Dream Work:

The Art and Science of *Fin de Siècle* Fantasy Imagery

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Chapter 1

Abstract

In this dissertation, I argue that the fantasy imagery of turn-of-the-century British illustrators Arthur Rackham, Aubrey Beardsley, and Sidney Sime, and French filmmakers Georges Méliès and Emile Cohl functions as visual rhetorical "texts" that explicate contemporaneous ideas about the self. At the *fin de siècle*, models of the self were shaped, in part, by scientific thought that interrogated themes of materiality and immateriality, visibility and invisibility, univalence and multivalence, permanence and impermanence. *Dream Work* grapples with these oppositions, the questions they brought up, and the provisional answers they elicited. I argue that both the science and the design considered in this study dealt with these oppositions, and the models of the self they elaborated, through a shared visual rhetoric of literal representation or hazy abstraction.

I reveal this shared visual rhetoric through analysis of the form of the design considered in this study and its relationship to visual aspects of contemporaneous scientific discourse. I first show how Rackham's imagery, which echoes the visual vocabulary of physiognomical diagrams, deals with material aspects of self and mind. But Rackham's work likewise positions the mind as part of a grand continuum with the natural world. I describe the ways that Beardsley's imagery fluctuates between expression of material and ethereal elaborations of the self manifested in contemporaneous dream theory. And I show how Sime's imagery—which mirrors late nineteenth-century notions of the realms of other dimensions—probes abstract qualities of the self in strangely material forms. Finally, I discuss the ways that the mystifying abstraction that characterizes turn-of-the-century ideas about time, space, and motion marks the mutable selves expressed in Méliès and Cohl's work.

In this dissertation, I likewise challenge the hegemony of the written word and of verbal analytical methods for interpreting visual entities. My goal, however, is not to dispense with the verbal analysis of visual artifacts. Rather, my intention is to foreground visual rhetorical analysis as a powerful method for understanding the visuality of both visual and verbal entities.

"DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER. Put the Engraving of the Head at the Title Page, and that of the New Craniometer at the End." (See Figure I.1)

–George Combe, *Elements of Phrenology*, 1824

Introduction

Visual Rhetoric and the Power of Imagistic Communication

In his 1824 treatise *Elements of Phrenology*, British phrenologist George Combe refers to the brain as a "materialist instrument" that facilitates the function of a range of faculties. Phrenology suggested that an individual's personality was stored in a number of so-called organs, or distinct divisions, in the brain and expressed in the size and shape of corresponding areas on the skull (See Figure 1-1). In order to orchestrate a clear distinction between two models of brain function, Combe contrasts the brain as a single undivided organ (which he compares to a trumpet) with the phrenological brain composed of complex of multiple organs (which he likens to a pianoforte). The brash undivided brain, Combe intones, has but one varied note:

> The brain, considered a single organ, and serving to manifest the mind as a general power capable of existing in different states, but not endowed with separate faculties, may be likened to a wind instrument, with only one form of apparatus for emitting a sound, —a trumpet, for example. If excited with one degree of force, it emits one kind of note, which is the result of the whole metal being in a certain state. If excited with another degree of force, it emits another kind of note, and this is the consequence of the metal being in another state. The number of notes that may be produced will be as great as the variety of states into
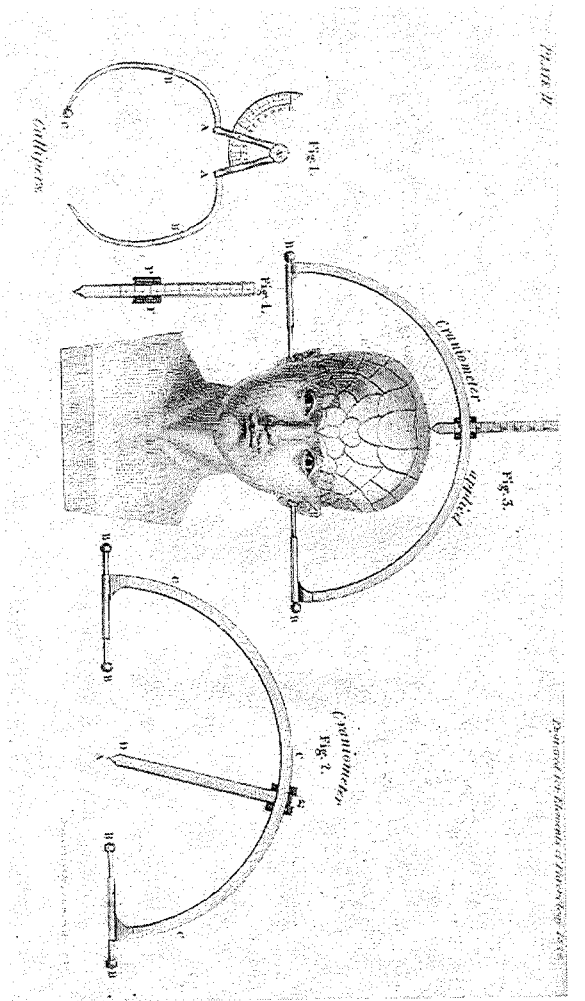
Figure I.1
New Craniometer, from George Combe, *Elements of Phrenology*, 1824

which the metal may be excited. Now, suppose the first state of the trumpet to correspond to a state of the whole brain in manifesting Perception, the second to its state in manifesting Conception, and so on, the analogy may be carried to an indefinite length; each state of the trumpet, and each note thence arising corresponding to an affection of the whole brain, and to a particular mental state accompanying it.[1]

Combe goes on to say that the trumpet-brain model is "the notion generally entertained of the functions of the brain and the mode of operation of the mind: but the phrenological view is different." Combe's phrenological pianoforte-brain model is sublime; it presents a string theory for the inner universe. Combe paints a picture of this complex and aesthetic divided brain of multiple individual resonances:

> The first string is excited, and a certain note is produced; the second is excited, and another note swells upon the ear. Each note results from the instrument being in a particular state, but it cannot exist in the state which produced the first note, without the first string; nor in that which produced the second note without the second string; and so forth. The piano-forte represents the brain as apprehended by the Phrenologists; Benevolence, for example, is manifested through the instrumentality of one part, Veneration through that of another, and Reflection by means of a third. The Phrenologist studies man in society, and, in comparing the power of manifesting particular mental faculties with the size of particular organs, he resembles a person who, to discover the mode of operation of a musical

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[1] George Combe, *Elements of Phrenology* (Edinburgh: John Anderson, Jr.), 1824, 16.

instrument, should examine narrowly its structure, and make it sound while he

observed it. [2]

British phrenology guru Combe stressed the practical aspects of phrenology; he saw

phrenology as the path to self-improvement and reform.[3] His reforming zeal, though,

was inflected by certain nineteenth-century preconceived notions of acceptable and

unacceptable behavior and their corresponding physical visages.

I suspect that Combe's choice of a trumpet for the metaphor of the whole brain

model is no accident. Although Combe's musical metaphor outlines his ideas nicely,

his comments contrast the simplistic univalence of a trumpet with the subtle

multivalence of a pianoforte. Using this musical instrument metaphor, Combe

effectively compares these two models of the brain by asking the reader to visualize the

way the physical forms of the two instruments function. At the same time, he manages

to infer, by invoking a suggestive visual syntax, the grossness of the former model and

the elegance of the second. The science of phrenology has this same tendency—

preconceived behavioral and physical stereotypes were coded into and deeply

embedded in its seemingly objective set of charts and diagrams.

The Victorian public embraced phrenology partly because it reinforced British

beliefs about the inferiority of other races. In turn, Victorian anthropology, set on

classification of races based on visual evidence of skull size and shape, fed the racialist

aspects of phrenology.[4] Like anthropologists, phrenologists collected animal and

human skulls from all over the world. The variety in the shape and size of skulls

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[2] Combe, *Elements of Phrenology*, 17-18.

[3] Thomas Hardy Leahey and Grace Evans Leahey, *Psychology's Occult Doubles* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1983), 64.

[4] For an in-depth discussion of Victorian anthropology, see George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Macmillan, 1987).

among the races and ethnic groups was visible proof positive of a hierarchical

"evolution" in which the "lower" races (which, in some cases, included fairies)

inhabited an inferior domain. Phrenological diagrams, which ostensibly explain why

we do what we do, acted as an important passageway between the inner and outer self.

They offered direct visual evidence—in the form of a complex visual rhetoric—of

both individual motivations and of Aryan racial superiority. These explanations didn't

have to be extracted from cumbersome texts; they were readily available in

illustrations and diagrams, which directly fed the audience's imagistic thought

processes.

Visual Rhetoric

Traditionally, rhetoric has been defined as "the art of effective or persuasive

speaking or writing."[5] Such a definition suggests several obvious questions whose

answers will help contextualize the approach that informs this study. Scholars in the

emerging field of visual rhetoric have broadened this definition by demonstrating that

visual objects inform and persuade in unique ways. In "Framing the Study of Visual

Rhetoric: Toward a Transformation of Rhetorical Theory," Sonja K. Foss explains that

"Conceptualized as a communicative artifact, visual rhetoric is the actual image or

object rhetors [in the context of this study, designers] generate when they use visual

symbols for the purpose of communicating."[6]

This dissertation focuses on design artifacts—phrenological diagrams, visual

models of the fourth dimension, or fantasy images, for example—as rhetorical

structures. In particular, I hope to demonstrate that the visual form of artifacts is

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[5] *Oxford English Dictionary*, x.

[6] Sonja K. Foss, "Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric: Toward a Transformation of Rhetorical
Theory," in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, ed. Marguerite Helmers and Charles A. Hill (Mahwah, New
Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 304.

rhetorical. But how does such a perspective square with the significant verbal rhetorical element of "persuasion?" The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the verb "to persuade" as "to cause (someone) to believe something." New work in visual rhetoric, however, has expanded this definition to include construction of meanings from visual entities that are, as visual rhetorician Charles A. Hill explains, not "obviously and explicitly persuasive."[7] I would suggest that the form of visual artifacts doesn't necessarily present blatantly persuasive information; it offers audiences communicative data that both reflect and influence an array of cultural themes. In this way, visual artifacts are involved in the generation of cultural belief systems—a profoundly rhetorical function.

If visual artifacts are structured according to rules, patterns, and principles that resemble those of verbal rhetoric, then rhetorical analysis of visual entities would be an invaluable tool for the interpretation of this material. Foss argues that visual rhetoric also refers to a "perspective scholars take on visual imagery or visual data."[8] Foss, in fact, defines visual rhetorical analysis as "a set of conceptual lenses through which visual symbols become knowable as communicative or rhetorical phenomena." In a rhetorical response, she explains, the formal qualities of an artifact provide a basis for the viewer to *infer the existence of emotions and ideas.*[9]

I would like to stress that form should not be taken to mean merely composition, line, texture, color, and other general formal features. This definition ignores the expressive possibilities contained in choices about formal elements. Each formal element of an artifact offers insight into the creative intent of those involved in the design of the artifact. For example, in my third chapter "Supernatural Selection:

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[7] Charles A. Hill, "The Psychology of Rhetorical Images," in Helmers and Hill, 25.

[8] Foss, 305.

[9] Foss, 306.

Sydney Sime's Weird Science," Sime reinforces for the viewer that white colored, cone shaped forms (sometimes emanating from certain sorts of mechanical gadgets) stand for x-rays. Sime's depiction of such light rays thus encourages the viewer to accept certain beliefs about the form and function of x-rays.

In her Introduction to *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, Marguerite Helmers considers the communicative function of material aesthetic qualities:

> One of our projects as visual rhetoricians is to differentiate ourselves from semiology by studying material as rhetoric. What does the character of a texture of pencil on paper or a smooth and reflective wall with names etched into its face impart to the meaning that the spectator takes from the object?[10]

The material entities Helmers cites, the "character of a texture of pencil on paper" and "a smooth and reflective wall with names etched into its face," are formal qualities of the corresponding visual artifacts. Designers take it for granted that such properties are part of visual form, and designers often consider the ways that an audience might construe meaning embodied in this form. Design scholarship, however, has yet to fully embrace visual form as rhetorical.

