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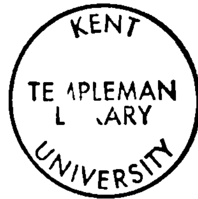
Truth and subjectivity: explorations in identity and the real in the photographic work of Clementina Hawarden (1822-65), Samuel Butler (1835-1902) and their contemporaries.



Abstract

This study focuses upon Victorian photography, and in particular upon two bodies of photographic work which are, as yet, comparatively little-known - the work of Lady Clementina Hawarden and of Samuel Butler.

While the pairing may at first seem an odd one, since the connections between the two are not immediately obvious, it is in my view entirely justified; for in the work of both one finds a similar sense of unease at Victorian discourses of truth and the real, whereby the idea of the indivisible and *a priori* nature of reality and truth is enshrined and protected, and at the implications of such a conception for the identity of the human subject. Even more strikingly, both choose (entirely independently) to examine and challenge these discourses using remarkably similar photographic strategies.

It is argued that, taking subjects which are at times very different and at others startlingly similar, both use photography as the means to explore a sense of the human subject, and the conception of truth/reality upon which it is based, as characterized by multiplicity, contingency and arbitrariness. Parallels are drawn with artists including Vermeer and Velazquez to support this reading, and their work is contrasted with that of other artists, both Victorian and otherwise, to demonstrate the degree to which their ideas diverge from the discursive norm.

The study builds towards the conclusion that, in the contingent and ambiguous nature of the photograph itself, both Hawarden and Butler found a medium capable of strengthening and confirming their resistance to the unifying and homogenizing structures employed by many of their contemporaries against the development of the modern decentered subject.

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Introduction

> Truth is like a photographic sensitized plate, which is equally ruined by over and by under exposure, and the just exposure for which can never be absolutely determined.
>
> (Samuel Butler [1]).

The analogy is a striking one - not least because it inverts the traditional and still persistent paradigm of the relationship between truth and the photograph, according to which the photograph is seen as guarantor of truthfulness, indeed, as the very visualization of truth. In Butler's version, however, rather than the photograph being 'like' truth, or in fact 'being' truth by virtue of sharing its infallibility, it becomes on the contrary a question of truth taking on the characteristics of the photograph, of truth sharing the variable and uncertain character of the photograph's light-sensitive surface.

In other words, it is precisely the apparent objectivity of the photographic image, (that reassuringly natural 'slice of reality', with its paradoxical and disorienting tendency to slip from one's grasp if one makes the mistake of looking at it with too concentrated a gaze), which points up the uncertainty of the truth or reality which it

seems, initially, to endorse. A century after Butler's observation this has become a widely accepted view of the photographic effect - in image theory, at least - whether one cites Baudrillard's 'vertigo', or Burgin's failure of suture - or even the 'That-Has-Been' of Barthes, which, while it asserts on the one hand that an object/event *has indeed existed* in the past, is predicated on the belief that it exists no more; in other words, that reality or truth is not constant and immutable, but rather that once apprehended, it is immediately lost, even in the fraction of a second after the release of the camera shutter.

A fundamental question is thus raised about the position of the human subject: if truth and reality are shifting, inconstant, even treacherous, where does the subject stand? The concerns of this study are rooted in the concept of the fundamentally arbitrary and contingent nature of what a culture calls 'truth', and, necessarily, of that inevitable correlative of truth, the centered, founding subject. Its central concern is the capacity of the photograph to disrupt the comforting premise that the truth proclaimed by a given cultural discourse is

essential, a *priori*, infallible, indivisible. As Derrida has demonstrated, ours is a culture still structured by logocentrism - ruled by a quasi-Biblical concept of 'the Word'.

The vision of the *decentered* subject is one which is implied in the work of a number of artists, particularly North European and Spanish, who quite clearly predate both the modern period and indeed Kant, in whose thought one finds the origins of the decentered subject [2]. One thinks of the artists - Vermeer and Velázquez, to name perhaps the two most prominent - who subscribe to an alternative mode of picturing which Svetlana Alpers has termed a 'constant artistic option' of Western art [3]. I would suggest, however, that the term 'option' is a misleading one, in that it implies a conscious artistic and philosophical *choice* which some artists embraced and others rejected; this 'option' is therefore perhaps better understood as a possible ontological and epistemological position, particularly apt to become apparent to those, such as artists, whose stock-in-trade is the problematic of vision, reflection and representation, but not an inevitable problem for those artists whose work is founded upon a synthesizing, (quasi-)religious

concept of a transcendent truth to which art gives access.

By the Victorian period, however, the Kantian view of the subject had made its mark, and the problem of the decentered subject was no longer simply the province of a small number of artists with a peculiar fascination for reflection, both specular and spiritual. For many Victorians and their European contemporaries the concern became the urgent if subconscious one of maintaining control over the now disturbingly anchorless condition of the modern subject - or, to persuade the modern subject (and equally themselves as such subjects) of a continued myth of essential stability, permanence and meaningfulness. Ruskin is a prime example of this imperative at work, and he will inevitably form a major point of contrast in this study, especially in connection with Samuel Butler, for whom he was a more or less explicit target.

Hawarden's images cannot be said to represent a similarly specific reaction to Ruskin, but it will be argued that it is possible to trace, in the character and direction of her work, a resistance to the prevalent ideas of not only the

academic but also the 'progressive' artists and theorists of her day. Indeed, Hawarden, only some ten years Butler's senior, and certainly with less actual art practice to her name, was developing an anti-essentialist vocabulary at a time when Butler was still struggling to satisfy the criteria of the academic tradition; indeed, one might very plausibly suggest that her 'headstart' may be ascribed precisely to the fact of her lesser experience of and immersion in academic art - a view with which Butler himself would certainly have concurred.

The work of both Butler and Hawarden, though it appears on the surface to be widely different, can be seen to offer remarkably similar responses to issues concerning the nature and relationship of truth, reality and art, which surfaced as a result of the oppositions and debates between academic and Ruskinian thought, the Royal Academy and the Pre-Raphaelite movement, and photography and art. Against the background of these concerns one can demonstrate their shared apprehension of the significance of photography as a means of countering the mythologizing and essentialism of a culture under siege from the more troubling and destabilizing aspects of the modern, and of

accepting and even embracing the decentered subject.

The accessibility of Butler's ideas and intentions through his own books, letters and essays, contrasts sharply with the absence of any such writing by Hawarden. I hope, by establishing the ways in which Butler used the photograph to articulate ideas of ambiguity, instability and contingency, to provide a strong framework for the analysis of the intentions behind the work of the more enigmatic Hawarden. To that end, this study is structured in the form of three basic units. The first is concerned with the development of Butler's visual work to its culmination in his mature photography, examining the factors which influenced his rejection of academicism, and directed his search for an ironic visual idiom towards photography. The first chapter deals with the now vanished painting, *The Last Days of Carey Street*, which represented the crisis-point of Butler's pursuit of academic validation. The second is concerned with his ironization both of classicism and the academic method, and of Pre-Raphaelitism, which for some time as an art student he had considered the answer to his dilemma. Finally, Chapter 3

considers Butler's ironic voice as a reaction against the pervasive influence of Ruskinian thought.

In Hawarden's case, in the absence of any primary source material of a written nature, the analysis relies of necessity on her photographic work alone, linking it to relevant parallels and contrasts in the work of other artists across a broad historical spectrum, and demonstrating Hawarden's frequently idiosyncratic use of themes and motifs popular in the Victorian period. Chapter 4 examines the beginnings of her exploration into subjectivity through her use of the Narcissus theme and the image of the reading woman (a common motif in the depiction of women, particularly in the work of Vermeer, which forms a useful point of comparison with Hawarden). Chapter 5 raises the issue of her use of costume and theatricality to destabilize identity, linking this with the orientalism of mid-Victorian culture and the paintings of John Frederick Lewis. The section concludes with an examination of the motif of the cheval glass or 'psyche', comparing Hawarden's work with that of the Impressionist, Berthe Morisot.

The third and final section brings Hawarden and Butler together, identifying recurrent motifs common to their work, and examining the significance of those motifs as a response to the dominant discourses of their culture.

The initial focus is on an examination of the concept of identity explored in Hawarden and Butler's portrait work, questioning how far these images can be said to affirm the traditional concept of portraiture, and comparing them with images by Julia Margaret Cameron, Charles Dodgson and Alfred Stieglitz. The chapter concludes with an analysis of one of Butler's most significant 'self-portraits', *Samuel Butler in the Cave of Polyphemus*, in which the themes of identity and truth are rooted in an image which contrasts the blindness of convention with the contingency and stratagem of the modern.

The eighth and ninth chapters are closely linked. They deal with the themes of absorption and marginality which characterize the work of both Hawarden and Butler. Chapter 8 draws in particular on the use of the theme of absorption in eighteenth-century French painting, and suggests how the theme is used by both Butler and

Hawarden to undermine its traditional significance and produce an image of a subjectivity out of synchronization with the cultural norm. In the ninth chapter on marginality, Butler's images of travel are linked with Hawarden's mirror images in an examination of spatial motifs used to express psychological states or attitudes. Butler is contrasted with figures as disparate as Wordsworth and Alfred Stieglitz, while Hawarden's images are examined in relation to the 'Keepsake' tradition of Victorian images of women.

The final chapter centres on vision as comprehension and knowledge. A number of images by Hawarden and Butler are examined in terms of their relationship to one another as a *mise en abyme* of the apparatus of both the camera and the eye itself. The issue is considered in relation to superficially similar images by William Henry Fox Talbot, Roger Fenton and Frederick Evans.

I should add that all the Hawarden photographs cited are to be found in the Hawarden collection at the Victoria & Albert Museum, while all paintings and photographs by Butler are in the Butler collection at his old college, St. John's, Cambridge, apart from *Rose the Model* [Fig. 3],

which belongs to the Chapin Library, Williams College, Williamstown, Mass., and *Portrait of an Unidentified Woman*, [Fig. 7], now in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Notes

1. Butler, Samuel, 'The Deadlock in Darwinism', *Collected Essays II*, Jonathan Cape: London, 1925, p.21.

2. If one is looking for a single figure in the philosophical field to whom the development of the decentered subject can most adequately be attributed, then clearly it is to Kant that one must turn. As he states in the famous analogy with Copernicus in his introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> The experiment ought ... to be made whether we might not succeed better with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that objects must conform to our mode of cognition, for this would better agree with the required possibility of an a *priori* knowledge of them ... We have here the same case as with the first thought of Copernicus, who, not being able to get on with the explanation of the movements of the heavenly bodies as long as he assumed that all the stars turned around the spectator, tried to ascertain whether he could not better succeed by assuming the spectator to be turning round and the stars to be at rest.

See Lewis White Beck (ed.), *Kant: Selections* Macmillan: London 1988, p.98.

3. Alpers, Svetlana, *The Art of Describing*, Penguin: London, 1989, p.244, n.37.

Part One : Samuel Butler - in pursuit of the ironic image

I Butler's 'advertisement picture'

Butler submitted his 'advertisement picture' to the Royal Academy in 1877. It was rejected, and although he seems to have continued to work on it for some time afterwards, (precisely how long is unclear), he eventually gave it away, relieved to be rid of it, but deeply embittered over the academic system which, he felt, had ruined his abilities as a painter by training on false principles. Even as late as 1901, less than a year before his death, his anger with the Academy and his distress over his own failure is still palpable in a note appended to one of his letters to Eliza Savage, which begins: 'As regards this picture - which it plagues me even to think of - I ought to have known it was no good - and I did know, but was too jaded even to admit it to myself.' [1]

It seems that Butler never saw the picture again after he gave it away, and it has now disappeared, leaving us with only his own verbal

description, and a description by Henry Festing Jones in his *Samuel Butler - A Memoir* (1920). Despite this handicap however, it seems to me significant enough, in the context of his later photographic work, to deserve discussion.

I.i The reconstruction of a lost image

Jones's description of *The Last Days of Carey Street* is an informative one:

> I remember seeing the "advertisement picture" in Butler's painting-room. It represented a group of costermongers having tea on a barrow at 5 o'clock in the morning in Carey Street, Lincoln's Inn, with a background of advertisements on a hoarding that cut the picture horizontally, and hid the building of the new Law Courts. Above the hoarding appeared the steeple of St. Clement Danes against a sky lit up by the rising sun. [2]

This is supported by Butler's own less detailed comments. Another note added by Butler to his published correspondence with Eliza Savage gives this description of the painting:

> The advertisement picture was called 'The last days of Carey Street', and was simply the hoarding covered with advertisements and the Tower of St. Clement Danes - before the Law Courts were begun. [3]

In a letter dated March 1877, he describes the painting to her in more detail:

> I have made 'The Messiah' the central advertisement - between 'Nabob Pickles' and

> 'Three millions of money' - with 'The Messiah' much smaller than 'Mr. Sims Reeves, and Signor Foli'. It does not seem in the least pointed, and of course I copied the advt. from nature. [4]

Before I discuss my own views on the painting, it will be useful to consider Elinor Shaffer's interpretation, since her book *Erewhons of the Eye* is the only one in which *The last days of Carey Street* is given any consideration.

Shaffer reads the painting thus:

> It seems clear ... that Butler was working with a subject that still had a link to contemporary genre painting ... ; yet the scene is an emptied one, a demolished urban street with only the disembodied tower as a reminder of the past, and the whole overwritten with advertising graphics. [5]

Butler does indeed describe the painting as being of Carey Street 'before the Law Courts were begun', but by no means makes it explicit that it actually shows the ruins of 'a demolished urban street', or a building site prior to construction, (although the hoarding may, of course, have been put up to hide such a site); merely that an aspect of the street which might now be expected to include a view of the Law Courts was painted before the Courts were built. Furthermore, Jones's more detailed description makes no mention of demolition or construction

work, so that, while the existence of a building site is clearly implied by the presence of the hoarding, equally clearly it cannot have been an obvious feature of the painting. Jones's description suggests that he had read the painting, as Shaffer has, as a rather strange contemporary genre piece ('An odd and unlikely subject', as he puts it), but one centering on the group of costermongers having tea on their barrow against the advertisement background, rather than on a ruined and deserted street.

However, there are grounds for thinking that Jones has misinterpreted the emphasis of the painting. It is interesting that, although in a letter to Eliza Savage he refers to the 'figures' in the painting being 'bad', Butler himself makes no specific mention of the costermongers as such, as though in his eyes their presence was incidental. (In a letter in which she comments on the painting, Eliza Savage makes a similarly vague reference to 'figures', hinting: 'don't you think the figures are too much in a line?' [6]). For him, (and it seems that Savage also understood his intention), the subject of the picture 'was simply the hoarding covered with

advertisements and the Tower of St. Clement Danes'.

In other words, the comments of both Butler and Jones imply that the street itself was not the focus, and was not represented beyond the stretch in which the hoarding stood. Significantly, while the official title of the work is given as *The last days of Carey Street*, Butler habitually refers to it as 'the advertisement picture', thus clearly indicating the focus of his interest on the subject.

It seems to me that the implication of the rejection of *The last days of Carey Street* by the Academy must be that Butler had rendered the figures in a naïve style which was totally unacceptable by academic standards. One need only look at *Family Prayers*, 1864, (St John's College, Cambridge) - [Fig. 1] discussed in the following chapter - or *The Christening at Fobello*, 1871, (Chapin Library, Williams College, Williamstown, Mass.), to guess at Butler's approach to the human figure at a stage when he was becoming ever more convinced of the superiority of primitivism over academicism.

But although the Academy may have objected to the figure drawing, the central issue of the painting is surely the relationship between the insistent modernity and aesthetically unpleasing functionalism of the hoarding, and the traditions of architectural, religious and social values embodied in the church tower, isolated, and perhaps overshadowed, as the name 'Messiah' is by the mundane and 'vulgar' slogans which surround it. The scale of the objects in the painting is unclear, but Butler's concern with the hoarding would suggest that this was intended to be a more dominant feature than the tower; the ephemera of the advertising world triumphant over (or at least encroaching upon) tradition.

One suspects that the painting was intended originally to draw attention to the ironies of modern life, rather than to lament the passing of the 'old order'; but although Butler hated all forms of Victorian orthodoxy, which he felt had warped his education and understanding, he demonstrated an inability, particularly in his earlier opinions and work, entirely to reject the orthodox forms. In religion for example, although he came much closer to agnosticism than many other doubting Victorians, there were recurring points

throughout his life when he was prepared to admit a basic acceptance, not only of God, but also of Anglicanism, (indeed, he once wrote: 'I want the Church as much as I want free-thought; but I want the Church to pull her letter more up to date or else to avow more frankly that her letter is a letter only.' [7]). A similar tension between deep-rooted conservatism and an at times almost unwilling radicalism informs the advertisement picture.

We might perhaps have expected the objects in the painting to suggest a more ambiguous reading than this, given Butler's openness towards progress and his avowed antagonism towards social, religious and academic tradition. Taking Butler's own views at face value, he might be expected to welcome the supersession of tradition by modernity, or at least to welcome the ironic juxtapositions to which it gives rise. But one is left feeling that there is, as Shaffer suggests, at least a hint of elegy about the painting. The inclusion of 'The Messiah' at the centre of the hoarding, dwarfed by the surrounding posters, is significant, since it would undoubtedly be not a religious tract but an advertisement for a performance of Handel's oratorio. Butler

considered Handel as arguably the greatest creative figure in history. Sims Reeves (and presumably also Signor Foli) was a well-known and evidently crowd-pulling soloist at the triennial Crystal Palace Handel Festival. Butler would have found particularly ironic the idea that the promoters should 'sell' *this work* on the merits of its performers - displacing the master with the temporary idols of the concert-going public.

In this context, one could also cite his reaction in *Alps and Sanctuaries* to the intrusion of (appropriately enough) two advertisements in the market-place at Locarno, at the time of a fête in honour of the Virgin Mary, attended by the Patriarch of Alexandria:

> The one was that of the Richmond Gem cigarette, with the large illustration representing a man in a hat smoking, so familiar to us here in London. The other was that of Wheeler & Wilson's sewing machines.
> As the Patriarch drove off in the carriage the man in the hat smoking the Richmond Gem cigarette leered at him, and the woman working Wheeler & Wilson's sewing machine sewed at him. During the illuminations the unwonted light threw its glare upon the effigies of saints and angels, but it illumined also the man in the black felt hat and the woman with the sewing machine; even during the artificial apparition of the Virgin Mary herself upon the hill behind the town, the more they let off fireworks the more clearly the man in the hat came out upon the walls round the market-place, and the bland imperturbable woman working at her sewing machine. I thought to myself that when the man with the hat appeared in the piazza the

> Madonna would ere long cease to appear on the hill. [8]

For all his enjoyment of the modern, or rather the ironic interrelation of old and new, the irony of this juxtaposition is swallowed up for Butler in a garish nightmare vision of the displacement of the Madonna by the Richmond Gem man as the town's modern patron. He goes on to describe the images as 'lying in wait, as a cat over a mouse's hole, to insinuate themselves into the hearts of the people so soon as they should wake' [9]. However, those in Italian, advertising the fête, are apparently sufficiently in keeping with the spirit of the place and the occasion to escape censure.

I.ii The "advertisement picture" and the social documentary photograph

Butler's remark that 'of course' he 'copied the advt. from nature' is interesting. It serves two purposes. The first is to make clear that, although he did not find those particular advertisements in that particular arrangement, ('I have *made* 'The Messiah' the central advertisement'), but exercised artistic licence

to dispose the details in such a way as to make his point, they are in fact advertisements which he has found during his studies in the streets. (He tells Eliza Savage about the hours spent in Carey Street itself, making sketches). The composition of a painting may be to some extent artificial, but, he points out, the ironies of modernity are actual, not invented.

The second purpose is not so much an unconscious irony pointed up by Butler, as an intentionally ironic appeal to Ruskinian and Pre-Raphaelite doctrine, citing 'truth to nature' in such an obviously 'unnatural' context as the modern technological and commercial world of printing and advertising - especially when that world is openly depicted in such a way as to threaten tradition and stability.

Shaffer is perhaps over-stating the case when she suggests that the painting 'combines intensity of detail with intensity of a vision of nothingness'. While not denying that one can imagine the sense of elegy conveyed by the subject, I think that this is limited and conditioned by the ambivalence which also allows Butler to enjoy the humorous aspect of the irony.

And, in quite literal terms, it is 'ambivalence' (in the sense of the co-existence of two conflicting principles) that is the focus of the painting. In other words, its theme is the collision of old and new values - but not so much to lament the passing of the old and the hollowness of the new, as to highlight the irony of the fact that the old continues to exist alongside the new despite their complete incompatibility. The picture dramatizes the gap which both separates and holds them in relation. In this sense Shaffer is quite right to state that:

> ... it could not be carried out by the traditional means of oil painting he was employing, but demanded the new graphics or photography. [10]

To Shaffer, the image is a genre painting radically subverted, in that it contains no figures, no human activity, (but this, as we have seen, is actually a misinterpretation); in fact, it celebrates the demolition of the community and family values which the genre painter found it a profitable fiction to promote. But it fails precisely because its radical intention is tied to the traditional medium of oil paint. In other words, the picture is itself subverted by the very medium which it originally sought to subvert.

I would suggest, however, that the picture's point of reference is not so much to the genre painting as the recently popularized social documentary photograph; that the painting does indeed fail because it is rendered in a traditional medium - but for slightly more complex reasons than those implied in Shaffer's account; and that, in invoking photography, Butler's intention is precisely to register, through another medium, a disparity which he has begun to grasp as being a particularly frequent and powerful element of the photographic message.

Let us consider these points in more detail. Firstly, what evidence is there for a link between *The last days of Carey Street* and social documentary photography?

This is the lengthiest, but at the same time the most straightforward of the three issues to consider in pursuing my hypothesis. My reading gives us a mundane, modern, urban scene, containing a few drab, working-class London figures who are not, however, the focus of the image, but merely incidental. More striking are the strident modern graphics of the hoarding

against which the figures are set. Such a scene is remarkably similar, at least in the basic visual information it attempts to register - the details of the modern city street - to the photographic images coming to public attention during the 1860's and 1870's, as the result of an increasing use of the camera in social documentary projects.

Many such projects were carried out for local councils, prior to major improvement and slum-clearance programmes, as, for example, were the images which gave rise to Thomas Annan's *The Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow*, published in 1868; or Charles Marville's photographs of old Paris before the construction of Haussmann's boulevards, (1864-5). Others were more personal ventures, one of the best-known being John Thomson's photographs of the poor, *Street Life in London*, which he published in collaboration with Adolphe Smith in 1877, the same year as Butler was at work on his painting.

Although *Street Life in London* began to appear in monthly instalments in the same month that Butler started the painting (February), it is clearly dangerous to read the specific influence

of Thomson's photographs into *The last days of Carey Street*. We have to take the coincidence as no more than that, since Butler would surely have been considering the idea for his picture for some time. Yet this does not imply that the more general echoes of the social documentary photography mentioned above are coincidental, and to that extent it is worth comparing what we know of Butler's painting with Thomson's photograph of a broadly similar scene, *Street Advertising*, c.1877, [Fig. 2].

Thomson's photograph focuses on two bill-stickers, one of whom is pasting up an advertisment for a new figure in Madame Tussaud's ('William Fish, The Blackburn Murderer'); but he is also clearly interested in the camera's ability to register the contrasts of light and dark between the posters (black on white and white on black) and the details of the men themselves: one in a pale jacket against which his face merges darkly into the hoarding, his shirt collar and white clay pipe merging into the jacket; the other, in a dark jacket, against which his forehead is almost as white as his shirt collar, his clay pipe standing out boldly against the

hoarding, while his body blends into the dark wall.

Unlike Butler's painting, there is no hint of elegy contained in the mood of the image or the messages on the posters. Thomson did not arrange his advertisements in a symbolic order. His concern is to register, through the insistence and starkness of the black and white signs which constitute the slogans and the men equally, a scene which will be accepted as immediate and contemporary, capable of making an impact, however small, on social awareness of the London working-class and destitute. The characteristics of Thomson's medium match the urgency of his message, and Thomson uses them powerfully and with confidence.

The apparently almost monochromatic colour vocabulary of Butler's painting is also highly suggestive of the influence of photography. Since the painting focused on a stone building and advertising graphics seen in thin, early morning light, it seems reasonable to assume that the dominant colours would have been black and white, with shades of grey and perhaps brown. Eliza Savage, in the letter in which she mentions the

figures, complains: '... I am still of the same mind about the blue which is always an obtrusive colour.' [11] But whether Butler retained the blue shade to which she objected, or indeed other touches of particularly bright colour, it seems unlikely, given the subject, that they can have been more than simply touches, intended to point up by contrast the drabness of the wider scene.

I should, however, make it clear, that although I believe Butler to have taken the idea for his 'advertisement picture' from photography, I am not implying that the actual details are lifted directly from any one photograph. What Butler is doing is rather more complex than simply copying from a specific photograph. (We also have his testimony to Eliza Savage that the details were drawn 'from nature').

My second point was that Shaffer is correct in suggesting that the painting fails because it is rendered in a traditional medium. This is true, but it would be more accurate to say that it fails because that medium (as an accepted academic one, and, moreover, one used by Butler to gain recognition on academic terms) cannot invoke photography through a rather simplistic attempt to

translate photographic 'naïveté' into a naïve painterly style. A basic flaw in such a project is that the absence of 'style' or 'manner' is fundamental to the rejection of academicism.

Butler's intention is, therefore, not quite so radical as Shaffer supposes. Rather than trying to subvert a traditional genre, but failing because he uses a traditional medium, Butler tries to make *Art* and *tradition* of a modern medium. He tries to suit photography to the dictates of the Academy, not yet seeing in the photograph his way of winning the battle with academic art - or at least of refusing its terms.

A painter, especially a would-be Academician, concerned with brushwork, colour, tone, and style, could not hope to produce visual immediacy and bluntness on the same terms as the photograph, even had his social conscience been as strong as Thomson's - which (it must be said) Butler's was not. When one considers that the figures in the painting were almost certainly rendered in a consciously naïve style, one begins to see how hopelessly Butler's efforts must have departed from the effect that he had admired in photographs and sought to translate into paint. It is hardly

surprising that the Academy rejected it; Butler himself must ultimately have had difficulty in articulating the clashing visual languages. It seems likely that, rather than the subversive genre picture that Elinor Shaffer has reconstructed, Butler was right in pronouncing the painting 'a thorough mess', too incomprehensible to be challenging, too technically weak to meet academic standards.

But at this stage, Butler was neither quite ready to believe that he was not a great painter, nor quite shrewd enough in his estimation of the Academy (or perhaps humble enough in his estimation of himself), to recognize the folly of the idea that one would-be "*enfant terrible*" (as he liked to call himself), meeting the Academy, moreover, on what were essentially its own terms, could present a genuine challenge to academic art.

Thirdly, I suggested that Butler's reason for trying to invoke the photograph was a recognition of the capacity of the medium to articulate disparity. I should clarify what I mean by this

point, as it will be crucial to the later stages of the argument.

Lady Eastlake, in her essay 'Photography', showed an early, if partial, understanding of a basic difference between the syntax of the painting and of the photograph, and why this meant that (as she insisted) photography could not be 'Art' in the academic sense:

> Art cares not for the right finish unless it be in the right place. *Her great aim is to produce a whole; the more photography advances in the execution of parts, the less does it give the idea of completeness.* [My italics]. [12]

Eastlake realized that, in formal terms, photography communicated through contrast - black and white, light and dark - and that this placed insurmountable limitations on its ability to produce an image as tonally unified as the Academy required. This tonal unity functions as a metaphor for a conservative mode of representation which stresses a unified and harmonious concept of reality. Eastlake was aware that photography was not compliant in accommodating this metaphor.

Butler may be said to have realized it too, however indistinctly, at this early stage. His struggle to paint with immediacy and an absence of

premeditation and convention, indicates a deeper struggle with the way in which academicism pictured 'reality'. Unable to fit comfortably into the dominant Victorian discourses, he was in search of a radically different means of expression which would accommodate his unorthodox and ironic view of the nature of reality. In photography he was to find a medium receptive to the ironic gap between reality and representation, a mode of picturing which could admit pluralism and heterogeneity - that is, a reality of gaps, incongruities and differences. Through this he would be able to reject the homogenizing, unifying structures of a rationalism where he (like the artists and art forms he championed - Gaudenzio Ferrari, Tabachetti, the Sacro Monte) could not fit, and could not be acknowledged.

Notes

1. Keynes, Geoffrey & Hill, Brian (eds.), *Letters between Samuel Butler and Miss E. M. A. Savage*, Jonathan Cape: London, 1935, p.145.

2. Jones, Henry Festing, *Samuel Butler - A Memoir, Vol. I*, Macmillan: London, 1920, p.248.

3. Keynes and Hill, op.cit., p.142.

4. Ibid., pp.144-5.

5. Shaffer, Elinor, *Erewhons of the Eye*, Reaktion Books: London, 1988, p.61.

6. Keynes and Hill, op. cit., p.147.

7. Bartholomew, A.T. (ed.), *Further Extracts from the Note-Books of Samuel Butler,* Jonathan Cape: London, 1934, p.215.

8. Butler, Samuel, *Alps and Sanctuaries,* Alan Sutton: Gloucester, 1986, pp.273-4.

9. Ibid., p.274.

10. Shaffer, op. cit., p.61.

11. Keynes and Hill, op.cit., p.147.

12. Trachtenberg, Alan (ed.), *Classic Essays on Photography,* Leete's Island Books: New Haven, Conn., 1980, p.63.

II Butler's first photographs, c.1866-70: early exercises in photographic irony

The few extant examples of Butler's early photography date from between 1866 and 1870, coinciding with the first years of his attendance at art school in London. This period began in 1864, and ended in 1877 with the failure of the 'advertisement picture', at which point Butler left art school.

These photographs reflect not only his assimilation of the aesthetics of both academic and Pre-Raphaelite art, but also his understanding of their respective discourses - which, as will become apparent, he found to be basically similar - and a consequent ironization of those discourses that he failed to achieve in painting. It is necessary to examine in more detail both the photographs and the background of training and influence from which they emerge.

II.i Art school

Butler's first art training began, conventionally enough, with a governess who taught Butler himself and one of his sisters the

rudiments of drawing. More significantly, if equally conventionally, Butler's art master at school at Shrewsbury was Philip Vandyck Browne, a minor watercolourist and friend of David Cox, with whom Browne had been on painting tours in the 1820's. Browne fostered Butler's interest in art, and his influence is evident in Butler's early paintings, which are predominantly attractive, if pedestrian, watercolours in the English landscape tradition.

He continued to paint at Cambridge, where he attended the Cambridge School of Art twice a week. The school advocated a strictly academic approach, as he describes in a letter home dated 1859: 'I ... went through a course of hands and am now going through a course of feet; I have just blocked out the Venus de Medici's toes.' [1] His tone suggests that, even at this early stage, he recognized an element of the ridiculous in the repetitive copying and absolute precision demanded by the academic system; but as the rest of his letter makes clear, as yet he had no doubts that this was the proper method for training a painter.

At this point, however, his training was interrupted by four years spent as a sheep farmer

in New Zealand, as part of a bizarre bargain with his father. In 1859, having graduated from Cambridge, he announced to his family his decision to become a painter. This, coming on top of his religious crisis and refusal to be ordained, had severely worsened his already strained relationship with his father, on whom he was financially dependent. Eventually it was agreed that Canon Butler would finance his son through art school on condition that he first made a success of a 'real' job.

Thus, on the strength of a four thousand pound stake from his father, Butler went out to New Zealand where he proved in fact to be a very successful sheep farmer. However, in New Zealand he found little time and, as he said disparagingly, no subject matter, for drawing (although once he had returned to England he painted several portraits of New Zealand acquaintances). Almost immediately after returning to England in 1864, however, he produced a painting so radically different from anything towards which the Cambridge School of Art had directed him, that one is left at something of a loss as to its precise origins.

The painting was *Family Prayers* [Fig. 1], (now part of the Butler Collection at St John's College, Cambridge), a powerful depiction of religious hypocrisy and domestic tension. Painted in a naïve manner, it is a largely autobiographical scene from childhood which he later expanded in his novel *The Way of All Flesh*, (written 1872-86, but only published posthumously in 1903, according to Butler's own wish).

The painting came 'out of my own head', as Butler said, and later he came to believe that had he continued to work in this way, instead of accepting as he did the rules and methods taught him at art school, he could have been a successful painter. But it is not easy to see why at this stage he should have produced this example of naïve painting, which had no precedent in his previous work or training.

He did not begin actually to formalize any radical anti-academic views until the failure of *The last days of Carey Street* caused him to question the canons he was simultaneously attempting to challenge and satisfy. The first sustained attack is contained in the chapter in *Alps and Sanctuaries*, (published in 1881), on 'The

Decline of Italian Art', in which he expresses his antipathy towards the academic approach to teaching, and calls for a return to the 'hands-on' apprenticeship system practiced by medieval and Early Renaissance artists, and carried on into the High Renaissance by the artists and craftsmen of the Sacri Monti of Northern Italy.

Family Prayers is not, of course, an example of naïve painting in its strictest sense - an unsophisticated art completely outside the influence of modern culture. Rather, it is a conscious utilization by an intellectually sophisticated (though technically not highly trained) artist, of a naïve style - in the manner, for example, of the St Ives painters after their discovery of Alfred Wallis.

The motives and influences which lie behind Butler's use of a naïve manner cannot ultimately be known with any certainty, but it is undoubtedly possible that, during his time in New Zealand, he had come into contact with Maori art. He does not record any such encounters in his letters, but his description in *Erewhon* (1872) of the musical statues guarding the pass into the country clearly suggests an awareness of Pacific art, and in

particular stone figures of the type found on Easter Island.

It is also very possible that he was influenced by the sympathy he felt at this stage of his career for Pre-Raphaelite principles. As a student at Cambridge in the second half of the 1850's, Butler had read *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and been 'taken in' (his phrase) by Ruskin. It is evident from his work at art school in the 1860's that Ruskinian doctrine had developed into an adoption of Pre-Raphaelite practice, by which he was still influenced up to a decade later. It must however be stated that his leaning was rather towards Ford Madox Brown, and through him, the German Nazarenes, than towards the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood proper. In fact Butler harboured a strong dislike of the Brotherhood's most flamboyant member, Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Family Prayers might thus be read as his untutored interpretation of the call for a return to the purity of primitive art, before that interpretation was mediated by the training in technique, composition, and choice of theme, that he received at art school - evident in paintings

such as his unfinished *Two Heads after Bellini* (1866, now at St John's).

During his time at art school, as his fellow student at Heatherley's, J. B. Yeats, explains, Butler's concern was to model his own manner on that of Giovanni Bellini:

> To be a painter after the manner of John Bellini was for years the passion of his life .... He always occupied one place in the school so that he could be as close as possible to the model and might paint with small brushes his kind of John Bellini art .... [2]

At this stage, influenced by Pre-Raphaelitism, Butler believed that to paint 'his kind of John Bellini art', in other words, to produce images which were independent of the constraints of academicism, he had to learn to paint like Bellini.

Family Prayers is the most successful of his paintings, precisely because it is independent of such an interpretation of the concept of primitive art. Because of its freedom from a full awareness of Pre-Raphaelite practice, the painting delivers its ironic thrust with an impact and incisiveness unequalled in his later paintings. With formal training Butler came up against the problem (which

culminated in the 'advertisement picture' crisis) of accommodating irony while actually working within the technical and thematic constraints of a fundamentally un- or even anti-ironic idiom.

However, *Family Prayers* is too early a work to be read as an overt challenge to or rejection of academicism, although the painting does unquestionably establish a precedent for Butler's *photography*, in the choice of a mode of picturing outside academicism, in order to give ironic voice to an attack on established cultural institutions.

Butler painted *Family Prayers* immediately prior to starting at art school. From late 1864 until 1877 he was regularly attending one or more of three London art schools, Cary's, South Kensington, and Heatherley's. (Heatherley's was the school at which he spent the most time, and which had the greatest influence on him). It is one of the paradoxes which characterize Butler's personality and behaviour, that even while he sought acceptance by the Academy (with a desperation well attested by the strength and permanence of his bitterness over *The last days of Carey Street*, not to mention Yeats's description of his 'passion' to paint like Bellini) he began

very quickly, perhaps within a year of becoming an art student, to produce biting and extremely perceptive ironizations of the very types of work which he was trying to emulate. It is significant that photography, not painting, was the mode in which his sense of irony was most successfully articulated.

II.ii Rose the model: ironizing imitation and the classical tradition

The first of these works, and indeed the earliest of Butler's extant photographs, is *Rose the model*, (Williams College, Mass.), [Fig. 3]. It was probably taken around 1868, although Elinor Shaffer suggests that it may be as early as 1865, as it was taken at the time when Butler was attending Cary's, where Rose modelled for the life class.

To be consistent in my own argument, I will assume that *Rose* was taken around 1868, the reason being that, if this is the case, the photograph is contemporaneous with a specific drawing done by Butler for submission to the Royal Academy, in the hope of being accepted as a

student there. The drawing, typical of the many meticulous copies from classical sculpture required by the Academy from prospective students, is copied from a statue of a standing male nude, entitled *The Antinous as Hermes* [Fig. 4]. On the drawing itself (now in St John's) is the inscription 'Samuel Butler, for probationship, Dec 28 1868.'

'Rose', despite its feminine sound, was in fact the surname of a man employed to model at Cary's because his torso so strikingly resembled that of a classical statue. Indeed, if one compares the photograph to the *Antinous* drawing, one finds that Rose's clearly defined bone and muscle structure is in fact a better specimen of the ideal than the classical statue itself.

Butler took undisguised delight in an anecdote which added another layer of irony to the image. This concerned the incongruously mundane manner in which Rose had developed his classical torso:

> His torso was not only the finest I ever saw but I never saw anything in the least like it. All the markings which we see in the antique and accept, though we never see them in real life, were not only there but in as full development as I ever saw in the antique; ... The head and lower limbs were not remarkable. I understood Rose got this wonderful development of arms and torso through turning a sausage machine .... [3]

Even without the above description, it is abundantly clear from the image itself that *Rose* is consciously aimed at the practice of copying from the antique. The photograph concentrates on Rose's torso and abdomen, ignoring his head and the lower part of his legs, the parts of Rose's body which Butler describes as unremarkable.

Butler's choice of title is far from unconscious. His use of Rose's name in the title would in itself suggest that the viewer should expect a portrait. But since the image excludes his face, leaving us with no idea of Rose's identity, it can hardly be intended as such. Indeed, it is part of the intention to point out the irony of the model's situation as a 'real', flesh-and-blood person who, within the context of the artist's studio, has no independent identity of his own, but instead is identified with a piece of statuary. Once he enters the life-drawing class, he ceases to be Rose, and becomes a classical torso. The anecdote about the sausage machine contextualizes Rose in the world outside the studio, as a working man employed to do a mundane, unskilled job at a butcher's or meat factory. Implicit in this is the fact that, as far as Rose is concerned, sitting to the life-

drawing class is no more than a way of supplementing his income. Butler's use of the incongruity between Rose's identity as Rose himself probably perceived it, and his fictive identification in the eyes of the art students with, for example, the *Antinous as Hermes*, must have underlined the irony of the academic adherence to imitation and the ideal.

If the image deprives us of the portrait which seems to be indicated in the title, the inter-relation of image and title has another, even greater deception to play. As I have argued, the image is in no way concerned with the identity of the model, and indeed, is actually concerned to underline the denial of independent identity; therefore there can have been no need to draw attention to the model's name unless for some very different purpose. Butler's later photography is characterized by the comedy of the interplay of image and title, particularly the comic disappointment of expectation which can be set up by the title; and here the humour lies in the stark contrasting of the frankly naked male body against both the demure femininity promised by the name 'Rose', and the familiar aesthetic treatment

of the female nude suggested by the idea of the artist's model.

In statues of the male nude, the torso tends to be the focus because it functions as a symbol of male strength and power which evades the disturbing principle of active sexuality. The highly-modelled torso usefully plays down the rather more vaguely defined genital area. However, Butler's photograph sets out deliberately to shock through the frankness of its declaration of sexuality. In a further subversion of the identification of Rose with a classical statue, the photograph, while focusing most sharply on shoulder, chest and rib-cage, also shows the genital area clearly enough to make unavoidable the conclusion that a conflict is deliberately being engineered between the ideal and the sexual.

In fact, although the focus is technically centered on the right shoulder and pectoral, the genitals form a second psychological focus which competes with the photographic and aesthetic one; and it is the startling contrast and conflict between the two - the clash, realized in Rose's body, between the ideal and permissible, and the sexual and prohibited - which is the invisible

'focus' of the image. Through the contrasting of the ideal torso against the genitals, (and more specifically, against the disturbingly dark area of pubic hair, which is what is never seen in the ideal), the resemblance of the smooth, pale, 'marble' surface of Rose's chest to a classical sculpture is unceremoniously revealed as a fiction.

Rose demonstrates certain similarities with Edouard Manet's *Olympia*, (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), [Fig. 5], which was exhibited in 1865 and is thus roughly contemporary with Butler's photograph. Like *Olympia*, *Rose* reveals all too clearly, in its display of the bluntly naked rather than the politely nude, the fundamental resistance of idealist discourse to the sexual. To borrow T J Clark's definition, nakedness is constituted by:

> ... those signs - that broken, interminable circuit - which say that we are nowhere but in a body, constructed by it, by the way it incorporates the signs of other people. (Nudity, on the contrary, is a set of signs for the belief that the body is *ours*, a great generality which we make our own, or leave in art in the abstract). [4]

Rose shares with *Olympia* that denial of the generalized and the ideal which is represented by the flagrant, insistent, above all conscious sexuality of the naked. However, the two images

employ the sexual to confront the conventional in rather different ways.

For Manet it is necessary, paradoxically, that the sexualization of his female model's body should in fact involve its de-eroticization. That is, in order to enable her, if not to dictate her own pleasure rather than being subject to the male's, then at least to draw attention to and take an active part in the negotiation over her own body, it is imperative that that body should be divested of eroticism, should cease to be the acquiescent object of the male gaze. This is why I suggest that the female body is here de-eroticized, because the sexual corresponds to an active, not an erotic/passive principle.

Olympia is intended first and foremost as a depiction of a conscious and open transaction, rather than a site of sexual pleasure. It is because the relationship set up between nude and viewer is so undisguisedly that of a commercial transaction that *Olympia* was not recognized by contemporary viewers as belonging to the tradition of the nude. In *Olympia*, Manet stated an unstatable fact, usually disguised by the naturalization of power relations which takes

place within an essentialist and idealizing discourse - the fact of negotiation and purchase which underlies possession and control. *Olympia* exposed the mechanics of power, and even more disturbingly (through the enabling of the female figure to take part in the transaction), its instability; therefore, because it offended against the power structure instead of passively confirming it, it could never, at least within its own historical context, be viewed as erotic, but only, as contemporary responses make plain, as an obscenity.

By comparison, Butler's image exists, both literally and metaphorically, on a much smaller scale. *Olympia* is a large work intended for public display. Moreover it is a painting, able to invoke well-established codes of picturing in order overtly to disrupt them. One source of opposition to the work, for example, was Manet's use of colour, which was considered dirty and drained. As George Heard Hamilton points out:

> Manet's technical innovation lay in the suppression of almost all the intermediate values between the highest light and the deepest shade. ... Today we read these outlined shapes as three-dimensional form without difficulty; in 1865, to eyes so long accustomed to more complex and gradual transitions from light to dark, *Olympia* looked like an arrangement of flat patterns lacking the depth and three-dimensionality needed in

> such elaborate compositions. This aspect called forth the remark attributed to Courbet that *Olympia* resembled the Queen of Spades just out of the tub. It is easy to understand how pale and two-dimensional she must have seemed to the creator of the *Bathers*. [5]

Indeed, the colour (or absence of it) in *Olympia* brings the painting close to the monochrome of a photograph. But where, for a nineteenth-century photographer, this was a fact of the medium, for Manet, as a painter, it was one of the transgressive strategies open to him. In other words, because a well-defined code of practice applied to Salon art, Manet could be sure that the explicit transgressiveness of his painting would be immediately and shockingly apparent.

Inevitably Butler's photograph lacks the visual impact of *Olympia*. Neither, while attacking the same fundamental target, does it have the same politicized edge. On the other hand, since the two projects are so significantly different, both in the medium used and the audience targeted, the contrast with the effectiveness of *Olympia* is an unfair and misleading one. When one considers the audience that *Rose* was intended for - a very small circle of fellow (probably exclusively male) art students - it becomes very much easier to see how

effective on its own terms the photograph actually was.

First of all Butler was assured of a peer group audience capable of recognizing immediately the academic practices and doctrines invoked in the photograph, and of appreciating its irony. Secondly, Butler was clearly aware that he could turn the wide-spread belief in the prosaic objectivity of the camera to his advantage in establishing the undeniability of the eroticism of the photograph.

Thirdly, the limited extent and probable gender of the audience is interesting with regard to the erotic/homo-erotic character of the image. Where eroticism in Western culture, certainly in Western capitalist culture, has tended to mean the consumption of the female body by the male gaze, in *Rose* Butler presents his audience with the male body as passive object offered to the gaze, and indeed implicates his private male audience in a kind of surreptitious homo-erotic consumption of the image. If, in order to deny the aesthetic of a-sexuality, the female nude has to cease to be the passive object of erotic consumption and become the active participant in sexual

transaction, then conversely the male nude has to cease to be the virtuous symbol of the maleness of power and control, and become precisely the passive object of (homo-)erotic consumption.

II.iii Butler and Pre-Raphaelitism

During the late 1860's, Butler's art work had been dictated by Pre-Raphaelite practice. His aim at that stage had been, as we have already noted, to learn how to paint like Bellini. Towards the end of this period, his increasing familiarity with Pre-Raphaelitism began to lead him into a more critical understanding of the movement, and among his painting and photography of the early 1870's are two particularly significant examples of a newly ironic attitude towards Pre-Raphaelite art.

The first of these is a photograph, entitled *Johnston Forbes-Robertson in armour, Heatherley's*, [Fig. 6], and dating from 1870 (in the Butler Collection, St John's). The second is a painting entitled simply, *Portrait of an Unknown Woman* [Fig. 7] (c.1873, now in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington), but referred to by Butler,

in an ironic thrust at the Lady of the Lake and the Pre-Raphaelite preoccupation with Arthurian/Tennysonian figures, as 'The Woman of the Pond'.

Johnston Forbes-Robertson is a very successful ironization of the Pre-Raphaelite/Arthurian mode. 'The Woman of the Pond' is clever, but ultimately a failure. Before going on to analyse first the unsuccessful work, then the successful, and to consider why the photographic image should have worked while the painted one did not, I want first to consider the origins of Butler's disillusionment with Pre-Raphaelitism. Central to this is Butler's view of the concept of 'genius' as it functions in both academic and Pre-Raphaelite art.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood set itself in opposition to the doctrine of Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose *Discourses* (delivered to the students of the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1790) had laid the foundations of the Academy's approach to art and art training. The problem that Butler faced with *The last days of Carey Street* was that academic art was unable to recognize irony, because, at even the most fundamental levels of technique and

execution, its demands were woven into the fabric of a wider ideological demand - the representation of a seamless, *a priori* reality existing on a more 'profound' level than that of the everyday, to which art and religion were understood to give access. In fact, this concept of the *nature* of reality was not in itself what Pre-Raphaelitism set out to challenge. Indeed, far from pointing to the gap between the 'real' and the represented, its contention was with the *insufficient* 'depth' and 'truth' of academic art. Despite the castigation it received for attention to particularities and inability to grasp the ideal, Pre-Raphaelitism was in its way as concerned as the Academy with the idea of universal truth. Therefore it could no more accommodate irony than could academicism, since irony is concerned precisely with highlighting process and structure and the arbitrariness of so-called truth.

Academic technique was based on imitation as the means to 'Truth'. In Reynoldsian terms, imitation represented the perfection of nature through the study of the 'great masters', the attainment of 'Ideal Beauty' - or the absolute 'Truth' of a form, unsullied by particularities.

The ability of the painter to render 'Truth' at its most pure and timeless was the mark of his genius.

Ruskin claimed that the work of the Pre-Raphaelites was not influenced by imitation. This is disingenuous, and clearly intended to defend the Pre-Raphaelites from charges of mechanical notation of details at the expense of breadth of conception. His use of the term 'imitation' indicates the same petty copying and privileging of detail that Reynolds also condemned; but taken in the sense of the perfection of nature through the example of previous artists, the Pre-Raphaelites were not in practice as far from Reynolds's ideas as they liked to believe. They desired to recreate what they perceived as the religious purity of the 'primitives', but more than this, their early technique, painting onto a film of wet white over a hard white ground, has certain similarities of both execution and effect with fresco (notably, the rather static, hieratic nature of the figures); and Rossetti's use of gouache during the 1850's demonstrates a richness and opacity of colour comparable to the appearance of tempera. Their technique and use of colour can certainly be read as paradigmatic of their belief

in the greater purity of truth of early Renaissance art.

In Rossetti's later paintings and in the work of the 'second generation' of Pre-Raphaelites, notably Burne-Jones, there is clearly a return to themes and principles familiar in academicism. The paintings of 'Rossetti women' which have come to typify Rossetti's work in the popular eye, can undeniably - and, in my view, justifiably - be interpreted as a return to the Reynoldsian doctrine of Ideal Beauty, though without its moral aspect. (Ruskin also adhered to a belief in the 'utmost degree of specific beauty, necessarily coexistent with the utmost perfection of the object in other respects' [6]). Rossetti's concern was rather with the aspect which considered the ability of the painter to render this ideal as the mark of his 'genius'. This is certainly the way that Butler read the decline of Pre-Raphaelitism and the work of Rossetti.

The charismatic effect Rossetti had on his fellow Pre-Raphaelites was lost on Butler. Even at the period of his greatest sympathy with Pre-Raphaelite aims and practice, it is very unlikely that he had much interest in Rossetti's work.

Rossetti's technique was not strong enough for him to be taken as a technical model by an art student, and his preoccupation with Dante would have been another, and perhaps greater, obstacle to Butler's appreciation of him. While Rossetti's self-image was evidently heavily identified with Dante, Butler regarded Dante as one of 'the Seven Humbugs of Christendom'.

