THE QUAKER CITY: GEORGE LIPPARD’S CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM THROUGH SENSATIONAL ADVOCACY FOR THE DISENFRANCHISED

A Thesis by

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ABSTRACT

Nineteenth-century author and journalist George Lippard advocated for the underprivileged by devoting himself to his self-founded labor union, “The Brotherhood of the Union,” as well as by incorporating fresh and fiery commentary on the political issues of the day into his fiction. Novels like Empire City and New York addressed corruption in local politics, exploitative practices in the emerging finance industry, and the horrors of slavery. Yet, Lippard’s most popular work, The Quaker City, or the Monks of Monk Hall (1845), most clearly provides a gritty and sensationalized depiction of the political and social corruption rampant in Philadelphia in the mid-1800s.

In the following thesis, I explore how George Lippard’s novel engages with the antebellum period’s unique intersection of spectacle, disability, and labor in order to argue that, through the character of Devil Bug, Lippard exemplifies how a marginalized body might make his own way as an independent businessman amidst the capitalist society that attempts to exploit or negate bodies like his own. In my first section, I turn to the sensationalist popular culture that prevailed in Lippard’s time (freak shows, dime museums, city penny papers, etc.) and his own engagement with this culture that turned the human body into spectacular entertainment. In my second section, I further argue how the rise of Northern factory systems reinforced the notion of the body as an object to be capitalized upon, and how I see Lippard rejecting this corruption of the body. My final section examines Devil Bug’s success operating within this capitalist system, despite his non-normative physicality. However, I also uncover the drawbacks of Devil Bug’s participation in the capitalist system: although Devil Bug attempts to counteract his isolated “abnormal” physical state by developing relationships, his all-consuming “goold”-focused mindset problematically drives him to define these relationships as economic transactions.
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INTRODUCTION

But it was not till I got to Philadelphia that the possibilities of popular corruption were worked out to the limit of humiliating confession…Philadelphia certainly is not merely corrupt, but corrupted, and this was made clear. – Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*¹

The rise of the American city in the nineteenth century, especially in the North, reflected the birth of the factory system and the widespread industrial growth it encouraged. While this burst of industry created accessible jobs for the poor, it also created a propensity for corruption. Political campaigns frequently benefited from these burgeoning industrial systems, which emerged before proper regulations and antitrust laws were in place. Philadelphia, like other major metropolises in the northern United States, underwent a period of rapid growth, triply expanding its population over the course of the century (Shapiro 72). Such meteoric growth created an expansive, new type of working class – one that was poor (due to a lack of fair wages) and especially prone to disease and disability given their unsanitary and dangerous working conditions.²

It was in this environment that George Lippard came of age both as a man and writer and learned to survive in what he saw as the ruthlessly competitive capitalist world developing around him. As an author and journalist who constantly kept current events and public opinion fresh on his mind, Lippard advocated for the underprivileged by devoting himself to his self-founded labor union, “The Brotherhood of the Union,” as well as by incorporating fresh and fiery commentary on the political issues of the day into his fiction. Novels like *Empire City* and

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¹ In this collection of articles originally written for *McClure’s Magazine*, Steffens highlights corruption rampant in some of America’s largest cities in the second half of the nineteenth century, including Philadelphia, St. Louis, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and New York (Shapiro 65-66).

² In his preface to Lippard’s text, David S. Reynolds explains the stark class disparity statistically: “During this period the share of Philadelphia’s wealth controlled by the richest 10 percent of the city’s population nearly doubled, increasing from 50 to 90 percent…while that owned by the poorest 75 percent sank from 30 to less than 3 percent” (xxxiii).
New York addressed corruption in local politics, exploitative practices in the emerging finance industry, and the horrors of slavery.

Yet, Lippard’s most popular work, *The Quaker City, or the Monks of Monk Hall* (1845), most clearly provides a gritty and sensationalized depiction of the political and social corruption rampant in Philadelphia in the mid-1800s. In the following thesis, I explore how George Lippard’s novel engages with the antebellum period’s unique intersection of spectacle, disability, and labor in order to argue that, through the character of Devil Bug, Lippard exemplifies how a marginalized body might make his own way as an independent businessman amidst the capitalist society that attempts to exploit or negate bodies like his own. In my first section, I turn to the sensationalist popular culture that prevailed in Lippard’s time and his own engagement with this culture. Phenomena like the freak show, dime museums, photography, city penny papers, and the rise of human dissection all contributed to a culture of viewing the human body as sensational entertainment and spectacle. In my second section, I further argue how the rise of Northern factory systems reinforced the notion of the body as an object to be capitalized upon, and how I see Lippard rejecting this type of corruption of the body. Dangerous working conditions and little industry oversight created a class of disabled workers, essentially transforming bodies of “normative” white males into a new kind of “freak.” My final section then examines Devil Bug’s success operating within this capitalist system, despite his non-normative physicality. However, I also uncover the drawbacks of Devil Bug’s participation in the capitalist system: although Devil Bug attempts to counteract his isolated “abnormal” physical state by developing relationships, his all-consuming “goold”-focused mindset problematically drives him to define these relationships as economic transactions.
CHAPTER I

A CENTURY OF SPECTACLE AND SENSATION

_The Quaker City_ was incredibly popular in its time, selling 60,000 copies within its first year of publication, earning its place as the best-selling novel in the United States until the publication of _Uncle Tom’s Cabin_ swept the nation seven years later in 1852 (Reynolds, _The Quaker City_ vii). The novel details the escapades of a band of double-dealing politicians and prominent figures of Philadelphia self-deemed the “Monks of Monk Hall” and their schemes with and against one another for personal gain. A rake of a gentleman works to seduce a young woman merely for the thrill; an adulteress plots the murder of her husband with her lover; clandestine parentages are revealed; and many other scandalous plots ensue. Set against this backdrop, Devil Bug, one of the novel’s more eccentric characters, maintains the secrets of the city’s elite, inconspicuously wielding power in his political dealings while deceitfully putting forward a goofy and twisted façade.

Lippard’s sensational treatment of the characters and issues in his novel certainly reflect an age that thrived on ideas about the gilt-tinted spectacular. As Lippard’s writing suggests, nineteenth-century America was a time and place teeming with sensationalism and spectacle. From various forms of popular entertainment like freak shows and melodrama to different types of publications like penny papers and pamphlet fiction, the spirit of sensationalism permeated all forms of American culture. In this climate, so-called “normative” bodies often profited from the display of what were viewed as “non-normative” bodies – essentially any individual that was not white, male, and able-bodied – in institutions like the freak show, which centered on creating a particularly heightened form of bodily spectacle for the public’s diversion. A popular sensationalist attraction of the era, this mode of crude entertainment was ultimately based off of
gawking at people who did not fit into the idealized image of a normal body.\(^3\) “Othered” bodies, including those of nineteenth-century factory workers who had been maimed by a machine, started to have a more visible presence in society, particularly as “freaks” were being paraded around and advertised as beings whose purpose was to serve for the public’s entertainment. Suddenly, bodies that did not fit into the narrow template of “normal” were more publicly visible, even if they were still represented as separate from the rest of society. P. T. Barnum’s showcase of Joice Heth in Philadelphia in 1835 set into motion the era of the American freak show, capitalizing on public fascination with popular science and Americans’ overwhelming desire to “hone the skills needed to tame world and self in the ambitious project of American self-making” (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 59). As the following section will show, Lippard would take this concept of “self-making” to the extreme in his novel, re-defining who should claim the title of “freak” in American society in the face of the forces promoting the human body as sensational entertainment and spectacle.

