"Drawn towards the lens": Representations and Receptions of Photography in Britain, 1839 to 1853

by

Julia Francesca Munro

A thesis

presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfillment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2008

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis,

including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This dissertation studies the earliest years of photography's invention. Attention to the earliest conceptions of photography reveals a more complex and contested understanding of the nature and significance of photographic representation than has previously been attributed to the Victorians of the early nineteenth century, providing not only a more comprehensive picture of the history of the new technology, but also new insights into the interactions of Victorian photography and visual culture. The earliest representations and receptions of photography are gathered from inventors' reports, the first photographic texts produced for a specialist and general audience, and periodical articles that reveal the popular reception of photography by a non-specialist audience. The evolving representations and reception of photography are traced throughout the 1840s, as the medium grew increasingly popular, with a particular focus on photographic portraiture. Arguing that the earliest figurations of a new medium directly inform or "premediate" how the medium is negotiated as it becomes established in the culture – that is, even though the technology and use of photography changed quite rapidly, the earliest perceptions of the medium powerfully influenced how it was used, perceived, and resisted – I examine the central anxieties raised by photography that persisted throughout the 1840s and early 1850s. Using Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* as a case study, I then turn to literature of the realist genre to assess how photography is imagined and contested in novelistic form. This not only provides a model with which to examine the incorporation of photographic allusions and themes into the realist novel, but also contributes new insights into the ways in which the issues of photography and other aspects of visuality intersected with the literary realist enterprise.

Acknowledgements

I must begin these acknowledgements by thanking my co-supervisors Drs. Katherine Acheson and Kate Lawson for their intelligence, patience, and kindness. I also wish to thank committee member Dr. Fraser Easton, who has provided helpful comments.

I am grateful for the encouragement of my parents and grandparents, who always reminded me of the value and privilege of education. I acknowledge the help of my colleague and friend Cara DeHaan, who has provided daily support and empathy. I appreciate the funding provided over the years by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program, and the University of Waterloo. Last but first, I thank my husband Adam for his inspiration, encouragement, and friendship.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to Adam and Emilia.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Introduction

The Cultural Reception of Photography in Britain

Fig. 1. Daguerre, Louis Jacques Mandé. *View of the Boulevard du Temple*. 1837. Stadtmuseum, Munich.

A dissertation on photography is best begun with the contemplation of a photograph, in this instance, the remarkable "View of the Boulevard du Temple" taken by one of photography's inventors, Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, in 1837. While not the earliest photograph, nor the earliest photograph to contain the depiction of a human being, it has an aura typical of early photographs that Walter Benjamin describes as "beautiful and unapproachable" ("A Small History" 257). I find it so insistently compelling for several reasons that aptly embody the unique aspects and problems of photography that this dissertation examines. A daguerreotype that is often commented on in the initial periodical reportage on the invention, it evoked amazement in earliest viewers' regarding the

unprecedented level of accuracy and realism that this new type of image seems to present; at the same time, its curiously "deserted appearance"[1] signals the unreality of this mediated representation or its "striking dissemblance to nature," as an early article describes Daguerre's boulevard daguerreotypes ("Letter from J.R." 435). As such, this image symbolizes the public's persistently oscillating reception of the photograph as both unmediated and mediated, a reception that would persist as the new medium developed in capabilities and popularity. The uncanny presence of the gentleman in the left foreground, a life-like figure amidst the empty stillness of the daguerreotype, also embodies several characteristic aspects of photography that this dissertation considers (among them the idea that a person photographed is never merely him or herself but rather becomes a figure or symbol). His presence suggests the incomparable immediacy of the photographic medium (what Roland Barthes describes as "literally an emanation of the referent"), an immediacy to which viewers responded with great desire, particularly as photographic portraiture began to be practiced (80). In capturing the individual as he existed in that moment (in high afternoon, during the approximately ten to fifteen minutes required to develop this early image),[2] the photograph also suggests its status as memorial. This is an aspect of photography that was frequently discussed in the period and that Christian Metz has more recently summarized by stating that the photograph is a "pure index [that] stubbornly point[s] to the print of what *was*, but no longer *is*" (83). Most compelling is the sense of voyeurism bound up in this

---

[1] Due to lengthy exposure times, anything in motion could not be photographed. In this case, the individual in the left foreground who was having his shoes polished was captured because he was standing still.

image, shot from the level of the rooftops, in which the individual has been unknowingly

captured. The power of the camera to *take* one's image, creating a seemingly perfect

duplicate of the original subject that circulates and takes on a life of its own, is a central

problem discussed from the moment of photography's invention, evoking an anxiety

(regarding the original and the copy, the agency of the camera, and the circulation and lack of

control over the photograph) that grew more pressing as photography developed into a mass

medium by the early 1850s. These and other aspects of photography are examined in this

dissertation.

Project Scope

This dissertation is a study of the representations and receptions of photography in

Britain from 1839 to 1853. The objects of study include inventors' reports and

correspondence, photographic and general interest periodicals, newspapers, and selected

fictional texts. A systematic study of these texts was conducted in order to examine the

representation of photography in its period of invention (in 1839)[3] and to examine its

---

[2] Exposure times varied depending on the time of day, the strength of the light, and the quality of the materials used in development; a ten to fifteen minute span was average (Leggat, "The Daguerreotype," n. pag.).

[3] Photography was separately invented by William Henry Fox Talbot, in England, and Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, in France. Daguerre announced his invention on 6 January 1839, which prompted Talbot to announce his invention shortly afterwards on 31 January 1839. Daguerre's process produced unique (non-reproducible) images on highly polished copper plates whose mirror-like surface prompted their common moniker, "the mirror of nature"; called daguerreotypes, they were favoured for their incredible level of detail and were more popular in France and England than Talbot's process, which produced reproducible, paper prints of lesser detail called talbotypes (or, less often, calotypes). Talbot's process would ultimately dominate, and was the basis for modern photography's process of producing multiple images from a negative. The circumstances of the invention of both the daguerreotype and talbotype, the competition between the two inventors, and the difficulties

reception in its earliest period of use (from 1839 to 1853), two periods that have remained largely overlooked in critical studies on the subject of photography. My research provides unique insight into the early history of photography, which is important to nineteenth-century cultural studies and to theories of the history of media technology, by analyzing the ways in which Victorian culture negotiated the idea of photography prior to it becoming a popular and widely practiced mode of visual representation. My research also helps us to understand how early uses and conceptualizations of photography helped to shape its later impact on the culture: in this example, we can see an early instance of what Richard Grusin has called "premediation" (18). This dissertation also contributes to a better understanding of the negotiation of photography in literature. Despite the widely acknowledged "transformative impact" of photography on culture and "fictional practice in particular," literary studies that examine photography tend to focus on a period no earlier than 1850, often citing Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1851 *The House of Seven Gables* as the earliest fictional text to contain photographic references (Dingley 43). By determining the common rhetorical conventions that were used to represent and understand photography in its earliest years of development and by identifying the debates and problems that the new technology raised, this dissertation provides a means by which we can detect early allusions to photography in literature and therefore offers new insights about photography's impact on literature and culture prior to the mid-century.

---

caused by the various patents in place for both processes comprise a complex history; where applicable, I describe these aspects of both inventions in this dissertation. For an overview of the history of photography, see Helmut Gernsheim's *The History of Photography*.

Critical approaches to photography in nineteenth-century Britain almost exclusively

examine photography from the 1850s onward, the period in which photography had rapidly

become a popular practice as measured by the sheer number of photographs produced,

middle-class consumption and circulation of photographs, and professionalization of the

trade: the 1861 census reveals, for instance, that "the number of professional photographers

in England had grown from 51 to 2,534 in ten years" (Heyert 83). A more common statistic

used to suggest the rapid popularization of photography reveals that within three months of

the Great Exhibition of 1851, a quarter of a million stereoscopic daguerreotype images were

sold in France and England (Terpak 357).[4] Helmut Gernsheim's assertion that "1851 marks

the beginning of a new era in photography," which referred to the immediate impact of the

collodion process, is often cited by cultural and literary historians (*A Concise History* 32).

Literary studies of photography reflect this mid-century focus, generally identifying the ten-

year period between 1850 and 1860 as the moment when Victorians began to negotiate their

world, their social hierarchy, and their individual identities in terms of the photograph. As a

result, photography's impact and influence on Victorian visuality is implied to have occurred

no earlier than the mid-century, although, as this dissertation proves, there is substantial and

significant evidence of photography's cultural impact. While it is certainly true, as Carol T.

---

[4] Stereoscopic photographs were a set of two images taken at slightly different distances that, when viewed through the stereoscope, created the illusion of a three-dimensional image. Histories of photography note that stereoscopes became rapidly popular in England after the Queen and Prince Albert took an interest in them at an exhibition at the Crystal Palace: as Gernsheim notes, "English opticians . . . began to manufacture stereoscopes, and nearly a quarter of a million instruments were sold in London and Paris within three months" of the Exhibition (*The History of Photography* 189). Stereoscopic photographs in a variety of genres and scenes (travel, dramatic, comedic, bawdy, etc.) were produced.

Christ and John O. Jordan argue, that there was an increasing preoccupation over the course

of the nineteenth century with "the question of what the visible reveals" (xxiv), the "frenzy

[for] the visible" began well before the middle of the century (Comolli 122).

Neglect of the early years of photography is perhaps understandable, given the slow

rate of progress from its invention to the early 1850s. Although technical improvements were

made throughout the 1840s and photographic portraiture began to be practiced commercially

beginning in 1841, the early 1850s are considered the period in which photography became

part of "mass culture, and the site of work" (Green-Lewis 51). The "industrialization of

photography" in this period stemmed from the invention of the collodion process in 1851

which, in increasing the speed of photography and decreasing its cost, led to the widespread

practice of photography and its entrance "into the commercial world" (Dingley 47; R.

Thomas 91).[5] Based on the advances of 1851, the mid-nineteenth century may be identified

as the moment when photography became a mass medium in terms of public use and

practice. However, photography was certainly part of the social landscape and cultural

imagination prior to the 1850s. By 1841, for instance, Beard and Claudet opened the first two

daguerreotype portrait studios in London to immediate success; portrait photography

subsequently became common enough to frequently figure in the periodical literature of the

---

[5] Leggat refers to the invention of the collodion process as a "watershed in photography" ("The Collodion Process," n. pag.). Invented by Frederick Scott Archer, it was superior to the calotype and daguerreotype processes in that it created paper prints with great detail from which multiple copies could reliably be made. The collodion process had a drastically decreased development time ("as little as two or three seconds"), and was cheaper to produce (with prints about one tenth the cost of the daguerreotype). Further, unlike the earlier methods that were protected under patent, the collodion process was never patented and consequentially led to photography being widely practiced.

period and in fictional texts, such as G. W. M. Reynolds's vastly popular 1844-1846 serial, *The Mysteries of London*, which featured a photographer and his studio in one of its many scenes.[6] These are just two instances that indicate that photography was already part of the larger cultural vocabulary; the nearly exclusive focus on dates no earlier than the 1850s in literary studies of photography, however, suggests otherwise. The consequences of such a focus include a lack of specificity regarding the development of the technology, a decontextualization of photographic texts, and the tendency to read photography in light of literary realism, thus obscuring alternative and contesting perceptions of the technology that were in circulation in the period. In its examination of the prevalence of photography in its earliest period of use, from 1839 to 1853, this dissertation thus provides a more accurate picture of photography and Victorian culture than is presently afforded by the mid-century focus.

Presumptions about the state of photography as it stood in the mid-nineteenth century often involve generalizations about the time period that are based on a lack of specificity regarding photography's technical capabilities at that point in time. In terms of the development of the technology itself, critical statements are made about photography without

---

[6] The inclusion of a photographer in Reynolds's serial suggests the extent of photography's popularity in the period, in that discussions of the process and fictional representations of the photographer and the medium appeared in a vast range of materials, from this mass-cultural phenomenon (described by Henry Mayhew as a popular text that was read to illiterate costermongers and other members of the working class), to middle- and upper- class specialist periodicals (Allen 119). The wide range of textual sources that mention photography suggests its prominence in popular culture. It also counters the perception that photography, due to its cost, was initially familiar only to the upper classes (or "an elite group of amateurs" with "education, leisure and means" [Seiberling 1, 4]).

regard to the actual physical mechanisms and processes (for instance, shutter speed, length of time for the development process, etc.) of the period in question. Assertions about the cultural impact of photography or its influence on literary works often refer to capabilities or roles the technology did not yet have, which results in erroneous generalizations about photography or nineteenth-century visual culture as a whole. One such generalization made about the technology, for example, is that the Victorians' penchant for sitting for and exchanging portrait photographs in the mid-nineteenth century was due to the vast popularity of *cartes-de-visites* (a photographic calling card),[7] although these were not popular in England until the 1860s and, as chapter two shows, evidence of the popularity of photographic portraiture can be seen as early as the mid-1840s.

Critical focus on the mid-century also results in the decontextualization and misinterpretation of texts in which photography figures. Qualities are often attributed to nineteenth-century visual culture as a whole based on mid-century texts that are presumed to contain the earliest references to photography. Most critical studies rely nearly exclusively on mid-century texts (for instance, Lady Eastlake's 1857 essay in the *London Quarterly Review*) to support a general reading of Victorian photography. When critics refer to earlier texts (most commonly, Talbot's 1844-1846 serialized book, *The Pencil of Nature* and Poe's 1840

---

[7] R. Thomas argues, for instance, that "the immensely popular *cartes-de-visites*" functioned as "forms of self-promotion" at the time of *Bleak House*'s publication in the early 1850s (93). *Cartes-de-visites* were small visiting card portraits patented in 1854 by Andre Disdéri in France; they were not popular in England, however, until the 1860s, after a portrait was made of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. "Cartomania" quickly ensued, with people collecting *cartes-de-visites* of friends, family, and famous persons (Leggat, "Cartes-de-Visite Photography," n. pag.).

essays),[8] these are similarly decontextualized. For example, based on Talbot's rationale in

The Pencil of Nature (as to why he invented photography), Nancy Armstrong describes

Talbot as being motivated by a "fantasy for making apparently unmediated copies from a

negative image" and by a desire for "unmediated mediation" (14). Jennifer Green-Lewis

similarly notes that the "human element" is what Talbot "triumphantly declared missing"

from photography (59-60). Such readings of Talbot's texts are often used in support of the

assertion that photography was accepted without question as a transparent and unmediated

form of representation by early Victorians.[9] This reading not only obscures alternative

receptions and negotiations of photography that were in circulation at the time, but also

overlooks the specific context of Talbot's work. His emphasis on the unmediated nature of

photographs, for instance, was typical of the descriptions of photography used by its early

inventors and commentators to attempt to convey the uniqueness of the medium and to

distinguish it from other technologies of reproduction, such as engraving, which relied on

more direct human intervention.[10] Further, photography was not exclusively represented as

---

[8] Two essays by Poe on the subject of photography were published in the American *Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine*, in April and May of 1840. The first photographically illustrated book, Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature* describes how the author came to invent photography and contains a series of photographs accompanied by descriptive text.

[9] Bolter and Grusin also read Talbot's positioning of photography in this manner, stating that "many in the nineteenth century could regard light or nature itself as the painter" since the process of photography was "mechanical and chemical" (27).

[10] Talbot's use of this description was also partly in response to a similar book that had been recently published, *Excursions Daguerriennes*, which did not contain actual photographs but rather engravings. As Talbot states in a note appended to the first part of *The Pencil of Nature*, "the plates of the work now offered to the public are the pictures themselves, obtained by the action of light, and not engravings in imitation of them. This explanation is necessary, because some well-executed engravings have been published in France in imitation of Photography, but they want the character of truth and reality which that art so eminently possesses" (n. pag.). In an introduction to *The Pencil of Nature*, Beaumont

unmediated in the period. For example, Talbot attributes the differences between two

photographs of the same object, printed in *The Pencil of Nature*, to the manipulations of the

camera: the two photographs show, in his words, "how very great a number of different

effects may be obtained" by photography (n. pag.). In early representations, photographs are

described as unmediated, but they are also described as mediated; in most accounts of

photography's impact on Victorian culture, however, these ambiguities are obscured. A more

accurate understanding of photography's role in the construction of the visual world of

Victorian England, which this dissertation provides, accounts for the varied and conflicting

concepts of early photography and the context for these concepts.

Another consequence of the mid-century focus of critics is the inevitable alignment of

photography with literary realism and its particular representation of the world, with

photography for the most part read as a visualization of the realist (objective, empiricist)

enterprise, in contrast to a romantic (subjective) perspective. Armstrong reads literary

realism, for instance, as a response to the "transparent images" of photography, stating that it

was due to the "referential possibilities afforded by the reversal of the mimetic priority of

original over copy that fiction developed the repertoire of techniques most commonly

associated with realism" (5). Green-Lewis similarly observes that realism "use[d] the idea of

photography as a structuring principle or standard of truth to which the language itself

aspire[d]" (35). But, as Sarah Kember asserts, the alignment of photography and realism

---

Newhall notes that the illustrations in *Excursions Daguerriennes* were "skillful aquatint
engravings incised by hand from tracings of daguerreotypes taken in Europe, America, and
the Middle East" (n. pag.).

represents a "fail[ure] to recognize the instability in the optical truth status of photography since its inception" by obscuring alternative perceptions of photography in the period that accounted for the medium's subjective and mediated nature (153). Debates about the nature of photographic representation – the competing models of photography as objective or subjective, transparent or mediated – were active since photography's official invention in 1839 and continued to be held throughout the period; the context and implications of such debates are overshadowed in existing scholarship, however, by the idea that the Victorians did not question the seeming transparency of photography.

The alignment of photography with realism not only suggests that the representational authority of photography (as objective or neutral "evidence") was uncontested in its earliest period of invention and use, but also that it continued to be uncontested during the high Victorian period (and the reign of the realist novel). This argument implies that a more sophisticated negotiation of photography and a troubling of the objective model of vision did not occur until the late nineteenth century, coinciding with the advent of literary modernism. An analysis that traces the contested representations of photography from its inception and earliest period of use thus produces a more complex theory of Victorian visuality than a later focus allows. Such an assessment of photography is more in keeping with other, broader statements about Victorian visuality, which stress that Victorians did indeed question the status of empirical vision. For instance, in *The Victorians and Visual Imagination*, Kate Flint argues that the increasing "power of the specular" in mid-Victorian society was tempered with "a growing concern with the very practice of looking, and the problematisation of . . . the human eye" (21, 2). She notes that photography, while a tool that supports empirical

vision (in its potential for surveillance), also had the potential for problematizing such vision: "its practices had the power to unsettle expectations concerning sight and representation" (30). Similarly, Christ and Jordan state that photography's "tensions between objective and subjective models of vision paradoxically resemble those of [Victorian] culture" and that the Victorians' negotiations of photography reflect their interest "in the conflict, even the competition, between objective and subjective paradigms for perception" (xxvi, xxiii). This dissertation's analysis of the representations and receptions of photography from its inception more clearly reveals the diverse representations of photography that the Victorians held – the many complex and often contradictory figurations of photography that reflected the Victorians' "increasing awareness of the instability of the visual, and their problematization of what they saw" – and also clarifies the relationship between photography and literary realism in the period (Flint 37).

Objects of Study: Periodical Texts

The majority of texts examined in this dissertation are periodical articles, advertisements, and illustrations. Both specialist periodicals (such as the scientific reportage of the *Philosophical Magazine*) and, to an even greater extent, non-specialist periodicals (such as *Punch*) provide a rich source of information regarding the representation and perception of photography as it developed. As Dawson, Noakes, and Topham note, "[s]cience, technology, and medicine permeated the content of general periodicals in nineteenth-century Britain . . . From the perspective of readers, science was omnipresent, and general periodicals probably played a far greater role than books in shaping the public understanding of new scientific discoveries, theories, and practices" (1-2). Indeed, some of

the earliest announcements of photography's invention are printed in the general-interest

periodical, *The Literary Gazette*. The periodical materials used in chapters one and two were

gathered using what Noakes describes as a "systematic study of the entire contents" of

periodicals, which entails reading the entire contents of all the issues of a periodical for a

certain period of time ("*Punch* and Comic Journalism" 94). This systematic study is

necessary in that references to photography are found not only in articles and letters devoted

to the subject but also less obviously in editorial comments, fictional articles, illustrations,

and articles on other subjects. The dispersion of the topic throughout a periodical is typical of

the genre, which referred to science and technology "not only in avowedly scientific articles,

but also in other forms of narrative including fictional representations, glancing asides in

political reports, and caricatures and allusions in comic magazines" (Dawson, Noakes, and

Topham 1). Indeed, it is often in these subtle references in articles not devoted to

photography that one can perceive the social and imaginative responses to the new

technology.

While Noakes's call for a "systematic study" of periodicals yields great riches

("*Punch* and Comic Journalism" 94), a study of all periodicals published in England from

1839 to 1853 in this manner is obviously beyond the scope of the present study. This

dissertation therefore focuses on two significant years from this early phase in particular,

1839 and 1846: 1839 significant in being the year of the introduction of photography, and

1846 significant as a period in which photographic portraiture (introduced five years earlier

in 1841) was no longer a novel invention but was still gaining in popularity, thus representing

a transitional moment of the growing cultural integration of photography. This dissertation is

also necessarily limited to a consideration of a selected number of periodicals that were chosen for their representative and extensive coverage of photography. The analysis of photography in 1839, for instance, primarily draws on articles from *The Literary Gazette* and *The Athenaeum*, both of which are notable for their detailed coverage of the announcement and development of photography, the former in particular providing the earliest references to the invention. The examination of the state of photography in 1846 and in the years of its transformation into a mass medium in the late 1840s and early 1850s draws on a wider range of periodicals in order to capture the varying representations of and responses to photography, including references from *The Times*, *Punch*, *The Art-Union*, and Dickens's *Household Words*.

The use of periodicals to examine the state of photography from 1839 to 1853 has several important benefits. Periodical coverage offers an interdisciplinary approach to a technology that in itself was interdisciplinary, its processes being discussed by practitioners in the field of science and its productions – photographs – being debated by practitioners of the arts. It also provides a much fuller picture of photography in its early years of invention and use, especially given that many of the announcements of discoveries and improvements (by photography's noted inventors, Talbot and Daguerre, as well as subsequent innovators) and debates about the technology's merits and capabilities took place within periodicals. Perhaps the best example of the importance of periodicals in the development of the technology is that of Talbot who was spurred to announce his invention after having read the announcement of Daguerre's invention published in the French periodical *Gazette de France* on 6 January 1839 and reprinted in the 12 January issue of *The Literary Gazette*. Indeed, the

publication of Daguerre's news in *Gazette de France* precedes Francois Arago's

announcement of the invention at the meeting of the Académie des Sciences on 7 January

(see Scharf 41), which is often cited as the earliest announcement of photography in many

histories of the technology. A systematic study of periodicals is also useful in that the

advertisements for photographic tools and services provide a unique picture of photography

that could otherwise elude the researcher. Indeed, as photography became more popular, the

increasingly numerous advertisements, particularly for portrait photography, reveal how the

technology was presented as a desirable consumer good to its first viewers and subjects.

Perhaps most importantly, in their commentary on the social good and detriment of the new

technology and their imaginings of its possible benefits and limitations, periodicals provide

important insight into how photography was negotiated or received by Victorians. In this

sense, the periodicals perform a "two-way" role, not only representing the technology to its

audience but also reflecting the audience's reactions. The ways in which photography was

negotiated – including, significantly, the anxieties that it raised – are presented implicitly in

fictional accounts and social commentary or essays that were often humourous or satirical in

tone. These fictional and implicit responses to photography are crucial to ascertaining the

Victorians' understanding of photography, in that such responses can also be detected in the

Victorian literature of the period, most notably in the realist novel (as I demonstrate in

chapter four). The periodical literature not only illuminates how a technology was imagined

by "captur[ing] the cultural complexities of nineteenth-century responses to science," but

also closely parallels the topics of concern that were represented in books published in the

period (Cantor et al. xviii). Periodicals therefore provide a valuable access point from which

to examine how Victorian literature explicitly and implicitly reflected the state of culture

(significantly, the state of visual culture) in the period in which it was written.

Theoretical Framework

While the theoretical framework of this dissertation is historicist and materialist, it is

also informed by the concept of "premediation," which was first introduced by Richard

Grusin (and builds upon the concept of "remediation" developed by Grusin and Jay David

Bolter). In addition to providing local and detailed evidence of the early reception of

photography and its cultural impact, this dissertation uniquely extends the application of

these concepts of remediation and premediation. Bolter and Grusin's theory of remediation

claims that new media present "themselves as refashioned and improved versions of other

media" and is used to analyse the "ways in which [new media] refashion older media and the

ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media"

(14-15). In particular, new media "refashion[s]" or reforms older forms of media through

"offering a more immediate or authentic experience" of what is represented by the medium

(19). Remediation tends to obscure the differences between new media and older forms of

representation, thus easing the way for cultures to accept the new medium as a comfortable

improvement, rather than a dangerous alternative, to older media. Remediation can be seen at

work, for instance, in the earliest discussions of photography that inevitably compared the

new medium to man-made visual representations, particularly engravings and miniature

paintings, with which it most directly competed. In fashioning photography as "the pencil of

nature," for example, as Talbot and other early commentators describe the invention,

photography was presented as remediating these older forms of visual representation in

which the pencil was held by human hands in order to assert its superiority in "offering a more immediate or authentic experience" – it is like drawing or painting, only it is seemingly more natural or real (Bolter and Grusin 19).

More interesting than the instances of remediation in photography's early development, particularly those that happened during the announcement of the invention and the initial attempts to situate the new medium, are the instances of premediation that this dissertation traces. In an essay entitled "Premediation," Richard Grusin elaborates the theory of "the logic of premediation" in which "future media technologies" are imagined "as remediations of current ones," and the future is already "pre-mediated" or imagined through contemporary media forms (18).[11] Premediation in Grusin's figuration, unlike remediation, is less about managing concerns about technology and representation than it is about using media to reassure the public that the future in a broader sense will unfold in a form that is both comprehensible and manageable because it will be manifest through media with which the public is already familiar. While Bolter and Grusin argue that the process of remediation has occurred "throughout the last several hundred years of Western visual representation" (11), Grusin suggests that the logic of premediation is a recent phenomenon that has only emerged "at the end of the twentieth century" (17). This dissertation applies the theory of premediation to photography's invention and negotiation in the nineteenth century,

---

[11] Grusin's example of premediation demonstrates that, through their establishment of forms of reporting prior to the beginning of the war in Iraq, media shaped how the war would unfold such that "the mediation of war and its aftermath always preceded the real" (27). According to Grusin, premediation worked to obviate the shock and helplessness felt by Americans and should be understood as a technique through which mass social anxiety is controlled.

17

demonstrating that the early development and uses of photography have many features that demonstrate the logic of premediation and thus suggesting that premediation occurs with earlier forms of new media and communication technologies than Grusin posits.

The evidence I gathered from periodicals shows that the earliest representations of photography in Victorian culture "pre-mediated" the later forms, and conditioned the ways in which the technology was used and understood in the second half of the nineteenth century: photography "remediated future media practices" by shaping its future figurations, in an attempt to predict or shape the future (Grusin 18). In this sense, photography is an early example of a medium or technology that not only addresses "a previously unimagined future" but also shapes its own future forms (Gunning 56).[12] The effects of premediation are also discerned in the ways in which the concerns, fears, anxieties, metaphors, and opportunities that were conceived of and expressed at the introduction of photography persisted and shaped photography's use and meaning long after the technology had matured. In particular, the anxieties that arose at the beginning of photography's development directly shaped the interpretation and reception of the medium as it became ubiquitous in the early 1850s, as did new anxieties and conceptualizations that arose in response to improvements to the technology (for instance, the invention of photographic portraiture in 1841 and the invention of the collodion process in 1851). In many respects, the metaphoric and figurative

---

[12] As Gunning explains, "[e]very new technology has a utopian dimension that imagines a future radically transformed by the implications of the device or practice" (56). In my figuration of premediation, I argue that a new technology also imagines its own future configurations and transformations; it can also be noted, as I demonstrate throughout this dissertation, that this future imagining is both utopic and dystopic, with the impact of photography upon the future as much a cause for celebration as for concern.

uses of photography and, even more so, the anxieties expressed about photography are most strongly indicative of the future forms that the medium takes on in its period of popularity: the figuration of photography as suggestive of magic, for instance, and the anxiety regarding the uncontrollable circulation of photographic copies were both conceptualizations of the medium that moulded the way in which photography was negotiated and made meaningful for Victorian culture.

Bound up in the imaginings of photography is an underlying anxiety about mediation itself, a fear that the future state will be more mediated than the present – "awash in mediation" – and that such mediation will be indeterminate, the mediated forms indistinguishable from the unmediated or "the real" (Grusin 20). As Tom Gunning states about photography, "the new technology allowed a re-animation of the ontological instability of all mimetic representation" (49). The concerns expressed from the moment of photography's invention regarding its unprecedented appearance of realism, for instance, involve a fear that such realistic images will predominate over other forms of visual representation and, more significantly, over the object photographed, the status of the photograph and its appearance of reality becoming superior to reality itself. These anxieties expressed about photography relate to mediation in that underlying the central anxieties expressed about the status of the photograph and the camera is a "fundamental fear about the status of the self," whose subjectivity is destabilized by the newly visual culture that photography's popularity created (Kember 146). The concerns about mediation that early discussions of photography foreground are also reflected in the realist novel, in that the presence of the photographic highlights the mediated nature of fiction as well: among other

things, the early history of photography constructs the possibilities for the use of photography in novelistic discourse, and offers a controlled, photographic realism as the positive side of the negative potential of the medium. The instances of remediation and premediation that this dissertation presents thus demonstrate how the issues of mediation, or the very nature of the medium itself, intimately relate to the cultural reception of the new medium.

Chapter One

The chapter "'Nature painted by herself': Representations of Photography in 1839" provides a close examination of photography's invention as it was reported in the periodical press, which served as the "forum for conducting debates on the efficacy and desirability of new technologies" in the nineteenth century (Cantor et al. xxii): indeed, as William H. Brock notes, "almost all initial scientific communication took place through . . . periodicals rather than books" (81). While a variety of periodicals are discussed in this chapter, including the *Philosophical Magazine* and the *Mirror of Literature and Amusement*, the majority of articles are drawn from *The Literary Gazette* and *The Athenaeum*.

Some accounts of photography gesture to a general cultural desire for photography, or "photographic desire," rather than closely examining this period of invention (Armstrong 8). The close reading I provide in chapter one of the numerous periodical articles of 1839 reveals a more complex figuration and reception of photography than has previously been attributed to its first viewers. Based on this systematic study, I consider how the periodical coverage of 1839 represented the new technology by explaining its processes and productions to their reading audiences, speculating on its many future capabilities and uses, and debating its

status and value. A pattern quickly emerges in these earliest periodical articles, with several key aspects of the medium becoming the central subject of discussion, namely, the question of how to classify photographic representation (as mechanical and scientific or artistic), considerations of the truth-value of the photograph, and questions about its unprecedented realism. Photography is figured as both transparent and mediated, as both an artistic and scientific endeavor, and as offering an unprecedented level of visual realism that was feared as much as it was celebrated. Indeed, along with the enthusiastic claims made for photography in 1839 emerge an equally, if not more, persistent voicing of anxieties regarding the medium, anxieties which grow more pressing as the technology becomes increasingly popular. Such "tensions between technological pessimism and optimism" (Noakes, "Representing" 155) that exist in the periodical literature of 1839 prove to be characteristic of the Victorians' reception of photography over the years, as chapters two and three show. In establishing the central topics of discussion in 1839 regarding photography, particularly the anxieties that were expressed, chapter one provides the basis from which to examine how the initial reception of photography continued to influence and inform the ways in which photography was imagined and negotiated as it became ubiquitous.

Chapter Two

Chapter two, entitled "'A complete transcript of our outward man': Photographic Portraiture in 1846," examines the state of photography mid-way in its development from a novel invention to a mass medium, with a focus on the increasingly popular practice of portrait photography. The objects of study for this chapter include early photographic manuals, advertisements, and a broad range of periodical articles (drawn from sources such

as *Punch*, *Times*, *The Illustrated London News*, and *The Literary Gazette*); such texts

popularized photography in that their particular constructions of photography were written

for a wide public audience. The representations of photography in these texts are compared

to the earlier period's representations (established in chapter one), in order to identify

common and divergent conceptions of photography. I examine how these initial

representations of photography changed in response to the growing number of viewers who

were familiar with the medium, whether from buying a photographic print, sitting for a

photographic portrait themselves, or exchanging portraits with family and friends. Drawing

on non-fictional reports and articles on the improvements of the photographic process,

numerous advertisements for competing photographic portrait studios, and, of increasing

number in the mid-1840s, fictional accounts and social commentary that dramatize the

benefits and drawbacks of photography, chapter two outlines the key aspects of photographic

portraiture that were discussed in 1846. Debates about the photograph's truth-status or

realism, which began in 1839, continued in 1846; also evolving from 1839 were the various

photographic metaphors and figurations in use, the most prominent being the figurative

treatment of photography as a dark art. The still-new phenomenon of photographic

portraiture was the foremost topic of discussion in 1846, with articles and advertisements

outlining conventional behaviours for posing for a portrait and directing the consumer in how

he or she is to value photographic portraiture (as an instantaneous and transparent record of a

moment of time and as a memorial of a loved one). Of particular significance in 1846 are the

underlying anxieties towards photography that can be detected in these articles and

advertisements; such anxieties are definitive of the public's response to photography and are examined in detail in chapter three.

Chapter Three

The intensive study of periodicals undertaken in chapters one and two yields one common and increasingly pressing concern that consistently surfaces throughout the body of literature – a profound anxiety voiced about the effect of the new medium on the human subject. Chapter three, entitled "'The optical stranger': Photographic Anxieties in the 1840s and early 1850s," thus returns to the fiction and periodical articles of the 1840s to trace the nature of the anxieties about photography which were increasingly insistent from 1839 onwards, while also including periodical references from the early 1850s in order to elucidate how such anxieties evolved on the cusp of photography's ubiquity.

This chapter departs methodologically from previous chapters (which follow a chronological organization) in being organized thematically around the consideration of the numerous anxieties raised about photography on the brink of its emergence as a mass medium. Rather than being limited to a specific time period, as were previous chapters, this chapter traces the sources and meanings of the anxieties that lead photography, celebrated as it was, to nonetheless be considered a "black art" and "optical stranger," as it was tellingly described in an 1853 *Household Words* article (Dodd 243). Chapter three therefore serves as a bridge between the earlier chapters and chapter four, in that it considers how these anxieties have evolved and were differently expressed over time, thus serving as a foundation for analyzing how such anxieties operate in novelistic form.

Chapter three traces the evolution of photographic anxieties from the technology's invention to its state in the early 1850s. The most pressing concern in 1839, for instance, regarded the "threatened power of the new art" of photography to supplant visual artists and their productions, one that diminished over the intervening years such that by the early 1850s, it was no longer the issue of greatest concern (Wilmore 215). In contrast, other aspects of concern regarding photographic representation continued to be discussed, many of them becoming increasingly urgent as the medium grew more popular. For instance, anxieties that were voiced in 1839 regarding the value of the photograph became more persistent with the introduction of portraiture and its "more than life-like" productions, which called into question the relationship of the original to the copy (Burgess 80). Concern regarding the status of the photograph in relation to the photographed subject, as well as the status of the camera with its seeming agency, also grew more troubling to the Victorians as their culture became increasingly visual, in large part due to photography itself, which "set up the world as something to be looked at" (Shloss 254). As I argue in chapter three, the anxieties regarding the status of the photograph and the camera are so central because photography troubled the status of the subject by presenting in the photograph-object the presence of the other: "the object is no longer understood as being wholly separate from the subject, but retains an equivalent status and integrity" (Kember 162). These and other photographic anxieties, expressed with increasing urgency in the period of photography's rapid development, are analyzed at length in chapter three.

Chapter Four

The final chapter, "'You have prepared me for my exposure': Photographic Allusions in *Bleak House*," examines how photography and the anxieties it raised are obliquely represented in its first period of mass popularity as evident in a realist novel. In this chapter, I analyze *Bleak House* (serially published between 1852 and 1853) and its treatment of photography within a specific historical and contextualized perspective. I read the references to photography in *Bleak House* alongside the constructions of photography in contemporary periodical literature, including Dickens's *Household Words,* a popular weekly magazine that contained articles on "the new worlds of science and technology" and that was "part of a large-scale effort to educate the Victorian public about scientific matters" through periodical literature (Ostry 57). The chapter seeks to determine how the periodicals' representations and negotiations of photography are reflected in novelistic form, including the issues of photographic representation, the metaphorical figurations of photography, and the photographic anxieties examined in the previous chapters. In terms of the theory of premediation, *Bleak House* crystallizes the concerns, concepts, anxieties, and opportunities that the prospect of photography as a mass medium offers, and articulates the ways in which photography shaped, problematized, and predicted the very form of "realism" that the novel epitomizes. Indeed, with its dual narrative structure that offers different viewpoints or access to the events of the story, its excess of references to the visual, and its preoccupation with the instability of authenticity, *Bleak House* embodies the logic of premediation in forebodingly depicting how the past scripts the future and in foregrounding issues of mediation.

This approach to *Bleak House* differs from other critical studies of the novel in that it reads the photographic allusions in *Bleak House* in light of the attitudes and debates regarding photography and visual representation that were voiced in the periodical literature of the period. For instance, the central role that the images of Lady Dedlock play in the novel's mystery, whether the unique, painted portrait, the mass-reproduced copperplate, or the similar copies represented by Esther, Hortense, and Jenny, gains in significance when considered in light of one of the most critical discussions surrounding photographic portraiture at the time, that of the anxiety regarding the circulation of numerous, reproducible copies (or, the "second self," as the portrait was popularly described in the period) beyond the control of the photographed subject (Joseph's studio, *Times* 30 May 1846). The control and circulation of the photographic copy, the regulation and surveillance enacted by the camera-agent, and the influence of photography on the manner in which human memory is negotiated and narrated are some of the central issues surrounding photography that are obliquely expressed in *Bleak House* and examined in this chapter.

In examining *Bleak House* in light of this cultural context, chapter four provides more specific assertions about the novel's treatment of photography than have been previously argued. It traces the ways in which Dickens's writings reflected the technological and modern advances of the time, showing his "direct, oblique, and metaphoric engagement with nineteenth-century science" through the novel's complex representations of photography (Nixon 271). The identification of photographic allusions in *Bleak House* also provides a new means by which to consider literary realism in the Victorian period, a mode that is inextricably linked to the visual, or what Mark Seltzer defines as "the 'realist' insistence on a

compulsory and compulsive visibility" and "the realist imperative of making everything,

including interior states, visible, legible, and governable" (95). As I argue in chapter four, the

presence of the photographic in realist novels such as *Bleak House* "confers verisimilitude"

and establishes the text's "consensus of realism" at the same time that such photographic

allusions destabilize this verisimilitude (Ermarth x), in that the very nature of the

photographic medium foregrounded issues of perspective, mediation, and subjectivity and in

so doing could "threaten to sabotage the realist claim to unmediated representation"

presented in the realist novel (Byerly 2). In examining an iconic novel that was written on the

cusp of photography's transformation into a popular practice and phenomenon, this chapter

contributes new insights regarding the intersection of issues of visuality with the imperatives

of the realist genre to literary studies of the Victorian period.

Conclusion

In its close reading of a range of source texts specific to the years of photography's

development, this dissertation provides a more comprehensive and context-specific

understanding of how Victorians perceived and negotiated photography than has previously

been available. It not only develops a clearer picture of the history of photography, but also

provides a model with which to examine the progress and cultural integration of other new

media, whether new media of the past or of the present. The extensive use of periodicals in

this dissertation also addresses the need identified by Cantor et al., who state, "although

general periodicals were among the most powerful forums of public debate, their role in

negotiating technology has received comparatively little attention" (xxii). Indeed, the

numerous periodical texts, both fictional and non-fictional, prove a rich source of information

regarding the cultural context of the period in which they were published and clearly serve as a valuable counterpart to the literature produced contemporaneously. In its examination of photographic allusions in *Bleak House*, this dissertation also demonstrates a critical approach through which the presence of the photographic and other aspects of visuality can be discussed in Victorian fiction, a presence that I argue is of greater frequency and significance than has been previously considered. This dissertation therefore contributes to the history of photography while at the same time offering new insights into new media and Victorian fiction of the photographic era from 1839 onwards.

Chapter 1

"Nature painted by herself": Representations of Photography in 1839

Photography was invented in 1839, with the announcement of its invention met with excitement and interest. This chapter examines the earliest representations and reception of photography in 1839 through an analysis of the references to photography in the periodical literature. As Tom Gunning observes, "the introduction of a new technology . . . employs a number of rhetorical tropes and discursive practices that constitute our richest source for excavating what the newness of technology entailed" (39). In order to elucidate the state of photography in its earliest period of existence and use, this chapter outlines, through an analysis of these "rhetorical tropes and discursive practices," how the invention was defined, who and what its potential users and uses were identified to be, and what anxieties were evoked in response to the new medium (39).

These early representations, speculations, and anxieties surrounding photography in 1839 provide a comprehensive picture of how photography was first defined and imagined, a picture that is crucial to an understanding of how the medium came to be negotiated during its later development into a mass medium by the mid-century. This chapter thus provides the needed foundation from which to examine the later cultural responses to the technology in the 1840s and early 1850s. In its examination of the earliest cultural reception of photography, it also provides evidence of premediation, or the process by which the earliest imaginings of a technology indelibly shape the ways in which the technology is used and perceived once it becomes a mass medium.

This analysis of photography is based on a comprehensive reading of two periodicals in particular, *The Literary Gazette* and *The Athenaeum*, with additional references from *The Philosophical Magazine*; *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*; and *The Times* (see table1). Reading the contents of all issues of *The Literary Gazette* and *The Athenaeum* for 1839, including the advertisement sections, I noted all references to photography, whether brief mentions (such as a sentence noting a display of photographs exhibited at a society meeting), indirect allusions (such as metaphorical plays on words) or lengthy articles on the subject. The amount of coverage and the varying types of reference to photography show the extent to which the invention permeated periodical literature in 1839 as a topic of interest and newsworthiness. Such a comprehensive approach to periodical literature is described by Richard Noakes as an "inclusive reading" or "contextualist analysis" that "reveals the embeddedness of particular types of technology in everyday life and shows the fears, anxieties, and enthusiasms about technology" ("Representing" 161-2, 153). The inclusive reading approach is especially useful given the manner in which the disciplines were defined and reported on in the period: "the boundaries between the arts and the sciences were far more flexible in the nineteenth century" (Cantor and Shuttleworth 4) and the "rigid disciplinary specialization" or professionalization of both had not yet occurred (Cantor et al. xvii). The fluidity of the disciplines of art and science is reflected in the typical organization of periodical literature, which seamlessly presented articles on science or other specialized topics alongside more general interest subjects. For this reason, references to photography or other topics of technology often can be found "in the putatively non-technological articles" (Noakes, "Representing" 152). A "contextualist analysis of

technology in the *totality*" of a periodical proves to be a valuable resource for the study of

cultural receptions of a technology, one that has been previously overlooked (Noakes,

"Representing" 158): as Cantor et al. note, "although general periodicals were among the

most powerful forums of public debate, their role in negotiating technology has received

comparatively little attention" (xxii).

Periodical	Circulation	Percentage of Issues that Contain Photography References in Articles	Number of Photography References in Articles	Number of Photographic Advertisements
The Athenaeum	Weekly (52 issues)	44%	31	35
The Literary Gazette	Weekly (52 issues)	54%	59	11
The Philosophical Magazine	Monthly (12 issues)	42%	9	N/A (periodical has no advertisements)
The Times[13]	Daily except Sunday (313 issues)	.05%	18	46

Table 1: Number of Photography References in Four Periodicals

The Literary Gazette and *The Athenaeum*

  The Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, etc. (hereafter

referred to as *The Literary Gazette*) and *The Athenaeum, Journal of Literature, Science, and

the Fine Arts* (hereafter referred to as *The Athenaeum*) are London weeklies that, as their

respective titles and descriptors indicate, focused on literature as well as other general

interest subjects. Along with literary reviews, both periodicals included scientific news and

reports, excerpts from foreign journals, miscellaneous items of interest (such as theatre and

literary gossip), and "proceedings of scientific and learned societies," as the title page of *The*

Literary Gazette states. The content and price of both periodicals (which were in competition

with one another) suggests that their primary audience was middle class or higher (Sullivan

21), *The Literary Gazette* costing 8d stamped in 1839 and *The Athenaeum* costing 5d

stamped.[14] Despite being general-interest literary weeklies, both periodicals are

distinguishable from other periodical literature in 1839 for the extent to which they contain

early and numerous references to photography's invention. For instance, both periodicals

published Talbot's speech announcing his invention (read before the Royal Society on 31

January), "Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing," earlier than the premier

scientific journal, *The London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine and Journal of*

Science (hereafter referred to as *The Philosophical Magazine*).[15]

   The Literary Gazette in particular is notable for containing more references to

photography than many other contemporary periodicals, and, in particular, for containing the

---

[13] *The Times* was searched using the keyword search function of the online interface; it is
possible that there were more references to photography than the search function reflected.
[14] Exact circulation figures for *The Literary Gazette* and *The Athenaeum* in 1839 have been
difficult to determine. *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals,
1800-1900* lists circulation for *The Athenaeum* at 7,200 per issue in 1836 and onward and for
The Literary Gazette at 2,000 in 1855 ("Athenaeum" n. pag., "Literary Gazette" n. pag.).
[15] *The Literary Gazette* published the contents of Talbot's speech in a letter by Talbot to the
journal in its 2 February issue ("Photogenic Drawing") and *The Athenaeum* published "Some
Account" in its 9 February issue (also entitled, "Photogenic Drawing"), while *The
Philosophical Magazine* did not publish the speech until its March issue. The delay may
partly be due to *The Philosophical Magazine* being a monthly publication; the expediency
with which the former two periodicals published news of photography suggests that both
periodicals, however, sought to cover the invention comprehensively and frequently.

earliest English announcement of photography. The 12 January issue contains an article by

H. Gaucheraud (originally published in France on 6 January) that announces Louis Jacques

Mandé Daguerre's invention.[16] This mention precedes the first notice in *The Athenaeum*,

whose first article on photography was published in its 26 January issue. Many of the

photographic references in *The Literary Gazette* are in articles from foreign journals, and in

original letters to the editor, printed in full, that are from important figures in the invention of

photography, most notably the inventor William Henry Fox Talbot. Such correspondence,

which also comprises a significant portion of the coverage of photography in *The Athenaeum*,

provides a first-hand or intimate perspective on photography as it developed over the course

of 1839. Many photographic references are also found in the frequent editorial commentary

that accompanies much of *The Literary Gazette*'s articles. These editorial comments (which

also appear in *The Athenaeum* in its section entitled, "Our Weekly Gossip," although to a

lesser degree) are significant in that they often comment on the social reception and

perception of the new invention. A 30 March editorial comment in *The Literary Gazette* not

only reveals this early perception of photography but also reveals the journal's stated

dedication to publishing news of the invention:

> [The intense and general interest which this subject continues to excite, renders us
>
> anxious to throw every *new light* upon it; and, as we were the first to make it publicly

---

[16] Daguerre's invention is often incorrectly stated to have been first announced on 7 January, since Gaucheraud's article precedes the announcement by a day: it "pre-empted the official announcement made by Francois Arago at a meeting of the Académie des Sciences on 7 January" (Scharf 41). The importance of periodicals in disseminating information is ably demonstrated in the case of photography, since Talbot was motivated to announce his invention upon hearing of the announcement of Daguerre's invention.

known, to supply every additional information, at home or abroad, which relates to the progress of so important a discovery.] (parentheses in original ["The Photogenic Art" 202])

This statement, with its play on photographic words ("new light") and its commentary on the popular reception of photography, not only reveals the typical manner in which the editorial voice is deployed in *The Literary Gazette* but also, more importantly, reveals the significance of this journal in tracing the earliest reportage of photography.