Understanding visual material as rhetoric is key to my approach in this study; for rhetoric is the bridge that spans all design fields and what seem at first glance to be irreconcilable disciplines—such as design and science. Darwin scholar Gillian Beer likewise uses rhetorical narratives as a bridge between literature and science in her groundbreaking book *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George*

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[10] Marguerite Helmers and Charles Hill, eds., *Defining Visual Rhetorics* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 18.

Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction.[11] Beer notes that the evolutionary themes in

Darwin's Plots had a particular influential force for some nineteenth-century novelists.

Beer also suggests that the rhetorical devices in, and the narrative structure of, some

nineteenth-century novels influenced Darwin's ideas. She draws on the narrative

character of Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species*, which was widely read by the

educated public, and shows that many of his chapters featured simultaneous rhetorical

plots of "progress and improvement," and rhetorical narratives of "rapine, degradation,

and loss."[12] I would like to reiterate, however, that rhetoric is not just a feature of

written material like scientific treatises or novels—there are ambient themes that

circulate in cultures and make their way into most sorts of human endeavor, including

visual entities.

Just as the form and content of literature can be read in the context of the

culture in which it was produced, the visual form and content of design artifacts can be

interpreted in light of contemporaneous ways of organizing the world. In *Dream Work*

I argue that specific turn-of-the-century fantasy imagery serves as a powerful

information source for understanding contemporaneous models of the self. Various

models of the self were shaped by scientific rhetoric about the processes of perception

and the unconscious mind.[13] At first glance, it may seem extraordinary that the themes

of this turn-of-the-century science can be extracted from the visual structures of

fantasy imagery. Thumbing through the images, the connections with

contemporaneous science are not blatantly obvious. Visual work, however, is not

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[11] Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[12] Beer, xix.

[13] See Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), and Bernard Lightman, ed., *Victorian Science in Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

produced in a vacuum and these scientific themes were powerful cultural currency.

Indeed, Stephen Kern points out that a "thematic similarity between developments"

across a culture incorporates "essential structures of human experience and basic

forms of human expression."[14] The images presented in *Dream Work*, I suggest, are

"basic forms of human expression" that give voice to these scientific themes.

Visual Scholarship

Work on visual topics has recently become a "hot" commodity. Addressing the

neglected realm of visual material is a laudable pursuit that will benefit scholarship in

many disciplines. Much of the recent scholarship in visual culture studies and on

visual topics in the humanities, however, inevitably approaches the subject in terms of

verbal analysis. In some cases, visual artifacts are interpreted as pictorial evidence for

verbal arguments rather than as distinct visual rhetorical structures. Other scholars

interpret the "narrative stories" literally depicted in "images." Still other work focuses

on perception; this scholarship is interested in ideas about the viewers' gaze or about

visuality as a cultural phenomenon.

These approaches foreground the deeply intellectual character of the verbal

contexts in which visual entities can be understood. At the same time, they miss

opportunities to extract deep-seated visual rhetorical meanings from the form of visual

artifacts—and the opportunity to raise visual analysis to equal status with verbal

analysis. This scholarship inadvertently reinforces the notion that intellectual (and

rhetorical) analysis is a purely verbal process. These sorts of verbally based scholarly

approaches have merit, of course—they engage in intriguing verbal analysis of visual

phenomena. Ignoring the layered communicative functions of visual artifacts

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[14] Kern, 6.

themselves, however, shortchanges the very visuality these scholars attempt to appreciate.

My approach in this dissertation challenges these paradigms for visual scholarship by foregrounding the power of visual discourse and challenging the privileging of verbal discourse in academic work. In "The Case for Literature," Part Two of *What Good are the Arts?*, literary critic John Carey argues that literature is superior to "painting" in its function as a profoundly intellectual discursive medium.[15] If fine art such as painting is considered to be second class by those who believe that intelligent discourse is always verbal, then design is a neglected underclass. When design is considered at all by scholars (other than design historians), it is appreciated for its surface decoration (or for its status as a cultural commodity). Graphic design—design that communicates content through the expressive forms of typography and image—is particularly neglected. Print graphic design is also suspect because it presents verbal information in conjunction with visual information—written text in the form of typographic imagery plus photography or illustration.

In a scathing indictment of book illustration, renowned child psychologist Dr. Bruno Bettelheim claims: "Studies of illustrated primers demonstrate that the pictures divert from the learning process rather than foster it, because the illustrations direct the child's imagination away from how he, on his own, could experience the story."[16] I beg to differ with Dr. Bettelheim. Why is it that a verbal description is less inhibiting to a child reader than a visual depiction? Image and text are both teeming with interpretive and expressive potential.

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[15] John Carey, "The Case for Literature," *What Good Are the Arts?* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 171-248.

[16] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Vintage, 1975), 59. Later in the book, Bettleheim explains the limitations of the studies he discusses.

I contend that Bettelheim's and Carey's attitude reflects a bias based on the privileging of verbal expression in western culture in general and in the academy in particular. Whereas verbal descriptions are imagined to spur the creative or intellectual imagination, book illustrations are cast as superficial addenda to such rich verbal texts. Illustration is considered to be the handmaiden of the verbal—at best the personal, whimsical interpretation of one person. The narrative role book illustration plays— both in relation to verbal narrative and as a separate rhetorical entity—has been at once overlooked and underestimated.

As I noted above, in "The Case for Literature," chapter of *What Good are the Arts?,* Carey argues for the superiority of the written word over visual media. One reviewer, who plugs *What Good are the Arts?* on amazon.com, concurs with Carey's thesis promoting the intellectual character of verbal language—this reviewer suggests that "Literature works because it uses language, the tool we use to make intelligible arguments and understand the world. When we try to understand...the visual arts we always do so in linguistic terms, as Carey points out. Literature works in the same medium as thought."[17] Despite neuroscientific evidence to the contrary, the belief that thought and language are purely verbal entities persists.[18] The reviewer's sentiments

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[17] Philip Crosby, review of *What Good Are the Arts?* by John Carey (September 5, 2005), http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/customerreviews/0571226027/ref=cm_cr_dp_pt/104-6254630-0375916?%5Fencoding=UTF8&n=283155&s=books, accessed December 15, 2005.

[18] According to contemporary neurobiologist Antonio Damasio, the mind's workings demand a visual vocabulary steeped in visual narrative. Twenty-first-century scientists propose that images are integral to thought—perhaps this is the reason our verbal language is infused with visual metaphor. Damasio, who suggests that images are the absolute medium of the mind, argues that the mind works not only in words, but utilizes a profound synesthesia based in imagery: "the ability to transform and combine images of actions and scenarios is the wellspring of creativity. . . the path-breaking novelty provided by consciousness was the possibility of connecting the inner sanctum of life regulation with the processing of images . . . Consciousness generates the knowledge that images exist within the individual who forms them."

Damasio is arguing that the ongoing processing of a mental image-narrative is intrinsic to the medium of thought. Damasio's thought "images" include perceptions from other senses such as smell, taste, and

are not uncommon among the educated general public and scholars; most people know little about visual *communication*. Carey, in fact, suggests that "literature…is the only art that is capable of reasoning…[and that] paintings…are locked in inarticulacy."[19] His definition of eloquence (and of art, for that matter) is a very narrow one indeed. Visual rhetorician Marguerite Helmers laments the fact that visual entities are commonly considered to be "soft or non-rigorous" because they are seen as "illustrative and decorative."[20] Carey's partiality for the written over the visual exemplifies the prejudice that Helmers identifies. The historical basis for such visual illiteracy—reaching back at least to the Hebraic scriptures—is too vast to explore in this dissertation, but I would like to pursue some aspects of what I consider to be a gaping hole in interpretive strategies for visual material. Insisting that visual entities are form without valuable substance not only encourages narrowly defined analysis based on superficial aspects of visual form, it perpetuates a *separate, but not quite equal* status for visual entities—and it masks the working of what I would like to call visual rhetoric.

This study also suggests alternative methodologies for a provocative intertextual practice of the sort that Maureen Goggin has described as "a rhetoric of the visual" in which, she argues, both verbal and visual analyses can be brought to bear on verbal and visual artifacts alike.[21] To some extent, of course, I rely on verbal texts to help make my argument. My interpretive methodology, however, is heavily reliant on visual rhetorical analysis of the form of the visual entities I discuss.

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hearing, along with sight. Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1999), 24.

[19] Carey, 177.

[20] Helmers and Hill, 2.

[21] Maureen Daly Goggin, "Challenging the Great Divide," in Helmers and Hill, 106.

Reconsidering Visual Analysis: The Special Eloquence of Visual Form

The approach I take in this dissertation can be productively located in a space in which

the discourses of several disciplines overlap. My critical method in this study

augments existing approaches for visual scholarship in visual culture studies, literary

criticism, and design theory and history. Academics in these disciplines have adopted

a range of critical approaches; in particular, many literary critics and some design

theorists and historians have embraced the theoretical strategies advanced by

scholarship in visual culture studies. Since visual culture studies research is seminal to

much contemporary visual scholarship, I will compare and contrast my approach to

visual culture studies strategies before I consider visual research in the humanities or

in design theory and history.

The discipline of visual culture studies, which has been thriving since the early

1990s, embraces a theoretical approach developed in response to nineteenth-century

so-called reflectionist, object-focused art historical models.[22] In *Visual Culture: The*

Reader, editor Jessica Evans and co-editor Stuart Hall point out that the "linguistic

turn" or "cultural turn" in the social sciences makes it impossible for the analysis of

visual entities to "turn back to the pre-semiotic assumptions of reflectionism."[23] In her

1994 essay "Through the Looking Glass: Territories of the Historiographic Gaze,"

graphic design writer Anne Bush notes that graphic design historians have embraced

this same nineteenth-century object-focused model of design historical analysis and

that "Recent theoretical discussions have extended 'beyond the object,' into the

dimensions of both action and ideology. If the purpose of historical investigation is

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[22] Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, eds., *Visual Culture: The Reader* (London: Sage, with the Open University, 1999), 12.

[23] Evans and Hall, 2.

self-knowledge, then we must not fall prey to the fallacy of objective evaluation."[24]

The evaluation of the aestheticized object in art history, Evans and Hall further explain, has been superseded by analysis of "visual metaphors and terminologies of looking and seeing" in visual cultural studies.

Since Evans and Hall's book came out in 1999, most of these same themes— "the society of the spectacle and the simulacrum; the politics of representation; the male gaze and the possibility of a female gaze; the 'mirror stage': fetishism and voyeurism; the reproduction of the image"—have driven the discourses of much visually based work (despite Bush's call for change, however, such ideas have not yet made serious headway in graphic design historical work).[25]

In this rush to champion theory that comes out of non-visual disciplines, I believe we have neglected possible theoretical approaches that embrace visual form. I sometimes wonder if our love affair with linguistic and cultural theory becomes a sort of self-aggrandizing attempt to ensure that visual research is perceived as rational and intellectual. Even though linguistics-based theory has left material form out, I suggest that there is no intrinsic opposition between form and theory. I applaud Bush's assertion that "In historiography we are not just experimenting with juxtaposition or the destruction of traditional affinities, but rather the convergence and divergence of particular events, the actuality of their crossing and dispersal viewed from the present perspective."[26] This provocative approach—exemplified in a number of books including Nicholas Mirzoeff's *An Introduction to Visual Culture*—however, has tended to "verbalize" visual discourse in visual culture studies by positioning visual

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[24] Anne Bush, "Through the Looking Glass: Territories of the Historiographic Gaze," New Perspectives: Critical Histories of Graphic Design, Part 1. *Visible Language* 28, 3 (Spring 1994), 220.

