to comment on the present day occupants of Crome's interest in spiritualism and mediumship. The inspiration for the Lapith

sisters, probably, came from real fasting girls like Sarah Jacob 'The Welsh Fasting Girl' and Mollie Fancher. Fasting girls, like mediums, were the focal point of debates between religion and science with some people claiming that they were miraculous while others argued that they were frauds. Joan Brumberg's *Fasting Girls* (1988) writes that:

The controversy over fasting girls exacerbated a set of pre-existing ideological tensions about the relationship between mind and body that were central to the Victorian debate between religion and science (1988: 63)

Sarah Jacob was a young girl who, it was claimed, had started to fast in 1867 after a bout of illness. It was suggested that she continued to fast for two years until her death in 1869. She died, at home, while under medical observation by nurses from Guy's Hospital. This watch was organised by doctors to disprove or authenticate the claim that she had not eaten for two years. During her life Jacob had become something of a celebrity and a tourist attraction. This demonstrates the popularity of this spectacle. One of Jacob's doctors, Robert Fowler, believed that she was a hysteric rather than a miracle (Brumberg, 1988. Busby, 2004. Wade, 2014). He also suggested that it was difficult to tell 'how much of the symptoms is the result of a morbid perversion of will, and how much is the product of intentional deceit' (Brumberg, 1988: 67). This brings up what was the motivation for Jacob to claim to fast and what she and her family hoped to prove by submitting to the observation of the fast. If the parents knew it was fraud and were in on it they would not have allowed it to continue. Interestingly Jacob's parents believed that offering her food made Sarah Jacob ill; not the fasting. This may have contributed to her death as it

was claimed that they refused to allow the watch to be stopped or for her to be offered water (Brumberg, 1988).

Mollie Fancher was another famous popular fasting girl. Fancher, like Jacob, claimed to have begun fasting after a series of accidents and illnesses. In addition to claiming to having fasted for fourteen years, Mollie Fancher also claimed to have other abilities such as clairvoyance (Brumberg, 1988). Many spiritualists were interested in Fancher and other fasting girls, although Fancher tried to distance herself from them (Brumberg, 1988). Fancher, unlike Jacob, did not feel the need to authenticate her act by submitting to observation. She declined the physician William Hammond's challenge to perform her fast under a supervised watch by 'members from the New York Neurological Society' which was to last for thirty days and nights' (Brumberg, 1988: 83). Fancher refused citing Hammond's materialism. The use of watchers to authenticate or disprove the claims of a faster can be seen in exhibition fasting and Kafka's hunger artist also uses them as part of his act. The desire for evidence of the claims of fasting girls is similar to that of psychical researchers who attempted to authenticate or disprove spiritualist mediums. Fasting girls, like mediums and somnambulists, would be found both performing privately in their home and also on stage as part of other entertainment spectacles. Legendry showman P.T Barnum tried, unsuccessfully, to recruit Fancher to perform at his show. Other fasting girls did end up on the side show: Maria Bedard was offered work by 'two different Boston promoters' (Brumberg, 1988: 97).

One factor in why Mollie Fancher was able to refuse to submit to being tested, while Sarah Jacob was not, could be to do with their social backgrounds. It was suggested, at the time, that money had been a factor in Sarah Jacob continuing

to claim to fast. The visitors who came to see her would leave gifts of money for her which given her popularity would seem to amount to quite a lot (Busby: 2004). Mollie Fancher appears to have come from a more privileged background than Sarah Jacob so money seems to have been less of a motivating factor for her or it at least meant that she was less likely to be accused of having money as a motive. As suggested in the previous chapter this same divide can be seen with mediums. Mediums from a wealthier background did not need to perform for money so they were less likely to be accused of being frauds. Mediums who were from a working class background were more likely to charge for their services. This is because they were reliant on their mediumship to provide their living. This meant that mediums who charged for their services were more likely to be thought to be fraudulent.

The Lapith sisters are never accused of being frauds, until George catches them secretly eating. The text, though, hints at their inauthenticity when it suggests that Georgiana was 'the most ethereal of all... she ate the least, swooned most often, talked most often of death, and was the palest – with a pallor that was so startling as to appear positively artificial' (103). Georgiana's complexion seems artificial because it is. Other aspects of the Lapith sisters' behaviour also seems to be faked. Georgiana pretends to faint during dinner to silence her mother when she is embarrassing her. George also notes that the Lapith sisters 'looked extraordinarily healthy... Perhaps if you were really spiritual you needed less food. He, clearly, was not spiritual' (103). People who believed in the legitimacy of fasting girls often claimed that they did not need to eat as they were spiritual. Sarah Jacob, it was claimed, 'live[d] on spiritual food alone' (Warner, 2006: 67). This was used to explain why they still appeared healthy and did not lose significant amounts of weight. The Lapith sisters want to seem spiritual, and fasting was an example of this, without

going through the actual rigours of a fast, demonstrating that their interest in it is extremely superficial. This connects them to Priscilla Wimbush as she too is interested in spiritualism as it is fashionable; but without understanding it or actually being spiritual herself. The connection between Priscilla and the Lapith sisters is underscored by the fact that the room where Priscilla talks to Denis is the same secret room where the sisters are discovered eating by George.

In the same way that Denis's cynicism is used to contrast to Priscilla's spiritualism, the Lapith sisters' pretensions to spirituality is contrasted with their mother and George's responses to it. During dinner the sisters are told by their mother that in her day 'if you didn't eat, people told you you needed a dose of rhubarb' (104). Lady Lapith suggests that: 'in my young days souls weren't as fashionable as they are now and we didn't think death was at all poetical. It was just unpleasant' (104). This suggests that there has been a change in attitude in how these things are perceived. George also contrasts with the sisters as he is 'unpretentious' and not 'very romantic or poetical' (103). *Crome Yellow* uses its characters to explore these oppositional views. Priscilla and Denis are used to show opposing views over spiritualism with Denis being cynical and Priscilla claiming to be a believer. George and Lady Lapith are used to contrast to the romanticism and pretensions of the Lapith sisters.

Crome Yellow's interest in pitting things that are related to spiritualism against the more practical is part of an overall argument in the text over the place of spirituality and its usefulness. The sisters' belief that it is not possible to think about the soul while eating contrasts with that of their ancestor, Sir Ferdinando, who built the 'privies' at Crome at the top of the four towers so that they were near heaven. The text suggests that:

It must not be thought that Sir Ferdinando was moved only by material and merely sanitary considerations; for the placing of his privies in an exalted position he had also certain excellent spiritual reasons. For... the necessities of nature are so base and brutish that in obeying them we are apt to forget that we are the noblest creatures of the universe. To counteract these degrading effects he advised that the privy should be in every house the room nearest heaven, that it should be well provided with windows commanding an extensive and noble prospect, and that the wall should be lined with bookshelves containing all the ripest products of human wisdom (51)

Whether or not religion or spiritual life can play a useful role in life is the subject of debate in *Crome Yellow*. In the present day Crome there is debate over what to build as a 'War memorial' (95). The vicar Mr Bodiham objects to the idea that such a monument should be something useful or practical such as the library that Henry Wimbush wants to build or the reservoir that the local people want. Bodiham characterises a war memorial as being 'a work dedicated to God' and suggests that all works to god need to be useless. He believes that a 'lich-gate' was perfect as it is 'an object which answered the definition of a War Memorial: a useless work dedicated to God carved with knops [*sic*]' (95). The text also states that the church already has one lich-gate so a second entrance would have to be made. This makes the second lich-gate redundant. Hazelgrove suggests that: 'post-war commemorative art, religious and secular used everything modernist art rejected: romanticism, sentimentality, duty and honour' (2000: 35). She also suggests that 'spiritualism acted as a kind of living memorial to the dead and performed an identical function to such commemorative art' (Hazelgrove, 2000: 35).

Although the sisters' belief that eating is unspiritual seems ridiculous, the consumption of food was a source of anxiety in a Victorian woman's life as it was fraught with other connection and was related to spirituality. Brumberg suggests that to conform to the 'the ideal of Victorian femininity' women were supposed to 'put soul over body' (1988: 182). She continues:

The gentlewoman responded not to the lower senses of taste and smell but to the highest senses – sight and hearing which were used for moral and aesthetic purposes. (182).