The journal's early and frequent coverage of photography is also captured in a 27 July editorial comment that, although obviously self-promoting and perhaps exaggerated, nonetheless provides insight into the stated purpose and style of the journal:

The rapidity with which *The Literary Gazette* is now circulated in distant parts of the country . . . is a great accession in unison with its original design and editorial system. Professing to give, from week to week, the *earliest*, as well as the most comprehensive accounts of novelties in Literature, Science, and the Arts, it comes excellently in aid of its exertions in these respects, to have its Nos. thus hastened, as if on wings, to every remote corner of Great Britain. (477)

The rapid and far-reaching dissemination of news through *The Literary Gazette* is significant in suggesting that news of photography was disseminated quite quickly throughout England after the initial announcements of its invention were made in France and England. That a news item printed in one journal was often published in many other journals (whether the exact same article or a variation with different wording) also suggests the extent to which

photography was a newsworthy subject of interest and curiosity to Victorian readers (at least

nine articles in 1839 were reprinted in some form in *The Literary Gazette*, *The Athenaeum*,

and *The Philosophical Magazine*).

The quality, frequency, and comprehensiveness of the coverage of photography

provided in *The Literary Gazette* and *The Athenaeum* thus suggests the importance of both

periodicals to an examination of the earliest representations of photography. That such

extensive coverage should come from these non-specialist periodicals (that were not

exclusively scientific journals, like *The Philosophical Magazine*) indicates that photography

was a topic with broad appeal, covered in a wide range of journals with varied readerships.

The representation of photography found in these two periodicals (and the others drawn upon

in this chapter) also reveals the important function of periodicals in disseminating news of

new technologies, and supports the assertion of Cantor et al. that periodical literature

"provides a particularly rich means of examining the cultural embeddedness of science across

a wide range of nineteenth-century contexts" (xx).

Chapter Organization

This chapter analyses the numerous references to photography (eighty total in both

periodicals) by grouping them under the following categories: descriptions of what

photography was; metaphorical and figurative constructions; potential users and uses of

photography; definitions of truth and realism;[17] and photographic anxieties. The latter two

---

[17] Note that my use of the term "realism" does not refer to literary realism or the fine arts
movement of realism – instead, the term is used to capture the references in these earliest
articles that comment on how realistic or "truthful" photographs appear.

categories – photography's realism and the anxiety raised by such realism – prove to be central and definitive characteristics of the technology that permeate the other categories. References to truth or realism often surface in descriptions of photography and in debates about its value or potential function as a new medium. As will be demonstrated, the characterization of photography as "real" did not preclude other representations of photography but was nonetheless a central figuration of the technology in 1839 that continued to inform how photography was negotiated in subsequent years. The expressions of anxiety voiced in 1839 similarly played a definitive role in the representations and negotiations of photography, for it is through such anxieties that we can determine what aspects of the invention were of most concern to its first viewers.

Descriptions of Photography

The earliest announcements of photography usually are comprised of descriptions of what the invention is, exactly, and what its images look like. Whether describing the daguerreotype process invented by Daguerre or the talbotype process (also known in 1839 as photogenic drawing) invented by Talbot, the articles in *The Literary Gazette* describe photography as a process in which the "images represented at the back of the camera obscura" are fixed and made permanent, such that they can be "removed from the presence of those objects" which they depict (Gaucheraud 28). The same descriptions are used in *The Athenaeum* in its earliest announcements of photography, which define it as combining "with the *camera obscura* an *engraving power*" ("Paris Letter" 69) and as "a process for copying the forms of natural objects by means of solar light" ("Royal Society" 97). The Royal Society proceedings reported in *The Literary Gazette* summarize Talbot's 31 January announcement

of his invention and provide an ideal description of photography that highlights its central characteristics:

> Objects the most minute are obtained . . . nay, even a shadow, the emblem of all that is most fleeting in this world, is fettered by the spell of the invention, and remains perfect and permanent long after it has been given back to the sunbeam which produced it. ("Royal Society" 75)

Photography is described as significant because it is a process that works wholly by the action of light alone and succeeds where earlier attempts failed in making a permanent fixed image.[18] In addition, the photograph is notable for its realism and for being a "facsimile," or an exact copy of the actual object it depicts. As Anthony Hamber notes, "while 'facsimile' was never clearly defined during the nineteenth century, the chimera of being able to obtain an exact record of certain features of an object was certainly an important characteristic," one that soon came to be associated with photography (36). The initial descriptions of photography thus establish the characteristics that distinguish photography as unique in comparison to other visual technologies: the indexicality of the images it makes, the seeming agency of the machine, and the superior accuracy of its pictures. The discussion of

---

[18] The most notable earlier attempts in England were by Thomas Wedgwood and Sir Humphrey Davy. While they succeeded in creating a faint photographic image, they were unable to permanently fix it. Discussions of photography in 1839 acknowledge these earlier experiments; for instance, the 2 February *Athenaeum* summary of the Royal Society 31 January meeting describes that Wedgwood and Davy were unsuccessful because "the paper could not be rendered sufficiently sensible to receive any impression…and secondly, that the pictures which were formed by the solar rays could not be preserved" ("Royal Society" 97). The processes by Daguerre and Talbot were considered the actual invention of photography because both were successful (through different methods) in receiving and permanently fixing the photograph.

photography's realism and photographic anxieties reveals that these definitive characteristics of photography prove central to the way in which the new medium was first imagined and negotiated.

Related to the category of what photography is and how its images can be described is the question of whether photography was considered an art or a science in these 1839 discussions. As Jonathan Crary observes, "[r]ather than stressing the separation between art and science in the nineteenth century, it is important to see how they were both part of a single interlocking field of knowledge and practice" (9). Indeed, photography's categorization as an art or science was complicated by the fact that it seemed to encompass both fields simultaneously: the process by which images are physically created is a scientific or chemical one, while the images themselves, as visual representations and a medium of communication, are expressive or "artistic." Photography's relation to both fields did not go unnoticed by its earliest commentators, who spoke of the process and the experiments to improve the invention as a science while describing its images in terms of art.

In these earliest descriptions of what photographs resembled, photography was consistently compared to earlier forms of visual representation – painting, drawing, and engraving – and can therefore be considered to have been categorized by the Victorians as an art in the sense that it was a type of made image. It is important to note, however, that there was an implicit distinction made between the fine and the mechanical arts, with painting and drawing being distinguished from engraving or other reprographic technologies that created reproducible copies of images. In this sense, photography is more closely comparable to the mechanical arts – not only because of its ability to make multiple copies, but also because of

the appearance of the image. The early articles on photography note that the image looks like an engraving more than it does a painting; while this similarity has to do with the physical appearance of the photograph (highly accurate, detailed, black and white), it does emphasize the difference noted by early viewers between the photograph and works of fine art: it cannot compare to paintings or drawings in terms of its expressive qualities. The absence of expressive qualities is most explicitly stated in the earliest *Athenaeum* article on photography, published in the 26 January issue. The author marvels at the accuracy of the daguerreotype image, concluding, however, that it is "wanting to its results something to be given by the hand and eye of the artist" (69). "This want exists" not as a fault of the photograph, he states, but as a fault in its observers, "who expect from it that which human taste and genius alone can accomplish" (69).

These earliest representations of photography are telling in the ambivalence with which they categorize photography as both an art and science; what is particularly significant to this chapter is the ambivalence expressed about the art of the photograph. As will be demonstrated in section four (which discusses the definitions of truth and realism), the problem of photography's place and value in comparison to other visual arts was a central concern in 1839. While photography is asserted as being superior to other visual representations – thus calling into question their status or value – it is also defined as being unlike and therefore incomparable to these same visual representations. This ambivalence regarding the status of the photograph is a central concern regarding photography in 1839 that related to the issue of mediation itself, an issue that continued to be discussed in relation

to photography throughout the 1840s and early 1850s, as the remaining chapters of this dissertation demonstrate.

Metaphorical and Figurative Constructions of Photography

Metaphors and figurative language are other means by which periodical articles of 1839 and succeeding years sought to understand and represent photography. These initial figurations are important because they establish how photography was imagined in its first period of existence before the technology was fully developed and when it was not yet clear what its abilities and limitations are. As Noakes asserts, "[a]n important indicator of the cultural significance of particular types of technology is the extent to which they inform metaphors or other aspects of non-technological discourses" ("Representing" 158). The common figurative terms and descriptions used, and the manner in which they characterize photography, reveal social attitudes or responses towards the invention (as opposed to more practical responses as to what one can actually do with the technology) and therefore relate to the discussions in the period regarding the assessment of photography's realism and to the attendant anxieties that photography raised.

The most frequent metaphorical and figurative descriptions are the mirror of nature, the pencil of nature, a magic mirror, nature's portrait, and so on. These descriptions are related in that they depict photography as natural yet magical, and emphasize the seeming agency of nature – that the photographic process occurs without human intervention. The figuration of photography as magical and unmediated is one that would persist throughout the years: as Susan S. Williams notes, "the more one studied the chemical processes of the

40

daguerreotype, the more wondrous they became; scientific understanding did not preclude a sense that the daguerreotype transcended human comprehension" ("'The Inconstant Daguerreotype'" 166). Many of these early descriptions were presumably influenced by Talbot's article, "Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing," which was read before the Royal Society on 31 January and was the first public announcement of his invention. In it, Talbot stresses the ability of the photographic process to create images by the action of light alone, without human aid, which he describes metaphorically by referring to a personified "Nature." For instance, he claims that with the photograph, "Nature substitute[s] her own inimitable pencil" for that of the artist (116). Related to this personification is his description of photography in terms of its agency. For instance, in a 2 February letter to the *Literary Gazette*, Talbot describes his earliest successful photograph (taken in 1835) as "the first instance on record, of a house having painted its own portrait" (74). Similarly, in "Some Account," he describes "this building . . . to be the first that was ever yet known *to have drawn its own picture*" (116).

An emphasis on photography's seeming agency, the magical workings of nature, and the play of light in creating images – such are the common metaphorical and figurative descriptions frequently used in the 1839 articles describing the invention. They often occur in connection with statements about the truth or realism of photography, as a means by which to attempt to convey to the reader the never-before-seen level of realism of the photograph. In this sense, the figurative descriptions used by the commentators to domesticate or familiarize photography reveal a central expression of anxiety about the new technology: specifically, the fanciful depictions of its agency and the perfection of its images call into question the

status of other visual representations. Agency is often conferred on photography, for example, in order to convey the unique accuracy of its images (a common description being "nature's portrait"); while such statements in themselves may seem neutral, they are often stated as proof of the superiority of the photograph over other visual images and therefore reveal an anxiety regarding the status of other visual technologies.

The figurative and metaphorical treatment of photography in 1839 thus reveals the central issues surrounding photography with which the Victorians were preoccupied. As S. Williams observes, "[e]ven as writers responded to the new art they also helped to articulate its cultural significance, creating a set of discursive terms that identified it simultaneously as a magical agent of revelation, an astoundingly 'true' and accurate likeness, and a locus of sentimental value" (*Confounding Images* 3). Such figurative treatments of photography become increasingly important as the culture became inevitably more involved with and defined by photography in the 1840s and early 1850s, in that the very aspects for which photography was celebrated, as revealed in these central metaphors and figurations, are at the same time that which becomes cause for concern (as the discussion of photographic anxieties reveals).

Potential Users and Uses of Photography

The articles on photography in 1839 often forecast the potential uses and users of the invention. These imagined uses and users of the technology relate to the central issue of photography's realism, in that many of these speculated uses involve a consideration of the previously unattainable level of realism that photography affords. Consequently, the

discussion of who is to use photography and for what purpose directly relates to the negotiation of photography's realism and the ensuing expressions of anxiety, both of which were the central means by which photography was understood in 1839.

There are several categories of users and uses that are identified in the early articles on photography. The earliest potential use identified is also one of the most commonly stated: its use by travelers to document and record the environment. Having described the realism of the daguerreotype, which looks "as if it were nature itself," the author of the earliest article on photography in *The Literary Gazette*, H. Gaucheraud, comments "travelers may, perhaps, be soon able to procure M. Daguerre's apparatus, and bring back views of the finest monuments, and of the most delightful scenery of the whole world" (28). The 2 February article, "French Discovery – Pencil of Nature" also notes the potential value of photography for travelers: "to artists and savans [sic] who travel, and who often find it impossible to prolong their stay at interesting places, this process must be welcome" (74). Photography was already being put to such use by travellers by the year's end, as described in a letter by Horace Vernet published in the 21 December issue of *The Athenaeum*: "we keep *Daguerreotyping* away, like lions; and from Cairo hope to send home an interesting remittance" (969).[19] That the earliest practitioners are imagined as travelers suggests the characteristics of photography that were most intriguing to its first viewers: its degree of

---

[19] Horace Vernet was one of several artists who were commissioned to produce daguerreotypes (of architecture, sculpture, etc.) for the book *Excursions Daguerriennes*, published by N.P. Lerebours in Paris from 1840-44. Hamber notes that "in the years immediately after 1839 topographic views and architectural monuments formed a major commercial market for daguerreotypes and these subjects tapped into the existing print market," which had an already large consumer market for such images (56).

realism or accuracy in capturing the environment, and its indexicality, or the ability to remove this perfect facsimile from its point of origin for later inspection by viewers.

Talbot himself emphasizes such qualities in "Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing," which identifies travelers and amateur artists as potential users of his invention. He states that "to the traveler in distant lands, who is ignorant, as too many unfortunately are, of the art of drawing," photography will "prove of real service" in allowing the user to capture multiple images of the locality, which will "furnish him with a large body of interesting memorials, and with numerous details which he had not had himself time either to note down or to delineate" (115). Photography is not only a more correct and comprehensive process than drawing or writing, he implies, but is also more efficient. Here as in many other articles, photographs are valued for their iconic quality – that they can replace the monuments themselves. As Talbot states later in "Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing," "[t]he most transitory of things" is "fixed for ever [sic] in the position which it seemed only destined for a single instant to occupy" (115).

The ability of the photograph to stand in for the experience of seeing an event or object firsthand is neatly delineated in a 28 September *Literary Gazette* article, in which the author describes a "very singular use" of the daguerreotype at the inauguration of "the iron railway at Courtray": the camera "will be open during the inauguratory speech" in order to "obtain the resemblance of all the persons present" and the picture will be buried at the site, "in order to give to posterity an exact idea of this grand ceremony" ("The New Art" 622). In the earliest representations of photography, then, commentators have already identified the medium's potential as a documentary or archival tool due to its indexicality, or what Roland

Barthes described as the photograph's quality of being "literally an emanation of the referent" (80). That photography improves how travelers, artists, and other users create images reveals that the photograph is valued in these accounts for its accuracy and realism. As demonstrated later in this chapter, the photograph's ability to depict objects in a manner never before seen evoked an anxiety regarding the status of other visual media, and thus revised the ways in which realism was defined.

Potential Users and Uses Identified in Photographic Advertisements

An overarching development in 1839 that is reflected in the statements about the potential users and uses of photography is a movement from an initial flurry of enthusiasm to a more cautious view of the invention. Such a movement is typical of the earliest receptions of any new technology: the first enthusiastic announcements about its capabilities are often exaggerated, with more accurate or realistic statements about its abilities and limitations voiced as the process becomes more familiar. In the case of the daguerreotype, for instance, speculation about how the daguerreotype image was made became more realistic once details about the complex process were at last revealed, six months after the invention was announced.[20] The change to a more cautious view of photography may have also been in response to the imposition of patent laws midway through 1839, which affected the actual

---

[20] The process for making daguerreotypes was at last revealed at a joint meeting of the *Académie des Sciences* and *Académie des Beaux Arts* on 19 August 1839. Daguerre's process had been kept secret until a pension could be secured for Daguerre; this of course garnered much interest and speculation about his process, such that the 19 August meeting was thronged with crowds of the curious. The 24 August *Literary Gazette* article, "The Daguerre Secret," describes the scene: "from an early hour, all the seats allotted to the public were occupied; and upwards of 200 persons, disappointed of gaining admission, were stationed in a crowd in a court of the Institute . . . Every body [sic] was anxious to hear the secret" (538).

use of the daguerreotype process in England.[21] The advertisements of 1839, which identify

the earliest uses and potential consumers of photography, reflect this evolving reception of

the technology.

The advertisements published in *The Literary Gazette* and *The Athenaeum* detail the

ways in which consumers were positioned in relation to photography, the frequency and type

of advertisements revealing an interesting shift in how photography was presented over the

course of the year.[22] The earliest advertisement for photographic tools or products that

appeared in both *The Athenaeum* and *The Literary Gazette* is for J.T. Cooper's "photogenic

drawing-paper" "for the copying of prints, drawings, patterns on lace, autographs, plants, and

other natural objects, in the space of a few minutes" (*Athenaeum* 16 March). The last

advertisement for photogenic paper (and a "field camera," both sold by E. Palmer) appeared

in the 18 May issue of *The Athenaeum* (361). For the remainder of the year, the type of

---

[21] Gernsheim discusses the complex process whereby patents were put into place in England. Although Daguerre's invention was revealed on 19 August and given as a gift by the French government to the world, the daguerreotype process was actually put under patent in England. This affected the number of practitioners; legally, only Cooper was licensed to practice daguerreotyping in England (*The History of Photography* 89). Talbot also sought to secure patents for his process not long after his invention was announced.

[22] Interestingly, there are more advertisements for photography in *The Athenaeum* than *The Literary Gazette*: there are thirty-five advertisements in *The Athenaeum* for photographic products, exhibitions, and listings of articles on photography in upcoming issues of other periodicals, while *The Literary Gazette* has only six advertisements. *The Athenaeum* has a greater number of advertisements because it regularly contained advertisements for the photographic exhibitions at the Adelaide Institution and the Polytechnic Institution (which were not published in *The Literary Gazette*). *The Times* of 1839 has thirty-four advertisements; the frequency and type of advertisements parallels *The Athenaeum*, as does the movement from products advertised to exhibitions advertised. This change in advertisements can thus be examined as a broad shift, rather than as a peculiarity of *The Athenaeum* alone.

advertisements shift to listings of photographic articles in upcoming periodical issues or, more commonly, advertisements for the two official demonstrations of the daguerreotype in London: M. de St. Croix's daguerreotype exhibit at the Adelaide Gallery or Royal Gallery of Practical Science, first advertised on 12 October (*Athenaeum* 782), and Mr. J. T. Cooper's exhibit at the Polytechnic Institution, first advertised on 5 October (*Athenaeum* 766).

The change in how photography is advertised – positioned less as an amateur practice and more as a spectacle, whether an exhibition or demonstration – relates to the imposition of patent licenses for both the daguerreotype and talbotype processes.[23] This redefined consumer relation to photography may also have been partly influenced by the high cost of daguerreotype equipment: a 14 September article in *The Literary Gazette* describes an optician and picture-dealer with daguerreotype pictures for sale, noting that "the crowd at Giroux's shop is immense, to see the photographic apparatus and the impressions obtained by M. Daguerre himself" but that costumers were disappointed by "the price (about 400 francs) of the apparatus!!" ("The Daguerreotype" 590). Whatever may have been the cause, consumers appear to have been redefined in terms of their relation to the new invention: initially, they were positioned as potential consumers of photographic products and tools (thus able to practice the process); as the year progressed, they were increasingly positioned

---

[23] The high number of sales of Daguerre's book, *History and Practice of Photogenic Drawing* (with a minimum of thirty editions published in 1839-40), may appear to contradict this shift in how photography is promoted for consumers' use. His book details how to operate the daguerreotype equipment and make daguerreotype images, thus positioning the reader as a potential user of photography. However, it is possible that readers were interested in learning how the process worked without necessarily attempting to do it themselves (statistics from Gernsheim [*The History of Photography* 55]).

as passive viewers of the process and as consumers of photographs (in being able to purchase daguerreotypes).[24]

As the periodical articles and advertisements of 1839 thus reveal, the categories of potential users and uses of photography were shaped by the progress of the technology over the course of 1839. The general movement in the reception of photography from enthusiasm to a more cautious skepticism suggests that any anxieties felt in response to the new medium were quelled once it became more familiar. It is important to note, however, that this more cautious view of photography did not quell the belief in the technology's progress. Despite technological limitations, expenses, and patent issues, the general tone of the articles and advertisements is one of enthusiasm and confidence that any limitations to technology would soon be corrected – a typical Victorian attitude towards technological progress as a whole.[25] As Gregory A. Wickliff states, "for the general public, the faults [of the daguerreotype process] were easily forgiven or resigned to the realm of problems that technology would inevitably solve" ("The Daguerreotype" 425). This confidence in photography is voiced in a 21 September article published in *The Literary Gazette* that describes St. Croix's exhibition

---

[24] A 28 September article in *The Literary Gazette* also demonstrates this relationship of the consumer to photography. It notes that a company was formed in Belgium consisting of photographers who "will go wherever the admirers of public monuments and the owners of country-seats shall invite them" to take photographs; this also speaks to the potential use of photographs to assert one's social identity through possessions or class status and anticipates one of the most popular uses of photography ("The New Art" 622).

[25] Noakes notes a similar response by Victorians to the introduction of the telegraph, as reflected in *Punch*: "enthusiastic commentaries on the possible applications of telegraphy . . . underlined [*Punch*'s] confidence that, despite its troublesome manifestations, the telegraph would eventually improve the physical and moral condition of humankind" ("Representing" 155-157).

of the daguerreotype process. While impressed with the images, the author admits "the process, however, takes a longer time than we had anticipated" and that "many persons will be disappointed by the low tone (the darkness) of the image":

> But the art is in its infancy; every scientific mind in Europe will be immediately directed towards the subject; and we predict, that ere long, improvements will be suggested in the process, which will leave nothing to be desired, either in that, or in any other respect. ("New Publications" 605)

The initial limitations of photography that seem to detract from its realism are discussed in this and other articles as minor flaws that will soon be corrected, such that a prevailing sense of anxiety thus remains throughout 1839 (as the discussion on photographic anxieties below elaborates).

The users and uses of photography identified in the periodical literature and advertisements of 1839 reveal the qualities of the medium that were most valued by its first viewers, its realism and indexicality. Commentators sought to define and position photography in light of older visual technologies, thus demonstrating the logic of remediation whereby new media are presented "as refashioned and improved versions of other media" (Bolter and Grusin 15). In identifying the potential users and uses of photography, the periodical literature can be understood in terms of premediation, in that the particular representation of photography presented in 1839 constrains or shapes it actual future usage as well as perception. The earliest descriptions that imagine the camera's use to photograph distant lands, for instant, constructs the medium as one that flawlessly documents the exotic

and, in so doing, anticipates and establishes its actual future use as such later in 1839 and in coming years. Further, that photography was characterized in these accounts as embodying a previously unattainable degree of accuracy suggests the medium's effect in revising the standard of visual realism and, subsequently, its effect in troubling the status of other visual representations.

Photography and Definitions of Truth and Realism

The consideration of photography's realism was a central characteristic of the medium by which it was understood in 1839. Most often wondrous in tone, the periodical articles champion photography's realism as the quality which renders it superior to other forms of visual representation; less common, but present nonetheless, are statements that present this same realism as photography's disadvantage. The variation in how photography's realism is discussed can be considered in terms of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's theory of modality: the photograph was seen as more or less realistic, depending on the context and criteria by which it was judged. As this section will reveal, definitions of truth or realism were used to categorize photography and other visual representations; the variety of ways in which the terms were used reveals that the Victorians responded to the invention of photography with a more sophisticated understanding of the subjective or mediated nature of its images than has been asserted by theorists of nineteenth-century culture; in this sense, the Victorians' negotiations of photography reflected their interest in the "tensions between objective and subjective models of vision" (Christ and Jordan xxvi).

An examination of the articles in *The Literary Gazette* that define photography in terms of its realism reveals that the use of the terms "realism" and "truth" stood for the unprecedented indexicality of the photograph, or its sense of "actual contiguity or connection" to the referent it records (Metz 82). Such a definition is evident in the earliest article on photography in *The Literary Gazette*, "The Daguerreotype." In it, the author attempts to describe the appearance of several daguerreotypes taken by Daguerre, describing the objects photographed to be "given with a truth which Nature alone can give to her works" (Gaucheraud 28). This statement is two-fold in its effect, asserting the truth of the image while also suggesting the agency of Nature personified. He continues, marveling at the daguerreotype's amount of detail: an image of "a dead spider," for example, "is finished with such detail in the design" that it may be studied "as if it were nature itself" (28). He then attempts to describe what the daguerreotype images resemble: "they have some resemblance to line engraving and mezzotinto" but, "as for truth, they surpass everything" (28).

As Gaucheraud's article reveals, the term "truth" was used to refer to the indexicality of the photograph and to the new level of realism that photography introduced. The indexicality of photography is also commented on in "Nature Painted by Herself," an article that immediately follows Gaucheraud's article. The title itself speaks to the truth of photography, giving agency to Nature and thus implying the accuracy of her creation. Daguerreotypes are described in this article as "the exact and actual preservation of the impressions reflected by natural images upon copper plates," such that "the likeness of whatever is so impressed . . . [is] retained with perfect accuracy" (28). As indicated in Gaucheraud's comment that photography "surpasses everything" ("The Daguerreotype" 28),

51

the indexicality or "perfect accuracy" by which photography was defined proved to be a

cause for concern to the Victorians, in that it exposed the comparative lack of "truth" in all

other images ("Nature Painted by Herself" 28).

Talbot's 2 February letter to the editor of *The Literary Gazette* also defines

photography in terms of its indexicality through numerous statements that suggest the

seeming agency of the medium (whether the agency of the camera, of nature, or of the

objects depicted).[26] He describes how prior inventions (such as the camera obscura and

camera lucida) are useful to the artist "for abridging the labour of the artist in copying natural

objects" and "for ensuring greater accuracy in the design than can be readily attained without

such assistance" ("Photogenic Drawing" 73). He notes that such tools depend, however, on

the skill of the artist using them: "they assist the artist in his work; they do not *work for him*"

(73). It is this distinction upon which rests his invention: "From all the prior ones, the present

invention differs totally in this respect (which may be explained in a single sentence), viz.

that, by means of this contrivance, it is not the artist who makes the picture, but the picture

which makes ITSELF" (73). Talbot's article continues with descriptions of photography's

agency that not only suggest the indexicality of the photography, but also consequently imply

the absence of the human operator. After stating that "the picture makes itself," for instance,

---

[26] Talbot describes photography's agency in order to suggest its superiority to other visual
representations in other correspondence as well. For instance, in a 25 January letter to Sir
John Herschel of the Royal Society, he states that he has "a paper to be read next week
before the Royal Society, respecting a new Art of Design which I discovered about five years
ago, viz. the possibility of fixing upon paper the image formed by a Camera Obscura; or
rather, I should say, causing it to *fix itself*" (*The Correspondence of William Henry Fox
Talbot* n.pag.).

he explains that "all that the artist does is to dispose the apparatus before the object whose image he requires: he then leaves it for a certain time . . . At the end of the time he returns, takes out his picture, and finds it finished" (73). As he later notes, "nothing of all this [process] was executed by the hand"; "[t]he agent in this operation is solar light" (74).

The agency given to the photograph in Talbot's letter not only defines what the photographic process is, but also implies the absolute realism of photography in comparison to other visual representations: while those made by human beings are inevitably faulty, the images "made" by the objects photographed and by Nature herself are inevitably perfect and become the standard for realism and truth, a measure by which human attempts cannot but fail. This assertion of photography's superiority rests on the definition of photography in terms of its iconicity, or the photograph's degree of closeness to the object it depicts. Such accuracy, detail, and instantaneity – the measure by which realism is defined in this and other early articles published in *The Literary Gazette* – can only be achieved by photography.

The definition of truth seen thus far in these *Literary Gazette* articles is one that emphasizes the indexicality of the photograph; the 19 January untitled *Le Commerce* article (originally published 13 January) is significant in that it introduces a qualification to this indexical truth. The article opens by commenting on the many "marvelous statements" made about the invention following its announcements:

> [They] are conformable to the truth, except that M. Daguerre's pictures do not give
> the colour, but only the outlines – the lights and shadows of the model. It is not

painting, it is drawing, but drawing carried to a degree of perfection which art can

never attain. The facsimile is faultless. (43)

The realism of daguerreotypes is flawless, the author notes, save for their lack of colour and

inability to depict motion (as the author observes, "motion escapes [the daguerreotype

process], or leaves only indefinite and vague traces") (44).[27] "Truth" is used in this article to

stand for reality itself: photography is "conformable" or equal to this truth in nearly every

way.

Similar to the other *Literary Gazette* articles, the *Le Commerce* article measures

photography's truth and realism in terms of its accuracy and indexicality. When compared to

drawing, photography is superior in its accuracy and degree of detail, embodying a truth that

drawing can "never attain" because the photograph is "created" by light reflecting off the

depicted objects themselves (44). The author's statement in the *Le Commerce* article that the

photograph "is not painting," however, sounds a note of qualification to this definition of

truth (43). The photograph *can* be less real than painting, less equivalent to the truth, if it is

considered in terms of colour and the ability to capture motion. Typical of these earliest

accounts, photography's limitations were mentioned only briefly in an otherwise enthusiastic

account of its perfection; also typical is that these flaws were assumed to be soon remedied.

---

[27] Colour photography was often attempted but not achieved until the discovery of sensitizing
dyes in 1873 (which eventually led to the production of colour film by Kodak in the mid-
1930s) (Leggat, "Photography in Colour," n. pag.). Length of exposure decreased as the
development process improved, allowing for more motion to be captured; Gernsheim notes
that in the 1840s, it "var[ied] between 10 seconds and 2 minutes according to the strength of
the sunlight, the time of day, and the season of the year" (*The History of Photography* 97). It
was not until the invention of the collodion process in 1851, however, that exposure times
were reduced to two or three seconds (Leggat, "The Beginnings of Photography," n. pag.).

The *Le Commerce* article states, for instance, that although "motion escapes" the daguerreotype, it can be "presumed that the sun of Africa would give [Daguerre] instantaneous autographs – images of nature, in motion and in life" (44). While seeming to dismiss the flaws that would detract from photography's realism, the author nonetheless acknowledges such flaws, qualifying the otherwise unquestioned equation of photography with truth. The Edenic sense of absolute perfection surrounding the earliest descriptions of photography is thus disturbed, in that the concept of truth is qualified by the implied acknowledgement that such truth depends on the criteria by which it is determined. These qualified definitions of truth can be understood in terms of the theory of modality.

Kress and van Leeuwen define modality as the shared or agreed-upon "truth value or credibility" of a visual representation for members of a society (162). The degree of modality can be described as high or low, high modality being the adherence of the image to the consensual definition of real that pertains for that type of image in its particular context. In the context of scientific classification, for instance, an illustration that depicts only the most generic features of a specimen would be more highly modal, or more "real," than an illustration that depicts every detail and atypical feature of a specimen, given the purpose of scientific classification to categorize individual specimens on the basis of their shared or generic characteristics.

As evident in the *Le Commerce* article, realism does not always mean the indexicality of a visual representation: the realism of a type of image or its degree of modality depends on "what counts as real, a set of criteria for the real" in that context and the best expression of "that kind of reality" (163). Naturalism can be considered the most dominant form of realism

in nineteenth-century visual culture, or what Kress and van Leeuwen describe as "how much correspondence there is between the visual representation of an object and what we normally see of that object with the naked eye" (163). By such standards, the definition of "truth" presented in these early periodical articles positions photography as more highly modal, or closer in correspondence to the object depicted, than a drawing or painting in terms of the criteria of accuracy of depiction, level of detail, and correct proportions.

At the same time, it is important to note that not all the criteria for truth are met by photography, such as the depiction of colour and motion: these early technical flaws of the photograph can detract from its correspondence to truth or realism. Ultimately, however, such flaws are minimized in these early articles in terms of their importance as criteria for measuring truth. The criteria of accuracy and indexicality, in other words, are emphasized as *more* important than colour and motion in the measure of realism; realism, subsequently, is revised to conform to photographic representation. This demonstrates that "visual modality rests on culturally and historically determined standards of what is real and what is not" and that such standards have meaning in a particular cultural context (Kress and Van Leeuwen 165). The criteria by which photography was judged superior to other forms of visual representation came to dominate, so that lack of colour would become irrelevant and "not function as an indicator of low modality" in the dominant definition and idea of "what counts as real" to the first viewers of photography in 1839 (168).

The modality of the photograph in terms of its relative realism is referred to in the 2 February article, "French Discovery – Pencil of Nature." The author describes the photographs as "living pictures" that are captured by the camera: "the new art has been

discovered to fix these wonderful images" (74). He then describes what the images are: they are not in colour, "as has been erroneously reported to the public," but rather depict objects in "every graduation of shade . . . as an oil-painting is given by a perfect engraving . . . or, perhaps, more akin to a design made with mathematical accuracy" (74). The first assessment of photography given in the article thus far suggests the medium is lacking in realism, if realism is measured by "the proper colours of objects [being] represented" by the image (74).

As the article continues, however, a description of realism is elaborated that conforms to photography. Although lacking in colour, photographs are nonetheless sufficient in their accuracy or "extreme truth": "But in these copies, the delicacy of the design – the purity of the forms – the truth and harmony of tone – the aerial perspective – the high finish of the details, are all expressed with the highest perfection" (74). The photograph can be considered truthful, then, if measured not by colour but rather by accuracy. The author emphasizes this criterion of truth in describing the inspection of the daguerreotype with magnifying lens:

> The formidable lens, which often betrays monstrosities in the most delicate and aerial of our master-pieces [sic], may here search for defects in vain. The creations of nature triumph . . . At each step, we find new objects to admire, revealing to us the existence of exquisite details, which escape the naked eye, even in reality. (74)

In this account, realism in relation to photography can be defined as a perfect accuracy that is expressed in a level of detail that surpasses what can be seen by the eye alone. That the photograph captures more than can be seen "in reality" suggests that photography revises the idea of realism itself, establishing a new measure of realism against which other visual

representations cannot but fail. Upon close inspection, human-created images reveal their imperfections, such "monstrosities" being the degree to which they are distant from the realism they attempt to depict. The measure of modality put forward in these early articles, then, posits photography as more highly modal than other visual representations, which are posited as monstrous or of low modality. As the author concludes, "far from betraying any defect, the highest magnifier only tends to show more clearly [photography's] vast superiority" (74).

The examination of photographs by magnification in order to prove their unprecedented level of detail and realism appears to have been frequently done during the earliest exhibitions of photographs (based on the number of times it is mentioned in early articles): to see is to believe. This is demonstrated in a 19 January article, reprinted from *Le Commerce*, in which the author rhetorically asks, "[b]ut who will say that [the photograph] is not the work of some able draughtsmen?," to which he responds that with "an eyeglass," the "degree of perfection" of the photograph in comparison to drawings is made apparent: "the smallest details" and "the lines of a landscape invisible to the naked eye" are all captured flawlessly with "the most minute accuracy" (43). A 13 July article reprinted from *The Quotidienne* also describes the use of magnification in an exhibition of several photographs by Daguerre, noting with amazement the images' "incredible exactness" and "extraordinary minuteness": "the astonishment was, however, greatly increased when, on applying the microscope, an immense quantity of details, of such extreme fineness that the best sight could not seize them with the naked eye, were discovered" (444). With magnification, the high modality of the photograph is made all the more apparent than that which "the naked

eye" can see: as the 2 February article, "The New Art" avers, "every line is preserved with a minuteness inconceivable until seen by the microscope" (73).

The truth presented by the photograph can therefore be defined as a level of accuracy and detail (made all the more clear by magnification) that is unmatched by any other means of visual representation. Photographs are described as such perfect replications of the environment that they can be examined as if they were the real things. The author of "French Discovery – Pencil of Nature" describes one such image: "M. Daguerre has represented . . . the whole of the magnificent buildings on the right bank of the Seine . . . Each line, each point, is rendered with a perfection quite unattainable by all means hitherto used" (74). With these statements, the author suggests that photography is not only superior to what human beings can create, but is also superior to what human beings can see. The 2 February report on the Royal Institution proceedings also implies the limitations of non-photographic images in its description of the photographic samples displayed by Talbot at the 25 January meeting: "No human hand has hitherto traced such lines as these drawings displayed" ("Royal Institution" 75). These descriptions of photography are thus significant in that they show how realism defines photography as much as it is defined by photography.

While the article, "French Discovery – Pencil of Nature" asserts the realism of photography, it also at the same time qualifies this realism. Having asserted the superior realism of the photograph based on its delicacy, purity, and perfection, the author then assesses the photograph by different terms: "the French journals, and reports of proceedings, however, admit that these admirable representations still leave something to be desired as to effect, when regarded as works of art" (74). He explains that the images are dark in tone,

which gives them an "absence of vivacity and effect" and the appearance of being "clothed with a melancholy aspect;" further, they are flawed in that "motion, it is obvious, can never be copied" (both flaws which were due to the limitations of the technology in its earliest form) (74). Beyond technical flaws, the photograph fails to compare to works of art due to its "mechanical exactness," or lack of expressiveness ("Paris Letter" 69). This is indicated in comments on the photograph's appearance: it is "as an oil painting is given by a perfect engraving," the author asserts, then retracts, by stating, "or, perhaps, more akin to a design made with mathematical accuracy" (74).

A similar assertion of photography's realism that at the same time qualifies this realism is also apparent in the 24 August article, "The Daguerre Secret." In it, the author marvels at the appearance of the daguerreotype, exclaiming that "the effect of the whole is miraculous" in its ability to perfectly represent the objects it depicts (538). As an example of this miraculous effect, he describes a specimen displayed by Daguerre: "one of the drawings . . . was the view of a room with some rich pieces of carpet in it; the *threads* of the carpet were given with mathematical accuracy, and with a richness of effect that was quite marvelous" (539). The "mathematical accuracy" of the photograph is here stated as an indication of its iconicity, and to imply its higher modality or degree of closeness to nature in comparison to other visual images. As discussed in "French Discovery – Pencil of Nature," however, the very mathematical accuracy with which photography is asserted to be more highly modal than other images is also an aspect of photography that can detract from its realism. The editorial note appended to "The Daguerre Secret" makes this apparent in its description of the flaws of the daguerreotype: "the images produced by M. Daguerre are exquisitely correct, but

gloomy-looking. They resemble moonlight pictures done in ink" (539). Although perfectly accurate, the photograph is still lacking in the qualities of colour and expression and in this sense cannot compare to "works of art."

The complexity and range of definitions of truth used in the 1839 articles of *The Literary Gazette* reveal the extent to which realism was central to the earliest representations and negotiations of photography. Such early accounts, which attempt to describe this wholly new kind of image, often do so by distinguishing the photograph from other visual representations on the basis of its accuracy, the previously unattainable degree of closeness to the "real thing" that its images entail. In this sense, photographic truth as presented in the periodical literature emphasized photography's quality of indexicality, or the manner in which the photograph appears equivalent to or an index of the original objects that it depicts. This measure of realism in terms of the indexicality of the image inevitably asserted photography as superior to other visual representations, which were of lower modality in comparison. As demonstrated in some of these early articles, however, the *relative* realism or modality of photographic representation was recognized, such that the photograph is judged more or less truthful than other visual representations, depending upon the criteria (or measures of modality) by which modality is measured. The photograph presented a new level of accurate depiction and, as such, revised the very standards by which realism was measured; at the same time, however, the photograph could be less real than other images, not only because of its technical limitations, but also because of the innate "mechanical" quality that distinguished it from "works of art."

Recognizing the instability of definitions of realism is important because it shows that the Victorians sustained a more complex and contested understanding of the nature and significance of photographic representation than is normally attributed to them (a common assertion being, for instance, that Victorians blindly accepted the photograph as a transparent and unmediated index of reality). As Kate Flint notes, although "the visual was, indeed, of paramount importance to the Victorians, it was a heavily problematized category" (25). From its inception, the issue of mediation and the concepts of truth and realism or mimesis were thus bound up with definitions of photography. The uncertain status of photography in 1839 – it was both more and less real than other visual representations, its images both like and wholly incomparable to works of art – demonstrates the extent to which photography troubled the categories of the real and, consequently, troubled the status of other visual technologies. The celebratory tone of wonder with which the new invention was announced at the same time embodies a note of uncertainty or concern about the presence of the new technology in relation to other visual technologies, evinced as "a tension between technological pessimism and optimism" (Noakes, "Representing" 157). This concern about the value of photography – the use of its images, the effect of its revision of realism or its higher modality on other visual reproductions, and the consequences of its never-before-seen level of recorded detail – manifests in these early articles as a note of anxiety regarding mediation. How this anxiety as well as other concerns evoked by photography are expressed will next be examined.

Photographic Anxieties

A common characteristic of the early accounts of photography published in the periodicals of 1839 is a tone of anxiety or concern engendered by the new invention. This anxiety closely relates to the themes of truth or realism: these earliest representations of the new invention and the unique images it produces define photography through statements regarding its unprecedented degree of truth; as such, the status and quality of other visual representations and processes are inevitably put into question. How this anxiety is expressed is significant in that it speaks to central issues of photographic representation that would continue to be negotiated throughout the 1840s and early 1850s, during photography's development into a mass medium.

The most explicit expression of anxiety evident in these early articles is the fear that photography and its images would supplant artists and their visual reproductions: as noted in a 23 March article in *The Literary Gazette*, "the first report of the discovery in France alarmed the painters from nature; next, the specimens of etched plates and printed impressions alarmed the engravers" ("Photogenic Drawing" 187). A 15 March article in *The Art-Union* also expresses this concern about photography, describing it as "employing the sun to create pictures," thus "taking the pencil out of the hands of all classes of artists . . . and away from the engraver altogether!" ("Sun-Painting" 24). This anxiety is also evident in the earliest article on photography in *The Literary Gazette*, "The Daguerreotype." After marveling at the realism of the photograph, such that travelers using it may see "how far their pencils and brushes are from the truth of the Daguerreotype," Gaucheraud then states, "let not the draughtsman and the painter, however, despair – the results obtained by M. Daguerre

are very different from their works, and, in many cases, cannot be a substitute for them" (28). Such contradictory statements regarding photographs, which assert their superiority over painting and drawing while simultaneously stating that they are not comparable to them, are common to these earliest descriptions of the invention. While the author seemingly reassures artists not to "despair," there still remains a tone of anxiety to his article: photographs may indeed be "very different" from other visual representations, but nonetheless they "surpass everything" in their "truth" – and, as has already been observed, such truth or realism is the central and defining characteristic by which all visual representations are measured in these early accounts of photography (28).

The threat of photography supplanting artists and their creations is also voiced in a 19 January *Literary Gazette* article reprinted from *Le Tempe*. It describes daguerreotypes as "represent[ing] all objects with a degree of perfection which no designer, however skilful, can equal" (43). Such a statement provokes anxiety in suggesting the inferior level of truth or realism in human-made visual representations in comparison to the unprecedented realism of photographic representation. The author continues, vouching for "the perfection of the results obtained, not after my own judgment, but after that of a celebrated artist, M. Paul Delaroche," who claims that the daguerreotype "may give useful hints to the most skilful painters" (43). Delaroche's comment that the technique of the artist is affected by photography raises the concern that other visual representations are rendered inferior by photography's accuracy or "truth," in that such photographic truth revises how artists view and depict objects and revises the standard or measure of realism.

The 2 February article, "French Discovery – Pencil of Nature," also reveals the common concern expressed in several early articles about the detrimental impact of photography upon current modes of visual production. The author foresees that "this discovery will doubtless make a great revolution in the arts of design; and, in a multitude of cases, will supersede old methods altogether inferior," and admits that "many may, at first, be affected; but whatever has the true character of good, cannot essentially do mischief" (74). To reassure readers that photography cannot "do mischief," he notes, "the invention of printing soon gave employment to many more than were employed as copyists," and that, more recently,

> [T]he substitution of steel-plates for engraving, instead of copper, although fifty times as many copies may be taken from them, has, by the substitution of good engravings for indifferent ones, so extended the demand, that more steel-plates are now required than were formerly used of copper. (74)

While suggesting that photography will only lead to more opportunities in the field of design and reprographic production, the author at the same time indirectly expresses the concern that the new invention will displace older forms of visual representation. This concern is perhaps best expressed in a 6 April letter from J.T. Wilmore to the *Literary Gazette*. Wilmore, an engraver, describes his attempt along with "two other artists" to secure a patent for his variation on the talbotype (which involved etching and painting the image on glass): "our object was to have united with us as many artists as a patent would allow, viz. twelve" (215). Wilmore explains his reasons for applying for a patent: "Self-protection prompted this, – for the new art, as it was spoken of, threatened us with the loss of our occupation" (215). This

letter is significant in voicing a common early response among artists to photography: the fear of displacement, or loss of occupation due to the "threatened power of the new art" (215).

An 8 June article published in *The Athenaeum* best demonstrates the manner in which these and other concerns about photography are expressed in these early articles that seek to define and categorize the new invention. The article consists of a letter from an unnamed individual "who ranks high in the scientific world" that describes in detail a display of daguerreotype images ("Letter from J.R." 435). As in other early announcements, the author first describes what the photograph looks like in terms of definitions of truth and realism:

> The pictures were as perfect as it is possible for pictures to be without colour, and although they did not possess this advantage, its absence was scarcely felt, as the truth, distinctness, and fidelity of the minutest details were so exquisite, that colour could have added little to the charm felt in contemplating them. (435)

This passage outlines several points of discussion that were commonly raised in the early articles on photography. The definition of truth here asserted, as in other articles, is one that emphasizes the previously unattainable level of accuracy that the photograph affords. While lack of colour is a characteristic of the photograph that may detract from its closeness to nature, the flaw has been minimized in other articles, as it is here, by statements that assert the criteria of accuracy and detail as more important than colour in the measure of realism. The author also acknowledges another flaw of the earliest photographs that could detract from their realism, the inability to capture objects in motion: "there is one point in which

these pictures have a striking dissemblance to nature, viz., the deserted appearance they give"
(435). He then proceeds to note, however, that, "living objects, if they remain motionless
during the short periods of exposure, are given with perfect fidelity" – and so, typical of other
early articles, he mentions but briefly this flaw before continuing on to assert the superiority
or "unquestionable fidelity" of the photograph (435).