The development of the sensationalist and pejorative vocabulary used to describe the stars of nineteenth-century freak shows can be traced back to before the time of Aristotle. Figures from Greek mythology like Oedipus (blind), Teiresias (blind clairvoyant who also underwent a sex change), giants, and other classic characters were considered “wonderous” and “inspired awe” rather than eliciting fear or repulsion as they might have in subsequent centuries (Garland-Thomson, “The Politics of Staring” 59). However, by the time that Aristotle’s *De Generatione Animalium* (*Generation of Animals*) emerged about one hundred years later with its analysis of the female body as inherently disabled and inferior to the male body, Aristotle had

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\(^3\) Although Lippard does not make direct use of the freak show in his writings, in *The Empire City, or, New York by Night and Day: Its Aristocracy and its Dollars*, Lippard does refer to one character as “looking as wise as the owl in Barnum’s Museum,” revealing his familiarity with the showman and his work (198).
established disability as a negative trait. In his foundational text on reproductive biology, the philosopher asserts that “females are weaker and colder in nature, and we must look upon the female character as being a sort of natural deficiency” and “he who does not resemble his parents is already in a certain sense a monstrosity; for in these cases Nature has in a way departed from the type. The first departure indeed is that the offspring should become female instead of male…” (Platt 775a and 767b). In his explanation of the female’s genesis and evolution Aristotle suggests her disability and imperfection, qualities that serve to transform her into a “monstrosity,” and equate her to something subhuman. Such logic assumes that the only so-called “normal” body is a Caucasian, male, able body.4

Aristotle’s establishment of the disabled as monstrous serves as a clear precedent in the negative rhetoric spun around freak show acts with bill names that employed animalistic or deranged qualifiers like “The Wild Australian Children,” “The Camel Girl,” and the “Monster-mouthed Ubangi Savages” (See Fig. 1. Bogdan 119, 15, and 193).5 Often presented as ethnographic exhibits, the freak show masked its spectacle with scientific authority that tapped into the public’s intrigue in blossoming scientific developments. In this way, the freak show worked to forge “a connection [with popular science] that showmen profited by and tried to

4 In texts written in the early 1990s that helped to define disability studies as a discipline, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson and Lennard J. Davis respectively coined the terms “normate” and “normalcy” in order to identify the illusory social construct of what those in power determined should be the standard template of the human body. Despite the normate’s lack of prevalence in an imperfect world, society has been structured to preference this group, as the one with the loudest pulp, while leaving all others at a disadvantage (Garland-Thomson, Extraordinary Bodies 8-9 and Davis, Enforcing Normalcy 23-49).

5 The air of supremacy in Aristotle’s language is unmistakable, and Garland-Thomson articulates this mentality in terms of today’s most common prejudiced language: “This is perhaps the original operation of the logic that has become so familiar in discussions of gender, race, or disability: male, white, or able-bodied superiority appears natural, undisputed, and unremarked, seemingly eclipsed by female, black, or disabled difference” (Extraordinary Bodies 20). Aristotle’s fateful rhetoric made a lasting impact, establishing the idea of the able, male body as the only truly viable one in Western civilization. This type of supremacist ideology and language helped spur movements like eugenics in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century as pioneered in the United States by Charles Davenport and Harry Laughlin who sought to rid the human gene pool of “undesirable” traits (Bouche and Rivard).
maintain well into the twentieth century. The distinction was between so-called examples of new and unknown ‘races’ and ‘lusus naturae’ or nature’s jokes or mistakes” (Bogdan 6). In an era where racial pseudosciences were becoming mainstream, freak shows largely comprised of individuals who embodied the racialized or disabled other (and some only costumed to appear congenitally disabled). P.T. Barnum’s show, perhaps the most recognized in the time period, subsequently engaged in the sensational discourse of the era through advertisements that capitalized on freak show stars’ non-normative features. These advertisements and posters that accompanied acts provoked and urged viewers to engage with and speculate about exhibit characters. While such posters served to make the audience active participants, they simultaneously dehumanized freak show workers. Garland-Thomson explains how such exhibit accouterments “provoke[ed] the spectators’ curiosity with taunts such as ‘What Is It?’” that heightened the difference between the common observer and the marvelous body… advertisements imaginatively distorted the freaks’ bodies into grotesque caricatures” (Extraordinary Bodies 61).
Barnum knew how to capitalize on public fears and prejudices of his largely white audiences. He did not hesitate to amplify the spectacle of his shows, often exaggerating an individual’s age or the exoticism of her particular race or physical anomaly in order to manifest a more sensational show. With Joice Heth, for instance, an elderly African American woman who Barnum billed as George Washington’s 161-year-old nursemaid, Barnum capitalized on her with increasing theatrics that culminated in her public autopsy after she died – a classic combination of spectacle and science that would become typical bait for a nineteenth-century American audience (See Fig. 2). Even her autopsy, performed by a well-known New York surgeon named David L. Rogers, revealed that Heth was likely younger than eighty, and offered Barnum an
opportunity for economic gain. The uproar at the big reveal just meant that Barnum could rely on a swell of attention from the media, attracting the public to his other endeavors in the process (Extraordinary Bodies 59-60). Barnum understood that such an act that took advantage of the spectacle of the freak in conjunction with popular science would draw crowds and bolster business.


For some differently abled persons, participating in Barnum’s and other freak shows offered an opportunity to create some sort of livelihood (however undesirable). For instance, Christine and Millie McKay, conjoined twins and gifted singers billed as “The Two-Headed Nightingale,” were made exceptionally fortunate because of the level of their stardom as freaks. The McKay sisters’ success eventually enabled their freedom from the slavery they were born
into in the South, allowed them to purchase the plantation of their birth, and endow schools for
black children – an impressive feat during this century for individuals who were triply
marginalized as disabled, female, and non-white (See Fig. 3. "Christine and Millie McKay,
American Conjoined Twins").

Fig. 3. "Christine and Millie McKay, American Conjoined Twins" from Photographs from the
Science Museum, Primary Source Media, 1870. Nineteenth Century Collections

Still, for all disabled persons, freak shows remained a debasement – meant to normalize
white, abled bodies over others. Dime museums, a natural evolution of the freak show, continued
the capitalization on the sensational during this era by further undercutting the value of the non-
normative body. With an affordable entrance price and some tantalizing advertising, a showman could draw healthy crowds. Reviews of such dime museum exhibits were common, and one composed by J. G. Wood, an English writer of natural history visiting Boston, in The Atlantic Monthly in June of 1885 provides insight into the varied public reception of such modes of entertainment. Overall, Wood acknowledges the grand pageantry of such museums, but also finds scientific value in the ethnographic exhibits, which he deems “worthy of a naturalist’s attention” (760). Of the disabled performers, Wood poignantly says, “I do not look upon these persons as merely sights to amuse the curious, but as persons to be honored for their victory over untoward circumstances, which would have crushed those of less courage and perseverance” (762). Although Wood’s reaction to the congenitally disabled might not be unique, many more spectators at this time might have equally reacted with repulsion, fear, or horror. As Bogdan has suggested, a visit by Wood, a natural historian, or any other scientist who ventured to visit a freak show would have “served to fan widespread interest and debates as to the nature and origin of these creatures” (as Barnum proved with Joice Heth), creating a publicity opportunity for showman and scientist alike to capitalize on American obsession with the sensational (27).