The Lapith sisters, by appearing to conform to the ideals of womanhood, have an effect on George. He believes that they 'needed protection; they were altogether too frail, too spiritual for this world. They never ate... Georgiana was the most ethereal of all' (103). By describing Georgiana as appearing to be ethereal, George suggests what was seen to be desirable in women. Etiquette manuals at the time suggested that women should have an 'ethereal appetite' if they wanted to be seen as attractive (Brumberg, 1988: 180). Lack of appetite or food also 'symbolised the rejection of all carnal appetites' (Brumberg, 1988: 182). The connotation between food and sex meant that women who overate: 'were said to develop "a certain unspiritual or superanimal expression" that conveyed their base instincts' (Brumberg, 1988: 180). Victorian girls were warned against consuming a wide list of foods that were believed to 'stimulate the sensual rather than the moral nature of the girl' (Brumberg, 1988: 176). Alcohol and meat were considered to be especially problematic, with 'meat eating in excess [being] linked to adolescent insanity and to nymphomania' (Brumberg, 1988: 176).

George's discovery of the Lapith sisters, secretly, eating in a hidden room, gives him power over them as they fear being exposed and made to look

‘ridiculous’ (107). He is able to blackmail the eldest sister Georgiana into marrying him by threatening her with exposure. Part of the hold that George has over them is to do with the relationship between appetite for food and sexual appetite. The sisters are described eating a large feast which includes:

The carcass of a cold chicken, a bowl of fruit, a great ham deeply gashed to its heart of tenderest white and pink, the brown cannon ball of a cold plum pudding, a slender hock bottle, and a decanter of claret jostled one another for a place on this festive board. And round the table sat the three sisters, the three lovely Lapiths – eating! (106).

The use of the name the ‘three lovely Lapiths’ points to the sisters relationship to fraud and showmanship. It suggests their theatricality as it sounds like the stage name of a performer. The fasting girl Mollie Fancher was known as the ‘Brooklyn Enigma’ and later as ‘America’s Most Famous Invalid’ (Brumberg, 1988: 78). The surname Lapith also references classical mythology and was the name of a tribe from northern Thessaly. According to myth the Lapiths had a battle with the centaurs during the wedding feast of the king of the Lapiths. The battle started after the centaurs who were unaccustomed to alcohol attempted to rape the bride after becoming drunk on wine (March, 1998). The depiction of this scene also seems to satirise good manners as when George walks in on them Georgiana is frozen holding a ‘drumstick’ in her hand ‘her little finger elegantly crooked stood apart from the rest of her hand’ (107). The way that Georgiana is holding the drumstick with her finger crooked mocks the etiquette of drinking tea with the small finger stuck out. This demonstrates the way that the correct behaviour of womanhood is a performance. The Lapith sisters are performing a role in the same way that Robin in *Nightwood* is, although Robin rejects the prescribed role while the Lapith sisters seem to

embrace it in public, without doing so in private, the Lapith sisters are shown to be performers but also hypocrites and frauds.

Kafka's hunger artist, in contrast to the Lapith sisters, does not claim a spiritual motivation for his fast and he also does genuinely perform the fast. Kafka's hunger artist is a fraud, not because he cheats at fasting, but because of the misrepresentation of his act. The interest in the spectacle of exhibition fasting comes from seeing the performer overcome the need to eat for survival. The hunger artist finds fasting 'to be the easiest thing in the world' (270). This undermines his own performance as the point of exhibition fasting is that it is, unlike fasting girls, an act of will power. The admission that he finds fasting easy leads the hunger artist's audience to believe that: 'He is some kind of cheat who found it easy to fast because he had found a way to make it easy' (270). The hunger artist finds it easy to fast because he 'couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else' (277).

The hunger artist is an accurate depiction of the decline in interest in exhibition fasting after the First World War. The decline in the interest in fasting coincided with an increased interest in spiritualism, as after the war, people turned to it to deal with the loss. It is likely that Kafka's hunger artist was based on real life entertainers like Giovanni Succi and Henry Tanner (Spann, 1959. Mitchell, 1987). Exhibition fasting grew out of the interest in fasting girls. Henry Tanner fasted for forty-one days at Claradon Hall while under supervision. The fast was in response to the challenge issued by William Hammond to Mollie Fancher: Tanner decided to accept on her behalf to prove that it was possible to fast for a longer period of time than previously thought.

(Brumberg, 1988). Tanner had previously fasted for a long period of time after attempting suicide through starvation. It was thought, at this time, that people could only survive for twelve to fifteen days without food (Brumberg, 1988). Tanner would have been taught this when he was a student at the Eclectic Medicine School in Cincinnati. Tanner was surprised to discover that he did not die but also that he felt better after the fast. He continued to fast for another thirty days (Russell, 2005). For Tanner fasting had a spiritual component as he wanted to 'demonstrate the power of the mind over the body and to illustrate the independence of the soul from physical functions' (Brumberg, 1988: 89). Nieto-Galan suggests that 'Tanner stood strongly for anti-materialism, the power of the human will and the therapeutic virtues of fasting' (2015: 74). Brumberg suggests that Tanner had 'expected progressive starvation to bring with it prophetic dreams, visions, or other "psychical phenomena"' which did not occur (1988: 90). Other doctors argued that his fast had not been rigorous enough as he had used 'alcohol vapour baths' (Brumberg, 1988: 90). The point of Tanner's fast was to prove that it was possible for someone to fast for a longer period of time than previously thought and that it was possible for fasting girls like Fancher to survive without food for long periods of time. Tanner's fast undermined his own point, to a certain degree, because while he proved that it was possible to survive without food for a longer period of time than previously thought. He also proved that there was nothing miraculous about fasting girls like Fancher and Jacob.

Another famous exhibition faster who was also likely an influence on Kafka's hunger artist was Giovanni Succi. Succi, like Tanner also claimed a spiritual dimension to his fasting as he believed, amongst other things, that he was 'possessed by a benign spirit' which helped him to fast (Russell, 1995: 4). Succi also claimed to have the ability to 'drink poison without ill effect' (Mitchell,

1987: 243). Another of Succi's delusions was that he was that he was the son of God and that he was the 'spirit of the lion' that 'Spiritist circles' in Rome were waiting for as they 'had received word of the imminent arrival of a so-called 'lowengeist' that had the same initials as Succi (Mitchell, 1987: 243). Succi is another way of looking at the meaning of fasting as he was delusional and had spent time in an institution. Succi, after being accused of fraud, performed a supervised fast under the supervision of Dr Luigi Luciani. Luciani used his observations of Succi's fast to form the basis for his: 'classic text in the scientific study of inanition: *Fisiologia de Digiumo: studi sull' uomo* [The physiology of Inanition: Studies of Man]' (Mitchell, 1987: 239). When Luciani's text was translated into German the translator, Dr M.O Frankel, in his notes said that he has chosen to use the term *hungerkünstler* to distinguish it from the term *faster* which had a spiritual connotation to it (Mitchell, 1987: 241). This ignores the claims of the exhibition fasters like Tanner and Succi who believed that what they were doing had a spiritual element to it and that exhibition fasting was directly linked to the spectacle of fasting girls. Mitchell suggests that Kafka got the name for 'A Hunger Artist' from the translation of Luciani's book (1987).

In contrast to some fasting girls, like Mollie Fancher and the Lapith sisters in *Crome Yellow*, establishing the authenticity of the fast was important to exhibition fasters. The authenticity of the fast is also important to the hunger artist. One of the reasons that the hunger artist despairs is that, no matter what he does, he cannot prove to the audience that the fast is genuine. The hunger artist uses watchers selected from the audience to authenticate his performance. This committee is made up of audience members who were selected by the rest of the audience. The hunger artist tries to demonstrate to

these watchers that he is unable to cheat at fasting by talking to them and by singing weakly. These attempts just make them think that he is clever to be able to 'fill his mouth even while singing' (269). The watchers who observe the hunger artist's act are comprised of two types. The first believe that the hunger artist is a fraud and believe that they are complicit in the duplicity and so do not watch him closely so as to allow him time to cheat. The second type, watches the hunger artist closely so as to prove that he is a cheat. These watchers still leave convinced that he is cheating as: 'No-one could possibly watch the hunger artist continuously day and night, and so no-one could produce first-hand evidence that the fast had been rigorous and continuous' (270). These watchers still leave believing what they believed when they came in and nothing the hunger artist does can prove otherwise. The text suggests that the only one who knew that the hunger artist would not cheat at fasting out of professional pride are the 'initiates' (268). The initiates are presumably either his impresario or other fasters who suffer from the same problems as the hunger artist.