The impact of photography's "unquestionable fidelity" upon other visual
representations is revealed in this article through statements that express an implicit anxiety.
As in other early articles, the author focuses on the unique ability of photography to record
aspects of nature that were previously undetected; as such, photography is shown to establish
a new standard of realism that corrects the manner in which human-made images depict
nature. This quality of photography is revealed in the author's description of three
daguerreotypes of "the same portion of the Boulevard," taken at morning, noon, and evening:

> I could not have anticipated so marked a difference in the tone and aspect of three
>
> representations of the same objects; yet, though they differed so much . . . that it
>
> required examination to be satisfied of the identity, the same examination, however,
>
> soon impressed me with the truth of the pictures, although they differed from the
>
> conventional tones used by artists to represent the same effects. (435)

The "truth of the pictures" suggests the new level of realism that the photograph introduced,
in that it depicted objects in a more truthful or "real" manner than had ever before been seen.
The author's acknowledgement that the truth of the photograph was "soon impressed" upon
him, thus effecting how he subsequently views all other visual images, is significant in

making explicit that photography enacted a revision of the concept of realism: to see the photograph is to experience a new level of reality in a visual image. The author indicates this in his wondrous description of a daguerreotype of "a street taken during a heavy fall of rain": "this was so accurately rendered, that the plate seemed wet . . . no artist could have hit off this effect with sufficient exactness to tell in a picture" (435).

The assertion that the artist's depiction cannot "tell" like the photograph can is important in that it speaks to the anxiety raised by the invention. The "conventional tones," or conventions employed by artists to create visual representations that are understood by viewers to suggest a realistic depiction of nature, are challenged by the photograph: in comparison to the photograph, human-made visual representations no longer "tell," and the conventions formerly used to create realistic images are proven false or lacking in "sufficient exactness" to be believable any longer (435). The photograph's effect in revising how one views other images is confirmed by the editorial comment that follows this letter, which implies that the visual convention of depicting perspective (or three dimensionality) in paintings and their overall illusion of realism is found wanting in comparison to the photograph:

> Daguerre's pictures are not, like the paintings of many artists, so imperfect that you must view them only from one point, and not approach nearer lest the illusion should vanish; on the contrary, you feel like you have a treasure before you, which affords stores of delineated beauty, which all the powers of sense, even when assisted by a microscope, are unable to exhaust. (436)

68

As the editorial comments asserts, in comparison to the conventions of human-made images, the photograph proves flawless in its illusionism and is therefore positioned as superior to other visual representations in "offering a more immediate or authentic experience" that exposes the conventions of these older visual representations (Bolter and Grusin 19).

The 8 June letter published in *The Athenaeum* as well as the other early periodical articles are thus significant to the study of the earliest representations and receptions of photography in revealing how the definitions of truth and realism used to define photography were inextricably bound with statements of anxiety that are either explicitly or implicitly expressed. As demonstrated in these articles, explicit statements acknowledge the shortcomings of other images in terms of the unparalleled realism of the photograph, and directly admit a concern about its impact on artists, draughtsmen, and engravers. Implicit statements of anxiety are indirectly revealed, often in comments on photography's limitations. A 23 February report of the Graphic Society demonstrates this implicit admission of anxiety. Not surprisingly, photography was often a recorded topic of discussion of the Graphic Society in 1839, a group that displayed and discussed various engravings, drawings, and sketches – the very type of visual representations to which the photograph was most comparable. The report notes that two photographic samples by Herschel were displayed and that "a gentleman present, who had seen those prepared by Daguerre . . . [stated] that [Daguerre's] were so far superior" ("Graphic Society" 124). Still, the author continues, even this "most favourable report of the process relieved the anxiety of the artists": "the painters were quieted that Daguerre could produce nothing in colour; and the engravers, that no impression could be taken from the design effected by light on his coppers" (124).

69

Photography's lack of colour, already noted in the discussion of definitions of truth and realism to have been a characteristic that can detract from its otherwise superior degree of realism, is here cited as a limitation to assuage the anxiety of painters, while the inability to create facsimiles assuages the anxiety of engravers (copies of daguerreotypes could only be made by creating engravings based on the original daguerreotype). Such statements implicitly express an underlying anxiety, however, in that they admit the challenge that photography posed to other visual representations and reveal a concern about the capabilities of this new "curious art" (124). Further, that photography's flaws were soon to be corrected (for instance, methods for creating engravings of daguerreotypes were developed) or to become insignificant (for instance, photography's lack of colour came to be a minor flaw in comparison to its accuracy and detail) suggests that the anxiety that defined the Victorians' response to photography thus persists.

The expressions of anxiety voiced in the periodical literature reveal as much about the new technology as they do about the state of the culture in 1839. In its first year of existence, photography was met with an overall tone of enthusiasm and confidence that the invention would increasingly benefit society as it was improved upon. The capabilities and limitations of a new technology at a specific point of time shape the cultural perceptions of and reactions to that technology: as the periodicals' characterization of photography shows, for instance, certain uses of photography identified in 1839 were not yet possible and were therefore discussed in terms of enthusiasm rather than anxiety. Portraiture, for instance, was not yet practicable – as "French Discovery" states, "M. Daguerre has not succeeded in copying the living physiognomy in a satisfactory manner, though he does not despair of success" – nor

was a method of producing multiple copies on a large scale; the ability to create portraits and to make exact, innumerable copies of a photograph were thus spoken of enthusiastically in 1839 as beneficial uses of photography that were sure to be soon in place (74).

Several articles demonstrate this response whereby future capabilities of photography are discussed in celebratory terms alone. The author of the 8 June letter in *The Athenaeum*, for example, posits that the daguerreotype process will be used to obtain "original pictures of unquestionable fidelity . . . of the most intricate objects, at a trifling expense," that "may then be multiplied by the engraver's arts, and the public [may then] obtain illustrations of the highest excellence at a modest cost" ("Letter from J.R." 436). This enthusiasm for the potential use of photography to circulate inexpensive, accurate images is similarly voiced in a 27 April article in *The Mirror of Literature* that predicts "almost everybody may furnish himself with a collection of copies from the best masters, or of original views of the scenery around him" ("The New Art – Photography" 263). Significantly, the article also predicts the democratic potential inherent in photography and the sentimental value of photographic portraiture:

> The folio will be seen not only on the table of the affluent, but on that of the poor
> man, who shall no longer hope in vain to carry with him wherever he may go some
> sketch of the dear scenes of his boyhood or of his early love. (263)

The potential circulation of reproducible images amongst all classes of society and the potential ability to create portraiture for the purposes of memorializing the human subject – a feature of the photographic portrait that, as is discussed in chapter two, is central to the

cultural negotiation of photographic portraiture – are uses of photography that are described in 1839 in terms of enthusiasm rather than anxiety. As will be seen throughout the 1840s and early 1850s, however, these very uses of photography that were here celebrated as possibilities are to be later expressed in terms of anxiety once they became a reality. This demonstrates the pervasiveness of the response of anxiety throughout photography's development. The identified possibilities of photography, which were spoken of with enthusiasm in 1839 – its potential ability to produce multiple copies and potential use for human portraiture – were to spoken of with concern as such possibilities became practicable.

The expressions of anxiety that this chapter outlines are clearly a central feature of these earliest representations and receptions of photography in 1839. These points of anxiety are significant in terms of premediation, in that they reveal how the technology was imagined at that particular stage of its development and, subsequently, how such imaginings inform the future perception and uses of the technology. The concern in 1839, for instance, regarding the status of other visual representations in light of photography's superior realism persists throughout the 1840s, although it is expressed differently as the technology progressed. As the following chapters demonstrate, the anxiety regarding photography's unprecedented realism directly informs how the medium is used in subsequent years. This anxiety pervades the Victorians' response to photographic portraiture: the portrait is read in its realism as a transparent, indexical imprint of the individual photographed that reveals the subject's interiority; at the same time, this very realism evokes concern about the status and control of the too-real photographic portrait. The rapid improvement of photography in 1839 and throughout the 1840s and early 1850s was such that new anxieties and concerns would soon

come into play as the technology became more ubiquitous. As is discussed in the remaining chapters of this dissertation, the anxiety with which photography was first met proves to be an "overriding uncertainty" that persists throughout the years of photography's development and characterizes the cultural reception of the new technology (Gunning 46).

The changing perceptions of photography and the attendant anxieties raised in response to its growing familiarity can be understood in terms of the Victorians' notions of the "curious" and the "novel." The transition of a technology from its earliest invention, when its limitations are numerous, to its period of increasing use and application, when its early flaws are corrected and improvements have been made, is reflected in the changing cultural reception of the technology that shifts from an initial astonishment to a growing acceptance such that the technology becomes "second nature" and "the astonishing becomes familiar" (Gunning 40, 42). This changing reception of photography in response to the technology's development is expressed in some periodical articles of 1839 that observe that, in its present form, photography is more curious or novel than it is practical. Such an observation is expressed in a 28 December report on the Graphic Society proceedings: having described daguerreotypes as "exquisite representations," the article proceeds to note their flaws, concluding that in its present state, "the art is hitherto more curious than useful" ("Graphic Society" 830). A 5 October article in *The Times* similarly describes photography's potential in such terms. It reports that a method of producing engravings of daguerreotypes has been found and contemplates the value of such a development: "the primitive art, which obliged us to make collections of unique pictures upon silver plates, is therefore about to take a far wider range. It will quit the cabinets of the curious, and enter the domain of the graphic

73

arts in general and of popular education" (untitled n. pag.). This transition of a new

technology from the realm of the novel to the practicable is reflected in the differing

expressions of anxiety that are voiced in response to the technology's development: as

Gunning notes, the growing familiarity of a technology is nonetheless underscored by a

persistent uncertainty or sense of "the uncanny [that] seems to permeate the whole cycle" by

which a new technology is domesticated (46). As chapters two and three demonstrate in their

examination of the status of photography in the 1840s and early 1850s, photography was to

quickly develop from the merely curious to the useful; accompanying such progression came

a new realm of possibilities, potential uses and, subsequently, anxieties and concerns.

Conclusion

The representations of photography in the periodical literature of 1839 depict a

picture of photography that is as complex and detailed as the photograph itself. The imagined

possible uses and users of photography, its definition in terms of truth and realism, and the

undercurrent of anxiety articulated in these early articles convey a sense of how the

technology was first negotiated. Such representations of photography are significant to an

understanding of the cultural reception of the technology prior to its development into a mass

medium. An analysis of how photography was first received and negotiated is also important

to an understanding of how the technology functioned once it was ubiquitous: as the rest of

this dissertation shows, the ways in which a technology is imagined to be put to use and to be

valuable in its period of definition and contestation influence and inform the actual uses and

perceptions of the technology in its period of ubiquity.

In this sense, the picture of photography in 1839 "at the point of [its] introduction, before it has become part of a nearly invisible everyday life of habit and routine," directly influences the manner in which photography was imagined in the 1840s and early 1850s as it became "invisible" or culturally integrated (Gunning 39). As photography became increasingly familiar to Victorians through the introduction of the first portrait studios in 1841, the increased publication of photographic manuals and prints, and through improvements to the technology that rendered the circulation and production of reproducible images practicable, new and revised representations of photography and its uses came into circulation, along with an attendant set of questions and anxieties. How have the definitions of truth and the measure of realism evolved to describe photography? How are consumers positioned in terms of photography as it becomes increasingly available, and how is photography presented as a means by which they can define themselves? How does the emphasis in 1839 on photography's use as documentary record shift to accommodate the expressive or subjective possibilities suggested by portraiture, as well as the subsequent anxiety over such representations? How does the literature of the period reflect these representations of photography and the attendant anxieties? The remaining chapters of this dissertation demonstrate how photography is imagined and how its possible uses, definitions of realism, and expressions of anxiety are negotiated as the medium became increasingly integrated into Victorian culture.

Chapter 2

"A complete transcript of our outward man": Photographic Portraiture in 1846

This chapter examines the state of photography in 1846, the mid-point in photography's development from its invention in 1839 to its identified "new era" of mass popularity in the early 1850s (Gernsheim, *A Concise History* 32).[28] It focuses in particular on the relatively new practice of photographic portraiture, which, since its invention in 1841, was one of the most prominent topics of discussion regarding photography. The mid-point of 1846 presents a picture of photography in its transitional period of growing popularity, as represented in the numerous periodical articles and studio advertisements published throughout the year. By 1846, the subject of concern had clearly shifted to the practice of portraiture; indeed, the issues and concerns raised by portraiture are more complex in nature and deliberated with greater frequency than the concerns about photography that were debated in 1839. The definitions of truth and realism, so central to the understanding of the medium in 1839, arise in 1846 in relation to portrait photography, a relatively new practice that complicates the figuration of photography as transparent or unmediated. The figurative language and metaphorical treatments of photography in use in 1846 similarly reveal the

---

[28] Given the scope of this dissertation it is not possible to trace in detail the history of the reception of photography from 1839 to the early 1850s. The mid-point of 1846 was thus chosen for examination as representative of the culture's negotiation of the medium in its transitional period. It was also chosen as the period in which portrait photography was still a novel process (having been introduced five years earlier), but was rapidly growing more familiar (due to increasing competition between established photographers, the opening of new studios in response to demand, and the increased references to portraiture in periodical literature and advertisements).

complex and often contradictory figurations of the medium that were in circulation in this transitional period of the medium's increasing popularity. The many portrait studio advertisements reveal the ways in which the practice is presented as desirable to potential consumers and the aspects of portraiture that are asserted as valuable and unique, thus indicating how the medium was negotiated as it became increasingly ubiquitous. An examination of the periodical reportage, fictional texts, and advertisements of the period is also significant in revealing the Victorians' underlying anxieties regarding portraiture. This chapter establishes the representations of photography present in 1846[29] that influence later ideas of the medium and examines how these perceptions of the medium influence the construction of the future (as envisioned through the forms of photography that are already in place).

From the moment of photography's invention, portraiture was a dreamed-of possibility: as Gregory Wickliff notes, "[a]t the mere hint of the possibility of human portraiture through this new technology, an enormous implicit demand was at once created" ("Light Writing" 295). Helmut Gernsheim observes that such demand stemmed from the exhibitions and "daily demonstrations" of photography that began in 1839: "It was a natural development that out of these demonstrations grew the first photographic studios in England, for these institutions drew large crowds whose curiosity, aroused by the lecture, led them to try the novel form of portraiture" (*The History of Photography* 89). Improvements in photography – such as shortened exposure times and better camera equipment – made

---

[29] Unless otherwise noted, all dates in this chapter refer to 1846.

portraiture practicable in 1841. As the early periodical reportage on portraiture indicates, the

new practice was met with much enthusiasm and was considered "miraculous" in

"reveal[ing] to us, in the space of a few seconds, a complete transcript of our outward man"

("Photographic Portraiture," *Illustrated London News* 1 October 1842 323).

Richard Beard opened the first professional portrait studio on 23 March 1841 in

London, taking daguerreotype portraits of customers from a rooftop studio located at the

Polytechnic Institution. Shortly after Beard's studio was opened, the daguerreotypist Antoine

Claudet opened the second portrait studio in London in June 1841, on the rooftop of the

Adelaide Gallery of Practical Science. Both studios offered daguerreotype portraits for sale

in various sizes and, because the daguerreotype process produced a single, unique image,

advertised that engraved copies of the unique image could be made. From the outset,

considerable competition existed between the two photographers, who were the only

practitioners to hold licences to practice daguerreotyping in England.[30] This competition,

which was played out in the numerous studio advertisements published in the period (each

studio claiming to produce better images than the other), clearly influenced the public's

reception of the new practice by stating the criteria by which this realism could be measured

---

[30] As John Hannavy states, "[t]he daguerreotype was the subject of a somewhat confused
patent situation in England" (17). Daguerre's process was free for use in France, but was
patented in England and Wales. Antoine Claudet was the first to acquire a licence in
England. By 1841, Daguerre "dispose[d] of his patent rights in England and Wales," which
were bought by Richard Beard (17). Beard thus became "the sole patent holder for the
daguerreotype" in England and had jurisdiction over the process, save for Claudet's licence.
All other photographers obtained licences to practice daguerreotyping from Beard (18).

and valued.[31] The competing claims for realism in these advertisements reveal how portraiture was valued in the early years of its practice. As this chapter demonstrates, the photographic advertisements and periodical articles detail the Victorians' experience and perception of the novel and unfamiliar process of portraiture.

Realism in Photographic Portraiture

Chapter one examined the ways in which photography, newly invented, was first described and defined in terms of its realism, or that the photograph presented an indexical duplicate of the visual world. Although the articles of 1839 acknowledged aspects of photography that detracted from this realism (such as its inability to capture motion), the dominant perception of photography nonetheless characterized the medium as superior to other visual representations in being more realistic. While the terms by which photography is understood have evolved by 1846, the issue of the medium's level of realism is yet contested.

By 1846, the tone and subject matter of the periodical reportage on photography reflects the improved conditions and increasing popularity of the medium. No longer a novel invention, photography has become an increasingly common practice; as an article in *Punch* humourously comments, "an alarming rumour" in circulation blames a lack of sunshine on the sun being "totally 'used up' by the Daguerreotype" ("The 'Light of All Nations'" 211). Although there are fewer articles than in 1839, the majority of articles in 1846 that do discuss photography concern the relatively new commercial practice of photographic portraiture. As

---

[31] While Beard eventually went out of business, Claudet set up in 1851a large "Temple to Photography" and was appointed in 1853 the "Photographer-in-Ordinary to the Queen" (Gernsheim 107).

this section details, one of the central topics debated about portraiture was its level of

realism, a discussion that was perhaps even more critical than in 1839, given that the images

produced now included those of paying clients, rather than simply of landscapes,

architecture, or reproductions of engravings: what was considered realistic or accurate in the

depiction of human beings?

The measure of the portrait's realism was debated in 1846 in terms of whether the

altered (manipulated or retouched) photograph or unaltered photographic portrait was more

real in its "approach to nature" ("Daguerreotype Portraiture," *Literary Gazette* 18 April 1846

360). Was a photograph more highly modal, or realistic, in being altered in appearance or in

being unaltered? The most significant form of alteration that is discussed in 1846 is the hand

colouring of photographs, a process introduced by Beard in March 1842.[32] Gernsheim asserts

that colouring was introduced in order "to make [the photographs] more acceptable to the

taste of the public who, accustomed to miniatures, objected to the metallic glare of the new

portraits, which they found lacking in warmth and life" (*The History of Photography* 100).[33]

---

[32] Colouring was a delicate process in which a thin layer of gum arabic coated the daguerreotype plate, allowing the artist to apply a layer of colour with a brush using dry powder pigments. Miniature painters were often employed as colourists, and "found a new lease of life by deftly combining the old art with the new" (Gernsheim, *The History of Photography* 110). Claudet (unable to use Beard's patented process) employed a famous miniature painter, M. Mansion, to colour daguerreotypes at his studio (100).

[33] That hand colouring was considered in terms of realism is apparent in an 1843 *Illustrated London News* report that describes the "new and important discovery" of coloured images: "Now may be seen . . . portraits, striking as life, of young and old, each exhibiting the peculiar complexion of age and health, and which alone was necessary to render this wonderful process equal to the original idea of its still more wonderful discoverer, Mons. Daguerre, that of permanently fixing upon the face of a mirror the colour and character of its reflected object" ("Photographic Portraits in Colour" 213).

The periodical reportage in response to the hand-colouring process reveals that such alterations were considered in terms of the debate begun in 1839 regarding the realism of photography. Along with colouring, other alterations performed in the period to increase portraiture's realism include the use of painted backgrounds (introduced by Claudet) and changes to the studio lighting. Such alterations can be described as "photographic manipulations" that can be classified as either manipulations done in the process of taking the photograph (such as lighting) or manipulations done to the photograph itself (such as hand-colouring). These manipulations were argued as being more or less real – increasing or decreasing the image's "warmth and life" – depending on the criteria by which such realism was measured (100).

The four 1846 articles published in *The Athenaeum* and *The Literary Gazette* that describe and compare Beard's and Claudet's portrait studios reveal the terms by which the debate about portraiture's realism was discussed. The competition between the two photographers for business was based on the quality of images offered by both, with each studio claiming (in numerous advertisements, to be discussed below) to produce more realistic or "natural" (true to life) photographs than the other. Reflecting this competition, the periodical coverage of the period is often devoted to comparing the two studios based on the realism of the portrait produced. The earliest article in 1846 to discuss either studio is the 18 April report published in *The Literary Gazette*; it is significant in revealing the manner in which portraiture's realism was debated. "By invitation from Mr. Beard," the author visits the studio in order "to inspect improvements in daguerreotype portraiture" ("Daguerreotype

Portraiture" 360). His article opens with a comment on the photograph's realism:

> We confess to a strong bias, despite the metallic hue, in favour of the genuine
>
> [untouched] photograph; but ours is not the taste of the million, and so the demand for
>
> a more natural resemblance than the "horrid leaden tint" must be met. (360)

As the author's statement reveals, the debate in 1846 concerned what was "more natural" or

real in portraiture: the untouched photograph, with its "metallic hue" due to the polished

metal of the daguerreotype plate, or the retouched photograph, hand-coloured to produce a

"more natural resemblance?" As in 1839, the modality of the photograph depends on the

standards by which it was measured: is the untouched photograph more real or "genuine," as

the author claims, since it is less mediated? Or, is the hand-coloured image more real or

"natural" because its colours approximate what human beings actually look like, more so

than the "horrid leaden tint" of the uncoloured image?

Photographic manipulations such as colouring thus directly relate to the measure of

the portrait's modality. Although the author argues in favour of the "genuine" untouched

photograph, he admits that the overwhelming "taste of the million" is for the coloured image,

and acknowledges that improvements to hand colouring or "surface painting" are "a step in

the advance": "Flesh-tints are still painted with the brush, but the colours . . . appear to

combine with the mercury [on the plate]; and thus blended, a more harmonious result is

produced" (360). Although manipulation can be seen to detract from the photograph's

indexicality by adding a level of mediation to the "genuine" image, the author nonetheless

acknowledges that such manipulation can be considered to increase the photograph's realism

82

by "assist[ing] the approach to nature," or rendering the appearance of the image more true to life (360). That the coloured portrait could be measured more highly modal or realistic than the "genuine" photograph is also voiced in an 1846 *Art-Union* review of Claudet's studio, which acknowledges that colouring is a "highly important" invention for enabling the individual "to obtain an exact representation in form and colour of any object they may wish to delineate" ("Photographic Miniatures" 20).

A 4 July review of Claudet's studio, published in *The Athenaeum*, also reveals more details about the manner in which photography's realism is discussed in 1846 and provides examples of photographic manipulations that are done to the image and to the process itself. As in the 18 April *Literary Gazette* report on Beard's studio, the division between altered or coloured and unaltered or "genuine" photographs is maintained ("Daguerreotype Portraiture" 360). The author begins the article by claiming, "[a] Daguerreotype portrait that could truly be pronounced a flattering likeness, we certainly never expected to see; that phenomenon, however, was presented to us on recently visiting the establishment of M. Claudet – not in the coloured works only, but in the genuine and unaltered performances of Nature" ("M. Claudet's Daguerreotype Portraits" 689). Based on the author's assessment, "the genuine and unaltered" photograph is that which is unmediated, or seemingly made by the agency of the camera – or "of Nature" – alone (689). That the "genuine" state of the photograph is considered an unmediated production is evident in the author's assertion that these unaltered photographs show that "[t]he mind of an artist had been at work, though his hand was inert" (689). The author continues, discussing in detail how these unaltered specimens reveal an artist's "touch": "The conditions of light, of position, and, to some extent, of costume, had

been studied . . . and thus each was imaged under picturesque circumstances" (689). These "conditions" can all be defined as photographic manipulations to the photographic process – changes to the background, the lighting, and to the individual (with the use of costume) that affect the quality or realism of the image produced. The author describes such manipulations as "endeavour[s]" on Claudet's part "to infuse an artistic feeling into these works, – and so, to quicken the photographic ray with human taste and fancy" (689). Another alteration that the author discusses as "artistic" is the photographic manipulation done to the image itself with hand colouring. "We can also speak in terms of commendation" about the coloured portraits, the author claims, for "[n]ot only do they no longer exhibit persons who seem to have been taking nitrate of silver, but the tints are fresh and almost glowing" (689). The criterion of naturalism – the image's approximation to the actual colours of the subject it depicts – is here stated as the standard by which realism is measured. The author thus identifies two different kinds of photographic manipulation that alter the modality of the photographic portrait produced, describing both as "artistic" alterations.

This article is useful in revealing several criteria that were involved in the assessment of photography's realism in 1846. Along with hand colouring, or manipulations done to the image itself, the author identifies the manipulations done in the process of taking the portrait that increase the realism of the image. With the practice of portraiture, then, a consideration of the choices made by the photographer in creating an image is introduced to the debates about the medium's realism. As Wickliff notes, discussions in 1839 "sought most often to position this medium of representation as one more aligned with nature than with art as a way to strengthen daguerreotypy's [sic] ethos" ("The Daguerreotype" 433). Photographic

manipulations that were practiced in 1846, such as hand colouring and the use of painted

backgrounds, change this earlier figuration of photography as unmediated and neutral by

introducing qualities of aesthetics and expression. The issue of mediation is also more

explicitly stated than in 1839, as evident in references to the "artistic" interventions done by

the photographer: the photographer's hand can clearly be seen at work in the coloured

images, while unaltered photographs are described as those in which the photographer's hand

was "inert" (even though the author proceeds to describe manipulations done by the

seemingly-inert photographer that show the mediated nature of photography [689]).

Although the idea of the photograph as unmediated persists since its invention in 1839, the

articles in 1846 nonetheless identify that manipulation or mediation does occur in the

production of photographic portraits. The definitions of photography in terms of realism and

indexicality, established in 1839, are thus complicated by the introduction of photographic

portraiture and the consideration of its degree of realism.

A review of Claudet's studio published in *The Literary Gazette* (also on 4 July) also

addresses similar issues regarding photography's realism. Like the 4 July *Athenaeum* article,

it distinguishes between manipulations done prior to the photograph being taken and those

done to the photograph itself; such manipulations are discussed in terms of art and science.

For example, the author describes the use of "an ingenious instrument" that aids the

photographer in focusing the camera lens as a "[s]cientific adjustment," and considers the use

of "hand-screens" to improve the lighting that illuminates the subject's face as an "artistical

treatment" ("Photography," *Literary Gazette* 4 July 1846 601). These scientific and aesthetic

manipulations to the process improve the quality of portraits taken, the author asserts, noting

that "we no longer see the flat unmeaning faces" with "features confused or distorted," but instead see realistic portraits depicted in the true "lights and shades of nature" (601).

The periodical reportage on Beard's and Claudet's studios thus show that the issue of truth and realism, so much a topic of discussion in 1839, continued to be debated in 1846 in terms of portraiture. The introduction of hand colouring and other techniques of photographic manipulation that measurably affect the quality of image being produced (such as lighting, use of costume and painted background, and so on) result in new levels of mediation between the altered and unaltered photograph. Perhaps because of the subject matter, portraits of individuals also introduced a consideration of the aesthetics of the photograph, with composition, colouring, and lighting being acknowledged as artistic actions by the photographer. A conflicting picture of photography thus emerges in discussions of its realism in 1846: at the same time that the photographic portrait is recognized to be constructed or mediated by the photographer, the idea of photography as being unmediated and indexical still persists. As Marien observes, manipulations to the image "did not significantly affect the public's belief in photographic truth" (*Photography* 74). The seemingly irreconcilable differences bound up in this negotiation of photography's realism is common to other discussions of photography in the 1840s (for instance, the consideration of the photographic portrait as deceptive as well as truthful, discussed below). That such opposing perceptions of photography were simultaneously in play can be explained in several ways. One explanation is that such a complex portrait of photography reveals that the Victorians had a more sophisticated understanding of photography than has previously been attributed to them, one that recognized in photography "the tensions between objective and subjective models of

vision" (Christ and Jordan xxvi). Perhaps more significantly, this conflicting picture of photography shows the effects of premediation, whereby the initial reactions and imaginings of photography (as indexical and unmediated) continue to inform the culture's understanding of photography as it becomes more widespread and commonly used. As Trachtenberg notes, the early writings on photography "both reflected and influenced the emerging forms of the medium" and shaped "its reception and also its conception" (22). The influence of the earliest representations of photography in informing the culture's negotiation of the medium in the mid-1840s is also evident in the figurative language with which photography was described.

Figurative Language and Photographic Metaphors

The use of photography in figurative descriptions indicates the public's growing familiarity with the technology: as Noakes notes, "an important indicator of the cultural significance of particular types of technology is the extent to which they inform metaphors or other aspects of non-technological discourses" ("Representing" 158). These figurations also indicate how photography was perceived, in revealing which aspects of the medium were emphasized as definitive. For example, as detailed in chapter one, the figurative language used in 1839 often emphasized the indexicality of the medium in order to distinguish photography from human-made images. References to the agency of the camera, to Nature (who "draws her own portrait"), and to "truth" were all employed in order to capture photography's unique quality of seeming to be unmediated. As this section reveals, the figurations of photography used in the 1840s continue to refer to the medium's indexicality,

87

suggesting that this quality remained valuable to the Victorians in their perception of the medium.

Compared to 1839, the use of photographic metaphors has increased in 1846, reflecting the ubiquity of the technology and its part in the larger cultural parlance. As Richard Altick observes, "the photograph was a convenient, comprehensible, and topically flavoured symbol of realistic representation, and as such it became a permanent part of the critical vocabulary, reviewers using [photographic] words as nouns, adjectives, and verbs to signify fidelity to the eye's report" (337). This incorporation of photographic references into "the critical vocabulary" can be considered an example of premediation, in demonstrating that photography influenced how reality is perceived more broadly in the period (337). As this section shows, the instances in which photography provides metaphors for broader concepts or standards are instances of premediation, in that the medium has become the form through which other concepts (such as the perception of reality) are known.

To what purpose are photographic metaphors employed in "the critical vocabulary" of 1846 (337)? As in 1839, these figurations are used to emphasize photography's seemingly unmediated nature, which is conveyed in fanciful descriptions of the camera's agency and of the absence of any human action in the process of taking a photograph. Confident statements that photographs of the moon "drawn by herself on a silver plate" would soon be possible, for example, are reported in both *The Athenaeum* and *The Literary Gazette* ("Society of Arts" 152). The camera's agency is also implied in a review of Talbot's book, *The Pencil of Nature* (serially published 1844-1846), in which the author notes that the photographs published in the later instalments of the serial are improved "in accuracy and effect, as if the Solar Artist,

like a human hand, had become more master of his powers by practice and experience" (*Literary Gazette* 10 January 1846 38).

Photographic metaphors are frequently used in 1846 to describe another medium, the photograph serving as the vehicle by which to indicate the accuracy of the metaphoric referent. An advertisement for *The Illustrated London News*, for example, deploys such a metaphor to indicate the accuracy of the newspaper's "news illustration": "the spirit of public improvement and scientific advancement has been chronicled with photographic fidelity in this journal" (*The Illustrated London News* advertisement, *Times* 30 December 1846). In this instance, the photograph has become the symbol by which to suggest the accuracy in documentary records. A review in *The Athenaeum* of a painting exhibition also uses photography in a similar manner, the author favourably describing the realism of one painting or "its truth of conception" in observing, "the shed in [painting number] 224 is painted with the faithfulness of a Daguerreotype" ("Society of British Artists" 354). In both instances, photography's machine-like accuracy is suggested in order to favourably imply the realism of the depiction in question.

When employed in descriptions of art, however, such photographic metaphors are more commonly used in a negative manner to suggest a servile copying (thus suggesting a resistance to photography's figuration as a perfect realism). Andrew Winter's 1846 article, "The Pencil of Nature," for example, outlines this argument whereby photography's accuracy is perceived as a flaw in terms of aesthetics: it is "a very mistaken idea" to think that photography "will supersede the labours of the artist," Winter claims, since photography "does nothing more than copy nature in the most servile manner . . . It has no power of

selecting," which Art "is alone capable of doing" (288-289). A metaphorical reference in *The Athenaeum* delineates this fine line between a favourable realism in representation and an undesirable accuracy. A review of Hans Christian Andersen's book, *A Poet's Bazaar*, states it is a "treasury of pictures" that "are clear as Daguerreotype landscapes; yet poetical enough to justify the author's own claim, on his title page, to be a 'poet'" (1135). Although used to criticize photographic accuracy, these metaphorical references nonetheless suggest the dominant perception of the objective quality of the medium.

Similar to the photographic metaphors that are used to describe another medium are the following two metaphorical references, which also employ photography to convey the accuracy of the referent in question. An excerpt in *The Literary Gazette* from a collection of "many hundred gleanings from eminent authors," for instance, includes the following entry:

> *Daguerreotype.* – A woman's heart is the only true plate for a man's likeness. An *instant* gives the impression, and an age of sorrow and change cannot efface it. (Rev. of *The Cairn* 806)

The use of the photograph to suggest fidelity in this metaphor reveals the figuration of photography as an instantaneous, accurate impression that remains unchanged by time. A similar assertion of photography's accuracy is used in the poem "The Vampire," by William Read, published in the 19 September issue of *The Literary Gazette*. In it, the poet asserts the accuracy of his description or "portrait" of the vampire figure by stating, "Behold the portrait! truer cannot start / From calotype or photographic art" (821).

The various metaphorical references employed in *The Athenaeum* and *The Literary Gazette* in 1846 clearly show the use of photographic metaphors to assert the exact accuracy of the metaphorical referent. These figurations imply photography's indexicality, asserting the medium as a definitive standard of truth. As such, they are contradictory to the alternative perceptions of photography that were also held in 1846: at the same time that photography was put forward metaphorically as a new level of realism, there was still recognition in the periodical literature that the process could be inaccurate and was imperfect. There existed, then, a gap between the idea of photography and its actual usage and capabilities in portraiture. This difference between the idea and actuality of photography is significant in revealing the ways in which photography was imagined in this transitional period. Before the technology has become wholly practicable and established, then, exists this period in which its function, capabilities, and impact on the culture are being imagined, a process of negotiation that is reflected in the figurative language by which the technology is described. The gap or discrepancy between the perceptions of photography and its actual state is a central characteristic of the Victorians' negotiation of the new medium. The concerns expressed about the actual and possible uses of portraiture are evident in the numerous allusions to photography as magical, a figurative treatment emerging in 1846 that embodies the Victorians' reaction to portraiture.

Photography's Figuration as Magic

A prominent figuration of photography that develops in the 1840s describes portraiture in terms suggestive of black magic. Although enthusiastic references to photography's magical qualities were in use since the technology's invention (as Talbot

states, "[i]t is a little bit of magic realized – of natural magic"), the allusions to the magical

take on a sinister tone throughout the 1840s, specifically in association with portrait

photography ("Photogenic Drawing" 74). As this section argues, these allusions function not

only as a means of negotiating the still novel practice of portraiture but also as a way of

expressing an underlying anxiety.

The association of photography with the magical began with its invention in 1839,

with descriptions of the process as mysterious and otherworldly commonly used. Such

descriptions may be attributed to several factors. Immediately following photography's

announcement in January 1839, much speculation was generated about the mysterious

process and the appearance of its images, which relatively few people had actually seen. The

speculative nature of the reportage was exacerbated by the circumstances surrounding

Daguerre's invention, which kept the details of his process secret until 19 August 1839 (the

point at which a pension had been secured for Daguerre). Although both Daguerre's as well

as Talbot's processes were disclosed (the details of Talbot's photogenic process being

announced in early 1839), it remained unclear *how* both processes actually worked to

produce the images they did. The allusions to the magical were also undoubtedly suggested

by the images themselves, due to their detailed beauty and indexicality, or their seeming to

be "literally an emanation of the referent," created by the agency of the camera (of "Nature")

alone without human aid (Barthes 80).

Although descriptions of photography as a dark magic did occur before 1846,[34] I argue that these references are used more frequently and grow increasingly ominous in tone in tandem with the commercialization of portraiture which, with the opening of the first studios, brought the larger public for the first time ever before the camera's eye. Uneasy references to the mysterious are often used in response to the uncanny realism of the portrait, as an 1843 letter by Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford makes clear: "the Mesmeric disembodiment of spirits strikes one as a degree less marvellous" than the daguerreotype portrait, which she emphasizes as being magical for its uncanny ability to capture the individual "stedfast [sic] on a plate" (357). Magical references are also used to convey the unfamiliar environment of the portrait and the unfamiliar process of portraiture. This is evident in one of the earliest reports on portraiture, a 24 March 1841 *Times* article that describes Beard's studio (that had just opened the day before):

> The apartment appropriated for the magical process . . . is well calculated for the
> object desired, being on the highest story of the institution. From the roof, which is
> constructed of blue glass . . . a very powerful light is obtained . . . In a portion of the
> room . . . an elevated seat is placed, on which the party whose likeness is to be taken
> sits . . . the sitter is told to look into a glass box . . . in which is placed the metallic

---

[34] Trachtenberg cites one such description in the 1839 article, "New Discovery in the Fine Arts" (*New Yorker*, 12 April 1839) that warns engravers and etchers that due to photography's invention, "'[t]here is an end to your black art . . . the real black art of true magic arises and cries avaunt'" (qtd. in Trachtenberg 30). Although this quote suggests that not only photography, but also other printing processes, were equated with black magic, I argue that these types of references were most often used in relation to photographic portraiture.

plate to be impressed with his portrait. Having done so for a few seconds, he

descends, and in a few minutes afterwards a faithful likeness is presented to him.

("The Photographic or Daguerreotype Miniatures" n. pag.)

The "magical process" of portraiture, as well as the studio environment (see fig.2) – the attic

location, lighting, and numerous apparatuses used to take the portrait – were all novel and

unfamiliar to the sitter and thus lent themselves well to fanciful descriptions that "hinted at

alchemy rather than scientific progress" (Linkman 26). Maria Edgeworth's account of her

visit to Beard's portrait studio in 1841 similarly describes the process as "a wonderful

mysterious operation . . . a snap-dragon blue light making all look like spectres [sic]" (594).

That the development of the photograph itself occurred in the darkroom behind closed doors

(or what Edgeworth describes as "rooms unseen"[594]) while the sitter waited to see his

portrait also contributed to the mysteriousness and unknowability of the process. This is

evident in an account by British photographer John Werge of his first time being

photographed in 1845: "the daguerreotypist was engaged in some mysterious manipulations

in a cupboard or closet," he recalls, the session ending with his leaving "without obtaining

the ghost of an idea of the modus operandi of producing portraits by the sun" (34-5).[35]

---

[35] The photographer was often characterized in early accounts in a contradictory manner as
either an objective, neutral scientist or a mysterious practitioner of optical illusions. As
Marien notes, "the association of magic and photography fostered a view of the photographer
as a magician or shaman, that is, as one who works outside the bounds of everyday life and
morality" (*Photography and Its Critics* 14). The conflict inherent in the association of the
photographer with science as well as magic reflects the culture's ambivalence towards the
photograph, which may be taken as an impartial, indexical record or as a subjective
depiction.

Fig. 2. "Photographic Phenomena, or the New School of Portrait-Painting." Illustration of Richard Beard's studio by George Cruikshank, *George Cruikshank's Omnibus* (1841).

These uneasy allusions to magic, secrecy, and mystery reveal an underlying anxiety on the part of the Victorians who were the first to come before the camera. The unfamiliarity of the studio environment, the unknowable complexities of the photographic process, and the shock of misrecognition in seeing oneself for the first time in a photograph – such were the conditions of portraiture faced by its first subjects. As chapter three argues, the persistence of these sinister allusions, particularly as photographic portraiture rapidly grew in popularity, reveals an ongoing anxiety about being photographed that was central to the Victorians' reception and negotiation of the medium.

95

Portrait Studio Advertisements: Overview

The numerous portrait studio advertisements of 1846, which sought to familiarize or domesticate portraiture, provide insight into how the public negotiated the still unfamiliar practice. While the majority of advertisements are for the two competing studios run by Beard and Claudet, there are also numerous advertisements for other photographic studios in London and for itinerant photographers, who temporarily set up studio space in various towns and cities.[36] The advertisements are significant source of information for several reasons. They reveal the persuasive rhetoric used to present photography as a desirable product and indicate how the consumer was positioned in terms of photography by outlining "portraiture conventions" – the rules of conduct or normative behaviours the consumer is expected to follow (whether during the process of being photographed, or afterwards when in possession of photographs). As Gerard Curtis observes in describing the increased importance of the visual in Victorian culture, due in part to the influence of photography, "[i]t was in the commodity / advertising nexus . . . that this new cultural way of looking was systematized and codified" (109). Underpinning these descriptions of conventional behaviour are aspects of photography that were problematic to the Victorians. As noted in the discussion of photography's figuration as magical, the newness of photographic portraiture

---

[36] There are more advertisements for photography in 1846 than in 1839. *The Athenaeum* has 53 advertisements in 1846 (versus 35 in 1839), while *The Literary Gazette* has 37 (versus 11 in 1839). Of the 88 total advertisements, only 15 are for photographic tools; the remaining are for portrait studios. *The Times* has the greatest number of advertisements (at least 100) for a wide range of portrait photographers (such as them, Bright, Joseph, Egerton, Findley, Jerrard, Hervé, Wynn, Barratt, and Paine), while the majority of advertisements in *The Athenaeum* and *The Literary Gazette* are for Claudet's and Beard's studios.

evoked excitement as well as anxiety on the part of the Victorians who were first to be photographed. Photographic advertisements, periodical articles, and fictional texts provide evidence of this concern: the advertisements provide information to familiarize the process (and make the photographic product seem appealing), while fictional texts and essays that treat portraiture as their subject often implicitly or explicitly comment on the significance of the "new social space" that portraiture introduces (Marien, *Photography* 64). The present section provides an overview of how the advertisements describe portraiture and the typical portrait studio, while the following section examines the conventional behaviours prescribed in the advertisements. Finally, the ways in which the advertisements and periodical literature describe the value of the photographic portrait are examined.

The advertisements of 1846 characterize portraiture as a product the consumer is to purchase and as a realistic visual depiction. Although a few advertisements state that "gentlemen and ladies [are] taught the whole process" of photography "at a reasonable sum" (Bright's studio, *Times* 28 July 1846) and others offer "lenses [and] apparatus" and "a complete book of instruction" for sale (thus positioning the consumer in the role of an amateur practitioner), the majority of advertisements are for having one's portrait taken at a professional studio, thus positioning the consumer in a passive relationship to photography (Egerton's studio, *Times* 28 July 1846). The photograph is most often advertised, then, as a product one is to possess, rather than the end product of a process one is to practice. This is similar to the shift in advertising in 1839 (discussed in chapter one), which at first positioned photography as an amateur practice but then, as the year went on, presented it as a process in

which the consumer was a passive viewer (in attending the numerous photographic

exhibitions advertised).

Similar to the reviews of Beard's and Claudet's studios discussed above, the

advertisements also characterize portrait photography as iconic, appealing to the consumer by

emphasizing the accuracy of the portrait produced. An advertisement for Beard's studio, for

instance, promotes its coloured images with a testimonial from one of the "leading journals"

(unnamed) that Beard's "portraits stand out in bold relief, clear, round, and life-like"

(*Athenaeum* 9 May 1846). Similar wording is used in a 12 September advertisement for

Beard's studio, which quotes the *Morning Herald*'s testament that the portraits, "by their

singularly close approximation to nature, no less delighted than astonished us" (*Athenaeum*

12 September 1846). The descriptions of these images – as "a true and faithful likeness"

(Joseph's studio, *Times* 28 May 1846), "natural," and "life-like" ("Mr. Beard's Photographic

Portraits" n. pag.) – reveals that realism or the "close approximation to nature" is still an

important and defining feature of photography in 1846, as it was in 1839, but that is now

used in order to suggest the skill of the portrait photographer and to appeal to potential

consumers (Beard's studio, *Athenaeum* 12 September 1846).

The 1846 advertisements also provide details about the typical photographic studio

that would have been particularly useful for the potential sitter who had never been

photographed. The studio was a popular destination, with crowds gathering daily to have

their picture taken. Advertisements advise the sitter to come early to avoid such crowds; as

one advertisement states, "earlier comers find the artists more at leisure" (Findley's studio,

Times 16 September 1846). Although the strength of light once affected whether an image

could be made, advertisements assure that "portraits taken during cloudy and even rainy weather are very successful" (Claudet's studio, *Times* 25 August 1846) and that photographs can be taken at any time of day. The studio was most often located on the rooftop, with glass ceilings letting in the natural light. A platform was set up upon which the sitter was posed: as Edgeworth describes, "the whole apparatus and stool [are] on a high platform under a glass dome" (593). Painted backgrounds were used as a backdrop for the portrait, and costumes and accessories were advertised as being available for clients' use: Richard Beard's trade card, for instance, advertises "drapery in elaborate patterns . . . carved furniture [and] articles of vertu [sic] whether of marble or silver" (Heyert 4). The studio often displayed a gallery of portraits, which served as a testament to the photographer's skill: once visitors "witnessed the caliber of portraits made in the studio," they were likely "to desire to be similarly photographed" (McCandles 53). Indeed, as Claudet states in one advertisement, "as for the merit of his production, Mr. Claudet begs only to submit them to the inspection of the public" (*Athenaeum* 23 May 1846).

Sitters would often go with a companion, women in particular accompanied by a gentleman. Clients could peruse the gallery, watch others being photographed, prepare themselves for their portrait, or wait to see the finished photograph (which was immediately developed in a separate darkroom). Many studios promise that the process will be quick and that satisfactory portraits are guaranteed (a photograph may be taken several times, since motion on the part of the viewer, for instance, would result in a blurred image or, just as common, judging by fictional accounts, the sitter may be displeased with the appearance of

his portrait).[37] As an advertisement for Bright's studio promises, Bright "guarantees satisfactory [portraits], and no objection ever made to changing them" (*Times* 28 August 1846), while another advertisement for his studio asserts that no portraits "are allowed to be kept unless parties are satisfied" (*Times* 19 October 1846).

Portraiture Conventions in Advertisements

Along with descriptions of the studio environment, the studio advertisements also detail several guidelines for conventional behaviour that were useful to the consumer in negotiating the still-new process of photographic portraiture. The conventions that are commonly referred to in the advertisements are that consumers are to appear natural but also adopt a visual identity through the use of accessories and painted backgrounds, that the act of being photographed is one of public display and exposure, and that they are to consider portraiture a genteel activity. This section argues that underlying these descriptions of the typical studio experience and the conventional behaviours the consumer is to enact are aspects of portraiture that were of concern to the Victorians.