His dislike of Rossetti's work was second only to his dislike of the man himself. He met him on several occasions, after one of which he wrote:

> You ask me about Rossetti. I dislike his face and his manner and his work, and I hate his poetry and his friends. He is wrapped up in self-conceit and lives upon adulation. ... I was oppressed by the sultry reticence of Rossetti's manner, which seemed to me assumed in order to conceal that he had nothing worth saying to say. [7]

Again, in a letter to his sister May Butler, dated 1883, the year after Rossetti's death, he writes:

> You asked me if I liked Rossetti's pictures; I dislike them extremely; in fact, *they have made me so angry* that I cannot see any good in them at all. [8] (My emphasis).

At the root of this anger (which might at first glance seem a peculiarly strong response) lay the belief that Rossetti's first object, far from challenging the academic conventions he had

originally set out to oppose, was in fact to cultivate an image of himself as a 'great master'. The mystification of art and artists was a central focus of Butler's argument with academicism, and he saw the Pre-Raphaelites and Ruskin as being equally implicated in this. In *Erewhon* he envisioned - not entirely flippantly - a system whereby no work of art (specifically sculpture in the context of the novel) was allowed immortality, but was destroyed after fifty years, unless a popular vote granted it another fifty. More seriously, his fascination with the Sacri Monti of Northern Italy was due in part to his admiration for the communal and anonymous nature of its works. While he certainly attempted to establish the individual reputations of Gaudenzio Ferrari and Tabachetti, this was at least as much an attempt to upset the accepted canon as a serious concern that they should be acknowledged as 'great masters' in the same breath as Raphael.

II. iv Ironizing Rossetti: the failure of 'The Woman of the Pond'

Thus, in his *Portrait of an Unidentified Woman*, Butler's target is the mythologizing of the nature

of art and the figure of the artist, and he insists that the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly Rossetti, should be found as guilty of the charge as the Academicians. His aim is to deflate the fantasy of femininity signified by the Rossetti woman - not so much from any pro-feminist point of view, as out of a recognition that the mythologized Pre-Raphaelite beauties were not intended as depictions of women *per se*, but rather represented, in their sanctioning of the female as passive/inspirational and male as active/creative principles, an endorsement of the academic view of the creation of the Ideal as sign of the artist's genius.

At first glance the painting is simply a competent but unremarkable portrait of a pale, red-haired woman without startling physical beauty, who has certainly not been flattered in the conventional way by the painter's rendering of her skin and colouring. If she offers the spectator no particular sensual or aesthetic pleasure, neither is she of interest from an historical or genealogical point of view, since she is anonymous and therefore cannot be placed as belonging within a specific family or historical context. There seems no reason why an artist

should take her as a subject. (This is a more emphatic return to the position in *Rose the Model*, where a portrait is promised - indeed in this case the word 'portrait' is actually used, and the face shown - but identification is withheld).

The woman's physical type is significant. As we have said, she is red-haired and pale-skinned; add to this an exaggerated, full-lipped, strongly-coloured mouth, and there can be little doubt that Butler is working within the code of the Pre-Raphaelite, or more specifically, the 'Rossetti' type. Indeed, the features and hair are not unlike those of Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix*, 1864-70, (Tate Gallery, London) [Fig. 8]. However, the head in Butler's painting is harshly lit, so that the skin tone is pallid and unhealthy - almost grey - and unevenly coloured, with a slight flush high up on the cheeks, and a conspicuously red nose, so that the woman appears to be suffering from a heavy cold.

Her hair is drawn back from her face and pinned loosely behind, in contrast to the flowing manes typical of images by Rossetti such as *Monna Vanna*, 1866, (Tate Gallery, London), or the earlier *Paolo and Francesca da Rimini*, 1855, (a

watercolour, also in the collection of the Tate Gallery); and its potential brilliance is played down by setting the head against a red background. Rossetti, when painting hair in shades of red and auburn, invariably sets it against the complementary colours, green and blue, in order to give the reds maximum emphasis, (for instance, *The Beloved*, 1865-6, [Fig. 9], again in the Tate, and *Veronica Veronese*, 1872, in the Bancroft Collection, Wilmington, Delaware). Butler's model wears a blue dress, but very little of it is visible, and that little is in shadow. The only strong blue is a flash at the neck, to denote a rich fabric with a high sheen, such as Rossetti's models wear.

Nor does Butler overlook the notorious degree of attention Rossetti paid to his sitters' necks, typically elongating them to sensualize the model and make her more statuesque. However, Butler's model displays only a very ordinary length of neck, and that length is visibly lined (unthinkable of a Rossetti woman), Butler having devoted his attention to noting deliberately and prosaically the way the flesh creases at the back of the neck as the head is turned to look across the shoulder.

His refusal to flatter is a conscious parody of Pre-Raphaelite truth to nature, and also perhaps, a glance at the increasing abandonment of that principle in favour of idealization, especially by those painters like Rossetti and Burne-Jones whose work centered on the depiction of women. Equally, his decision to highlight in his chosen title, *Portrait of an Unidentified Woman*, the woman's anonymity, must surely be read as an ironization of Rossetti's use of poetic references and quotations in his titles, such as *Beata Beatrix* and *Bocca bacciata* - 'identifications' which say no more about the women themselves than if they had indeed been 'unidentified', but rather point to the artist's desire to identify *himself* in his own and the public mind, with mythologized symbols of (male) genius such as Dante.

Why then, since the *Portrait of an Unidentified Woman* clearly involves in theory an intelligent and penetrating analysis and subversion of Rossetti, of Pre-Raphaelitism, and indeed, of the mystification of art in general, is it a failure in practice? One should point out that it is not one of the works exhibited at the Royal Academy, nor is there any record of Butler submitting it only to have it rejected, as with *The last days of*

Carey Street; thus one cannot assume that his failure to communicate the intended irony ever became apparent to him.

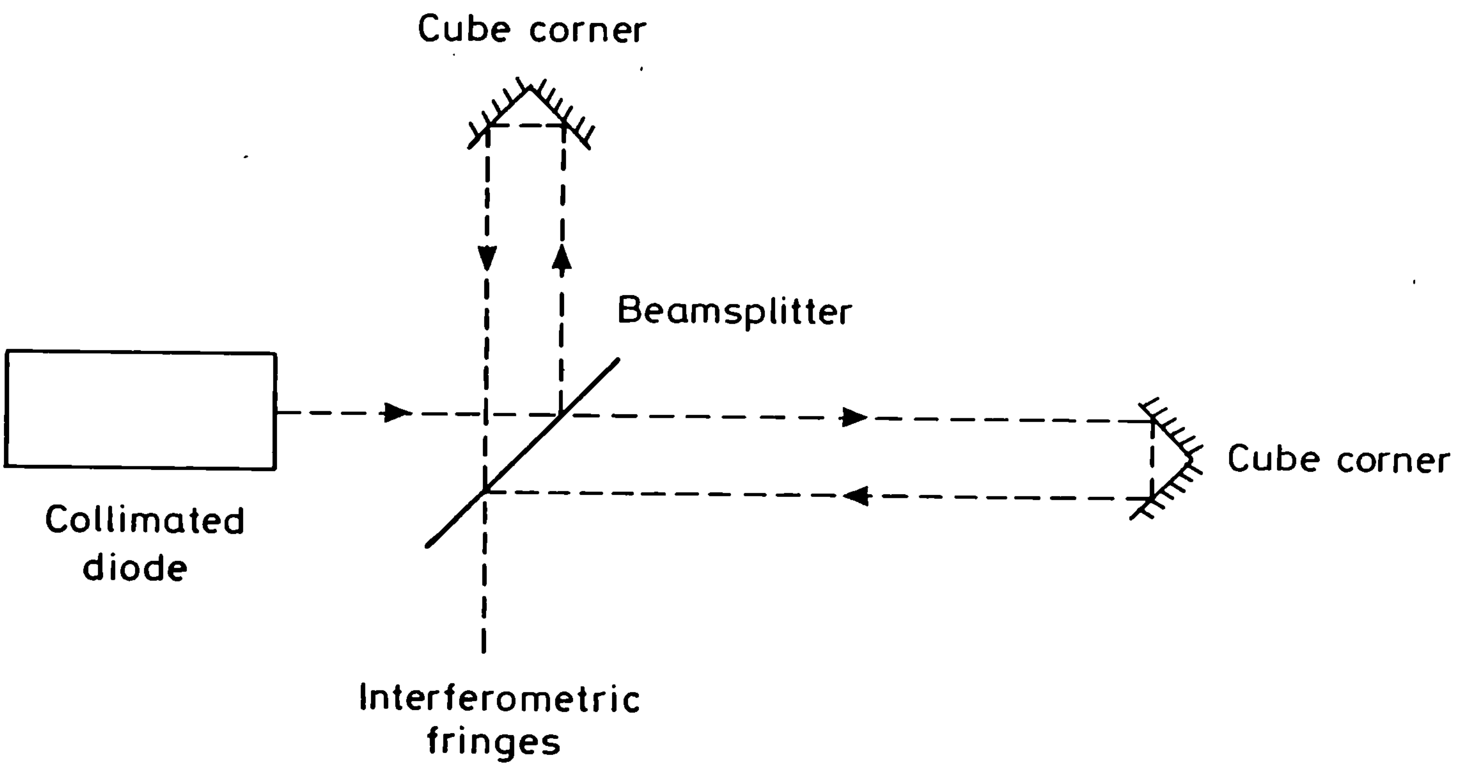
The explanation could be that it is problematic to attempt to demystify the production of painting and the function of the painter when one is oneself working within that very medium. Butler was inevitably implicated in the debunking process, and while the self-ironization was undoubtedly quite conscious on his part, it is unlikely that it would have been understood by many viewers at the time (indeed is equally unlikely to be understood now, without some knowledge of Pre-Raphaelitism and, more to the point, Butler's shifting relationship to it). Butler's contemporaries, accustomed to read art in precisely and exclusively those terms which Butler wanted to deny, would not have recognized the process for what it was, (indeed, were not taught to recognize the process *as such*), and would have read the absence of beauty as an absence (rather than a conscious denial) of genius.

Add to this the fact that Butler was not (as he was beginning painfully to realize) a highly

talented, but only a competent, painter, and one can see very easily that the project inevitably had to be a failure. Had it been widely viewed, the painting must have been dismissed as an unimaginative portrait of an uninteresting woman. Without 'Beauty', the reference to Rossetti, indeed the reference to 'Art', would have been lost to the casual viewer. For as Butler was intent on pointing out, the woman in the painting does not exist in her own right; she is simply the sign by which the artist gains access to the code of genius. Take away 'Beauty' and the ('Rossetti'-)woman disappears - but as a result, so does the ability of Butler's potential viewers to understand the function of the painting.

II. v Ironizing the Arthurian myths: Johnston Forbes-Robertson in armour

One significant advantage that *Johnston Forbes-Robertson in armour* would necessarily have had over a painting is that in a photograph the code of artistic genius would not be expected to apply. It would not be looked for and therefore would not be found missing. The photograph, as Lady



1.1.1 Use of a laser in a Michelson interferometer

photographs of Millais as Dante and Holman Hunt as Henry VIII. The costume was on one level intended to illustrate aspects of the sitter's character or popular image, but Wynfield's fondness for puns and jokes (which he indulged amongst his friends and fellow artists in the eccentric St Johns Wood Clique, of which he was founder member) spills over, both into the individual portrayals, and into the concept of the 'historical portrait photograph' as a whole.

The 'historical portrait photograph' is inevitably ambiguous and ironic. Take, for example, the portrait of Millais as Dante. Firstly, should we take 'historical portrait' to indicate a portrait of the contemporary figure or the historical one? It is on one level a portrait of Millais; but it is also an imaginative, reconstructive 'portrait' of Dante, based on a certain physical resemblance of Millais, however vague, to the portrait of Dante by Giotto. Dante is invoked to illustrate an idea of Millais as an artist of genius and poetic sensibility; and yet at the same time, this is deliberately undermined and ironized, and the imaginative, subjective nature of the portrayal pointed up, by the corresponding project of the

'reanimation' of Dante via the person of Millais - a project which cannot be 'historical', but only fictional. In fact, neither project has anything to do with 'history', except in so far as they suggest the arbitrary and subjective character of the historical, but everything to do with imagination. History, like the photograph, is supposed to be supremely factual and objective; indeed photography was and is still widely considered to be historical fact in visual form. Yet here they come together to produce an impossible piece of 'history' - a photograph of Dante.

Wynfield thus underlines the capacity of the photographic image to declare itself as artificial and constructed, using this self-reflexiveness as a paradigm of the artificiality of the concepts (primarily history and the portrait, but also ideas of genius and beauty,) that his work seems, on the most immediate and superficial level, to affirm.

Butler's *Johnston Forbes-Robertson in armour* can be read as an exercise in Wynfield's ironic voice, a demonstration of the degree of intelligence and skill with which Butler had assimilated his work.

The photograph is a half-length study in the soft focus typical of Wynfield's manner. Its target is the contemporary fascination with Arthurian legend, particularly as interpreted by Tennyson - a fascination particularly visible in Pre-Raphaelite work, but which extended to a far wider public than simply those who admired Pre-Raphaelitism.

Like Wynfield, Butler uses lighting and focus to dwell on texture and tone; the photograph, apart from being an image of an Arthurian knight, is also a skilled and beautiful study of the sitter's very young, smooth face (Forbes-Robertson was sixteen at the time), and the metallic sheen of his armour.

Even more than Wynfield, however, the technical and aesthetic aspects of the photograph suggest the work of Julia Margaret Cameron. Cameron had been a pupil of Wynfield, and throughout her career retained a strong sense of the indebtedness of her work to his. As she once wrote: ' ... to my feeling about his beautiful Photography I owed *all* my attempts and indeed consequently all my successes.' [9] She derived her love of costume and her preference for soft focus largely from the

example of Wynfield's historical portraits, but it is evident that she failed to appreciate the ironic nature of his work, as her interpretation of it in the idealist terminology of the 'beautiful' reveals.

The reason for this is that fundamentally she continued to see art in conservative eighteenth-century terms as the expression through the sublime and the beautiful of a Christian morality. It is clear that both she and her husband were familiar with Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), and three years before their marriage her husband, Charles Hay Cameron, had written his own treatise on the same subject, entitled 'On the Sublime and Beautiful'. This work accepts a Burkian view of the relationship between art and Christian morality, and takes on board the related idea, espoused by Burke as by the eighteenth-century Academy, that it is not the business of art to concern itself with the detailed and particular, which can only indicate the vulgar and trivial, but to concentrate on the general and ideal as the means of access to the noble and sacred. As Charles Cameron puts it:

> No man of taste can endure that his reflections upon the death of Cleopatra should be interrupted by the obtrusive accuracy with which the velvet or satin of her dress is depicted. The artist, therefore, who wishes to show how well he can represent satin and velvet with his pencil, should paint a silk mercer's window, but not a dying queen. [10]

Cameron's work is the unquestioning product of this doctrine of art, which is nowhere more visible than in her use of the soft focus which allowed her to produce an appropriately generalized effect. An idealist discourse such as this, with its belief in a seamless reality originating and culminating in God, has no room for the humorous and ironic, because, by its very nature, it cannot admit the existence of the incongruous and ambivalent.

Her interest in the Arthurian myths readily invites comparison with Butler's ironization of the Arthurian knight, although since *Johnston Forbes-Robertson* predates Cameron's overtly 'Arthurian phase' by four years, one must keep in mind that it cannot be a direct parody of Cameron's Arthurian knights. This is not a serious problem, however. The comparison remains a useful one because Cameron's intensely serious interpretations of Tennyson reflect so closely Tennyson's own, and the Victorian public's, sense

of the significance of the Arthurian knight in the terms of their own era.

While *Johnston Forbes-Robertson* predates Cameron's Arthurian images, it is certainly probable that Butler had other examples of her work in mind when he took the photograph. Her intense religious seriousness and conviction of the religious purpose of art, no less than her belief that it was her calling as an artist to immortalize those she saw as the artistic and intellectual geniuses of her day, would undoubtedly have provoked his irony; and although we have no proof that he was familiar with her work, it is very unlikely that he was not, since it was frequently exhibited in London and sold through Colnaghi's, and had given rise to well-publicized controversy over the issue of soft focus.

Butler achieves a sense of similar aesthetic values to Cameron's by adopting the techniques most typical of her work. He demonstrates a sensitivity to skin tone and expression which is highly suggestive of Cameron, as is his use of a dark, featureless background from which the figure seems to be in the process of emerging into

form. The black background and single, frontal source of artificial light (in this case from the photographer's left) also allow Butler to produce the typically Cameronesque device whereby there appears to be no external light source, the light instead glowing from the figure itself, an effect reminiscent of Titian's portraits, which Cameron greatly admired.

If one reads Butler's *Johnston Forbes-Robertson* purely as 'straight' art photography, untouched by irony, it is in fact considerably more successful than those photographs of Cameron's which are specifically of Arthurian knights, for instance, her *King Arthur*, 1874, [Fig. 10] (The Royal Photographic Society, Bath). To a modern eye, these images are generally amongst her poorest work, tending to suffer from over-elaborate costume and, at times, over-intense expression and gesture. As a result they descend into the ludicrous. The obviousness of the artificiality stands in the way of the viewer's serious consideration of the image.

Johnston Forbes-Robertson, on the other hand, is entirely successful because it first persuades the viewer on the purely aesthetic level. Only once

it has convinced on what one might call 'Cameronesque' terms does it bring the question of artificiality into play. Echoing Wynfield, Butler sets the obvious play-acting and pretence signalled by costume against the persuasive factual aspect of photography, so that as a viewer one only finds oneself questioning the 'truth' of the image once one has already been charmed into accepting it.

While the Arthurian knights' armour symbolized physical and moral bravery, it also necessarily symbolized battle, a battle which was interpreted as an inner struggle, as well as one against external forces. Butler heightens the impression of this struggle through the vulnerability of the very young face and its withdrawn, reflective expression.

Butler demonstrates a penetrating understanding of the Victorian interpretation of the Arthurian myths. The figures of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table took on a particular significance for the educated Victorian middle class at a period of unprecedented questioning of religion. For those like Cameron, whose belief was passionate and untroubled, Arthur and the knights

represented, in their struggle in the name of a Christian ideal, a straightforward affirmation of the Christ figure and the saints. For those like Tennyson, who experienced the disorientation of religious doubt, Arthur was both the symbol of a substitute moral system, and simultaneously (surreptitiously, as it were), an affirmation of the presence of Christ precisely because he was, as Cameron recognized, a re-presentation of him.

This 'typological' way of seeing, the recognition of typical figures through whom the pagan, the modern and the biblical are linked together into a single, moral, fundamentally Christian system, reaches, as Mike Weaver has explained in *Julia Margaret Cameron 1815-1879* [11], a peculiarly complex stage of development with the Victorians, precisely, one suspects, because the innocent and untroubled belief of earlier generations was no longer possible - despite the exceptions like Cameron - and typology, as for example with Tennyson's interpretation of Arthur, helped both to mitigate the consequences of doubt, and affirm the continued functioning of a familiar ethical system.

The basic premise is that, given a figure with sufficient visible attributes, one can recognize a specific spiritual type. Thus in Cameron's work (although these are basic signs which would have been generally recognizable in other art contexts), a woman with long loose hair should be read as a Magdalen, a woman with a covered head as a Madonna; a man with white hair and a beard as a prophet, and a man in armour as an Arthurian knight - in other words, a type of the saint, and, by extension, of Christ.

Butler shares with Cameron the typological facility of recognizing these visible, physical signs which suggest the 'transmigration' (as he puts it) of a famous historical or biblical figure or a character from art or literature into a contemporary body. Cameron, for example, saw Prospero in the playwright and poet Henry Taylor; the Madonna in one of her housemaids, Mary Ryan; and the young John the Baptist in her sister Mia's small granddaughter, Florence Fisher. But Butler turns typology on its head by suggesting that what one often finds is in fact the transmigration of the body *without* the soul, or vice versa, so that body and soul are linked in an alien and uncongenial relationship. Thus, in his essay

'Ramblings in Cheapside', he recognizes Michelangelo on a boat going to Clacton, and finds out that he has been reincarnated as a commissionaire; spots Dante working as a waiter in a restaurant on the Lago Maggiore (but now 'he is better-tempered-looking, and has a more intellectual expression' [12]); and has his hair cut in Modena by Raphael.

While Butler adopts the same fundamental rules as Cameron, his aim is clearly the subversion, and indeed the 'de-railing', of the typological process. His figures do not represent a point of entry into a kind of spiritual continuum, a continuous link with the divine. Rather, the absurdity and incongruity of their situations and conditions tend to deflate and belittle the traditional significance attached to the famous figures they evoke. For instance, Butler's encounter with Socrates, (who was once included among Butler's 'Seven Humbugs of Christendom', but ultimately lost his place to Plato):

> I met Socrates once. He was my muleteer on an excursion .... The moment I saw my guide I knew he was somebody, but for the life of me I could not remember who. All of a sudden it flashed across me that he was Socrates. He talked enough for six, but it was all in *dialetto*, so I could not understand him, nor, when I discovered who he was, did I much try to do so. He was a good creature, a trifle given to stealing fruit and vegetables, but an

> amiable man enough. ... "And now, Socrates," said I at parting, "we go on our several ways, you to steal tomatoes, I to filch ideas from other people; for the rest - which of these two roads will be the better going, our father which is in heaven knows, but we know not." [13]

Butler's concern is clearly to disrupt the idea that through typology Socrates can be brought into the continuum of moral and spiritual truth. He consciously blocks the typological flow by establishing instead an incongruous, self-enclosed pairing, unintelligible in terms of either internal or external logic. In other words, where, underlying Cameron's project, is the principle of a continuous flux of mutually illuminating images, underlying Butler's there is simply a principle of deliberate closure and disorientation.

This principle of closure is also the focus of *Johnston Forbes-Robertson in armour*. The character of the image as a *photograph*, a factual and contemporary medium, underlines the sheer impossibility of the knight being anything other than a fiction. Along with the prosaically modern name of the model and a hint of shirt collar peeping out at the neck of the armour, it declares the image to be a pretence. It denies the idea

that the figure in any way symbolizes or gives access to an immutable truth. For Butler there is only the incongruity of the contemporary man in a suit of armour - a visual metaphor of the incongruity of a continuing adherence to a system of principles and beliefs modelled not only on an image from the past, but on a mythicized image from a past that is equally mythical.

Notes

1. Jones, *Memoir*, op.cit., Vol I, p.64.

2. Quoted in Shaffer, op.cit., p.18.

3. Jones, op.cit., Vol I, pp.141-2.

4. Clark, T J, *The Painting of Modern Life*, Thames & Hudson: London, 1984, p.146.

5. Hamilton, G H, *Manet and His Critics*, Yale University Press: New Haven, 1954, p.69.

6. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol I: Part 1, Ch. VI, p.16, (ed.) David Barrie, Andre Deutsch: London, 1987.

7. Jones, op.cit., Vol I, p.164.

8. Ibid., p.383.

9. Hopkinson, Amanda, *Julia Margaret Cameron*, Virago: London, 1986, p.144.

10. Quoted in Mike Weaver, *Julia Margaret Cameron 1815-1879*, The Herbert Press: London, 1984, p.137.

11. Ibid., p.15.

12. Butler, 'Ramblings in Cheapside', *Collected Essays*, Vol II, (eds.) H.F.Jones and A.T.Bartholomew, The Shrewsbury Edition, Jonathan Cape: London, 1925, p.137.

13. Ibid., p.138.

III Photography and the Sacro Monte: defying Ruskin and the historicist viewpoint

What Butler had learnt from the example of Wynfield's work did not immediately bear fruit in a body of photographic work. Rather, as one can see in works from the 1870's like *Portrait of an Unidentified Woman* and *The last days of Carey Street*, while Butler's ironic sense had become more alert, he seems to have believed that he could transfer what he had learnt, quite unproblematically, to painting. *The last days of Carey Street*, and Butler's subsequent reaction to it, suggest a growing realization on his part that the process was a rather more complex one of translation rather than simple transferral, and that such a translation, even if technically achievable, might not necessarily be the most successful way of articulating irony.

After the trouble over *Carey Street* in 1877 Butler did not return to art school, although he continued to paint and occasionally to sell his work. His first major photographic work dates from more than ten years later - the illustrations for his most important and extensive piece of art historical research, *Ex Voto* (1888). In it he

attempted to draw attention to the Sacri Monti of Northern Italy, and to the artists who worked on them, in particular Gaudenzio Ferrari who was both a painter and a sculptor, and Jean de Wespin, known in Italy as Tabachetti, a Flemish sculptor who had settled in that area.

III.i Samuel Butler and Stefano Scotto

There were, and indeed still are, a number of Sacri Monti around Piedmont and Lombardy: at Varallo in the Val Sesia, north-east of Turin; at Varese, some thirty miles further east, on the other side of L. Maggiore; and on a smaller scale, at Orta, between Varallo and Varese, and at Oropa, to the south-west of Varallo, in the direction of Turin. A Sacro Monte is a series of chapels situated along the length of a path winding up a hill. The chapels cannot normally be entered, but contain tableaux, intended to be viewed through grilles in the walls, of life-size statues, usually in painted terracotta, which depict Biblical scenes, mainly from the life of Christ. The Sacro Monte at Varallo is the earliest, having been founded in the early 1490's; with forty-four chapels it is also the

most ambitious, and, in Butler's view, by far the finest.

The most interesting of the *Ex Voto* photographs, in that it demonstrates both the core of Butler's fascination with the Sacro Monte as a form and the place of the Sacro Monte in the development of his ironic photography, is a photograph entitled *Stefano Scotto and Samuel Butler*, [Fig. 11]. It simply shows Butler photographed alongside one of the terracotta statues. Shaffer dates the image c.1882, but this seems dubious. It is highly unlikely that it can date from any earlier than January 1888. For one thing, we have Jones's account of Butler's purchase in December 1887 of two cameras, one of which was certainly bought with the Sacro Monte research in mind since it was designed for time-exposures - in other words, it was intended to cope with dimly-lit interiors. While this does not preclude Butler already owning a camera (although there is no evidence to suggest that he did) it certainly indicates that he had not until now owned a camera capable of taking photographs under these conditions. Jones also tells us that Butler 'took a few lessons' in December, specifically in order to photograph the statues in the Sacro Monte chapels.

As Shaffer has rightly pointed out, Jones's evidence is frequently unreliable, partly from faulty, partly from selective, memory. But in this case, his recollection of Butler's purchase of the cameras backs up other facts given in the *Memoir*. The most important of these is that almost immediately on buying the cameras and having his lessons, Butler set off on an apparently unprecedented winter journey to Italy. He spent Christmas in Boulogne with Charles Gogin, a friend from art school, then continued alone to Varallo. The object of the journey was to take the photographs to illustrate *Ex Voto*. Butler must have been impatient for the book to be published (which it was, only a few months later, in May 1888), because travelling in the Alps in winter was not to be undertaken lightly, as Butler's testimony makes plain.

There is no record of him visiting Varallo in 1882, the date that Shaffer gives for *Stefano Scotto and Samuel Butler*, although he was, as usual, in Northern Italy, and certainly visited the Sacro Monte at Varese on the other side of Lake Maggiore. This winter visit in 1888, on the other hand, is described in some detail by Jones, and is moreover the first where there is any

mention of photographing inside the chapels (although Butler had entered at least some of them before), or of the special arrangements that obviously had to be made for Butler to do so.

Stefano Scotto was Gaudenzio's master, and Butler argues convincingly that the statue is a portrait of him done by Gaudenzio. By having himself photographed next to Scotto, by setting a living figure against the terracotta representation, he is, he suggests, simply demonstrating both Gaudenzio's skill and the realistic effect typical of the Sacro Monte at its best.

This is of course disingenuous. Butler is not interested in the realism of the tableaux. What fascinates him is their uncanny or grotesque confusion of the animate and inanimate:

> No one is allowed to enter [the chapels], except when repairs are needed; but when these are going on, as is constantly the case, it is curious to look through the grating into the somewhat darkened interior, and to see a living figure or two among the statues; a little motion on the part of a single figure seems to communicate itself to the rest and make them all more animated. If the living figure does not move much, it is easy at first to mistake it for a terra-cotta one.

Having identified the effect, he goes on to relate a particular instance of it:

> At Orta, some years since, looking one evening into a chapel when the light was fading, I was surprised to see a saint whom I had not seen before; he had no glory except what shone from a very red nose; he was smoking a pipe, and was painting the Virgin Mary's face. The touch was a finishing one, put on with deliberation, slowly, so that it was two or three seconds before I discovered that the interloper was no saint. [1]

One recognizes that Butler was well aware of the effect he was playing with in setting up *Stefano Scotto and Samuel Butler*. Thus the photograph itself is clearly not a measure of the realism of the works on the Sacro Monte, but a demonstration of the way all measures of reality dissolve in the face of the challenge presented by the hyperreal statues to the distinction between the real and the represented. Jones recounts the reaction of Butler's laundress, Mrs. Doncaster, on seeing the photograph:

> One of the illustrations in *Ex Voto* ... represents Butler standing by the side of Gaudenzio's statue of Stefano Scotto. He had this done to show how real this statue looks even when compared with a living figure. It looked so real in the photograph that Mrs. Doncaster, mistaking Scotto's gaberdine for a petticoat, asked Mrs. Cathie whether that was the lady Mr. Butler was going to marry. [2]

I use the terms 'uncanny' and 'grotesque' in relation to this confusion of the animate and

inanimate, in both cases with their technical sense in mind. The provinces of the grotesque and the uncanny overlap; one could claim that the uncanny is the psychoanalytic theorization of but one manifestation of the grotesque. The grotesque certainly extends over a wider and more complex range of forms, and has a much longer history. It has also so far proved impossible to pin down and define comprehensively.

In his essay of 1919 entitled simply 'The "Uncanny"', Freud cites E Jentsch's 'Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen' (1906), in which Jentsch gives the classic example of the uncanny as confusion over whether an object is living or not. Typically, a waxwork or mannequin comes to life with nightmarish consequences, as in Hoffmann's 'The Sandman'. The application to the statues of the Sacri Monti is unmistakable.

Freud largely accepts this definition, himself glossing the uncanny as the effect produced 'when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced.' [3] This concurs with numerous definitions of the grotesque, notably Wolfgang Kayser's in his classic but flawed text *The grotesque in art and literature* (1957), which

focus not only on its ambivalence, its semantic instability and its corruption of categories, but also, and almost exclusively (which is why Mikhail Bakhtin, for example, considers it a flawed and partial approach) on its sinister transformation of the familiar into the alien.

However, the theories of Freud and Jentsch, Kayser and Bakhtin, all post-date Butler's work. A more appropriate and indeed more comprehensive model is found amongst Schlegel's theories of the grotesque, of irony, and of incomprehensibility (which we have already noted at work in Butler's disruption of Victorian typology). Schlegel stressed the destabilizing, subversive quality of wit and irony [4], and the specifically visual character of the wit expressed in the grotesque (grotesque 'Bilderwitz').

An explicit comparison with Schlegel is problematic, as one of Butler's greatest aversions was towards Romanticism, and German Romanticism in particular. This does not of course mean that he never read any Schlegel, but it does make it probable that Schlegel was one of the writers - such as Dante - that Butler decided to hate, often without reading their work at all,

simply because he hated their associates or admirers, or the predecessors who had influenced them. As he wrote in one of the entries in his *Notebooks*:

> Talking it over, we agreed that Blake was no good because he learnt Italian at 60 in order to study Dante, and we knew Dante was no good because he was so fond of Virgil, and Virgil was no good because Tennyson ran him, and as for Tennyson - well, Tennyson goes without saying. [5]

In practice, however, the question of whether or not Butler had any knowledge of Schlegel is not of great importance. It remains true, even though he himself was probably unaware of it, that through his work, his photographic work in particular, he reached the same fundamental conclusions as are reached in Schlegel's theory of wit and irony.

Elinor Shaffer has already suggested Schlegel's concept of the grotesque as a model for Butler's own. But the grotesque, for Butler as for Schlegel, is only a part - the most concentrated and visible form - of a wider conception of the function of irony and, even more widely still, of incomprehensibility.

The two Schlegelian texts which relate most specifically to the grotesque are the *Dialogue on Poetry* (*Gesprach über Poesie*) published 1799-1800, and the *Athenäum Fragment* (1798). The full significance of irony and the grotesque are only appreciable however against the background of his essay 'On Incomprehensibility' ('Uber die Unverständlichkeit'), written in 1800, which makes clear Schlegel's conception of the function of incomprehensibility as a hermeneutic tool (an appropriately paradoxical concept). That is to say that Schlegel considered the introduction of the strange and disorienting into art and literature, (as did the Russian Formalists with their theory of 'ostranenie' - defamiliarization - more than a century later), as a means of revealing, analysing and challenging the accepted limits of knowledge.

For Schlegel art should result from the fusion and confusion of dynamic paradoxes, from the ironic play of 'Form und Materie'. It must challenge the conventional mimetic project of representation. It is the artist's function to make visible the ironic tensions which underlie representation, to *present* the contradiction inherent in the attempt to *represent* the real.

The grotesque is simply the most strongly (though not exclusively) visual presentation of those ironies. Hence the definition of the grotesque as a play of opposites - the confusion, for instance, of animate and inanimate, masculine and feminine, real and fantastic, which had already begun to emerge in Butler's early photography - a continual shifting of signifiers which denies the subject a firm grasp on their meaning. The application to the photographic image is more than coincidental.

III.ii Problematizing identity

The relationship set up in *Stefano Scotto and Samuel Butler* between the artificial Stefano Scotto and the real Samuel Butler also raises questions related to the grotesque about the 'knowableness' of identity. The statue of Scotto may be a convincing imitation of real life, but Butler equally problematizes 'real', living, human identity by giving a convincing imitation of a statue. Butler's grotesque appearance of lifelessness is as necessary as the statue's grotesque appearance of life to his intention of

questioning the idea of an essential, given, knowable reality.

Already in 1878, in the first of his books on evolution, *Life and Habit*, Butler had challenged the conventional view of identity, or, as he also says, personality, (personality being used to signify the visible, outward expression of identity). He denies categorically that personality/identity can be explained as 'a simple definite whole; ... a plain, palpable, individual thing'. In fact, he argues, 'this "we," which looks so simple and definite, is a nebulous aggregation of many component parts'. [6] Indeed, our awareness of our existence is probably due to the 'very clash of warfare' of these multiple, dynamic components. (This more than a decade before Wilde wrote, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890): 'He used to wonder at the shallow psychology of those who conceive the Ego in man as a thing simple, permanent, reliable, and of one essence.' [7]).

Because the component parts of identity are dynamic and therefore constantly changing, personality/identity 'becomes a thing dependent upon time present, which has no logical

existence' [8]. It is 'as fleeting as the present moment'. Who one is 'now' has no meaning divorced from past and future. 'Now' has no qualities of its own - it is in a strange way atemporal, merely the gap between past and future. In Butler's view, identity cannot be pinned down, but slips vertiginously away from one in the attempt to grasp time present.

His conception of identity has no room for the idea of the transcendental subject, preceding discourse and invulnerable to its effects. Butler's subject is supremely vulnerable, existing in a time/space which does not exist in its own right, but only through the agency of the discourses of past and future.

Butler's questioning of identity extends, in the context of his art, to a questioning of the nature and function of authorship - the creating, originating eye; as for instance in his attack on Rossetti and the mythologizing of the figure of the artist through the idea of 'genius' in the *Portrait of an Unidentified Woman*. It is fundamental to his understanding of the communal art of the Sacro Monte, and to his plea for naïve art and the return of the apprenticeship system.

Most of all, of course, it is inherent in his adoption of photography as an answer to the issues that had plagued his relationship with the Academy and the discourse for which it stood.

Stefano Scotto and Samuel Butler is a useful illustration of this. It is inserted innocently amongst the photographs in *Ex Voto* without a comment on its authorship. But though it is of course perfectly possible for Butler to have photographed himself using a delayed shutter release, it seems fairly clear from his and Jones's evidence, that he actually got someone else to take it for him. Both certainly speak in the passive voice of Butler 'having the photograph taken'.

Added to this, in his choice of title, Butler refers to himself in the third person, not as 'I', but as 'Samuel Butler', erasing his creative role and controlling presence (for while he is not strictly the photographer, he is certainly the constructor of the image - in the same way, for example, that in the case of the Jane Morris photo-session of 1865, although the photographer responsible for releasing the shutter was John R. Parsons, the images themselves have

always been considered, and indeed often explicitly described, as Rossetti's, since the composition was undoubtedly his). Placing himself in relation to Stefano Scotto, Butler makes himself simply an object, with no claim to precedence over his companion object, the statue.

Authorship and the identifiability of the artist was of immense importance to the academic conception of the work of art. On the identification of the artist, the indisputable attribution of a work or body of work, (guaranteed by the name of Michelangelo, Raphael, etc.), rode the authenticity of the work as representation of a transcendental, universal truth. In *The Way of All Flesh*, Overton the narrator, one of the novel's two representations of Butler himself, mocks the investment of the convention in the figure of the genius:

> Not long ago a much esteemed writer informed the world that he felt 'disposed to cry out with delight' before a figure by Michelangelo. I wonder whether he would feel disposed to cry out before a real Michelangelo, if the critics had decided that it was not genuine, or before a reputed Michelangelo which was really by someone else. [9]

Shaffer points out that Ruskin had admired the communal work of anonymous craftsmen in the Gothic

cathedrals. But for Ruskin this was not an issue which challenged the idea of the 'great master'. Ruskin valued neither the communality nor the anonymity in itself, but the scope which he believed the Gothic cathedral to have given to the lowest, least skilled worker for 'invention' - that is, for the exercise of thought in his work. In Ruskin's view, this was essential if labour, in the Carlylean tradition, was to ennoble man rather than enslave him. Thus:

> ... it is, perhaps, the principal admirableness of the Gothic schools of architecture, that they thus receive the results of the labour of inferior minds; and out of fragments full of imperfection, and betraying that imperfection in every touch, indulgently raise up a stately and unaccusable whole. [10]

This synecdochic strategy is fundamental to Ruskin's essentialist project. He sees the significance of communality and anonymity as lying in the fact that it offers a way to reclaim the idea of the homogenizing, moral and spiritual perfection of the 'whole' from the imperfection of its parts. For Ruskin this is the 'primitive', pre-Renaissance equivalent to the great Renaissance master, who acts as the vehicle of transcendental truth.

Butler, on the other hand, recognized in the concern with authorship one of the strategies of conventional discursive practice - the concern to establish an *a priori*, given truth to which the author has access. He clearly understood that, as Foucault would later say, the author is 'a function of discourse', not its creator; the author's role is 'to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society.' [11] For though he was concerned to establish the reputations of Gaudenzio Ferrari and Tabachetti, this was essentially, as I have already suggested, a challenge to the impregnability of the canon of great masters. And though he clearly enjoyed the 'detective' work necessary to reconstruct their backgrounds and identify their contributions to the Sacri Monti, one feels that his evident relish for his research stemmed to a large extent from a belief that he was amassing evidence to support the case against the great art historical tradition.

In many ways, *Alps and Sanctuaries* is a far more accessible and engaging record than *Ex Voto* of Butler's fascination with the effect of the Sacro Monte as a form. Indeed, *Ex Voto* must

ultimately be seen as a failure. Like the majority of Butler's books, including *Alps and Sanctuaries*, it barely sold, but in the case of *Ex Voto* the failure was more serious, since it was intended, as *Alps and Sanctuaries* never was, as a major challenge to the academic tradition. It failed, however, to provoke any real interest, and even today the Sacri Monti remain outside the pale of fine art and the art historical canon.

On the other hand, it is very probable that without *Ex Voto*, Butler would not have produced the main body of his photographic work; the research for *Ex Voto* clarified the issues he had begun to grasp through his early photography but foundered over as a painter in an academic framework, and gave him a greater understanding of the defamiliarizing and destabilizing strategies which could be effectively pursued against academicism in art, and conventionalism as a whole.

III. iii Ruskin, Butler and the ironic voice

Butler's perception of the function of authorship within discourse lies at the basis of

his distrust of a large proportion of the 'great' figures of Western culture, particularly those to whom he referred as 'the Seven Humbugs of Christendom' (which included Plato, Dante, Raphael, and Goethe), and underlies his more serious challenges to Darwin, Homer, and the Biblical concept of God the Father.

Ruskin was not specifically cited as a 'Humbug', although this might simply be because he was still living, as Butler certainly saw him in a similar light; an over-rated figure with an unwarranted degree of influence over contemporary ideas. His original enthusiasm for Ruskin did not survive his disillusionment with Pre-Raphaelitism, and the direction in which his ideas about the function of art developed is to a great degree a reaction against Ruskin and the homogenizing tendency of the historicist interpretation of art history.

Nowhere is the difference between Butler and Ruskin and their respective 'ways of seeing' more apparent than in their differing reactions to Italy both as a country and as a cultural symbol. Indicative of this difference is the fact that although he passed through the region on his travels, Ruskin never mentions the Sacri Monti,

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and indeed may very well have been completely ignorant of their existence, since his Italy was exclusively that of the great Renaissance cities, Florence and Venice in particular.

Ruskin's first trip to the Continent took place in 1833, when he was fourteen years old. Butler's parents first took their children abroad ten years later, in 1843, when Butler himself was still only seven. The most well-trodden scenic route into Italy took tourists over the Alps from Switzerland into that part of Italian-speaking Switzerland and Northern Italy which was to become so central to Butler's later fascination with the Sacri Monti. In *Praeterita* (1885-9), Ruskin dwells mainly on the Swiss side of the Alps, dealing only cursorily with the Italian Alps and the Lakes, en route for Italy proper - the Italy of the Renaissance. (Although on this trip the young Ruskin saw only Milan and Genoa, and not Rome as planned, the journey being cut short by the heat of the Italian summer). Ruskin writes thus of his first experience of the Alps, seen from Schaffhausen, near Lake Constance and the German border :

> There was no thought in any of us for a moment of their being clouds. They were as clear as crystal, sharp on the pure horizon sky, and already tinged with rose by the

> sinking sun. Infinitely beyond all that we had ever thought or dreamed, - the seen walls of lost Eden could not have been more beautiful to us; not more awful, round heaven, the walls of sacred Death. ...
>
> Thus, in perfect health of life and fire of heart, not wanting to be anything but the boy I was, not wanting to have anything more than I had; knowing of sorrow only so much as to make life serious to me, not enough to slacken in the least its sinews; and with so much of science mixed with feeling as to make the sight of the Alps not only the revelation of the beauty of the earth, but the opening of the first page of its volume, - I went down that evening from the garden-terrace of Schaffhausen with my destiny fixed in all of it that was to be sacred and useful. [12]

Ruskin's choice of vocabulary in this passage makes clear his frame of aesthetic and metaphysical reference: 'pure', 'infinitely', 'beyond all', 'awful', 'sacred Death', 'revelation', 'destiny'; his response to the Alps, as indeed he tells us a little further on, was mediated by Turner, and his memories of that Turneresque vision of mountain grandeur are couched in the familiar romantic language of the sublime - the aweful, transforming encounter with the infinite and divine, the revelation of Truth (specifically, the Truth of the fourteen year old Ruskin's sacred destiny - or so the seventy year old chooses to interpret it). For the aging Ruskin, his mental health deteriorating alarmingly, (*Praeterita* was written in the lucid intervals as his mental breakdown began to gather

momentum), the Alps, connected in his mind with the certainties and simplicity of childhood, represent a defence against both age and madness, and, a paradigm of his highly selective autobiography as a whole, the final attempt to deny the phantoms of doubt and disintegration which, as his letters make plain, begin to trouble him (significantly enough) in 1845 on his first trip to Italy without his parents.

The few brief records that exist of the Butlers' trip suggest that they crossed into Italy by the same route - through the St. Gothard Pass, and down the River Ticino. Butler's earliest memory of the Alps (on the Italian side, inevitably, and in the heart of precisely that area mentioned so briefly by Ruskin) is recorded in *Alps and Sanctuaries*:

> My first acquaintance with the Monte Cenere was made some seven-and-thirty years ago when I was a small boy. I remember with what delight I found wild narcissuses growing in a meadow on the top of it, and was allowed to gather as many as I liked. It was not until some thirty years afterwards that I again passed over the Monte Cenere in summer time, but I well remembered the narcissus place, and wondered whether there would still be any of them growing there. Sure enough when we got to the top, there they were as thick as cowslips in an English meadow. [13]

This markedly more low-key description does not immediately, precisely because of its apparently simple and comparatively prosaic charm, indicate a startling comparison with Ruskin's experience; one seems to be dealing with two unconnected responses to two utterly different phenomena of nature. But in fact, Butler is in the midst of scenery which he could very well, and indeed, according to convention *should*, have described in the same idiom of the sublime employed by Ruskin. That he was well versed in the conventional vocabulary is made plain in his satirical description, in *The Way of All Flesh*, of the response of George Pontifex, on a tour of Europe, to the sight of Mont Blanc:

> The first glimpse of Mont Blanc threw Mr Pontifex into a conventional ecstasy. 'My feelings I cannot express. I gasped, yet hardly dared to breathe, as I viewed for the first time the monarch of the mountains. I seemed to fancy the genius seated on his stupendous throne far above his aspiring brethren and in his solitary might defying the universe. I was so overcome by my feelings that I was almost bereft of my faculties, and I would not for worlds have spoken after my first exclamation till I found some relief in a gush of tears. With pain I tore myself from contemplating for the first time "at distance dimly seen" (though I felt as if I had sent my soul and eyes after it), this sublime spectacle.' [14]

How far removed is this from Ruskin's entirely serious response? (In the same chapter, Butler tells us that Pontifex proceeds to the Great St

Bernard, where he takes 'good care to be properly impressed by the Hospice and its situation'; while Ernest, his grandson, modelled to a great extent on Butler himself, is made to respond to the same sight many years later with the Butleresque "'I went up the Great St Bernard and saw the dogs.'").

Both Butler and Ruskin are claiming to recall the child's sense of the beauty of the natural world, but the scale according to which each constructs his interpretation is vastly different, and undoubtedly reveals more about the adult's choice of emphasis than the child's perception. Where Ruskin, in accordance with the dictates of the aesthetic of the sublime, looks up and into the distance, Butler looks down at the ground; where Ruskin sees crystalline peaks, Butler sees 'the narcissus place'; where Ruskin feels awe, Butler feels 'delight'; where Ruskin has a vision of the 'walls of lost Eden', Butler is reminded of 'an English meadow'. Finally, where the young Ruskin feels his sacred destiny revealed to him, the young Butler, capitalising upon the licence afforded by school holidays and foreign travel, proceeds to transgress the rules of the Rectory garden, and pick the flowers.

The calculated ordinariness and simplicity of the memory is clearly intended mischievously to counter the monumentality of the romantic apprehension of the sublime as rendered by Turner, by Wordsworth, by Ruskin, and by the German Romantics - to name but the most obvious. Wordsworth was one of Butler's particular *bêtes noires*, (he is the author of several Wordsworthian parodies), and it is surely asking too much to believe that, in recalling a field of wild narcissi, Butler's intentions were completely innocent and without a single glance in the direction of 'I wandered lonely as a cloud...'.

I am perhaps not being entirely fair to Ruskin at this point, since I seem to be suggesting that while Butler's mind operates in terms of irony, Ruskin's does not. In fact, Ruskin is far from insensitive to the effects of irony, but for him irony represents a threat to be countered rather than a weapon with which to arm oneself. The problem that begins to trouble him in Italy in 1845 is precisely one of the ironic clash between old and modern; and as he builds up to his description of the mountains seen from

Schaffhausen, he is fully aware of the usefulness of a catachretic effect, setting the Swiss Alps against the rolling English hills and downs. He introduces the passage thus:

> ... gazing as at one of our own distances from Malvern of Worcestershire, or Dorking of Kent, – suddenly – behold – beyond! [15]

One might at first be inclined to assume that Ruskin's Dorking offers a structural parallel to Butler's 'English meadow'. In fact, however, they operate in completely opposite directions to one another. This is most simply illustrated by the fact that Butler's description begins with the Italian Alps and swiftly, in fact dismissively, descends to a field of homely English cowslips, while Ruskin's leaps ('suddenly – behold') from Dorking to – let us say – St. Gothard; from the familiar to the unimaginable. That jolt is not intended to amuse us, but rather to make us sharply aware of how far 'beyond' Ruskin is directing us – to the sacred, the infinite, the ultimate.

Although Ruskin does not record his impressions of the Italian Alps in *Praeterita*, they do feature – mediated, like the Swiss Alps, by

Turner - in his chapter on 'Turnerian Topography' in *Modern Painters* Vol IV (1856). He discusses Turner's painting of *The Pass of Faido,* Faido being precisely the place where Butler begins his travels in *Alps and Sanctuaries*. (Faido, as Butler points out, was politically Swiss, but he counts it as 'Italian in character').

Ruskin sets out to explain Turner's romantic interpretation of the relatively unspectacular scenery of the pass of Faido. While couching it in the language of the sublime, Ruskin constructs what is presented implicitly as an objective analysis of the effect of the scenery on the mind of the ordinary traveller, talking his readers through the journey from Mont St. Gothard to Faido, preparing the ground for a justification of the 'sacredness of the truth of *Impression*' in Turner's work. The traveller's impression of Faido, he suggests, will be heightened by the memory of the truly sublime scenery through which he has just passed on the journey from the St. Gothard, the sublime thus binding the disparate terrains and different experiences of the traveller's alpine journey into a unified and meaningful whole.