Ultimately, freak shows and dime museums encouraged public engagement, but only from a distance. Without the fear of “contamination,” audiences could freely gawk at and scrutinize different bodies. It is of no surprise then that early American photography became a popular way of consuming these differently-abled bodies through spectacle. Photography

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Wood’s reaction to the exhibits suggests that he could do without some of the more flamboyant theatrics, but he has a clear fascination with – and borderline fetishization with – exhibits featuring performers of non-white races. Of two Fijians, Wood says, “physically, this is one of the finest races of mankind, and the two were very good specimens of it,” belittling these two human beings to the science experiment the museum situated them as (760). Wood goes on to proclaim, “It is a benevolent dream to think that education can elevate any savage race to the level of the white man, and the Fijians must yield to the beneficently inexorable law which compels a lower race to give way to a higher.” Through this condemnation, Wood attempts to forcibly resign the Fijians to what he sees as their impending extinction, given what he deems as their obvious and insurmountable inferiority as, what he later calls, “a doomed race” (761).
literally framed unusual bodies for display and documentation, giving spectators a token with
which to personally objectify stock freak characters. Photographic exhibits and books established
an environment in which freak characters and disabled bodies overlapped and engaged in
dialogue. For instance, in George R. Sims’ *Living London* travelogue, Sims devotes a chapter to
“London Street Characters,” profiling a variety of disabled individuals condemned to the
outskirts of society by passing their time (largely begging) in the streets. The photographic
montage that accompanies Sims’ melodramatic descriptions places various disabled persons at
their street posts in a piecemeal album that only names the photographer’s subjects by their
disability: “A busy cripple,” “Blind,” “Paralysed,” “Crippled,” and “On Wheels” litter the page
(Figs. 4 and 5). Only “Blind Jack” is given any sort of proper forename (177-181). Illustrated
pamphlets that accompanied freak show exhibits functioned similarly to remove all sense of
identity from the individual other than the “freakish” characteristic that marked them as separate
from the rest of society. Illustrated or photographed subjects were, for the most part, only named
as the “Beast of Borneo,” “The Most Marvelous Creature Living,” or “The Legless Wonder,”
among other bynames that equated these individuals with animals or unusual physical attributes.
Fig. 4. George R. Sims’ “London Street Characters.”
The ritual of photographing and buying photographs of freaks allowed one to provide evidence that these so-called anomalies of human nature existed, while also allowing for the framing, containing, and ownership of the freak and their body. The carte de visite, a small portable photograph developed in the 1840s, was especially useful for this purpose. These photographs were often staged in a studio or at home in a parlor, inviting collectors to...
voyeuristically join photographed subjects in their home (Volpe). As a socially-conscious writer and activist, George Lippard was highly aware of this exploitation of marginalized bodies through the visual – by way of freak shows and other institutions – as a sacrifice to support America’s zeal for and anxiety over the nation’s careening shift towards capitalism. Yet, Lippard also played into the public’s need for sensationalism and spectacle through his own journalism like his “City Police” column for Spirit of the Times, which contained such colorful headlines as “Remarkable Case of Witchcraft,” “Bad Boys,” and “You’d Better Read It” (Looby). These gaudy articles that were only a few short paragraphs at most, gave the public another way in which to consume sensationalism from afar. City penny papers quickly gained a reputation for publishing outrageous stories that exaggerated the details of murder, crime, licentiousness, and more “newsworthy” occurrences that permeated the streets of America’s cities. Popular writers at the time, including Lippard, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, were acutely aware of this popular shift and drew inspiration from such publications. David Reynolds points out how “the 1830 trial of Joseph and Frank Knapp for the murder of Captain Joseph White – the notorious “Salem Murder”…was destined to have a lasting impact on Hawthorne and Poe,” both of whom later crafted horror tales with similarly cool villains as the Knapp brothers and contained themes of tainted family legacies and retribution that had been brought up in the trial (Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance 179). Even The Quaker City was based off of the real-life 1843 Philadelphia murder trial in which a man named Singleton Mercer was acquitted after killing his sister’s ill-intentioned seducer (Reynolds, George Lippard 10). The trend toward sensationalism that swept the nation in print and elsewhere gave rise to the publication of several new popular journals and papers cheaply and quickly produced to feed the public’s desire.
Because of mid-century printing improvements that allowed for speedy production of cheap paper-covered pamphlet novels, most classes could afford to purchase such reading material regularly. Therefore, newspapers like The Daily Blackmail of Lippard’s own Buzby Poodle character in The Quaker City, quickly became ubiquitous, publicizing the gruesome details of the day’s rapes, trysts, and trials to bait the public. The major authors of the period then incorporated these themes into their own works by adapting these sensational images of popular print materials and, as Reynolds suggests, “tr[y]ing] to lend new suggestiveness to ironies that had lost resonance because of crass repetition in the popular press” (Beneath the American Renaissance 178). Although Lippard was acutely aware of the public’s concurrent weakness for sensationalism, which had infiltrated literature and the press, he was also critical of the capitalistic system driving it. In addition to employing the gore and scandal the public craved, Lippard emerged as one member of what Reynolds has termed “radical democrat” writers, a group that revered American democratic ideals, but also strongly condemned the increasing wealth divide between the privileged upper class and the beaten-down lower class (184).

Although Lippard’s journalistic and literary work often served the poor laboring classes by exposing political corruption and advocating for workers’ rights, his writing style also clearly operated alongside penny newspapers, romantic fiction, and erotic writings to capitalize on the public’s growing appetite for the sensational. At a time when freak shows, melodramatic penny papers, and Dark Adventure novels were rampant, there was a genuine struggle, for any business that relied on the public’s favor, to secure its undivided attention. As an experienced journalist and public advocate, Lippard understood that the public unequivocally responded to sensationalism and wielded his writing abilities in this form to make commentary on the issues he was passionate about. His use of sensationalism drew the public closer to the plights of the
Lippard’s sensational treatment of his most popular novel, *The Quaker City*, flowed out of the popular culture’s contemporary discourse. By operating within this discourse, one of Lippard’s core messages of economic viability for individuals who challenge the ideal of the “normate” had a chance at being heard.

While using his literature to advocate for disenfranchised groups in the real world, Lippard simultaneously takes care to reassure his reader that the world he depicts in his novel is all a fiction by coaxing, “remember that a creature, despicable as [Buzby Poodle], has no existence in fact, but is only a fancy of the author” (140). Yet, Lippard’s use of mesmerism and dissection in his novel reflected the period’s concurrent developments in anatomy and popular science, all of which were in dialogue with a culture of spectacle and display or appropriation of the body. Such use of spectacle was further developed in Lippard’s situating the reader as a voyeuristic audience member in his house-of-horror-style peep show. In his first full description of Monk Hall, Lippard sets up this environment by making much of the building’s mysterious western wing tower, its three floors of underground chambers, and the secret subterranean tunnel leading to the stables, as well as rumors of “witchcraft” and “devildom” permeating its halls in the estate’s early days (46-47).

After carefully establishing Monk Hall as a peep show of sorts, the reader might expect to find a house of freaks to peer in on. However, Lippard defies this expectation by instead filling his fun house with the “normal” elite and upper-middle class ranking members of Philadelphia society. Rather than turn the focus in on an eclectic group of “freaks,” Lippard pivots the reader’s attention to unassuming characters like the Parson Pyne, Mary Arlington, Gustavus Lorrimer, and Dora Livingstone – a pastor, an innocent young woman, an upper-class gentleman,
and a cobbler’s daughter, respectively – and then refocuses the reader’s viewpoint in order to see these characters as “freakish” puppets in a larger show. The Parson is made a fool of for his vile passions; Mary unwittingly succumbs to her own suppressed sexuality, leading to her ruin; Lorrimer’s lust results in his demise, despite a foreboding prophecy; and Dora’s boldness and headstrong attitude put her in hot water, nearly reducing her to a joke.