Two conflicting portraiture conventions emerge in relation to the sitter's pose and the use of background, costume, and other accessories when having one's portrait taken: the directive that the sitter is to appear natural in appearance, yet also must adopt a particular visual identity. Photographers carefully controlled the backdrops, costumes, accessories, and

---

[37] Because exposure time was not instantaneous (on average about two minutes), clamps were commonly used to still the head and the body while the portrait was taken. Exposure time was also long enough that contemporary texts often comment on the discomfort in holding a facial expression perfectly still without blinking.

lighting that were used in the portrait in order "to assist in characterization and aid in the idealization of the sitter" (Linkman 44). Clothing accessories were provided for practical as well as aesthetic purposes. Due to the development process of the daguerreotype at the time, some colours could not be photographed properly: white and violet both appeared quite different in the developed plate (looking "spotty," as Winter describes it in "The Pencil of Nature" [288]). Studios offered clothing items (such as shawls or collars) should the sitter wear the wrong colours and printed instructions guiding the sitter in how to properly dress for one's portrait. Aside from practical reasons, accessories were also available for aesthetic or expressive purposes, as an advertisement for Findley's studio details: "Landscapes, backgrounds, and interior [sic] of rooms finished in any style, with family groups and erect or seated figures. Favorite musical instruments and military and other uniforms elegantly completed in corresponding manner" (*Times* 16 September 1846). The convention of borrowed clothing and accessories is significant for this latter purpose, in that it dictates to the consumer that inherent in the photographic process of portraiture is an enactment of a particular visual self: "sitters could compose and record an image of how they desired to appear for acquaintances, strangers, and posterity" (Marien, *Photography* 64). In their description of the accessories available for the sitter's use, the studio advertisements thus position photography as expressive and communicative, and guide the consumer to value the portrait as a means by which to display a public persona. They also suggest that consumers can read the photographic portraiture to reveal the pictured subject's interiority

That the consumer is to adopt a particular visual identity through the use of accessories contrasts, however, with another convention suggested in the advertisements –

101

the convention that the sitter is to appear as "natural" as possible in expression and pose. This natural appearance is more easily achieved, the advertisements suggest, due to improvements to the studio environment and to the development process. An 1846 review of Beard's studio claims, for instance, that shortened exposure times (the length of time during which the sitter is required to remain perfectly still while being photographed) effect the sitter's natural expression: "the brevity of the period required for a sitting . . . enables the operator to catch at once the characteristic expression of the countenance, which is more natural as the sitter is not obliged to remain longer than a few seconds in a fixed position" ("Mr. Beard's Photographic Portraits" n. pag.). An advertisement for Claudet's studio similarly states that portraits taken with shaded lighting, "in which persons can better preserve a natural and pleasing expression of countenance," are more natural in appearance (*Athenaeum* 11 April 1846). Conveyed in these descriptions of what is "natural" in portraiture is the suggestion that the consumer ought to "be" him or herself while being photographed. Such information is contrary to the descriptions of the sitter's pose and the use of accessories, the advertisements thus suggesting the sitter adopt a natural expression and appearance while at the same time posing as a particular visual identity. The subjective and expressive possibilities of photography are implied in these conventions regarding the sitter's appearance: in posing for one's portrait, the subject may assume a persona that differs from reality. The possibility for deceit in the photograph – a medium presented as being in its indexicality "real" or truthful – was an aspect of photographic portraiture that was of concern to the Victorians, as discussed in chapter three.

Another portraiture convention outlined in the studio advertisements informs consumers that being photographed was a public act of exposure. As noted above, much of the studio environment was open and visible to the waiting crowds, the sitter in particular exposed to view on the raised platform where he or she was placed when being photographed. Among the eyes of other clients that were upon him or her was the singular eye of the camera lens in which, disconcertedly, the sitter could see him or herself reflected. Blanchard describes this effect when the subject sits before the camera in "Photographic Phenomena": ". . . when you look / Your image reversed will minutely appear, / So delicate, forcible, brilliant, and clear" (31). Descriptions of the exposed space of the studio environment inform the consumer that having one's portrait taken is a wholly public act, the studio a public space / stage in which one performs a particular visual identity (and watches others doing the same). As Trachtenberg asserts, the studio environment created "a new sort of reality" that encouraged "the self-display of promenading visitors and clients" and provided "a place set aside for open unembarrassed looking, for an exchange of looks" (25). The portrait studio's function as a space in which one may look as well as be looked at relates to an anxiety that was foremost in the response of the Victorians to photographic portraiture: a concern regarding the exposure of the subject, who is seemingly vulnerable to the camera's control.

That an anxiety about exposure characterized the Victorians' reaction to portraiture is also evident in the conventional behaviour detailed in studio advertisements regarding women clients in particular. Several advertisements state that a "separate room" with a "respectable female" attendant was available exclusively for women to use in preparing for

the public act of having their portrait taken (Claudet's studio, *Athenaeum* 12 December 1846). An advertisement for Claudet's studio, for example, states, "a Private Room has been fitted up particularly for Ladies, who can avail themselves of the attendance and attention of a respectable female" (*Literary Gazette* 11 April 1846). The advertisement of these rooms not only informs consumers of the conventions by which to negotiate the public space of the studio (in suggesting that the act of being photographed was a public display), but also more specifically implies that special care must be taken in the case of the female client. The focus on private rooms implies the Victorians' unease with photographic portraiture: underwriting the advertisements' assurances of respectability is a concern about the possible impropriety inherent in the photographic act, whether a general concern about the exposure of any photographed subject, or a concern about the exposure of the female subject in particular. As Linkman observes, "[b]oth public and photographer alike were keenly aware of the potential for unseemly behavior," due to the act of exposure inherent in being photographed and to the physical contact involved "in the act of posing a sitter" (48). The exposure of the woman before the camera lens as well as her contact with the photographer suggests why "so many young women attended at the studio in the company of friends, and why some studios carefully advertised the presence of 'ladies in constant attendance'" (48).

The descriptions of the conventions prescribed for the woman client thus reveal the underlying anxiety felt towards the public display involved in photographic portraiture and its exposure of the photographed subject (with the female gender, figured as the most

vulnerable and most sexualized, an apt symbol of this concern).[38] As chapter three details, fictional texts especially evince this anxiety in that the majority of texts that describe the process of portraiture involve a female protagonist. In these texts, the female figure at the least is used to demonstrate the human vanity and weakness that the camera so deftly reveals, and at the worst is made subject to the voyeurism and (sexual) exploitation that the camera enacts. Whether a general unease about exposure before the camera or a particular concern about the photographed woman, the Victorians' response to the act of display involved in photography was clearly one of anxiety.

That anxiety was felt in the period about the act of displaying oneself before the camera and about the implicit connotations of impropriety in such a display is also evident in another portraiture convention outlined in the studio advertisements: the reassurance that portraiture is a respectable or genteel activity. While an advertisement for Bright's studio proclaims that its comparatively low prices place portraiture "within the reach of all classes" (suggesting the democratic or populist appeal of photography), most advertisements instead focus on portraiture's caché as an activity of the upper class, thus appealing to the socially upward behaviours of the middle classes while also lending portraiture an air of respectability (*Times* 11 May 1846). For instance, as the itinerant photographer Findley advertises, "the artists have just returned from a successful tour through England, where,

---

[38] Although Trachtenberg does not specifically consider the significance of the female subject posing before the camera, he argues in general that the erotic undertones in descriptions of portraiture reveal a "broader pattern of popular anxiety about early photographers in America" because photography was "something new and strange and inexplicable" (27).

indeed, almost every genteel family visited their rooms" (*Times* 31 July 1846). Claudet (who,

in comparison to Beard, more often listed the famous and upper-class clients who visited his

studio) claims that, due to the "high degree of perfection" he has obtained, he has "tak[en]

the portraits of H.M. King Louis Phillipe, H.M. the Queen Dowager . . . and a great many

other persons of distinction, both English and foreign," and that "H.M. Queen Victoria and

H.R.H. Prince Albert . . . have acknowledged [his portraits] the best they had yet seen"

(Claudet's studio, *Athenaeum* 9 May 1846). Studios also assert the respectability of

portraiture in their gallery displays of well-known clients who had come to be photographed.

As McCandles observes, photographers would display these celebrity images "to gain public

credibility for their own work, to assuage popular anxieties about photography, and to

communicate . . . the power and the possibilities of the photographic image" (49). The

convention of assuring sitters that the genteel classes and celebrities endorsed portraiture

reveals how the advertisements' influenced the public's reception of the new practice. It

highlights portraiture's allure as a fashionable activity and suggests similarities between

having one's photograph taken and having one's portrait painted (something which, aside

from miniature paintings, was a practice exclusive to the upper class), thus imbuing

photographic portraiture with respectable associations. More significantly, this figuration of

photographic portraiture can be considered an attempt to assuage the anxiety felt towards

photographic exposure: by reassuring the public that the upper classes have partaken in such

an activity, the advertisements suggest that the public act of sitting for one's portrait is indeed

a suitable and polite practice.

The portraiture conventions outlined in the numerous advertisements for portrait studios in 1846 are significant in revealing how Victorians interacted with the still-new space of portrait studios and how they were directed to act when posing for their photographic portrait. Of further significance, the studio advertisements reveal the anxieties that were felt towards photographic portraiture as the practice became increasingly familiar (concerns that are examined in depth in chapter three). As the following section examines, the advertisements are also useful in revealing how the consumer was directed to value the photographic portrait and consider it a necessary product.

The Value of the Photographic Portrait

In addition to guiding the consumer's interaction with the portrait studio and portraiture process, the advertisements provide guidelines for consumers in how they are to value the photographic portrait. Aspects of portraiture that were emphasized as valuable in the periodical literature and advertisements are its function as a sentimental item, its ability to make a perfectly accurate record of a moment in time, and its ability to memorialize the individual (figured in terms of mortality). Similar to the portraiture conventions discussed above, these aspects of photography evoked a response of anxiety on the part of the Victorians.

One of the photographic conventions noted above was the directive that the consumer is to consider the portrait process as a way to express his or her subjectivity and the portrait as a way to display a particular visual identity (whether "real" or assumed). As the advertisements make clear, the portrait was thus a valuable item of exchange in being a

visual expression of one's self. It is desirable not only to have a portrait made of oneself, they recommend, but also to have portraits made of one's family and friends: it is in "the best feelings of our nature," an advertisement for Findley's studio states, to want this photographic "likeness" (*Times* 31 July 1846). Indeed, the advertisements assert the value of the photograph as a sentimental item of exchange by variously hailing the consumer as "parents, children, and friends" (Findley's studio, *Times* 19 October 1846) and "relations" (Findley's studio, *Times* 29 September 1846). "What shall I send my friend?" a studio advertisement rhetorically asks, responding that an "exact likeness" is an ideal gift (Findley's studio, *Times* 19 October 1846). Similarly, an advertisement for Beard's studio asks, "[w]hat gift could be more acceptable?" (*Times* 10 December 1846). Photographs are clearly positioned as tokens of affection – "as family portraits these miniatures are invaluable," one advertisement proclaims – mementoes to be exchanged and collected, whether kept for viewing or intimately worn on the body (Beard's studio, *Times* 28 May 1846). The intimacy of the worn photograph is evident in an advertisement for Beard's studio that proclaims, "Christmas presents. – Beard's coloured photographic portraits, mounted in lockets, brooches, or rings are taken daily" (*Times* 18 December 1846).

The asserted value or social function of the photograph as an intimate memento partly rests on the materiality of the daguerreotype image itself, which was a small image encased in a metal decorative case that was best viewed individually, due to its small size as well as to the highly reflective, mirror-like surface of the silvered copper plate (which required the viewer to tilt the plate in order to view the image). These qualities of the daguerreotype portrait lent it an air of intimacy: "Typically small enough to hold in one's hand or carry in a

108

pocket, [the dagurreotype] permitted an intimate experience of exact representation – a kind of magic realism – unique to photography at the time" (Trachtenberg 20). Similarly, Patrizia Di Bello describes the daguerreotype's materiality as its "ability to combine the mnemonic functions of the portrait with the fetishistic charge of the lock of hair, fulfilling at once the job of the miniature and of its hair-jewellery frame" (67).

The figuration of the portrait's value as a sentimental item of exchange also rests on the perception of the photographic medium as a transparent, unmediated representation of the world. That the photograph is to be read as, and valued for being, an indexical recording of the individual is emphasized in several advertisements that assert the photograph's realism. An advertisement for Joseph's studio, for example, promises "a true and faithful likeness both of face, figure, dress, expression, &c.; in fact, the portrait is a stamp of the original, and produces in effect a second self" (*Times* 30 May 1846). The frequent reference in advertisements such as this to perfect likeness implies that the photograph is valuable in being a faultless duplicate of the individual that, when viewed, is perceived "as genuinely akin to actual experience," as if one is in the presence of the person photographed (Marien, *Photography* 78-9).

Another quality of the photographic portrait for which it is to be valued, as discussed in the studio advertisements of 1846, is its instantaneity or "flash of lightning method," as it is described in an 1842 article: its ability to perfectly fix an instant of time ("Photographic Portraiture" 323). Like the quality of photography's seemingly perfect realism, the idea of photography's instantaneity differs from the actual capabilities of photography in this period:

due to longer exposure times, the camera could not yet capture truly instantaneous images.[39]

In comparison to other representations such as paintings, however, photography did present an unprecedented instantaneity to Victorians, as is noted in an 1841 review of Beard's newly opened studio: photographic portraiture creates "in the short space of five seconds . . . a more correct miniature likeness than the most accomplished artist could paint on ivory, after days of laborious study" ("The Photographic or Daguerreotype Miniatures" n. pag.). Regardless, this idea of instantaneity persists, and is presented in advertisements as a unique characteristic that consumers are to value, and thus desire. The instantaneity of the photograph is desirable in making permanent exactly who that individual was at that instant of being photographed. Such a reading of photography has been emphasized in periodical literature since portraiture first became available. A report published in the 3 April 1841 issue of *The Literary Gazette* (just days after Beard's studio opened), for instance, describes what the photographic portrait looks like: "the face is there, wearing the very expression of the moment"; it is "of excellence," the article concludes, "to all who desire to perpetuate the looks of fond beings in the several stages of existence" ("Royal Institution" 218). In producing a "veritable reflection of the face" in a single instant, as an advertisement describes it, photography is to be valued for producing a permanent visual record that counters the transience of time (Beard's studio, *Times* 5 August 1846).

---

[39] That the photograph was considered instantaneous despite the technology not yet having achieved actual instantaneity is revealed in the public's response in 1842 to Claudet's portraits of members of the Italian Opera: "in July 1842 several members of the *corps de ballet* at the Italian Opera posed for their portraits" in poses that could only be held for a brief moment; "these pictures caused a sensation, being regarded as the first 'instantaneous' photographs ever taken" (Gernsheim, *The History of Photography* 101).

Similar to the photograph's characterization as a sentimental item of exchange, the idea that the photographic portrait is valuable for its instantaneity is not solely a means of persuasion on the part of studio advertisements to increase business, but also reveals the importance of this unique characteristic of the medium. In perfectly recording a single moment of the individual subject, the portrait enabled Victorians to experience a permanence of time never before possible by "extend[ing] the possibilities of memory to include the literal preservation of an infinite number of isolated fragments of time" (Groth 2). That the individual as he or she was in that moment could – and must – be photographed shows the impact of photography on Victorians' conceptions of time and memory, particularly as photography's popularity increased and the idea "that something might be photographed hardened into the expectation that it ought to be photographed" (Marien, *Photography* 79). As a perfect memorial, the photograph helped create "a future where no moment could be forgotten" (Groth 13).

The studio advertisements also assert the photographic portrait's value in being a unique memorial of the person photographed. This characterization of portraiture, which also rests on the medium's qualities of indexicality and instantaneity, introduces new ways of negotiating time and memory – and, subsequently, also raises a response of anxiety (which is examined below). In perfectly depicting one's loved ones, the photographic portrait introduced a new, unprecedented means of memorializing the individual. As Susan S. Williams notes, the portrait was in effect a "living double . . . made all the more compelling by the fact that it was necessarily viewed as a true transcript of the face" ("'The Inconstant Daguerreotype'" 164). That there existed such a strong desire for photographic portraiture

111

because of its memorial function is apparent in the degree to which the studio advertisements discuss portraiture in terms of mortality, imbuing their words with a sense of urgency. This tone of urgency is most evident in the advertisements for Findley's temporary portrait studio. Although it is clearly used to convince clients to visit his studio before it closes – as his advertisements all warn, "delays are dangerous" – the urgency voiced in these advertisements also manifests as a warning about mortality:

> This opportunity to some may never occur again . . . There is a time . . . when a
> likeness is beyond price . . . No memento can be so endearing. A faithful likeness is
> all that can be rescued from the grave. Parents, the operation is short, the cost trifling;
> do not have to reproach yourselves with neglect. Children, the object is laudable: you
> know not how soon death may bereave you of valued parents. Urge then their
> going . . . (*Times* 16 September 1846)

Should one "neglect" to have a portrait done, another advertisement for Findley's studio offers the consolation that "copies of deceased friends exact to a hair" can be made (*Times* 16 September 1846). This suggestion of mortality pervades other studio advertisements, if not voiced as explicitly as in Findley's advertisements: an advertisement for Wynn's studio, for instance, suggests that its ground floor studios are "particularly recommended for invalids and elderly persons," who are urged to come be photographed (*Times* 29 September 1846).

The association of photography with mortality, like the other aspects of photography that the advertisements promote as valuable to consumers, is more than a mere advertising strategy on the part of photographers to create a market for the photograph. In presenting

112

photography as a permanent, perfect recording of the individual that alone can be "rescued from the grave," the advertisements reflect a cultural desire for an unmediated visual facsimile, the promise of immortality captured on the photographic plate (Findley's studio, *Times* 16 September 1846). The urgency with which photography is recommended appeals to this desire: one is to hurry to the studio, the advertisements warn, before time runs out. The urgency that pervades descriptions of portraiture's value as a memorial is also evident in the periodical literature as late as the early 1850s. For instance, an 1855 article by a mortuary photographer, N.G. Burgess, advises "the necessity of procuring those more than life-like resemblances of our friends, ere it is too late—ere the hand of death has snatched away those we prize so dearly on earth" ("Taking Portraits After Death" 80). The endurance of this figuration of photographic portraiture as memorial reveals the effects of premediation, whereby the earlier imaginings of a medium shape how the medium is perceived in its later forms and functions: just as visual realism came to be oriented around photography (as noted in chapter one), so too does memory and the criteria by which a successful memory is measured come to be oriented around photography: unlike any other form of memory, photography alone succeeds in lifting the dead "from the great tide of oblivion" (Winter 289). In this instance, the association of portraiture with mortality influences how the practice of mortuary photography (begun in the mid-century) is perceived. The reading of the portrait as a memorial of the person photographed also reflects another aspect of premediation, in which the early perceptions of photography shape the construction of the future as envisioned through the forms of that medium. The advertisements indicate, for instance, that the portrait was considered necessary in order to capture for posterity and

113

future reference what a person once looked like "ere it is too late"; in being photographed, however, the person and how he or she looked becomes mediated by the photographic form, the individual transformed into a set of images (80).

The aspects of photographic portraiture asserted as valuable in the advertisements of 1846 – its figuration as an indexical, instantaneous memorial, a "more than life-like" image – not only informs consumers how to negotiate the still-new phenomenon of portraiture, but more importantly reveals the qualities of the photographic medium that were considered important throughout the years as the medium became ubiquitous (Burgess 80). The advertisements are further significant in revealing how the very qualities of photography that are considered valuable are at the same time considered troubling. As discussed in chapter one, a central aspect of the cultural reception of photography is a response of ambivalence on the part of Victorians. Just as photography's invention was met with enthusiasm as much as anxiety, so too are the new realities of portraiture – the image's function as memorial (and the immortality it is implied to offer), its indexicality, and its instantaneity – responded to with ambivalence by its first subjects.

The suggestion that the photographic portrait immortalizes the individual depicted was tantalizing to the first generation of Victorians to sit before the camera. Such enthusiasm is expressed in a 3 April 1841 article published days after Beard's photographic studio first opened, which marvels that the portrait allows one to "catch and hold fast the features of those so dear, ere they flee away for ever" ("Royal Institution" 218). The allure of the

photograph as an antidote to mortality is perhaps best expressed in an 1843 letter by

Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford:

> Have you seen any [daguerreotype] portraits? . . . Several of these wonderful portraits
>
> . . . have I seen lately – longing to have such a memorial of every Being dear to me in
>
> the world. It is not merely the likeness which is precious in such cases – but the
>
> association, and the sense of nearness involved in the thing . . . the fact of the *very*
>
> *shadow of the person* lying there fixed for ever! (358)

As Barrett Browning's letter makes clear, the portrait is cherished for seeming to embody

and make permanent the physical trace or imprint of the very person who is pictured.

Underlying the overwhelming enthusiasm with which portraiture's suggestion of immortality

is met, however, is a note of concern about the superiority of the photographic memorial

superseding other forms of memory. Such concern is implicit in Winter's description that all

who have been photographed "have achieved immortality": the portrait now allows us to

"secure for ever" from death our loved ones that are "now buried in the grave," he argues,

asking, "what would we not give . . . to snatch [the dead] from the great tide of oblivion to

which they have drifted?" (289). This claim is similar in tone to the confident assertions

made in the advertisements by Findley that, once death occurs, the portrait alone is all of the

individual "that can be rescued from the grave" (*Times* 16 September 1846). Both accounts

are similar in that they speak to the concern that the power of the too-real photograph

"alter[s] the human relationship to memory" (Marien, *Photography* 78) by rendering obsolete

prior modes of memorial, whether written descriptions or imperfect visual depictions such as

engravings or paintings. No longer does the individual have to rely on the imperfect painting or hazy mental image when an "exact likeness," as the advertisements describe the photograph, is available (Findley's studio, *Times* 19 October 1846): as Barrett Browning claims, "I would rather have such a memorial of one I dearly loved, than the noblest Artist's work ever produced" (358). The figuration of the photographic portrait as memorial, and the implied superiority of this image, raises the troubling implication that other media and forms of memory are inferior. As chapter three outlines, the concern regarding the impact of photography on human memory and written and visual depictions is evident in fictional accounts throughout the 1840s and early 1850s.

Another aspect of photography that is deemed valuable in studio advertisements, yet is also disconcerting, is its indexicality and instantaneity. As noted earlier in the chapter, despite acknowledgement of photography's mediated nature, the overwhelming perception of the medium in the period considers the photograph a perfect duplicate that is equal to reality. As Barrett Browning notes in her 1843 letter, the allure of the portrait is in its "sense of nearness," the inarguable "fact," as she describes it, of "[t]he very shadow of the person" photographed being imprinted on the daguerreotype plate: "think of a man sitting down in the sun and leaving his facsimile in all its full completion of outline and shadow, stedfast [sic] on a plate" (357). Yet the excessive realism for which photography is known – its "pure reality" – is at times described as too much of a good thing: that the photograph is a "*perfect* likeness," indiscernible from the individual, suggests a troubling indeterminacy between original and copy (Carey 125). The studio advertisements inadvertently expose this concern in their overly enthusiastic claims about the realness of their images: as an advertisement for

Joseph's studio proclaims, its portraits are "in effect a second self" (*Times* 30 May 1846).

This second self, indistinguishable from the original, is a figure that appears in other

advertisements as well: Bright's studio claims to produce portraits "that are actually to

appearance breathing" (*Times* 16 September 1846), while Beard's studio promises to produce

"life-like, almost speaking, portraits" (*Times* 10 December 1846). Similarly, Beard's trading

card advertises that his studio produces portraits "with such exactness and truth" that they are

"a speaking likeness" of the original photographed (Heyert 4).

Bound up in this troubling concept of the photographic other or second self that

photography's indexicality and instantaneity evokes is the equally troubling concept of the

camera's agency. The figuration of the camera as an active agent (and, subsequently, the

erasure of the human operator) has been used since photography's invention to describe the

realism of the image (as discussed in chapter one). The effect of such a figuration is to assert

the agency of the medium: as Green-Lewis notes, "such writing separates the photographer

from the photograph and empowers the photograph as an independent print of the world" (7).

With the introduction of portraiture and its creation of these perfect duplicates of the

individual subject, allusions to the camera's agency are voiced with an increasing anxiety. As

the Victorians sat before the camera for the first time, ambivalent descriptions arose in

reaction to being subject to the camera's perfect recording power. An advertisement for

Findley's studio reveals this figuration of the camera in confidently informing potential

clients, "the instrument is infallible" (*Times* 16 September 1846). As chapter three reveals,

the anxiety felt regarding the troubling figuration of the camera's agency and the

photographic other was a central concern in the literature of the period.

117

The aspects of photographic portraiture for which it is asserted as valuable – its function as a memorial, and the medium's indexicality and instantaneity – are thus at the same time that which clearly evoked a response of anxiety on the part of the Victorians. Underlying the advertisements' attempts to familiarize portraiture by establishing conventional behaviours and suggesting how the consumer is to value the portrait is a significant note of anxiety, one that becomes more explicitly voiced in the literature of the 1840s and early 1850s. The representation of photographic portraiture provided in the periodical literature and advertisements of 1846 – one that the Victorians negotiated with enthusiasm as much as concern – can thus be seen to influence the later negotiations and imaginings of the medium, as chapter three details.

Conclusion

An examination of the state of photography in 1846 – a consideration of the perceived realism of the medium, the figurative language relating to photography, and the conventions and values prescribed in the studio advertisements – shows the extent to which the Victorians' negotiation of photography in 1846 was marked with ambivalence. Although photographic portraiture was for the most part responded to with great enthusiasm (as the practice became increasingly accessible to more Victorians), a close examination of the representation of photography in the periodical literature and advertisements reveal an undercurrent of anxiety. Aspects of the photography that were of concern in 1846 include the medium's function as a memorial that is superior to other forms of representation, that it is a troubling duplication of the photographic subject, and that the camera seemingly operates autonomously. The repeated surfacing of these figurations of photography, whether in the

advertisements of 1846, as examined above, or in the fictional texts and social commentary produced throughout the 1840s and early 1850s (as considered in chapter three), reveals the centrality of these anxieties in this transitional period of photography's growing popularity. Indeed, as noted in chapter one, such expressions of anxiety increase as photography becomes more ubiquitous and, in particular, are voiced with greater urgency as portraiture becomes more popular. That these troubling aspects of photographic portraiture continued to be of concern in this developmental period shows the effect of premediation, whereby the earlier negotiations of the medium inform the later reception of the medium in its period of mass popularity. The state of photography in 1846 as outlined in this chapter directly shapes the ways in which the medium is represented and imagined in later years, with the photographic anxieties or "overriding uncertainty" to which photography was responded serving as a definitive force in the cultural reception of the new technology (Gunning 46). The function and implications of these photographic anxieties are considered in chapter three.

Chapter 3

'The optical stranger': Photographic Anxieties in the 1840s and early 1850s

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, the Victorians' reception of photography was characterized by a response of anxiety and ambivalence, one that grew increasingly insistent from the technology's invention in 1839 through to the early 1850s. This chapter examines in depth the representation of photography in a selection of fictional and periodical texts from the 1840s and early 1850s, in order to trace the development of the anxieties about photography and to elucidate how such anxieties evolved in light of the medium's growing ubiquity. In delineating the manner in which the Victorians responded to photography over the course of its increasing popularity, this chapter serves as a bridge to the chapter four, which examines how these photographic anxieties are obliquely expressed in novelistic form.

As a thematic analysis, this chapter departs methodologically from the previous chapters. Unlike chapters one and two, which rely almost entirely on sources from 1839 and 1846 respectively, this chapter draws on a variety of textual sources for that were published as early as 1841 to as late as 1855. While the majority of texts are drawn from British periodicals, I also refer to G.W.M. Reynolds's popular serial novel, *The Mysteries of London*, and several articles published in American periodicals.[40] The texts examined in this chapter include humorous vignettes, social commentary essays, poems, and prose narrative, all of

---

[40] As Jennifer Green-Lewis observes, there was a "continual photographic exchange throughout the nineteenth century between the two nations. American journals frequently reviewed exhibitions in London; books on photography from the United States were reviewed in the English press; and the same essays often appeared in publications of both countries" (9).

which were published in periodicals. That most of the texts referred to in this chapter are fictional in nature reflects the increased number of photographic references found in fictional texts from 1839 onwards. In 1839, when the invention was newly announced, most periodical articles were non-fictional reports of the technology (describing what photography was, its capabilities, and so on). By the 1840s and early 1850s, when photography is no longer a news item but an increasingly familiar presence, such reportage decreases and fictional texts become more predominant, providing a space in which the problems and anxieties surrounding photography were considered in more depth. As Mary Warner Marien notes, "[f]iction gave voice to the way in which growing public confidence in photographic representation was mixed with wariness about its power" (*Photography* 75). In serving as this space in which Victorians expressed their ambivalence regarding photography, the fictional texts thus provide valuable insight into the Victorians' representations and negotiations of the technology and the visual culture within which photography operated.

The various photographic anxieties examined in this chapter include the troubling association of photography with the magical; the fear of the exposure and display involved in photographic portraiture; the unease felt towards the possibility of deception in the seemingly truthful photographic medium and towards the photograph as memorial; and the concern regarding the camera's agency and the perfect photographic copy. As this chapter demonstrates, the latter two aspects of the medium – the seeming agency or autonomous nature of the camera and its ability to produce an accurate replica of the human subject (which in its realism seems to acquire an agency of its own) – prove to be the central concerns surrounding photography that underlie the other expressions of anxiety voiced in

regard to the medium. In its seemingly flawless realism, particularly when depicting the human subject, photography not only challenged the status of other media but also the status of the subject itself, the increasingly popular medium evoking "a re-animation of the ontological instability of all mimetic representation" (Gunning 49) as well as a "fundamental fear about the status of the self" (Kember 146). The anxieties that this chapter traces can be understood in terms of premediation, in that the earliest ambivalent responses to photography's indexicality and agency, present since 1839, persisted into the early 1850s as a concern about mediation itself. The Victorians' response of anxiety to the ways in which photography troubled other media as well as the subjectivity of the photographed individual is examined in this chapter.

Photographic Portraiture and Allusions to Magic

Several critics have noted the Victorians' association of photography with magic.[41] As discussed in chapter two, the description of photographic portraiture as magical in 1846 was primarily in response to the strange newness of portraiture. This association endures into the early 1850s, however, thus suggesting that the impulse to describe photography in this manner was more than simply a reaction to the newness of the medium. As Tom Gunning observes, such allusions reveal "an overriding uncertainty" towards the medium that persists despite the medium's growing familiarity (47). This section considers why the "vocabulary of magic suffused photographic discourse" and what this reveals about the Victorians'

---

[41] For instance, John Hannavy, Audrey Linkman, Elizabeth McCauley and Alan Trachtenberg all comment on the allusions to magic in photographic discourse; Christian Metz's essay, "Photography and Fetish," situates this reaction to photography in terms of the photograph's function as a fetish object.

reception of the medium as it grew increasingly popular (Marien, *Photography and Its Critics* 13). In particular, it considers the references to magic to be an exaggeration that reveals an underlying sense of concern towards portraiture and the "too-real" photographic portrait, with the accounts that figure photography as a sinister magic and as exotic often written in a satirical or exaggerated tone that serves only to "allay anxieties rather than dispel them" (Gunning 46).

Chapter two detailed how the periodical literature of the early 1840s employed magical references to convey the individual's reactions to his or her first encounter with the studio environment and process of having his or her portrait taken. These allusions were often specifically used to describe the sense of unfamiliarity the sitter felt when confronted with a photographic portrait of him or herself. As Gunning notes, photography "generated grave suspicion due to its seeming uncanny resemblance to its subject and the apparently automatic nature of its production" (49). Similarly, Helen Groth observes that portraits "inspired analogies with mesmerism and other necromantic materializations of the spirit" because "they so often consisted of haunting likenesses of familiar faces and scenes" (10). Descriptions of this haunting misrecognition in response to the portrait abound in the 1840s, often written in humorous or exaggerated tones. Andrew Winter's 1846 article "The Pencil of Nature," for instance, describes the sitter's typical sense of unfamiliarity in response to his or her portrait, often evoked by its otherworldly appearance: the uncoloured portrait's "dull blackness reminded one of the ghastly lights and shades of an eclipse" and led the sitter to conclude that "the artist has looked too much on the dark side of things" (288). Ladies in

123

particular are said to react negatively to "be[ing] made 'such frights of'" when sitting for

their portrait (288).

An 1843 fictional account published in *Godey's Lady's Book*, "Sketches of Paris,"

also uses magical references to describe the uncomfortable reaction of the subject to being

photographed for the first time. A "pretty girl" reflects upon seeing her photograph for the

first time ever, "[h]ow mournful it is. There is something in these portraits, which betrays

that it is no mortal hand which has executed them; one would think that nature, to punish us

for prying into her secrets, would injure us in revealing them" (177). As this account shows,

magical allusions stemmed from several aspects of the process. The monochrome tone and

dark colouring of the daguerreotype image (due to the silvered copper plate upon which the

image develops), which had been commented upon since 1839 as being dark and sombre, is

now specifically described as "mournful" and strange in appearance because of its depiction

of the human subject.[42] Similarly, the seeming agency of Nature in creating images without

---

[42] It is possible that the dark appearance of the daguerreotype plate suggested racial comparisons. For example, Helmut Gernsheim cites an 1843 advertisement by German photographer J.C. Schall, which claims, "my portraits are not like Moors – as is mostly the case with those taken indoors – but are clear and white, truly European" (*The History of Photography* 99). Later in the nineteenth century, the photographic negative was described as a black person and set up as the dark "other" to the "good" positive image: as Douglas Lorimer asserts, "[t]he Victorians looked upon the Negro as the photographic negative of the Anglo-Saxon, and they seemed to get a clearer perception of their own supposed racial uniqueness from the inverted image of the black man" (11). The 1853 article "Photography" characterizes the negative in such a manner, stating that "the Negro stage was not of course the finished portrait, it was 'the negative'" (Morley and Wills 63). The description of photography in terms of the racialized other relates to its description as magic in that both figurations seem an exaggeration that reveals an underlying anxiety about photographic representation.

"mortal hand" and the description of portraiture as an "execut[ion]" is ominous in tone, suggesting the sitter's unease (177).

An examination of accounts from the early 1850s reveals that such magical allusions continued to be used to describe portraiture, despite its growing popularity and familiarity. As John Hannavy notes, photography "did retain the popular name of the 'black art' . . . well into the era of mass production of photographs" (34). The endurance of this unease in the culture's negotiation of portraiture is evident in two texts from the early 1850s, the 1852 "More Work for the Ladies" and the 1853 "Photography," both from Dickens's journal, *Household Words*.

Edmund Saul Dixon's article, "More Work for the Ladies," is a humorous account of the "hordes of Daguerréotypists" to be found "[i]n all French towns where any respectable concourse or transit of strangers is going on. . . ." (18). He describes his visit to a female daguerreotypist's studio in which he observes others being photographed and where he himself sits for his portrait. Similar to earlier accounts from the 1840s, Dixon relies on magical associations to convey the mysteriousness that still pervades the portrait studio (even though they first opened eleven years earlier). The two female daguerreotypists, for instance, mysteriously "pursued their vocation" by stepping "in and out at their dark closet," by "handling their secret pickles, preserves, pigments," and by using terms as "unintelligible as *abracadabra*" (18). Also similar to earlier accounts, Dixon uses magic allusions to convey the sitter's nervousness in being photographed: when it is his turn "to proceed to the mysterious apartment," he approaches "with a fluttering heart" the "formidable" apparatuses of portraiture (the chair, the clamps to keep the sitter still, and the camera). Such nervousness

125

also extends to the author's encounter with the portraits themselves, which he describes as "specimen heads" of "the previously decapitated victims" laid out for display (18). The metaphorical characterization of photography as execution is prominent in the literature of the period; its significance will be discussed below in the section on the photographic other.

As used in the early 1850s, magical descriptions reveal that photography, despite becoming a popular medium, nonetheless remains mysterious and "[s]trange, scientific, mournful, all at once," (Dodd 245). This is evident in Henry Morley and W.H. Wills' 1853 article, "Photography," which recounts their visit to John Jabez Edwin Mayall's portrait studio. The authors' frequent use of magical allusions to characterize the studio and the photographer are exaggerated in effect and embody the Victorians' preoccupation with the innate mysteriousness surrounding photography. The article begins with a statement that is contradictory in tone and content:

> We have been haunting the dark chambers of photographers. We have found those
> gentlemen – our modern high priests of Apollo, the old sun god – very courteous, and
> not at all desirous to forbid to the world's curiosity a knowledge of their inmost
> mysteries. (54)

Although stating that photography is no more secret than any other process and that its practitioners are open in sharing their "mysteries" with them, they still characterize it as a sinister magic. The photographer, for instance, is referred to variously as "the necromancer" who performs "dark deeds," "the expert magician" and "taker of men" who, although "affable enough" is still suspect, for "smiling faces have been long connected with

mysterious designs" (58, 56, 55). As in other accounts, allusions to the magical are used to convey the mystery of the studio environment and the odd appearance of daguerreotype portraits. The authors describe being "led into a chamber, of which the walls and tables were in great part overlaid with metal curiously wrought," the curious metal being the daguerreotype plates of a "thousand images of human creatures . . . [that] glanced at us from all sides" (54). The highly reflective, mirror-like surface of the daguerreotype plate also suggests the magical, in that the image on the plate could only be seen from certain angles.[43] As the authors observe, "[h]ere a face was invisible: there it burst suddenly into view, and seemed to peep at us . . . their faces seemed in a mysterious way to come and go as the lights shifted on the silver wall" (55).

Despite the process being shown to them, the authors persist in characterizing it as magical. "Our sense of the supernatural . . . was excited strongly in this chamber" or darkroom, in which the photographer "goes through those mysterious operations which are not submitted to the observations of the sitter" (56). In the darkroom, or "the very head quarters [sic] of spectredom," the authors observe the "expert magician" develop a photographic plate, a process that, although explained to them, they still characterize as occurring by the "mysterious agencies" of chemicals which magically fix the individual's image: "the portrait was in this way perfectly spellbound" (56, 58). As in earlier articles from

---

[43] Trachtenberg describes how the viewer could "see his or her own image superimposed over the photographic one" due to the "mirror effect" of the plate's surface, and how with "the merest tilt of the plate, the actual image seems to flicker away" (26). In his 1855 satirical book *Photographic Pleasures*, Cuthbert Bede observes, "[t]he plates on which the likenesses were executed, were polished like so many little mirrors. We saw in them the reflection of our (shall we say, handsome) features" (29).

the 1840s, the magical allusions also suggest the sitter's unease in being photographed. The authors describe a lady client, for instance, who exclaimed while sitting for her portrait that "she must be held in some way, for she was too nervous to sit still" before the camera, while a couple who were also "executed" sat "fixed as statues," "rigidly pleasant" while the operator captured them "spellbound" on the daguerreotype plate (55, 58).

The endurance of magical allusions in accounts ranging from the early 1840s to the early 1850s is evidence of the process of premediation, in which the early representations and receptions of a medium continue to inform the culture's interactions with the medium as it matures. Gunning reads such anxiety as typical of the reception of new technologies, noting that "new technologies evoke not only a short-lived wonder based on unfamiliarity which greater and constant exposure will overcome, but also a possibly less dramatic but more enduring sense of the uncanny, a feeling that they involve magical operations which greater familiarity or habituation might cover over, but not totally destroy" (47). As the magical allusions demonstrate, this ongoing "sense of the uncanny" in relation to photographic portraiture reveals the persistent anxiety towards the photographic portrait because of its suggestion of the uncanny and its threat of estrangement (or an "execution") from the human subject who is photographed. As discussed in this chapter and in chapter four, this implicit discomfort surrounding portraiture, so central to the Victorians' negotiation of photography, is expressed obliquely in the fiction of the period, the persistence of these magic associations revealing a continued anxiety.

Exposure and Display in Photographic Portraiture

Closely related to the anxieties underlying the use of the language of magic are the issues of exposure and public display, so central to portraiture. The opening of the first portrait studios in 1841 created a new reality defined by the predominance of the visual, in that "the camera set up the world as something to be looked at" (Shloss 254). Whether viewing the gallery of portraits, watching others sit for their portraits, or posing for one's own image, the individual was immersed in the visual, the studio presenting an environment that allowed "for open unembarrassed looking, for an exchange of looks and, more important, of *images*" (Trachtenberg 25). As demonstrated in the analysis of portraiture conventions in chapter two, advertisements implied that sitting for one's portrait was an enactment of a public, visual self and was "one of the symbolic acts by which individuals from the rising social classes made their ascent visible to themselves and others and classed themselves among those who enjoyed social status" (Tagg 37). What are the social effects of the now-dominant photographic portrait and the new space of the portrait studio? This section examines the anxieties evoked by this new visual culture and the experience of posing for one's photograph, which derive from a fear of the exposure and possible impropriety inherent in the photographic act.

As noted in chapter two, early studio advertisements and informational articles suggested that the consumer is to "put on" a visual identity while posing for the camera, one that would be observed by others not only while the portrait is taken but also afterwards when the subject has been transformed into a photographic portrait. Studios suggested that the client compose a particular visual image by advertising the accessories available for the

client's use and providing guides on how to dress for one's portrait, often generically entitled, "Helpful Hints for Sitters" (which were published as part of photographic manuals or made available at portrait studios for clients to consult). Winter's 1846 article, "The Pencil of Nature," is partly a guide in the vein of "Helpful Hints for Sitters" and partly a social commentary on the act of display involved in posing for one's portrait. He provides "a rule or two" on how to dress and pose (specifically addressing female clients), detailing what colours to wear and avoid and what facial expressions to adopt, for instance, while at the same time criticizing the false appearances most women put on in striving "for effect" as "not at all natural" (288). As discussed in chapter two, consumers were presented with the conflicting message that they ought to appear "natural" while at the same time assuming a visual identity that may differ from actuality (such as one that implies a certain social or class standing). The possibility of deception in posing for one's portrait figures in the debate about photography's truthfulness, which is discussed below.

That display was considered quite crucial to the public's negotiation of the process of photographic portraiture is evident in the degree to which the literature of the period figures the process as a spectacle or very public experience. This figuration was in use immediately following the opening of the first portrait studios in March 1841: Laman Blanchard's satirical poem, "Photographic Phenomena," for instance, observes the unending crowds who come to be photographed and watch others being photographed. "Nothing can keep the crowd below," who "mount up a mile and a quarter of stair" (32, 30). From the outset, the studio was depicted as a busy place of observation frequented by all classes of people, "the high and

130

the low": as Blanchard's poem concludes, "thus are all flocking . . . to witness" the camera at work (31-2).

The characterization of the studio as spectacle persists throughout the 1840s and early 1850s, which suggests that the emphasis on the acts of display and observation were not just an initial reaction to the newness of portraiture. The 1843 fictional article, "Sketches of Paris," for instance, describes the growing popularity of the studio. Now "spread all over Europe and America," portraiture is practiced with particular "vigour" in Paris, where photographic studios abound (176). The impact of portraiture is indicated in the author's observation that having one's portrait taken has quickly become a necessity: "It is not the Parisians alone who have their likenesses taken," he states, rather "all strangers who visit Paris, hasten to do likewise, before leaving the city" (176). He continues with a description of the always-crowded studio in which observation and display constantly occur: the studio "is never vacant; sometimes there is a long string of people, each waiting till his turn comes" (176). While waiting, the client "may walk about, sit down, or even talk with the Daguerreotype people" who take and develop the photographs (176). That the studio is a place of looking is most explicitly stated in the author's comment that one "may observe" those who wait to be or are in the process of being photographed: "There are very queer people that come here sometimes. There you may observe a countryman and his wife, they wish to have their portraits taken . . . and they are inquiring about the price" (176).

The narrator's positioning of himself as an observer of others being photographed is common to many accounts of the period, which seem preoccupied with the act of observation and the exchange of glances inherent in the photographic act. Also common to these accounts

is the stock naïve character who is ignorant of the process, fearful of "being taken," and quickly disenchanted with the strange portrait of himself (see fig.3). Richard Noakes notes that such figures were used as "the targets . . . of technological humour" in *Punch* in the period, with "cariacatures of ignorant rustics, women, and members of foreign races" used to voice a "confusion and unfounded hostility towards new technology" (and, subsequently, suggesting that it is wrong to express hesitation about a new technology ["Representing" 157]). "The countryman and his wife" serve as these naïfs in "Sketches of Paris," asking the photographer to "draw [them] both" before deciding it is "too dear" and dark for their liking (177). Like the prevalent usage of magical allusions, the stock character (often figured as a woman) and her reaction to being photographed frequently surfaces in the literature of the period. Just as the exaggerated language of magic reveals an underlying concern regarding portraiture, these humorous and satirical treatments similarly attempt to manage or "contain" the anxieties evoked by the exposure of portraiture – attempts that only serve to highlight how strong this anxiety actually was.

Fig.3. A sitter's unfamiliarity with and dislike of her portrait. C.K. Frost, "Sketches of Paris,"

Godey's Lady's Book 27 (October 1843), 179.

What is the significance of this characterization of the photographic studio as a place

of spectacle in which display and observation persistently occur? It suggests the profound

effect of photography on Victorian culture in creating a newly visual reality in which the

photograph or "exact likeness" (as described in an advertisement for Findley's studio)

predominates and interaction is based on the circulation of glances (*Times* 19 October 1846).

As Trachtenberg notes, photography created "to an incalculable extent" "a public

increasingly aware . . . of 'image,' of social self-presentation" (26). As an enactment of a

public identity, the photographic portrait stands in for the individual, who is reduced to an

image in the newly industrialized, urbanized Victorian culture: "in the burgeoning cities

strangers gawked at strangers, sizing them up in an instant. In this milieu of unstable social

identity, photography offered sitters a chance to fix an outward appearance for all time"

133

(Marien *Photography* 30). The transformation of the individual into a photographic object of consumption is implied in several accounts from the period, such as the article "Sketches of Paris." While other stores advertise with windows full of goods, the author states, the entrance to the photographic studio curiously appears, "like a shop without goods, but this is a shop where it is not necessary to tempt you by displaying the wares. A little enclosed space near the window [the studio entrance], into which the aspiring subject goes, is all that is necessary" to lure customers to be photographed (176). *Punch* similarly satirizes the photograph's transformation of the individual into an image object in the 1846 article, "No More Autographs," which comments on the too-popular fad of collecting celebrity autographs: "We should not at all wonder that the next demand on a genius will be to send some unknown admirer, 'who hopes you will excuse the liberty,' your photographic portrait" (250).

As these accounts show, the extent to which the literature of the period fixates on the gaze, acts of looking, and the transformation of the individual from being a subject with agency to becoming a fixed photographic image reveals an unease with the exposure that photography enacts, the human subject made subject or vulnerable to the camera as well as others' glances. Such anxiety also involves an unease in being made subject to the gaze of the seemingly autonomous photographic portrait, the presence of which is rapidly increasing in the new visual culture, as discussed by Morley and Wills in their 1853 article, "Photography": "A thousand images of human creatures of each sex and of every age – such as no painter ever has produced – glanced at us from all sides . . . innumerable people whose

134

eyes seemed to speak at us" (54-55).[44] The anxiety about the perfect photographic portrait or photographic other that exists separately from the "original" or person who is photographed is discussed below.