[25] Evans and Hall, 1.

[26] Bush, 231.

entities as part of a web of theoretical constructs.[27] In such a world, we can lose sight of the power of visual form as a site of complex theoretical constructs in and of itself.

Bush's belief that "the designed product" is "an organic structure, an alluvial connection relative to changing consumer positions, values and expectations" could easily include complex analysis of cultural meanings extracted from the visual form of design artifacts.[28] Yet, in visual culture studies (and in Bush's proposals for revamping design historical analysis) there is little if any consideration of visual form. I'd like to suggest that the special eloquence of visual form has been lost in the well-intentioned drive to rid the "new" discourse of the simplistic analysis of reflectionist, object-focused art historical models.

Deep-seated analysis of visual form highlights problems with certain commonly used terms in much visual culture studies. Bush, for example, refers to design objects as "visual images." In fact, "image" is the commonly used terminology for visual entities in visual culture studies. The term "image," I would argue, actually diminishes the material aspects of visual entities—it impedes material analysis by construing artifacts as copies or likenesses, or as entities that represent something else. Almost anything can, of course, be fruitfully construed as an image in this sense of the term. It is imperative, however, to realize that we lose the "object"—the fully embodied, material artifact with its rich formal rhetoric—when we use "image" exclusively. Labeling all visual objects "images" also lumps the varied array of visual artifacts into one undifferentiated group. Semiotics, the basis of the "linguistic turn," helped foment a range of theoretical approaches that have been embraced by visual culture studies. In semiotics, Evans explains, "Language is a series of 'negative'

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[27] Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[28] Bush, 230.

values, each sign not so much expressing a meaning as marking a divergence of meaning between itself and other signs within the collective symbolic system of language."[29] She offers the pragmatic example of how a

> set of distinctions between dead/living, cooked/raw operate in English...to distinguish between the signifiers mutton and sheep, whereas the French signifier mouton cuts only one conceptual unit. It is not the case that there is pure, positive content, which is then "clothed in the form of a signifier."[30]

Our commonly used terms (or signifiers) are distinguished, according to these ideas, not so much by what they positively represent (signifieds), but by contrast with what they don't represent and by the network of neighboring meanings. Why then is the catch-all signfier "image" so widely used for the whole range of visual entities (signifieds)? While semiotics is always relational, I suggest that labeling all visual entities "images" obliterates crucial contrasts and differences, and refuses to consider visual artifacts in the context of a network of neighboring meanings. The very premises of semiotics, then, seem to militate against allowing a single term like "image," which has no clear antonym, to carry so much weight. Semiotics suggests that theory should reconnect with visual form. We ought to be able to refer to visual entities by using a rich and varied set of descriptive terms, and in the meantime, visual scholars should seek terminology that acknowledges the materiality of visual artifacts and deepens our understanding of their rhetorical potential.

Some more recent visual culture scholarship (typically work that is grounded in historical analysis) recognizes the relevance of the material object. In their

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[29] Evans and Hall, 13.

[30] Evans and Hall, 12.

introduction for *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader*, editors Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski challenge Mirzoeff's suggestion for a "move away from a certain kind of object-orientation."[31] They call for "attention to the formal elements and conventions of the material objects."[32] Although a number of the essays in this collection endeavor to insert the material object into the inevitable web of theoretical visual culture constructs, the rhetorical function of the form of visual artifacts itself is not central to the authors' theses.

As have noted, some literary critics have eagerly embraced research with visual themes. Visual scholarship in literary criticism, however, often turns to fine art for inspiration; this writing typically focuses on painting, sculpture, and photography. In this work, art frequently serves as perfunctory evidence for visual culture studies-like verbal analysis. In *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, for example, literary critic Kate Flint persuasively argues that, in the late nineteenth century, visuality played an important role in catalyzing and then also portraying shifting notions of the self. Yet, she misses deeper visual meaning because she turns to fine art—mostly painting—that *literally* portrays the themes she discusses. Rather than extracting and disclosing the subtle discourse embedded in visual work, as she does in the literature she discusses, she focuses on more superficial visual meaning. Flint asserts a "visual bias within Western culture [in which]…our language is infused with visual metaphors, the visual manifesting its dominance not merely in terms of perceptual experience, but also as a cultural trope."[33] She rightly notes that visuality is a pervasive cultural theme, and that visual metaphor suffuses spoken and written

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[31] Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds. *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7.

[32] Schwartz and Przyblyski, 8.

[33] Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 8.

language. Despite the prevalence of visually suffused cultural and verbal language, however, there is no true visual ascendancy without deep and rigorous analysis of visual entities. In this study, I aspire to situate a range of visual artifacts at the very center of my analysis.

Book history scholarship fares somewhat better than most visual work in literary criticism in its attempts to equalize visual and verbal form and content. In *Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the Eighteenth Century Novel*, author Janine Barchas explains how during the genre's formative years "in the first half of the eighteenth century," the novel's "material embodiment as printed book rivaled its narrative content in diversity and creativity."[34] Her fascinating chapters include discussions of the power of author images in frontispieces, how placement of printer's ornaments symbolizes the passage of time, and the ways that punctuation was graphically significant in some early novels.

Barchas, however, overlooks deep interpretation of commonplace eighteenth-century typographic form in favor of what is more familiar territory for book historians: the orientation of text on the page, imagistic printers' elements (such as fleurons), and textual content. Barchas has published an exciting cross-disciplinary book, but she does not interpret typographic form the way graphic design historians can.

It is worth noting that in Barchas' *Works Cited* section there is *not one* book or article by a graphic design historian. Why? Although there is little graphic design historical work on eighteenth-century design, there is some research on preeminent eighteenth-century British typographers William Caslon and John Baskerville, for example, that Barchas might have found useful. But even this scholarship is not

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[34] Janine Barchas, *Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

rigorous enough—not broad or deep enough—to offer much to research as disciplined as Barchas'.

Barchas' fine book, which never completely breaks away from the perception of graphic design as an adjunct to the written word, nonetheless does what much graphic design historical research fails to do—it puts forward a thesis that attempts to challenge the status quo in book history and literary criticism. Graphic design historians, as Bush perceptively notes, often utilize a nineteenth-century art historical aesthetic approach to scholarship. They typically look to other design and art movements, with prominent cultural phenomena presented as background or influence, to reinforce their arguments—what Teal Triggs has called a "familiar assortment of critical biographies, historical narratives and anthologized readers."[35] Such an approach is exemplified by, but is by no means limited to, Phillip Meggs' groundbreaking survey *A History of Graphic Design*—and this approach is still prevalent in recent publications.[36] Visual work, however, is not just a function of other art and design movements with a smattering of cultural influence, as much scholarship in graphic design history would have it.

There is other, more substantive graphic design historical research, such as the gorgeous *Graphic Design in Germany, 1890-1945* by Jeremy Aynsley, and the informative *Graphic Design: Reproduction and Representation Since 1800* by Paul Jobling and David Crowley. These books detail the technological and political environments in which graphic design functions. But even Aynsley's and Jobling and Crowley's books don't address more subtle, but equally fascinating, cultural themes

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[35] Teal Triggs, "Call for Papers for the New Views: Repositioning Graphic Design History Conference," April 2005, http://www.lcc.arts.ac.uk/docs/NEWVIEWS-call2005.pdf.

[36] Phillip Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design*, 4th ed. 1983; New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 2006. See, for example, Martha Scotford, *Cipe Pineles: A Life of Design* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998); Steven Heller and Elinor Pettit, *Graphic Design Time Line* (London: Allworth Press, 2000); Steven Heller and Georgette Ballance, eds., *Graphic Design History* (London: Allworth Press, 2001).

that can be *read* in the *form* of design artifacts—themes that are typically less obvious

than the technological and political factors presented in these culturally oriented

graphic design historical works.[37] Graphic design theory is still a fledgling discipline.

In *Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design, a Reader,* editor Audrey

Bennett calls for more rigor in graphic design research and writing, which, she

suggests, will foster connections between graphic design theoretical work and other

academic discourses.[38] Although her attempt to encourage interdisciplinary work in

design scholarship is laudable, the essays in the book are much too caught up in

conventional graphic design thinking and methodologies to nurture interdisciplinarity.

Much product design historical work, like graphic design historical research,

has retained a strong focus on styles and periods along with technical discussions of

manufacturing and materials. Architectural design history tends to be more closely

linked to architectural design theory, which Hanno-Walter Kruft defines as "the

history of thought on architecture as recorded in written form."[39] His book, *A History*

of Architectural Theory from Vitruvius to the Present, which surveys the ways that

politically or socially based architectural theory influences the design, form, and use of

architecture over many centuries, offers a comprehensive look at the ideological

underpinnings behind architectural form. Kruft's methodology typifies most design

theoretical work in the major design disciplines. In *Design After Modernism: Beyond*

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[37] Jeremy Aynsley, *Graphic Design in Germany, 1890-1945* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000).
To their credit, Paul Jobling and David Crowley deftly sidestep the established design canon and
predictable graphic design historical methodologies. They feature "low" design when such design
correlates with the technological and political influences they highlight—and they feature nineteenth-
century graphic design. Jobling and Crowley's approach is invaluable to the field of graphic design
history. Paul Jobling and David Crowley, *Graphic Design: Reproduction and Representation since
1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

[38] Audrey Bennett, Editor, *Design Studies: Theory and Research in Graphic Design, a Reader* (New
York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006).

[39] Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory from Vitruvius to the Present* (Princeton:
Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 13.

the Object, design theorist John Thackara challenges established design theoretical methods. He argues that postmodern design is "an art of experience" that deals with "whole systems" and "collective participation" rather than individual "experts solving problems" in order to produce "individual products."[40] Although Thackara's contributors make some fascinating points, the essays included in this anthology eschew the rhetorical role of the material object <u>itself</u> in the discourses of political, social, or cultural theory.

Some recent research rethinks the notion that the form of design artifacts is merely indebted to certain cultural constructs. Fran Tonkiss' 2005 treatise on social process and spatial form, *Space, The City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Forms*, asks "How do social processes—such as political mobilization or economic change—take shape in the city?" Her particular focus shows how "debates in urban studies" relate to "wider concerns within social theory and analysis."[41] Christopher Lindner's fascinating collection, *Urban Space and Cityscapes: Perspectives from Modernism and Contemporary Culture*, presents a wonderfully cross-disciplinary series of essays that demonstrate the dynamic relationships among cultural forces, visual and verbal texts, and urban design.[42]

In this dissertation, however, I consider design artifacts from a different vantage. While design theoretical work typically elaborates the ways that cultural factors *influence or impact* the creation, form, and use of design artifacts, and some recent work explores provocative ways to relate theory to the life of design artifacts, I put design artifacts front and center by positioning them as visual rhetorical texts to be

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[40] John Thackara, *Design after Modernism: Beyond the Object* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 32.

[41] Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), blurb, back cover.

[42] Christopher Lindner, ed., *Urban Space and Cityscapes: Perspectives from Modern and Contemporary Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006).

scrutinized. I attempt to *decipher cultural themes* in the form of artifacts. The meanings extracted from these artifacts may or may not concern the sorts of political and social issues commonly addressed in design theory or history. I tap into liminal cultural themes—including scientific discourses not typically considered in design theoretical work. Some of these themes are not obvious in the artifact's form (or its creation or use)—they are subtle or indirect, and they must be teased out through sustained visual rhetorical analysis. Other scientific themes are more readily apparent in the imagery, but my close readings reveal fascinating beliefs about the nature of self and mind at the turn-of-the-century.

A Little Background on Relevant Scientific Discourse

Dream Work is neither a treatise on the history of *fin de siècle* science or psychology nor an art historical work. Rather, it is a project about visual communication—in particular, the ways in which ambient cultural themes surrounding this science make themselves known through the visual rhetoric of the imagery I discuss. This approach, however, requires that I offer some background material on the science presented in my argument.

