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NEGATIVE TRAITS: THE UNCANNY, BIZARRE AND
HORRIFIC IN NINETEENTH CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHS

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SUMMARY

This thesis explores manifestations of the uncanny, bizarre and horrific in Victorian photographs. It follows the broad narrative trajectory of the development of horror as a literary genre, tracking the same path through photographic images. Using close reading and analysis of both texts and pictures I examine the interplay between narrative and image, looking at how these forms influenced each other's expression of the nineteenth century cultural fascination with the strange and terrifying.

Chapter one examines the spatial character of the horrific in early Gothic writing and includes a close reading of the 1856 publication of *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire* by Joseph Cundall and Philip H. Delamotte to illuminate how ideas of cultural heritage and picturesque art converged with constructions of the uncanny in photography.

Chapter two looks at the phenomenon of the human freak in the context of Darwinian notions of evolution. I look at the influence of animal imagery and textual representation on the construction of uncanny human-animal hybrids.

Chapter three continues the discussion of how human freaks disrupt the conventional human-animal divide and explores how the freak show was an arena of fantasy influenced by fairytales and children's fiction of the period.

Chapter four examines early medical photographs from the archives of St. Bartholomew's Hospital to look at specifically at the abject horrors of the body.

My conclusion argues that all the themes explored in the previous chapters are consolidated in the Victorian cultural perception of the criminal, and points the way toward further research into historical photographs of crime scenes.

I hereby declare that this thesis has not and will not be submitted, in whole or in part, to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signed.....

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introduction

The premise of this work is that the photograph is a simultaneously fictional and veritable medium: a unique realm in which fantasy is manifest truth and reality is mobilised by magic. My inquiry into this idea is approached thematically, and my themes - the uncanny, bizarre and horrific - are qualities that are linked by their capacity to provoke fear. While fear is a highly subjective emotion there are also fears that many people share, and it is difficult to discern in what ways fear is determined by biological instinct, and to what extent it is a product of culture. Fear itself is a slippery beast that elides common categories of nature and nurture, since its expressions often owe something to each. The uncanny, bizarre and horrific are shades or nuances of this ambivalent complex and my intention is to explore how these qualities emerged in the photographic images produced in the nineteenth century. I will demonstrate that, among the many social and cultural functions photographs fulfilled in the Victorian era, they were also agents of fear. In some cases photographic images were deliberately designed to be unsettling, as a means of reflecting, and expressing, ideological or social anxieties within a controlled forum; in others, the power to disturb comes from the innate characteristics of the medium, or subsidiary associations connected to the subject matter, and often from the combined effects of both.

In conducting this research several theorists have been useful in defining the causes and conditions that constitute uncanny, bizarre and horrific phenomena and experience. Freud's 1919 essay 'The Uncanny' outlines a specific set of articles and circumstances as being uncanny, and differentiates them from the simply fearful by their correspondence to the mechanism of repression.¹ Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection - developed from the tenets of psychoanalysis and presented in her *Powers of Horror* (1980) - has informed my understanding of horror as intrinsically related to the body and, as such, as a quality also entwined with elements of disgust, defilement and contamination.² The ideas asserted in Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* (1980) provide the overarching theoretical framework for my interpretation of photography as a medium, and how its properties can contribute to an eerie or ominous aspect in the images it constructs.³

Freud's concept of the 'unhomely' is a sense of sinister presence, haunting, and alienation that, perversely, is fundamentally inscribed with, and contingent on, opposing conditions of familiarity, comfort, and the feeling of home. This essential contradiction of something 'known of old' (Freud, p.340), that is also strange and threatening, is the common characteristic of those 'things, persons, impressions, events and situations' (Freud, p.347) Freud evaluates as uncanny.

¹ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', *Penguin Freud Library Volume 14 Art and Literature*, translated by James Strachey, ed. by Albert Dickson (London: Penguin, 1990) pp.339-381.

² Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 1993)

Most prominent among these uncanny phenomena is the double, which arises from striking similarities in the look of separate entities. The double is a particularly visual kind of uncanniness, that disrupts stable notions of what is real and what is fake. When the double is an extraneous incarnation of the self – as in a mirror image or, indeed, a photograph – the implication is of a sinister splitting, that incites doubt in one's own psychological integrity.

Uncertainty concerning the nature of being is likewise the cause of the uncanniness Freud (p.347) attributes to dolls and automata, which can appear to be alive but are in fact insensate objects. Conversely, the intimation that a lifeless object may be sentient is also uncanny, since it pertains to the mindset Freud (p.362-63) refers to as 'animistic' or the 'omnipotence of thoughts'. In this magical outlook, thought has the power to manifest items, control others, and engineer events; the world is 'peopled with spirits' (Freud, p.362); and objects and entities are invested with the same conscious power. It is an attitude that, according to Freud, corresponds both to a former stage in the mental evolution of humanity, and to the infantile beliefs of individual psychological development. Thus, when strange coincidences - such as wishes that transpire in actuality, or reoccurring encounters with the same name or number - intimate such animistic forces to be at work, their 'lure of superstition' (Freud, p.362) has a familiar ring, being an old persuasion, either repressed or overcome, and this regression evinces uncanny sensation. Such repetition – of actions and situations as well as symbols – not only unearths surmounted superstitious convictions but also points to a latent, 'instinctual' (Freud, p.360), 'inner "compulsion to repeat"' (p.361), the 'daemonic character' of which conceives a schism ('a doubling, dividing, interchanging' (p.356) in psychic self-integrity and, as such, is 'perceived as uncanny' (p.361). It is another aspect of the Freudian uncanny that corresponds to the properties of photography, which doubles, or reiterates, existential phenomena, and produces endlessly repeated copies of the same, or similar, pictures, the echoing visions of which may work to invoke inner 'daemons'.

Like the Freudian uncanny, Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytically premised theory of abjection also indicates the frightening to be a quality connected to disordered boundaries. Specifically concerned with the physical and conceptual construction of categories of 'I' and 'other', it is rooted in the body, and thus more congruous to the notion of horror, which carries inflections of loathing, repugnance, and fleshly desecration. Abject phenomena include blood, vomit, pus, and bodily wastes, that occupy a peripheral interspace between subject and object - both physically, in that they originate within the body, and manifest through orifices that designate the corporeal threshold - and conceptually, in that they cannot be comfortably integrated as 'self' or 'other' and thereby challenge the fragile construction of the ego. In a process that perpetually re-enacts the

primary (traumatic and violent) separation of the infantile and maternal bodies, that inaugurates entry into the symbolic order, such phenomena must be vehemently jettisoned, or expelled, in order to reassert the borders that demarcate self and other, and facilitate subjective existence.⁴ Abjection is the necessary condition of establishing and maintaining the self, but is simultaneously a source of terror, since each encounter with the abject presents the possibility of that identity being subsumed in, and annihilated by, the other. As in Freud's *heimliche/unheimliche* the abject effectuates a paradox - the phenomena that facilitate ego construction being simultaneously those which imperil it.

The corpse, for Kristeva, is the most abject of phenomena, since it completely erases the distinction between subject and object, and with it the foundation on which identity is built. To confront a dead body 'without God, and outside of science' (Kristeva, p.4) is to face the reality of human life as perishable flesh. It is death as crude, existential truth, or 'death infecting life' (Kristeva, p.4), which compels a traumatic revelation of, and at, the limits of the human condition. Kristeva's concept of the corpse as the material fact death - of 'death infecting life' rather than being approached through the abstractions of meaning or knowledge - is analogous to Barthes's reading of the photograph as 'an asymbolic Death, outside of religion, outside of ritual' (Barthes, p.92). For Barthes, the photographic action of isolating and extracting a moment from the continuum of existence is 'an abrupt dive into literal Death' (p.92), since it also inevitably articulates the unceasing action of time and change, growth and decay, the pith of which is mortality. At the same time, the photograph is a temporal collapse of past and present, that resurrects what has been in the now of the viewer and, as such, 'assumes Death with the denying alibi of the distractedly "alive"' (Barthes, p.92). Photographs at once read as '*this will be* and *this has been*' (Barthes, p.96) - an improbable conflation that both destabilises the border that segregates life from death and disrupts the linear logic of time. It is a paradox that also sites the photograph within the Freudian uncanny, which asserts the 'highest degree' (Freud, p.364) of uncanny feeling to be that aroused by 'dead bodies', the 'return of the dead', and 'spirits and ghosts': effects precisely manifest in the photograph's temporal disjunction, and conjuring of spectral presences.

What emerges from these theories is that the disturbing and horrific arise in relation to the disruption of borders, and contingent collapse of categories that uphold social, cultural,

⁴ The concept of the symbolic order comes from the work of Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), and denotes the realm of language, verbal communication, inter-subjective relations and the law. It is associated with the father, and in order to enter it, and become a subject, the child must accept certain restrictions on their desires. Its counterpart, the 'semiotic chora' - theorised by Kristeva - is a pre-Oedipal state governed by undefined instincts, and is related to the mother.

psychological, and epistemological structures. Even within the understanding of fear and the frightening itself, such category confusion is an evident meta-trait. In 'The Uncanny' Freud proposes a differentiation between the uncanny 'depicted [...] in imaginative productions' and 'the uncanny in real life' (p.362). This distinction has tended to transfer to the mediated representation of frightening things and experiences which, Matt Hills has argued, scholars have generally distinguished as pertaining to either art horror, which functions as an aesthetic and/or narrative fictional exercise, or 'true' horror, presented as the spontaneously produced records of traumatic events within their social, cultural and historical context.⁵ However, as Hills asserts, those mediations framed as 'true horror' can only function as such – that is, be comprehended and read as horror – by adopting 'codes of meaning' (p.136) derived from the 'generic templates' (p.135) and narrative strategies of horror fiction. Rather than clearly delimited fields, 'art horror' and 'true horror' are modes of representing the fearful that intersect and overlap in complex ways: fiction providing the means of communicating and assimilating traumatic fact, and terrifying events furnishing art with subject-matter that compels imaginative interrogation.

Although the orders of actual and invented have no doubt never been strictly segregated their aberrant cohesion is exemplified by the duplicitous constitution of the photograph, that is at once visual replica, and artful interpretation. With the camera, the mechanism of mediation itself became transparent, and empiricism became a paradigm of picture making. Photographs were not images but windows into the world, that purported to put viewers in direct contact with the realities around and far beyond them. More than just a tool of communication, the camera was a substitute for 'being there' – a witness to the things, people, and events that comprised the world itself– whose products held the status of visual documents or factual information.

Despite this apparent immediacy of the photograph, the camera was also, from the start, a creative technology, and its practitioners drew on established aesthetic disciplines – for instance, portraiture and landscape painting – to find a visual language through which to explore the artistic capacities of the medium. The influence of literary fiction was also crucial – as Nancy Armstrong has theorised – in creating the prevalent nineteenth-century photographic mode of 'realism'. By privileging sight as the principle agent of knowledge, the Victorian social-realist novel disseminated a specifically visual epistemological stance that anticipated the advent of photography

⁵ Matt Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror* (London/New York: Continuum, 2005) pp.129-131. Although I have used Hills's term 'true horror', as he states, there is actually no such genre, real horror being presented rather as news or documentary. 'True horror' is intended to expose the structuring of a distance between actuality and entertainment, that enables fictive horror to function 'affectively and pleasurably as a genre' (Hills, p.129) without the moral suspicion of taking enjoyment from others' misfortunes and traumas.

and primed cultural conditions to receive it.⁶ Narrative fiction was also, I want to argue, instrumental in enabling the photographic portrayal of disturbing and horrific phenomena. What Hills asserts in relation to the mechanisms of film and television – namely that the mediation of genuine frightening things and experiences demands an interpretative framework which comes from generic sources – is, I feel, applicable to photography from the earliest instances in which it engages with uncomfortable subjects and issues, and photography modeled its interpretations of the traumatic on those of fiction and art.

*

The formation of horror as a specific literary genre is itself a narrative, and it is the arc of this story that structures my investigation of photographic horror, which traces those themes and motifs that mark the developmental growth of terror fiction through parallel stages of visual expression in Victorian photographic images. Prior to the eighteenth century emergence of the Gothic there is no separate tradition of representing the fearful, though there are scattered seeds: the monsters of Greek myth and the witches and ogres of folk and fairytale; the bloody violence and supernatural turns of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. Drawing on these influences, the Gothic manifested a sharpening literary focus on the spectral, strange, and macabre, which, although a discernible trend, was difficult to define as a cohesive genre.

In the first Gothic novels to appear, horror was figured as having a particularly spatial character.⁷ Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764)⁸ and the fiction of Ann Radcliffe⁹ revolved around decaying castles, and abandoned abbeys, as the loci of murderous schemes and phantasmal occurrences. This architecturally annexed horror was a mode that had already begun to take shape in the work of the Graveyard school of poetry, that emerged in the mid-eighteenth century – so called because they favoured grim settings such as mouldering tombs and deserted churchyards, and shared a morbid interest in the imagery of death, and the emotions of

⁶ Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 2002) pp.6-8.

⁷ Dale Townshend, 'Gothic and the Cultural Sources of Horror, 1740-1820', in *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. by Xavier Aldana Reyes (London: The British Library, 2016) pp. 259-775. (N.B. – the pagination given for this text corresponds to the digital version, on Kindle).

⁸ Horace Walpole (1717-1797), sixth child of the Whig Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole, was an author, antiquarian and key figure in the eighteenth century Gothic Revival, his house, Strawberry Hill, in Richmond-upon-Thames, being an exemplary neo-Gothic building of the period. He described *The Castle of Otranto* as an attempt to infuse the eighteenth century realist novel with fantastical elements of medieval romance. The second edition of 1765 was self defined as a 'Gothic tale'. (See Marie Mulvey-Roberts, *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*, (London: Macmillan, 1998) pp.246-249.

⁹ Ann Radcliffe (née Ward) (1764-1823) published her first novel *The Castles of Athlin and Dunblayne* (London: T. Hookham) in 1789, and went on to become the highest paid professional author of the 1790s, producing six novels as well as travel journals and critical work.

melancholy and dread.¹⁰ Graveyard poetry was a map that charted the spatial terrain of fear, and Gothic fiction then built its sensational dramas of moral corruption and esoteric menace on the same derelict sites. Thus invested with terror, the haunted or ruined edifice became the first essential convention of generic horror.

It was from those dark and ominous spaces that monsters emerged. A ‘solitary chamber, or rather cell [...] separated from all other apartments by a gallery and staircase’ is the dank and isolated location of Victor Frankenstein’s ‘laboratory’ in which he constructs and brings to life the ghoulish creature that will plague his conscience, and threaten his life, in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818).¹¹ Assembled with ‘materials’ gathered from ‘charnel-houses [...] the dissecting room and the slaughter-house’ (Shelley, p.53), Frankenstein’s monster is an abject, ‘filthy creation’ that shifts the focus of fear towards body horror, and the body as determinant of ontological status. Again, it is ambiguity that makes Frankenstein’s monster terrible – he is neither human nor animal, dead nor alive. Gigantic and grossly misshapen, he is both an imitation and an aberration of the anatomical structure of a man. ‘His yellow skin’ that ‘scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath’ (Shelley, p.56) suggests sutured and wounded flesh, and his disparate parts, barely held together, are at once fragmented, and yet somehow intact.

There is also a decidedly medical aspect to the horror of *Frankenstein*. It is through his studies in physiognomy, and anatomy, that Victor discovers the dreadful power of ‘bestowing animation upon lifeless matter’ (Shelley, p.51), and it is with the skills of a surgeon that he carries out this fateful scheme. As Royce Mahawatte explains in his essay ‘Horror in the Nineteenth Century: Dreadful Sensations, 1820-80’ the early Victorian period saw the eighteenth century Gothic novel ‘proliferate’ into a ‘network of tropes, subgenres and plot threads’ – one of which was a specifically medical expression of fear, which Shelley’s narrative anticipates.¹² The ‘medical casebook’ was a genre of literature that revolved around the ‘unstable body’ (Mahawatte, p.1156) and the repugnance of death and disease. Samuel Warren’s ‘Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician’ was a popular serial that ran in *Blackwood’s* magazine between 1830 and 1837. Framed as the memoirs of a medical practitioner, the work catalogued cases of sickness and injury, and

¹⁰ ‘Graveyard poetry’ is the retrospective name given to a body of lyrical works that emerged mainly in the 1740s. The major works of the school are the early *A Night Piece on Death* (1722), by Thomas Parnell, Edward Young’s *Night Thoughts* (1742-45); Robert Blair’s *The Grave* (1743); James Hervey’s *Meditations Among the Tombs* (1745) Thomas Wharton’s *On the Pleasures of Melancholy* (1747) and Thomas Gray’s *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751). With their emphasis on extreme emotion, and indulgent introspection, these works challenged the prevalent cultural mode of rationalism and marked a transition into Romanticism. See Fred Botting, *Gothic*, (London/New York: Routledge, 1996) pp.21-25; David Punter, *The Literature of Terror Volume 1*, (Harlow, Essex: Longman Group Ltd., 1996) pp.30-40; and Marie Mulvey-Roberts, *Handbook to Gothic Literature*, pp.107-08.

¹¹ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, (ed. by Maurice Hindle) (London: Penguin, 1992) p.53.

¹² Royce Mahawatte ‘Horror in the Nineteenth Century: Dreadful Sensations, 1820-80’ in *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. by Xavier Aldana Reyes (pp.1129-1516) p.1176.

included intimately gruesome descriptions of the body corrupt, as well as the mental agonies of madness and hysteria. Although these vignettes were ostensibly based on actual experience and, as such, maintained a posture of documentary, as Mahawatte (p.1228) argues, their 'imagery and literary allusions' adopted the sensational style of Gothic fiction, and the work was produced to hook a readership partial to the horrifying novel. With this unique blend of social commentary and imaginative invention, the sub-strain of medical horror not only 'brought the Gothic into line' (Mahawatte, p.1249)) with the prevalent nineteenth century literary mode of Realism, but was also using the language of terror literature to interpret the traumatic reality of the suffering body.

In crime fiction body horror was taken to a more shockingly violent extreme, with graphic depictions of murder. Indeed, killing was prevalent in both the imaginative and factual literature of the period. Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), *Bleak House* (1852-53) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65) were respectable bourgeois serials that featured murders or murder plots, while George W.M. Reynolds's 'penny dreadful' *The Mysteries of London* (1844-48) catered to a mass audience with lurid stories of iniquity and vice set in the city's seedy slums and contrasting spheres of the hedonistic aristocracy. Popular current affairs publications such as *The Illustrated London News* (1842-2003), and *The Illustrated Police News* (1864-1938), were largely vehicles for crime stories, reports of which were styled with the same dramatic impact, and sensational spin, as those offered in fiction. Inevitably there was overlap, and mutual exchange, between invented and real-life accounts of violent crime, and this generic synergy was epitomised by the Whitechapel series of murders, perpetrated by the notorious 'Jack the Ripper', that occurred in East London between 3rd April 1888 and 13th February 1891. These atrocities, in which at least five women were brutally slaughtered, have inspired numerous imaginative, and professedly factual narratives, often themed around identifying, or characterising, the unknown murderer, or speculating as to his motives, and the mysterious circumstances of the crimes. From the start, fantasy and reality were inextricably bound together in the proliferation of stories, images, ideas and theories the unsolved murders inspired, and while the figure of Jack the Ripper retains the status of an ordinary man, he has also become a being of supernatural menace and power. That these homicides were among the first in Britain in which photography was used as an investigative tool only seems to have abetted the enthusiasm for inventive supposition, and the case exemplifies the photograph's role as being as much a creator of horrific narrative as a clarification of it.

The structure of this thesis parallels the developmental trajectory of horror in literature. Chapter one, 'Place', investigates the photographic depiction of the first Gothic motif, the ruined abbey or castle, and contends that, through the photograph's dual indexical and symbolic status, the conception of ruins in Gothic fiction as haunted and macabre came to condition the experience of ruins in embodied life. Evolving from this setting of uncanny space, chapter two, 'Monsters', examines the photographic construction of the sideshow 'freak', with a specific emphasis on those performers presented as human-animal hybrids; and chapter three, 'Monsters Return (Of the Repressed)', continues this discussion, tracing how the shift in the interpretation of bodily diversity, from wonder to pathology, was reflected in photographic representation. The medical theme is developed further in chapter four, 'Flesh', which considers the social and cultural functions of medical photographs from the previously unstudied archive of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, in London. A coda finishes the study by outlining ideas for potential further research into the making of crime scene photographs, that represent the real-life horrors of violent crime, the anxieties surrounding which would emerge in a new century, and new medium, in the serial killer and slasher film.

This scholarship brings together the cultural history of photography, and the study of Gothic and horror as artistic modes. In the first instance, my work enriches a body of research concerned with understanding the functions of photography in Victorian society and culture. Steve Edwards's reflection on the dual documentary and artistic qualities of the photograph, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories*, is pertinent to a study of horror in photographs, since such expressions are inevitably underpinned by real-life events and anxieties.¹³ My exploration of the relationship between photography and fiction is particularly informed by Nancy Armstrong's *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism*, and Daniel A. Novak's *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*¹⁴; and *Photography, Vision, and the Production of Modern Bodies*, by Suren Lalvani, has provided valuable insight into the ways the photographic visual order acted as a regulator of social and bodily propriety: most significantly to this work, through the genre of bourgeois portraiture.¹⁵

Within the vast and varied field of Gothic studies, I have drawn from texts with a focus on Gothic and the body, and Gothic and the visual. Of especial note are: Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*; Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality,*

¹³ Steve Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories* (University Park Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2006).

¹⁴ Daniel A. Novak, *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Suren Lalvani, *Photography, Vision, and the Production of Modern Bodies* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996).

Materialism and Degeneration at the Fin-de-Siècle; Catherine Spooner, *Fashioning Gothic Bodies*; Marie Mulvey-Roberts, *Dangerous Bodies: Historicising the Gothic Corporeal*; Alexa Wright, *Monstrosity: The Human Monster in Visual Culture*; and the essay collection *Monstrous Media/Spectral Subjects: Imaging Gothic from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, edited by Fred Botting and Catherine Spooner.¹⁶ Nicholas Royle's *The Uncanny*, an intensive dissection of Freud's writings, ideas, and their ramifications, has also been an important influence on this study.¹⁷

Each of my chapters also speaks to more specialist branches of scholarly investigation. Chapter one is specifically concerned with the relationship between literary and visual representations of ruins, and perceptions of uncanny space and, as such, sits alongside work that addresses these themes, including John Macarthur's *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust, and Other Irregularities*,¹⁸ Dylan Trigg's *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, Robert Ginsburg's *The Aesthetics of Ruins*, and the specifically photographic study, *Antiquity and Ruin: Early Views of Ancient and Mediterranean Sites*, edited by Claire L. Lyons. The ideas forwarded in James Risser's 1992 article, 'Siting Order at the Limits of Construction: Deconstructing Architectural Place', are key to my argument that ruin photographs came to manifest uncanny space.¹⁹ This chapter also addresses arguments regarding Ann Radcliffe and visual culture, particularly those in Jayne Lewis's article "'No color of language": Radcliffe's Aesthetic Unbound', and Elizabeth Bohls's *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics 1716-1818*.²⁰ A further valuable resource on Radcliffe has been the essay collection *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic*, edited by Dale Townshend and Angela Wright.²¹

My discussion of the photographic construction of zoomorphic 'freaks', in chapters two and three, begins with a broad survey of the visual representation of animals throughout history, which draws extensively on *Picturing Animals in Britain* by Diana Donald, and Harriet Ritvo's *The*

¹⁶ Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1995); Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism and Degeneration at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Catherine Spooner, *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004); Alexa Wright, *Monstrosity: The Human Monster in Visual Culture* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2013); Fred Botting and Catherine Spooner, eds, *Monstrous Media/Spectral Subjects – Imaging Gothic from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

¹⁷ Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

¹⁸ John Macarthur, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust, and Other Irregularities* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2007); Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011); Robert Ginsburg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004); Claire L. Lyons, John K. Papadopoulos, Lindsey Stewart, Andrew Szegedy-Masak, *Antiquity and Ruin: Early Views of Ancient and Mediterranean Sites* (Los Angeles, California: Getty Publications, 2005).

¹⁹ James Risser, 'Siting Order at the Limits of Construction: Deconstructing Architectural Place', *Research in Phenomenology*, 22:1 (1992) 62-72.

²⁰ Jayne Lewis, "'No color of language": Radcliffe's Aesthetic Unbound', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 39:3 (2006) 377-390; Elizabeth Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics 1716-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

²¹ Dale Townshend and Angela Wright, eds, *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age, while aiming to enrich these studies with a narrative of specifically photographic animal representation.²² With regard to the photographing of animals, Matthew Brower's book *Developing Animals: Wildlife and Early American Photography* has been an essential source of information and inspiration, and I extend his theory of wildlife photography to encompass the work of John Dilwyn Llewelyn (1810-1882), arguing for an earlier emergence of that genre.²³ My theoretical inquiry into Llewelyn's use of taxidermic specimens in his photographs is especially indebted to Connor Creaney's article, 'Paralytic Animation: The Anthropomorphic Taxidermy of Walter Potter'.²⁴

A number of texts have been crucial to my understanding of 'enfreakment', or the conversion of bodily diversity into symbolic monstrosity, the most significant being: Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*; Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Disability in American Culture and Literature*, and *Staring: How We Look*.²⁵ On the cultural history of freak shows, of particular note are Nadya Durbach's *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British History*, Erin O'Connor's *Raw Material: Producing Pathology in Victorian Culture*, and the collection *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, edited by Marlene Tromp.²⁶ My scholarship seeks to complement these works by illuminating the role of photography in the construction and cultural dissemination of freaks. In this work, a most valuable source on the photographer Charles Eisenmann, and his subjects, has been Michael Mitchell's *Monsters: Human Freaks in the Gilded Age – The Photographs of Charles Eisenmann*.²⁷

My reading of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in chapter three, owes much to Lillian Craton's *The Victorian Freak Show: The Significance of Disability and Physical Differences in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*.²⁸ The theoretical framework I apply is drawn from Rasheed Tazudeen's article, 'Immanent Metaphor, Branching Form(s) and the Unmaking of the Human in *Alice* and

²² Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 2007); Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1987).

²³ Matthew Brower, *Developing Animals: Wildlife and Early American Photography* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010)

²⁴ Connor Creaney, 'Paralytic Animation: The Anthropomorphic Taxidermy of Walter Potter', *Victorian Studies*, 53:1 (2010) 7-35.

²⁵ Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) and *Staring: How We Look*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁶ Nadya Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2010); Erin O'Connor, *Raw Material: Producing Pathology in Victorian Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000); Marlene Tromp, ed., *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, (Ohio, U.S.A.: Ohio State University Press, 2010).

²⁷ Michael Mitchell, *Monsters: Human Freaks in the Gilded Age – The Photographs of Charles Eisenmann* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2002).

²⁸ Lillian Craton, *The Victorian Freak Show: The Significance of Disability and Physical Differences in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009)

The Origin of Species', and uses his concept of metaphor as an integration of the symbolic and somatic, to reveal the photograph's radical collapse of the boundary between reality and invention.²⁹ Tess Cosslett's article, 'The Child's Place in Nature': Talking Animals in Victorian Children's Fiction', has inspired my thinking on Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, and 'Reading Meat in H.G. Wells' by Michael Parrish Lee, and 'The Future Will Have Been Animal: Dr. Moreau and the Aesthetics of Monstrosity', by Chris Danta, have supplied interesting takes on H.G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau*.³⁰

My examination of medical photographs from St. Bartholomew's Hospital, in chapter four, speaks to scholarship interested in medical images and their role in medical and wider culture. It complements archival studies such as Richard Barnett's *The Sick Rose or; Disease and the Art of Medical Illustration*, Laura Lindgren's *Mutter Museum: Historical Medical Photographs*, and *Stiffs, Skulls and Skeletons: Medical Photography and Symbolism*, by Stanley B. Burns and Elizabeth A. Burns, and brings an original and rich resource, with important implications for understanding the development and functions of medical images in Britain, into the academic arena.³¹ Benjamin A. Rifkin, Michael J. Ackenburg and Judith Folkenburg's history of anatomical imagery, *Human Anatomy: Depicting the Body from the Renaissance to Today*, has given this investigation context, and Corinna Wagner's *Pathological Bodies: Medicine and Political Culture*, has added insight into the historical use of medicine as a social and cultural regulating mechanism.³² Lionello Puppi's *Torment in Art: Pain, Violence, Martyrdom*, and Maureen Moran's *Catholic Sensationalism and Victorian Literature*, have been key works in my connection of the photographs to images of martyrs in Renaissance art, and the contextualization of this in relation to the Victorian martyr novel.³³ These observations are further linked to my overarching theme of horror through the contemporary genre of the 'torture porn' film, about which Steve Jones's monograph *Torture Porn: Popular Horror After 'Saw'*, and the articles 'All Stripped Down: The Spectacle of "Torture

²⁹ Rasheed Tazudeen, 'Immanent Metaphor, Branching Form(s) and the Unmaking of the Human in *Alice* and *The Origin of Species*', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 43:3 (2015) 533-558.

³⁰ Tess Cosslett, 'The Child's Place in Nature': Talking Animals in Victorian Children's Fiction', *Nineteenth Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 23:4 (2007) 475-495; Michael Parrish Lee, 'Reading Meat in H.G. Wells', *Studies in the Novel*, 42:3 (2010); Chris Danta, 'The Future Will Have Been Animal: Dr. Moreau and the Aesthetics of Monstrosity', *Textual Practice*, 26:4 (2012) 687-705.

³¹ Richard Barnett, *The Sick Rose or; Disease and the Art of Medical Illustration*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2015); Laura Lindgren, ed., *Mutter Museum: Historical Medical Photographs* (New York: Blast Books, 2007); Stanley B. Burns and Elizabeth A. Burns, *Stiffs, Skulls and Skeletons: Medical Photography and Symbolism*, (Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2015).

³² Benjamin A. Rifkin, Michael J. Ackenburg, and Judith Folkenburg, *Human Anatomy: Depicting the Body from the Renaissance to Today* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011); Corinna Wagner, *Pathological Bodies: Medicine and Political Culture*, London and Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2013).

³³ Lionello Puppi, *Torment in Art: Pain, Violence, Martyrdom*, translated by Jeremy Scott (New York: Rizzoli, 1991); Maureen Moran, *Catholic Sensationalism and Victorian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).

Porn” by Dean Lockwood, and ‘Beyond Psychoanalysis: Post-Millennial Horror and Affect Theory’, by Xavier Aldana Reyes, have furnished me with crucial information.³⁴

The study brings together diverse topics, of buildings, and bodies, and practices concerned with managing bodies, which interrelate through their role as prominent symbols and themes, in the cultural language of fear and horror. It is in this capacity that the subjects of architecture, taxonomy, and bodily propriety, reveal anxiety as an essential human motivator, and our erection of edifices, both material and conceptual, to be an attempt to find some security, and stability, in the face of chaos, and to limit the forces of uncertainty and change, that are the inherent conditions of life. The findings of the study concur with, and substantiate, Freud’s and Kristeva’s theories that the frightening is connected to the establishment and disruption of borders, and that the ongoing project of rebuilding, and re-negotiating these boundaries, through what we fear, is the essence of cultural production. What the thesis contributes to the understanding of both the uncanny, and the abject, is a deeper knowledge of the cultural field that fomented the conditions from which those ideas emerged: a field affected by the photograph’s destabilisation of what properly constituted the real, and unreal, leading to a widespread sense of uncertainty, and thus unease, that influenced the analytical interest in anxiety and fear.

³⁴ Steve Jones, *Torture Porn: Popular Horror After ‘Saw’* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Dean Lockwood, ‘All Stripped Down: The Spectacle of “Torture Porn”’, *Popular Communications: The International Journal of Media and Culture*, 7:1 (2009) 40-48; Xavier Aldana Reyes, ‘Beyond Psychoanalysis: Post-Millennial Horror and Affect Theory’, *Horror Studies*, (2012) 243-261.

chapter 1

place

The ruin was a subject that came to photography not only invested with uncanny association from its role in Gothic fiction, but also with an aesthetic interest and appeal attained through the traditions of painting, sketching and illustration. As such, the ruined edifice was an expedient subject for early photographers. Indeed, the oldest surviving paper negative is William Henry Fox Talbot's darkly Gothic *Window at Lacock Abbey* (1835) (figure 1).³⁵ My discussion in this chapter focuses on the 1856 publication, *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire*, by Joseph Cundall and Philip H. Delamotte – a title in which shades of the Gothic uncanny merge with ambitions of photographic artistry, and aspects of touristic promotion and historical heritage.³⁶ This latter thread is particularly linked to photographic indexicality, and its perceived ability to preserve the past, and put the viewer in contact with remote articles and locations. The title of the work, in fact, claims that the photographs it contains will provide a vicarious encounter with Yorkshire and its abbeys that, though altered, is an experience equivocal to that of the lived reality. It is an idea that clearly demonstrates Nancy Armstrong's (pp.19-38) theory that, for the nineteenth-century literate middle-classes especially, at whom *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire* was aimed, photographic copies attained a status equal to that of their existential referents in terms of their authenticity, and even, in some cases, usurped the original articles as determinants of what qualified the real. In the case of uncanny spaces this process of photographic substitution has sinister connotations of the photographed place producing a reality instilled with Gothic terrors.

³⁵ See Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *The History of Photography*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969) p.75. Although Lacock Abbey was not a ruin, the image captures the moribund mood of historical architecture in its fictional Gothic incarnations. William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) was a British inventor and pioneer of photography, who developed the calotype process of producing negative images on paper, which could then be printed to create positive images. He patented the process in 1841, and his *Pencil Of Nature* (1844-46) was the first book to be illustrated with photographic pictures.

³⁶ Joseph Cundall (1818-95), was a London publisher of children's books, for which he commissioned illustrations from many of the greatest artists of the era. He was also a practising photographer, and a founding member of the Royal Photographic Society of London. He is credited as being the creator of the popular fairytale 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. (See Ruari McClean, *Joseph Cundall* (Pinner: Private Libraries Association, 1976)). Philip Henry Delamotte (1821-89) was professor of drawing and fine art at Kings College, London, and involved in the early establishment of photographic practice through institutions like the Royal Society, and the periodical *The Sunbeam* (London, 1857-61) which he edited. The major commission of his photographic career was the pictorial documentation of the reconstruction of the Crystal Palace in 1854. A number of these images are held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and are available to view at www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/52.639/.

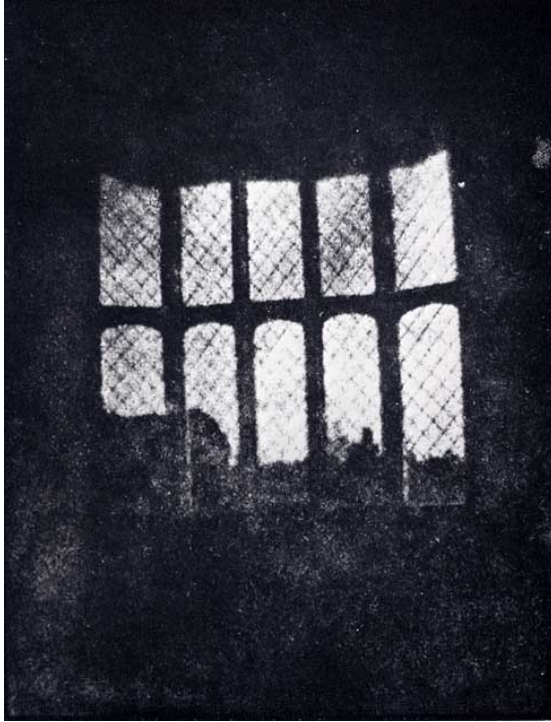


Figure 1
 William Henry Fox Talbot
Window at Lacock Abbey, 1835, paper negative,
 850 x 116mm (irregularly trimmed)
 Science Museum, London.

Scholars of Gothic literature generally pinpoint the inception of the genre as Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*. Yet preceding the publication of that text by some twenty years, it was the work of the macabre-minded Graveyard poets that set the tone for Walpole's tale of terror. Preoccupied with death, decay, darkness, fear, and morbid imagery of tombs, skulls, worms and spectres, the Graveyard school of poetry bequeathed to culture a set of themes and symbols that would come to typify the Gothic. Most importantly, Graveyard poetry influenced what Dale Townshend has called 'the "spatiality" of horror in the eighteenth century', which rooted the Gothic in specific architectural structures and configurations of place: the ancient abbeys, ruined castles, mouldering crypts, and gloomy cemeteries that articulate the genre's characteristic atmosphere of dread.³⁷

It is my contention that this spatial imperative in Gothic literature became a blueprint for uncanny space that, through the mechanism of photographic realism, produces the perception and construction of fearful places in contemporary life. As a popular entertainment amongst the rising middle classes of the late eighteenth century, the Gothic novel had a significant influence on the cultural imagination, conditioning how people perceived and experienced the types of place it had established as its emblematic loci. The popular fiction of Ann Radcliffe, especially, developed a distinctive mode of vivid, linguistic picturing, that both presented crumbling monasteries, castles

³⁷ Dale Townshend, 'Gothic and the Cultural Sources of Horror', in *Horror: A Literary History*, ed. by Xavier Aldana Reyes, pp. 259-275, p.425.

and graveyards as places of trepidation, and created visual expectations amongst its readership about how such places should look: expectations that would soon materialise as photographic images. As Nancy Armstrong has theorised in her monograph *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* the photograph, in turn, through both its indexical relationship to its subject and its sheer proliferation and repetition, came to act as the standard that qualified the real. That is, reality as perceived by the Victorian general consensus was primarily defined and authorised by the visual codes and conventions implemented in photographs. In achieving this position of mastery the photograph effectively inverted the traditional hierarchy of original over copy. Rather, the photographic reproduction took precedence over its original or referent as the paradigm of authenticity through which physical phenomena would be interpreted and validated (Armstrong, 76-7).

The 1856 publication *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire*, produced by London publisher Joseph Cundall, and pioneer photographer Philip H. Delamotte, is the focus of my exposition of this process, and how it generates uncanny space. This title comprised a series of twenty-three original albumen prints, from collodion glass negatives, featuring views of five Gothic abbeys located in the English county of Yorkshire.³⁸ The photographs were mounted into a large, folio-format cloth-bound book and accompanied by fifty pages of text authored by antiquarian John Richard Walbran, and William Jones, who wrote and published a number of books on British folklore throughout the second half of the century.³⁹ The collaborative creation of *A Photographic Tour [...]* meant it was an unprecedented fusion of parlour album, historical study, travelogue and tour guide. Its blend of art and scholarship, and the luxurious material quality of its production, indicate that its intended audience was the affluent, literate middle-classes: the same readership that most avidly consumed popular fiction and were therefore likely to be familiar with Gothic novels and their requisite visual descriptions of ancient ruined edifices.

It was the Gothic novel that influenced the perception of mouldering castles and monasteries as romantic, mysterious, and replete with lurking terrors. Through its emphasis on spectacle it also determined a set of observable traits by which such places could be identified and, by extension, how they could be represented pictorially. Radcliffe's Gothic was particularly important in this respect, being itself influenced by the discourse and practice of picturesque aesthetics, from which images of Gothic ruins such as the photographs in *A Photographic Tour [...]*

³⁸ Each photograph is approximately 280mm in height by 230mm wide. The physical dimensions of the book are 300 x 430mm.

³⁹ John Richard Walbran (1817-1869) was a native of Yorkshire, and specialised in the history of the locale. The archaeological excavation of Fountains Abbey that took place from 1848-56 was carried out under his direction. William Jones (c.1816-1904) authored books on diverse subjects including natural history and household management, as well as local lore.

largely inherited their visual conventions, and laid claim to artistic refinement, as well as the enchanting impressions of fiction.

Radcliffe's characteristic mixture of dramatic narrative, travelogue, informative observation, and poetic interlude, was also a precedent for the text of *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire*. Like the picturesque excursions that typically motivate Radcliffe's narratives, *A Photographic Tour [...]* is structured to simulate movement. Chapters are dedicated to each featured abbey, and ordered to parallel a physical journey through the geography of Yorkshire, mapping a kinetic progression beginning at Fountains Abbey, and navigating a clockwise, circular route around the county, via Easby, Rievaulx and Kirkstall Abbeys, and ending at Bolton Priory. Each chapter, in turn, starts with a photograph of a distant view of its particular abbey, showing the whole structure, which is then followed by close-ups, and images of alternative perspectives, to convey travel towards and around the buildings. Each photograph has its own dedicated sub-section of text, which fills the unseen spaces between the images with narrated actions such as 'we have now reached the eastern extremity of the church'⁴⁰ or 'on entering [...] the chapel' (CD 21), and determines the order in which the images should be viewed. Text and photographs work together to project a virtual reality – correspondent to the actual topographic area of the Yorkshire abbeys – around the reader-viewer, and guides them through it, thereby constructing her or him as a picturesque tourist.

Part of the appeal of *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire* was that for the Victorian imagination, the picturesque tour had itself become a figure of sentimental retrospection, its association with nature, and a leisurely pace of life, evoking an idealised image of a time before widespread urbanisation, mechanisation, and the unprecedented speed of rail travel. The Gothic Revival was also at its height at the time of *A Photographic Tour's [...]* publication, and the title's promotion of the Yorkshire abbeys as a tourist attraction is also part of a wider movement to rehabilitate ancient structures as items of cultural value.⁴¹ As such, it was a publication that also engaged with ideas of historical heritage, and local and national identity. Gothic fiction – which featured both picturesque travel and ancient edifices – was another thread

⁴⁰ Joseph Cundall and Philip H. Delamotte, *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1856) p.19. (This publication is hereafter denoted as 'CD' in the text, with the relevant page number).

⁴¹ The Gothic Revival began in the eighteenth century and, like Graveyard poetry, was something of a backlash against the dominant rational mode of thinking. The movement sought to reappraise the Gothic style of building asserting that its organic shapes, pointed arches, and characteristic decorative detail were preferable to the measured symmetry and precision of classical and Neo-classical architecture. In the nineteenth century, A. W. N. Pugin's polemical *Contrasts* (1836), and John Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1853), were influential works of the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival. (See Michael J. Lewis, *The Gothic Revival* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002) pp.81-82, and 85-93).

in its complex knot of influences, and the reader-viewer's role as picturesque tourist was akin to being cast as a character in a Radcliffe novel.

The photograph *Fountains Abbey: Church, Cloister and Hospitium* (figure 2) (third in a series of eleven featuring this structure), demonstrates how these various motives and concerns are communicated pictorially. The text explains that the 'view is taken in receding towards the [river] Skell, which bounds the ruins of the Monastery on the south side' (CD, p.9). This orients the picture space in relation to a genuine physical location and invokes that area's topographic landmarks to conceptually reconstruct its spatial order, and site the reader-viewer specifically within it. The central position of the abbey within the aesthetic scheme of the image indicates it is the object of principle interest. Even bands of sky above, and grass below, trees to the left, and a crumbling wall to the right, create a frame that both directs the eye towards the structure, and work as pleasingly picturesque natural forms in themselves, attesting to the artistic merit of the piece. The angle at which the architecture is displayed emphasises its Gothic features and, as such, its historical and artistic value, offsetting the tower against the pale backdrop of the sky and, although long since divested of its stained glass, the large window that typifies the Gothic pointed arch is the focal point of the composition.

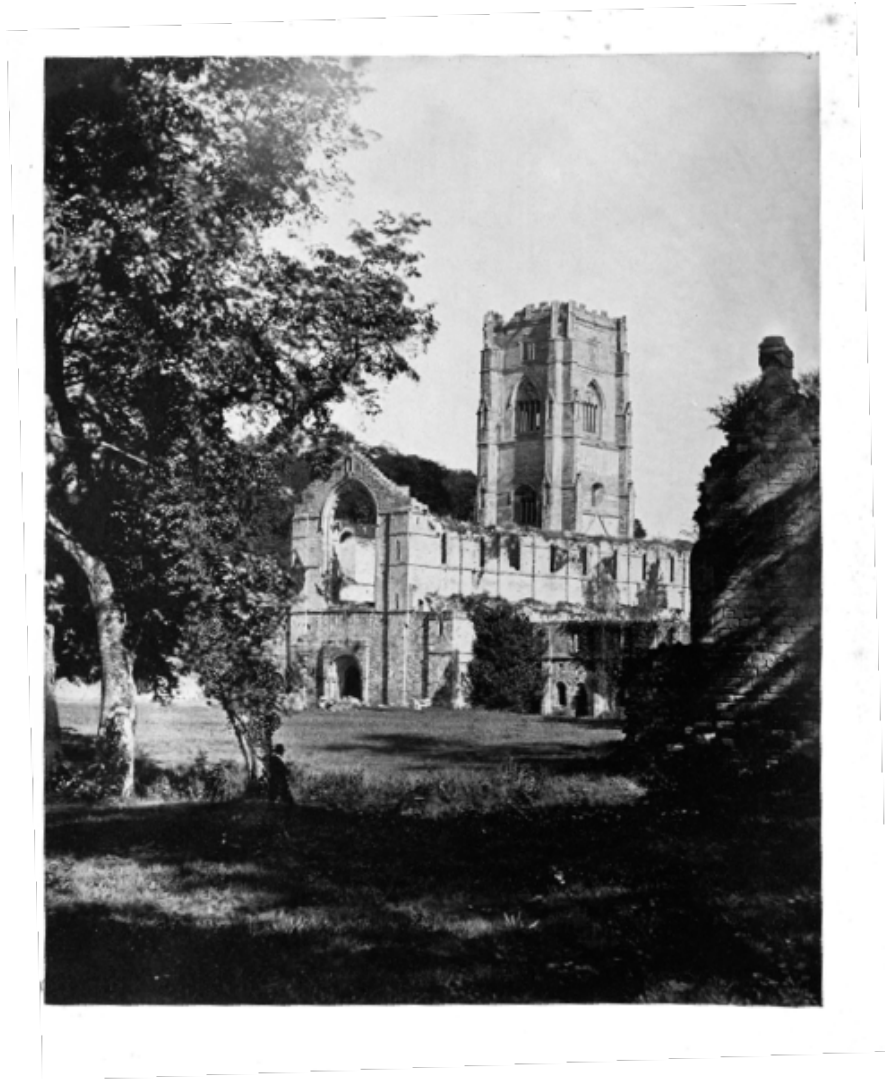


Figure 2. Joseph Cundall and Philip H. Delamotte, 'Fountains Abbey: Church, Cloister and Hospitium', albumen print on paper, 280 x 230mm, from *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire* (1856) The British Library, London.

In highlighting details that attest to the ancient origin of the abbey, the photograph seeks to promote the building's historical importance, which is intrinsically bound up with notions of cultural heritage and collective tradition. Ann Janowitz has written that myths of a shared past and ancestral legacy were instrumental in generating British national identity.⁴² The late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century shift from agricultural to industrial economy, and the consequent (and violent) rise of the British Isles to the status of a global, imperial power demanded that its regionally and economically diverse inhabitants be united as a coherent group. Collective history

⁴² Ann Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) p.2-3.

was the basis on which a concept of Britain, and the British, was forged, and the architectural ruin the empirical provenance that certified this idea as ‘immemorially ancient’ (Janowitz, p.4).

The building of national identity entwines the land with its inhabitants, the dual meaning of country as rural terrain and as a body of people merging to create not only a concept of nation but also of homeland (Janowitz, p.4). Yet any place constructed as ‘home’ is also always implicated as an instantiation of the uncanny – that is, of a simultaneous, conflicting perception of the ‘unhomely’, sinister and frightful. In this light, although Cundall and Delamotte’s photograph of Fountains Abbey aims to inculcate ideas of common extraction and shared tradition, it also points towards the dark secrets, hauntings, and ‘spatiality of horror’ figured in Gothic fiction. For me, such esoteric menace can be sensed in the gathering gloom that obscures the foreground of the photograph, and in the darkness glimpsed behind the structure’s portals and windows. The collapse of disintegrating bricks, tangled plants and shadows that is the architectural fragment on the right suggests shapes of lumpen figures that eerily emerge and recede as the gaze scours its formless mass. There is even an apparition who appears to have sprouted from the shade beneath the large tree - a spectral, black-clad figure that, with no telling detail of dress or demeanour to anchor them to history or culture, might be equally man or ghost.

A Photographic Tour [...] did not just transport the reader-viewer to a remote location through its spatially informed structure, it also transposed her or him temporally in order to elucidate the history of place. Narrated scenes such as Friar Tuck’s first encounter with Robin Hood (CD, p.20-21) operate as fiction, in which the reader becomes an omnipotent observer, who can access events past and present, and watch as they unfold. An atmospheric episode in which darkened, winding staircases are imagined inhabited by ‘monks descend[ing] to their nocturnal duties in the church’ (CD, p.9) is distinctively Gothic in tone and function, with its evocation of the night, and conjuring of ghostly presences. And the macabre mystery of ‘four hundred human skeletons’ (CD, p.18), discovered during archeological excavations, is exactly the kind of grisly detail characteristic of eighteenth-century horror fiction.

Although *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire* solicits the sensational allure of Gothic fiction, where it diverges from that genre is in its claim to empirical validity. Precise measurements of the heights, lengths, and square footages of the structures, information describing the dates of their construction, and the materials and methods used, testify to their empirical existence. References to recorded data detailing such facts as former annual incomes and expenditures (CD, p.35) and the names and dates of presiding abbots (CD, p.38) verifies their historical vitality.

However, the key element in the book's project of accessing, and preserving, historical truth, is the photographs: a role clarified by the text, which asserts observation as the principle means of understanding, and construes the 'peculiar accuracy' (CD, p.43) of photographic mediation as a reliable source of visual knowledge. Photography records 'with a fidelity no pencil could attain or graver multiply' (CD, p.2); and the photograph is 'a literal transcript of the object on which it is exercised' that the viewer can 'study [...] with as much confidence as if the object itself was presented to their view' (CD, p.7-8). Photographs are declared not simply pictures of things, but copies or doubles, of a status equal to the things themselves. They do not just illustrate the text, but are the principle object and purpose of its creation. The text functions as a supplement to the photographs, that instructs the reader-viewer how to look at, interpret, and understand them, as original, rather than mediated, visual information, and text and photographs together produce the cultural conditions of 'realism'.

It is this construction of photographic transparency - of its immediate, rather than arbitrariness, imparting of existential truth - that effectively erases the difference between original and copy, object and image, and enables *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire* to claim an experiential status equal to that of an embodied encounter. This is implicit in the title of the book, which promises to recreate the lived experience of touring the Yorkshire abbeys through the substitute of visual representation. This vicarious experience is acknowledged as something different to factual circumstance - it is not a regular tour, but a 'photographic' one - yet it is in no way inferior, because looking is alleged to be the essential act of sensory life. Repeated references in the narration to the photographs as 'views' maintain this posture, fusing the meanings of view as both noun and verb, so that the gap between object seen and act of seeing is closed, and sight becomes a direct connection to worldly knowledge. In some respects, the vision of the camera was even held to be superior to the human, as when its sharpened contrast reveals eroded inscriptions in the stone of the structures, hitherto 'lost to enquiring eyes' (CD, p.8). Thus in terms of access to meaning, and quality of information, photographic copies were as good as, if not better than, the objects they portrayed and, as such, could effectively displace them.

A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire was symptomatic of a trend that was overwhelming Victorian popular culture, whereby photographic images were being lauded as a source of truth and knowledge equivalent, or preferable to, the phenomena they referred to. The crucial role photography played in structuring a general consensus of what constituted the real meant that by the 1850s photographs were beginning to supplant the objects, scenes, and people they represented as primary agents of the mainstream Victorian understanding of the world. Topographic images, in particular, were invested with the power not only to determine how

viewers visually appraised their physical environment, but also - through the influence of the picturesque - to subordinate the material domain to pictorial ideals.⁴³ For Armstrong, the eighteenth-century discourse of the picturesque was instrumental in fomenting the cultural conditions that enabled the photograph's usurpation of the object by its image. As an aesthetic theory concerned with landscape painting, the picturesque had a particular interest in natural settings, which it viewed in terms of visible effects such as formal shapes, chromatic patterns, and surface textures. The picturesque tour was an enterprise directly inspired by this painterly mindset, being a countryside excursion conducted for the express purpose of observing, and sketching, scenes in nature. Images produced in this context were held to be a sufficient means of recreating, for their viewers, the experience of visiting such scenes themselves - an assumption that reduces the multi-sensory interactions of embodiment to ocular data, and locates their import in spectacular effect, rather than other sensorial aspects, such as sound, smell, feeling, and subjective associations of memory. Moreover, artists of the picturesque were encouraged to alter, add, or remove articles from the scenes they reproduced, in order to make those scenes more perfectly correspond to a visual ideal: a practice that challenged the traditional hierarchy of object over image by investing the copy with the capacity to exceed the original in its beauty, harmony, and ability to produce aesthetic pleasure. Eventually, the superior copy would produce its referent through the art of the landscape garden, which sought to remodel physical environments by manipulating topographic form and configuration to meet the picturesque pictorial standard.