Butler, taking the prosaic and practical line in his estimation of the average traveller's experience of Faido, literally bypasses St. Gothard, thus negating the pivotal, unifying function of the St. Gothard scenery:

> I was attracted to this place, in the first instance, chiefly because it is one of the easiest places on the Italian side of the Alps to reach from England. This merit it will soon possess in a still greater degree, for when the St. Gothard tunnel is open, it will be possible to leave London, we will say, on a Monday morning and be at Faido by six or seven o'clock the next evening ...
>
> True, by making use of the tunnel one will miss the St. Gothard scenery, but I would not, if I were the reader, lay this too much to heart. Mountain scenery, when one is staying right in the middle of it, or when one is on foot, is one thing, and mountain scenery as seen from the top of a diligence very likely smothered in dust is another. Besides, I do not think he will like the St. Gothard scenery very much. [16]

Summing up his attitude to both the sublime and its Romantic devotees with typical vigour, he goes on to say:

> As for knowing whether or not one likes a picture, which under the present aesthetic reign of terror is *de rigueur*, I once heard a man say the only test was to ask one's self whether one would care to look at it if one was quite sure that one was alone; I have never been able to get beyond this test with the St. Gothard scenery, and applying it to the Devil's Bridge, I should say that a stay of about thirty seconds would be enough for me. I daresay Mendelssohn would have stayed at least two hours at the Devil's Bridge, but then he did stay such a long while before things. [17]

Unlike Ruskin, Butler makes little mention of the Swiss aspect of Northern Italy, and certainly does not discuss Switzerland itself. He claimed to hate Germanic culture and accused German-speaking people of 'priggism'. By the same token, Ruskin openly admitted his distaste for and mistrust of Italians, clearly feeling them to be chaotic and overly demonstrative, and accordingly felt deeply relieved at escaping them and moving north to the Swiss border and the German-speaking inhabitants of the Italian Alps, (as he reveals, for instance, in the letters home from that momentous 1845 tour). Butler is tolerant of Northern Italians brought up in German-speaking areas, but of Italians who *choose* to learn German he has a very different opinion. As he puts it, 'if an Italian happens to be a prig, he will, like Tacitus, invariably show a hankering after German institutions.' [18]

Butler was clearly attracted by the process of the fusion and confusion of the Northern and the Italian which took place on the Italian side of the Alps. Ruskin mentally drew a line between Italian-speaking and German-speaking territory, which he crossed with relief, seeing the German-speaking areas of Italy as discrete little havens

of Germanic-ness, oases of cleanliness, purity, peacefulness, and - the implicit corollary of this - order and intelligibility. Butler on the other hand, since he positively welcomed equivocation and uncertainty as the basis of the ironic voice, recognized that in an area where the boundary dividing Italy from Switzerland was often so tortuous as to be, in effect, invisible, with language, customs, and styles of domestic and church architecture spilling across the arbitrary frontier which supposedly dictated where Switzerland ended and Italy began, there was nothing so definite as a line, but only an ambiguous blurring. He saw in both the Sacro Monte and the figure of Tabachetti, the Northern sculptor who adopted Italy as his 'second country' and spent his career working on an Italian Catholic art form, the fusion of Northern and Italian in an art that defied classification, on this border where North and South met and mingled. Clearly the area, the art form and the sculptor all represented for him a value for fluidity and the hybrid with which he, as a Northern European artist uncomfortable with the rigidity of the society and artistic tradition into which he was born, could strongly identify.

III. iv Ruskin on the grotesque

One can see clearly why Ruskin became for Butler the symbol of a discourse with which he found himself in fundamental disagreement, and as such a focus-point - at times conscious, at other times less so - for many of Butler's attacks on the art historical tradition and the relationship of art and morality. Ruskin's view of art was a historicist one, whereby art was presented as a continuous tradition developing from the Renaissance. Butler sought to challenge and disrupt this conception, recognizing behind it a similar imperative to that which fuels the idea of the author as creator/originator rather than a function of discourse - the need to preserve the idea of the founding subject. Because it is the guarantee of an over-all unity, a pattern and meaningfulness which the subject can understand and through understanding control, 'Continuous history', as Foucault has said, 'is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject.' [19]

Butler was undoubtedly familiar with a considerable amount of Ruskin's work. We know that he read *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* as a

student, and as an artist and art historian it is very unlikely that he would not have had some knowledge of *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice*. Many of Butler's apparently general barbs may plausibly be read as being aimed at Ruskin, as the symbol of a discourse if not specifically as an individual. Ruskin came to a great extent to embody the intellectual 'hoodwinking', as Butler called it, of the art-loving English public, and he relates an anecdote which both illustrates this hoodwinking and demonstrates how centrally he considered Ruskin to be implicated in it:

> Jones knew an old lady who said she had been to Venice and seen St. Mark's. It was so beautiful. 'It is made of all the different kinds of architecture; there's Bissentine [sic], and Elizabethan and Gothic, and perpendicular, and all the different kinds and Mr. Ruskin says it's lovely.' [20]

One area in which the opposing attitudes of Butler and Ruskin towards the ironic and equivocal are particularly clearly highlighted, is that of the grotesque. Unlike Butler, Ruskin was troubled by the concept of the grotesque. He was never able satisfactorily to draw his views together into a cohesive theory. His grotesque is peculiar in its attempt to use grotesque confusion (as the mysterious and unknown is used by

theorists of the sublime) as a means of access precisely to that transcendental whole which other interpretations see the grotesque as contradicting. As in his understanding of communal and anonymous art, one sees Ruskin's need to reclaim the idea of the whole from concepts which threaten to disrupt it.

This is not to say that Ruskin misunderstood the grotesque. On the contrary, he understood it very well, which is precisely why he needed to reclaim the idea of the whole from it. He certainly recognized the centrality of disjunction in the construction of the grotesque:

> A fine grotesque is the expression, in a moment, by a series of symbols thrown together in bold and fearless connection, of truths which it would have taken a long time to express in any verbal way, and of which the connection is left for the beholder to work out for himself; the gaps, left or overleaped by the haste of the imagination, forming the grotesque character. [21]

Butler's work, by contrast - and his mature photographic practice in particular - stresses that the *absence* of connections and the *lack* of a coherent sign system are what give the grotesque its peculiar character. The effect of the grotesque is founded on disorientation and defamiliarization; like the ironic, it is a function of ambiguity and disintegrating identity.

In his understanding of and capitalization upon 'defamiliarizing' devices, Butler anticipates the doctrine of the Russian Formalists, expressed in Shklovsky's call, in 'Art as Technique' (1917), for an art designed to shock, to make difficult, to problematize the subject's relationship to discourse and awaken critical awareness. Several passages among Butler's writings state quite explicitly his awareness of the centrality of the function of shock in sensation and perception. In a lecture given in 1887 at the City of London College, and entitled 'On the Genesis of Feeling', he cites Herbert Spencer's *The Principles of Psychology* (1855) in his support:

> I, following Mr. Herbert Spencer in this respect, wish to show that all our present widely diversified feelings have sprung from a single, simple, and highly unspecialized form of feeling, namely, a sense of shock, which Mr. Spencer has well posited as the unit of feeling, much in the same way as biologists posit the simple unspecialized cell of protoplasm as the unit of organism. [22]

Furthermore, in *Alps and Sanctuaries* he recognizes the effort made by a culture, and by the dominant discourses within that culture, to guard their fundamental structure against radical change - to cushion themselves precisely against the *shock* of the new and the other:

> ... the power of adaptation is mainly dependent on the power of thinking certain new things sufficiently like certain others to which we have been accustomed for us not to be

> too much incommoded by the change - upon the power, in fact, of mistaking the new for the old. ... We always, I believe, make an effort to see every new object as a repetition of the object last before us. ... Where the effort is successful, there is illusion; where nearly successful but not quite, there is a shock and a sense of being puzzled... [23]

For Butler this disintegration of illusion and its vertiginous effect provides a strategy with which to undermine the idea of a higher reality and truth existing prior to its articulation to which representation was supposed to give access. For Ruskin, on the other hand, the idea of problematizing truth and meaning, and letting go a standard of objective, divinely-ordained truth, threatens his sense of ontological and epistemological order. In *The Stones of Venice III*, in his chapter on the 'Grotesque Renaissance', he speaks of the danger of disturbing the hold of discourse on the subject, when he warns against 'exposing weakness to eyes which cannot comprehend greatness.' [24] Thus even while he tries to claim the grotesque as the imaginative expression of an insight into truth, he is deeply uneasy about its potential for 'corrupting' and problematizing that same truth.

He tries to account for the partial nature of his theory of the grotesque by making a distinction between its legitimate and illegitimate uses. There is, he argues, a 'true' or 'noble' grotesque, which flourishes in a climate of religious purity and reverence. It is the expression of the artist's 'deep insight into nature.' In this context, 'His beasts and birds, however monstrous, will have profound relations with the true.' [25] But the 'true' grotesque must be distinguished from the 'false' or 'ignoble' grotesque, which is the result of 'diseased and ungoverned imaginativeness'[26], and of a 'want of reverence in approaching subjects of importance or sacredness' [27].

Butler certainly recognized irreverence as a characteristic of his own work, and considered it a completely positive quality. Unlike Ruskin, he did not see it as gratuitous flippancy and mockery, but as a seriously motivated project, a challenge directed against the canons of Victorian taste, morality, and ultimately, epistemology. To recall for a moment the parallel with the Formalists, the title of Mayakovsky's manifesto of 1912 - 'A Slap in the Face of Public Taste' - could well be said to be what Butler spent his

career trying to administer - although to little effect.

This explains a large part of the appeal of the Sacro Monte for Butler. It embodied all those things which Victorian taste found it hardest to conceive of as art. It mingled Northern and Italian modes; it violated the distinction between painting and sculpture; it did not observe the concept, formalized for British artists by Reynolds, of ideal form; the use of colour was considered garish, because it did not conform to conventional standards of tonal harmony; and it fell totally outside the hierarchy of genres, addressing the religious subjects of 'high' art in an unorthodox form, and mingling the sacred with the comic, the bizarre, and at times the brutal. As the site of these multiple boundary transgressions, the Sacro Monte is a supremely grotesque form. And within that form Butler highlighted Tabachetti as the embodiment of all these transgressive, grotesque confusions.

In Butler's opinion, some of Tabachetti's finest work was to be seen in the 'Journey to Calvary' chapel at Varallo. In this chapel the

figures of Christ, fallen beneath the weight of the cross, and St. Veronica, kneeling before him holding the cloth, now bearing the image of his face, with which she has just wiped away the sweat and blood, are juxtaposed with the figure of a jeering man kicking Christ, and a man with a goitre who leads Christ by a chain around his neck, raising a staff to strike him [Fig. 12]. Lord Lindsay, in his *Sketches of the History of Christian Art* (1847), isolates an instance in the work of the artists of the Cologne school, which suggests the antecedents of the tableau, and expresses his uneasiness about its propriety:

> The least agreeable feature in the works of this peculiar class of artists occurs in their representations of the Procession to Calvary, in which the Saviour is almost invariably urged forwards by personal violence - a most revolting idea, in every point of view. If I mistake not, this is prominent in proportion as the purely German element preponderates over the Belgic or Flemish in the painter who represents the subject. The propensity to dwell on horrible ideas is in fact involved in the predisposition to Analysis or Individuality, the peculiar characteristic of the Teutonic race. [28]

Like Ruskin, Lindsay sought to rehabilitate the art of the Northern Renaissance while remaining to a great degree uncomfortable about it and unable to come to terms with it, precisely because of the prevalence within it of the grotesque and the 'vulgar', which strictly disqualified it from the

realms of 'high' art with its demand for 'purity' and idealism of form. Lindsay desires to restrict the sphere of influence of the grotesque (in this case, to the 'Teutonic' mind - although he is over-optimistic in his assessment of its limits, as Tabachetti was of course Flemish). He is deeply concerned by its tendency towards 'analysis'. This is significant, because by implication Lindsay is clearly recognizing (and validating) *synthesis* as the proper function of art within culture, and simultaneously attempting to place analysis, or the breaking down and testing of discourse, outside the compass of art, or at least, of 'high' art.

Butler would have agreed that analysis was indeed outside the compass of high art. But in his eyes this was because 'high' art was a concept which had been constructed specifically to deny the analytic and the potentially subversive. Photography, on the other hand, was a medium which, like the Sacro Monte, fell outside the definition of high art, because it invited the articulation of the transgressive, the disjunctive and the dissonant.

Photography had no weight of history to be deferred to. It was free, if the photographer so chose, from the investment made by academic art in the idea of the founding subject. Without denying the influence of painting on art photography, photography *as an invention* represents an absolute rupture from previous traditions of image-making. It required no formal training, and offered anonymity, if we take 'Stefano Scotto and Samuel Butler' as an example, to the point of the apparent dispensability of the human agent. It had an immediacy, particularly with the invention of the snapshot (which came in in the late 1880's, and which became Butler's characteristic photographic mode), which promised freedom from aesthetic constraints; and although inevitably it could not stand outside the influences and pressures of culture, it could dispense with the art techniques through which the making of images was implicated in the construction of the dominant cultural discourses.

At this point we temporarily take leave of Butler, and move on to discuss the work of Clementina Hawarden. We will, however, return to

him in Part Three, when his work will be brought together with that of Hawarden. This section will provide not only the scope for an analysis of Butler's mature photography, but also support for the interpretation of Hawarden's work.

Notes

1. *Alps and Sanctuaries*, pp.176-7.

2. Jones, op.cit., Vol. II, p.63.

3. Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', (1919), The Pelican Freud Library 14, 1985, p.367.

4. The difference between these two terms is not made clear by Schlegel; at times he uses them interchangeably.

5. Jones, H.F. (ed), *The Notebooks of Samuel Butler*, Jonathan Cape: London, 1912, p.183.

6. Butler, *Life and Habit*, Jonathan Cape: London, 1924, p.78.

7. Quoted in Miyoshi, M., *The Divided Self*, New York University Press: New York, 1969, p.318.

8. Butler, op.cit.

9. Butler, *The Way of All Flesh*, (1903), Penguin: London, 1987, p.47.

10. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol. II, *The Works of Ruskin*, E.T. Cook & A. Wedderburn (eds.), London, 1903-12, Vol X, p.190.

11. Foucault, M., 'What is an Author?', *Screen* 20, no.1, Spring 1979, p.19.

12. Ruskin, *Praeterita*, OUP: Oxford, 1978, pp.103-4.

13. *Alps and Sanctuaries*, p.228.

14. *The Way of All Flesh*, p.45.

15. *Praeterita*, p.103.

16. *Alps and Sanctuaries*, p.22.

17. Ibid., pp.23-4.

18. Ibid., p.142.

19. Foucault, M., *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Tavistock: London, 1972, p.12.

20. Quoted in Shaffer, op.cit., p.36.

21. *Modern Painters*, ed. Barrie, p.329, (Vol. III: Part IV, Ch. VIII).

22. Butler, 'On the Genesis of Feeling', *Collected Essays*, Vol. I, op.cit., p.192.

23. *Alps and Sanctuaries*, p.44.

24. *Stones of Venice*, Vol. III, *The Works of Ruskin*, op.cit., Vol. XI, p.155.

25. Ibid., p.169.

26. Ibid., p.166.

27. Ibid., p.151.

28. Crawford, A.W., (Lord Lindsay), *Sketches of the History of Christian Art*, Vol. II, Letter VIII, London, 1885, (2nd ed.), p.340.

Part Two : Clementina Hawarden - Self-consciousness and reflection

IV Problems of reconstruction

In moving from an analysis of Butler's work and the ideas that structured it, to a similar analysis of Hawarden, one must necessarily rethink one's methodology. Reconstruction in Butler's case is a relatively straightforward exercise; never wary of making his opinion known on any given question (and, more importantly from the point of view of anyone engaged in researching his work, of committing an opinion to print), Butler established through his writing a position or persona, as ironist of Victorian culture, with more than sufficient clarity for his images to have retained their sharpness, wit and accuracy of aim, despite the passage of time from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century. That ironic voice causes his work to run against the grain of his age in a way that is particularly accessible and engaging for a modern audience.

With Hawarden's work one has no recourse to any record of her tastes, her opinions, or her intentions in her work, and at times it can be difficult, when confronted, say, with a photograph of an apparently typical Victorian costume tableau, to see in what way Hawarden runs against anything except the grain of modern taste. It is not difficult to persuade a modern audience of the radicalism of an artist who can clearly be seen to have been, in a number of significant ways, both philosophical and aesthetic, so obviously ahead of his time; but how does one make out a convincing case for the radicalism of an artist who, on the surface at least, seems to modern eyes so much a *product* of her time?

Compared to an analysis of Butler's photography, the interpretation of Hawarden's work is much more akin to a 'detective' or 'archaeological' process. One has only a scant handful of biographical facts and the evidence of the images themselves from which to work. The only extant 'character references' (provided by a sister and an uncle) attest, predictably enough, to the strength of Hawarden's maternal feelings, rather than to her religious or political beliefs, her consciousness of current scientific or philosophical debates,

or her knowledge of art and literature, despite the fact that from at least the late 1850's, up until her death in 1865, she and her husband clearly belonged to the influential intellectual set of artists and scientists which established itself in the burgeoning museum culture of South Kensington. The set included their close friends Sir Francis Seymour Haden, the engraver, (brother-in-law and close artistic associate of Whistler), and Henry Cole, the first director of the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria & Albert).

Neither was her family background a strictly conventional one. Born Clementina Elphinstone Fleming, she was the child of a marriage that was far from conventional by the standards of her time and class. Her father, Charles Elphinstone Fleming, a Scot, led an apparently orthodox life as the Whig MP for Stirlingshire in the Reform Parliament of 1832, and an Admiral. His choice of wife, however, suggests a certain disregard for convention; for Hawarden's mother, Catalina Paulina Alessandro, was a Spaniard of Italian descent, and a Catholic. A measure of the unconventionality of Hawarden's background is the fact that, when she married, her staid English

parents-in-law raised strong objections to her Liberal, un-English and half-Catholic blood.

It should also be pointed out that Hawarden's education in art was certainly unusual and probably considerably more extensive than that received by the majority of young Victorian women - or indeed, men. When she was about eighteen or nineteen (c.1841) her mother and uncle took the family to live in Italy, where it was hoped that tutors would prove less expensive. The intention was to complete her education and that of her sisters cheaply, their father's death having left the family with financial problems. Though undertaken out of motives of economy, the move surely proved invaluable, at least for Hawarden, for it gave her access to innumerable original works of Renaissance art *in situ*, which the majority of British students had seen only in reproduction. During their two-year stay in Italy, the daughters were encouraged to move freely in the intellectual and artistic circles of Rome. While the paramount motive in introducing the children to society was clearly the marriage market - especially for an impoverished upper-class family with four daughters to dispose of -

the children's Italian education was far from being entirely frivolous and superficial.

Indeed, though I am by no means trying to suggest that she possessed the precocious intellectual brilliance of the young Ruskin, it is certainly arguable that the adolescent Hawarden (or Clementina Elphinstone Fleming, as she was at the time) gained at least a *first-hand* knowledge of the works of the Italian Renaissance that Ruskin did not acquire until, in 1845, at the age of twenty-six, he made his first real study tour of Italy without the restrictive presence of his parents. That Italy was incomparably more significant for Ruskin's work than it ever was for Hawarden's, and that his knowledge quickly outstripped hers, is undeniable; but that is not the point I am concerned to make. I would simply question whether it is justifiable to characterize Hawarden as an intellectual *naïve*, who photographed what she knew best and felt most deeply about - children, and the life of the Victorian lady. Her unorthodox education and her later intellectual and artistic friendships certainly weigh strongly against such a view, which, in the small body of research that has so

far been done on Hawarden, is all too often implied.

IV. i Existing studies and problems raised

Present studies of Hawarden's work tend to interpret it as a psychological 'drama' of femininity, exploring concerns which are 'specifically female' in character - from motherhood to lesbianism. In an article in the *Print Quarterly*, Virginia Dodier (who has also completed an unpublished *catalogue raisonné* of its Hawarden collection for the V&A) suggests that Hawarden's photography was 'prompted by a desire to make portraits of her children, so as to record their childhood.' [1] While one must agree that her work includes some of the kind of family portraits one would expect to find in the typical family album, it should be pointed out that they do not amount to a significant proportion of the body of her surviving work, which numbers some 800 photographs (of which 775 were given to the V&A by Hawarden's granddaughter).

Furthermore, how far can her family portraits be described as typical of the concerns which she most frequently explores in her work? Her interest in reflection and doubling and her use of costume, so far from crystallizing identity (or at least a myth of identity) as a portrait was traditionally supposed by nature to do, (as, for example, Julia Margaret Cameron does so consummately), in fact deliberately confuses and fractures it. The question of the treatment of identity in Hawarden's work is one which will be addressed in more depth later in this study.

In challenging the view that Hawarden's work is fuelled by her maternal feelings, one might also point out that as a record of a family growing up, her choice of subjects is selective in the extreme. By far the greatest proportion of the images show the three eldest children - all girls, and all in fact adolescents, not children. There were, however, four other surviving children, three daughters and a son. When Hawarden took up photography around 1857, her children would have been aged between about 11 and 3, with another born that same year. (Another baby had recently died, and there were three more to come, the last only months before

Hawarden's death). For a parent putting together a family record, this would be the central period of family life, before the eldest children in fact cease to be children altogether. However, the photographs of the three eldest daughters which predominate in and typify Hawarden's work do not start to appear until c.1859 to 1860, when the eldest is about 13 or 14 – hardly a child any longer. (Until this time she concentrates almost exclusively on landscape photography). These photographs, supposedly 'of her children', in fact come increasingly to dominate Hawarden's work as the girls grow away from childhood. (The youngest of the three is, significantly, the one who appears least).

As far as the rest of the children are concerned, by comparison with their elder sisters they are photographed very infrequently. The implication behind this must surely be that Hawarden chose her models for a specific reason, and that the smaller children were too young to suit that purpose. (In the earlier of Hawarden's landscapes with figures, adult female relatives and friends are used as models rather than the elder daughters, who were still children at this stage). Her son appears in some of the

photographs, as do other male relatives, but he would inevitably have been away at school for most of the time just at an age where he might perhaps have become a suitable subject.

The question of her son's virtual absence from her photography (and indeed, the general scarcity of male sitters), raises the issue of Hawarden's almost exclusive use of women models. I would suggest that, to begin with, the reason for this was pragmatic, although it quickly developed into something much more intentional. She certainly took photographs of male relatives, including her husband and son, but for purely practical reasons it was very much easier for a woman artist to work with women relatives and friends and the servants who supervised the children, since they were the people available during the day around the home. The frequent depiction of mothers, nursemaids and children in the work of nineteenth-century women artists (for example Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt) feeds the concept of a typically feminine tendency to deal only with highly personal subjects of an at best emotional, at worst simply sentimental nature, while in fact, particularly if they wanted to deal with scenes from contemporary life,

the home and the rituals of its female and infant inhabitants were almost the only subjects open to them.

Yet compared to Morisot and Cassatt, Hawarden's work - while it is clearly restricted in the same way in its range of possible models - is far less interested in contemporary female experience *per se*. An article by Roy Aspin in the *British Journal of Photography* sets her images in precisely the context of the everyday life of 'a generation of Victorian young ladies, cocooned in the family drawing-room, in class exclusiveness, and in a web of proprieties' [2]. He interprets the intensity of some of the images in terms of the contemporary denial of both female sexuality and the intellectual capacities and needs of women. But while this is certainly pertinent up to a point, one feels that his analysis falls considerably short of explaining Hawarden's persistent preference for actually *masking* the contemporariness of her models and their dress, often using costume or a simple chemise and skirt, and photographing them not in the context of the actual settings and social rituals which made up the existence of contemporary fashionable women, but in a sparse studio setting with high ceilings

and large French windows, bare floorboards, minimal furniture and plain, white, translucent curtains - very different from the prevailing Victorian taste in interior decor.

Aspin isolates as the characteristic atmosphere of Hawarden's images a sense of languor and emptiness, and, interestingly, a complete lack of any feminist politicization. As he puts it:

> If female suffrage had been offered in that decade would fine ladies have accepted it? Looking through the Hawarden pictures, the impression is that they probably wouldn't have bothered. [3]

This idea however, like so many of Aspin's most perceptive and potentially rewarding observations throughout the article, is not pursued. Hawarden's lack of politicized anger is attributed to the inertia of bored and oppressed women.

Similarly, though without characterizing the sense of absence in Hawarden's images as *apolitical*, Graham Ovenden in his book *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, notes the languor of the models and, more significantly in formal and technical terms, the way that light is often used by Hawarden to dissolve solid form; this, as we shall see, is one of Hawarden's most central techniques. Lesbianism is also hinted at by

Ovenden, though only briefly and euphemistically. Like Aspin he reads her work as an expression of 'oppressed sexuality':

> Lady Hawarden's attitude to costume and, in particular, the delicate 'niceness' of pose, in turn, give an oppressed sexuality to her subjects. The refined groupings of two women or a girl matched, Narcissus-like, with a mirror, when combined with her interest in contrasting patterns of shadow and light resulted in a languid, almost Sapphic sensuality. [4]

His use of terms such as 'Sapphic' and in particular 'Narcissus-like' suggest that the images have seduced him into a superficially Freudian, psychosexual reading, (although in fairness one should point out that *Clementina, Lady Hawarden* is intended simply as an introduction to her work, and does not attempt a comprehensive analysis). But to interpret Hawarden's work in terms of 'women's psychology', whether this be read as sexual repression or maternal fulfilment, is to assume that Hawarden set out with a convinced purpose (whether radical or reactionary - it makes no real difference in the context of this type of reading) of depicting the female figure *as such*.

I would argue, however, that there was no such initial purpose; indeed, the strongly formal use of the female figure in her earliest work, which

was, as I have said, predominantly landscape, surely indicates that she did not start out with any such awareness of femininity as being in any way a problem or issue. After all, what little biographical detail we have supports the evidence of the images, showing us a privileged woman who appears to have considered herself to be generally comfortable and largely unconstrained in her Liberal intellectual sphere, and who seems, as a result, not to have felt a driving need to confront femininity as a political concern.

While her work is far from overtly politicized, however, it certainly conveys a strong sense of curiosity, and frequently of disturbance, stemming from a consciousness of the relationship of image and reality, and of what such an analysis reveals about the position of the subject within discourse, which becomes increasingly penetrating as her work matures. And though it is fair to say that, overall, she tends to be less concerned with focusing on femininity in its own right than with using it as a metaphor for the ambiguity of the *human*, rather than the specifically *female*, subjective position, I believe that it is also possible to see in Hawarden's images of women a progressively

deepening awareness of gender as a site of complications and anxieties - a development which I would attribute, as I hope to make clear, to the sharpening of Hawarden's sense of the arbitrary and ambiguous nature of reality and subjectivity through the example of the photographic process.

Hawarden's work falls quite clearly into two parts, the first of which, a period of roughly three years, is dominated by rural 'genre' and landscape photographs taken on the family estate, Dundrum, in Ireland, (a large number of which use human figures, usually alone, as formal elements in the composition). While she continued to take landscape photographs throughout the rest of her career, from about 1860 until her death in 1865 her work concentrates on the photographs of her daughters, taken in her studio on the first floor of the family's house in Princes Gardens, South Kensington.

IV. ii A female Narcissus?

My starting point is two landscapes with figures which seem to me to mark more clearly than any others the beginning of the transition from landscape to figure in Hawarden's work [Figs. 13 & 14]. They belong to a group of three such images, all dating from c.1857-c.1860, and while they probably do not come from the same session (since Hawarden uses different sitters) both photographs clearly come from one period when a single interest was uppermost in Hawarden's mind. Since Hawarden herself gave her work neither dates nor titles (simply referring to them as 'studies from life'), it is impossible to be more precise as to when they were taken or whether they were among those photographs that she exhibited. According to the chronology suggested by Dodier in the *catalogue raisonné*, they appear to belong to a small group of early photographs taken around what is probably an old flooded limestone quarry, (this accounts for the dramatic rocky aspects of the setting, and for the impression of extreme depth but a quite limited surface area of water), in which the human figure is first introduced into her landscapes. If these images do indeed mark her first attempts at photographing the human

figure, it is the more remarkable, since they foreshadow so clearly her use of the figure and its reflected image in her Kensington photographs.

They are both photographs of a female 'Narcissus', seen from a short distance across a body of water in which the figure is reflected. Both photographs are stereoscopic, as indeed was all Hawarden's work until around 1860. In one, [Fig. 13], a group of trees stands in the background on the right of a landscape which slopes down from the left to the right of the image. It is clearly reflected in the water in the foreground, creating a marked arrowhead shape pointing to the right of the image. In the centre of the image at the edge of the water a woman is seated, her legs stretched out towards the right, echoing the downward-sloping, left-to-right movement of the landscape behind her, her form repeated in the water before her.

The subordination of figure to landscape suggests another image which is more explicitly an illustration of the Narcissus myth: Claude's *Landscape with Narcissus and Echo*, 1644, [Fig. 15] (National Gallery, London), a painting with which Hawarden could certainly have been familiar,

since it was bequeathed to the National Gallery by Sir George Beaumont (one of Constable's patrons) around 1823, and has been on display there since 1828. Let us consider the implications of that painting more closely.

It shows a typically Claudian Italianate landscape stretching into a hazy blue distance, with a heavily shaded foreground at the centre of which is a woodland pool, corresponding to Ovid's description of a pool 'shielded' from the sunlight by trees. Narcissus is depicted kneeling at the edge of the pool, reaching down to try and grasp his reflection. Yet he is strangely camouflaged from the viewer by shadow. Indeed, of all the figures in the painting, Narcissus himself is perhaps the most difficult initially to spot - more so even than the largely incidental figures of two of the lovesick girls of whom Ovid speaks, half-hidden by the trees on the left of the painting. It is as though he had been hidden away as far as possible, to avoid the confrontation with subjectivity that the figure of Narcissus signifies. The inevitable eventual disintegration of the imaginary is precisely what the harmony of Claude's paintings seeks to disguise.

The most arresting figure in the composition is Echo, who, contrary to the *Metamorphoses* narrative, is depicted as a nude stretched out prominently in the left of the foreground. (By this point in Ovid's tale she has pined away into a disembodied voice). Although the National Gallery's Curator of Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century French Painting, Humphrey Wine, identifies Echo as one of the two female figures in the trees above the reclining nude (whom he describes simply as a nymph), such an interpretation leaves far too many questions unanswered. For example, why, if one is going to contradict the information in the text and include Echo as a physical presence, would one pair her with another figure and omit any clue as to which is which? And why, unless she were a significant figure in the narrative, would one so obviously make the strangely out of place nude the focus of the painting when there is no excuse for her in Ovid's text?

Echo, as we have noted, is *by now invisible* according to Ovid. To include her, as Claude's title plainly states that he does, in a *visualization* of her story, one would have to find a device which makes plain her radical

difference from the other figures in terms of her physical state – a visual equivalent for her pining, her relentless offering up of herself to Narcissus, even to the point where she loses her individual identity, existing only as a reaffirmation of another's desire. What more obvious choice to express this aquiescence in and affirmation of the other's desire, in terms of the conventions of visual art, than the female nude? As Stephen Bann has suggested in his analysis of the painting, 'Echo's message, *sit tibi copia nostri* ['I would offer myself to you'], is in effect the message of the Claudian landscape'. As a metaphor for the undisturbed and undisturbing aesthetic perfection of the Claudian landscape itself the message of Echo subsumes the message of Narcissus; Echo, like the landscape she represents, is 'a device for projecting us into the domain of the imaginary.' [5]

One can trace, in the striking symmetry of the composition of Hawarden's mirrored landscape, and the perfect appropriateness of its visual 'echo' in the form of the female figure and her reflection at its centre, a parallel with the aesthetic satisfaction one derives from Claude's composition and use of colour – a satisfaction

which allows the viewing subject an illusion of that primal wholeness to which it is the ultimately impossible function of the image to return her/him. The consummate skill Claude displays in bringing into line the problematic nature of the Narcissus myth stands as a metaphor of his art as a whole, in which one might justifiably see a determination to fly in the face of possibility and reclaim the wholeness of the pre-conscious.

One cannot claim for Hawarden's photograph of Narcissus such a sharply developed awareness of the problem confronting her. The serene symmetry of her image is rather a metaphor of an as yet only partially realized consciousness of subjectivity and the nature of the photographic image - only partially realized, in that a connection between the two in terms of their similarly contingent natures has not yet been made. Hawarden's mirrored image is a play on the nature of the photographic image, a visual pun on the camera's (apparently) straightforward visual echo of the real, elegant, but lacking in insight into the internal drama of reflection. But this mis- or under-conception is only a starting point; the figure of the 'female

Narcissus' will prove immensely significant in Hawarden's work, a device through which she comes to achieve a more complex perception of what can be suggested in a photograph about the relationship of subject, image and reality.

IV. iii Reflection and contemplation

One might argue that the process of grasping after the complexity of the metaphor she has chosen is already in motion in the second photograph, [Fig. 14] - although it should be said that one cannot state with certainty that this image is chronologically a development from the other. Here the background is curtailed by a sheer rock face rising almost from the water's edge, leaving only a narrow path beside the water, on which a figure in a dark dress is seated. The stereoscopic depth of field allows an equal clarity through foreground, middle distance and background. Thus, while the background provides a detailed rock study, the camera also emphasizes the lake in the foreground, rendering a blackness which suggests deep water and the psychological metaphor it conveys,

together with the brilliance of light on a still, liquid surface.

Out of this depth and stillness, particularly when viewed correctly through a stereoscope to achieve the three-dimensional effect, the reflected face leaps out with startling clarity. The rendering of the water evokes Ovid's 'limpid and silvery' pool. It is not possible to be certain that this evocation is intentional, but indeed it hardly matters, since what is at stake in the stereoscopic image is in itself aptly illustrated by the analogy of Narcissus's deceived recognition of himself as an actual, graspable other; for the stereoscope was intended to produce a very similar illusion - that of an immediate, fully present and graspable reality, or, as Jonathan Crary succinctly describes it, 'a mass form of ocular possession' [6]. It seems to me no coincidence that Hawarden's stereoscopic photography ceases around 1860-1, which (while one could obviously put forward a plausible argument for some such mundane explanation as the acquisition of a more sophisticated camera) is also about the same time that her photography begins to demonstrate a concern with declaring the

illusory nature of the realism of the photographic image.

A female Narcissus then, seated before her reflection in complete absorption? In fact, the object of her absorption seems *not* to be her own image, but a book which lies open on her lap. This is an interesting complication, because both Narcissus and the book have a well-established significance in the Western Christian tradition of representation. Originating in the Neo-Platonic interpretation of the myth in Plotinus's first *Ennead*, Narcissus stands as a metaphor of purely specular captivation and the failure to discriminate between the essential and the superficial, God and self. The book, on the other hand, is a metaphor of internal contemplation and spiritual depth (for ultimately, it represents The Book - 'the Word of God').

The image of a *woman* reading is a particularly familiar one in visual art. As Martin Pops has pointed out in *Vermeer: consciousness and the chamber of being*, it stems specifically from a visual tradition in which the Virgin Mary is depicted with a prayer book or Bible [7]. In the

Marian tradition reading is a metaphor of the immaculate conception - the supreme example of pure, internal (parthenogenetic) doubling. If the self can be entrapped by its double in the mirror, spiritual contemplation frees the self from its outer image, generating a second, pure, inner self.

Women reading are a common theme in Hawarden's work, and Dodier has connected this with the influence of eighteenth-century French painting, specifically the work of Fragonard and Greuze. This is a question which I wish to answer only briefly here, deferring a closer examination until the third and final part of this study, since it should also be considered in relation to the motif of absorption in Butler's work. The fundamental problem is that, even in this very early image, while the figure may be in a state of absorption, the reflection remains a loose end, disrupting the illusion of the wholeness and contentment of self-internalization. It does not share with the absorptive paintings of Fragonard and Greuze the fiction of the inviolate, undivided inner self generated through contemplation. This clearly points to the conclusion that the impulse behind the use of the

theme by eighteenth-century French painters is diametrically opposed to its use in self-reflexive images such as Hawarden's. However, this analysis can safely be put aside for the moment, to be dealt with in the context of the later images which specifically prompted a comparison with Greuze and Fragonard.

Before leaving the subject completely, however, I should add that I do not, in fact, think it very probable that Hawarden discovered the image of the woman reading through eighteenth-century French painting. It seems more likely that the motif derives from the work of contemporary Victorian painters, than from Fragonard or Greuze, for whose work there seems to have been little taste in Britain during Hawarden's lifetime. It appears that there were no Fragonards in British collections until after Hawarden's death, (when the few that were brought into the country were purchased almost exclusively by Lord Hertford and his son, Sir Richard Wallace, forming the Fragonard content of the present Wallace Collection) [8]. A small number of Greuzes had been purchased by British collectors, but mostly during the 1810's and 1820's [9], suggesting that Greuze was a largely

pre-Victorian taste. It is reasonable to deduce from this that if there was no significant taste for either painter, there were probably very few reproductions of the paintings in circulation, so that Hawarden's motif is unlikely to have been directly drawn from an acquaintance with their work.

It is therefore much more plausible to attribute Hawarden's familiarity with the theme of the solitary woman reading to the work of contemporary genre painters, for whom the theme was also a common one. William Henry Hunt in particular painted a number of watercolours of similar reading female figures, and his preference for full-length figure studies is certainly more suggestive of Hawarden's photographs in compositional terms than either Fragonard or Greuze. But Hunt's figures are painted in the same spirit of observation of contemporary and mundane subjects that characterizes his work as a whole, and in this his intentions diverge from Hawarden's. Hunt chose to paint quietly absorbed female figures as representative of certain activities and rituals that helped shape the middle-class woman's day, (as did Morisot and Cassatt in France later in the century, though it

will become apparent in the final chapter of this section that Morisot's work demonstrates some striking similarities to Hawarden's in intention as well as simply in motif); Hawarden, as we have observed, shows little specific interest in contemporary femininity.

Martin Pops has drawn attention to Vermeer's adaptation of the Marian tradition of the reading woman in a number of his paintings which focus on women reading letters, and others which have been interpreted as depicting pregnant women; and while Vermeer certainly cannot be cited as an influence on Hawarden, since his reputation only began to be recovered just after her death [10], he offers what I believe to be a much more instructive parallel than any we have yet considered.

In one image, *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter*, c.1662-65, [Fig. 16] (Rijksmuseum-Stichting, Amsterdam), Vermeer combines the themes of reading and pregnancy in a single figure. Although the emblematic reading of Vermeer's paintings has rightly been questioned by Svetlana Alpers in *The Art of Describing* as placing undue emphasis on the importance of symbols in his work,

the clothing in blue of the woman, taken together with the associations attached to both reading and pregnancy, surely indicate that one is justified in interpreting all these, perhaps not so much as strictly Marian *emblems*, but rather as intended signs of an inner, inviolate space of which Mary herself is another metaphor. There is a clear parallel between the 'inviolate space' inhabited by Vermeer's *Woman in Blue*, and the absorption of Hawarden's reading figure.

The association of Vermeer and the camera is well known, not simply in terms of the technical question of the extent of Vermeer's use of the camera obscura, but also in metaphorical terms, it being a commonplace to describe Vermeer's paintings as 'photographic' in their precise naturalism. On a rather more complex level, Crary has underlined the extent to which Vermeer's more serene and self-contained figures embody certain broadly Cartesian ideas surrounding the significance of observation, reflection and introspection which were attached to the camera obscura at that time - for instance, in works such as Newton's *Opticks* (1704), and Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690). As Crary puts it:

> The space of the camera obscura, its enclosedness, its darkness, its separation from an exterior, incarnate Descartes's "I will now shut my eyes, I shall stop my ears, I shall disregard my senses." The orderly and calculable penetration of light rays through the single opening of the camera corresponds to the flooding of the mind by the light of reason... [11]

In relation to *The Astronomer*, 1668, (private collection, Paris), and its contemporary work, *The Geographer*, c.1668-9, (Städelches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt), Crary points out the similarity of form between the camera obscura and the two men's studies, illuminated by a single window. (The self-reflexive use of *photographic* images of the room - *camera* - and the aperture is discussed in the final chapter of this study). Neither figure looks out of the window, but rather derives his knowledge of the outer worlds of geograpny and astronomy from his globe or chart. The patent lack of tension evinced by this absorption in the exterior world while divorced from direct sensory perception of it, Crary describes as indicative of 'the reconciling function of the camera obscura' [12], through which the world can be known, organized and controlled. Their absorption is complete and unproblematized.

In the case of Hawarden's 'Narcissus' figure, I have said that the completeness of this absorption is disrupted by the presence of the reflection, and this is certainly true; but the reflection remains as a genuine problem, not, I think, as a deliberate ambiguity such as we will find in later images. The figure is literally too distant, too featureless, for the sense of tension provoked by the split between woman and reflection to generate any sustained anxiety. Like the figure in the *Woman in Blue*, Hawarden's figure exists in the Sartrean '*en-soi*', the mythical condition of atemporal being-in-itself, or return to the pre-conscious, which Pops identifies as a characteristic illusion of the images of women reading which Vermeer painted between c.1658-c.1665, and equally recognizable in the undisturbed unselfconsciousness of the figures in Hawarden's 'Narcissus' photographs - the first too formally appropriate, both too distant, to suggest any real internal drama of reflection. In neither image is the figure perceptibly conscious of itself as object.

Pops makes a persuasive case for a progression in Vermeer's images of women - although *The Astronomer* and *The Geographer* may be thought to

disrupt the rather too neat idea of a completely logical development [13] - from the undisturbed and undisturbing *en-soi* of the paintings of women reading, to the painfully apparent self-consciousness of paintings such as *Girl with a Pearl Ear-Drop* c.1663-65, (Mauritshuis, The Hague) - 'She cannot escape our look, nor can we escape the knowledge of it' [14] - to Clio's *mask* of unselfconsciousness, her ironic, play-acting '"recovery" of the *en-soi*' in *The Art of Painting* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), one of the most brilliantly self-reflexive of the images which belong to Alpers' alternative 'artistic option'.

It will be argued in the course of this study that a similar deepening of the concept of subjectivity can be traced in Hawarden's work; one sees an increasing delight being taken in declaring the fundamental artificiality of the image through the theatrical and openly 'staged', deliberately moving the photograph farther and farther away from any pretence of reflecting reality, in order finally to deny, as all self-reflexive art must, that the image functions to return us to the security of the pre-conscious, to console us for that internalization of the

Other. The second aspect of my argument is that this development is essentially linked to an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the relationship of the image produced by the camera to the 'real'; in other words, that the unproblematic reading articulated in the 'Narcissus' photographs, which find a parallel in the inviolate spaces of Vermeer's reading/pregnant women and the studies of the geographer and astronomer, is gradually problematized by the maturing photographer's growing awareness of the contingent and arbitrary nature of the 'reality' revealed by the photographic image.

Notes

1. Dodier, V., 'Haden, Photography and Salmon Fishing', *Print Quarterly*, Vol. III, No.1, March, 1986, p.36.

2. Aspin, R., 'Oh Weary Neutral Days', *British Journal of Photography*, 28, May 1982, Issue 22, Vol. 129, p.565.

3. Ibid., p.566.

4. Ovenden, G., *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, London, 1974, p.7.

5. Bann, S., *The True Vine*, Cambridge, 1989, p.150.

6. Crary, J., *Techniques of the Observer*, MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1991, p.127.

7. Pops, M., *Vermeer: Consciousness and the Chamber of Being*, UMI Research Press: Michigan, 1984, p.5.

8. See Wildenstein, *The Paintings of Fragonard*, Phaidon: Oxford, 1960.

9. See *Jean-Baptiste Greuze, 1725-1805*, Wadsworth Athenaeum: Hartford, 1976.

10. Vermeer's rehabilitation as a major figure in the history of western art did not begin until the year after Hawarden's death, although his champion Théophile Thoré, the republican journalist and art critic, actually made the (re)discovery in 1842, as Martin Pops recounts:

> In 1842, while visiting the Hague, Thoré noticed "a strange painting" which surprised him, he said, as much as Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson*. "Not knowing to whom to attribute it, I consulted the catalogue: '*View of the City of Delft*, from the side of the canal, by Jan van der Meer of Delft.' *Tiens!* Here's one we don't know in France and whom we ought to know!" Thoré tracked down many of Vermeer's paintings through years of political exile and delineated an oeuvre. [p.103, n.2]

In 1866 Thoré published three articles in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, on the basis of which was established Vermeer's reputation as we know it today. Until this time, the works in Vermeer's very small oeuvre (only 34 or 35 paintings) were subject to wrong attribution and misappropriation.

11. Crary, op.cit., p.43.

12. Ibid., p.46.

13. This would rather depend on whether one chose to see the gender of the astronomer and the geographer as significant: a comment on male self-absorption (as opposed to female self-consciousness)? Or simply an inconsistency or hesitation in Vermeer's developing ideas around reflection and introspection? Tempting as the former may be, I confess that the latter seems to me the more probable!

14. Pops, M., op. cit., p.97.

V Theatricality and the use of costume

Undoubtedly, costume is the most conspicuous device that Hawarden uses to convey the artificiality of the image. To argue this about her use of costume is potentially contentious, since there is nothing inherently significant in 'dressing up' in the context of the leisure-time of a wealthy Victorian family. The costume tableau was both a favourite pastime and a frequent photographic subject for the Victorians, and an aspect of their culture which has come to seem particularly banal and naïve. As a result, it is towards Hawarden's more obviously theatrical images that today's viewers experience the strongest resistance.

But however conventional they may appear, these photographs clearly demand to be examined; they occur too frequently, and are often too outrageous, to be ignored. Costume and disguise are traditional theatrical devices for problematizing identity, (a particularly strong example would obviously be Shakespearian comedy); but as a problematization of identity they are also peculiarly resonant as a metaphor for the construction of femininity within a masculine

order [1]. Clearly, also, on a more mundane level, dress plays a central role in the relationship between femininity and self-consciousness.

Hawarden uses costume in a variety of ways, from the subtle to the melodramatic (or even, to the modern eye, ludicrous), and from the powerful to the frankly comic. The costumes fall into three fairly clearly defined categories; contemporary dress, theatrical costume, and makeshift 'dressing-up box' outfits which are often little more than arrangements of pieces of material. To a more or less obvious extent, the majority of her photographs can be said to make use of 'dressing up'. In other words, more than four hundred of Hawarden's photographs are costume images. It is obvious then that one can hardly hope to give an adequate account of their scope and variety. One can, however, identify an underlying pattern of intention which makes sense of a large number of frequently disparate images, not only as a group in themselves, but in the context of Hawarden's work as a whole.

Dressing up and amateur theatricals feature from the beginning in her earliest photographs of her

family at Dundrum; and with the exception of a very small number of costume photographs of, or including, men or boys, costume is firmly linked with images of women. In the *catalogue raisonné* Dodier habitually refers to the model's clothes as 'fancy dress', which I would suggest is not always appropriate, since it tends to trivialize the process at work in such images. It implies that the costumes in themselves constitute the point of the images, where what is at stake is the actual *process* of dressing up. 'Costume' seems to me a better term, because of its obvious theatrical association. Also useful is the idea of 'dressing up', which has equally obvious associations with children's play. In Part 3 of this study I draw attention to the awareness of both Hawarden and Butler of children's ability to inhabit multiple imaginative realities which, by their very nature, challenge adult reality structures. It is this childlike capacity for transforming identity, continually constructing and dissolving it, that is expressed by the term 'dressing up'.

There is, of course, one important qualification. Children, I have suggested, 'inhabit' their multiple and kaleidoscopic

realities; this implies a naïve fullness and conviction in their engagement with each succeeding identity. In Hawarden's images there is always the distance imposed by an analytic and sceptical adult mind, conscious of the gap, present on all levels - the photographic, the feminine, the subjective - between image and object, self and other.

V. i Costume and play-acting

Dodier has suggested that there is a link between Hawarden's interest in costume and the fashion plates and pictures of "reigning beauties" which appeared in what might be considered the equivalent of today's glossy magazines - publications such as Heath's *Book of Beauty*, and Finden's *Byron Beauties*, dealing with fashion and fashionable people [2]. Dickens, describing in *Bleak House* one character's obsession with the images from these albums, offers a vivid picture of their typical contents:

> But what Mr Weevle prizes most, of all his few possessions ... is a choice collection of copper-plate impressions from that truly national work, The Divinities of Albion, or Galaxy Gallery of British Beauty, representing ladies of title and fashion in every variety of smirk that art, combined with capital, is capable of producing. With

> these magnificent portraits ... he decorates his apartment; and as the Galaxy Gallery of British Beauty wears every variety of fancy dress, plays every variety of musical instrument, fondles every variety of dog, ogles every variety of prospect, and is backed up by every variety of flower-pot and balustrade, the result is very imposing. [3]

Certainly, Hawarden was familiar with this kind of publication. During Hawarden's adolescence her mother was an avid follower, collecting the pictures as Mr Weevle is described as doing, and pasting them into scrapbooks. It must, however, be considered doubtful whether they had any real influence on Hawarden's later use of costume, which displays less a concern with dress *per se*, than an awareness of the identity-changing possibilities of costume which is far more akin to its use in the theatre.

Indeed, many of her costumes and poses have obvious theatrical antecedents, in melodrama and tragedy as well as in pantomime and burlesque. More interesting, however, is the frequent introduction into her costumes of a calculated 'amateur theatricality', (not generally typical of her contemporaries, with their love of elaborate costumes for their theatricals and tableaux), which functions to underline the illusoriness of the identity to which costume is

supposed to give shape. At times the intention is a serious one, and one has to say that to a modern eye some of the images are disastrous; for while artificiality clearly lends itself to comedy, the incongruity from which it derives its effect is less readily adaptable to the portrayal of serious and intense emotions. From the point of view of a modern viewer, the most sucessful of the attempts to use artificiality with serious intent are generally single figure studies, or studies of two sleeping figures, in which overt emotion is not registered on the faces of the models, for the dramatic tableaux involving two models often tip over into a melodrama which is unacceptable to modern taste.

Thus it is often the case with Hawarden's costume photographs, that the more blatantly comic and unashamedly artificial they are, the better they succeed. Hawarden's comic strategy differs from Butler's in depending rather on farce than irony, (in other words,on a theatrical rather than a literary form of humour), delighting in exaggerated and stereotypical costume, pose and gesture; though clearly both strategies have a considerable amount in common in terms of the disruptive and subversive elements -

inappropriateness, incongruity, absurdity - inherent in all forms of comedy.