Although the hunger artist's fast is genuine he does not acknowledge that parts of his act are staged. The hunger artist's use of watchers made up of the audience members are there purely for effect as they cannot prove whether or not he broke the fast. They are there for dramatic effect and work in the same way that a magician uses a committee made up of audience members to verify a trick. The theatrical role that these watchers play in the hunger artist's performance is suggested by that fact that the committee normally comprises of the town butchers as 'the butcher is a stock character in old European carnival' (Marcus, 1991: 247). Another aspect of the hunger artist's performance that is purely theatrical is his use of a cage to stage his act in. The cage, like the watchers, would not stop the hunger artist from cheating if he

wanted to do so. Mitchell suggests that the use of a cage is a detail invented by Kafka, as while many exhibition fasters used many different kinds of props to stage their fast in, such as a barrel, none performed in a cage (1987). Coincidentally some mediums did perform in 'cages' to prove their authenticity (Silverman, 1996: 39). The hunger artist's cage also recalls the use of a 'spirit cabinet' by mediums like the Davenport brothers. The spirit cabinet was meant to suggest that the brothers could not cheat as they were tied up and placed inside it. This was meant to demonstrate that they were unable to create the manifestations themselves. It was also used to create the right atmosphere for the medium. Many mediums claimed to need darkness and privacy to contact the spirits. The restriction actually made it easier for the brothers to cheat as they were out of sight from the audience. The Davenports in reality were escape artists who would inspire acts like Houdini's (Kalush and Sloman: 2006). Mediums like the Davenports seem to have more in common with magicians and other forms of entertainment than any serious proof of the afterlife. The hunger artist's use of a committee of watchers suggests the role that psychical researchers like Cesare Lombroso, Charles Richet and Schrenck-Notzing played in the séances of mediums. They too, just like the hunger artist's watchers were being used to authenticate the medium's performance for their wider audience.

In the same way that the hunger artist uses his watchers and cage as part of his act he also uses religious imagery to stage it. This is another part of his act that is faked. The hunger artist after being shaken by the impresario falls against one of the women in a Christ-like pose. The narrator suggests that:

His head lolled on his breast as if it had landed there by chance... his legs clung close to each other at the knees yet scraped on the ground (171).

This suggests that this pose is a deliberate part of the performance. The hunger artist's performance uses other elements with religious significance. Kafka's hunger artist fasts for up to forty days as after this the spectators begin to lose interest. Forty days was a standard length for exhibition fasters to fast for as it took advantage of the biblical story of the temptation of Jesus in the desert. The use of it in 'A Hunger Artist' is significant as Bell suggests that: 'the point of the Gospel message is his refusal to be tempted by Satan, a point that rests on Jesus being hungry' (1985: 112). If Jesus like the hunger artist found it easy to fast then this would suggest that Jesus's refusal of Satan was unremarkable. Spiritualists believed that their séances were proof of an afterlife. Lamont suggests that: 'Spiritualists regularly argued that séance phenomena were proof of the authenticity of Christian miracles' (2006: 28). Presumably the reverse was true and that the exposure of fraudulent mediums would reduce these biblical miracles to being potential fakes as well. Houdini himself is meant to have acknowledged the similarities between his illusions and biblical miracles, claiming that if he had performed his 'feats' in biblical times that they might have been mistaken for miracles (Kalush and Sloman, 2006: 509).

Some spiritualists' insisted that magicians like Houdini and others also had the same powers as mediums because to accept that magicians and mediums performed in the same way using the same tricks would be admitting that their key beliefs were false (Lamont, 2006). Fasting acts like Tanner's resemble spiritualists and their attempts to prove that there was a life after death as they are both interested in proving claims about the relationship between spirituality and the body. G.K Nelson writes: 'it has been remarked that Spiritualism is singularly unspiritual in that it is concerned to demonstrate its claims by scientific methods' (1969: 134-135). These attempts to prove that

there was an afterlife that could communicate with the living demonstrates the anxiety that lay behind the need to believe in spiritualism. People required proof because they were dealing with the uncertainties brought on by the loss of life in World War One and with that the loss of faith in conventional religions.

The religious elements that can be seen in 'A hunger artist' have led some critics to argue that the hunger artist should be seen as a saint-like figure. Steinhauer (1969) argues that the hunger artist is an allegory describing an ascetic saint who fails, while Ozsathan and Satz (1978) suggest that 'The Hunger Artist may be seen as both the exemplification and the parody of Schopenhauer's vision of the Artist and Saint' (204). Arthur Schopenhauer in *The World as will and Representation* (1969) argued that only the artist and the saint were able to deny the will-to-live. The will-to-live is the motivating force that makes everything strive for survival and procreation. Schopenhauer praised the ascetic's abilities to overcome the will-to-live but he was critical of the superstition that accompanied it. Schopenhauer argued that the 'voluntarily chosen death by starvation [is] at the highest degree of asceticism. Its manifestation, however, has always been accompanied and thus rendered vague and obscure by much religious fanaticism and even superstition' (Schopenhauer, 1969: 401). Kafka's hunger artist's death fulfils his role as an ascetic saint stripped of all superstition but this also takes away the meaning of the act. A saint stripped of any meaning becomes a sideshow performer as people can no longer interpret the act as having any significance. One reading of the hunger artist's death is that he is a true saint figure who is misunderstood by his spectators who can no longer interpret religious phenomena. It is now interpreted, like spiritualism, as being entertainment. The hunger artist's desire for the public's attention and admiration undermines

this reading and stops the hunger artist from being read convincingly as being a saint-like figure.

Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow* and Franz Kafka's 'A Hunger Artist' both use the idea of fasting because of its religious and spiritual significance. Fasting was subject to the same debates and arguments as spiritualism and mediumship. Both of these texts show their fasters as frauds regardless of whether they actually complete the fast like the hunger artist or are faking the whole experience like the Lapith sisters. The sisters' are shown to be ludicrous by the revelation that they have been secretly eating the whole time and Georgiana is so concerned with how they will be perceived that she gives into George's blackmail. The Lapith sisters are being used to ridicule the current occupants of Crome who are interested in spiritualism. *Crome Yellow* uses the similarities between the ideology behind fasting girls and spiritualism, they were both meant to prove the existence of the miraculous, to expose the characters with an interest in spiritualism like Priscilla, Barbecue-Smith and Ivor as being as equally fraudulent and vapid. *Crome Yellow* also questions the inherent value of these things that are connected to the spiritual side of life like fasting, mediums and the building of monuments; it suggests that they are all pretty useless and pointless and questions why this is so.

'A Hunger Artist' also questions the value of fasting as although the hunger artist does perform the fast like he claims, he does not find it difficult to do so. The point of an exhibition faster's fast is that it relies on it being a struggle of human will to overcome hunger. Equally the hunger artist does not claim that his lack of appetite is miraculous like a fasting girl. The hunger artist does not claim any spiritual motive for performing his fast. The failure to conform to either category of fasting renders the hunger artist a fraud: which makes his

act and death meaningless. Both texts show that whether fasting is authentic or fraudulent, does not matter, as it is ultimately devoid of any meaning, and its connotations of spirituality turn out to be hollow. This is in keeping with contemporary debates around spiritualism, both texts are questioning the value and use of fasting, both as a private activity and as a public fast.

Chapter Three: Freak Shows and Spiritualism.