Architectural ruins presented exactly the kind of fascinating forms and variegated textures that the picturesque deemed ideal for visual replication. They were also objects of philosophical musing, on mortality and the relationship between past and present. Thus, although the ruin was

⁴³ Originated by the English cleric, schoolmaster and amateur artist, William Gilpin (1724-1804), the picturesque was an aesthetic theory concerned with the natural environment and its representation. The landscape paintings of Claude Lorrain (c.1600-1682), and Nicholas Poussin (1594-1665), were particularly revered for their stylised elegance, and harmony of composition, and were held as a model by which to evaluate beauty in nature. Gilpin's writings were for the most part accounts of his travels around the countryside, observing and sketching rural scenes and vistas that corresponded to the ideals derived from painting. His works defined what material characteristics qualified objects and sights as picturesque, as well as outlining a set of aesthetic principles - such as choice of subject, pictorial composition, and tonal effects - for making picturesque images. These ideas were presented in his *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty, On Picturesque Travel and On Sketching Landscape* (London: R. Blamire, 1794). Later proponents of the picturesque were divided in their opinions on its properties and effects. Uvedale Price (1747-1829) sought to locate the picturesque within a Burkean concept of the beautiful, and held that aesthetic value resided in the object viewed. Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824) argued that the perception of beauty was dependent on the cultural training and knowledge of the observer. Some notable painters in the picturesque style were Russian-born, British artist Alexander Cozens (1745-1786) who was drawing master at Eton, where he taught Uvedale Price. Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) and John Constable (1776-1837) both produced picturesque landscape pieces, working mainly in oils, while Thomas Girtin (1775-1802) was an early creator of watercolour landscapes and was both a friend and rival to J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851). (See: Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful: And, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape* (London: J. Robson, 1794); Richard Payne Knight, *An Analytical Enquiry into the Principles of Taste* (London: T. Payne and J. White, 1805); Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1967); John MacArthur *The Picturesque: architecture, disgust and other irregularities* (London: Routledge, 2007).

an unstable, architectural form, it nonetheless carried a definite sense of spatial identity. As James Risser has put it, the purpose of a building is to 'install order', and to manage natural geography by bringing 'measure and moderation' to its innate chaos (Risser, p.62-63), and ruins in picturesque images functioned as part of the movement's idealising project, rationalising formless territories and creating dimensional harmony. Picturesque depictions of derelict architecture even achieved manifest form, through the landscape garden's mock or sham ruins: structures that existed purely as physical materialisations of an aesthetic ideal, and the function of which was firstly ornamental. Since actual, historical ruins also came to serve primarily as objects of contemplation and cosmetic effect – that is, to adopt the properties of an aesthetic representation – in a very literal way, the copy or sham ruin had displaced the original article as the authoritative source of its meaning.

The spatiality of horror constructed by the Gothic novel also appropriated the ordering principle of architecture to at once conjure, and contain, those intense and volatile qualities and emotions that it sought to explore. Shock, disorder, anxiety, do not erupt just anywhere in early Gothic fiction, but are linked to specific locations. Old abbeys, castles, and mausoleums are dark, decaying, and fearfully haunted by the past, in contrast to the pastoral idylls of peasant cottages and country manors, that exude domesticity, serenity and security. The formal perimeters of these structures demarcate a clear distinction between terror and delight, grotesque and beautiful, confusion and clarity, and produce a safely bounded domain in which terrible thrills abound but have no scope beyond.

Both a realm of intrigue and terror in Gothic fiction, and an object of visual value to the picturesque aesthetic, the historical and/or ruined edifice was already established as a suitable subject for representation by the time of photography's public inception in 1839. As photographs of architectural ruins quickly proliferated, the displacement of the object by its image or copy, begun by literary symbolism and picturesque representation, was consummate. Photographs saturated Victorian culture, and soon almost everything that could be seen had also been, or would be, photographed. While each photograph captured the visible idiosyncrasies of an object, person, or place and, as such, seemed to transparently reveal the world around, they simultaneously enmeshed their singular subject matter in standardised formats, that 'reproduced what people thought they had agreed something was supposed to look like' (Armstrong, p.29). Photography did not simply replicate the infinite diversity of things themselves, which would have only resulted in baffling profusion. Rather, through the mechanics of its mediation - that is, the collation of repeated, superabundant, individual examples - photography conceived a body of homogenised, composite images, or types, that together comprised a coherent, visual taxonomy

‘capable of classifying virtually everything that could be seen and on this basis considered real’ (Armstrong, p.20). Through their ongoing reiteration and accumulation, these types, over time, acquired ‘something like the status of objects’ (Armstrong, p.30), becoming neither image nor object, but image-objects, constituting a ‘shadow-archive’ that was ‘the ultimate source of meaning for both’ (p.27).

The types of persons, places and things represented in photographs were identified by their differentiation from other types and categories of image within photography’s visual taxonomy, which was both the origin, and the product, of the paradigms that comprised the shadow-archive. As such, photography was a closed system that could not ‘offer an empirically valid picture of the world beyond itself’ (Armstrong, p.19). On the one hand, the infinitely expanding number of photographic images was too immense to provide a means of identifying anything actual, unless there were abstract norms, or frames of reference, by which to distinguish categories of image to be matched to things. Yet, at the same time, these norms could not be validated by any extant body (or individual photograph), since these inevitably displayed unique details that the standard worked to suppress.⁴⁴ With the inception of photography and mass visuality ‘mediation itself became the subject and object it presumed to mediate’ (Armstrong, p.30). That is, what photography reproduced and verified was its own visual conventions, and system of seeing, as a functional epistemology. According to Armstrong, the traditional mimetic prerogative of the object to produce and verify its representation was subverted by this assertion of images as knowledge, and photographic representation attained an authenticity that became the measure of reality for the Victorian cultural consensus.

The process is evident in *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire*, which produced and presented photographs of historical ruins as an equivocal substitute for the original objects from which they derive. These pictures not only functioned as indexical copies of their referents but were also inhered with shades of the spectral, strange and macabre from the role of the ruin in Gothic fiction, which, along with the picturesque, was the cultural paradigm that informed their visual conventions or frame of reference. Thus in uncannily displacing the objects they replicate, the photographs instilled an alternative experience of a reality necessarily inflected with creeping agitation and fear.

⁴⁴ Armstrong (p.281-2, note 28) likens these effects to Roland Barthes’s well-known theory of the photographic qualities, *studium* and *punctum*. The *studium* is the level of pictorial convention in a photograph - that which makes it legible to the viewer, since it engages with familiar, visual signifiers or agreed norms. The *punctum* is the unique and arresting detail that has the power to disrupt, or puncture, the bland familiarity of the *studium* by asserting the singularity, and thus the existential reality (albeit a reality of the past), of the represented phenomenon as a part of infinite diversity. The *studium* is the generic gloss of mediation which, although occasionally supplanted by the *punctum*’s assertion of the thing itself, always provides the frame of reference for that momentary effect. (See also: Barthes, *Camera Lucida* pp.25-28, 45-60).

Since the vivid visual descriptions in Gothic fiction, and the painted iconography of the picturesque, had already begun to conjure an imagery of the architectural ruin in the public imagination, its integration into the classificatory system of photography was a spontaneous progression. These influences not only shaped a standardised look and concept of ancient buildings, but also, because photographic epistemology and the shadow-archive was what qualified the real, they informed how actual, ruined edifices were known and experienced by the mainstream populace. The photographic image conditioned the way people looked at, understood, and responded to, architectural ruins, investing them with historic, aesthetic, spectacular, and thus touristic value, as well as an innately uncanny atmosphere and aura of romance, mystery and ghostly dread.

In some respects, the architectural ordering of space was reinforced by the visual order of photography. With its precision engineering, and single, disembodied eye, the camera was complicit with the optical geometry of Cartesian perspective.⁴⁵ As such, the world it saw and mediated was transformed into rationalised space, the abstract, mathematical perfection of which constructed a mode of detached observation, correspondent with a scientific world view. Thus when photographed, the spatial order inherent in architectural structure (already an exercise of angles, vertices and quadratics), was assimilated into a matrix of coordinates through which its organising intelligence gained the added authority of numerical logic.

Where the object represented was a specifically Gothic ruin, this fortifying effect of the photograph also pertained to Gothic fiction's spatiality of horror, and its function of delimiting the threat of sinister forces and dark passions. Photographs replicate the regulatory mechanics of the built structure, and also confine that structure to the bounded and geometrically ordered domain of a picture. Photographic images of derelict castles, and crumbling monasteries, at once manifest the literary Gothic construction of uncanny space, and hold those places at a spatial and temporal distance, as well as containing them within the literal perimeters of the picture-frame. Moreover, if the photograph conjures for the viewer a category or type, which – since collectively agreed and understood – is by necessity largely fixed, then popular photographs of decaying buildings work to stabilise the cultural codification that ties malignant presence to ruined, rather than other kinds of architecture.

However, both architectural ruins and photography are phenomena that simultaneously undermine the order they construct. The ordering principle of architectural ruin is the

⁴⁵ See: Jonathan Crary, 'Techniques of the Observer', *October*, 45 (1988) 3-35; and 'Modernizing Vision', in *Vision and Visuality: Dia Art Foundation Discussions in Contemporary Culture Number 2*, ed. by Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988) 29-44.

fragmentation, dissolution, and subversion of architectural order.⁴⁶ In other words, its spatial identity is the disruption of spatial identity, or a paradoxical structuring of anti-structure, which is intrinsically uncanny. If the purpose of architectural form is the organisation of space, and the instantiation of ‘a centered and centering structure of identification and “home”’ (Risser, p.63), then the ruin very literally marks the place of ‘unhome’ and, in its deforming form, manifests the contradiction of *heimlich-unheimlich* that elicits uncanny sensation.

Photography is likewise founded on contradiction, and this permeates its epistemology of the real. On the one hand, the pictorial conventions of photographs moderate the idiosyncrasies of their diverse, and singular, subject matter, and organise the persons, places, and things they portray into types or categories, that together comprise a legible catalogue of visible phenomena. Yet, at the same time, each photograph captures the unique and individual constitution of what it represents, thus challenging its own system of classification. The photographic interpretation of the world is not stable or centred, but is continually shifting between conflicting qualities of peculiarity and similarity, divergence and consistence. From this oscillation between the uniform and the various, photographs produce the shadow-archive of image-objects, suspended between the fabricated median of the ideal, and the endless variety of the real. Both an index of the existential, and a closed system of images, identifiable only by their differentiation from other images within its taxonomy, the shadow-archive became the authoritative source of understanding for both objects and images.

The confusion of what constitutes the real and the unreal, that Freud (p. 367) considers a fundamental feature of the uncanny, is embedded in the very fabric and informatics of the photograph. On its material level the photograph manifests a copy or replica of its subject, and as a representation it both records and interprets, at once conjuring a sense of things in themselves, and of things as they are mediated. Where its subject is architectural ruin, this formative uncanniness of the photograph is layered with the paradoxical – and thus also uncannily ambiguous – disordered order of the derelict building, as well as its foreboding aspect acquired through its role Gothic fiction. These factors together collated a visual standard or image-object which determined the visible features by which frightening places were recognized, and understood, in the popular imagination. As such, photographs of ruins challenged the basis of reality, by ousting the ordering of place instilled by architecture, and replacing it with the visual

⁴⁶ The German philosopher-critic George Simmel (1858-1918), discusses the properties of derelict buildings in his essay ‘The Ruin’ (first published in German 1911) in *Essays on Sociology, Philosophy and Aesthetics*, translated by David Kettler, (New York: Harper and Row, 1965). See also Michael S.Roth, Claire Lyons and Charles Merewether *Irresistible Decay* (Los Angeles CA: The Getty Research Institute, 1997); and Sophie Thomas, *Romanticism and Visuality: Fragments, History, Spectacle* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2008).

order of photography, which was an order founded on the accumulation of multiple examples, which simultaneously fragment, dispute, and destabilise its organising structure. By subverting the authority of the empirical article, photographs of ruins also became an uncanny instance of substitution, or displacement, of the physical object by its image.

It is precisely this contradictory and uncanny logic of an order whose unifying principle is disunity and disorder that, for James Risser, is the impetus of twentieth century deconstructive architecture.⁴⁷ As Risser explains it, deconstructive architecture does not seek to produce formless, chaotic space, which would anyway be impossible, since any built form is necessarily a delineation of place. Rather, deconstructive architecture looks to challenge architectural convention, and ‘to use traditional mechanisms and structures of order to create their opposite’ (Risser, p.70) so ‘purity, perfection, order become impurity, imperfection, disorder’. Deconstructive architecture is, in fact, a materialisation of the same uncanny contradiction intrinsic to the properties of the photograph, and to the ruin. And it is the ruin photograph that inspires the desire, and provides the blueprint for, the realisation of uncanny space. The fragmentation, discontinuity, and asymmetry of form that characterises deconstructive architecture, are the same conditions found in the dilapidated abbeys and castles of Gothic fiction, that structure its spatiality of horror. Many of the effects seen in deconstructive architecture are achieved by manipulating a building’s surface skin (figures 3 and 4) displaying an interest, and cultural investment in, the visible exterior of forms, that is surely the legacy of photography, and can also be traced in the literary Gothic’s concern with the aesthetic qualities or surface texture of language, as well as its abundance of visual description.

Figure 3. Frank Gehry and Vlado Milunic
National Nederlanden Building (Dancing House)
Prague, Czech Republic, 1996
Photograph from:
<<https://www.nakedtourguideprague.com/the-story-of-the-dancing-house/>>



⁴⁷ Deconstructivism was a sub-movement of Post-modern architecture, that emerged in the mid-1980s. Notable architects that have worked in the style are Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid and Bernard Tschumi.

Figure 7.
 Frank Gehry
 Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health
 Las Vegas, Nevada, 2010.
 Photograph from:
<http://www.bluffton.edu/homepages/facstaff/sullivanm/nevada/lasvegas/gehry/brain.html>



Not only architectural ruin, but any architectural structure is rendered uncanny by the innately paradoxical properties of the photograph, that at once reveals the mutability and confusion of the visible world, and presents it as definite, coherent, and stable. If this photographic model, as Armstrong's theory claims, is what qualified the real for the majority of literate, bourgeois Victorians, then the fundamental quality of authentic space in their world was uncanniness; and the desire for actual, built spaces that match, and express, this inherited image of the real, emerges, in contemporary culture, in deconstructive architecture.

Figure 9. Michael Jantzen
 From the series, *Deconstructing the Houses*,
 photo-collage, 2012.
 Image from <https://archinect.com/michael-jantzen/project/deconstructing-the-houses>



Architect and artist Michael Jantzen's 2012 photo-collage project 'Deconstructing the Houses' and 'Deconstructing the Churches' (figures 5 and 6) returns the disrupted, deconstructive building to the domain of the photograph - the ultimate, ambiguous space, in which structures that waver in the interstices of imagination and reality, and defy the limits of possibility, achieve their most perfect expression. The literal photographic construction of Jantzen's buildings makes them exceedingly uncanny, since not only do they subvert spatial order, they also expose photography's mediation of 'mediation itself' (Armstrong, p.30): that is, its representation of its own photographically determined and produced realism and, as such, its inherent questioning of existential truth. In light of this, the attempt to use photographs to contain the disturbing implications that erupt from uncanny space is condemned to fail, since photography's system of order is its own subversion, and what it fixes and holds it also reveals as

erratic, unsettled and subject to change. Most ironic is the photograph's frozen moment that, always sited in the past, perversely articulates the unceasing passage of time and our inescapable mortality, which is the very fear that Gothic's spatiality of horror, and its reverberations through visual culture, attempt to structure and regulate.

Figure 10. Michael Jantzen
From the series *Deconstructing the Churches*,
photo-collage, 2012
Image from <<https://archinect.com/michael-jantzen/project/deconstructing-the-churches>>



*

In his seminal 1977 treatise, *The Hour of Our Death*, Philippe Ariès identifies the emergence, in the eighteenth century, of a historically unprecedented sense of anxiety and terror surrounding death.⁴⁸ It was in this context that Graveyard poetry developed, as a response to this newly felt mortal panic. What prevailed for thousands of years prior to that point in history was what Ariès terms the 'tame death' (p.28). While death was always something to be feared, in previous centuries it was a far more public, and thus far more familiar, event. The most common place of death was in the home, where the family of the dying person were able to observe and manage the process. Such intimacy with the dying meant that death was both 'close and familiar', yet 'diminished and desensitised' in comparison to the unspeakable dread that surrounds it today (Ariès, p.28). Although an event of great sadness and regret, death was integrated into everyday life and, as such, was accepted as an inevitable part of nature, and its cycles of growth and decay. For the people of the Middle Ages, whose public life was focused around the church, the surrounding cemeteries even became recreational centres, where they would happily 'stroll, socialise and assemble [...] conduct their spiritual and temporal business, play their games and

⁴⁸ Ariès's study has been criticised for not fully recognising the complexities inherent in specific demographic and individual attitudes to death, and for having an obvious bias towards pre-Modern concepts and processes of dying and death. Nonetheless, an idea of the prevalent trends in eighteenth century attitudes to death is a useful insight into understanding its representation in the literature and imagery of horror. Joachim Whaley's Introduction to *Mirrors of Mortality: Social Studies in the History of Death* (London: Europa Publications Ltd., 1981) provides a succinct overview of the strengths and shortcomings of Ariès's exegesis.

carry on their love affairs' amidst the sights and smells of festering corpses heaped in open graves (Ariès, p.64).

An important aspect of the long-prevailing tame death was the belief that death occurred by gradual increments, or stages. Even when a person appeared dead, it was supposed that some features of life still lingered, and slowly faded, and it was only when signs of decomposition became evident that death could be verified with certainty. The distinction between life and death was thus an ambiguous one - at least at the initial onset - and funeral rites and customs, such as exhibiting the body, and performing lamentations (the noise of which, it was hoped, would awaken a living corpse), also allowed for a waiting period, in which to prove the individual dead, before interment or cremation.

The cultural decline of the tame death coincided with the rise of medicine as a profession. As doctors took control of bodily existence the sick and dying were increasingly segregated, and consequently, the wider community was estranged from the workings of death, which became an obscure and mysterious, rather than a known and commonplace event. While the practicalities of dying were becoming strange and remote, the incertitude surrounding when a person was properly dead still troubled the social conscience, transforming into a fear of premature burial. By the late eighteenth century this anxiety had become such a cultural obsession that measures were taken to ensure proper regulation of interments, and to institute 'repositories' (the forerunners of today's funeral homes), where dead bodies could be kept under observation until decomposition set in. Doctors - who were now the 'mediums' of death - were called upon to clarify the confusion, and having invested in the empirical model of the body as machine, they established the moment of death as precisely that when physical functions cease (Ariès, p.403). The methods and language of science could not admit of a state broaching life and death, and rather than a gradual decline, death became a sudden plunge into oblivion. Moreover, the 'arrest of the machine' was a 'concept of pure negativity' - a state to be reviled and resisted, which also made it terrifying (Ariès, p.403). The blurred edges of the tame death were now sharply defined as two diametrically opposed extremes, and if life was to be cherished then death, its antithesis, was the ultimate dread.

Graveyard poetry was a literary formalisation of this unprecedented fear of death. Through the measured structures of verse, it functioned to moderate the escalating frenzy surrounding human mortality, and by entwining the imagery of the dead - of rotting flesh, skeletons, burial grounds, and tombstones - with oppressive emotions of fear, despair, melancholy, and disgust - it created a new, symbolic language that precisely captured the cultural mood of morbid anxiety. It also demarcated space - both figurative and literal - into which these

fears could be projected and safely contained. Cemeteries and graveyards, represented and perceived as sites of darkness, decay and terror became shunned and marginalised territories, the construction of which (both actual and symbolic) enabled the effective displacement and dissociation of mortality, and all its attendant horrors, from the domains of the living. This polarisation both generated, and sublimated, the fear of death, conceiving death as something so alien and adverse to life that it became intolerable. Yet this very revulsion also demanded the abjection of death as a personal truth, and placed it at a conceptual distance where it became other - the dead rather than death - the threat of which was absorbed into the rhetoric and imagery of horror.

In the first Gothic novels to emerge, the spatiality of horror marked out in Graveyard poetry takes on a temporal aspect through an interconnection with history and the past - the native realm of the dead. Not only cemeteries and graveyards, but historical, ruined edifices became sites of mystery and fear. The secrets of the past are a central device in Gothic fiction, from which plots evolve, and terrors ensue. History is figured as a repository of unspeakable, hidden deeds that will not remain concealed, but fatefully return to disrupt the living present.⁴⁹ Through the Gothic trope of haunting the dead become a supernatural (or seeming supernatural) agency that troubles the living and, as such, a metaphor for mortality that, although desperately disavowed, cannot be escaped. Such hauntings are attached to places as much as individual persons. Sites of former violence, villainy, and death contain and carry traces and memories of traumatic events, often felt as a spectral, tense, disturbing ambience, the reach of which delimits and specifies uncanny space.

It is visual appearance, however, that is the fundamental means of establishing types of place in Gothic fiction. The novels of Ann Radcliffe are again exemplary in this respect, since optical effects are both the author's creative aim, and essential mode of communication. Graveyard poetry's horrible descriptions of tombs, skeletons, and obfuscating gloom - although visually striking - functioned firstly as a vehicle for accessing the emotional apex of the sublime through terror. But in Radcliffe's writing imagery becomes the central expressive intention. The visible appearance of things is both fascinating in itself and the principle source of knowledge and, as such, anticipates the dominance of vision and the visual in nineteenth-century culture. The equivocation of 'seeing with knowing' that Armstrong (p.7) observes in nineteenth-century

⁴⁹ Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* (1768) for example, revolves around a past act of incest, the repercussions of which bring about the downfall of the immoral Countess of Narbonne and her family (Townsend 'Gothic and the Cultural Sources of Horror' Loc 372). Radcliffe's typical fictional technique was to use uncanny phenomena in the present as signifiers of past crimes or tragedies that unearth tales of mystery and terror. (See E. J. Clery *Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* Second Edition. Tavistock, Devon: Northcote, 2004 59-60.

Realist fiction is already discernible in Radcliffe's earlier, eighteenth-century texts. And 'the Victorian novel's use of painterly technique, perspective, detail, spectacle or simply an abundance of visual description' (Armstrong, p.6) that 'made visual information the basis for the intelligibility of a verbal narrative' (p.7) are all prominent features of Radcliffe's work.

The vividly graphic style of Radcliffe's fiction is partly due to her use of landscape paintings, rather than direct observation, as the source for her depictions of natural scenery. Italy and France, although Radcliffe's favourite settings for her narratives, were countries she never visited. Rather, it was the pictures on display at the Royal Academy of Art, in London, that fuelled her desire to portray those regions.⁵⁰ In accordance with the standards of taste set by picturesque theorists, such as Gilpin and Price, she especially admired the work of Claude Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin, as well as the contrastingly sombre canvases of Salvator Rosa. The influence of visual art emerges in Radcliffe's specifically painterly vocabulary. In her celebrated 1794 novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, for example, the frequent repetition of words such as 'light', 'shade', 'horizon', 'distance' and 'perspective', as well as references to a chromatic rainbow of 'harmonious hues' and 'tints' directly allude to artistic technique.⁵¹

Her reputation as a painter in words did not hold, however, with her contemporary Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who found there was 'too much of a sameness' in her verbal landscapes.⁵² Jayne Lewis has pointed out that as linguistic translations of visual images, Radcliffe's landscapes 'originate not in perception but rather in [...] pre-fabricated forms - most evidently verbal ones' and, as such, tend to dissolve into endlessly reiterated poetic clichés and artful platitudes (Lewis, p.382). Walter Scott perceived such reliance on established epithet as a 'haze' clinging to Radcliffe's fictional scenery, which did not produce an 'absolutely precise or individual image' but only a 'general effect'.⁵³ That is, Radcliffe's words ultimately fail to speak authentically to the eye, and rather draw attention to themselves as literary mediation.

Lewis reads such 'consciously linguistic practices' as evidence that Radcliffe's real interest lay 'more with authoritative words than with visual images' (p.380). Yet, while Radcliffe was a writer, and thus primarily concerned with words, for me, this does not preclude, or diminish, her infatuation with the visual. Indeed, it is precisely this emphasis on the material quality of mediation that most clearly expresses the visual values of the picturesque aesthetic she seeks to

⁵⁰ Aline Grant, *Ann Radcliffe: A Biography* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1952), cited in Jayne Lewis, 'Radcliffe's Aesthetic Unbound', p.379.

⁵¹ Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, ed. by Jaqueline Howard (London: Penguin, 2001) pp.30-32, 44-45.

⁵² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, letter to William Wordsworth, October 1810, in *Collected Letters of Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) III, 290; cited in Jayne Lewis, 'Radcliffe's Aesthetic Unbound' Note 26, p.390.

⁵³ Sir Walter Scott, *Biographical Memoirs of Eminent Novelists, and Other Distinguished Persons* (London: Whittaker and Co., 1834) p.379.

simulate - namely, the shift in investment from the object represented to the image or copy - that is, the representation itself. That Radcliffe consciously cultivated a qualitative difference between her fictional landscapes, that describe paintings, and those of her travel writing, based on embodied encounter, was again noticed by Scott, who found her verbal picturing of Hardwick Hall in the nonfictional *A journey made in the summer of 1794 [...]*⁵⁴ to be 'a striking and faithful portrait' (Scott, p.381) compared to the 'undefined' and 'boundless' 'towers of Udolpho' (p.383). The impressionistic, rather than specific, topographies of Radcliffe's fiction, then, are not the failure of rhetoric, but are deliberately designed to acknowledge and reflect the increasing reliance on visible information and, more pertinently, visual representation, in the understanding of the world.

What Radcliffe's linguistic pictures anticipate, in fact, is the epistemology of photographic realism that would soon become a prevalent influence on nineteenth-century thinking. The reiteration and repetition of artistic conventions or 'pre-fabricated forms' that characterises Radcliffe's prose are the very mechanisms by which photography orders the diversity of visible phenomena, and enables infinitely varied places, people and objects to be identified by their type, or 'general effect'. Furthermore, her use of painting to inform her depictions of place sees Radcliffe treating images as a valid form of knowledge. As such, her work advances the process - begun by picturesque aesthetics - of directing attention away from the object represented, and towards the form and texture of the representation itself. It also anticipates the inversion of the traditional hierarchy of the object as the source of authoritative meaning over its image, that would soon be made consummate by the photograph.

As I interpret it, Radcliffe's fiction is not so much interested in the convincing replication of natural scenery, as it is concerned with constructing a spatial order that distinguishes good from bad, safety from danger and, ultimately, life from death. Radcliffe's spatiality of horror is a graphically evocative, formal and thematic chiaroscuro, and another way in which her writing foreshadows the monochromatic worlds opened by photography in the nineteenth century. It is also a narrative model that reflects the sharpened contrast between death and life that arose in the eighteenth century, which figured death as exclusively negative, and thus other to, the venerated state of being alive, through which it became a source of extreme terror. In fact, Radcliffe's novels are part of the eighteenth-century cultural apparatus that worked to sublimate the new fear

⁵⁴ Ann Radcliffe, *A journey made in the summer of 1794 : through Holland and the western frontier of Germany, with a return down the Rhine; to which are added, observations during a tour to the lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland*, 2 vols, (London: G. G. & J. Robinson, 1795) II, 177-186. Hardwick Hall is an Elizabethan country house located in Derbyshire.

of death; their sensationalised, theatrical and spectacular constructions of horror functioning as a way of masking or diverting the true underlying anxiety which was that surrounding mortality.

The contrasted portrayal of authentically ancient ruins, and reproduction or renovated ones, in Radcliffe's 1791 novel, *The Romance of the Forest*, exemplifies this function.⁵⁵ The young heroine Adeline, abandoned by her father, is on the run with aristocratic profligate, Pierre de la Motte, and his wife and servant, when the party decides to take refuge in the ruins of a former abbey. From its exterior the abbey appears 'half demolished' and 'awful in decay' with 'birds of prey' nesting in its 'lofty battlements', and trees, moss, and wild plants impinging on the fabric of the structure.⁵⁶ The place is explicitly associated with death when, as La Motte traverses a 'broken pavement' to enter the edifice, 'the sound of his steps [...] seemed like the mysterious accents of the dead' (RF, p.16). Within, the building is thick with 'shade', 'gloom' (RF, p.17) and 'obscurity' (p.18), and as the group venture further, they are assailed with sensations of 'sublimity' and 'terror'. The interior is a maze of dark passages, narrow and winding staircases, 'horrible recesses' (RF, p.18), and secret doorways, one of which later discloses a concealed human skeleton (RF, p.54). Such architectural confusion, and the fearful, desolate atmosphere prompt La Motte to muse again that they are 'standing over the ashes of the dead' (RF, p.18).

At the heart of this grim setting, however, there is quite a different situation. Behind one of the many doors they pass through, the party is surprised to find a suite of newly refurbished apartments. In contrast to the dark and dank of the ruined section of the abbey, these rooms 'receive light and air' (RF, p.20) and 'appear to have been built in modern times', although 'upon a Gothic plan' - that is, as a copy or simulation of ancient architecture, in the manner of Walpole's Strawberry Hill, or Newstead Abbey.⁵⁷ It is at this point, as Michael Charlesworth has commented, that the characters 'become students of architecture',⁵⁸ - Adeline's observation that the floor is inlaid with mosaic eliciting a confirmation from La Motte that 'the style of this apartment was not strictly Gothic' (RF, p.20). It is in these rooms that the party set up residence, since La Motte's intention is to conceal himself from his unpaid creditors. They even manage to exist quite comfortably, excepting an oppressive feeling of threat that lurks in the crumbling shell of the ruin that encloses them.

⁵⁵ Originally published by Hookham and Carpenter, London 1791.

⁵⁶ Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, ed. by Chloe Chard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) p.14. Hereafter indicated in the text by 'RF' with a page reference.

⁵⁷ Strawberry Hill was designed by Horace Walpole as a mock Gothic castle and was built in stages between 1749 and 1776. Newstead Abbey, in Nottinghamshire, England is a former monastic priory given to Sir John Byron by Henry VIII in the sixteenth century, who began its conversion into a domestic residence. It is famous for being the ancestral home of the poet George Gordon (Lord) Byron (1788-1824).

⁵⁸ Michael Charlesworth, 'The ruined abbey: Picturesque and Gothic values' in *The Politics of the Picturesque*, ed. by Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 62-80, p.75.

I read this architectural configuration as a metaphor for the increased value of the image in relation to the object, implicit in picturesque theory, and later consolidated by photography. At the same time it also constructs a spatial order that both effectuates, and critiques, the ideology that holds life and death to be opposing extremes. The ancient, ruined parts of the abbey are an architectural palimpsest, inscribed with living history, that stand for the actual object and, contingently, the realm of the empiric, and of embodied life, that is the origin of the articles to which representation refers. It is a domain of constant change, wrought by the cycles of growth and decline inherent in nature, of which death is an integral and inescapable part, as demonstrated by the decayed condition of the structure, and its association with the dead. By contrast, the renovated sections of the abbey are a contemporary pastiche, or an 'affected [...] Gothic mode of architecture' (RF, p.20), that symbolises the copy or image. Although, in the traditional scheme of things, the synthetic copy is perceived as that which is inert, fixed and dead, here the relation is reversed, and it is the imitation part of the edifice that provides the conditions conducive to existence, and a haven from the (deadly) horrors that loom outside. This contemporary space is referred to as a 'refuge from a persecuting world' (RF, p.24) - that is, the organic world of bodies and of history and, as such, of flesh that must perish. As a 'refuge', however, it is far from safely bounded. It is only, in fact, an illusion - an artificially 'affected' image of vitality, security, stability, for there can be no life without death. The characters' can only exist there as prisoners, their lives literally reduced to one-dimensional stasis. And always a turn down the wrong passage, or opening the wrong door, will lead back to dark and festering tomb-like places 'dripping with unwholesome dew' (RF, p.53), since death, in the end, is inevitable.

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Contingent on the fear of mortality is a self-interested sense of preciousness attached to individual identity. Accordingly, the thanatophobia that gripped eighteenth-century Europe was offset by the philosophical concern with the nature of consciousness, and constitution of subjectivity. Was the mind comprised of physical matter or of metaphysical spirit? Was identity a fixed commodity, or a dynamic effect, and where, precisely, was it located? Was it innately formed or did it arise in relation to a social context? These were the kinds of questions that were at the forefront of eighteenth-century natural science and intellectual debate, and which were being explored in major works such as David Hume's *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739), and later, around the turn of the century, by Georg W. F. Hegel whose *Phenomenology of the Spirit* was published in 1807.

For Radcliffe, what and how one sees is the key to successful self definition. In her fiction, the dichotomous denial-of-death/desire-for-personal-identity is figured spatially and constructed through the appliance of pictorial aesthetics. As such, it is only through visual recognition that mortality can be effectively disavowed and the subjectivity contingent on it affirmed. Although Radcliffe's narratives are famed for their mystery, and psychological suspense, her technique of the 'explained supernatural' - whereby seemingly preternatural or paranormal occurrences transpire to have a rational cause - aligns her thinking with the empiricist logic that dominated her era, and her fiction with the aspired verisimilitude of the Victorian Realist novel. Nancy Armstrong, theorising the tactics of Victorian realist fiction, asserts that any novel purporting to be a 'reliable guide [...] to the reality at hand' adopted a technique whereby a selection of visual descriptions were offered to the reader 'as if to a person selecting the correct mug shot' (p.27). Via a process of 'trial and error' the narrative would then reveal which description – that is, visible appearance – properly matched the category of person or object being referred to (Armstrong, p.27). That the character types, settings, and kinds of objects rendered in fiction were also made manifest in photographic images, endowed the realist novel with 'a truth-telling capability resembling the transparency attributed to the photograph' (Armstrong, p.28). And it was fictional strategies such as this that made visuality, and visual information, the central imperative of understanding the extant environment, and schooled the nineteenth-century readership of popular novels in the usage and function of ocular epistemology produced by photography.

What Radcliffe's writing provided was the prefatory foundation for this system. In Radcliffe's novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) readers are presented with a number of different approaches to interpreting the world, embodied in the actions and attitudes of various characters. Using a similar strategy to that of Victorian realist fiction, as outlined by Armstrong, each posture is then put through a process of evaluation through which the correct, or most efficacious one, is made apparent. The aristocratic Countess de Villefort values material wealth and seeks meaning, as well as reassurance of her status, in the social interactions of 'gay [...] parties at Paris'; but this affords her no insight into the natural world, which she can only 'survey with disgust'.⁵⁹ Equally ignorant are the peasantry who, as inhabitants of the land, cannot attain the distance required to properly comprehend it. Rather, they themselves are the components of its decorative design - the 'muleteers', 'shepherds' and 'mountaineer-children at play among the rocks' who 'heighten the effect of the scenery' (MU, p.30). It is only the heroine, Emily St. Aubert's, aesthetically

⁵⁹ Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, ed. by Jaqueline Howard (London: Penguin, 2001) p.440. Hereafter indicated in the text, by 'MU', with a page number.

influenced perception - her literal vision of the world as a painted canvas - that affords any effective awareness or acumen: a contrivance that not only privileges sight as the primary agent of knowledge production, but also advances knowledge of visual representation as imperative to proper understanding.

As Elizabeth Bohls has written, it is when Emily is viewing landscape that she becomes a clearly delineated, controlling subject.⁶⁰ It is the act of looking that enables her to transcend the object-world of matter and death, transforming her into the disembodied eye of Cartesian optics, and the natural world into a structured image. Windows – in houses, castles or carriages – are often literal frames for these artistic scenes (Bohls, p.224), which are described in pictorial terms, of composition, form, surface texture, and chromatic effects:

Emily could not restrain her transport as she looked over the pine forests of the mountains upon the vast plains, that, enriched with woods, towns, blushing vines, and plantations of almonds, palms and olives, stretched along, till their various colours melted in distance into one harmonious hue, that seemed to unite earth with heaven. Through the whole of this glorious scene the majestic Garonne wandered; descending from its source among the Pyrenées, and winding its blue waves towards the Bay of Biscay. (MU, p.30)

Emily's knowledge of, and preference for, the picturesque aesthetic demonstrates her standing as an educated, culturally refined, bourgeois woman with taste.⁶¹ Exercising her capacity to appreciate nature and art thus establishes a social order, as well an aesthetic one, that both validates, and secures, her personal/class identity, and asserts it as superior to those of her aristocratic and lower-class associates. It is the interpretation of the world by and as sight, and through the mechanisms of visual representation, that emerges as the apex of intelligent perception, foreshadowing the logistics of looking instilled by photography, that was a prerequisite of the literate classes of the nineteenth century.

So long as Emily can see, her subjective ontology remains stable. The open countryside, pastoral vistas, and cottages and country manors that reside there, are all safe spaces, since, as conventional subjects of picturesque representation, they are understood, ordered, and contained as part of an idyllic image that necessarily exists at a remove from the threatening realm of physical causes, fluctuation, historicity and mortality. Castle Udolpho is of this latter realm, but as

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics 1716-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p.214.

⁶¹ The picturesque is politically linked with the rise of the middle classes, since it implied that knowledge of aesthetics could offer any literate person - not just the elite - access to a world of beauty and harmony, that offered a retreat from the mundanity of city life. The picturesque ideal also became a template for the kind of provincial, bourgeois dwellings produced by the newly moneyed as miniaturised imitations of the grand country houses of the aristocracy. See: Armstrong, p.65-66; and Stephen Daniels and Charles Watkins, 'Picturesque Landscaping and Estate Management: Uvedale Price and Nathaniel Kent at Foxley' in *The Politics of the Picturesque*, ed. by Copley and Garside pp.13-41.

an architectural ruin, it is also integral to the picturesque aesthetic. As such, when viewed at a distance from which it can be discerned in its entirety, it becomes a compelling spectacle:

Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle [...] for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. [...] As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity [...] till its clustering towers were alone seen, rising over the tops of the woods [...] (MU, p.216)

Radcliffe's signature pictorial register here abjures authentic description, and revels instead in the textures of representation – both verbal and visual – with repeated painterly epithets of colour, light, and shade, that assert the properties of the image over those of the original object. Repeated references to the gaze emphasise sight as the sense that constructs this intercession, which enables the subject, Emily, to maintain a distanced control over her environment.

When the gap is closed, however, the illusion falls apart, and the force of physical experience overwhelms. The gloom and obscurity of Udolpho's interior 'whose walls [...] were scarcely distinguishable from darkness itself' (MU, p.217), obviates the use of vision, and with it the coherence and stability of Emily's persona. No longer able to exert the aesthetic capability that identifies her with a social and cultural type, Emily is confronted with her own embodied reality. And in this fleshly form she is compelled to use senses other than her sight. Yet although she is able to feel her way through the dark, to smell the stagnant air and decay, and hear sounds of distant footsteps or spectral music, without being able to see she cannot consolidate this information into a legible order. Consequently, like the crumbling structure of Udolpho itself, which is only perceived in disjunctive fragments by the restless glow of candlelight, Emily's subjective psychology is rendered unstable and confused - a circumstance corroborated by the maidservant Annette's admonition that to 'lose yourself' (MU, p.221) is the inexorable outcome of entering Udolpho's murky interior.

Inhabiting a corporeal body - as opposed to fashioning self-identity within a remote and idyllic realm of imagery - also entails being drawn into a potentially threatening sexual economy. This is evident in Emily's dealings with the salacious Count Morano, who seeks to 'marry' (that is, sexually possess) her, if not with her consent, then by coercion. Indeed, Morano is the reason for Emily's imprisonment in castle Udolpho, since the mercenary Montoni (her uncle by marriage, and default guardian, since her father's death) plans to secure his own financial gain through a deal for Emily's hand. More grievous still is the inescapable mortality of flesh, announced by the constant presence of death at Udolpho. Simultaneously ancient and extant, the

ruined fabric of the structure collapses past and present temporalities, deceased and living ontologies, while the martial design of the edifice declares a more definite involvement in violence and killing. In its recent past, the castle has been the site of the mysterious disappearance of Laurentini di Udolpho, the heiress of the estate who is presumed murdered, and her ghost rumoured to haunt the grounds. The anatomical wax model concealed in a veiled recess is described as a 'picture' (MU, p.221), but taken by Emily to be an actual corpse - an ambiguous organic/synthetic status that at once sublimates the fear of death in a terrifying spectacle and suggests the true terror of human finitude that lurks beneath the image. Amongst the castle's living tenants, conflict continually threatens to erupt, and the climactic clash between Montoni and his antagonists sees a man murdered, and Udolpho's labyrinthine chambers 'stained with blood' (MU, p.306).

The sharp contrast between the violence, terror, and subjugation that Emily experiences inside castle Udolpho, and the solace and stability she finds in the rural countryside and its familiar domiciles, constructs a spatial order symbolic of conflicting social, moral and ontological values. This scheme is also intrinsically bound up with the visual, in that the spaces it configures are distinguished by their visible appearance, and the structure they instill also implements, and operates as, an aesthetic epistemology. Natural and pastoral terrains are aligned with the picturesque which, as a system of seeing and image-making, necessarily depends on visual conventions in order to function consistently. Within this framework, outdoor spaces and landscapes are described in pictorial terms of composition, colour and tonality, and take on the formulaic, idealised quality of fabricated images. The standardisation of vision produced by picturesque aesthetics also generates a contingent, and similarly standardised, type of viewing subject, whose clearly defined and delimited identity is illusively stable and commanding.

The sense of security and control fabricated by the picturesque is countered by the disruption of self identity induced by entering Udolpho. The darkness that subsumes the castle is a metaphor for its incapacitation and concealment of knowledge - of literally being 'in the dark' (Bohls, p.218). Darkness is also the cause of such a lack, since Radcliffe's technique of knowing - derived from picturesque aesthetics - locates information in the visible surfaces of things, and therefore the want of sight is also a want of intelligence. Unable to see, Emily is deprived of her principle means of understanding her world by categorising the objects, people, and settings that comprise it according to how they look. It is this visual taxonomy that facilitates identification and comprehension - including of the self - and without it Emily's sense of subjective integrity dissipates. The castle itself reflects this configuration, since it is only when viewed from without, and from a distance, that Udolpho attains a clarity of form, and a legible identity. Within, it is

only glimpsed in fragmented details – a staircase, a fireplace, a passageway – and this visual prescriptive aligns the castle with the physical realm of objects, since the detail is that which speaks of the particular, the singular, the extraordinary, and asserts the limitless diversity of the manifest over the uniformity of mediated types.

This pattern of the distant view followed by the close-up – already so visual in its expression, and thus prescient of the photographically determined perception that emerged in the nineteenth century – is the template for Cundall and Delamotte's photographic interpretation of Gothic ruins in *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire*. And by reproducing the visual structures of Gothic fiction, their photographs are also inhered with the themes, anxieties, moral convictions, and modes of understanding, that inform that literary genre. Two photographs of Rievaulx Abbey (the first and third in series of five featuring the structure) are an elucidative example of this effect. *Rivaulx Abbey: General View from the South* (figure 7) is constructed in accordance with picturesque convention and, as such, identifies and introduces its subject as a picturesque ruin. The title makes this more specific by naming the particular abbey, but also reinforces the sense of a sight that is familiar, typical and satisfyingly whole with 'general view'. 'From the south' conceptualises a dimensional layout, and fixes the viewer within it, in relation to what is seen, conferring on her or him a secure and authoritative power of visual perception. Within the picture space, the structure itself is centrally placed, which unequivocally conveys its status as the principle object of visual interest, and directs the viewer to recognise it as such. No additional items detract from this paramount concern, and the harmonious composition enhances the display. The grass border in the foreground is of a uniform width and tone, and provides a contrast to the stone base of the edifice. The white sky similarly offsets the upper section of the structure, emphasising those features that are typical of a gothic ruin, such as the pointed arches of the windows, and the ragged lines where brick has decayed and crumbled. Creeping plants that partially veil the face of the abbey do not appear as an unsettling obfuscation here, but complement the artifice of the architecture with organic nature, creating a balanced juxtaposition of design and disorder, growth and demise. The viewer is encouraged to meditate on the rise and fall of civilisations, and the transience of all earthly things, yet the implied optical omnipotence of the camera's Cartesian perspective positions them at a fixed distance, outside of, and beyond, the domain of the image, and their subjective control remains unaffected.



Figure 7. Joseph Cundall and Philip H. Delamotte,
'Rievaulx Abbey: General View from the South', albumen print on paper,
280 x 230 mm, from *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire*, 1856.
The British Library, London.

Just as the picturesque fallacy of subjective control is undermined by the obscure interior of the castle in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the rational intelligibility of *General View from the South*'s conventional aesthetic is disordered in *Looking Across the Choir* (figure 8). This photograph depicts a succession of repeated, and receding, architectural arches which, although recognisably gothic, are not located within a larger built form, but fill the visible field. Indeed, we only know this is part of an ancient gothic abbey (rather than, for instance, a theatrical set, or a mock ruin) because it appears in the context of a series dedicated to that subject. The viewer here is no longer afforded the assurance of a fixed and distanced position, but is brought into claustrophobic proximity with the structure. Rather than being guided towards a central aspect by a familiar pictorial format, the eyes wander restlessly over the image, which resists simple categorisation, and disrupts any certainty of what is being seen.

What keeps the gaze always moving is the photograph's density of detail. Shapes of individual leaves and blades of grass bring nature to life with vivid immediacy; visible scratches, indents, and chips, reveal the unique character of each brick; intricacies of architectural ornamentation highlight the individual artistry of stonemasons long dead. Such details proclaim the peculiarity of physical forms – convey a particular existential (and temporally bound) object, rather than a stylised symbol. Because it intimates the experienced reality of endless variation, the visual rhetoric of the detail, like the interior of castle Udolpho, is always a fractured spectacle, since the sum of its minutiae – no less than the totality of creation – is too immense to access, or comprehend. This resistance to comprehensive cognisance means details actively subvert the illusion of integrity created by aesthetic systems such as the picturesque, and rather point towards the sublime, infinite and mysterious, which are precisely the themes of Gothic fiction. The 'choir' of the title even raises the spectres of the abbey's former inhabitants, which – as does Radcliffe's fiction – explicitly connects the space of the gothic ruin to death and the dead.

As well as mapping conflicting ideologies onto constructions of place, the pattern of the distant view, followed by the close-up, creates a sense of movement essential to the function of both Radcliffe's novels, and *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire*, as works about travel. For Radcliffe, physical journeys are metaphoric of psychological states. Her narratives use the representation of place and travel to explore the nature of subjectivity through thematic binaries, such as interior-exterior, concealed-revealed, mystery and knowledge, and it was Radcliffe's particularly visual delineation of these ideas that saw her novels set a precedent for the picturing of gothic ruins. The influence is evident in Cundall and Delamotte's photographic interpretation of ancient edifices, which creates a spatial order inhered with meanings and sentiments that parallel those of Radcliffe's fiction. Where Cundall and Delamotte's production diverges from



Figure 8. Joseph Cundall and Philip H. Delamotte,
'Rievaulx Abbey: Looking Across the Choir', albumen print on paper,
280 x 230 mm, from *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire*, 1856.
The British Library, London.

Radcliffe's narratives, however, is in its proposition of realism. While Radcliffe's settings reference actual geographies, such as Italy and France, the places she specifies - the forest abbey, castle Udolpho - are invented and never alleged to be other than fantasies.

Conversely, *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire* is consciously conceived as a project that both implements, and constructs, photographic realism, and the format of the distant view followed by the close-up is crucial to this endeavour. By altering the proximity of viewer (that is, camera), to object, the distant-close-up format implies movement towards and, contingently, produces an illusion of dimensional space, and the mobility of bodied activity. It is

an illusion, however, that easily evaporates. Far from convincingly emulating the multi-sensory continuum of lived experience, the photographic series rather produces static and intermittent visual impressions, creating something more akin to the fractured and erratic mind state of Gothic terror. That the reader-viewer of *A Photographic Tour* [...] is invited to assess the veracity of the photographic recreation, as compared to the corresponding embodied activity, deliberately reveals this discrepancy between intention and outcome, and directs attention back towards the material condition of the representation. Photographic 'realism' is folded back into physical reality as the object presence of the photograph is made apparent, and itself becomes a detail of an indivisible unity of phenomena, its limited scope an inverse demonstration of endless variation, that dismantles its own assumption of authoritative knowledge.

Cundall and Delamotte's abbey photographs create strange and disorienting effects, on both the representational level of what they depict and how, and in their constitution as sensible objects. Like a magic, alchemical crucible, the photograph mixed the symbolism of art and literature with the phenomenal presence of existent buildings, and through this synthesis of fiction and fact produced the gothic ruin as a material form inhered with the spectral and sinister qualities imagined in Gothic novels. As a photographed representation, the architectural ruin - along with almost all other visible phenomena - entered the shadow-archive, becoming an image-object that, as the standard of authenticity, determined the popular perception of actual ancient buildings as uncanny space. The authoritative status of the image-object as 'the ultimate source of meaning' (Armstrong, p.27) also conferred on the photograph a value equivalent to that of the object it referred to and, as legitimate substitutes, photographs began to displace actual things as agents of knowledge. Yet if photographs displaced lived experience as the grounds for understanding reality, what they offered instead - as demonstrated in *A Photographic Tour Among the Abbeys of Yorkshire* - was the kind of fitful, fragmented awareness that characterised the terrorised mind, as conceived in Gothic fiction.

The influence of photographic epistemology on the perception, and thus construction, of uncanny space - especially where that space is an architectural ruin - is evident in Freud's 1936 anecdote 'A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis'.⁶² The piece recounts, and assesses, a strange experience Freud had on an excursion to Athens when, standing before the ruins of the Acropolis, he is overwhelmed by a feeling of disbelief and unreality. Freud himself theorises this

⁶² Freud framed the piece as 'An Open Letter to Roman Rolland on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday'. It was first published in *Almanach der Psychoanalyse*, Volume 9, 1937. James Strachey's translation was published in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 1941 22:93, and the version used here is from Sigmund Freud, *Collected Papers*, Volume 5, ed. by James Strachey (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1959) 304-311. Hereafter cited as 'Freud Ac' with a page reference.

event as an instance of what he terms ‘derealization’ (Freud, Ac. p.308) – a psychic self-defence mechanism, that protects the ego from unwanted ‘factors’ arising from the external world, or from internal stores of memory and belief. As mental processes, derealizations are ‘failures in functioning’ (Freud, Ac. p.308) in which ‘the subject feels either that a piece of reality or that a piece of his own self is strange to him’ (p.309) - that is, threatening elements are defamiliarised and thus disavowed by the psyche.

Freud attributes his own derealization at the Acropolis to repressed, pre-Oedipal fear and guilt. He recalls that, as a boy, he longed to travel, but since his family was not of great wealth, he doubted that he should ever get to see the Acropolis for himself. To find himself standing before that monument, then, was the realisation of a long-held ambition. But what it also signalled was that he had surpassed the achievements of his father who, uneducated and financially constrained, had neither the inclination, nor the funds, to travel to Athens. While this would seem to be a positive advancement, in the order of the unconscious to excel the father is a forbidden act of usurpation, and it is the guilt and terror attached to this offence that necessitates derealization. To protect itself from the expected punishment for this transgression (that is, castration), Freud’s ego falsely exaggerates his memory of boyhood doubt that he would ever visit the Acropolis, to a boyhood disbelief that the Acropolis exists at all. This false memory then displaces the distress prompted by Freud’s arrival at the Acropolis with a feeling of uncanny unreality, and existential doubt.

While this theory compellingly locates the cause of Freud’s ‘disturbance’ in his subjective memories, and unconscious beliefs, I would maintain that there is more going on here: namely, the photographic sabotage of the traditional covenant that qualified the real. Born in 1856, Freud was of the first generation to be born into a culture of mass visibility. As such, his boyhood knowledge of the Acropolis, which inspired such an ardent urge to travel, was surely informed to some degree by photographic images.⁶³ Freud’s casual and repeated use of the word ‘see’ - rather than, for instance, ‘visit’, ‘tour’, or ‘encounter’ - to describe what he desires of the Acropolis, and his activity there, is an innate equivocation of experience with vision and looking – a

⁶³ The British photographer Francis Bedford (1815-1894) accompanied the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) on a tour of the near east in 1862. Bedford took around two hundred photographs during the tour, which encompassed Athens. The trip was followed avidly by the British press, and some of Bedford’s images were published, in woodcut form, in the *London Illustrated News*, and elsewhere. Three portfolios of original prints were published by Day and Sons, London, in 1862, and an illustrated volume featuring the photographs, with descriptive text by W. T. Thomson, was produced in London in 1866. Birmingham Library and Archives have a substantial collection of material by and about Bedford, and in 2011 acquired a rare set of the three-volume suite of original prints from the royal tour. See <<https://vintagephotosjohnson.com/2012/05/30/francis-bedford-1816-1894-bibliography/>> A number of Bedford’s photographs of Athens can be seen in the online magazine *Monovisions* at <<http://monovisions.com/francis-bedford-biography-19th-century-photographer/>> There were also many others who produced images to more conventional standards, as an offshoot of the escalating tourist industry, which would have been mass produced and widely circulated as collector cards.

privileging of sight as the agent that produces meaning, which is the presumption of photographic epistemology. Freud's wish to see the monument with 'my own eyes' (Freud, Ac. p.304, 306) suggests that he has, in fact, seen it before, and given the mid nineteenth-century expansion of print and visual cultures, this was very likely to have been via the arbitrated 'eyes' of illustration and photography. Although his longing for a personal encounter implies a perceived discrepancy between exclusively subjective ('my own'), and mediated modes of looking, the spectacle of the Acropolis is still deemed the quintessence of its import, evidencing Freud's inveterate conviction that understanding the properties of things is based on their observation.

To my mind, it is precisely Freud's deep-seated belief in the image as the determinant of meaning that deranges his recognition of the real in Athens. For Freud, as a literate subject of the era of mass-produced images, visual representations and their referents are of equal value, since if seeing something was held to be the sum of experiencing it, then there was essentially no qualitative difference between seeing a photographic image of an object, and seeing the object itself. Effectuated by the photograph's production of the shadow-archive, this parity, or interchangeability, of original and copy, overturned the traditional hierarchy in which the object defines and generates its image, and stands as the measure of its truth. To borrow Dylan Trigg's fitting phrase, 'the materiality of things [was] not sufficient to attest to their brute existence'⁶⁴, since the power to qualify the real had been commandeered by the dominant order of mass visuality. Thus when Freud is confronted by the manifest physicality of the Acropolis, the distinction between original and copy collapses; past and present, sight and site, merge into a single vision, and the comprehensive intelligence he anticipates will be 'my own' is displaced by a hallucinatory sensation of incredulity, that renders the ruin flat, uncertain, and uncanny.