Late nineteenth-century psychology was distinguished by a variety of sometimes contradictory ideas about mental processes. Some psychologists theorized that the mind was a material commodity physically located in the brain and sometimes expressed in the body, while others hypothesized that the psyche was an ethereal phenomenon—a formulation based on associationist philosophy or on ideas about the soul—all or partly removed from the physical constraints of the body. Yet others offered theories that were hybrids of material and ethereal models of the mind.

Nineteenth-century scientists proposed various models, for example, to explain the puzzling set of circumstances in which, unbeknownst to the host, discrete multiple personalities could exist simultaneously in one person. Some Victorian psychologists believed that multiple personality was brought about by an accumulation of disharmonious, intangible memory "streams" in the mind. Yet they relied on material visual metaphors, such as a palimpsest or a storehouse, to portray this memory stockpile. Others, such as late nineteenth-century psychologist Frederick H. W. Myers—who was, incidentally, a member of the Society for Psychical Research— associated multiple selves with "truncated" memory. But he located this condition squarely in the physical division of the brain's hemispheres.[43]

It is also important to note that many late nineteenth-century mental scientists were not psychologists in our contemporary sense of the word. A good number of psychologists were physicians, philosophers, or even social reformers, many of whom wrote essays about the function of the mind in both popular and scientific venues. The provocative mix of ideas in this period and their dissemination was enhanced by the varied backgrounds of psychological commentators, researchers, and practitioners.

This late nineteenth-century psychological mélange was fertile ground indeed for the birth of early twentieth-century theories about the mind, perception, and the self. In particular, many late nineteenth-century models of the mind suggested a hidden component—namely, the unconscious mind. By the turn of the century, a young but relatively unknown Sigmund Freud was investigating a dynamic, but diffuse, and fragmented psyche that was "possibly only ever partially knowable, and possessed of

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[43] Frederick W. H. Myers, "Multiplex Personality," [*Nineteenth Century* 20 (Nov. 1886), 648-56], in *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890,* eds. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 132-37.

hidden but frighteningly powerful realm.[44] But Freud's work did not develop in a vacuum; it emerged from the rich and varied late nineteenth-century psychological discourse.

Freud's thinking was also colored by contemporaneous ideas about the place of the self in the universe; these ideas found their way into work produced across various disciplines. I would like to argue that, at the turn-of-the-century, certain psychological configurations of the unconscious mind, perception, and the self were in rapport with theories presented in contemporaneous social and physical science—and with the rhetorical narratives that structured visual entities. Scientists and non-scientists produced books and articles that introduced the public to new ideas in sociology, anthropology, and physics. Physician William Rimmer's 1877 *Art Anatomy*, for example, was a how-to book for budding artists. In this book, Rimmer correlated the common physical and behavioral traits of lower animals and "lower" human races spelled out in Victorian social science. *Art Anatomy* offers a pseudo-physiognomical approach to drawing human beings; it ignores the "idealist underpinnings" behind physiognomy and embraces the "materialist interpretation of the importance of external form."[45] In 1884, teacher Edwin Abbott and mathematician Charles Hinton each wrote popular scientific romances that encouraged lay readers to imagine how two- or three-dimensional visual forms might be rendered in four-dimensional space. These scientific romances—fantasy stories that featured geometric shapes as their protagonists—encouraged their readers to visualize the behavior of their geometric dramatis personae. Two decades later, Albert Einstein's suggested that time, not space, was the medium of the fourth dimension. His theories posed time, space, and motion

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[44] Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 119.

[45] Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth, eds., *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 4.

as interdependent entities, and suggested that they change relative to each other and to the viewer's vantage point. Cubist artists of the same period embraced the Einstein-like idea that the character of a subject is relative to the viewer's perception of it and, therefore, any subject matter is necessarily unfixed.

Art historians have written about the impact of physiognomy on art or the ways early twentieth-century physics influenced Cubism. But in this study I come at visual material from a different vantage. I hope to show turn-of-the-century scientific ideas about the self can be found in the visual form of contemporaneous fantasy illustration and fantasy cinema…and, indeed, that the science itself can be construed as visual.

Visualizing Science

I would like to emphasize the broad-based discursive capacity of visualization; late nineteenth-century corporeal models of the mind feature strikingly visual attributes that invite close readings. So do contemporaneous theories of a diffuse and fragmented psyche, the odd perspectives of other dimensions, and the relativity of time, space, and motion. Visual expression, I suggest, provides a strong baseline for cultural discourses of self and mind. The ideas behind phrenology were interrelated with the visual forms of the physical body.[46] Picturing a material mind located in the brain and expressed in the body also offered affinities with Darwinian theory. These connections were manifested in widely disseminated evolutionary-tainted renderings such as those found in Rimmer's *Art Anatomy*. Rimmer "scientifically" compares and contrasts African facial angles and ratios with those of an orangutan face and those of a "higher" European face. His commentary, careful measurements, and detailed renderings served as a guide to recreation of the human form. At the same time, these

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[46] Erin O'Connor, *Raw Material: Producing Pathology in Victorian Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 14.

illustrations all but confirmed the notion of the hereditary beast hidden within the

unconscious mind and reinforced the body as the source for delineating the self and its

ancestry. The body served as a visual archive for these ideas; it also was the main

source for visual representations of humanity's bestial heritage.[47]

In the mid-nineteenth century, psychological models that stressed a

nonmaterial mind found coherence in the visual vocabularies of extrinsic phenomena,

such as the projected imagery of spiritualism and the invisible magnetic fluid of

mesmerism. The related notion that the self and perception were partly extrinsic and

unfixed relative to each other gained even more prominence at the turn-of-the-

century—and visual abstraction was the perfect medium by which to express these

intangible, unfixed elements.

Abbot's popular *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions by a Square*

describes a two-dimensional visual world inhabited by a series of geometric creatures.

Abbot includes diagrams (See Figure I.2) that accompany a visually dynamic plot.

Michio Kaku describes this scenario, in which the three-dimensional Lord Sphere—

who appears as a circle that can suddenly change size—visits the two-dimensional

protagonist Mr. Square. Mr. Square has trouble accepting the possibility of a three-

dimensional realm—Lord Sphere's homeland, Spaceland—so Lord Sphere decides to

demonstrate, as Kaku explains:

Lord Sphere...peels Mr. Square off the two-dimensional Flatland and hurls him

into Spaceland. It is a fantastic, almost mystical experience that changes Mr.

Square's life....As the flat Mr. Square floats in the third dimension like a sheet of

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[47] In the late nineteenth century, phrenology was also associated with mesmerism and spiritualism. Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 199-266.

paper drifting in the wind, he can visualize only two-dimensional slices of Spaceland. Mr. Square, seeing only cross sections of three-dimensional objects, views a fantastic world where objects change shape and even appear and disappear into thin air.[48]

Abbot visualizes an other-dimensional fantasy world in which abstract geometric shaped creatures morph, appear and disappear. Like Abbot, Hinton strove to popularize visual depictions of the fourth dimension (See Figure I.3) by suggesting reconfigurations of geometric shapes.[49] In *Scientific Romances*, Hinton encouraged his readers to utilize special cubes included with the book in order to visualize cubes moving in four-dimensional space. Some people linked renderings of Hinton's fourth spatial dimension with the spirit realm—a realm that a number of turn-of-the-century spiritualists and psychologists, including Freud, associated with dreams and other unconscious cerebration.[50] Bizarrely visual, the abstract and unpredictable four-dimensional worlds described by Abbot and Hinton reinforced the subjectivity of perception and rhymed with characterizations of the hidden unconscious. They also helped reframe scientific associations among the mind, the self, and the abstract visual realm of geometry.

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[48] Michio Kaku, *Hyperspace: A Scientific Odyssey through Parallel Universes, Time Warps, and the Tenth Dimension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 56.

[49] Kaku, *Hyperspace*, 70.

[50] (*Hyperspace*, 70). According to Michio Kaku, "Hinton's cubes were widely advertised in women's magazines and were even used in séances, where they soon became objects of mystical importance. By meditating on Hinton's cubes, it was claimed by members of high society, you could catch glimpses of the fourth dimension and hence the nether world of ghosts and the dearly departed. His disciples spent hours contemplating and meditating on these cubes, until they attained the ability to mentally rearrange and reassemble these cubes via the fourth dimension into a hypercube. Those who could perform this mental feat, it was said, would attain the highest state of nirvana." Kaku, *Hyperspace*, 70.
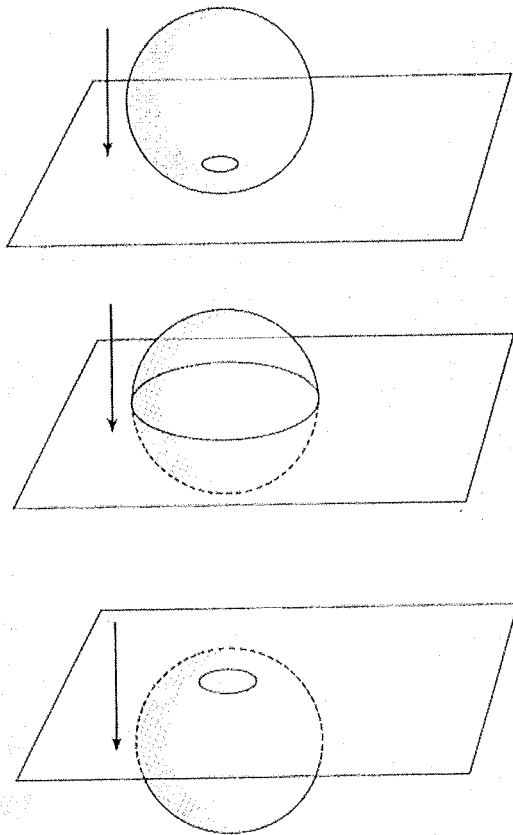
Figure I.2
Geometric creatures in Edwin Abbott's *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions by a Square*, 1884, from Michio Kaku, *Hyperspace: A Scientific Odyssey Through Parallel Universes, Time Warps, and The Tenth Dimension*
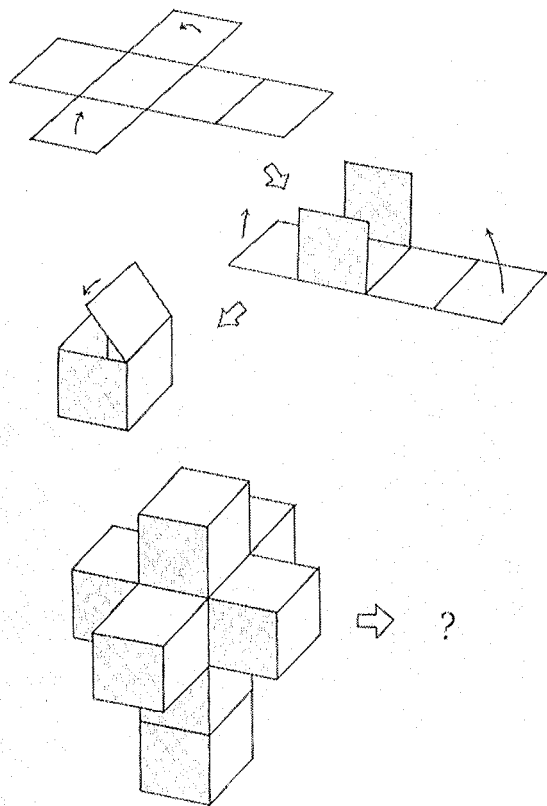
Figure I.3
Charles Hinton's visual depictions of the fourth dimension, from Michio Kaku,
*Hyperspace: A Scientific Odyssey Through Parallel Universes, Time Warps, and The
Tenth Dimension*

Kaku notes that "Hinton spent most of his adult years trying to visualize higher

spatial dimensions" but that Einstein "saw...that the fourth dimension can be taken as

a temporal one...By adding higher dimensions, he could unite physical concepts that,

in a three-dimensional world have no connection" such as concepts of time, space, and

motion.[51] In Einstein's theories, time and space are interrelated. Kaku explains that

"according to special relativity, time can beat at different rates, depending on how fast

one is moving. Time being the fourth dimension means that time is intrinsically linked

with movement in space."[52] It is interesting that Kaku chooses the term "saw" to

describe Einstein's temporalization of the fourth-dimensional realm. What at first

seems a highly abstract and non-visual theory lends itself to being described in visual

terms—terms that portray the movement of entities in space over time as in this

example from Kaku's book *Hyperspace* that describes relativistic effects:

> Imagine trying to overtake a train in a speeding car. If we hit the gas pedal, our
>
> car races neck-and-neck with the train. We can peer inside the train, which now
>
> appears to be at rest. We can see the seats and the people, who are acting as
>
> though the train weren't moving...Now let us replace the train by a light beam,
>
> but keep the velocity of light at just 100 miles per hour. The pedestrian still
>
> clocks our car traveling at 99 miles per hour in hot pursuit of the light beam

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[51] Kaku, *Hyperspace*, 88.