The concerns surrounding the act of display, so inherent to photographic portraiture, thus reveal the Victorians' reaction to the new visual culture that photography introduced. That the literature of the period shows a preoccupation with observation, display, the exchange of glances (whether the gaze of a living human being or the gaze of a photographic portrait), and the circulation of images suggests the influence of photographic portraiture in transforming how Victorians pictured themselves and interacted with others in the midst of "the sheer mass of images" (Trachtenberg 25). The concerns expressed regarding the display and exposure involved in photographic portraiture – particularly the reading of the photograph as a duplicate and substitute for the subject depicted – relate to the seemingly conflicted representation held in the period regarding the photograph as truthful and, at the same time, deceptive.

---

[44] Morley and Will's reaction to and description of the studio is similar to other accounts in the period, which supports my assertion that these accounts are more than just mere descriptions of portraiture but rather reflect an underlying concern about the consequences of this new visual culture. For instance, Walt Whitman's 1846 account of Plumbe's Gallery marvels at the display of endless images: "What a spectacle! In whatever direction you turn your peering gaze, you see naught but human faces! . . . a great legion of human faces . . . eyes gazing silently but fixedly upon you . . . speechless and motionless, but yet *realities*" ("Visit to Plumbe's Gallery" n. pag.).

Truth and Deception in the Photographic Portrait

Another common issue focused on in the literature of the period is an emphasis on the camera as "truthful" or incapable of lying and thus able to reveal the subject's true character while, in juxtaposition, there is also a troubling acknowledgement of the possibility that the photograph can deceive by depicting the subject in manner that is other than reality. Shloss describes these "juxtapositions of contrary thought" as resulting from the difference between the neutral "process of recording," which depicts accurately whatever is before the camera, and the objects "viewed through the lens," which could be manipulated (34). This conflicting representation of photography – that the camera can only tell the truth, depicting exactly and accurately what is placed before it, and yet that the image is capable of deceit – underlies many accounts of portraiture in the period, revealing an anxiety that stems from the uncertainty in knowing how to read and negotiate the photograph.

As discussed in chapter one, photography had been defined in relation to the terms "truth" and "reality" from the moment of its invention in 1839: compared to all other visual and written representations, it was figured as being the most capable of telling the truth, the truth being an accurate and indexical depiction. Photography's truthfulness became all the more obvious with the introduction of portraiture: never before had such accurate images been made of the human subject. The camera's unprecedented, perfect recording of individuals was such that photography came to be described as being, for better or worse, *only* capable of *always* telling the truth. This advantage / disadvantage of photographic portraiture is neatly indicated in the 24 March 1841 *Times* article, "The Photographic or Daguerreotype Miniatures," that was published just one day after Richard Beard opened the

136

first portrait studio in London: "The likenesses which we saw were admirable, and closely true to nature, beauties and deformities being alike exhibited: therefore those who are ashamed of their personal appearance had better keep from the influence of [the daguerreotype]" (n. pag.). A similar observation is made in a 3 April 1841 *Literary Gazette* article, which concludes that it is not "possible for the truth-telling operating influences [of the camera] to flatter . . . the face is there, wearing the very expression of the moment" ("Royal Institution" 218).

Such statements about the inability of the camera to flatter occur frequently throughout the period. They are posed as both an advantage and disadvantage of photography in comparison to other visual reproductions, particularly in comparison to paintings. In the debate initiated in 1839 regarding the value of photography as an art and its potential displacement of painting altogether, one argument claims that photography's truthfulness renders the medium inferior to man-made representations. Winter's 1846 article, "The Pencil of Nature," voices the usual points made in this argument in favour of painting. "Many people imagine that the Daguerreotype will supersede the labours of the artist," he states, immediately countering, "[t]his is a very mistaken idea" (288):

> It must be borne in mind that the Daguerreotype does nothing more than copy nature in the most servile manner – it elaborates a pimple as carefully as the most divine expression. It has no power of selecting what is fine and discarding what is mean in its representation of any object, this, Art, in the best sense of the word, is alone capable of doing. (288)

The photograph's inability to depict anything other than an exact facsimile of the objects placed before the camera is discussed by Winter as a flaw of the medium.

Yet photography's "servile manner" of copying is at the same time figured as its very advantage over other visual representations in the opposing argument in this debate, which argues that its accuracy exposes in contrast the flattery and deception inherent in man-made representations (288). As William Henry Fox Talbot argues of his invention, "the [camera] chronicles whatever it sees . . . [it] delineate[s] a chimney pot . . . with the same impartiality as it would the Apollo of Belvedere" (*The Pencil of Nature* n. pag.). Elizabeth Carey's 1843 poem "Lines . . ." confidently states, for example, that no artist could "in *veracity*" surpass the photograph: "Here is no feature half awry, / . . . But the fair face as Nature made it, / So hath the regal sun portray'd it!" (125). That the continued debate about the superiority of photography to painting arouses anxiety is evident in Carey's unease in making such assertions about photography's ascendancy. In the notes accompanying her poem, she states that in comparing paintings to photographs, she "refer[s] only to that *unerring accuracy of resemblance* which, unattainable by the pencil, renders the Daguerreotype invaluable in portraiture" (125). An 1846 American article, "Daguerreotypes," is more confident in voicing this argument in favor of photography's truthfulness. The author of the article asserts that photography "is slowly accomplishing a great revolution in the morals of portrait painting" (552). "The flattery of countenance delineators is notorious," he argues, claiming, "[n]o artist of eminence has ever painted an ugly face" (552). "These abuses of the brush the photographic art is happily designed to correct," the author avers, noting that photography's inability to flatter establishes a new standard of truthfulness in which all, the beautiful and

138

the ugly alike, "sit for likenesses that *are* likenesses" and "are each fairly and faithfully imprinted" (552).

Although photography's truthfulness is used to prove two irreconcilable perceptions of the medium – as inferior and superior to other visual representations – such truthfulness or indexicality is nonetheless the common ground underlying both sides of the debate. Significantly, this shows the extent to which indexicality functioned as a taken-for-granted, defining characteristic of the medium. Whether superior or not, the photographic portrait is asserted to be fundamentally different from images created by human artists in being "the real thing," due to its physical connection to the referent photographed. Such a dominant perception of photography persists despite the recognition in the period that the photograph was mediated due to the manipulations performed by the operator (such as changes to lighting and accessories, as chapter two details).

The reading of the photograph as truthful directly informs the interpretation of the photographic portrait, commonly expressed in the literature of the period, as revealing the depicted subject's "true" inner character. Much more than being a perfect recording of the subject's external appearance, the photograph, it is implied, can and does capture and make visual the subject's interiority. The perception that the camera can penetrate the outer surface and expose the subject is at odds with the conflicting perception that the photograph can deceive; this conflicting representation of photography reveals an anxiety about reading the photograph.

The camera's inability to produce anything but accurate (if unflattering) images results in the photographic portrait being read as a manifestation of the subject's true character (as revealed in his or her exterior appearance). This reading is frequently emphasized in the literature through the often-humorous accounts that detail the subject's reaction to being photographed. Blanchard's 1841 poem, "Photographic Phenomena" is a typical account of the photograph's ability to expose the sitter, often much to his or her chagrin. For example, "Poor Jane begins to whimper" that her photograph "gives me quite a simper," while "Crosslook, the lawyer" is said to "sneer" that his likeness is correct – "Yes, the wig, throat and forehead I spy . . . But it gives me a cast in the eye!" (32). Although both subjects denies the accuracy of their likeness in capturing their external appearance and in suggesting their inner character, other viewers of their portrait can see quite clearly its truth: "Well, I *never*! . . . it is cruelly like you!" (31). "Photographic Phenomena" concludes that although "Truth is unpleasant / To prince and to peasant," people are nonetheless compelled to sit before the neutral camera (31, 32). The poem records a common pattern repeated in other contemporary accounts: the sitter's desire to be photographed; the resulting portrait's uncannily accurate depiction of the sitter's external appearance and internal character; the subject's misrecognition of his own perfect image and sense of alienation resulting from "see[ing] themselves as other see'em" (Carey 125). The camera's ability to visualize the subject's personality is also acknowledged in the 1843 article, "Sketches of Paris," which concludes that many individuals "are not satisfied" with their portraits although the images are "exactly like" them, rhetorically asking, "and why not? It is because the Daguerreotype does not flatter, and it is very hard to satisfy people with the plain truth" (179).

140

That the photograph can be read as evidence of the subject's interiority clearly relates to the theories of physiognomy (and later phrenology) that are present in Victorian culture in the period. As noted in the discussion of photographic portraiture as public display, the visual culture of the period is defined by the exchange of glances in which the photograph serves as a symbol of, and substitution for, the subject depicted. The photographic portrait, as a "complete transcript of our outward man," is the ideal object of study in the practice of physiognomy, which reads the subject's character as written in his exterior features ("Photographic Portraiture," *Illustrated London News* 1 October 1842 323). The photograph's association with physiognomy is recognized in the period in accounts that assert that the "exactness of features" captured by the medium reveals "the character of the individual as is displayed in his features" (323). An 1846 *Mirror of Literature* article, "On Physiognomy," for example, explains physiognomy as "the science of faces or forms which nature puts on to indicate her intentions," and as "rules whereby we may judge the moral or physical qualities of any one by his exterior form and colour" (204-5). The photographic portrait is useful to this "science of faces" in capturing the subject in a moment of time and exposing his subjectivity, which the article describes as the "mind exhibited in act" and appearance (205). The 1846 American article, "Daguerreotypes," makes this connection between photography and physiognomy explicit in stating, "daguerreotypes properly regarded, are the indices of human character," and are the "grand climacteric of [Lavater's] science" (552). The author continues, asserting that "of the advantages resulting from this novel art, the aid which it affords to the successful study of human nature, is among the most important" (552). The idea of photographic portraiture's truthfulness and seeming ability to

141

expose the subject's inner self is thus supported by, and used in support of, physiognomy or what Groth describes as "the nineteenth-century fascination with the face as the transparent boundary between public and private selves, presence and absence" (16). In a visual culture defined by "the belief that the contours of the face revealed a secret history that no amount of sophistry could mask," the photograph serves as an ideal record of the subject's exteriority/interiority (16). Although an examination of physiognomy extends beyond the scope of this section, the affinity of physiognomy with photography suggests the extent to which "debates concerning the relationship between inner and outer" were central to Victorians in the period (Flint 14).

The Victorians' preoccupation with the similarities and differences between "surface and essence" are reflected in their concerns regarding the photographic portrait (14). As portraits were produced in ever increasing numbers, their function as "indices of human character" ("Daguerreotypes" 552) and ability to reveal the exterior and interior truth of the subject evokes an anxiety about the exposure of the photographed subject before the unfailing agency of the camera. The sense of the camera's unerring and unrelenting perfection (and the resultant vulnerability of the subject) is described by Gregory Wickliff as resulting from photography's characterization in the period as "having moral superiority," or serving as a touchstone of truth by which human weakness and vanity are made all too apparent ("The Daguerreotype" 428).

These concerns about the camera and its exposure of the subject's interiority or "true moral character" through its perfect recording of his or her external features is at odds with a conflicting idea present in the literature of the period: that of the potential for the photograph

to deceive (McCandles 55). As Kate Flint notes, the Victorians' "fascination with disguise and its capacity to deceive" seems contradictory to their "belief in the sufficiency of physiognomic encodement" (19). The interpretation of the photograph as truthful and yet capable of deceit is apparent in the convention (discussed in chapter two) that details that the sitter is to assume a visual identity while being photographed. As Barbara McCandles explains, "photographers showed their customers ways to emulate the characteristics associated with breeding and education" (55). That the sitter could visually "impl[y] rank, education, and wealth" (Linkman 52) in a way that differed from reality while posing for his or her portrait is particularly troubling when considered in light of the dominant idea of photography's indexicality: if the image can deceive, then the viewer could misread the depicted subject's external appearance and, subsequently, his true character. That the literature of the period frequently resists this idea of deceit (in denying that the viewer can be deceived) only suggests all the more strongly that the potential to misinterpret the photograph was of concern.

Most accounts that speak to the issue of photography's truthfulness claim that any attempts at deception are quite obvious to the viewer of the photograph. The 1843 poem, "Lines," for instance, includes a note by the author in which she claims, "the daguerreotype is infallible": sitters may "pretend to youth, beauty, grace, and intellectual character," but the daguerreotypes or "honest resemblances" prove otherwise (Carey 125). Winter's 1846 article, "The Pencil of Nature," claims even more confidently that deception in photographic portraiture is immediately discernable. He describes the foolish effects resulting from sitters' attempt to look their best for their photographic portrait: foolish, he claims, because they are

143

transparent. He claims sitters invariably state, "we wish to be taken as we are," and yet are photographed "to their heart's content in a heap of finery put on merely for effect" (288). Criticizing ladies in particular, he argues that their attempts to dress their hair in order to "look nice," as they describe it, and their "system of making up a face" are unnatural and, even worse, are "painfully transparent" (288). The American article of the same year, "Daguerreotypes," is the most explicit in arguing against such deception. The "phenomenon" of human weakness in which sitters "attempt to assume a look which they have not" results in obvious "caricatures":

> Timid men . . . summon up a look of stern fierceness, and savage natures borrow an expression of gentle meekness. People appear dignified, haughty, mild, condescending, humorous, and grave, in their daguerreotypes, who manifestly never appeared so anywhere else. (552)

Not only do sitters assume a counterfeit wealth, the author continues, by wearing jewellery in order to "attract attention, and impress the spectator with a dazzling conception of [their] immense and untold riches," but also worse, they assume a counterfeit personality (552).

The three accounts examined above are all vociferous in their confident claim that photographic deceit is "painfully transparent" (Winter 288). Yet the very strength with which they argue this claim suggests that this deception is nonetheless of concern. Aside from the author stating otherwise in each account, how can the viewer of the photograph detect that the man of "stern fierceness" is in actuality "timid" ("Daguerreotypes" 552)? More troubling is the potential for class transgression or "passing." How can the viewer know that the

144

subject draped in jewellery (real or otherwise) is wealthy or not in reality, when in the reality of the image he or she appears convincingly so? The insistence in such accounts that the viewer can discern deception in the photograph suggests the very opposite: the fear that the viewer is indeed unable to determine what is true or not in the portrait he or she views.

The possibility of class transgression in photographic portraiture underscores the anxiety evinced towards reading the photograph. The concern that photography allows the subject to transgress social and class boundaries was a troubling consequence of photography's perceived democratic potential. Since its invention, photography had been spoken of in terms of democracy, whether for its ability to create affordable reproductions of art or its imagined potential to fairly and objectively record the likeness of all classes of people. The democracy envisioned since 1839 – described, for instance, in a *Mirror of Literature* article that predicts that photographs will "be seen not only on the table of the affluent, but on that of the poor man" – becomes worrisome with the introduction of portraiture, a process that allows the "poor man" not only to view and collect portraits but also to emulate and mimic the images he sees ("The New Art – Photography" 263). Blanchard's poem "Photographic Phenomena" hints at this democracy in noting that "prince" and "peasant" both are depicted without flattery by the truthful camera (31). The 1846 article, "Daguerreotypes," similarly notes that with the democratic camera, the sun "pours his rays as freely and willingly into the cottage of the peasant, as into the palace of the peer; and he vouchsafes no brighter or purer light to the disdainful mistress than to her humble maid" (552). As described in these two typical accounts, photographic portraiture levels the field of depiction; unspoken in both, however, is the question of how one is to discern the "disdainful

mistress" from "her humble maid" in a portrait that can portray both as one and the same (552).

The unspoken anxiety regarding the potential for class transgression in photographic portraiture is made explicit in G.W.M. Reynolds's 1844-1846 *Mysteries of London*, a gothic penny-dreadful that satirizes and comments on the very latest events that occurred in the period during which it was written and which, uncannily, seems to expose the raw nerves and anxieties of the mass audience which voraciously read its weekly instalments.[45] Part of the serial concerns the downfall of the destitute young woman Ellen who, in an effort to make money to support herself and her ailing father, is led by a corrupt old woman to pose as a model for various artists. The narrator describes how Ellen's figure proliferates in numerous depictions, her fragmented body passing for other women without detection. "The likeness of some vain and conceited West End daughter of the aristocracy," for example, was painted with "Ellen's hand – or Ellen's hair – or Ellen's eyes – or Ellen's bust – or some feature or peculiar beauty of the young maiden . . . upon the canvass [sic]" (87). After a plaster cast of her face is made, Ellen's countenance was soon seen on "statues of Madonnas in catholic chapels; opera dancers, and actresses in theatrical clubs; nymphs holding lamps in the halls of public institutions; and queens in the staircase windows of insurance offices" (86). With

---

[45] Ellen Bayuk Rosenman describes the serial's popularity: "*The Mysteries of London* sold 40,000 copies a week in penny installments and over a million copies cumulatively before it was issued in bound volumes" (31). The mass audience of *Mysteries* was not only composed of the literate middle classes, but also "the newly literate lower class" of the mid-1840s (T. Thomas vii).

its emphasis on the circulation of numerous images, *Mysteries of London* reflects the concern felt towards the photographic portrait's potential to deceive the viewer. The fear that the viewer would be unable to discern the "truth" about the depicted subject, who can assume any visual identity in the photographic portrait, would become all the more significant in the early 1850s. In this period, photography became cheaper than ever due to improved processes and, subsequently, became ever more democratic: "all classes and types of people" could now be photographed and could therefore see, "through the easy availability of images," how these different strata of society visually presented themselves (Shloss 266).

The preoccupation in the literature of the 1840s with photography's truthfulness and the conflicting idea of the possibility for photographic deception (whether class transgression or otherwise) thus strongly suggests a profound unease on the part of Victorians in negotiating the photographic portrait. Despite the stance in many articles that deception is "painfully transparent," texts such as *Mysteries of London* make explicit that deception is indeed difficult to discern: how can the viewer know what is true or not in the photograph when both appear the same (Winter 288)? The photograph proves troublingly opaque rather than transparent in its ability to deceive, an opacity that is all the more disconcerting due to the medium's uncanny indexicality or appearance as "an imprint or transfer of the real" (Krauss 31). The indeterminacy of the photograph and the potential for misinterpretation on the part of the viewer conflicts with photography's seeming realism, and the viewer's tension in knowing that the photograph can deceive while being drawn nonetheless to its realistic appearance: as the author of "Daguerreotypes" admits, "so perfect is the 'counterfeit presentiment' that you recognize your friends at a glance," the subject-turned image so

147

convincing that you cannot help but "find yourself stretching out your hand to their daguerreotypes" (551). As discussed in the following section, the temptation to read the photographic portrait as truthful (and, in terms of physiognomy, as an index of the subject's interiority) and to succumb to the medium's "visual veracity" was especially difficult to resist when the photograph functioned as a memorial for an individual that no longer existed (Marien, *Photography* 74).

The Photograph as Memorial

As discussed in chapter two, photographic portraiture was perhaps most valued for its potential to memorialize, or to offer an image to be cherished after the individual's death. In capturing an exact imprint of the individual as he or she existed in that instant of time, the photographic portrait was valued for offering a permanent visual facsimile to which Victorians responded with great alacrity. The advertisements in 1846 reflected, and helped create, this desire on the part of the Victorians: speaking of the inevitability of death, they assert that the photograph was to be valued as the ideal (and only) way to remember an individual and, as such, urge the potential consumer and all his loved ones to be photographed at once. This section extends the analysis of the photographic memorial in chapter two by examining the implications of this idea of photography in terms of the anxieties such an idea raised: namely, concern about the ascendancy of the medium over other means of knowledge, and concern about the relation of the photograph to the subject memorialized.

As chapter two argues, the photograph's function as a perfect memorial or visual preservation for future reference rests on its unique indexicality and instantaneity, or, that it

is read as "a true tale concerning a particular spot at a particular time" (Benjamin, "A Small History" 243). The instantaneity of the medium increased the veracity of the photograph by making visible and permanent discrete moments of time that were never before experienced as such: as Walter Benjamin asserts, the photograph preserved the "Here and Now . . . the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently" (243). Carey describes this instantaneity as unattainable by no other medium in her 1843 poem, "Lines," claiming that the daguerreotype "is unrivalled" in "preserv[ing], for ever, the fleeting sunbeam of a smile" (125). By capturing and freezing the individual in an instant, the photograph "reveal[ed] moments of time and aspects of appearance undiscerned by normal human perception and attention" (Marien, *Photography and Its Critics* 77).

The medium's indexicality and instantaneity are perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the photograph as memorial. An imprint of the individual's physicality, the photographic portrait suggests an antidote to mortality in being a "more than life-like resemblance" that endures beyond the life of the photographed subject (Burgess 80). Metz similarly observes the connection between photography's indexicality and instantaneity and its "deeply rooted kinship with death" in his essay, "Photography and Fetish" (83). In capturing the physical imprint of the individual, the photograph enacts a "cutting off of a piece of space and time," functioning as a "pure index [that] stubbornly point[s] to the print of what *was*, but no longer *is*" and that memorializes "that moment when she or he *was* has forever vanished" (83-5). In a very real sense, then, the photograph always functions as a memorial for the moment that *was*, yet does so in images that appear timeless or as "past presence" (85).

The sense of the photographic portrait as a "more than life-like" copy of the individual and as the perfect recording of a now-past moment is expressed in articles immediately following the opening of the first portrait studios in 1841, in numerous advertisements from the mid-1840s, and in articles published in the early 1850s and beyond (Burgess 80). Although (as has already been discussed) the Victorians were well aware of the photography's mediation and ability to deceive, this knowledge was often overshadowed by the more dominant reading of the medium's realism; this reading of the photograph as seemingly transparent and unmediated was all the more strong in the instance of photographic portraits. Thus, although the Victorians did not have a blind "belief in photographic truth," it is important to observe that the idea of photographic truth did in some instances dominate – such as in the case of photographic portraiture as memorial (Marien, *Photography* 74).

One consequence of the figuration of photography as memorial is the suggestion that other media are rendered inferior. Photography captured an instant of time that was previously indiscernible and depicted the individual in images that were more accurate, permanent, and seemingly unmediated than any other depiction available. The photograph therefore appeared to be the ideal vehicle of memory, superior to other forms such as written description, paintings, or mental images: as Marien notes, "no prior medium fully presaged the common photograph's ability to externalize remembrance" (*Photography* 78). George Dodd's 1854 article in *Household Words*, "Busy With the Photograph," makes explicit this effect of viewing photography as a superior mode of memory. It summarizes photography's unique capability as being "[t]he power of seeing things [that are] out of sight" – whether

objects in distant lands, or deceased loved ones – and in creating images that survive long after one's memory of the event or individual fades (243). The author argues that when an accident occurs, for instance, witnesses "often differ greatly" in their recollection of the event, while a photograph would be "the best witness of all" of what actually occurred (245). He further argues for photography's superiority in proposing the use of the camera in war. An individual's accounts of the state of battle, he asserts, is inferior to "faithful pictures, actually showing the state of things at any given moment" (245). In such an argument, the photograph is presented as superior to not only what human beings may recollect, but also to their attempts to describe such recollections. Implicit in this argument is the troubling implication that the faculties of the human mind are less reliable than the all-seeing, "objective" eye of the camera.

Another consequence of the figuration of photography as memorial is evident in a consideration of how the photograph itself was perceived in relation to the subject photographed. That the photographic portrait of the deceased individual was irresistible in its appearance of realism is apparent in the degree to which the literature of the period alludes to the photograph as an actual presence that could stand in for the subject it depicts. As discussed in chapter two, the studio advertisements in 1846 refer to the illusory realism of the photographic portrait in describing it as the sitter's double, a "second self" (Joseph's studio, *Times* 30 May 1846) that in its perfect realism is "almost speaking" (Beard's studio, *Times* 10 December 1846) and "actually to appearance breathing" (Bright's studio, *Times* 16 September 1846). The allure of this photographic other (as I describe the too-real portrait) was all the more powerful when the photograph was of a deceased individual: such images

appealed in documenting and preserving the photographed subject "in a form deemed more reliable than human memory" (Marien, *Photography and Its Critics* 75). Cuthbert Bede best demonstrates this belief in the camera's power of preservation, exclaiming, "[s]hadows of the dear departed, lost to us for ever [sic]! the Camera gives you back to life, and bids you live in something more than memory" (46). As this section argues, the photograph's status as "more than memory" evoked a concern about the value of other forms of memory (46).

The implications of this figuration of the photographic memorial as an almost-living, "second self" (Joseph's studio, *Times* 30 May 1846) that is superior to or "more than memory" (Bede 46) are evident in the 1849 article, "The Daguerreotypist," published in the American periodical, *Godey's Lady's Book*. In common with other articles in the period, it relates the typical incidents that occur at portrait studios, focusing in particular on incidents involving portraits of individuals who are deceased. As discussed in chapter two, periodical literature often referred to stock incidents (such as sitting for one's portrait for the first time) or characters of photography in an effort to familiarize or domesticate a still-new and rapidly changing technology which, obliquely, expresses the anxieties felt towards photography as the medium increased in popularity. In the case of the article "The Daguerreotypist," the accounts of these memorial portraits reveal an underlying concern about the too-real photograph and the ascendancy of the medium. The article relates the "frequent occurrence" in which a loved one searches for a portrait of one who has died (Arthur 354). "An old lady in deep mourning," for example, searched the gallery of daguerreotype portraits hanging in

the studio when she suddenly "sank half fainting upon a sofa" (354):

> Remembering that [her daughter's] likeness had been taken . . . the faint hope had
>
> crossed her mind that there might be a duplicate in the rooms of the Daguerreotypist.
>
> She had found it, and gazed once more into the almost speaking face of her child!
>
> (354)

This passage makes clear that the photograph was more than a mere representation, and

functioned as a near-perfect facsimile of the individual, so real as to appear "almost

speaking" (354). The medium's realism is further emphasized in this article by the author's

absenting of the photograph: in finding "it," the duplicate, the old lady "once more" saw the

"face of her child," not a photograph of the face (354). The photograph's allure as a

"duplicate" is also demonstrated later in the article, in which a mother comes with "her first

and only child, a bright little boy of four years, to sit for her likeness" (354). The mother,

father, and child at first pose together, but then the parents decide to have the child's picture

taken when he was "a little older" and the mother instead poses alone (354). Before they

leave, the photographer asks if they would like to keep the first portrait (of the entire family),

but they decline. Three months later, however, the mother returns:

> She was in deep mourning. Her boy was dead. She had come in hopes that the picture
>
> of her child might still be in existence. But alas! it was not so. Search was made
>
> among old and rejected plates . . . [but] the search was abandoned as hopeless . . . the
>
> only image of the child that remained for the mother was on the tablet of her memory.
>
> (354)

This passage echoes the sense of urgency voiced in the studio advertisements and articles of 1846 that warned the reader to have photographic portraits made of loved ones at once, before it is too late, these likenesses being all "that can be rescued from the grave" (Findley's studio, *Times* 16 September 1846). The consequences of not doing so are made all too apparent in these accounts of mourning mothers: without a photograph, one has no grasp of the deceased individual, no other means to memorialize him or her, save for one's "tablet of memory," which the literature has proven hopelessly fallible in comparison to the photographic medium (Arthur 354).

Bede's 1855 fictional text, *Photographic Pleasures*, similarly refers to the photographic memorial and its superiority to other forms of memory, showing the endurance of this figuration throughout the years. Several compelling examples of the allure of the photograph as memorial occur throughout the text. "By the aid of Photography," he claims, "the mother again gazes on her sailor-boy lost at sea . . . He is lost to her; and that Daguerreotype is all that she has to keep before her his never-to-be-forgotten features" (45). The photographic portrait's indexicality is all the more alluring in comparison to other visual representations, as he demonstrates in an account of a widower who prefers the photographic portrait of his dead wife to a painted portrait of her: "How [the painting] sinks in interest before that little Calotype! In it the husband sees the living likeness of his wife . . . She lives before him again; she is snatched once more from the tomb, and he is permitted to gaze upon her for a time" (45).

The fictional articles from 1849 and 1855 thus show that the photograph as memorial – a concept that was so alluring to Victorians from the very beginnings of photographic

portraiture – was still a preoccupation as photography became increasingly ubiquitous. The desire to read the photograph as this permanent, indexical "duplicate" of the individual shows the appeal of the medium's seeming indexicality and instantaneity ("The Daguerreotypist" 354). The preoccupation with the photographic memorial – both the literature and advertisements pitting the photograph against mortality, as a means to escape the grave – at the same time reveals an implicit anxiety towards the medium that creates such perfect images. Not only is there the suggestion that the medium is superior to human forms of memory and other media, but also the implicit suggestion of the camera's superiority and agency. This anxiety also derives from the uneasy relationship between the photograph and the photographed individual. In consistently describing the perfect portrait as more than a mere depiction, but rather as a "duplicate" that disarms the viewer with its appearance of breathing and "almost speaking," the literature and studio advertisements expose the uncanny presence of the too-real photographic other and the danger of its displacing the original who is photographed ("The Daguerreotypist" 354). The very indexicality and instantaneity for which photography was celebrated was at the same time that which aroused anxiety: as Susan Williams notes, photographic portraiture too perfectly "preserved the dead unnaturally into the present" ("'The Inconstant Daguerreotype'" 165). Gunning describes this uncanny effect of portraiture as its functioning "as a peculiarly modern *Memento Mori*," the too-real photographic portrait existing as "a bodiless transparent, or even invisible, double, who haunts our imagination rather than re-assuring us" (48). The camera's agency and the troubling presence of the photographic other are considered below; first will be considered the use of the concept of photographic memorial as a means to understand modernity.

155

That photography's association with time and memory was significant to the Victorians is evident in their use of this idea to negotiate the ongoing effects of modernization. As discussed above, the photograph was considered instantaneous in freezing a moment amidst the onward rush of time, creating permanence in the face of transience. As Roland Barthes notes, "that the photograph is 'modern,' mingled with our noisiest everyday life, does not keep it from having an enigmatic point of actuality, a strange stasis, the stasis of an *arrest* . . ." (91). In an era in which the telegraph, railroad, and other new technologies, including photography, resulted in a rapidly transformed understanding of time and space, the Victorians' perception of the photograph as stasis suggests a reaction to this changing imagined and physical environment, the medium's instantaneity appealing to them in seeming to counteract the troubling perception of modernity and urbanization as an inevitable and uncontrollable movement forward. As Groth observes, the photograph's ability "to arrest time, in effect, in the face of the relentless pace of history, would become an increasingly seductive prospect in an era when advances in transport and communication were pressing against the limits of what the mind could take in at a glance" (18).

The sense of an overwhelming modernity is captured in the 1854 *Household Words* article, "Busy With the Photograph," which comments that the world "becomes every now and then a little alarmed . . . at the startling strides made by science: fearful . . . [of being] over-dazzled by the brilliancy of modern discoveries" (Dodd 244). The photographic memorial as stasis seemed a way to gain control of the "startling strides" of modern society (244). Several critics have noted this figuration of photography. Metz observes, for instance, that "in all photographs, we have this same act of cutting off a piece of space and time, of

156

keeping it unchanged while the world around continues to change" (85), while Raymond

Williams comments on the photograph as "moments of isolation and stasis within an

experienced rush of change" (22). Photography's appeal as an apparent stasis in the rush of

modernity is made especially vivid in contrast to the other vastly transformational technology

in the period, the railroad, which was also put to use as a trope of modernity. Wolfgang

Schivelbusch discusses the experience of railway travel as creating a "loss of continuity" or

shift in the Victorian understanding of space and time as landscape and other familiar

markers are blurred from the new perspective of the railway carriage (93). In contrast,

photography seemed to provide a stasis that railway travel and other modern advances had

destroyed: "Since immediacy, close-ups, and foreground have been lost in reality, they

appear particularly attractive in the new medium" (98).

It is interesting to observe, however, that obscured in this view of photography is the

technology's contribution to the very modernization of society that it seems to arrest.

Photography is perceived as an antidote to the tide of modernity even though, at the same

time, it is one of the causes of this profound transformation. By recording and freezing

moments of time that were previously invisible, the camera introduces a new level of

visibility to the period, "making each installment [of suspended time] hypothetically

knowable" and, with the introduction of portraiture, making the human subject visually

knowable as well (Marien, *Photography and Its Critics* 82). The medium thus creates a

visual culture in which the world is made observable and subject to monitoring and

surveillance, such visuality becoming central to "the mid-nineteenth century understanding

157

of modernity" (79). The consequences of this visualization of the world and the camera's function as surveillance will now be considered.

At the heart of the various anxieties discussed thus far in this chapter are the concerns regarding the agency of the camera or "optical stranger" (Dodd 243) and the agency of the perfect photographic portrait or "second self" (Joseph's studio, *Times* 30 May 1846). These two anxieties are definitive of the Victorians' negotiation of the medium, central to the way in which Victorians' represented and responded to the idea of photography. At issue is a profound unease with the medium's power and with the reproducible, perfect duplicate that was proliferating with ever-greater frequency over the course of the 1840s and early 1850s. The following section discusses the camera's agency, while the subsequent section discuss the implications of this agency, as revealed in the idea of the photographic other or second self.

The "optical stranger": Anxiety Towards the Camera's Agency

As noted earlier in this chapter, photographic discourse is notable for its emphasis on the camera's agency and its elision of the camera operator, descriptions that were in use since photography's invention. As Shloss observes, "photographers tended to see [photography] as autotelic and to ignore their role as manipulators and originators"; as such, a "language of human passivity, of automatism" resulted (32). Green-Lewis notes the effects of this absence, such that "the act of photography became part of a process of signification which functioned on occasion not merely to record but to control" (5). While this language of passivity could be viewed as simply reflecting the unique qualities of the medium itself – which is how it

was used in 1839, to attempt to explain how the photographic process worked and how it differed from other visual representations – the fact that such descriptions persist well beyond 1839, continuing into the early 1850s and the era of photography's unprecedented popularity, suggests that this absenting of the human presence is more significant. The camera's agency can be understood as an instance of premediation, in that the earlier perceptions of photography's agency have persisted, manifesting as new, more pressing concerns as the technology has progressed. The earliest imaginings of the camera's agency, in other words, have clearly shaped how photographic portraiture is actually perceived and used.

This section argues that the "language of human passivity" reflects the Victorians' ongoing unease regarding the very aspects of the technology for which it was celebrated: its ability to create perfect images and the ability of the camera to constantly record everything put before it with an unflattering truthfulness (Shloss 32). Such unease is indicated in the 1849 article, "The Daguerreotypist," for instance, which claims that the photographer "could not force [the camera] to record anything but the truth" (355). Descriptions of the camera as autonomous thus manifest the concerns elaborated in this chapter regarding the medium's power and potential ascendancy: fear of exposure and surveillance, of the superiority of photographs to human visual depictions and memory, and the fear of being subject to the camera's control.

The emphasis throughout the 1840s and early 1850s on the agency of the camera and the lack of emphasis on the human operator reveals these concerns about photography. The camera's agency is suggested in various ways; the consequences of the agency asserted in

159

these different figurations is the implied inferiority of human vision: as Jean-Louis Comolli notes, "the mechanical eye of the photographic machine now sees in [the human eye's] place, and in certain aspects with more sureness" (123). Some accounts that describe the operator present him either as an objective, machine-like presence (a mere extension of the camera-machine) or as a magical, hypnotizing presence whose power rests in the camera. An example of the former, for instance, is evident in *The Mysteries of London*, which describes the photographer or "French scientific experimentalist" as a man who was "entirely devoted to matters of science, and having no soul for love, pleasure, politics, or any kind of excitement save his learned pursuits" (88), a figuration also seen in *Bleak House*'s Tulkinghorn, as chapter four details. In this and other accounts that do mention the photographer, the camera lens and photographer are often collapsed into one object, the lens symbolic of and often standing in for the operator. Other accounts assert the camera's agency by focusing on the camera to the exclusion of the operator. Studio advertisements for photographic studios, which assert the perfection of the photograph as a means of persuading potential consumers to "be taken," draw attention to the camera's power: as an advertisement for Findley's studio asserts, "the instrument is infallible" (*Times* 16 September 1846). Metaphors of execution, which play on the description of "being taken" by the camera, also suggest the infallible and overwhelming power of the camera. "The Daguerreotypist," for example, describes the camera as a "singular-looking apparatus," the lens like "the muzzle of . . . a small brass cannon" which causes the sitter to feel "the blood in his veins curdle to his very heart" (Arthur 352). Such metaphors of execution and exposure convey the unease regarding the camera's control over the subjects photographed (discussed below).

160

The agency of the camera and the medium's power are also suggested in accounts that refer to sitters being held captive by the camera lens and "unnerved by the experience of being photographed, as if they were being scrutinized, or compelled to act like a marionette" (Marien, *Photography* 75). Trachtenberg similarly observes in the literature of the period "a powerful ambivalence toward the daguerreian camera and the gaze of the operator, a current of feeling comprised of erotic attraction, moral revulsion, and physical fear" (27). This power of the camera over the human subject is implied in the 1849 article, "The Daguerreotypist," which states that many sitters experience "the illusion that the instrument exercises a kind of magnetic attraction, and many good ladies actually feel their eyes 'drawn' towards the lens while the operation is in progress!" (353). "A sense of suffocation is a common feeling," the article continues, concluding "no wonder" many portraits "have a strange, surprised look, or an air as if the original was ill at ease in his or her mind" (353).

As demonstrated in these accounts, the image of the autonomous camera was central to the Victorians' representation of photography in the period. What does such a figuration reveal – specifically, what anxieties are raised by the "infallible instrument" that, as the medium grew in popularity, was becoming an increasingly prominent presence (Findley's studio, *Times* 16 September 1846)? As suggested by the frequent references to exposure and execution (the subject exposed before the camera lens, his picture a beheading or execution), the agency of the camera reveals a concern about the new state of surveillance photography introduced (and, by extension, reveals a concern about the perfect photographs it produces). In terms of premediation, the early concerns imagined regarding the camera's power in 1839 have thus come to realization in this period. In this sense, the perception of photography

shaped and constructed the future in which these feared forms of photography are now an actuality.

As noted earlier in this chapter, photography significantly altered the Victorians' negotiation of themselves and interaction with others in creating a highly visual space that was defined by its "sheer mass of images" (Trachtenberg 25). As photography was more frequently used throughout the 1840s – recording exotic locales and cultures, capturing instantaneous moments of time and, perhaps most significantly, portraying the human subject – it presented the world as visually knowable and as "something to be looked at" (Shloss 254). *Punch* often comments on this new state of visuality in exaggerated reference to the growing popularity of photography, claiming in "An Artist's Struggles," for instance, that photographic portraiture could occur in ever-more public spheres, such as the theatre – "[b]y the aid of the chandelier, photographic portraits could be taken" of the audience below (238) – while "Making the Most of It" imagines the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral to be "fitted up as a camera obscura," in which "Daguerreotype likenesses" may be taken (221). Winter's 1846 article, "The Pencil of Nature," welcomes this new state of visibility, the author claiming that he would "gladly, then, see [photography] become general; that each family might thereby have its inner life chronicled by an artist so faithful and so expeditious, and whose charges come within the compass of the great mass of *the people*" (289). These accounts highlight the growing ubiquity of the medium, which exposes and records the "inner life" and makes ever-larger segments of "the people" subject to the camera (289). It is significant to note that this idea of a newly visible world rests on the presence of the "optical stranger," or the figuration of the camera as an unfailingly accurate, continually operating recorder (Dodd 243). That the

human subject is made vulnerable to the uncanny gaze of the "optical stranger" raises a fear about over-exposure and surveillance that is implicitly suggested in the literature of the period.

The most explicit description of surveillance is provided in the 1846 American article, "Daguerreotypes," which speculates on the impact of photography. The "progress of this art" seems limitless, the author claims: "it tasks the imagination to conjecture what it will *not* accomplish" (551). A "society for obtaining daguerreotypes" will no doubt be established, its practitioners deployed worldwide, from the "Arctic regions" to the "Holy Land," to "bring home exact representations" (551). He next imagines the camera's impact at the level of the individual: "popular vocalists will be *taken* in the very act and attitude of vocalizing" with "apparatus so extensive . . . that a whole assembly may be taken at once" (551). His speculation grows increasingly ominous in tone, however, as he imagines the implications of such a state of visuality:

> Indeed, it will be impossible for a tree to bud and blossom . . . without executing at
> the same time an exact photograph of the wonderful process on the . . . plates of some
> agricultural, botanical, or horticultural photographic society. A man cannot make a
> proposal, or a lady decline one – a steam-boiler cannot explode, or an ambitious river
> overflow its banks – a gardener cannot elope with a heiress, or a reverend bishop
> commit an indiscretion, but straightaway, an officious daguerreotype will proclaim
> the whole affair to the world. (551-2)

As this passage makes clear, the consequences of the new state that photography introduces

is a troubling excess of visibility, the camera functioning as a form of surveillance that

monitors and "proclaim[s] . . . to the world" the actions of the known world, whether minute

(a tree bud) or large in scale (a flood), whether a once-private interaction (an elopement) or

the actions of a public figure (a bishop).[46] As the author darkly concludes, the photographic

state is an unceasingly visible one in which the individual is subject to the camera: "There

will be no safety . . . every apple-orchard, store-house, and coat-pocket, will contain a self-

regulating photographic machine faithfully performing *its* functions, while the [individual] is

executing *his*" (552).

The troubling presence of the "self-regulating" camera, unerringly and perfectly

performing "its functions" of surveillance, is at the heart of the Victorians' conceptions of

photography (552). The unceasing mechanical eye is the perfect symbol and embodiment of

the central anxiety felt towards photography in the period, namely, "the anxiety produced by

visual predation" (Shloss 257) that Michel Foucault describes as the fear of being made the

"targets of surveillance" (202). Whether in texts that directly treat photography as its subject

or in literature that makes no explicit mention of the technology, the presence of this "optical

stranger" in Victorian culture must therefore be considered as an influence informing the

production of these contemporary texts (Dodd 243). As chapter four demonstrates in its

---

[46] In the 1855 *Photographic Pleasures* (1855), Bede similarly comments on the camera as an ubiquitous surveillance: "If I go upon the Continent there [it] is before me . . . If I wander into the green lanes and leafy dells of my own sweet country, there is our friend upon his tripod, making ready to carry off the village church, and even the sexton himself. If I betake myself to the fenny flats of the Eastern counties, and imagine myself to be remote from civilization, lo! and behold, there is our friend" (81).

examination of *Bleak House*, references to excess visuality in the literature of the period –

whether surveillance, scopophilia, or voyeurism – prove especially fruitful when interpreted

in light of the prevailing concept of camera's agency, thus providing modern readers with

greater insight into Victorian literature. That photography was often figured "to denote the

frisson of forbidden looking" suggests the centrality of the medium in the culture's

preoccupation with the visual, a preoccupation that is evinced in the extent to which "the

theme of looking at that which had been hidden, was forbidden, or both, runs through the

literature of the nineteenth century" (Marien, *Photography and Its Critics* 125, 198). As a

consideration of the photographic other reveals, the effects of the surveillance that the "self-

regulating" camera enacts are apparent in the reactions of the photographed subject towards

the camera and the perfect photographic copies it produces ("Daguerreotypes" 552).

The "second self": Anxiety Towards the Photographic Other

The anxiety evoked by the agency of the camera closely relates to the anxiety felt in

the period towards the photographic portrait. That the camera is considered an autonomous

machine that perfectly records and exposes the visible world means that the products of such

surveillance – the perfectly accurate and indexical photographs – are perceived as being

similarly autonomous. As noted in this chapter, the photograph's "miraculous" realism –

which was particularly compelling when photographic portraits or "complete transcripts" of

human beings became possible – was met with enthusiasm as much as anxiety

("Photographic Portraiture" 323). This section argues that the uncannily life-like appearance

of photographic portraits, while championed in advertisements that variously proclaim

portraits to be in "appearance breathing" (Bright's studio, *Times* 16 September 1846) and

"almost speaking," aroused a profound anxiety on the part of the Victorians who were first met with these images of themselves and others (Beard's studio, *Times* 10 December 1846). As Gunning observes, the photographic portrait's "preservation of distinctive human traits divorced from a living individual produced less an experience of immortality than a phantom, a bodiless transparent, or even invisible, double, who haunts our imagination rather than re-assuring us" (48). Similarly, S. Williams describes the photographic portrait to "provide a living double of the deceased" ("'The Inconstant Daguerreotype'" 164). As a "literal transcript" of the person photographed ("The Application of the Talbotype" 195), the status of the photographic portrait thus raised troubling questions about the nature of the original and the copy, control of the circulating image, and the relationship of the photographed subject to his "second self" or photographic other (Joseph's studio, *Times* 30 May 1846).

One of the concerns raised by the photographic other is a sense of estrangement felt by the individual photographed towards his portrait, a portrait that, in its realism, seems to exist separately from the individual with a life of its own or assume "an equivalent status and integrity" (Kember 162). The uncanny feeling that the sitter is severed from his photographic portrait is often conveyed in the literature as a sense of strangeness felt in response to one's image and in metaphors of execution and exposure. Accounts that narrate the experience of being photographed for the first time describe the sitter's vulnerability before the camera-agent, which in its power to produce perfect duplicates seems to divorce the subject from his photographed image such that a sense of estrangement or alienation results. The 1843 article, "Sketches of Paris," for instance, recounts such a reaction on the part of a sitter. Having

166

waited with her companions while her portrait is developed, the "ugly lady" reacts in shock at the sight of her image:

> At last the long wished for plate is brought; – they all rush to look at it. Mr. Mouille, who looks at it first, exclaims, "Oh, it is exactly like!" . . . the original is very anxious to see it herself. As soon as she casts her eyes upon it, she exclaims with a voice of horror, "Monsieur, what are you giving me. It is a failure . . . I know you are showing me a fright; you will never make me believe that that thing is my likeness." (179)

The 1849 article, "The Daguerreotypist," also describes this typical reaction, noting that sitters often "are frightened of their own image when it is placed in their hands" (352). In this article, the sitters' fright is partly attributed to their "nervousness" felt in the "operating room" or studio when faced with the camera and thus suggests the anxiety felt in the period towards being made subject to the camera's control (352). That this scene of mis-recognition appears often throughout the literature of the period shows an underlying anxiety deriving from the sitter or "original's" encounter with the perfect likeness ("Sketches of Paris" 179).