Lippard thus subverts the normative/non-normative binary by taking the notion of the freak show and effectively turning it on its head. Moreover, in Monk Hall, characters that might be seen as freaks out in the world – Devil Bug, Musquito, Glow-worm, Long-haired Bess, for instance – become the puppeteers in the type of house of mirrors that Monk Hall functions as. Knowing every winding staircase and trap door within Monk Hall enables Devil Bug to steer his various puppets wherever he wishes with the help of Musquito and Glow-worm. Likewise, Bess, donned completely in black and with “slightly discolored” skin beneath her eyes, exudes a morbidity and desperateness that anyone might gawk at in surprise for a young woman of twenty-five (77). However, her bleak visage works to her advantage in intimidating Monk Hall’s guests. The so-called odd mannerisms and somewhat jarring appearances of these characters do not detract from their influence within the confines of Monk Hall, but rather, help empower them. Consequently, the “normal” members of Philadelphia society that pass through Monk Hall transform into unpredictable freaks with prodding by Devil Bug and his accomplices.

In this way, The Quaker City upends the binary of the normative and non-normative body associated with the freak show. Crucially, Lippard further “dissects” what is defined as normal in the period by linking it to the period’s medical discourse – showing how medical advancements in anatomy and dissection, as well as the practice of body snatching equalized all bodies. In the eighteenth century, medical schools started being established in increasing numbers globally,
creating a need for human subjects on which to practice medicine, including dissection. Until the Anatomy Act of 1832 in Britain and various state-specific laws in the United States starting in 1818, it was illegal to use human cadavers for dissection unless the cadavers were those of criminals who had been sentenced to death (“Body Snatching Around the World”; Breeden 324). Up until this legislation, the lack of medical subjects created a new, lucrative market for selling human cadavers. As a result, body snatching, the practice of digging up bodies from their graves and selling them, became a widespread, underground trade. Suddenly, teams of body snatchers developed like the infamous “Burke and Hare, and their London imitators, Bishop and Williams, the ‘Corpse King’ Ben Crouch, and a legion of eager medical students, who risked life and limb to swoop on newly-dug graves to further the cause of medical science” (Adams 2).

Imagining the body on display in dissection halls or medical labs sparked interest in the showcase of the body, which became so ubiquitous that it began to permeate popular culture, including folksongs like “The Ghost’s Complaint” which articulated widespread problems with body-snatching: “the body-snatchers! They have come / And made a snatch at me; / It’s very hard them kind of men / Won’t let a body be!” (Lossing 3). For resurrectionists, the men who covertly dug up and delivered bodies, as well as for many anatomists at the time, the body became completely divorced from the human being that occupied it during life. Bodies became coveted objects to be bought and sold or displayed in public lectures, but lost all other meaning. In this way, any body – whether normative or not – became a “freak” for display and reduced to a source for profit.

We first see Lippard gesture toward this medical discourse in the novel’s dissection scene. Here, Lippard emphasizes the disposability and interchangeability of human bodies as a source of study for scientists. Describing the scene, Lippard says, “Bending over each table was
a young man, whose long hair and characteristic look of frankness and recklessness combined, betrayed the Medical Student…Here was a grisly trunk, there an arm, there a leg, and yonder a solitary hand occupied the attention of the Student” (437). Calling attention to the practice of body snatching, body parts, regardless of what kind of body they once belonged to, were reduced to science exhibits. They were also made to be part of freak culture by the cultivation of the idea of the human body as spectacle. The novel’s medical students toy with cadavers, moving them into lewd positions for their own entertainment. Meanwhile, Lippard also takes care to describe the lecture hall like a theatrical venue – an amphitheatre lit by “vivid rays of gas light” and an eager “audience” filling “tiers of benches on either side”– a space for the grand display of any and all bodies that were attainable to the lecturer (439).

Yet it is Devil Bug’s manipulation of Byrnewood within Monk Hall that most clearly reveals this upside-down transformation of “normal” white male becoming a type of crazed freak – where scientific/medical discourse meets the freak show. With Bess’ aid, Devil Bug traps Byrnewood in the Tower Room, and lights a charcoal fire in a fireplace that’s been sealed off. As a result, Byrnewood quickly enters a state of delirium as the fumes from the charcoal intoxicate him. Looking on from a secret passageway behind a false bookcase, Devil Bug delights in his “experiment,” as he takes part, in his own way, in the day’s trending popular science. Devil Bug makes Byrnewood a deranged specimen as Byrnewood frantically tries to break out of the room while gasping for breath and attempting to maintain his own sanity. Throughout, Devil Bug asks himself, “Wonder how that ‘ill work!” observing Byrnewood’s bodily reactions from his isolated perch and hypothesizing how he might next react to Devil Bug’s evolving experimentation (110). Therefore, instead of employing the kind of experimentation that may have been conducted on freaks in traditional freak shows, here, Lippard makes a member of Philadelphia’s elite class into
new kind of freak to be experimented on by the very kind of non-normative freakish body such shows exploited.

Yet, the exploitative type of sensational popular culture that Lippard sought to thwart was stubborn and pervasive. The human body ultimately transformed into a profitable source of spectacular entertainment because of entities like the freak show, dime museums, photography, city penny papers, and an abusive anatomy discipline. But, Devil Bug’s repeated question of how something will “work” also calls attention to the novel’s layered critique of capitalism. As the following section will show, the growth of factories, particularly in the North, reinforced the notion of the objectified body as a means of capital gain. Soon, the harrowing environment of the factory would produce a new kind of “freak” – mutating “normal” white males into their own personal nightmare of what they believed to be the most horrifying type of monster.
CHAPTER II
INDUSTRY AND BODILY COMMODIFICATION

For several weeks we have ever and anon cautioned the public against placing too much faith in the stability of the Girard Bank. We had reasons for believing that it was very far from being a solvent institution; and although we were unable to publish those reasons, from the fact that in our State “the greater the truth, the greater the libel,” is the prevailing maxim of the law, a sense of duty compelled us to warn every reader of the presence of danger, and bid every man, woman, and child, to “touch not – handle not” its faithless promises. – George Lippard, *Spirit of the Times*

Lippard, as an advocate for the working class, would have been concerned with the effects of urbanization and the adoption of Northern factory systems on workers. Such systems complicated the notion of the “freak” by making “freaks” out of workers: disabilities workers incurred as a result of crowded and unsafe factory conditions often relegated them to almshouses or the streets, since, once disabled, they were no longer economically supported by society. Lippard gained an intimate glimpse into the grave lifestyles such workers desperately adopted when he himself was stringing together low-paying law assistant jobs in 1837 in the wake of his father’s death (and not receiving any inheritance from his $2,000 estate (Reynolds, *The Quaker City* xi). During this trying time, Lippard’s “walks about Philadelphia gave him firsthand knowledge of the terrible effects of the great depression of 1837-44…bank closings, unemployment, strikes, and widespread starvation. Especially wretched were the city’s tailors and seamstresses, who led squalid, desperate lives in crowded tenements” (Reynolds, *The Quaker City* xi). In the midst of textile trade workers, Lippard undoubtedly observed individuals who had been maimed on the job to varying degrees.