(Owen, 5-6). Alex Owen explains that "Sigmund Freud . . . along with others who saw the human mind as the new frontier of scientific discovery, was fascinated by occultism and psychical (or paranormal) research. In 1921, he received invitations to co-edit three different periodicals concerned with the study of the occult, and while he declined in each case, he wrote in one of his letters of refusal: 'If I had my life to live over again I should devote myself to psychical research rather than to psychoanalysis.' Freud apparently later forgot this admission of deep interest, but his personal involvement with occultism during the early years of the new century was real enough . . . there is a close connection between occultism and innovative approaches to the study of the mind. Indeed, Victorian science itself was sometimes less divorced from occultism than its practitioners might care to admit." Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, 5-6.

[52] Kaku, *Hyperspace*, 85.

traveling at 100 miles per hour. Remarkably, we see the light beam racing ahead

of us as though we were at rest. Not believing our own eyes, we slam on the gas

pedal until the pedestrian clocks our car racing ahead at 99.99999 miles per hour.

Surely, we think, we must be about to overtake the light beam. However, when

we look out the window, we still see the light beam speeding ahead of us at 100

miles per hour. Uneasily, we reach several bizarre, disturbing conclusions. First,

no matter how much we gun the engines of our car, the pedestrian tells us that

we can approach, but never exceed 100 miles per hour. This seems to be the top

velocity of the car. Second, no matter how close we come to 100 miles per hour,

we still see the beam of light speeding ahead of us at 100 miles per hour, as

though we weren't moving at all…Inexorably, we are led to the astonishing

conclusion that shook Einstein…The only solution to this puzzle is that *time*

slows down for us in the car. If the pedestrian takes a telescope and peers into our

car, he sees everyone in the car moving exceptionally slowly. However, we in

the car never notice that time is slowing down because our brains, too, have

slowed down, and everything seems normal to us. Furthermore, he sees that the

car has become flattened in the direction of motion. The car has shrunk like an

accordion. However, we never feel this effect because our bodies, too, have

shrunk…These relativistic effects, of course, are too small to be seen in everyday

life because the speed of light is so great.[53]

One must picture Kaku's description as a sequence of changing images over time in

order to comprehend this example. Even so, the scenario defies common sense.

Einstein's ideas about the interdependence of time, space, and motion once more

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[53] Kaku, *Hyperspace*, 81-83.

challenged the limits of perception—and these abstract theories had a strikingly visual disposition.

Abstraction, in fact, was a hallmark of early twentieth-century thought. Doubts about the solidity of perception reframed subject matter across disciplines, suggesting new paradigms for understanding physical space. Kern explains:

> Biologists explored the space perceptions of different animals, and sociologists, the spatial organizations of different cultures. Artists dismantled the uniform perspectival space that had governed painting since the Renaissance and reconstructed objects as seen from several perspectives. Novelists used multiple perspectives with the versatility of the new cinema. Nietzsche and José Ortega y Gasset developed a philosophy of "perspectivism" which implied that there are as many different spaces as points of view. The most serious challenge to conventional space came from physical science itself, with the development in the early nineteenth century of non-Euclidian geometries.[54]

The reconfiguring of visual and perceptual space went hand-in-hand with new turn-of-the-century ideas about geometry and the weird space of the fourth dimension—and with ideas about the self.

Notions of the strange interdependence of time, space and motion likewise made their way into visual work produced in the first decades of the twentieth century. In *Duchamp in Context*, art historian Linda Dalrymple Henderson cites the prominence of ether physics, which featured "luminiferous ether" as the medium for

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[54] Kern, 132.

electromagnetic waves, before World War I.[55] Henderson rightly claims that the artist

Duchamp was influenced by science that captured the popular imagination. She makes

a very strong case for public ignorance of Einstein's ideas before 1912 and argues that

Einstein's "highly mathematical and abstract" special relativity theory of 1905 was not

"within the reach of the layperson." I believe, however, that *subterranean* cultural

themes have an impact on a range of creative endeavor as well. I would like to argue

that the ambient cultural discourse that sparked Einstein's brilliant theories also found

its way into the visual rhetorical themes of the time. The very visuality of Einstein's

ideas seems to suggest a kinship. It is important to distinguish, I suggest, between

factors that *directly* influence an undertaking—such as the science that was a source

for Duchamp's artwork discussed in *Duchamp in Context*—and a cultural ambience

that makes itself known in less obvious ways.

I propose that there was also an ubiquitous cultural ambience, at the turn-of-

the-century that evoked notions of sequenced images over (sometimes distorted) time

and space. Einstein's special relativity and the early fantasy cinema considered in

Dream Work—both concerned with representation in motion over time—fit this

pattern. So do other sorts of visuals that are suggestive of dynamic mental imagery.

All of these entities pose reality as a surprising series of visualizations in which

intangible matter can fluctuate in multiple directions over time and space.

My approach in this study allows me to picture the emergence of ideas of a

malleable self out of a mix of scientific and psychological theories; the very variety of

theories that explicate each phenomenon suggests a certain malleability. *Dream Work*

seeks to trace this process in the fantasy imagery of turn-of-the-century British

illustrators Arthur Rackham, Aubrey Beardsley, and Sidney Sime, and French

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[55] Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *Duchamp in Context: Science and Technology in the Large Glass and Related Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), xx.

filmmakers Georges Méliès and Emile Cohl. Although a number of the scientific ideas I describe earlier in this introduction are present to some extent in Beardsley's, Sime's, Méliès' and Cohl's work, the Rackham imagery I discuss in Chapter 1 is firmly planted in materialist renderings of the mind. But Rackham's work also embraces the philosophical underpinnings of physiognomy that were taken up by some phrenologists; Rackham pictures the self in a grand continuum with the natural world. In Chapter 2, I describe how Beardsley's work fluctuates between expression of material and ethereal manifestations of the psyche. And in Chapter 3, I show that Sime's imagery—which sometimes foreshadows geometric abstraction—manifests notions of a mind freed from the constraints of the physical body. His illustrations resemble projected image-thoughts like those attributed to a subjective unconscious. In Chapter 4, I discuss the ways that Méliès and Cohl's imagery, brought to life by the perception of time and motion in cinematic media, is expressive of the early twentieth-century ideas of the self in flux. Cohl's work in particular presents what can be understood to be unpredictable and abstract mental imagery that unfolds over time.

The Chapters

This dissertation began as a graphic design historical study of the impact of phrenology and physiognomy on character types in some Victorian fantasy illustration. As is common in dissertations, the project migrated and expanded significantly as it unfolded. In some ways, the individuals I chose to investigate helped chart my path through the work. The three illustrators I discuss in this study were not randomly selected, but the project had hardly begun to take form when I settled on three specific people. The die was cast in a way. This decision forced me to seek unique comparisons and surprising contrasts among their images—and these close readings

sometimes produced unruly insights that didn't quite mesh with my original premise. Rackham's work more or less fit my original thesis, but Beardsley's work called my suppositions into question and, after an in-depth analysis, I found that Sime's illustration suggested a whole new set of cultural and scientific themes that I hadn't originally considered.

The project became an exercise in making sense of all this complex and seemingly incoherent information. I began to notice evolving patterns—from Rackham to Beardsley to Sime—that seemed to match comparable shifts in contemporaneous ideas about the self and the unconscious mind. In particular, the visual narratives in Sime's imagery suggested a fascinating rapport between turn-of-the-century notions of unconscious cerebration and visualization of contemporaneous scientific theories in physics. Sorting out these new insights forced me to rethink and reconfigure my previous work on Rackham and Beardsley. I felt I needed to expand my thesis significantly—my new working hypothesis for the project had to be much broader and much riskier. I was compelled to ferret out the complex relationships among these three designers' work. At the same time, I had to reconcile the narratives of a number of different scientific endeavors—such as Darwinian theory, optics, microbiology, and ideas about space and time in the fourth dimension—with evolving *fin de siècle* notions of the self. And I had to figure out how all these ideas came together in the images.

My study of Sime also pointed to my next move. Sime's dynamic work, in which a melding of scientific and psychological narratives is rendered in light and darkness, pointed to cinematic media. Early fantasy cinema seemed like the best next step for the project. Although I have little background in film history, I decided to explore fantasy filmmakers Georges Méliès and Emile Cohl's imagery. I was thrilled

to find certain striking commonalities among the narratives in Sime's, Méliès,' and Cohl's work.

The two filmmakers added yet another dimension the group—a different medium altogether—and I sought common ground among the five individuals considered. In order to anchor the premises of this study, I felt that I had to approach all five as designers, regardless of how scholars in art history, literary criticism, or film history characterized them. This disciplinary tactic made practical sense, since design history is my area of expertise. I wondered, though, if I could also provide new insights about the images I discuss by positioning the five as visual communicators rather than as illustrators or filmmakers. At any rate, I decided that approaching all these image-makers as designers—or visual communicators—would serve as a sort of stable base from which to compare and contrast. Approaching all five image-makers as designers also focused this study squarely on the communicative power of visual narrative, and demonstrated that the visual rhetoric culled from imagery can moderate disciplinary distinctions. Rhetorical analysis is the key to this method. It allows me to make sense of all the complex strands of my thesis by making it possible for me to reframe all components—including the scientific ideas and notions of the unconscious mind I discuss—in the terms of imagistic discourse. In *Dream Work* I am searching for certain cultural themes that are common to each designer's work and to contemporaneous science and psychology. At the same time, I note shifts in the prominence of certain cultural themes as I progress through the chapters from Arthur Rackham's work to that of Georges Méliès and Emile Cohl. Several interrelated threads, however, emerge in this study—the visual rhetoric I examine interrogates materiality and immateriality, visibility and invisibility, and permanence and impermanence.

Although all five image-makers were more or less contemporaries who produced their work in the decades spanning the turn-of-the-century, it is important to note that Rackham continued to work into the 1930s, Beardsley died in 1898, and Cohl, who had been a caricaturist and cartoonist, worked as a filmmaker from 1908 to 1923. I found it useful, though, to begin this study with Rackham. His illustration, which I suggest is steeped in a solidly materialist tradition, serves as springboard for ideas that are elaborated in later chapters.