There are a number of further indications in Hawarden's work of the influence of theatre. It is possible that she used specific productions as a source of costume ideas. For example, Dodier suggests that a particular set of costumes (one of which will be considered in more detail later in the chapter) which appears in many photographs around 1863-4 may derive from a production of a play called *Leah*, put on in London in 1863. The play was highly successful and enormous publicity accompanied it; (the actress Kate Bateman is reported as causing a "sensation" in the title role). It is impossible to establish whether Hawarden saw the play, but it is certainly the case that in the months immediately following the opening of the production, a set of costumes on a Biblical/Oriental (in modern terms, Jewish/Arab) theme becomes a frequent feature of Hawarden's photographs.

A number of the costumes used by Hawarden appear professionally made, and were probably designed for the amateur productions in which her daughters acted. They were almost certainly involved in a

number of short comic plays at the Female School of Art fête in 1864 (at which Hawarden had a stall and photography booth), and judging by the frequent appearance of 'harlequin' or jester costumes it is likely that their shows often took the form of burlesque and pantomime. Certainly the plays at the fête involved some of the men in the traditional comic device of cross-dressing.

This is interesting, for Hawarden's images often involve the same device in reverse, with one of the female models dressed as a man. Sometimes the intention is comic, as in a photograph dating from c.1863-4 [4] (which may have been taken in Hawarden's photography booth at the fête), of one model dressed as a nun or saint, and the other on her knees in cloak and hat, with a false moustache and goatee beard. In other images, the illusion of masculinity is considerably more convincing, and an unwary viewer could certainly be persuaded that she/he was looking at one female and one adolescent male figure.

V. ii Costume and the typological mode of seeing

A significant number of these cross-dressing photographs draw on the typological mode of seeing which one finds in the work of both Cameron and Butler. Typical of Hawarden's more subdued applications of melodrama is a photograph, also dated c.1863-4, in which one model in knee breeches sits on the floor, her legs stretched out, grasping the skirt of the other, seen standing, in left profile, who wears a sixteenth-century style dress. The despairing attitude of the seated model is typical of Hawarden's use of the 'male' figure, who is frequently depicted in distress or supplication before 'his' lover; he functions less in his own right than as a stereotype establishing a generalized narrative context which facilitates our comprehension of the emotion portrayed by the woman.

While the image may not appeal to modern taste, the dramatic blending of theme and structure is undeniably effective. The light enters from the right of the image, behind the standing figure, so that her face is almost lost in shadow, while the paleness of her skirt reflects light onto the

anguished face of her 'lover'. The dramatic emotional bond between the two figures is emphasized by a steep diagonal sketched by the imaginary line joining the head of the figures and running down the length of the seated model's outstretched leg, which is echoed by a bar of shadow on the wall.

The costumes indicate one of Hawarden's 'Mary Queen of Scots' images. Hawarden's family background often emerges in her use of costume; being half Scots, half Spanish, authentic-looking articles of Spanish dress often feature in the images, as does a set of costumes in which the models often appear to be playing scenes from the life of Mary Queen of Scots. This is not as strange as it perhaps sounds. First of all, as Dodier says, Mary Queen of Scots was 'a tragic heroine to the Victorians and a popular subject of historical genre paintings and costume tableaux photographs' [5]. Secondly, the Scottish side of Hawarden's family traced its descent from one of Mary Queen of Scots' 'Four Maries', Mary Fleeming - a personal connection which, it seems, the whole family took with great seriousness. Hawarden's imaginative investment in the 'Mary Queen of Scots' figure gives rise to

one of the more powerful of the types which recur in her costume images, an embodiment of courage in suffering.

The technique may well indicate the influence of the photographer Oscar Rejlander, whom she knew personally, and who probably instructed her when she first took up photography [6]. His photographs for Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions* (1872) purport to display the characteristic facial expressions of a comprehensive range of human emotions, a project undertaken in all scientific seriousness, although to the modern eye it appears at best misconceived, and at worst ludicrous - as, for instance, in the illustrations of 'Sneering' and 'Disdain'. The work represents a meeting of the pseudo-scientific and the typological which was common, indeed almost inevitable, in Victorian thought and practice; one thinks, for instance, of the psychiatrist Hugh Welch Diamond's photographic 'catalogue' of types of insanity.

Hawarden's images, however, though they resemble Rejlander's work in that they display a pseudo-psychological intention of representing specific emotions, rather than an aesthetic or

metaphysical concern to encapsulate the whole character (as in Cameron's work), are radically different from Rejlander's, stemming rather from an impulse to explore and break down, than to define and epitomize. Types function in her work on a far less ambitious level, as readily recognizable signs for *facets* of character, their two-dimensionality underlining their temporary and interchangeable nature.

Her work certainly indicates that Hawarden is as aware of the typological mode of seeing as either Cameron, who used it unquestioningly, or Butler, for whom it was ironic; but in her images it works in yet another direction. She adapts it, paradoxically at first sight, to stress the *multiplicity* of human character rather than its conformity to a universal pattern, or the absurdity of the very idea of such universal patterns. In Hawarden's work, typology is not a way of regularizing differences by drawing out the 'inner truth' of a person, as Cameron does; rather, the model functions as a blank page onto which temporary identities can be infinitely superimposed by means of costume, identities which give access to particular ideas and emotions. Hawarden's typological figures are

never intended as character studies like Cameron's, but as discrete images of the multiple emotions that constitute character.

V. iii Costume and sensuality

One particularly vivid and recurrent type in Hawarden's work is the eastern odalisque, whose conventional function in the Victorian imagination is as a sign for sensuality. Hawarden's use of the figure is, from this point of view, no exception to the rule. In a photograph dating from c.1863-4 [Fig. 17], she poses the model on a divan, reclining with her eyes closed, her body tilted slightly to her right, with her right hand on her cheek. With her left hand she holds close to her body an *épergne*, an ornate fruit basket. Behind her head on the left edge of the picture can be seen part of the large, floor-length window typical of Hawarden's interiors. On the far side of the divan, opposite the viewer, and tilted to offer a clear reflection to the camera, is a cheval glass reflecting the left side of the head of the model and the upper part of her body.

On the right of the image a table is partially visible, a vase perched on the corner nearest the model, and on the extreme right a small oval easel-back mirror. The divan is draped with several different patterned fabrics (recognizable as those used in numerous other photographs to improvise costumes). The combination of clothes worn by the model corresponds to no strict style, but clearly indicates an attempt to evoke the unfamiliar and exotic. Dodier is certainly right to identify the intended effect as 'Oriental', and 'Like an odalisque in a harem' [7]; this is one of the images which probably reflect the influence of the play *Leah*. Along with a number of others among her work of the same period, it is a product of mid-Victorian 'Orientalism' - the taste for representations of the Middle East.[8]

The fascination with the Middle East was such that, while many British artists toured Egypt, Turkey and the Holy Land, even at home in England photographers posed models in Middle Eastern dress - or approximations to it. Roger Fenton's dancing girls and water carriers date from the 1850's; a decade later the theme was far from exhausted - for example, Julia Margaret Cameron also experimented with Middle Eastern costume,

photographing Holman Hunt 'in Eastern dress' (1864), and finding many of her later Magdalen and Madonna types in Hebrew heroines from poetry and the Old Testament.

In their use of white models, Hawarden's 'Oriental' pictures resemble the majority of other such images photographed or painted, not in the Middle East but in an English studio, which were commonly criticized for the obviously European physical characteristics of the models. Many of the watercolourist John Frederick Lewis's works were actually executed after he returned to England, from sketches and studies done abroad. To a considerable extent this accounts for the European colouring of his models and the disconcertingly northern skies glimpsed through the hareem windows. Fenton came in for criticism for employing English models as 'Nubian' women; and as late as 1891 Eveleen Myers' photograph *Rebecca* demonstrated what Michael Bartram refers to as 'the continuing taste for robing Anglo-Saxon maidens as heroines of exotic tales, biblical and otherwise.' [9].

The paradoxical figure of the fair-skinned pseudo-eastern woman epitomizes the nature of the

taste for the eastern and exotic; a taste for a form in which overt sexuality was tamed and tempered, in which the model could wear an 'exotic' (though in fact, rarely actually revealing) costume and gaze with seductively lowered eyes at the viewer, but remain reassuringly white, and therefore known and controlled. (Despite the criticism of the whiteness of the models, one suspects that few of the critics would have found appealing images of genuinely dark-skinned women).

Dodier has drawn a parallel between Hawarden's Oriental photographs and Lewis's watercolours of hareem women, and certainly, although his eastern paintings are not limited to hareem scenes, the theme is so closely, indeed almost exclusively, associated with Lewis, that another artist working during the same period could hardly approach it without reference to his work. In Fig. 17 in particular there are unmistakable similarities of both theme and composition. His paintings caused a great impact on the Victorian picture-viewing public during the 1850's, when he returned to England and began to exhibit them. The stunningly naturalistic detail of the rich Turkish and Egyptian fabrics, the intricate and

highly coloured inlay of the interior walls, the minute filigree of the hareem shutters, and the beautiful and languid women, fascinated and delighted his viewers. His eastern interiors presented an eager audience with the east in a supremely accessible and non-threatening form. Probably no single artist's work did more to give a shape to the Victorian fascination with the Middle East than Lewis's; he offered the exotic and alien mediated through an image epitomizing control and subservience - the hareem.

The image of the Middle Eastern woman *per se* did not add anything significantly different to the vocabulary of what could be expressed through the feminine. She is, after all, the genuine odalisque, whose name was appropriated to describe nudes such as Ingres' - the word derives from the Turkish *odalik*, meaning a hareem slave. Unlike the classical nude, of which Ingres' odalisques are the culmination, the Turkish or Egyptian odalisques of the Victorians are typically depicted clothed, their sensuality to a great extent expressed by the richness of the patterned fabrics they wear. In her essential subservience, however, the Victorian odalisque

is nevertheless the twin sister of the classical nude.

It should also be borne in mind, however, that unlike the nude, one is not dealing in this instance simply with the control of female sexuality, but also with western imperialism. It is not a coincidence that the image which, perhaps more than any other, typified eastern-ness for the Victorians, was female, or, as I have already suggested, that the setting in which she was depicted was so clear a metaphor of disempowerment. Exotic and sexual, but safely, passively so (as is so often underlined by the familiarity of her pale skin), she affirms not only the power of the male over the female, but also that of a 'masculine' culture over a 'feminine' one, or in other words, the perceived moral superiority of the rational West over the sensual East.

Despite his well-known sympathy with the Oriental way of life, (he went native and lived in Cairo for a decade), it is undeniable that Lewis's work is implicated in the process of taming and assimilating the culture of the Middle East. Inevitably, Hawarden too is implicated

simply by her uncritical use of the formula, but it is significant that she demonstrates no interest in trying to perfect and sustain the mythical female figure who miraculously combines the exoticism of dark skin with the virtue of white skin, who is both hareem slave and English virgin. (For proof that this figure was indeed attainable, one need only look at Myers's *Rebecca*, who combines sexuality and innocence in perfect balance in a pure 'English Rose' face out of which stare two large eyes, rimmed with dark eastern kohl which serves not simply to sensualize, but also to emphasize by contrast the whiteness of the model's face - a look that was to become the hallmark of the heroines of silent film). In Hawarden's image the only conscious concern seems to be to find an obvious sign for sensuality and the other. The model remains simply and undisguisedly white, and where other artists usually did their best to compensate for the Englishness of their models with a convincingly eastern outfit, her costume is blatantly inauthentic. (Parts of it are employed elsewhere, with little adaptation, in an apparently 'medieval' costume).

This is typical of Hawarden's casual attitude to costume, probably the best illustration of which [Fig. 18] is one of the few relatively well-known images by Hawarden, in which two of her daughters stand on the terrace outside the Kensington house, one in a dark suit and hat with her arm round her sister's waist, the other in white, her hand resting on her sister's shoulder. The sister in the dark suit, on the left of the image, looks back over her right shoulder at the camera. Their dresses are arranged so that their shapes echo each other, forming a paradoxical composition of simultaneous contrast of tone and angle, and repetition of form. It works so well aesthetically that unless one looks with unusual care, one is likely to realize only on reading the catalogue description that the skirt of the white dress is made of a separate length of material which blatantly fails to join at the back. Clearly, though Hawarden used costume extensively, accuracy and authenticity ranked well below the aesthetic and structural on her list of concerns.

To return to the Victorian odalisque, and the relationship between Hawarden's work and Lewis's; the most complex of Lewis's interiors share

several features in common with Hawarden's. Windows in Lewis's hareem scenes have the same effect on the psychological structure of the image as they often do in Hawarden's work - to heighten by contrast the sense of claustrophobia and constriction, and denial of free will. Often Lewis uses the pierced hareem shutters as Hawarden uses translucent curtains, to give a sense of light and space beyond the room, perceptible, but fundamentally separated from it. On the wall of the room he habitually places a black-framed mirror, not full-length like Hawarden's cheval glass, but large enough to reflect a head and torso.

It is hardly a coincidence that the painters with whom Lewis's work has provoked comparison should both be northern artists whose paintings show a fascination with reflection and its consequent psychological and structural tensions. In his *Academy Notes* for 1857, the year when *Hareem Life, Constantinople* [Fig. 19] (Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne) was exhibited at the Old Watercolour Society, and *A Syrian Sheikh, Egypt* at the Royal Academy, Ruskin identifies a parallel between Lewis and van Eyck. Later commentators have seen even stronger parallels

with Vermeer; as Christopher Newall has said in *Victorian Watercolours,* there is about Lewis's hareem interiors a correspondence between the 'certainty' of the perspectival construction and the tightness of the psychological structure which vividly recalls the paintings of Vermeer [10]. This Vermeeresque ability to construct an interdependent relationship between the deployment of light and space in structural composition, and the psychological structure of the image, is a technique which typifies Hawarden's photographs as it does Lewis's paintings.

Lewis returned repeatedly not only to the theme of the hareem woman, but more especially to a composition around the same basic elements - light, reflection, and the pairing and doubling of figures - elements which have clear antecedents in the northern tradition, certainly as far back as van Eyck. Discussing Vermeer, Norman Bryson has aptly summarized this peculiarly northern fascination as one focusing on the production of 'an asymmetry between the original perception, recorded in the image, and the act of viewing.' [11] Like Hawarden, Lewis uses a mirror to introduce this asymmetry, but his precise naturalism does not admit the effect of a

discrepancy of identity between the face and its reflection. His mirror images correspond perfectly to the object they reflect. (In practice however, this demonstrates the artificiality of naturalism, because the mirror, like the photograph, displays a disconcerting capacity to present the viewer with a completely unknown aspect of an apparently familiar object).

The discrepancy between object and mirror image is central to the function of Hawarden's odalisque. The photograph shows the head and reflected profile seen from two different angles that are sufficiently unlike to give a subtle but unsettling impression of not quite belonging to the same person. Such an effect defeats the object of the conventional odalisque/nude in suggesting a gap between conventional function and private identity. It also, in the case of Hawarden's odalisque, raises the possibility of a certain autonomous space to which the figure has access but where the viewer is not admitted. For example, the closed eyes of the reclining woman in Lewis's *The Siesta* [Fig. 20] (1876, Tate Gallery), probably the most conventional of his odalisques, refer less to her own oneiric state than that of the viewer who is intended to build

his fantasies around her. In Hawarden's image the split between figure and reflection, and the contemplative gesture of the hand raised to the cheek, combine to point to a more complex state of being, and one in which the closure of the eyes signifies not the fantasy which the viewer constructs around the figure, but the exclusion of the viewer from the figure's own fantasies or meditations. One might put this another way by saying that the image reclaims the idea of the feminine as other from neutralizing strategies of male-directed representations.

V. iv Private and public sensuality: costume versus the nude

If the image of the Middle Eastern woman merely reiterated the visual vocabulary of the nude in the hands of many artists, one can see that, on another level, it allowed a certain freedom for the woman artist - rarely able, on grounds of propriety, to work from the nude - to explore the vocabulary of sensuality. Julia Margaret Cameron came close to dealing with the nude in her highly sensualized studies of partially-clothed children, but nowhere among Hawarden's extant photographs is

there an example of the nude or an approach to it in the sense of Cameron's sensitive and undeniably seductive studies of the effect of light on children's skin.

In part, no doubt, this is because she did not have the general disregard for propriety demonstrated by Cameron. It is conceivable that Cameron, had her career not lost momentum with her move to Ceylon in 1875, might have progressed to adult nude studies; but Hawarden, whose interest in structure and process was always diametrically opposed to Cameron's concern with texture and essence, would probably never have chosen to deal with the nude, not sharing Cameron's interest in sensuality *per se*. Another reason was her relationship with her models. Hawarden had taken studies of her daughters in underwear and in male clothing, but in that social and historical context, while nude studies of pre-sexual children were rarely considered dubious, it would have been taboo for a mother to take nude studies of her adolescent daughters (and indeed it would generally be considered so today). Even Cameron, for all her opposition to ideas of what a woman could and could not do as an artist, would not have broken such a prohibition.

Thus the figure of the exotically clothed hareem woman offered a convenient alternative - an immediately recognizable type of sensuality, which was taken up by Hawarden and used to suggest what female sensuality could mean if looked at from an unconventional (female), rather than the typical (male) point of view. However beautiful Cameron's studies of children, they nevertheless belong to that typical view which presents sensuality as the innate quality of a passive object, to be offered for the viewer's delectation. Hawarden does not offer the sensuality of the model to the viewer; her work displays none of the sheer textural beauty of Cameron's studies. The reclining pseudo-Oriental figure on the divan is undoubtedly, in its very eastern-ness, a sign for sensuality, but a paradoxical sensuality, in Hawarden's limitation by her use of clothing of the visibility that makes the figure accessible to the viewer. Rather it depicts a self-enclosed sensuality, suggesting an inner space in which sensuality is reclaimed from the male principle as the outward sign of a sense of inner wholeness and contentment.

This state of being is, however, heavily qualified by the image of the divided self, split

between body and reflection, which we have seen before in the second of the two Narcissus photographs. Here, however, the complication is deliberately and successfully sustained. There is an undoubted tension between the withdrawal of the figure from the field of conventional sensuality, and the image of her split self. The doubled image points inescapably to the temporary, contingent, and ultimately illusory nature of this moment of pure self-internalization and wholeness.

On the other hand, while the doubling or splitting of the figure in the mirror surely indicates the underlying conclusion that such wholeness is, on a conscious level, fundamentally illusory, the insistence on it, at least as a temporary escape from the self-consciousness of subjectivity, is further underlined by the photographer's use of light, which functions to dissolve the physical presence of the figure. Light is deployed to produce a sense of the figure's mental and physical withdrawal of itself. It enters the room in a powerful, brilliant stream from the window behind the model's head. The face and the details of the dark drapery around her torso are quite clearly

defined, but her white skirt deflects and diffuses the light, erasing all details of contour and shadow from the waist down, and almost absorbing the whiteness of her bare arm into the material of the skirt. Indeed, the entire upper contour of her body, from the top of her head to the left shoulder and down to the feet, seems to be beginning to dissolve and blend into the atmosphere around the figure.

Dodier recognizes this effect in her description of the image:

> Like an odalisque in a harem, Clementina reclines on a divan draped with rich fabrics. Her body is nearly insubstantiated by light, and she seems to be rising, perhaps to the world of dreams as the outside world recedes. The cheval-glass ... isolates her cheek resting on her hand in the Classic gesture of contemplation. [12]

While one would argue against the romantic terminology of her description, she is certainly right to draw attention to a related process of material 'insubstantiation', and entry into a different, non-material space. In the process described by Dodier, however, the role played by the model is a passive one, in which light acts upon her body, and outer, 'real' space draws itself back from her. Such an interpretation stresses the passivity through which the

odalisque's body is offered up to the gaze. However, this presents us with a fundamental problem, in that while, in order to fulfil her confirmatory function in relation to male desire, the odalisque must be nothing more than a body, equally she must be *nothing less*; in other words, one cannot have an odalisque whose physical presence is in doubt. Dodier's analysis unconsciously suggests this contradiction, relating the figure unquestioningly to that of the conventional odalisque, but going on to draw attention to the strongly contemplative element in the image.

The contradiction is in fact central to an understanding of the image. In terms of conventional passive sensuality, it does indeed present us with an irreconcilable opposition. But as I have suggested, Hawarden's image is not one of passive sensuality, but active withdrawal from the 'outside world' into an inner, oneiric and fundamentally cerebral space. In this image Hawarden presents us with the sensual in a highly unusual form, in that, instead of entailing possession of the female body, instead of offering it for consumption, as does Lewis's *The Siesta* for example, it actually involves the de-

materialization of that body, its withdrawal from the stage of its conventional functions. This is not sensuality for the sake or at the instigation of another, but rather sensuality as a means of access into an utterly private, individual space - something which, by the usual definition, the realm of the sensual does not admit, and against which, as the image itself indicates, the very condition of subjectivity weighs heavily.

Notes

1. This is also observable in twentieth-century explorations of women's identity. Jo Spence and Rosy Martin's phototherapy project of the 1980's comes to mind, (see their essay in *Looking On*, Rosemary Betterton (ed.), Pandora Press: London, 1987), as does the work of Cindy Sherman, whose black and white 'film stills' images and similar, slightly later colour photographs seem to me to offer an even stronger parallel with Hawaroen's 'staging' of multiple female identities, not least in the ambivalent reactions both are capable of provoking, particularly from a feminist standpoint.

2. Dodier, *catalogue raisonné*, Introduction.

3. Dickens, C., *Bleak House*, (1853), Penguin Classics, 1987, p.340.

4. See D609, *catalogue raisonné*, V & A.

5. Dodier, op.cit., note to photograph D708.

6. Ibid., Introduction.

7. Ibid., note to photograph D665.

8. This taste is very much a product of the 1830's, when the pattern of foreign travel changed fundamentally from what it had been at the

height of the Grand Tour. It was the birth of the steam era, and consequently the beginning of a period of unparalleled wealth for the middle classes. Travel, both at home and abroad, began to become more generally accessible - not necessarily in practical terms, (for clearly a European rail network did not spring up overnight), but perhaps more importantly, in psychological terms. One could say that it was no longer necessary to have a title to travel abroad. Consequently the English middle classes became tourists in increasingly large numbers, (so much so, that later in the century Brahms was led to write feelingly: '... there are many beer gardens here where the English do not penetrate; for my comfort that is no small matter'). The travels of the Ruskins in 1833 and the Butlers a decade later are typical of the new middle class tourism. They now had access to what had previously been the cultural property of the aristocracy and the wealthier gentry. As a result, many artists and the more adventurous (or snobbish) travellers began to look further east, to Athens, Constantinople, Cairo and Jerusalem, for new areas to document, interpret, and generally lay cultural claim to. Inevitably the biblical history of Palestine gave a special imperative to the religiously-minded.

9. Bartram, op.cit., p.119.

10. Newall, C., *Victorian Watercolours*, Phaidon: Oxford, 1987, p.36.

11. Bryson, N., *Vision and Painting*, Macmillan: London, 1983, p.112.

12. Dodier, op.cit.

VI Psyche and the mirror of consciousness

Hawarden's photography is distinguished, not simply by its almost exclusive concentration on images of women, but more specifically by its tendency to focus specifically on feminine identity as a series of elusive subjective positions rooted in ambiguity and contingency. Even the more positive or optimistic images demonstrate, as one sees in Fig.17, a constant consciousness of the fragmented nature of identity.

There is, of course, nothing new in the use of the female as metaphor of fragmentation and confusion. Traditionally woman stands as a figure of chaos, irrationality and physicality against the rational and cerebral male. What is intriguing about Hawarden's work is her use of the female as a general metaphor of the *human*, rather than the feminine, subjective predicament. However, as I have indicated, it is not the case that her work is entirely without any sense of the significance of her characteristic motifs from a gender-specific point of view. From about 1861 onwards, when her work begins to concentrate almost exclusively on images of women, she

exhibits an increasing tendency to dramatize the confrontation with self as other. It is clearly most unlikely that this has no bearing on her conception of femininity; certainly, numerous images dating from this point onwards display an aspect which seems most adequately summarized as an awareness of femininity as a locus of conflict between inner and outer, self and other. To what degree this awareness is the product of a 'photographic' sense of the nature of reality, rather than a primarily feminine or feminist one, will become clearer as her work falls into place beside Butler's.

VI. i Internalizing the other

In a photograph dating from c.1862 [Fig. 21], the model is posed against her reflection in a mirror. She is seated at an angle to a large window, side on to the camera. From the waist upwards she is turned further away from the camera, to face a cheval glass on her left. Her skirt, the right side of her back and head, and her partial right profile are thus visible to us. A distinct bar of shadow, probably from the window frame, falls across her skirt.

Her reflected image, on the other hand, is far less clear. Only the face and part of the torso are at all visible, the rest of the body being hidden by the actual figure. The reflected face gazes intensely back at its original, heavily clouded by the comparative shadowiness of the interior - a shadowiness which is heightened by the contrasting brilliance of the window reflected behind the figure. This very unreadability, however, underlines the atmosphere of profound self-absorption, intensifying the concentration of the gaze through the same impenetrability that makes the actual details of the face so hard to decipher. The image plays to the full on the metaphorical overtones of the shadow which Hawarden invests with such ominous meaningfulness.

The *catalogue raisonné* describes the figure's outfit as 'costume' and 'fancy dress', which is not strictly appropriate in this context. In fact it seems more likely that it is simply an ordinary skirt worn over a chemise, as though she is half-way through dressing or undressing. This adds to the image a vulnerability and intimacy not conveyed by the idea of 'fancy dress'. The chemise is slipped off the right shoulder, in a gesture which is more one of weariness or

dejection than coquettishness, a tiredness echoed by the slight droop of her body.

The look that the figure gives her reflection is a self-enclosed one which by its very nature excludes the viewer. The figure appears entirely unaware of the viewer's gaze, but her impenetrability does not carry with it an equal sense of inner certainty. Indeed, the figure is herself an image of an uncertainty of which the ambiguity of the viewer's position is but one layer. If she is unaware of the other in the form of the spectator, she is palpably conscious of the internal other, of self as object.

Light, shadow and reflection are used to structure space with equal ambiguity. As is typical of her interior photographs, Hawarden uses the huge windows which were a feature of the front of the family's Kensington house as her only light source. The interior itself is comparatively dim and shadowy. Contrasting with this, like a brilliantly-lit opening in the wall behind it, the mirror reflects the window, which is floor-length and opens onto bright sunlight, making the interior even more claustrophobic by comparison. It suggests a space of which she is

unaware, or which she has for some reason discounted, extending out behind the reflected figure. Perhaps it has been discounted because it is illusory; for in fact, the actual window is inaccesible, situated out of shot, behind and to the model's left, and furthermore, beyond the reflected window a balustrade is also reflected, firmly curtailing the space suggested by the flood of light behind the figure.

A barring effect is created, principally by the balustrade, but also by the bar of shadow which cuts across the figure, giving the sense that the figure is hemmed into a very restricted space. The ambiguity of the space which appears, at first sight, to be accessible, is underlined by the paradoxical situation in which the figure is placed in relation to it. In fact, neither the actual nor the reflected figure faces an opening: the actual figure faces a false opening, a mere reflection, while the actual opening is out of shot, therefore depriving the reflected figure of any possibility of extended space at all.

Interestingly, Griselda Pollock has identified a similar problematizing of space in the work of Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt, the two best-

known women associates of the Impressionists. She underlines spatial features in Morisot's work in particular which unmistakably echo those frequently appearing in Hawarden's photographs, taken two decades earlier. Like Hawarden, Morisot frequently divides the picture plane up into two 'compartments of space', one containing the female figure, the other inaccessible to her, marked off by a barring device such as a balcony or balustrade. (One thinks of the frequency with which the figure of a woman on a balcony occurs in Morisot's work; or again, a woman and child in the 'feminine' space of a garden enclosed by a hedge or wall). Pollock goes on to point out that:

> ... it is as if the place from which the painter worked is made part of the scene creating a compression or immediacy in the foreground spaces. This locates the viewer in that same place, establishing a notional relation between the viewer and the woman defining the foreground, therefore forcing the viewer to experience the dislocation between her space and that of a world beyond its frontiers. [1]

There is an obvious pertinence in this analysis to the viewer's experience of Hawarden's photograph; and in this image (and there are numerous others of which the same could be said) it seems accurate to concur with Pollock's definition of this spatial ambiguity as

registering the demarcation between male and female spaces.

VI. ii The mirror of Venus

The image of a woman contemplating herself in a mirror has a long history in the tradition of the 'Toilette of Venus', a treatment of the nude in which she gazes at her reflection in a mirror held for her by Cupid. She represents the woman not only seen through male eyes, but also *seeing herself* through male eyes, confirming male desire and the gender roles it demands. To take probably the classic Renaissance example, Titian's *Venus with Mirror*, 1555, (National Gallery of Art, Washington), while Venus's head is turned away to look at her reflection, the body is posed frontally, open and accessible to the viewer's gaze. The viewer cannot meet the model's eyes, but her reflection is angled so that the eye visible in the mirror gives a relayed look of acknowledgement. Venus offers herself to be possessed, both in the reflected look of acquiescence which she gives the spectator, and in the gaze directed at herself through which she confirms her role in the structure of his desire.

With Hawarden's photograph the intention and the effect is quite different. The turning of the model's body and head is not intended to display as much of that body as possible, to make it as consumable as possible, while at the same time displaying the face reflected in the mirror, but on the contrary, to close it up and complicate it, while at the same time enabling the camera to be placed at such an angle as to show the closed and enigmatic reflection.

The 'body language' of the respective figures and the quality of their reflected images underline the widely divergent significance of their respective gazes. If Venus's open and available body and clear reflection indicate that her gaze is an uncomplicated one which affirms her function within discourse, the closure of the model's body and reflection indicate the opposite - an inner uncertainty and an inability (rather than a refusal, since the elements of the image indicate doubt, not resolve) to affirm that function.

The tradition of the 'Toilette of Venus' is not, however, an entirely straightforward one; the mirror is a potentially disruptive element. One

has only to consider Velázquez's treatment of the subject in his *'Rokeby' Venus*, 1649-51, [Fig. 22] (National Gallery) [2], at first sight a typical depiction of the nude, indeed one of the great nude paintings; and undeniably it contains features which place it in a line of descent from Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, [Fig. 23] (1538, Uffizi Gallery, Florence), continuing down to Ingres's odalisques. Of course, like them it lays out an idealized female body for display and consumption; but a problem is raised by the mirror into which Venus gazes.

A woman before a mirror has traditionally been an emblem of Vanity, and up to a point this does indicate the nature of the relationship of woman to her reflection, in the sense that it links this relationship to the cosmetic rituals by which women conform to a gendered identity. The mirror which holds the reflection of Velázquez's Venus remains the repository of gendered identity, but it by no means represents an unreserved affirmation of that identity - for the face reflected in the mirror does not belong to the figure before the mirror; where the form of the body is refined to the point of idealization, the head and pinned-up hair elegant, the skin smooth

and evenly-toned, the face that looks out of the mirror is heavy and drained of colour apart from a high flush on the cheeks, and the hair is coarse and untidy. While one could argue prosaically that the blurring and discolouration is simply a naturalistic translation of the effect of the mirror, such an argument is countered by the evidence of the shape and character of the face, which so obviously belongs to a different woman. There is also a discrepancy between the angle of the head and the angle of the mirror. On one level of course this allows the viewer to see the reflection without the need for the painter to alter the seductive line of the woman's body; on another more significant level, however, it also serves to emphasize the jolt, similar to that experienced in looking at Hawarden's photograph, that the viewer feels when he [3] tries to match figure to reflection.

This fracturing of suture strikes at the heart of the function of the nude. It undermines the structure of identity through which the woman is assimilated into a masculine discourse, and thus, instead of confirming the spectator's possession of the body before him, disconcerts and disorients him. His failure to fit the woman into

the familiar discourse in which he wants to place her disrupts the structure of that discourse, and in so doing confronts him with the insecurity of his own subjective position. In this the *'Rokeby' Venus* clearly shares the concerns of Velázquez's later work, *Las Meninas*, 1656, (Prado, Madrid), that most complex of dramatizations of the problematization of suture in the act of viewing. In his article 'Velázquez's *Las Meninas*', Leo Steinberg says of the mirror in which the King and Queen are reflected:

> The mirror within *Las Meninas* is merely its central emblem, a sign for the whole. *Las Meninas* in its entirety is a metaphor, a mirror of consciousness. [4]

Although Velázquez's Venus is a considerably more straightforward work, one immediately recognizes the ease with which one could substitute one painting for the other in this analysis. One can also see the applicability of such a judgment to the effects noted in Hawarden's photograph. *Venus* differs fundamentally from Hawarden's image because, while on the one hand her nudity makes her sexually available in a way that the model in the photograph with her covered and averted body is not, on the other it makes her powerful in a way that Hawarden's model equally cannot be, because of her ability to disorient the (male)

spectator with such force by undermining the significance of that nudity. But both images share that non-correspondence that Steinberg refers to, of reflection to figure, of image to 'reality', through which the spectator is made conscious of the arbitrariness and instability of his/her position within the structure of reality.

In the *'Rokeby' Venus* Velázquez made explicit the relation of the painting to the mirror contained within it by showing it in a black frame like the one which surrounds the mirror [5]. For the photographer, the connection between *photograph* and photographed reflection can be underlined by the physical nature of the photograph itself. With its typically alluring, light-reflecting surface, its illusion of depth, its detail-for-detail naturalistic accuracy, it is still commonplace to accept a photograph as a kind of unconnoted mirror image, a direct trace of the real. In the early stages of photography the similarity was even more generally accepted. For example, in his essay of 1859, 'The Stereoscope and the Stereograph', Oliver Wendell Holmes described (stereoscopic) photography as 'the mirror with a memory' [6]; and in 1830, nine years before the 'birth' of photography, and

nearly thirty years before Holmes coined his phrase, Fox Talbot wrote a poem entitled 'The Magic Mirror', which, while it draws upon the magic mirror of Merlin in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, clearly owes much to his researches into the phenomenon of images created by the action of light on light-sensitive surfaces [7].

Thus the photograph's perceived similarity to the mirror image serves to underline their shared nature as *image*, not substance, incorporeal absence, not physical presence. The photograph of a reflection (or indeed, of another photograph or a painting) emphasizes the way in which the photograph doubles the real to create '*within* the moment the experience of fission' [8], thus calling into question the stability of the position of the subject within the discourse of the real. The photograph of an image is self-reflexive - a comment upon itself. The mirror in the photograph is a *mise en abyme*, the fragment that reflects the structure of the whole, calling attention to the mythical nature of the whole and thus to that which it seeks to disguise - 'the indefinite play of substitution' of the signified [9] :

> The mirror reflects not only the subjects depicted, but also the entire photograph

> itself. It tells us in a photograph what a photograph is - *en abyme*. [10]

In other words, the mirror tells us *en abyme* what a photograph is, but it also tells us that the photograph is itself *en abyme* in its relation to the 'real', and that the position of the subject of the photograph is thus a *mise en abyme* of its counterpart in reality.

VI. iii Hawarden and Morisot - femininity and subjectivity

Hawarden's interest in the splitting and multiplying of female identity has a parallel in the work of Berthe Morisot. (Morisot was younger than Hawarden, belonging rather to the same generation as Hawarden's children, and she first began to exhibit publicly in 1864, the year before Hawarden's premature death). Hawarden seems to have questioned gender less than did Morisot, in so far as her images are, on the whole, less specifically interested in femininity *per se*.

The photographic medium itself is partly responsible for this, in that the medium was one

in which a woman could remain, in feminist terms, largely uncommitted and even unaware, since she would face very little of the opposition which confronted and would almost inevitably politicize a woman painter such as Morisot. During the mid-nineteenth century photography was after all acceptably amateur and new-fangled, and the pursuit of the wealthy and leisured. Since photographers were not generally considered to be artists there could be nothing improper in a wealthy (if perhaps, by conventional standards, slightly eccentric) woman 'dabbling' in photography, and even exhibiting her work, whereas a woman wishing to submit work to the Royal Academy or the Salon had to overcome formidable traditionalism and ingrained prejudice against intellectual pretensions or career ambition in women.

In Morisot's work the multiplying of images is often achieved through depicting painted or photographic portraits which can be recognized as images of Morisot or members of her family (almost always female), by Morisot herself or by contemporaries such as Manet, on the walls or tables of the room in which the model sits. Although there are no significant instances of

Hawarden photographing pictures rather than mirror images, there are several examples in which Morisot uses a reflection rather than, or as well as, a portrait, to complicate the idea of the identity of the figure in her painting. Indeed in an early work Morisot, like Hawarden, uses the image of a female Narcissus reclining beside a pool, gazing at her reflection. The shaded woodland setting is suggestive of Ovid's description, and the model is dressed not in contemporary clothes but in a long classical tunic. This painting, called simply *Etude*, (Mr. & Mrs. Schoneman), dates from 1864 and was exhibited at the Salon in 1865 (indeed, on the same wall as *Olympia*).

The influence of Corot, which so many contemporary critics commented upon, is clear in the treatment of the landscape and in details such as the counterpointing touch of bright red in the ribbon around the figure's head, (though Morisot was by now consciously trying to lose the label of a disciple of Corot). But although Corot painted at least two very similar works - including *The Secret of Love*, (location unknown), in which a female figure, apparently Venus, reclines by a pool, trailing her hand in the water while Cupid

whispers in her ear – both date from 1865, thus making it more likely that in this instance Corot (who certainly knew the Morisots, and may have instructed Berthe and her sister Edma) was responding to Morisot's work rather than Morisot specifically emulating Corot [11] .

The reflection of Morisot's 'Narcissus' is far from clear. Only the arm and the red of the ribbon are immediately identifiable, and the face is in shadow and therefore unreadable. The focus is directed upon the figure, rather than the relationship of figure and reflection. As with Hawarden's two 'Narcissus' photographs discussed in the first chapter, one feels that here it is perhaps that early interest in landscape art and the association of the genre with classical subjects, which provides Morisot with an image not yet fully understood, but one which will have immense importance for her later work.

Morisot's *Psyche*, [Fig. 24] 1876, (Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Madrid), displays very clearly the extent to which the idea of doubling develops in her work over the decade following her 'Narcissus' painting. It forms a strong parallel

with the photograph of Clementina reflected in the cheval glass (for which 'psyche' is of course another word). In the painting a young woman is depicted, full-length and side on to the viewer, standing before the mirror of the title half-dressed, still wearing a pair of heeled slippers, but having pinned up her hair and put on her petticoat, stockings, and a black neck-ribbon. The woman stares critically not at her face but at her figure, or perhaps at some adjustment she is making to her petticoat.

The room differs from Hawarden's typical settings in that it is obviously a contemporary boudoir, uncluttered but clearly comfortable and lived-in; not stripped of all inessential detail like the studio-room of the Hawardens' house, but carpeted, with drapes and upholstery in a pretty, 'feminine', floral pattern. The lighting of the room, however, does recall Hawarden's work; a large window, partially visible behind the figure and on the right of the painting lets in, through translucent net curtains, a bright natural light.

The work has notable compositional and thematic elements in common with Manet's *Nana*, [Fig. 25]

(Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg), and indeed both pictures date from the same period, making it more than probable that Morisot and Manet discussed the subject at some length, both before and during the painting process. It is therefore all the more interesting to note the significant differences between their respective conceptions of the image of a female figure before a mirror.

Nana was submitted to the Salon of 1877, and initially hung, but was removed just before the Salon opened on grounds of indecency. The scandalous nature of *Nana* did not, of course, stem from the subject of a woman at her toilette, which was, as we have said, a traditional treatment of the nude. In fact, one might say that it was precisely the partial clothing in place of complete nudity (in other words, the tantalizing and provocative, rather than disclosed and submissive nature of the figure) that, in part at least, caused the outrage. In place of the classical goddess of love Manet offers the spectator an all too contemporary 'kept woman', standing half-dressed in front of a man, in a boudoir the clutter and untidiness of which indicates the state of her morals – added to which, this is clearly not the innocent morning

ritual suggested by the lighting of Morisot's painting, as the evening clothes of the male visitor tell us.

She does not look at her reflection, nor in fact does she acknowledge the presence of the man, although she does both of these things indirectly, in the expression of calm, almost amused self-assurance and invitation with which she instead confronts the viewer - acknowledging her own awareness of herself as men see her, her plump prettiness almost but not quite concealing her sense that, while she undoubtedly plays a game not of her own making, her consciousness places her in a position of control over the man - who is marginalized at the edge of the picture and slightly ridiculous in the formality of his evening suit, waiting to take his mistress out to a theatre or café, while she confidently ignores him. That consciousness, like the consciousness of Olympia, alters the structure of the game.

It is significant that Morisot's painting is titled not after the woman it depicts, but rather after the mirror in which she is reflected. Indeed, the *specific* identity of the figure is not important; like Hawarden's photograph, the

painting is neither a portrait of a particular character, nor the personification of a particular characteristic. Nor, like *Nana*, does it reveal the politics of knowledge and control. For the work shares with Hawarden's an even more fundamental concern with the *concept* of identity - what it is and how it is constituted. For Morisot as for Hawarden, the focus of the painting is not the woman but her relationship to her image - her exploration of her own subjectivity.

The Psyche theme is one which persists throughout Morisot's career. In 1891, four years before her death, it appears again in one of the few nude studies she did, *At the Psyche* (private collection). It shows a woman in her bedroom, seated before a mirror, pinning up her hair. She is not fully nude but half-dressed, her chemise hanging off her left shoulder down to her waist, exposing her left breast. Reflected in the mirror is a painting on the wall behind her which Anne Higonnet, in her article 'The Other Side of the Mirror' [12] identifies as Manet's *Berthe Morisot Reclining*, 1873, (private collection), a portrait which appears in more than one of Morisot's own works. Higonnet draws attention to the way that

Morisot identifies Manet's portrait of her with the nude and her reflection, in the shape of the face, the style and colour of the hair, and the compositional echo through which the right edge of the frame of the mirror, which seems to transfix the head of the model sitting below it through the top of her skull, is repeated by the right edge of the reflected picture frame, which is positioned similarly over the reflected head. But neither the reflected portrait nor indeed the reflected face are more than a cursory sketch. As Higonnet puts it:

> The female nude ... seen in the mirror is juxtaposed with herself seen by Manet, but, thus juxtaposed, Morisot can bring neither into focus. Both are visions of a female self seen with masculine eyes, and neither, in Morisot's vision, can be resolved. [13]

For Morisot as for Hawarden, this conflict of identities is sited in the ritual of dressing and undressing, or often, in Hawarden's case, of 'dressing up' - the process of putting on and peeling off the different layers of an image and assessing the result in the mirror, through which wealthy women went repeatedly every day. It would be a metaphor particularly familiar to women of Morisot and Hawarden's time and class for a constant, unresolvable shifting of identity.

VI. iv Psyche in the age of modernism

Precisely when the cheval glass was first referred to as a 'psyche' is not clear, but if one refers back to the story of the mythical girl from whom the name derives, one uncovers some significant connections. The myth of Psyche and Eros is found in Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, Bks iv-vi. According to Apuleius's tale, Psyche was a young woman so beautiful that she was talked of as the 'new Venus' and distracted people from the worship of the goddess herself, thus arousing Venus's anger and jealousy. Psyche became the wife of Eros, but suffered greatly, not only at the hands of Venus but from the jealousy of her own sisters, before finally being allowed by Jupiter to join Eros in Heaven.

Psyche was traditionally read as a symbol of awakening sexuality, but I want to suggest another aspect of her story which offers a different interpretation, more pertinent to the concerns of women artists like Hawarden and Morisot, which links her specifically with the mirror with which she shares a name. The story was a popular one with painters, particularly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries

(although it had certainly been used before this, since Velázquez had painted a *Cupid and Psyche*, thought to have been destroyed in a fire in 1743 [14]).

It also received a number of treatments by writers in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, (William Morris, Walter Pater and Robert Bridges all produced versions). Robert Graves's now standard modern translation (1960) emphasizes Apuleius's humour, but earlier interpretations - for example, Pater's in *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) - were far more inclined to take as central the etymology of Psyche's name (from *psukhe*, Greek for soul or mind), and dwell on the sufferings she undergoes before she reaches Heaven; and in this the Victorian versions provide an insight into the myth which Graves, amusing as his translation undoubtedly is, tends to overlook.

The beginning of the tale is of most interest. Psyche, we are told, in spite of her great beauty - or rather, precisely because of it - is deeply unhappy and begins to be filled with self-hatred, because while her less beautiful sisters have both found husbands, no one has

asked for Psyche herself in marriage. As Graves puts it: 'All wondered at her beauty, but only as they might wonder at an exquisite statue.' [15] Pater's version gives us a greater sense of Psyche's self-consciousness. If Apuleius does not actually describe Psyche looking at her own reflection, she is certainly described as sitting alone, *mentally reflecting upon* her 'fruitless' beauty.

The implication is clear; one may reasonably interpret Psyche (not Narcissus, as Ovenden seems to suggest) as the image of the female experience of self-contemplation in the mirror of masculine self-representation. Perceived by men as an aesthetic and/or sexual object ('an exquisite statue') and by other women as a competitor, never as she herself wishes to be seen, Psyche enters into a conflict of self-doubt and dissatisfaction which stands as a powerful metaphor for femininity, and certainly for the predicament of the woman artist in the nineteenth century.

Thus, without necessarily demonstrating any overtly political conviction, without an explicit awareness of herself as a gendered subject, the

work of such an artist may evince a consciousness of the disjunction between self and other that is peculiarly vivid, because for her as a woman it is a condition of mundane, everyday experience; in other words, her awareness of this disjunction is less a dramatic event (as the Lacanian account of the mirror phase implies), than a constant, unspoken condition of being.

Indeed, I think one should be particularly careful not to imply that this was a necessarily anguished and intense experience; rather one should stress precisely its mundane and routine nature. If she centres her work on feminine subjects (and as I have already suggested, a nineteenth-century woman had little choice but to do so) the artist can hardly avoid this condition becoming a more or less noticeable element of her work. Therefore, while the work of neither artist is overtly *politicized*, (and Hawarden's is certainly less so than Morisot's), it is through their *experience*, even more perhaps than their *consciousness*, of the politics of subjectivity, that Morisot and Hawarden - to invoke the mirror of Velázquez - transform the cheval-glass into the 'mirror of consciousness' of the nineteenth-century boudoir.

Notes

1. Pollock, G., *Vision and Difference*, Routledge: London, 1988, p.63.

2. Hawarden may have known the *'Rokeby' Venus*. She might certainly have seen reproductions, but it is also possible that she could have seen the original, which, although it was not acquired by the National Gallery until 1906, had been in England since 1813, and was exhibited publicly during Hawarden's lifetime. (See National Gallery Catalogue, *The Spanish Schools*, Neil Maclaren, revised by Allan Braham, 1988, pp.125-90).

3. I use the male pronoun here, on the assumption that in the context of the female nude at least, (the wider implications of spectatorship in gender terms require a study in their own right), the presumed spectator is inevitably male.

4. Steinberg, L., 'Velazquez's *Las Meninas*', *October*, 19, Winter 1981, p.54.

5. National Gallery Catalogue, (see n.2 above), p.126.

6. Trachtenberg, op.cit., p.74.

7. *The Art of Photography*, RA catalogue, op. cit., pp.15-17.

8. Krauss, R., 'The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism', *October*, 19, Winter 1981, p.25.

9. Owens, C., 'Photography *en abyme*', *October*, 5, 1978, p.77.

10. Ibid., p.75.

11. Stuckey, C.F. & Scott, W.P., *Berthe Morisot, Impressionist*, Sotheby's: London, 1987, p.25.

12. Higonnet, A., 'The Other Side of the Mirror', in *Perspectives on Morisot*, T.J.Edelstein (ed.), Hudson & Hills Press: New York, 1990.

13. Ibid, p.75.

14. National Gallery Catalogue, op. cit., p.126, & n.16 p.128.

15. Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, Robert Graves (tr.), The Folio Society: London, 1960, p.82.

Part Three : Multiplicity and contingency - the image and the real

This final section represents the convergence and amplification of the concerns of Parts One and Two. It seeks to consolidate the claims made for the intentions and motivations of the work of Butler and Hawarden. Its aim is to identify a number of significant parallels between the images of Butler and Hawarden, and to demonstrate the extent to which these parallels are the product of the ontological and epistemological concern which has been the theme of this study: namely, the undermining of the concept of the founding subject, a simple, unified and present being, who gives rise to and controls an equally simple, unified and present reality based upon the belief in an ultimate religious/quasi-religious 'Truth'.

Furthermore, the final chapter seeks to clarify my claim that the development and maturation of the ontological/epistemological strain in the work of both photographers may be specifically linked to their deepening consciousness of and sensitivity to the nature of the photographic process *per se*.

VII Identity, essence, and the photographic portrait

In the photography of Butler and Hawarden one witnesses the operation of a range of techniques and devices which link their work: the use of the double, the dematerializing effect of light, absorption, marginality, to name but the most obvious. The common thread running through the variety of destabilizing strategies employed by both photographers is spun out of a fundamental concern with the concept of identity, their work illustrating the belief that, as Butler put it, identity is very far from being 'a plain, palpable, individual thing'. It is not coincidental, therefore, that amongst the earliest issues raised by this study with regard to their work was that of portraiture. In Butler's case, it will be remembered, the focus was his ironization of the genre, while in the case of Hawarden, I questioned whether her work, focusing as it does on her daughters, could adequately be described as portraiture.

Neither is it coincidental that we should now return to the portrait. It is inevitably an area in which the effect of the advent of photography

on the question of identity or 'likeness' is played out in art with great vividness. The naturalism of the photograph brought with it a heightening of the idea of 'likeness'; to quote Baudelaire's famous diatribe against photography:

> In the domain of painting and statuary, the present-day credo of the worldly wise ... is this: 'I believe in nature, and I believe only in nature.' (There are good reasons for that.) 'I believe that art is, and can only be, the exact reproduction of nature.' ... 'Thus if an industrial process could give us a result identical to nature, that would be absolute art.' An avenging God has heard the prayers of this multitude; Daguerre was his messiah. And then they said to themselves: 'Since photography provides us with every desirable guarantee of exactitude' (they believe that, poor madmen!) 'art is photography.' From that moment onwards, our loathsome society rushed, like Narcissus, to contemplate its trivial image on the metallic plate. [1]

(It is notable that, though he does not develop the simile, Baudelaire is drawn to the Narcissus myth to explain the attraction of the photographic image. Narcissus and the photograph are inextricably entwined, not simply in the obvious physical similarities of the mythical pool and the shining surface of Daguerre's 'metallic plate' or today's glossy print, out of which the human face stares back at us as Narcissus stared back at himself, but more profoundly, as we have seen, in terms of the self-reflexive nature shared by photograph and mirror alike).