The sense of alienation experienced with photographic portraiture is also revealed in the metaphors of exposure and execution that frequently appear in the periodical literature throughout the period, specifically in relation to portraiture. Descriptions of photography as an exposure and execution are suggestive of the anxiety felt towards the camera's agency, which has the power to expose and capture the individual photographed. One such early description is employed in the 1842 article, "Photographic Portraiture," in its explanation of the portraiture process as "a *coup de soleil* [that] takes off the sitter's head" (323). The 1849

article, "The Daguerreotypist" describes subjects who are "brought within the range of the lens" and, "before they dream of danger . . . are caught and fixed" (353). The 1852 article, "More Work for the Ladies" extensively uses the metaphor of execution, describing photographers as "hungry hunters after the heads of man, woman, or child" who compete to "take [the sitter] and add the newly arrived head to the previously decapitated victims" displayed in their studios (Dixon 18). The narrator's unease in being taken is revealed as he reluctantly sits before the camera, observing that the process "might be taken for a milder mode of garrotting [sic] criminals" (18). The fear of execution photography aroused is similarly evident in another *Household Words* article, "Photography," in which Morley and Wills describe their reaction when faced with the "thousands" of daguerreotypes displayed in a portrait studio:

> Young chevaliers regarded us with faces tied and fastened down so that . . . they
> could by no struggle get their features loose out of the very twist and smirk they
> chanced to wear when captured and fixed . . . innumerable people whose eyes seemed
> to speak at us, but all whose tongues were silent; all whose limbs were fixed . . . [the
> photographer states,] "they have all been executed here . . ." (55)

As these accounts make clear, the figuration of photography as an exposure and execution reveals the degree to which the process suggested the vulnerability of the sitter before the agency of the camera. That this figuration endures is evident in its use in accounts as late as the mid-1850s. An illustration in Bede's *Photographic Pleasures*, for example, depicts a woman pleading the photographer not "to fire" (55) (fig.4). Not only does the fear of being

"targets of surveillance" (Foucault 202) haunt these accounts, but so too does a fear of these too real "specimen heads" or photographic others (Dixon 18).
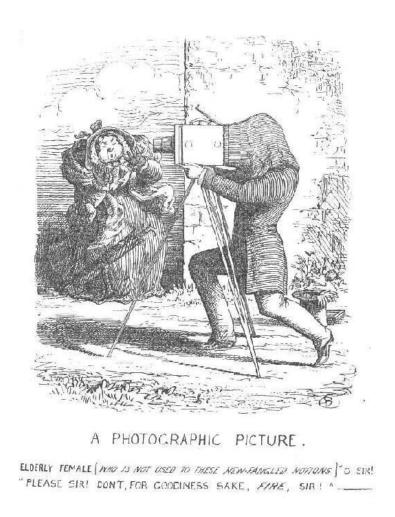

A PHOTOGRAPHIC PICTURE.

ELDERLY FEMALE [WHO IS NOT USED TO THESE NEW-FANGLED NOTIONS] "O SIR! "PLEASE SIR! DON'T, FOR GOODNESS SAKE, FIRE, SIR! "

Fig. 4. Cuthbert Bede, *Photographic Pleasures* (London: Thomas McLean, 1855): 55.

The status of the "second self" that seems to exist in separation from the "original" or photographed subject raises concerns about the subject's lack of control over the photograph and the threat of the photograph supplanting the individual depicted. As an 1846 quip in *Punch* relates, a lady's photographic portrait was so convincingly life-like "that her husband

absolutely preferred it to the original" ("Something New Under the Sun" 236). Bede

similarly quips in *Photographic Pleasures* that the photograph will one day supplant "the

original," rhetorically asking what suitor would not want to "be a Photograph . . . to lie

pillowed by so fair a bosom – clasped to so warm and loving a heart!" (43-4). The persistent

presence of the too life-like photographic other, while humourously and explicitly referred to

in the above accounts, is more often implicitly referred to in tones of concern in other texts in

the period. The 1849 article, "The Daguerreotypist," for example, considers the troubling

possibility that individuals may be "caught and fixed" without their knowing (353). It relates

an instance in which a young admirer obtained a lady's portrait by stealth, which the author

claims is a not-uncommon occurrence: "not a few likenesses of gentlemen as well as ladies

have been secured in this way" (354). Susan Williams confirms the occurrence of such a

practice, observing, "the sitter could not always control the circulation of this surrogate,"

since photographic studios would display portraits "for the public to view and, in some cases,

to purchase and exchange for another portrait" ("'The Inconstant Daguerreotype'" 166-7).

The beautiful young lady was "rather surprised to learn" that the gentleman "had her

Daguerreotype," particularly since she believed herself to have "in her own possession" the

only portrait produced of her (353). After they had married, the gentleman shows her the

illicit portrait, which "was even a more perfect picture than the one she already possessed,"

and admits he had convinced the photographer to take a second portrait of the lady. The lady

recalls that two portraits had been taken of her, but that "one of them [was] spoiled" and

disposed of, to which the admirer admits, "in that you were deceived" – the photographer had

deliberately shown her a ruined plate while keeping the more perfect duplicate for the suitor

(354).[47] While this light scene is easily resolved, the lady forgiving her husband's indiscretion with "loving eyes," it nonetheless raises the issue of the subject's lack of control over the photographic copy, the "perfect picture" that is indiscernible in appearance from the subject photographed (354).[48] The anxiety raised by the circulation of the photographic other became all the more significant in the early 1850s, in which the implementation of the collodion process made multiple exact copies of a single image possible.

Bound up in this anxiety regarding the uncontrollable "second self" is the threatened superiority of the photograph and the possibility that this perfect copy, indiscernible in appearance from the original, can supplant the individual. The vulnerability of the individual to the camera and to the copy it creates is evident in Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*. The popular serial, with its abundant references to visual representations, its pornographic scenes of voyeurism, cross-dressing, and illicit lovemaking, and its numerous salacious illustrations, clearly evinces a fixation with "the theme of looking at that which had been hidden [and] was forbidden" and, as such, reflects the excessively visible state that photography introduced (Marien, *Photography and Its Critics* 198). As described earlier in this chapter, the beautiful

---

[47] Underwriting this polite tale of courtship is the admirer's act of voyeurism and the suggestions of his unseemly possession of her image, something that the more lurid *Mysteries of London* makes explicit in its descriptions of Ellen's nude images and her eventual prostitution. Both accounts relate to the production of pornographic photographs, which were often disguised as the closely related "artistic studies" of nudes. McCauley notes, for instance, that "French commercial operators gradually introduced posing reclining nudes to sell to artists and art students," and that pornographic images were soon after introduced (153).

[48] The concern over photographic copies is raised in an 1853 letter to the *Journal of the Photographic Society*, in which "Luke Limner" states, "a friend of mine has a picture of great value which he will not allow to be copied by [photography], because he imagines (and I think rightly) that he will have no hold upon it hereafter" (91).

Ellen's "road to ruin" begins when she is led by a corrupt old woman to pose as a model for various artists. For each subsequent artist, Ellen exposes more of her body: a "statuary" copies her face, a painter copies her face and bare limbs, and a sculptor copies her naked upper body (89). With the promise of ever-larger sums of money, Ellen at last "enters the service of the man of science," or photographer (89). The text's description of her encounter with the photographer not only suggests the surveillance and exposure associated with photography but also the subject's vulnerability before the camera's agency (88). In their encounter, the photographer, "eyeing his fair visitant from head to foot," describes the terms of Ellen's task (88). "Ellen found, to her surprise, that the photographer was desirous of taking full-length female portraits in a state of nudity"; she at first felt "disgust and indignation" but quickly accepted when the photographer "mentioned the price which he proposed to pay her":

> We shall not proceed to any details connected with this new avocation to which that
> lovely maiden lent herself. Suffice it to say, that having sold her countenance to the
> statuary, her likeness to the artist, and her bust to the sculptor, she disposed of her
> whole body to the photographer. Thus her head embellished images white and
> bronzed; her features and her figure were perpetuated in divers paintings; her bust
> was immortalized in a splendid statue; and her entire form is preserved, in all
> attitudes, and on many plates, in the private cabinet of a photographer at one of the
> metropolitan Galleries of Practical Science. (89)

As the author's description suggests, photography, as the most accurate and indexical form of visual representation, was the worst of all visual media in recording Ellen's "whole body" on

numerous photographic plates (89). As she herself later describes it, "I sold myself in detail":

"I sold my face to the statuary – my likeness to the artist – my bust to the sculptor – my

whole form to the photographer" (129). Being photographed is described as the final act that

ensured her ruin, with Ellen subsequently becoming a prostitute: "a tainted soul now resided

in a pure body. Every remaining sentiment of decency and delicacy was crushed – obliterated

– destroyed by this last service" (89). Such a description pits the ruined "original" against the

numerous perfect photographs now in existence. The figure of the ruined or tainted girl who

is literally and figuratively exposed by the camera is an apt symbol of the fear of

photographic impropriety and exposure that is implied in the literature of the period, as well

as the fear of losing control over these accurate image copies: as S. Williams observes of

early photographic literature, "[i]nstead of letting a woman decide to whom to give her

image, these stories . . . gave that power to the men who made and saw these images" (167).

Further, as this scene and the other contemporary accounts discussed above make clear, the

camera's power of surveillance and exposure clearly related to the issue of female sexuality,

which was largely "constructed . . . in terms of visibility" in the period (Bayuk Rosenman

36).[49]

---

[49] Bayuk Rosenman comments on this visibility, noting "the ease with which women were objectified, sexualized, and consumed within the economy—both visual and monetary—of the city, especially when aided by the new technology of photography" (37). The proliferation of photographic copies (or others) only increases such visibility, such that "women circulate as both bodies and images, on display for the male gaze" (38).

Also suggested in this passage is the surveillance and voyeurism with which the camera is linked, the subject vulnerable to the unerring gaze of the camera lens. The photographer's objective and neutral positioning serves as a contrast for the lurid associations implied in the scene. The "gentleman of science," is described by the old woman as having "invented a means of taking likenesses by the aid of the sun. I do not know what the process is," she continues, "all that concerns me and you [Ellen] is that the Frenchman requires a beautiful woman to serve as a pattern for his experiments" (88). The seemingly neutral photographic "experiments" are directly contrasted with the scene's pornographic allusions, which describe the photographs of Ellen's body, "in all attitudes," being purchased by a photographer "at one of the metropolitan Galleries of Practical Science" for his private collection (89). In its depiction of photography as a complete exposure of the subject, who is stripped bare by "the action of light upon every part of the human frame," *Mysteries of London* thus makes explicit the anxieties Victorians felt regarding the camera and the vulnerability of the photographed subject before it (89). As chapter four demonstrates, such anxieties (which obliquely figure in *Bleak House*)[50] were to become all the more crucial as photography became ubiquitous and ever-increasing numbers of people were thus brought before the camera's lens.

---

[50] The connections between *Bleak House* and *The Mysteries of London* were not unapparent to contemporary readers: one reviewer notes that the plot of *Bleak House* is "disagreeably reminiscent of that vilest of modern books, Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*" (Brimley qtd. in Collins 284).

Conclusion

The photographic anxieties examined in this chapter present the definitive aspects of the Victorians' representations and receptions of the developing medium of photography. Many of the issues associated with the medium have evolved from the initial reactions to and perceptions of photography in the year of its invention in 1839. That such concerns continued to surface throughout the 1840s suggests the influence of the initial imaginings of the new medium and is evidence of premediation. As this chapter has demonstrated, these anxieties are often implicitly expressed, serving as a troubling undertone to the contemporary accounts about photography, particularly those which document the experience of photographic portraiture. The ways in which these anxieties are expressed and the problems suggested by photography – whether the issues of surveillance and voyeurism, visual deceit, or the status of the original and the copy – can thus be seen to resonate with other texts in the period in which explicit references to the medium are absent. As Marien notes, "by the middle of the nineteenth century photography embodied the anxieties of modern life" (*Photography and Its Critics* 111). The following chapter shows the extent to which the figure of photography and the attendant anxieties it raised intimately informed the Victorian realist novel, as evident in Dickens's *Bleak House*.

Chapter 4

"You have prepared me for my exposure": Photographic Allusions in

Bleak House

This chapter examines how the representations, reception, and problems of

photography explored in chapters one through three are expressed in novelistic form in

Dickens's 1852-3 novel, *Bleak House*. It argues that the figuration of photography developed

in the periodical press since the medium's invention and the attendant anxieties the medium

raised influenced the Victorian realist novel, as exemplified by the numerous, implicit

allusions to photography that surface throughout *Bleak House*. The novel's representation of

photography and its treatment of photographic anxieties demonstrate fiction's role in

reflecting and commenting upon the concerns of the period; as Mary Warner Marien notes,

"fiction gave voice to the way in which growing public confidence in photographic

representation was mixed with wariness about its power" (*Photography* 75). The excess of

visual references, the circulation of visual copies of Lady Dedlock, the figuration of the

camera in Bucket and Tulkinghorn, and the references to photography by Esther as well as

the anonymous narrator all work in concert to give expression to a profound unease about the

status of the photographic medium in the midst of photography's growing popularity in mid-

nineteenth-century Britain.

Although its precise time setting is vague (with critics generally identifying the pre-

photographic period of the 1830s as the setting for the novel's actions), *Bleak House* is

nonetheless reflective of the period in which it was written and is critically examined as a

"tract for the times" and "a model in little of English society in [Dickens's] time" that is "at once a work of fiction and a critical guide to contemporary reality" (Butt and Tillotson 200; Miller 11; Tracy 30).[51] As such, photography undeniably imbues the novel with the unique possibilities and realities, both celebrated and feared by Victorians, that the new technology created. The novel's numerous references to images and noticeable focus on the exchange and regulation of glances amongst characters reveal its engagement with the culture at the onset of the 1850s, which was increasingly fascinated with "the question of what the visible reveals," particularly in terms of the technology of photography (Christ and Jordan xxiv). While critics have commented on the seeming absence of photography from the Victorian realist novel (Robert Dingley, for instance, observing that "[t]he absence of photography from the repertoire of 'canonical' fiction is almost complete" [43]), this chapter presents a reading of *Bleak House* that shows the extent to which this mid-century novel was preoccupied with the visual, particularly as negotiated through photography. Although there are no explicit references to photography in *Bleak House* (aside from the often-cited instance in which Bucket "looks at Mr. Snagsby as if he were going to take his portrait" [361]), I argue that the numerous visual references reveal the novel's engagement with and consideration of the issues that photography uniquely raised in this time period: namely, the status of the original in the face of reproducible copies, the agency of the machine, the status and representation of memory, and the status of the subject in contrast to the status of his or

---

[51] The general consensus among critics is that the novel's action most likely was set in the 1830s, although there are references to events as early as the 1820s, such as the Spanish refugees, and as late as the 1850s, such as the new professionalized police force (see, for instance, Norman Page and Andrew Sanders).

her photographic portrait. *Bleak House* considers the status of the photographed subject, of the original image, and of the image's copies as demonstrated in the copies of Lady Dedlock that circulate in the novel and in Esther's role as an image-object. It also considers the effects of photography on the representation of memory (as evident in Esther's narrative) and considers the troubling agency of the camera machine and the newly visible state that photography created in the figuration of both Bucket and Tulkinghorn as cameras. Further, in its dual narration, the novel raises the problems of subjectivity, perspective, and observation, all of which relate to mediation itself, which photography similarly foregrounded in the period of its increasing popularity. That photography highlighted the mediated nature of all media is demonstrated in the novel itself, which presents a realist world that is interrupted by the excess of photographic allusions. As Alison Byerly asserts, such references are "insistent reminders of the disjunction between art in life" that function in realist novels to "threaten to sabotage the realist claim to unmediated representation" (2). The disruption of novelistic realism that photography enacts will be considered in this chapter.

Visual References

A consideration of the wealth of visual references in *Bleak House* reveals the extent to which the novel is engaged with the issues of visuality raised in the period. Numerous references to eyes and looking are made throughout the novel. Guppy and Weevle are "the possessors of those eyes" that unobserved (save by the anonymous narrator) watch Richard (612). Better there be "five thousand pairs of fashionable eyes" upon Lady Dedlock than the relentless eyes of Tulkinghorn (457). Even Tulkinghorn, seemingly the most powerful and covert observer in the novel, is himself observed by the "watching stars" (633), which are

just some of the many inanimate objects comprising the novel's "world of objects" that "assumes a life of its own and becomes in its turn watchful" (Ousby 979). Houses, for instance, are often described as having eyes: "the Dedlock town house stares at other houses," while "the two eyes in the shutters stare at [Weevle] in his sleep, as if they were full of wonder" (817, 339). Beyond the text itself, the contemporary reader of *Bleak House* was faced with even more visual references in the advertising sections accompanying the nineteen serial parts of the novel, which "embedded Dickens's text in a display of goods" (Tracy 33). Significant items and services advertised include *The Gallery of Byron Beauties*, a set of engravings or gallery of women similar to *Bleak House*'s "Galaxy Gallery of British Beauty," a *Practical Manual of Photography*, and John E. Mayall's well-known photographic portrait studio and gallery (Tracy 34; Steinlight 135; Oost 144). Visual references were also present in the numerous literary reviews of *Bleak House* that describe the novel and Dickens himself in terms of the photographic: as Gerard Curtis notes, "reviewers were making a not-uncommon comparison, in equating Dickens's observational manner with those instruments of precise optical enquiry, the photograph and camera lucida" (111). Philip Collins also notes this popular metaphorical figuration of Dickens, which had become a "frequent image in Victorian novel-criticism," with Dickens often "compared – as indeed he compared himself – to a taker of daguerreotypes, sun-pictures, [and] photographs" (6). A typical instance is the 24 September 1853 unsigned review in *The Illustrated London News* that comments, "Mr. Dickens has, in this book, given to his readers many intellectual daguerreotypes to carry away" (qtd. in Collins 282).

A sample of the numerous passing references to pictures and to observation demonstrates how these visual details, which are incidental to the plot, nonetheless imbue *Bleak House* with a distinctly visual atmosphere. Esther "almost" described Guppy's portrait "as more like than life: it insisted upon him with such obstinacy, and was so determined to not let him off" (597). The anonymous narrator observes a "fearful abortion of a portrait of Sir Leicester" hanging in Chesney Wold (853). Mr. Turveydrop's dancing academy is in the same building as a "drawing master . . . and a lithographic artist" (241). An "artist of a picture newspaper, with a foreground and figures ready drawn for anything," comes to document the scene of Krook's death (524). Related to these references to pictures are the many instances in which metaphors of originals and copies are used, metaphors that were often employed in descriptions of photography. After her surprise that Guppy's portrait seemed almost "more like than life," Esther notes, "[n]ot only was the portrait there, but we found the original there too" (597). She describes Mr. Turveydrop as behaving "in a manner . . . worthy of his shining original" (248), while Bucket describes Esther as "a pattern" (248, 857). Weevle behaves towards the copperplates of British aristocratic ladies as if he "seems to know the originals, and to be known of them" (340). These paintings even crowd the book's illustrations, with forty-eight paintings depicted in the forty plates by Hablot Knight Browne, who often included "in the background of illustrations paintings that comment on the action being depicted" (Oost 151).

Bleak House's numerous visual references reveal the extent to which the novel reflected the period's concerns about issues of visuality and photography. As Regina Oost observes, "[g]iven the popularity of portrait photography during the 1850s, as well as the

proliferation of discussions about its uses and shortcomings – a discussion in which

Dickens's *Household Words* often engaged – it is not altogether surprising that questions

about the truth-claims of painted portraits resonate through *Bleak House*" (147). These

photographic allusions contribute to the novel's "complex fabric of recurrences" in which its

"[c]haracters, scenes, themes and metaphors return in proliferating resemblances" (Miller

15). The visual references can further be read as just one type of connection that draws the

characters together. Indeed, when the anonymous narrator asks "[w]hat connexion can there

be" between the characters from high to low class or "from opposite sides of great gulfs . . .

who have been very curiously brought together" into this "web of very different lives," the

answer can be considered to be the common act of watching and being watched (272, 703).

As an examination of the images of Lady Dedlock reveals, the various characters' acts of

observation include surveillance not only of one another, but also of the numerous images in

circulation throughout the novel.

Copies of Lady Dedlock

The most obvious allusions to photography in *Bleak House* are evident in the

abundance of references to reproducible images throughout the novel, particularly the images

of Lady Dedlock, which include her painted portrait and copperplate image.[52] Several critics

---

[52] The use of metal plates for engraving was introduced in the fifteenth century; unlike
previous methods of engraving (that used wood, for instance), copper and other metal plates
were stronger and more durable and so a greater numbers of images of greater clarity could
be reproduced (Namowitz Worthen, "Engraving. Materials and Techniques" n. pag.). By the
1820s and 1830s, increased demand for reproductive prints led to advanced methods such as
lithography that were more efficient than copperplate engraving (Namowitz Worthen,
"Engraving. History, c1750 - c1900. Steel Engraving" n. pag.). Metal plate engraving,
lithography, and other reprographic technologies were early forms of mass reproduction; as

suggest that photography is implicitly referred to in *Bleak House* in its juxtaposition of the

painted portrait (or aristocratic, unique image) and the copperplate (or "classless", mass-

produced image). This reading aligns with Walter Benjamin's argument in "The Work of Art

in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" that photography and other mass visual media

threatened or devalued the originality or "aura" of the unique image (such as the painting) by

"substitut[ing] a plurality of copies for a unique existence" (223). This critical argument

contrasts Lady Dedlock's painted portrait to the copperplate engraving of her (sold as part of

the mass-produced series, "Galaxy Gallery of British Beauty"), asserting that the copperplate

represents the threat of the photograph (easily reproducible, democratic) to the aura of the

unique, upper-class portrait painting.[53] Ronald Thomas states, for instance, that the novel

"recapitulates photography's transformation of nineteenth-century portraiture from an

authentic sign of aristocratic status, to a mechanical image of middle-class self-promotion,

and finally to a clue for criminal investigation and control" (97). His reading of photography

relies on an opposition of the photograph and visual art, as evident in his assertion that

photographs "are contrasted in the novel with a set of painted portraits which do *not* tell the

---

such, they raised questions about the status of the original image and its copies. However, the
unprecedented accuracy and unmediated nature of the photograph and its potential for large-
scale image reproduction (due to the recent invention of the collodion process in 1851, which
produced copies from a photographic negative) was such that concerns about the status of
reproducible images grew more critical and were debated with greater frequency, as the
previous chapters have shown.

[53] Dickens does not specify what exactly the copperplate is an impression of – a copy of a
drawing or painting, for instance, or a photograph? In the 1850s, it was possible to create
engravings of a photograph and thus mass-produce a photographic image. My discussion of
the copperplate image does not rest on the assertion that the image is an engraving of a
photograph specifically; instead, I argue that the copperplate is one of several "image copies"
of Lady Dedlock that circulate in the novel (thus evoking issues that photography similarly
raised).

truth" (103); such a reading overlooks the debates in the period regarding the status of the photograph as art, the value of other visual media in comparison to photography, and the photograph's ability to tell as much as hide the "truth" (as discussed in chapter three). Oost counters R. Thomas's assertion that the novel "promote[s] the truth-claims of the newer technology over those of the older," instead positing that *Bleak House* "bears the traces of considerable ambivalence about what any portrait – painted or photographed – can convey" (142). Susan Horton makes a similar argument, asserting that Dickens's novels are "perspectival reflections on the problematics of empirical vision" (2). In his troubling of the status of the image and models of objective vision, Dickens expresses the profound ambivalence towards representation that was characteristic of the time period in which photography was increasingly becoming ubiquitous.

As Oost and Horton suggest, images in *Bleak House* provoke anxiety about the indeterminancy of the original and copy, as well as anxiety regarding control over the reproducible image. While most arguments rely on the assertion that the copperplate symbolizes the photograph, juxtaposing it to the painted portrait, my argument instead examines how the novel emphasizes similarities between the two types of images through the manner in which they are described and observed by other characters. Descriptions of the copperplate are suggestive of photographic portraiture, while the manner in which both the copperplate and painted portrait of Lady Dedlock are read and monitored by various characters throughout the novel, particularly Guppy, reveals the same anxieties that were raised by photographic reproduction and circulation. Given that *Bleak House*'s time setting is most likely to have been the 1830s, thus predating photographic technology, there are no

183

explicit references to the photograph or daguerreotype; rather, the references to the

copperplate serve to foreground – along with the other image copies in circulation throughout

the novel – the issues or anxieties that surrounded photography since its invention and were

growing all the more critical as the technology became increasingly ubiquitous.

The Copperplate Copy of Lady Dedlock

The copperplate image of Lady Dedlock is central to the detection and exposure of

her secret past, serving as one of several image copies of her that circulate throughout the

novel, along with the painted portrait or "perfect likeness" of her at Chesney Wold that "has

never been engraved," and Esther, Hortense, and Jenny (all of whom are mistaken for Lady

Dedlock at various points in the novel [138]). While some critics such as R. Thomas read the

copperplate as an engraving of the portrait of Lady Dedlock that Sir Dedlock so carefully

guarded from reproduction, the text does not make clear whether this is indeed the case.[54]

Indeed, Tulkinghorn's comment that the copperplate is a "very good likeness in its way, but

[that] it wants force of character" would suggest that it is a reproduction of a different portrait

than the one treasured by Sir Dedlock as a "perfect likeness" of Lady Dedlock (although this

comment could be interpreted to suggest that engravings are of lesser quality than the

original that they replicate) (618, 138). Whatever the status of the copperplate image, it, the

other copperplates of the "Galaxy Gallery of British Beauty," and the painted portrait of

---

[54] While engravings of photographs were possible in this period, R. Thomas's suggestion that
the copperplate is based on a photograph of Lady Dedlock's guarded portrait (stating that
"this copy may well have been reproduced by an early photographic process") is unlikely
(95), given that it would have been difficult for an operator to make a photograph of the
portrait without being detected, since Sir Leicester "has always refused permission" (Dickens
138).

Lady Dedlock are all representative of the anxieties about circulation and loss of control that photography introduced (340).

One way that the copperplates are suggestive of photography is in the manner in which they are described, which evokes the setting and accessories of the contemporary photographic portrait studio. The first description of the copperplates details the numerous accessories pictured in the images: "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" (340). Lady Dedlock's copperplate image also contains similar accessories: in it, "she is represented on a terrace, with a pedestal upon the terrace, and a vase upon the pedestal, and her shawl upon the vase, and a prodigious piece of fur upon the shawl, and her arm on the prodigious piece of fur, and a bracelet on her arm" (503). The flower pots, balustrade, and pedestal that "back up" the female figures suggest the stands provided in studios to support and keep the photographic subject still while she is photographed, while the "variety of prospect" and "terrace" evoke the decorative painted backgrounds used to set the portrait's scene. The musical instruments, "fancy dress," fur, and bracelet can also be read as the visual markers employed by subjects to suggest their status and wealth. The accessories employed in these copperplate images were all familiar to the Victorian viewer as "the recognized trappings of serious portraiture" that photographic studios provided sitters as a means for them "to enact a public personality" (Marien, *Photography* 30).

The Surveillance of Lady Dedlock's Portrait and Copperplate

Allusions to photography are also apparent in the manner in which Mr. Guppy monitors Lady Dedlock and the numerous visual copies of her in circulation throughout the novel. Guppy is the character who first sees, and thus allows the reader to see, both the painted portrait and mass-produced copperplate image of Lady Dedlock. The manner in which he monitors these images, seeking out the connection between these and the other image copies of her (particularly Esther), can be examined in light of contemporary concerns regarding photographic reproduction and the control of images. Lady Dedlock's portrait is first mentioned in the scene in which Guppy and his companion Weevle tour Chesney Wold. Guppy listlessly looks about the long drawing room, until "a portrait over the chimney-piece, painted by the fashionable artist of the day, acts upon him like a charm. He recovers in a moment. He stares at it with uncommon interest; he seems to be fixed and fascinated by it" (138). The maid Rosa identifies the portrait as "the present Lady Dedlock. It is considered a perfect likeness, and the best work of the master" (138). In response to Guppy's query whether the painting has been engraved, she states, "the picture has never been engraved. Sir Leicester has always refused permission" (138). The rest of the scene is notable for the manner in which Guppy is affected by the portrait. He has "no eyes" but for the image, and repeatedly states that he strangely feels he "knows her": "how well I know that picture! So that's Lady Dedlock, is it!"; "the more I think of that picture the better I know it, without knowing how I know it!" (138-9). That Guppy stares "with uncommon interest," "absorbed" and "dazed" by the picture, establishes his role throughout the novel as an observer in pursuit of Lady Dedlock's mystery (138). In this sense, he is aligned with Tulkinghorn and Bucket,

186

the two characters who monitor and control others. That he conflates seeing "that picture" of Lady Dedlock with "know[ing] her" also speaks to a key point in the novel – namely, that Lady Dedlock is positioned by these many observers as an image object, the copies of her (both pictures and other people) in circulation threatening to expose her hidden past (138).

Guppy's surveillance of Lady Dedlock is also demonstrated in the way in which he describes and monitors her copperplate portrait. As with Lady Dedlock's painted portrait, the copperplate of her is first brought to the reader's attention by Guppy, who notices it amongst the other portraits of British beauties in the copperplate collection. Looking about Weevle's room, Guppy detects "the portrait of Lady Dedlock over the mantelshelf," claiming, "that's very like Lady Dedlock . . . it's a speaking likeness" (503). Such a description resonates with contemporary advertisements for photographic portraiture in the period that (as discussed in chapters two and three) often described the portrait as so real as to appear "almost speaking" (Beard's studio, *Times* 10 December 1846). It also shows the similarities between the painting and copperplate, in that both are first described as homogenous groups; then, with Guppy's observation, Lady Dedlock's image in particular is identified and singled out. This also confirms Guppy's position as a principal observer – and correspondingly, also positions Lady Dedlock as the principal object observed.

That Guppy's manner of observation establishes Lady Dedlock as an observed image is also made apparent in his observation of Esther, who functions as another image copy of Lady Dedlock that surfaces in the novel. Guppy's feeling that he "know[s] that picture" of Lady Dedlock is strengthened by his meeting Esther for the second time. Having seen Lady Dedlock's portrait, he now looks at Esther, she says, "with an attention that quite confused

me . . . I never looked at him, but I found him looking at me, in the same scrutinizing and curious way" (173). In his "uncommon interest" towards both the painting and copperplate, and subsequently towards Lady Dedlock and Esther, Guppy thus functions like Bucket and Tulkinghorn as the "possessors of those eyes" which in their surveillance position Lady Dedlock and, by extension, Esther, as an image-object (138, 612). Such positioning is reinforced throughout the novel by Guppy referring to Esther as "an image" that, in his affection for her, "is imprinted on [his] art" (462).

Guppy's role in the positioning of Lady Dedlock and Esther as image objects is also made apparent in the scene in which he confronts Lady Dedlock with his theory of the connection between the two women, the first point in the novel in which this relationship is explicitly stated (and confirmed, at the scene's end, by Lady Dedlock stating in reference to Esther, "O my child, my child!" [466]). Similar to the above scenes in which Guppy's observation draws the reader's attention to Lady Dedlock's portrait and copperplate, this scene also centres on the image of Lady Dedlock and the copies that Guppy's sharp eyes detect. Guppy begins by asking Lady Dedlock whether Esther was familiar to her: "Now, did it strike your ladyship that she was like anybody?" (462). Her denial prompts him to ask whether she "remember[s] Miss Summerson's face," explaining "that having Miss Summerson's image imprinted on my art" enabled him to detect "such a resemblance between Miss Esther Summerson and your ladyship's own portrait, that it completely knocked me over; so much so, that I didn't at the moment even know what it *was* that knocked me over" (462). As his description makes clear, Guppy interacts with both Esther

and Lady Dedlock as images and succeeds in identifying the former as a duplicate of the latter. He admits that his detection is based on a surveillance of Lady Dedlock:

> And now I have the honour of beholding your ladyship near, (I have often, since that, taken the liberty of looking at your ladyship in your carriage in the park, when I dare say you was not aware of me, but I never saw your ladyship so near), [the resemblance is] really more surprising than I thought it. (462)

Guppy's admitted monitoring of Lady Dedlock is significant in aligning him with Bucket and Tulkinghorn, both of whom also relentlessly scrutinize Lady Dedlock. Like them, he works to unravel what he describes as "the chain of circumstances" that stem from the "undoubted strong likeness of [Esther] to your ladyship, which is a positive fact for a jury" (465).[55] His voyeurism also suggests the troubling exposure that the camera enacted, an exposure that evoked profound anxiety on the part of Victorians in the period. As discussed in chapter three, contemporary accounts often described the "unnerving" experience of being photographed that resulted from the sense of being uncannily "drawn to the camera's eye" (Marien *Photography* 75). The photographed subject's fear of exposure before the unerring eye of the camera is suggested by Guppy's uncomfortably intimate examination of Lady Dedlock, "so near" before him, as an image-object – just as he similarly poured over her painted portrait, her copperplate, and Esther herself (who describes his surveillance as his "scrutinizing and curious way" of watching her [173]).

---

[55] The statement that Esther's face would function as a "positive fact for a jury" in connecting her to Lady Dedlock is suggestive of photography's role in highlighting familial resemblance and its eventual function as court evidence (465).

Similarities between the portrait and copperplate of Lady Dedlock are not only suggested in their being called to the reader's attention through Guppy's gaze, but also in their being described as similar to one another by the anonymous narrator, as evident in the descriptions of Weevle's possession of the copperplates. Like Sir Leicester's portrait of Lady Dedlock, which hangs "over the fire-place" (138), Weevle's copperplate of her also resides in a central position on his walls "over the mantelshelf" (503). This has the effect of linking the aristocratic estate to the humble housing of the working classes, a connection that the "democratic" photograph similarly engendered.[56] As Oost notes, photography transformed the social status of the portrait by making it available to a number of classes beyond the aristocracy: "Once a marker of social difference, the portrait now marks an erasure of distinctions as a new class energetically claims the right to represent itself" (151). Although Sir Leicester sought control over his favourite portrait of Lady Dedlock by forbidding it to be engraved, her image nonetheless escapes his grasp in being multiplied as part of the published series of "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" (340).

---

[56] The connection between the classes of society is also emphasized by the novel's illustrations. Oost notes that the illustrations' depiction of portraits "not only thematically supports a plot hinging upon revelations about identity, but also visually connects the homes of the middle class and those of the aristocracy and gentry" (151). Jane R. Cohen also states "[t]he dark plates, depicting the settings associated with the aristocratic Dedlocks, Tulkinghorn, their attorney, and the slum orphan, Jo, link these characters graphically as Dickens links them narratively" (109). The paintings in *Bleak House* – both those described in the text and those illustrated – serve to visually symbolize the "opening of floodgates" that Leicester so fears will dissolve class distinctions (and thus also parallel the contamination of Tom-all-Alone's) (449). This anxiety about contamination and connection in *Bleak House* resonates with the contemporary fear towards photography, in that any person could be depicted in a manner that suggests a different class status or social standing than reality.

Weevle "prizes most" his "choice collection" of Galaxy copperplates, and "seems to know the originals, and to be known of them" (340). This familiarity positions Weevle as one of countless observers of the fashionable world of which Lady Dedlock is the centre: "to be informed what the Galaxy . . . is about . . . and what Galaxy rumours are in circulation, is to become acquainted with the most glorious destinies of mankind" (340). Weevle's familiarity with and ownership of the copperplate images – and, by extension, his familiarity with the "originals" of the images – not only satirizes and makes ineffectual Sir Leicester's proprietary control of Lady Dedlock's portrait, but also reveals the ease of image circulation that photography enabled and the resulting anxiety about access to and possession of such images. This anxiety often figured in contemporary accounts such as an 1854 letter to *The Journal of the Photographic Society*, which recounts that photographs of the Vatican's "famous picture of 'Beatrice Cenci'" were no longer permitted since a photographer "had exchanged his copy for the original, and had walked off with it" and that, "ever since, the Cardinal, justly suspicious of all sorts of copyists, had denied access to the picture" (Sutton 53). A similar anxiety about the value of the original and its numerous copies is voiced in the 1854 article "Busy With the Photograph," in which Dodd describes the ongoing "fear that the power of taking dozens of copies . . . with very little trouble will disentitle those copies to be designated works of art at all" (243).

The way in which both the painted portrait and copperplate of Lady Dedlock are treated thus reveals the Victorians' concern about the circulation of photographs and their potential control by all levels of society. As Jennifer Green-Lewis notes, "[t]he apparently classless appeal and possession of photographs were the subject of continued, almost

191

obsessive observation" (45). Such concern is evident in the extent to which the issue of the democratic photograph's circulation was the frequent subject of contemporary photographic literature (45). The 1846 article, "Daguerreotypes," for instance, troublingly suggests that with the photographic portrait, the "disdainful mistress" (such as Lady Dedlock) may be indistinguishable in appearance from "her humble maid" (such as Hortense and Jenny [552]). The manner in which characters are oriented as observer or observed, particularly Lady Dedlock's positioning as an image object in circulation amongst other copies of her (her portrait, Weevle's copperplate engraving and the innumerable copies published in the "Galaxy Gallery," and Esther, Hortense, and Jenny, all of whom are mistaken for Lady Dedlock), reveals the period's preoccupation with technologies of reproduction in general, and with photography (with its abilities to create exact, duplicable images) in particular. Indeed, the circulation of these numerous image copies beyond Lady Dedlock's control enacts "the stripping bare of the object," or original image, Lady Dedlock, a "destruction of the aura . . . where even the singular, the unique, is divested of its uniqueness – by means of its reproduction" (Benjamin, "The Work of Art" 250).

Lady Dedlock's portrait and copperplate also reveal the period's anxiety about the photograph (as an indexical representation of the subject) threatening to displace the person photographed. As photographs became increasingly affordable in the early 1850s, more portraits were produced, exchanged, and circulated (whether in the form of engravings of famous individuals that were published in "illustrated books, magazines, and collections of prints," or of daguerreotypes of famous or "regular" clients that were displayed in photographic studio galleries or collected in personal albums [S. Williams, *Confounding*

192

Images 41]). As noted in chapter three, this exposure of the photographed subject was of increasing concern as photography grew in popularity: with photographic portraiture, "the reading of the 'portrait / face' underwent dramatic changes . . . The face was, in effect, democratized and commodified . . . Anyone's face could now be mass engraved or reproduced at little cost, and in various media" (Curtis 123). The effect of such display and circulation was the transformation of the individual into a visual object, the photographic portrait making increasing numbers of people from a range of classes highly visible. As Susan Williams notes of this photographic state, "images became negotiable within a market economy that detached them from their original referent. As a result, the self became an exchangeable form of social currency" (*Confounding Images* 44). Lady Dedlock is an apt symbol of this new photographic state in being acutely aware of being constantly scrutinized by Guppy and other characters and in being powerless over the numerous images of her in circulation and exchange.

Esther as a Copy of Lady Dedlock

That Esther, like Lady Dedlock, is scrutinized by various characters shows the effect such observation has in reducing the female subject to "the female-observed-object" within the highly visualized state of culture that photography introduced (Bayuk Rosenman 37). As Deborah Epstein Nord asserts of this culture of observation, "femaleness itself constitutes an object of curiosity" (240). Just as Guppy first detects and identifies Lady Dedlock's painted and copperplate images (by extension, allowing the reader to "see" them) and positions Lady Dedlock herself as the observed object, so too does he position Esther, as demonstrated when he first meets her. He observes that the fog "seems to do you good, miss, judging from your

appearance" (83). Esther blushes in response, admitting he "meant well in paying me this compliment" (83). Having been identified as pretty, Esther is forced to mention her appearance to the reader.[57] While this reluctant admission may be a part of her general narrative desire not to draw attention to herself, it nevertheless highlights Esther's positioning as an image through others' observations of her.

Esther's role as an observed object is also emphasized by her function throughout the novel (until her scarring) as one of several image copies of Lady Dedlock.[58] This is most evident in the scenes in which the crossing-sweeper Jo witnesses multiple copies of Lady Dedlock – the original he led to the grave of Nemo (revealed to be Lady Dedlock), the image copy Tulkinghorn presents him for verification of identity (revealed to be Hortense), and finally the image copy, Esther, whom he sees while lying ill at the brickmaker's house. Upon seeing the veiled Esther enter the brickmaker's cottage, Jo stares with an "expression of surprise and terror"; her face revealed, he states, "she looks to me the t'other one [the veiled lady]. It ain't the bonnet, nor yet it ain't the gownd, but she looks to me the t'other one" (485-6). Despite Esther's assurances that she is not the veiled lady, Jo still stares "with his

---

[57] Prior to this scene, the only suggestion of her pretty appearance occurs when she describes Mr. Kenge's reaction to seeing her after a spell of time has passed: "*He* was not altered; but he was surprised to see how altered I was, and appeared quite pleased" (77). As in the meeting with Guppy, Esther does not directly admit her beauty but instead describes the effect of it, as reflected in the observer's (Mr. Kenge's, and Guppy's) face.

[58] Esther's similarity to Lady Dedlock is suggested in her first chapter in the novel, which recounts how Mr. Kenge visited her at her godmother's when she was twelve years old (significantly, on the cusp of womanhood). As Esther narrates, her godmother states, "'This is Esther, sir.' The gentleman put up his eye-glasses to look at me . . . and asked me to take off my bonnet – looking at me all the while. When I had complied, he said, 'Ah!' and afterwards 'Yes!'", which suggests he detects Lady Dedlock's appearance reflected in the young Esther (66).

lustrous eyes fixed upon [her] . . . arrested" (similar to Guppy's "immovable" and "dazed state" before Lady Dedlock's portrait [138]) and claims, "[i]f she ain't the t'other one, she ain't the forrenner [the foreigner, Hortense]. Is there *three* of 'em then?" (488). Jo's inability to distinguish amongst these copies is a recurring pattern throughout the novel, one that is repeated by other characters who are also unable to discern the original image from its duplicates. For instance, when George (who knew Esther's father, Captain Hawdon) sees Esther for the first time, he confusedly feels that he knows her (without knowing why): as she narrates, he "looked at me now, in three or four quick successive glances," stating, "I thought I had seen you somewhere . . . what is it that sets me off again . . . what's my head running against!" (397-8).

Jo's anxiety when faced with the multiple copies of Lady Dedlock suggests the concern in the period regarding the proliferating copies of the photograph that circulate beyond the control of the "original" subject who is photographed (Joseph's studio, *Times* 30 May 1846). Jo's and George's sense of misrecognition also resonates with contemporary accounts of viewers' similar reaction of misrecognition when confronted with the uncanny realism of the photographic portrait, whether a portrait of themselves or another individual. Esther's description of seeing her scarred face for the first time since her illness also evokes this sense of estrangement: "I put my hair aside, and looked at the reflection in the mirror . . . At first, my face was so strange to me, that I think I should have put my hands before it and started back" (559). That she describes seeing herself in the mirror further strengthens this scene's association with photographic portraiture, in that the daguerreotype portrait was often described as a "mirror with a memory" not only for its highly accurate image, but also for its

195

mirror-like, highly polished surface in which the viewing subject could see his own image reflected back. The suggestion of photography in this scene's reference to the mirror is repeated throughout the novel, which often (in Esther's narrative) draws attention to mirrors, particularly in association with Lady Dedlock, who is "like a broken glass" to Esther, the image-copy (304). That Esther feels a strange sense of recognition when confronted with Lady Dedlock, yet also feels a defamiliarization from herself, suggests the estrangement subjects felt "in see[ing] themselves as others see'em" when faced with their photographic portrait (Carey 125), or what Esther describes as "an undefinable impression of myself as something different from what I then was" (484). The unease that the photographic portrait evokes reveals the anxiety expressed in the period towards the status of the too-real photograph that in its accuracy threatens to displace the individual photographed, an anxiety (as discussed in chapter three) that is tellingly suggested in the contemporary references to the photograph as an agent with a life of its own, a "living likeness" (Bede 45) that is in "appearance breathing" (Bright's studio, *Times* 16 September 1846). This troubling presence of the photographic other is evident, for instance, in one of the photographer Mayall's advertisements in the *Bleak House* serial, in which his photographic portraits are described as superior to "'the many wretched abortions claiming the same nomenclature, and to be seen in almost every street'" (qtd. in Oost 145).

Esther's positioning as an observed object monitored by various characters and as one of several image-copies of Lady Dedlock in circulation thus clearly resonates with the anxiety expressed in the period regarding the troubling indeterminacy of the original and copies. The novel attempts to assuage this anxiety towards photographic indeterminacy in its

196

scarring of Esther and in its presentation of her as an active observer. With her illness, Esther's role as an image-copy of Lady Dedlock is ruined by her scarring (a literal defacing of the perfect copy), such that she is no longer a duplicate of her mother. Esther herself confirms this in her narration of the scene in which Lady Dedlock confesses to be her mother, anxious in her response to state that the likeness has been defaced by her scarring:

> When I saw her at my feet on the bare earth in her great agony of mind, I felt, through all my tumult of emotion, a burst of gratitude to the providence of God that I was so changed as that I never could disgrace her by any trace of likeness; as that nobody could ever now look at me, and look at her, and remotely think of any near tie between us. (565)

With Lady Dedlock's death, the various copies of her that were once in circulation are systematically expunged (Weevle's copperplate of her and the other British Beauties are "deposited . . . in their old ignoble band-box" and never mentioned again in the novel, Hortense is jailed, and Jenny disappears from the plot) – until only Esther remains, now the sole, albeit mutilated, copy (617). Esther's relationship to Lady Dedlock as a (now) singular image suggests the function of the photograph as memorial: as S. Williams notes, "[t]he daguerreotype thus provided a living double of the deceased" ("'The Inconstant Daguerreotype'" 164). In its removal of the numerous image-copies such that only one unique image now remains, *Bleak House* attempts to assuage the contemporary anxiety towards photography in suggesting that control over the circulation of photographs is possible. Further, in presenting Esther as an "active observer," thus challenging her figuration as merely an observed object, the novel can also be seen to attempt to assuage the

photographed subject's feeling of lack of control in regard to his or her "living likeness," or photographic portrait (Bede 45).

Esther's role as an observer aligns her with the other active observers in *Bleak House*. She is represented in the anonymous narrative and in her own narrative as being subject to observation by other characters and positioned as an image. Her reluctance to admit her role as an active agent and observer stems from her professed modesty, as evident in her discomfort in writing about herself: "It seems so curious to me to be obliged to write all this about myself! As if this narrative were the narrative of *my* life!" (73-4). Esther's resistance to being focalized and her desire that her "little body . . . soon fall into the background" (74) of the story is nonetheless challenged by points in her narrative in which she admits to surreptitiously observing others around her (which she describes as "peeping"), as evident in her observation of Richard and Ada:

> I had never seen any young people falling in love before, but I found them out quite soon. I could not say so, of course, or show that I knew anything about it. On the contrary, I was so demure, and used to seem so unconscious, that sometimes I considered within myself . . . whether I was not growing quite deceitful. But there was no help for it. All I had to do was to be quiet, and I was as quiet as a mouse. (163)

In admitting that she "had always rather a noticing way – not a quick way, O no! – a silent way of noticing what passed before me," Esther admits her frequent role throughout her narrative as an unnoticed, undetected observer. Although J. Hillis Miller asserts that

198

Esther "is conspicuously unwilling to engage in that form of the will to power which infects so many others in the book, the desire to decipher signs and to ferret out secrets," her role as the active observer-subject (rather than only a vulnerable observed-object) shows her participation in the power "to decipher signs" (31). Esther resists the traditional positioning of the female subject as an observed "object of curiosity," one to whom, in being observed, the role of observer is unavailable: as Nord asserts, "[t]o see without being seen, or to be seen without becoming a spectacle is rendered impossible" (240). In participating in the novel's surveillance, Esther can thus be compared to the anonymous narrator as well as Bucket and Tulkinghorn.