Arthur Rackham, one of the most popular illustrators of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was born in London in 1867. When he was eighteen, he began work as an insurance clerk at the Westminster Fire Office and studied in his spare time at the Lambeth School of Art. During the 1890s, Rackham produced nineteen books and dozens of illustrations for two major children's magazines, *Cassell's* and *Little Folks*, and for. During this period, Rackham was also a regular contributor to the magazines the *Pall Mall Budget*, the *Westminster Budget*, and the *Westminster Gazette*. Rackham's first book illustrations were commissioned in 1896 by publisher J.M. Dent—who, incidentally, had also commissioned Beardsley illustrations—for the book *The Zankiwank and the Bletherwitch* (Rackham got this commission three years after Beardsley was first hired by Dent in 1893).

By 1896, though, Beardsley was at the height of his career (Rackham owned a set of the two volume Dent edition of *Morte D'Arthur* illustrated by Beardsley), while Rackham had just begun to figure out his illustrative approach. Rackham biographer James Hamilton suggests that it is no coincidence that Rackham's career blossomed after Beardsley died in 1898.[56] In 1898, Dent commissioned Rackham to illustrate *The Ingoldsby Legends*, in which Rackham demonstrates the beginnings of his mature

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[56] James Hamilton, *Arthur Rackham* (New York: Arcade, 1990), 45.

style. Rackham, whose books appealed to both children and adults, continued to produce lushly illustrated books of legends and fairy tales until his death in 1939.

Part of his wide popularity was due to the reassuring quality of Rackham's illustrations. His images did not threaten Victorian sensibilities; in fact, I would argue that the pervasive visual narratives that characterized his illustrations perpetuated well entrenched Victorian codes of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. In the first chapter, "Mind via Matter: Arthur Rackham's Phrenological Landscape," I address the impact of widespread cultural presumptions about the physical manifestation of the psyche on Arthur Rackham's fairy imagery. I discuss the ways in which Rackham's popular illustrations played an important role in creating the Victorian repertoire of fairy and fantasy images. At the same time his illustrations disclose hidden implications for the understanding of the physicality of the mid-to-late-nineteenth-century psyche.

Although there is no evidence that Rackham subscribed to phrenology and physiognomy per se, it is clear from his fairy portraits that he absorbed the visual vocabulary spelled out in phrenological and physiognomical charts. Popular art anatomy books of the era—often written by scientists (William Rimmer was a physician), and intended for artists—not only presented portraits of specific "types" of persons, but also included written commentary loaded with phrenological and physiognomical biases. Again, there is no evidence that Rackham used art anatomy books, but his work matches the visual vocabulary laid down in their pages. The imagery in these books, like that in phrenological and physiognomical texts, reinforced Victorian racial stereotypes by associating physical features of certain ethnic and racial groups—and fairies—with those of animals.

Rackham's fairies' physical features bear striking resemblances to fierce, greedy, evil, lustful, or callous types portrayed in art anatomy books. Their features match negative phrenological and physiognomical descriptions associated with animalistic character. A number of Rackham's male and elderly female fairies have features in common with apes, foxes, and weasels. According to Victorian social science, so-called primitive women were also believed to be more bestial—and thus more highly sexed—than white women. These women were, in turn, equated with female fairies. While his older female fairies resemble beasts, Rackham's young female fairies are seductively beautiful. According to folklore, such female fairies were considered extremely dangerous and destructive. Fairy brides, for example, were temptresses who could revert, at any moment, to their more primitive selves. Some of Rackham's female fairy imagery borders on soft-core pornography—complete with *femmes fatales* who simultaneously play out male sexual fantasies and anxieties.

It was understood that white Europeans likewise retained some of their bestial heritage. This animalistic remnant was believed to be stored in the unconscious mind. The emergence of the hidden beast within was a familiar theme in Victorian culture (in the story *Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde* written by Robert Lewis Stevenson in 1886, for example). Most Victorians accepted these racial and characterological stereotypes as scientific fact. Thus, whether or not Rackham was racist is irrelevant to this study. In *Dream Work* I intend to show that the visual narrative in Rackham's illustration is expressive of Victorian materialist sciences of the mind that, according to Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth, "rejected the dualistic division between mind and body" and "was at once fascinated and perturbed by those hidden regions that remained beyond conscious control."[57]

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[57] Taylor and Shuttleworth, xiv.

Rackham's visuals were likewise influenced by his view of nature, which culminated in animistic notions of the supernatural. Rackham's fascination with nature was in synch with phrenological and physiognomical ideas that the mind and the natural world were related in a great continuum. To reinforce the mind's interassociation with nature, phrenologists adapted botanical terminology to phrenological phenomena and arranged the faculties according to order and genera.[58] Indeed, phrenology was believed to be the landscape of the mind that planted a landscape in the mind. In his book *The Human Body and Its Connexion with Man* [1851], phrenologist James John Garth Wilkinson describes such a landscape:

[Phrenologist Franz Joseph] Gall came out of the cerebral well, and looking upon the surface found that it was a landscape, inhabited by human natures in a thousand tents, all dwelling according to passions, faculties and powers. So much was gained by the first man who came to the surface, where nature speaks by representations; but it is lost again at the point where cerebral anatomy begins.[59]

Cerebral anatomy alone is too abstract for most to comprehend. However, when the brain's faculties are aestheticized and portrayed as a visual image—a panorama of "tents, each with its own complexion"—then the parallel with nature is obvious. Rackham's illustrations depict physical types similar to those designated in phrenological charts and descriptions; on another level, Arthur Rackham's illustrations

[58] Spurzheim was a frequent visitor to England. Charles Colbert, *A Measure of Perfection: Phrenology and the Fine Arts in America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 8.
[59] James John Garth Wilkinson, *The Human Body and Its Connexion with Man, Illustrated by the Principal Organs* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1851), 22.

mirror the phrenological landscape. His scenes are full of characters—amalgams of trees, animals, and humans—displaying various dispositions.

Beardsley, on the other hand, plants his own bizarrely artificial landscape of human psychology. According to Beardsley critic Milly Heyd:

> Masking inner nature is also expressed through Beardsley's concept of landscape. Landscape is usually the focal interest of artists attracted to nature and the natural—as it represents that which is not man-made. Beardsley, however, is "against Nature". He makes no landscapes in their own right but rather uses or treats them as backgrounds to illustrated scenes. This is a man-made landscape, artificially tended by it creator like a gardener trimming his garden and imposing his own order on creation... Beardsley seems to adopt the Italian pronouncement on garden planning according to which things planted should reflect the shape of things built. He puns with this idea as the things he builds are human beings rather than architectural edifices.[60]

Heyd uses the term "human being" very loosely. I suspect she means that Beardsley builds a picture of human psychology, including the unconscious thought. Beardsley was an astute student of human nature and, according to Beardsley critic Linda Zatlin, he "hated hypocrisy, particularly social hypocrisy."[61] His insights about human behavior made their way into many of the illustrations he produced in his abruptly curtailed career.

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[60] Milly Heyd, *Aubrey Beardsley: Symbol, Mask, and Self-Irony* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 198.
[61] Linda Zatlin, *Aubrey Beardsley and Victorian Sexual Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 8.

Born in Brighton in 1872, Aubrey Beardsley contracted tuberculosis as a young boy. Despite his frequent bouts of illness, he was a precocious young artist and produced a number of childhood drawings (some extant). After completing his schooling in 1888 at age sixteen, Beardsley, like Rackham, took a job as an insurance clerk. He continued to draw, sometimes attending the Westminster School of Art at night, while barely enduring the drudgery of his clerkship. Beardsley's career escalated after he was offered his first commission in 1892; publisher J. M. Dent invited him to illustrate Thomas Mallory's *Morte D'Arthur* (three years before Dent commissioned Rackham to illustrate *The Zankwank and the Bletherwitch*). His first illustration work, though, appeared in 1893 in the *Pall Mall Budget*. Beardsley's illustrations—including one inspired by Oscar Wilde's French rendition of *Salome*— were featured in an article by Joseph Pennell in the 1893 inaugural issue of the fine art magazine *The Studio*. Wilde's publisher, John Lane, asked Beardsley to illustrate the 1894 English edition of *Salome*. That same year, Beardsley became the editor of Lane's new arts and letters periodical, *The Yellow Book*.

In 1895, Wilde was put on trial for "gross indecency"—a legalistic term for the then illegal act of sodomy—and Beardsley was considered to be guilty by association. He lost his job at *The Yellow Book* and in 1895 took a job at *The Savoy*, a new publication owned by publisher and sometime pornographer Leonard Smithers. Although the *The Savoy* folded in 1896, Beardsley continued to be very productive for the next three years producing illustrated editions of books such as Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and Ben Jonson's *Volpone*. Beardsley eventually went to live in France, where he died in 1898 at the age of 25. Although Beardsley's work was "enormously popular with the public," after the publication of *Salome* (and the publication of *The Yellow Book*), his reputation was tainted by constant criticism that

highlighted the "vulgar" or "freakish" content of his work.[62] Some of these same so-called vulgar and freakish aspects provide fruitful material for understanding Beardsley's images in the context of Victorian science and psychology.

In the next chapter, entitled "In His Wildest Dreams: Aubrey Beardsley's Visionary Fusion," I examine Beardsley's fetus, ape, dwarf, and mask imagery. Although it is clear that Beardsley was intrigued by phrenology and physiognomy—he subtly inserts phrenological diagrams into his illustrations that feature fetuses, apes, dwarfs, and masks—the images I discuss are likewise evocative of the realm of dreams and hallucinations. This work renders aspects of both the material mind and the ethereal self, and of scientific fact and scientific fiction.

Gillian Beer, in fact, argues that new scientific theories, such as evolution and natural selection—and the fictions they generated—made their mark on late-Victorian discourse and on Beardsley's imagery. Early twentieth-century Beardsley critic Osbert Burdett [1925] describes the stunning impact of Darwin's theories on the tenor of the era in which Beardsley worked:

> *The Origin of Species* was published in 1859…the tide turned, and belief that
>
> all was well with modern progress turned to doubt. After 1859 the
>
> complacency of the century was definitely smitten, for with the publication of
>
> *The Origin of Species*, the revolt against the system became conscious, because
>
> the effect of the book (unintended by Darwin) was to make the system
>
> understood…The reason for its welcome is to be found, of course, in the two

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[62] Zatlin, *Victorian Sexual Politics*, 5.

doctrines which quickly became popular catchwords: the struggle for existence and, and the survival of the fittest.[63]

As I argued earlier in this Introduction, Darwinian evolution is a material process with subliminal operations —both mutation and natural selection are invisible.[64] Evolution converges with other late-Victorian scientific theory in its combination of overt and covert dispositions. A close reading of Beardsley's images that feature fetuses, apes, dwarfs, and masks demonstrates a deliberate mix of hidden and apparent visual meanings. The synthesis of scientific theory at the turn-of-the-century—the mixing and matching of tangible and intangible qualities—provoked the broad question of the place of self in the cosmos. Burdett explains that Darwinian struggle and survival "came, too, with the infallibility of 'science,' 'fact,' and 'observation.' The claim to certainty still rested on revelation, but revelation was now the perquisite of science...Anarchy was the order of the universe."[65] Beardsley's provocative fetus, ape, dwarf, and mask imagery seeks revelation and infers anarchy.

Beardsley's fetuses are human monstrosities that manifest Victorian fears about their own grotesque animal phylogeny. These monsters offer grotesque interpretations of the processes of human growth and transformation. Spontaneous mutation is one of the main tenets of evolutionary theory. Beardsley's fetuses are reminiscent of Darwin's Galapagos creatures—they manifest a host of bizarre mutations. Beardsley commonly merges his dwarf and fetus images—he considers both creatures to be primitive and unformed. While both Rackham's and Beardsley's

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[63] Osbert Burdett, *The Beardsley Period: An Essay in Perspective* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1925), 36.

[64] Mutated genes are not visible to the naked eye, but their impact on the body may or may not be obvious.

[65] Burdett, 36.

dwarfs suggest the Victorian belief in unbridled dwarf sexuality, Beardsley's dwarf-fetus freak shows associate deviant sexuality with embryology and evolution. At the same time, these monstrous fetuses function as if in a dream scenario that deftly sidesteps rationality.