Freud himself locates the cause of his disordered understanding specifically in his 'perception' (Freud, Ac. p.307) – a perception, I am suggesting, not only influenced by the apparatus of his unconscious, but also pre-conditioned by the photographic standard of reality to interpret architectural ruins as uncanny space. Gothic literature was a key component in creating the paradigm or image-object that determined the eerie character of ancient and derelict buildings, and its effect, via photography, infiltrates Freud's mental constitution as well as his cognition. Like Radcliffe's heroines, who find their minds unravelled and overwhelmed in the face of uncanny space, Freud's psychic integrity is shattered by the material presence of the Acropolis. Rather than a satisfying expansion, and reinforcement, of his identity as a cosmopolitan intellectual, Freud's trip to Athens affords him only a disorienting division of self, in which he

⁶⁴ Dylan Trigg, 'The Psychoanalysis of Ruins', *3:AM Magazine*, 9.12.2012, <<http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/?s=dylan+trigg>>

becomes three people: one who reacts to the ruin with the incredulous thought that “So all this really *does* exist” (Freud, Ac. p.304); a second who takes cognisance of the remark, and is alarmed by its expression of disbelief; and - although Freud does not acknowledge him - the narrator of the anecdote makes a third, omnipotent observer who interprets and articulates the situation. The ‘piece of reality’ (Freud, Ac. pp.305,309) that is the Acropolis disrupts the coherence of existential phenomena, which must instead be approached in ‘pieces’. And as in Gothic fiction uncanny space offers no stable, structured environment within and against which to establish a secure subject position, resulting in a ruptured mind state.

What this fragmenting of Freud’s identity also reflects is the doubling effect of the photograph. The multiplying of Freud, like infinitely multiplying photographic copies, begs the question which individual example is the true one? Just as it does with photographs, the line between original and copy becomes blurred, and with it the very basis of reality is ungrounded. In relating to dystopian orders of space, the self is circumstantially also placed in peril and doubt. And given that photographic epistemology had installed a visual standard that deemed uncanniness the essential qualification of authentic place, such ontological uncertainty would have been widespread. That Freud likens his experience of the Acropolis to the sudden materialisation of the ‘Loch Ness Monster’ (Freud, Ac. p.304) is a certain sign of existential ambiguity – the monster being the ‘harbinger of category crisis’⁶⁵, and here presaging the collapsing distinction between real and replica, fact and fiction. Monsters, in fact, had been prolific in nineteenth-century culture, signifying the troubled relations, not only of the imagined to the existent, but also of the worldly to the divine, the traditional to the technological, and particularly the position of the human in nature.

⁶⁵ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ‘Monster Culture: Seven Theses’, in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1997) 3-25, p.11.

chapter 2

monsters

Photographic epistemology privileged the visual as the basis of knowledge and meaning, and it was photography's visual order that created the conditions by which monstrosity was made apparent. In his 'Monster Culture: Seven Theses', Jeffrey Jerome Cohen elucidates a useful set of traits by which monsters can be defined, chief of which is the embodiment of difference, and resistance to common modes of categorisation (pp.6-7). This chapter looks at cartes-de-visite portrait photographs of freaks, mainly by the nineteenth-century, New York photographer, Charles Eisenmann⁶⁶, and sourced from the Ronald G. Becker collection held at Syracuse University in New York. The monstrous bodies of zoomorphic freaks reflected the anxieties surrounding the proper distinction of human from animal in the Victorian imaginary. Traditional taxonomies of Natural History based on hierarchies of fixed types had been challenged by evolutionary theory, which proposed instead an interrelated system, in which species distinctions were mutable and fluid. Constructing an imagery of human-animal hybrids gave the nebulous fears arising from these ideas a tangible shape, and created a safely contained forum in which to re-negotiate definitions of the human and the animal, in light of such radical upheaval.

Nineteenth-century thinking on nature was inhered with contradiction, since on the one hand, the era's concern with taxonomy sought to organise natural reality by determining differences between living phenomena and establishing discrete species; and on the other, the public inception of evolutionary theory - crystallised in Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) - worked to destabilise conventional boundaries between plants, humans, and animals, with its emphasis on common descent, kinship and variation. What confounded both these modes of thinking, however, was the *lusus naturae* (freak of nature), or monstrous birth. Simultaneously a product of nature, and a corruption of it, the singularity of the monstrous body could not be accommodated by systems of thought based on types, while the extremity of its difference also made its integration into concepts of nature as universal family distinctly uncomfortable.

Both human and animal in origin, the order of the monstrous was fundamentally ambiguous and defied conventional explanation, but consolidation under the common label 'freaks' offered a way of understanding these unique individuals as a class of being whose defining

⁶⁶ Charles Eisenmann (1855-1927), was a German immigrant, who opened his photographic studio in New York's Bowery district in 1876. Although he was based on the other side of the Atlantic, it was quite probable that some of his images would have circulated in Britain, due to the notoriety of his clients, many of whom were contracted to P.T. Barnum's American Museum, as well as to the ease of distribution offered by cartes-de-visite, and the frequency of travel between Britain and New York. Eisenmann's operation ran with great success until the U.S. economic collapse of 1893, when he sold his studio to Frank Wendt, who continued in the business for another five years, before closing down for good in 1898. (See: Michael Mitchell, *Human Freaks in the Gilded Age*, p.43. The Ronald G. Becker Collection of Charles Eisenmann Photographs is held at Syracuse University, New York, and many images from the archive can be accessed via http://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/b/becker_eisenmann.htm)

characteristic was their incomprehensibility. The freak body was confusion made flesh, and the compulsive Victorian fascination with it expressed the social and intellectual turmoil caused by industrialisation, imperial expansion, and rapid technological innovation. Zoomorphic and anthropomorphic freak presentations in particular - that is, entities of an interspecies character - reflected the breakdown of traditional human-animal boundaries instigated by evolutionary theory; the hybrid monster functioning as a site for exploring and reconfiguring humanity's relationship to nature, and what might or might not constitute human, and animal, identities.

The freak show was the main cultural arena in which these ideas and concerns were negotiated, through the form of popular entertainment. Mixing elements of theatre, museum exhibition, and pseudo-scientific scholarship, these live displays typically consisted of human exhibits ranging from the disabled, deformed, and diseased, to racially and culturally diverse subjects from the colonies, who were shown alongside animals that were either exotic, foreign imports (elephants, crocodiles, and large primates were especially popular), or else possessed of some physical anomaly, such as two heads, or excess limbs. Presenting such a disparate array of people and animals together underlined the idea of affiliation between them, exploiting uneasy Darwinian concepts for sensational effect, and constructing the freakish as a mutable, shifting condition, that exists across, or in between, given notions of human and animal. At the same time, the space - both physical and figurative - between audience and freak performers, placed these possibilities at a reassuring distance, containing them by projecting them as other.

A major contributor to the success, both financial and cultural, of these ventures, was the use of photographs, in advertising material, and as consumer goods in themselves sold as souvenirs and collectibles. Particularly significant for the purpose of theatrical marketing was the introduction of the *carte-de-visite* format,⁶⁷ since it was cheap to produce, accessible to most, and highly appealing, with sales peaking between three and four hundred million cartes per year at the height of the 'cartomania' craze of the 1860s and 70s (Wichard, p.5).⁶⁸

Cartes-de-visite were miniature portrait photographs, pasted on card, the uniform dimensions⁶⁹ of which effected a concomitant standardisation of popular culture, and disseminated it on a greater scale than ever before, boosting the careers of theatre personalities, and marking

⁶⁷ The *cartes-de-visite* format was first patented by Parisian photographer Andre-Adolphe Eugene Disderi (1819-1889) in 1854. See: Robin and Carol Wichard, *Victorian Cartes-de-Visite* (Buckinghamshire, U.K.: Shire Publications Ltd., 1999) p.12-14.

⁶⁸ While the portrait was, from the start, the most popular genre of photography, prior to the introduction of the *carte* format, photographic portraits were predominantly the preserve of the upper class. (See: Christopher R. Smit, 'A Collaborative Aesthetic: Levinas' Idea of Responsibility and the Photographs of Charles Eisenmann and the Late Nineteenth-Century Freak Show', in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Marlene Tromp, 283-311, p.290.

⁶⁹ The standard dimensions of *cartes-de-visite* were 54mm x 89mm, mounted on card of 63mm x 100mm (Wichard, p. 12).

the inception of a celebrity culture founded on images (Mitchell, p.23). For freak acts, sales of cartes-de-visite became an important source of income, often generating more money than their contracts to perform. Sittings for portraits were typically organised, and financed, by the individual, independently of their employer, which allowed them to exercise some degree of control over their public image. Choice of setting, dress, pose, and accessories were all ways for freak performers to express individual attitude and to communicate their concerns and aspirations to a wide and varied audience. Once the photograph had been taken, copies could then be printed off in bulk and sold, usually within the exhibition space, as a supplement to the performance.

For patrons of the shows, the photographs functioned as keepsakes, commemorating the experience of a live encounter with their favourite freak, several of whom were famous household names.⁷⁰ Photographs also offered the promise of visual satiety, enabling the kind of prolonged staring and prurient scrutiny that would have been deemed inappropriate in a public space. In the double sense of supplement, as both adjunct and substitute, the freak photographic portrait was a source of additional information to that offered by the theatrical spectacle of the show, and at the same time acted as a proxy for the physical presence of the freak body itself, recreating performances as miniature tableaux, and extending the display beyond the boundaries of the exhibition space.

Freak photographic portraits, then, are positioned somewhere between a specimen and an artefact, functioning as both source material to be examined and analysed, and objects of scholarly interest and aesthetic value, suitable for collection and display. Both aspects reinforce the freak show's actual and pretentious alignment with Natural History, by mimicking that discipline's interdependent practices of collection and observation. As the method of Natural Historical endeavour, collection facilitates the work of observation, by first extracting samples from the organic environment - an action that fragments the integrated ecosystems of nature, and converts them into isolated objects. These are then re-contextualised as 'specimens' which, when considered as a group or collection, accentuate variety, contrast, and unexpected juxtaposition, and stimulate the observatory act of comparison, or the finding and quantifying of points of similarity and divergence between phenomena, that is the basis of species differentiation. The collection is not only the means, but also the product of this process, in which the gathered data is

⁷⁰ To give an example of the scale of some of these performers' notoriety, one of the most famous freaks of the era was Charles Sherwood Stratton (1838-1883), better known by his stage name, General Tom Thumb. Stratton was a midget whom Barnum (a distant relative) adopted at the age of four, and taught to perform. He achieved international fame through touring Europe and British India. His marriage, in 1863, to another midget, Lavinia Warren, was attended by then president, Abraham Lincoln, and an estimated 20,000 mourners were present at Stratton's funeral. (See: Phineas Taylor Barnum, *The Autobiography of P. T. Barnum*, 2nd edn. (London: Ward and Lock, 1855) pp.79, 101-102.

formally presented, and institutionalised, as the museum display, to be observed, in turn, as an index of scientific ordering and understanding of the natural world.

Photography parallels these actions in the sense that it also pirates empirical reality, converting it into images. And emulating the museum display, the photograph album formalises the collection, arrangement, and viewing of photographic images, particularly those produced as cartes-de-visite, which, despite their name, were rarely used as visiting cards, and were produced primarily as album photographs (Wichard, p.74). Albums specifically designed to accommodate the carte format were introduced in the early 1860s, and quickly became a staple feature of the British drawing room (Wichard, pp.74-77). Although there were no strict conventions structuring the composition of these 'family albums', there was a certain stylistic etiquette surrounding them. The first page was almost always an introductory image inscribed with a verse welcoming the viewer, which was usually followed by a picture of the Queen; and while family portraits comprised the bulk of the material, it was common practice to also display likenesses of celebrities from the spheres of politics, religion, literature, and popular entertainment, including people who were famous for performing as freaks.⁷¹

As in other kinds of collection, the photographs in albums were presented specifically for the purpose of comparison, with each image gaining its meaning from those around it and from its relationship to the group as a whole, rather than from its own intrinsic qualities (Craton, p.50). Information regarding individual character, social roles, and status, encoded in the stylistic and aesthetic variations of photographic production, is most effectively read when images are compared and contrasted, and their arrangement can be used to further this function. For instance, the practice of including a portrait of the Queen at the front of the album is a visual obsequy to conventional authority, signifying royal precedence over other represented persons. This visual communication was essential to the album's predominant purpose of constructing a visible record of a family's genealogy, and social dynamics (both internal, and within the wider community), as well as expressing their interests and opinions by the choice of subjects featured.

In this context, the inclusion of freak portraits would have marked a distinct divergence from the similar types of bodies seen in family portraits and occasional vaudeville stars, its physical aberrance not only conveying a topical taste for the strange, but also serving to reinforce, by extreme contrast, the normalcy of its neighbours. The striking oddity of a giant, or conjoined

⁷¹ Celebrity portraits could be purchased from photographers' studios which often sold prints, as well as offering a service for personal likenesses. It was not only portraits that were produced in carte format: images of landscapes, and photographs of original paintings and sculpture, as well as illustrations especially commissioned for production as cartes were also available. (See: Smit, p.290-291; and Wichard, pp.69-79). A dedicated study of Victorian album culture is Patrizia di Bello's *Women's Albums and Photography in Victorian England: Ladies, Mothers and Flirts* (Hampshire, England and Burlington, USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007).

twins, would have also been a conversation piece in itself, another purpose of the parlour photograph album being to provoke discussion. Such oddity, however, is created by the complex of the group, which is the prerequisite condition for the emergence of difference. For it is only when viewed together that the patterns revealing reoccurring traits become apparent, and that inconsistencies in these trends can be identified as abnormal.

For the figure of the freak this meant that its defining quality of physical difference was less an invariable state and more a relative perception – a perception that was emphatically visual, thus locating the construction of freak bodies in the Natural Historical methods of observation and classification. Visual phenomena also have an intrinsic proclivity to aesthetic effect, and this sense is bound up in the etymology of ‘freak’, which begins in the sixteenth century, when it emerged as a term to signify a brilliant speck or streak of colour⁷². In this rather painterly understanding, the ‘freak’ is a bright spot that arises as singular and distinct from the general field of colour and shade, interpreted through the eye: a point whose special intensity cannot be integrated into any scheme, yet is only apparent in relation to its context. Again, the broad conceptual basis is that of difference or deviance, only here this is specified as an ocular impression, and carries shades of the purely sensual, as well as pictorial, to the meaning of ‘freak’.

An interesting connection to photography emerges from this as well, since ‘spots’ or ‘specks’ also describes the material state of light-sensitive silver crystals - the tiny particles that, massed together, comprise the physical substance of the photograph.⁷³ It can be said, then, that through this linguistic and notional parallel, freaks are embedded in the formal properties of the photograph. And this is a twofold effect, since freaks in the sense of vibrant dots or grains of matter comprise the corporeal foundation of the photograph as object, while the freakish - the quality of divergence and variation - enables the gradations of light and dark in which photographic pictures are discerned.

Extending the same idea to photography theory, Roland Barthes (pp.26-27) elucidates his idea of the photograph’s *punctum* as a ‘point’, ‘sting’ or ‘speck’, linking it conceptually to those meanings historically attached to ‘freak’. The perception of *punctum* is subjective to each viewer, and is not necessarily present in all photographs. It is the detail that disrupts or punctures the familiar surface of visual convention – or in Barthes’s term, *studium* – causing the image to momentarily transcend its mediating role and manifest the truth of its moment. Neither sought

⁷² The first literary instance of this usage is in John Milton’s poem *Lycidas* (1637), line 144, ‘The white pink and the pansy freaked with jet’. Cited in Erin O’Connor, *Raw Material*, p.175.

⁷³ There are, of course, many methods of producing photographs, which include the use of salts, powders or liquids of silver. My analogy here consolidates these processes in the term ‘crystal’ to signify the essential element of sensitive silver particles. Gernsheim (pp.30-42) gives a history and explanation of some of these methods.

for, nor contrived, the *punctum* is an ‘accident’ (Barthes, p.27) or put another way, a freak occurrence, whose source ‘shoots out’ with particular insistence or acuity to ‘mark’ or ‘prick’ the viewer, its presence distinguishing those photographs in which it is perceived from the vast accumulation of camera-made imagery like singular brilliant spots, within a field of uniformity.

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In order to create an imagery of human-animal hybrids, whether as hand-made pictures, photographs, or theatrical spectacle, there must be separate representational histories specific to humans, and to animals, that inform its construction, and which it also, to some extent, subverts by muddling together. Portraiture was already long established by the nineteenth century, and as the dominant mode for picturing people, many of its precepts were readily transposed from painting to photography.⁷⁴ Traditions concerning the visual mediation of animals, however, were rather more scattered. In painting, they were often absorbed into a blanket concept of nature, playing a symbolic or purely decorative role in genres such as landscape and game-themed still life. In illustration, depictions of fairytale creatures, derived from narrative, began to appear in the seventeenth century, while the practice of making detailed, realistic drawings of plants and animals emerged as an aspect of scientific endeavour in the mid-1500s, and developed into a distinct pictorial style alongside the discipline of Natural History⁷⁵.

By the nineteenth century, zoology had become a branch of study in itself, which relied on illustration to evidence and support its scientific claim of direct observation. The chief products of this scholarship were printed books and periodicals, and while zoological illustration approximated the experience of looking for the reader-viewers of these tomes, a bias towards the accompanying text as the superior source of knowledge was encoded in the aesthetic conventions of the genre, rendering the images subordinate, or supplementary, to it.⁷⁶ The main indication of this was the ubiquitous blank background. Animal subjects were generally depicted as isolated individuals, or in small groups, with either a minimal environmental setting, implied by a patch of grass or tree branch, or more often none at all - an omission that urged the viewer to turn to the

⁷⁴ See: Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013) pp.7-21; Shearer West, *Portraiture* (Oxford: OUP, 2004) pp.22-43.

⁷⁵ Ann Shelby Blum, *Picturing Nature: American Nineteenth Century Zoological Illustration* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993) p.6.

⁷⁶ J. G. Woods’s Three Volume *Illustrated Natural History* (London and New York: Routledge Warner and Routledge, 1853) was a hugely popular title both in Britain and the USA, which remained in print, in various versions (it was adapted as a children’s picture book, for instance) until the turn of the century. Popular Natural History periodicals included *Hardwicke’s Science Gossip* (1865-1893), *The Naturalist* (published from 1864), and *Nature* (from 1869), the journal of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which is still published today.

text for this information. Portraying creatures in this detached manner also mirrored the Natural Historical concept of the specimen, with the plain surround suggesting the ‘cabinet drawers or shelves’ (Blum, p.6) commonly used to house such items. Labelling and numbering the images further emphasised the feel of a museum display, and again, referred viewers to the text, which directed the act of looking towards sequences and combinations of images that verified its claim to ‘descriptive or analytical knowledge’ (Blum, p.6). Another obvious, but easily overlooked, convention, particularly in the case of the printed book, was the use of rectangular paper, which necessitated the shrinking or enlargement of most natural phenomena, in order for them to ‘fit onto a page and be legible’ (Blum, p.3) – a practice that already begins to draw the animal body into the realm of the freak show, with its affectations of dwarfism and gigantism.

The advent of photography promised a more precise means of recreating direct observation of the natural world, but for early photographers, long exposure times combined with unpredictable and uncooperative subjects, proved a major obstacle to capturing animals on camera. Since technological limitation proscribed the possibility of effectively portraying living creatures, early nature photography, modelling itself on painting, adopted the aesthetic of the picturesque, which privileges topography as the basis of composition, and usually limits the appearance of animals to domestic horses, cattle and sheep, who feature as decorative accents, or to evoke an atmosphere of rural harmony.⁷⁷

Developed in the eighteenth century, the theory and practice of the picturesque was bound up with the process of ‘enclosure’, which entailed the wresting of land from common use to exclusive, controlled ownership, for purposes of farming, agriculture and personal profit.⁷⁸ Picturesque images both reflected this conversion, in their restructuring of ordinary countryside into artistic ‘landscape’, and functioned as its hegemonic agent, by presenting scenes of cultivated terrain as the social and aesthetic ideal. While enclosure may be argued to have had some benefits - chiefly an increase in crop yields - it also resulted in large numbers of disenfranchised working people, and impacted particularly negatively on animals, as habitats such as forest and marshland began to shrink and were pushed to the edges of the ‘civilised’ realm, resulting in the literal, and metaphorical, marginalisation of indigenous beasts. Prior to enclosure, these animals were

⁷⁷ Francis Bedford (1816-94), Roger Fenton (1819-69) and Francis Frith (1822-98) are all well-known early photographers who produced images of nature with a distinctly picturesque influence, depicting scenes of country life, and pastoral landscapes with an emphasis on botanical features and village architecture. (See: Charles Millard, ‘Images of Nature: A Photo Essay’, in *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, ed. by U. C. Knoepelmacher and G. B. Tennyson (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1977).

⁷⁸ See: Ian Wailes, ‘The Common Field Landscape, Cultural Commemoration and the Impact of Enclosure, c.1770-1850’, in *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950*, ed. by Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) pp.19-36; and J. M. Neeson *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England 1700-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

available to everyone. Afterwards, only privileged landowners retained the right to hunt, or otherwise access such creatures, and their consequent scarcity led to a Romanticised concept of 'the wild' or 'wild nature', appreciation of which became the preserve of those with 'taste' (Blum, p.5).

In his 1980 essay, 'Why Look at Animals?', John Berger argues that this marginalisation reached its full fruition in the nineteenth century, which saw social and cultural practices concerning animals compelling an ever-widening gulf between humans and other living beings.⁷⁹ The emergence of the public zoo⁸⁰ was the most prominent manifestation of this process, being a space in which as many varieties of animal as possible are gathered expressly for the purpose of being 'seen, observed, studied' (Berger, p.23). The cages they are kept in function as frames around them, to facilitate looking, and also erect a literal border separating their 'natural' world from the human one of culture – of which the zoo itself is a signifier. That many of the creatures were colonial imports only reinforced the idea of a human-animal divide by universalising it, while each animal's isolation again echoed the notion of the specimen, constructing the zoo as a kind of museum - a physical actualisation of Natural History's taxonomic ordering, 'whose purpose was to further knowledge and public enlightenment' (Berger, p.21).

An exception to the general paucity of early animal photographs are those images produced by the Comte de Montizon in the 1850s of animals living at London Zoo, which provide a visual record of the zoo's role in mobilising this displacement.⁸¹ The Comte's photograph of polar bears (c.1852) (figure 9) shows two creatures lumped in a featureless space, the contours of which aim to recreate the ice and rock formations of the animals' native terrain, but the obviousness of concrete, brick and metal render the attempt merely nominal. Similarly, in the famous picture of the Hippopotamus (c.1852) (figure 10), the animal's environment is emphatically artificial, it's original habitat reduced to a token pool of water. These enclosures are like theatrical sets, in which everything is illusory: cultivated plants pretend to be jungle, artificial lighting substitutes the sun, and painted backdrops create sham savannahs or coral reefs. Confined in these fake surroundings, the animals, too, become imitations of themselves. With nothing to act upon, their natural responses are replaced by 'utter dependence [and] a passive waiting for a series of arbitrary outside interventions' (Berger, p.25), that admit them, briefly, to perform the

⁷⁹ John Berger, 'Why Look at Animals?' in *About Looking* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

⁸⁰ The Jardin des Plantes in Paris was founded in 1793, London Zoo in 1828 and Berlin Zoo in 1844. (See Berger, p.21).

⁸¹ Born in France, Don Juan Carlos Maria Isidro Borbon, Count of Montizon (1822-1887) was a claimant to both the French and the Spanish thrones, but took little interest in either and spent much of his life in England, pursuing his interest in science. He was active as a photographer around mid-century, and the animals at the zoological gardens were his favoured subject.

routine of feeding time, or the highly surveilled procedure of organised breeding. In the zoo animal ‘perennial actions become marginal actions without an object’ (Berger, p.25), and this endemic want of purpose causes them to treat the events that occur around them, including the spectating public, as equally marginal, producing symptomatic reactions of boredom, sullenness and the ‘otherwise exclusively human attitude’ of indifference (Berger, p.26).



Figure 9. Comte de Montizon, *Polar Bears at London Zoo*, c.1852, salted paper print, 88 x 106mm, Royal Collection Trust, London.

Ironically, it is this very confinement and conditioned passivity that made zoo animals possible subjects for early photographs. But while the Comte de Montizon’s images in many ways conspire with the ongoing marginalisation of non-human creatures, by treating them as the objects of our curiosity, to be examined, understood, and classified, they also latently acknowledge this position, and in doing so, work to subvert it. The image of the Hippopotamus, for instance, makes the animal central to the composition, in an attempt to reinstate, or at least recognise, its diminished social and cultural centrality, its ghostly reflection in the water a visual allusion to its compromised existence. The positioning of the camera also creates empathy with the animal’s point of view, which sees its spectators overwhelming a space where there was once boundless land and sky, and disrupts any stable sense of inside or outside, so that the human figures might equally be the ones who are imprisoned by the brace of metal bars.

In contrast to the isolated hippo, the Comte’s polar bears at least have each other for company. Yet their dejection is conspicuous, both in the image itself, and in the added caption, “Oh for an ice” which mocks their predicament by suggesting a frozen dessert is suitable

compensation for their natural habitat, but also implicitly affirms the enormity of its loss, and even sympathises with it, in its anthropomorphised projection of a longing for something more.

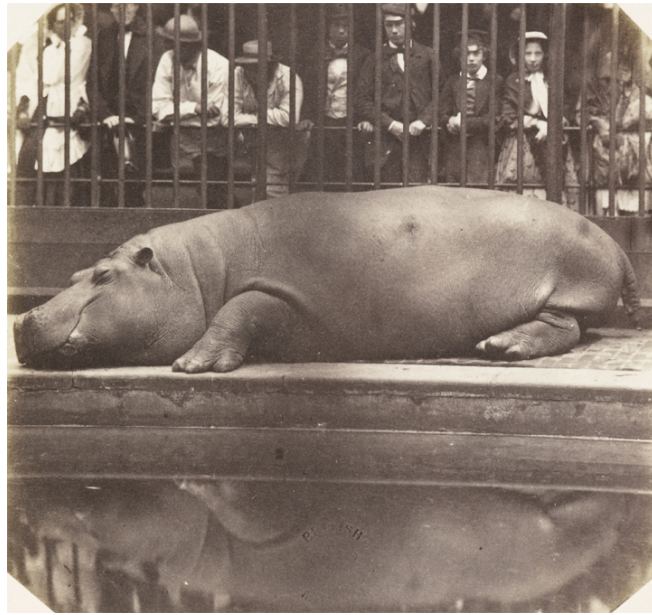


Figure 10. Comte de Montizon, *Hippopotomus*, c.1852, salted paper print, 88 x 106mm, Royal Collection Trust, London.

As Berger sees it, zoos ‘cannot but disappoint’, since what they offer is a mediated relation with other species, rather than the desired ‘authentic’ experience of nature, that technological progress, industrial development, cultural alienation, and the concomitant marginalisation of animals have all but erased (p.28). As they disappeared from daily life, animals began to reappear in imagery that presented them as figures of nostalgia, belonging to a lost realm of originary innocence and harmony, which Matthew Brower aligns with Western myth of the Garden of Eden⁸². Such images function as both an attempted redemption of the animals that are estranged, and as evidence of the radical division between human and animal spheres, since their visual logic constructs a concept of ‘deep nature’ (Brower, p.xvii) that is premised on the exclusion of humans.⁸³ Brower explains how this visual rhetoric finds its apogee in the contemporary wildlife photograph - a genre which, by purporting to access the ‘normally invisible’ world of wild nature, collapses the human-animal divide yet simultaneously positions animals at an insurmountable distance, by ‘leaving no space within their visual economy for the

⁸² Matthew Brower, *Developing Animals: Wildlife and Early American Photography* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) p.xiv.

⁸³ The conceptual framework here, as in the Biblical myth of Edenic paradise, is that nature is innocent, while humans are fundamentally corrupt, and therefore any intimation of human intervention in the natural realm renders it inauthentic. (Brower, p.xiv).

viewer to occupy' (p.xiv); the fundamental message being 'real animals [...] only exist when humans are absent' (Brower xvii).

As a product of modernity, the concept of 'wildlife', that is, of real animals existing in a realm beyond, or receding from, the human, was largely alien to the Victorians. Their attitude to other species was a rather more pragmatic one based on utility and consumption, that celebrated the capture, subjugation, and display of exotic creatures as proof of human superiority (Brower, p.11). The nature photographs of John Dillwyn Llewelyn are in some respects a testament to this mindset, since the animals they feature are taxidermic models – the ultimate trophy of human dominion over the order of beasts. Yet the staging of the images absorbs the animal bodies into an idealised fantasy of nature that foreshadows many conventions of the contemporary wildlife genre, and subdues their effect as symbols of power.⁸⁴

The composition of Llewelyn's photograph, *Stag* (c.1852) (figure 11), dominated by echoed, triangular shapes of water and vegetation, seems to locate it in the tradition of the picturesque. While the setting is forest, rather than pastoral, the mood is nonetheless that of a tranquil idyll, with the camera/viewer positioned on the riverbank, as if enjoying a day's fishing, or a leisurely repose from that most picturesque activity of rambling. Inherent in this sense of seclusion, or escape from the trappings of human society, is the concept of a nature-culture divide, and the disordered abundance of trees, foliage, ferns, and grass that covers the entire picture space, suggests a realm in which nature is wholly dominant. The 'deep nature' of the contemporary wildlife image, to which the camera has privileged access. The absence of any cultural artefacts anticipates a central convention of the contemporary wildlife genre, and means the image cannot be harnessed to a historical period, constructing the natural realm as a timeless continuum, that is at once the source, and the antithesis, of human activity (Brower, p.4).

The animal itself, although readily discernible, does not dominate the picture, and placed slightly off centre, works as an ornamental flourish which, in its vivid contrast to the prevalent greenery, is drawn into the semantic nexus of 'freak', in its sense as prominent mark, or visual highlight. The title *Stag*, however, suggests that the animal is more than merely decorative, and in

⁸⁴ Born into the Welsh landed gentry, John Dilwyn Llewelyn (1810-1882) was an enthusiastic amateur scientist and pioneer of early photography, who was related by marriage to William Henry Fox Talbot. His photographic production was very much a family affair, his wife Emma (Talbot's cousin) and eldest daughter, Tereza, being his favoured assistants, and his most consistent subjects being family portraits, and landscapes and country scenes taken in and around his Swansea estate, and home, Penllergare. Llewelyn is credited with inventing an early type of instantaneous shutter, as well as creating the 'Oxymel' process: an adaptation of the wet-collodion process, which meant plates could be stored after they were sensitised, and after exposure, enabling outdoor photography without the need to transport large amounts of chemicals - technological innovations that were fuelled by his desire to work outdoors, and to capture natural phenomena. (See: Richard Morris, 'John Dilwyn Llewelyn', *History of Photography* 1.3 (1977) 221-233). The largest archive of Llewelyn's works is held at Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales, and *The Photographer of Penllergare: A Life of John Dilwyn Llewelyn* by Noel Chanan was published by Impress in May 2013, some extracts of which are available at <<http://the-photographer-of-penllergare.co.uk>>.

fact implies that it is the principle subject and premise of the image. What this reveals is the desire to recreate, photographically, the increasingly elusive ‘authentic’ experience of nature, of which the encounter with an animal other is the crucial catalyst. Llewelyn’s inclusion of the viewer is key to producing this effect, since it constructs a narrative of patient observation, in which the implied viewer/watcher is rewarded with the spontaneous appearance of a genuine wild creature. This, again, is a feature that prefigures the contemporary wildlife photograph, which presents itself as the result of patience and luck, although its frequent use of extreme close-ups, aerial views, and underwater shots, entirely erases the viewer, and instead emphasises technology, turning the wildlife itself into pure spectacle, or that which is observed, but cannot, in any significant way, look back.



Figure 11. John Dilwyn Llewelyn, *Stag*, c.1852, salted paper print, 241 x 190mm, National Museum Wales.

It is this look back, this mutual recognition of familiarity and incomprehension, expressed through the exchange of the gaze that, for John Berger, makes encounters between humans and other species meaningful. Although the ‘absolutely marginal’ zoo animal, vested of its independence, can only ‘look sideways’, or ‘blindly beyond’, or ‘scan mechanically’ (Berger, p.24), the self-possession of the wild animal ascribes it with a power that parallels the human, and

by which humanity defines itself.⁸⁵ The exchange of gaze is thus a moment both of clarity and of ambiguity. An evocation of the primordial past, that necessarily articulates the present, and it is this sensation that Llewelyn's *Stag* aims to recreate. The forest setting is intrinsically understood as the crucible, and natural domain, of wild creatures, and the density of vegetation that fills the visible field imparts it with an intimate atmosphere. The deer nestled within it is positioned tentatively close, but warily out of reach, as if conscious of another presence, and this is corroborated by its gaze which is fixed directly on the camera/viewer. Although the stag's gaze is static due to the properties of the photograph, it is also fleeting, since the animal is poised in the act of walking away, and the implied inclusion of a person – the viewer – projects a human perspective, and human temporality, (as opposed to the protracted, evolutionary timescale of nature) onto the scene, so that the impression is of a spontaneously captured, transient moment, of privileged communion with nature through the animal.⁸⁶

This, however, is a twenty-first century perspective, formed with hindsight of the contemporary wildlife genre, and it is impossible to properly discern whether Victorian spectators would have read the image in this way. Certainly, Llewelyn's *Stag* offers a novel concept of nature and animals, that is not simply in the mode of the picturesque. The photograph draws on other influences too, particularly the paintings of Edwin Landseer, in which animal bodies become sites for the projection of idealised, anthropomorphic qualities, such as freedom, nobility, strength, and masculinity; as well as in many ways foreshadowing the contemporary wildlife photograph's construction of the natural realm as an everlasting given, distinct from human culture (Brower, p.11)⁸⁷. Where Llewelyn's image does differ from the generic wildlife photographs of today is that while wildlife photographs can function as biological documents, *Stag* would have functioned firstly as an aesthetic piece, weighting it towards the artistic, decorative tradition of the picturesque. Although with its photographic status as empirical record, its subject

⁸⁵ As Berger (p.6) puts it, animals are both 'like and unlike' us, and it is by measuring how, and in what ways, we correspond or diverge from animals that we are able to understand, or conceptualise, being human.

⁸⁶ This differs from the contemporary wildlife photograph which, as Matthew Brower (p.xiv) has explained, completely eradicates the viewer, and thereby detaches itself from human temporality, constructing nature as an eternal realm, to which technology provides a seemingly non-interventional access (p.xiii). Interestingly, Llewelyn's photograph is also sometimes titled *The Stag* or *Study of a Stag*, variations that reflect its intermediary construction of nature as both timeless and transient: the simple *Stag*, conveys the idea of an immortal essence of a species, which is nature as eternal given. *The Stag* is rather more singular, and refers to a particular, individual animal, with an obviously limited life span, while *Study of a Stag* implies that the photograph is a form of visual examination or scholarly research.

⁸⁷ Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-1873) was the premier animal painter of the Victorian era. He had many works commissioned by the Queen, and many of his paintings published as engravings - a form that made them popular with, and accessible to, the middle classes. He was knighted in 1850, and following an earlier breakdown, was declared insane in 1872.

matter of the natural environment, and its title, it seems to sit most comfortably somewhere between these two types.

Despite Llewelyn's best efforts to transport the viewer to the primal sanctuary of untamed nature, *Stag* is, in the end, a technological mediation of a relation with a wild creature and, as such, is precisely the kind of nostalgic, idealised, sentimental imagery of animals that Berger describes as not only compensatory for the animals that had vanished from people's daily lives, but part of 'the same remorseless movement as was dispersing animals' (p.26). Such images, 'competitively forced to make animals ever more exotic and remote', advanced an irredeemable distance between humanity and nature (Berger, p.26). Akira Lippit has theorised that technological representations of animals are also a means of mourning creatures that continue to linger in human consciousness.⁸⁸ Western culture, descended from Judaeo-Christian ethics, and still in the grip of Cartesian binary thought, denies animals the possession of a soul, and with it the 'proper ... experience of death', meaning their loss can never be conclusively resolved, and is instead perpetually grieved over through representation (Lippit, cited in Brower, p.xv). In the 'vast mausoleum [of] animal being' (Brower xv) that is wildlife photography, species appear to be alive, but are actually more like 'spectral presences', existing in an uncanny limbo state, always on the verge of vanishing, but 'unable to completely disappear'.

More uncanny still, in the case of Llewelyn's *Stag*, is that the animal is not a living entity at all, but a taxidermic specimen – knowledge that profoundly alters the reading of the image as a wildlife photograph. As Brower points out in his discussion of another John Dilwyn Llewelyn photograph, *Deer Parking* (1852), (which appears to include the same stuffed stag), the taxidermic model is a cultural object and, as such, sites the photograph in a specific historical period, undermining wildlife photography's essential construction of nature as an eternal realm outside of human affairs (pp.10-15). However, the image is equally resistant to being read as a photograph of a taxidermic deer, since the creature has been placed in a natural setting, rather than in the conventional context for stuffed animals, such as a 'trophy case, game lodge [or][...] museum' (Brower, p.11). By contemporary standards the image can only be read as a fake, since what it presents as an autonomous, organic phenomenon, is in fact artificially staged with props, and actually highlights the very technological limitation – the inability to photograph living creatures – it pretends to achieve. To a nineteenth-century audience, though, these standards did not apply, and to a culture founded on imperialism, both the taxidermy, and the photograph, display the dominance of human will over empirical reality, which was generally regarded as a positive

⁸⁸ Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). Cited in Brower, p.xv.

achievement. It was also conventional practice to use taxidermy in photographs of the natural world, and rather than seeing this as deceptive, Victorian viewers would have embraced the artificiality of Llewelyn's *Stag* as essential to its artistry, so that the image then becomes a form of still life or *nature morte* (Brower, p.15).

If *Stag* is a still life, then it is one suffused with the surreal juxtaposition of dynamic stasis – a quality inherent in both the photograph, and the taxidermic animal, and therefore amplified by their cohesion. In Llewelyn's *Otter* (1852) (figure 12), and his untitled photograph of a stuffed fox (1850) (figure 13), the animals are plainly dead and preserved, yet their embodied presence intensifies the photographic simulation of nature. And in turn, the photographic staging of an organic environment elaborates the taxidermic illusion of a living creature. Together, these two agents forge the concept of a privileged glimpse into a wild animal's hidden life, in which the camera is presented as an extension of the human eye, with the capacity to see into the remotest regions of nature⁸⁹. The proximity of the animals, encountered at their own level, is a technological interpretation of a viewpoint only available, in actuality, to another animal, and constructs an imagined ideal of comprehensive, yet non-interventional, access to wild nature through the camera. This framing logic is the foundation of contemporary wildlife photography (Brower, p.xiii).



Figure 12. John Dilwyn Llewelyn, *Otter*, 1852, salted paper print, Science and Media Museum, Bradford.

⁸⁹ Connor Creaney, 'Paralytic Animation', p.12.

The fantasy of scopic revelation intrinsically holds the promise of discovery and new information, enabling *Otter* and 'fox' to function as forms of scientific data. What these images offer is a (arguably) more convincing replication of the direct observation that the zoological illustration aims to imitate, and apparently a superior one, since they purport to see beyond the practical capacity of the human gaze. The origin of the taxidermic specimen in Natural Historical endeavour, particularly museum display, supports this purpose, and both pictures present animals as objects of interest in their own right, rather than integrating this into a general meditation on nature, as in *Stag*. Titled, or more fittingly labelled, with the names of the animals they represent, these photographs can be seen as a contribution to the Natural Historical project of differentiation and classification of species.



Figure 13. John Dilwyn Llewelyn, *Untitled (Stuffed Fox)*, 1850, salted paper print, Science and Media Museum, Bradford.

While featuring genuine animal bodies lends these photographs a degree of scientific kudos, that they are preserved bodies means their use as biological information is restricted to that of photographic reproductions of the kind of wildlife dioramas made for museums. These were essentially three-dimensional manifestations of zoological illustration, in which taxidermic specimens were displayed amidst scenery approximating their natural habitat. If read as synecdochic of a museum, these pictures admit the viewer into their visual logic, as an observer

standing directly before such a model. This is seen most clearly in *Otter*, where the flat, even whiteness beyond the trees gives the impression of an interior surface (or perhaps the conventional blank, white background of zoological illustration), and the edge of the display, clearly visible in the bottom right corner, exposes the scene as a self-contained simulacrum, rather than an integral element of the ongoing expanse of nature. If, on the other hand, we accept the illusion of living nature these photographs promote, they become more precisely prescient of the contemporary wildlife genre's photographic conventions. In this capacity the image of the stuffed fox is most successful, with its naturalistic lighting and organic vegetation creating a (if not genuinely outdoor) highly convincing backdrop of wild countryside, which, filling the picture space, draws the viewer into intimate proximity. The animal itself, however, looking angrily askance, is involved in its own drama, and its ignorance of the implied spectator, standing before it, effectively erases her or his presence from the scene, so that the nature it portrays is at the same time figured as remote, and accessible only through the optical excavation of the camera.

It may be, as Matthew Brower (p.11) has suggested, that early nature photographs such as Llewelyn's *Stag*, *Otter*, and 'fox' are not aiming for the status of scientific documentation, but are rather self-consciously artificial and aesthetically motivated: a fantasised realism, mobilised by the simultaneously indexical, and figurative, agency of the camera. The photograph's conflation of factual and imaginary impressions of nature escalates with the inclusion of taxidermic animals, which emphasises representation, even as it strives towards a more authentic mimesis. The paradox of the dead yet notionally living creature, coupled with the temporal paradox of the photograph, that is a living moment simultaneously consigned to the extinct past, causes the images to fluctuate disturbingly between manifest and metaphoric, singular and conventional, past and present. The photographs also present a series of inherently uncanny displacements, or supplements, in which the living animal is usurped by its taxidermic effigy, and the taxidermy and its setting by their photographic representation.

Even before it is photographed, taxidermy is a site of multiple ironies and uncertainties, and its use in early photographic interpretations of nature, and the animal, gives those pictures an intrinsically sinister edge. Like the photograph, taxidermy is powerfully evocative of death, since in its primary function, as hunting trophy, it authenticates the animal's killing, but at the same time presents that animal as inhabiting a living existence in the natural realm (Creaney, p.12). It is a fundamentally ambivalent, and therefore uncanny state of morbid animation, that Jane Desmond sees as being situated within an implied narrative comprising moments both before, and after, the

animal's death.⁹⁰ More than just an uncanny disruption of linear temporal logic, the taxidermic specimen effectuates a synchronic manifestation of past and present, that dissolves the boundary between them, aligning it with the monstrous which, in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's definition, is that which 'introjects the disturbing, the repressed, but formative traumas of "pre" into the sensory moment of "post" - binding the one irrevocably to the other' (p.ix-x).

Added to this chronometric confusion is the taxidermic creature's shifting status between object and subject. While the taxidermic model is primarily a form of sculpture, and ostensibly a handmade object, its use of real animal bodies is an indexical authentication of an original, autonomous identity, that continues to pervade the commodity it has become. And as well as the former animal subject, the taxidermic specimen is haunted again, by the human subjectivity of its creator, whose influence is most transparent in the emotive, and thereby oddly contorted, facial expressions given to taxidermy - such as the fierce grimace of 'fox' - which are rarely natural to the animal, but rather an anthropomorphic projection, imagined and imposed by the maker. These conflicting animal and human identities are what inform the taxidermic model's 'discordant relations of form and content' (Creaney, p.16-17). Taxidermy is at once 'a tribute to nature' (for the human maker) and 'a violation of it' (for the appropriated animal), which problematises any effort to understand it as the product of a single genre or precept. The uncanny 'effect of reading' that Nicholas Royle has identified as a feature of certain texts, is also applicable to the taxidermic model which, like verbal representations that mix genres, is resistant to definitive formal assignation, and thus also to the rationalising process of reading, which only produces confusion and a 'ghostly feeling' (p.44).

Even more troubling is when this ambivalence surrounding form begins to arouse doubts as to what is real and what is figurative. The taxidermic specimen presents an exemplary instance of this aspect of the uncanny, where the experience of fiction - that is, a reading experience - mobilises, or brings into being, real life events. Both simulated and authentic at once, the taxidermic specimen as artefact asks to be read, yet when we do so, its embodied immediacy and ghostly subjectivity begin to converge uncomfortably with the environmental and interpersonal encounters that comprise lived experience, begging the (unanswerable) question: is taxidermy a confrontation with a real animal, or a representation of one?

The eyes of taxidermic entities, in particular, are a locus of uncanny intensity. For while many parts of the animal body – skin, fur, claws, teeth – are genuine, the eyes are always synthetic, there being no effective means of preserving them. Although these eyes are often,

⁹⁰ Jane Desmond 'Displaying Death, Animating Life: Changing Fictions of Liveness from Taxidermy to Animatronics', in *Representing Animals*, ed. by Nigel Rothfels, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2002) 159–79, p.59. Cited in Creaney p.12.

ironically, one of the most realistic or convincing components of the taxidermic illusion, the viewer who is seduced to seek in them the kind of meaningful, inter-species exchange of gaze described by Berger will be confronted only by cold, blank, blindness, and blind eyes are a well known Freudian metaphor for castration, the dread of which is associated with formative Oedipal trauma.⁹¹ The glassy gaze of the taxidermic animal, then, is not only disturbing in its blurring of the boundary between real and fake, but also harbours the potential to provoke a resurgence of those ‘peculiarly violent and obscure emotion[s]’ (Freud, p.352) of primal fear, and infantile anxiety, eliciting a powerfully uncanny ‘return of the repressed’ – the monstrous consequence of Cohen’s (p.ix-x) temporal collapse of ‘pre’ and ‘post’.

*

As some of the earliest attempts to mediate animals through photography, Llewelyn’s images invest the tradition with shades of the uncanny and grotesque. Preoccupied with both pictorial design, and creating an illusion of realism, his photographs have an unnerving tendency to flit between fiction and fact, while their reliance on taxidermic specimens to effectively portray animal subjects means they are embedded with that form’s insidious relationship to death, and strangely haunted presence. Although produced from the organic matter of animal bodies, taxidermic specimens, like all representations, are subject to the distorting influence of human sensibility. And while the driving desire to create naturalistic images of animals aligns these early photographs with Natural History and zoological imagery, there is an inevitable degree of overlap between those images of animals presented as realistic, and those conceived in the tradition of storybook illustration, in which the anthropomorphising tendency finds its fullest expression.

It is in this interstice, or overlap, that the figure of the zoomorphic freak is constructed, by applying, or enhancing, animal characteristics in human subjects, creating hybridised, interspecies entities. In the nineteenth century, such hybrids are presented on stage, and in supplementary photographs, as natural curiosities, or specimens of special scientific note and interest and, simultaneously, as supernatural or extraordinary beings, in their affiliation with the anthropomorphic animal characters found in fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and classical myth, that are often endowed with speech, dressed in human clothes, and possessed of magical powers, including the ability to transform. Such creatures embody the fantastic, exceptional, and bizarre – the same qualities on which freak exhibition and spectacle are founded. They also conjure the

⁹¹ This is a distinctly phallogocentric developmental path, applicable predominantly to men. In Freudian psychology, infantile female experience is characterised by an opposing sense of having already been castrated, and as a consequence suffering ‘penis envy’ – a theory much contested in feminist discourse.

essence of the carnivalesque – a subversive representational mode, derived from the social tradition of carnival, and characterised by the disruption of boundaries, inversion of hierarchies, and collision of opposites⁹²: conditions that bear comparison to the interior space of the camera, as an arena in which ordinary appearances are inverted and reversed.⁹³

Preeminent among those who produced portraits of freaks in the mid to late nineteenth century was the New York photographer Charles Eisenmann, whose demographic comprised ‘everybody who was anybody in the world of dime museums and travelling shows’ (Mitchell, p.7). It was not just the celebrity kudos of his clients that distinguished Eisenmann’s work, but the sympathetic attitude that he and his wife, Dora, showed towards their unusual customers’ aspirations and desires in presenting themselves to the public, working with them to create images that displayed their subjects’ startling oddity, while also sensitively maintaining their dignity.⁹⁴ That ‘everybody who was anybody’ on the freak show circuit came to the Eisenmanns’ studio for their promotional shots was testament to both their creative and delicate handling of potentially contentious material, and to their keen business acumen in identifying, and making a specialism of, this relatively niche market.

Avery Childs was an Eisenmann client, and although he was not a freak in the proper sense, his photograph (figure 14), taken in 1884, clearly shows how an eye for condensing narrative into visual code turns his unusual, but hardly prodigious, talent for bodily contortion, into a spectacle of the strange, and how this is generated through the fantasy figure of the human-animal hybrid.

⁹² Theorised by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World* (1965) (english translation by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana State University Press, 1984).

⁹³ Mark M. Henelly Jr., ‘Alice’s Adventures at the Carnival’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 37:1 (2009) 103-128, p.104.

⁹⁴ Dora Eisenmann was listed as a photographer in her own right, as well as being her husband’s studio assistant. Although her work is uncredited, Michael Mitchell speculates that she may well have taken some of the freak portraits, particularly those in which the subjects are female (p.18).



Figure 14. Charles Eisenmann, *Avery Childs the 'Frog Boy'*, 1884, cartes-de-visite photographic portrait, 54 x 89 mm, mounted on card 63 x 100mm, Ronald G. Becker Collection of Charles Eisenmann Photographs, Syracuse University, New York.

Child's stage persona was 'The Frog Boy', which immediately presents him as being possessed of some animal affiliation or ability, and in this sense is somewhat prescient of comic book superheroes with zoomorphic characteristics or/and powers, of which there are numerous examples, a famous one being Marvel's Spiderman. While the image is plainly a full-length portrait, it subverts almost every convention of the genre. The most obvious diversion is the orientation of the picture space in landscape – a mode more common in figurative studies of supine nudes, but used here to better accommodate the subject's peculiar pose. Oddly crouched, and resting on his forearms, his hands splayed to suggest webbing or flippers, and with his legs folded so the feet turn backwards, it is a posture far more expressive of animal character than anything human.

Indeed, both the orientation of the image, and the view of the subject in profile are conventions of zoological illustration, that go back to Thomas Bewick's *General History of Quadrupeds* (1790), a publication that crystallised many of the conventions for the scientifically motivated visual interpretation of animal subjects.⁹⁵ Having the picture space oriented in

⁹⁵ Thomas Bewick (1753-1828) was born in Northumberland, England. He began his career as an engraver, and carver of woodblocks, for advertising and book illustration, and went on to write, illustrate, and publish his own

landscape enabled creatures to be displayed with all four legs – a defining animal characteristic – clearly visible, and was particularly influential. Used in *Frog Boy*, these devices foster association with the kind of biological imagery produced for instruction, and enquiry, and endorse the subject's proclaimed animalistic traits, as well as sanctioning the viewer's officious scrutiny of him. Child's clothing, cut close to the body to accentuate its structure, and patterned like amphibian skin, enhances the animal affiliation, but as a deliberately contrived costume also points towards the theatrical construction of both image and persona. The fake grass and foliage offer a similarly illusory construal of the natural environment which, with the picturesque, painted backdrop, evokes the fairytale villages and kingdoms of 'once upon a time'. The setting has the abstract charm of a storybook idyll rather than the actuality of geographic place, evoking tales such as *The Frog Prince* as well as those narratives of nature, folklore, and personal history, already inherited in the image.

A more specific children's story is evoked by Eisenmann's photograph of 'wild man' George L. Stull (1891) (figure 15), whose styling bears a striking resemblance to the character *Struwwelpeter* (Shock-headed Peter) (figure 16) from Heinrich Hoffmann's highly popular 1848 collection of cautionary tales, illustrated by its author.⁹⁶

works, mainly in the Natural History genre. *General History of Quadrapeds* was followed by the two-volume *History of British Birds*, in 1797 and 1804. He also illustrated several volumes of Aesop's Fables during his life.

⁹⁶ Heinrich Hoffman (1809-1894) was a German psychiatrist and not primarily an author. *Struwwelpeter* (Frankfurt am Main: Literarische Anstalt, 1845; English translation 1848) was a collection of verse tales originally created as a Christmas gift for his son, which he was persuaded by friends to publish. The book was one of the first to use chromolithography to print colour. It proved immensely popular and was reprinted regularly and widely translated. A digital (English) version can be viewed at <<https://archive.org/details/englishstruwwelp00hoffrich>>

Figure 15 .Charles Eisenmann,
George L. Stull 'Wild Man', 1891,
cartes-de-visite photographic portrait,
54 x 89 mm,
mounted on card 63 x 100mm,
Ronald G. Becker Collection of
Charles Eisenmann Photographs,
Syracuse University, New York.



The figure of the 'wild man', existing on the borders between nature and civilisation, is a myth that dates back to at least the middle ages, and expresses both anxieties concerning social and moral management, and the desire for liberation from its behavioural restrictions⁹⁷ - a tension the photograph captures by mixing signifiers of wildness and refinement. The conventional, disordered abundance of flora, to represent wilderness, is here literally contained in the shape of the potted plant on the right, which is itself part of the flattened and distanced plane of the painted background. The artificial rocks indicate an outdoor setting, and also double as furniture, recalling the primitive dwellings of the caveman - a figure in many ways synonymous with the wild man, whose costume of animal furs, unkempt hair, and bare feet, similarly signify a semi-feral state, provoking notions of degeneration, and destabilising the human-animal distinction.

⁹⁷ Wright, *Monstrosity*, pp.35-44.

Figure 24. Heinrich Hoffman
Struwwelpeter 1848



For a supposed savage, however, Stull is surprisingly clean-shaven, a feature that draws him closer - in visual as well as conceptual terms - to the character of the unkempt child in *Struwwelpeter*, whose story is intended as a moral lesson about proper grooming. As Nadja Durbach has pointed out, personal grooming had become an increasingly important aspect of middle-class masculinity in the nineteenth century (p.50), and both the 'wild man', and Struwwelpeter, with their overgrown hair and disturbingly long nails, reinforce the idea that the negligence of proper hygiene is bestial, crude, and beyond the social perimeters of civilised conduct. The irony of George L. Stull is that these very indications of feral abandon (particularly the fingernails) are only made possible by the most careful cultivation.

Figure 17. Jost Amman,
woodcut illustration, 165 x 130mm,
from *Kunst und Lehrbuchlein*
(Frankfurt: Aeschbach-Stiftung, 1580).