The portrait painter aims to reflect the 'essential truth' of the sitter's identity, to be in some sense a creator, and - as Diderot's comments on his own portrait by Garand reveal - breathe life into the image; as Hazlitt says:

> The fact is, that the having one's picture painted is like the creation of another self; and that is an idea, of the repetition or reduplication of which no man is ever tired, to the thousandth reflection. [2]

Both Butler and Hawarden are concerned to use that reduplication, not to reproduce or confirm identity, but rather to make of it something multiple, decentralized and fluctuating.

IV. i Butler and the ironic 'anti-portrait'

As we have seen in Butler's *Portrait of an Unknown Woman*, the portrait falls prey to Butler's irony, no less than any other of his many targets. Nor is this simply a feature of his earlier work; a number of family group photographs, taken on his travels through France and Italy, demonstrate the point with even greater clarity. One such picture is *Mme Refards and the four children*, 1889, [Fig. 26]. The image uses the device, typical of Pre-Raphaelite photography, of the ivy-covered wall (which

derives from Millais's *A Huguenot*, 1851-2), against which the figures are placed in order to limit depth of field and guarantee sharpness of focus and therefore maximum detail throughout. (In some pictures other plants took the place of ivy, but ivy carried specific connotations of love in adversity, the perceived dependence of the female on the male, and, particularly appropriate from the point of view of the Victorian idea of childhood, the ineluctable passing of time).

If one thinks of similar compositions such as Lewis Carroll's photographs of the Pre-Raphaelite Arthur Hughes and his daughters, taken in 1863, and in particular *Arthur Hughes and his Daughter Agnes* [Fig. 27] (Howard Grey Collection), or indeed of Millais's painting itself, one is struck immediately by the powerfully aesthetic, romanticizing function of the backdrop, enhancing the tenderness of the pair (father and daughter/ tragic couple) depicted in an embrace. But in Butler's image the tender, romantic associations of the composition are comically undercut by the bathetic effect of the grim and anxious expressions on the faces of the family grouped against it. The mother seems rather to cling

defensively to her small daughter than embrace her protectively as Hughes does Agnes. She peers round the side of the child's head at the photographer with an uneasiness which forms a comic contrast with the face of Arthur Hughes, who wears the 'poetical' look of the artist/father/creator whose concerns lie with higher things.

The little Refards girl, in thickly striped stockings, a dress and pinafore of a coarse-looking material (evidently chosen for its practicality rather than its aesthetic qualities), her hair pathetically thin and wispy, and a frown half-way between imminent tears and belligerence on her face, provides an equally amusing contrast with Agnes, who epitomizes the Victorian image of the angelic child (and unconsciously, her sensual appeal), a sort of 'Little Nell', her face demure and earnest and framed by ringlets, while the skirt of her dress flares prettily from the waist, with far more consciousness of adult feminine fashions than is demonstrated by the clothes of Mlle Refards. The look on her face is echoed in the different expressions of the two brothers on either side of her, the younger apparently about to burst into tears, the elder sitting with his

arms and legs defensively crossed, and his face grimly set.

Carroll invests his image with an eminently persuasive sense of having captured the emotional essence of his sitters' relationship. It has already been pointed out that Cameron's use of long exposures plays a significant role in achieving a powerful sense of essence. Carroll did not force his models to sit for so long, but he characteristically used an exposure time of about forty-five seconds. The difference may easily be imagined between the image of a face which has gazed motionlessly for three-quarters of a minute as opposed to one whose expression has been snapped at an exposure of far less than three-quarters of a second [3].

Speaking of the sitters who posed for the earliest portrait photographs, Walter Benjamin has said that the long exposure invested them with '... an aura ..., a medium which mingled with their manner of looking and gave them a plenitude and security' [4], and again that '... all the possibilities of portraiture depended on an absence of contact between photography and actuality' [5]. The long exposure interposes a

myth of atemporality between the subject and her/his image, a sense of having forced time to a stop, of having transcended time, which readily accords with the aim of the portrait to transcend the physical, leaving only a distillation of identity.

The snapshot, on the other hand, does not have, as it were, an existence of its own in the form of an aura, outside the confines of time, but rather is an almost imperceptible event that takes place within the confines of a precise fraction of a second. As such it is a particularly appropriate medium for a vertiginous view of identity such as Butler's (we might say an 'anti-identity' view of identity), which argues, as has already been said, that the question of 'who we are' cannot be answered, since identity (like the movement of the shutter) is 'as fleeting as the present moment' - and therefore cannot be known as such.

Stieglitz attempted to resolve the problem of the multi-layered nature of identity with his fragmentary 'portraits' of Georgia O'Keeffe, taken over a period of years from the late 1910's into the 1920's, separately photographing her

neck, her hands, etc. - a device that he used with other sitters also, but never so intensively and powerfully as with O'Keeffe. But in fact the effect, and certainly the intention, is not to convey the fragmentariness and multiplicity of identity; rather, it creates an illusion of greater completeness, greater wholeness. It was a strategy of portraiture entirely in keeping, not only with the traditional function of the portrait, but also with Stieglitz's own photographic and metaphysical aims; as he put it: 'The search for Truth [is] my obsession' [6]. In a review of an exhibition of Stieglitz's work held at the Anderson Galleries in New York in 1921, John A. Tennant, editor and publisher of *The Photo-Miniature*, wrote of these multiple portraits:

> There were portraits, some of them of men whom I knew fairly well. Sometimes it was a single print, at other times several prints side by side, giving different aspects of the same subject but grouped as "one Portrait." Well, they were just portraits of those men, compellingly intimate, betrayals (if I may so use the word) of personality, satisfying in likeness, convincing in characterization, instinct with the illusion of life. [7]

Stieglitz never doubted that there was an identity to be portrayed, and here Butler would clearly have disagreed with him. In the *Refards* portrait he delights in demonstrating how mythical

identity is, and how mythicizing the image which appears, however persuasively, to state otherwise. What does the portrait of the family Refards have to do with the certainty, unity, epitome, of which portraiture should be the embodiment? The tender family bonds that such an image is supposed to convey are undermined by the palpable doubt and anxiety of the sitters - feelings which are plainly temporary, not characteristic or 'essential', engendered by the presence of the camera, which will pass when the disturbing process of sitting for the photograph is over.

The irony of Butler's 'portrait' is precisely that it patently and deliberately fails to convey any real sense of individual character, family unity, or identity in any sense. He had ironized the costume portrait years before in *Johnston Forbes-Robertson in armour*; the *Refards* portrait takes the process a step further, in ironizing the supposed truthfulness of the photographic image itself, that apparently privileged access to essential truth upon which statements of belief such as Stieglitz's are founded.

VII. ii Hawarden's 'family album'

Though children are the subject of comparatively few of Hawarden's photographs, she is a charming and unsentimental photographer of children, and amongst those images which have most obviously prompted the label of 'family portraiture' it is generally children who provide her with her quirkiest, most humorous and most complex images. In fact, her child photography has much in common with Butler's, since both, despite Hawarden's sentimentalized reputation as "a great baby lover", demonstrate a marked absence of Victorian mawkishness with regard to children. Indeed, in Hawarden's images the gap between the world of the child and the world of the adult is frequently expressed, not in terms of the conventional adult nostalgia for lost innocence, but rather in terms of the irrational, capricious, and even surreal nature of a child's perception of the world. This emphasis on the challenge presented by childish perception to an adult conception of reality goes a considerable way in itself towards undermining the epitomizing and unifying function of the portrait.

Nowhere is this better demonstrated by Hawarden than in an image of one of her younger daughters Elphinstone Agnes, aged about five years, simply entitled, as is usual with Hawarden, *Study from Life* [Fig. 28]. The child is pictured full length, facing to the right of the image, and standing in a short white frock, with her feet bare. A sense of grave thoughtfulness is conveyed by her sheer concentration. (It is typical of Hawarden's photographs of children, particularly very small children, that she rarely shows them smiling but rather wearing a serious or even worried expression quite incongruous with their years). She appears entirely unselfconscious and absorbed in contemplation, her left leg bent at the knee, as though unconsciously swinging her foot. The object of her contemplation is before her on the ground: a pair of small, shiny black boots (apparently her own) placed at right angles to each other, toe to heel, as though the boots were poised to move of their own volition, like a pair of surrealistically displaced (or misplaced) feet, undecided as to which direction to go in search of their owner.

There are two possibilities open to the photographer who wishes to 'capture the essence'

of her/his subject's identity. Firstly, there is the prolonged meditative study, as perfected by Cameron, in which case the subject must necessarily be aware of the camera, even if she/he appears not to be, (though one would expect the child's face to be more completely visible if it were indeed a photograph of this type, since facial expression is so fundamental to a visual characterization). Secondly, there is the freezing of the subject at a random moment when her/his consciousness of being observed has not been alerted, or has been deliberately lowered. Both are predicated on the hypothesis that there is an essence to be caught, though they diverge radically on the nature of that essence - whether, on the one hand, it is a solemn, constant thing to be coaxed from deep within the subject, or whether, on the other hand, it is unpredictable and capricious, requiring to be patiently stalked in order to catch it unawares.

Clearly the second strategy does not apply in this instance, but I would strongly question whether the first is at work here either. There are a number of considerations which fundamentally undermine the idea that it is intended to

epitomize the identity of the photographer's daughter. Hawarden does not employ techniques which would give it the quality of contemplation and spiritual depth, as exemplified by Cameron. The photograph forms an interesting parallel with Cameron's portrait of her grandson, *My grandchild Archie aged 2 years, 3 months*, 1865, [Fig. 29] (Royal Photographic Society, Bath). Cameron's image does two things which Hawarden's, significantly, does not. Firstly, and most obviously, it makes plain by the use of a title the emotional relationship between photographer and subject; secondly, it makes explicit the specifically religious essence which the photographer perceives in the child, by basing the composition on a certain visual type of the Virgin and Child, a type which, as Jeremy Howard points out in his catalogue notes for Colnaghi's 1990 Cameron exhibition:

> Mrs Jameson ... categorizes ... as the *Madre Pia*, 'where the Virgin in her divine infant acknowledges and adores the Godhead' [8].

Cameron introduces a female figure, (not the child's actual mother but the model who regularly sat for her as the Virgin Mary), in appropriate costume, who bends in worship over the sleeping figure of the child. Howard suggests that Cameron's composition is closely related to

several works which Cameron is very likely to have known, by Guido Reni and Carlo Dolci on the theme of the Virgin and sleeping Child, and its variant, St. Elizabeth watching over the infant John the Baptist as he sleeps.

The image is lit from the left with a soft, diffuse light which avoids any sense of a particular external source. Instead it catches the child's fair hair and combines with the softening effect of Cameron's calculated under-focusing and the tonal unity produced by long exposure to form a glow that seems to emanate like a halo from the child's head, and even to illuminate the Virgin's face. This skilful synthesis of the effects of lighting, soft focus and long exposure produces a sensual overall tonality which blends highlights through to shadows on the child's half-clothed body, perfectly communicating the almost downy quality of a baby's skin. Hazlitt termed this sensual quality in a visual work *gusto*: 'In a word, gusto in painting is where the impression made on one sense excites by affinity those of another' [9] - and, significantly, identified it in the work of all the artists on whom Cameron most consciously modelled herself, including Rembrandt,

Michelangelo, and particularly Titian. Of his use of colour he offered an assessment which might be applied to Cameron's sense of tonality with equal justification:

> There is gusto in the colouring of Titian. Not only do his heads seem to think - his bodies seem to feel. This is what the Italians mean by the *morbidezza* of his flesh-colour. It seems sensitive and alive all over; not merely to have the look and texture of flesh, but the feeling in itself. [10]

He goes on to make clear the connection between gusto and the articulation of a greater truth, or in other words, of essence:

> As the objects themselves in nature would produce an impression on the sense, distinct from every other object, and having something divine in it, which the heart owns and the imagination consecrates, the objects in the picture preserve the same impression, absolute, unimpaired, stamped with all the truth of passion, the pride of the eye, and the charm of beauty. [11]

As Hazlitt's language indicates, with its quasi-religious vocabulary of authenticity, purity, absoluteness, truth, etc., gusto is the sign of the synecdochic embodiment in an object of a greater, explicitly divine, unity. It reveals in the human figure its inner essence. It transforms the image from an object to be looked at into one that must be experienced and dwelt upon - no longer a physical, external object of sight but a spiritual, inner object of

meditation. The mother contemplating the figure of her sleeping child less as a child than as a spiritual truth, serves to dramatize the relationship between viewer and image, predicated on the assumption that the picture functions as object of meditation. (The picture as both depiction and object of meditation is an issue which is dealt with in more depth in the following chapter).

Had he lived in the age of photography, (he died in 1830), Hazlitt would surely have recognized gusto in the tonal effect of Cameron's technique. Cameron's art is pre-eminently one of synthesis. Just as her belief in typology enabled her to achieve a spiritual and moral synthesis of the pagan, the biblical and the modern, so her technique enabled her to bind the look of the image into its spiritual intention. It is thus that she persuades the viewer of the fundamentally sacred identity of the child - that in Archie as type of the Christ-child we are seeing both the essential truth about the nature of all children, and the particular essence of Archie's identity.

Hawarden's art, on the other hand, is one of analysis, which does not 'naturalize' the idea of

meditation by binding it into the structure of the photograph, but rather draws attention to it by presenting the viewer with an image of the endless flexibility of the child's mind at work. She is concerned less with the representation of meditativeness as the means of access to the 'truth' of a particular identity, than with the representation of mental activity *in itself*. In other words, she wants the viewer to be aware of *process*, not *essence*.

The image is not a study of the child *in herself*, but instead seeks to reveal mental process and the intense activity of the human imagination which makes it impossible to achieve an epitome of identity. The profound and imperturbable concentration which the child bestows on the boots, functions as a metaphor for the vividness of perception and the ability of the imagination to construct multiple levels of reality, animating the most mundane and boringly functional of objects, on a totally arbitrary and unpredictable basis, with a bizarre but compelling reality of their own. Hawarden's image is not based on the assumption that identity is a knowable and constant attribute, particularly for a parent with her child; rather the fantastic and

kaleidoscopic nature of the child's construction of reality functions as a magnifying lens, disclosing the inadequacy of the conventional view which claims identity as a static and unified quality which forms the bedrock of the real.

VII. iii An ironic Odysseus

In Part Two I discussed Hawarden's use of costume and theatricality as a means of playing with and confusing the question of identity. In Butler's work one finds only one example of the use of costume, in the above-mentioned *Johnston Forbes-Robertson in armour*, where Butler's ironic invocation of the moral and religious code embodied for the Victorian mind in the figure of the Arthurian knight, underlines not simply the artificiality of costume in similar Arthurian photographs - by Cameron, for example - but also the serious typological purpose which at times led Cameron and others into just such excess and over-zealousness in the name of a higher truthfulness which Butler is concerned to expose.

Johnston Forbes-Robertson shows no particular awareness of irony in the photographic process

itself, where the *Refards* portrait hinges on such an irony; but the lesson of the costume portrait, or historical portrait photograph, remained with Butler as a demonstration of the problematic element which play-acting and pretence introduce into identity. Blatant *theatricality*, of the kind that interested Hawarden, has no place in his work; the success of *Johnston Forbes-Robertson* depends precisely on the persuasiveness of the use of costume and the subtlety of the hint of modernity underneath it. But in his later work, and specifically in some of the self-portraits, his awareness of the disruptive potential of *acting* clearly emerges.

Indeed, we have already seen an example of Butler's ability as an actor in his *Stefano Scotto and Samuel Butler*, where it is upon his acting of the part of a statue, more even than the actual statue's lifelikeness, that the effectiveness of the photograph hinges. It was argued that, despite the fact that the photograph was not actually taken by Butler himself, he is just as much constructor of the image as if he had actually released the shutter. There are a number of other instances of Butler handing over control of the camera to another person, in order to take

a photograph of himself, the most interesting of which is probably a photograph which emerges from his research for a later book, *The Authoress of the Odyssey* (1897).

That there should be such a photograph connected with this book is perhaps not surprising. If in *Ex Voto* Butler set out to attack the great Western art historical canon, by means which included a challenge to the fundamental concept of authorship and the identity of the artist, in *The Authoress of the Odyssey* his challenge was aimed at the identity of Homer, the backbone of the English classical education, or rather at the monolith of classical scholarship which Homer was commonly taken to represent. Homer becomes another focus for Butler's attack on the concept of identity as unified and present, and carrying with it the authority of truth.

In fact, there was nothing new or scandalous in the suggestion that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were not written by the same person, and indeed did not even date from the same century. Butler's contention, calculated to outrage Homeric scholars, (and made public, one suspects, rather more for that reason than out of scholarly

motives), was that the *Odyssey* had been written by a woman, and that furthermore, in Odysseus the poet describes a central character who, far from voyaging thousands of miles around the Aegean and the Mediterranean before finding his way home to Ithaca, in effect spent years sailing in circles around Sicily:

> ... the voyages of Ulysses practically resolve themselves into a voyage from Troy to the neighbourhood of Sicily, and thenceforward into a sail around Sicily, beginning with Trapani and ending in the same place. [12]

Early in 1892, in the course of translating the *Odyssey*, Butler became convinced from the geographical references in the poem that the action took place entirely in and around Sicily, and in particular that both Odysseus's home, Ithaca, and Scheria, the town near which he meets Nausicaa in Book VI, were based on an actual Sicilian town called Trapani on the west coast of the island. He made several visits to Trapani over the next few years, and discovered a number of further facts that supported his theory, including the existence of a cave at the foot of nearby Mount Eryx which was known locally as 'Polyphemus's cave', Polyphemus of course being the Cyclops whose blinding Odysseus recounts in Book IX. The photograph with which I am concerned

was taken in the mouth of that cave in 1892, [13], and titled *Samuel Butler in Polyphemus' Cave* [Fig. 30].

The photograph is not among those which were used to illustrate *The Authoress*, although two photographs of 'Polyphemus's cave' were included, one taken at some distance from the outside, the other, taken from a distance of several yards, showing Butler and a local Trapanese scholar, Signor Sugameli, in the entrance to the cave. *Samuel Butler in Polyphemus' Cave* is not a factual image such as these. It shows Butler alone, confronting the camera, his arms at his sides, and a quiet smile on his face, in which one would not be far wrong in finding a resemblance with certain of his photographs of children whose minds appear to be engaged in some private plot.

What the viewer sees in this image is Butler's conscious assumption of the role of Odysseus; not in the costumed mode of the historical portrait photograph, but as a Victorian Odysseus incongruously attired in frock-coat, watch-chain, bowler hat and cane. That such an identification is intended is surely beyond doubt. Indeed, the opportunity would have been irresistible; where

else would Butler have chosen to identify himself with Odysseus, if not in the cave of Polyphemus, where Odysseus outwitted the cyclops by playing a calculated game with identity? (I quote from Butler's own abridged translation):

> ... I [Odysseus] went up to [Polyphemus] with the skin of wondrous wine that Maron had given me and gave him a bowl full of it. He asked for another, and then another, so I gave them to him, and he was so much delighted that he enquired my name and I said it was Noman. [14]

It will be remembered that Polyphemus falls into a drunken sleep, during which Odysseus and his men blind him with a sharpened stake of olive wood, and that Polyphemus cries out to the neighbouring cyclopes for help:

> When they came, they said, 'What ails you? Who is harming you?' and he answered, 'No man is harming me.' They then said that he must be ill, and had better pray to his father Neptune; so they went away, and I laughed at the success of my stratagem. [15]

When Polyphemus takes Odysseus at his word and tries to use 'Noman' as a positive, definitive sign, a concrete, present identity that can be grasped, the sign inverts itself into the negative and insubstantial 'no man', leaving Polyphemus disoriented and at a loss.

If Butler is Odysseus, this begs the question, who is Polyphemus? Perhaps we risk overstretching

the conceit; but we should overlook neither Butler's ironic awareness of the workings of the typological Victorian mind, nor the degree of conscious plotting involved in his challenge to classical scholarship. In the opening chapter of *The Authoress*, he wrote:

> ... the following pages will read a lesson of another kind, which I will leave the reader to guess at, to men whom I will not name, but some of whom he may perhaps know, for there are many of them. Indeed, I have sometimes thought that the sharpness of this lesson may be a more useful service than either the establishment of the points which I have set myself to prove, or the dispelling of the nightmares of Homeric extravagance which German professors have evolved out of their own inner consciousness. [16]

The above quotation is not the only one, though it is perhaps the most cutting, in which he makes his opinion of classical scholarship (and indeed conventionalism in any form) abundantly clear. He would certainly not have been unaware of the resonance of an image so suggestive as that of Polyphemus the one-eyed giant. He had always, of course, liked to see himself as a kind of giant killer - or rather, perhaps, as a David throwing stones through the Philistines' windows; that, in part, is what is implied in the title of the '*enfant terrible* of literature and science' that Butler claimed for himself, picturing himself 'heaving bricks' into the middle of 'the

literary and scientific bigwigs' [17] who were engaged in promoting epistemological and ontological certitudes.

In an episode in the *Notebooks* involving a seasick archdeacon, one finds a strong hint that Butler was aware of the similarity between Odysseus and David as figures of defiance and impudence, and liked to picture himself, with his camera, in both:

> When David found himself in the cave with Saul he cut off one of Saul's coat-tails; if he had had a camera and there had been enough light he would have photographed him ... [18].

Odysseus outmanoeuvred Polyphemus by tricking him over a question of identity. If Butler was not exactly tricking his personal one-eyed giant in the way that Odysseus tricked Polyphemus, he was clearly trying to upset the classical establishment's perceptions through a similar impudence - not, in his case, in an attempt to blind, but rather to elicit an admission of blindness.

The parallel between Odysseus's 'stratagem' and not simply Butler's aims for *The Authoress*, but the ironic strategy that underlies his challenge

to the Victorian mind with its desire for certainties and absolutes, is too vivid to be dismissed. Irony is built on the 'schizophrenic', shifting principle of disunited, collapsible identity. It is no coincidence that the non-correspondence of signifier and signified which betrays Polyphemus to Odysseus's merciless and exultant humour should mirror so accurately the catachretis of the ironic 'stratagem' employed by Butler, though one may perhaps be inclined to think, as in the case of *Ex Voto*, that Butler's patent failure to shake the foundations of the classical establishment causes the triumphant laughter of the giant-killer to ring a little hollow.

Notes

1. Trachtenberg, op.cit., pp.86-7.

2. Hazlitt, W., *Selected Essays*, (ed.) Keynes, G., The Nonesuch Press: London, 1934, p.653.

3. Exposures of 1/25 of a second had been possible since 1878, with the development of the gelatin plate by Charles Harper Bennett. With the advent of the "detective camera" a decade later the shutter speed was increased still further; and by 1890, shutters had been refined to such a degree that exposures of 1/5000 of a second became possible. (See Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography*, Secker & Warburg: London, 1986, p.128; John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, Macmillan; London, 1988, pp.53-4).

4. Benjamin, W., 'A short history of photography', *Screen*, Spring, 1972, p.18.

5. Ibid., p.8.

6. Newhall, B., *The History of Photography*, (see n.3 above), p.171.

7. Ibid.

8. Howard, J., *Whisper of the Muse*, (exh. cat.), Colnaghi & Co. Ltd: London, 1990, p.23.

9. Hazlitt, op.cit., p.610.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Butler, *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, Longmans, Green, & Co: London, 1897, p.163.

13. The same picture appears in Shaffer's *Erewhons of the Eye*, inexplicably entitled *Samuel Butler atop Staffel Kulm*, 1894. In support of my own identification I would point to two facts: firstly, the lighting of the image, which is more obviously consistent with an interior, lit from the left, than with the open air; and secondly, the fact that the photograph appears under the title I have given, with both title and dating in Butler's own handwriting, in his 1892 album.

14. *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, p.44.

15. Ibid., p.45.

16. Ibid, p.3.

17. *The Notebooks of Samuel Butler*, op.cit., p.183.

18. Ibid., p.214.

VIII Absorption

As I have already indicated, this chapter and the following one are closely related. If absorption signals the fact that the subject has psychologically/imaginatively stepped beyond the boundary of the conventional and generally-accessible structure of reality, marginality signals a similar crossing into, or existence within, another reality-system, but expressed in physical, rather than psychological, terms. The difference between the two is best summarized in terms of absorptive *states* as opposed to marginal *positions*. To put it another way, they represent two aspects of the same conception of subjectivity, expressed in one case through an inner, metaphorical, and in the other, an outer, literal space (or the illusion of such a space - one thinks here of the instances of false, deceptive spaces opened up by mirrors in Hawarden's images).

Inevitably, in some cases, the images discussed bridge the gap between the two chapters, and my decision to place them in one chapter rather than the other depends on the comparative

centrality to a given image, as I see it, of either inner or outer space. It is particularly true in Hawarden's case that a number of images clearly fit both categories, and indeed, nothing illustrates more vividly the gap between the range of subjects generally open to men and women artists of that period than the variety of people and places in which Butler finds his subjects, and the almost invariably similar settings and sitters of Hawarden's photographs.

It should also be said, however, that this was to a greater or lesser extent intentional; Hawarden clearly restricted herself quite deliberately to a narrower range of subjects than, for example, either Morisot or Cameron, indicating the intensity of her concentration on certain chosen motifs. The difference between Hawarden's and Butler's range of subjects lies in the fact that Hawarden returned repeatedly to a limited number of similar *constructed* motifs - the Dundrum estate workshops and the same group of workmen, for example, or her regular models in the Kensington studio, while Butler found his repeated patterns of imagery in innumerable places on his travels around Southern England, France, throughout Italy, and in Greece and Turkey. As a

result, it is unusual for strikingly similar motifs to occur more than between five and ten times in Butler's largely snapshot-oriented work, where Hawarden returns again and again to the same motif, testing every possible variation.

VIII. i Work

In *Absorption and Theatricality,* Michael Fried cites as a significant absorptive motif in the eighteenth-century French tradition, the image of a child at play or at her/his lessons. This is especially characteristic of the depiction of absorption in the work of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, (a painter of the generation before Greuze and Fragonard, whose influence on Greuze in particular was significant), in paintings such as *The Game of Knucklebones*, c.1734, (Baltimore, Museum of Art), and *The Card Castle,* c.1737, (Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art). It is also to be found in one of the few Greuzes to belong to a British collection during the early nineteenth-century, *Un Ecolier qui étudie sa leçon,* Salon of 1757, (now in the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh). While photographs of children make up only a small

proportion of the work of either Hawarden or Butler, similar imaginative spaces recur repeatedly in both. These take various forms, but mainly centre on images of women and men at work, reading, or asleep.

Hawarden's images of working men on the estate at Dundrum tend rather to be primarily studies of light effects than of absorptive motifs. A number of images taken c.1858-c.1861 do however depict states of absorption, as for instance, in a study of two workmen in the Dundrum workshops [Fig. 31]. The image serves to indicate the significance that the absorptive motif was to develop for Hawarden. Here, as in later works, absorption is not an indicator of work or even concentration *per se*; rather it signifies the withdrawal of the subject into an inner reality.

This meaning is confirmed by the presence of the figure on the left of the image, who is subject to the dematerializing action of light. He is substance on the very edge of substantiality, a mere cipher, who belongs more to the non-material world of the imagination than to the physical world of the workshop. (One can hardly refer to this figure as an 'apparition', for quite apart

from the misleadingly gothic connotations of such a term, the process is one of *dis*-appearance).

His abstraction from the material world functions as a mirror of the condition of his more physically present companion. This second figure, positioned in the centre of the image and flanked by his incorporeal companion, is engaged in planing a piece of wood, his head inclined towards the work bench in confirmation of his absolute concentration.

Inevitably, this self-absorption is deliberately manufactured; the photograph is far from candid, since it must have required an exposure of some length, given the conditions - perhaps as much as half a minute. Therefore some thought has been given to the significance of the image. It seems plausible that in this photograph Hawarden is working through and confirming in her own mind the significance of the absorptive motif; another motif which she has established more firmly for herself is used as the means to test the new idea, which expresses a similar abstraction into another level of reality, but in mental rather than physical terms.

Because of the accessibility to him of a greater variety of subject matter, images of work (in the sense of labour, as opposed to the genteel accomplishments practised by young ladies in contemporary genre paintings), are more typical of Butler's photographs than Hawarden's. On one level, of course, even if she had been able to wander around the streets of London, Paris, Florence, Naples, etc., her work belongs to the pre-snapshot era, and therefore she could never have taken precisely the kind of street-photographs that Butler took, the split-second exposure enabling the photographer to convey the unstudied, unposed concentration of a working woman or man engrossed by the intricacy or sheer physical effort of an ongoing job.

After the Dundrum estate photographs, where she could safely take pictures of working men who were, so to speak, captive models, the motif effectively disappears, as she concentrates more and more on studio work. To this extent, Roy Aspin is right when he suggests that her photographs reflect the lifestyle of rich young women, for the closest that Hawarden ever approaches again to the idea of work is in a single photograph of a woman, probably the

children's governess, sewing, and several photographs in which the model wears a 'Cinderella' costume and poses with a broom in her hand. Hawarden's work is far from being overburdened with social awareness; (Dodier makes the same point in the *catalogue raisonné* with regard to the pastoral harmony of the Dundrum photographs, which reveal nothing of the actual tensions between the local rural community and the Hawarden family, who were regarded with considerable bitterness as part of the English occupation of Ireland).

For Butler, on the other hand, working people were a frequent subject. His earliest existing photograph, *Mrs. Barratt, Langar*, taken in 1866 or 1867, [Fig. 32], shows a stout, aging woman in cap and apron, probably the Butler family's housekeeper or cook, seated outside the kitchen door, engrossed in a piece of knitting or darning. The photograph dates from Butler's art school days and the period of his greatest sympathy with Pre-Raphaelitism, and indeed it is an accomplished Pre-Raphaelite study, rendering detail and texture in high definition, and using the backdrop of the plant-clad wall to limit depth of field. (A much later photograph, *Boulogne*

Quay, 1891, [Fig. 41], discussed in the following chapter, suggests a conscious and ironic reprisal of the uncomplicated though undeniably appealing *Mrs. Barratt* study).

Later studies of absorption such as the *Boulogne Quay* image are typified by the ironic edge which is lacking in *Mrs. Barratt*. One such, and one of Butler's most striking and technically accomplished photographs, is *Knifegrinder, Bellinzona*, 1892, [Fig. 33]. It appears to be a study of perfect absorption, the balance between the motionlessness of the head, torso and arms, and the blur of foot and wheel, conveying the almost paradoxical blend of stillness and intensity characteristic of absorptive states. But in fact this straightforwardness is deceptive. The ambiguity is signalled by the figure of the girl who stands behind the knifegrinder. Her gaze is intense, but it is impossible to pinpoint its direction; is she looking at the knifegrinder, or does she confront the camera? Transferring our attention to the knifegrinder himself,we find that he is not absorbed in his work at all; he does it with the mechanical ease of long practice. He is actually looking out from the shadow of the brim of his hat, and directly returning the gaze of

the photographer/viewer. The photograph is certainly an image of work and absorption, but the two conditions are separate, not consequent upon each other. Absorption does not indicate unselfconsciousness, but quite the opposite – absolute awareness of the scrutiny of the gaze.

In a slightly later image, *Man shaving poodles, Naples*, 1893, [Fig. 34], there is no ambiguity about the absorption of the man, engrossed in clipping the coat of a small puppy which he holds up in one hand. Indeed, his absorption in itself would fulfil perfectly the criteria of the absorptive tradition, the intensity of his expression drawing the spectator in and eliciting from her/him a similar state of concentration. But Butler ensures that this effect is always, inevitably, undercut; firstly by the title, which blends a subtle exaggeration ('shaving', rather than 'cutting' or 'clipping') with an almost pedantic precision ('poodles', rather than simply 'dogs'), to produce a surreal effect which entirely subverts the fundamental mundanity of the image; and secondly through the figure of the dog sitting on the ground against the man's chair. The dog's rather anxious awareness of the camera functions as a bathetic counterbalance to

the intensity of the man's unselfconsciousness, ensuring that whenever the viewer is in any danger of falling under the absorptive spell, the humorous banality of the scene as against the frequently portentous quality of the absorptive tradition is always brought back in to relief.

VIII. ii Reading

In the first chapter of Part Two, I drew attention to the suggestion by Dodier that Hawarden's use of the theme of (usually) solitary women, absorbed in reading a book, might derive from the work of eighteenth-century French painters, particularly Jean-Baptiste Greuze and Jean-Honoré Fragonard. As has been pointed out, however, a direct connection between Hawarden's images and those of painters such as Greuze and Fragonard does not hold good. On the one hand there is the pragmatic consideration that Hawarden is not likely to have known Greuze's work, and almost certainly could not have known Fragonard's. On the other, and at a more significant level, there is the diametrical opposition between the way that Hawarden uses the absorption motif and the way it is used in eighteenth-century French

absorptive paintings. This is the point which I now wish to develop, since it is also fundamental to a large number of Butler's photographs.

In Hawarden's work there are a number of photographs which, picking up on the idea first noted in the second Narcissus image and developing from it, depict variations on the theme of a woman reading. In some the figures are paired, as in a photograph dating from c.1861, which shows two models positioned against the window of the Kensington studio, one seated, with a book in her lap, the other standing, with her hand on her companion's shoulder, while both gaze down at the open book. Others are more obviously suggestive of the single-figure studies that Dodier has in mind, though one is inclined to think that perhaps the parallel is suggested by superficial details, such as the frequent presence of a small desk which Dodier describes as 'French-style', and the dresses and hairstyles, which, in keeping with Hawarden's lax attitude to costume, often suggest an indeterminate historical past, possibly eighteenth-century, but not necessarily so.

In one such image, [Fig. 35], c.1861-c.1862, the model is depicted, seated and in left profile, reading at a desk. She faces towards a window on the extreme left of the image, clearly discernible as such (though it remains out of shot) by the presence of curtains, and the strong light which illuminates that left side, while the right side of the image remains heavily shadowed. The figure is poised in the centre, her head inclined towards the window, the hem of her skirt trailing back to anchor her in the darker half of the image. Half in shadow, half in light, she seems split between two spaces, bright and shadowed, inner and outer, private and visible. For if the light may be taken to represent another space, it is very clearly a space of the imagination, not a visible, physical world. The reader is entirely absorbed in her book; she does not look up to gaze through the window, and as we have noted, the window is in fact just out of shot, so that the viewer cannot look out of it either, but rather is forced, by the desire to construct an interpretation, to enter a space equally a product of the imagination as the imaginative world of the reader's book.

The use of light to convey a sense of the alteration of the self effected by the process of absorption, is developed still further in another image, dating from the same period as the previous photograph. (It is in the catalogue notes accompanying this particular photograph that Dodier suggests the parallel with Fragonard and Greuze [11]). Here, the model is seated sideways on a chair, near, but not actually at, a desk which is on the left of the image, while the window is just visible on the right. Thus her face and torso are turned away from the window and towards the viewer over the chair-back, though she remains absorbed in her book and does not confront the camera. In this image, as I have said, the window is in shot on the right edge of the picture; one of the horizontal bars separating the panes of glass is visible, as is the panelling of one side of the window frame. But what lies beyond the window is not visible, to the viewer any more than to the figure whose head is physically turned away from it. Underlining this is the device of the stream of light which enters through this window dissolving the definition of the model's skirt, so that she seems to be beginning to merge with the light itself. Is the figure physically present or

incorporeal? The photograph records an indeterminate state of being, calling into question the primacy of presence as the fundamental criterion of reality, suggesting instead an unresolved split between inner and outer identity.

This is significant, because the absorptive motif has traditionally been used with quite the opposite end in mind. It has conventionally indicated precisely the inner integrity of the subject - the subject's withdrawal into a more profound self, or, put another way, inner communion with God. The figure of the reading woman in particular, as we have seen, is fundamentally connected with Marian symbolism, and conventionally functions as metaphor for the purest, most perfect self-internalization - mythical parthenogenetic doubling.

What then is the fundamental difference between Hawarden and Butler's absorptive *images, and the* significance of absorption in the work of painters such as Chardin, Greuze and Fragonard? One can hardly discuss the subject of images of absorption, particularly when they have been specifically connected with Greuze and Fragonard,

without reference to Michael Fried's major study of absorptive painting in eighteenth-century France, *Absorption and Theatricality*. What Fried uncovers is a widespread desire among French artists and writers on the arts, amongst whom he singles out Diderot as being to a great extent the architect of this desire, for a greater moral seriousness in art. This is largely a reaction to the perceived frivolity and simple sensual gratification of the Rococo. It is against the sense of Rococo as superficial spectacle that Diderot calls for a 'detheatricalization' of art; in other words, the viewer should ideally be made unaware of looking at an artificial image.

Thus one finds in French painting of the period a fascination with images of absorptive states. The assumption is that the painting somehow negates the presence of the beholder by the figure's obliviousness of that presence. (This assumption betrays the fundamental fiction necessary to all representational paintings which use representation as a guarantee of a definitive reality – that of the painter's ability to invest his subject with life; this fiction rests on the belief that the great painter is not simply an accomplished workman whose mastery of his art

produces 'life-*like*' imitations, but a quasi-divine figure who creates - who almost literally breathes life into his subjects).

The work of both Hawarden and Butler, in its concern with artificiality and consciousness, is in direct confrontation with this tradition. This is particularly obvious in Hawarden's case, since she uses precisely that theatrical tableau element singled out by Diderot for special censure; but Butler's ironic distance, underlining the gap between viewer and image, is an equally fundamental challenge to the absorptive tradition. This challenge is a mark, not so much of a wider awareness of Diderot's thought outside its period and location, but rather, on a more general level, of the continued primacy in academic art, which arose as a fundamental tenet of Renaissance aesthetics, of the idea of the human spirit as the supremely noble subject which all artists have to master in order to attain greatness.

Of his favourite portrait of himself, painted in 1760 by Garand, Diderot wrote:

> Je suis représenté ... jetant mes regards au loin, comme quelqu'un qui médite. Je médite en effet sur cette toile. J'y vis, j'y respire, j'y suis animé; la pensée paroît à travers le front.

> ("I am portrayed ... gazing into the distance, like one who meditates. I am, in fact, meditating in this canvas. I am living in it, I am breathing in it, I am alive in it; thought is visible on my brow." Fried's translation). [2]

As Fried points out, Diderot is not simply saying that his portrayal in a state of meditation is a true representation of his character. Rather, he implies that to invest any painting depicting the human figure with a true sense of 'life', to persuade the viewer that the figure is actually living and breathing, the artist should (paradoxically) depict her/him, not active and moving, but lost in stillness and contemplation. The reasoning is clearly that such a state gives access to a 'truer', more essential life than that of the merely outer, moving being.

The difficulty here is of course that, in order to persuade the viewer that she/he has direct access to 'truth' through the painting, the viewer is required to treat the figure in the painting to all intents and purposes as though it were actually sentient, since it is its 'life' that guarantees its truth. There are two obvious pretences at work here: firstly, the masking of the painting as facture or artifice, by treating the two-dimensional image of a figure as an

actual, conscious being; and secondly, the masking of the self-consciousness of the sitter, since all portrayals (from life, at least) of the human figure presuppose a model who must necessarily be conscious - even though she/he be feigning unconsciousness - of the viewer's gaze, through her/his inevitable awareness of the intense scrutiny of the painter. In the absorptive tradition, the being created in the portrait is required simultaneously to transcend both image and model.

Absorption in Hawarden's photographs has quite another effect. In part this is due to the photographic medium itself, although, (and one is continually aware of this in the work of Cameron, for example), this is not to say that such transcendental effects cannot be achieved in a photograph. But Hawarden's work deals fundamentally with *visibility*, and her concern is specifically not to disguise the working of the gaze. In this the camera is a useful and appropriate tool, since the immediate and comparatively unmediated relationship of camera to subject gives it a particularly 'naked' gaze, the rawness of which must be disguised by photographers such as Cameron who wish to achieve

an illusion of transcendence. We have seen how, even in a work such as the odalisque image, where the desire for 'invisibility' is so powerfully expressed, Hawarden continues to emphasize the opposite, the ever-presence of the gaze, in the split (and therefore doubly visible) figure. Hawarden's use of absorptive motifs signals awareness of the self, contemplation of the self as other. The figure is absorbed in the idea of the gaze.

There are fewer images of people reading in Butler's work than in Hawarden's. What they lack in number, however, they more than gain in bizarreness, for they centre on the figure of a blind man. The man seems to have been a regular feature outside Greenwich station, sitting on a folding stool with a pile of books in his lap, sometimes wearing a sign around his neck announcing his condition, 'DEAF & BLIND', as he does in a photograph entitled *Blind man with children, Greenwich*, 1892.

In *Blind Man reading the Bible, Greenwich*, [Fig. 36], also dated 1892, he is depicted sitting against a wall pasted over with

advertisements, his Bible open in his lap. (There is of course no reason why a blind man should not be reading; in fact, the positioning of his hands suggests that he is indeed reading Braille. But Butler uses the interplay of image and title to heighten the incongruity of the image, producing the overwhelming impression that the man is bizarrely sitting with a pile of books he cannot read).

The heavy, insistent print of the advertisements on the wall behind the 'reading' figure, announcing train and ferry services to the Continent, and energetically threatening action against bill stickers, contrasts starkly with the incommunicative Bible. Thus, finally, through the ironic ambiguity of the photographic image, Butler fully expresses the modern resonance of the advertisement hoarding, which he recognized so early on in his career as the text of a new, ironic, secular gospel. The image contains several layers of meaning, and clearly one such layer is an indictment of the failure of religion to communicate to modern society, Butler himself included. As Shaffer points out:

> It is in these studies of the viewless Bible contrasted to the sharply readable 'page' of urban hoarding behind the blind man that

Butler finally executes a successful version of his 'Advertising painting'. [3]

In this case, however, there are no discernible reservations on Butler's part about their message, as there are, for instance, in his account of the Richmond cigarette man and the sewing machine woman in *Alps and Sanctuaries*. Modern advances, particularly in travel, always fascinated Butler. The promised "Paris in 7½ hours" of the advertisement suggests his enthusiasm in *Alps and Sanctuaries* at the prospect, with the opening of the St. Gothard tunnel, of being able to reach the Canton Ticino in little more than twenty-four hours.

Blind man reading the Bible goes deeper than this, however, in its challenge, attacking the very concept of spirituality embodied in the absorption motif. Entirely sealed in his enforced self-absorption, the Greenwich blind man is a savage ironization of the spiritual wholeness promised by the absorptive tradition. His is a self-enclosed, incommunicable, and therefore necessarily frustrated and frustrating, inner life that contrasts profoundly with the most powerful of eighteenth-century absorptive figures, Belisarius. Belisarius was a distinguished Roman

general who, according to a (rather distorted) legend, suffered a reversal of fortunes and was reduced to blindness and poverty [4]. He was the subject of works by a number of artists of the period, including Jacques-Louis David, who evidently considered the theme sufficiently significant to necessitate a reworking, the first version being exhibited at the Salon of 1781, (now in the Musée Wicar, Lille), the second [Fig. 37], mostly the work of one of his students, at the Salon of 1785, (Louvre, Paris).

Belisarius is conventionally represented as bearing his afflictions with great nobility and inner calm, and is invariably depicted receiving alms from other figures, for whom he functions as an object of the most profound contemplation. Thus the figure of Belisarius personifies the perfectly absorbed and spiritually awakened condition of his companions. He functions as the ultimate paradigm of the ideal 'unawareness of being beheld' sought by the absorptive tradition.

Clearly the Greenwich blind man also sits in the street in the hope of charity from passers-by. In fact, he is even more completely cut off from contact than Belisarius, because he is deaf as

well as blind, as the sign in *Blind man with children* tells us; and yet he seems deceptively conscious of the presence of onlookers, his face turned, almost straining, towards the camera. The viewer knows that he cannot be aware, that the illusion of awareness must be coincidental, but his attitude underlines the fictive nature of the inner wholeness and self-sufficiency of the blind man as portrayed in the absorptive tradition. It reveals the fiction of the blind man's noble patience and inner peace. For the Greenwich blind man, though he is condemned to remain fundamentally out of contact with the onlooker, seems equally inevitably to struggle against his condition. Clearly he is indeed 'aware', to the extent that he is conscious of his isolation and vainly straining out of it to claim an impossible contact. He is very far from being the passive model of spiritual contentment.

VIII. iii Sleep

Within the overall theme of absorption, the most striking parallel between Hawarden's work and Butler's is the motif of the sleeping figure. We have already encountered this image in Hawarden's

work, in the sleeping odalisque [Fig. 17]. The image registers the expression of desire for withdrawal from the outer, perceived or imposed self, into a state of inner, self-determined being. But at the same time, the visible outer self is split or doubled by the reflection in a mirror, as though Hawarden is deliberately undermining the wholeness of the internalized self, and casting doubt on its practicability. This is typical of the ambiguity of the absorptive motif. It indicates withdrawal into another world, but it does not necessarily therefore confirm the inner or 'spiritual' fulfilment of the withdrawn subject. By the very admission of the possibility of another plane of experience, the absorptive motif creates a finely poised situation which has serious consequences for the idea of a unified subject inhabiting a concomitantly unified reality.

Butler's goal is fundamentally the same as Hawarden's, but his treatment of the sleeping figure differs from hers, partly in the fact that his images are not posed, but of actual sleeping figures, partly in the invariably comic effect of the examples he chooses. His travels on the Continent proved invaluable in this respect, the

Southern European siesta providing a rich vein of such images, particularly as labourers who had to take their siesta on the job happily slept anywhere, no matter how inconvenient or uncomfortable - Butler provides examples of siestas taken on a park bench, on top of a narrow dry-stone wall, or (most common of all) lying in the street, extended indiscriminately across the pavement and out into the road. The comic effect of such images is partly cumulative, and derives from the startling frequency with which Butler was able to record scenes so bizarre to the British eye.

Typical of Butler's studies of sleeping figures is *Men asleep in the Piazza S Marco, Florence*, 1892, [Fig. 38]. Here, a group of eight men, all in dusty labourers' clothes, with heavy hob-nailed boots, sleep stretched out on the pavement of the piazza, one of them preferring to use the pavement as a pillow and lie in the gutter. Though they appear to lie haphazardly, there is actually a certain methodical air about the group, which contrasts humorously with their tough labourer's image, their worn and dirty clothing and the evidently filthy surface on which they are lying with complete unconcern. There is a pattern

to their relative positions, some lying on the very edge of the kerb, others against the wall, a narrow gangway having been thoughtfully left between the two rows of sleeping figures for pedestrians to pass. One man has taken his boots off and placed them side by side in the gutter, as though next to his bed. Only the man lying in the gutter, and the hat which has fallen off the head of his unconscious neighbour, disrupt the neatness of the design.

Always keenly aware of the power of titles, Butler was adept at deceptively straightforward captions, accompanied by precise dates which add to the sense of simple objectivity, written under the images in the albums in which he carefully kept most of his photographs, (for example, the Piazza S. Marco picture was taken on September 8 1892). This image is a typical illustration of that technique. In its bizarre combination of the surreal and the mundane it ironizes the idea of Florence as great cultural centre, the home of Giotto and Dante, and the birthplace of the Renaissance, out of which developed the rationalization and hence, according to the established view, the perfection of art.

Butler's irony is almost certainly directed once more against Ruskin, for whom Florence was one of the profoundly resonant Renaissance sites. In typically synecdochic and hyperbolic style, he writes in his handbook for tourists, *Mornings in Florence*, that Florence can be seen embodied in the outline of a vase painted by Giotto [5]. This is characteristic of Ruskin's integrative, fundamentally anti-ironic strategy, and one can clearly see in Butler's image another instance of his reaction against what he considered the retrogressive mythicization enshrined by the Ruskinian view of art. Florence, more than any other city, is conventionally the place where tourists go, their opinions formed by guidebooks such as Ruskin's, precisely to 'lose' themselves in 'Art'. Butler sets this myth against the more prosaic state of absorption of the sleeping Florentine locals: what are they dreaming of? - certainly not Giotto.

While Butler's images of sleeping figures almost invariably contain an element of humour, several, depicting small boys asleep in the street, also demonstrate the sensitivity of which Butler's photography is capable, especially when children

are the subject. A particularly good example of this ability to blend gentleness towards his subject with an eye for the bizarre or humorous touch, is his *Sleeping Boy, Casale*, 1893, [Fig. 39]. Here Butler has angled the shot to incorporate the strange barrier of adult legs as a continuation on the left of the image of the wall against which the child rests. His bare, slightly splayed legs contrast with the standing, trousered legs of the unknown men.

The boy's back is against the wall, so that he faces in the opposite direction to the legs. This is in itself symbolic, the sleeping child and the wall of adult legs facing into opposite spaces. The wall makes visible the boundary between one world and another - the adult world which lies on the other side of the wall of legs, and the world within the sleeping child's head. He is clearly a child who works for a precarious living, (there is a small brush made of twigs tucked in against his leg), an almost Dickensian street child, grubby, and wearing patched and dirty clothing and a battered hat, taking his siesta, like any other labourer. Butler catches a moment of escape into a more obviously child-like world of dreams and imagination - into the kind of

innocent, unburdened freedom that the more privileged fondly imagine to be the 'natural' state of childhood.

Sleeping children were a common motif of Victorian painting and photography. A number of such images are found in Cameron's work, a particularly good instance being her portrait, discussed in the previous chapter, of *My grandson Archie aged 2 years, 3 months*. Archie was only one of a number of small children photographed by Cameron asleep or feigning sleep, who are intended to suggest explicitly the embodiment of innocence and purity, the infant Christ. Arthur Hughes, the subject, with his daughter Agnes, of Carroll's portrait, made it the theme of his even more sentimental painting *The Woodman's Child*, 1860, (Tate Gallery, London - not to be confused with Millais's *The Woodman's Daughter* 1851, in the Guildhall Gallery, London), in which the innocence of the sleeping child is set against the background of the analogous innocence and purity of nature.