Along with New York City, Boston, and Washington, D. C., Philadelphia became a hub of industrialization in the Northeast, attracting people with the generation of factories, mills, coal mines, and railroads. The promise of jobs provided hope for Americans seeking opportunities to
make a livelihood. However, the rush to industrialize also brought the typical problems that urban overcrowding promotes – namely, unsanitary conditions that help breed disease and an increased likelihood of work-related accidents. The frenzy to capitalize upon and keep up with the idea of American progress also encouraged proprietors to push workers beyond their limits, resulting in overwork and injury (Trachtenberg 38-43).

The working conditions of Joseph Ripka’s Philadelphia textile mills (a major force in the cotton manufacturing industry) in the first half of the nineteenth century demonstrates the physical and mental abuse factory workers faced in a system where all were a slave to capitalist dogma. For instance, it was not uncommon for employees to be compelled to work twelve or more hours a day. In 1835 mill craftsmen were fortunate to successfully bargain for a ten-hour work day while textile hands were still required to work an eleven-hour day. This reprise only lasted until 1837, however, when hours gradually increased again until they reached thirteen-hour workdays by the mid-forties in the wake of economic downturn during the Panic of 1837 (Laurie 19). Long hours were only one of many forms of abuse that employees of Ripka’s mills had to endure, however. Overseers and room bosses monitored mill floors with a sharp eye and did not hesitate to punish those who did not keep pace or meet expected quotas. As Laurie explains, “Ripka levied fines for ‘neglect of work,’ carelessness, mistreatment of machinery, and poor performance or work ‘badly done.’ He encouraged promptness by docking ‘every hand coming to work a quarter of an hour after the mill started a quarter of a day[’s wage.]’” (19). Such reprimands were particularly painful for the textile worker demographic, which was already at the bottom of the wage-earning class. In 1850, male spinners, who often earned twice as much as female weavers, for instance, “averaged slightly more than $210 a year, which placed them near the bottom of the occupational pyramid” (20).
Other manufacturers in Manayunk, the borough in Philadelphia where Ripka’s mills were located, also seem to have had little regard for the general well-being of their workers, although they tried to keep up appearances with superficial concern for workers’ morality and education. “Although manufacturers were concerned with education, temperance, and church building for their workers, their paternalistic gestures had stopped short of using the tax power to meet the health and safety requirements of that population whose labor added to their daily capital.”

Residents of Manayunk withstood undrinkable water, poorly constructed roads, and a faulty gas lighting system that often did not provide adequate illumination after dark (Scranton 254).

Newspaper reports from local papers like the *Manayunk Star* and the *Germantown Telegraph* that detailed the number and types of physical maiming occurring to factory workers would have drawn in Americans already accustomed to the high dramas of sensational penny press reporting. The *Manayunk Star* reported that “at Arbuckle’s mill, ‘a young man, named Joseph Adams, living on Washington Street above Hipple’s Lane, had his right hand fearfully lacerated’” and “‘Mr. Benjamin Riley, boss-weaver in Mr. Ripka’s factory, had his hand injured, on Thursday last, by being caught in the wheels.’” Such reports describing injury to limbs specifically (a common form of trauma in these cases) would have brought to the public’s mind the “armless” and “legless wonders” of popular freak shows and museums. And, although such extreme injuries were regularly reported, efforts to cover up or minimize the results of accidents were not likely unnoticed by the public. As Scranton points out, “None [of these reports] was followed up with later accounts of the fate of the injured, and, more interesting, none was accompanied by invocations to care and caution in the mills. Such warnings regularly closed the analogous reports in the *Telegraph*, suggesting that its readers included laborers, whereas the *Star* was merely reminding the bourgeoisie to reflect…” (254-5). The inequality between
manufacturers and their workers was clearly demarcated through the outward effects to workers’ bodies, even if manufacturers were hesitant to acknowledge it. Although the press did its duty in making the public aware of the iniquities and dangers of factory work, for some readers, unfortunately, such reporting would not have held much meaning beyond sensationalist entertainment.

As with dissection and the freak show, the factory system was yet another way in which normative bodies were made non-normative by way of capitalism. Yet, this bodily deformity that was previously othered by the use of freak shows then became progressively familiar to factory workers who likely witnessed injury by machinery on a regular basis. Even some initial proponents of the factory system like Henry George (the nineteenth-century political economist and journalist who authored Progress and Poverty in 1879) eventually had to admit that factory machines “depriv[ed] [the workman] of skill and opportunities to acquire it…cramp[ed] his mind, and in many cases distort[ed] and enervat[ed] his body” (Trachtenberg 43). For the first time, the white male body was at risk of becoming a “freak” – one of the things he most feared and reviled – because of his own drive to push industrialization and the factory system to its limits.

While freak shows clearly commodified the so-called non-normative body, other practices during this era like body snatching, public dissections, and the rise of factory labor revealed how delicate this line between the freak and the not-freak actually was. In this way, all these practices contributed to the culture of sensational bodily objectification and commodification that prevailed during the nineteenth century, redefining who could be vulnerable to being marketed in such a way. Of course, there were still significant advantages some held over others. The dominating groups in society at this time continued to co-opt the
bodies of disadvantaged and liminal groups for use as spectacle and/or financial gain in service of the growth of capitalism while the disabled, poor, and racially or corporeally othered often did not have other options for pursuing a livelihood aside from those mandated by society to keep them in their places – in exploitative factories, poor houses, freak shows, dime museums, and after death, in the hands of grave robbers – enabling a coercive cycle of discrimination and exploitation. Yet the division between the rich and the poor, abled body and disabled body, and white and non-white was a tenuous fiction – one that Lippard unquestionably capitalizes on in his work.

Through the character of Devil Bug, Lippard provides an example of how a marginalized body like Devil Bug’s (which is both disabled and racially othered) could make his own way as a financially-independent, self-made businessman, despite the societal structures that attempt to exploit or negate bodies like his own. Devil Bug takes the notion of spectacle and the freak show – the capitalizing upon non-normative bodies for economic gain – and rejects this exploitation of othered bodies like his own by becoming a self-made entrepreneur. Rather than be bound to a ring master’s contract or the stares of a public ravenous for the sensational, he subverts this social expectation by retaining ownership of his body, ultimately reclaiming autonomy for the disenfranchised within the coercive and predatory capitalist system that Lippard sought to expose as corrupt.

Amidst the twists and turns of The Quaker City’s meandering and often scandalous plotline, Devil Bug eventually emerges as a quasi-antihero – what Reynolds identifies as one of the sensational press’ “likeable criminals”; viewed as a largely irredeemable creature, forever branded as one who doesn’t belong, or is less than, because of his physical, and therefore, due to nineteenth-century beliefs about the nature of disease, also moral, deformity. In many ways,
Devil Bug, and *The Quaker City* as a whole, reflect the antebellum fascination with spectacle. In shaping Devil Bug and the scene of Philadelphia during this era, Lippard uses excess and grandioseness. Devil Bug jumps at the chance to drug, strike a deal with, or draw blood from Monk Hall’s visitors, calling into question his fundamental nature and motives.