This chapter will focus on how all four texts incorporate elements taken from the freak show and its relationship to fraud. The place of fraudulence in the freak show is complicated as, like a magic act, it has deception and fakery at the heart of it. As noted in the introduction Robert Bogdan has identified four different categories of freak show performer. A 'born freak' was someone who was born with a 'physical anomaly'; a 'self-made freak' was a performer who had done something 'unusual enough for exhibit' like a tattooed person. A 'novelty act' was used to describe an act like a snake charmer or sword swallower (1996: 24-26). These acts were not considered to be fraudulent by the standards of the freak show even though they would rely on hyperbole and exaggeration to promote their act. The term 'gaffed freak' was used to describe acts that were considered fraudulent within the freak show. Bogdan suggests that this included acts like 'the armless wonder who tucked his hands under a tight fitting shirt' (1996: 24). Bogdan acknowledges the difficulties of these terms as all the acts were engaged in some form of fakery through how they were presented. He suggests that: 'Fabrications and misrepresentations were just part of the taken for granted hype of the freak show world' (1996: 25). Bogdan also argues that people are not simply born a freak even if they are born with abnormality. He instead suggests that being a "Freak" is a way of thinking about and presenting people – a frame of mind and a set of practices' (1996: 24). Bogdan identified two modes of presentation for a freak show performer - the 'aggrandised mode' and the 'exotic mode'. He defines the 'aggrandised mode' as being practices that suggest that the performer is prestigious. This would include giving them things like titles. The 'exotic mode'

stressed the performer's difference. The performer 'received an identity that appealed to people's interest in the culturally strange, the primitive, the bestial, the exotic' (28). This chapter will suggest that elements taken from the freak show can be seen in the works of modernist writers and that this is because of modernist writers' interest in fraud. It will use Thomas Mann's 'Mario and the Magician', Franz Kafka's 'A Hunger Artist', Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* and Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow* to look at how these texts all contain elements related to the freak show in order to explore fraudulence in modern society and to suggest that people are now unable to distinguish between the real and the fraudulent.

In 'Mario and the Magician' the magician Cipolla presents himself in the 'aggrandised mode' of freak show presentation by billing himself as the Cavaliere Cipolla. The use of a title was standard in this form of presentation. Cipolla continues to conform to this mode of presentation when he brags about how he was 'lauded' by the newspapers (130). Cipolla's costume also conforms to this as he wears a sash which another member of the audience explains to the narrator goes with the title of Cavaliere. The narrator states that he has never heard of the title including a sash and that 'perhaps the sash was sheer pose' (128). The narrator is acknowledging that part of Cipolla's act is fraudulent which makes his later belief in Cipolla's powers strange. Freak show performers who were presented in the 'aggrandised mode' often wore things like medals and sashes to suggest their importance and that they were prestigious. Cipolla is using these conventions to suggest his own importance. Cipolla's use of conventions of presentation from a freak show is suggestive of how the narrator sees him and it demonstrates the narrator's interest in Cipolla's deformity.

The narrator draws the reader's attention to Cipolla's deformity throughout the text. The narrator initially describes Cipolla's deformity as being: 'Not very clear; the chest was too high...but the corresponding malformation of the back did not sit between the shoulders. It took the form of a sort of hip or buttock bump' (132). The narrator continues to focus on Cipolla's deformity throughout the text by referring to Cipolla as 'this self-confident cripple' (145) and states that he sits with 'the complacent, pompous air cripples so often have' (137). This suggests that Cipolla's deformity is part of the spectacle for the narrator despite Cipolla's act being that of a magician rather than that of a freak show performer. Deformity is often associated with villains in horror films. The film *Freaks* (1932), demonstrates this as although the film initially shows a sympathetic portrayal of freak show performers, the director Tod Browning used real freak show performers as the stars, the mood changes in the film after one of their own is hurt. The film then turns into a horror film as the freak show performers seek revenge (Hawkins, 1996). The relationship between deformity and horror films suggests that Cipolla is meant to be seen as the villain of the tale and it shows the audience's mounting fear of him and the belief that he has genuine abilities.

Cipolla exploits his deformity and its associations as a useful tool of self-promotion. He suggests that it is his deformity that forced him to develop his abilities. Cipolla implies this when he states that his deformity has forced him to 'conquer life' with his 'mental and spiritual parts' rather than physically (130). Cipolla claims that his performance is difficult for him by telling the audience that 'my calling is hard and my health not of the best' (130). The admission that he finds his act hard on his health and difficult makes it seem more real for the audience as ordinarily magicians were meant to make their act appear effortless to keep up the illusion that it is magic. Mediums, on the

other hand, as they claimed what they did was real, were able to show that they found it difficult (Lamont, 2006). The narrator believes Cipolla's claim that he finds his act mentally or physically draining to do as he believes that Cipolla, who drinks and smokes throughout the performance is doing so for the 'replenishment of his energy' (140). Cipolla uses these ideas to make his act seem genuine. Cipolla's act incorporates elements from different forms of entertainment blurring the line between a magician's, a medium's and a freak show performer's act. Cipolla uses the negative stereotypes around deformity to make his act seem more convincing. 'Mario and the Magician' demonstrates that being seen as a freak can be bestowed on someone through the response of the gazer, but that it is also an identity which can be used for a person's own ends.

Cipolla's claim that he needs alcohol and cigarettes to re-energise himself contrasts with the hunger artist's desire to starve himself. The hunger artist like Cipolla suffers from his audience re-categorising his act as being that of a freak show performer. In the past, when he was successful, the hunger artist's act seems to have resembled exhibition fasters' performances. He would fast for a set amount of time, with a recovery period in-between performances. The hunger artist's desire to continue fasting has changed the nature of his performance as it is no longer an endurance act. This changes how the audience perceives his act. The narrator suggests:

It was not perhaps mere fasting that had brought him to such skeleton thinness that many people had regretfully to keep away from his exhibitions, because the sight of him was too much for them (270).

This suggests that there has been a change in how the hunger artist's act is being read by the audience. Kafka's 'A Hunger Artist' depicts the historical

decline of the interest in the spectacle of fasting, which relates to the decline of interest in the freak show. Fahy suggests that a contributing factor in the decline of the popularity of the freak show was the increased understanding and awareness of these conditions meant that doctors were increasingly able to identify, label and explain these conditions to the public. Fahy states that: 'Science... gave freak show performers new labels that supposedly explained their conditions' (2006: 12). This meant that the freak show was read differently to how it had been previously.

Mitchell suggests that Kafka's hunger artist, in addition to being influenced by the spectacle of exhibition, also was influenced by freak show performers like Claude Seurat 'The Human Skeleton' (1987). Acts like Seurat's differed from exhibition fasters as the performance was based around the exhibition of the body rather than through fasting. The different focus of the acts can be seen in the difference in costume that they wore. Seurat performed in a 'loincloth with holes cut into it' to expose his prominent hip bones (Altick, 1978: 261). This serves to show off and emphasise his thinness. Exhibition fasters, on the other hand, would have performed in their street clothes (Mitchell, 1987). The influence of Seurat on Kafka's hunger artist can be seen in his choice of costume as he performs in just black tights which like Seurat's costume emphasise his body (Blyn, 2000). The difference in focus between the two different types of performance means that acts like that of Seurat can potentially be seen as more exploitative. Seurat's as part of his act would: 'crawl and shuffle around the stage –to have his squalid trunk gripped and his clammy extremities squeezed by hundreds' (Altick, 1978: 262). A contemporary source praised Seurat for being one of the: 'True examples of thinness' suggesting that Seurat's health might be only 'slightly affected or possibly perfect health is enjoyed' in contrast to performers suffering from a

wasting disease (Gooldin quoting Gould and Pyle, 2003: 41). There is no definite diagnosis for what medical condition Seurat suffered from but it has been suggested that it might have been either 'acute muscular dystrophy' or 'anorexia nervosa' (Nickell, 2008:102. Fiedler, 1978: 134). This seems to suggest that rather than having a genetic disorder, Seurat was an early example of anorexia nervosa in men. Although anorexia was more commonly associated with young women and girls rather than men and boys, Sir William Withey Gull noted that he had seen the condition in males (Brumberg, 1988: 120). Gull rejected the earlier term 'hysterical anorexia' as hysteria would imply that the condition was only seen in women. He preferred the term "nervosa" because it implicated the central nervous system instead of the uterus and allowed that the condition could exist in males' (Brumberg, 1988: 120).