Bartram points out the association of sleep with death in many such images, for certainly the Victorian tendency to sentimentalize childhood was

deeply bound up with the very real fear of infant mortality, and this association is clearly implied in photographs such as Cameron's, which evoke the figure of Christ; indeed, another image, probably also of Archie and dating from the same session as *My grandson Archie*, in which the sleeping child grasps a small wooden cross in his hand, is actually entitled by Cameron *The Shadow of the Cross*, 1865, (V&A, London). (Interestingly, Hawarden seems to have photographed a sleeping child only once, in an experiment with a Madonna and Child composition. It is not a success, as she clearly realized, for it was not repeated).

In Butler's *Sleeping boy*, it is the tension between the conventional image of innocence embodied in sleeping children, and this child's status as just another labourer enjoying a siesta, which gives the image such penetration. The apparently chance nature of the snapshot undercuts any conventional sentimentality, and by creating a sense of the boy's genuine exhaustion - in the lolling head, the splayed legs, the apparent disregard for the obviously less than comfortable position in which he is forced to rest - the image suggests a more pragmatic awareness of the

precarious balance maintained within the sleeping figure, between the vulnerability of the child and the enforced maturity of the working boy than is displayed in the treatment of similar subjects by Dickens, for example.

The image juxtaposes the ideal world and the actual world in a way that recalls Hawarden's odalisque photograph. The boy is able to snatch a short period of freedom from his hard and prematurely adult way of life, and retreat into a private space inside his head. But just as the mirror functions in Hawarden's photographs as a constant reminder of the actually divided condition of the human subject, as opposed to its ideal wholeness and integrity, so the peculiar barrier of disembodied legs maintains in the spectator's mind, not so much the sentimental idea of the harsh adult world that the child will inevitably have to grow up to inhabit, as the more shrewd understanding that, awake, the child already inhabits this world, and that the barrier is one that he will cross, not at some point in the future, but very shortly, when he gets up and goes back to work. The wall of legs indicates in its very surreality the incongruous division between worlds and identities, that already

exists within the child - a paradigm of all conscious human experience.

Sleeping pigs in Piazza Gaudenzio Ferrari, Varallo, 1892, [Fig. 40], is the most obviously comic of Butler's various 'sleep studies'. It dates from his stay in Varallo in the summer of 1892, where he came across the scene of a group of pigs sleeping in the sun on a patch of grass in the town's central piazza. Behind them, against a high plastered wall, stands a man, presumably their owner, squinting against the sun as he looks directly back at the camera. His face expresses the humour of the scene, his smile indicating his sense of the oddity of Butler's desire to photograph his pigs - a consciousness which mirrors the photographer's own awareness of the surreal quality of his subject, or rather, the surreality it takes on precisely by virtue of of having been frozen into an image.

It is a scene that a local would hardly notice in everyday experience; a scene for which there is probably a totally logical explanation which would entirely forestall any sense of bizarreness. Clearly the likelihood is that the

pigs have been brought into town to be sold at market. But Butler exploits the power of the image, and in particular the apparently irrefutable authority of the *photographic* image, to privilege this no doubt mundane and completely explicable fragment of provincial life by isolating it within the device of a picture frame.

The rectangular picture frame, far from being the 'natural' form of an image, as the custom of centuries persuades us, (in fact, the 'natural' form of the image produced by the camera lens is circular), is a central element in the artifice of the image, designed to announce the special status of what lies within it as 'Art' and therefore 'Truth'. The frame functions as a form of visual emphasis, which declares the aesthetic/moral/metaphysical value of the subject.

By framing such a scene, Butler invests it with an ironic dignity. In other hands, the result might have been patronising, the owner and his pigs becoming the butt of a joke about their unsuitability as a subject for 'Art', or as the embodiment of a universal 'Truth'; but Butler avoids this, for on the one hand he clearly sees the man as in some sense a reflection of himself,

identifying the amused consciousness of the pig owner with his own response to the scene, and on the other, he has a far bigger and completely different target in his sights. His irony is directed against what he recognizes as the Western habit of assuming the existence of a hierarchy of significant and insignificant strands of reality, the placing of which depends on the extent to which they contribute to a 'higher', unified, universal Truth. Butler's aim is to deflate that concept of 'Truth', and claim a place for the sleeping pigs in a multiple reality system that is fundamentally banal.

Notes

1. Dodier, op. cit., note to D418.

2. Fried, M., *Absorption and Theatricality*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1980, p.113.

3. Shaffer, op.cit., p.215.

4. Fried, op.cit., pp.146-7.

5. Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence*, H.M.Caldwell: New York, p.41.

IX On the margins - the multiplicity of the real

Butler's desire to establish banality as the basic condition that links the multiple aspects of reality, is borne out in a rich vein of images which depict human beings and, once again, animals, in situations that take place 'on the margins' of the familiar and known. In Hawarden's case, the focus, lacking Butler's irony, is rather on the divided and confused, and here again, as was noted in the previous chapter, the partly enforced, partly voluntary restrictions on the range of subjects open to her is noticeable. But she too is concerned with figures who find themselves positioned physically on the margin between different realities, despite the fact that a sense of disparate realities must be constructed within the walls of the studio, through the deployment of mirrors and windows.

IX. i Abroad - ports and quays

Butler suggests the necessary ambiguity of the relationship between self and other in a far more light-hearted and indeed celebratory manner than Hawarden. Unaffected by the constraints of a

female lifestyle, he welcomes such disturbance as a weapon in his armoury. Amongst the most frequent and bizarre scenes in which his enjoyment of confusion is articulated are those aboard ferries and on quays, (usually at Calais and Boulogne).

Ports in Butler's work are sites of fundamental ambiguity; places equally of ingress and egress, import and export, arrival and embarkation, the daily life of which is dictated by the changing nature of the tides, they represent an interweaving of cultures and languages, and the point at which the traveller feels her/himself leaving a familiar culture and stepping into the cultural other. Thus Butler's interest in the French channel ports and the cross-channel ferries, while owing much to his eye for the bizarre, was not simply an idiosyncracy on his part, but a recognition and deliberate targeting of a general human propensity, and a particularly English trait - a tendency developed perhaps to a pronounced degree in island nations with a literally and metaphorically insular outlook - the suspicion of the Other.

Frederick Burwick points out that Calais is the scene of Dr. Syntax's first experience of the grotesque, in *Doctor Syntax in Paris, or A Tour in Search of the Grotesque,* 1820, (an anonymous parody of Rowlandson and Combe's satire of the picturesque landscape aesthetic, *The Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque,* published a decade earlier). He also notes of Wordsworth's *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820,* that Wordsworth's experience of the foreign commences, like Dr. Syntax, as he disembarks at Calais. Wordsworth encounters the grotesque in the shape of a group of French fish-wives described in the first sonnet, 'Fish-women - On Landing at Calais'. He is unable to come to terms with the fish-wives in any way other than to envisage them, in conventional literary grotesque terminology, as witches and hags:

> Withered, grotesque, immeasurably old,
> And shrill and fierce in accent! [i]

They are perceived as inhuman - monsters rather than women; and their alienness is clearly heightened for Wordsworth by their work-worn and evidently prematurely-aged appearance, (exposing an ironic failure of his romantic sympathy for those members of the poor and labouring classes

who exist outside the familiar and meaningful landscape into which he absorbs English figures).

In this context, it is interesting to note that Butler's photograph *Boulogne Quay*, 1891, [Fig. 41], focuses upon a woman, probably also a fish-wife, at work in the harbour at Boulogne. Wearing a white cap, she sits on the quay, absorbed in a task the precise nature of which is unclear. Around her is a clutter of baskets, kegs, cans, and lengths of rope and canvas, the debris of the quay. In the background, to the left of the image, boats and harbour buildings are faintly visible. The arm, leg and boot of a man wearing labourer's clothes and turned towards the camera are visible on the extreme right of the picture, an image of Butler's own exteriority to the scene. Despite the woman's apparent unawareness of the camera, Butler declares his presence, both in this peripheral figure and in the looks of the group of three women and a man on the upper right edge of the image, who stare with partly curious, partly amused expressions at the photographer and his oblivious subject [2].

The concentration on her face and the blurred movement of her hands underline the actual process

of work, and in doing so convey dignity and seriousness to her occupation. At the same time, as the amusement of the watching figures indicates, the image is not a moralistic evocation of either the virtues or the evils of labour. In its depiction of a harsh, contemporary dockyard environment as opposed to a timeless 'English cottage garden' one, it can be read on one level as a self-ironizing comment upon the earlier *Mrs. Barratt*, which is obviously closer to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century genre scenes portraying the conservative values of tranquil rustic and domestic industry. But in this later image Butler's main interest lies less in the woman's occupation than in her marginality. That is, he is primarily concerned with her status as other, particularly as perceived through the eyes of the English traveller.

Wordsworth draws a hypothetical comparison between the perceived ugliness of the Calais fish-women and the beauty of the mythical Nereids, painting a grotesque picture of the fish-women as malformed sea nymphs, or evil spirits of the sea. Butler's fish-wife is also conceived in grotesque terms, but his conception of her bears out the fact that his is a radically different view from

the negative, anxiety-ridden Romantic one, suggesting rather the positive grotesque of folk humour which Bakhtin, in talking about Rabelais, would describe more than half a century after Butler's death as 'grotesque realism'.

Butler fuses the fish-wife with the stuff of the quay from which she makes her living, the animate and inanimate forming a single entity. She has no visible feet, and the lengths of canvas and rope stretch away to the left of the image, indistinguishable from the dark fabric of her dress, like an extension of her body - the tail of a sea-creature washed up among the flotsam of the harbour, not uncanny in any disturbing sense, but rather, with an odd sense of homeliness about her. She is a kind of mermaid; not a fatally entrancing siren, but round, motherly and sympathetic, ironically undercutting the alienness of the Other.

Probably taken on the same trip, is a photograph entitled, *Gogin and blocks of ice on the quay, Boulogne*, 1891, [Fig. 42]. On the left of the image, in right profile, stands Butler's friend Gogin, bowler-hatted, overcoated

and moustached, with a rolled umbrella under his arm, anticipating the sober, mundane, bowler-hatted figures which in the twentieth century were to become so characteristic of Magritte's paintings. (Shaffer points out that similar figures appear in Magritte's photographs of his friends). Like the fish-wife, Gogin is in a state of absorption; but the ooject at which he stares with such comic gravity is a pile of large ice blocks - an Arctic in miniature which seems to have materialized inexplicably in the middle of the busy quay - the other quay inhabitants, however, failing to exhibit the slightest disquiet at this phenomenon.

Butler's image turns the traditional significance of the absorptive motif on its head. Where clarity of understanding and inner certainty should be indicated, Gogin is a comic figure of disorientation and incredulity. Literally marginalized on one side of the image by the ice, he gazes not in meditation but because he cannot believe his eyes. More than this, however, he is himself a central element of the surreality of the scene. The image could not be more definitely divided into two halves if it were a composite photograph made up of two completely unconnected

negatives. The harbour scene in the background goes on in its own right, undisturbed, barely defined, almost timeless. Gogin and the blocks of ice belong together in the sharp modernity of their absolute incongruence, fundamentally separated from the normal life carrying on within yards of them. If the ice blocks have materialized out of nowhere, Gogin has materialized with them. He is as out of place as they, with his bowler and umbrella. Butler shows that the terms of otherness are interchangeable. If a French quay is alien from the point of view of the English traveller, there is equally a point of view from which it is the English traveller standing on a French quay, a model of staid, middle-class respectability among the hardened sailors, fishermen, fish-wives and dockers, who is the alien.

IX. ii Afloat - boats and ferries

Butler's interest is not in the sea *per se*, but rather in the process of life that takes place on and around boats. Anecdotes abound in the *Notebooks* and *Memoir* concerning travel on the Thames and Cross-Channel steamers. They gave

unlimited scope for his ironic typology. He snapped the Wife of Bath aboard the 'Clacton Belle', and it was also aboard one of the Clacton steamers that he had his encounter with Michelangelo. The conventional romantic view of the sea as representing the religious or quasi-religious mystery of the sublime - as, for example, in the seascape photographs of Gustave le Gray taken in the 1850's - is transformed by Butler's ironic view, according to which the sea is perceived rather as a blank between countries, a gap between two identities, in which the fluctuating, the indefinite and the ambiguous are paramount.

The boat functions in Butler's work as a kind of non-place. Floating - literally and figuratively - in that gap between countries, physically attached to neither, it becomes a twilight zone in which the surreal runs riot. He photographed numerous subjects on boats, but his irreverent genius seems to have had a bizarre capacity for spotting religious figures in these situations more frequently than in any other context. He clearly delighted in the idea of a proverbial model of religious certainty out of its element

and at the mercy of the ambiguities represented by boats and the sea.

His photograph *Nuns on the Lake of Lucerne*, 1894, [Fig. 43], demonstrates Butler's ability to detect the surreal in a quiet, and in many ways unremarkable, scene. There is surely nothing intrinsically odd about a group of nuns using the boat to cross Lake Lucerne. And yet Butler makes it strange in the same way that the sleeping pigs are made strange, by the very act of taking notice, of drawing attention to, of framing. By lifting the scene out of its context, Butler takes it out of the continuum of 'ordinariness', so that the viewer is led to remark rather upon its unusual than its mundane aspect.

The mundane necessity of taking the boat to get from A to B confers upon the nuns an ordinariness which makes them figures of ambiguity; in other words, on one level they are like any other ferry passengers using a local route, and engaged in whatever banal occupation serves to pass the time of the crossing. Indeed, if they were not nuns, it would be considerably easier to interpret their occupations; one would state

without hesitation that the two older figures seem to be gossiping over a letter, while the younger one might be filing her nails. But their wimples and veils force us to reject the banal in favour of pastimes more in keeping with our idea of their vocation – gossip must be transformed into theological discussion, and the young novice's apparent concentration on her hands into the saying of her rosary.

The comedy derives from the very fine line between unremarkability and utter bizarreness on which the image rests. The setting taken without the information of the title is certainly highly ambiguous. If the benches looked only a little more like pews and the table a little more like an altar, there would be nothing to remark upon. But in this gap between church and ship, the bizarre comes into play, and it is this *which*, in preserving one's doubt as to whether the setting can really be an ecclesiastical one, draws one's attention to the row of three 'crosses' behind the nuns, and the misty/mystical 'aura' above their heads, which confirm the setting as a parody of sacredness.

The subject of animals on boats is almost as fruitful for Butler as that of ecclesiastical figures, though he clearly felt considerably more sympathy for the plight of a sea-sick sheep or horse than for a bishop in a similar condition, as, for instance, in *Horse on steamer going to Boulogne*, 1892, [Fig. 44]. In its fusion of the animate and inanimate to create a strange, hybrid creature, such as could exist only in the ambiguous world of ferries and ports, the photograph is similar to that of the mermaid/fish-wife. The 'creature's' elephantine body is formed by a roofless horse-box draped with tarpaulin, while its head is recognizably that of a horse, but a horse wearing a hood which covers even its ears, exposing only its nose and eyes to the December mid-channel weather.

Perhaps the most well-known image of passengers on board ship is Stieglitz's *The Steerage*, 1907, [Fig. 45] (National Gallery of Art, Washington), which post-dates Butler's work by little more than a decade. *The Steerage* is one of the classic photographs of the American avant-garde, and the work that Stieglitz himself regarded with greatest pride. It is taken from the first-class passenger

deck of an ocean liner, looking down into the steerage, the cheapest quarters, occupied by only the poorest passengers, usually emigrants. Stieglitz's interest in the scene, as his own comments reveal, is primarily aesthetic rather than documentary:

> A round straw hat, the funnel leaning left, the stairway leaning right, the white drawbridge with its railings made of circular chains - white suspenders crossing on the back of a man in the steerage below, round shapes of iron machinery, a mast cutting into the sky, making a triangular shape ... I saw a picture of shapes and underlying that a feeling I had about life. [3]

The apparent crush and chaos of the scene resolves itself, as Stieglitz says, into a formal structure of contrasting angles and echoed forms punctuated by small insistent points such as the crown of the down-tilted straw hat, the cross formed by a pair of braces.

Against this one might place a photograph such as Butler's laconically titled *Sheep on board steamer* [Fig. 46]. The image, dated August 1892, captures a scene on a ferry carrying local people and their livestock between Palermo and Trapani. It juxtaposes a distressed woman presumably suffering from sea-sickness and, looking scarcely less nauseous, two evidently unhappy black sheep which seem to be staggering

about on the deck. On the left of the little group stands another sheep, on the right a man, both apparently better sailors than their companions, and both staring curiously, almost suspiciously, at the camera.

The subjects' consciousness functions not only as a declaration of the presence of the photographer, but also as a reflection of the consciousness with which he conceives the image. This is fundamental to the contrast between Butler's *Sheep* and *The Steerage*, where the ideal pursued by Stieglitz is that the medium should be transparent to the viewer. The contrast between the two images is expressed metaphorically by the fundamentally different point of view from which they are taken - the vantage point of the first-class passenger on the ocean liner, as opposed to that of the fellow traveller sharing the single deck of the local ferry - underlining the difference between the view of the artist who is consciously creating 'art', and that of the aesthetic saboteur who makes images deliberately to undermine the supposedly immutable values of artistic and philosophical dignity for which 'art' stands.

In its way of course, Butler's image is equally a statement of 'a feeling about life'; not about its underlying physical and metaphysical poetry and balance, but on the contrary, its fundamental absurdity, the tendency of meaning and reason to collapse vertiginously into confusion, and the illogical juxtapositions and ironic mismatches which constitute lived experience.

IX. iii Through the looking-glass?

As we have seen, through the device of the mirror, Hawarden explores the idea that the human subject does not experience a unified reality. But quite independently of the incidence of mirrors in the 'alternative mode' of Western art, by which I have explained the parallels between Hawarden's work and that of Vermeer, Velázquez and Manet, the mirror was established as a powerful idea in Victorian art and literature by the time that Hawarden began to explore the possibilities of reflected images around 1860. The Victorian image of the mirror centered on Tennyson's poem *The Lady of Shalott*, published in *Poems*, (1832); and it was to retain its

imaginative hold throughout the Victorian period, with some help, in 1871, from the publication of Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. As Bartram puts it:

> ... mirrors, since Tennyson, since the Pre-Raphaelites - even more since Alice stepped through one - had a speaking voice. They hinted of other worlds. [4]

As far as any possible connection between Hawarden's use of mirrors and Lewis Carroll's Alice is concerned, seductive as such a parallel is, *Through the Looking Glass* post-dates Hawarden's death by more than six years, and in fact, while following the theme of the logical inversion of the mirror image, the book is fundamentally structured by the pattern of a chess game. The idea of stepping through the looking glass was, it seems, a later addition to the story, prompted, in part at least, by Dodgson's interest in logic.

However, if Carroll did not influence Hawarden, might not Hawarden have had some influence on Carroll? It is known that he was a great admirer of Hawarden's photography. He certainly owned examples of her work [5]; and while it is unclear which photographs he bought from her, there is a large number of extant images among

Hawarden's work which might well have provided Carroll with the idea of a world on the other side of a mirror, or given substance to such an idea in its half-formed state. In an image dated c.1862, [Fig. 47], for instance, the model, stretched out on the floor, reaches out towards her reflection as though she would pass through the glass and touch her reversed 'looking-glass' self; the similarity to Tenniel's illustrations of Alice stepping into and out of the looking-glass is worthy of notice.

Clearly however, while it is possible that Hawarden's images of young girls reaching out to their reflections may have played their part in Carroll's second Alice story, one must look rather to Tennyson than to *Through the Looking Glass* for Hawarden's influences. Mirrors, as Tennyson's poem makes clear, are not alone in hinting of other worlds; windows are equally significant in this respect, and Hawarden typically makes use of a conjunction of the two. In a series of photographs dated c.1863-c.1864, she produces a number of images which share similar concerns with Tennyson, though they should not be seen as actually illustrative of 'The Lady of Shalott', (for, unlike Cameron,

Hawarden was never interested, even in the case of the 'Narcissus' images, which are undoubtedly evocative of the Ovidian myth, in making specific illustrations of literary texts, however much such texts may have influenced her ideas).

In one particularly striking instance, [Fig. 48], the model, shown three-quarter length in a costume which suggests a medieval setting, stands with her back against a wall, looking out of a window on the right of the image, which is discernible by the shadow of its bars falling across both the shutters and the figure itself; while on the left of the image is a cheval-glass reflecting her in right profile. Her hands are held together in an attitude of prayer or supplication, and she seems to gaze far into the distance as though trying to see beyond what lies immediately outside. Positioned between mirror and window, she stands between an inner and an outer world, turning from the internal absorption of the mirrored self to consciousness of the exterior and other.

Tennyson's poem is also concerned with the clash between the inner and the outer world, and the emotional and psychological danger of waking from

absorption in the one into confrontation with the other. It was most famously visualized in Holman Hunt's illustration for the Moxon Tennyson, (1857), which he developed many years later into an oil painting, (1886-1905, now in the collection of the Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Connecticut), the last major work he completed before his death in 1910. It seems, however, that the theme had interested him for some time before the Moxon project, and he is known to have made a drawing on which the Moxon design was probably based, as early as 1850. The image of the Lady of Shalott thus functions as a theme of continuity between his early and his late work.

Hunt depicts the Lady at precisely the crisis of awakening and confrontation:

> She left the web, she left the loom,
> She made three paces thro' the room,
> She saw the water-lily bloom,
> She saw the helmet and the plume,
> She look'd down to Camelot.
> Out flew the web and floated wide;
> The mirror crack'd from side to side;
> 'The curse is come upon me,' cried
> The Lady of Shalott. [6]

He illustrates the most dramatic point of the narrative, (the climax of Part III), but there are a number of other angles from which he might have approached the poem. There were other artists who chose to depict the Lady both before

and after the fatal moment when she yields to temptation and gazes out of the window. Most famous is John William Waterhouse's version of 1888, (Tate Gallery, London), depicting the dying Lady in her boat. The photographer Henry Peach Robinson had also illustrated the final part of the poem in his *Lady of Shalott*, 1860-61 (The Royal Photographic Society, Bath), basing his composition on Millais's *Ophelia*, (which almost certainly also influenced Waterhouse). On the other hand, Sidney Harold Meteyard, a second-generation Pre-Raphaelite like Waterhouse, chose to illustrate the conclusion of Part II of the poem in his painting (one of the very late Pre-Raphaelite works, dated 1913, now in the collection of The Pre-Raphaelite Trust) *"I am half-sick of shadows", said the Lady of Shalott"*.

Hunt's illustrations of the poem reflect not simply a preference for scenes of the greatest dramatic intensity, but, necessarily connected with this, a concern with climactic emotional and psychological points at which recognition of the division between the inner and the outer being is brought home, and indeed in this his interpretation goes to the heart of Tennyson's conception. He chooses to illustrate what is in

many ways a very similar psychological state to that of Hawarden's photograph. Though his Lady is depicted at a moment of intense drama and motion, while Hawarden's figure is passive and contemplative, the crisis experienced by both figures is fundamentally similar; the self drawn away from the inner world to confront the outer. Where Hunt's painting depicts the figure at the moment of greatest trauma, struggling simultaneously to break away from the inner and resist the outer, Hawarden might be said to depict a further stage, as though, while resigning herself to the outer world, the figure searches for a meaningfulness and identification that has been lost in the split from the mirrored, inner self.

It is typical of Hunt that the painting offers an excess of meaningfulness; one might almost wonder whether he did not rather lose track of his original point, and instead become caught up simply in realizing the sheer inner turmoil of the Lady. (The great mass of swirling, stormy red hair alone took three years to paint [7]). In becoming so caught up, however, he demonstrates a far more profound insight into the heart of the poem than is achieved either by Waterhouse or

Robinson, for example. In choosing to base his illustration around the mirror, he is faithful to the complexity of the poem itself, which deals rather with a divided self and its self-fulfilling fear of actual lived experience, than with the broken vow and the supernatural curse which are offered by Tennyson as a rather vague motivation for the narrative.

The divided self is complicated further in a device frequently used in Hawarden's mirror images, whereby the actual figure is made to seem less substantial than the image reflected in the mirror. This is true, for example, in the case of a photograph dated c.1862, [Fig. 49]. The left side of the photograph is badly damaged, probably through having been removed from the album in which Hawarden originally kept it. Nevertheless, the main body of the image remains. The model stands facing the camera, wearing a dark dress with a cross on a black ribbon around her throat. The light source is behind both figure and mirror, the mirror having been angled to reflect the left profile of the figure, but not to catch the direct rays from the window. Thus the head of the actual figure dissolves hazily into the light, while the head of the

reflected figure maintains its clarity and solidity. As in the odalisque image, light is deployed to eat into the substance of the figure, undermining its physical presence.

Combined with the expression of inner disturbance conveyed by the mourning clothes, the effect is to raise doubts about the constitution of the self, questioning the primacy of the actual over the imaged. The photograph articulates an extreme sense of confusion: does the inner sense of self determine who one feels oneself to be? Indeed, can any one aspect of the self be said to establish identity?

IX. iv Beyond the looking-glass

So far, Hawarden's images have tended to emphasize confrontation between self and other; but amongst the later images there are certainly some which suggest an interpretation of the other more akin to Butler's acceptance of the other as a paradox encompassing both outer and inner within the concept of the self. This development is expressed in a variant of the mirror image dating from c.1862-c.1863 [Fig. 50]. It shows two women

standing together, facing one another and looking deeply into one another's eyes. The woman closest to the camera has her back turned to the viewer. The second woman is largely hidden from the viewer by her companion's body, although her face is clearly visible. Their hair is dressed very similarly, and the colour of their clothing is comparable. Most strikingly of all, they appear to be posed identically, each with her hands on the other's shoulders, both heads at a similar angle. It is as though one is able to see separately a front and a back view of the same figure - the function served by mirrors in many paintings in Western art. The effect is of looking at a woman from the back, who is looking at herself in the mirror.

One might ask whether this is not merely another of the images of young women paired to represent 'sisterhood' which so appealed to the sentimentality of Victorian taste. Sentimental genre paintings or 'Keepsake' pictures depicting young women had a wide circulation in the annuals which became popular from around 1820, the most notorious being *The Keepsake*, from which the tradition derived its name; and the motif of two

sisters, their arms entwined about each other, was one of the most popular of Keepsake themes.

The typical pose of the young women, with their arms clasping each other's waists and shoulders, operates on two levels. On one level it functions as a token of the perceived and - depending on whether one takes a Victorian or a modern view - either appealing or cloying idea of feminine emotional dependence and naïve trustfulness; but on another, it has obviously sensual, often openly voluptuous overtones, as for instance, in Charles Baxter's *The Sisters*, 1860, [Fig. 51] (Victoria & Albert Museum, London). The colouring of the painting focuses on warm, physical, fleshy tones, the pink of the right-hand sister's dress being echoed in the second sister's cheeks. The sister on the right displays a bared shoulder with a wave of hair snaking suggestively around her neck, while she looks pertly at the viewer over a sensually curved mouth, her left breast subtly pushed into greater prominence by the left arm which reaches up towards her right shoulder. Her sister, prettily though less seductively painted, and, significantly, not so highly finished, functions primarily as a shadowy second presence extending an arm quietly around the other sister's

waist, her hand resting gently above her sister's left hip, in a projection of the male desire for possession that the young woman is clearly intended to stimulate.

It should be pointed out that, while one might read lesbian overtones into Fig. 50, (this seems to me to make no fundamental difference to the overall reading), there are patently no such connotations in the Keepsake images, which are intended to underline the perceived physical and emotional attractions of women from an overtly male point of view. Incidentally, it seems likely that the two young women in Baxter's painting are not actual sisters, but rather professional models, since paintings of actual sisters would normally carry their names in the title. This supports the idea that 'Keepsake'-type images of sisterhood are less concerned with the identities of the sitters, even when those identities are declared in the title, than with the portrayal of an ideal of submissive femininity.

Hawarden may perhaps have drawn on such conventional images of sisterhood, (indeed, she may very well have seen Baxter's painting, being a regular attender of London art exhibitions), but

the fact that the two models are indeed sisters (and moreover that the photographer is their mother) is entirely superfluous to the significance of the image. Comparison with a conventional image of sisterhood such as Baxter's quickly makes clear the inadequacy of such biographical details in formulating an explanation - or at least, the inadequacy of the idea that these details can be explained by reference to the conventional image of sisterhood.

The first point is that Hawarden's figures do actually gaze *at each other*. Conventional images of sisterhood rarely pose the models in this manner; rather, they gaze directly at the viewer, or at some distant fictional object, not at each other. This underlines the fact that, however innocent and simply sentimental they appear, they are intended as objects of the male gaze. One is most unlikely to find an example in which the women are permitted to take control of the gaze and actively direct it at each other. Indeed, this would inevitably indicate their consciousness, not only of being in control, but also of being the object of a gaze that is not male - that is, a gaze which does not scrutinize them in terms of their ascribed gender

role; and both these factors would fatally undermine the significance of Keepsake 'sisterhood'.

It is one of Hawarden's most arresting images, and the motif occurs in another photograph from the same period, in which the two models look at each other from either side of a window pane, each inhabiting a radically separated space, as though one of them has literally stepped 'through the looking glass' onto a different plane on the other side. In Fig. 50, however, all suggestion of an actual mirror is done away with, and at the same time the two models are made to look far more closely alike. Equally significant is the intensity of the mutual gaze, which excludes everything outside the two figures, and the startlingly symmetrical pose.

The illusion of physical separation has been paradoxically dispelled by the introduction of actually separate figures; once the glass partition of window or mirror has been removed, the figures are no longer perceived in terms of difference, but rather of similarity. One no longer sees two women whose different identities are emphasized by the interposition of a

transparent but nonetheless material barrier, or one woman confronting in the mirror her sense of inner division. Instead one sees the mutual self-sufficiency of two women entirely enveloped in the security of their own and the photographer's female gaze - the only mirror, Hawarden suggests, in which a woman can find the reflection of a self which she can embrace. The two women stand firm and four-square, both literally and metaphorically supporting and stabilizing each other, undisturbed by the outer, male-oriented gaze.

One might justifiably ask what relationship this image bears to the subject of the chapter, marginality, if it represents stability and wholeness. I would argue that it is in fact Hawarden's most radical treatment of the subject, demonstrating the sharpening of her conception of femininity as a result of her increased consciousness, through photographic practice, of ambiguity and contingency as basic conditions of the real; for instead of depicting isolation and disorientation as analogous to the feminine, she produces an image which expresses the feminine in terms of strength and solidity. While the female subject, undisturbed by the gender-specific

implications of the male-oriented gaze, finds a balance between self and other, Hawarden turns back on the masculine position of spectatorship the experience of marginalization.

Notes

1. Wordsworth, W., *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820*, 'Fish-women. - On landing at Calais', I, ll.8-9, in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, (ed.) Hutchinson, T., revised by de Selincourt, E., OUP: London, 1967.

2. In fact, Butler's disclaiming of the invisible omnipotence of the creator may go further even than this turning of the spectators' gazes back upon himself. Though the fish-wife may have been 'snapshotted', it is likely that the photograph was taken with her knowledge and consent. Where his Italian subjects were concerned, certainly, Butler tended scrupulously to ask permission, and indeed preferred to photograph people with whom he had already established a friendship. It is one of the consequences of his views on academicism that he invariably expressed far greater respect for those ignorant of theoretical concepts, such as children and working people, than for those who propounded theories (though remaining ironically aware of his own compromised position as a classically educated man, a trained artist, and a thinker and writer who had published contributions to a number of significant theoretical debates). Thus, where he saw a bishop as fair game for a predatory photographer, a fish-wife or a knifegrinder was likely to be treated with greater consideration. Though his scruples did not prevent him from taking a surreptitious snapshot if he particularly wanted it, there were cases in which he felt a distinct dishonesty about doing so:

> I got some snapshots during this Easter that ought to turn out well. I took a mean advantage of a little boy and a little girl... They were by the roadside and I hope the negative will be succcessful. [*Samuel Butler: A Memoir*, Vol II, p.151.]

3. Lemagny, J-C. & Rouillé, A., *A History of Photography*, CUP: Cambridge, 1987, p.107.

4. Bartram, op.cit., p.144.

5. A number of other fellow photographers, including Oscar Rejlander, also recognized the quality of her work; but she never had the high profile enjoyed by Cameron, largely because she was not as zealous or as astute as Cameron in promoting her work. Cameron took up photography in 1863. She was very quick to put together and circulate a portfolio, immediately recognizing the importance of establishing a connection with a good dealer who would exhibit and sell her work; in 1864 she came to an arrangement with Colnaghi's, then in Pall Mall. She also exhibited regularly, both nationally, at the Photographic Society from the 1860's onwards, and internationally, in Dublin, Berlin (where she won bronze and gold medals in 1865 and 1866 respectively), Paris and Vienna, building up an international reputation and winning admirers who included such famous figures as Victor Hugo. By contrast, Hawarden exhibited publically only twice, in the 1863 and 1864 shows at the Photographic Society, (some six years after taking up photography). She was a prize-winner at both, but had no time before her death, which followed soon after in January 1865, to capitalize upon her success. She had no connection with an art dealer. The sale of her photographs seems to have been limited to stalls which she herself took at genteel fetes such as the Kensington benefit for the Female School of Art in 1864, at which Dodgson is known to have bought some of her work.

6. Tennyson, A., 'The Lady of Shalott', (1832), *Selected Poems*, Penguin: London, 1991, p.29.

7. Wood, C., *The Pre-Raphaelites*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London, 1981, p.109.

X The image and the aperture

X. i Picture machines - the eye as camera versus the eye as window

While the effect of light, more especially in Hawarden's work, has been considered in some detail in previous chapters, a significant number of photographs by both Hawarden and Butler deal with light in a manner which demands consideration from another angle. These images are primarily interested in framing the light source, or more accurately, framing the hole or opening through which light is admitted - *the aperture*. In working through the corpus of images left by both photographers, one is equally struck in both cases by the number of photographs which draw attention to the photographic process *as such*, most commonly by placing a frame around an opening (an arch, a door, a window, or often, in Hawarden's case, a mirror reflecting a window). The frame usually isolates one of two processes: the ingress of light through an aperture, or the act of looking out through an aperture.

The aperture is not, however, conceived of as the Albertian 'window'. It is concerned with two

problems: firstly, the capacity of light, as we noted in Hawarden's odalisque image, apparently to contradict its nature, which is to illuminate, and instead function to dazzle and obscure; and secondly, the fundamental question of whether the act of looking necessarily yields meaning, or at least the meaning that we assume we read.

In the Western perspectival traditions of representation, knowledge and possession have almost invariably (except in the case of the practitioners of Alpers' 'alternative mode') been taken as the twin corollaries of sight, and the breath-taking naturalism of the photograph made it seem for many the culmination of that access to knowledge through visual representation. Hawarden and Butler repeatedly question this assumption.

Before it developed into the modern camera, the purpose of the *camera obscura* - or, in its more primitive form, the pinhole camera - was scientific. Its function was to enable astronomers to study the rays of the sun, and in particular it made possible observation of solar and lunar eclipses. In 1600 the astronomer Tycho Brahe noted an 'enigma' in the diameter of the image of the moon formed by the pinhole camera

during a solar eclipse; it appeared, without any apparent reason, to have shrunk. Brahe's assistant, Johannes Kepler, deduced that the cause was not the moon itself but the size of the aperture of the camera. He argued that in visual observations it is necessary to take into account the nature of the instrument or mechanism through which the object is viewed. From this he went on to suggest that the eye itself is simply an instrument, a mechanism for making pictures, and that it too introduces distortions into the visual image. As he puts it in *Ad Vitellionem paralipomena* (*Commentary on Vitellio*) (1604):

> ... some deception of vision arises partly from the artifice of observing [i.e., the camera] ... and partly just from vision itself. ... And thus the origin of errors in vision must be sought in the conformation and functions of the eye itself. [1]

The crux of Kepler's argument is that vision itself is representation, and that the retinal image (he even refers to it as a "painting") has no special claim to objectivity or truthfulness.

My point is that Kepler arrives at this theory of representation - a theory the relevance of which to 'self-conscious' photographers such as Hawarden and Butler can hardly be overstressed - precisely through an awareness and comprehension

of the function of the aperture (whether of the camera or the eye itself) in image-making. Thus the aperture lies at the heart of any attempt, whether it be theoretical or photographic, to 'deanthropomorphize' vision [2].

One of the central points I am concerned to demonstrate is Butler and Hawarden's consciousness of the nature of the photograph. In other words, in my view they were not simply using the camera to take pictures; they were using it because in the course of their photographic practice they became aware of the *kind* of pictures it could produce. In framing openings which function as visual metaphors of the one essential feature which all types of camera possess, primitive or modern, with or without the capacity to fix the image, they provide a particularly explicit declaration of the photographer's consciousness of the nature of the photographic process, and concomitantly, of the relationship of image and reality to which her/his pictures bear witness.

X. ii Framing the aperture

One of the earliest photographs to take as its subject a doorway or window is Talbot's *The Open Door*, 1843, [Fig. 52] (National Museums of Scotland). Even earlier - in fact one can state with some assurance that it is actually the first such image - is his *Latticed Window*, (the Science Museum, London), a tiny paper negative dating from 1835, of a window in the library at his home, Lacock Abbey. Though taken using a very early and basic camera (which Talbot called a 'mousetrap'), and despite its diminutive size, the image was so clear that, as a note by Talbot himself tells us, 'When first made, the squares of glass about 200 in number could be counted, with help of a lens.' [3] As a negative, it immediately draws attention to light *per se*, in the necessary exchange of light and dark values. The negative form of a photograph is an immediate and inevitable 'making strange', in its inversion of the tonal coding of reality.

The Open Door is one of the images central to Mike Weaver's analysis of Talbot's work in *The Photographic Art*. Apart from the significance that the doorway held for Talbot as a sign of

mortality, signifying the gateway from this world to the next, the broom, as Weaver points out, is a symbol going back to the Dutch school, signifying cleanliness, and the lantern 'reminds us of our need for inner illumination, for divine grace and reason.' [4] . Through the door a latticed window is faintly visible, but it is not so much a window admitting light, (light barely penetrates it, so overshadowed from the outside does it appear to be), as another gateway to be passed – 'a second door which we do not penetrate so easily', as Weaver puts it. For Talbot it surely stood for the gateway to final spiritual enlightenment, a gateway that allows faint intimations of divine light to pass through it, but one only finally attained by cleansing oneself of the physical world and passing through the door of the spiritual into the world of belief.

In contrast to the traditional Christian theology and art historical reference of *The Open Door*, the *Latticed Window* is a paradoxically 'modern' image. One can of course argue that this is due, at least in part, to the inherent strangeness of the negative image, but the *Latticed Window* is a far more self-conscious

photograph than this would suggest. It conveys a sense of wonder at and raw awareness of the bizarre and unique character of the new medium and its relation to the reality it depicts, which is certainly as significant as the negative form of this primitive photograph in giving it the sharp, radical edge which is missing from the majority of Talbot's later and more sophisticated works, particularly the Dutch/picturesque images of which *The Open Door* is such a consummate example.

It is instructive to compare a photograph such as *The Open Door* with similar images by Hawarden, for the inner window glimpsed through a door is also a motif found in her early work. Between c.1857 and c.1860 Hawarden took a number of photographs of Dundrum village railway station. Two of these focus on the door into the station building, and echo *The Open Door* closely. In both instances, the door stands slightly ajar as in Talbot's photograph, so that one can see into the interior, which is a dark and featureless space, apart from a bright rectangle set in the centre. This rectangle is a window in the back wall of the building [Fig. 53].

The image demonstrates a fascination with involutions of space and the arbitrariness of spatial distinctions, as 'inside' and 'outside' kaleidoscope into one another. Usually 'inside' would signify a dimly-lit, shadowy, defined space, 'outside' a space that it is brightly lit and unbounded; yet in this image these distinctions are inverted in the framing of the window, where light is held 'inside' darkness and bounded by the outlines of the window-frame. The image is a series of frames set one inside the other, *en abyme*, like Chinese boxes. The photograph itself frames the porch, which frames the doorway, which in turn opens to frame the black space of the room, which finally frames the small bright shape of the window.

The definition of the window is remarkably sharp, any blur or bleeding of light around the edges of the rectangle being kept to a minimum. This is due to the fact that the *photograph is* stereoscopic; hence, as in Hawarden's Narcissus photographs, firstly the focus remains sharp throughout the image from foreground to background, and secondly, when viewed through the correct apparatus the clarity is intensified to a startling degree. The rectangle of light is

kept separate and discrete from the surrounding rectangle of darkness. Paradoxically, despite the fact that the window admits light, that light remains within the bounds of its frame and fails to help the spectator to make out the details of the interior by fulfilling its expected function and illuminating the room (*camera*). Rather, the window represents light framed as such; it can be read as a picture of the aperture seen from inside the camera.

That this is not over-interpretation is argued by the presence of several images in Hawarden's work in which she specifically photographs the camera. Dating from around the same period as the Dundrum railway station images is a photograph of an unidentified young man standing in the stableyard at Dundrum next to a camera on a tripod. This is a very early suggestion that Hawarden was curious about the camera and the photographic process in themselves, and conscious of herself as photographer. Rather more complex is a later image (c.1862-c.1863), [Fig. 54], one of the interiors taken in the studio in the Hawardens' Kensington house, in which the model stands in the centre of the image, her face turned to the camera, at the side of a cheval

glass. The model herself is not the object of reflection, but seems rather to draw the spectator's attention to the mirror, in which the presence of the camera, flanked by a large window, is revealed.

Hawarden tended to work in series, using the same model and costume, but altering poses, angles and lighting. This image appears to be the result of such a session; it is probable that the camera originally appeared in the mirror unintentionally, as the result of Hawarden's alterations of composition, and that she recognized and welcomed the undesignedly self-reflexive nature of the image. This is certainly underlined by the use she makes of the model, who functions as a purely formal sign, an exclamation mark, focusing our gaze and directing it back to the significant elements, the camera and the window through which light is admitted.

A similar interest in consciously self-reflexive photography is evinced in Butler's work. His *Church at Bormio through an opening*, 1891, [Fig. 55], despite its title, focuses not on the church, but on an opening which is situated in

the centre of the lower half of the image. Very little of the church itself, which the title would lead us to consider the focal point of the image, is visible. One cupola can be seen clearly above the inner arch, although its left side is partially eaten away by the action of light. A second cupola is faintly visible on a lower level and to the left of the first, but its definition is dissolved by light to an even greater degree. The cupolas are set on towers against a sky that is light and featureless, so that the towers themselves, which are white-washed, merge into the background and lose their outlines altogether, with only a few architectural and ornamental features standing out to give a sense of their form and character. The materially ambiguous presence of the church functions primarily to underline the ambiguity of the title. It is clearly not the focal point that the title sets it up to be.

In a further complication, however, neither is the focal point the opening referred to in the title. This opening is neither the primary light source, nor the frame around a view of the church. Rather the cupola of the church rises *above* the arch, which is in fact a smaller

opening inside the larger, overarching one of the title, the presence of which is indicated in the top right hand corner of the photograph, cutting off the corner and running into the framing of the picture. This device of echoed architectural and geometrical forms is used frequently by Butler, particularly when the focus is an opening of some kind. He often consciously matches the top of the outer opening, as in this instance, to the top of the picture frame. Again, for example, in a photograph dated 1895, *Monastery on Mt Lycabettus, Athens*, [Fig. 56], the image is shot through an arch, the top of which coincides with the top of the picture frame, framing another, inner arch, so that the architectural aperture rather than giving access to an actual view or scene, merely frames a *mise en abyme* of itself.

The *Mt Lycabettus* photograph is, however, a more straightforward image than the *Church at Bormio*, though at the same time - indeed, as a consequence - it is the more aesthetically 'perfect' of the two since, in declaring the presence of an outer arch more openly, it sets up a more complete and satisfying geometrical echo. One's view through both arches is uninterrupted and uncomplicated, (and furthermore the title

does not specifically draw attention to the idea of looking *through*, as in the *Bormio* photograph). While the *Mount Lycabettus* arches do not ultimately give access to a view, but declare themselves as apertures by admitting light rather than opening onto a scene, they represent a much less complex treatment of the theme than the *Bormio* photograph. Here, the matching of outer arch to picture edge is almost complete, so that the arch *as such* is barely visible, but rather is explicitly fused with the aperture of the camera.

The inner arch is no more straightforward. The space framed by the arch is divided into two halves, one black, the other white. The white half is a white-washed wall which intensifies the brilliance of the natural light that falls on it. In the wall is an odd dark shape, which on examination resolves itself into a door opening out of the wall at an angle and casting a shadow on the wall as it does so. The angle at which it stands open prevents the spectator from seeing what lies beyond it - an aperture that is open but nevertheless nontransparent. Though fortuitous rather than deliberate, (the positioning of the camera is dependent first and foremost on the outer arch, not the angling of

the door, which is incidental), it is a neat ironic comment on the opacity and complexity of this image in particular, and the interpretation of images in general, underlining the fact that they do not necessarily yield meaning immediately and, as it were, transparently. The dark half of the space in the arch graduates from deep grey to black as it leads into yet another arch, set even further into the heart of the image, and impenetrable like the doorway, but rather swallowing up the gaze where the doorway repulsed it.

An interesting comparison in terms of the treatment of the gaze is suggested by Roger Fenton's famous photograph *Vista, Furness Abbey*, 1860, [Fig. 57] (Royal Photographic Society, Bath). Doorways and windows are a familiar and often powerful motif in Fenton's photographs of architectural subjects, but perhaps none are as memorable as this image of a female figure framed in the pointed arch of a doorway at the top of a flight of steps in the ruined abbey. It is a beautifully balanced image in which her caped and crinolined form echoes the shape of the arch in which she stands. The sun strikes her from behind but also above, so that she is not strictly

silhouetted, the pattern on her skirt and the glint of sun on her hair being decipherable. A pool of light punctuated by her shadow is cast on the uneven ground before her. Some distance behind her are two male figures, staring back down the path towards her.

The arch in Fenton's photograph is not used self-consciously, in the sense of deliberate reference back to the operation of the aperture in the photographic process. As the title of the photograph indicates, it is concerned with a view - a 'vista'. The opening, in other words, is not conceived of primarily as admitting light but as a means of extending the space over which the viewer has control. Indeed, the female figure framed in the arch is not ultimately the focus of the image. She actually marks the beginning of the vista, not its culmination, (for technically a vista is a long narrow view bounded on either side to dictate the line of vision, usually by trees, though here by the architectural forms of the ruined abbey). Thus the vista of the title strictly excludes the foreground before the arch, and is in fact constituted by the defined lines of vision which extend from the arch into the background. The true culmination of those lines

of vision is situated in the torso of the second of the two men at the top of the path, and the camera has been carefully positioned to maximize the perspectival convergence of the vista using the men as the focal point.

The image is complicated, however, by the returned gaze of the men. Whether they are watching the woman or the photographer, the uncompromising stare that they direct down the path throws the gaze back at us in a particularly claustrophobic and disconcerting manner. It confirms, in a way that Fenton surely did not intend, the rigid, enclosed and above all domineering nature of perspectival vision.

Fenton's apparent failure to spot this self-reflexive touch creeping into the image demonstrates a fundamentally uncritical attitude towards the politics of vision which is hardly surprising when one takes into account the fact that much of Fenton's work is an extension into photography of eighteenth-century landscape aesthetics. For instance, this image, though not a landscape, draws certain distinctive elements from the aesthetic of the picturesque - the 'Gothic' ruin, the variations of texture of

worn stone, ivy-clad walls, rough unmetalled pathways, etc. The idea of the vista is also an echo of eighteenth-century landscape aesthetics, articulating metaphorically a concept of knowledge and control, in which the landscape is arranged according to a series of fixed focal points. The gaze is directed to a single point at a time, without interruption or distraction, enabling the spectator to take visual possession of a stretch of land extending over a considerable distance.

Hawarden made a strongly contrasting use of a similar composition in one of a group of photographs dated c.1858-c.1861 [Fig. 58]. It is a photograph of a labourer holding a broom as though in the act of sweeping, standing just inside the doorway of one of the estate outbuildings. The figure in Hawarden's image, however, is not framed by the opening as Fenton's is, but positioned off-centre, the right hand upright of the door-frame pinioning the top of his head. The strong sunlight beyond the door largely obliterates the details of the scene outside, so that the door does not act as a picture frame, either for the figure or for a view beyond it. Nor does light simply reveal the figure. Most

details of face and clothing are reasonably legible, but a second light source, evidently above and in front of the figure, is used, as is so typical of Hawarden, to dissolve solid form, eating away the left hand and leg of the figure, and the broom he is using, so that they can barely be discerned one from the other.

Fenton's arch is the 'open window' of which Alberti speaks in describing the picture plane; it is the continuation of the viewer's own sense of reality. In most 'conventional' photographs the image invokes linear perspective, because, since the spectator can see only what the photographer frames in the view-finder, the space of the image will inevitably create an illusion of cohering with the space in which the viewer stands; in other words, without special equipment the photographer cannot produce spatially impossible points of view. The painter, on the other hand, if she/he so chooses, is perfectly at liberty to ignore the rules of linear perspective. As Claude Bailblé points out in his article 'Programming the Look':

> By a continuous realignment of point of view, the painter can put the vanishing point in the middle or at the side, above, on the horizontal or even outside the picture. The 'objectivity' of the photographic lens consists precisely in always placing it -

> along the line of the optic rays - right in the middle of the image. [5]

Thus it is largely through spatial continuity that the photograph seeks to maintain suture by persuading the viewing subject of its unconnoted, naturalistic truthfulness, its direct, unmediated access to reality.

Both Hawarden and Butler simultaneously invoke and undermine Fenton's landscape aesthetics in two images which disrupt the idea of the architectural opening set in a landscape as a window directing the viewer's gaze into a perspectival vista. A stereoscopic photograph of Hawarden's dating from c.1857-c.1860, one of two images of the same subject, shows a rustic stone bridge spanning a stream overhung with trees [Fig. 59]. The camera is slightly above the level of the arch of the bridge, potentially giving visual access to a considerable stretch of the river on the far side. However, one can barely see through the arch because of the light streaming under the bridge, intensified both by its own reflection on the water and, when viewed correctly, by stereoscopic effect.