As a fundamental feature of fables and tales animals were an integral element of storybook illustration, from its earliest examples. Described as the first picture book, *Kunst und Lehrbuchlein* ('a book of art and instruction for young people') (1580), was produced in Germany by artist Jost Amman, with the specific aim of inspiring the interest of children through large, intricate, woodcut illustrations.⁹⁸ Subjects depicted ranged from studies of everyday work and social life, to scenes drawn from folklore and myth, depicting fantastical, interspecies hybrids such as satyrs and mermaids, as well as the more familiar domestic horses and dogs. These animals were often interpreted with anthropomorphic traits, like the wolf who seems to be taking the role of surrogate mother to two human babies, shown in figure 17.⁹⁹ Full-page format pictures afforded images as much, if not more, importance as the accompanying text, as a source of information and instruction, and were soon a convention of book production in the fable genre. Originally published in 1687, Francis Barlow's (1626-1704) illustrations for his luxurious volume of *Aesop's Fables*, represent animals in a manner that is at once true to their biological actuality, and

⁹⁸ See Martin Salisbury, 'Introduction', *Illustrating Children's Books: creating pictures for publication* (London: A & C Black, 2004).

⁹⁹ This image is clearly a depiction of the myth of the 'feral child', prevalent in the Middle Ages and related to the Biblical character Nebuchadnezzar, who was punished for his pride by being driven to live as a wild animal for seven years. The myth of the feral or wolf-child, raised in the wild by animals, reflects anxieties concerning the boundary between human and animal, civilised and savage, and expresses a sense that these are not strictly delimited, since a child may be capable of thriving outside of human society, and a beast may possess the empathy to nurture another species' young. See: Wright, *Monstrosity*, pp. 34,43. Jost Amman (1539-1591) was a Swiss-German artist who produced woodcut illustrations for books, including the 128 images for the Frankfurt Bible (c. 1565).

expressive of the moral dramas figured in the tales.¹⁰⁰ His etching of ‘The Boy Who Cried Wolf’ (figure 18), for example, depicts naturalistically detailed creatures, yet exudes a psychological intensity that resides in their anthropomorphised characters. The lamb’s passive terror, and astonished bleating at its own imperilment, are the essence of vulnerability and innocence; the cunning rapacity of the wolf is captured in a snarl of triumph, as it turns to gloat at the stumbling boy, whose flailing appears at best inept beside the courageous defense of the dog. The labouring horses, and the remainder of the flock, grazing, oblivious, in the distance, provide a counterpoint of simple quietude that amplifies the complex relationships and highly emotive conflict of the figures in the foreground.¹⁰¹

Figure 18. Francis Barlow,
‘The Boy Who Cried Wolf’, 1675,
etched engraving, 238x159mm,
from *Aesop’s Fables*
(London: T.Basset &c., 3rd edn.)
The British Library, London.



The speaking, thinking, feeling creatures of fable questioned and countered the limited view of animal intelligence, forwarded by the Cartesian mechanistic model, that dominated seventeenth and eighteenth-century Natural philosophy.¹⁰² Textual representation, in particular, as a linguistic abstraction, could ‘achieve a suspension of disbelief’ (Donald, p.119), that permitted unrestricted indulgence in fantasy, whereas in the imagery illustrating fable narratives, this imaginative capacity was limited by the need to portray recognisable likenesses of animals – a demand that was especially pressing in the light of Natural History’s growing insistence on the accurate visual delineation of biological phenomena.

¹⁰⁰ Francis Barlow (1626-1704) was an English painter, etcher and printmaker, and one of the most prolific book illustrators of the seventeenth century, producing visual material in the genres of hunting and recreation, politics and natural history, as well fables.

¹⁰¹ See also Diana Donald’s reading of this illustration in *Picturing Animals in Britain* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 2007) ?

¹⁰² See: Donald, *Picturing Animals*, Chapter 3.

Fable illustration was thus a careful balancing act between these opposing requirements of symbolic communication, and the naturalistic presentation of real animals. At the symbolic level, the ascription of anthropomorphic characteristics and abilities to animals served the purpose of analogising, and therefore illuminating, aspects of human social and moral behaviour, but this pretended likeness also, inevitably, suggested a genuine kinship, the ‘exact nature and limits’ (Donald, p.115) of which were unknown. This question was one that would come under increasing scrutiny over the course of the eighteenth century, when the taxonomic endeavours of proto-biologists like Carl Linnaeus, and Georges-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, paradoxically engendered a growing awareness of the filial connections between species.¹⁰³ Knowledge of ‘transformism’¹⁰⁴ meant a contingent consciousness of the anthropomorphic artifice involved in the identification between humans and animals in fables, making the tension between the symbolic and mimetic functions of these images ever more apparent, and eventually leading to the split between ‘real’ and invented animal identities, that prevailed throughout the nineteenth century (Donald, p.121).

With zoological illustration managing realist interpretations of organic life, Victorian visual mediation of imaginary animal characters was free to more fully realise the narrative concepts from which they generally derived. Although the influence of work such as Barlow’s was still very much apparent, the golden age of the illustrated book saw the anthropomorphised animals of fable imagery superseded by a figure closer to a human-animal hybrid in its purely fantastical fusion of species’ traits. The French illustrator J. J. Grandville (1803-1847), whose work is credited as an influence on numerous artists – from Tenniel, to the Surrealists, to Disney – set the precedent for this type of representation.¹⁰⁵ Combining animal heads with human bodies, Grandville’s images are a very literal visual translation of what fable narratives delineate

¹⁰³ Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) was a Swedish botanist, physician and zoologist who revolutionised the understanding of organic phenomena with his hierarchical system of classes, orders, genera and species. His *Systema Naturae*, a taxonomy of flora, was published in 1735 and was followed by volumes on animals and minerals, all of which underwent revision and republication throughout the eighteenth century.

Comte de Buffon (1707-1788) was a French naturalist and mathematician. His thirty-six volume *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* was published between 1749-1788 and dealt with material sciences of physics and chemistry as well as the Natural History of animals. His taxonomic system recognised the mutability of species and formulated a notion of hereditary and, as such, he was an important forerunner of evolutionary theory.

¹⁰⁴ Developed by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, (1744-1829) ‘transformism’ was a conceptual progenitor of evolutionary theory, which observed that environmental circumstances compel organisms to adapt or evolve, and that this metamorphosis takes place according to a scale of increasing complexity.

¹⁰⁵ J. J. Grandville (1803-1847) was born Jean-Ignace-Isidore Gérard in Nancy, France, into a family connected to theatre and the arts. He began to publish series of lithographs after moving to Paris in his early twenties, producing both the preliminary drawings and plates. His first major success was *The Metamorphoses of the Day* (1829) - a series of seventy images which included *The Fox and the Dog* shown in Figure 19. His later career was more involved with creating satirical cartoons, and book illustrations, on commission. See: Stanley Appelbaum, ed., ‘Introduction’, in *Bizareries and Fantasies of Grandville* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1974). An archive of Grandville’s original drawings is housed at Musée des beaux-arts de Nancy, France.

conceptually – that is, animals inhabiting human social identities, and enacting human social situations. As such, it is impossible to determine whether the figures he creates are anthropomorphised animals or zoomorphic humans – a strikingly similar effect to that which constructions of hybrid freaks sought to provoke. Grandville's illustration *The Fox and the Dog* (figure 19) shows how this fusion engages with multiple levels of human and animal signification, offering insight into issues such as class conflict, material and moral propriety, and the contrast between wild and domestic, legitimate and outlaw.¹⁰⁶



Figure 19. J. J. Grandville, 'The Fox and the Dog', lithographed drawing, book size 150 x 210mm, from *Les Métamorphoses du Jour*, (Paris, 1854)

More immediate than this, though, is the power of Grandville's characters to disturb: both in their strange and fascinating ambivalence, that challenges notions of a stable human-animal binary, and in the way they bring linguistic imagery into the dimension of visible perception. By the time Grandville's work began to appear widely in print, sight was well on its way to being the prevailing sense by which reality was interpreted and qualified. The image – an object in itself as well as a representation – already sits somewhere between abstraction and material presence, and if seeing something was what substantiated its truth, then giving visible form to figures of fantasy brought them nearer to what construed the empirically valid. It is this closing of the gap between

¹⁰⁶ For John Berger, (p.18-20) Grandville's illustrations of animals go beyond the merely anthropomorphic and, in a 'disturbingly prophetic vision', show animals 'becoming synonymous' with the human, 'which is to say that the animals are fading away' (p.19). Entirely subsumed into the concept of the human, the natural animal is stripped of its autonomous significance, and ousted to the margins of social and cultural consciousness.

conceptualization, and manifestation, that stirs what Connor Creaney calls ‘ekphrastic fear’ or the delirious and uncanny sensation of the ‘figurative becoming literal’ (p.28).

This effect is amplified when the medium is photography. In Henry Peach Robinson’s¹⁰⁷ 1858 series *Little Red Riding Hood* (figure 20), the photograph’s function as ‘witness of “what has been”’ (Barthes, p.93), brings the ‘desire to materialise the image’ that is the ‘heart of ekphrasis’ closer to its awful, ‘inevitable conclusion’ of ‘literalizing catastrophe’ (Creaney, p.28).



Figure 20. Henry Peach Robinson, *Little Red Riding Hood*, 1858, photographic print on paper, 180 x 240mm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The taxidermic wolf is the animating agent in this process, since it converges metaphoric allusion and the embodied actuality of an animal, and incarnates the symbolic scene the picture portrays at the ‘level of active presence’ (Creaney, p.28). The wolf here meets the definition of ‘freak’ both in its condition as a monstrous interspecies hybrid, and by functioning as the photograph’s *punctum*, or the intensely evocative detail, that pushes the symbolic towards the thing itself and thus highlights a point of visual prominence within the scheme of the image as a whole. Of course, as a photograph and a mediated image, Robinson’s picture works to distance, and contain, the very ‘literalizing catastrophe’ it simultaneously conjures into being. But its own internal logic is such that it dissolves the difference between the real and the imagined, implying that the worlds within and without of the frame are one and the same, and may, at any moment, collapse into deranged chaos.

¹⁰⁷ British photographer Henry Peach Robinson (1830-1901) - a schoolmaster by day - was a premier fine art photographer of the Victorian era, whose work was influenced by Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites. He developed the technique of combination printing, whereby multiple negatives are cut and rejoined into a single image. The photograph of *Little Red Riding Hood* and the wolf (fourth from a series of four) appears to have been constructed in this manner.

More consciously anthropomorphised than the animals of fable illustration, the human-animal hybrid was nonetheless still firstly a figure of verbal narrative, and this textual antecedent rounded out the meaning of, and provided context for, its visual progeny. Magical animals with human attributes featured particularly prolifically in the children's fiction that flourished throughout the nineteenth century, at the same time that realist narratives of Natural History were closing the gap between humans and animals, and forging links through common experiences of survival, competition and warfare (Donald, p.65).

Since the nineteenth-century expansion in children's publications¹⁰⁸ had already admitted the figure of the human-animal hybrid into the public imagination, it made a familiar template on which to model freak show personae, and to attach to them a similar sense of delight and drama as that experienced through reading (or hearing) stories, and viewing illustrations.¹⁰⁹ In its basic state, the freak show's stock-in-trade of physical difference, as determined by the Natural Historical process of observation and comparison, is a biological curiosity and, as such, carries with it an aura of scientific mystery and intrigue – enough to engage scholarly interest, perhaps, but the consumers of Victorian mass entertainment demanded more. As Robert Bogdan has argued, being a freak is not so much a bodily condition as 'a frame of mind, a set of practices, a way of thinking about and presenting people', and it was the sideshow spin, or 'ballyhoo' that turned anatomical anomalies into sensational spectacle (Bogdan, p.3). By appropriating themes and figures from fantastic narrative, freak performers could be presented in an alluring context of magic and the supernatural, the association with fiction enabling promoters to stretch freak show hype beyond the limits of logical plausibility; and while the larger, framing concept of biological exposition, founded on the freaks' embodied presence, laid claim to the empiric, it was a version of science informed and mobilised by the fictive.

As a site in which the real and the imaginary converge, the photograph was a fitting medium for the freak show's factual invention (or conversely, fictionalised fact). In *Realism, Photography and Nineteenth Century Fiction* Daniel A. Novak contends that photographic realism, particularly where it was concerned with the representation of the body, was fundamentally a fiction. For Victorian viewers, there was a 'widespread conviction' that the photograph could not capture 'individuality' or 'particularity' and, as such, the replication of bodies in photographs was

¹⁰⁸ Some of the more popular titles published during the nineteenth century in Britain, in this genre, included the tales of the Brothers Grimm (1812), Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy Tales* (1835-45) and Margaret Gatty's *Parables from Nature* (1855), as well as Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1862) and Lewis Carroll's *Alice Books* (1865/71). There were also numerous illustrated children's periodicals, which would have regularly included fictional pieces.

¹⁰⁹ While the mixed crowds of mainly labouring and lower middle-class families who attended freak shows may have been only semi-literate, and therefore not necessarily aware of contemporary developments in publishing, the imaginary narratives of fairy tale, folklore, and myth, would have been familiar to most through their rich oral traditions, meaning sideshow audiences were well aware of, and practised in, the processes and strategies of fiction.

inherently flawed, and lacking those qualities perceived as essential to the 'real' (Novak, p.4). The solution to this failing was the 'composite photograph', a Frankensteinian construction of body parts derived from multiple photographs, manipulated and rearranged to create a new, idealised whole, that transformed the incoherence of ordinary photographic reproduction into a vision that corresponded with an abstract concept of the real. As Novak puts it 'to be a photograph the bodies must be 'real', but to be art they must be 'figurative' (p.18). That is, they must have aesthetic value, which can only be achieved through the process of fictional recreation, that enables the photographic body to 'exceed the literal' and become symbolic, or a site that, while still attached to an empiric referent, also reaches into a purely conceptual realm of narrative potential (Novak, p.19). It is the ability to 'tell a story', to access an arena of imaginary projection, and suggestion, that 'produce[s] the surplus value of photographic narrative', that turns simplistic, photographic replication into photographic art or 'pictures' (Novak, p.19).

This journey from literal to figurative, in the true spirit of carnival, can be seen to work in reverse when applied to the 'always already fictionalised' (O'Connor, p.180) freak body, which also presents some interesting correspondences with Novak's photographic bodies. In Novak's theory, to photographically reproduce a standard body was to expose its limitations in terms of artistic potential. That is, standard bodies are rendered deficient by being photographed so that they then parallel the supposed inhibited functionality of the 'disabled' bodies often displayed as freaks. It is only when dismembered, disordered, and juxtaposed with each other, that these photographed bodies become coherent or 'real'. Ironically, they must be remade as monsters in order to become meaningful.

While the standard body must adopt the qualities of the freak in order to appear photographically 'real', the freak body, by contrast, cannot be anything other than 'individual' and 'particular', and thus emphatically real. As Novak's theory foregrounds, however, realism is itself a construct, and one that is disturbingly subverted by the existence of freak bodies, since the realist discourses of Natural History that would logically be expected to explain the physically different, cannot accommodate the freak either in terms of its proper assignment to an established species, or in its welcome acceptance as consanguineous to the universal family of evolutionary theory. It is the insistent corporeality of the freak, its vehement assertion that we are all incontrovertibly bound in flesh, that make it too literal a sign of material existence, and by extension of mortality. As such, its presence cannot be tolerated by the body politic and must be rejected, or abjected, from the collective consciousness of acceptable reality. Only when filtered through the prism of fiction can the 'abjected fragment' (Cohen, p.20) that is the monstrous body be admitted (albeit marginally), into social and cultural practices predicated on the mechanisms of

the 'real'. In other words, the freak can only enter social and cultural consciousness as a fictional construct, through which it becomes a kind of living mythology, and contrary to Novak's photographically replicated bodies, that must be refashioned from bland similarity into an aesthetic ideal that can 'tell a story', the freak comes to photography predetermined and supplemented by its narrative allusions, which garner tangible substance through the camera.

Even from the first, the medieval prodigy - cultural ancestor of the Victorian freak - was a phenomenon primarily experienced as oral or textual narrative, since the scarcity of monstrous, or 'prodigious', births, coupled with limited mobility, meant interpersonal contact with such individuals was extremely rare.¹¹⁰ A major draw of the nineteenth century freak show was that it presented these wonders and oddities 'alive!', as the banners advertising attractions often proclaimed, and while one of the functions of the photograph was to document these events, it was also a crucial means of transforming anterior verbal connotation into visual spectacle. Although similar in many ways to theatrical performance, with which it shared the same apparatus of sets, costumes, lighting and props, the photograph's propensity to function as a repository of narrative was superior to that of live display since, as a static image rather than a transient event, it could more readily adopt the conventions of illustration and thus create a more satisfying embodiment of a fantasy figure.

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Although the traditional association of the zoomorphic/anthropomorphic entity with children's fiction lends a certain storybook charm to its use as a mode of presenting human freaks, there is nonetheless a fine line between fanciful appeal and uncanny manifestation. Obviously contrived stylistic trappings such as costumes, and props, consign the human-animal hybrid to the realm of the imaginary, by pointing towards the fictional; yet, like a mask or screen, they also adversely indicate the underlying biological enigma from which their construction proceeds. The necessary interplay between the stylized, and the substantive particular, blurs the distinction between invention and truth, and opens the possibility that the fantastical creatures of myth and fairytale appertain to tangible orders of existence.

¹¹⁰ By the mid 1500s, freak display was emerging as form of organised entertainment, with abnormal children and animals being touted around town squares and taverns, where they were shown for money, and by the early 1600s monstrosities had become a staple feature of the seasonal itinerant fairs. See: Katherine Park, and Lorraine J. Daston, 'Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century France and England', *Past and Present*, 92 (1981) 20-54, p.34.

While this effect of manifesting the impossible is a central element of the freak show's intrigue, as well as bringing a sense of magic and wonder to the everyday world, it also agitates profound feelings of the uncanny in its connection to what Freud terms the 'omnipotence of thoughts' (p.370-71). Defined as a 'primitive' or 'infantile' panpsychistic world view, belief in the 'omnipotence of thoughts' is a perception of the extrinsic environment that closely resembles the animistic universe of fairytale, folklore and myth, in which sentient objects, 'the fulfilment of wishes' and 'the return of the dead' are all viable phenomena (Freud, p.370). Such beliefs sit incongruously with the kind of empirically based logic that has dominated post-Enlightenment thought and, as such, the majority of adults living in post-industrial civilisations have eschewed them as unfounded and naive. Certain experiential circumstances, however, among them 'remarkable coincidences', 'mysterious repetition', 'deceptive sights' and 'suspicious sounds' (Freud, p.371) that seem to operate on animistic principles, can sometimes appear to give credence to those 'discarded beliefs' connected to the 'omnipotence of thoughts', provoking in turn 'a fear of something uncanny'.

For Freud, the surge of such uncanny sensations is connected to both the atavistic origin of the 'omnipotence of thoughts' as an ethos, and to the apparent expression of animistic energies in everyday experience, which agitates such surmounted beliefs. Since magical, talking animals, and human-animal hybrids, belong to this esoteric ideological landscape, their evocation in Victorian freak shows and photographs foreshadows Freud in playing on these suppressed, archaic fears of universal and pervasive occult agency. Significantly, Freud uses the image of the animal – and particularly the animal in its post-Darwinian, ancestral relation to the human – to delineate his theory concerning 'the omnipotence of thoughts'. Ancient beliefs become a predacious entity lurking in the psyche, poised to pounce and 'seize upon any confirmation' of their superstitious predilection (Freud, p.371). It is a metaphor that implicitly adopts the conventional split between logic and instinct, and shows the superior, rational mind as susceptible to primitive, infantile, and animalistic modes of cognisance, that threaten evolutionary retrogression unless they are vanquished by reason. Indulging in superstitious ideas entails the collapse of cultivated human intelligence into the irrational, and impulsive, assumptions of bestial existence, effacing the very boundary by which the human is defined. This is not, however, simply a case of regressing to a former, unthinking 'animal' consciousness, which would be akin to an infantile, oceanic, ignorant and blissful state. Rather, it is a desegregation and fusion of human and animal mental faculties: a psychological hybridisation, or forging of a third term that is essentially monstrous, and finds its embodied form in the zoomorphic freak.

Some of the most popular works of children's fiction of the nineteenth century (indeed of all time), Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871) are texts that reverberate with the concept and figure of the human-animal hybrid on dramatic, thematic and formal levels. Not only do the novels abound with anthropomorphic animal characters, they also prefigure Freud's hypothesis of the hybridised mentality in their merging of traditionally opposing rational-intellectual (human), and archaic-intuitive (animal), modes of perception, that informs their construction. As such, the fabric of these texts is itself an embodiment of hybrid consciousness - a literary emergence of a monstrous third term that, read retrospectively through Freud, becomes inherently uncanny.

An important determinant of this aspect of the *Alice* books is Darwin's theory of evolution, which, while ostensibly scientific in its methodology and approach, forwards suppositions that, as Gillian Beer has written, conventionally specify the fantastic – for example, its attribution of transformative and metamorphic powers to living phenomena¹¹¹. By broaching these traditionally conflicting modes of understanding, evolutionary theory produces a radical subversion of the divisions that order intelligence, and it is Carroll's implementation of Darwinian ideas in the *Alice* books that informs their epistemically integral perspective.

The primary evidence of such influence is the unique character of Wonderland's creatures. While they are anthropomorphic hybrids, and thus emphatically fantastic inventions, they also mark a distinct divergence from traditional mythic and fairytale animals. As Rose Lovell-Smith notes in her essay 'The Animals of Wonderland: Tenniel as Carroll's Reader', Carroll's creatures are 'neither helpers, nor donors, nor monsters, nor prophetic truth-tellers'¹¹². And neither are they one-dimensional representatives of human moral qualities, like the cunning fox, innocent lamb, and loyal dog customary to fables. Rather, their concerns are those assumed appropriate to animals in the natural world: identifying food sources, being a potential food source, fear of predators, and the contingent fear of death – personified by the Queen of Hearts, and her penchant for random decapitation. Chaotic, unpredictable, and fraught with danger, Wonderland is an environment modelled on the Darwinian vision of the world, in which the essential motivating principle is the 'struggle for existence'.¹¹³ In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* this axiom is exemplified by the hopelessly disorganised 'caucus race'¹¹⁴ that sees Alice, along with assorted

¹¹¹ Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 2nd edn, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p.7.

¹¹² Rose Lovell-Smith, 'The Animals of Wonderland: Tenniel as Carroll's Reader', *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, 43 (2003) 383-415, p.386.

¹¹³ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, ed. by Gillian Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p.49.

¹¹⁴ Lewis Carroll, and Martin Gardener (ed.), *The Annotated Alice* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2000) pp.31-33. Hereafter cited in the text as 'A1' with page number.

animals and birds (and in the illustrations, sea creatures as well) thrown together in desperate and confused competition, while the perilous game of croquet, presided over by the Queen, has no discernible aim other than for the players to evade an arbitrary demise (Al, pp.83-89).

For species to flourish - or even simply survive - in Darwin's universe, it is vital that they are able to modify and adapt, striving to most advantageously exploit surroundings and resources that are also in constant flux. As understood by evolutionary theory, organic life is a mutable, shifting field of interdependent entities, that sees 'all organisms, recent and extinct [...] included [...] in one great natural system' (Darwin, p.315). While 'all organic beings are found to resemble each other' there is also 'a constant tendency in their characters to diverge' and this metamorphic potential and synergistic energy bears striking correspondences to the unified, mobilising intent of the animistic universe (Darwin, p.301). Emerging from evolutionary narrative, Wonderland's creatures share the same plasticity and transformative power Darwin attributes to extant life forms and, through this property, they similarly lay claim to both material validity and magical allure. The baby that changes into a pig essentially undergoes the same process that produced humans from apes, only vastly accelerated, and in looking-glass logic running in reverse (that is, human to animal) (Al, pp.63-640. Similarly, the White Queen in *Through the Looking Glass* transforms from chess piece, to living person, to sheep, and back again, encapsulating the precepts of contemporary biology in a series of evidently incredible events.

This conceptual borderland, where science meets magic, is also the territory of the freak show, and its special mode of peculiar fascination, which is another crucial antecedent of the *Alice* books. Alice's position as viewing subject is initially akin to that of a spectator at a sideshow, and her first impression of Wonderland and its creatures, on spying the white rabbit, is as a diversion that excites her curiosity. Indeed, Alice's famous refrain of 'curiouser and curiouser' even recalls the freak show's cultural progenitor, the cabinet of curiosities, and its construction around, and of, the concept of 'wonder'.¹¹⁵ However, once Alice enters Wonderland, and engages with its objects and entities, this perspective begins to shift. Consuming Wonderland food and drink, for instance, causes rapid and dramatic growth or shrinkage, that resonates with the freak show's extremes of giant and midget (Craton, p.179). And interacting with Wonderland's creatures results in a loss of species integrity, since they variously interpret her as a 'serpent' (Al, p.55), a flower (Al, p.157) and even a 'monster' (Al, p.230-31). Not only does this articulate the *Alice* books' affinity with the stalwart freak show contrivance of interspecies entities and the hybrid, it also displaces Alice from her position as a standard bodied human at the apex of hierarchical

¹¹⁵ See: Arthur MacGregor, *Curiosity and enlightenment: collectors and collections from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century* (New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 2007).

models of nature, and sees her aligned, instead, with those beings commonly designated as other – and thus as objects to be viewed – including animals and freaks. It is this ‘visceral’ (Craton, p. 176) experience of physical ambiguity that (for both Alice and the reader) troubles common distinctions, and closes the gap between self and other, subject and object, human and animal, exposing such binary concepts as artificial constructions, and asserting, rather, a model of thought and perception that values both considered logic and instinctual insight.

A pivotal determinant of the *Alice* books, then, is the fictional representation, and exploration, of cultural anxieties concerning the conflict between traditional, classificatory systems of understanding the living world – such as those of Linnaeus and Buffon – and the incipient, radical concepts of evolutionary theory, that are more closely aligned with the animistic worldview. The Victorian, bourgeois drawing room and nursery, with its routines, rules, and purported stability comprise Alice’s ‘real’ life, from which the fluctuating, illogical, ‘dream’ landscape of Wonderland emerges. What arises from the collision of Alice’s received ideas, and conditioned perceptions, and the amorphous, shifting field of living phenomena that is the post-Darwinian world - essentially the conflict of order and chaos - is the uncertain in-between of Wonderland. A realm in which concepts and forms, both free-flowing and structured, converge and coalesce into manifestations of the monstrous that defy definition, since their fundamental characteristic is ambiguity. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has theorised, such ‘eternally incoherent bodies’ tend to appear at ‘times of crisis’ (p.6), and the nineteenth century, which saw unprecedented industrialisation and urbanisation, religious reform, and revolutionary discoveries in geology and astronomy as well as biology, certainly qualifies as a period of intense social and intellectual upheaval. At such times, the appearance of the monstrous ‘acts as a [...] third term that problematizes the clash of extremes’ (Cohen, p.6) and, in this sense, the indeterminate, human-animal hybrid condition – not only figured in Carroll’s Wonderland creatures, but embedded in the *Alice* books’ ideological framework as well – is a means of acknowledging, and working through, the cultural turmoil provoked by the public inception of evolutionary theory.

Not only does Carroll figure the monstrous in the characters and attitude of the *Alice* books, he produces it from the very substance of language itself, disrupting, from within, the fundamental medium through which binary logic, and the myth of anthropocentric understanding as definitive, is constructed and upheld. In his article, ‘Immanent Metaphor, Branching Form(s) and the Unmaking of the Human in ‘*Alice*’ and ‘*The Origin of Species*’, Rasheed Tazudeen argues that the *Alice* books’ proliferation of metaphors, puns and portmanteau words is Carroll’s primary means of actuating this subversion. Through Carroll’s dazzling word play, the role of language as an agent that structures experience as logical and intelligible is undermined, and it is instead

reconfigured as a 'mode of engagement with the living world's unknowability', in which sense is usurped by nonsense, and meaning becomes mystery (Tazudeen, p.534).

A common function of metaphor is as a form of knowledge production, in which two distinct terms are offered for comparison with one another, with the purpose of creating novel insights into the nature of each. This exercise implicitly assumes the formal or essential integrity of the objects being compared, and maintains a conceptual separation both between each unit, and between their symbolic/linguistic construction and material existence. That is, metaphor generally operates within a conceptual order predicated on discrete, standard types, the differentiation of which enables the making of sense and meaning. For Tazudeen, Carroll's metaphors, by contrast, create a field of metaphoric comparison in which (as in Wonderland itself) bodies and concepts cumulate, become fluid and transmutable, and able to interact, destabilising (rather than reinforcing as in conventional metaphor) standard assumptions of physical consistency and transcendently determined coherence. Biting into a mushroom, for example, which causes Alice to grow, induces profound bodily ambiguity and estrangement, when she finds her 'shoulders were nowhere to be found' and 'all she could see, when she looked down, was an immense length of neck, which seemed to rise like a stalk out of a sea of green leaves' (Al, p.54). Within the space of the metaphor, the terms 'neck' and 'stalk' lose their stability, becoming 'formless, mobile and malleable' (Tazudeen, p.535), and capable of interacting to produce a third term whose character is essentially monstrous – in this case, the mutated Alice who is neither properly a person nor a plant, and cannot be located in the human body, or rooted in the earth, but exists as an inexplicable 'length' emerging from a disconnected 'sea of green leaves' (Tazudeen, pp.534-36).

When Alice encounters a pigeon in this elongated condition, another immanent metaphor is produced by the bird's accusation that she is a serpent. While Alice perceives herself as being able to move 'like a serpent', she nonetheless maintains (although she assumes the identity with a degree of dubiety, because of 'the number of changes she had gone through that day' (Al, p.55)) that she is actually a 'little girl' (Al, p.54). As in common uses of metaphor, this comparison elucidates Alice's present condition, but sustains a separation between her physical similarity to a serpent and her metaphysical identity of 'little girl' which thus remains intact. The pigeon, however, considers Alice's assertion a suspect attempt to 'invent something' (Al, p.55). To the bird, Alice *is* 'a kind of serpent', since her sinuous deportment, and admitted fondness for eating eggs, are more convincing indicators of type than abstract concepts (Al, p.56). From the non-human perspective the designation of species is neither static nor stable, but is a fluctuating

‘invention’ that arises from an immanent field of metamorphic forms and ideas, where material actions and affects entwine with, and determine, conceptual identity.

The destabilisation of both bodily constitution, and linguistic designation, produced by the immanent metaphor is pushed towards total collapse by the pun, which works to erase the conceptual distinctions sustained by language. Puns spark an errant interplay between material sounds and multiple concepts, that renders words ambiguous, and introjects monstrosity into the linguistic order, dismantling the systems of knowledge it structures - including, importantly for Tazudeen and for this discussion, ‘the anthropocentric order of meaning that divides speaking and reasoning humans from mute, instinctual animals’ (Tazudeen, p.546).¹¹⁶

Wonderland’s Mock-Turtle and Gryphon converse almost exclusively in puns, and are themselves entities that defy ‘both the ordered composition of bodies and the ordered constitution of words’ (Tazudeen, p.546): the Gryphon being a hybrid of a lion and an eagle, and the Mock Turtle – that is, ‘the thing Mock Turtle soup is made from’ (Al, p.94) – being the existential embodiment of a linguistic pun, signifying both a simulation of a sea creature and a sentient gastronomic invention, and thereby merging opposing categories of original/copy, and actual/symbolic into a singular, confounding entity. Such binary structures are fractured further by the Mock Turtle’s account of his school days, and the lessons (or ‘lessens’) he once undertook in ‘Reeling and Writhing’ (reading and writing), ‘Drawling’ (drawing), ‘Stretching’ (sketching) and ‘Laughing and Grief’ (Latin and Greek) (Al, pp.97-99). What is imperative to the effect of this series of puns is their coupling with corporeal functions, which causes abstract concepts, material sounds, and somatic states, to meld and collapse into one another, so that words and actions are rendered ambiguous and resistant to conclusive comprehension.¹¹⁷ The Carrollian pun’s conflation of abstract notion and physical referent disrupts the function of both terms as ‘self-consistent units of knowledge’, and disables the transmission of authoritative meaning, positioning readers not only ‘outside of semantic space’ but ‘outside of both carnal and linguistic reality, or what carnal and linguistic modes of knowing can contain’ (Tazudeen, p.547).

These subversive features identified in Carroll’s metaphors and puns have a visual parallel in the properties of the photograph, and are realised particularly distinctly in photographs of human freaks. Like the immanent metaphor in which the orders of abstract concepts and sensible

¹¹⁶ See also Jonathan Culler, ‘The Call of the Phoneme: Introduction’, in *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters*, ed. by Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) 140-188; Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Philosophy of Nonsense: The Intuitions of Victorian Nonsense Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

¹¹⁷ Without this connection to the corporeal, puns are susceptible to simply being a reinforcement of binary structures such as wrong/correct, spurious/sincere, since once the mistaken or accidental meaning has been perceived and expiated from the intended or right semantic signification, sense and meaning are reasserted, and ambiguity is nullified. (See Tazudeen, p.547; Lecercle, pp.65-67).

phenomena become equivocal, capacitating the plasticity and interplay of its comparative terms, the photograph opens a space in which image melds with substance, and what emerges from this as photographic effect is a monstrous – that is, intrinsically ambiguous – third term, created by the interaction of empirical articles and their visual representation. It is an effect that cannot be reduced to purely symbolic pictorial expression, but at the same time bears a transfigured relation to its material source, and which occurs both outside of, and because of, those initialising causes. Like the immanent metaphor that enables interplay between two distinct terms, the photograph dissolves the boundary between the object and its image and, as the Carrollian pun does with words and meanings, these states no longer properly adhere to their recognised ontologies, but become something new.

By introducing the monstrous body into this commingling of the actual and the figurative, the freak photograph – like the Carrollian pun – sustains its ambiguity through physical, conceptual, and figurative phenomenal planes. Charles Eisenmann's photograph *Fred Wilson, the Lobster Boy* (1885) (Figure 21), offers a pertinent example here, with its echoes of Carroll's whimsical Lobster Quadrille. The photograph's juxtaposition of a traditional, interior setting with a visually and existentially peculiar character also recalls the *Alice* books' construction of Wonderland as a bizarre and fantastical dream that emerges within the frame of the ostensibly coherent, and secure domain of the middle-class Victorian home and family. Interpreted through the simultaneously indexical, and inventive, medium of photography, the freak body – although informed by fiction – overflows the bounds of the purely imaginary, but at the same time refuses to conform to any experiential or epistemological order of reality. As in Carroll's metaphors and puns, that conflate the abstract and the material, dichotomous structures of artificial-actual, illusion-document, pictorial-indexical collapse into each other, generating an uncanny incertitude that reverberates through the theoretical and functional implications of the image.

Most immediately, the name 'Lobster-Boy' is an attempt to make sense of the subject through established, classificatory models of understanding. The amalgamation of 'Lobster' and 'Boy' is only an approximation fashioned from existing typology, and far from affording the subject a conclusive designation, it only serves to highlight his refusal to fit the given boxes. 'Lobster Boy' is a fiction that both elicits the marvellous, and contains its radical potential, through the use of familiar nomenclature. But when this fantasy is represented through photography, the distinction between what is contrived, and what might be authentic, becomes unclear, and the principal cause of this confusion is that such imaginings are founded on the subject's extraordinary physical composition. Put on prominent display, these bodily differences

bind the image to a fleshly imperative equivalent to the annexing of the carnal Tazudeen perceives in Carroll's puns.



Figure 21. Charles Eisenmann, *Fred Wilson, the 'Lobster Boy'*, 1885, carte-de-visite photographic portrait, 54 x 89 mm, mounted on card 63 x 100mm, Ronald G. Becker Collection of Charles Eisenmann Photographs, Syracuse University, New York.

Human traits are most emphatic in Lobster Boy's face, with its youthful and beautiful appeal, to which the deformed hands - the left held aloft to optimise its visibility - mark an extreme divergence, the interpretation of which as lobster's claws constructs a fantastical human-animal

hybrid figure.¹¹⁸ It is this bodily ambiguity that informs the uncanny cohesion of opposites, such as wild/civilised, and natural/cultural, that resonates through the styling of the image. Bare feet, for instance, were unconventional in portraiture, which was traditionally the preserve of the rich and, as such, a lack of shoes subverts this with intimations of the savage and primitive. Exposing the subject's lower limbs also displays their unusual curvature, that more readily recalls something flipper-ish or tail-like, than what is commonly accepted as a human limb. His clothing is just as enigmatic, its layered folds, and panels of fabric, visually mimicking the overlapping plates of a shellfish carapace; yet, at the same time, the suit, with its bright buttons and bow tie, also conveys a mood of luxury, leisure and sophistication, so that intimations of the animal are interwoven with assertions of emphatically human cultural refinement. The setting similarly converges dualities, its carpeting, drapes, and painted Baroque backdrop implying wealth and comfort (the secluded opulence of the beast's castle), which is embedded with foreign notes of wild nature and the exotic, from the potted plants, and the Oriental tassel suspended from the back of the chair.¹¹⁹

Through this interplay of contrasts, and the corporeal conundrum at its heart, the photograph presents itself as at once an authentication of the mythic, and a fabrication of the real. In the photographic sphere circumscribed genres of fiction and truth lose their integrity and seep into each other and, like sounds, meanings, and material affects in Carroll's metaphors and puns, are thrown into chaotic communion. More than the 'interdependence of beauty and beast' that Gillian Beer (p.7) perceives in evolutionary theory, what emerges in *Lobster Boy* is their discordant unity: a mutated, monstrous third term, that carries characteristics of both, but is reducible to neither. That such a hybrid creature – the kind of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic fabrication usually consigned to the cultural repository of folk and fairytale – is given a degree of manifest viability, through the indexical function of the photograph, points back (both in terms of this discussion, and of ideological history) to the archaic, animistic worldview. Animism asserts parity between the human and the non-human, since all empiric phenomena is mobilised by the same omnipotent, sentient agency or energy, so that animals are perceived as harbouring equivocally human, as well as distinctly other, traits. As Freud has it, the potential empirical evidence of such fabulous beings - as recorded in photographs, for instance - is a 'deceptive sight' that stirs the

¹¹⁸ This condition has since been classified by medical science as Ectrodactyly - a congenital trait in which the middle finger in the hand and the metacarpal bone in the foot are missing. See: Armand Marie Leroi, *Mutants: on the form, varieties and errors of the human body* (London: HarperCollins, 2003) pp.107-109.

¹¹⁹ As Michael Mitchell reveals, the flora are particularly significant in this respect, since the species of begonia Eisenmann favoured had only been imported from Assam in 1858, and were still very rare in the 1880s. Their origin meant they also required a greenhouse (or brightly lit photographer's studio) to thrive, and as such they garnered contemporary associations with wealth and prosperity that are lost today (p.34).

other primitive beast of the animistic mindset, and is deeply uncanny in its expression of both existential uncertainty and surmounted, archaic beliefs (Freud, p.371).

Lewis Carroll's lexical novelty of the portmanteau word is another linguistic monster that finds a counterpart in the photographed freak phenomenon of conjoined twins. Twinning, or doubling, is also a prevalent motif of the Freudian uncanny and, as such, its appearance is redolent with dreadful possibility. As its descriptor suggests, the portmanteau word packs multiple terms into a single utterance, opening plural possibilities of interpretation that destabilise the relationships of word to thing, and of meaning to sense, and denies words their individuated semantic integrity.¹²⁰ To use Tazudeen's example, the word 'slithey' (from Carroll's poem 'Jabberwocky' (AI, pp.148-49)) consolidates 'slither', 'lithe', 'slide', 'slimy' and 'sly', enabling the various senses attached to these words, and the ways they relate to each other, to interact and combine, but affords no way of conclusively singling out any one (Tazudeen, p.551). The portmanteau does for words what the immanent metaphor does for concepts and forms, or signifiers and signifieds, facilitating their mutability and interaction, and urging them into unruly interplay, with the potential to generate monstrosity. It is a device through which words, as Tazudeen argues, are 'biologized', becoming, like Darwin's concept of species, fluctuating trends rather than constants whose meanings are definitively fixed (Tazudeen, p.551).

In the freak occurrence of conjoined twins, it is the actual, biological material of bodies and organisms that meld into irresolute arrangements. This rare phenomenon, in which the fertilised egg of potential identical twins does not properly separate, has several manifestations – twins can be conjoined at the head, chest, pelvis, back, or one may appear as an atrophied 'parasite' emerging from the other – and necessarily presents a challenge to conventional notions of what constitutes a person.¹²¹ Like the portmanteau word, in which multiple signifiers and meanings converge, conjoined twins appear as both two people and a singular being - distinct entities whose individual integrity cannot be isolated from each other, disrupting common definitions of identity and subjectivity. For the nineteenth century the fear and fascination provoked by such ontological instability, combined with the rarity of the phenomenon, meant that conjoined twins were an ideal incidence for display as human freaks.

One of the few nineteenth century cases of human conjoined twins to survive into adulthood was that of Millie and Christine McKoy (1851-1912), whose story (at least in the promotional and souvenir pamphlets that accompanied their presentation on stage), is replete

¹²⁰ See: Derek Attridge 'Unpacking the Portmanteau, or Who's Afraid of *Finnegan's Wake*', in *On Puns*, ed. by Jonathan Culler, 140-155; and Lecercle, *Philosophy of Nonsense*, pp. 44-51.

¹²¹ The process, known as fission, is the commonly accepted theory of how conjoined twins develop. (See Leroi, *Mutants*, pp.49-54).

with the kind of intrigue and drama that is the essence of fiction. Born into slavery in Columbus, North Carolina, the girls were abducted at the age of two, and brought to Europe, where they were put on public display. In hot pursuit of them across the continent were their parents Menemia and Jacob, and the family's 'owner' Joseph P. Smith, who eventually reclaimed the twins in England. On returning to the U.S.A., the sisters were again exhibited for money, under the direction of their 'white ma' Mrs. Smith, and they continued to perform on stage after the abolition of American slavery in 1863. Their huge success as a freak show act brought them wealth and independence, which ultimately enabled them to accomplish the cyclic retribution of purchasing the plantation on which they were born.¹²²

This tale, told in the context of sideshow ballyhoo, cannot be considered entirely reliable,¹²³ but what does ring true is the confusion surrounding the McKoy twins' existential status. A prevalent symptom of this is the way contemporary descriptions of the sisters shift between singular and plural personal pronouns: for example, a printed handbill advertising an 1885 performance contains the line 'she sings with both mouths, they dance on four feet' ; while another, from 1871, reports in an astonished tone how 'each head assert[s] its own individuality ... saying "I" rather than "we"'.¹²⁴ Most often, however, verbal accounts of the girls resort to the neutral and objectifying idiom 'it', and they are frequently reduced to a list of fragmented body parts, as in '2 heads, 4 arms, 4 feet, all in one perfect body meet'.¹²⁵ What this vacillating terminology reveals is the breakdown in understandings of the self, produced by the physical indeterminacy of the McKoy twins, that both exposes, and undermines, the conceptual grounds of itemised egos and personal identity - just as the portmanteau word causes slippage between signs and meanings, proscribing semantic certainty and usurping sense with nonsense. Even the sisters' preferred title of address, Millie-Christine, is a cohesion of their personal names that emulates the qualities of the portmanteau word, particularly since it is an attempt to reshape linguistic conventions to more accurately reflect their unique ontological condition.

It is this ideational dilemma, and the physical peculiarity that informs it, that captivates visual images of Millie-Christine, which are also complexly bound up with representations of

¹²² This rendition of the girls' life story is taken from *Biographical Sketch of Millie-Christine the two-headed nightingale* - a thirty-six page pamphlet produced in 1871, in conjunction with a European tour. A copy is held in the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, at the Bodleian Library, and a digitised facsimile is available at Johnjohnson.chadwyck.co.uk

¹²³ Particularly dubious is the insistence that the McKoy's were affectionately attached to the Smith family, and that their relationship was mutually beneficial, rather than simply exploitative on the part of the plantation owners. As Ellen Samuels has argued, this interpretation glosses over the issue of institutionalised oppression, and presents the exceptional case of the McKoys as an 'apologist slave narrative'. See 'Examining Millie and Christine McKoy: Where Enslavement and Enfreakment Meet', *Signs*, 31:1 (2011).

¹²⁴ Both these documents are from the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, housed at the Bodleian Library, and are accessible online at Johnjohnson.chadwyck.co.uk through the 'Entertainments' folder in the 'Images' menu.

¹²⁵ Printed promotional handbill, 1885 (see note 122).

race. Freak shows, for the most part, constructed racial difference as exotic, primitive and inferior, with concepts such as the 'savage' and the 'human zoo' validating dehumanised displays of ethnic diversity, that both reinforced white Europeans as a social group, and naturalised the centrality and dominance of their culture.¹²⁶ However, in the highly competitive market of Victorian mass entertainment, the McKoy twins' biological anomaly was a far bigger commercial draw than their race or ethnic status, and while images of the sisters are inevitably invested with a sense of the alien and strange, rather than constructing them as racially other, their pictures present them as prodigious in their learned accomplishments, as well as their organic constitution, amplifying their appeal as a rare and engaging 'curiosity'.

John H. Fitzgibbon's 1865 photographic portrait, produced as a carte-de-visite (figure 22), is typical of the manner in which the sisters were pictured for public consumption.¹²⁷ With a prevailing social attitude in both the U.S.A. and Britain that deemed people of colour intellectually deficient, it was almost unknown for black people to be shown with books - books being symbols of literacy and cultural refinement.¹²⁸ It is exceptional, then, that Millie-Christine appears in this image with both a book and a sheet of music, as indicators of education and talent. The verbal accounts given in promotional pamphlets, and newspaper reports, also tend to reinforce this unconventionally agreeable - even glowing - image of the black female, variously describing the sisters as 'most astonishing', 'interesting', 'remarkable', and 'wonderful', and noting that 'she sings beautifully, two parts of an air at once'.

Although this representational inversion is motivated by the promise of capital gain, and remains consigned to the essentially servile business of popular entertainment, it nonetheless offers a favourable counterpoint to the image of the 'savage' - the most common mode of styling people of colour for freak performance - that promotes a relatively more positive view of racial diversity. Where the savage is signified by his or her scant clothing, bare feet, and unkempt appearance, Millie-Christine is daintily dressed, booted and bejewelled, and carefully groomed - the hair, in particular, arranged in pretty ringlets that conform to contemporary bourgeois iconography of idealised, white girlhood. Where constructions of the savage were conventionally set outdoors, connoting the wild and uncivilised, the illusion produced by the painted backdrop in Fitzgibbon's photograph locates the sisters in a sumptuous interior, with suggestions of an

¹²⁶ For an extensive exploration of racial representation in the Victorian freak show see Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boetsch and Nanette Jacomijn Snoop *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage*. Arles, France: Actes Sud; Paris, France: Musée du Quai Branly, 2011.

¹²⁷ John H. Fitzgibbon (1819-1882) was born in England and emigrated to the USA in 1825. From 1846-1860 he ran a photographic studio in St. Louis, Missouri, producing daguerotypes. He is best known for his portraits of Native Americans.

¹²⁸ See Mitchell, Michael *Human Freaks* 30.

antebellum mansion that, as such, confounds racially determined expectations of who is an owner and who a slave.



Figure 22. John H. Fitzgibbons, *Millie-Christine McKoy*, 1865, carte-de-visite photographic portrait, 54 x 89 mm, mounted on card 63 x 100mm, International Center of Photography, New York.

Despite the potentially positive ramifications such presentations of the McKoy sisters may have had on depictions of race, the photograph was also an attempt to domesticate, and thereby manage and contain, the radical affront to nineteenth-century standards of physical normality,

individuation, and femininity, posed by the McKoy twins. As in Eisenmann's photograph of the Lobster Boy, the tension between promoting the abnormal as an enticing commodity, and the need to control and confine its dissident implications, produces a collocation of the conservative and marvellous, that resonates with a particularly Carrollian sensibility. Produced in the same year that saw the publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Fitzgibbon's image parallels that text's at once idealised, yet subversive, construction of the little girl, and apprehends its interest in doubles and doubling, prefiguring a theme and motif that would become a central concern of Carroll's in *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). The notion of wonder is also inherent in the construction of the McKoys as spectacle, and similarly impels Carroll's extraordinary, eccentric creations.

With her stockinged feet, complaisant character, and educated regard for the correct and proper, Alice is superficially the epitome of the perfect, middle-class Victorian girl. A similarly romanticised figuration is exploited in Fitzgibbon's photograph of the McKoy sisters, whose demure pose, placid expressions, and winsome attire, exude a tractable charm, softness and delicate refinement, conventionally venerated as feminine. The paper crowns are especially evocative in this respect, recalling fictions of the fairytale princess, and imparting a sense of girlish fantasy and dress-up, as well as anticipating Alice's quest to become a Queen - the pinnacle of decorous female adulthood - in *Through the Looking Glass*. Once she has entered Wonderland, however, Alice's body - and by extension her identity - becomes unruly like that of the freak, and defiant of physical or cultural regulation, growing to overwhelming proportions, or shrinking to an inscrutable scale. At other times she manifests animal traits - such as a long neck - that blur the line between human and other species, and she always exhibits a voracious and, as such, unfeminine, appetite, for excitement and knowledge, as well as for food.

This discrepancy between the fabricated social identity, and the embodied existence of the little girl, apparent in Alice, also informs the freak presentation of the McKoys, which plays on the popular appeal of the feminine ideal while simultaneously countering its standards of beauty and propriety, and its presumption of a universal model of woman. The sisters' race immediately asserts a transgressive image of the ideal little girl, which becomes decidedly strange coupled with their physical anomaly, and its manifestation of uncanny doubling. At once integrated and divided, the rachipagus (back to back) type of conjoined twinning seen in Millie-Christine is particularly conducive to producing the sense of a mirror image. Fitzgibbon's portrait accentuates this peculiarity by having the girls dressed in identical white dresses and beaded jewellery, and holding identical poses, in which the tilt of their heads, bend of their arms, and even the angle at which they've positioned their feet, are in perfect synthesis. It is a striking

replication that induces the eye to flit ceaselessly from one figure to the other, seeking out the differences and similarities that never resolve into entirely separate identities, or a properly unified whole. That the unnerving similitude exhibited by the McKoy girls is embedded, and made manifest, in the photograph, creates a layering through which the double effect is itself doubled (quadrupled), being both incarnate in the materiality of the representation, and figured in its content.

That the disquieting duplication of the McKoys is bound up with constructions of the feminine opens a further sphere of uncanny potential connected to the female, and particularly, the maternal, body. Although Freud (Un 368) suggests that 'there is something uncanny about the female genitals' he attributes such feelings only to 'neurotic men', thereby denying the possibility that similar sensations might arise in himself (or indeed, that he is himself 'neurotic') (p.368). Yet, Robin Lydenberg's reading of 'The Uncanny' finds the uncanny woman to be a sublimated theme, that haunts Freud's essay and, as such, constitutes an unconscious informant of his theory regarding the subject.¹²⁹ The feminine uncanny is revealed most transparently in Freud's famous anecdote recounting his wanderings around an unfamiliar 'provincial town' in Italy that lead him mysteriously back, several times, to the same street where 'nothing but painted women were to be seen' (p.359). Professedly told to illustrate the uncanniness of unintended repetition, Lydenburg points out that this narrative also expresses anxieties related to feminine sexuality and fecundity. The 'painted women' that Freud refers to are of course prostitutes, and the tale is at once an evocation of female sexual power, and an attempt to contain it. Confined to 'small houses' where they appear framed by 'windows', the women's disturbing, erotic otherness is corralled in the domestic, making them both *heimlich* (homely) and *unheimlich* (unhomely) (Freud, p.359): the fundamental paradox on which the Freudian uncanny turns. Most unnerving is that while the women's 'narrative confinement' - within Freud's anecdotal, rather than his theoretical register - is intended as a rhetorical defence against their threatening sexuality, it only serves to make them more potent, 'operating like an incubator that causes them to multiply until they completely fill Freud's field of vision: "Nothing but painted women were to be seen"' (Lydenburg, p.1077). The reproductive and gestational capacities of female bodies cannot be controlled, and 'spread out over the entire town' in overwhelming profusion (Lydenburg, p.1077).

Viewed through the 'window' of the photograph, that both displays and contains, Millie-Christine McKoy are, like Freud's 'painted women', female bodies as merchandise, constructed for consumption as spectacular entertainment. The sister's eerily plural form - that is appealing

¹²⁹ Robin Lydenburg, 'Freud's Uncanny Narratives', *PMLA*, 112 (1997) 1072-1086.

precisely because it is uncanny - echoes Freud's multiplying Italian prostitutes, and instantiates the profligate fertility endemic in the female body, and in nature as universal mother - the propagative extravagance of which threatens inundation and chaos. In some respects the delimited zone of the photograph works to curb this generative capacity, keeping it spacially and temporally bound, but as a replicating medium it also simultaneously amplifies it, enabling the production (and reproduction) of potentially infinite numbers of McKoy females.

A similar tension is discernible between the proliferated form of the McKoy twins - that points towards female fecundity and its over-abundant production - and the photograph's invocation of the idealised image of the little girl. Although Victorian constructions of the little girl undoubtedly had an air of eroticism, this was focused on (and sublimated in) qualities such as moral purity, sincerity, compliance and innocence.¹³⁰ The attribution of sexual innocence, in particular, created an image of femininity antithetical to that of the sexually mature, fertile woman, with her threatening, gravid potentiality. Fitzgibbon's photograph of Millie-Christine plays on both aspects. The girls' seductively bared shoulders, hinting at nascent carnality, and reminiscent of the erotically charged 'yaller-girl' character of minstrelsy,¹³¹ conjures the spectre of the sexually threatening uncanny woman - the menace of which is at the same time held in check by the childish simplicity of the white dresses and paper crowns.