Kafka's hunger artist does seem to be suffering from a condition like anorexia as he believes it is stopping fasting that makes him ill. This recalls the claim of Sarah Jacob's parents who believed that offering her food made her ill. The hunger artist reacts badly when an audience member tells him that his 'melancholy' is caused by the fast (272). The hunger artist: 'Reacted with an outbreak of fury and to the general alarm began to shake the bars of his cage like a wild animal' (272). The impresario stops these outbursts by showing the audience members photographs of the hunger artist 'on the fortieth day of the fast lying in a bed almost dead with exhaustion (273). This stops the hunger artist's outbreak. Another explanation for this is that the outburst and the production of the photographs are part of the act and one that has been decided between the hunger artist and the impresario. The hunger artist's initial outburst resembles that of another freak show performer, the wild man

or cannibal. This points to the idea of deception. The text also suggests that this has happened on more than one occasion. It states that the hunger artist:

Time and again in good faith he stood by the bars listening to the impresario, but as soon as the photographs appeared he always let go and sank with a groan back onto his straw, and the reassured public could once more come close and gaze at him (273)

This suggests that the hunger artist and the impresario are working together and that they may be employing confederates, like Cipolla does, to play the audience member. The text also contradicts itself as earlier in the story the narrator states that the impresario stops the fast at forty days because the spectators lose interest, not because the hunger artist is made ill by going over the forty days. This demonstrates that the narrator is unreliable. Robin Blyn argues that 'the artist, the impresario and the narrator' can all be seen 'as collaborators in the same hoax' (2000: 145).

The argument that the hunger artist, the impresario and the narrator are working together to fool the spectators and the reader suggests that the photographs themselves are staged. The narrator explains that these photographs are 'also on sale to the public' (273). Many performers at the freak show would sell photographs of themselves to visitors, these photographs which were known as *carte de visite* were extremely popular (Blyn, 2000). The proceeds of the sale of *carte de vistas* would go to the performer (Blyn, 2000). Leja discussing the trial of the spirit photographer William H. Mumler suggests that this 'case helped to consolidate an experience of photography as a medium simultaneously of truth and illusion' (Leja, 2004: 58). The photographs of the hunger artist conform to this as they claim to show the reality of what happens to the hunger artist if he continues

his fast but instead these photographs may well have been posed. The photographs serve to remind the audience of the dangers of fasting and re-enforces the idea that it is dangerous. The photograph of the hunger artist also foreshadows his death (Duttlinger, 2007).

Both 'Mario and the Magician' and 'A Hunger Artist' contain an actual performer, with connections to the freak show, as the central character. *Nightwood* and *Crome Yellow* both differ from this as they use characters who are connected to the freak show to throw the main characters into sharper relief. Fiedler suggests that modernist texts like *Crome Yellow* and *Nightwood* deal 'not with freaks on show but in society – or rather "Freaks" more like their authors than Barnum's performers' (1978: 284). They also use the freak as a metaphor for the main characters. They show the freak in real life.

The first chapter argued that Robin was presented fraudulently as a somnambulist; the narrator also presents Robin in the guise of various freak show performers. *Nightwood* suggests that Robin is 'a woman who is beast turning human' (32). This relates her to performers who were billed as being the missing link between humans and animals. This act capitalised on the interest in Darwin's theory of evolution and that people were 'descended from ape-like creatures' (Drimmer, 1973: 143). Krao Farini started to perform in the 1880s while still a child (Drimmer, 1973). She was promoted as 'Darwin's Missing Link' as she had thick hair covering her arms and legs. She was billed as being 'half way between human and monkey' (Bogdan, 1990: 115). Audiences were 'fraudulently' told that she had 'pouches in her mouth, prehensile toes, cartilage in her nose, and other simian features' (Bogdan, 1990: 115). It was also claimed that she had 'been captured in the forests of Laos' and that she

was part of a tribe of people who were covered in fur (Rothfels, 1996: 162-163).

Freak show performers like Krao were promoted in the exotic mode and this was shown in the photographs of them by depicting them in jungle settings. In photographs Krao was: 'Regularly depicted reclining on her side in a jungle setting'. This was a 'recognisably erotic pose' which 'was also adopted by actresses, who were widely believed to be little more than prostitutes, in their publicity materials' (Durbach, 2009: 104). *Nightwood* mimics the presentation of Krao in how it introduces Robin in the chapter 'La Somnambula'. The narrator suggests that Robin's hotel room is: 'Like a painting by the *douanier* Rousseau' as Robin 'seemed to lie in a jungle trapped in a drawing room' (31). Robin is laid:

on a bed, surrounded by a confusion of potted plants, exotic palms and cut flowers, faintly oversung by the notes of unseen birds, which seem to have been forgotten – left without the usual silencing cover... half flung off the support of the cushions from which, in a moment of threatened consciousness she had turned her head, lay the young woman, heavy and dishevelled. Her legs, in white flannel trousers, were spread as if in a dance, the thick lacquered pumps looking too lively for the arrested step. Her hands, long and beautiful, lay on either side of her face (30-31).

Robin is depicted in the manner of a freak show performer to suggest how she is seen and treated by the other characters. She is shown to be a freak in real life by having this scene observed by Felix who is watching O'Connor treat Robin while hidden behind some of the palms. *Nightwood's* use of the *carte de viste* contrasts with that of the hunger artist as he staged the photograph and

claims they are real while Robin in real life resembles the staging of the freak show. The point of presenting Robin in this way suggests how she is objectified by the other characters in the text. The depiction of women reclining also had another connotation as this pose was also found in 'Victorian pornography' which would 'often feature naked women lounging in a similar position' (Durbach, 2009: 104). Durbach suggests that: 'the very act of displaying one's body publically rendered the female performer, regardless of the context and nature of the performance, a sexual object' (2009: 104). The displaying of one's self is warned against in *Nightwood* as the text suggests that: 'The woman who presents herself to the spectator as a 'picture' forever arranged, is, for the contemplative mind, the chiefest danger' (32). In this scene the spectator is Felix as he is watching O'Connor treat her. Felix will later admit that: 'I had an image of her, but that's not the same thing. An image is a stop the mind makes between uncertainties' (100). The text is using the presentation of a freak show performer as a metaphor for how Robin is seen in the text. She is the object of Felix, Nora and Jenny's obsessions.

Barnes continues to present Robin in the guise of a freak as Matthew O'Connor attempts to explain her to Nora, in an effort to console her. Robin Blyn suggests that O'Connor never explains what anything means and that he only 'further mystif[ies] with his rampant assertions' (2000: 152). O'Connor tells Nora that it is: 'Telling my stories to people like you, to take the mortal agony out of their guts... that and nothing else has made me the liar I am' (122). This suggests that O'Connor is using these stories as a strategy to try to explain Robin's behaviour to the other characters in an effort to console them. One of the anecdotes that O'Connor tells is about a performer he had seen at Coney Island who he explicitly relates Robin to. O'Connor tells Nora that:

Robin was outside the “human type” – a wild thing caught in a woman’s skin, monstrously alone, monstrously vain; like the paralysed man at Coney Island – (take away a man’s conformity and you take away his remedy) – who had to lie on his back in a box, but the box was lined with velvet, his fingers jewelled with stones, and suspended over him where he could never take his eyes off, a sky blue mounted mirror, for he wanted to enjoy his own “difference” (131-132).

This implies that Robin is only interested in contemplating herself, her position in life and her own difference. This is further suggested in the text as O’Connor continues:

That’s why she cannot put “herself in another’s place”, she herself is the only “position”; so she resents it when you reproach her with what she had done. She knows she is innocent because she cannot do anything in relation to anyone but herself (132).

This suggests Robin’s singular position. The text is always keen to reinforce the idea of Robin as being innocent and this refers back to her being a somnambulist and having no will.

Matthew O’Connor’s claim that he tells these stories to try to help people suggests that some of his earlier stories are referring to the other characters. One of the stories that he tells is of Mademoiselle Basquette. Although this story precedes O’Connor and Felix’s meeting with Robin it seems to refer to her. O’Connor suggests that Felix is ‘damned from the waist up’ and that he reminds him of Mademoiselle Basquette who was ‘damned from the waist down, a girl without legs, built like a medieval abuse’ (23). Mademoiselle Basquette was abducted by a sailor as she was as: ‘gorgeous and bereft as the figure head of a Norse vessel that the ship has abandoned’ (24). After the sailor

has had his 'will' he puts Mademoiselle Basquette 'down on her board five miles out of town, so she had to roll herself back again, weeping' (24). The description of Mademoiselle Basquette as being like a figurehead on a ship suggests both the tattoo that Nikka has of a ship and the way that Robin reminds Felix of a 'figurehead in a museum' (34). O'Connor uses some of the same language to describe Mademoiselle Basquette and Robin. He states that in the case of Mademoiselle Basquette: 'the other half of her [is] still in God's bag of tricks' (22). Robin, on the other hand, held 'God's bag of tricks upside down' (101). This suggests that Madam Basquette is being used as a figurative opposite to Robin. It is suggestive of the way that Robin is picked up by her different lovers in the course of the text and seems to have no motive for either being with them or leaving them.