When analyzing Devil Bug, most critics tend to focus on his borderline outlandishly deformed physical state – he has one eye, a protuberant forehead, and distorted legs, among other characteristics that might be deemed “abnormal” – as a reflection of his warped psyche. Cynthia Hall connects this interpretation back to early nineteenth-century popular scientific beliefs by explaining how “Lippard’s readers would have readily accepted the idea that corporeal deformities were evidence of corruption, sickness or sin, given the influence of mid-century health reformers like Dr. John Ellis who proclaimed moral corruption as the essential cause of physical disease” (39). Similarly, Timothy Helwig has taken this interpretation a step further by connecting the deformed body/corrupt soul notion to the image of the “freak” that was promoted at freak shows popularized during this era as well. Helwig bridges these ideas with the claim that Devil Bug is racially othered in stating that “Devil-Bug, in his deformity and unusual upper-body strength, is also linked with the racially ambiguous ‘freaks’ exhibited in P. T. Barnum’s museums” (106). Lippard’s cultivation of Devil Bug’s blood-thirsty tendencies for torture and murder makes any combination of these interpretations appealing.

Lippard indeed capitalized on the public’s fear of the “infectious” disabled and racial other through Devil Bug, who seeks to spread crime and corruption throughout the city. In *The Quaker City*, Lippard presents various grim and colorful characters placed against the backdrop of Philadelphia’s crime-ridden streets in the mid-nineteenth century. But, of the many long-tressed gents and heaving-bosomed ladies, Devil Bug (or Abijah K. Jones, as he insists) sets
apart, largely because of his physical deformity coupled with his fantastic thrill for blood. These core components of Devil Bug’s character effectively “other” him in the face of the narrative’s remaining characters. Descriptions of Devil Bug’s disfigurement define his physicality as much as his spirituality, in part due to assumptions drawn from his appearance, and in part due to his own delight in vile mischief.

Devil Bug’s appearance, especially through Lippard’s words, makes quite an impression (see Fig. 6 for rendition). The first physical description of Devil Bug that Lippard shares with the reader gives a detailed picture of his grating appearance:

It was a strange thickset specimen of flesh and blood, with a short body, marked by immensely broad shoulders, long arms and thin distorted legs… Long masses of stiff black hair fell tangled and matted over a forehead, protuberant to deformity. A flat nose with wide nostrils shooting out into each cheek like the smaller wings of an insect…all furnished the details of a countenance, not exactly calculated to inspire the most pleasant feelings in the world. [He had o]ne eye, small black and shapen like a bead… (51)

Lippard characterizes Devil Bug in animalistic terms – he is a “specimen” and “creature” with nostrils likened to an insect’s – stripping him of his humanity. Lippard’s language likewise shapes Devil Bug into a grotesque being, emphasizing his disproportioned body, “distorted legs,” “protuberant” forehead, and outright “deformity.” Devil Bug’s disability as a human with only one eye paired with his distorted legs heightens his other unusual traits, making them appear even more malformed. These compounded factors increase Devil Bug’s monstrosity in the eyes of the characters around him.

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7 Incidentally, Garland-Thomson’s account of P. T. Barnum’s first ever displayed “freak” is quite similar to Devil Bug: “The first freak Barnum displayed was Joice Heth, a black woman already on exhibit in Philadelphia in 1835 as George Washington’s 161-year-old nursemaid…A black, old, toothless, blind, crippled slave woman…” (Extraordinary Bodies 59). Also noteworthy is Heth’s ties to Philadelphia in 1835, allowing for speculation as to whether or not she served as inspiration for Lippard in forging Devil Bug’s character.
As mentioned earlier, with practitioners like Dr. John Ellis preaching about physical deformities as a direct result of various vices like selfishness, violence, vanity, or sensualism, such popular beliefs would have signaled to readers the state of Devil Bug’s tainted morals (Ellis 29-33). Lippard explicitly promotes the reading of Devil Bug as morally deformed by penetrating directly to his crippled soul: “His soul was like his body, a mass of hideous and distorted energy” (Lippard 105). Lippard further elucidates how Devil Bug’s singular (and
therefore, abnormal) eye plays a key role in connecting body and soul by explaining, “His solitary eye blazed with that instinct of Cruelty, which was his Soul” (310). The eye functions as a portal, bridging the distance between body and soul, allowing the cruelty of Devil Bug’s deformity to seep into his heart, further promoting his status as a disabled, and therefore, untouchable, being.

Devil Bug’s dual physical and spiritual disability seemingly blinds all other characters in The Quaker City from viewing him as anything other than a lower-class citizen. However, Lippard actually seeks to counteract such narrow views of nineteenth-century disabled persons by making Devil Bug financially independent. The first thing the reader of Lippard’s novel learns about Monk Hall’s devious caretaker is his reliability as a tenant. The landlord of Monk Hall tells the reader that Abijah K. Jones “pays his rent with the regularity of clockwork!” (Lippard 49). Devil Bug supports himself and lives comfortably – all on his own terms. As doorkeeper of Monk Hall, Devil Bug suggests that he holds some responsibility in creating contracts when wryly musing to himself, “We don’t kontract to supply so many thieves an’ cut-throats with vittels, lodgin’ and viskey?” (221). Yet, Devil Bug’s viable (if morally questionable) place in the economy does not seem to make an impression of his character, respectability, or worthiness for companionship on those with whom he interacts because his physical appearance

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8 Devil Bug’s exaggerated features are exactly the sort that freak show proprietors like Barnum would seek out. As Timothy Helwig notes, “Devil-Bug, in his deformity and unusual upper-body strength, is also linked with the racially ambiguous ‘freaks’ exhibited in P. T. Barnum’s museums” (106). Given Barnum’s currency in Lippard’s time, his museum of grotesque figures would have been familiar to the monks and other figures in The Quaker City. Lippard himself promotes this reading, explaining that “To us the study of a character like Devil-Bug’s is full of interest, replete with the grotesque-sublime,” nodding to the public’s fascination with the freak show (305). Devil Bug’s ambiguity and grotesquerie gives other characters in the novel great unease. Devil Bug’s race is never clearly defined, but his facial features and speech indicate some sort of mixed African descent. However, he also clearly does not fit into the rigid, racist African archetype that Glow-worm and Musquito fall into – the “tall Herculean negro” that Lippard describes (52). Devil Bug occupies a liminal space – one that his peers at Monk Hall have been trained to observe as repellent spectacle by popular culture, ensuring his isolation.
blinds others to all else. Contrastingly, Colonel Fitz-Cowles maintains his respectability in the economic system because of his impending aristocratic title as count and his outwardly respectable appearance. Lippard takes care to describe Fitz-Cowles’ elegant coat, gold-headed cane, and “aristocratic” hat, which, once “introduced by the gallant Colonel, it soon became the rage, and was at the time of which we write, the standing test of fashion and elegance among the exquisites of Chesnut street” (173). Despite endlessly evading his creditors through excuses and false promises of giving them stock in a business endeavor he has no intention of following through with (not to mention deigning them the epithet “blood-suckers”), Fitz-Cowles somehow maintains his specious status as a reputable contributor to the economy (162). Although Fitz-Cowles is in crippling debt, Dora pursues him largely because of his ability to elevate her own class status to “countess” through their marriage.