While the little girl image is called upon here to limit the disturbing implications of the uncanny mother, its effect is Janus-faced (that is, contrastingly, and uncannily, double), since the construct of the little girl raises uncanny intimations in itself. Taken to their logical extreme, those qualities of docility, amenity, virtue, and beauty, attributed to the little girl, take on an inert and crystallised perfection that, dressed up in ribbons and curls, resembles nothing so much as a doll: a hollow and insubstantial 'painted woman'. A lifeless object, the doll is the dead flip-side of the excessively pro-creative, life-affirming and giving, maternal body. Yet, as a facsimile of a living being, the doll is inhered with an existential uncertainty that, for Freud, is extremely uncanny. The possibly animate object is connected to the tenets of animistic belief, and to Freud's 'omnipotence of thoughts'. In the case of dolls, such fear not only connects to a surmounted,

¹³⁰ See, for example, Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London: Croom Helm Ltd. and Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982) and Catherine Robson, *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentlemen* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹³¹ The 'yaller-girl', 'wench' or 'prima donna' was a stock character of the nineteenth-century minstrel show. These variety shows - appropriated from a style originally devised by black performers - were based around musical numbers, and the comedic lampooning of African-American people and culture, by white performers for white audiences. Minstrel shows reached the height of their popularity in 1830s and '40s America, but continued as a form up until the turn of the century. The 'yaller-girl' was a mulatto (or 'high yellow'/'yaller' in black vernacular) woman, who combined the light complexion and facial features of a white female, with the exotic sexuality and perceived promiscuity of a black woman. Her personality was depicted as flirtatious yet capricious, and comedy often centred around male characters' pursuit of her. Interestingly, Millie-Christine is described as having a 'bright, mulatto complexion' in a printed promotional handbill of 1871 (see note 122).

atavistic world view, but also surfaces suppressed or overcome childhood beliefs and ‘wishes’ of ‘dolls coming to life’ (Freud, p.355), locating it in the uncanny in-between of an uncomfortable or unhomely anxiety, and a familiar or homely memory, or fantasy of childhood play.¹³²

The allusion to the figure of the little girl – with its suggestions of the doll – in the styling of Millie-Christine is compounded not only by the photograph’s simultaneously invented/authentic incertitude, but also its ambiguous suspension of the subject between life and death, thus fostering an eerie affinity with the type of ‘waxwork figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata’ that Freud cites as prone to arouse sensations of uncanny uncertainty (p.347). That the sisters also appear as mirrored doubles makes the image a foreshadowing, in essence, of Alice’s peculiar encounter with the identical, mirror-imaged twins Tweedledum and Tweedledee in *Through the Looking Glass*, who ‘stood so still that she quite forgot they were alive’ (Al, p.180). Like Millie-Christine in Fitzgibbon’s photograph, the Tweedle brothers are disconcertingly duplicate, and existentially indeterminate, since their absolute immobility gives them the aura of a living statue. As Alice moves in to examine them more closely, and ascertain their condition, Tweedledum exclaims “If you think we’re wax-works ... you ought to pay, you know. Wax-works weren’t made to be looked at for nothing. Nohow!” (Al, p.180). In referring to ‘wax-works’ here, Carroll both anticipates Freud’s theory of uncanny uncertainty, and makes an explicit connection to the carnival sideshow, which often included wax-work displays as a standard element of the tariffed entertainments, drawing his reader into the territory of the human freak and eccentric incarnations like the McKoy twins.

The figurative structures at play in the representation of the McKoy sisters is decidedly dual. On the one hand, the Victorian model of the perfect little girl is reified, depersonalised and homogenised, imparting a sense of order and stability. On the other, the spectre of the uncanny woman is threateningly sexual, and overwhelmingly fecund, and speaks of the chaotic multiplicity, mutability, and variation that characterises evolutionary theory and disrupts conceptual distinctions between human and animal. This dichotomous design is reiterated (reflected, replicated, doubled) in Millie-Christine’s bipartite physical form, and is also apparent in the conflicted character of Alice, a ‘curious child’ who is ‘very fond of pretending to be two people’ (Al, p.18). It is in Wonderland, though, that the little girl propriety of Alice begins to recede, and the desires and instincts, that in binary logic are associated with animal conduct,

¹³² An interesting Carroll connection to dolls appears in his 1858 photograph of a ‘family doll’ named ‘Tim’. As Lindsay Smith discusses in *Lewis Carroll: Photography on the Move* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015) this photograph, in its nostalgic connection to the past, functioned in a manner similar to the toy itself, which could perhaps be construed as an uncanny displacement. On the representational level, as well, the photograph pictures the doll in a setting and circumstance that prefigures several of Carroll’s child portraits, so that dolls and children become interchangeable, uncannily connected entities (pp.108-116).

necessarily erupt in the 'struggle for existence'. Even Alice's physical body takes on animal traits in Wonderland, its sudden plasticity causing it to assume an interspecies character that leads to the erroneous identifications of her as a snake, plant or monster.

Sold to the public as 'The Two-Headed Nightingale', Millie-Christine McKoy are also attributed with properties of the animal. In implying that the twins' vocal virtuosity is synonymous with the singing of a bird, the metaphor brings us back once again to the domain of sound, speech and language. As an animal mode of articulation, birdsong belongs to the undifferentiated cacophony of beastly gibbering, gabbling and chattering that, being unintelligible, has an innate affinity with Carrollian nonsense. For Tazudeen this connection in Carroll's writing to inexplicable animal utterance, or jabber, is most apparent in Carroll's poem 'Jabberwocky', from *Through the Looking Glass*. Comprised almost entirely of invented and portmanteau words, the poem is emphatically resistant to rational interpretation; its splitting, splicing, and jumbling of words working rather to disrupt the knowledge-producing function of language, and 'denature human networks of meaning from within' (Tazudeen, p.552).

Like the undifferentiated mass of organic matter from which species have evolved, and are evolving, the unintelligible din and dissonance of animal sounds represents the acoustic miasma from which language has emerged. By a process that parallels the development of species through evolution, the forms and meanings of words in the present are achieved only through the exclusion of infinite, and thus unknowable, alternative possibilities, that did not become actualised. In its fundamental obscurity, and 'refusal of formal consistency of the word, body and meaning alike', 'Jabberwocky' addresses our ignorance of our origins: of the how, why and where from conditions in the present have come to be (Tazudeen, 553). 'Jabberwocky' returns us to the sonic and semantic non-sense of the primordial past and, in doing so, insists on the incomprehensibility of the present which, because of its always incoherent relationship to its own history, becomes 'something alien to itself' (Tazudeen, p.553). Words (and concepts, and bodies) lose stability, becoming malleable, uncertain, and uncanny in the sense that they have no fixed identity, and therefore can never be uttered with absolute conviction in what they mean. Freud's comment, in 'The Uncanny', that 'we ourselves speak a language that is foreign' (p.341), seconds this notion that language is somehow estranged from itself and, as such, from those who speak it, and also expresses the same feeling of a weirdness surrounding verbal communication that 'Jabberwocky' makes so explicitly manifest.

This inherent strangeness of things and conditions in the present arises from an 'illegible' and thus 'uneasy relationship to history and pre-history' (Tazudeen, p.553). The 'beautiful soup' that the Mock Turtle sings of (Al, p.108-09) is a fitting metaphor for primordial origin, that evinces

the prehistoric past as a melting pot of material and linguistic potential from which forms, words and ideas emerge like bubbles that float briefly to the surface before bursting or sinking back into undifferentiated and non-conceptual confusion. As the underlying evolutionary dynamic that generates life through the ceaseless interaction and fluctuation of bodies, thoughts and sounds, the 'beautiful soup' exposes the classification of species as temporal, artificial and emphatically anthropocentric. Within its shifting shapes and energies distinctions between types dissolve, human and non-human are made equivocal and, freed from formal and conceptual stasis, are open to infinite transformative possibilities. After all, it only takes a little Jabberwockian word splitting to find the lice - the lowliest and most reviled of biological forms - in A/lice - a paragon of idealised Victorian girlhood.

chapter 3

monsters return (of the repressed)

The closing of the gap between human and other life caused by evolutionary theory was a seismic cultural and ideological shift, that instigated an urgent need to reassess the relationships between species, and the place of the human within nature.¹³³ Hybrid, zoomorphic freaks were a response to this upheaval, acting as both a symbol of the conceptual confusion surrounding what constitutes the properly human, and as a site for exploring alternative identities in the wake of new understandings of the natural world. As such, the interspecies monster was reassuring as well as terrifying. In one sense, the figure of the hybrid gave the fears and anxieties arising from the upheaval of conventional doctrine a tangible shape, allowing their projection and containment as an 'abjected fragment'. But it also materialised a spectre that would increasingly worry the moral consciousness and threaten the structural fabric of Victorian society.

Filtered through the prism of myth and fairytale, the destabilised human-animal boundary has a familiar ring, and is rather more comforting than upsetting. Hybrid monsters take on a magical allure, and acquire largely positive connotations of fantastic metamorphoses and supernatural powers, that also consign them safely to the realm of the imaginary. However, when fiction bleeds into perceptions of reality - as it does in the ambiguous domains of the freak show and the photograph - its charm becomes faceted with disturbing particularity, and from around the 1860s there was a growing cultural awareness of the embodied existence, and thus the social liability, of both animals and human freaks. Consequently, as the nineteenth century drew to its end, the enchanting conceptions of human-animal hybrids in works such as Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1862) and Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books gave way to the kind of deeply pessimistic vision found in H.G. Wells's 1896 novel, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. In contrast to the marvellous and playful 'dream' quality of Kingsley's and Carroll's texts, Wells's response to the Darwinian disruption of traditional species distinctions is a nightmare scenario of human intervention in evolutionary process. In it the interspecies monster of fantasy is drawn into the realm of biological possibility through the practical application of contemporary scientific interests such as xenotransplantation and plastic surgery. The result of the unscrupulous Doctor Moreau's experiments in vivisection is a cohort of horrific 'beast people', whose generation asks troubling questions regarding moral propriety, social status and integration, and what constitutes human identity.

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¹³³ See: Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, pp.38-42; Arnold I. Davidson, 'The Horror of Monsters', in *The Boundaries of Humanity: Humans, Animals, Machines*, ed. by James Sheehan and Morton Sosna (Berkeley/L.A./Oxford: University of California Press, 1991) 37-62, pp.53-62.

The sideshow played a significant role in fomenting the nineteenth century's burgeoning cultural consciousness of animal rights and welfare, and the altered concept of the human this inevitably demanded. Travelling menageries had been an essential element of the carnival since the late eighteenth century, and the widespread social presence of animals on display and as entertainment would have already begun to shift ideas of what faculties animals possessed and what roles they might inhabit beyond the purely utilitarian.¹³⁴ On top of this, evolutionary theory destabilised boundaries in both directions, so that as well as the human becoming more animal, the animal was also made more human, and nowhere was this more manifest than in the Victorian freak show. While the zoomorphic styling of human freaks played on fears and fantasies of interspecies permutation, and miscegenation, they often - in what constitutes another levelling of differences - shared exhibition space with animal acts, whose anthropomorphised antics similarly transgressed the human-animal divide.

In a strange inversion of the zoomorphic human (like something from the other side of Carroll's looking glass) these creatures (or anthropomorphic animals) - for the most part dogs, monkeys, and primates - were dressed in human clothes, bestowed with personal names, and trained to perform human actions. Dogs would walk or dance on two legs, as in Dickens's portrayal of Jerry's dancing dogs in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-1) who arrive at the Jolly Sandboys inn attired in 'little coat[s] of some gaudy colour trimmed with tarnished spangles, and one of them had a cap upon his head', and proceed to stand 'upon their hind legs in a grave and melancholy row' awaiting their 'master' very much like a band of disgruntled schoolboys.¹³⁵ Chimpanzees and orang-utans, although a much rarer sight than the ubiquitous canine, were also presented in order to emphasise likenesses with humans, and would eat with utensils, use teacups and sleep under blankets (Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, p.31). An essential element of these entertainments was the parody of human behaviour they presented, and the insights into civilisation and its trappings - particularly its formalisation and distance from natural (that is, bestial) modes of being - that interpretation through animal bodies revealed. At the same time, seeing non-human species assume human pretensions conversely enabled new perceptions of animal ontology. By reinforcing what makes humans human, performing animals also implied that human-like qualities were not inevitably exclusive, thus simultaneously denying comfortable distinctions between man and beast. Performing animal displays were in fact an explicit invitation

¹³⁴ In his essay 'White Wings and Six-Legged Muttons: The Freakish Animal' Timothy Neil cites George Wombwell - who became a household name as the proprietor of several itinerant animal exhibitions - as evidence of the popularity and prevalence of animals in mass entertainment in the early nineteenth century. (In *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Marlene Trompe, 62-71).

¹³⁵ Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, ed. by Norman Page (London: Penguin, 2000) p.146.

to draw parallels between the human condition and that of the animal, and to sustain empathy with other species, which necessarily encouraged ideas of animals as thinking, feeling, intelligent and complex beings, as opposed to the insensitive brutes advanced by the dominant, Cartesian mechanistic model.

Presented in the context of mass entertainment, performing animals channeled the debate concerning the sensibility and subjective status of animals - a long time concern of moral philosophers - towards the popular imagination. This was no doubt a contributing factor to the issue of animal rights gaining increasing credence throughout the nineteenth century. Evidence of the growing intolerance of animal abuse and exploitation can be seen in the first bill legislating against the maltreatment of horses and cattle, which was passed in 1822. This was followed in 1824 by the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. And their lobbying resulted in the 1835 Cruelty to Animals Act, which expanded the existing statute to include protection of other domestic animals and the prohibition of bear-baiting and cock-fighting.¹³⁶

From around mid century the issue of animal experimentation, or vivisection, presented a particularly difficult dilemma. While animal testing was a practice dating back to the Greeks of the fourth and third centuries BCE, the expansion and professionalisation of medicine that began in the late eighteenth century saw it become ever more widespread. Scientific empiricism, with its demand that knowledge be experimentally founded, and physically demonstrable, entailed the use of animals as disposable objects, yet the premise that animals were suitable subjects for revealing facts about human physiology paradoxically asserted an essential similarity between the two (Donald, p.9). Central to the vivisection dispute was the question of pain, since the suffering and distress of animals was the chief objection to its practice. In the first place, there was contention over whether animals could feel pain at all, and whether concern for their welfare was even warranted. Yet even for those who claimed that animals were insensate, vivisection still raised moral complications, such as: was potential human gain sufficient justification for killing?

¹³⁶ Scottish Baronet William Johnstone Pulteney was the first person to attempt to pass a legislative bill related to animal welfare through the English Parliament in 1800, which was an attempt to ban bull-baiting. In 1809 Lord Erskine tried to use theological rhetoric to issue an anti-cruelty bill, which was passed by the House of Lords but rejected by the Commons. The 1822 Cruel Treatment of Cattle Act was spearheaded by the Irish-born parliamentarian Richard Martin (and was thus also known as Martin's Act). It was the first parliamentary legislation concerning the protection of animals in the world, and banned the abuse of cows and sheep, on pain of a fine of five pounds. The 1824 formation of the SPCA - which became the RSPCA in 1837 - lead by clergyman Reverend Arthur Broome, meant the lobbying of government became more consistent and the 1822 Act underwent several reforms as a result. The 1835 expansion included bulls, dogs, bears and goats as animals to be protected, as well as the ban on certain blood sports. In 1849 the bill was amended again, to include a penal sentence for the unlawful killing of an animal. The 1876 amendment was specifically concerned with regulating vivisection and animal experimentation. In 1911 The Protection of Animals Act legislated against the failure to properly care for any captive animal, under threat of prosecution.

Should human rights take precedence over those of other species? And in what ways might perpetrating acts of cruelty affect experimenters?¹³⁷

Pain and suffering are the overriding outcome of vivisection as portrayed by Wells in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. Not only do the animal subjects endure the surgical violation of their living flesh, the uncertain, abject entities they afterwards become are doomed to the psychological torment of their conflicting bestial instincts and human morality. Moreau's ambition to create 'humanised animals' that are 'triumphs of vivisection' aligns his 'beast folk' with the magical, therianthropic (shape-shifting) creatures of fairytale and folklore, since both undergo the same essential transformation from animal to human.¹³⁸ This likeness self-consciously places Wells's text within the domain of the fantastic, as do tropes of the fabulous such as the 'Satyr' man, whose name and 'ovine' appendages are derived directly from classical myth (DM, p.84). And Doctor Moreau himself who, 'massive' in stature, 'white haired', and wielding the power to master and direct the forces of nature, has the aura of a mythical God or fairytale wizard (DM, p.20).

However, unlike the immediate, easeful, and often reversible transformations of folkloric shape shifters, the changes wrought on the beast folk are protracted and agonised, with ongoing implications. The beast folk are very much grounded in the body, and there is a sense of physical duress, and a struggle to exceed material constraints, that gives their metamorphosis a realist aspect, enhanced by Well's portrayal of genuine scientific techniques as the means by which it is accomplished. The beast folk's journey from animal to human also parallels the path of evolution, yet natural modification is so extended – occurring over hundreds of thousands of years and many generations of organisms – that, in comparison, Doctor Moreau's fabricated conversions appear to occur with supernatural rapidity. It is the beast folk's intermediate rate of transition – slower than the instantaneous process of mythical shape shifting, but quicker than the expansive timescale of evolution – that falls somewhere between magic and science, and determines the hybrid configuration of Wells's narrative in which practicable actions yield marvellous results. As Chris Danta has put it, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (subtitled 'A Possibility') is a work that 'blurs the

¹³⁷ Opposition to vivisection in the nineteenth century took many forms, being religiously, morally and politically motivated. Links between early women's rights movements and anti-vivisection were embodied by Francis Power Cobbe (1822-1904). Both a feminist theorist, and animal rights campaigner, Cobbe founded the National Anti-Vivisection Society in 1875, which resulted in the 1876 amendments to the Cruelty to Animals Act, to include specific regulation of animal experimentation. Author Anna Sewell (1820-1877), who was raised a Quaker, opposed animal cruelty on religious grounds, and her novel *Black Beauty* (1877), which told of the plights of a horse from the animal's point of view, was hugely influential in raising awareness of, and sympathy for, animal exploitation and suffering. Many of the era's greatest thinkers and writers were likewise explicitly anti-vivisection, including Charles Dickens, Robert Browning, Lewis Carroll, Leo Tolstoy and Mark Twain.
<<https://brebisnoire.wordpress.com/a-history-of-antivivisection-from-the-1800s-to-the-present-part-i-mid-1800s-to-1914/>>

¹³⁸ H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, ed. by Brian Aldiss (London: Everyman, 1993) p.68. Hereafter referenced in text as 'DM' with page citation.

distinction between reality and fantasy', 'domesticating' its fictional representation of artificial evolution by founding it on authentic, contemporary scientific method (Danta, 689).

The extreme pain and suffering that marks the beast folk's metamorphosis further amplifies their terrestrial veracity, and invests their experience with psychological depth. For Wells, physical pain is a universal experience, the fictional portrayal of which elicits an empathetic perception that unites readers and characters, humans, animals, and hybrids, and opens a space where invented ontologies converge with sensory truth. In creating this dimension of shared feeling, Wells not only advances the notion that inherent affinities exist between different species, but also aims to actively demonstrate this, by engaging the reader's compassion for diverse orders of being. This feature of the novel exemplifies the growing cultural awareness that entities constructed as other to the human in fact inhabit similarly complex subjective identities.

Interspecies affiliation and empathy is demonstrated in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* by the effect upon humans of torturing of animals. Both the narrator, Edward Prendick - a 'private gentlemen' (DM, p.3) stranded on the island following a shipwreck - and Moreau's alcoholic assistant, Montgomery, are acutely and viscerally moved by the anguished 'howl[s]', 'screams' and 'cries' of a puma undergoing vivisection, despite their conscious efforts to remain impassive (DM, pp.35-36). The wailing causes Montgomery to 'wince' in vicarious distress, as he imbibes whiskey to steady his 'odd want of nerve' (DM, pp.35-36). Prendick's responses are similarly attuned to the suffering animal's, whose screams he experiences as 'painful', and whose physical agitation he echoes as he 'began to clench my fists, to bite my lips, and pace the room' (DM, p.36). That these reactions occur spontaneously, and involuntarily, and beyond the men's will or reason, draws a parallel between certain human behaviours and instinctive, animal modes of being, while the display of fellow-feeling they elicit suggests innate emotional connections that transcend the bounds of species. As the scene closes, the puma's agony escalates to an excruciating tenor of expression, and in uncanny, telepathic synthesis, Prendick's awareness becomes 'a confusion, blurred with drifting black and red phantasms' (DM, p.36).

As a condition determined by the body the experience of pain foregrounds physical form as the seat of the self. Accordingly, the pain that colours the beast folk's creation and existence asserts their corrupt and ambiguous anatomies as the essential determinant of their miserable ontology. The novel's privileging of the body as the basis of personhood follows a trend seen in wider nineteenth-century culture, that surfaced in reaction to the Industrial Revolution, and consequent rise of the middle class. This shift meant that status was no longer exclusively conferred, and defined by family lineage, as in the old aristocratic system, but predicated rather

on extrinsic indicators such as dress, demonstrable wealth, and the performance of social roles. Such capricious and unreliable tokens of identity provoked an opposing drive to root character, and moral worth, in the more stable substance of the corporeal body - a symptom of which was the rising popularity of practices such as physiognomy and phrenology. These 'body reading' activities treated physical form as a type of text, to be decoded, the structural idiosyncrasies of which decreed an individual's nuances of character and disposition, and thus the prospective course of their life. They also offered a concrete, and therefore more reliable means of establishing, and regulating, one's value and repute within a fluctuating social order.¹³⁹

The current of determinist ideas that tied mental, moral, and behavioural traits to the body had significant implications for the understanding of human freaks. Zoomorphic freaks, in particular, when considered in this light, take on a dimension of palpable menace. Degeneration was a concept that had been gaining credence since the turn of the century¹⁴⁰ - with the inception of evolutionary theory in the 1850s giving it positive, biological justification - and the apparent emergence of anatomical structures regarded as animal, in otherwise human bodies, would have been convincing evidence of species decline in action. Worse still, when read from a determinist perspective, such bodily ambiguity would have signalled an associated regression in personal demeanour, and social conduct, putting at risk the very fabric of civilisation itself. In transgressing the (perceived) divide between natural and civilised, animal and human, the hybrid freak threatened to unleash those carnal desires and aggressive tendencies designated as bestial back into a human society, that functioned, and defined itself, by their suppression, limitation and control.

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If humans can degenerate to their animal origins, then by the same logic animals can also surely evolve to surpass and, eventually, displace them. Fyodor Jeftichew who, in the 1880s, performed as 'Jo-Jo the Dog-faced Boy', was a hybrid freak character whose photographic representation arouses this fear. His condition, now medically defined as congenital hypertrichosis lanuginosa, is a rare, inherited, genetic mutation of the skin, that produces excessive hair over the entire head and face, and often across the arms and torso as well (Leroi, pp.269-70). In the

¹³⁹ Outline and argument drawn from Craton, pp.30-31.

¹⁴⁰ Degeneration theory arose with the early study of anthropology in the eighteenth century. Johann Blumenbach's (1752-1840) *Elements of Physiology* (English translation 1828) and Robert Knox's (1793-1862) *The Races of Men* (1850) both suggesting the possibility. The work of Italian physician Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) made a specific link between physical constitution and criminal tendency, proposing a direct correlation between physical particulars and moral capacity. He attempted to quantify this idea through a system of bodily measurements which would define the look of the criminal type, and track any sign of species decline. His works include *The Man of Genius* (London: Walter Scott, 1891) and *The Female Offender* (New York: D. Appleton, 1895).

1880s, however, when Jeftichew was being presented across Europe and the U.S.A. as part of 'P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth' medical science had yet to provide an explanation for his alarming appearance.¹⁴¹ This meant spurious supposition, pseudo-scientific conjecture, and even outright fantasies of human-animal miscegenation, degenerative throwbacks, evolving beasts, lycanthropes, and wild men, were free to step in and offer solutions, that were no more outlandish than Jeftichew's fantastical advent itself.



Figure 23. Charles Eisenmann, *Fyodor Jeftichew 'Jo-Jo the Dog-Faced Boy'*, 1882, carte-de-visite photographic portrait, 54 x 89 mm, mounted on card, 63 x 100mm, Ronald G. Becker Collection of Charles Eisenmann Photographs, Syracuse University, New York.

¹⁴¹ See: Mitchell, p.50, for a synopsis of Jeftichew's biography.

The itinerant arm of Barnum's operation was the Grand Traveling American Museum, the main competitor to which was the Cooper and Bailey Circus, headed by James Bailey which had been running since the 1860s. In 1881 the two outfits decided to merge, creating a spectacular three-ring circus billed as 'P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth' which reached the height of its popularity in the 1880s.

The carte photograph taken of Jeftichew, by Charles Eisenmann (1882) (figure 23), intensifies this uncertainty regarding his biological identity. In particular, the image aggravates anxieties regarding the usurpation of human sovereignty by animals - a structure already destabilised by evolutionary theory's assertion of common descent and, consequently, no longer a biologically or divinely guaranteed certainty. That such an anatomically ambiguous figure as Jeftichew is represented in a full-length portrait already pushes this issue, since this is a format more usually seen in the types of large-scale paintings commissioned by the landed gentry to proclaim and reinforce their superior status. Through these associations the subject is afforded an immediate air of importance, enhanced by his seated (throned) pose, with its relaxed, yet confident, flexion of the arms, and his gaze that ranges above and beyond the viewer, implying that he engages on a higher plane of existence. This aura of affluence is carried through in the stylistic notes of the photograph. The costume has a militaristic look, suggestive of authority, while the detailing of the gold buttons, watch chain, ring, and polished boots, add a touch of luxury. The blanket of furs on which he reposes is an opulent indulgence, that completes the picture of lordly grandeur: the beast in his castle, or the uncanny monster that lurks in the very citadel (that is, the unhomey home) of social authority.

Uncanniness emerges again in the ambiguity of the indoor studio that is also an outdoor setting. Eisenmann's favourite stretch of fake grass fills out the foreground, while his ubiquitous potted plants, and a painted backdrop of palm fronds, convey a web of jungle vegetation. With its intimations of the wild and exotic, the jungle setting reads as a site of colonial exploration that emphasises the aspirational mood of the image - travel, hunting, and adventuring, being largely pursuits of those with money and leisure. At the same time, the wilderness is also conventionally seen as the natural home, and origin, of the animal. In the case of the jungle, the association is particularly for foreign, fierce, predacious and dangerous animals. Such evocation of the wild attaches to Jeftichew's peculiar countenance intimations of the feral, and insubordinate, that threaten disruption, chaos, and violence. The rifle Jeftichew holds makes this menace a part of the beastly appropriation of human power the image implies, and in a carnivalesque, or looking-glass inversion of conventional hierarchy, the hunted animal becomes the hunter, in pursuit of his persecutors. It is a vision that elicits fears of the potential of the animal to subjugate the human, and that sites this possibility in technologies of violence and death: the top dogs in the 'struggle for existence' being those who control the most effective means of destruction. As in displays of performing animals, whose anthropomorphism prompts contemplation on the human condition, the attribution of these murderous tools to the zoomorphic figure of Jeftichew is in fact a questioning of human conduct. The anxiety aroused by the 'turning of the tables' that is an

animal/hybrid wielding a gun being also an implicit acknowledgement of the moral ambiguity surrounding human attitudes to animals, and their exploitation and abuse: crimes for which the victims may come to seek righteous, and terrible, retribution.

Underlying this theme of dominance and subjugation in the understanding of species relations is the fact that predator and prey are not fixed identities, but rather interchangeable, shifting states. It is a condition that emphasises the human (and indeed animal) self as body, or rather as the fleshly matter that is the food source of the carnivorously inclined and, as such, is always vulnerable to being attacked and eaten. In *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, the killing and consumption of flesh both demarcates, and blurs, the human-animal distinction. The beast folks' struggle to be fully human is canonised as 'The Law' - a list of prohibited behaviours that draws a line between the brutish and the civilised, and which they reinforce by ritual recitation. Forbidden acts include walking on all fours, the 'sucking up' of drink and, most critically, the eating of flesh or fish (DM, p.57). Not only are these behaviours cloaked in the shame of taboo, they also incur corporal punishment, administered by the men of the island. Those who slip up do so under the threat of being returned to the 'House of Pain' - that is, being subjected to the excruciating tortures of Moreau's vivisection.

For the men of the island – Moreau, Montgomery, and, to a lesser extent, Prendick – controlling the beast folk's feral instincts, particularly the desire to eat meat, is crucial to their own safety, since they themselves not only qualify as tempting prey, but in an atmosphere thick with hostility, and simmering resentment, also as potential targets of revenge. Their alarm, then, is great, when the discovery of a rabbit, 'rent to pieces' and 'indisputably gnawed' reveals their rules have been disdained (DM, p.84). Montgomery comments: 'If some brute has by accident tasted blood...' (DM, p.86), his rhetorical silence, heavy with horror, implying that the savour of meat might be enough to unleash a tide of carnal rapacity, and bloodlust, that would see the lives of all the island's inhabitants (human, animal, and in-between) revert to the chaos and violence of brute existence.

What is consumed, and by whom, is the issue on which the order of the island - that is, the dominance of its humans - is tenuously maintained. Yet while the eating of flesh is condemned as an act of debasement for the beast folk, the men of the island are seen to ingest meat with impunity. It is Montgomery who introduces rabbits to the island, in order to redress its 'certain lack of meat' - a measure that he undertakes with Moreau's approval (DM, p.28). And it is Montgomery, again, who is suspected of laying temptation in the beast folk's way, having carelessly shown his hybrid servant, M'ling, 'how to skin and cook a rabbit' (DM, p.86). The eating of meat, then, although ostensibly a marker of what distinguishes animal from human, is

actually a behaviour common to both, the only point of divergence being in their approach. While the animal takes its meals according to its urges, and with spontaneous abandon, the human couches his in the formalised rituals of mealtimes, cooking, and serving up on plates. But Wells here exposes the trappings of 'civilisation' as merely a fragile veneer that seeks to dignify what is essentially a bestial behaviour.¹⁴² The humans of the island fear the objectification of being reduced to food, or the matter of meat, since it strips them of their selfhood and humanity (and thus facilitates an easy death). Yet it is in fact they who inflict this fate on the animals that, in the process of vivisection, are rendered agonised and mangled masses of flesh. Their casual brutality begs the question whether these humans in fact have any humanity, and raises contradictions concerning the nature of morality, and whom or what may be said to possess it.

Although superficially a marker of difference, the eating of meat, as a common behaviour, rather calls attention to the kinship and affinity between humans and animals. In asserting the likeness, and thus parity, of species, the consumption of flesh then becomes an innate issue of cannibalism - a subject that connects to both the monstrous and the uncanny. This theme is addressed explicitly in the opening chapter of *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, in which Prendick describes the ordeal of being stranded at sea following a shipwreck, which leads to his arrival on the island. At the start of the novel, now back home and speaking with hindsight of his experience on Moreau's island, Prendick's immediate concern is to contest official media reports, insisting that three men, not four - one of whom is himself - escaped the wreck of the 'Lady Vain' in a 'dingey' (*sic*). Did one of the men truly perish by drowning before he reached the boat, as Prendick claims, or is this a lie from an unreliable narrator, trying to hide his involvement in something more sinister?

The cannibal is a figure of absolute alterity, signifying everything that is other to acceptable standards of morality and conduct. In the nineteenth century, cannibalism was a requisite feature of the savage which, combined with geographical foreignness, and cultural difference, constructed people of colour not only as 'other', but as both a moral and physical threat.¹⁴³ No doubt this *frisson* of menace and horror added to the appeal that made the savage a standard presentation freak show line-ups, and so-called 'human zoos'. Ironically, though, this structuring of difference was so successful that it led to the uniformity of what was valued for

¹⁴² Although it is not known whether Wells practised vegetarianism himself, he certainly seems to have regarded a diet free from meat as the human ideal. In his 1905 novel, *A Modern Utopia*, the narrator lives in a future society in which the killing of animals for food has been entirely abandoned, and he describes the closing of the last slaughterhouse, during his childhood, as a moment of great celebration. The ideas expressed in some of Wells's other works, including *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *The Time Machine* (1895), also affirm his attitude towards the consumption of animal flesh as largely negative.

¹⁴³ This construction dates back to the short work 'Of Cannibals' by French Renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), published in his *Essays* (1580) (English translation 1603 by John Florio).

being variant and unique. As Erin O'Connor puts it, the popularity of freaks elicited 'an endless procession of human oddities whose cumulative impact was to standardize abnormality itself' (p.195). What made the cannibal savage truly monstrous, and therefore enduring, in its power to fascinate, was that those taboo urges and behaviours it figures as 'other', are in fact desires that originate within. 'Fear of the monster is really a kind of desire' (Cohen, p.17) and, as such, also an expression of the uncanny, since the strangeness it embodies is actually a hidden or denied aspect of the self, and the sensation it elicits the uncomfortable/unhomely recognition of the intimate/homely source of what is reviled.

This is the awful truth that emerges in the dingy of the 'Lady Vain'. All three (or four?) survivors are white, male Europeans - the embodied pinnacle of contemporary civilisation, exemplars of moral propriety and social refinement, and exulted ideal of which the cannibal savage is a (literally) dark inversion. Yet after eight 'tormented' (DM, p.6) days adrift at sea, with no food and only minimal water, their facade of order starts to crumble, and we see them exhibit the very traits they outwardly oppose. On the fourth day, when the water runs out, they are 'already thinking strange things, and saying them with our eyes' (DM, p.6). And on the sixth day, a man named Helmar - a 'passenger' like Prendick - 'gave voice to the thing we all had in mind' (DM, p.6). The non-verbal communication of 'the thing' - that is, cannibalistic desire - before it is openly acknowledged, is intensely uncanny, being a telepathic exchange that disrupts the proper distinction between self and other.

Although Prendick claims to have 'stood out against it with all my might' and 'was rather for scuttling the boat and perishing together among the sharks that followed us' (DM, p.6), his expressed preference for humane compassion, over self-serving depravity, nonetheless belies the fact that he is the only person remaining when the dingy is discovered. His explanation of a grapple between the boat's two other occupant's, that pitches them overboard, is sketchy at best, its lack of detail perhaps the result of his starved and ailing awareness at the time, or again, perhaps the sign of a glib cover-up. More suspicious still is that, far from curtailing his appetite for meat (as one imagines the menace of becoming cannibal/cannibalised well might), Prendick's heinous experience in the dingy rather intensifies his carnivorous cravings. On being rescued he is given 'a dose of some scarlet stuff, iced', by a man we later learn is Montgomery, which he says "tasted like blood, and made me feel stronger" (DM, p.8). When he has recovered enough to take a meal, and learns that the first thing on the menu is mutton, his declaration "Yes [...] I could eat some mutton" is met with Montgomery's response "But [...] you know I'm dying to hear of how you came to be alone in the boat" - in the utterance of which Prendick 'detected a certain suspicion in his eyes' (DM, p.9). The dark humour of 'dying to hear' implies that the

mutual, if subliminal, acknowledgment of Prendick's cannibal tendencies is in some way a transaction or execution of the deed. Such blurring of thought and action anticipates Freud's conception of the unconscious as recognising no distinction between a desire and its fulfilment, which would indicate the drive to cannibalise as essentially synonymous with the act.¹⁴⁴ As Nicholas Royle has mused, 'where does cannibalism start if wishing itself is cannibalistic?' (p.207).

The same question of 'where does cannibalism start?' is a concern Wells also explores in relation to species. Montgomery's insinuation of Prendick's cannibalism is prompted by, and occurs in the context of, the preparation of 'mutton' - that is, animal flesh - for consumption, arousing uncertainty as to where the limits of acceptable meat eating lie, and at what point, or with what type of creature, it is turned into something morally reprehensible. By drawing attention to this border, and its propensity to shift, Wells not only questions the ethics of eating flesh, but also undermines the structure of a human-animal divide. The exclusion of animals from the moral jurisprudence practised by humans - such as the taboo on cannibalism - works to maintain this separation. In possessing the rational capacity to discern right and wrong, humanity is made (in its own perception) an exceptional, better, and higher life form and, as such, has license to dominate other species. But it is precisely this divisive superiority, and attitude of wilful ignorance towards animal welfare that exposes human morality as mere hubris and hypocrisy - a ruse that enables the kind of self-seeking corruption, barbarity, and greed that ensure success in the 'struggle for existence'. As a mechanism of survival human intelligence is nothing more than an evolutionary advantage that, rather than evidencing a separate, elevated status, insists on humanity's integration within the universal family of life. It is having the potential for virtue, but misusing it, that, for Wells, makes humans worse than animals who, lacking the ability to conceive moral principles, cannot be held culpable for the ruthlessly cruel and bloodthirsty aspects of their natures. Hence in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* it is the beast folk who exemplify the human ideal of painful, yet noble, striving towards a greater perfection of existence, and humans who are trapped in the violence, fear and treachery of brute conflict.

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Whether human superiority was believed to be the natural order or a constructed, cultural apparatus, it served an important purpose - as Wells perceived - which was to legitimise the dominance and exploitation of animals for human needs. Since animal labour and products

¹⁴⁴ As referenced and discussed in Royle, pp.207-08.

were integral to the infrastructure of nineteenth-century economic and social systems, the need to maintain a relationship of sanctioned subjugation with creature-kind was crucial. This would have been no easy task in the face of evolutionary theory, which asserted the kinship of all life and in doing so questioned the moral propriety of the habitual treatment of animals as a resource. That these ethical implications were then actuated by movements such as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the Anti Vivisection League, meant that through the second half of the century there was additional and peremptory pressure to modify traditional attitudes and practice.

It is the conception of a divide between animals and humans - the very structure that validates and enables the exploitation of the natural world - that, figured as a gap or gulf, also opens a chink in the armour and makes it vulnerable. The space created by such distancing was also a vacancy that could potentially be filled by the developing or degenerating organisms of evolutionary theory, thus subverting the fundamental difference on which human supremacy, and all its attendant advantages, was based. What emerged as a solution to this paradox was the 'missing link': a hypothetical species that constitutes the evolutionary transition from ape to human, and assumed to be extinct.¹⁴⁵ Constructed as an absence or void, the missing link allows the preservation of a human-animal divide, yet at the same time occupies the vacancy with a presence whose ambiguous identity absorbs, and thus blocks, other prospective interlopers. Neither properly human, nor completely animal, the missing link was a monstrous embodiment of the confusion surrounding the human-animal distinction, but also shaped and contained this field of biological dispute into a figure that personified the abject expanse between traditional dualities of beast and man, nature and culture, wild and civilised and, as such, acted as the barrier or borderline that circumscribed their segregation.

As evolutionary ancestors of the missing link, apes and monkeys display the same ontological uncertainty, which is intensified by the temporal illogic of being extant precursors of an entity long buried in the past. Indeed, it was the simian species that were the cause of the discomfort projected into the conceptual margin proposed by the missing link. With their strikingly humanoid characteristics, apes and monkeys resisted being easily othered along with the rest of animal kind, and were instead invoked as a monstrous 'third term' positioned outside of

¹⁴⁵ The term 'missing links' was first used by the geologist Charles Lyell (1797-1875) in his *Elements of Geology* (Six Volumes London: John Murray, 1838-1855) to describe discrepancies in the system of chronological dating through geological strata (the geologic timescale). The term later came to signify 'transitional fossils' or those of creatures that occupied gaps between accepted genera, especially that between animals and humans. The English biologist T. H. Huxley's (1825-1895) *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1863) was a work of comparative anatomy that looked at the skeletons of men and apes and concluded there were close affiliations. (See Robert A. Martin *Missing Links: Evolutionary Concepts and Transitions Through Time* (Sudbury, Massachusetts: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2004) pp.13,209,222).

the traditional binary structuring of human/non-human. In this sense, extant simians were functionally synonymous with the missing link, in that their disavowal enabled the maintenance of human-animal segregation, but also inherently questioned the veracity of such a divide. An example of apes and monkeys represented in this way in Victorian popular culture can be seen in Rudyard Kipling's 1894 work *The Jungle Book*. As argued in the article 'The Child's Place in Nature: Talking Animals in Victorian Children's Fiction', by Tess Cosslett, the novel builds a fictional terrain of binary oppositions that are defined against the outcast monkey tribe. These contrasts are constructed, and dramatized, through the narrative of Mowgli, a human child raised by wild animals, whose adventures are an exploration of human and animal natures, and the painful choice that must be made between the two, due to the ultimate impossibility of their integration.

Mowgli's initial adoption by a pack of wolves is a highly awkward process that must be negotiated with a legislative 'council', and since many creatures are against him living amongst them, he is never properly accepted. Even those animals with whom Mowgli has intimate bonds - Mother and Father Wolf, Baloo the Bear, and Bagheera the Panther - regard him with a degree of misgiving. He is often referred to as 'man-cub' - a term that reflects his ambiguous standing, and the existential contradiction he presents. The conflict that surrounds Mowgli's ingress to jungle society constructs human and animal ontologies as fundamentally different and oppositional. This distinction is reinforced by the discrete territories to which the two types are confined: the men in the village which, with its huts and croplands, is a place of system, cooperation and work; the animals in the wild landscape of teeming vegetation, dark caves, and mysterious pools that is the jungle, where a life of sport and play is fraught with the constant menace of falling prey to a bigger or better hunter.

While Mowgli is unique in being able to move between these two realms, he is acutely uncomfortable in the human world, and although he yearns for the freedom of the jungle, he is eventually denied by the wolf-pack, to whom his human ways are always conspicuous, and always a potential threat. With his knowledge of the 'Master-Words of the Jungle' passed to him by Baloo, Mowgli can claim protection from, and kinship with, the whole variety of jungle inhabitants, from fishes and birds to snakes and rodents.¹⁴⁶ Yet while the words themselves - 'We be of one blood, ye and I' (JB, p.49) - are seemingly an expression of alliance and altruism, they become a tool that Mowgli uses to 'trick the animals into doing his will' (Cosslett, p.487) and, as such, are the means by which he rises to dominance in the jungle. His eventual command of

¹⁴⁶ Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1975) p.48. Hereafter cited in the text as 'JB' with relevant page number.

powerful and wise creatures, such as Kaa the python, and Hathi the elephant, is confirmation not of his parity with animals, but of his alterity to them, and particularly his superior status as a human.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding Mowgli's character having obvious similarities with the ambiguous condition of monkeys and apes, his ability to fit in anywhere is the privilege of the intelligence and acumen that distinguish him as human. The apprehension that his omnipotent capabilities arouse in the animals emphasises him as different, and other to them, and are the precise definition of his humanity, rather than the cause of classificatory doubt. By contrast, the 'Bandar-Log' or monkey tribe, belong nowhere. They are rejected by those creatures with whom Mowgli identifies himself - the predacious bears, wolves, and big cats - who refuse to recognise their semi-human demeanour as properly animal. At the same time, the monkeys' attempts to imitate the behaviour of men is a parody that serves to reveal the discrepancy between their situation and the fully human status of Mowgli and the villagers. Proper animal or 'jungle' society, although distinct and detached, can be seen to parallel the human in that it is ordered by laws upheld by an innate moral integrity, and certain pride, but the Bandar-Log are portrayed as utterly outside of these realms, having no leader, and no law, and, as a consequence, being 'evil, dirty, shameless' (JB, p.52), and abject in their association with 'filth' (Cosslett, p.490). That Mowgli is 'forbidden' (JB, p.52) from mixing with the Bandar-Log by his animal friends reinforces the idea of a disparity between them, and dissociates the monkeys from any accepted ontology. Refused the definitive status of other beings, the monkeys are consumed with a longing for recognition and the 'desire, if they have any fixed desire, to be noticed by the Jungle-People' (JB, p.50).

Not only do they seek to be noticed, but also to be acknowledged as superior, due to their likeness to humans. Yet their efforts to impress only appear as the kind of attention-seeking Victorian bourgeois sensibility would have considered vulgar, thus confirming their general character as improper and unacceptable.¹⁴⁷ Disowned by jungle society, and unable to access the world of men, the monkeys dwell in the tree-tops - a territory literally suspended between the earth and sky: planes that in traditional elemental symbology respectively represent the mind, or the intellectual, rational and human, and the body, associated with instinct, intuition and the bestial. Their other favoured haunt is the 'Cold Lairs' - a 'Lost City' (JB p.66) of ruins that, like the monkeys themselves, is categorically irresolute, being neither of nature nor culture, innate nor contrived, but something in between. The Bandar-Log's positioning at the limits of ordered

¹⁴⁷ As the moral centre and model of normalcy that structures the novel, the animal protagonists reflect the values of the British middle-class at the nineteenth century fin-de-siecle.

understanding, and their status as abject, indefinite, and unstable, is embedded in Kipling's imagery of 'monkeys huddled together on the walls and battlements [...] like the ragged, shaky fringes of things' (JB, p.80).

The outcasting of monkeys in *The Jungle Book* to a no-man's (and no-animal's) land - which they at once occupy and embody - enables the human relationship to nature, and other species, to be interpreted as a clear-cut duality of 'us and them'. Even though Mowgli moves between these territories, their delineation as singular, and segregated, means he retains the identity of a misappropriated human rather than one whose authenticity is questionable. To integrate anthropoid apes into the scheme would be to disrupt its simplified vision with graduated scales of differentiation, coloured with subtle and complex shades of similitude, divergence, fluctuation, exchange, and interdependence. It would also necessitate the uncomfortable acknowledgement of those morally repulsive or proscribed behaviours - aggression, violence, greed, sexual vice - usually othered as 'animal', as intrinsic aspects of the human.¹⁴⁸

The figure of the missing link was an even more effective cultural strategy for displacing the difficulty presented by monkeys and apes since it erected a barrier between human and simian. This had the effect of distancing and isolating humanity from the rest of creature kind, including primates, and supplanted the issue of human proximity to animals with a reactionary demand for proof that such a connection was in fact viable. The indeterminate, abject and subversive qualities that Kipling candidly attributes to monkeys and apes, were projected onto the missing link, shifting the anxieties they provoked to an externalised, tangible, and monstrous shape. At the same time, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has elucidated, the monster is 'pure culture' - a concept and a construct and, as such, always evasive; a form that continually threatens to materialise but remains ever out of reach (p.4). For the nineteenth-century imaginary, the search for the missing link was very much in Cohen's monstrous mode, having both the empirical gravitas of scientific theory, and the romance and mystery of a mythical quest. The entity itself, consigned to the remote past, and thus seemingly safely contained, was simultaneously always on the verge of erupting into the corporeal present, but only as the fossilised traces of something that was - the 'footprints, bones, talismans, teeth, shadows, obscured glimpses' that both verify the monstrous body and signify its riddance (Cohen, p.6).

A fusion of tall tales and pseudo-science, the Victorian sideshow was the ideal incubator for monsters, and it was a freak presentation that anticipated, and provided a model for, the monstrous configuration of the missing link. Various displayed as the 'Bear-Woman', the 'Ape-

¹⁴⁸ The deeper irony of Kipling's novel is that his animal characters, being endowed with speech, are anthropomorphised hybrids: that is, not animals at all, but, like the creatures of fable, an analogy of human conditions and social dynamics.

Woman', the 'Baboon Lady' and 'The Nondescript' (a title that, like 'missing link', paradoxically constructs its object as a negation), Julia Pastrana was the prototype zoomorphic hybrid, and one of the most infamous freak performers of the age.¹⁴⁹ Born in Mexico in 1834, Pastrana was afflicted with what are now thought to have been two rare genetic disorders - hypertrichosis, which caused her to grow a beard and coarse hair all over her body, and gingival hyperplasia, a thickening of the gums that gave her jaw a protruding, simian appearance.¹⁵⁰ Her story of exploitation, unrequited love, and early death, is consummately tragic on a personal level, while in the wider context of social and cultural history, it is exemplary of the functional role played by constructions of the monstrous during periods of ideological conflict and civil upheaval, such as those that marked the nineteenth century.

Julia was first exhibited in December 1854 at the Gothic Hall on Broadway, New York City, where she was promoted as 'The Marvellous Hybrid Bear Woman' and this idea of hybridity, or a confluence of contradictions, was the essence of her construction as a freak.¹⁵¹ Accounts of Julia's birth and early life, given in contemporary exhibition pamphlets, have her originate in ambiguous territory - rather like the uncertain haunts of Kipling's monkeys - as the child of an 'Indian' (that is, Native American) woman, separated from her tribe and compelled to dwell in a cave, in a manner part wild, part civilised. Since the region in which mother and daughter were discovered was uninhabited by humans, but abundant with bears, monkeys and baboons,¹⁵² Julia's conception was sensationally suggested to be the result of interspecies breeding.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ The internet resource juliapastranaonline.com consolidates Pastrana related material from a large pool of disparate archives and contains digital facsimiles of contemporary posters, printed ephemera, articles, and newspaper reports from her first 1854 performances in New York and Boston which variously deem her a 'mysterious link', 'bear lady' and 'baboon lady'. The Wellcome Library holds a woodcut poster advertisement and a lithograph, both for a performance at Regent Hall, Regent Street, in London, that call her 'The Nondescript Wonder of the World' (c. 1856-58) which can be viewed at the Wellcome Images website under iconographic collections.

¹⁵⁰ Jan Bondeson, and A. E. W. Miles, 'Julia Pastrana, The Nondescript: An Example of Congenital Generalized Hypertrichosis Terminalis with Gingival Hyperplasia', *American Journal of Medical Genetics*, 47 (1993) pp.198-212.

¹⁵¹ Jan Bondeson's account of Julia Pastrana's life and career in *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities* (Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1997) pp.216-244) makes extensive use of contemporary promotional material and printed ephemera to present a scholarly biographical outline, and is the main source of the information I have given here. *Julia Pastrana: The Tragic Story of the Victorian Ape Woman* by Christopher Hals Gylseth and Lars O. Toverund (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2003) is a more sensational take on her life story.

¹⁵² A claim which ignored the fact that apes and baboons are not indigenous to the Americas.

¹⁵³ An early source for Pastrana's spurious biography was an illustrated pamphlet relating the tale of the 'Hybrid Indian, the misnomered bear woman, Julia Pastrana' (Concord, New Hampshire: Steam Job Press of Macfarland and Jenks, 1855); a copy is held at Yale University in the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, and a facsimile is accessible at <http://juliapastranaonline.com/files/original/ae0adc3aefa02527b1c40763f705b918.pdf>

The only known photograph taken of Julia Pastrana while alive (figure 24), is dated 1857, and depicts her as her stage persona, the crafting of which is informed by the notion of unnatural union.¹⁵⁴



Figure 24. *Julia Pastrana*, 1857, photographic print on paper, (unknown photographer), Royal College of Surgeons, London.

A masculine beard, and heavy features, are juxtaposed with the feminine figure and embroidered gown. Both beard and hair are carefully styled, counter to the feral disorder they imply. The delicate flowers that decorate her crown simultaneously signify organic nature and the culturally refined, and sit strangely with the coarse face. Her abnormal excess of hair conventionally suggests the animal, and carries associations of wild instinct and impulse, that jar

¹⁵⁴ The image was taken by an unknown photographer and is part of the Frances Buckland Collection, now held at the Royal College of Surgeons, London.

with the solemn atmosphere surrounding the sepulchral sculpture she is leaning against. This monumental fragment also has a feeling of the museum about it - of institution, exhibition, exposition, education - that chimes with the freak show's mode of populist pedagogy. The subject's ponderous gaze, directed away from the viewer, would have us believe she is lost in contemplation, but the gesture is designed to enable – even to invite – the viewer's unrestricted scrutiny, and its deliberateness betrays an implicit consciousness of herself, as both photographic, and theatrical, spectacle. Her pose, with crossed legs and clasped hands, is likewise highly contrived, its formality and artifice at odds with her supposed animal-inclined nature. Even down to the boldly contrasted light and dark hues of Julia's clothing, the image is a clash of extremes that produces the monstrous through its incoherence and resistance to 'easy categorisation' within bifurcated systems of understanding (Cohen, p.6).

At once intriguing and disturbing, the fusion of opposites manifest in Julia Pastrana drew large crowds on the entertainment circuit, and the shows in New York expanded into a tour of the U.S.A., and subsequent exhibitions in London and continental Europe. It was not only the theatre-going public but also doctors and scientists who were fascinated by Pastrana.¹⁵⁵ Alexander B. Mott, M.D., who examined her in New York, concluded that she was a hybrid of a human and an orang-utan, while Mr. Samuel Kneeland Jr., curator of comparative anatomy for the Boston Natural History Society believed her to be unequivocally human. In London, a report published by Dr. J. Z. Laurence in the *Lancet* was more dubious, describing Julia's hairy body as a human anomaly, but maintaining that her breasts were remarkably well developed and that she menstruated regularly.¹⁵⁶ Pastrana also seems to have presented a racial conundrum, with one S. Brainerd M.D., having studied a sample of her hair under the microscope, declaring her as having 'no trace of negro blood' (cited in Bondeson, p.219). Such conflicting information from these self-proclaimed authoritative sources only added to the confusion that was the source of Julia's appeal as a freak.

The troubling inconsistency of Julia's ontological condition was the subject of a poem by Arthur Munby (1828-1910), titled with her name 'Pastrana'. An English barrister and man of letters - infamous for his controversial, class-transgressive relationship with Shropshire maidservant Hannah Cullwick - Munby was inspired to produce the thirty-two stanza work after seeing Julia on exhibition in Germany in 1857, although the piece did not appear until 1909,

¹⁵⁵ An 1855 pamphlet, published in New Hampshire, contains Doctor Mott's 'certificate' of authenticity, a report from the Boston Natural History Society, and an account of 'Professor' Brainerd's medical examination. A number of newspaper reports on Pastrana's 1854 exhibition at the Boston Natural History Society are available in digitised format at juliapastranaonline.com.

¹⁵⁶ J. Z. Laurence, 'A Short Account of the Bearded and Hairy Female', *The Lancet*, 70:1767 (11th July 1857) p.48.

when it was published in his verse collection *Relicta*.¹⁵⁷ A strange narrative, in which the identities of a baboon and a woman mysteriously overlap, correspond, and eventually merge, the poem perfectly expresses the confusion concerning the human-animal distinction that worried the cultural imagination of the mid nineteenth century. It begins with the narrator describing his encounter with a 'black ape',¹⁵⁸ a creature figured as other not only in type, but also in its foreign origin 'from over the sea', emphasised by the racial descriptor intimated in 'black'. Gendered as 'she' the ape also presents a foil to male centrality - specifically, the 'young' nameless narrator. Yet there is also a disquieting familiarity about this alienated figure that has a 'look of a creature in disguise', and emits an uncanny aura of uncertainty, or a perceptible tension between what it is, and what it seems or is supposed, that causes the narrator to 'doubt/ If she were an ape indeed'.