The story of Mademoiselle Basquette is also significant as although she is connected to the freak show because of her disability, Mademoiselle Basquette is not a freak show performer and she is depicted in her everyday life. In *Nightwood*, though it contains characters who are connected to the circus like Nora and Frau Mann, and there are characters like Felix and Robin who are drawn to the circus, at no point do any of the performers actually perform their acts. The description of freak show performers at work comes from O'Connor's stories. Even during Nora's first meeting with Robin which takes place at the circus, it is the animals that are performing. *Nightwood* shows characters who are performers in their daily lives to suggest the ways in which the main characters Robin, Felix and Matthew O'Connor are also performing in their lives. It is suggesting that they can all be seen as freak show performers as they are all excluded from mainstream society.

Nightwood further connects the main characters to freak show performers through their use of titles. The performers in *Nightwood* like Cipolla in 'Mario and the Magician' use titles as part of their stage names to present themselves in aggrandised mode. *Nightwood* contrasts the performers' use of names such as 'Princess Nadja, a Baron von Tink, a Principessa Stasera y Stasero and a Duchess of Broadback' with the titles that the other characters use to suggest their similarities (10). Felix fraudulently uses the title Baron, which has been handed down to him by his father. It is not clear in the text whether or not Felix is aware that his title is not genuine as his parents both died soon after his birth. The text suggests that Felix is drawn to these performers as 'He became for a little while a part of their splendid and reeking falsification' (10). Robin, through her marriage to Felix, also becomes a 'Baronin' (39). This further connects her to the freak show. It also suggests that Robin is at different times performing different roles that are being projected onto her. Felix continues to refer to Robin as the Baronin after she has left him. Matthew O'Connor is usually referred to by the title doctor as well. This demonstrates that the characters are all performing in *Nightwood* but in their real lives rather than on stage.

Crome Yellow, in contrast, to *Nightwood*, does not deal with characters who are genuinely excluded from society but rather characters who make up society. *Crome Yellow's* use of the freak show is more critical and satirical than that of *Nightwood*. It argues that characters like Priscilla, Barbecue-Smith and Ivor's eccentricities turns them into freak show performers or caricatures. One of the characters who could be connected to the freak show is Sir Hercules, who is a dwarf. Hercules rejects the identity of a freak show performer and to do this he cuts himself off from society by surrounding himself with other dwarves. Despite Hercules's rejection of the freak show identity the text uses

techniques from a freak show to describe him. Hercules, like Felix, is connected to the freak show through the use of his title. In contrast to Felix Hercules's title is real. *Crome Yellow* inverts the standard freak show presentation to suggest that Hercules cannot escape from being seen in this way no matter what he does. This is used to contrast the main characters in *Crome Yellow* and to suggest that through their eccentric behaviour and interests they are turning themselves into performers.

The text continues to present Hercules in the manner of a freak show performer as it tells the reader about Hercules's many accomplishments. Bogdan suggests that another technique that was used to present performers in the 'aggrandised mode' was to stress that 'with the exception of the particular physical, mental or behavioural condition, the freak was an upstanding high status person with talents of a socially prestigious nature (1990: 108). This can be seen in *Crome Yellow's* description of Hercules as a young man. It suggests that Hercules at 'twelve' is 'exquisitely proportioned' apart from his head which was disproportionately bigger than his body, but was otherwise 'very handsome and nobly shaped' (62). Hercules remains attractive and intelligent as an adult. He is described as: 'but for his dwarfish stature, he would have taken his place among the handsomest and most accomplished young men of his time' (63). The text continues to emphasise Hercules's accomplishments which include being 'well read in Greek and Latin authors, as well as in all the moderns of any merit' (63). Hercules is also a talented musician and poet, although he refuses to publish any of his poetry as: 'if the public were to read them it would not be because I am a poet, but because I am a dwarf' (63). Hercules's refusal to try to gain any recognition for his work for fear of being read as a novelty contrasts with characters like Barbecue-Smith who have embraced it. *Crome Yellow* relates writers and poets

to magicians through Denis and then to freak show performers through Hercules.

To avoid being seen as a freak Hercules cuts himself off from society by turning Crome into a 'private world of his own' where everything is 'proportionable to himself' (65). Hercules achieves this by hiring other dwarves to be his servants and by marrying another dwarf Filomena. Filomena's father is rumoured to be thinking about selling her to the freak show. The text contrasts Hercules with his son Ferdinando who does not have dwarfism. Earlier, the text lists Hercules's height as a child stating that: 'At three years he weighed but twenty-four pounds, and at six, though he could read and write perfectly and showed a remarkable aptitude for music, he was no larger and heavier than a well-grown child of two' (61). This same technique is used to describe Hercules's son Ferdinando. The text suggests that Ferdinando was: 'At eighteen months... almost as tall as their smallest jockey, who was a man of thirty-six' (68). The comparison of Ferdinando to the jockey demonstrates that in Hercules's world it is Ferdinando who is seen as the abnormal one as he is a child who is nearly as tall as an adult. The text, by comparing the heights of Hercules and Ferdinando, suggests that what is determined as being abnormal is socially constructed as it relies on a point of comparison that is seen to be normal.

This can further be seen when Ferdinando returns to Crome as an adult after being away first at school and then on a grand tour. Ferdinando brings with him some friends and their staff. The return of Ferdinando and his friends creates a point of contrast and this threatens to turn the household back into spectacles. This can be seen when Ferdinando and his guests laugh at Simon, the butler, as he attempts to see over the table to serve them. The household

normally uses a table that is the right size for them. Hercules and Filomena normally 'dine at a small table twenty inches high' but have had to get the old family dining table out to accommodate Ferdinando and their guests (70). It is the point of contrast that makes the dwarves into spectacles rather than their height. Ferdinando and his guests turn the dwarves back into spectacles, figuratively and literally, as they turn Simon into a performer for their amusement:

In the middle of the ravaged table old Simon, the butler, so primed with drink that he could scarcely keep his balance, dancing a jig... The three young men sat round, thumping the table with their hand or with their empty wine bottles, shouting and laughing encouragement (71).

This scene ends when Ferdinando 'throws a handful of walnuts at the dancer's head' which causes Simon to fall over (71). Hercules witnesses his son and his friends' cruelty by peering through the keyhole of the door. Hercules overhears his son say that: 'Tomorrow... we'll have a concerted ballet of the whole household' to which one of his friends replies: 'with father Hercules wearing his club and lion skin' (77). This threat puns on Hercules's name and stature as it was a common name for a strong man performer. The threat to turn him into a spectacle is Hercules's worst nightmare. To avoid this fate Hercules gives Filomena an overdose and kills himself by slitting his wrists in the bath. Hercules's decision to kill himself and Filomena rather than being turned into a spectacle contrasts with the main characters' eagerness to be seen as one. The story of Hercules together with the story about the Lapith sisters suggests the changing attitude to the idea of eccentricity. And this is being used to discuss the guests at Crome.