Nineteenth-century Turanian dwarf theory associated dwarf and simian. Carole Silver explains the idea that "dwarfs were descended from a race older and other than *Homo Sapiens*," confirmed the widespread nineteenth-century belief that dwarfs are aboriginal.[66] Recapitulation—in which a developing embryo passes through all evolutionary stages, including a "simian" stage—unites embryo and lower primate. Beardsley plays on these ideas by making his monkeys and apes look and behave human—a rendering that suggests the beast hidden in the unconscious mind. A close reading of these images, however, reveals a host of complex and sometimes contradictory interpretations. I would like to argue that much is missed if one interprets Beardsley's monkey and ape imagery as simply symbolic of unconscious thought or the unconscious. Instead, I suggest this imagery reflects the multifarious and shifting discourse about the self at the turn-of-the-century, which includes simultaneous theories of a material mind located in the body and an ethereal psyche freed from physical constraints.

Beardsley's masks are likewise evocative of a material mind located in the body and an ethereal psyche freed from physical constraints. His mask iconography draws attention to the face—and to physiognomy and its failings. Flint suggests that "the whole Victorian literary fascination with disguise and its capacity to deceive successfully…may be seen as a counter-current to the belief in the sufficiency of

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[66] Carole Silver, *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 137.

physiognomic encodement."[67] At the same time, Beardsley's mask iconography

evokes the faculty of vision by simultaneously revealing and covering characters'

eyes. Beardsley's irrational visuals point up at once the concrete nature of perceptions

but challenge the stability of these perceptions by reframing them in unpredictable

ways.

Sidney Sime's imagery foregrounds this turn-of-the-century interest in the

subjectivity of perception. Sime is an important and vastly underappreciated *fin de*

siècle fantasy illustrator. He was born in Manchester in 1867 and attended the

Liverpool School of Art from 1883 to 1886. Early in his career, Sime produced

illustrations for a variety of high-quality, popular magazines (*The Strand, The Sketch,*

The Idler, Pall Mall, Pick-me-up, The Butterfly) that featured the work of other

talented illustrators. He later collaborated with author Lord Dunsany on ten fantasy

books—a number of his fabulous illustrations from the Dunsany books are featured in

this chapter. Sime biographer Paul Skeeters notes that, after 1927, Sime went into

seclusion, producing work "from his imagination with no regard to subject" that

"reflected…the new schools of surrealism and cubism."[68] After Sime died in 1941,

Dunsany [1942] described him as "A genius whose stupendous imagination has passed

across our time little more noticed by most people than a bird passing over the lawn

would be noticed by most of a tennis party."[69] Sime's unfortunate obscurity

notwithstanding, in a strange way, Dunsany's elusive bird is an apt metaphor for

Sime's dynamic and otherworldly images.

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[67] Flint, 18.

[68] Paul Skeeters, *Sidney H. Sime: Master of Fantasy* (Pasadena, California: Ward Ritchie Press, 1978), 11.

[69] Baron Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett Dunsany, "Sime," *The Fortnightly Review* (August 1942).

We can begin to understand his enigmatic images by locating them in the discourse of turn-of-the-century science. In the third chapter, "Supernatural Selection: Sidney Sime's Weird Science," I discuss how notions of the instability of perception lead to symbolic and abstract visual renderings expressive of unconscious thought. In keeping with this trend, Sime's surreal visual narratives blur the boundaries between the seen and unseen, and between the physical and the ethereal. Sime's illustrations express the visual essence of a range of turn-of-the-century scientific disciplines. He uses the visual vocabulary of hallucinations and dreams to address fantastic aspects of Darwinian evolution, x-rays and optical gadgets, and the fourth dimension. The otherworldly aspects of turn-of-the-century optics and optical gadgetry become associated with dreams and hallucinations in his work, offering the viewer what Simon During calls "new revelations and visual pleasures."[70]

Sime's work conveys the quality of popular nineteenth-century magic lantern shows, or phantasmagorias, which projected moving slide imagery on a screen in a darkened room. Often frighteningly real, magic lantern shows replicated the hidden domain of the imagination by playing out eerie visual scenarios. Like phantasmagorias, Sime's illustrations seem to project imaginative fantasies onto an *external screen*—the page. Sime's imagery is likewise evocative of the revelatory power of x-rays. X-rays, which projected the body's hidden interior, were sometimes thought of as frightening powerhouses. Cone-shaped rays of light common in Victorian depictions of x-rays are featured in Sidney Sime's illustrations. His cone-shaped rays assimilate both revelatory and destructive power.

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[70] Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 21.

Indeed, Sime was fascinated by the revelatory power of both x-rays and the invisible underpinnings of Darwinian evolution—spontaneous mutation and natural selection. The images for his book *Bogey Beasts*, in fact, propose that creatures' thoughts are responsible for their physical appearances. Sime poaches from Lamarckian theory and physiognomical principles, but his causation moves in an opposite direction. Sime asserts *intangible* rather than tangible internal determinants for physical form. Unconscious and conscious thought processes take center stage in his work.

Sime's chiaroscuro imagery highlights his interest in these unseen interior realms of the body and mind. Light and darkness come together in his work to project what appear to be projections of fuzzy image-thoughts. At the same time, Sime ventured into the abstract worlds of the new physics, which manifested the unseen *exterior* worlds of the universe. Contemporaneous ideas about the fourth dimension intrigued Sime—he frequently cites the fourth dimension in his texts that accompany his imagery. Sime's illustration evokes the hazy abstraction and unfathomable configuration laid down in popular turn-of-the-century scientific romances, such as Abbott's and Hinton's books, that present other-dimensional worlds.

"Material objects, Sime warns in text accompanying his semi-abstract image "The Quest of the Oof-Bird," (See Figure 3.2) "should not be looked for in the Realms of Abstraction."[71] For Sime, the mind's dream maneuvers—the realms of abstraction in which seemingly material objects appear, mutate, and vaporize—are like a journey through distorted time and space. Sime uses the visual vocabulary of dreams and hallucinations to render the content of these newly discovered physical laws.

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[71] George Locke, *From an Ultimate Dim Thule: A Review of the Early Works of Sidney Sime* (London: Ferret Fantasy, 1973), 47.

In the final chapter, "Moving Pictures: Georges Méliès' and Emile Cohl's Time/Space Continuum," I explore the ways in which the disembodied psyche fluctuates according to the context in which it is observed. French fantasy filmmakers Georges Méliès' and Emile Cohl's fantasy films embody both discourses of the subjective, disembodied unconscious and related turn-of-the-century scientific discourses.

Georges Méliès and Emile Cohl were born in Paris four years apart, in 1861 and 1857 respectively. In the early 1880s, Méliès studied privately with the painter Gustave Moreau while he worked in the family business. While studying English in London in 1884, Méliès became involved in a number of theatrical productions. He was particularly interested in magic shows, and when he returned to Paris in 1885, Méliès purchased the Théâtre Robert-Houdin and began his career as a popular magician. Biographer Elizabeth Ezra notes that Méliès produced "magic tricks [and] *féeries* or fantasy pantomime spectacles" at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin.[72] After attending the Lumière brothers' infamous screening of *Sortie des usines* in 1895, Méliès became passionate about incorporating cinematic media into his theatrical shows.[73] Méliès' film career was highly successful for only eight or nine years—his films were so popular with the general public that they inspired a whole host of knock-offs in England and the U.S. (much to Méliès' dismay)—but Méliès financial concerns eventually forced him to hand over creative control of his films in 1911 to the Pathé film company.

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[72] Elizabeth Ezra, *Artificially Arranged Scenes: The Films of Georges Méliès* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979), 9.

[73] Méliès also produced erotic films, filmed advertisements, and documentary films. In 1899 he made a film in support of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French military who was falsely accused of being a German spy. Cohl was firmly in the anti-Dreyfus camp. Ezra, 9, 15.

Cohl, on the other hand, began his artistic career as a political caricaturist

(although he briefly joined a magician's act around 1890).[74] In 1878, Cohl joined the

atelier of the prominent political caricaturist André Gill, and by 1884 he became a

member of a small group of so-called Incoherent artists. Film historian Donald Crafton

describes the Incoherents as "both defiant—assaulting decorum perpetuated by the

salons and the Academy—and escapist, denying the problems of French society…by

drowning them in forced mirth."[75] By the 1890s, Cohl's caricatures had evolved into a

newfound interest—comic strips that featured visual pranks and fantasy narratives that

had a distinctly filmic quality.

Cohl was most certainly aware, by the late 1890s, of the new cinematic

medium. Crafton suggests that Cohl may have even been interested in Méliès' work.[76]

Although the details about Cohl's entry into the world of filmmaking are sketchy, it is

clear that he was producing animated films for the Gaumont studios by 1908—about

the time Méliès' career was at its peak. His first animated films, which featured a

moving white line that rendered strange scenarios against a black background, were

very popular. Cohl left Gaumont in 1910 for a short-lived eight month stint at Pathé

studios, and then joined Eclair studios where he produced some of his finest and most

well known animated work. In the 1920s, Cohl gained more notoriety when he and

American animator Winsor McKay clashed publicly about which man was the proper

"father of the animated film." By the 1930s, however, a new generation of American

animators had become all the rage, and Cohl sank into a bitter state of destitution.

According to Crafton, Cohl was "deeply wounded" by those who gave credit to

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[74] Donald Crafton, *Emile Cohl, Caricature and Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 4-5.

[75] Crafton, 51.

[76] Crafton, 91.

American filmmakers for surrealism in animated films, "while ignoring the irrational world of dream and fantasy that he had created years before in his own films."[77] Both Méliès and Cohl seemed to sense that cinema was the perfect medium to represent the invisible workings of the psyche—their soundless black and white images in motion produced a powerful, yet intangible, visual experience. Light projected the imagery into a darkened space. The power of light and darkness was heightened by Méliès and Cohl's dream-like worlds, which featured a hybrid mix of "real" and drawn imagery.

In this chapter, I discuss the visual processes by which Méliès and Cohl challenge expectations about the juxtaposition of these "real" and drawn images. In order to examine certain aspects of the visual narrative in Cohl's and Méliès' work, I first factor out the time-based motion. I do so by looking only at sketches and stills in the first part of the chapter. These sketches and stills provide fascinating new material for deep visual analysis—this narrative material is glossed over in most scholarship on their work. Filmic motion adds yet another captivating dimension to Cohl's and Méliès' imagery. In the second portion of the chapter, I address the ways in which Cohl's and Méliès' hybrid visuals, when brought to life by the sensation of time and motion in cinematic media, project early twentieth-century scientific notions of a universe in flux.

As I mentioned earlier, abstraction became an important means of rendering unfixed subjects evocative of a fluid universe. Cohl's work tended to abstraction. He generated visuals that can be examined in the context of subjective motion of irrational line and its consequent abstract geometric elements. Turn-of-the-century mathematics and science foregrounded line as well. German physicist Hermann Minkowski, in fact,

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[77] Crafton, 209.

used the term "world-line" to describe the union of time and space to a point in motion.

Motion was also an important constituent of *fin de siècle* scientific ideas about the interrelatedness of light, time, and space. Kern notes that in 1907 Einstein proposed that gravity warps space and time as it slows the speed of light. Kern also explains that since the motion of light traverses "the shortest distance between two points… [Einstein's] theory altered the very conception of space itself."[78] In these abstract universes, time, space, and motion are interdependent. Their behavior, as spelled out in the new physics, defies common sense. Likewise Cohl's visuals, when brought to life by the sensation of time and motion in cinematic media, project early twentieth-century scientific notions of an irrational and unpredictable universe. His line—which is even width, as if drawn mechanically—renders geometrically inspired forms and creatures that flatten, morph, and appear and disappear without obvious logic. Like Einstein's theories, Cohl's logic is based in picturing the interrelated motion of linear forms in contorted time and space.