'Hairy', 'brute', 'monstrous', and 'hideous', yet also 'languid' and 'blithe', with an 'elfish look', the ape is both grotesque and ethereal, and these varied qualities spark equally mixed feelings of 'disgust' and dread, and fascinated 'awe' in the narrator. The creature is also affected with inexplicable and motiveless animal 'wrath', in which the narrator nonetheless perceives a conscious intent that 'meant too much and [...] reach'd too high / To come of an apelike kind', and fearing 'what power she had to harm' he makes a hurried exit. Later on, while having dinner at his hotel, his attention is captivated by a mysterious, and peculiar lady, who is 'comely and young', with 'wonderful hair', but with an aspect in her 'elfish stare' that puts him in mind of the 'grim baboon' he encountered earlier in the garden.

Both ape and 'lady' inspire the same sensations of attraction and repulsion, the distinctly sexual character of which is apparent in the narrator's lingering description of the lady's 'lips to kiss', as well as the 'shudders' and 'thrills' that convulse him when observing the baboon, and his mingled fear and fantasy of being 'hugg'd to death in the foul embrace / Of a loathly, angry ape'. The fetishised, 'steel-bright collar and chain' that binds the ape to a tree, and is echoed in the necklace - a 'white metallic thing', that 'gleams' around the 'throat' of the strange woman, is particularly significant in this respect, since Munby's relationship with Hannah Cullwick was of a master-slave dynamic, and included the erotic practice of her wearing a leather strap around her wrist, and locking chain around her neck, to which Munby held the key.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ It is assumed that, although Munby's experience of Julia Pastrana took place many years before, that the poem was written some time around the turn of the century, as he states in the forward to the 1909 edition of *Relicta* that 'the contents of the book are recent'. (Arthur Munby, *Relicta: Verses* (London: Bertram and Dobell, 1909) p.13).

¹⁵⁸ Arthur Munby, 'Pastrana', in *Relicta: Verses*.

¹⁵⁹ See: Diane Atkinson, *Love and Dirt: The Marriage of Arthur Munby and Hannah Cullwick* (London: Pan Books, 2004); Carol Mavor, *Pleasures Taken: Performances of Sexuality and Loss in Victorian Photographs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) p.91.

The woman's ambiguity is also notable in her silence, that might be down to her enigmatic character, or a bestial lack of language. It is only at the close of the poem, when she is trapped in a net, and dragged, fighting and struggling against her captors, from the hotel - apparently having been perceived, despite her quietude, as some sort of threat - that she is given a voice of sorts: 'Not [one] to soothe and bless', as is properly becoming of a 'woman's charms', but 'a scream and a roar and a growl; / More like a cry of beasts that howl'. It is on this utterance that the distinction between woman and ape collapses entirely, and the two are supernaturally synthesized, and strangely melded together. The final lines of the poem "Lassen Sie es nicht gehen hinaus - / Das schlechte schwarze Thier!" ("Do not let it go out / The bad black beast!") are a plea to contain the encroaching beasts, and to fortify the crumbling barrier that separates humans from animals, or risk creating monstrous amalgamations like the woman-ape. As in all constructions of the monstrous, however, Munby's xeno/zoophobic terror is 'really a kind of desire' (Cohen, p.16). The anger, violence, passion, and vicissitude shunned onto the ape/woman figure are actually fantasies that originate within, which is evident in the sexual inflections in Munby's representation.

For Victorian mass society, Pastrana's controversial and indefinable strangeness made an engaging act, and since she proved such a lucrative enterprise, there was a clamour to gain control of her career. Between 1854 and 1857 she underwent several changes of manager, the last of whom - Theodore Lent - secured his interest by proposing marriage, which Julia accepted. What their private life was like can only be guessed. Contemporary accounts by outside observers of the relationship generally represent Lent as an avaricious impresario who viewed Julia as little more than a commercial investment. She was kept completely under his control, locked indoors when she was not on display, and only permitted to travel to shows wearing a black veil, since being seen on the street might diminish her earning capacity.¹⁶⁰ She had little interaction with the world at large that was not engineered by Lent. He often spoke on her behalf, describing her as 'always cheerful and perfectly contented with her situation in life' and even stating that 'she did not see the necessity' of making money (Bondeson, p.221).¹⁶¹ Julia herself is said to have told her friend Friederike Gossman, an Austrian singer, that Lent 'loved her for herself' (Bondeson, p.230), and Jan Bondeson (p.226) imagines that she was 'touchingly devoted' to her husband.

It was under Lent's management that Julia's exhibition was expanded to become a more active performance that showcased her talents for dancing and singing. She could also speak three

¹⁶⁰ Bess Lovejoy, 'Julia Pastrana: "A Monster to the Whole World"', Publicdomainreview.org. 26.11.2014

¹⁶¹ Bondeson does not give the specific source for these quotations, but a report in the *London Evening Standard* of 8th December 1857 (p.5), on a press lunch held with Lent, to promote Julia's performance, contains similar remarks. (See <http://juliapastranaonline.com/items/show/36>).

languages, and even played a grotesque in a burlesque play in Leipzig, in 1857. Yet rather than being understood as expressions of a rich and complex interior reality, of the kind that defines a human subject, these accomplishments were simply other aspects of her aberrance – such refinement being incongruous with her animalised otherness. Interpreted according to the then prevalent empiricist epistemology, that privileged formal structure as the basis of species assignation, Julia's hairy physique and simian features would have signalled her bestial nature and – in keeping with the Cartesian view of animal ontology – an accompanying lack of self-awareness and rational intelligence.

While there was a perceptible tension between this notion, and Julia's evident subjective reality, instead of validating her humanity her personal charm was turned into another aspect of her monstrosity: a fearful and fascinating chimeric juxtaposition promoted to entice the public. Plus it was simply less complicated, and more convenient – not to mention capitably and culturally profitable – for promoters and audiences alike to view her as an unthinking commodity. Thus Julia's affable disposition, fine *mezzo-soprano* voice, and enthusiasm for the Highland Fling, were presented as little beyond the mechanistic responses of an animal trained to perform for public amusement.

It is pitiful to know that the man closest to her, and the person who should, above all others, have recognised and respected Julia as a person, was the one who most vehemently endorsed and encouraged her exploitation and dehumanisation. The objectification of Julia, led by Theodore Lent, became startlingly literal when, after her death, Lent continued to display the preserved and stuffed corpses of Julia and her son for money, leaving no doubt as to his mercenary attitude, not only towards her, but also his own child. Julia discovered she was pregnant in 1859, and was touring with the Circus Salomansky, in Moscow, when she delivered a baby boy in March 1860. Because of her diminutive dimensions – she stood only four feet six inches (1.37m) tall – and the large size of the eight pound (3.6 kg) infant, the birth was difficult. Afflicted with the same excessive hair and facial deformities as his mother, the newborn baby suffered from irremediable asphyxia and survived only thirty-five hours. Julia herself, lacerated from the use of obstetric forceps to deliver the child, died five days later from metro peritonitis puerperalis – inflammation of the uterus and peritoneum. It is said that Lent admitted private viewings of her on her deathbed.¹⁶²

Having made an easy and prosperous living off Julia for several years, it seems Lent was loathe to lose his source of income, and in a final bid to maximise his profits, he sold the bodies of

¹⁶² See: Lovejoy, 'A Monster to the Whole World.'

his wife and son to a Professor Sukolov of Moscow University, who wished to preserve them.¹⁶³ Sukolov's process was a secret combination of embalming and taxidermy that took some six months to complete, and when the 'mummies' were finished they were put on display in the anatomical museum of the University of Moscow (figures 25 and 26). This was the Cartesian conception of the animal, and its application to Julia Pastrana, taken to its logical extreme. Stripped of interior constitution and reduced to the corporeal matter of the body, she becomes all surface – a material artefact whose discernible form is the totality of its existential worth.



Figure 25. 'Mummy' of Julia Pastrana, c.1860s,
<http://allthatsinteresting.com/julia-pastrana>

Despite, or perhaps because of, their rather macabre nature, the mummies, when displayed, attracted great interest, and the unconscionable Lent, recognising a further commercial opportunity, negotiated to re-purchase them. Having secured their custody, Lent took the mummies to London, and in February 1862 Julia was again put on exhibition, this time as 'The Embalmed Female Nondescript'. Now as much a marvel of mortuary technology as a monstrous freak, with all the uncanny temporal and ontological disruption of a taxidermic model, there was much comment on the life-like appearance of the figures, as well as ongoing speculation concerning the nature of Julia's abnormality.

¹⁶³ J. Sokolov (*sic.*), 'Julia Pastrana and her Child', translated by M. Ralston, *The Lancet* 79:2018 (3rd May 1862) 467-469.



Figure 26. 'Mummies' of Julia Pastrana and her son, photographed c.1860s, juliapastranaonline.com

Through all her sad and varied fortunes, the construction of Julia Pastrana as a monster, and her power to enthrall and disturb always endured. Perhaps even more compellingly in death, since as a preserved cadaver her already incoherent deformity was intensified by all the additional disruptive properties inherent in taxidermic models: their slippage between the states of subject and object; the temporal illogic of being both dead and illusorily alive; the repulsive and abject quality of the corpse and, specific to Julia and her baby, the uncomfortable moral questions surrounding the taxidermy of humans.¹⁶⁴ Pastrana's person and story have continued to interest and influence popular culture in the twenty-first century. Australian visual artist Patricia Piccinini's hyper-real sculptures of uncanny, interspecies entities undermine the human-animal boundary and expose the problematic nature of taxonomic distinction, just as the freak display of Julia Pastrana had done in the nineteenth century. Piccinini's 2005 work, *Big Mother* (figure 27), is especially reminiscent of the mummies of Julia and her infant - if not directly in composition, then very much so in its atmosphere and essence, with its themes of human-ape hybridism and the mother-child dynamic, as well as the melancholy yet somehow defiant aspect of the figure.

¹⁶⁴ The use of the term 'mummy' with its archaic mystique and sense of respected tradition seems to have been a convenient displacement of this issue.

Figure 27. Patricia Piccinini,
Big Mother, 2005,
 Silicone, fiberglass, polyurethane, leather,
 human hair, height 175cm.
 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia.



It was in the mid-twentieth century that representations of Pastrana proper shifted towards the aim of understanding her subjective reality, rather than merely marvelling at her strangeness or attempting to diagnose her condition. The 1964 Italian/French film *La Donna Scimmia* (*The Ape Woman*), directed by Marco Ferreri, was a sympathetic biopic that heralded a new fascination with Julia's experiences as a social misfit, and the emotional ramifications of being outcast. Literary fiction by authors Michelle Lovric¹⁶⁵ and, most recently, Carol Birch's novel, *Orphans of the Carnival* (2016), has produced more immediate biographical narratives, that strive to get under the skin of Pastrana, and to imagine her existence in a way that redresses the dehumanised and one-sided understanding of her as an inferior, animalised freak, consummated by her transformation into a literal soul/mind-less body.¹⁶⁶ *The True History of the Tragic Life and Triumphant Death of Julia Pastrana, the Ugliest Woman in the World*, a play by Shaun Prendergrast, is performed entirely in the dark, and goes to the opposite extreme of representing Julia as disembodied consciousness or a sentient presence, without a physical form.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Michelle Lovric's short piece on Pastrana, titled 'Hair in all the wrong places' (05.2014) can be read on the website and blog 'History Girls' at: <<http://the-history-girls.blogspot.co.uk/2014/05/hair-in-all-wrong-places-michelle-lovric.html>>

¹⁶⁶ Carol Birch, *Orphans of the Carnival*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2016).

¹⁶⁷ Shaun Prendergrast (b.1958), is an English television actor and writer. The play debuted at Battersea Arts Centre, London, on 5th July 1998.



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Julia Pastrana was just one prominent example of a freak performer whose ‘intelligent’, ‘kindly’ and ‘sensitive’ (Bondeson, p.221/225) personality (as she was described by various contemporaries who met her) was at odds with her beastly countenance; and although this was packaged as an aspect of her monstrosity, it also highlighted, and questioned, the relationship between appearance and character. Such subliminal recognition of Julia’s subjective existence, and the empathy it enabled, was an early symptom of a growing public reluctance to buy into the kind of sideshow ballyhoo that rallied sensation at the expense of an individual’s dignity. As nineteenth-century perceptions shifted towards the conscious subjects that inhabited supposedly grotesque and distorted bodies, freak display began to appear increasingly exploitative and tasteless, and the figurative discrepancy between physical form, and inner being, that mobilised these changes, became ever more pronounced.

Joseph Carey Merrick (1862-1890) was a man whose flesh was so corrupt, and whose moral perfection so absolute, that the two could not be reconciled. The ‘Elephant Man’, as Merrick was and is famously known, first appeared in the context of freak display in 1884, in a former shop

premises on the Whitechapel Road in London, hired for the express purpose of his exhibition.¹⁶⁸ While promoter Tom Norman's attempt to present Merrick as a zoomorphic human-elephant hybrid may have excited public intrigue, it did nothing to negotiate his severe deformities, or to mitigate his obvious anguish. Growing awareness of freak display as degrading - for audiences as well as performers - meant that the kind of whimsical, fairytale-animal analogy that had appealed to sideshow spectators of the past was losing its charm. No doubt such allusion felt particularly opprobrious in the face of Joseph Merrick's profoundly abject condition. The idea of an elephant was perhaps only helpful in that it captured a sense of something too vast, excessive, and unwieldy, to be easily contained.

If the tactics of fantasy failed to find any meaning in Joseph's affliction, empirical discourses were equally unavailing. When London Hospital surgeon Sir Frederick Treves (1853-1923) paid a shilling (the usual going rate was two pence) for a private view of the Elephant Man he was utterly dumfounded, having never encountered such a being before, either in theory or practice, despite his extensive professional experience.¹⁶⁹ Nonetheless, since the objective of pathology was to explore the secret intricacies of the body - and Merrick certainly qualified as uncharted territory - the case was brought under medical management, with Treves in charge. The construction of Joseph Merrick as a bifurcated subject - that is, a person whose soul and body were recognisable as discrete and mutually exclusive elements of their self - was largely the product of Treves's retrospective account of their time together, titled simply 'The Elephant Man' (1923).¹⁷⁰ This divisive conception was the only way Treves could accommodate the enormity of Merrick's monstrosity within accepted models of understanding, and it remains very much a part of the Elephant Man mythology. Breaking Merrick down into these constituent parts forces him to conform to the familiar theoretical pattern of mind-body dualism, which in turn offers a means of dealing with his extreme abnormality. In this way the horrible disorder of Merrick's physical form became the property of medicine, the objectifying gaze of which enabled his flesh to be viewed as pure organic matter, and its corruption as an inherent process of nature. His mind,

¹⁶⁸ Then number 123 Whitechapel Road, now renumbered 259. Merrick is thought to have appeared before the public on two previous occasions - once in his home town of Leicester, and also in Nottingham - as part of a variety show. This came about after Merrick had written to Sam Torr (1849-1923), a former music-hall comedian and proprietor of Sam Torr's Gaiety Palace of Varieties in Leicester, in the hope of exhibiting himself as a means of escaping the workhouse. See: Michael Howell, and Peter Ford, *The True History of the Elephant Man* (London: Penguin, 1992) pp.1; 62-3.

¹⁶⁹ Sir Frederick Treves (1853-1923) trained as a surgeon at the London Hospital Medical College. He specialised in abdominal surgery and performed the first appendectomy in 1888. In 1875 he became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and a fellow in 1878, and received his knighthood in 1901. He was also Surgeon Extraordinary to Queen Victoria. Treves was a gifted author, producing works in the genre of travel writing as well as primers for medical students.

¹⁷⁰ The piece was originally published in 1923, in Treves's collection *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1923).

or soul, in contrast, fell to the processes of fiction, which combined romanticised notions of childlike innocence, heroic endurance, and faultless conduct, to create an image of ideal moral beauty. Portraying these vastly differing aspects of Merrick's person as separate also precluded the monstrosity arising from their incongruity.

The figure of the martyr is another important influence upon Treves's dichotomous representation of Joseph Merrick. Martyr narratives and images operate on the trope of body-mind division and are the historical model for depictions of body horror. The martyr's true self is his or her immortal soul, distinct from physical form, which is a temporary, earthly shell, the torture and desecration of which facilitates divine transcendence. As I discuss at length in chapter four, the concept and image of martyrdom was particularly significant in the context of nineteenth-century medical practice, since its construction of bodily torment as a spiritually productive experience was invoked to make the otherwise pointless suffering of the sick meaningful. Thus Treves - a medical man - structures his interpretation of Merrick's affliction as a version of martyrdom that sees body and soul not only as separate elements, but as polar opposites, the appalling corruption of Joseph's flesh producing the proportionally adverse extreme of his saintly soul. With Merrick's monstrosity consigned to his body, his mind became a parallel, yet independently functioning complex of thoughts and emotions, that anticipates the modernist preoccupation with interior life and personal cognisance as a distinct aspect of reality, as well as modernist novels that crystallise the association of mind with the literary, abstract and fictional.

Treves's narrative is also one of transformation, in which the subject's conversion from half-bestial indigent, to civilised dignitary, produces a corresponding development of thought, from incomprehension to, if not knowledge (since Treves famously failed to account for Merrick's condition, for which there is still no precise diagnosis), then at least to the effort of methodical inquiry. The Elephant Man with whom Treves is first confronted bears no resemblance, either formal or conceptual, to any familiar species or character type, but is a figure of mystery and wonder - an otherworldly 'wizard'¹⁷¹ or a 'hideous [...] Indian idol' (Treves, p.191). The Gothic ambience of the dark, dank hovel in which flickering shadows cast by the spectral, blue light of a bunsen burner distort his vision, intensifies the sense of bewilderment and foreboding. Treves, however, quickly switches to a medical register of detached observation, and while his horror is undiminished, he is able to impose order on Merrick's chaotic form by fragmenting it and comparing the parts to things he knows: Merrick's head is 'enormous' and

¹⁷¹ Sir Frederick Treves, 'The Elephant Man', in Michael Howell and Peter Ford, *The True History of the Elephant Man*. Further quotations will be indicated in the text by 'Treves' with a page reference.

‘misshapened’, but the brow is ‘like a loaf’; his skin is ‘fungous-looking’ and like ‘cauliflower’ (Treves, p.182); his face is ‘a block of gnarled wood’ (p.183); his thumb ‘had the appearance of a radish, while the fingers might have been thick, tuberous roots’ (p.183). The profusion of botanical imagery locates Merrick in the intrinsically corporeal realm of primordial nature, affiliating him with the lowest forms of biological life, and their copious growth, and emphasising the gross and material qualities of his flesh. The plant metaphors also implicitly draw a parallel between Merrick’s person, and the scene-setting details of ‘shrivelled potatoes’ and ‘vague vegetable refuse’ (Treves, p.181) that litter the premises, suggesting organic decay and corruption. The double meaning of ‘vegetable’ also alludes to Treves’s initial supposition that Merrick is an ‘imbecile’ (Treves, p.184).

Prior to Treves’s intervention Merrick’s life was defined by ‘constant movement’ (Treves, p.190) as he is ‘dragged from town to town and from fair to fair’ (p.189), his unsettled circumstances a reflection of his ambiguous status, and resistance to being pinned down or fixed by any system of classification or traditional philosophy. Making a schism of Merrick’s identity was the only way in which the magnitude of his monstrosity could even approach something like coherence. And once the body of Merrick was regulated and contained, by the processes of medicine, Treves was able to segregate the construction of his character, which proved to be ‘highly intelligent [...] possessed [of] an acute sensibility and [...] a romantic imagination’ (p.185). To dissociate Merrick’s exemplary disposition from his atrocious anatomy Treves isolates his psychological constitution from its origin in, and connection to, the empirical environment. Thus the convergence of biological, social and ideological factors from which an individual character commonly emerges become, in Merrick, entirely abstract effects: his early life is a ‘nightmare’, his father ‘nothing’, his mother ‘a memory’ (p.188). ‘He had no past to look back upon and no future to look forward to’ (p.189). He is a being detached from historical specificity, who exists in the timeless and spatially unbound realm of pure thought. Accordingly, Merrick finds the truest expression of his self within the arena of the conceptual. The stories he loves to read are ‘real to him’ (Treves, p.188), as is the pantomime he is taken to see; he discusses their characters and twists of plot ‘as incidents in the lives of people who [...] lived’ (p.188) or ‘a vision of some actual world’ (p.197). While the body of Merrick recedes into the fabric of base matter, his inner being exalts in a fictional domain, where he is ‘mentally [...] “dressed up”’ (Treves, p.194) as a ‘dandy’, ‘gallant’ or ‘Don Juan’ (p.195). Treves underlines Merrick’s life as a fantasy figure by describing him in terms of mythical alter-egos, such as ‘The Man with the Iron Mask’, a ‘Venetian bravo’ (p.184) and ‘Adonis’ (p.194).

To maintain the division between Merrick's physical form, and his metaphysical being, Treves 'would not allow a mirror of any kind in his room' (Treves, p.193). This meant that Merrick – during his life at the London Hospital, at least – was never able to access an exterior perspective of himself; that is, to perceive himself as other, and thereby attach his ego to a tangible shape. That Treves segregates Merrick's inner life from his bodily existence and also construes his mind to be 'primitive' (p.188) and like that of a 'child' (pp.188,190,194), constructs an ontology that anticipates the Freudian theory of oceanic consciousness.¹⁷² This state precedes maternal separation and the mirror stage, which facilitate the formation of the self as subject, and sees the infant move through experience as a complex of desires and emotions, rather than as a properly defined and delimited material presence. In the field of oceanic bliss, as in the disembodied ontology of Merrick's true self, there are no formal or dimensional constraints, and no distinction between the real and the fictional.

As a divided entity, Merrick could be admitted into - even embraced by - the conventional social and epistemological order. In Treves's version of his life-story this is achieved by the medical management of his body, which effectively absolves Merrick himself of his troubling physical predicament, and enables his spirit to flourish. Under these conditions he even comes to keep company with the great and good of his era, and even enjoyed the favour of Queen Alexandra (then Princess of Wales). Should these two discrete and discordant aspects of his identity ever integrate, however, it would create a monstrosity too immense to comprehend or accommodate. The disastrous consequences of such a confluence is the subject of Oscar Wilde's story 'The Birthday of the Infanta', in which a deformed dwarf's realisation of his own abnormality is the cause of his death. Published in 1891, Wilde's tale is a text that sits in dialogue with the cultural construction of Joseph Merrick, having been written contemporaneously with the widely publicised saga of the Elephant Man's ventures, and pre-dating Treves's own retrospectively penned narrative.¹⁷³

There are notable parallels between the characterisation of Wilde's dwarf and that of Joseph Merrick. That the premise of Wilde's narrative is a monstrous individual flattered by the attentions of a princess surely owes something to the royal regard focused on Merrick. Princess Alexandra not only visited Merrick several times at the London Hospital,¹⁷⁴ but also showered him with gifts, inspiring a 'cult' amongst her 'personal friends'¹⁷⁵ - society ladies who moved in

¹⁷² This theory is outlined by Freud in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1929).

¹⁷³ 'The Birthday of the Infanta' was first published along with three other tales in the collection *A House of Pomegranates* (London: James R. Osgood McIlvaine and Co., 1891).

¹⁷⁴ The first of these visits occurred in May of 1887. (See Howell and Ford, pp.117-120; 193-94).

¹⁷⁵ Sir John Bland-Sutton, *The Story of a Surgeon, etc.* (London: Methuen and Co., 1930) quoted in Howell and Ford, p.118. Sutton (1855-1936) was a London Hospital surgeon and contemporary of Treves.

the same circles as Wilde - for patronising him, and bestowing on him all manner of trinkets and prizes. While similar, the situation in Wilde's story is presented rather more cynically, as one of disdainful exploitation. When the little dwarf is invited to dance at the infanta of Spain's birthday party he - although unconscious of it himself - is jeered at and derided for his ugly and aberrant appearance. The infanta, 'for a jest', and in mock admiration, throws him the perfect white rose she has been wearing in her hair, which he in his innocence and naivety takes at face value as a token of her love, and cherishes the bloom with a reverential fervour.¹⁷⁶ In 'The Elephant Man' Treves describes, in comparable tones, how Merrick was 'transported with delight', and 'quite overcome', by Princess Alexandra's gift of a signed photograph, and how he treated the object with almost sacred adoration, not permitting anyone to touch it, and having it framed and 'put up in his room as a kind of ikon' (p.193).

'The Birthday of the Infanta' explores the quality of beauty, and its manifestation in contrasting somatic/spiritual, and natural/artificial forms, structuring its moral intelligence on the same dualities Treves uses to elucidate the strangeness of Merrick. Discovered 'running wild in the forest' (Wilde, p.105), Wilde's dwarf, like the Joseph Merrick of Treves's interpretation, is affiliated with nature. The dwarf has an intimate kinship with the woodland creatures, whom he lives amongst as one of their own, 'sharing his nuts with the squirrels' (Wilde, p.108) or basking in the sun with the lizards, who 'played and romped all over him' (p.109). Since he is unconscious of his body, it does not determine or constrain his experience. His perception of self is of the same infantile, boundless, oceanic character, as that which Treves attributes to Joseph Merrick, in which self and other, and actual and imagined, are shifting, mutable states with no fixed boundaries. Consequently, the dwarf is a being who transcends conventional distinctions of wild-civilised, animal-human and fantasy-reality. He is an 'elf' (Wilde, p.108) and a confederate of the mythical, zoomorphic nature deity, Pan, whose pipe he likes to 'fashion from the long-jointed bamboo' (p.110). His reality is the animistic universe of the primitive, and of fable and fairytale, and his point of view is expressed by Wilde's switch to a magical, narrative register, in which plants, animals, and objects are sentient and articulate.

Without awareness of his body the dwarf is also without vanity, self-interest, or discrimination. His beauty is the moral beauty of innocence, and his unified reality, in which all life is equally valid, is demonstrated in an expansive compassion that sees him divide his 'poor breakfast' (Wilde, p.108) with the famished birds. It is a beauty shared and surpassed by Merrick, who is also 'gentle, affectionate and lovable [...] free from any trace of cynicism or resentment, without a grievance and without an unkind word for anyone' (Treves, p.189). While the

¹⁷⁶ Oscar Wilde, 'The Birthday of the Infanta', in *Fairy Tales* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1971) p.106.

innocence of Wilde's dwarf, however, is produced by his seclusion from society in the forest, Merrick has suffered 'brutish' exploitation, cruelty and abuse (Treves, p.189); and yet he manages to avoid sinking into resentment and despair, being rather 'ennobled' by his 'troubles' and, (in Treves's account) retaining his gracious outlook by detaching his self identity from the body that arouses such disgust and fear in his fellows, and cultivating a consciousness that is, in essence, of the same innocent purity as that of Wilde's dwarf.

As a dancer, Wilde's dwarf is associated with movement, spontaneity and the dynamic flow of elemental energy. He follows the natural rhythm of the seasons, and knows 'a great many wonderful things' (Wilde, p.110) about the wild environment, such as 'how to make little cages out of rushes for the grasshoppers to sing in', how to 'track the hare by its delicate footprints and the boar by the trampled leaves', and 'make a necklace of red bryony berries' (p.112). Contrasted with the vitality, and transient, natural beauty of the dwarf's forest domain, is the meticulously structured life of the Spanish court. As the bastion of high culture and 'State-affairs' (Wilde, p.100) it is a sphere ruled by religious and political ideology, where behaviour is formalised by ritual, and ordered by the imposition of abstract concepts. Time, for instance, is regulated by routine - the 'hour of siesta' (p.106) and the 'trumpet [...] sounding' (p.101) that synchronises activity, while social hierarchy is preserved by the 'strict order of precedence' (p.101), predicated on the arbitrary patterns of language, in which the children must follow the infanta into the gardens, 'those who had the longest names going first'.

At the centre of this measured existence is the magnificent palace, the luxury and artistry of which is the material expression of the cultural refinement that structures courtly society. Yet the very beauty of design, and richness of substance, that gives the gorgeous architecture, and precious objects, their intensely sensual appeal is also a form of restriction, and stasis, that is the inverse of the impulsive animation represented by the dwarf. Mired in such inert elegance, the King takes on the same attitude as his surroundings, and stagnates in sorrow for the deceased queen; while her beautiful, embalmed corpse, kept in a 'gloomy chapel, where the candles were always burning' (Wilde, p.101), effectuates the literal deadening of natural dynamism, imperative to the creation of aesthetic objects. Wilde's richly purple prose perfectly captures the sensual excess of the scene he presents, by foregrounding the material texture - the rhythm and euphony - of language, his deliberate style being itself a demonstration of the formalisation, or art, of linguistic composition.

It is amidst the earthly splendour of the palace that the little dwarf comes across the mirror which reveals to him his own bodily aberrance. Where the material condition of the palace is artificial, considered, methodical, and elegant, that of the dwarf is organic, innate, inconsistent,

and crude, and it is in contrast to the idealised forms of art that his own bodily disfiguration becomes apparent. The dwarf's encounter with his own reflected image anticipates Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of the mirror stage of ego development.¹⁷⁷ At first, the dwarf does not recognise the figure as himself, but believes it might be the infanta, whom he has been searching for. However, he quickly discovers his mistake, and sees that 'it was a monster, the most grotesque monster he had ever beheld' (Wilde, p.116). Finding each gesture and expression he makes repeated by this 'monster', he is stirred by a mixture of emotions, that range from puzzlement, to amusement, through fear and loathing, to the eventual, anguished, realisation that the horrible creature is in fact himself. As in Lacanian theory, this is a process of both identification and alienation. Until this moment of clarity, the dwarf has existed in a state of undifferentiated understanding, akin to the unified field of infantile oceanic consciousness. With no fixed idea of self and other, the boundaries between things are fluid and permeable, and he perceives himself to be at one with the world, rather than separate from it, 'smiling and nodding at [the children] just as if he was really one of themselves' (Wilde, p.105). In recognising his mirror image as himself, the dwarf gives his identity a definite shape, and specific limits, that distinguish it from other phenomena, but by necessity this also constitutes a schism in unified consciousness, thus alienating him from its integrity.

Lacan theorised that a baby's ability to recognise its image in a mirror occurs at a time before it has attained bodily control. This means that although the infant perceives its reflected image as whole, this integrity does not correspond with the experience of its body as uncoordinated and disordered: a conflict that creates tension between subject and image, which must be resolved by identification, and the production of ego. The image becomes an ideal, or promise of future completion, that the ego sustains itself by striving towards. The assumption of the visual identity seen in the mirror as its own gives the infant a sense of triumph and mastery, since the image imparts an illusion of entirety to its sense of a fragmented, embodied reality. For Wilde's dwarf, however, this effect is inverted. Rather older than a babe-in-arms, some suspension of disbelief is necessary to accept that he has never encountered an image of himself, yet this is implicitly understood as inherent to the fiction of his idealised innocence. Read in Lacanian terms, the dwarf's ego lacks a specifically visual conception of self, and thus has no optimal imago to aspire towards, meaning its purpose remains amorphous, flexible, and mutable, yielding or expanding according to a dynamic flow of desire, empathy, aversion. He inhabits his

¹⁷⁷ Lacan first presented his paper 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of *I* as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience', on July 17th, 1949, at a conference of the International Psychoanalytic Congress in Zurich. It was published in *Écrits* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966). The first English translation, by Jean Roussel, was published in *New Left Review* 51 Sept/Oct 1968 63-77.

body unconsciously, and completely, as an expression of spontaneous, free-flowing energy, and thus experiences it as perfectly coordinated, and in harmony with his drives - as exemplified in his role as a dancer.

His mirror image, by contrast, is chaotic and incoherent, 'not properly shaped as all other people were, but hunchbacked, and crooked-limbed, with huge lolling head and mane of black hair' (Wilde, pp.116-17) - the opposite of Lacan's tacitly assumed to be standard-bodied infant, that perceives its unruly body as disordered and its specular image as an idealised whole. For the (intact) baby, the identification with its image is also its initiation into the symbolic order of language, signifiers and logic, that enables the construction of self as an aspirational, imaginary other. For the dwarf, on the other hand, whose body is deformed, the entry into the symbolic, afforded by the mirror, is simultaneously a banishment from it. The abnormal body is unacceptable to the symbolic order, since it speaks too insistently of flesh, and the peculiarity of organic form; of corruption, and by extension, of mortality, whereas the image or symbol is by nature abstract, uniform, and superlative. What is doubly disastrous is that the dwarf's identification with his image is also an act of individuation, or demarcation of 'I' and 'other' that inevitably expels him from the realm of unified intelligence and its inclusive totality of phenomena. Thus, for the dwarf, there is no jubilant sense of mastery in assuming his mirror image as his own, as there is for the infant of Lacan's theory, but only the 'despair' (Wilde, p.118) of finding himself the monstrous 'abjected fragment' (Cohen, p.20) that is outcast from, or beyond the scope of, conceptual possibility.

It is not simply the dwarf's physical disparity that is intolerable to customary modes of comprehension. The monstrous conflation of opposites that occurs when his pure spirit integrates with his incongruously distorted body cannot be contained by systems of knowledge based on binary logic, of which the tale, 'The Birthday of the Infanta', is itself both product, and agent, as well as critique and, as such, necessarily effectuates the dwarf's destruction. Before his encounter with the mirror, Wilde's dwarf - like Treves's Joseph Merrick - is a character whose construction is divided into body and soul. He himself has no awareness of his external appearance. His body is simply an extension of his free spirit, which is in turn synonymous with the ongoing, fluctuating dance of cosmic energy. Hence from his perspective he is pure essence or soul. Contrasted with the dwarf's spontaneous and boundless natural dynamism is the controlled and constricted courtly existence of the infanta. Her physical loveliness is the antithesis of the dwarf's distorted form, but she is all surface, and has never cultivated anything beyond her flawless looks. Like the lovely objects she lives with her beauty is hollow, and having no moral dimension herself she does not perceive it in others. She and her friends have no comprehension of the dwarf's inner beauty, but

see him only as a physical aberration - 'a little misshapen thing that Nature, in some humorous mood, had fashioned for others to mock at' (Wilde, p.105). And referred to as 'my funny little dwarf' (Wilde, p.119) he is merely another object and possession, the value of which is determined by its material properties and their ability to engage the infanta's frivolous regard. The dwarf's death from a broken heart is both the consequence, and the authentication, of his spiritual beauty. The measure of his soul's purity is its refusal to accept the discordantly ugly, corrupt and corrupting flesh that is his body, and this insistence on the total segregation of mind and matter, immaterial and manifest, reinstates the bifurcated logic that the encounter in the mirror threatens to subvert.

It is in the act of looking, and comparing, that the standards of beauty and ugliness, by which the dwarf judges his image to be deficient, emerge. However, the critical perception afforded by what is accessible to the gaze is only part of the story. In the diametrically structured universe of Wilde's tale the visible field also inevitably conceives its opposite, which is the intangible, the enigmatic, the hidden. Because the surface appearance of things is informed by their material constitution, which does not necessarily match, or accurately express, their inner essence, the knowledge gained by sight is incomplete, and can be deceptive, and even pernicious. Beauty particularly, in 'The Birthday of the Infanta' - whether natural or contrived - is an ambiguous quality that corrupts even as it exalts, tainting the dwarf's pure soul with an aesthetic sensibility that deems his body unfit, and nurturing shallow pride and facile disregard in the pretty infanta. Visual allure, though, is not exclusive to the harmonious of form, and is as much an effect of the crude, skewed and strange as it is of perfection. The children 'delight' (Wilde, p.105) in the dwarf's distorted figure; his 'crooked legs' and 'huge misshapen head' that are 'quite irresistible' to the Spanish Court's 'passion for the horrible' (Wilde, p.105). The epitome of his appeal is his 'complete unconsciousness of his own grotesque appearance' (Wilde, p.105). To refined court sensibilities, ever mindful of the image they present to others, the dwarf's total lack of self awareness, particularly in the face of his conspicuous deformity, is indecorous, bordering on impertinent. The dwarf's absence of self consciousness is inconsistent with the civilised, social expectation that he ought to have a heightened idea of his outlandish appearance and, as such, produces a preposterous, farcical figure, and a comedic conflict of attitudes.

The 'passion for the horrible' is a compulsion of sight; a taste primarily informed and motivated by the act of viewing. It is an undercurrent that flows through both the freak show, and the practice of medicine, each of which are founded on the act of looking at bodies - specifically deformed and damaged ones. The figure of Joseph Merrick emerges from both these cultural institutions and, as such, images, and the interplay of appearance and ideas, were vital

components in producing the phenomenon of the Elephant Man. It is in the case of Merrick that the understanding of the monstrous body shifts away from the marvels and mysteries of the carnival to become the property of clinical pathology: a change established through the contrasting attitudes to looking these practices were perceived to employ. Public opinion had already started to question the propriety of sideshow spectating when the Elephant Man appeared on the circuit, and the profundity of his disfigurement made the voyeuristic and degrading aspects of viewing the abnormal for entertainment even more acutely apparent. So much so that displays of Merrick's body were persistently shut down, as an affront to common decency. In contrast to the licentious inflected scrutiny of the freak show audience, the methodically conducted examinations, and ordered analysis, of the medical gaze, framed as a noble quest for knowledge, and the betterment of humanity, was a much more acceptable way of indulging the desire to see. In 'The Elephant Man' Frederick Treves constructs this distinction between recreational, and medical, modes of viewing, as self-evident and inherently determined by moral motivation. His own clinical practice is implicitly deemed respectable, having the benevolent aim of relieving the subject's suffering, and improving his lot in life, while the scurrilous dealings of the 'showman' (Treves, p.182) are avaricious and exploitative by dint of being profit driven.

In fact, as Nadya Durbach has compellingly argued in *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture*, Treves had as much investment in Merrick as a lucrative spectacle as did any of his former impresarios.¹⁷⁸ It was no accident that the shop premises in which Merrick's then manager, Tom Norman, set him up for exhibition, was located directly opposite the London Hospital.¹⁷⁹ Rather, it was a commercial ploy, calculated to attract the custom of the doctors and medical professionals whom Norman well knew had an enterprising, as well as an intellectual interest in, extraordinary bodies, which they sought out as specimens, on which to base research and build their careers. Sharing a preoccupation with viewing deformed bodies meant the motives and procedures of medical work often converged with those of the leisure industry. The sideshow styled its pseudo-expertise and educational pretense on the conventions of science, while medical lectures used the theatrical format of bodily display framed by verbal explanation, with doctors

¹⁷⁸ Durbach, pp.36-45.

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Merrick had several managers who organised his public appearances. Together with a music-hall colleague, Mr. J. Ellis, Sam Torr launched and promoted Joseph's career as The Elephant Man. The novelty of Joseph's bizarre deformities, however, quickly lost its appeal for showgoers, and knowing that moving the display on to new territory was essential to success, Torr passed the care of Merrick to Tom Norman of Whitechapel, London in late 1884. While Treves paints a dismal picture of these individuals as self-seeking miscreants who exploited Merrick's vulnerable position for their own gain, Howell and Ford's account - constructed from, among other sources, the unpublished manuscript of Tom Norman's memoirs (subsequently published privately as *The Penny Showman: This is Tom Norman, 'Silver King'* (1985)) - paints a somewhat different picture in which the arrangement is more of a partnership established in a spirit of friendship and mutual benefit. Durbach has also argued that Merrick's decision to commodify his body was his own choice, and one which enabled him to earn an independent income in otherwise arduous circumstances (pp49-50).

taking on the role of showman, and even borrowing their techniques of drama and suspense, to make their talks entertaining. In the case of Merrick, show-business spiel even influenced professional conjecture, inciting medical debate over ‘maternal impression’ - the spurious theory and folkloric belief that birth defects were caused by women witnessing frightening and traumatic events, or horrible spectacles, during pregnancy - as the cause of Merrick’s condition.¹⁸⁰ Frederick Treves even hypothesised that Joseph was suffering from ‘elephantiasis’ - a misdiagnosis that could only have been prompted by the elephant reference in his stage presentation.

Treves also draws on popular culture in the text, ‘The Elephant Man’. As Christine Ferguson has commented in her essay, ‘Elephant Talk: Language and Enfranchisement in the Merrick Case’, the narrative is itself a monstrous construction, that combines elements of realism, the fantastic, Victorian sentimentalism, and medical discourse, to create a literary chimera.¹⁸¹ Conjuring the horror of Merrick’s deformity, Treves adopts a register of expression lifted from Gothic writing, describing the details of Merrick’s body in tones of aghast fascination. The influence of sentimentalism is apparent, too, in Treves’s creation of a tragic figure, brutalised and isolated by society, until his rescue and rehabilitation through the compassion of the good doctor himself. There are also suggestions of the freak show in Treves’s interpretation of Merrick as an animalised, zoomorphic entity: the ‘showman’ talks to Joseph ‘as if to a dog’ (p.182); the distorted flaps of skin that comprise his chin are ‘like a dewlap suspended from the neck of a lizard’ (p.183); he is ‘a sick sheep’, ‘housed like a wild beast’ (p.185) and exhibited as ‘a strange beast in a cage’ (p.189). That Joseph’s ‘speech is so maimed [...] he might as well have spoken in Arabic’ (Treves, p.186), imagines him as divested of the language skills which Darwin cited as distinguishing humans from beasts, and pushes him even more firmly towards the animal side of the divide. It is Merrick’s initial difficulty with language, and his subsequent acquisition of ‘proper’ speech - through the tutoring efforts of Treves - that also mobilises the narrative as a tale of transformation, the sequence of which parallels the path of evolution, from dumb beasts to articulate humans (Ferguson, pp.118-9). Language is a humanising attribute that gives the narrative an empirical premise, and plays on magical tropes of shape-shifting creatures, and mythical monsters of ambiguous human-animal status.

To my thinking, however, the issue of language is a lesser factor in Treves’s construction of Merrick than are visual effects, and the act of looking, which are the central concern of ‘The

¹⁸⁰ Despite the lack of empirical evidence maternal impression was still widely credited in the popular imagination as a cause of congenital deformity. It was not so long since the play staged in Leipzig in 1857 featuring Julia Pastrana had been forced to close due to fears that her grotesque appearance might affect pregnant women. Merrick himself was said to have believed maternal impression to be the cause of his abnormal physicality.

¹⁸¹ Christine Ferguson, ‘Elephant Talk: Language and Enfranchisement in the Merrick Case’, in *Victorian Freaks*, ed. by Marlene Tromp, 114-129, p.129.

Elephant Man'. Major portions of the text are dedicated to the linguistic recreation of Merrick's repugnant appearance, and its psychological and emotional impact on the viewer. There is also a persistent undertone that reveals Treves's anxiety to control the spectacle of the Elephant Man - that is, to regulate who is permitted to look at him, in what context, and what purpose their observation serves. Treves's first personal interaction with Joseph is the 'private view', arranged by Merrick's manager at the time, Tom Norman, and it is this social structure of spectator-spectacle, along with the intimations in 'private' of privileged, and confidential access, and an especially intimate mode of inspection, that sets the precedent for their relationship. While Treves's intentions towards Merrick undoubtedly had a compassionate aspect, part of the deal of Joseph's residence at the London Hospital was that he be available at all times for examination by, and display to, Treves and other medics of his approval. There is an urgency and intensity not unlike the eager anticipation of the sideshow patron in Treves's admission of his own desire 'to examine him [Merrick] in detail' (p.183). At the same time, the doctor is perturbed by the crowds that follow Merrick on the street, clamouring to 'get a look' (p.185) in a manner he deems to be prurient. The cloak and hooded cap that comprise Merrick's public dress are an insufficient protection against this unauthorised, and indecorous seeing, since the garments are themselves an 'alarming' sight that only provoke intrigue, and can easily be infiltrated by 'lift[ing] the hem [...] to peep at his body' (Treves, p.185). To prevent such surreptitious viewing, Merrick's movements are carefully restricted: he is only allowed to walk outside under cover of darkness, and must not venture beyond the immediate vicinity of Bedstead Square. On his occasional trips beyond these confines, he is conveyed to his destination by door to door private carriage, and for his night at the theatre, the seating arrangements are meticulously engineered with three of the hospital sisters deployed to screen Merrick, within his already segregated box, from the 'notice of the audience' (Treves, p.197).¹⁸² So guarded, in fact, was Treves's policing of the sight of Merrick, that under his direction, Merrick himself was not permitted to view his own image, and was denied access to a mirror.

Thus, although there were many benefits to Merrick's life at the London Hospital - the comfortable rooms, regular meals, hygienic and medical care, friends from the highest echelons of society, and the luxuries of personal possessions and even country holidays - it was very much a gilded cage, the price of which was the control of his body. Incidental to the father-saviour-mentor role that Treves cast himself in, in relation to Merrick, was a managerial opportunity similar to that of the theatrical promoters with whom Merrick was formerly associated, only even

¹⁸² Protective measures such as the screening from the pantomime audience, and the disguise of the hood and cloak, are inherently ambiguous, since it is never clear whether they are intended to safeguard Merrick from the public gaze, or the public from the traumatising sight of Merrick.

more subordinating, since the sense of partnership that had characterised Joseph's dealings with his impresarios was replaced by a situation of total dependence on, and thus obligation to, his physician. Treves records Merrick as saying he was "happy every hour of the day" (p.193) under his care, and while there may well have been genuine feeling in the words, Merrick's attitude to his life at the London Hospital was more complex and ambivalent than Treves admits. As Durbach conjectures, by assuming control of Merrick's deformed body the medical establishment had effectively robbed him of his only asset, and with it the possibility of earning an independent living which, for Merrick, as a working-class man, was the foundation of both identity and manhood (pp. 36-38). Despite what he may have told Treves, Merrick was never entirely comfortable with his charity case status, or with conditions that kept him a virtual prisoner, and he was rumoured to have asked hospital staff on several occasions why he could not "go back to Mr. Norman?" (Howell and Ford, p.153).

Since Merrick's body was synonymous with his appearance, by taking command of it the medical profession also effectively assumed control of the spectacle of the Elephant Man. It is no surprise, then, that all the visual images of Merrick produced during his lifetime came from medical sources. After the initial 'private view' Treves invited Merrick to the London Hospital for examination, and he also appeared before the Pathological Society of London.¹⁸³ Tom Norman recalled that there were two or three such visits before Joseph took exception to being "stripped naked" and ogled in a manner that made him feel "like an animal in a cattle market" (Howell and Ford, p.76-77) and refused to return again. The photographs Treves took of Merrick at this time were used as the basis for a set of engravings produced for the *Transactions of the Pathological Society of London* (1885).¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ On 2nd December 1885.

¹⁸⁴ Frederick Treves 'A Case of Congenital Deformity' *Transactions of the Pathological Society of London* 36 1885, 494-498.

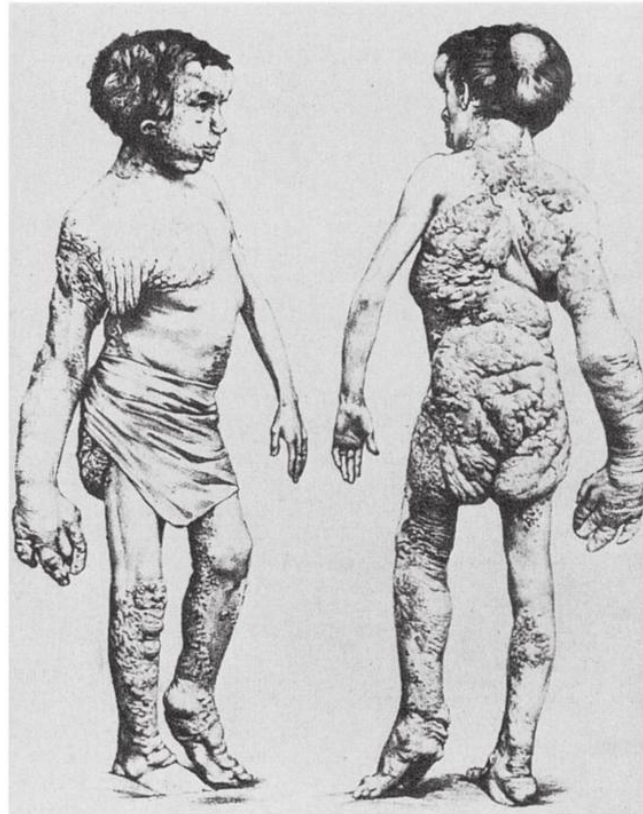


Figure 28.
Engravings of Joseph Merrick,
From *Transactions of the Royal Pathological Society, London*, 1885.

The two full length representations, showing Merrick's figure in its entirety - one showing the right side, and one from the back - render his physical form with exceptional accuracy, conveying every contortion of limb, and each ridge, pucker, and papule of his skin, in meticulous detail. Two studies of the left and right profiles of his head, made contemporaneously, are likewise interested in the precise configuration and texture of his disfigurement. The blank backgrounds the images use are conventional of scientific illustration, and eradicate the wider context of the subject's social /emotional/cultural existence, emphasising instead purely material qualities, that describe a specimen as opposed to a person, as one would see in a portrait.

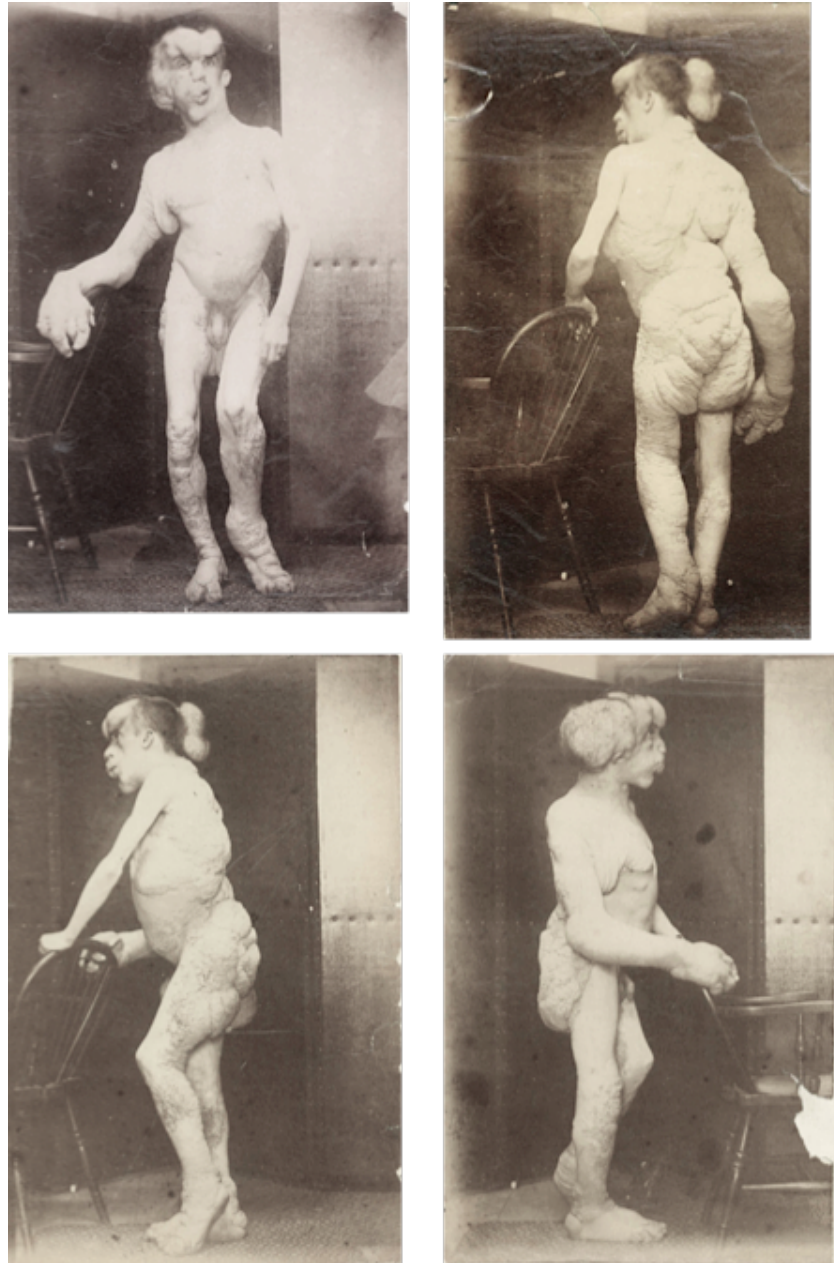
For Merrick, these early interactions with Treves and his associates were not particularly productive. No explanation of his disease was forthcoming, and there was no offer of any medical treatment. When the Whitechapel exhibition of the Elephant Man was shut down by police, Merrick preferred to stay on the freak circuit, and embarked on a tour of Europe with his original promoter, Sam Torr. The photographs taken by Treves, which Merrick carried a set of, along with the doctor's visiting card, were used once more as the template for an illustration in a

pamphlet featuring Merrick's 'autobiography'¹⁸⁵, demonstrating again the overlap, that occurred between clinical and sideshow modes of seeing. Such advertising tactics, however, failed to surmount the public mood of disenchantment with freak display that also prevailed on the continent, and the tour proved disastrous for Merrick, whose exhibition was proclaimed a moral outrage and consistently forced to close. Merrick returned to London, arriving at Liverpool Street station alone, starving and destitute, and attired in his strange cloak and mask which, arousing the curiosity of bystanders, had incited a huge crowd to follow and harangue him. Police intervention was eventually required to control the excited mob, and Merrick, in desperation, handed them the details of Dr. Treves who - whatever ulterior motives he may have had - nonetheless came to Merrick's rescue in his hour of need.

It was following this episode, in December 1886, that Merrick took up his residence at the London Hospital, and one of the first things Treves did was have him photographed again. The four images (figures 29-32) produced on this occasion comprise a set, the purpose of which is to document Joseph's condition upon his admission to the hospital.¹⁸⁶ As in the engravings, the interest here is strictly in physical particularities and the visual differentiation of diseased and healthy bodies. Already totally exposed in its nakedness, Merrick's physical form is systematically displayed from front and back, and left and right side perspectives, producing the idea of ocular omniscience and authority, that defines the medical gaze.