It is an effect that occurs repeatedly in the early landscapes. For instance one example, [Fig. 60], shows a wooded riverscape with what are probably the remains of an old mill in the background. However, Hawarden seems most concerned with the light pouring through a gap in the trees, rather than with the landscape itself. Like all her work, the image can only be dated approximately, again c.1857-c.1860, but probably belongs in the first half of that period, since it would seem to fit chronologically among a large number of landscape photographs, taken particularly along the Multeen River running through the family estate, which apparently predate the introduction of the human figure into her landscapes.

The camera is positioned on the river bank to look out and up from under the branches. Again, it is a stereoscopic photograph, and when viewed correctly its two images come together to give an almost complete frame of trees around a patch of sky in the upper half of the picture, which is echoed in the lower half as a stretch of light reflected on the dark water of the river. The sky itself is featureless - a stream of pure light admitted by the opening in the trees.

Butler's *The Washing Pit, Varallo,* 1892, [Fig. 61], undermines the concept of the opening as means of access to a view in a different way. With typical visual wit, he literally crosses out the focal point. We have already noted his frequent use of echoed geometrical forms, and here one finds a particularly attractive example which plays on the pyramid, the basic form of perspectival construction. The washing pit is a stone trough sheltered by a roof on four stone supports which frames a view in linear perspective. A wooden lintel at the far end forms an open triangle with two diagonal beams. This triangle is repeated at the near end, though the triangle nearest the viewer is not so immediately evident, being partially disguised by the shadow of the roof. The perspectival lines of vision lead the eye along the outlines of the trough and up the path that stretches away on the far side. Their focal point should be a white object, possibly a stone wall or a building, at the far end of the path, but the second lintel cuts directly through it, preventing the viewer from establishing the identity of this focal object, and disrupting the perspectival progression so that it cannot truly culminate.

In fact, were it not for the lintels, the construction of the washing pit would define the point of an actual triangle fanning out from the near end of the trough, and culminating beyond the focal point in an echo of the visual pyramid. But the lintel nearest the camera cuts off the tip of this echoing triangle, and the lintel on the farther side strikes a thick, black, cancelling line through the construction.

X. iii Spatial coherence - light as truth and knowledge

While Fenton's *Vista* provides one particularly interesting point of comparison, the work of Frederick Evans offers another. Evans was a Pictorial photographer whose work spans the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Like Butler, he took up photography around 1880, (some fifteen years after Hawarden's death), and a number of his images from the 1890's offer a very pertinent contrast to Butler and Hawarden in the present context of images of openings.

As a Pictorialist, Platonist and Christian, Evans had a three-fold investment in the idea of an essential truth. His religious and metaphysical ideas predicated a world in which the objects that are apparent to the senses are simply the reflection of a higher (and specifically Christian) reality. Pictorialism was a fundamentally conservative photographic movement which dovetailed neatly with a system of belief such as Evans's, in that it sought to establish the artistic potential of photography by invoking certain traditional aesthetics in a photographic context, and particularly adhered to accepted concepts of beauty and tonal harmony as vehicles of a higher truth. As we have observed, it was precisely such concepts as these that led Butler to abandon painting (or at least to abandon hope of finding a voice through painting). In Evans's photography one sees academic concepts and attitudes reinstated, where Butler recognized in the same medium the potential to challenge and subvert. In many ways Pictorialism attempted to do what Butler had tried with his *The Last Days of Carey Street*; that is, to challenge what the establishment would accept as art, but working all the while within the established vocabulary.

An image of Evans's that is particularly significant is his *Kelmscott Manor: Through a Window in the Tapestry Room*, 1896, [Fig. 62] (Royal Photographic Society, Bath). This is one of a number of photographs that Evans took at Kelmscott Manor, the Oxfordshire home of William Morris. Through the Morris connection Kelmscott would have had a double significance for Evans. Firstly it was common for Pictorialists to refer, either visually, in echoed motif and tonal effect, or verbally, in the title, (or indeed both simultaneously), to the work of other artists, visual and literary, in order to underpin the claims of photography to aesthetic respect. (His contemporary Edward Steichen's use of titles and visual echoes makes the point more explicitly than Evans's work, with images such as *Balzac, the Open Sky, 11 p.m.*, and *Rodin, The Thinker*.)

The second, more general, and perhaps more powerful reason (peculiar rather to Evans than to Pictorialism as a whole), was his adherence to the Masonic belief in the function of a building as a system of memory [6], a matrix of spaces in which particular remembered images and ideas reside, combining to give access to an essential

reality. Thus in photographing Kelmscott, Evans would have believed himself to be doing far more than simply invoking for his own art the authority of another artist. He would also have been vividly aware of Kelmscott as sign of a passionate belief in the ethical and spiritual necessity of art in human existence; but also, and perhaps most significantly in the context of Evans's own medium of photography, as sign of an unquestioning acceptance that art is not fundamentally the property of an élite, that it is conveyed by media and objects apparently far more mundane than the oil painting, and that it is not the exclusive province of the Royal Academician and his patron. The photographs of Kelmscott were certainly taken in a spirit of tribute to Morris, for they date from 1896, and, from the appearance of the trees visible through the window, late in the year: Morris had died in October.

The photograph *Through a Window in the Tapestry Room* itself is a complex and very beautiful image, with the typical soft grey tones of the platinum print characteristic of the Pictorialists. The window, made up of rectangular leaded panels, rather like the type seen in Dutch interiors, is

thrown open onto a yard and outbuildings built onto the main body of the manor. A group of three bare trees, in which there are a handful of rooks' nests, rises above the outbuildings in the centre of the background, the finer branches misted and obscured by the thin winter light shining through them. Another solitary tree, even less clearly focused than the others, stands on the left of the image. Through the panes of the window one can just make out the section of the manor house that runs at right angles to the wing containing the tapestry room, but it is barely visible, rather melting almost into pure pattern with the reflections on the panes and the irregularities of the old, handmade glass - entirely fitting, whether conscious or not, in an image which invokes an artist whose work was based on surface pattern and design.

Light, though it slightly mists the tops of the trees and the edges of the outbuildings, obscures nothing pertinent. The effect, particularly in conjunction with the soft platinum tones, is elegiac. It creates a gentle, quasi-spiritual glow around the edges of objects - for example the lead of the windows. In other words, far from obstructing meaning, as it is frequently

employed to do by Hawarden or Butler, it appears in its Biblical and Neo-Platonic guise as vehicle of a purer and higher meaning. It is interesting that, as Mike Weaver has pointed out:

> The author of *Ad Herennium*, the classical source of all memory-systems, actually described the necessary lighting conditions for the 'images' mentally placed in such *loci* – not too brightly lit so as to avoid dazzle, but not so dark as to lose detail in the shadows. [7]

Such a lighting scheme perfectly describes Evans's own approach to the function of light, not simply in this image, but in his work as a whole. For him a window is not a quasi-photographic aperture admitting light; its function is not to call attention to the photographic medium. It is certainly not intended to introduce obstacles into the process of interpretation and assimilation by the spectator. Rather, it gives access to an *a priori*, essential reality.

The high vantage point of Evans's image parallels a number of Hawarden's Kensington interiors. The entire first floor of the house was apparently given over to Hawarden for her photography, and she often makes use of the situation of her studio rooms above ground level to suggest a sense of an unattainable space beyond

the window, a space that it is physically impossible to reach. For instance, in an image which belongs to a series dated c.1862, the model is seated at a window looking out, [Fig. 63]. A stark black mourning costume creates a particular emotional intensity and sense of anguish or desperation. The scene beyond the window is vague and unfocused, (Hawarden was no longer working with a stereoscopic camera, and in images such as this, one can see one of her reasons for ceasing to do so; continuous clarity would not serve the purpose of images such as these, which depend for their effect on discontinuity between foreground and background). The balustrade which occurs in numerous other images, for instance the 'psyche' image discussed in Part II, marks a barrier between the enclosed interior and the unknown and unknowable territory beyond. Hawarden produces the effect of an unbridgeable gulf between interior and exterior by rarely directing the camera at the window itself; the outside is usually seen from an angle, so that any possible continuity is already twisted askew before ultimately being cut through by the balustrade.

This complete rupture of interior and exterior space contrasts sharply with the coherence between

inner and outer in Evans's photograph of the view from the window in Kelmscott Manor. The concept of an overarching 'inner', spiritual space, rendered by his use of light and of softly graduated tonal effects, and the sense of looking out over a direct and uncomplicated view, guarantees the continuity between the spectator's space and the space of the image.

A very high vantage point is used by Butler in his *Window in the Count's Salone, Mount Erice* (1894), [Fig. 64], an image taken from the window of a Sicilian villa which, as the title indicates, is probably situated on the mountain itself. Like Hawarden's Dundrum railway station photographs, the image is of a window admitting light into a dark room, although unlike her photographs, Butler's image is taken from inside the room. The edge of a round table catches the light very slightly, and the panes of glass in the window, which opens inwards into the room, reflect the light, but without revealing any image or pattern. They are a pale, dull, fairly uniform grey, and are barely allowed to distract attention from the window opening itself. The window opens onto what appears to be a village on

a neighbouring hill-top surmounted by the tower of an old church or monastery.

The window does not, however, present a view in the strict sense of the word, since there is no hierarchy of space to confirm the spatial relationships of viewer, window and village. Furthermore, the village/monastery has a flattening effect on the image. It sits on the bottom edge of the window frame, leaving nearly three quarters of the space within the frame blank, showing merely a sky emptied of features by the strong glare of the sun. The effect is to deny any illusion of three-dimensionality. The vestigial traces of the window panes and table provide a vague sense of space between the camera and the window, but it is not strong enough to establish dominating perspectival lines of vision. It is as though Butler had set a frame around the central object on which the photographer focuses through the camera lens, abstracting it from the scene around it and refusing to set it within a unified spatial structure which would make sense of it.

In Butler's *Jones in a Kitchen*, 1894, [Fig. 65], the issue of vision as comprehension or knowledge is cast in a rather less serious light than that in which we have perhaps looked at it up to now. The image is a subtly comic visualization of the act of looking and the relationship of vision and knowledge. Butler's friend and frequent travelling companion, Jones, sits on a chair or stool, arms crossed over the top of a walking stick, head turned towards a large window with a pointed arch. Between the camera and the place where Jones sits is a table laden with dishes, and a number of small pails and bowls set on their sides, their mouths pointing into the room.

There is an understated humour in the sheer mundanity of the title, and the interplay of the title with the image of Jones, a grave and meditative look on his face, seated among the pots and pans. The window seems, like that in the *Window in the Count's Salone*, to be a considerable distance above the ground. Nothing is visible through it but a featureless sky. The camera is more or less at right angles with Jones's line of vision, so that the viewer cannot see outside the window. Thus - as one often sees in Hawarden's work - the camera angle is used to

deny any continuity between the space in which the viewer stands and the space outside the window.

But Butler's master-stroke is the ambiguous direction of Jones's gaze. The light strikes his face in such a way that one cannot be sure whether the pale area under his eyebrow is actually his eye or his eyelid - in other words, it is not entirely clear whether he is looking outwards or downwards. The viewer is not able to see what Jones sees, but neither is she/he sure where he is actually looking. One's immediate assumption is that he is staring out of the window. But that initial assumption is swiftly succeeded by doubt; suture is broken, and the direction of Jones's gaze becomes evasive: one cannot be absolutely sure whether the object of his gaze is perhaps a parodic revelation of the Infinite glimpsed through the kitchen window, or the pail lying on its side in front of him - in other words, it seems distinctly possible that he is, in fact, simply staring into the bottom of a bucket.

It has become a commonplace to speak of Butler as a modernist out of step with his fellow Victorians, while in contrast, as we have seen,

it is just as easily stated of Hawarden that her work is a reflection (the pun is unintentional) of mid-Victorian femininity. Clearly, however, that very self-reflexiveness should alert one to the fact that Hawarden was far from being as completely at one with her era as some commentators have suggested. In Butler's case, on the other hand, while his was in many ways a mind ahead of its time, it was nevertheless a mind formed in large part by an enduring sense of rejection by his cultural peers. Indeed, any attempt to establish the respective identities of Butler and Hawarden rapidly bears out Butler's claim that 'truth' is mirrored in the precarious and contingent nature of photography; the work of both inevitably embodies the radical and the reactionary in uneasy relation. What, then, makes their voice worthy of note as standing outside the Victorian context?

It is not their concern with contradiction and destabilization which differentiates them from their contemporaries; indeed, in this they are entirely of their time, for such dilemmas can be diagnosed as a fundamental current in Victorian culture [8]. In their recognition of conflict and paradox within the self and within the related

concepts of truth and reality, they are doing no more than registering the cultural neurosis of the Victorian age. What places both of them outside their cultural and historical context is their demand for resistance to the drive to achieve closure and unity. Their work, in its understanding of photography as a necessarily self-reflexive process, is an expression of a modern sense of mulitiplicity and indeterminacy, not simply as the reflection of the nature of reality, but more significantly, as the means by which cultural mythologies of identity, reality and truth may be exploded.

Notes

1. Quoted in Alpers, op.cit., p.34.

2. Ibid.

3. Lemagny & Rouillé, op.cit., p.17.

4. Weaver, M., *The Photographic Art*, The Herbert Press: London, 1986, p.111.

5. Bailblé, C., 'Programming the Look', *Screen Education*, 30-33, Autumn/Winter 79-80, p.109.

6. Weaver, op.cit., p.102.

7. Ibid.

8. See Miyoshi, M., *The Divided Self*, New York University Press: New York, 1969.

Fig. 1: Samuel Butler, *Family Prayers*, 1864. Oil on canvas, 40.6 x 50.8cm, St John's College, Cambridge.

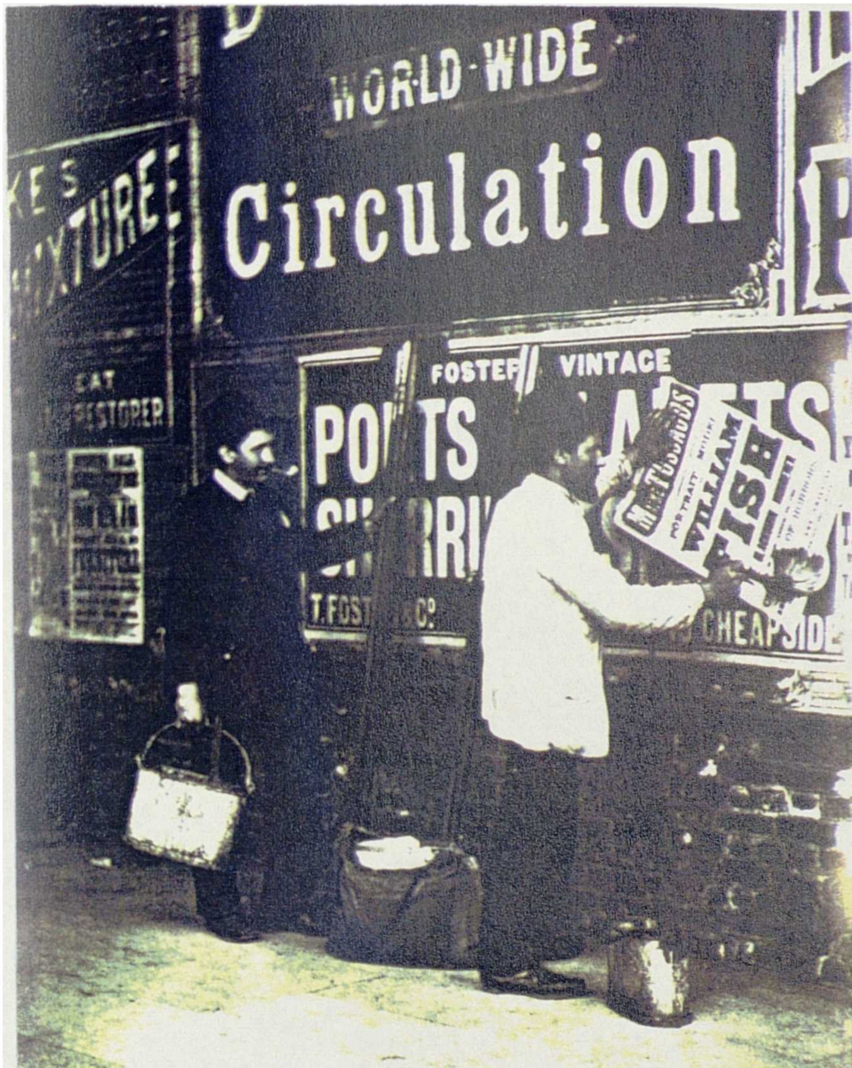

Fig. 2: John Thomson, *Street Advertising*, c.1877. Woodburytype, 114 x 89mm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Fig. 3: Samuel Butler, *Rose the Model*, c.1868. Albumen print, 121 x 168mm. The Chapin Library, Williams College, Williamstown, Mass.

Fig. 4: Samuel Butler, *The Antinous as Hermes*, 1868. Pencil on paper, 67.9 x 40.6cm, St John's College, Cambridge.

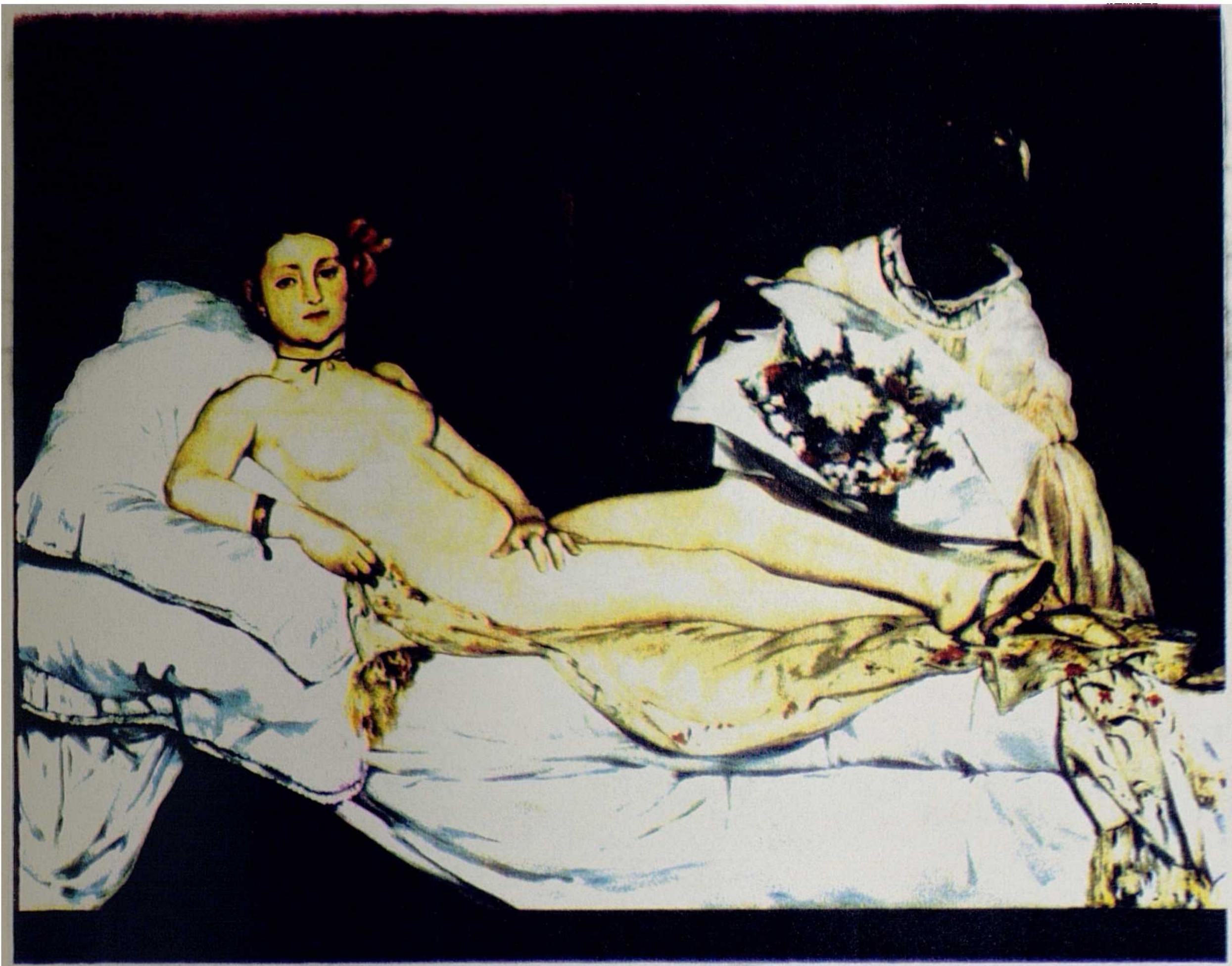

Fig. 5: Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 129.25 x 187.5cm, Musée d'Orsay (Jeu de Paume), Paris.

Fig. 6: Samuel Butler, *Johnston Forbes-Robertson in armour, Heatherley's*, 1870. Albumen print, 146 x 222mm.

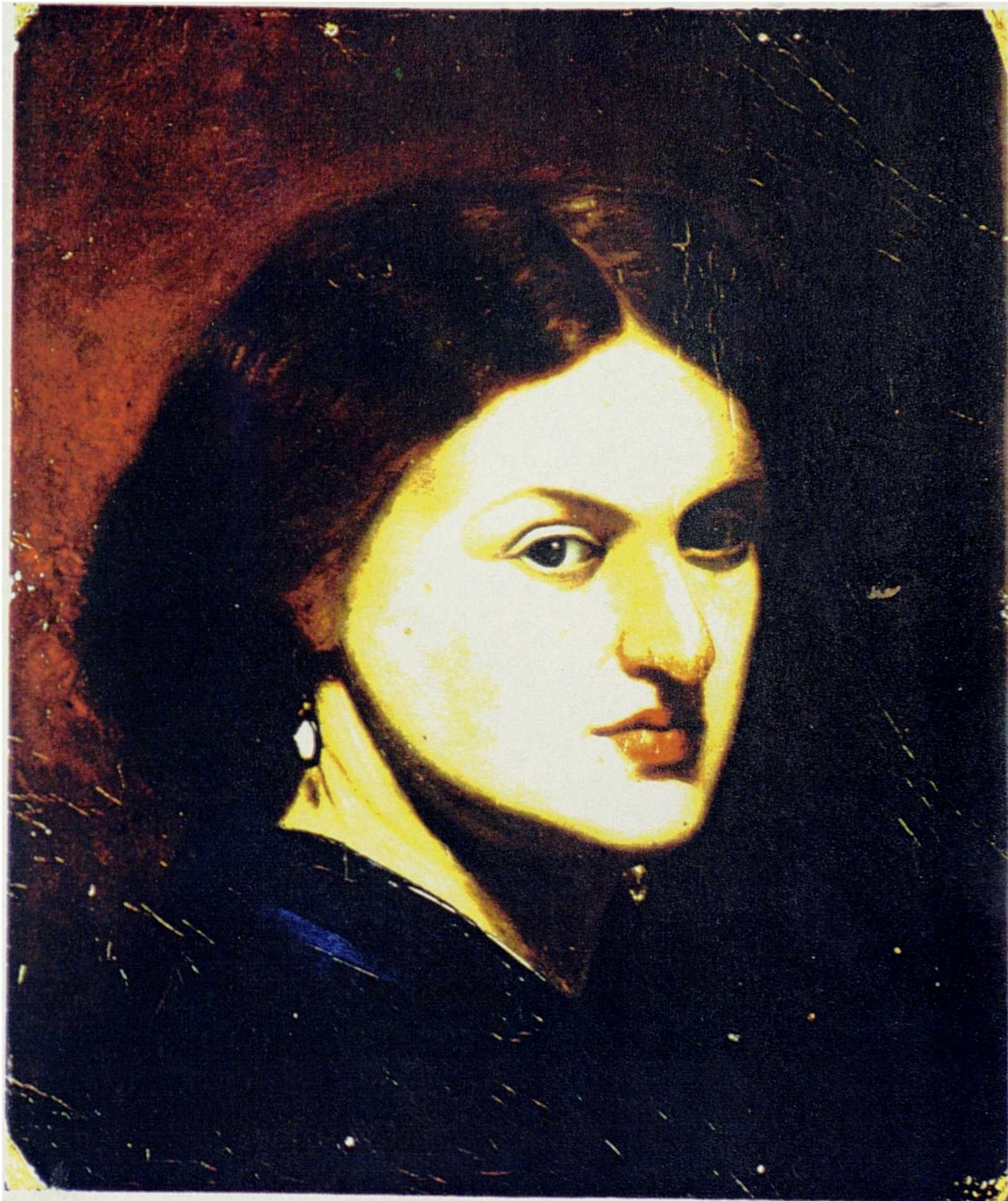

Fig. 7: Samuel Butler, *Portrait of an Unidentified Woman*, 1873. Oil, 30.4 x 25.4cm, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

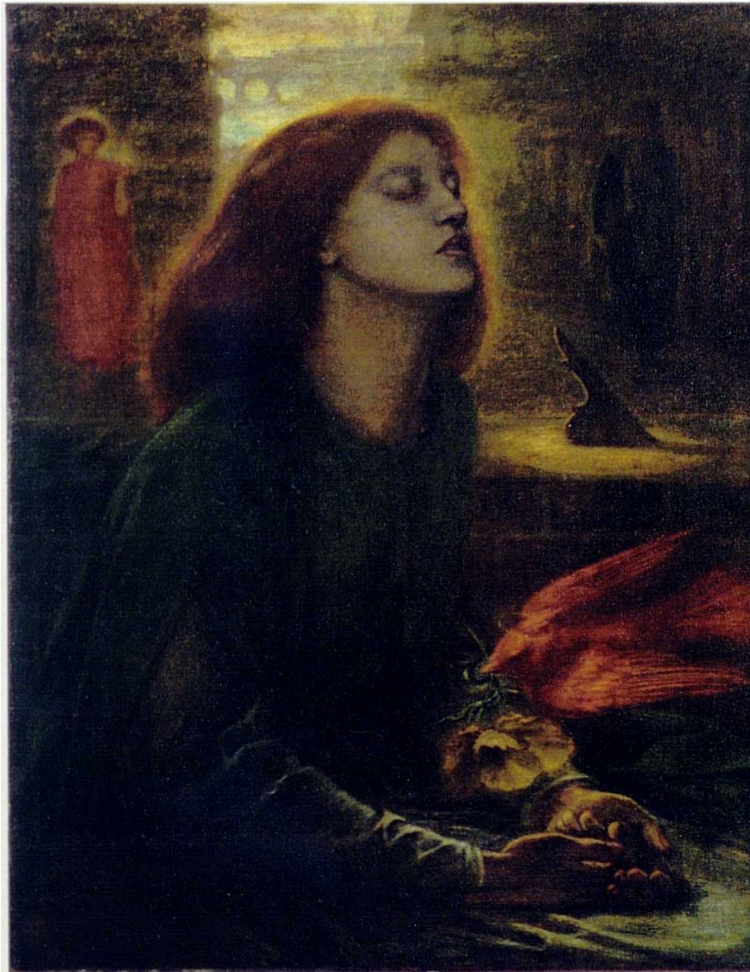

Fig. 8: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Beata Beatrix*, c.1864-70. Oil on canvas, 86.4 x 66cm, Tate Gallery, London.

Fig. 9: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Beloved*, 1865-66. Oil on canvas, 82.6 x 76.2cm, Tate Gallery, London.

Fig. 10: Julia Margaret Cameron, *King Arthur, Freshwater, Isle of Wight*, 1874. Albumen print, 361 x 280mm. The Royal Photographic Society, Bath.

Fig. 11: Samuel Butler & unknown photographer, *Stefano Scotto with Mr S Butler, Ecce Homo Chapel, Sacro Monte, Varallo,*, c.1882. Silver bromide print, 108 x 156mm.

Fig. 12: Samuel Butler, *Tabachetti, Chapel of the Journey to Calvary: Goitred man (extreme left), St Veronica and 'kicking man', Varallo, c.1599*, 1888. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

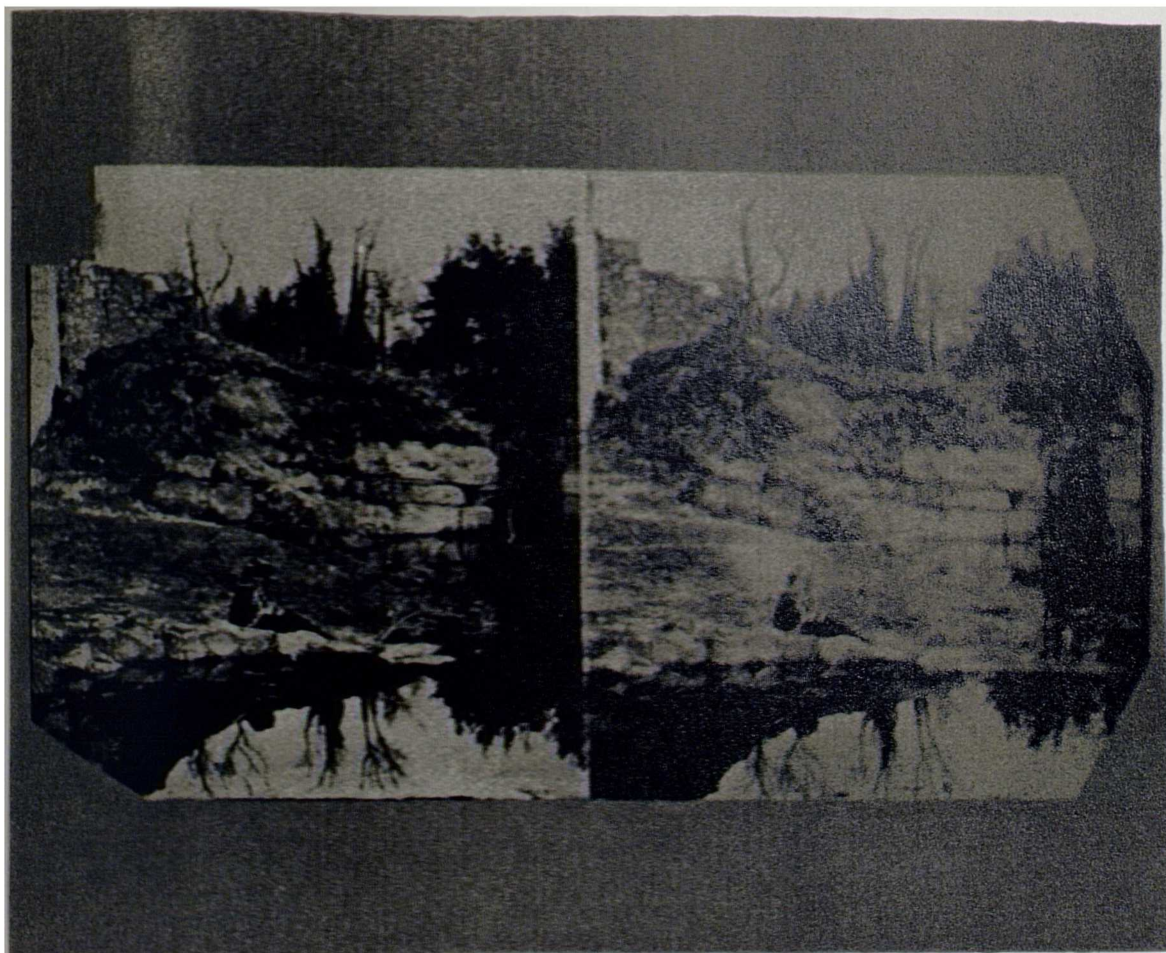

Fig. 13: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1857-60. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 78 x 142mm (stereoscopic).

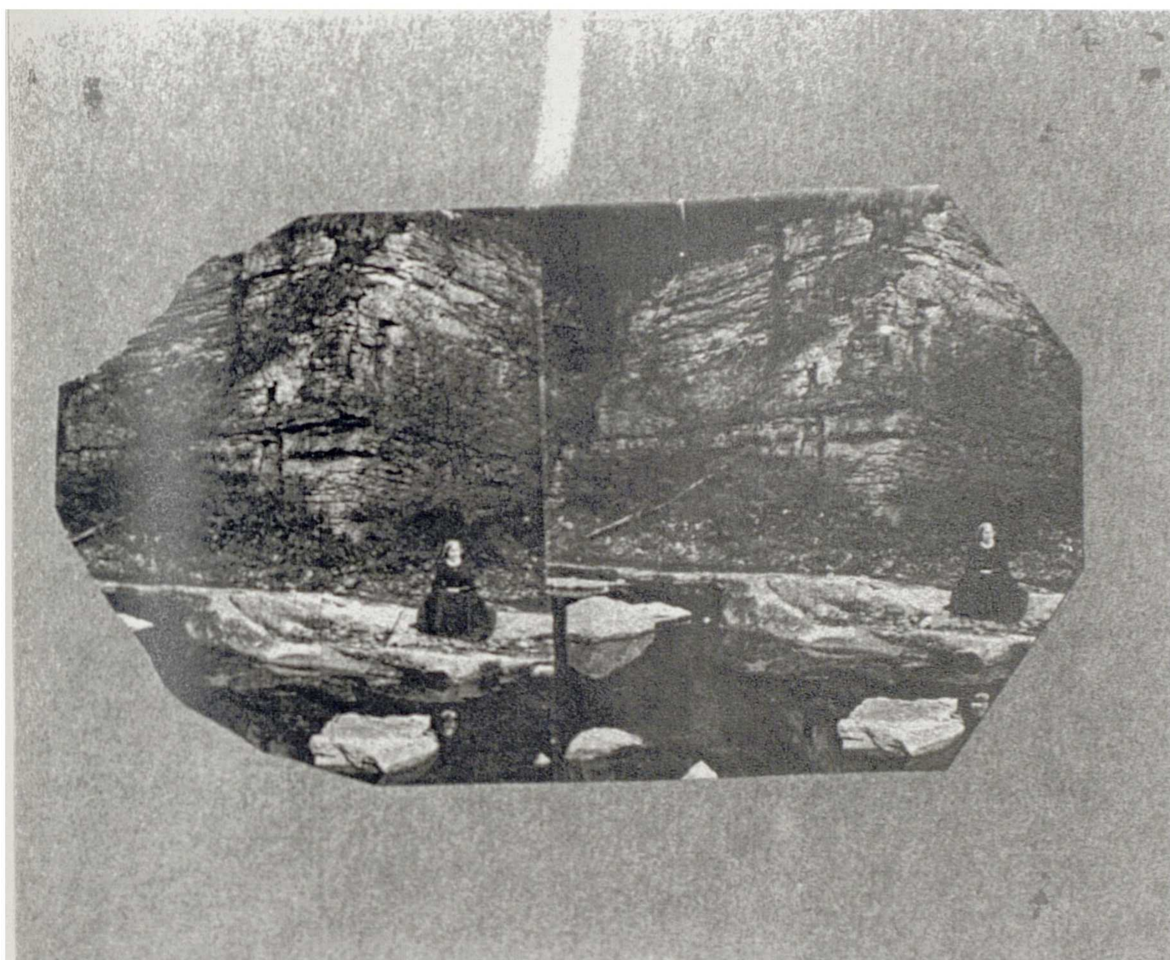

Fig. 14: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1857-60. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 73 x 132mm (stereoscopic).

Fig. 15: Claude Lorrain, *Landscape with Narcissus and Echo*, 1644. Oil on canvas, 94.6 x 118.1cm, The National Gallery, London.

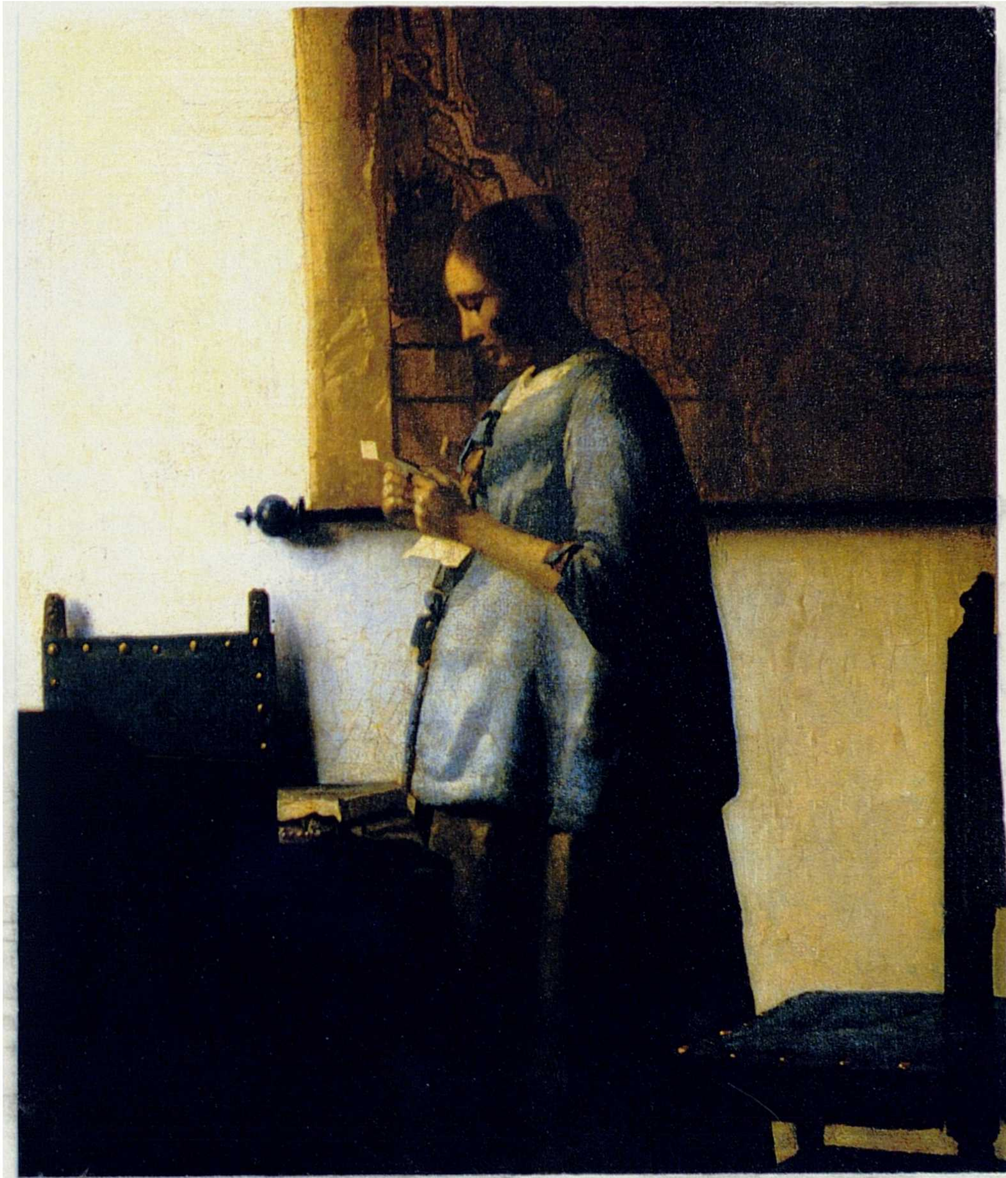

Fig. 16: Johannes Vermeer, *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter*, c.1662-65. Oil on canvas, 46.5 x 39cm, Rijksmuseum-Stichting, Amsterdam).

Fig. 17: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1863-64. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 244 x 283mm.

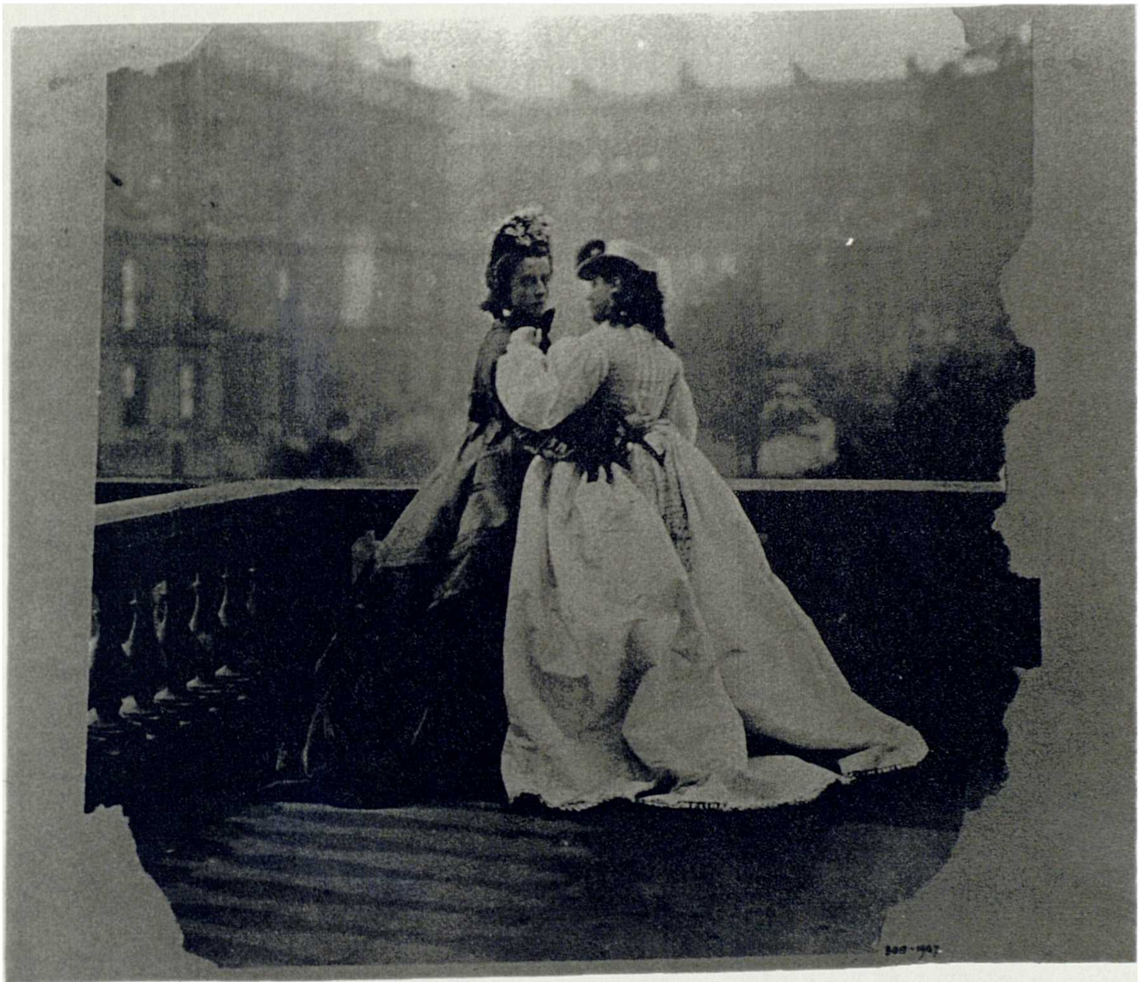

Fig. 18: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1863-64. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 230 x 210mm.

Fig. 19: J F Lewis, *Hhareem Life, Constantinople*, exhibited 1857. Watercolour and bodycolour, 62.2 x 47.6cm, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Laing Art Gallery.

Fig. 20: John Frederick Lewis, *The Siesta*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 88.6 x 111.1cm, Tate Gallery, London.

Fig. 21: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from Life*, c.1862. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 114 x 86mm.

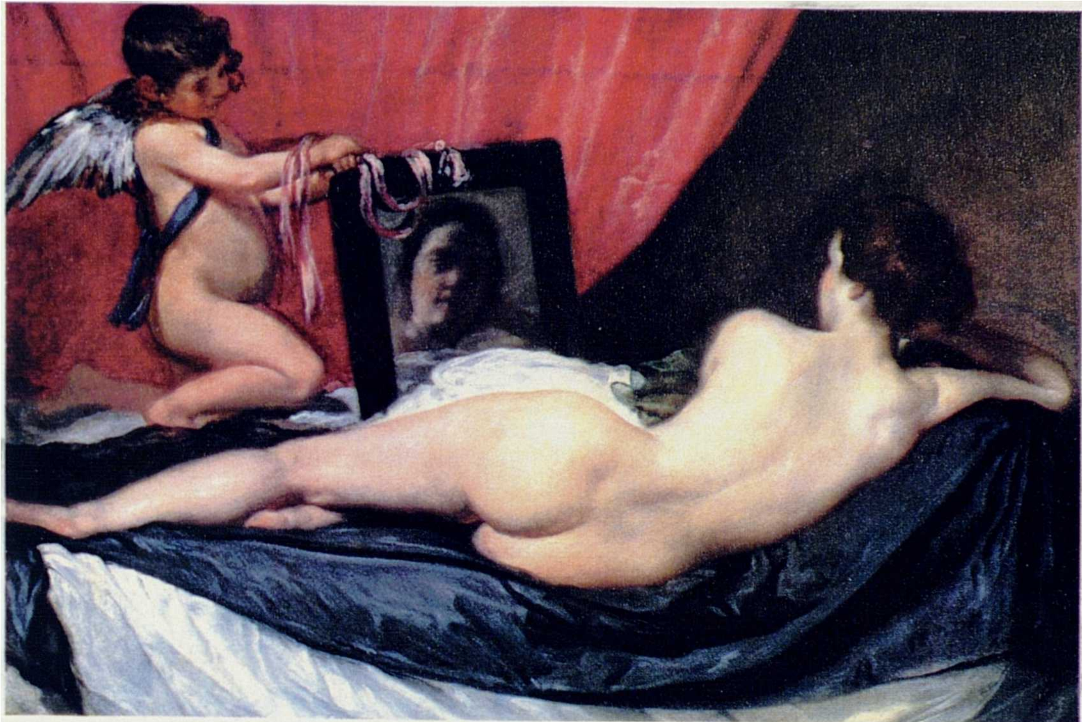

Fig. 22: Diego Velazquez, *The Toilet of Venus (The 'Rokeby' Venus)*, 1649-51. Oil on canvas, 122.5 x 177cm, The National Gallery, London.

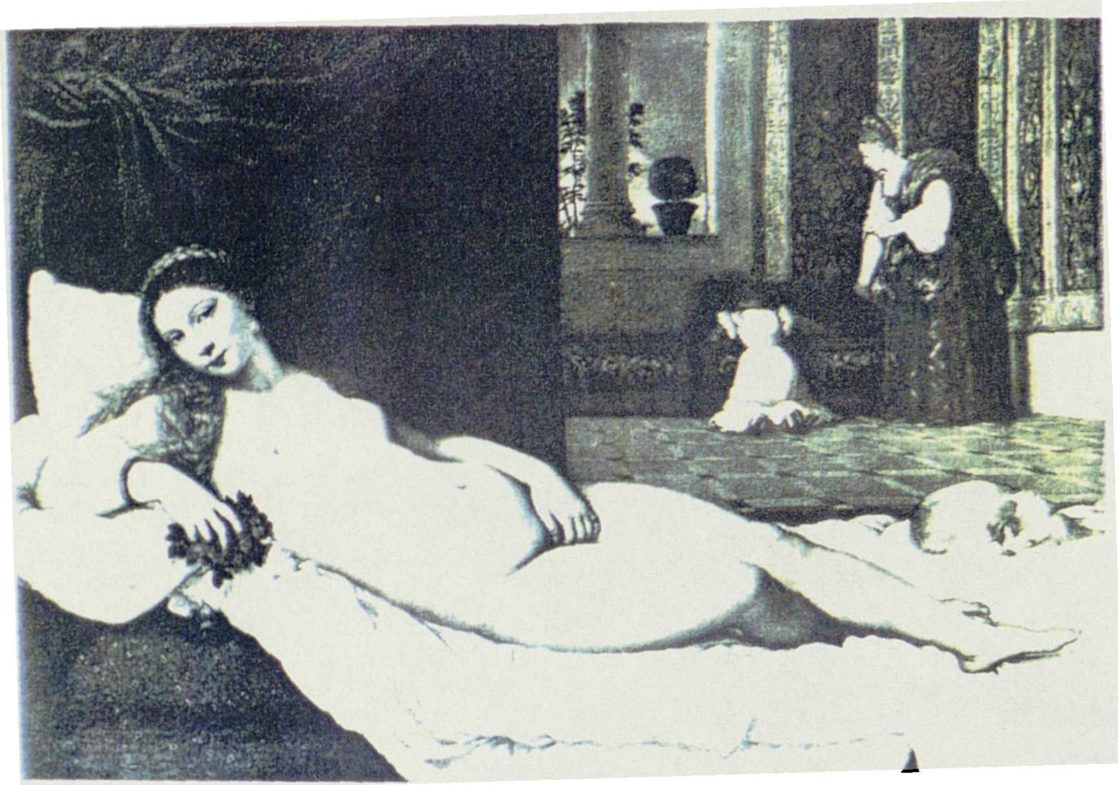

Fig. 23: Titian, *The Venus of Urbino*, 1538. Oil on canvas, 165 x 195cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Fig. 24: Berthe Morisot, *Psyche*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 64 x 54cm, Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Madrid.