The Camera Embodied

The secretive lawyer Tulkinghorn and detective Bucket are the two characters who succeed in discovering the truth about Lady Dedlock's past; the manner in which both are characterized and their contribution to the novel's world of surveillance and image circulation is suggestive of the camera and its functions: like the camera, they both "set up the world as something to be looked at" (Shloss 254). Physical descriptions of Bucket and Tulkinghorn's appearance, as well as descriptions of their actions and behaviour, allude to the physical apparatus of the camera and descriptions of its processes (both actual and metaphorical). More significantly, in seeming to have "the power of seeing things [that are] out of sight" (as an 1853 article describes the camera), they also evoke photography in their acts of surveillance that monitor the actions (and, seemingly, the thoughts) of other characters – as is made evident in their exposure of Lady Dedlock (Dodd 243). Their central roles as the "possessors of those eyes" (612) that unfailingly monitor and control the

characters around them and the effects of such surveillance are reflective of the contemporary anxieties surrounding the agency and power of "the optical stranger" or photographic machine, the control and circulation of the image and, subsequently, the control of the subject who is photographed (Dodd 243).

While the descriptions of Bucket are indeed telling insofar as they resonate with photography, this section argues that the allusions to the camera are more convincing in the case of Tulkinghorn who, unlike Bucket (with his compassion for other characters), remains consistently characterized until death as a neutral or objective observer – and thus is more evocative of the perceived "neutral" eye of the camera machine. This argument diverges from the typical critical examinations of photography in *Bleak House*, which have largely focused on Bucket as the explicit representation of the camera. R. Thomas, for instance, argues that, "[s]ince the novel is set before but written after the invention of photography," Bucket functions as a "personified harbinger" of the medium (166). The critical focus on Bucket overlooks the extent to which Tulkinghorn more consistently embodies the camera's power of surveillance and documentation in monitoring and constraining its subjects. In his figuration as the camera, Tulkinghorn can be understood in terms of a "Foucauldian reading" that, as Kate Flint observes, "emphasizes the fact that practices of surveillance, of bringing material to the surface, worked in collaboration with practices of codification and classification" (13).

Descriptions of Bucket and Tulkinghorn as the Camera

There are several aspects of both Bucket and Tulkinghorn's appearance and behaviour that allude to photography. Descriptions of their covert manner of observation are suggestive of the camera lens, which was personified from its invention as a neutral eye that perfectly records (and monitors) all visual information. The first description of Bucket, which states he is a "sharp-eyed man in black" who looks at Mr. Snagsby "as if he were going to take his picture" (361), is often cited as the novel's one explicit reference to photography. The anonymous narrator also describes Bucket as one who "notices things in general, with a face as unchanging as the great mourning ring on his little finger," while Jo describes him to be "in all manner of places, all at wunst," and believes him "to be everywhere, and cognizant of everything" (364, 690, 694). Tulkinghorn is also similarly described; although closely monitoring all others around him, he ever appears "in perfect assumption of indifference," with "a countenance as imperturbable as Death," a "speechless repository" of all objects and persons he views (540-1, 217).

Allusions to the camera are also apparent in the manner in which both Bucket's and Tulkinghorn's "sharp eye[s]" are described to flawlessly search out and "fix" all characters that come within their gaze (730). Bucket, for instance, is described as "a sharp-eyed man . . . [who] takes in everybody's look at him, all at once, individually and collectively," and as one with a "ghostly manner of appearing" who "cast[s] his sharp eye all about" (728, 361, 730). This parallel between Bucket and the camera lens is made especially apparent in the description of the "bull's-eye" lantern that he often has in hand while in pursuit of others. In his search for Jo, for instance, Bucket's lantern's eye (symbolic of Bucket himself and his

201

function as a camera) guides the reader through the slums, able to discern from amongst a multitude of similar criminal types the particular individual for whom he seeks. The "angry bull's-eye glare" pierces the hovering crowds and momentarily fixes or arrests the "flow" of people; once the bull's eye / camera lens shifts, the people "fade away" into an indistinguishable mass (365). The lantern also functions metonymically, symbolizing Bucket's eyes: "he turns his bull's-eye on a line of stinking ruins" and, "opening another door . . . glar[es] in with his bull's-eye" (364-5). His glaring light / gaze at last captures Jo: Bucket "throws his light into the doorway" and fixes (or photographs) Jo, "amazed in the disc of light" (367). That Bucket's gaze functions as a visual recording is also made evident in his hunt for Lady Dedlock, in which he "thoughtfully brings his keen eyes to bear on every slinking creature whom he passes . . . and even on the lights in upper windows . . . and alike on the heavy sky, and the earth where the snow lies thin – for something may present itself to assist him, anywhere" (822). Bucket's powerful surveillance is even suggested to capture visual information that is beyond his immediate environment: he is said to "mount a high tower in his mind" and there see "many solitary figures out on heaths, and roads, and lying under haystacks . . . [and] other solitaries . . . in shadowed places . . . and a dark, dark, shapeless object drifting with the tide" (824).

In contrast to Bucket, the descriptions of Tulkinghorn's appearance, behavior, and surveillance of other characters is even more striking in its allusions to photography. Tulkinghorn's "sharp-eyed" gaze, evocative of the camera lens, is not only emphasized in descriptions of his surveillance of others (as in the case of Bucket), but also in descriptions of his appearance, which are suggestive of the camera. Nearly every mention of Tulkinghorn in

202

the novel is accompanied by reference to his physical figure, particularly his black clothing: he is consistently described as a "black figure," "rustily drest [sic]" (213, 433). That his black clothing functions metonymically as shorthand for the character and his particular method of observation is made explicit by the narrator in his first description of Tulkinghorn: "one particularity of his black clothes . . . is that they never shine. Mute, close, irresponsive to any glancing light, his dress is like himself" (59). This connection between the clothing and the man is reinforced throughout the novel: "His imperturbable face has been as inexpressive as his rusty clothes. . . . He has shown nothing but his shell" (191). Just as the rusty black velvet he wears absorbs all light, so too does Tulkinghorn coldly absorb all knowledge of others: "He wears his usual expressionless mask – if it be a mask – and carries family secrets in every limb of his body, and every crease of his dress" (213).

Such references to Tulkinghorn's physical appearance, expressive equally of his personality and behavior, match contemporary descriptions of the camera and its functions. His black clothes and blank face parallel the camera's black cover of cloth and its lens, as described in the 1853 *Household Words* article, "Photography":

> The velvet pall was thrown over the back of the camera to exclude the light, and a black stopper . . . was clapped over the glass in front . . . [then] the cap was off, and the two figures, fixed as statues, shone upon the magic mirror of the camera, rigidly pleasant . . . suddenly, the stopper was again clapped over the glass in front. (Morley and Wills 58)

This passage also resonates with the particular manner in which Tulkinghorn's gaze is described. Ever "watchful behind a blind," he monitors others "from behind that blind which is always down" (433). That his gaze parallels the above description of the process of taking a photograph is most obvious in Tulkinghorn's surveillance of Lady Dedlock. The moment when his suspicions of her hidden past are confirmed, for example, register briefly on his face: "One glance between the old man and the lady; and for an instant the blind that is always down flies up. Suspicion, eager and sharp, looks out. Another instant; close again" (527). Tulkinghorn thus functions throughout the novel as the camera embodied, his ever-vigilant gaze equivalent to the camera lens, which captures all visual information with flawless accuracy and exposes details that the unaided eye cannot discern. Lady Dedlock herself notes this camera-like ability, describing Tulkinghorn as "mechanical," "always vigilant, and always near me . . . I can never shake him off . . . he is indifferent"; none "had the power of seeing me as I was," she claimed, until Tulkinghorn's investigations at last exposed her true identity to others (567, 633).

Neutral and Subjective Surveillance

Although Bucket and Tulkinghorn are similarly described as performing a relentless monitoring and detection of others, their figurations as the camera vary in that both the anonymous narrator and Esther consistently characterize Tulkinghorn as objective (without emotion) and Bucket as subjective (with emotion) in their surveillance. As this section argues, it is Bucket's subjective manner of surveillance that renders him less like the camera than Tulkinghorn, in that the camera was most often figured in contemporary accounts as an objective or neutral machine with the agency to flawlessly monitor and capture all it sees.

This figuration of the camera was dominant in the period, despite recognition of the medium's subjective or mediated nature: as discussed in previous chapters, "the ideological conception of the photograph as a direct and 'natural' cast of reality was present from the very beginning" (Tagg 41).

Bucket's metaphorical association with the camera is weakened by the narrators' suggestions of his subjectivity or compassion towards other characters; such benevolence is gradually revealed over the course of the novel. Despite the description of his unerring detection of others – such as the scene in which he and his "bull's-eye" fix and capture Jo – Bucket is at the same time described by the anonymous narrator in this scene as displaying compassion, "turn[ing] his light gently on the infant," for instance, when questioning Jenny about Jo's whereabouts (366). Esther also describes his concern for other characters, his dogged hunt for Gridley tempered by sympathy when he finds him dying. In her account of Gridley's death, Esther observes that Bucket "good-naturedly offered such consolation as he could administer," and that he "anxiously" said in seeing Gridley fading, "I only want to rouse him. I don't like to see an old acquaintance giving in like this" (408).

Bucket's subjectivity is perhaps made most evident in his compassionate behaviour towards Lady Dedlock, as described by both Esther and the anonymous narrator. As Bucket surveys Tulkinghorn's funeral, the anonymous narrator comments that he is "on the whole a benignant philosopher not disposed to be severe upon the follies of mankind" (768). Bucket himself also reveals his compassion or investment in his clients (while Tulkinghorn remains unfailingly neutral): "when her Ladyship, as is so universally admired I am sure, come home looking – why, Lord! A man might almost say like Venus rising from the ocean, it was so

unpleasant and inconsistent to think of her being charged with a murder of which she was innocent, that I felt quite to want to put an end to the job" (798). Bucket's subjectivity is similarly revealed through Esther's narration as well. At the outset of their search for Lady Dedlock, Esther observes, "[h]e was really very kind and gentle; . . . I felt a confidence in his sagacity which reassured me" (826). As their pursuit continues, she observes that Bucket converses "to divert me. With the same kind intention, manifestly, he often spoke to me of indifferent things, while his face was busy with the one object he had in view" (831). That both the anonymous narration and Esther's narration characterize Bucket as compassionate or subjective in his surveillance of others suggests his lesser association with the camera's flawlessly neutral form of surveillance, a surveillance that is best embodied in the "unchanging character" of Tulkinghorn who in his covert detection of others displays "no flaws" (714).

As discussed above, Tulkinghorn's embodiment of the camera and the objective nature of his surveillance are revealed in descriptions of his appearance and behaviour by the narrators and other characters; a prominent description often used throughout *Bleak House* compares him to a machine. The anonymous narrator describes him, for example, to be "as imperturbable as [a] hearthstone" and "millstone" and, in his exposure of Lady Dedlock, to be "like a machine" (617, 541, 637). Various characters confirm this depiction; Mr. George, for instance, describes him as "no more like flesh and blood, than a rusty old carbine is" and speculates, "to think of that rusty carbine . . . standing up on end in his corner, hard, indifferent, taking everything so evenly – it made the flesh and blood tingle" (698, 727).

206

Lady Dedlock herself – the central object of this neutral, machine-like surveillance – also describes him as "mechanically faithful without attachment" (567).

Tulkinghorn's embodiment of the camera is also made explicit in the narrative treatment of him that never attempts to interpret the interiority beneath this "impenetrable," "indifferent," "imperturbable and unchangeable" surface (359, 567, 714): as James Hill notes, the anonymous narrator is unable "to do more than suggest Tulkinghorn's motivation in pursuing Lady Dedlock, leav[ing] us only with the uncertainty of hypotheses" (180). That Tulkinghorn remains unreadable is especially clear in comparison to Bucket, whose actions are interpreted by Esther and other characters. In their pursuit of Lady Dedlock, for instance, Esther detects a flaw in Bucket's detection: "as we advanced, I began to feel misgivings that my companion lost confidence . . . I saw his finger uneasily going across and across his mouth . . . He always gave me a reassuring beck of his finger . . . but he seemed perplexed now" (838). In contrast to Bucket's subjectivity, Tulkinghorn's objectivity is foregrounded in that the anonymous narrator speculates on Tulkinghorn's motives and actions, yet falls short of asserting that such conjectures are actually what lie beneath his "expressionless mask" of a face (213). After confronting Lady Dedlock, for instance, Tulkinghorn's actions are contemplated by the narrator: "there is an expression on his face *as if* he had discharged his mind of some grave matter, and were, in his close way, satisfied . . . *perhaps* there is rather an increased sense of power upon him," the narrator concludes, but does not explicitly state (emphasis added [631]). Such narrative speculation only occurs once more in the novel,

207

when the anonymous narrator considers why Tulkinghorn hunts Lady Dedlock as he does:

> Yet *it may be* that my Lady fears this Mr. Tulkinghorn, and that he knows it. *It may be* that he pursues her doggedly and steadily, with no touch of compunction, remorse, or pity. *It may be* that her beauty, and all the state and brilliancy surrounding her, only gives him the greater zest for what he is set upon, and makes him the more inflexible in it. *Whether* he be cold and cruel, *whether* immovable in what he has made his duty, *whether* absorbed in love of power, *whether* determined to have nothing hidden from him in ground where he has burrowed among secrets all his life, *whether* he in his heart despises the splendour of which he is a distant beam . . . *whether* he be any of this, or all of this, *it may be* that my Lady had better have five thousand pairs of fashionable eyes upon her, in distrustful vigilance, than the two eyes of this rusty lawyer. (emphasis added [457-8])

As this passage reveals, the narrator at most conjectures but never directly states why Tulkinghorn functions as he does, thus speculating but not explicitly stating that Tulkinghorn ever behaves in a manner that is not objective or "without attachment" (567). Unlike Bucket, whose motives are read by both Esther and the anonymous narrator, Tulkinghorn remains consistently characterized as inscrutable or unreadable and, as such, is more closely aligned with the camera's seeming objectivity.[59]

---

[59] There are a few rare moments in which Tulkinghorn is shown to be susceptible to emotion, such as when discussing Gridley: "with these words, spoken in an unusually high tone for him, the lawyer goes into his rooms, and shuts the door with a thundering noise" (444). Another moment occurs when Lady Dedlock unexpectedly appears outside his Chesney Wold room: "the blood has not flushed into his face so suddenly and redly for many a long

The effects of Tulkinghorn's "indifferent," "impenetrable," and "unpitying" manner of functioning, and its similarities to the period's figuration of the camera, are most obvious in his pursuit and relentless surveillance of Lady Dedlock (567, 359, 568). She makes explicit the effects of his neutral and continual surveillance, admitting in one of the final scenes of confrontation between herself and Tulkinghorn, "[y]ou have prepared me for my exposure . . . you can do nothing worse than you have done" (633). That Lady Dedlock is reduced to an image-object, vulnerable to "exposure" under Tulkinghorn's control, is also made evident in her later stating, "I am to remain on this gaudy platform, on which my miserable deception has been so long acted, and it is to fall beneath me when you give the signal" (637). While obviously a reference to a hangman's platform, the reference to "this gaudy platform" further resonates with contemporary descriptions of the photographic studio's platform upon which the sitter was photographed or "executed" (as discussed in chapter three). The association of photography with execution or beheading is suggested in Lady Dedlock's description of herself as being exposed and executed before Tulkinghorn / the camera.

The suggestion of exposure, lack of control, and execution in Lady Dedlock's comments is significant in revealing the parallels between Tulkinghorn's figuration of the camera and contemporary discussions of the concerns felt towards photography. As argued in chapters two and three, much of the anxiety registered throughout the 1840s and early 1850s

year, as when he recognizes Lady Dedlock" (631). However, both instances are quite brief, the anonymous narrator indicating that they are unnoticeable to other characters and that Tulkinghorn instantly regains control.

concerned the unease felt before the seeming power and agency of the camera lens, which was described as a troubling exposure and execution of the photographic subject. Such concerns grew all the more pressing as photographic portraiture and the medium in general became increasingly popular. Like the camera, Tulkinghorn's power evokes the fear of being made "targets of surveillance," a fear described in several contemporary accounts in a manner that resonates with the descriptions in *Bleak House* (Foucault 202). An 1846 article, "Daguerreotypes," for instance, describes the regulatory power of the camera as an unrelenting surveillance that permits nothing to remain invisible: no one can perform any action without the camera detecting and "proclaim[ing] the whole affair to the world" (552). Such a description parallels Tulkinghorn's exposure and control of Lady Dedlock, whose fear of him is aptly summarized in her asking Tulkinghorn whether he has yet exposed her hidden past: "Is it the town-talk yet? Is it chalked upon the walls and cried in the streets?" (632). The anxiety about exposure before the seeming agency of the camera is made particularly evident in contemporary accounts that present the female photographic subject's vulnerability before the camera lens. As discussed in chapter three, *The Mysteries of London* makes explicit this anxiety in a scene that depicts the literal exposure of the character Ellen, who is stripped bare by the camera's "action of light upon every part of the human frame" (Reynolds 89). As "the obdurate and unpitying watcher" of Lady Dedlock (as he is described by Esther), Tulkinghorn functions as an embodiment of the camera in his continual surveillance and systematic exposure of the photographed subject, Lady Dedlock (568).

The depiction of Bucket and, in particular, Tulkinghorn can thus be read to embody the regulatory powers of the camera in that both function to position the world of *Bleak*

House as one in which every character is vulnerable to surveillance, detection, and documentation; their characterization reveals the pervasive influence of photography on the novel's treatment of visuality. As R. Thomas notes, "[i]n Tulkinghorn and Bucket, respectively . . . we are presented with negative and positive versions of panoptical social power" (100). That Tulkinghorn presents a negative form of power, embodying a machine-like surveillance that must be expunged from the novel by the more benevolent, humane surveillance of Bucket, shows the extent to which *Bleak House* manifests an anxiety about photography, particularly expressing a profound ambivalence about its increasing use and effects on society. Further, that Esther characterizes Bucket like the anonymous narrator characterizes Bucket and Tulkinghorn, in terms of the camera, exposes their own involvement in observation and surveillance; the two characters and the two narrators can therefore be seen to participate in the new visual state that photography created, which involves surveillance, detection, and "the skillful management of signs and images" (R. Thomas 94). The manner in which both utilize descriptions of the contrast of light and dark to highlight issues of visuality also shows the extent to which the anonymous narrator's and Esther's narrations embody the novel's allusions to photography.

Scenes of Light and Dark

The pervasive influence of photography on *Bleak House* is revealed in the anonymous narrator's and Esther's use of descriptions of light and dark in their narrations. Scenes of light and dark are defined as moments in which the reader's attention is drawn to the contrast of light and dark; they are used in both narratives in connection with the visual. In the anonymous narration, these descriptions are used in association with the Dedlock portraits

and moments of surveillance (particularly, Tulkinghorn's monitoring of Lady Dedlock); in Esther's narrative, they are used to signal highly visual memories or "mental pictures" (as they are described by the anonymous narrator) and to reveal the connections between her and her mother (132). While Esther and the anonymous narrator vary in their use of the terms, both their narratives manifest a telling preoccupation with the play of light and visual perception. That these narrative descriptions of contrast allude to photography is evident in that contemporary accounts of the technology similarly employ this language of light and dark. This section examines several key instances of light and dark in both narrations in terms of contemporary usage of this language in order to show how this narrative device is an implicit evocation of photography. In particular, I argue that the anonymous narrator's use of the language of light and dark functions to reveal an anxiety towards the camera's power of surveillance and seeming agency, while Esther's use of such language in association with significant, remembered events not only shows the influence of photography on the negotiation and narration of memories, but also shows the extent to which she is implicated in the novel's world of observation and surveillance.

The language of light and dark is significant on several levels. It shows the extent to which the period's representations of photography were reflected in contemporary literature. Further, in highlighting both narrators' participation in surveillance, these scenes can be examined as moments of visual excess that reveal the effects of photography in disrupting the novel's realism. These scenes are also significant in exposing Esther's role as an active observer-subject (rather than observed object) performing a surveillance of others similar to what the anonymous narrator performs (as well as Bucket and Tulkinghorn); as such, the

212

scenes of light and dark reveal an important "connexion" between the dual narratives that has been previously overlooked in critical examinations of *Bleak House* (272). As Miller argues, for instance, the anonymous narrator serves as an "ironic commentary" on Esther's "way of seeing things," while the novel ultimately "does not resolve the incompatibility between [Esther's] vision and what the other narrator sees" (31); Susan Beckwith and John Reed similarly argue that the "Jeremiah-like authority" of the anonymous narrator "contrasts with Esther Summerson's humble and subjective, first-person, past-tense narration" (306).

A consideration of contemporary accounts of photography reveals that the descriptions of light and dark used throughout *Bleak House* would have had significance to the contemporary reader in resonating with contemporary figurations of photography. As discussed in chapter one, photography had been described in terms of light and dark from the date of its invention in 1839 (as evident in the common description of the process, for example, as "light writing"). These descriptions function on both a literal and metaphorical level. On a literal level, they were used to describe the actual chemical process by which an image is formed, in which a chemically treated surface, when exposed to light, is imprinted with the image before the camera lens. These descriptions of the actual process of photography served as the basis from which metaphorical descriptions of the technology arose, which spoke of the play of sun and shadow in tracing the visible world onto paper. Figurative interpretations of photography hailed the sun, for instance, as an artist drawing with light and characterized the photographer as a necromancer associated with the practice of magic. Thus, the many references to the contrast of light and dark in the novel would not only have been read naturalistically, they would also have suggested to Victorian readers

213

photography, the technology that literally used light and dark and made them manifest in physical form. While there are many references to "light" and "shadow" throughout *Bleak House*, this section examines in particular the descriptions used by the anonymous narrator and Esther that specifically draw attention to the contrast of light and dark.

Scenes of Light and Dark: The Anonymous Narration

Nearly all references to portraiture throughout Bleak House – specifically, to the Dedlock ancestry's portraiture housed in Chesney Wold – are described in terms of the contrast of light and dark. As these instances of contrast demonstrate, the anonymous narrator's employment of the language of light and dark highlights the mutability of images and their openness to interpretation; that they preface pivotal moments when Tulkinghorn monitors and confronts Lady Dedlock with knowledge of her past also shows their association with the issues of surveillance that photography raised.

The anonymous narrator's first description of contrast occurs early in the novel, at the moment when the events that lead to Lady Dedlock's mystery being revealed begin to unfold. The narrator describes the play of the "clear cold sunshine" at Chesney Wold: it "touches the ancestral portraits with bars and patches of brightness, never contemplated by the painters. Athwart the picture of my Lady, over the great chimney-piece, it throws a broad bend-sinister of light that strikes down crookedly into the hearth, and seems to rend it" (the "bend-sinister of light" is an early intimation that Chesney Wold is affected by bastardy

[203-4]).[60] This description is characteristic of scenes of light and dark in the anonymous narration. It reveals that the pictured subjects are subject to the play of light, the sun and shade changing their appearance; it also encourages the reader to interpret this contrast of light as symbolic of the novel's events and the images as substitutions for the individual depicted (just as the light rends Lady Dedlock's portrait and the hearth, so too is Lady Dedlock destroyed and rent from Chesney Wold). Finally, such descriptions precede pivotal scenes in the plot. Immediately following the above description of the setting in terms of light and dark is the scene in which Tulkinghorn tells Lady Dedlock of the death of the law-writer, Nemo, whose writing she had noticed with such interest. This scene is thus crucial in marking the beginning of Tulkinghorn's surveillance in earnest of Lady Dedlock (and her mistrustful watching of him in response): as the narrator observes, "[t]hey appear to take . . . little notice of one another . . . but whether each evermore watches and suspects the other, evermore mistrustful . . . what each would give to know how much the other knows – all this is hidden, for the time" (217).

Another description of the play of light in the anonymous narration precedes the first instance in which Tulkinghorn begins to work to expose Lady Dedlock's past. The chapter opens with the most extensive description in the novel of the effects of light upon the Dedlock ancestral portraits. At the "sunset hour," the light pours into Chesney Wold and "the frozen Dedlocks thaw. Strange movements come upon their features, as the shadows of

---

[60] The symbolism of the effects of light is emphasized in the narrator's description of the light as a "bend-sinister," which in heraldry was a marking of bastardy (Page, *Bleak House* 957).

215

leaves play there" (620). As in the earlier description of the Dedlock portraiture, their appearance is shown to change, vulnerable to the effects of light and shadow: for instance, "a dense Justice in a corner is beguiled into a wink" (620). The narrator then focuses in detail on the shifting image of Lady Dedlock: "a weird shade falls . . . and looks as if a great arm held a veil or hood, watching an opportunity to draw it over her"; as the night deepens, the shadow "changes into threatening hands raised up, and menacing the handsome face with every breath that stirs" (621). These references to light and dark are explicitly connected to Tulkinghorn in the scene that follows, in which Tulkinghorn for the first time hints to Lady Dedlock (in front of Sir Leicester and the Dedlock relatives visiting Chesney Wold) that he has at last discovered the scandal of her past. The scene is rife with references to light and dark: "the moon is rising, and where [Lady Dedlock] sits there is a little stream of cold pale light, in which her head is seen" (628). As Tulkinghorn speaks to her and her husband, unbeknownst to her husband revealing more and more that he is aware of her secret, so too is Lady Dedlock increasingly exposed to light: "By the moonlight, Lady Dedlock can be seen in profile, perfectly still"; when Tulkinghorn finishes speaking, the "moonlight has swelled into a lake" and she is "looked after by admiring eyes" (628-30). When Lady Dedlock and Tulkinghorn speak in private, her words emphasize this connection between narrative descriptions of contrast and Tulkinghorn's symbolic power to expose Lady Dedlock. She confronts him, admitting his power over her: "You have prepared me for my exposure . . . you can do nothing worse than you have done" (633). In knowing her secret and deciding when he will expose her, Tulkinghorn is presented as controlling Lady Dedlock.

216

The anonymous narrator's descriptions of light and dark thus function on several levels. In relation to the Dedlock portraits, these descriptions draw the reader's attention to the mutability of images, the shifting light changing the portraits' appearance in a manner "never contemplated by the painters" (204). They also suggest the permanence of the portraits in contrast to the dead Dedlocks they depict, a permanence that was recognized in the period in relation to the photographic portrait in particular, which "preserved the dead unnaturally into the present" (S. Williams, "The Inconstant Daguerreotype" 167). The narrator describes the portraits to say, "[e]ach of us was a passing reality here, and left this coloured shadow of himself, and melted into remembrance" (272). Such a statement also foreshadows the novel's end in that Lady Dedlock dies and is removed from the novel, outlived by her portrait: "Sir Leicester holds his shrunken state in the long drawing-room . . . and reposes in his old place before my Lady's picture" (930). Descriptions of the play of light also reveal the novel's preoccupation with the power of the image to overtake the person depicted (a theme that is similarly revealed in the novel's proliferation of copies of Lady Dedlock).

In preceding pivotal moments of surveillance, these descriptions further symbolize Tulkinghorn's interaction with Lady Dedlock and his embodiment of the camera. References to light and dark accompany the crucial scenes of the novel in which Tulkinghorn confronts Lady Dedlock and threatens to expose her past, thus symbolic of his camera-like ability to monitor and expose her. As the rising moonlight fixes Lady Dedlock, "perfectly still," so too does Tulkinghorn's observation of her expose and fix her in place, like an image (629). Similarly, Tulkinghorn's presence as a relentless observer of Lady Dedlock is visualized as a

217

shadow that rends her portrait. The association of light and dark with Tulkinghorn's exposure

of Lady Dedlock is captured in the anonymous narrator's description of their final

confrontation of one another that occurs immediately before Tulkinghorn's murder.

Tulkinghorn is described at the outset of this scene as standing at the window, "closing up

[Lady Dedlock's] view of the night as well as of the day" (714). Obscuring her view, he

"studies her at his leisure" and concludes, "she cannot be spared"; "'this woman,' thinks Mr.

Tulkinghorn, standing on the hearth, again a dark object closing up her view, 'is a study'"

(716). The language of light and dark employed by the anonymous narrator thus signals a

preoccupation with images and surveillance, one that suggests the influence of photography.

Scenes of Light and Dark: Esther's Narration

There are many references to the contrast of light and dark in Esther's narration that

reveal her own involvement in observation. Like the anonymous narrator, Esther makes use

of such descriptions to signal pivotal moments in the novel – unique to her narration,

however, is her use of such language to describe important moments that have become

strongly visual memories or what she calls "whole picture[s]" (591). The frequency of these

descriptions, as well as the degree to which they are coupled with climactic moments in

Esther's life, reveal the significance of the language of light and dark to Esther's narration.

The descriptions are important in not only revealing the influence of photography in the

negotiation and construction of narrated experience and the connection of photography to

memory, but also in revealing the depth of Esther's involvement in the novel's world of

observation and surveillance. As I will argue, an important effect of her involvement strains

the novel's attachment to the realist genre.

Many scenes narrated by Esther explicitly or implicitly draw attention to the contrast of light and dark in connection with observation. She and Mr. Jarndyce watch Ada and Richard at the piano, the room "only lighted by the fire. . . . their shadows blended together" on the wall (122). They later watch Ada and Richard in "the adjoining room on which the sun was shining" as they "went on lightly through the sunlight . . . [then] passed away into the shadow, and were gone. It was only a burst of light that had been so radiant. The room darkened as they went out, and the sun was clouded over" (233). In the Chesney Wold woods, Esther observes "a distant prospect made so radiant by its contrast with the shade in which we sat" (308). The memory of the bridge that Esther and Bucket cross in their pursuit of her mother is described by her as a contrast of "the profound black pit of water," with "the lights upon the bridge" and the light of the carriage-lamps "reflected back, look[ing] palely in upon me – a face, rising out of the dreaded water" (828). While stopping at an inn in their hunt for her mother, Esther observes the "bleakness" of night "enhanced by the contrast of the pictured fire glowing and gleaming in the window-pane" through which she gazes (839).

Esther's narration of scenes of contrasting light and dark are connected through several similarities. They precede climactic moments in the plot; they are marked by a shift in verb tense and the use of descriptions of memory; they are notable for the degree to which they call attention to observation; they transform past action into a framed image of which Esther is an observer; and they draw attention to Esther's act of writing. Significantly, the way in which Esther narrates these scenes are evocative of metaphorical and literal descriptions of the process of photography, in that she describes the scenes as strongly visual, brief instants of time in which action on her part is minimized and she instead presents

herself as a distanced observer. The scenes are later recalled as image-memories in her

narrative, thus suggesting her positioning in a manner like the camera (functioning as the

observer-recorder) and suggesting the influence of photography in the period as a means to

negotiate, order, and narrate memories. She describes the scene of Ada and Richard at the

piano, for instance, as an image symbolic of the relationship that would later develop

between them: "The mystery of the future, and the little clue afforded to it by the voice of the

present, seemed expressed in the whole picture" (122). These visual descriptions that Esther

employs resonate with contemporary descriptions that emphasized the instantaneity of

photography, or its ability to create what were later called "snapshot" images that freeze and

make visible a moment, which Roland Barthes describes as the photograph's unique quality

to embody a "strange stasis, the stasis of an *arrest*" (91).

The evocation of photography in these scenes of contrast can be seen, for instance, in

Esther's description of the memory of seeing Vholes (the predatory lawyer aiding Richard in

the Jarndyce case) for the first time. She abruptly shifts verb tense, interrupting her narration

of their action – "we all went out together to the top of the hill . . . where we found a man

with a lantern standing at the head of the gaunt pale horse" – by stating, "I never shall forget"

(591). Immediately she shifts from the lived scene to her strong visual memory of the

moment, narrated to us in terms of light and dark:

I never shall forget those two seated side by side in the lantern's light; Richard, all

flush and fire and laughter . . . Mr. Vholes . . . looking at him as if he were looking at

his prey and charming it. I have before me the whole picture of the warm dark night, the summer lightning, the dusty track of road closed in by hedgerows and high trees . . . (591)

As with other scenes that are similarly described as being awash in the contrast of light and dark, this scene is significant in foreshadowing the eventual outcome of the characters' lives (in this instance, foreshadowing Richard being consumed and eventually killed by the Jarndyce case) and in presenting a past experience in terms of a visual memory. It is suggestive of the photograph in that it details a comprehensive recording or accrual of all physical detail in a "split-second" or instantaneous moment, and in that the moment as narrated in the future is recollected like an entire image – something neatly captured in Esther stating, "I have before me the whole picture" (591). It also is suggestive of an image in that Esther's description of the scene elides her presence, instead positioning her as a distanced observer not involved in the action of the scene. Finally, like other scenes of light and dark it employs a shift in verb tense to the present voice, which has the effect of interrupting the narrated flow of the novel's action with the presence of Esther as narrator, writing out the story in which the reader was immersed. In stating, "I have before me the whole picture," for instance, Esther draws attention to her physical presence as writer; such comments are significant in highlighting the transformation of memory in the period to a material artifact embodied in the photograph.

Many of Esther's descriptions of the contrast of light and dark are used to narrate significant scenes that reveal the connection between Esther and her mother, Lady Dedlock (either by evoking for Esther remembered images of herself or of Lady Dedlock). In such

scenes, Esther experiences an odd estrangement that, as the novel progresses, represents less an alienation from herself than an undeniable connection with her mother. The scenes of connection between Esther and Lady Dedlock highlight the conflict in Esther's narration, whereby she is presented as an active observer (in positioning herself as a viewer of the image memory) at the same time that she is presented as the observed (in establishing her as an image copy of her mother). The uncanny estrangement / connection that Esther experiences in connection with her mother is made most apparent in the pivotal scenes of the novel in which she and Lady Dedlock meet. Such critical scenes are significant to an analysis of Esther's narrative reference to light and dark in that they strongly evoke allusions to photography. In particular, her narration of these remembered events in terms of light and dark and as "whole picture[s]" suggests the association of photography in the period with the experience and description of memory and Esther's positioning of herself as a viewer of these photographic memories (591).

The first such scene narrated is Esther's account of seeing Lady Dedlock for the first time. In their first visit to Boythorn's residence adjoining Chesney Wold, Esther, Jarndyce, Ada and Boythorn attend the nearby church. Before describing her (as yet not known) mother's entrance in the church, Esther carefully details her surroundings in terms of light and dark. "I had leisure to glance over the church . . . The windows, heavily shaded by trees, admitted a subdued light that made the faces around me pale, and darkened the old brasses in the pavement, and the time and damp-worn monuments, and rendered the sunshine in the little porch . . . inestimably bright" (304). Immediately following this description of the darkness within and "inestimable brightness" without, Lady Dedlock makes her entrance,

which is described by Esther as a pivotal moment in her life: "Shall I ever forget the rapid beating at my heart, occasioned by the look I met, as I stood up! Shall I ever forget the manner in which those handsome proud eyes seemed to spring out of their languor, and to hold mine! It was only a moment before I cast mine down . . . but I knew that beautiful face quite well, in that short space of time" (304). This scene is characteristic of the scenes in which Esther employs descriptions of light and dark. The significant moment is preceded by her present tense exclamation, "shall I ever forget," which has the effect of positioning the scene as an image-memory. That it is a climactic event in Esther's narration that occurs in "only a moment" and in a "short space of time" also suggests the instantaneous nature of photographs (304). It precedes a crucial event in the text in which Esther positions herself as observer at the same time that the scene, unbeknownst to Esther at the moment of its occurrence, positions her as an image observed (in being a copy of her mother).[61] As she notes upon seeing Lady Dedlock, she is perplexed and wonders "why her face should be, in a confused way, like a broken glass to me, in which I saw scraps of old remembrances," and wonders why the image of herself as a child "seemed to arise before my own eyes, evoked out of the past by some power in this fashionable lady" (304-5). The scene also positions her as an observed object in that, because of Lady Dedlock gazing at her, Esther feels herself compelled to raise her own eyes and look at Lady Dedlock, whose "eyes seemed . . . to hold mine" (304).

---

[61] This connection between Esther and Lady Dedlock is reinforced by Lady Dedlock later stating in her letter to Esther (after confessing to Esther that she is her mother) that, as Esther relates, "when she had first seen me in church, she had been startled; and had thought of what would have been like me, if it had ever lived, and had lived on" (569).

Such a use of light and shadow is also evident in the scene that follows the moment at church, in which Esther meets Lady Dedlock for the first time. As in other scenes, Esther details the setting in terms of light and dark. She relates how she, Jarndyce, and Ada were sitting in their "favourite spot" in the woods of Chesney Wold: "we looked through a green vista supported by thousands of natural columns, the whitened stems of trees, upon a distant prospect made so radiant by its contrast with the shade in which we sat, and made so precious by the arched perspective through which we saw it" (308). Immediately following this description, a sudden summer storm causes them to rush to the keeper's lodge within the woods. This setting is described in a manner that draws attention not only to the contrast of dark and light, but also to observation: "The lodge was so dark within," Esther notes, in contrast to the landscape lit by lightning without (308). Ada and Esther were seated in two chairs "just within the doorway, watching the storm" through the frame provided by the doorway and the latticed windows (Esther is framed by this structure, and is observed by Lady Dedlock, who arrived at the lodge before they did). As in other scenes, Lady Dedlock's presence profoundly affects Esther: "I had never heard the voice, as I had never seen the face, but it affected me in the same strange way. Again, in a moment, there arose before my mind innumerable pictures of myself" (309). As in the church scene, Esther's description of the setting in terms of contrast precedes a pivotal moment in which the connection between Lady Dedlock and Esther is made obvious to the reader, in that such a moment causes Esther to see images of herself. The descriptions of the contrast of light and dark thus signal "photographic" moments in the text: significant scenes are described as distinct visual images

224

or evidence that draw the reader and Esther herself closer to the discovery of her hidden identity.

Another such description in Esther's narrative that draws connection between herself and her mother immediately precedes her visit to the brickmaker's house. Before entering, Esther pauses to describe the "cold wild night": "there was a pale dead light both beautiful and awful . . . Towards London, a lurid glare overhung the whole dark waste; and the contrast between these two lights, and the fancy which the redder light engendered of an unearthly fire . . . was as solemn as might be" (484). Esther describes this moment as pivotal in her life and in her narration:

> I had no thought, that night . . . of what was soon to happen to me. But I have always
> remembered since, that when we had stopped at the garden-gate to look up at the sky .
> . . I had for a moment an undefinable impression of myself as something different
> from what I then was. I know it was then, and there, that I had it. I have ever since
> connected the feeling with that spot and time, and with everything associated with
> that spot and time. (484)

As in the other scenes of light and dark, the moment is similarly described as a striking image that is to become a powerful visual memory. Her description of the "contrast between the two lights" also precedes an important scene in which Esther becomes infected by Jo's illness and, more importantly, in which a crucial moment of connection between Esther and her mother occurs due to Jo mistakenly believing Esther to be Lady Dedlock, or the veiled lady,

asking, "is there *three* of 'em then?" (488). As in the other climactic scenes of contrast, such descriptions impress upon the reader a visual image of Esther as identical to Lady Dedlock.

The impression of Esther as a photographic copy of her mother is also made clear in the scene that occurs shortly after Esther's illness. As in other scenes of light and dark in Esther's narration, the scene draws attention to light and dark, to observation, and, most importantly, to the connection of Esther to Lady Dedlock. Having recovered from her illness and regained her sight – now "attached to life again" – Esther while lying in the sickroom describes Charley, her young servant, passing "out of the shade into the divine sunshine, and out of the sunshine into the shade, while I watched her peacefully" (545). This description of light and shadow immediately precedes the crucial conversation between Esther and Charley, which is the first indication in the text that Esther has been scarred by her disease. Looking around the room, she asks Charley, "I miss something, surely, that I am accustomed to?" Eventually Esther realizes, "I miss some familiar object. Ah, I know what it is, Charley! It's the looking glass" (546). Charley leaves the room, distressed. Esther "was now certain of it" – that she had been disfigured (546). This marks the point in the novel in which Esther's resemblance to Lady Dedlock is defaced by scarring, which occurs immediately before Lady Dedlock reveals herself to be Esther's mother: with Esther's illness, she is severed from her mother as an exact duplicate at the same time that the connection between her and Lady Dedlock is at last about to be made explicit.

The use of the contrast to establish a visual connection between Esther and her mother is most clearly revealed when they meet for the final time and Lady Dedlock declares herself to be Esther's mother. Similar to the other scenes of light and dark that connect Esther

226

to her mother – as Esther herself notes, Lady Dedlock's "face and figure were associated . . .

naturally" with the view before her – this scene has numerous references to the contrast of

light and shade (562). From the "point of sight" in the dark Chesney Wold woods where

Esther sits, "the bright sunny landscape beyond" appears in stark contrast (562). Esther's

description of Lady Dedlock's appearance in the woods is also rich in references to light and

dark:

> I had been looking at the Ghost's Walk lying in a deep shade of masonry afar off, and
>
> picturing to myself the female shape that was said to haunt it, when I became aware
>
> of a figure approaching through the wood. The perspective was so long, and so
>
> darkened by leaves, and the shadows of the branches on the ground made it so much
>
> more intricate to the eye, that at first I could not discern what figure it was. By little
>
> and little, it revealed itself to be a woman's — a lady's — Lady Dedlock's. (563)

This description is significant on several levels. As in the other moments in Esther's

narration in which the contrast of light and shadow is utilized, it signals a central moment in

the text – perhaps the most important one – the one in which at last, the visual connection

between Lady Dedlock and Esther is confessed by Lady Dedlock to Esther in her crying, "O

my child, my child, I am your wicked and unhappy mother!" (565). The passage is also

significant in being evocative of photographic development, or the way in which a

photograph – in this instance, the portrait of Lady Dedlock – gradually sharpens or is

"brought out" as it develops by exposure to chemicals (other such allusions in Esther's

narrative are discussed below). Finally, in narrating this significant moment as a gradual

visual disclosure of Lady Dedlock (a woman, a lady, Lady Dedlock), Esther emphasizes her role in the narrative as an active observer.

The scenes of light and dark in Esther's narrative are thus significant for the numerous ways in which they allude to photography. Perhaps the most obvious allusion is Esther's description of these significant moments as "whole picture[s]," in that it suggests the connection between photography and memory, a connection that was central to the literature of the period and thus would have resonated with the contemporary reader as suggestive of photography (591). As discussed in chapters two and three, photographic metaphors were often used in contemporary accounts of the 1840s and early 1850s to suggest the functions of human memory. The camera and its lens were frequently referred to as symbolic of memory and the eye, as described in the 1852 *Household Words* article, "First Fruits": "the first impressions come equally through the focus, and are daguerreotyped with equal force on the silver tablet of memory" (Sala 189). A similar metaphorical association is used in the 1854 *Household Words* story, "Why My Uncle is a Bachelor": "It was but for a brief space that I could gaze upon her unobserved . . . but all, even to the minutest details of her dress, were stamped on my recollection with the truth and vigour of a daguerreotype picture" (569). This passage complements "First Fruits" in not only referring to the daguerreotype as a standard for visual accuracy and truth, but also in comparing the mental process of memory to photography, the image or memory impressed upon the narrator's mind in a "brief space" of time (569).

The association of photography with the process of human memory shows the extent to which the new medium influenced the Victorians' negotiation of the visible world and

228

themselves. Specifically, with the introduction of the permanent, perfectly detailed photographic image, memory and the memorial came to be negotiated as photographs and narrated in terms of the photographic. This is evident in Esther's description of the scene in which she and Bucket cross the bridge in pursuit of her mother, a memory-turned-image that supersedes all subsequent views of the bridge: "I have seen it many times since then, by sunlight and by moonlight, but never free from the impression of that journey" (828).[62] This change in the perception and narration of memory as photograph-like impressions is perhaps most evident in Esther's memory of the pivotal moment when she travels to the brickmaker's house (and encounters the diseased Jo): "I had for a moment an undefinable impression of myself as something different from what I then was . . . I have ever since connected the feeling with that spot and time, and with everything associated with that spot and time" (484). Esther describes these and other significant events as memories that are viewed like photographs – or, as she describes them, as "whole pictures" (591). Such descriptions resonate with Benjamin's description of photographic-like memory as "moments of sudden exposure . . . when we are beside ourselves. . . It is to this sacrifice of our deepest self in shock that our memory owes its most indelible images" ("A Berlin Chronicle" 343).

Further, the extent to which photography influenced the Victorians' negotiation and narration of memory is evident in light of the Wordsworthian concept of "spots of time" (the

---

[62] Such a description also suggests the photograph's instantaneity or ability to freeze and make permanent a discrete unit of time, a quality described by Metz as a "cutting off of a piece of space and time, of keeping it unchanged while the world around continues to change" (85).

language of which is evoked in Esther's description of the "spot and time" of her recollected experience [484]). Wordsworth's concept of life-altering events as "spots of time / Which with distinct preeminence retain / A renovating Virtue . . ." (*The Prelude* Book XI, l. 258-60) involves interiority on the part of the individual, who recollects such events in tranquility. Such a negotiation of past experience and memories, which emphasizes the internal contemplation of remembered events, contrasts with the contemporary descriptions that figure memories in terms of photographs that are accessed by individual viewers as external images, a figuration expressed by Esther herself in her recollection of one such memory: "I have before me the whole picture" (591). In its narration of memories in terms of the photographic image, *Bleak House* thus reveals the pervasive influence of the medium not only on how Victorians negotiated their visual environment but also on how they remembered and narrated such experience, as evident in the literature of the period.

That these scenes of light and dark are symbolic of photography – in their physical descriptions and in their references to observation and memory – is neatly crystallized in the scene of Esther's first morning at Bleak House, in which she describes in great detail the rising sun and the prospect it reveals. The manner in which the scene is described also alludes to the actual processes of photography (the chemical development of the photograph), while Esther's assertion that the moment is a trope for her memory alludes to the metaphorical connection of photography with memory in the period in which *Bleak House* was written. Significantly, the specific language used in the narration of this scene not only reveals the presence of the photographic in the novel, but also demonstrates the extent of

photography's influence in the early 1850s in changing how the visual environment was perceived and written about as if it were a photograph.

The scene opens with Esther positioned at the window, looking out onto the landscape below: "it was interesting, when I dressed before daylight, to peep out of window [sic], where my candles were reflected in the black panes like two beacons, and, finding all beyond still enshrouded in the indistinctness of last night, to watch how it turned out when the day came on" (142). The "unknown objects" that surrounded her when she first arrived at Bleak House the night before were "gradually revealed":

> At first they were faintly discernible in the mist, and above them the later stars still glimmered. That pale interval over, the picture began to enlarge and fill up so fast, that, at every new peep, I could have found enough to look at for an hour. Imperceptibly, my candles became the only incongruous part of the morning, the dark places in my room all melted away, and the day shone bright upon a cheerful landscape . . . (142)

Esther's description of how the scene "turned out" resonates with contemporary descriptions of the developing photograph. An 1853 article, for instance, explains how the daguerreotype plate is bathed in chemicals until, gradually, "all the lights being expressed and graduated . . . There were the allied images of gentleman and lady revealed . . . before us with a startling accuracy" (Morley and Wills 58). Interestingly, an 1839 article describes the appearance of the developed photograph in terms of a sunrise: "the effect was that of looking out at the first dawn of day, when, under a grey sky, white objects begin to peer through the obscurity of the

231

night" ("Letter from J. R." 435). Further, Esther's comment that "I could have found enough to look at for an hour" recalls similar comments often made about the photograph in its first years of invention. Viewers marvelled not only at the novelty of the photograph, but also at the unprecedented level of detail that could be pored over at great length: as an 1839 article claims, the photograph "affords stores of delineated beauty, which all the powers of sense, even when assisted by a microscope, are unable to exhaust" ("Letter from J. R." 436). This photographic moment of the sunrise relates to the scenes of light and dark in Esther's narrative, in that it is also marked by an attention to light, observation, and memory: "the prospect gradually revealed itself, and disclosed the scene over which the wind had wandered in the dark, like my memory over my life" (142). The gradual revealing of the scene, described like the developing photograph, is related to the workings of memory and the movement of the novel as a whole, in that as Esther's narrative progresses, her past and her selfhood are similarly brought out of darkness and gradually revealed.