¹⁸⁵ The pamphlet was published by H & M Cockshaw of Leicester, and is undated. It is also of contested authenticity, the 'Autobiography of Joseph Carey Merrick' having possibly been penned by someone other than himself. Sales of these booklets at performances would have contributed to Joseph's earnings. A copy is held by the British Museum.

¹⁸⁶ The photographs are albumen prints, taken on the premises of the hospital. The date given by Howell and Ford is 1886, but there is no official date according to the London Hospital Archives and Museum, which gives c.1880s.



Figures 29,30,31,32. Frederick Treves, *Four photographs of Joseph Merrick on his admission to the London Hospital*, albumen prints on paper, c.1886, Royal London Hospital Museum and Archives, London.

Through the tabulated structure of the photographic set, the body is ordered as visual data, which has a coincident effect of objectifying, and depersonalizing, the potentially overwhelming sight of suppurating flesh. The photographer has carefully chosen the bland, dark backdrop, to isolate the subject in the kind of neutral field that best enables scientific, impartial observation. That the sparse setting contains no indication of Merrick's personal character, social activities, or cultural interests - or indeed any sign of an existence beyond his corrupt anatomy - is

entirely in keeping with the images' function of presenting him as a pathological specimen. Such controlled conditions, and methodical exposition, also suggest a connection to the practice of anthropometry, which is the systematic measuring of human bodily dimensions and facial traits as a means of identifying trends and types and, by necessity, aberrations. While its origins go back to the eighteenth century, it was a technique that gained particular credence during the nineteenth century, most crucially through the service of the photograph. The work of Alphonse Bertillon (1853-1914), in the field of law enforcement, was especially influential, and included the standardisation and comprehensive implementation of the criminal identification system commonly called the 'mug shot'.¹⁸⁷ Rather than the variable photographic likenesses used by the police since the 1840s, Bertillon's method used uniform sizing, and mandatory full face and profile views, which enabled the police to more readily compare, and identify individuals, by the idiosyncrasies of their features. Bertillon's use of photography is strikingly similar to that seen in the medical set's depiction of Joseph Merrick from four different views, the aim of which is likewise to produce quantifiable, visual information. The chair is an essential element of this design, not only functioning as a support for Joseph but also as an indication of scale, by which to assess in what ways his body conforms to, and diverges from, established norms.

Although written some thirty years after the taking of the photographs, Frederick Treves's portrayal of Merrick as a soul distinct from his body should be read as an extension of the objectifying tendency at work in the medical set. As demonstrated by the dwarf in 'The Birthday of the Infanta', whose 'complete unconsciousness of his own grotesque appearance' (Wilde, p.105) enables his observers to gawk at him without restraint, lack of self awareness in a subject is a trait that facilitates looking. The distancing of thought and emotion from somatic functions, effectuated by Treves's partitioning of Merrick's spiritual and physical selves, was similarly advantageous to the spectator, since it has the double effect of making the subject, like Wilde's dwarf, 'less conscious of his unsightliness' (Treves, p.192) and of reducing his body to a purely material commodity that, exempt from moral concerns, can be ogled with impunity. For Treves, who had a personal relationship with Merrick, the splitting of his physical and spiritual selves was also perhaps a means of consolidating the complexity of Merrick's personality (and Treves's own intellectual/emotional entanglement with it) with the indifferent, analytical stance demanded by the medical gaze.

Primarily concerned with reflecting a strictly professional, clinical interest in Merrick's aberrant anatomy, the medical set of photographs conform to, and reinforce, dualistic

¹⁸⁷ Bertillon (1853-1914) was a native of Paris where he worked as a police officer. His system of anthropometric data sheets and standardised photographs of convicted criminals was implemented on a national scale by the French police force in 1888.

epistemologies through their innate assumption that the corporal can be studied in isolation from social, emotional, cerebral, and spiritual aspects of ontology. Yet the camera's capacity for expansive capture, that ineluctably exceeds the schematics of the pictures it creates (the eruption of *punctum* that overwhelms the configuration of *studium*), has here etched an alternative strata of intelligence that undermines the medical set's overt intentions of objectification and scientific procedure. Looking more closely at the photographs, the seemingly innocuous background reveals details of form and texture. The walls (or screens?) have a sheen that suggests metal or leather, and are studded with lines of industrial looking rivets, that have a harsh quality lacking in domestic comfort, while the floor is a mix of mismatched carpeting, and bare wooden boards - features that indicate not the precision of scientific technique, but the crude conditions, and necessarily improvised tactics, of the underfunded institution. Most telling are Merrick's stance and facial expressions. His 'good' left arm, the most mobile and expressive part of his body, changes position across the images, and in the left profile, particularly, is held with a tension that seems to exude affront. The obdurate set of his mouth - which by turning his head, he displays even in the back view - similarly conveys a sense of his resentment. It is his confrontational gaze in the full frontal view, however, that most clearly articulates defiance, and a stoic resistance to the humiliating and dehumanising effects of medical examination.

Of course, reading Merrick's attitude and emotions in these images can never be more than conjecture and projection, since there is no way of verifying what his feelings were at the moment of photographic and physical exposure. What is important is that Merrick *is* there to be read, despite the pictorial intent of recording him as empirical data. The collaborative nature of photographic production has allowed him to assert his agency, and through his look back he inhabits and claims his body, challenging and undermining the reductive tendency of clinical procedure, and its contingent construction of a mind-body binary.

While the medical set of photographs seeks to view and present Merrick as a scientific study, the London Hospital also arranged the taking of a studio portrait of Joseph (figure 33) which offers a very different perception of his identity.¹⁸⁸ Showing Merrick dressed in his 'Sunday Best', the photograph was produced as a carte-de-visite, for distribution to his high-society patrons as a memento or keepsake.

¹⁸⁸ There is no precise date for the image and the photographer is unknown. London Hospital Archives has c.1889 as the approximate time frame, and given Merrick's mobility issues, and controlled activity, the portrait is likely to have been taken at a studio close to the London Hospital. The carte has a parasol design and was manufactured by Marion, Paris; it is annotated 'The Elephant Man'.

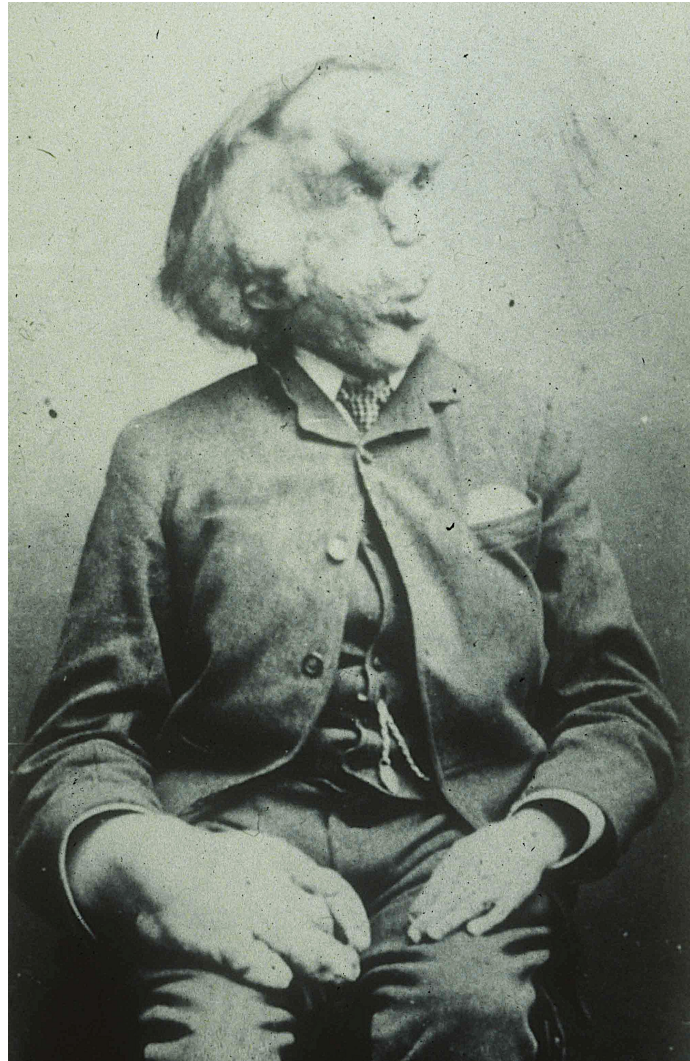


Figure 33. Joseph Merrick in his 'Sunday Best', c.1886, carte-de-visite photographic portrait, 54 x 89 mm, mounted on card 63 x 100mm, (photographer unknown), Royal London Hospital Museum and Archives.

This - as Nadya Durbach has noted - was a practice lifted directly from the circus sideshow, where the sale of carte portraits of freak performers was an important aspect of the commodification and exhibition of monstrous bodies (Durbach, p.41). Durbach argues that the creation and function of the 'Sunday Best' photograph evidences the London Hospital's investment in Merrick as a profitable spectacle, who helped the institution to attract the favour of wealthy sponsors. I would add that it also demonstrates a middle-class appropriation of mass entertainment, which uses the carnival techniques of theatrical display, private views, and circulation of souvenir cartes, to reinvent the freak show as medical inquiry and aristocratic philanthropy.

In contrast to the medical set of photographs, and ironically, considering its ostensibly aesthetic, rather than scientific, function, it is the Sunday Best portrait that more precisely foreshadows Frederick Treves's construction of Joseph's identity as divided. Although no image of Joseph Merrick could be about anything but his deformity, in the Sunday Best photograph this fascination with his physical form is clarified, and condensed, in subtle ways. The composition of the picture in conventional portrait format serves as a pattern against which to measure Joseph's deviation from the standard bodies more usually seen in such representations. The subject is framed to display his body in a way that makes his distorted proportions obvious, the partial inclusion of his legs, with their atrophied appearance, serving to accentuate his overly large head. His hands are likewise positioned to encourage and facilitate comparison between the shapely delicacy of the 'normal' left hand, and the gross distortion of the right, while his face, rotated slightly to a three-quarter view, is 'posed to best display his deformity' (Durbach, p.41). There is no attempt to interpret this monstrosity, or to give it a sense of mythical intrigue, as do the imaginative settings, costumes, and attitudes, seen in Charles Eisenmann's freak portraits. The background is a void, and there are no visible emblems of the interests and acquaintances that colour Merrick's intellectual and social life. His grotesque physicality simply fills the picture space, as if his monstrosity is the sum total of his being. The description 'in his Sunday best'¹⁸⁹ is a nominal reference point, from which to structure our understanding of the image: an idea rooted in familiar, sartorial custom, but which Merrick's oddly unbuttoned jacket shows him to be literally bursting out of, clothing being an inadequate framework within which to conceptually, or physically, contain the enormity of his aberrance.

With its emphasis on the corporeal and minimisation of any context beyond it, the Sunday Best portrait constructs a body-mind binary that prefigures the popular myth of the Elephant Man as a beautiful soul trapped in a grotesque physique, later affirmed by Treves. While the pose and framing of the subject work to concentrate interest in the material, signs of Joseph's inner life and personality are kept at a distance, signifying their separation from his physical self. His eyes are the only feature that give a clue to his character, and these are turned away from the viewer, suggesting his sentient self is removed from the material environment, and thus enabling the kind of prolonged and involved scrutiny of his anatomy that a confrontational gaze might deem uncomfortable. There is also an unfocused, misted, dreamy quality to his look, as if his attention is engaged with a realm beyond the mundane - the abstract, fantasy world of 'make-believe' which, according to Treves was Merrick's annexed reality (Treves, p.194). The mystically transported face or gaze, paired with the damaged body, is also a conventional trope of

¹⁸⁹ Which often accompanies this image in reproductions and archival labelling.

visual images of religious martyrs, indicating the soul's transcendence, or separation from, the corrupt and agonised trappings of flesh.

It was the extreme nature of Joseph Merrick's deformity that, in the end, demanded medical intervention, and in doing so paved the way for pathology to usurp the mythopoeic influence of the freak show as the primary cultural medium for interpreting monstrous bodies. Merrick's abjection was so emphatic and repulsive, his suffering so palpable, that his 'Elephant Man' persona never properly captured the collective imagination. Indeed, no amount of theatrical embellishment could give his devastating disease any appeal beyond prurient curiosity. The swell of opposition against exploitative practices - which included the abuse of animals as well as conduct that preyed on the vulnerable, such as child labour and, indeed, circus sideshows - that had been gathering throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, came to a head in the case of Joseph Merrick. His exhibition was persistently shut down as a moral outrage, and an affront to public decency, heralding the demise of the freak show as a popular entertainment. Although the name Elephant Man is still attached to Merrick's identity, its function as sensational propaganda has been absorbed into the contemporary construction of a dark, brutal, and morally inferior past of which the freak show is symptomatic, and its creation the 'Elephant Man' evidence of the contempt and cruelty to which the Victorians subjected their disabled and diseased.

In the management of Merrick's extraordinary body we see the wonder and lore of sideshow exposition shift firmly towards the empirical erudition of medical science, yet the entwining of these influences is still very much evident, and is reflected in the photographs taken of him. The medical set of images are an attempt to achieve scientific objectivity by isolating the subject within a uniform field, and stripping him (literally) of any elaboration. Yet even this stark mode of presentation as a medical specimen is a form of freak display, which shares a similar interest in creating an intriguing spectacle. The Sunday Best photograph was a more direct imitation of freak show practice in its carte-de-visite format, and function as a souvenir or memento, yet its visual construction differed from previous portraits of freak performers. Although the pose and framing are aesthetically conventional, and the emphasis on bodily display the very essence of the freak show, the subject has been removed from any social or imaginative context, rather than given meaning through the use of theatrical apparatus - the costumes, settings, and props and the associations they generate - as was typical in earlier freak cartes. The empty background and paucity of personal effects work to reduce the subject to a purely corporal phenomenon, detached from the abstract intellectual, emotional and spiritual qualities that comprise character. Despite its accordance with sideshow convention then, the Sunday Best

portrait pushes the interpretation of the different bodied towards the impassive, distanced perspective of the medical gaze, visibly reflecting the changes taking place in social practice. Teratology was a specialist branch of medical science dedicated to the study of birth defects, which expanded and gained credence during the nineteenth century, effectively appropriating the cultural control of deformed bodies from the more ancient techniques of the carnival.¹⁹⁰ That the discipline derived its name from the Greek *teras* meaning ‘monster’ is testament to its close connections to the freak show, and the myth and folklore that informed it. The twentieth century, however, was to sever this last tie, as the specialism of teratology began to overlap with the study of genetics, embryology and developmental biology, and the term largely fell out of use, consummating the extraordinary body’s transition to the exclusive preserve of medicine.

¹⁹⁰ The term ‘teratology’ comes from the Greek *teras* meaning monster or marvel. The term was coined by French zoologist Isidore Geoffroy St. Hilaire (1805-1861) (see <http://www.collegeofphysicians.org/histmed/for-students/teratology-monster-as-a-medical-term/>). In the late nineteenth century Barton Cooke Hirst and George Piersol published *Human Monstrosities* (Philadelphia: Lea, 1891-1893) a four-volume treatise, illustrated with photographs of preserved specimens, which began to form a taxonomy of human congenital deformities.

chapter 4

flesh

The language used by Barthes to convey the sensation of *punctum* conjures ideas of ruptured and damaged flesh, and intimates an affective relation between photographic impact and a certain abject fleshiness. If the photograph is itself already a kind of visual/emotional/temporal laceration, then its recording of disturbing and ugly sights of genuine, wounded bodies surely amplifies that incisive power. Where the freak body challenged the borders that distinguish type, with its bizarre anatomical idiosyncracies that could not be properly categorised, the diseased and injured body – with its blood, wastes, and sickly fluids, conspicuously over-spilling itself – manifested an even more extreme body horror, that troubled the limits of self-integrity. The medical photographs I consider in this final chapter are representations of bodies in precisely such conditions of acute abjection and suffering. As such, they are images that generate a powerful impression (*punctum*, wound) of the body as matter – the Kristevan horror of the abject, and of death – but which also, I argue, counter this disturbing effect by adopting the conventions of religious art, and martyr imagery, to generate a perception of spiritual significance and aesthetic beauty.

The project of pathology was to implement an order of categories of affliction, which was also a means of controlling, and containing, the body horror of blood, viscera, and diseased flesh. Accordingly, the illustrations produced by the discipline in the nineteenth century emphasised physical impact, concentrating on the tissue corruption of specific body parts, which were depicted in isolated detail. While the indexical properties of photography might appear to conspire with this empirical emphasis, offering greater clarity and authenticity, the dark interiors of bodies were often obscured by the photograph's limitation to contrasts of light and shade, and for the increasingly sophisticated and delicate work of surgery, handmade pictures were the superior source of information and instruction. The role photography found in nineteenth-century medicine was rather to counter the distancing tendency of anatomical illustration and to recover a more holistic interpretation of sickness, more in keeping with the integrated approach seen in earlier illustrated anatomies.

Photographs produced in a medical context are already a framing of the abject body as part of the study of anatomy – a tradition that had, for centuries, been the pursuit of both students of science, and students of art: the former seeking to discover its intimate mechanisms and their operation, in order to prevent their malfunction; the latter to explore the secrets of its structure and design, in order to convincingly recreate its form.

The practice of dissection, and its accompanying document, the anatomical illustration, was the expression of this desire, which initiated a collaboration founded on the empirical methodology of systematic examination, and artistic techniques of production. Some of the

earliest examples are those made by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), whose innovative works in the fields of both art and science embody the zeitgeist in which the formal study of the body emerged. Produced from the late 1480s until his death, Leonardo's anatomical notations are a visual and literary record of his numerous surgical dissections, rendered with acute graphic precision and an emphasis on revealing the intricacies of human constitution (figure 34). Benjamin A. Rifkin speculates that Leonardo's tendency to depict the body in isolated sections was a style necessitated by the rapid decomposition of cadavers, in an age before refrigeration, or chemical preservatives.¹⁹¹ This meant studying individual components and drawing them quickly, compiling an image of the whole body over the course of many sessions. While this fragmented appearance and the accompanying lack of social or emotional context show a desire for objective accuracy, and are now recognizable features of, as Rifkin puts it, 'pure scientific' (p.10) representation, Leonardo's anatomical notebooks were lost after his death, and their influence was not realised until their rediscovery, and publication, at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Figure 34. Leonardo da Vinci, *Anatomical Manuscript B*, c.1510, ink drawing on paper, Royal Collection Trust, London.



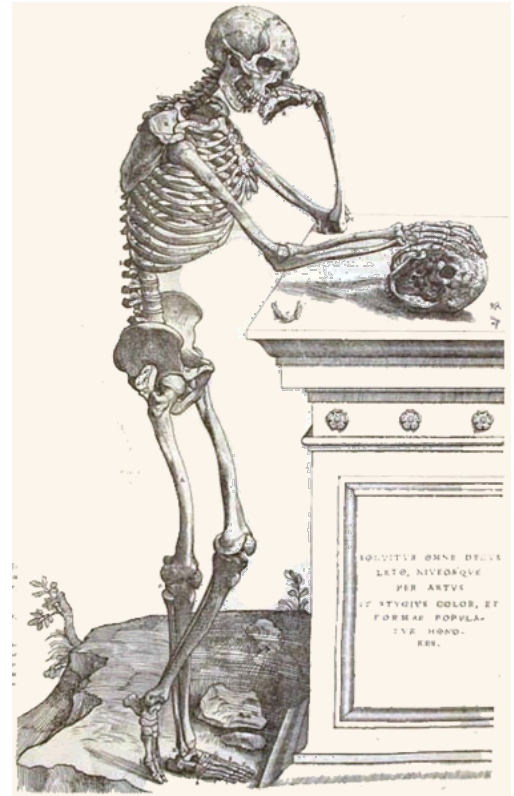
¹⁹¹ Benjamin A. Rifkin, Michael J. Ackerman and Judith Folkenburg, *Human Anatomy: Depicting the Body from the Renaissance to Today* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011) p.10.

The intervening years saw the flourishing, across Europe, of the illustrated anatomy – a genre of book often lavishly produced, and conceived around sumptuous images of both the internal and external workings of the body. Aimed at an assorted audience of physicians, artists, scholars, and the educated elite, the visual content of these books functioned in multiple ways: as instruction manuals for surgeons, as informative illustration, and as art in their capacity as moral and emotional musings on death and the afterlife.

Among the first of these publications was *Fasciculus medicinae* (*The Medical Gathering*), produced by the Gregoriis brothers in Venice in 1492, which contained woodcut illustrations showing scenes of medical training and practice, in which dissection is portrayed in its theatrical aspect, performed in front of an audience, and presided over by a professor instructing from a lectern. The flattened, linear style and human interest themes of these images emulate the friezes and frescoes of classical antiquity.

Almost fifty years later, Andreas Vesalius (1514-64), a Flemish-born professor of anatomy at the University of Padua, published *De humani corporis fabrica* (*The Fabric of the Human Body*) (1543), in which the prints of skeletons posed in scenic Italian vistas are notable both for their unprecedented fidelity and detail, and for their evocation of the sufferings of the grave. They are strangely self-conscious symbols of death, who mourn their own demise and implore the spectator to consider their own inevitable end (figure 35). Further images depict flayed corpses wandering picturesque hills and valleys, their deceased-yet-sentient state and erupting entrails faintly prescient of today's zombie.

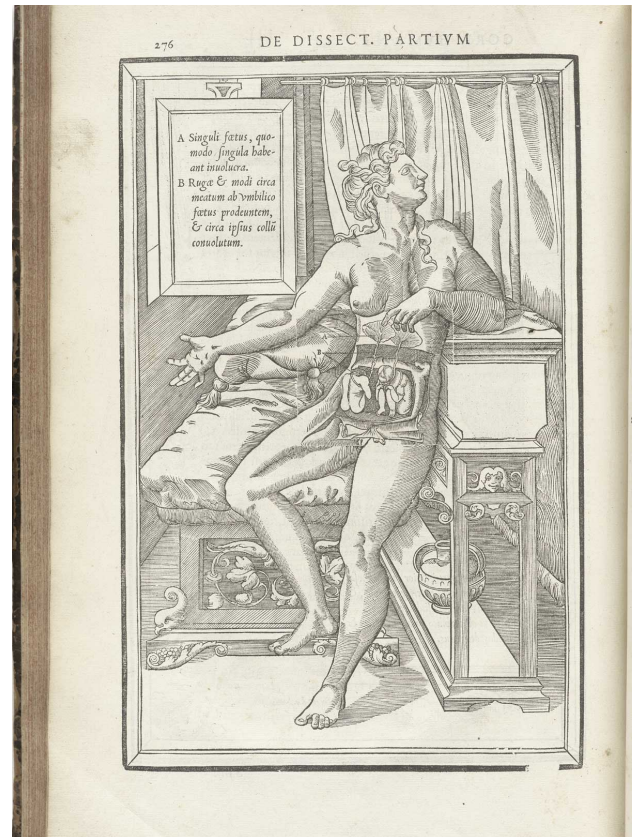
Figure 35.
 Andreas Vesalius,
 from *De humani corporis fabrica libri septum*, Basel, 1543.



In a similar vein, Charles Estienne's (c.1504-c.1564) images for his *De dissectione partium corporis humani* (*Dissection of the Human Body*) (1545), transfer the exposed viscera of dissected cadavers onto seemingly living figures.¹⁹² Often pictured holding or indicating tablets inscribed with anatomical data, these beings demand recognition of their dead and disemboweled state, provoking speculation on the nature and meaning of the corpse, while poses derived from contemporary sculpture, and Italianate interior settings, reflect the aesthetics of Renaissance art (figure 36).

¹⁹² Although Estienne's tome was published two years after Vesalius', it was completed far earlier (a lawsuit between the author and the artist Etienne de la Riviere (d. 1569) having delayed publication), and is considered by Rifkin to be an important source for Vesalius' superior pictures, despite the latter largely superseding its predecessor (p.16-19).

Figure 36.
Charles Estienne,
from *De dissectione partium corporis humani libri tres*,
Paris, 1545.



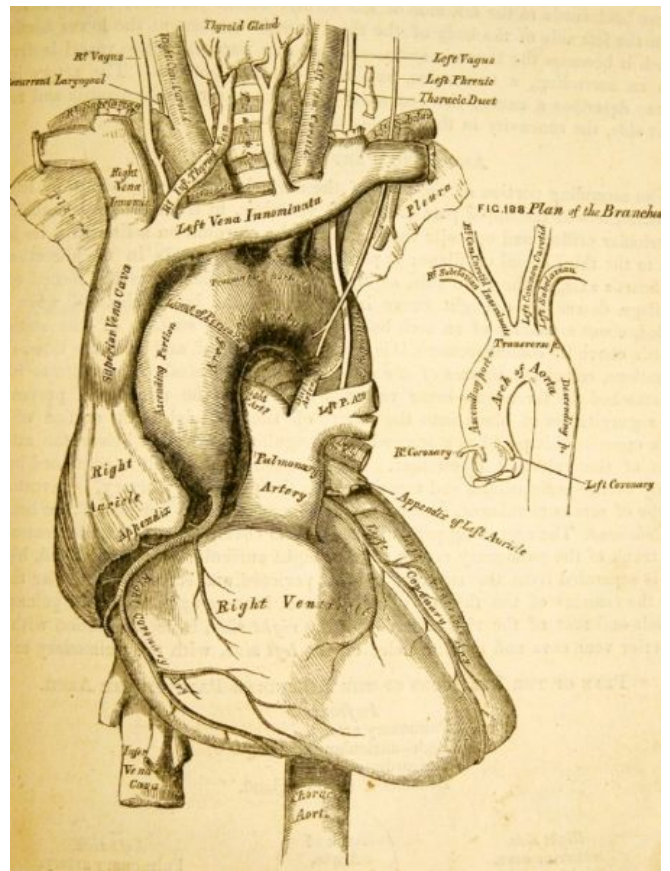
Although, as Rifkin explains, period style, individual aptitude and preference, and changes in tools, materials and methods continued to alter the appearance of medical images, these two volumes set a precedent for the illustrated anatomy as an expression of the unified vision of science, religion and art concerning the wonders of creation and mysteries of death, that was to last through the next two centuries (Rifkin, p.8).

It was not until the late eighteenth century that anatomical illustration began to develop an impassive, literal appearance, as the nascent discipline of pathology, with its need to classify diseases and to examine their effects on specific types of tissue, began to demand images that explored afflicted body parts in singular detail. There were changes, too, in the format of publications, since the luxurious, folio-sized volumes of the past were no longer practical for the ever-increasing numbers of medical students who required smaller and cheaper editions to be used as field guides and ‘lugged around in a satchel and propped against a cadaver on the mortuary table’.¹⁹³ Such influences meant that by the nineteenth century the typical anatomical illustration was an intricately rendered display of discrete body parts, with no environmental or social context and no intentional ethical sentiment - a style exemplified by Henry Gray’s (1827-68) *Anatomy, Descriptive and Surgical* (1858) (figure 37). Here, the physically, mentally and emotionally

¹⁹³ Richard Barnett, *The Sick Rose or; Disease and the Art of Medical Illustration* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2014) p.29.

integrated being of Renaissance humanism becomes a 'collage of tissues', viewed with the pragmatic detachment of the medical gaze (Barnett,27).

Figure 37.
Henry Gray,
'Heart', from *Anatomy Descriptive and Surgical*
(London: John W. Parker and Son,1858)



The discovery of photography at this point in the history of medical images would seem to offer a means of furthering the tendency towards an impartial, objectified idea of the body, since the automated eye of the camera is an apparently neutral observer, free from the flaws and prejudices that affect human endeavour. However, as Barnett points out, this view of photography was always an erroneous one, since from its earliest years the camera had been used to stage deceptions and record untruths – spirit photographs being a well known example (p.34). Rather, then, than simply being a tool for recording visual data, the photograph was more accurately a forum in which empirical enquiry, imagination, and aesthetics could interact and combine in unprecedented and novel ways. The latest manifestation, in fact, of the centuries-old alliance between art and science, that first informed the study of anatomy.

Reflecting the camera's capacity to embrace these varied possibilities, the first medical photographs to appear in the 1840s recovered the interests of the early illustrated anatomy, with genre scenes of doctors and surgeons at work, dissections performed in crowded amphitheatres,

and studies of individual patients being typical subject matter.¹⁹⁴ While the nineteenth century anatomical illustration had largely become a means of elucidating the internal mechanics of the body, the early medical photograph reinstates a more holistic understanding of disease, incorporating the emotional and moral impact of illness through its depiction of whole persons, within a social context, as opposed to the isolated, objectified, body parts of pathological anatomy. What is conveyed most insistently in the early medical photograph – particularly the portrait of the patient – is a sense of the subject's suffering, both physical and mental. Like Vesalius's disconcerted skeletons, these individuals are acutely aware of their own mortality as they negotiate an uncomfortable limbo between the pain of a broken body and the fear of death.

The liminal condition of the body corrupt is echoed in the formal properties of the photograph which, in Barthes conception, manifests a transgression of the life-death distinction since its ability to hold and fix what is inherently fleeting always announces the very thing it pretends to overcome - that is, change, transience, and our propulsion through time towards death (Barthes, pp.92-99). In Barthes's words the photograph 'produces death while trying to preserve life' (p.92), manifesting a 'body simultaneously living and dead' (p.31), rather like the animated cadavers of the illustrated anatomy.

Themes of liminality and transgression are reiterated again by the abjection of bodies discharging vomit, pus, blood or phlegm. Not only repugnant as symptoms of sickness, such phenomena also expose a profound disruption of species integrity contingent on disease. While people and bacteria are for the most part singular entities, when hostile micro-organisms enter the human biological system, the very fabric of the body begins to act and react in accordance with the parasitic invader. A state of metamorphosis ensues, where some cells are destroyed and others are activated, tissue mutates, and organs and muscles contort and erupt into the growths, swellings, lesions, and emissions that constitute disease. No longer exclusively human, nor an independent micro-organism, disease is rather a manifest integration of the two: a symbiotic embodiment of the abject.¹⁹⁵

For the individuals portrayed in early medical photographs, the experience of disease is most fundamentally characterised by both psychological, and somatic, misery and pain. The viewer's sense of this is intensified further by the adoption of stylistic precepts derived from religious art -

¹⁹⁴ The Burns Archive in New York, U.S.A. houses the largest collection of very early (1830s and 1840s) medical photographs of this kind, some examples of which can be viewed online at www.burnsarchive.com.

¹⁹⁵ The beginnings of Bacteriology go back to 1683 and Dutch pioneer of microscopy Anton von Leewenhoek's observation of tiny 'animalcules' harvested from his own tooth plaque. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the work of French chemist Louis Pasteur and German physician Robert Koch, acting independently, inceptioned germ theory: Pasteur revealing the function of microbes in the fermentation process, in 1859, while Koch's work on tuberculosis proved that micro-organisms are the cause of some diseases. See: Joshua Lederburg, 'Infectious History', *Science* New Series 288:5456 (2000) 287-293, pp.287-88.

particularly images depicting those paragons of suffering, the martyred saints. Representations of the martyr, both visual and literary, offer the abject body as a horrific spectacle and also as a contemplation on the perishable quality of flesh, the relationship between spirit and matter, and the nature of death and the divine. As such, they share the early illustrated anatomy's fascination with the corporeal and the meaning of mortality, and similarly broach conventional distinctions between living and dead, seeking to portray an uncanny moment somewhere between the end of life and the onset of death, that is both physical agony and spiritual ecstasy.

Violent destruction of the body is the central event and interest of martyr narratives and images, framed by the understanding of suffering as a means of spiritual exultation. The agony inflicted on the martyr's body is the necessary cause of their divine euphoria, styled as a purging of material form that enables the transcendence of the soul. Surpassing its Christian origins, this association of physical torment with spiritual epiphany has become a convention of both religious and secular representations of torture and pain across a range of media, that appears throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. In Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854), for example, Stephen Blackpool's long hours of anguish at the bottom of a mine, known as the 'Old Hell Shaft' are accompanied by the mystical vision of a star that shows him 'where to find ... God'.¹⁹⁶ In the case of medical photography, recreating the sick as martyrs contextualized, and sanctioned, the viewing of the abject body and, at a time when traditional theological ideas of pain as divinely ordained were being undermined by scientific advances, that determined pain to be physiologically founded, it was a way of making affliction meaningful again.¹⁹⁷ A recurring figure in both popular literature and visual art, the martyr demonstrated the ideal of how to suffer with dignity, while simultaneously reinforcing conventional bourgeois moral values of the period, such as the nobility of self-sacrifice, the supremacy of spirit over matter and deference to a higher authority.

The pairing of bodily damage with spiritual awakening is a motif that can also be traced in contemporary culture, its most prominent emergence in recent years being in the post-millennial sub-genre of horror film dubbed 'torture porn' (or less luridly, 'torture horror').¹⁹⁸ Following

¹⁹⁶ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, ed. by Kate Flint (London: Penguin, 2003) p.265).

¹⁹⁷ Lucy Bending, *The Representation of Bodily Pain in Late Nineteenth-Century British Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) pp.53-77.

¹⁹⁸ The term 'torture porn' has been attributed to American journalist David Edelstein, who coined it in a 2006 article for *New York*. As Steve Jones explains in *Torture Porn: Popular Horror After Saw* (Hampshire / New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) the term is often used in a derogatory or dismissive manner that 'brushes over the subgenre's diversity', and also carries with it connotations of sexually provocative and gratuitously violent content that is for the most part misrepresentative and belies the mainstream success of many such films. However, following Jones's (2) assertion that there are 'productive tensions' embedded in the label, and that grouping these films together allows for engagement with wider concepts they might raise, I have chosen to use the term 'torture porn' when referring to this branch of horror cinema.

images and stories of martyrdom, the torture porn film is primarily interested in exploring the human capacity to endure and inflict pain. The typical torture porn narrative places characters in extreme situations of captivity and physical abuse, which force them to test the moral principles that inform their personal actions and social relationships. Those who survive these brutal dramas are transformed by an enlightened insight into human nature, and find renewed engagement with their previously apathetic lives. Like the martyr whose desecrated body enables their rebirth in the spirit, the survivor in the torture porn film undergoes a symbolic rebirth into a new and revelatory awareness of the world.

*

The most comprehensive collection of British nineteenth century medical photographs is that held in the archives of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London.¹⁹⁹ The fifteen hundred or so images, dating from the 1860s to the turn of the century, were discovered in a seemingly forgotten box, during renovation work carried out at the hospital in the 1990s, and there is little factual knowledge about them.²⁰⁰ It is assumed that the majority of the pictures were produced by medical professionals and students working at the hospital, who informally organised as the St. Bartholomew's Hospital Photographic Society, and were active through the latter half of the century.²⁰¹ This affiliation of a photographic club with the hospital demonstrates a desire to experiment with ways of using photographic technology within a specifically medical context, although personal interest and pleasure must have also been significant factors, since members were likely to have been self-funded amateurs, exploring photography as a hobby or leisure pursuit, as well as a vocational tool.²⁰²

As such, the photographs were not specifically produced for public view, but for the use of medical professionals.²⁰³ John Henry Lightbody's images of smallpox sufferers (figures 38 and

¹⁹⁹ Now consolidated under the umbrella organisation of the Wellcome Collection, who funded the conservation, archiving, and digitising of the collection, which are available to view at <<http://wellcomeimages.org>>

²⁰⁰ In a strangely doubled scenario, another significant collection of early medical photographs – the Dr. Ikkaku Ochi collection, produced in Japan between 1868-1911, was discovered in very similar circumstances, in an abandoned box, which astonishingly survived the 1945 nuclear attack on Hiroshima. (See Naruyama A., ed., *Dr. Ikkaku Ochi Collection* (Zurich and New York: Scalo, 2004) pp. 5-12.

²⁰¹ Information provided by Katie Ormerod, archivist at Barts Pathology Museum, who kindly spoke to me on 13.1.2014.

²⁰² The huge variety in the format of photographic prints in the collection – their different sizes, shapes and tints, is an indication that many types of camera, developing formulas and printing mediums were being used, reflecting the differing budgets, personal tastes and professional and artistic ambitions of the society's members.

²⁰³ Some of the photographs attributed to St. Bartholomew's Photographic Society were later used as illustrations in medical textbooks, although they were not specifically produced as such.

39) are a typical instance of how photography was being used by St. Bartholomew's medical students to enhance their studies. Produced in 1893, the photographs are a supplement to Lightbody's written research on vaccination (published in the same year), that illustrate the abstract impressions given in the text with a perceptible manifestation of the disease. Text and image together strive to establish what Foucault refers to as a 'picture of a disease', defined as the effort to correlate disparate visual and verbal accounts of illness into a unified concept.²⁰⁴

It is also evident that these photographs act as a kind of data. Viewing Lightbody's images of vaccinated and unvaccinated smallpox victims together, it is clear that photography has been used as an observational experiment that identifies differences in how the infection manifests with and without treatment. In accordance with scientific methodology, test conditions have been imposed at each stage of this endeavor. Firstly, the subjects have been selected in order to give the most impartial and quantifiable results, so both are female, they are of similar age, and at similar stages of progression of the disease at the time the photographs are taken. There is also a careful recording of these empirical facts, showing an effort to assert control. Visually, the images have been composed almost identically – both subjects are positioned centrally within the frame, and shown in full-face close-up, to enable detailed examination of the appearance of their condition. Both are pictured in bed, in the same hospital backdrop, which provides a neutral setting equivalent to the scientific laboratory. All of these features give the impression of objective enquiry, and the resulting photographs can be viewed in a kind of 'spot the difference' format, in which the outcome of the experiment can clearly be seen.

²⁰⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, translated by A. M. Sheridan (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) p.138.



Figure 38. John Henry Lightbody,
"A.B." girl, age 6. Vaccinated. Fifth day of eruption, March-May 1893,
 photographic print on paper, St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Archives.



Figure 39. John Henry Lightbody
"S.A.J." girl, age 7, Unvaccinated. Sixth day of eruption, March-May 1893,
 photographic print on paper, St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Archives.

This 'spot the difference' or 'before and after' configuration of two similar images printed together for viewing as a pair, is one that recurs in early medical photographs, since it advances a visual, and therefore immediate, means of showing the changes or 'improvements' wrought on the sick by clinical intervention. The mechanism is clear in *Two boys with pseudo-hypertrophic paralysis* (c.1870s) (figure 40), which invites the viewer to compare two photographs

of children with the same ailment, one with, and one without medical correction. As in Lightbody's smallpox photographs, the setting regulates procedure, with the same blank walls, dark drapery to the right, and decorative chair on the left, creating an almost identical field in which to conduct observation. The photograph on the right shows a semi-naked boy attempting to stand with his hands on the back of the chair for support, although his contorted legs and feet seem to make this an awkward endeavour. His sullen expression and confrontational gaze enhance the sense of his discomfort and resentment. Draped around his waist is what appears to be a loincloth, an item of (un)dress associated with the image of the primitive and barbarous savage; although on closer inspection it looks more likely to be the arm of someone hidden in the drapery, held there to support the child. Either reading suggests dependency, deficiency, and justifies the need for improvement.

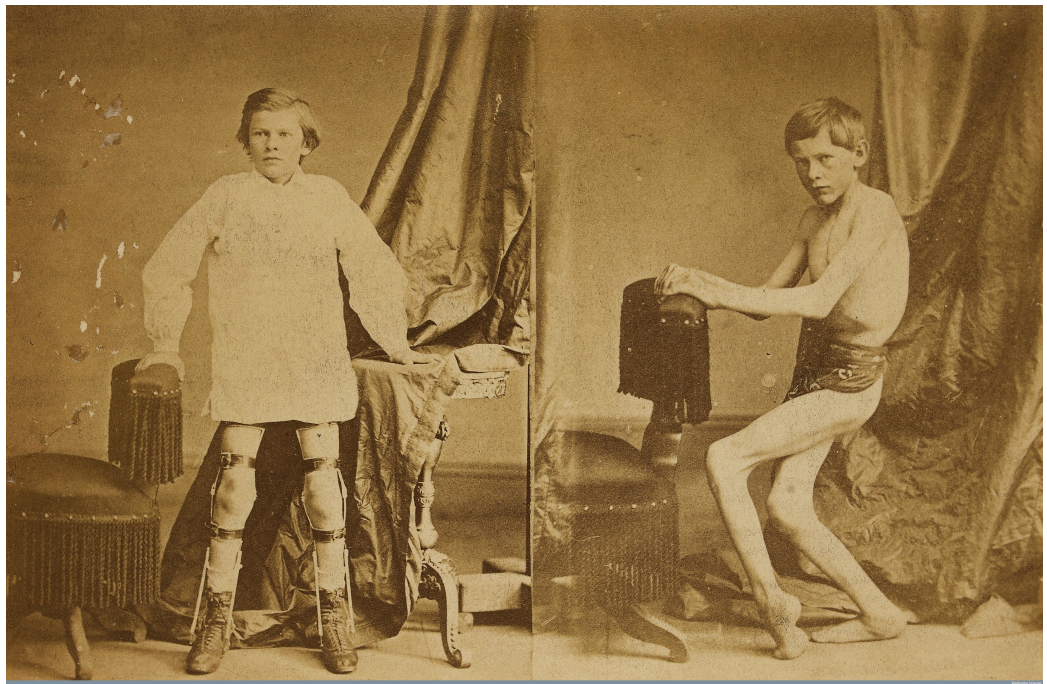


Figure 40.
St. Bartholomew's Hospital Photographic Society
Two boys with pseudo-hypertrophic paralysis. c.1870s, photographic print on paper,
St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Archives

I

In contrast, the photograph on the left shows the same child subjected to medical treatment. With his damaged legs constrained in metal and leather braces – the visible and coercive method of ‘correction’ – the boy is able to stand upright independently, albeit achieved using both hands for balance. Clothed in a clean white shirt and boots, with his hair brushed, and attentively engaged

in watching something beyond the camera, this child clearly presents an image of transformation, from the lame and disconsolate boy in the photograph on the right, to one more conventionally healthy, proper and civilised. However, it is the impartial nature of the photograph, the very quality that gives it its value as a source of data, that also works to subvert the aura of control this image attempts to assert. The photograph's revelation of the random, and tendency to record whatever enters its field of vision - whether placed there intentionally or not - has here captured the drapery to the right of the composition falling aside to reveal a table underneath, prompting doubts as to how stable the boy's posture truly is, since his efforts to remain upright have seemingly upset the decor.

The convention of formatting medical photographs in pairs for comparison opens another potential source of the uncanny, since it presents a manifestation of the double. In order to function as data, these images are deliberately contrived to feature duplicate settings and compositions, generating a sense of 'constant recurrence' and 'repetition' (Freud, p.356) which evokes the Freudian uncanny. As Freud states, the eeriness of visible repetition is deepened by its intimation of 'mental processes leaping from one ... to another – by what one should call telepathy – so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other' (p.356). This quality is particularly significant for images of disease, where individuals with the same infection are highly likely to suffer in similar ways and to display the same symptoms. That is on the human level. With regard to the micro-organisms that cause disease, it is unclear whether each instance of illness is caused by an autonomous agent or if, more disturbingly, each strain of bacteria is in fact a vast indivisible entity, acting with the same purpose through and across its various individual victims, and communicating telepathically to produce the same patterns of physical distress. In paired medical images, then, there is not only the similarity between the persons depicted, and their circumstances and symptoms, but signified by these, there is also the presence of an 'identical' entity, able to synchronise its actions despite its visible 'doubling, dividing and interchanging' (Freud, p.356).

While the provision of data is a crucial determinant of medical photographs, they are strikingly different from the nineteenth-century anatomical illustrations made for referential and pedagogic purposes. The typical anatomical illustration of the period is a graphically rendered depiction of a surgical dissection, which shows the body divided into isolated parts. Such images are generally characterised by their scrupulous detail and emphasis on exposing the internal structure of bones and tissues, and how pathological damage manifests in them: a highly technical type of analysis that demands an objectified view of the body as a system of components. In contrast, the early medical photograph can be seen to convey information that is relevant to a

range of scientific, moral, and aesthetic concerns, in the manner of the illustrated anatomy, and its method of communication is more closely aligned with the tradition of portraiture, which uses signifiers such as pose, facial expression, dress, setting, and props to construct the idea of an individual and their social context.

The difference is obvious when photographs and illustrations of the same affliction are compared. Jean Cruveilhier's (1791-1874) illustration taken from *Anatomie pathologique du corps humain* (1829) (figure 41) is a detailed, colour image of a heart in dissection which, although it offers a lucid insight into the various tissues and mechanisms of the organ, is nonetheless an image made by, and for, the medical profession, since it requires specialist knowledge to perceive where and how disease has taken affect.

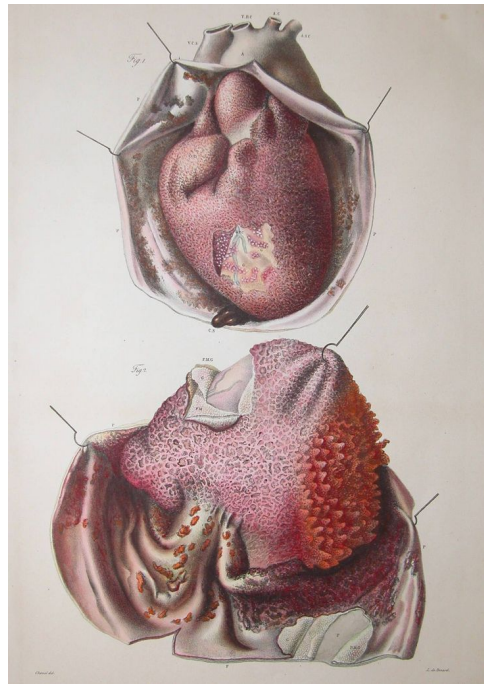


Figure 41. Jean Cruveilhier,
'Diseased heart' from *Anatomie pathologique de corps humane*, 1829,
image from <library.fxplus.ac.uk/resource/wellcome-images>

In comparison, the photograph *Man with large aneurysm which originated in the aortic arch* (St. Bartholomew's Photographic Society, 1903) (figure 42) does not call for the same kind of advanced understanding to know that the man is sick. There is an obvious distortion and swelling around his chest, his expression is dejected and he is pictured in a sickroom setting: factors through which the photograph does not so much explain how or why, but relates a general sense

of suffering and malaise. As Richard Barnett has observed, the anatomical illustration instantiates a 'concept of clinical authority ... rooted in the dead patient's body' (p.22), whereas the medical photograph captures the living patient with a candour that compels recognition of disease as a holistic experience, with mental, emotional, and preternatural, as well as physiological effects.



Figure 42. St. Bartholomew's Photographic Society
Man with large aneurysm that originated in the aortic arch, 1903,
 photographic print on paper,
 St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Archives.

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Through the common theme of human suffering shared by medical and martyr imagery, there evolves a complex of intersected clinical and theological ideas, for example: medicine as a venerable institution and moral authority similar to the church; care of the sick as both a profession, and the work of Christian charity; illness as both divinely ordained, and biologically determined; and pain as a physical burden that is also a spiritual privilege. Lionello Puppi has advanced the notion that the iconography of the martyr, while ostensibly portraying events that occurred in the first centuries, often disregards historical accuracy in its depiction of torture, and rather acts as a record or critique of the methods of punishment employed by the society

contemporary to that in which the image arises.²⁰⁵ Put another way, the public executions and horrific spectacles of violence witnessed by artists were not, for the most part, represented by them as current events (perhaps for fear of reprimand by authorities using those same tortures as their means of control), but ‘recycled in the scenes of martyrdom or biblical epic for which there was an ever-growing demand’ (Puppi, p.59). If, as Puppi maintains, the figure of the martyr is a vehicle for social critique, then the early medical photograph’s alignment with martyr imagery could have functioned subliminally as a forum for expressing unconscious or socially unacceptable fears of medical intervention as a form of torture, or means of control. Or conversely (and perhaps simultaneously) that the association acts as a hegemonic agent for the medical profession who produce the images, disseminating a concept of the ideal patient modelled on the martyr, and characterised by submissiveness and observance.

Religious connections are established through the staging of the photographs, which actively adopt the same visual signifiers that appear in martyr imagery. *Woman with malignant disease of the thyroid gland* (1887) (figure 43), taken by surgeon James Berry, is composed (either deliberately or unconsciously) to resemble Renaissance depictions of St. Mary Magdalene, thus creating its meaning and effect through this alignment.²⁰⁶ Although it is not obviously apparent what the woman’s ailment is, her pose and demeanour are immediately indicative of suffering. Her facial expression with its downturned, pursed lips and drooping eyelids has an air of melancholy and resignation. Her passive, seated pose and the tilt of her head are likewise suggestive of frailty and dejection. The bedclothes she is wearing are the conventional garb of the invalid, yet are also reminiscent of the ecclesiastical robes worn by saints in religious paintings, and the similarity is confirmed by the way the clothing is falling away from her shoulders, and the position of her hand holding them in place, which are both conventional features of Renaissance paintings of Mary Magdalene, as seen in the comparative example, *The Penitent Magdalen* (c.1635) by Guido Reni (figure 44).²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Lionello Puppi, *Torment in Art: Pain, Violence, Martyrdom*, translated by Jeremy Scott (New York: Rizzoli, 1991) p.59.

²⁰⁶ Sir James Berry (1860-1946) was born in Ontario but lived most of his life in London. He completed his medical training at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital and went on to serve as house surgeon there. His particular areas of expertise were cleft palate surgery, the treatment of goitre and diseases of the thyroid. The collection of forty-seven photographs credited to Berry held in St. Bartholomew’s Hospital Archives - dating from 1886-87 - mainly depict thyroid disorders and many of them were used to illustrate Berry’s essay on the subject which was awarded the Jacksonian prize by the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1887 (published in book form as *Diseases of the thyroid gland and their surgical treatment* (London: J&A Churchill, 1901). He was knighted in 1925. (Information taken from Berry’s biographical entry on the Royal College of Surgeons website at <<http://livesonline.rcseng.ac.uk/biogs/E003832b.htm>> (accessed 08.2017)).

²⁰⁷ Guido Reni (1575-1642) was a Bolognese painter whose work was influenced by the classical style of Raphael. His achieved great fame in his lifetime, although his critical appraisal has been inconsistent since. There is a large collection of his works in the Pinacoteca in Bologna (*Oxford Dictionary of Art*, p.470).



Figure 43. James Berry
Woman with malignant disease of the thyroid gland, 1887,
 photographic print on paper,
 St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Archives

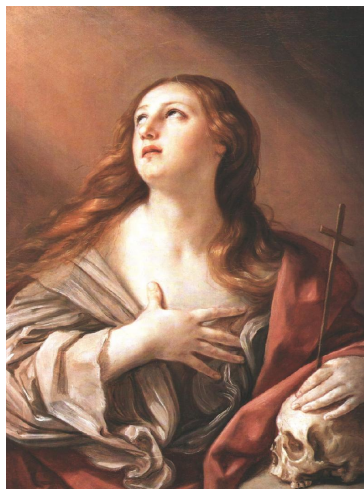


Figure 44. Guido Reni,
The Penitent Magdalen, c.1635,
 oil on canvas, 908 x 743mm,
 The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, U.S.A..

Mary Magdalene was not strictly a martyr, but is considered more as an example of a reformed sinner – someone who has renounced worldly pleasures in favour of spiritual devotion - and by recreating the visual tropes used in portraits of her, this photograph suggests similar concepts. The background in the photograph is out of focus, which imparts a sense of material

reality fading away, and of the subject turning towards a mystical realm. The woman's gaze is directed away from the viewer, suggesting a lack of concern with social engagement, while the light falling on her face is a common signifier of piety, or even a saintly state of grace. Considering that she is suffering from a 'malignant disease' these features could also be read as conveying the relinquishing of life, and transition into death and the beyond. Disease here is portrayed as an emotional and psychological experience as well as a somatic effect, and by utilising the visual language of religious art, this photograph asks us to read that experience in theological terms as something spiritually productive.

A further association with the art world that merits some attention here is found in the titles (or perhaps more accurately, labels) conventionally given to medical photographs. While the idiom 'with' is common parlance when referring to persons afflicted by disease, as in *Woman with malignant disease of the thyroid gland*, *Man with large aneurysm*, etc., it is also a term derived from the traditional modes of naming (predominantly Western European) figurative paintings: *Self-Portrait with a Sunflower* (Anthony Van Dyck 1633), *Self-Portrait with Circles* (Rembrandt 1659), and *Woman with a Water-Jug* (Jan Vermeer 1660-67), being prominent examples. In all these celebrated paintings the word 'with' denotes the presence, within the composition, of something additional to the main subject – a separate, self-contained object, included to embellish the central interest of the figure. However, in medical photographs, the use of 'with' is something of a misnomer, since it indicates the presence of two entities – the subject and the disease; yet only one of these – the subject – is ever distinctly visible, because disease is not a separate object, as implied in the terminology, but an integrated biological system in a state of simultaneous union and conflict, that the word 'with' is inadequate to convey. The term 'with' serves to suppress the threat of the abject embodied by disease, by reinstating the dualism that signifies 'I' and 'other' and, in doing this through language, by asserting the authority of the symbolic order that the abject threatens to sabotage. In its emulation of titles given to figurative art, using 'with' further compounds this distancing and denial of the abject by aligning medical photographs with aesthetic practices rather than the disordered body.

Patient who had a recurrent carcinoma of the right breast (1888-89) (figure 45) presents, again, an instance where the explicit foregrounding of body trauma is tempered by a resemblance to religious imagery. Despite the subject's extensive injury and probable pain, her facial expression is not agonised, but stoical, and her gaze is turned benignly towards the viewer with a look of mingled pity and submission.