By asserting Devil Bug’s economic viability in *The Quaker City*, Lippard hoped to “[brandish] his literary sword against what he perceived to be capitalist oppression” (*The Quaker City* viii). The writer consistently used his publications as a forum for cultural criticism, believing literature that did not address these issues was essentially worthless. In the *Spirit of the Times* and *Citizen Soldier*, both Philadelphia newspapers for which he wrote, Lippard critiqued the elite rich for their lack of charity to the poor, and capitalism in general. Lippard went on to create his own labor organization, “The Brotherhood of the Union,” which, in turn, initiated networks of cooperatives that encouraged self-employment and profit-sharing in an effort to one day create an economic system to displace capitalism (*The Quaker City* xiii, xvii-xviii). Devil Bug’s concurrent status as a disabled person and a viable contributor to the economy reflects Lippard’s desire to assert the place of the poor and marginalized persons in society. Given Lippard’s criticism of the rapid urbanization of America, his choice to emphasize Devil Bug’s
reclusive lifestyle and twisted soul side by side with his disabled body seems to allude to an overall condemnation of the factory system – a primary product of urbanization – and its ability to prey on the poor whilst turning them into disfigured, tormented creatures.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{9} For a more detailed discussion on Lippard’s social commentary through Devil Bug’s disability see Carey R. Voeller’s “Disability, Masculinity, and Sentimentality in Lippard’s \textit{The Quaker City}.”
CHAPTER III

DEVIL BUG’S MARKET VIABILITY WITHIN AN IMPERFECT ECONOMIC SYSTEM AND ITS PROBLEMATIC CONSEQUENCES

Although Devil Bug maintains his independence as an entrepreneur – in spite of his jarring appearance – by positioning him as a businessman operating within the capitalist system rather than fighting against it, Lippard argues for the limitations of capitalism. As a result of Devil Bug’s non-normative appearance in an otherwise normative-dominated realm, his nearly all-consuming “goold”-focused mindset causes Devil Bug to seek out and develop problematic relationships in terms of economical transactions as an effort to counteract his isolating non-normative physicality. Despite the repulsion and rejection heaped onto Devil Bug by the novel’s characters – Byrnewood “shrinks back in disgust” upon first sight of him (52), Dora marks him with “a look of disgust” (288), and Mabel’s initial reaction to him is “wonder mingled with terror” (332) – Devil Bug seeks out what I will call “companions,” in order to counterbalance his alienating disability. However, Devil Bug’s notion of companionship is most certainly skewed, an understanding partially derived from his bleak upbringing in a brothel. Lippard explains how Devil Bug grew up “in full and continual sight of scenes of vice, wretchedness and squalor,” and how, “His world…his only theatre of action – had been the common house of ill-fame” (106). Lippard’s language here indicates both the disreputable, lower class environs in which Devil Bug cultivated his persona, and the nature of his existence there. Devil Bug’s brothel home was his sole “theatre of action,” the only place where he could observe human interaction, and try his own hand at it, without the benefit of guidance from any family or friends. At an impressionable age, Devil Bug witnesses men paying the proprietor for the sexual favors of any number of women, and the proprietor giving each prostitute her cut of the earnings. Within this framework,
Devil Bug comes to understand human connection as merely something to be bought and sold: an economic transaction. Oftentimes Devil Bug mutters to himself a variation of the phrase “Wonder how that would work?” both in regards to his pursuit of companions and his plots to wreak mischief. Devil Bug is a curious being – he meditates upon his interactions with others and their consequences, often to the point of obsession. But, his choice of the word “work” also suggests the labor sphere, and therefore, economic transactions. His fixation on this phrase indicates how wholly Devil Bug views the obtaining of companions through an economic lens, something of value that must be strategically bought, traded, or swindled.

Dora becomes an enticing potential companion for Devil Bug within his framing of relationships as economic transactions. Although she herself is able-bodied, Dora presents as a female counterpart to Devil Bug, merging the vicious and greedy with an outward façade of beauty and devotion. In stark contrast to the vision Lippard creates of Dora’s womanhood as “the greatest wonder of God’s universe,” Lippard goes on to reveal how she is, “in her heart, as corrupt as the blackness of hell” (250). Devil Bug sees past Dora’s disguises to the nature of her soul in all its wickedness. Calling attention to her “devil eyes” with “a look of gloating admiration,” he finds something of himself in her that he admires (287). While Dora’s outward beauty does not conform with Devil Bug’s distorted figure, their core similarities prove that outward appearances here are rendered meaningless in the face of a shared cutthroat desire for economic gain.

Lippard acutely conflates Devil Bug’s view of companionship as a coercive economic transaction through his relationship with Dora, and in doing so, again upends the traditional normative body/non-normative body power dynamic within the capitalist system. When she comes begging at his door in the wake of being blackmailed by Luke Harvey, Devil Bug realizes
that she provides an opportunity for sexual companionship. While Dora makes clear her repulsion of Devil Bug, her desperate plea that “Luke Harvey must die, at any price,” offers Devil Bug leverage (289). By beginning their interaction with economic transactions, Dora unknowingly makes herself vulnerable to Devil Bug’s advances. In this instance, though, Devil Bug does not seek any sort of true monetary value or collateral by establishing the relationship. Through his own power and influence in the economy of Monk Hall, Devil Bug hopes to achieve Dora’s “goold” as he sees it: her womanhood. Harking back to his brothel days during this encounter, Devil Bug equates Dora’s sexuality with gold and finds it equally desirable as gaining any money she may have to offer him. In this instance, Devil Bug shifts the traditional discourse in an attempt to exploit a normative body with his “freakish” body for his own benefit.

Devil Bug’s word choice of “gold” demonstrates his ability to only see human interactions as an economic value set; however, it also echoes his only other previous romantic relationship. Recalling memories of his former paramour Ellen, Devil Bug says, “She never told me nothin’ but her first name, an’ that’s on the goold bracelet which she gave me” (223). In addition to his whorehouse upbringing in which he played witness to relationships with women as economic transactions, Devil Bug’s first real romance holds a deep-seated association with gold because of the bracelet Ellen left him. Therefore, anything physically gold or even metonymically called “gold” holds an emotional resonance with Devil Bug, not only because of its economic value, but because of its sentimental value. One might think that Devil Bug’s and Dora’s similarly routed minds might offer a chance for reciprocal collaboration: Dora is fixed on obtaining a “coronet” and becoming a countess, while Devil Bug is also preoccupied with obtaining Dora’s “goold” as well as phantoms to add to his collection. However, while Devil
Bug sees their commonalities as an opportunity to create a connection within the framework of the market economy, Dora cannot overcome her repulsion at his exterior in order to reciprocate.

Summoning memories of “goold”-tinted love does not fully satisfy Devil Bug’s desire for economically valued companions, however. When Mabel enters Devil Bug’s sphere and he realizes that she is his daughter, she provides a chance for him to reach out and develop a more selfless form of companionship, even while she accrues a surprising economic value. Once Devil Bug unearths Ellen’s previous romantic connection to Livingstone, he uses his economical acumen to transfer this connection to Mabel. By convincing Harvey that Mabel is Livingstone’s rightful heir and inducing him to support his cause, Devil Bug effectively establishes Mabel in the market economy. In doing so, Devil Bug solidifies Mabel’s status as a type of investment. He also reinforces his own economic savvy – Devil Bug displays his ability of financial foresight, which was not immediately apparent when seeking out Dora’s “goold” or his phantom collectibles, the ghosts of his murdered victims who accompany him. Furthermore, Mabel’s nearly overnight class rise acts as a backhanded slap to Philadelphia’s elite who scorn Devil Bug largely because of his appearance, and in spite of his economic viability. But, in the end, Voeller explains, “Devil-Bug ultimately triumphs: Mabel bypasses the dominant ethos of the self-made, ‘rags to riches’ market narrative and instead immediately infiltrates the system…through an alternative and aristocratic birthright” (17). Elevating his daughter to the upper class both allows Devil Bug personal satisfaction in thwarting the market economy that tries to shut him out and provides Mabel with a hopeful future.