The suggestion that the present day occupants of Crome have turned themselves into performers and caricatures can be seen on the day of the fair. Denis sees Priscilla and realises that he is just like her. This has been prompted by him seeing Jenny's sketch of him pretending to read while really watching Anne dance. This makes him realise that he is caricature, a freak and a fraud as well. It can also be seen in the guests' participation of the fair as some of them perform as attractions at the fair. Denis is to write a poem; Jenny is to play the drums. Gombauld is told by Anne that he is to be a 'lighting artist'. He suggests that: 'It's a pity, I'm not Ivor... I could throw in a picture of their Aura for an extra sixpence' (139). Mary tells him that 'psychical research is a perfectly serious subject' (139). Psychical research and spiritualism are shown to be anything but serious in *Crome Yellow* and its inclusion here when they are discussing performing at the fair is further to suggest its fraudulence and relationship to entertainment spectacles. Mr Scogan performs as a fortune teller, under the name 'Madam Seosotris, The Sorceress of Ecbantana' (148). He performs alongside other entertainments like a 'Tattooed Woman' and 'the Largest Rat in the World' (146). Scogan dresses for the part by wearing a 'bandana' and 'pendulous brass ear-rings' (148). This costume is a stereotype of a gypsy fortune teller. Scogan uses his disguise to attempt to arrange a meeting with a young woman. He does this by tricking her into meeting him by reading her fortune. Scogan manipulates the woman's vanity as he tells her, as Madam Seosotris, that: 'The fates don't say whether you settle down to married life and have four children or whether you will try to go into the cinema and have none. They are only specific about this one incident' (148 - 149). Scogan tells her that she will meet a man that Sunday who will be 'a small man with a sharp nose, not exactly good looking, nor precisely young, but fascinating' (149). He also tells her that the man will ask her if she knows

the way to paradise to which she is to answer yes and take him down to 'a little hazel cope'. He also warns her that 'if anything untoward happens to you must blame your own curiosity' (149). Scrogan's disguise as a fortune teller is reminiscent of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) in which Mr Rochester predicts Jane's fortune while in disguise as a gypsy fortune teller. This also satirises the normal readings of clairvoyants who suggest that their client will meet a tall, dark and handsome man. Scrogan's predictions to the young woman show the potential for a fortune teller or a medium to dupe their client for their own ends. It suggests that all fortune tellers and mediums are frauds. By having Scrogan perform at the fair as a fortune teller the text relates this fortune telling and mediumship to the freak show demonstrating that deception and fraud is a part of them as well.

These four texts all use elements taken from the freak show. 'Mario and the Magician' and 'A Hunger Artist' both use a performer that can be connected to the freak show although this is not primarily what their act is about. Cipolla's deformity and the narrator's reaction to it suggests his connection to the freak show and that this is a reinterpretation of his act as he is a magician. The hunger artist's act is also subject to reinterpretation by his audience as his desire to continue to fast and the fact that he finds it easy changes the meaning of the act so that his act becomes the sight of his body rather than an act of overcoming hunger. Both of these text employ aspects from the freak show to suggest how these acts are fundamentally fraudulent.

Furthermore 'Mario and the Magician', *Nightwood* and *Crome Yellow* all give some of their characters titles to suggest their connection to the freak show. Cipolla's title of Caviliere demonstrates his arrogance and his high opinion of himself. Although it is not clear if this is his genuine personality or stage

persona that he puts on. It also suggests that his act should not have been read as being genuine by the narrator as it shows that a lot of what Cipolla does is related to his stage craft. *Nightwood* also gives its characters titles, Felix, Robin and Matthew O'Connor all at times use titles. They are contrasted with the circus performers to show their underlying connection. It suggests that they are freaks in real life rather than on stage. This shows a change in attitude to what the freak meant. Robin is also shown as being a freak in real life by having her introduced in a scene that appears to be like the set of a *carte de viste*. This is part of an ongoing strategy to explain her strange behaviour. *Nightwood* is filled with references to circuses, freak show and other spectacles, from the narrator descriptions to the stories that O'Connor tells and of course real performers.

Robert Bogdan in his book *Freak Show* (1990) while discussing Diane Arbus's work has suggested that the 'freak has become a metaphor for estrangement, alienation, marginality, the dark side of human experience' (1990: 2). All this can be seen in *Nightwood* as the image of the freak is used to try to explain and make sense of Robin's behaviour. *Crome Yellow* on the other hand uses its freaks to critique its main characters' eccentricities and foibles to suggest that it make them like freaks and caricatures. Sir Hercules' rejection of the identity of being seen as a freak is used to critique them as it suggests that they have adopted this as a persona. It is used to show a changing attitude to being seen as a spectacle.

While the exoticism of the freak show has become a desirable pose to cultivated, nevertheless this pose is simultaneously critiqued by these writers as being fraudulent. Each of these texts shows a different view of what being a freak means. They also depict being a freak as an identity that can be adopted

and exploited for an individual's own end and something that can be projected onto another through the gaze. 'Mario and the Magician' and 'A Hunger Artist' are both performers who at times exploit elements from the freak show to help promote their shows but at the same time cannot control their audiences negative responses to its use or the audiences reinterpretation of their acts. *Nightwood* and *Crome Yellow* both show how the freak show performers identity can be used by others in society. In *Nightwood* the freak show performer's identity is used to show how characters like Robin, Felix and O'Connor are excluded by mainstream society and it suggests a kinship with the freaks because they are all outsiders. *Crome Yellow* on the other hand is critical of its characters' appropriation of this identity and shows it as being attention seeking and fundamentally fraudulent.

Conclusion.

This dissertation has argued that at the same time that modernist writers were being accused by some critics of writing fraudulent works or literary hoaxes, they were also engaged with writing about fraudulence through their use of different types of performers whose acts revolved around fraud. It has argued that the use of performers in these texts can be read as being a response to spiritualism. This dissertation has shown that mediums were just one of many strange entertainment spectacles that were controversial because of accusations of fraud and these included magicians, fasting girls and exhibition fasters, somnambulists and mesmerists, and freak show performers.

Furthermore magicians had a complicated relationship with mediums as many famous magicians were anti-spiritualist and would expose mediums. This is despite the fact that mediums and magicians shared many underlying similarities. This dissertation has argued that these four writers are drawing on these contemporary issues in their works.

Both Thomas Mann's 'Mario and the Magician' and Franz Kafka's 'A Hunger Artist' set the story around a performer. These two stories share a common theme as they use the performer and his performance to suggest that because of spectacles like mediumship and somnambulism, which claim to be genuine but share many attributes with other forms of entertainment, it is no longer possible to distinguish between what is real or not. Spectacles like mediumship and somnambulism, were found in a range of places from purely theatrical places like Barnum's American Museum to being studied by doctors like Charcot which resembles the way that mediums were studied by psychical researchers and how they use them to authenticate their performance.

Thomas Mann may have been drawing on his own experience having attended

a series of séances with Schrenck-Notzing and he was accused of having been mesmerised.

Thomas Mann's 'Mario and the Magician' is drawing on the debates around the authenticity of mediumship and somnambulism. It uses the conventions of a magic show and the interaction between a magician and an audience as a vehicle to examine whether this phenomenon is genuine or not. It uses the tricks that Cipolla performs on his audience to examine how if it was possible to put someone into a somnambulant state it could be exploited for someone's own ends. It expresses the anxiety felt that this type of phenomena could be real. 'Mario and the Magician' weighs up the possibility that this could be real through the narrator who switches back and forth between reading Cipolla as just being a magician and at other times being convinced that he has a genuine power to control people through mesmerism. Cipolla's illusions consist of mesmerising his subjects into a somnambulant trance and then making them perform humiliating stunts against their will. Early in his act Cipolla claims that there is a difference between the desire to do something and the actual action. The text uses a magic show to debate this idea. That someone while in a trance can be subject to another's will can be seen in mediumship where it was claimed that the medium was just the vehicle for the will of the spirits. They were meant to have no will themselves but this was undermined when they were revealed to be frauds as they then definitely had a will and a desire to do something. Cipolla's act differs from the usual presentation of a magician by implying that he finds the act of mesmerising someone hard, that it takes a toll on him. This is implied by Cipolla's drinking and smoking throughout the evening or at least the narrator claims that this is the reason. This makes it resemble a medium's performance as they, unlike magicians, were able to

show that it was difficult to produce the phenomena as it made their act seem more authentic.

'Mario and the Magician' balances the elements that are used to suggest that the act is authentic with elements taken from the freak show and therefore are fraudulent. One of these is Cipolla having a deformity. Cipolla exploits his deformity in his performance by drawing attention to it early in the act and by implying that it is through having a deformity that he was able to develop his abilities. Cipolla can also be seen to exploit the negative connotations around deformity and casts himself as a villain to make his act seem more impressive. That Cipolla's villainy is just part of his act is suggested by his use of a title as part of his stage name which is taken from freak show tradition and the aggrandised mode of presentation. This implies that while Cipolla's deformity is genuine, he like other freak show performers is engaged in hyperbole and fraudulence in the rest of his performance. The narrator's persistent interest in Cipolla's deformity throughout the performance suggests that being a freak is something that can be bestowed through the gaze of an observer but also an identity that can be adopted or exploited by the individual. This can also be seen in *Nightwood*.