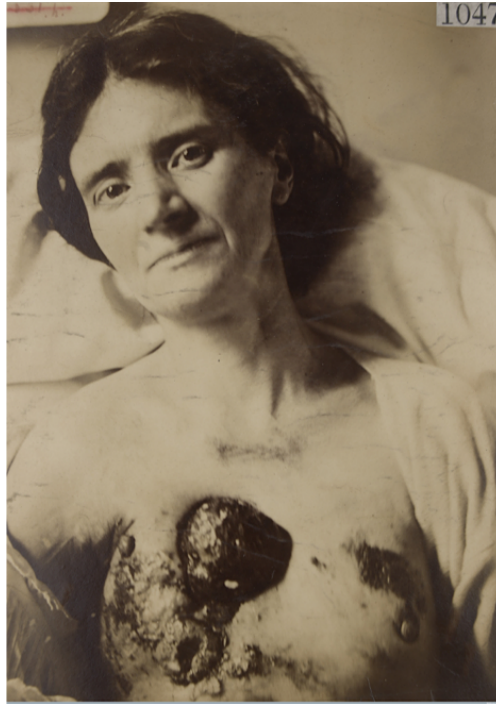


Figure 45. St Bartholomew's Photographic Society
Patient who had a recurrent carcinoma of the right breast, 1888-89
 photographic print on paper,
 St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Archives

Often the only physical attribute to remain intact in martyr iconography, the face is the signifier of the saint's divine ecstasy and the symbol of the transcendent soul, which is distinct from, and liberated by, his or her desecrated body. The pairing of the brutalised body with the divinely transfigured face is a visual code, that enables the viewer to inscribe, and thus palliate images of body trauma, with mystical significance. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag speculates that photographs of facial mutilation are the most difficult images of atrocity to endure²⁰⁸: precisely because, I would argue, the means of reading or projecting spiritual benefit – that is, facial expression – has been proscribed. Here, the photograph is labeled with the statement that the woman's cancer is recurrent, suggesting she has already (unsuccessfully) undergone surgery - the equivalent of the violent ordeal endured by the martyr that facilitates their divine transcendence.

The framing and composition of *Patient who had a recurrent carcinoma of the right breast* is comparable to the icon of the 'Immaculate Heart of Mary' (also called 'Our Lady of Seven Sorrows' and 'Mater Dolorosa') (Figure 46) – an image associated with the cult of the Sacred Heart that emerged in the twelfth century, and which is still used in Catholic devotions today. Like the well-known icon, the photograph shows a female figure enveloped in folds of cloth,

²⁰⁸ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London, Penguin, 2003) p.74.

bearing a slightly mysterious, though compassionate, expression, and suffused with light - a common signifier of the divine.



Figure 46.
'Immaculate Heart of Mary',
Catholic devotional image, from
<<http://www.marypages.com>>

The prominent wound in the chest of the woman in the photograph echoes the stylised representation of the Holy Virgin's heart pierced by seven swords – a graphic symbol of her interior suffering. Such striking similarities enable the photograph to draw all the theological attributes associated with this icon, such as virtue, purity, absolute faith, and suffering as a form of beauty, into a medical context.²⁰⁹

The St. Bartholomew's Photographic Society image of a young woman with anorexia (1896) (figure 47) is accompanied by an extended label that reads: 'Emaciated woman, aged 17 years, suffering from 'Hysteria', who refused food on account of anorexia (anorexia nervosa)'. This descriptive summary attaches a sense of complete breakdown to the photograph: of physical deterioration through 'emaciation', of disordered mental faculties through 'hysteria', a lack of

²⁰⁹ It is perhaps also significant to this particular photograph that the Catholic cult of the Virgin Mary saw a surge in popularity during the nineteenth century, following her alleged appearance to St. Catherine Laboure (1806-1876) in Burgundy, France, in 1830. In this mystical vision the Virgin delivered instructions for making the 'miraculous medal' – a medallion featuring the image of the Immaculate Heart, which, if worn, would afford the bearer many blessings. The Mass of the Pure Heart, derived from Marian cults, was also formerly integrated into Catholic practice in 1855.

sound judgment and an inability to perform basic functions of survival since she refuses food, and all of these conditions made more poignant by the subject's youth. What the words want to emphasise is an idea of the suffering of the whole being, and this feeling is echoed visually in the photograph, and enhanced through stylistic and compositional similarities to paintings depicting the death of Christ - the original and most revered of martyrs.



Figure 47. St Bartholomew's Photographic Society,
Emaciated woman, aged 17 years, suffering from 'Hysteria', who refused food on account of anorexia (anorexia nervosa), 1896, photographic print on paper,
St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Archives.

Since the pretext of the photograph is to illustrate a medical condition, the girl's nakedness is contingent to the effective display of her damaged body, and any sexual connotation is suppressed by both the medical context, and the aura of fragility and suffering perceptible in the sag of her head and flaccid limbs, characteristic of the weakness and lassitude induced by starvation. At the same time, the exposed flesh, minimally covered by a cloth wrapped around the loins, mimics the conventional appearance of the crucified or dead Christ, and the woman's enervated body, laid out on a shroud-like cloth, adds to this impression in its likeness to the behaviour of a corpse. While this would seem to evoke the abject, the allusion to the dead Christ

works to subvert this tendency by imparting a sense of spiritual significance, enhanced by the indeterminate background, which lacking any contextualising feature, might be imagined as the interior of a tomb, or the underworld, or some unknown divine realm. Against this dark backdrop, the pale body appears almost mystically illuminated, and the slightly out-of-focus blurring around the head adds to the feeling of a ghostly form, or the idea of someone broaching divine and earthly states. Compared to Fillipino Lippi's (1459-1504) *Pieta* (*The Dead Christ Mourned by Nicodemus and Two Angels*) (c.1500, figure 48), the photograph can be seen to feature many of the same signifiers, and although there is obviously a gender difference, it only serves to further the concept that the transient, physical self is of less significance than the immortal soul made ascendant by its suffering.



Figure 48. Fillipino Lippi, *Pietà* (*The Dead Christ Mourned by Nicodemus and Two Angels*), (detail) c.1500, oil on panel, 31 x 46 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

While religious art is an explicitly visual source for this thematic thread in medical photographs, another influence can be identified in the cluster of martyr novels that emerged around the mid nineteenth century. These best-selling titles – some of whose authors were also prominent churchmen – had already brought the figure of the martyr, and her or his attainment of supernal grace through earthly immolation, to the surface of the popular imagination. This made it an expedient model for photographic interpretations of injury and disease. What is especially interesting about these texts is that they are grounded in history, and the empirical evidence of contemporary archaeological discovery, concerning the early development of Christianity. As such, their narratives evolve from a blend of scientific research and creative invention that

parallels the dual documentary and aesthetic properties of the photograph, as well as the integrated outlook of the early illustrated anatomy. That the martyr narrative and the medical photograph also share a prevalent interest in the morbid or damaged body makes for an especially strong alignment, and it is in the martyr narrative's devoutly inspired attitude of compassion and reverence towards bodily suffering that the medical photograph finds a moral framework for studying, and presenting, sickly states of being.

Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia, or New Foes with Old Faces* (1853), Nicholas Wiseman's *Fabiola, or The Church of the Catacombs* (1854) and *Callista, A Tale of the Third Century* (1855) by John Henry Newman are all titles that exemplify this use of historical record as the narrative basis for their theological polemic and mystical supposition.²¹⁰ Following the emancipation of the Roman church in England in 1829, Catholics were free to openly practise their religion, and their growing public presence inevitably posed a threat to established denominations. Kingsley's *Hypatia* has been considered as a response to this so-called 'papal aggression'²¹¹ and his depiction, through the violent martyrdom of his heroine, of early (Roman) Christians as corrupt and depraved was controversial, and offensive, to both Catholics and High Anglicans, prompting the creation of *Fabiola* and *Callista* as a means of redressing the matter.

Despite the general trend for secularization,²¹² all three books were bestsellers, remaining in print throughout the century, and were widely translated, and also adapted for the stage,²¹³ suggesting a popular appeal beyond the partisan interest of committed Christians. One reason for this widespread readership was that these works function on several levels: Romance plots in the mould of Walter Scott, featuring Christians and pagans in melodramatic contention, attracted

²¹⁰ Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) was a Church of England priest as well as a prolific author of fiction and theological polemic. *Hypatia* was inspired by the life of the 4th Century scholar Hypatia of Alexandria. It was serialised in *Fraser's Magazine* from January 1852 to April 1853 and reprinted as a book the same year. Nicholas Patrick Wiseman (1802-1865) was an Irish cardinal who became the first Archbishop of Westminster in 1850, following the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales. *Fabiola* was first published in 1854 (SI: s.n.) and Wiseman cited the sources for it as the 'Acts of the Martyrs' (a body of documents comprising official records and eye-witness accounts of the trials and deaths of Christian martyrs dating from the second century on) and the Roman Breviary (*Fabiola* (forgottenbooks, 2012) viii). John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was an Anglican priest who controversially converted to catholicism in 1846. Prior to this he had spearheaded the Oxford Movement - an Anglican group who campaigned to reinstate Catholic beliefs and rituals to the Church of England, which had been vested after the Reformation. *Callista* (London: Burns and Lambert, 1855) was based on the historical writings of Tertullian and St. Cyprian.

²¹¹ Leon B. Litvack, 'Callista, Martyrdom, and the Early Christian Novel in the Victorian Age', *Nineteenth Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 17:2 (1993) 159-173, p.65.

²¹² Although membership of the Catholic church increased steadily throughout the century, this was mainly due to the influx of Irish immigrants, and while the 1851 census recorded a growth in dissenting churches, putting them on a par with the established Anglican church, overall church attendance was in decline. (See Robin Gilmour, *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature 1830-1900* (London: Longman Group, 1993) pp.65-93.

²¹³ *Fabiola* was adapted as *The Youthful Martyrs of Rome* by Frederick Oakeley in 1856. *Callista* as *The Convert Martyr* by Frederick Charles Husenbeth in 1857, and *Hypatia* under the same title, by G. Ogilvie, somewhat later (though this is testament to its ongoing fascination) in 1894; an earlier, 1859 version, *The Black Agate*, adapted by an Elizabeth Bowers, was also briefly staged in Philadelphia, U.S.A..

readers of fiction; the inclusion of current historical and archaeological discovery would have drawn a scholarly audience, and an air of pious morality and veneration of God satisfied those seeking spiritual edification. What we see again in these novels is the same collaboration of art, science and religion that characterised the early illustrated anatomy – a significant correlative of the martyr narrative and image – since both are concerned with the body, and particularly the morbid body, in states of mutilation or disarrayed display.

A further factor that garnered interest in these three novels was due to the wave of cynicism towards scriptural maxims that had come to appear trite or improbable in the light of scientific discovery. Rather than simply refuting such concerns, these works actively contributed to topical debate, seeking to substantiate Christian rhetoric with material facts. Newman and Wiseman were especially keen to advance an empirically-based theology. As leader of the Oxford Movement, Newman hoped for the verification of Anglican Church authority through historical scholarship; he was also famously resentful of theological mysticism, and (frustratedly) strove to find ‘logical proof of God’s existence’ (Gilmour, p.82).²¹⁴ In 1835, Wiseman, equally keen to provide a rational basis for his faith, delivered his *Twelve lectures on the connexion between science and revealed religion* (1836), to the English College in Rome where he was then rector.²¹⁵ Newman’s widely-noted conversion to Catholicism in 1845, and his notorious public dispute with Kingsley – still a staunch Anglican - regarding it, was another source of advertising.

The concept of the martyr was a particularly apt one for mediating the prevalent mood of confusion regarding Christian authority. As a metaphor for representing contemporary life, the martyr began to collapse distinctions between religious and secular values. Soldiers fighting in the Crimea were styled as self-sacrificing Christ-like heroes, encoding territorial dispute as holy mission.²¹⁶ As the ideal of how to suffer with dignity, the martyr figure encouraged the sick and elderly to endure their afflictions without complaint, in the hope of gaining holy favour. The martyr figure also reflected the cultural desire for both stability and rebellion, being simultaneously orthodox in his or her embodiment of traditional Christian, and conventional bourgeois, moral ideals, such as humility, altruism, loyalty and obedience; and transgressive, by

²¹⁴ Also known as ‘Tractarians’ and ‘Puseyites’, the Oxford Movement’s members included the Oxford Dons E.B. Pusey, Robert Wilberforce, Hummel Froude and John Keble. They were active between 1833 and 1841. (see Gilmour 75-82).

²¹⁵ Nicholas Wiseman *Twelve lectures on the connexion between science and revealed religion*, 2 Volumes, (London: Joseph Booker, 1836). These lectures present Wiseman’s ideas on how biblical narrative aligns with new discoveries in archaeology, Natural History and other disciplines.

²¹⁶ The Crimean War began in October 1853 and ended in February 1856. The cause of the conflict centred around the rights of Christian minorities living in the Holy Land - then a part of the Ottoman Empire. The Russian Empire took the side of the Eastern Orthodox Church, while the French promoted the cause of the Roman Catholics. The violence that ensued eventually saw the Russian Empire defeated by an alliance of the Ottoman Empire, France, Britain and Sardinia.

participating in sado-masochistic spectacles in which willful self-destruction is the illogical means of self-assertion²¹⁷.

The sensational nature of the intense brutality at the heart of the martyr narrative was no doubt another element of its popular appeal. The theatrical adaptations of *Hypatia*, *Fabiola* and *Callista* are a testament to this, evidencing a cultural desire to (pertinently) experience violent display 'in the flesh' - especially when it has been sanctioned and made safe by the policed platform of the fictional stage. Since the martyr narrative validates the viewing of the abject, desecrated body as the witnessing of spiritual transcendence, it also opens a space that accommodates potentially negative or even deviant responses to persecution, such as voyeuristic prurience, erotic gratification and sadistic desire (Moran, AD p.477). As Maureen Moran has suggested, this figuring of sado-masochistic practice as a form of transcendental ecstasy transposes 'shunned sexual territories' onto 'religious aims', allowing sexual fantasies to exist alongside those of an exemplarily pious character, and catering to extreme, as well as conformist spheres of taste.²¹⁸

Excessive violence, however, is perhaps most powerfully provocative of horrific and macabre sensations, that might include moral disgust at the barbarous perpetrators, repulsion towards the abject, mutilated body, and empathetic fear of pain and death. At once both thrilling and appalling, such reactions, consolidated as the feeling of 'horror', cannot be accurately placed as either morally fortifying or depraved and, like the other prevalent subjects of this discussion – disease and photography - tends to defy conventional classification, and adds a dimension of conceptual confusion to what is already a potent form of emotional and physical disturbance.

Since Victorian martyr narratives often comprise a mixture of genres, they cannot be called 'horror' in the same sense that we regard Gothic texts like Shelley's *Frankenstein* or the stories of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49), but the horrific is nonetheless an important element of their dramatic effect, emotional impact and entertainment value. Wiseman shows this tendency towards the macabre by setting *Fabiola* in the catacombs of Rome - a topical choice, since the site had recently been excavated by Italian archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi (1822-94), grounding the narrative in geographical place and historical research, but also a decidedly gruesome one, that affords the text the richly Gothic backdrop of a dark, labyrinthine, subterranean graveyard, thick with human remains.²¹⁹ Exemplary of the Gothic tone of the text is

²¹⁷ The ideas in this paragraph are drawn from Maureen Moran, 'The Art of Looking Dangerously: Victorian Images of Martyrdom', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 32.2 (2004) 475-493, pp.475-77. Hereafter cited as AD with page.

²¹⁸ Maureen Moran, *Catholic Sensationalism and Victorian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007) p.155. Hereafter cited in the text as CS with page number.

²¹⁹ De Rossi's excavation of the Roman catacombs occurred during the 1840s, and led to new discoveries, particularly regarding the size and extent of the underground tombs, and how they impacted on development of the

a scene in which Lucina, mother of Pancratius (St. Pancras), gifts her son the relic of a sponge soaked in the blood of his martyred father, which he then proceeds to fetishistically fondle and kiss giving him ‘empurpled lips’²²⁰ which Moran (CS, p.155) acutely describes as ‘vampiric’.

Newman also plays up the horrific for sensational effect in his novel *Callista*, displaying, as one reviewer of the time commented, ‘what odd thoughts may lurk in the most ... austere of minds’.²²¹ This leaning towards the grotesque is particularly apparent in the creation of the character Gurta – witch, and mother of the hero Aegillius - whose forest dwelling is detailed like the hideout of a twenty-first century slasher-film serial killer:

Upon the trees hung the emblems and objects of idolatry, and the turf was traced with magical characters. Littered about were human bones, horns of wild animals, wax figures [...] large nails, to which portions of flesh adhered [...] metal plates engraved with strange characters, bottled blood, hair of young persons and old rags.²²²

Gurta’s deeds are equally in the mode of post-millennial torture-horror, as when she is witnessed by her elder son, Juba, murdering a young boy:

Did not I catch you the other day, practising on that little child? You had him nailed up by hands and feet against a tree, and were cutting him to pieces at your leisure, as he quivered and shrieked the while. You were examining or using his liver for some of your black purposes ... and when he wailed, you wailed in mimicry. You were panting with pleasure. (Ca, p.263)

The suggestion of perverse and violent sexuality in the phrase ‘panting with pleasure’ is particularly disturbing here, and casting a child as the victim of such cruelty is extreme even by current standards, so it is no surprise that the book was condemned by some as ‘unspeakably offensive’ (Garden, Mozley and Scott p.146).

early Christian church. The project was well known and of wide public interest, and Wiseman’s novel was one of several titles on the catacombs of Rome published around mid-century, all of which, excepting *Fabiola*, were non-fiction, and included Louis Perret’s lavishly illustrated six-volume treatise *Les Catacombs de Rome*. (1852-57); *The Church in the Catacombs; a description of the primitive church in Rome, illustrated by its sepulchral remains*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1847) by Charles Maitland; and *The Roman Catacombs, or some account of the Early Christians in Rome*. (London: 1857) by Reverend J. Spencer Northcote.

²²⁰ Nicholas Wiseman, *Fabiola; or The Church of the Catacombs* (New York: P. O’Shea, 1880) Facsimile edition by Forgotten Books, 2012, p.18. Hereafter indicated in the text as ‘Fab’ with page reference.

²²¹ Francis Garden, James Bowling Mozley and William Scott (eds.) ‘Art VI’ *The Christian Remembrancer* 33:95 January, 1857 124-166, 139.

²²² John Henry Newman, *Callista; A Tale of the Third Century* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1890) p.257. Hereafter cited as ‘Ca’ with page.

The demonic possession of Juba is another device in *Callista* that chimes with twentieth and twenty-first century horror film. The episode begins when Juba wakes to an awareness that there is:

[...] something in him not himself. He felt it in his breathing; he tasted it in his mouth ... Suddenly the power within him began uttering, by means of his organs of speech, the most fearful blasphemies [...] and he felt himself carried away, against his will, as the prey of some dreadful, mysterious power, which tyrannised over him. (Ca, p.266-7)

Newman handles the scene naturalistically, depicting the supernatural agency through Juba's sensations and actions - first as a 'feeling' and 'taste', then as speech and movement. Under duress of this 'power' Juba is later compelled to slaughter a 'beast of prey' and drink 'a draught of its blood' (Ca, p.268), and to 'spout a chorus of Greek, a language he had never learned or heard spoken' (p.271). A menagerie of sinister animals - 'owls, bats, ravens, crows, snakes, wild cats' (Ca, p.267) - follow in his wake; a passing cow 'foamed and trembled' (p.270) in his presence, and a child 'fell into convulsions' (p.271). Although these events are bizarre, they nonetheless remain within the bounds of what a human is feasibly capable - Juba does not fly, for example, or develop powers of telekinises, as is often the case in filmic depictions of supernatural possession - and this restraint illustrates the author's desire to harness the concept of a spiritual realm to material reality.

This scenario also foregrounds the body as the site of contention between two opposing agents struggling for control. Juba's ability to access bodily sensations of 'feeling' and 'taste' that illogically signal to his self that he is 'not himself', gives rise to an uncanny internal doubling or double consciousness, which operates in an almost identical manner to that of disease - also at once a hostile foreign invader and an integrated element of a singular entity. The similarity to disease is also carried through in the confusion between self and other figured in the possession motif. The supernatural agent is both separate from, and the same as, its victim, whose self-awareness is realised through the body, but at the same time somehow exists independently of it, as an observer that is at once interior and exterior, disrupting common distinctions between I and other, inside and outside, and body and mind.

In Wiseman's *Fabiola* the macabre subject of the internment of corpses becomes an empirical take on Christianity that also emphasises body horror. Using the device of two voices - one the invented character Diogenes, a caretaker of the catacombs, and the other a contemporary, didactic voice featured in scholarly footnotes - Wiseman relates parallel fictional-historical and factual-informative stories of two child martyrs.

Diogenes' narration is anecdotal and familiar and mimics the form of eye-witness testimony found in the earliest annals of hagiography, which lends it a gravitas enhanced by the evidence offered in the footnotes. Diogenes' account of having "to gather up hastily the torn flesh and broken limbs ... to wrap them hurriedly in their winding sheets, then fold them into another sheet full of lime [...] and shove them precipitately into their tomb" (Fab, p.171) gives a personalised, dramatic report of burial in the catacombs. The detail of double wrapping the body is a practice verified as historically authentic by a footnote that tells the reader: 'In the cemetery of St. Agnes, pieces of lime have been found in tombs forming exact moulds of different parts of the body with the impression of a finer linen inside and a coarser outside' (Fab, p.171).

Throughout the novel Wiseman also employs a variety of visual aids - including maps, architectural plans, and facsimiles of the inscriptions found on the tombs - as material proof that aims to promote his imaginative supposition to the sphere of historical reconstruction. A tomb that Diogenes recalls "My father and I made [...] of six slabs of marble [...] and I engraved" (Fab, p.172) is identified by such a facsimile as being that of the young martyr Aelius Fabius Restitus. Although the inscription indicates the remains of only one body, Diogenes, recalling the burial, reveals that Restitutus:

"[...] has a comrade younger than himself lying in the same bed. As we were closing the tomb of Restitutus, the body of a boy not more than twelve or thirteen years old was brought to us. Oh, I shall never forget the sight! He had been hung over a fire, and his head, trunk, and limbs nearly to the knees, were burnt to the very bone; and so disfigured was he that no feature could be recognized. Poor little fellow, what he must have suffered! ... we thought the youth of eighteen would not grudge room for his fellow-soldier of twelve, but would own him for a younger brother; so we laid him as Aelius Fabius's feet." (Fab, p.173)

An accompanying footnote, in contrasting pedagogic tone, announces that:

On the 22nd April, 1823, this tomb was discovered unviolated.²²³ On being opened, the bones, white, bright, and polished as ivory, were found, corresponding to the framework of a youth of eighteen. At his head was the phial of blood.²²⁴ With the head to his feet was the skeleton of a boy,

²²³ By Giuseppe Marchi (1795-1860) de Rossi's predecessor and mentor.

²²⁴ The 'phials of blood' became a controversial issue following the nineteenth-century excavations of the catacombs. Said to contain blood collected at the scenes of martyrdom, the presence of a phial embedded in the plaster that sealed a tomb identified the grave as that of a martyr, and consequently elevated the corpse within from ordinary remains to holy relics. However, the matter was hotly debated, with some (generally Anglicans) maintaining that the glass ampules contained Eucharistic wine, rather than blood, and demands to test the chemical composition of the contents once again put Church authority in contention with that of science, although the mystery was never resolved, since the Vatican ceased the distribution of relics from the catacombs in 1863 (Wendel W. Meyer, 'The Phial of Blood Controversy and the Decline of the Liberal Catholic Movement', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46.1 (1995) 75-94.

of twelve or thirteen, black and charred chiefly at the head and upper parts, down to the middle of the thigh-bones, from which to the feet the bones gradually whitened. The two bodies, richly clothed, repose side by side under the altar of the Jesuit's college at Loretto. (Fab, p.173)

Founded on fact, and therefore not entirely fiction, but using imaginative invention to reconstruct the past, Wiseman's novel is a fusion of styles that exploits both the immediacy and sensation of first-person narration, and the documentary realism of historical research. What is interesting to this discussion is that both elements are developed through a focus on the abject body. Diogenes' narrative describes the condition of the dead child in grimly explicit detail, with the body broken apart and listed as 'head, trunk, limbs [...] knees', forcing concentrated attention on physicality and form, and enacting a literary equivalent of corporeal dismemberment; while phrases like 'hung over a fire', 'burnt to the very bone' and 'so disfigured' graphically convey notions of intense bodily agony and desecration.

In the footnote, the same corpses have undergone a change of status and become remains, affording them value as both religious relics and archaeological artefacts. This is reflected in the lingering, fetishised description of the bones, which are 'bright', 'polished' and like 'ivory', evoking the qualities of something precious, while 'richly clothed' and their placement 'under the altar' esteems them as holy treasures. The 'black and charred' skeleton of the boy is the factual foundation of Diogenes' tale and thus Wiseman's theological premise of martyrdom, while the documenting of the precise date of the discovery of the tomb, as well as the (then) current location of the relics ('at Loretto'), adds weight to the evidence by siting it in a historical context and geographic location.²²⁵

By collapsing time, and consolidating events that occurred in the early centuries with developments in the Victorian present, the two voices together comprise a complete story that traces the post-mortem progress of the body from the circumstances of death and state of the cadaver, through rituals of interment and decomposition, to their exhumation as skeletal remains. Paired with Wiseman's overtly Christian agenda, this morbid fascination with the process of death and the body in its most abject states - as ruptured flesh, corpse, remains, and relics - draws us once again into the territory of the illustrated anatomy, in which the dead uncannily articulate concepts of history, nature, and the divine.

²²⁵ The reviewer in *The Christian Remembrancer* of January 1857 was distinctly unimpressed by the 'factional' style of *Fabiola*, declaring that 'it would not be wise or safe to place [it] in the hands of young people who could not discriminate or mark the boundaries between fact and unjustifiable assumption, where it is of such great moment that the truth should not be tampered with' (Garden, Mozley and Scott, p.166).

Corpses also express a medical agenda, to which the text of *Fabiola* connects in several instances. One is the figuring of Christianity itself as a kind of disease, due to its tendency to spread like a virus, with individuals becoming ‘infected’ by contact with the faithful, and the faithful imagined as colonised or invaded by divine power.²²⁶ Physically, believers are indistinguishable from the rest of society, so that others become contaminated/converted by unwitting contact with them. Often it is witnessing a spectacle, such as a miracle, or indeed a martyrdom, that is the means by which conversion is secured. Seeing the saint’s supernatural resistance to torture and pain, and their subsequent transcendence, attests to the existence of God, and those who view it are compelled to believe. Conversion then spreads - in a manner akin to a plague - by these direct witnesses relating their stories, which then ‘infect’ those who hear their testimony.

Following her own conversion to Christianity, Fabiola - a wealthy Roman noblewoman - renounces her life of luxury and spends her time ‘attending to the sick, in an hospital established in her own house’ (Fab, p.469). Often associated with Christian values of duty and charity, tending to the sick is also the suitably pious sideline of Dionysius, the ‘pope’ of the catacombs, who holds ‘the twofold office of physician and priest’ (Fab, p.433). The tombs and relics of the martyred saints are attributed with mystical powers of healing, and pagans and Christians alike clamour at their sepulchres, praying for relief of their ailments. St. Agnes’ tomb is especially esteemed in this regard, having ‘completely cured’ a ‘virulent ulcer’ suffered by Constantia, daughter of the Emperor Constantine (Fab, p.469). However, for those Christians who have endured and survived persecution, bodily damage becomes a mark of exceptional courage and faith, that is ‘[...] saluted reverently by the passers-by, when they saw that his right eye had been burnt out, or his hand mutilated, or when his halting gait showed that the tendons of the knee had been severed ... for Christ’s sake’ (Fab, p.468).

*

There is some degree of overlap in the framing of representations of the abject body as either medical case or moral lesson. The medical photograph borrows the martyr image’s spiritual contextualisation of suffering, while medical practices are featured as a form of religious compassion in martyr narratives, resulting in a blend of science, aesthetics and theism that can

²²⁶ Sarah Juliet Lauro, ‘The Zombie Saints: The Contagious Spirit of Christian Conversion Narratives’, *Literature and Theology*, 26:2 (2012) 160-178, p.162.

also be traced back to the earliest depictions of the excised body in the illustrated anatomy. But whether the premise is predominantly medical or mystical, representations of the abject body almost always inspire, to a greater or lesser degree, responses of repugnance and fear, which can be emphasised for sensational effect.

One such example in *Fabiola* is the luridly graphic depiction of the death of St. Lawrence on the 'gridiron', which amplifies the visceral for horrific effect. The scene is once again recounted by Diogenes and framed as an eyewitness testimony, enhanced by the naturalistic style of the description, while the flashback format creates distance between the reader and the action, which is otherwise intense and immediate:

"To look at his tender flesh blistering and breaking over the fire, and deeply scored with red burning gashes that cut to the bone where the iron bars went across; to see the steam, thick as from a cauldron, rise from his body, and hear the fire hiss beneath him as he melted away into it; and every now and then to observe the tremulous quivering that crept over the surface of his skin, the living motion of which the agony gave to each separate muscle, and the sharp, spasmodic twitches which convulsed, and gradually contracted, his limbs ..." (Fab, p.261)

Visuality is accentuated here, with 'look', 'see', and 'observe' repeatedly drawing attention to the act of viewing and the experience of spectacle. At the same time the density of palpably violent terms like 'blistering', 'breaking', 'cut', 'quivering', 'agony', 'sharp', 'convulsed' stresses sensory experience and evinces a kind of somatic empathy with the victim, so that the reader is simultaneously aligned with both the observing audience and the tortured subject.

In encouraging readers to identify with both the victim and witnesses of torture in this scene Wiseman precisely anticipates the mode of the twenty-first century torture porn film. Like martyr narratives and images, and medical pictures, torture porn films are interested in exploring the nature of somatic suffering. What is extreme agony like? How do humans cope with it? And what are the psychological and spiritual ramifications of bodily torture and mutilation? Contrary to the alarmist assumptions of the tabloid press that has portrayed torture porn as a type of vicarious sadism, that aligns viewers with perpetrators of violence, it is much more likely to evince empathy with the persecuted, as does Wiseman's novel.²²⁷

It will be useful here to clarify what cinematic conditions meet the definition of torture porn by referring to Steve Jones's 'pivotal qualities', which are: (a) they are films made during or after 2003 (b) they 'centralise abduction, binding, imprisonment and torture (mental or physical)'

²²⁷ Steve Jones, *Torture Porn*, p.1-10.

and (c) they ‘broadly belong to the horror genre’ (p.8) - horror here indicating those texts whose primary themes are the terrorisation and suffering of their protagonists, with the aim of creating tension and eliciting emotional responses from the audience.²²⁸

Although produced a hundred and fifty years earlier, Wiseman’s *Fabiola* is contrived with similar aims, and his literary delineation of the martyrdom of St. Lawrence has a distinctly cinematic texture. In it, the body is glimpsed as a series of violated components, foreshadowing filmic techniques of cutting and editing, and phrases such as ‘red burning gashes’ and ‘cut to the bone’ work as the verbal equivalent of the motion-picture close-up. The fragmentation of the body that this entails (the integral subject St. Lawrence is disintegrated into ‘flesh’, ‘bone’, ‘skin’, ‘muscle’ and ‘limbs’) is also reminiscent of the objectified vision of the nineteenth-century anatomical illustration, with its focus on specific types of tissue in pathological and injured states.

The brutality enacted on the body is essential to the martyr narrative’s and image’s greater purpose of asserting the preeminence of God and the value of Christian faith. Figured as a site of conflict on which opposing religious, and secular, ideologies struggle for control, the wounds and mutilations suffered by the martyr are a visible manifestation of the state’s enforcement of the law, and the martyr’s miraculous ability to resist it (Moran, CS, p.153). That is, the abject body reads as both a punishment for, and reinforcement of, the martyr’s faith in God. Similarly damaged bodies in medical photographs can also be seen as sites of contention, only here the agents competing for mastery are the medical profession on the one side, and on the other, the hostile micro-organisms that cause disease. As a determinant of physical disruption and pain, disease is naturally ascribed the role of malevolent persecutor, meaning the adverse characteristics of benevolence, succour and liberation automatically attach to the actions of medicine, and work to promote the profession in a positive light.

While the martyr narrative and image and the medical photograph construct a clear dichotomy of good and evil, the torture porn film differs from this in that it tends to disrupt such simplistic distinctions, portraying instead a constantly shifting ground of ethical ambiguities, where the roles of persecutor and victim are far more fluid and interchangeable. Protagonists in torture porn narratives are typically introduced as innocent prey, but this presumption is gradually undermined as the ongoing action reveals an ethically suspect element to their characters. Eli Roth’s *Hostel* (2005) presents a typical example.²²⁹ Josh (Derek Richardson) and Paxton (Jay Hernandez) initially appear to be a pair of decent, middle-class, college boys enjoying a backpacking holiday in Europe. However, when they are entreated by a fellow traveller to

²²⁸ As Jones indicates, the definition of ‘horror’ cannot be ‘perfectly delimited’, since films that could equally be designated ‘thrillers’ or ‘mysteries’ often exhibit similar traits (p.8).

²²⁹ Eli Roth, dir., *Hostel*, (USA: Raw Nerve / Nex Entertainment, 2005).

bypass Barcelona in favour of visiting a hostel in Slovakia where they are told there are many beautiful and available girls, their enthusiasm at the prospect of using women for sex begins to undermine their innocuous appearance.

The torture porn trope that most insistently expresses this moral ambiguity is the incitement of victims to torment or murder others in order to save themselves. When Paxton, following the murder of Josh, is kidnapped and brutalised by a Dutch ‘businessman’ (Jan Vlasá), he turns murderer in order to secure his own escape, violating the fundamental moral principle that it is wrong to kill. And his actions become even more questionable when, unexpectedly encountering his assailant on a train leaving Slovakia, he chooses to vengefully torture him with a knife despite being under no immediate threat (Jones, p.88).

In *Saw* (2004) the ‘games’ devised by the killer, Jigsaw (Tobin Bell), pressurise victims to torture and murder others in order to avoid a similar fate themselves.²³⁰ This is exemplified in an early scene where Amanda (Shawnee Smith) must remove a ‘reverse bear trap’, fastened to her head and set to rip her jaws apart after sixty seconds, an action that can only be accomplished by murdering and disemboweling her cell mate in order to retrieve the key, which he has been made to swallow, from his stomach.



‘Reverse bear trap’, from *Saw*, (Director James Wan, 2004)

In this circumstance, the distinction between torturer and tortured becomes blurred, and inflicting pain reads as both an immoral act of cruelty and an added source of torment for the victim induced to do it. It is also unclear who is responsible for committing the acts of violence since the victim, although coerced by their captor, nonetheless performs through their own free will and with personal motives of self-preservation, making blame

²³⁰ James Wan, dir., *Saw* (Australia / USA: Twisted Pictures, 2004).

difficult to properly place. Where torture is self-inflicted, as in the climax of *Saw*, where Dr. Lawrence Gordon (Cary Elwes) is compelled to amputate his own foot, the torturer/tortured dichotomy collapses entirely, and the two become one and the same. Again, this situation provokes the question of who is morally responsible. Has the victim, in turning against themselves, somehow been colonised by the agency of their tormentor? Or does the act of self harm rather prove his or her personal courage, and supremacy in the 'struggle for existence'?²³¹



From *Saw* (James Wan, 2004)

Dean Lockwood has theorised that the ethical anxieties expressed in torture porn films reflect Western society's 'post 9/11 permanent state of emergency' in which the subject is 'constantly exposed to death [and] stripped of any sense of agency or mastery over causes and effects'.²³² Denied any political identity or will, the subject is reduced to little more than a body, under the control and constant surveillance of an omnipotent, disturbingly deific power, with the ability to impose 'a brutal, anonymizing death ... at any time' (Lockwood, p.44).

As the major cultural institution assigned to the management of bodily life, the medical profession is often implicated as a conspirator in torture porn's forces of oppressive violence. The Dutch businessman who pays to torment and kill Josh in *Hostel* confesses to having a failed dream of becoming a surgeon; the murderous maniac in Japanese film *Grotesque*²³³ is a doctor by day; and the repugnant, scatological horror of *The Human Centipede*²³⁴ centres on the deranged medical 'experiments' of a Nazi-sympathising orthopaedist. While these films express fears concerning

²³¹ These ideas are drawn from Jones *Torture Porn* 88-100.

²³² Dean Lockwood, 'All stripped down: The spectacle of "torture porn"', *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture*, 7.1 (2009) 40-48, p.44.

²³³ Koji Shirashi, dir., *Grotesque* (Japan: Ace Deuce Entertainment / Tornado Film, 2009).

²³⁴ Tom Six, dir., *The Human Centipede (First Sequence)* (Netherlands: Six Entertainment, 2009).

potential uses and abuses of the power medical organisations hold over individual bodies, *Saw* turns the tables on the clinicians and has oncologist Dr. Gordon tortured and victimised by his former patient John Kramer - alias the homicidal mastermind of the series, Jigsaw - who is afflicted with terminal cancer. Although not a physician himself, Jigsaw has a sinisterly medical aura, residing in a hospital, and having an extensive knowledge of pharmaceuticals, and clinical procedures, due to his long dependency on them – information which he uses to devise his sadistic games and traps.

Jigsaw's debilitating condition is the one humanising aspect of a character whose seemingly unlimited access to property, resources and information enable him to observe and manipulate the lives and deaths of his victims with the preeminence of a God. That there is no feasible given explanation for how he accomplishes this, and that he manages to do so with very limited physical power due to his disease, only adds to the mysterious impression of supernatural agency. Like the biblical God, Jigsaw is also the origin and the enforcer of moral law, subjecting those who transgress to brutal ordeals contrived to teach proper ethical conduct as well as to punish. However, the criteria by which he judges his victims conforms to a conventional, capitalist political agenda which holds production (of labour/goods) as the chief source of human value. Thus drug addicts, drop-outs, petty criminals, fraudsters and generally those not benefiting the system, are deemed disposable unless they can be coerced into making a suitable contribution. The use of unconscionable methods of abduction, torture and murder in order to maintain the moral and ideological status quo places Jigsaw both outside, and on the side of, the law, and as in the figure of the martyr - whose implacable piety manifests as perverse delight in pain - this reads as both orthodox and radically transgressive behaviour. But where the martyr narrative tends to positively promote faith in God as righteous, despite requiring an errant involvement in sadomasochistic practice, torture porn films rather complicate and undermine any kind of ethical certainty, questioning whether it is proper or desirable to violate moral principles in order to uphold them, though offering no resolution to this dilemma.

The ultimate aim of Jigsaw's 'games' is to eliminate the unworthy, or else to transform them into functional citizens, by reconnecting them with their own dynamic power and igniting a new regard for the value of life. Dean Lockwood reads torture porn films as 'allegories of becoming', in which the typical victim is portrayed as complaisant and disconnected from the 'affective and intensive potential of life' (p.46). Through the experience of possible or actual torture and the immediate threat of death they are exposed to an 'ecstatic [...] self-altering moment, which opens up a revitalized, more intense engagement with life' (Lockwood, p.46): a

pattern inherited from the martyr narrative and image, in which the saint's divine euphoria is induced by extreme states of physical and mental anguish suffered through persecution.

For the figure of the martyr, the destruction of the physical body is the means of realising the true self in the transcendent soul, or what Maureen Moran (AD, p.490) terms the 'invisible-visible body', a self that is paradoxically asserted through the destruction of the self, and signified by the beatific, transfigured face. Returning to Wiseman's depiction of the death of St. Lawrence as an example, this is demonstrated by the sensational intensity of bodily agony being superseded by a calm and serene scene of mystical epiphany:

"[...] to look on his countenance was to forget all this. His head raised up from the burning body and stretched out, as if fixed on the contemplation of some most celestial vision [...] His face glowed indeed with the heat below, and the perspiration flowed down it, but the light from the fire shining upwards, and passing through his golden locks, created a glory around his beautiful head and countenance, which made him look as if already in heaven. And every feature, serene and sweet as ever, was so impressed with an eager, longing look [...] that you would willingly have changed places with him." (Fab, p.261)

The 'burning body', in its metamorphosis from substantial matter to ethereal smoke, is a literal figuration of the movement from corporeal self to liberated soul. Emphasis is repeatedly placed on the 'head', 'face', and 'countenance', which is 'raised up' and 'stretched out' as if straining to detach itself from the detritus of the ruined physical form. With Wiseman's concern for realism, the light around the saint's head is cast by the fire, but his use of the words 'glowed', 'shining', 'golden', and 'glory' still impart an impression of divine illumination, commonly used to signify a hallowed state of grace in Medieval and Renaissance religious paintings.

While it is a clear demarcation between body and soul, the pairing of the suffering body with the enraptured, ecstatic face signifies the uncanny moment in which the body is suspended between life and death, and the soul between earthly and spiritual realms, and encodes the violent ordeal as a means of spiritual exultation. The motif enables a religiously-framed reading of the abject body, and can be traced back to early religious art. Thus a direct line can be drawn between a depiction of tortured transcendence such as Giovanni da Milano's fourteenth century altarpiece representing the martyrdom of St. Bartholomew (c. 1355-1360) (figure 49)²³⁵ and the appearance of the same configuration in a torture porn film like Pascal Laugier's *Martyrs* (2008).²³⁶

²³⁵ Giovanni da Milano (c.1320-1369) was an Italian painter active in Florence and Rome between 1346 and 1369. The depiction of saint Bartholomew appears in the predella - the decorative frame at the bottom of a main altarpiece of the Madonna and Child. The painting is kept at the Museo di Palazzo Pretorio in Prato, Tuscany.

²³⁶ Pascal Laugier, dir., *Martyrs* (France / Canada: Eskwood ; Wild Bunch; TCB Film, 2008).



Figure 49. Giovanni da Milano, *St Bartholomew*, detail of the predella of altarpiece, with Madonna and Child with Saints) c.1355-1360, Museo di Palazzo Pretorio, Prato, Tuscany.

The title of Laugier's film immediately declares its interest in both religious themes and body horror. Its narrative concerns a clandestine organisation that kidnaps and tortures people with the aim of inducing in them precisely the martyr's state of life-death suspension, by which the perpetrators hope to discover something of what - if anything - lies beyond death. It is a circumstance that raises questions regarding the moral validity of such ambition, and explores what it means to enact and suffer extreme violence.



Figure 50. From *Martyrs* (Director Pascal Laugier) 2008.

As a victim of this system, Anna (Morjana Alaoui) - having already endured prolonged imprisonment and physical abuse - is flayed alive in the final scene. Following the precedent of religious imagery, her face is left intact, and soon appears suffused with mystical bliss, her gaze fixed upon something beyond (figure 50). While the pattern of the mutilated body paired with the beatific face indicates Anna's spiritual transcendence, in typical torture porn style the film neither confirms nor denies this supposition, since whatever she whispers to her antagonist, 'Madame' - compelling her to instant suicide - is never revealed to the viewer.

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The concept and image of the martyr – which dates back as far as the inception of Christianity in the first centuries (CE) – is the archetype commonly invoked in artistic interpretations of bodily damage and is the basis of a representational tradition in which body horror is conflated with the spiritual. The association functions as both a sanctioning of sensational spectacles of corrupt flesh, and as a means of palliating their potentially traumatic effect by framing them as scenes of supernatural transcendence. Early empirical study of the body, although scientific in its outlook, was contingent on the uncanny and disturbing phenomenon of the corpse, and therefore influenced by traditional modes of representing abject bodies as allied with the mystical. The illustrated anatomy was thus an interweaving of the macabre, medical process of dissection with the contemplation of metaphysical enigmas such as the temporal quality of flesh, the relationship of matter to spirit and of spirit to the divine, as well as the nature and purpose of mortality.

With the rise of pathology throughout the nineteenth century, the religious and moral dimension of medical images of the body became much more subdued. Anatomical illustration was dominated rather by a focus on discrete sections of the body, and a highly technical, intensely detailed style. While these images retained the power to disturb – in their depiction of the interior of the body and the corruption of flesh through disease - their fragmented quality and use of artistic materials and techniques worked to regulate and contain their capacity to provoke feelings of horror. Ironically for a medium that lays claim to the scientific ideals of objective observation and accurate recording, it was photography that reintroduced aspects of holism and spiritual significance to the medical image. Early medical photographs not only chronicle a process of negotiation between established medical practice and a new representational technology, but in their engagement with aesthetic and religious traditions they open a space for a greater range of artistic interpretation and moral expression in medical images. Rather than the objectified, intimate scrutiny of body parts seen in the nineteenth century anatomical illustration, medical

photographs were more closely aligned with those representations of the damaged body with aesthetic and moral as well as analytical attributes, also seen in the highly popular Victorian martyr novels, as well as more traditional religious paintings and icons.

The contemporary evolution of this cultural convention is found in the horror film subgenre of torture porn, in which suffering flesh is the currency of a moral economy that problematises the ethical implications of sadistic acts, and disrupts distinctions between victims and villains. In questioning whether the immorality of violence resides in the perpetrator or in the act itself torture porn films perceive a disjunction between intention and outcome that implies a disabling of personal will and loss self-control. It is a psychological model with disturbing indications of internal doubling and demonic possession that also preoccupied the cultural imaginary at the turn of the nineteenth century, as well as a trait often attributed to the figure of the serial killer, which was likewise seeded in the Victorian fin-de-siècle.

coda: the scene of the crime

The notorious Whitechapel murders have become synonymous with an idea of the dark underbelly of Victorian Britain which, contrasted with the regulated formality and conservative values of the idealised middle-class family, constructs the nineteenth century social landscape as an oppositional binary. The same theme of dualities, divisions and doublings is one that resonates through the subjects addressed in this thesis, and is a concept which, I have argued, is subverted by the inherent ambivalence of both horrifying phenomena and photographs, which challenge clear cut distinctions on both existential and ideological levels. The aspects of the frightening addressed in this research which have demonstrated this argument – the uncanniness of place, the bizarre hybridity of the monster and the abject bodies of medical imagery – are consolidated in the crime scene photograph. The appearance of crime scene photography at the turn of the century also corresponds to the developmental path of horror fiction, the interests of which began to shift away from the fantastic monsters of the Gothic novel towards more authentic representations of fears concerning moral depravity and crime, as reflected in the growth of detective fiction and the figure of the killer as a narrative trope.

‘Jack the Ripper’ emerged from the convergence of events and stories surrounding the Whitechapel murders – an invented name and persona intermixed with the fact of at least six women’s lives being viciously obliterated.²³⁷ Initial reports on the murder of Martha Tabram were fairly low key, the *Illustrated Police News* giving an account of a woman being ‘throttled’ and *Star* featuring a short piece on ‘A Whitechapel Horror’.²³⁸ It was with the murder of Mary Ann ‘Polly’ Nichols some three weeks later on 31st August 1888, that circumstantial similarities in the atrocities became evident – Tabram was strangled and Nichols had her throat slashed, both suffered multiple stab wounds, particularly to the stomach and genitals – that imaginative speculation fully came into play, as a crucial aspect of both police detection and of the mediation of the crimes. When the Central News Agency received a letter purporting to be from the murderer and signed ‘Jack the Ripper’, a man – albeit an extraordinarily twisted and viciously sadistic one – also became a mythical monster materialised from the darkest of horror fictions.

That the case was one of the first in which photography was used as an investigative tool exemplifies both the cultural position of the medium, and the understanding of the crimes, as being at the interstices of invention and reality. It is telling in itself that the type of criminal case

²³⁷ The facts of the Ripper murders have never been conclusively established, with numbers of victims and the time frame of the killings. Emma Smith, who was attacked on 3rd April 1888 and later died of her stab wounds in the London Hospital is a contested victim, as are Alice McKenzie and Francis Coles who were murdered in July of 1889 and February 1891 respectively.

²³⁸ Both articles appeared in the issues for 7th August 1888 – the same day on which the murder was committed in the early hours. Cited in Philip Sugden, *The Complete History of Jack the Ripper* (London: Robinson Publishing Ltd., 1994) pp.16-19.

to which photography was deemed worth applying was a particularly horrific one. In Matt Hills's theoretical terms, as a real life horror the case demanded an interpretative framework derived from the conventions of fiction and the camera enabled this process while also maintaining proper methods of police investigation. Presumably petty thieving and vandalism, and even serious felonies such as battering and rapes (where victims were overwhelmingly female) were such an integral element of the urban landscape they did not even register as crimes – or certainly not crimes worthy of serious investigation and, as such, of photographing.

Paris police officer Alphonse Bertillon (1853-1914) was a pioneer of detective and law enforcement applications of photography. His criminal identification system – commonly called the mug shot – was developed from the practice of anthropometry or measuring of the body, and was a scheme bound up with the photographic imperative that knowledge is located in the visual: in this case in the visible discernment of criminality through physical features.²³⁹ Bertillon also set a precedent for photographing crime scenes – the importance of not moving or altering articles of evidence, for example, led him to augment existing photographic apparatus such as the tripod in order to take images angled from above a scene.²⁴⁰ The mug shot system turned the photograph to the use of crime prevention, concentrating on the identification and control of perpetrators, while the crime scene photograph looked to understanding criminal actions by their outcome, and it is this latter genre of image that consolidates the themes and subjects considered in this thesis.

Crime scene photographs are fundamentally constructions of uncanny place. Like the 'spatiality of horror' in the Gothic novel crime, and particularly murder scene photographs, mark specific locations as sites of former turmoil and brutality: places which then become haunted by spectral recollections or re-imaginings of these evils. The crime scene photograph itself takes on the role of the historic ruin in Gothic fiction as that which preserves, or is imprinted with, the iniquities of the past. When the photographs are viewed (or the ruins disturbed) the victims of these violent acts are resurrected like angry, accusatory ghosts, and are forever embedded in the spatial identity of the sites where they died. Ross Gibson has written that to contemplate a crime scene photograph is to confront 'several personae' including 'the photographer, the perpetrator, the victim [and] the bystander' who 'fleetingly inhabit both you and the scene in front of you'.²⁴¹ The 'many new dispositions and temporary identities' (Gibson, p.254) that one is 'warped' into by viewing crime scene photographs mirrors the fractured mindset of the Gothic sublime, while the implication of uncanny possession and the fracturing of subjectivity induced by uncanny space

²³⁹ The mug-shot system was universally implemented throughout the French police force in 1888.

²⁴⁰ See Philippe Charlier, ed., *Seine de Crimes* (Paris: Éditions du Rocher, 2015).

²⁴¹ Ross Gibson, 'Where the Darkness Loiters', *History of Photography* 24:3 (2000) 251-254, p.254.

(an especially photographic uncanny space) is akin to the disorienting multiplicity Freud experiences at the Acropolis.

That crime scene photographs operate as evidence of atrocities is also their incarnation of the monster which, as Cohen suggests, is only visible in ‘the damage that [it] [...] wreaks’ (p.4). In the case of Jack the Ripper this invisibility was analogous to his anonymity and his ability to evade apprehension by the police (most likely due to their incompetence rather than the almost supernatural agency he has come to be attributed with) is the very incarnation of the monster’s ‘propensity to shift’; to ‘leave behind material remains’ but then ‘turn immaterial and vanish’ (Cohen, p.4). It was the unknown identity of the Whitechapel murderer that made the figure such a source of anxiety.

The fact that Jack the Ripper could have been any man walking the streets was a powerful subversion of the photographically supported notion that the world could be understood by how it looked. What the case pointed to, rather, was unseen realms of meaning – the warped psychology of sadistic intent hidden beneath an unremarkable and innocuous exterior. A moral monstrosity that was the inverse of his contemporary Joseph Merrick’s beautiful soul masked by a grotesque exterior. Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde* (1886) captured the mood of anxiety surrounding disjunctions between appearance and conduct, and the threat of moral degeneration, as well as being strangely prescient of the Ripper murders.

Since there was no actual visual information by which the killer could be recognised, the press was quick to remedy the situation. Using the mechanism of fiction outlined by Nancy Armstrong, news reports offered their readers a selection of types to match to potential suspects - most commonly an ‘English Milord, mad doctor, or foreigner’²⁴² – each of which was distinctly other to the working and lower-middle class demographic who both read print news and lived in the places where the murderer was at large. As such, these fictional characters functioned as a means of containing and distancing the threat that may well have been lurking in the heart of the community. They are figures that still endure to this day, the most recent publication in the field of ‘Ripperology’ hypothesising the psychologically unstable medical student Francis Thompson to have been the killer.²⁴³

While doctors were under suspicion as potential criminals they were also called upon to ‘re-establish moral credence’ in the wake of violent homicides.²⁴⁴ The medical aspect of murder

²⁴² Drew D. Gray, *London’s Shadows: The Dark Side of the Victorian City* (London/ New York: Bloomsbury, 2010).

²⁴³ The book, *Jack the Ripper: The Works of Francis Thompson* by Richard Patterson was published in February 2017 by Austin Macauley Publishers.

²⁴⁴ Megha Anwer, ‘Victorian Crime Scenes and the Ripper Photographs’, *Victorian Studies* 56: 3 (2014) 433-439, p.436.

investigation was reconstructive. A work of reverse narrative, beginning at the outcome of the deliberately destroyed body, which needed recovering and piecing together in order to reveal the methods, motives and identity of the killer with which the story started. Mortuary photographs, 'fixated on dead victim's faces' restored order to abject flesh by creating portraits 'purged of nearly all crime scene traces' (Anwer, p.434). It is this medically mobilised, restorative aspect of crime scene photographs that is perhaps most complicit with fiction, since it alleges that acts of atrocity can be understood, and that there is meaning to them if it can only be found.

As I have briefly outlined here, early crime scene photographs are a potentially rich source of new insights into the cultural apparatus of the late Victorian and early modernist periods, and one that has been largely neglected by photography scholars. In particular, crime scene photographs reveal the influences of fact and fiction in structuring and producing the perception and knowledge of real life events.

Photography is particularly implicated in these convergent processes of knowledge production, and the quotation given at the beginning of the chapter is intended to recognise both the productive potential and distorting tendencies of the photograph's creative and elucidative possibilities. What is ironic about the camera is that its funhouse mirror reflections – its turning of dwarfs into giants – are inherited with the certainty that all visions are altered, and no picture can represent the truth – although they can point the way to deeper understanding.

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