Unlike his other attempts to find or coerce companionship, Devil Bug’s hope for a relationship with Mabel seems largely good-hearted and selfless, in spite of her economic value. He says to her "I'm a poor one-eyed devil, and nobody cares for me! But I'll be your friend g-al –
I, that never yet was friend to a human bein' save one – I will be your friend!" (333). The only time that Devil Bug dares use the term “friend” toward human beings is in relation to Ellen and Mabel, an indication that this human relationship holds much more value for him than the others for which he strives. The trust and devotion cultivated in his past relationship with Ellen carries over to Mabel, the new generation. Mabel brings out new characteristics in Devil Bug as well, proving the strength of his ties to her. When attempting to save Luke for the benefit of Mabel, Lippard describes “every infernal emotion, playing over his chaos of a face, mingled with some gleams of human feeling,” humanizing Devil Bug and drawing out the reader’s empathy (521).

However slight, Mabel also shares the load of Devil Bug’s disability through her mirror birthmark: “a slight, thin and discolored streak, marring the beauty of her face, near the right temple. It was a faint and delicate copy of the deep red mark near the swarthy temple of Devil Bug” (332). Mabel’s other characteristics – her generally appealing appearance and pleasant personality – offset her small “deformity” such that it goes unnoticed to others. But, this connection coupled with Mabel’s biological ties to Devil Bug, and especially, Ellen, makes her a particularly desirable, more hopeful character for Devil Bug to try and establish as a companion. Although subtle, Mabel’s physical “mar” serves for Lippard as yet another way in which the disfigured outcast (even if this time she is covertly disfigured) is able to supplant the so-called “normal” economic power players in the Quaker City.

Ultimately, the narrator reveals how Devil Bug conducts his bartering for companions through blood and violence. He divulges that “[Devil Bug] loved not so much to kill, as to observe the blood of his victim, “fall drop by drop,” and that “a longing desire had grown up, within this creature, to lay another corpse beside his solitary victim…He longed to surround

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10 Devil Bug also calls the physical structure of Monk Hall his friend: “I never had a friend in all my born days, but these old walls have been my friends!” (299).
himself with the Phantoms of new victims” (106-7). Devil Bug counts the drops of blood falling from his victims much as a banker might tally his new accounts. His yearning for more victims certainly plays into the view of Devil Bug’s blackened soul, but Lippard specifically emphasizes his desire for “Phantoms,” not simply victims for the thrill of the kill. Although Devil Bug’s natural state fails to attract altruistic comrades, it does not pose as a problem to him, since he reasons that companionship is obtained through economic means. Adding to his savings of blood (his currency in this case) buys Devil Bug more spectral sidekicks. And, although the phantom at his side summons guilt, at least he is a reliable companion.

In a scene that is perhaps Lippard’s most blatant condemnation of Philadelphia’s capitalist elite, it is Devil Bug’s phantoms – that of Paul Western and the Widow Smolby – who seemingly lead Devil Bug into his foreboding dream depicting the last day of the Quaker City. In his vision, Devil Bug encounters a host of new ghosts that present themselves exclusively to him. Devil Bug’s glee at discovering the “silks and satins” of the rich living persons soon turns to glee at the still operating gallows, and then the “flock of coffins” traveling down the river, carrying bodies of the poor and neglected of Philadelphia. Devil Bug delights in an ensuing rush of the dead to the living king’s throne, although the king, and all others living, are oblivious. He witnesses “the legions of the shrouded dead, amid the ranks of the Procession…that band of countless dead” and thrills at the sight, laughing “until his sides ached” (387). Although seeing so many phantasmic bodies of Philadelphia’s poor in one place gives Devil Bug pleasure, their invisibility to the living emphasizes their existence as bodies viewed as having no right to exist.

Devil Bug’s euphoria at these spectacular scenes, and the destruction that follows – the decaying ghosts revealing themselves to the living humans, and the world ending in a culmination of damnation, fire, and terror – precipitates for a few reasons. Firstly, Devil Bug is
surrounded by phantoms in his dream, ones not so different from his companions who initially brought him into the vision. These phantoms are not the product of Devil Bug’s murder sprees, but they are the product of the Quaker City elites’ apathy and repulsion. They too were murdered in a figurative sense, like Devil Bug’s own companion phantoms, if not a literal one. Secondly, Devil Bug delights in the grotesque and macabre. Like himself, the ghosts of this dystopian Philadelphia exhibit unsettling features (one ghost has “worms crawling round its brow”), and both Devil Bug and these phantoms have been marginalized by society (390). The phantoms also exhibit disabilities in the afterlife – their bodies remain disfigured from the violence they incurred in the act of death, and continue to become more disabled through bodily decay. This perpetual violation of the body in death reflects Lippard’s idea of capitalism’s sustained violation of the rights of those individuals who embody non-normative features. Though not of this world, Devil Bug finds a place amid the outcast and misfit ghosts of his vision because of their shared disabilities and ostracism from society. This otherworldly interaction also has a value for Devil Bug, even if not expressly economic: it is his portal to the Underworld, full of his cherished ghosts, and an alternative reality set apart from the real-life economy of Philadelphia that spurns him.

Throughout *The Quaker City*, Devil Bug is unquestionably portrayed as a character of excess who lacks restraint. When it comes to murder and torture, Devil Bug cannot help but push his limits ever further, prodding himself with cheers of, “Wonders how that ‘ud vork?” By linking Devil Bug’s disabled body with his twisted soul, Lippard makes plain Devil Bug’s use as a literary vehicle, playing into symbolical convention in order to capitalize on an audience trained to crave sensationalism. Lippard eventually carries Devil Bug’s symbolic place through to his own self-destruction. As Carey Voeller summarizes, “In a text that desires to obliterate
urban wrongs, this obliteration finally extends to the ‘wrong’ body, and Lippard, like authors before and after him, appears to suggest that there is no lasting place for disabled figures” (18). Ultimately, Devil Bug projects society’s own rejection of him out on the novel through violent actions of retaliation in an effort to gain sympathy, regardless of the lack of sympathy the Quaker City shows him.

David S. Reynolds has argued that Lippard’s extravagant use of sensationalism ultimately undermines the social message underlying his work. Reynolds asserts, "The novel's hyperbolic sensationalism and voyeuristic eroticism compromise whatever political message it might contain. Dismayed by social injustice and economic inequities, Lippard exploits every device of popular sensational literature to expose the social elite; but time and again sensationalism becomes an end in itself" (*Beneath the American Renaissance* 206-7). However, I’d like to argue that *The Quaker City’s* best-selling status demonstrates Lippard’s success in advocating for social change through extreme sensationalism; even if his sensationalist writing was the impetus for any given book purchase, his core themes condemning corruption, sexism, ableism, and classism were still imparted to the reader upon finishing the novel. Lippard’s work spurred controversy because of its pointed criticism of public figures – as Reynolds points out, “According to John Bell Bouton, *The Quaker City* divided Philadelphia into two camps, with poor laborers taking Lippard’s side” – but it also sparked public conversation (*George Lippard* 10). Despite the challenges and personal tragedies Lippard faced during his brief life, he remained an unwavering advocate for the American labor movement. Given his record of non-fiction writing in criticism of the treatment of workers, his involvement in various cooperatives and reform groups, and the generation of his own labor union, it stands to reason that Lippard would go to extremes in trying to spread the word about these social issues, which ultimately,
became his life’s work once his production of fiction tapered around 1850. For today’s readers, *The Quaker City* may come across as an effusive, excessive text. But in Lippard’s time, it made perfect sense as a vehicle for the author to champion the downtrodden of urban America.


---. *The Quaker City, or, the Monks of Monk Hall*. Edited by David S. Reynolds, University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.
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