'A Hunger Artist' also shares the concern that people are no longer able to distinguish between what is genuine or not. It is concerned that because of spiritualism, people are unable to recognise something that once had spiritual significance like fasting as being genuine and instead they interpret it as being fraudulent and just as entertainment. Simultaneously it questions the overall worth of something like fasting. The hunger artist, in contrast to Cipolla, is believed to be a fake by his audience because he makes his fast appear too easy. The point of an exhibition faster's act is that it should be difficult because

it is about overcoming the need to survive. It is about will power. The hunger artist then is a fake because he finds fasting to be easy, not because he cheats at fasting. The hunger artist's claim to find fasting easy and his belief that it is stopping the fast that make him ill resembles the claims of fasting girls and the Lapith sisters in *Crome Yellow*. The hunger artist unlike fasting girls does not claim any spiritual motive for his fast, nor is it shown to be miraculous in any way as he dies from starvation at the end. Kafka presents his hunger artist as having no spiritual motivation for his act unlike the real life exhibition fasters who may have inspired the hunger artist. The title of the piece also suggests the lack of spiritual connotations as the term 'Hungerkünstler' was likely taken from the German translation of the study performed on Giovanni Succi. The term was picked by the translator to avoid the religious and spiritual connotations of the term faster.

Like the other texts that have been looked at 'A Hunger Artist' contains elements that are taken from the freak show. The hunger artist through his continued desire to fast turns his act from being like an exhibition faster to being like a freak show performer like Tanner's. There are other ways in which 'A Hunger Artist' takes imagery and ideas from the freak show these include: the hunger artist's resemblance to a cannibal performer when an audience member suggests that it is the fasting that is making him ill and the subsequent reminder that there are *carte de vistas* for sale. This implies that the hunger artist and his impresario are working together. In both 'Mario and the Magician' and 'A Hunger Artist' the text ends with the performers' death which is ultimately shown to be empty because of their fraud.

Nightwood and *Crome Yellow* differ from 'Mario and the Magician' and 'A Hunger Artist' as instead of focusing on the performer and their performance to look at how they are fraudulent, both texts use performers such as magicians, somnambulists and freak show performers to critique and comment on their main characters. This is to explore how these people with their interest in things like spiritualism can now be seen to be like performers and thus fraudulent in their day to day lives. *Nightwood* shows all its characters as being outsiders who are attracted to the circus and its performers because of the way in which their performances reflect Felix, Nora, Robin and O'Connor's own. This is shown through the use of false titles which is something that Felix, Robin and O'Connor are doing in their real lives which mirrors the circus performers' use of titles in their stage names. It is furthermore shown by the fact that none of the circus performers ever actually perform their acts. They are always depicted in their everyday lives. They are shown as freaks in real life. The only time that freak show performers are discussed in relationship to their acts are through the stories of O'Connor.

In *Nightwood* O'Connor is likened to a magician as he uses sleight of hand and misdirection to steal some of Robin's money and apply her make-up. The text by likening O'Connor to a magician hints at his role in *Nightwood* as he is a self-acknowledged liar and story teller. One of the anecdotes that O'Connor tells, about the paralysed man at Coney Island, is used metaphorically to try to explain Robin's behaviour to Nora, the lover she left behind. This implies that the other anecdotes and stories that O'Connor tells also refer to Robin such as the story about Mademoiselle Basquette. Robin is also metaphorically presented as both a somnambulist and a freak show performer as the first time she is seen she is passed out on the bed, in a room that resembles the

staging of a *carte de visite* come to life. The depiction of Robin as a somnambulist makes her not responsible for any of her actions. *Nightwood* like 'Mario and the Magician' is differentiating between the desire to do an action and the actual doing of it. The claim that Robin is a somnambulist undermines Robin's rejection of conventional roles like that of marriage and motherhood as it suggests that she is not making an active decision. There is a parallel between Robin and mediums as mediums were also meant to be passive during a *séance* while they were really in control. Robin also resembles a medium in the way that she is objectified as an object of everyone's desire. This is shown in the text by having Robin's hotel room look like the staging of a freak show performer's *carte de visite* and through likening her to a missing link performer like Krao. It can also be seen in the way that Felix watches her in this initial encounter and the subsequent times that she is followed by her various lovers. The spiritual elements in the text also show that Robin is othered as Jenny believes that she is possessed and at a party it is claimed that Robin alone out of a group of people will not be reborn. Robin differs from the other characters in the other texts looked at, as on one hand, she is represented fraudulently by the text and the other characters through showing her as a somnambulist and a freak show performer. On the other hand it still implies that she is a fraud through these connections as it suggests that her embodiment of the bohemian is also a performance or a constructed identity.

Crome Yellow like *Nightwood* is concerned with how people in modern life can appear to turn themselves into freaks and performers through the interest in spiritualism. It presents a far more critical view of its characters than *Nightwood* as it argues that there is something inauthentic about people in the twentieth century altogether. It uses the anecdotes about Henry Wimbush's

ancestors, Sir Hercules and the Lapith sisters to critique the main characters' interest in spiritualism. Hercules's rejection of the identity of being a freak show performer is contrasted with the Lapith sisters' embracing of being a spectacle or a freak through their fraudulent claims to fasting. *Crome Yellow* through the different generations of the Henry Wimbush's family traces a change in attitude to being seen as a spectacle and a freak and suggests that spiritualism is a symptom of this. Hercules's refusal to publish his works because he believes that he will be judged based on him being a dwarf rather than on his talent. This contrasts with Barbecue-Smith, who is not talented and has jumped on the bandwagon of spiritualism in order to sell books. The Lapith sisters are being used to comment on Priscilla and to suggest that her interest in spiritualism makes her as much of a performer and a fraud as they are. It is suggesting that Priscilla is adopting an eccentric identity out of boredom and because it is fashionable, in much the same way that Robin can be seen to do but without the substance to it. Even Denis who likens himself to a magician and is shown to be a somnambulist has a moment of self-realisation and recognises that he, also, can be seen as a fraud and a performer. This moment of self-awareness might be enough to redeem him.

Modernism itself can be seen as being like vaudeville and freak shows because of the way in which it relies on the shock factor and novelty value of its works. Walter Benjamin's 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' (1968) and 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Production' (1968) identifies that shock is a threat to the subconscious through overstimulation and that the conscious seeks to protect the subconscious from these shocks. Benjamin also notes that Baudelaire inaugurated an important aspect of modernist writing when he 'placed shock experience at the very centre of his art' (319). This experience of

shock is intimately related to another feature which modernism shares with the freak show and the vaudeville act, namely an emphasis on novelty. Michael North notes that Ezra Pound's slogan 'Make It New' has now 'become the all-purpose label for modernist novelty (2013: N.P). In *ABC of Reading* Pound claimed 'literature is news that stays news' implying that it had to stay fresh through reinvention and novelty (1934: 29). These are both concepts in freak shows and other entertainment spectacles as they to rely on fraud to fabricate novelty and the shock factor. Modernism itself became a focal point for expressing anxiety about the inability to distinguish between what is real and fake due to the interest in spectacles like mediumship and somnambulism which while sharing similarities with other forms of entertainment spectacles such as magicians and freak shows in terms of its presentation and content were never the less taken seriously by some distinguished people. Modernism with its use of techniques like automatic writing which was borrowed from mediums came under the suspicion that they too were frauds who were committing hoaxes to deceive the reader. These accusations come from the suspicion that the reader does not understand the text because there is nothing to understand as it is a hoax. *Crome Yellow* clearly illustrates this point with Priscilla who has never experienced any spiritual phenomena herself but does not suspect that she has never experienced anything because spiritualism is all fake and there is nothing to experience. Part of the accusations of fraud against modernism may come from a desire to suggest it is not real because of the anxiety that it causes. Diepeveen writes that:

Skeptics[Sic] didn't see modernism as merely bad art, they didn't see it as art at all; it belonged to some other sphere of human activity, such as

fashion, or P.T Barnum's sideshows or the new mania for crossword puzzles; or – telling to the timeless activity of fraud' (2013, N.P).

By calling modernism a hoax a critic can dismiss it as not being new or shocking because it is just a fraud. Modernism itself came to embody what its writers were exploring in their work because like vaudeville or the freak shows it contains the potential for being seen as being fraudulent.

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