Fig. 25: Edouard Manet, *Nana*, 1877. Oil on canvas, 154 x 115cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

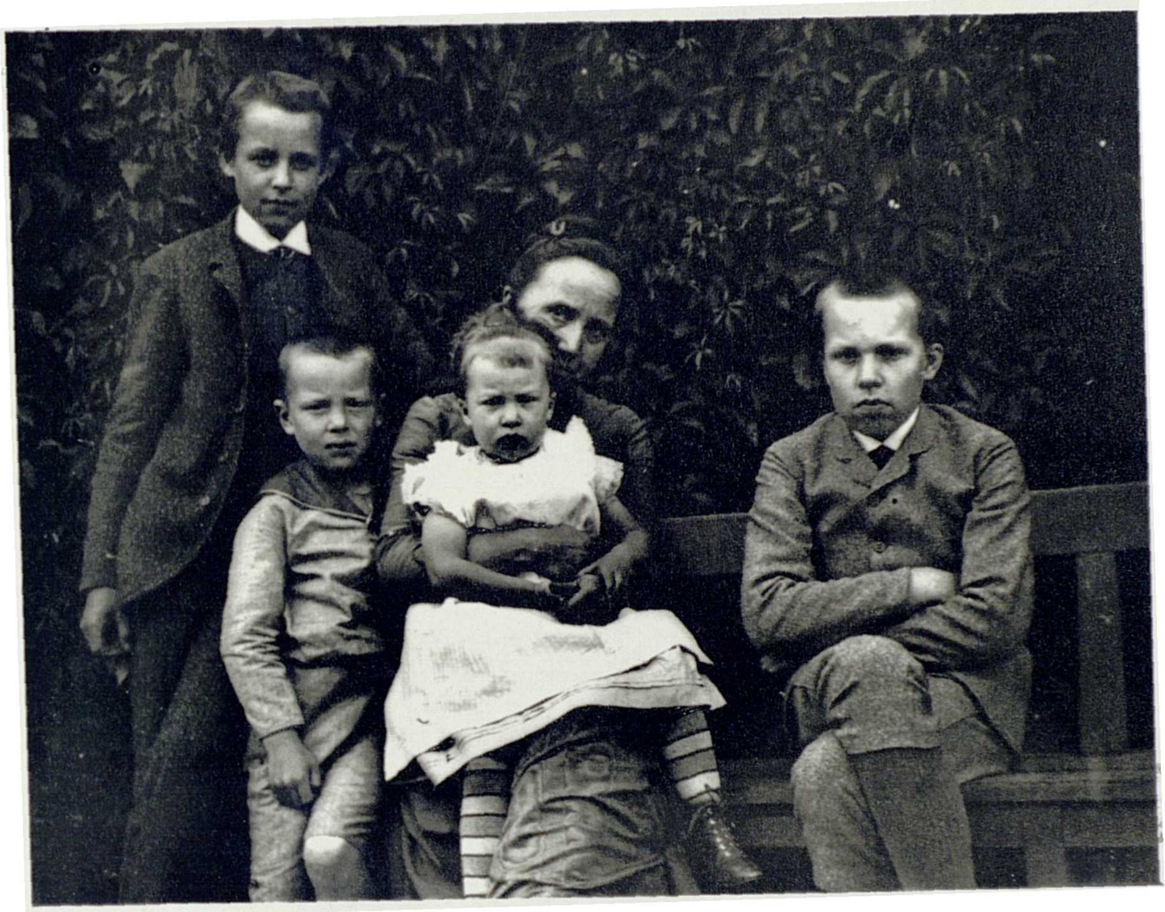

Fig. 26: Samuel Butler, *Mme Refards and the four children*, 1889. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 27: Lewis Carroll (Charles Dodgson), *Arthur Hughes and his daughter Agnes*, 1863. (Details not available.) Howard Grey.

Fig. 28: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from Life*, c.1862. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 105 x 81mm.

Fig. 29: Julia Margaret Cameron, *My grandchild Archie, aged 2 years, 3 months*, 1865. Albumen print, 227 x 279mm. Royal Photographic Society, Bath.

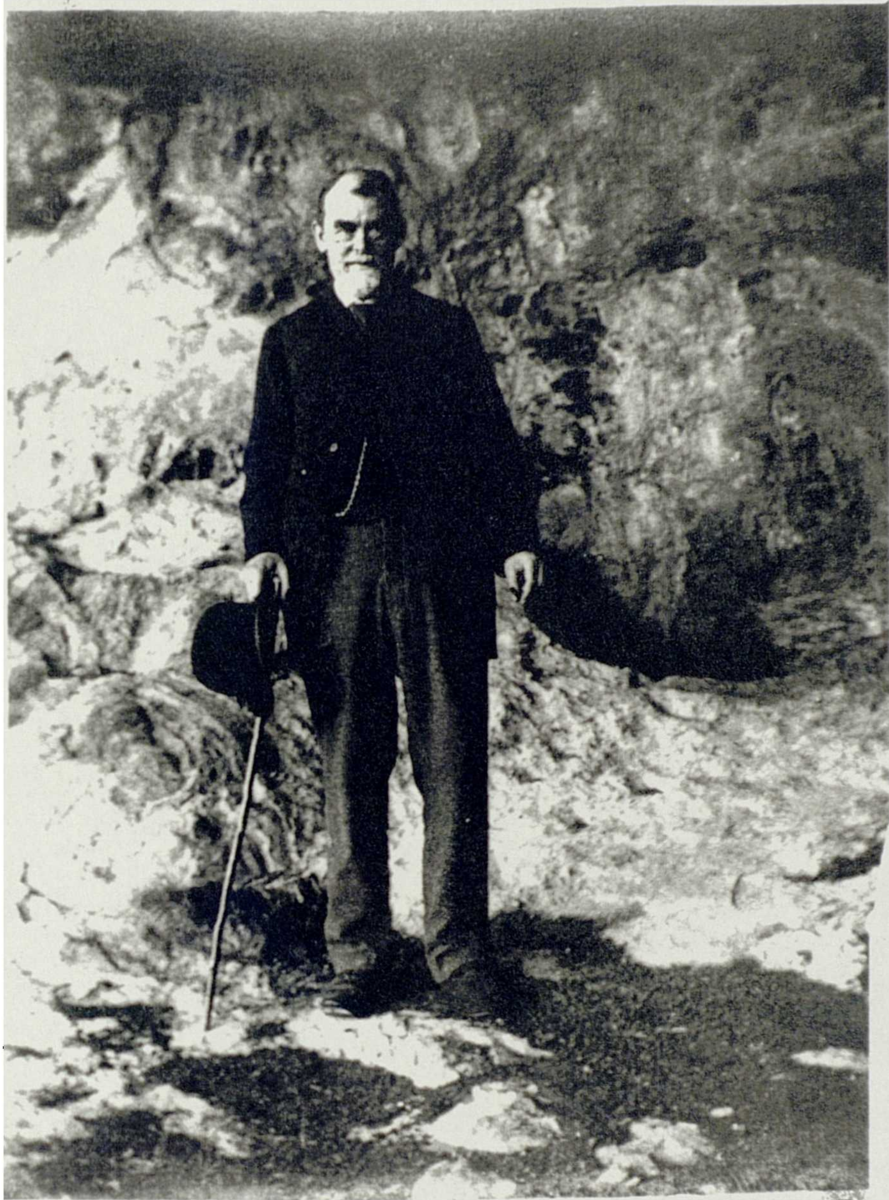

Fig. 30: Samuel Butler & unknown photographer, Samuel Butler in Polyphemus' Cave, 1892. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 31: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1858-61. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 119 x 90mm.

Fig. 32: Samuel Butler, *Mrs. Barratt, Langar*, 1866 or 67. Albumen print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 33: Samuel Butler, *The Knifegrinder, Bellinzona*, 1892. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 34: Samuel Butler, *Man shaving poodles, Naples*, 1893. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 35: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1861-62. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 103 x 85mm.

Fig. 36: Samuel Butler, *The Blind Man reading the Bible near Greenwich*, 1892. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 37: Jacques-Louis David with Francois-Xavier Fabre, *Belisarius*, Salon of 1785. Oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 38: Samuel Butler, *Men asleep in the Piazza S. Marco, Florence*, 1892. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

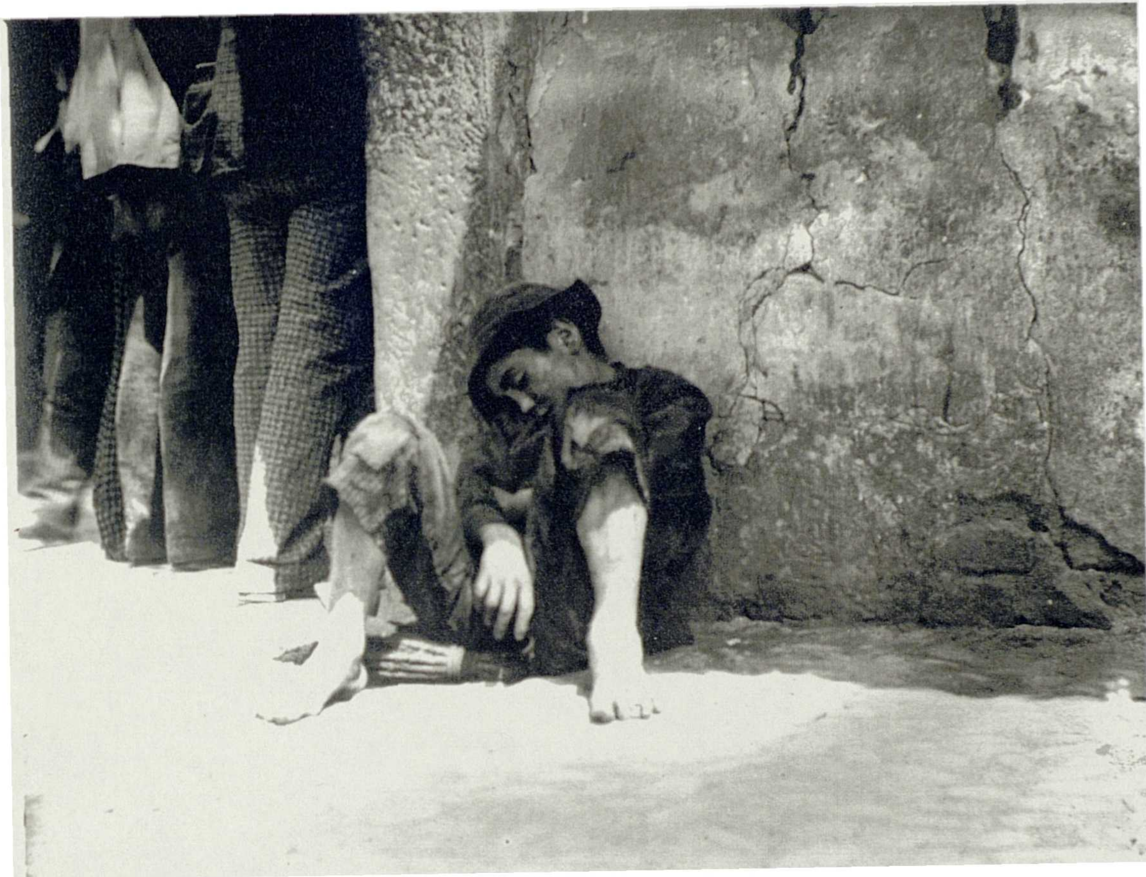

Fig. 39: Samuel Butler, *Sleeping Boy, Casale,* 1893. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 40: Samuel Butler, *Sleeping pigs in Piazza Gaudenzio Ferrari, Varallo*, 1892. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 41: Samuel Butler, *Boulogne Quay*, 1891. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 42: Samuel Butler, *Gogin and blocks of ice on the quay, Boulogne*, 1891. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 43: Samuel Butler, *Nuns on the Lake of Lucerne*, 1894. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 44: Samuel Butler, *Horse on steamer going to Boulogne*, 1892. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 45: Alfred Stieglitz, *The Steerage*, 1907. Photogravure, 320 ×257mm. National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Fig. 46: Samuel Butler, *Sheep on board steamer*, 1892. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

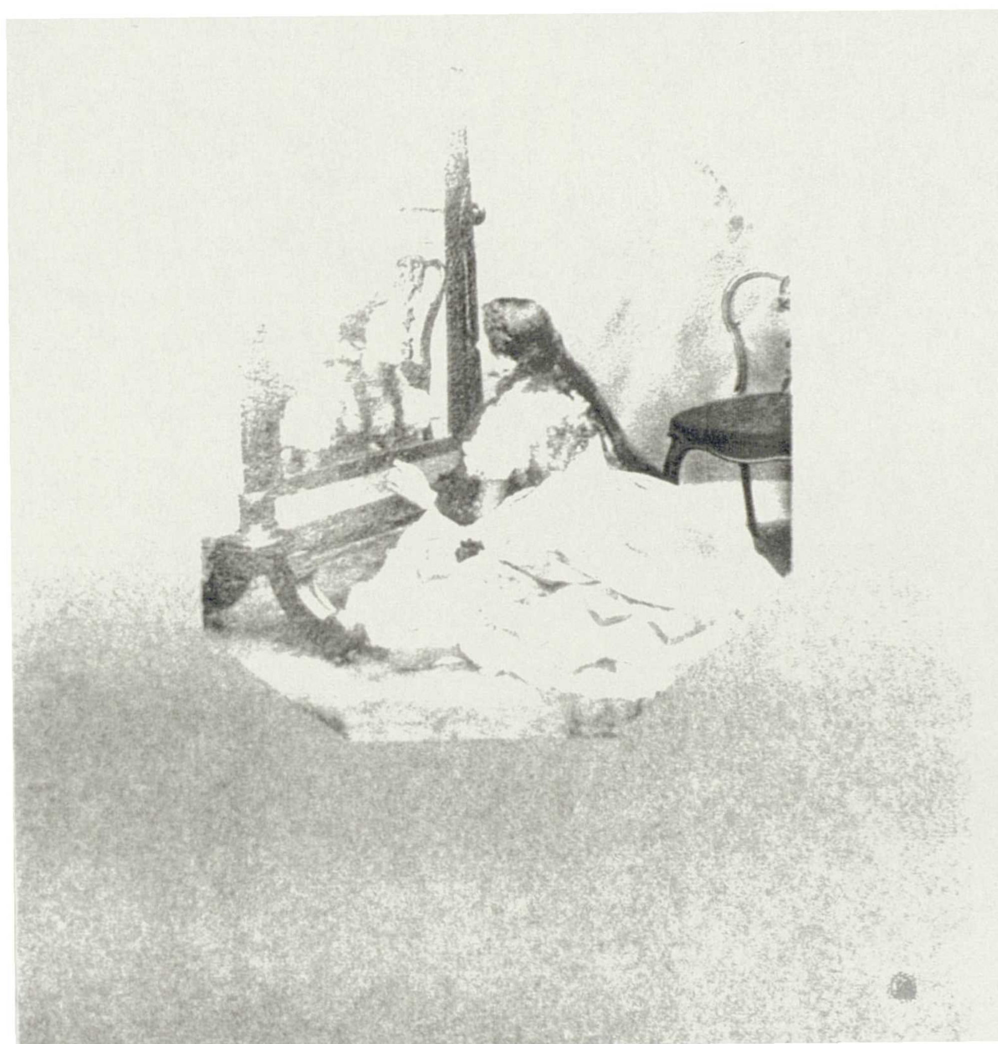

Fig. 47: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1862. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 102 x 85mm.

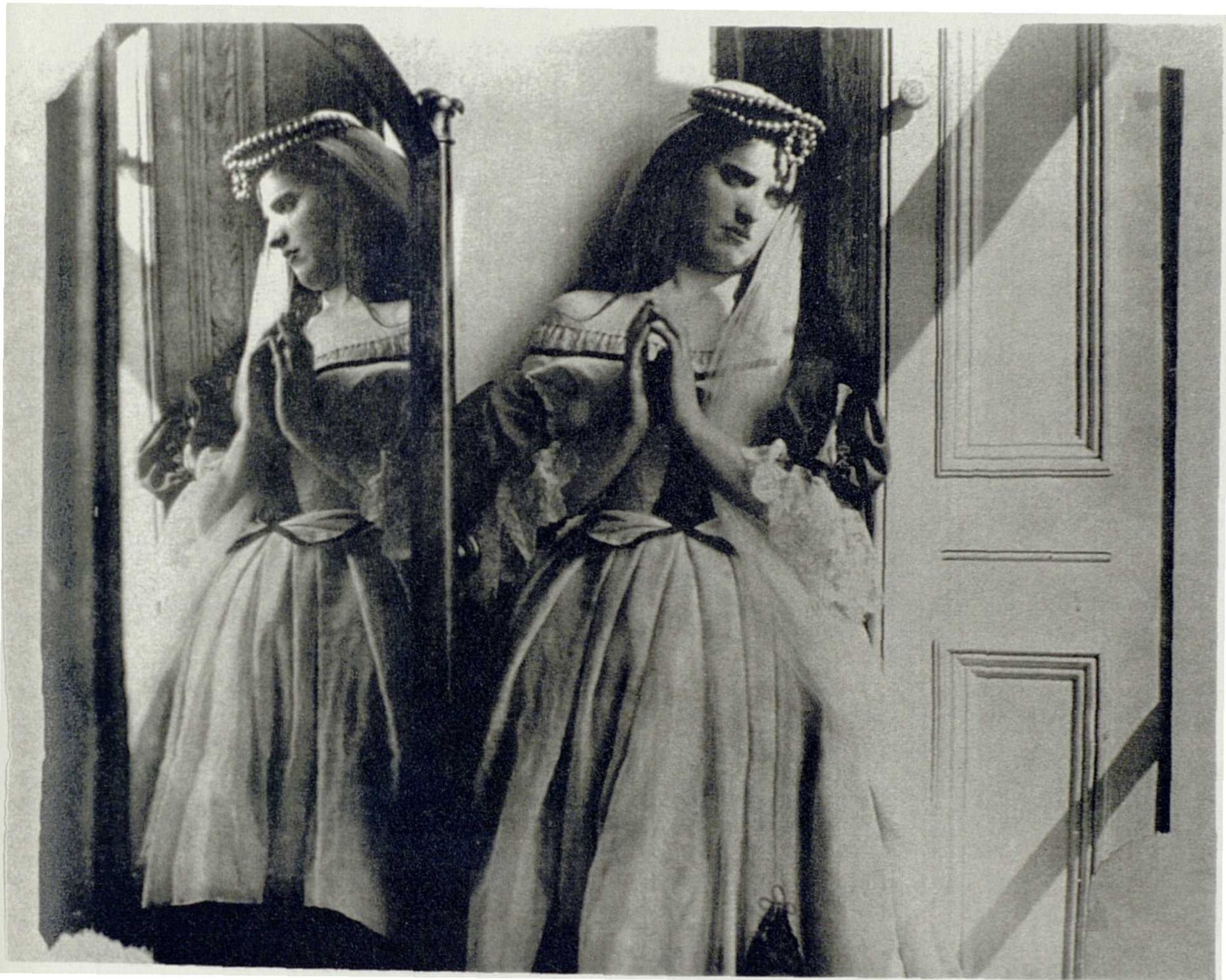

Fig. 48: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1863-64. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 246 x 259mm.

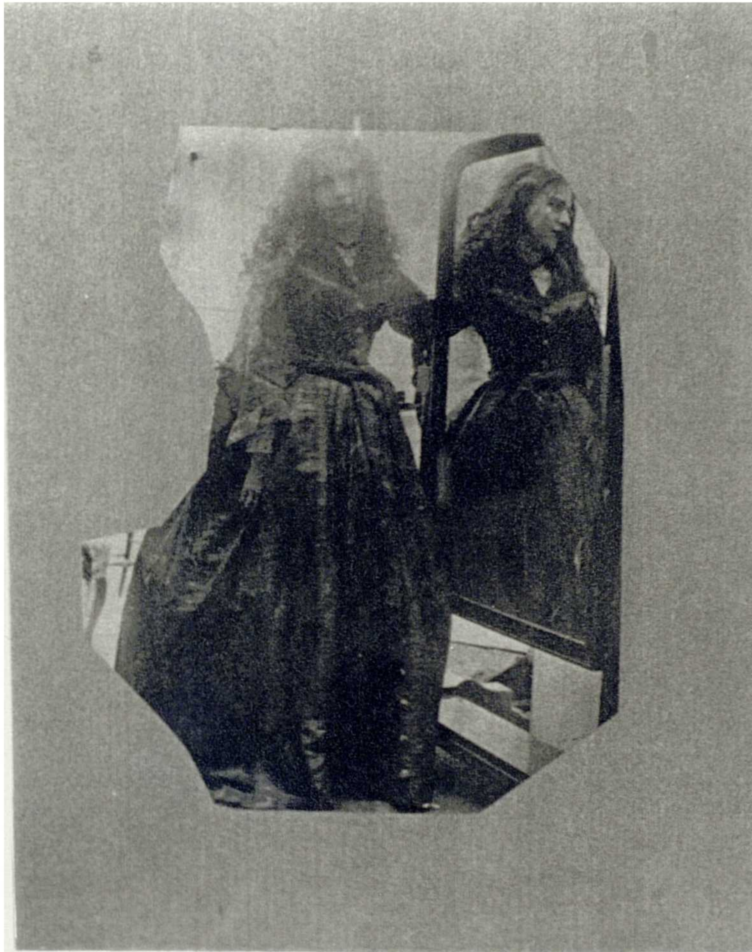

Fig. 49: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1862. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 107 x 86mm.

Fig. 50: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1862-63. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 112 x 80mm.

Fig. 51: Charles Baxter, *The Sisters*, 1860. Oil on canvas, 32.5cm diameter, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

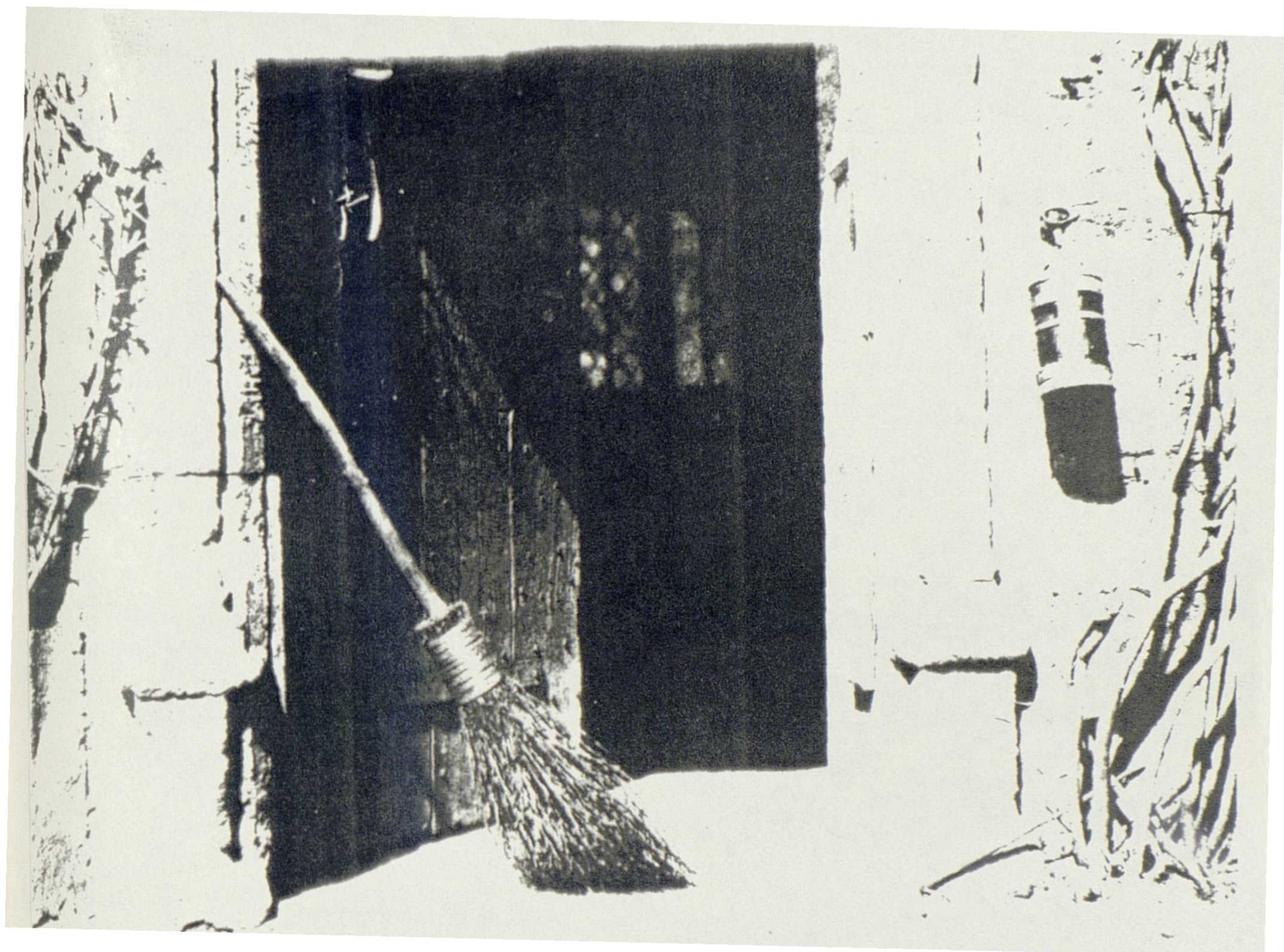

Fig. 52: William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Open Door*, 1843. Salt print positive from the calotype process, 195 x 146mm. National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh.

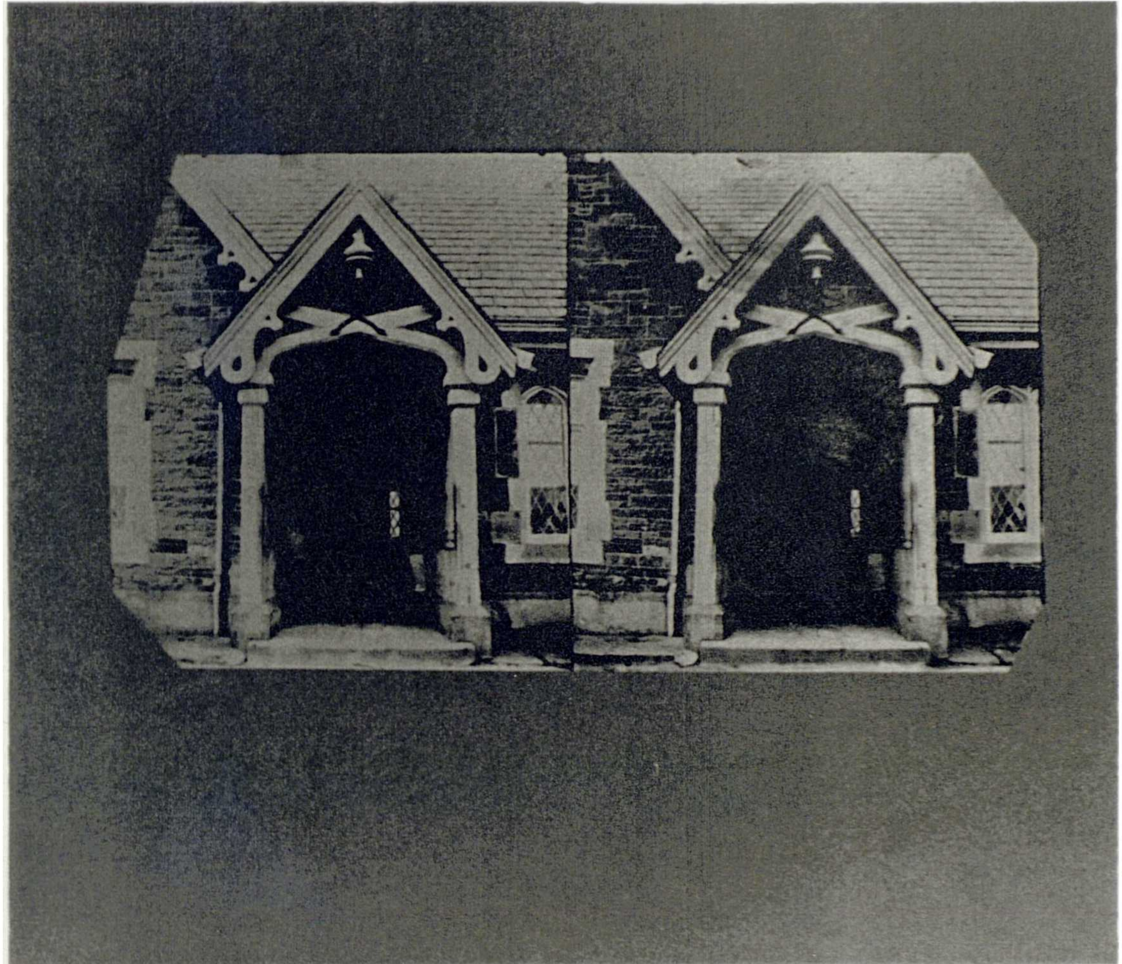

Fig. 53: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1857-60. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 79 x 141mm (stereoscopic).

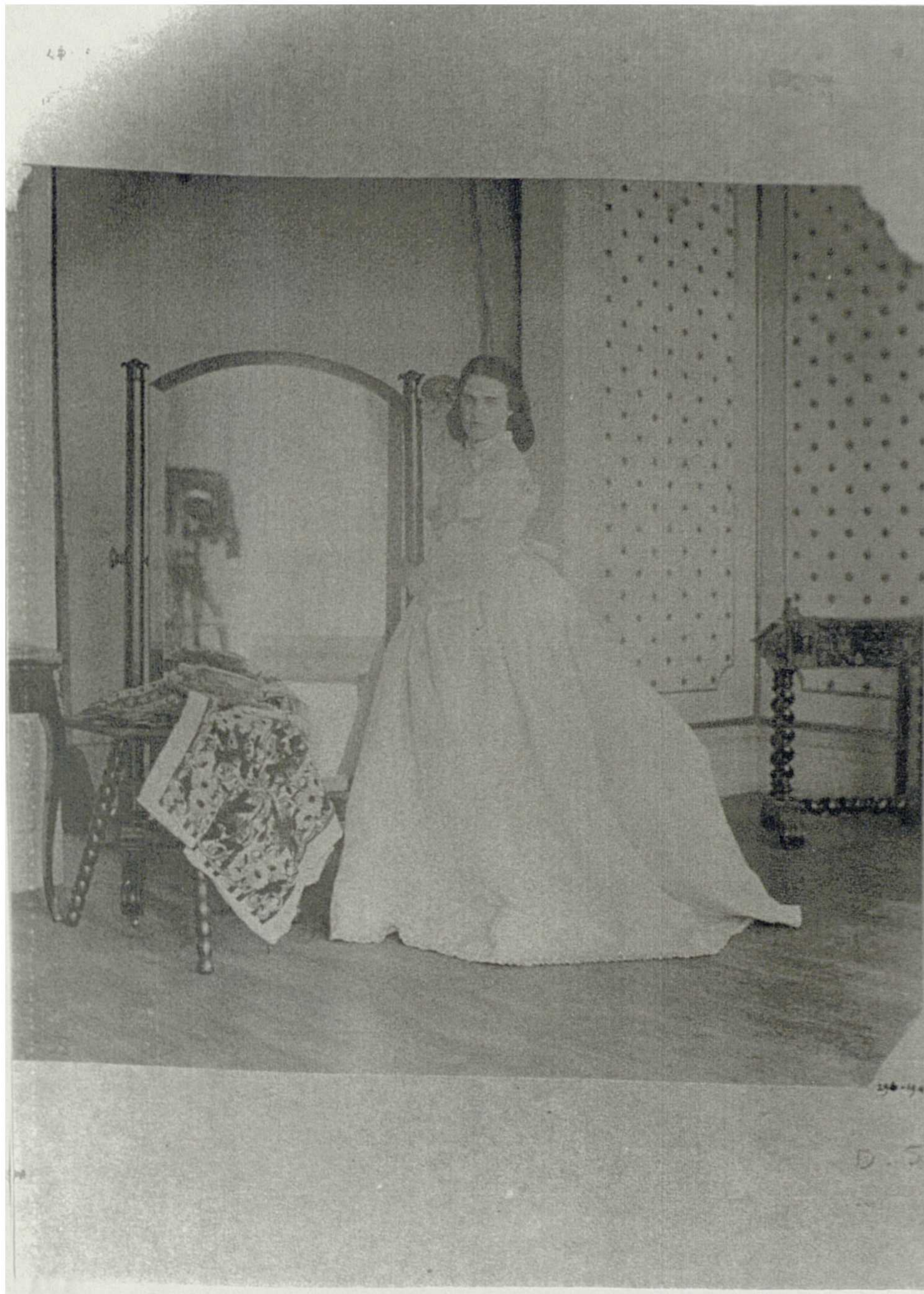

Fig. 54: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1862-63. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 216 x 232mm.

Fig. 55: Samuel Butler, *Church at Bormio through an opening*, 1891. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 56: Samuel Butler, *Monastery on Mt. Lycabettus, Athens*, 1895. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 57: Roger Fenton, *Vista, Furness Abbey*, 1860. Albumen print, 281 x 262mm. The Royal Photographic Society, Bath.

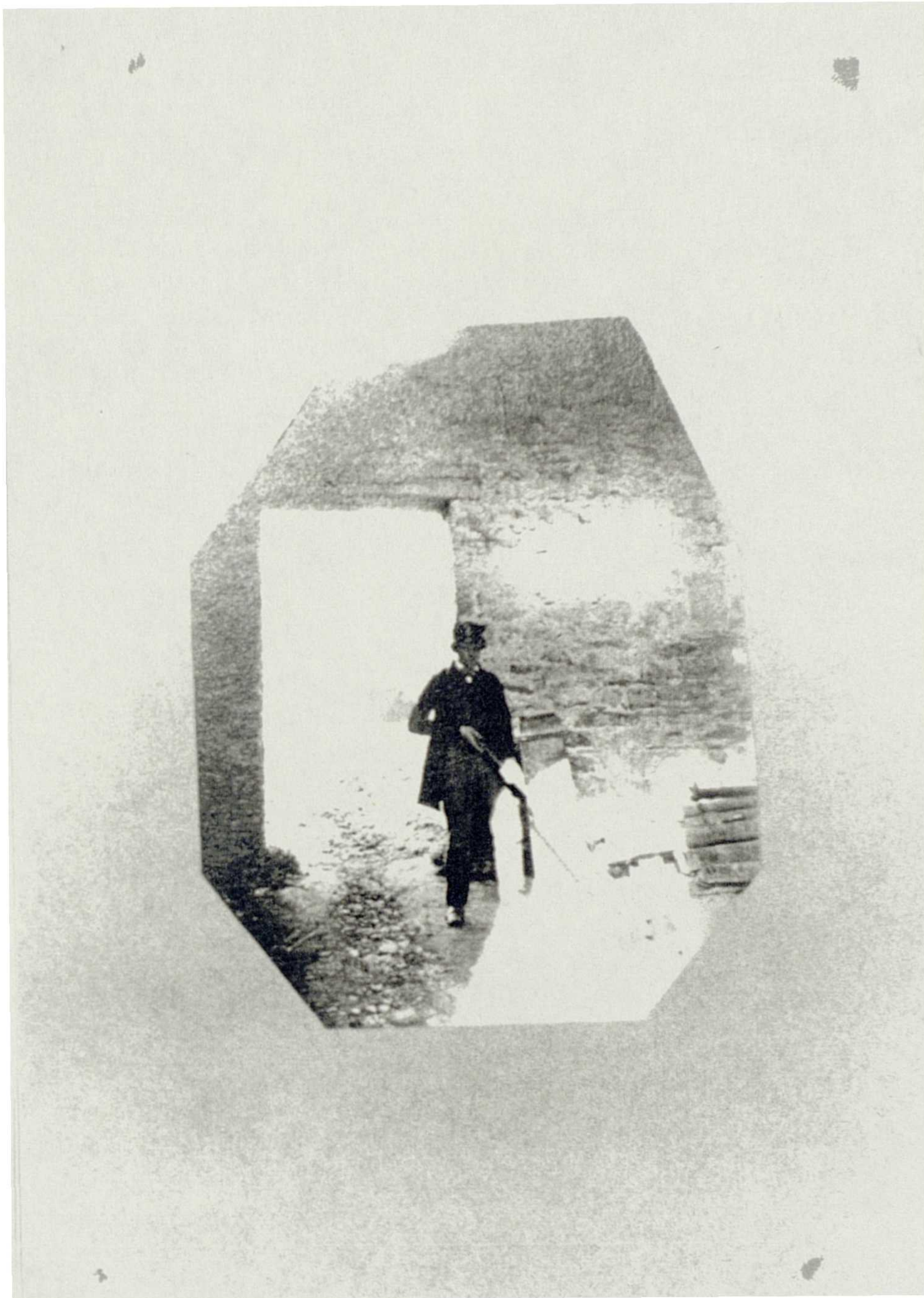

Fig. 58: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1858-61. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 105 x 83mm.

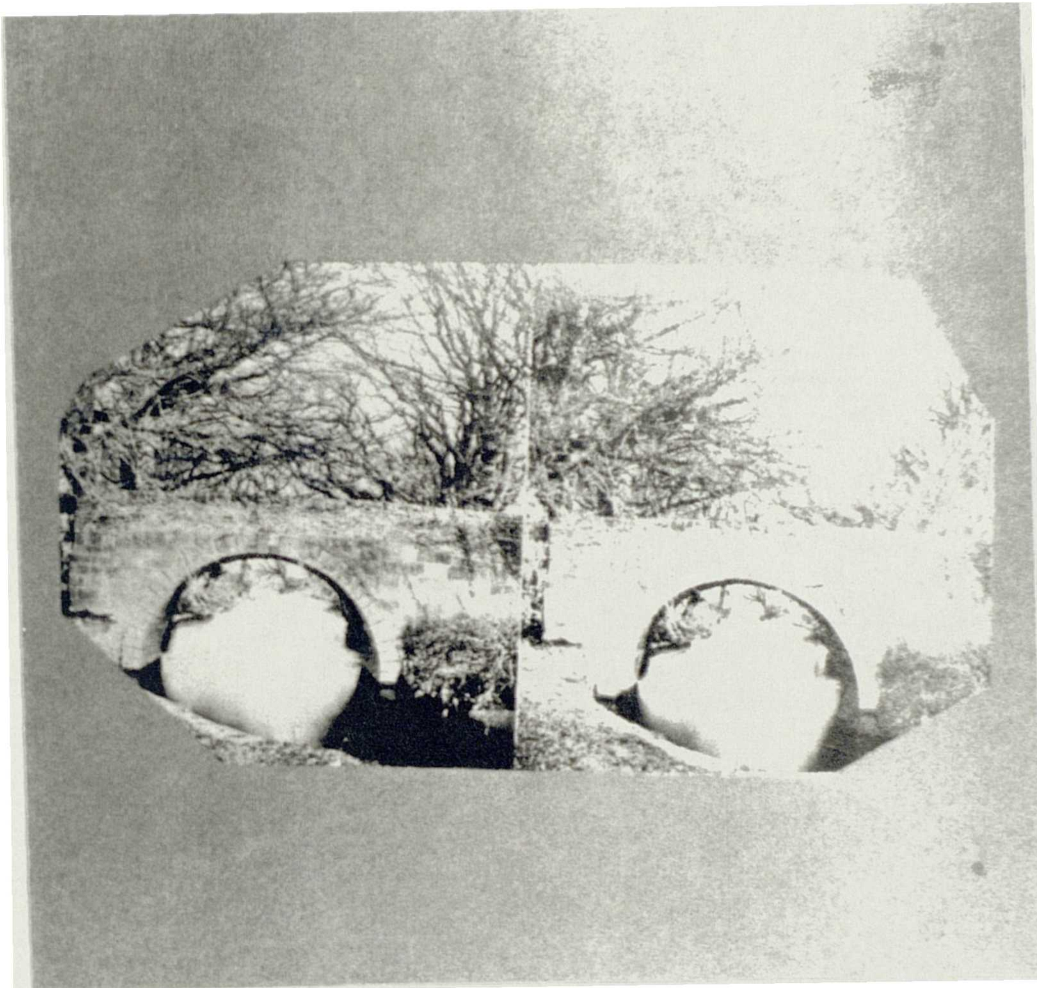

Fig. 59: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from life*, c.1857-60. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 77 x 140mm (stereoscopic).

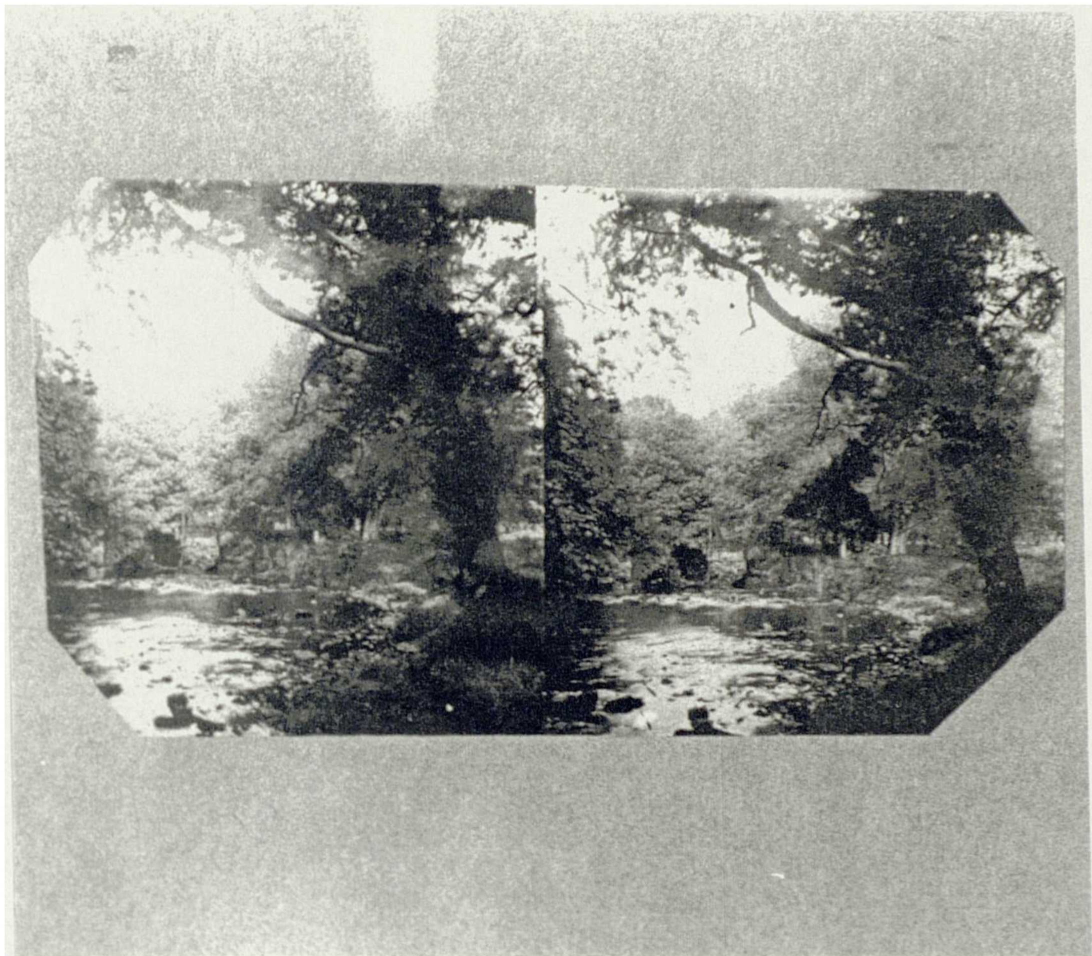

Fig. 60: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from Life*, c.1857-60. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 74 x 138mm (stereoscopic).

Fig. 61: Samuel Butler, *The Washing Pit, Varallo,* 1892. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

Fig. 62: Frederick Evans, *Kelmscott Manor: Through a Window in the Tapestry Room*, 1896. Platinum print, 188 x 129mm. The Royal Photographic Society, Bath.

Fig. 63: Clementina Hawarden, *Study from Life*, c.1862. Albumen print from wet collodion negative, 110 x 85mm.

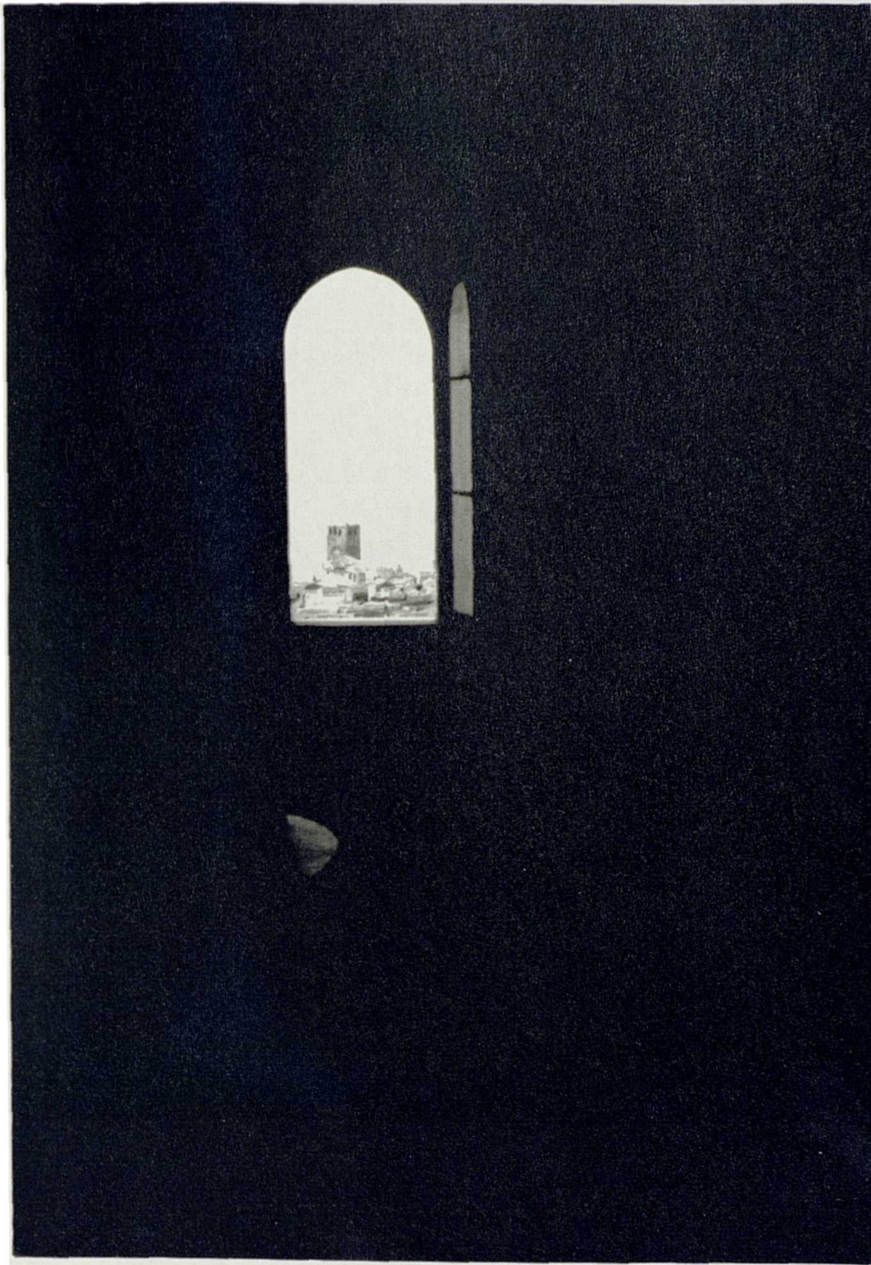

Fig. 64: Samuel Butler, *Window in the Count's Salone, Mount Erice*, 1894. Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

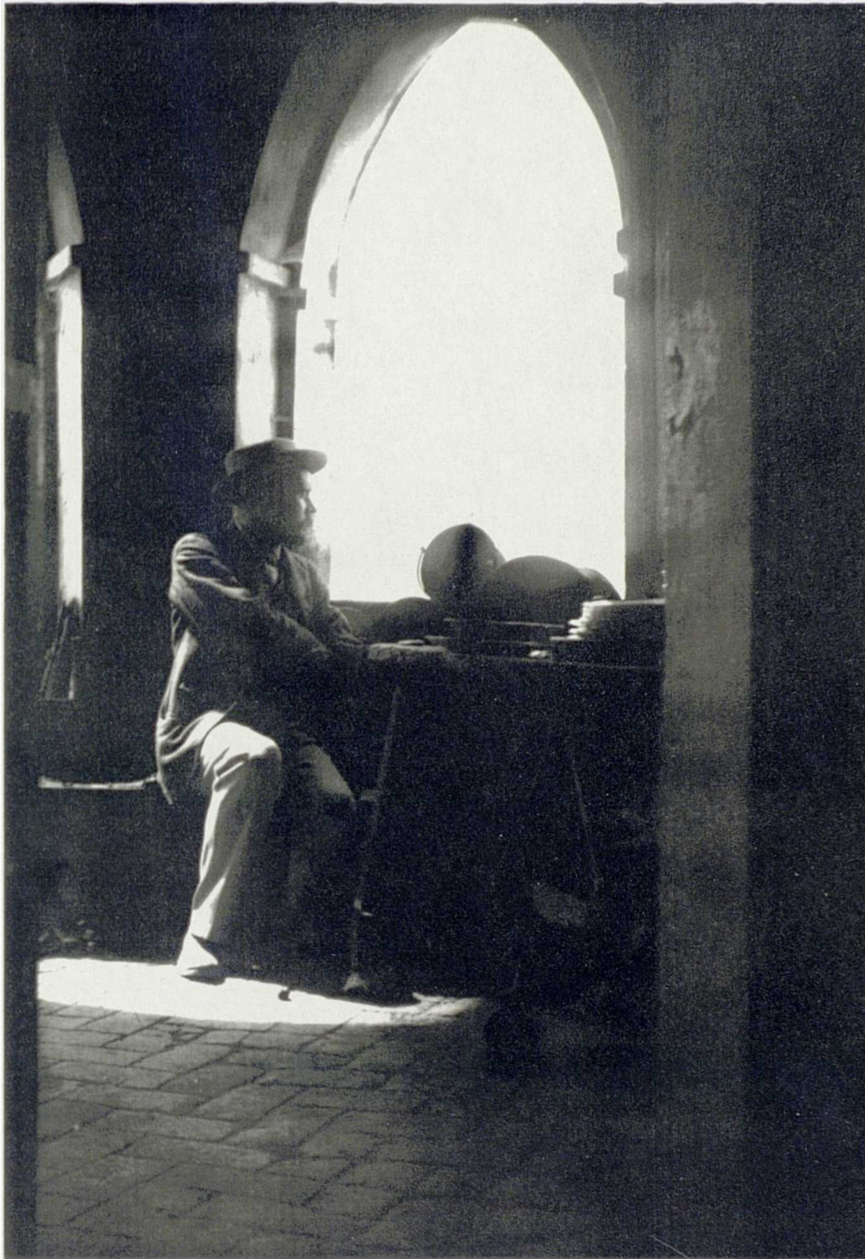

Fig. 65: Samuel Butler, *Jones in a Kitchen*, 1894.
Silver bromide print, 76 x 102mm.

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