The narrative movement of these scenes of light and dark, in which Esther simultaneously absents herself from the action (thus removing herself from the position of observed and occupying the invisible position of observer) and asserts herself as present narrator (thus drawing attention to the constructed nature of narrative) is of significance to a consideration of Esther's character. Her narrative sleight of hand whereby she is removed as an actor from the past experience and from being observed, yet asserted as a writer in the present, has the same effect as other instances in the text in which she negotiates the positions of observer and observed. In relating these visual scenes of memory, Esther presents herself as an active observer, one who "peeps" undetected at the action. Her

232

description of past scenes in terms of present memory – her remembering – also functions as a metafictional disruption to the constructed world of the novel. Her shift to the present tense in these scenes of light and dark interrupts her past tense, "objective" narration of the novel's events by drawing attention to her present self. This has the effect of disrupting the realism of the narration of the novel, in that the traditional past tense description of events (by an "invisible" omniscient narrator) is interrupted by the presence of the present self writing seven years later (as Esther discloses towards the novel's end) who draws attention to herself remembering the events that she is now writing: in one such statement, for instance, which is typical throughout her narration, Esther states "[t]he few words that I have to add to what I have written, are soon penned (915, 932). Esther's narrative techniques of presenting herself as an active observer (who is at the same time observed) and her shift in verb tense to mark significant visual or photographic memories thus reveal her mediation throughout the novel between her self as an image copy and her role as an observer and, by extension, her role as a narrator constructing the realist world in which the reader has been immersed. As such, Esther's narrative plays a crucial role in the novel's troubling of the realist conventions, or the manner in which "the novel calls attention to its own procedures and confesses to its own rhetoric" (Miller 29).

As has been demonstrated, the scenes of light and dark thus signal crucial moments in both the anonymous narration as well as Esther's narration. That both Esther and the unnamed narrator use these descriptions of contrast to signal "photographic" moments in the text suggests a parallel between the two narrators on several levels. Most obviously, the common narrative technique of references to the contrast of light and dark serves as one of

233

the central connections that abound in *Bleak House*. In rhetorically asking "what connexion can there be" between the "web of very different lives" that are drawn together, *Bleak House* presents one answer in the connection of the two narratives through shared language and metaphorical descriptions that evokes photography (272, 703). It also reveals the extent to which Esther with her "silent way of noticing" is invested in the novel's web of surveillance as an active observer, which connects her to the anonymous narrator (as well as Tulkinghorn and Bucket [63]). Most significantly, the photographic descriptions, metaphors, and narrative structuring presented by the anonymous narrator and Esther expose a preoccupation with the issues of visual representation raised by the new technology that manifests as a point of excess that "moves beyond 'realism'" (Miller 18). Just as Dickens's declaration in the Preface to the First Edition of *Bleak House* to "purposely" reveal the "romantic side of familiar things" challenges the mimetic capacities of the realist novel, so too do the moments of the photographic interrupt the constructed realist world that the novel creates (43).

Conclusion

Towards the novel's end, the present tense voice of the anonymous narrator and the indeterminate time setting are disturbed by a forward-looking prophecy of the coming railway: "Railroads shall soon traverse all this country . . . the engine and train shall shoot like a meteor over the wide night-landscape, turning the moon paler; but, as yet, such things are non-existent in these parts, though not wholly unexpected" (801). The narrator continues, describing a landscape already made alien by the anticipation of the imminent technology: "Preparations are afoot, measurements are made, ground is staked out. Bridges are begun, . . . fragments of embankments are thrown up, . . . everything looks chaotic, and abandoned in

full hopelessness" (801). The passage suggests premediation in its anticipation and

foreknowledge of the impact of the emerging technology. In particular, the passage's

contemplation of the irreversible influence of technology, intruding on and disturbing the

lived environment, is an apt description of photography's influence in terms of premediation.

That the coming railroad's "chaotic" presence interrupts the narrator's narration of a point in

time is an apt metaphor for the presence of photography in *Bleak House*. The effect of

photography's influence upon the novel is two-fold. Although not explicitly referred to,

photography's implicit presence imbues the novel with a distinctly modern atmosphere, one

that has caused critics to read it as a reflection of the "social reality of Dickens's day" (Miller

11). The implied photographic allusions in *Bleak House* reveal the extent to which

photography influenced Victorian realist fiction which, as Nancy Armstrong argues,

"referenced a world of objects that either had been or could be photographed" in order to

assert its realism (7). While references to photography contribute to the realist novel's

"consensus of realism" in suggesting mimesis (Ermarth 4), photography also manifests as

points of visual excess that interrupts the novel's reflection of social reality, revealing to the

reader that realist novels such as *Bleak House* are "fiction rather than mimesis" (Miller 29).

This excess of visual references, as John O. Jordan observes, "calls attention to their status as

signifiers in need of interpretation" and serves to "exceed the requirements of any

documentary or mimetic realism" (585). Their presence as such thus functions as "[i]nsistent

reminders of the disjunction between art and life . . . [that] threaten to sabotage the realist

claim to unmediated representation" (Byerly 2). Indeed, photography's participation in the

construction and interruption of the realist novel is reflective of the medium's influence in

the early 1850s, the period in which the Victorians' belief in the "mimetic realism" of photography was at the same time challenged by the recognition of photography's mediated nature and the conflict between objective and subjective modes of perception (Jordan 585).

Although the pre-photographic time setting of *Bleak House* precludes the possibility of an active role for and explicit reference to photography in the novel, photography's presence nonetheless embeds itself in the novel's themes and insistently draws attention to itself in a manner that disturbs the novel's cohesive and self-sustaining realist world. This is evident in the novel's excess of visual references, in the figuration of Bucket and Tulkinghorn in a manner that evokes the regulatory function of the camera, and in the extent to which both Esther's narration as well as the anonymous narration allude to the photographic in their style of description, their negotiation of experience and other characters as images, and in their representation of selfhood and narrative role (both absented and asserted) in the connecting worlds that their narratives create. Like the "fog everywhere" that seeps throughout *Bleak House*, so too is photography's influence everywhere felt in the novel, a presence that reflects the state of Victorian culture in the early 1850s on the cusp of photography's transformation into a mass medium (49).

Conclusion
Photography's Impact

The introduction of new visual technologies such as photography undoubtedly had significant cultural impact: as Paul Virilio notes, new optical devices like the camera "profoundly altered the contexts in which mental images were topographically stored and retrieved" and encouraged "the imperative to re-present oneself" (4). As traced in this dissertation, the new medium of photography transformed how Victorians perceived their visual reality (including the perception of space and time), visually "re-present[ed]" themselves in the exchange of photographic portraits, and conceived of and negotiated memories and experiences as photographs (4). As the chapters of this dissertation have made evident, a governing aspect of their imaginings and negotiations of photography is the response of anxiety towards the possibilities and actualities that the new medium afforded. Unlike prior optical devices and reprographic technologies (such as the camera obscura and the mass-reproduction process of lithography), photography specifically raised concerns not only about the medium itself, but also about the status of other visual media and, perhaps most significantly, about the status of individual subjectivity, creating "a fundamental fear about the status of the self" in the face of the newly visual state that photography created (Kember 146).

The extent to which photography altered the Victorians' perception and description of reality is made evident in an examination of a passage that pre-dates photography, a scene in Charles Dickens's 1837-9 *Oliver Twist* that considers the status of the painted portrait. Mrs.

Bedwin, noting that "Oliver had fixed his eyes, most intently, on a portrait which hung against the wall," comments, "painters always make ladies out prettier than they are, or they wouldn't get any custom, child. The man that invented the machine for taking likeness might have known *that* would never succeed; it's a deal too honest" (86). To Oliver's question, "Is – is that a likeness, ma'am?," Mrs. Bedwin replies that yes, "that's a portrait" (86). Mrs. Bedwin's dismissal of a proto-photographic optical device (most likely the physionotrace, a tool that mechanically traced a sitter's profile, often used for silhouettes) and the mechanical images it produces suggests the difference in the response of viewers before and after the introduction of photography.[63] The passage shows Dickens's engagement with early optical devices and, in comparison to later works such as *Bleak House*, shows how visual references in Dickens's writing would take on a far more rich and varied fullness by virtue of the new ways of seeing that photography introduced. More significantly, as chapters two and three have shown, the photograph's quality of being "too honest" – the very quality for which Mrs. Bedwin dismisses earlier forms of mechanically-reproduced likenesses – was responded to with great desire on the part of viewers, particularly in the instance of photographic portraits (whether of living or deceased individuals [106]). The allure of the photograph's indexicality or its uncanny appearance of being a "more than living likeness" (Bede 45), as these contemporary accounts demonstrate, was such that the medium transformed the Victorians'

---

[63] In "Precursors of the Photographic Portrait," Gisèle Freund argues that optical devices such as the physionotrace represented a mechanization of portraiture art that developed in response to "the increased demand for portraits" (79). However, as discussed in this dissertation, photography was unique in comparison to these earlier visual reproductions: as Freund asserts, "[i]t was not until a totally impersonal technique came into use with the advent of photography that the portrait could be completely democratized" (81).

experience of memory and memorial and altered their perception of the visual environment as that which could be made into and negotiated as a series of photographs, a change that Mary Warner Marien describes as "the notion that something might be photographed harden[ing] into the expectation that it ought to be photographed" (*Photography* 79).

The transformation that photography caused over the years of its development from 1839 to 1853 is perhaps best reflected in the ways in which it functioned as a defining principle in descriptions of the visual. An 8 June 1839 letter to *The Athenaeum* from "J.R.," which describes the author's reaction to seeing daguerreotypes for the first time, reveals several aspects of the medium that continued to fascinate the Victorians throughout the ensuing years of its development and increasing popularity. The first aspect of the photograph that the author comments on is its seeming transparency to the visual world that it captures, what he describes as "the truth, distinctness, and fidelity of the minutest details" of the photograph (435). The allure of the medium for its indexicality was a defining feature that influenced the Victorians' perception of the photograph, particularly their perception of the photographic portrait as a "second self," or perfect memorial of the individual subject (Joseph's studio, *Times* 30 May 1846). In its indexicality and accuracy of detail – such that even "the smallest crack, a withered leaf, or a little dust, which a telescope only will detect" is perfectly recorded – the photograph also introduced a new level of realism to visual representation, allowing Victorians to see what could not previously be captured in a visual representation or detected by the naked eye alone (435). The alteration that photography enacted upon their perception of the visual environment is captured in the author's wondrous statement that he "could not have anticipated" the realistic appearance of the photographs

upon first viewing them, but that the "truth of the pictures" was soon impressed upon him (435). The author's prediction that these "original pictures of unquestionable fidelity" will soon "be multiplied" anticipates the development of photography in the early 1850s such that multiple copies of the photograph can be made (due to the collodion process), a development that, as the previous chapters have shown, was met with enthusiasm (in allowing all classes of "the public [to] obtain illustrations of the highest excellence at a moderate cost" [435]) as much as anxiety (in its uncontrollable circulation of photographic copies that were indiscernible from the original). Finally, the author's wondrous conclusion that, in viewing the daguerreotype photograph, "you feel that you have a treasure before you, which affords stores of delineated beauty, which all the powers of sense . . . are unable to exhaust," suggests the extent to which photography affected the Victorians' perception of visual images (436). The photograph introduced a new level of visuality in accurately documenting a wealth of seemingly transparent visual detail and in its immediacy, or ability to capture and make permanent a discrete unit of time that previously could not be recorded and visually discerned.

The impact of photography's indexicality, immediacy, and ability to alter the Victorians' perception and negotiation of the visual world in the subsequent years of its development is evident in accounts from the early 1850s such as *Bleak House* which, in its employment of photographic metaphors and allusions, demonstrates the influence of photography on the narration of experience and memories in terms of the photographic. In her description of past events as "whole pictures" (591), in the accrual of rich visual detail in her narration, and in her description of the visual environment in terms of a developing

240

photograph – as a "picture [that] began to enlarge and fill up so fast that . . . I could have found enough to look at for an hour" – the narrator Esther's account ably demonstrates photography's cultural impact (142). As J.R.'s 1839 letter and Dickens's 1852-3 novel reveal, photography altered the Victorians' negotiation and narration of time and memory, enacting an externalization and mechanization of memory and interiority such that past experiences are recalled as photographs that the viewer "sees" before him or her. Further, the visual environment is experienced and narrated as a wealth of accurate visual detail; as chapters two and three have shown, photographic portraiture allowed for the individual subject to present him or herself as an image-object in circulation in this newly visual state. The impact of photography in the years of its development from 1839 to 1853 can, in short, thus be described as a transformation in which the Victorians perceived themselves and their environment as "whole pictures" (Dickens 591), the camera "set[ting] up the world as something to be looked at" (Shloss 254).

The scope of this dissertation on the representations and receptions of photography in Britain provides a clear picture of the Victorians' negotiation of the new medium as the technology rapidly developed from its invention in 1839 to the beginning of its mass popularity in the early 1850s. The representations and receptions that this dissertation traces show the degree of complexity of this negotiation: from its invention, photography was variously represented or imagined to be a medium with differing qualities, potentials, and drawbacks, and was received and perceived in numerous ways as it became an increasingly familiar presence. These varying representations in the periodical literature constituted as

much as reflected the Victorians' perception of photography, and continued to inform how the medium was received as it developed into a mass medium.

The complexity of the Victorians' response to photography is perhaps best seen in their negotiation of the photograph as an indexical representation. As Walter Benjamin delineates, the urge to read the photograph as indexical stems from its alluring appearance of reality: "All the artistic preparations of the photographer and all the design in the positioning of his model to the contrary, the viewer feels an irresistible compulsion to seek the tiny spark . . . of here and now" ("A Small History" 202). Although the medium's "reality effect" predominated (Marien *Photography* 74), the existence of alternative perceptions that recognized the mediated nature of photography reveals that the Victorians held a more complex view of photography than has previously been attributed to them by critical studies that "fail to recognize the instability in the optical truth status of photography since its inception" (Kember 153). That these competing representations of photography were in circulation reflect the "tensions between objective and subjective models of vision" that were debated in Victorian culture and show the extent to which photography figured in the Victorians' negotiation of the status of the visual in the period (Christ and Jordan xxvi).

That photography's status was considered in terms of "objective [or] subjective models of vision" is evident, for instance, in the discussions throughout the 1840s regarding the modality of the image and photographic manipulations (Christ and Jordan xxvi). As has been observed in this dissertation, the question of the medium's modality has always been complicated by the photograph's unique quality of appearing transparent, and the desire to read it as such, even though its mediated nature has been recognized. The debate in 1846

regarding which photographic image was of higher modality – one that was altered with manipulations such as hand-colouring, or one that was unaltered or "genuine" – would continue to surface throughout photography's development, particularly as new methods were introduced that, although increasing the realism of the image, were nonetheless alterations. One such method introduced in the early 1850s, for instance, was the deliberate use of an out of focus lens to create more "artistic" images. The consideration of photograph's modality closely relates to the discussions present since photography's invention regarding whether the medium was to be considered more an art or a science – more a subjective creation or a seemingly transparent, documentary recording of the observable world. The question of the modality of photography and its function as an objective or subjective ordering of vision is one that persistently surfaces throughout the years of photography's development and that shows the Victorians' consideration of the status of the emerging medium.

This dissertation's analysis of the reception of photography also makes apparent the extent to which the Victorians responded to the new medium with expressions of anxiety. As much as the new medium was positively received and deemed miraculous for its unprecedented accuracy and for the numerous possibilities it allowed (to record distant lands, to reproduce and make available for all classes works of fine art and literature, to capture and memorialize loved ones), it at the same time evoked a response of anxiety that persisted (indeed, grew even stronger in tone) as the medium became ubiquitous. Tom Gunning asserts that such a response of anxiety figures in the reception of communicative media, with "new technologies evok[ing] not only a short-lived wonder based on unfamiliarity which greater

243

and constant exposure will overcome, but also a possibly less dramatic but more enduring sense of the uncanny" (47). The strength with which such anxieties were voiced and the endurance of such anxieties even as photography became as familiar "as a household word" was particularly noticeable in the periodical reportage and fiction from 1839 to 1853 (Dodd 245). The concerns voiced regarding the autonomy of the camera; the status and subjectivity of the photographed subject; the exposure, surveillance, and impropriety involved in the photographic act; and the autonomy or after-life of the perfect photographic copy or "living double" were all anxieties that played a central and defining role in the Victorians' reception of the new technology and that continued to inform their negotiation of photography as it became a mass medium (S. Williams, "'The Inconstant Daguerreotype'" 164).

As argued in chapter three, underlying these various expressions of concern towards photography are the central anxieties felt regarding the seeming agency of the camera and of the photograph (which, in its perfect duplication of the subject photographed, assumes "an equivalent status and integrity" [Kember 162]); such anxieties are embodied in the period's concern about the status of the female photographed subject in particular. The female subject is most often the assumed object of the camera's agency and uncanny power, with photographic literature often referring to a female character who is vulnerable before the camera. Alan Trachtenberg notes, for instance, "to be 'drawn' towards the lens implied a more than faintly erotic surrender to another's will, and the lens itself, a rigid tubular protuberance with a large glass eye at its tip, represented a redoubtably masculine will" (27). Susan Williams similarly notes the specifically feminine act of surrender common in early photographic literature, providing fictional examples in which the control and circulation of a

woman's image is consistently given "to the men who made and saw these images" ("'The Inconstant Daguerreotype'" 167). As discussed in chapter three, G. W. M. Reynold's *Mysteries of London* and other contemporary accounts reveal the profound anxiety regarding the lack of control over the photographic other (the photograph of the subject that in its perfection seems to take on a life of its own). That the female subject / object is particularly vulnerable to the camera's agency and has no control over her photographic copy is a significant aspect of photographic literature that reveals the extent to which the anxieties felt towards the new medium dominated the Victorians' perception and negotiation of photography.

The unique analysis of *Bleak House* in chapter four provides a case study or model that can be applied to an analysis of other realist novels of the Victorian period. That the novel implicitly considers the anxieties raised about photography – whether the problems of surveillance and voyeurism, visual deceit, or the status of the original and the copy – suggests that other realist novels of the same period similarly embody such anxieties. As the previous chapters have shown, references to surveillance, exposure, and to the control and circulation of images were issues that were specifically raised in terms of photography; therefore, references to such issues in realist novels of the period can and perhaps should be interpreted in light of photography's influence. For instance, the way in which Esther and the anonymous narrator narrate significant moments and memories in photographic terms – making reference to the contrast of light and dark, for instance, and narrating key remembered scenes as if they were a viewed photograph – is a technique that reveals the influence of the photographic medium in the negotiation and construction of narrated

experience. These scenes of narration in which the narrator (and, subsequently, the reader) are positioned as "observant spectator[s]" (as Charles Dickens described himself in relation to his novels) reflect the newly visual state that photography enacted and the direct association of photography with memorial and memory (Curtis 111). An examination of references to visualized memory or "mental pictures," as the anonymous narrator describes it, to the narration of experience, to (covert) observation, and to other techniques that suggest the influence of the photographic medium on a novel's narration and focalization in realist novels of the early 1850s and onwards would provide greater insight into the period's perception of photography and the effect of the photographic on the realist genre (132).

Underwriting my examination of *Bleak House* in chapter four has been the argument that the novel's visual references, particularly the implicit allusions to photography, "exceed the requirements of any documentary or mimetic realism" and interrupt the realist novel's construction of a transparent world (Jordan 585). The photographic medium's unique status, as has been traced in this dissertation, troubles mediation itself, its seeming transparency and indexicality arousing a "re-animation of the ontological instability of all mimetic representation" (Gunning 49). How the realist novel represents and negotiates the presence of the photographic in contemporary culture – a presence that lays bare the conventions and imperatives of the realist genre – is an area of further study that would contribute to the field of Victorian literary studies.

This dissertation has extended Grusin's theory of premediation to trace the effects of premediation on a culture's reception and negotiation of new media technologies. Premediation allows for an examination of two aspects of the cultural integration of new

media. It theorizes that historical perceptions of a medium effect later perceptions and uses of that medium, even after the technology has improved and developed since its earliest state, and theorizes that a medium can be used within a culture to both imagine a future and control that future's unfolding (just as photography determined a future that would conform to the perceptions of reality that photography generated). Specifically, the anxiety that arises in the culture in imagining the unknown future (a future that is negotiated through this new medium) is managed by considering this future through the present perceptions of the medium. As this dissertation demonstrates in its examination of photography, the early perceptions and anxieties about the status and value of photography and its cultural impact directly shape the future uses of photography. For instance, the speculation in early articles that photography would be used to document distant lands became a reality, with the underlying perception that the camera is a documentary, transparent tool subsequently persisting throughout the years (and informing photography's future uses in ethnographic studies, phrenology, police archives of the criminal type, and so on). Premediation provides a means by which to examine how these earliest perceptions and anxieties about photography shape future uses of the technology and, in so doing, shape the future state of the culture itself.

The concept of premediation thus provides a useful means by which to consider the relationship between media and society in general and the cultural impact of photography on the Victorian period in particular. This theory shows how a medium is understood and becomes integrated into a culture based on the culture's perceptions, imaginings, and concerns about the medium, and functions as a "two-way" model that recognizes the

influence of a culture's perceptions of and anxieties towards the medium in shaping how that medium is perceived, while also recognizing how the medium itself shapes these perceptions and anxieties. In contrast to Bolter and Grusin's theory of remediation, it also provides an examination of the effect of a medium upon its own future forms (rather than only considering the effects of older forms of media upon a new medium). Premediation provides a more complex view of the cultural integration of a new medium than provided by other critical perspectives, which often just focus on the ways in which a new medium's "ultimate meanings or functions are shaped over time by that society's existing habits of media use" (Pingree and Gitelman xii). Further, premediation allows for a cultural analysis that accommodates the complexity of the Victorians' reception of the new medium of photography and, as such, contributes to cultural studies' examination of "the mutual determinations and interrelations of cultural forms and historical forces" (Nelson et al 3).

In its analysis of the representations, receptions, and anxieties raised by photography in its developmental period and in its elaboration of the theory of premediation, this dissertation not only uniquely contributes to an understanding of the history of photography and Victorian culture but also serves as a useful model for the study of the "cultural history of the reception of technology" that is significant to an examination of emerging technologies and new media in the present day (Gunning 47).

Bibliography

Allen, Rick. *The Moving Pageant: A Literary Sourcebook on London Street-Life, 1700-1914*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Altick, Richard D. *The Presence of the Present*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1991.

"An Artist's Struggles." *Punch* 11 (1846): 238.

"The Application of the Talbotype." *Art-Union* (1 July 1846): 195.

Armstrong, Nancy. *Fiction in the Age of Photography*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.

Arthur, T.B. "The Daguerreotypist." *Godey's Lady's Book* 38 (May 1849): 352-6.

"*Athenaeum*." 2001. *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800-1900*. Ed. John S. North. 19 March 2008 <http://www.victorianperiodicals.com>.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

Bayuk Rosenman, Ellen. "Spectacular Women: *The Mysteries of London* and the Female Body." *Victorian Studies* 40.1 (1996): 31-65.

Beard's studio. Advertisement. *Athenaeum* 967 (9 May 1846): 465.

Beard's studio. Advertisement. *Athenaeum* 985 (12 September 1846): 921.

Beard's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 28 May 1846: n. pag.

Beard's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 5 August 1846: n. pag.

Beard's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 10 December 1846: n. pag.

Beard's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 18 December 1846: n. pag.

Beckwith, Susan Lynn, and John R. Reed. "Impounding the Future: Some Uses of the

      Present Tense in Dickens and Collins." *Dickens Studies Annual* 32 (2002): 299-318.

Bede, Cuthbert. *Photographic Pleasures*. London: Thomas McLean, 1855.

Benjamin, Walter. "A Berlin Chronicle." *One-Way Street and Other Writings*. Trans.

      Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter. London: NLB, 1979. 293-349.

---. "A Small History of Photography." *One-Way Street and Other Writings*. Trans. Edmund

      Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter. London: NLB, 1979. 240-57.

---. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah

      Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968. 219-53.

Blanchard, Laman. "Photographic Phenomena, or the New School of Portrait Painting."

      George Cruikshank's Omnibus 1 (May 1841): 29-32.

Bolter, Jay David, and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*.

      Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.

Bright's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 11 May 1846: n. pag.

Bright's Studio. Advertisement. *Times* 28 July 1846: n. pag.

Bright's Studio. Advertisement. *Times* 28 August 1846: n. pag.

Bright's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 16 September 1846: n. pag.

Bright's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 19 October 1846: n. pag.

Brimley, George. Rev. of *Bleak House*, by Charles Dickens. *Spectator* (24 September 1853):

      923-5. Rpt. in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. Philip Collins. London: Routledge,

      1971. 283-5.

Brock, William H. "Science." *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society*. Ed. J. Don Vann
and Rosemary T. VanArsdel. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1994. 81-97.

Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. Letter to Mary Russell Mitford. 7 December 1843. *The Letters
of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford 1836-1854*. Ed. Meredith B.
Raymond and Mary Rose Sullivan. Vol. 2. Winfield: Armstrong Browning Library of
Baylor University, The Browning Institute, Wedgestone Press, and Wellesley
College, 1983. 356-8.

Burgess, N. G. "Taking Portraits After Death." *Photographic and Fine-Art Journal* 8.3
(1855): 80.

Butt, John, and Kathleen Tillotson. *Dickens at Work*. London: Methuen, 1963.

Byerly, Alison. *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature*.
Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.

Cantor, Geoffrey, et al. Introduction. *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media*.
Ed. Louise Henson, Geoffrey N. Cantor, Gowan Dawson, Richard Noakes, Sally
Shuttleworth, and Jonathan R. Topham. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. xvii-xxiii.

Cantor, Geoffrey, and Sally Shuttleworth. Introduction. *Science Serialized: Representations
of the Sciences in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals*. Ed. Cantor and Shuttleworth.
Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004. 1-17.

Carey, Elizabeth Sheridan. "Lines Written on Seeing a Daguerreotype Portrait of a Lady."
Illustrated London News 3.68 (19 August 1843): 125.

Christ, Carol T., and John O. Jordan. Introduction. *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*. Ed. Christ and Jordan. Berkeley: U of California P, 1995. xix-xxix.

Claudet's studio. Advertisement. *Athenaeum* 963 (11 April 1846): 361.

Claudet's studio. Advertisement. *Athenaeum* 967 (9 May 1846): 465.

Claudet's studio. Advertisement. *Athenaeum* 969 (23 May 1846): 513.

Claudet's studio. Advertisement. *Athenaeum* 998 (12 December 1846): 1257.

Claudet's studio. Advertisement. *Literary Gazette* 1525 (11 April 1846): 349.

Claudet's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 25 August 1846: n. pag.

Cohen, Jane R. *Charles Dickens and His Original Illustrators*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1980.

Collins, Philip. Introduction. *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. Collins. London: Routledge, 1971. 1-26.

Comolli, Jean-Louis. "Machines of the Visible." *The Cinematic Apparatus*. Ed. Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980. 121-43.

Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.

Cruikshank, George. "Photographic Phenomena, or the New School of Portrait-Painting." Illustration. *George Cruikshank's Omnibus* 1 (May 1841): 29.

Curtis, Gerard. *Visual Words: Art and the Material Book in Victorian England*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.

Daguerre, Louis Jacques Mandé. *View of the Boulevard du Temple* daguerreotype. 1839. Stadtmuseum, Munich.

"Daguerreotype." *The Quotidienne*. Rpt. in *Literary Gazette* 1173 (13 July 1839): 444.

"The Daguerreotype." *Literary Gazette* 1182 (14 September 1839): 590.

"Daguerreotypes." *Littell's Living Age* 9.110 (20 June 1846): 551-2.

"Daguerreotype Portraiture." *Literary Gazette* 1526 (18 April 1846): 360.

"The Daguerre Secret." *Literary Gazette* 1179 (24 August 1839): 538-9.

Dawson, Gowan, Richard Noakes, and Jonathan R. Topham. Introduction. *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical: Reading the Magazine of Nature*. Ed. Geoffrey Cantor, Gowan Dawson, Graeme Gooday, Richard Noakes, Sally Shuttleworth, and Jonathan R. Topham. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 1-37.

Di Bello, Patrizia. "From the Album Page to the Computer Screen: Collecting Photographs at Home." *Multimedia Histories: From the Magic Lantern to the Internet*. Ed. James Lyons and John Plunkett. Exeter: U of Exeter P, 2007. 57-72.

Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. Ed. Norman Page. London: Penguin, 1971.

---. *Oliver Twist*. Ed. Kathleen Tillotson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

Dingley, Robert. "The Unreliable Camera: Photography as Evidence in Mid-Victorian Fiction." *Victorian Review: The Journal of Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada* 27.2 (2001): 42-55.

Dixon, Edmund Saul. "More Work for the Ladies." *Household Words* 6.130 (18 September 1852): 18-9.

Dodd, George. "Busy With the Photograph." *Household Words* 9.214 (29 April 1854):

242-5.

E. Palmer Photogenic Drawing Paper and Field Camera. Advertisement. *Athenaeum* 603 (18

May 1839): 361.

Edgeworth, Maria. Letter to Fanny Wilson. 25 May 1841. *Maria Edgeworth: Letters from*

England 1813-1844. Ed. Christina Colvin. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. 593-4.

Egerton's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 28 July 1846: n. pag.

Ermarth, Elizabeth Deeds. *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel*. Princeton: Princeton

UP, 1983.

Findley's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 31 July 1846: n. pag.

Findley's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 16 September 1846: n. pag.

Findley's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 29 September 1846: n. pag.

Findley's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 19 October 1846: n. pag.

Flint, Kate. *The Victorians and Visual Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.

"French Discovery – Pencil of Nature." *Literary Gazette* 1150 (2 February 1839): 74.

Freund, Gisèle. "Precursors of the Photographic Portrait." *The Nineteenth-Century Visual*

Culture Reader. Ed. Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski. New York:

Routledge, 2004. 79-82.

Frost, C.K. Untitled. Illustration. "Sketches of Paris. The Daguerreotype." Trans. Sarah

Howitt. *Godey's Lady's Book* Vol.27 (October 1843): 178.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New

York: Vintage, 1979.

Gaucheraud, H. "The Daguerreotype." *Gazette de France* (6 January 1839): n. pag. Rpt. in
    Literary Gazette 1147 (12 January 1839): 28.

Gernsheim, Helmut. *A Concise History of Photography*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap,
    1965.

---. *The History of Photography: From the Earliest Use of the Camera Obscura in the
    Eleventh Century up to 1914*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1955.

"Graphic Society." *Literary Gazette* 1153 (24 February 1839): 124.

"Graphic Society." *Literary Gazette* 1197 (28 December 1839): 830.

Green-Lewis, Jennifer. *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism*.
    Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996.

Groth, Helen. *Victorian Photography and Literary Nostalgia*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.

Grusin, Richard A. "Premediation." *Criticism* 46.1 (2004): 17-39.

Gunning, Tom. "Re-Newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the
    Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century." *Rethinking Media
    Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*. Ed. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins.
    Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003. 39-60.

Hamber, Anthony J. *"A Higher Branch of the Art": Photographing the Fine Arts in England,
    1839-1880*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1996.

Hannavy, John. *Case Histories: The Presentation of the Victorian Photographic Portrait,
    1840-1875*. Suffolk: The Antique Collector's Club, 2005.

Henisch, Heinz K., and Bridget A. Henisch. *The Painted Photograph, 1839-1914: Origins,
    Techniques, Aspirations*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996.

255

Heyert, Elizabeth. *The Glass-House Years: Victorian Portrait Photography, 1839-1870*.

      Montclair, N.J.: Allanheld & Schram, 1979.

Hill, James. "Authority and the *Bildungsroman*: The Double Narrative of *Bleak House*."

      Dickens Studies Annual 29 (2000): 163-93.

Horton, Susan. "Were They Having Fun Yet? Victorian Optical Gadgetry, Modernist

      Selves." *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination.* Ed. Carol T.

      Christ and John O. Jordan. Berkeley: U of California P, 1995. 1-27.

Illustrated London News subscription. Advertisement. *Times* 30 December 1846: n. pag.

Illustration. *Illustrated London News* 3.68 (19 August 1843): 125.

J. T. Cooper's Photogenic Drawing Paper. Advertisement. *Athenaeum* 594 (16 March 1839):

      193.

Jordan, John O. "The Purloined Handkerchief." *Dickens Studies Annual* 18 (1989): 1-17.

Joseph's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 28 May 1846: n. pag.

Joseph's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 30 May 1846: n. pag.

Kember, Sarah. "'The Shadow of the Object': Photography and Realism." *Textual Practice*

      10.1 (1996): 145-64.

King, Louisa. "Why My Uncle Was a Bachelor." *Household Words* 8.203 (11 February

      1854): 567-571.

Krauss, Rosalind. "Photography in the Service of Surrealism." *L'Amour Fou*. Ed. Rosalind

      Krauss and Jane Livingston. New York: Abbeville, 1985. 15-57.

Kress, Gunther, and Theo van Leeuwen. *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design*.

      London: Routledge, 1996.

Leggat, Robert. "Beard, Richard." 28 April 2005. *A History of Photography*. 19 March 2008

      <http://www.rleggat.com/photohistory/history/beard.htm>.

---. "The Beginnings of Photography." 2000. *A History of Photography*. 19 March 2008

      <http://www.rleggat.com/photohistory/history/beginnin.htm>.

---. "Cartes-de-Visite Photography." 20 November 2003. *A History of Photography*. 19

      March 2008 <http://www.rleggat.com/photohistory/history/cart-de-.htm>.

---. "The Collodion Process." 29 July 2007. *A History of Photography*. 19 March 2008

      <http://www.rleggat.com/photohistory/history/collodio.htm>.

---. "The Daguerreotype." 30 June 2006. *A History of Photography*. 19 March 2008

      <http://www.rleggat.com/photohistory/history/daguerro.htm>.

---. "Photography in Colour." 30 August 2001. *A History of Photography*. 19 March 2008

      <http://www.rleggat.com/photohistory/history/colour.htm>.

"Letter from J.R." *Athenaeum* 606 (8 June 1839): 435-6.

"The 'Light of All Nations.'" *Punch* 11 (1846): 211.

Limner, Luke. "Copyright and Photography." *Journal of the Photographic Society* 1.7 (21

      July 1853): 91.

Linkman, Audrey. *The Victorians: Photographic Portraits*. London: Tauris Parke, 1993.

"*Literary Gazette*." 2001. *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals,*

      1800-1900. Ed. John S. North. 19 March 2008

      <http://www.victorianperiodicals.com>.

Lorimer, Douglas A. *Colour, Class, and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the*

      Mid-Nineteenth Century. Leicester: Leicester UP, 1978.

"M. Claudet's Daguerreotype Portraits." *Athenaeum* 975 (4 July 1846): 689.

"Making the Most of It." *Punch* 11 (1846): 221.

Illustration. "Making the Most of It." *Punch* 11 (1846): 221.

Marien, Mary Warner. *Photography: A Cultural History*. New York: Abrams, 2002.

---. *Photography and Its Critics: A Cultural History, 1839-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.

McCandles, Barbara. "The Portrait Studio and the Celebrity: Promoting the Art." *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*. Ed. Martha A. Sandweiss. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991. 49-75.

McCauley, Elizabeth Anne. *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1994.

Metz, Christian. "Photography and Fetish." *October* 34 (1985): 81-90.

Miller, J. Hillis. Introduction. *Bleak House*. By Charles Dickens. Ed. Norman Page. London: Penguin, 1971. 11-35.

Morley, Henry, and W.H. Wills. "Photography." *Household Words* 7.156 (19 March 1853): 54-61.

"Mr. Beard's Photographic Portraits." *Times* 22 April 1846: n. pag.

Namowitz Worthen, Amy. "Engraving. Materials and Techniques." 2008. *Grove Art Online*. Oxford UP. 5 May 2008 <http://www.groveart.com>.

---. "Engraving. History, c1750 - c1900. Steel Engraving." 2008. *Grove Art Online*. Oxford UP. 5 May 2008 <http://www.groveart.com>.

"Nature Painted by Herself." *Literary Gazette* 1147 (12 January 1839): 28.

Nelson, Cary, Paula A. Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg. "Cultural Studies: An

    Introduction." Introduction. *Cultural Studies*. Ed. Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler.

    New York: Routledge, 1992. 1-23.

"The New Art." *Literary Gazette* 1150 (2 February 1839): 72-3.

"The New Art." *Literary Gazette* 1184 (28 September 1839): 622.

"The New Art – Photography." *Mirror of Literature* 946 (27 April 1839): 262-3.

"New Discovery in the Fine Arts." *New Yorker* (12 April 1839): n. pag. Trachtenberg, Alan.

    "Photography: the Emergence of a Keyword." *Photography in Nineteenth-Century*

    America. Ed. Martha A. Sandweiss. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991. 17-47.

"New Publications." *Literary Gazette* 1183 (21 September 1839): 605.

Newhall, Beaumont. Introduction. *The Pencil of Nature*. By William Henry Fox Talbot. Ed.

    Newhall. New York: Da Capo, 1968. N. pag.

Nixon, Jude V. "'Lost in the Vast Worlds of Wonder': Dickens and Science." *Dickens*

    Studies Annual 35 (2005): 267-333.

"No More Autographs." *Punch* 11 (1846): 250.

Noakes, Richard. "*Punch* and Comic Journalism in Mid-Victorian Britain." *Science in the*

    Nineteenth-Century Periodical: Reading the Magazine of Nature. Ed. Geoffrey

    Cantor, Gowan Dawson, Graeme Gooday, Richard Noakes, Sally Shuttleworth, and

    Jonathan R. Topham. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 91-123.

---. "Representing 'A Century of Inventions': Nineteenth-Century Technology and Victorian *Punch*." *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media*. Ed. Louise Henson, Geoffrey Cantor, Gowan Dawson, Richard Noakes, Sally Shuttleworth, and Jonathan R. Topham. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 151-64.

Nord, Deborah Epstein. *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995.

"On Physiognomy." *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* 13 (28 March 1846): 203-5.

Oost, Regina B. "'More Like than Life': Paintings, Photography, and Dickens's *Bleak House*." *Dickens Studies Annual* 30 (2001): 141-58.

Ostry, Elaine. "'Social Wonders': Fancy, Science, and Technology in Dickens's Periodicals." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 34.1 (Spring 2001): 54-78.

"Our Weekly Gossip." *Athenaeum* 588 (2 February 1839): 96.

"Our Weekly Gossip." *Athenaeum* 589 (9 February 1839): 114.

Ousby, Ian. "The Broken Glass: Vision and Comprehension in *Bleak House*." *Bleak House*. By Charles Dickens. Ed. George Ford and Sylvère Monod. New York: Norton, 1977. 974-85.

Page, Norman. Bleak House*: A Novel of Connections*. Boston: Twayne, 1990.

"Paris Letter." *Athenaeum* 587 (26 January 1839): 69.

"The Photogenic Art." *Literary Gazette* 1158 (30 March 1839): 202.

"Photogenic Drawing." *Literary Gazette* 1157 (23 March 1839): 187.

"Photographic Miniatures." *Art-Union* (1 January 1846): 20.

"The Photographic or Daguerreotype Miniatures." *Times* 24 March 1841: n. pag.

Illustration. "A Photographic Picture." *Photographic Pleasures*. Cuthbert Bede. London:
Thomas McLean, 1855. 55.

"Photographic Portraits in Colour." *Illustrated London News* 2.47 (25 March 1843): 213.

"Photographic Portraiture." *Illustrated London News* 1.21 (1 October 1842): 323.

"Photography." *Literary Gazette* 1537 (4 July 1846): 601.

Pingree, Geoffrey B., and Lisa Gitelman. "What's New About New Media?" Introduction.
New Media, 1740-1915. Ed. Gitelman and Pingree. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003.
xi-xxii.

Polytechnic Institution Exhibition. Advertisement. *Athenaeum* 623 (5 October 1839): 766.

"Principle of the Daguerreotype." *Athenaeum* 617 (24 August 1839): 636-7.

Read, William. "The Vampire." *Literary Gazette* 1548 (19 September 1846): 821.

Rev. of *Bleak House*, by Charles Dickens. *Illustrated London News* (24 September 1853):
247. Rpt. in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. Philip Collins. London: Routledge,
1971. 282.

Rev. of *The Cairn: A Gathering of Precious Stones from Many Hands*, by G. Bell. *Literary
Gazette* 1548 (19 September 1846): 806.

Rev. of *The Pencil of Nature*, by William Henry Fox Talbot. *Literary Gazette* 1512 (10
January 1846): 38-9.

Rev. of *Pictures from Italy*, by Charles Dickens. *Art-Union* (1 June 1846): 170.

Rev. of *A Poet's Bazaar*, by Hans Christian Andersen. *Athenaeum* 993 (7 November 1846):
1135-6.

Reynolds, George William M. *The Mysteries of London*. Ed. Trefor Thomas. Keele: Keele

    UP, 1998.

Royal Gallery of Practical Science Exhibition. Advertisement. *Athenaeum* 624 (12 October

    1839): 782.

"Royal Institution." *Literary Gazette* 1150 (2 February 1839): 74-5.

"Royal Institution." *Literary Gazette* 1263 (3 April 1841): 218-9.

"Royal Society." *Athenaeum* 588 (2 February 1839): 97.

"Royal Society." *Literary Gazette* 1150 (2 February 1839): 75.

Sala, George A. "First Fruits." *Household Words* 5.112 (15 May 1852): 189-91.

Sanders, Andrew. *Charles Dickens*. Authors in Context Series. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.

Scharf, Aaron. *Pioneers of Photography*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1976.

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. "Panoramic Travel." *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture*

    Reader. Ed. Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski. New York:

    Routledge, 2004. 92-100.

Seiberling, Grace. *Amateurs, Photography and the Mid-Victorian Imagination*. Chicago: U

    of Chicago P, 1986.

Seltzer, Mark. *Bodies and Machines*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Shloss, Carol. *In Visible Light: Photography and the American Writer*. Oxford: Oxford UP,

    1987.

"Sketches of Paris. The Daguerreotype." Trans. Sarah Howitt. *Godey's Lady's Book* 27

    (October 1843): 176-9.

Smee, Alfred. Letter. *Literary Gazette* 1165 (18 May 1839): 314.

"Society of Arts." *Athenaeum* 954 (7 February 1846): 152.

"Society of British Artists." *Athenaeum* 962 (4 April 1846): 354.

"Something New Under the Sun." *Punch* 10 (1846): 236.

Steinlight, Emily. "'Anti-Bleak House': Advertising and the Victorian Novel." *Narrative* 14.2 (2006): 132-62.

"Sun-Painting." *Art-Union* 2 (15 March 1839): 24.

Sullivan, Alvin. "*The Athenaeum*." *British Literary Magazines. The Romantic Age, 1789-1836*. Ed. Sullivan. Vol. 2. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983. 21-4.

Sutton, Thomas. "Paper v. Collodion." *Journal of the Photographic Society* 1.23 (21 October 1854): 53-4.

Tagg, John. *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1988.

Talbot, William Henry Fox. Letter to John Herschel (25 January 1839). 1 September 2003. *The Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot*. Ed. Larry Schaaf. 19 March 2008 <http://foxtalbot.dmu.ac.uk/letters/letters.html>.

---. "Photogenic Drawing." *Literary Gazette* 1150 (2 February 1839): 73-4.

---. *The Pencil of Nature*. Ed. Beaumont Newhall. New York: Da Capo Press, 1968.

---. "Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing, or the Process by which Natural Objects May be Made to Delineate Themselves Without the Aid of the Artist's Pencil." *Athenaeum* 589 (9 February 1839): 114-7.

Terpak, Frances. "Stereo." *Devices of Wonder*. Ed. Barbara Maria Stafford and Frances Terpak. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2001. 357-62.

Thomas, Ronald R. "Double Exposures: Arresting Images in *Bleak House* and *The House of*

    Seven Gables." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 31.1 (1997): 87-113.

Thomas, Trefor. Introduction. *The Mysteries of London*. By George William M. Reynolds.

    Ed. Thomas. Keele: Keele UP, 1998. vii-xxv.

Thorburn, David, and Henry Jenkins. "Toward an Aesthetics of Transition." Introduction.

    Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition. Ed. Thorburn and Jenkins.

    Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003. 1-18.

Trachtenberg, Alan. "Photography: the Emergence of a Keyword." *Photography in*

    Nineteenth-Century America. Ed. Martha A. Sandweiss. New York: Harry N.

    Abrams, 1991. 17-47.

Tracy, Robert. "Lighthousekeeping: *Bleak House* and the Crystal Palace." *Dickens Studies*

    Annual 33 (2003): 25-53.

Untitled. *Athenaeum* 962 (16 May 1846): 506.

Untitled. *Le Commerce* (13 January 1839): n. pag. Rpt. in *Literary Gazette* 1148 (19 January

    1839): 43-4.

Untitled. *Le Tempe* (9 January 1839): n. pag. Rpt. in *Literary Gazette* 1148 (19 January

    1839): 43.

Untitled. *Literary Gazette* 1175 (27 July 1839): 477.

Untitled. *Times* 5 October 1839: n. pag.

Vernet, Horace. Letter. *Athenaeum* 634 (21 December 1839): 969.

Virilio, Paul. *The Vision Machine*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994.

Werge, John. *The Evolution of Photography*. Reprint Edition. New York: Arno Press, 1973.

Whitman, Walt. "Visit to Plumbe's Gallery." *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 5.160 (2 July 1846):

n. pag.

Wickliff, Gregory A. "The Daguerreotype and the Rhetoric of Photographic Technology."

Journal of Business and Technical Communication 12.4 (October 1998): 413-36.

---. "Light Writing: Technology Transfer and Photography to 1845." *Technical*

Communication Quarterly 15.3 (2004): 293-313.

Williams, Raymond. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. New York: Schocken,

1975.

Williams, Susan S. *Confounding Images*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1997.

---. "'The Inconstant Daguerreotype': The Narrative of Early Photography." *Narrative* 4.2

(May 1996): 161-174.

Wilmore, J.T. Letter. *Literary Gazette* 1159 (6 April 1839): 215.

Winter, Andrew. "The Pencil of Nature." *People's Journal* 2 (1846): 288-289.

Wordsworth, William. *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*. Ed. Mark L. Reed. Vol. 1. Ithaca: Cornell

UP, 1991.

Wynn's studio. Advertisement. *Times* 29 September 1846: n. pag.