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[78] Kern, 206.

Chapter One

Mind via Matter: Arthur Rackham's Phrenological Landscape

In a fairy story, the good fairy always gets the better of the wicked fairy, as the child knows there is no harm in showing it a picture or representation of a bad fairy, dark and ugly, but not deformed.[1]

—Arthur Rackham

Introduction

"Dark and ugly" fairies swarm over a virtuous maiden in Arthur Rackham's illustration "White and Gold Lizzie Stood" (See Figure 1.1) from Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*. Despite Rackham's candid denial, every fairy in this image is deformed—each is a grotesque hybrid of human and beast complete with unnerving eyes and sharp-angled features. A number of the animalistic fairies in "White and Gold Lizzie Stood" appear to be extensions of the tree. Others seem to emerge from the ground like a patch of poisonous toadstools. The fairy who hangs down from the tree (at the top of the illustration) has a face like a monkey, but his hand that caresses Lizzie's face is reminiscent of a gnarled tree branch. At the same time, his body appears to be an extension of the tree—his trunk both emerges from and merges with the tree, suggesting a broad-based continuum among humans, beasts, and the natural world. To the right of this fairy's head, in fact, there are several deformed faces that seem to materialize out of the tree trunk; one face has a long nose and beard and the other is simian looking. On the other hand, the male and female fairies at the center right of the image look human, but their features are subtly bestial. More readily

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[1] Interview with Arthur Rackham on his feelings about dolls, *The Daily Mirror*, November 23, 1908.

Figure 1.1
"White and gold Lizzie stood"
Arthur Rackham, 1933
from Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*

apparent in the images of these two fairies, though, are facial characteristics that the Victorians commonly attributed to "primitive" races.

Rackham's (and Rossetti's) beautiful maiden stands in stark contrast to the fairies who accost her. Her virtue is unassailable, but the same cannot be said for Rackham's depictions of her female fairy counterparts. His beautiful fairies exude an erotic sexuality that would have been considered unbecoming to Victorian ladies. Fairies and "primitive" women were believed to be more highly sexed than their white counterparts. But even white European women were considered suspect, especially if they were beautiful.

Indeed, nineteenth-century social science equated fairies and women with "primitive" peoples, while some Victorian psychology claimed that "primitive" traits could be read in the face. Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) draws on this Victorian lexicon of embodied selfhood. The information revealed in the monstrous physiques of Rackham's fairies were visual shorthand for Victorian beliefs about the revelation of base character in the face and body. At the same time, these grotesque portraits offered his audience the comfort of in an era in which the very notion of a stable self was in doubt.

In this study, I attend to visual depictions that can be read in the context of the changing *fin de siècle* scientific landscape. The shapes of Rackham's monstrous images—as visual communication situated in a certain time and place—beg to be interpreted as narrative evocative of their cultural context. In this chapter, I also investigate the meanings in Rackham's images that modern audiences are likely to miss but that were readily apparent to Victorian viewers. Rackham's audience would have taken for granted that the external human form (and movements, gestures, and attitudes) was expressive of the psychological qualities of an individual. Part of their

cultural inheritance was a visual vocabulary of gestures and features whereby the inner state could be revealed through exterior detail. Victorian sciences of the mind both reaffirmed and elaborated this concept. In this study, I interpret Rackham's fairies in the context of this Victorian psychology. At the same time, I intend to exploit my twenty-first century vantage point. The passage of time makes it possible for me to read Rackham's images against the backdrop of changing notions of self and mind before the turn-of-the-century.

Nineteenth-century psychology ventured into the sciences of physiognomy—in which the character of the brain had an impact on the features of the face—and phrenology—in which the psyche was believed to be located in a series of "organs" in the brain, and was subsequently expressed in the shape of the head (See Figure 1.2).[2] According to Roger Cooter, Franz Joseph Gall—who founded phrenology in the late eighteenth century—believed that "since the skull ossified over the brain during infant development, external craniological means could be used to diagnose the internal state of mental faculties."[3] In other words, the shape of the brain determines the shape of the head—and the shape of the head describes character. Physiognomy's founder, Johann Caspar Lavater, claimed that "Physiognomy is the science of knowledge of the correspondence between the external and internal man, the visible superficies and the

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[2] According to Lucy Hartley, the term *pseudo-science* diminishes the role phrenology and physiognomy played in nineteenth-century scientific thought. "The problem is that characterizations of phrenology, mesmerism, and physiognomy as 'pseudo'-science, or 'alternative' forms of scientific enquiry presuppose that we can identify claims about the organic world as falling on one side or other of a boundary line which demarcates what is science from what is not, and in this way define the realm of science proper. However, as Winter implies, the notion of a boundary line between science and non-science has the effect of smoothing over the diversity of opinion in the scientific communities of the nineteenth century and positing in its stead, a rather singular and monolithic view of science—a view which scholarship on the period has now affirmed was not evident." Lucy Hartley, *Physiognomy and the Meaning of Expression in Nineteenth Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 8.

[3] Roger Cooter, *Phrenology in the British Isles: An Annotated, Historical Bibliography and Index* (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1989), viii.
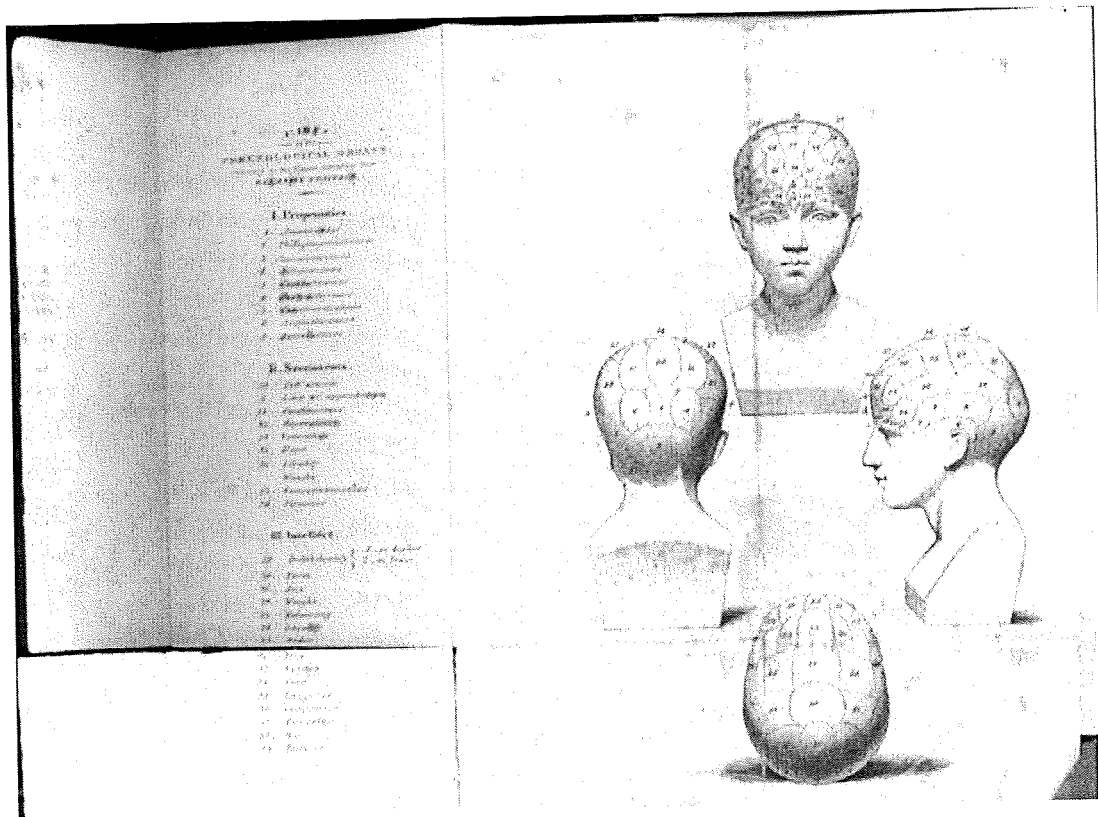
Figure 1.2
'Phrenological Chart," from George Combe, *Elements of Phrenology*, 1824

invisible contents."[4] Cooter explains that—like physiognomy—phrenology provided

proponents a "'scientific' justification for real and idealized social relations with

women, savages and the politically recalcitrant working class, and…an

anthropological basis for the further investigation and comprehension of these

categories."[5] Twentieth-century art historian Mary Cowling likewise notes that certain

physiognomic types portrayed in Victorian art were considered anthropologically

correct and drew on "repositories of mid-Victorian ideals and beliefs relating to human

nature, so boldly and unselfconsciously expressed because then [they were] accepted

as a part of natural law."[6]

In *The Artist as Anthropologist*, Cowling presents an exhaustive sampling of

portraits that support her thesis that nineteenth-century physiognomic designations

underwrote widely accepted stereotypical racial and class-based facial features in

Victorian "narrative" art. Cowling describes the impact of physiognomy and art

anatomy books on painted images of people "from the contemporary scene."[7]

Although she does not locate physiognomic imagery in the context of shifting notions

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[4] Hartley, 33.

[5] Cooter, viii.

[6] Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist; The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 5.

[7] Cowling, 5.

Although it is beyond the scope of this study for me to talk about how art impacts physiognomy, I would like to suggest that Cowling misses the influence of art on physiognomic portraits. I suspect that the visual vocabulary of previous and contemporaneous art likewise informed nineteenth-century phrenological and physiognomical imagery. Late-Victorian social scientist Havelock Ellis [1890], in fact, cites medieval artists' depictions of Satan described in Hubert Lauvergne's 1841 "old book on criminals," *Les Forçats*. Lauvergne compares artistic renderings of Satan's head with those of the criminals he studies: "Such are the heads which painters throw into their pictures, and call 'heads of the other world.' I have recognized them in mediaeval pictures, and in all the museums in which the products of early art are preserved." Lauvergne describes the physiognomy of Satan's head, which he says "presents a prominent base supporting an inclined pyramid, more or less truncated." According to Ellis, Lauvergne warns, "This head announces the monstrous alliance of the most eminent faculty of man, genius, with the most pronounced impulses to rape, murder, and theft." Although I cannot address these ideas in depth in this study, Cowling's argument might be enhanced by a discussion of art's role in determining physiognomic designations. Hubert Lauvergne, *Les Forçats* (Paris: J.B. Ballière, 1841), quoted in Havelock Ellis, *The Criminal* (London: Walter Scott, 1890), 50.

of the self at the turn-of-the-century, Cowling does explain just how pervasive scrutiny of people's physical features was in the Victorian era.[8] She argues that the generalized notion that aspects of one's psyche could be read in and categorized by an examination of external form had a far-reaching impact on quotidian Victorian culture. She also suggests that we miss much of what was intended in Victorian art because "we no longer scrutinize the human face in this close manner...still less do we attempt to deduce from those features specific information about the character of the person concerned."[9]

I likewise suggest that we miss relevant information that has been encoded into Victorian illustration, especially in evocative work such as Rackham's. I would like to build on Cowling's ideas, however, by arguing that the narrative I examine in Rackham's work goes beyond mere physical depictions of physiognomic class, ethnic, and racial stereotypes. I intend to venture into this fertile territory in my discussion of Arthur Rackham, revealing Victorian cultural presumptions about the visual manifestation of the mind in the facial features of his "charming" animalistic fairies and anthropomorphic trees. At the same time, I will argue that this system of representation worked, in part, to stave off the insecurity precipitated by challenges to the very stability of perception and identity at the turn-of-the-century. Darwinian theory and nineteenth-century notions of the unconscious mind in particular—each of which suggested invisible and intangible processes—conjured up ideas of a modern human condition rife with hidden animalism that was beyond conscious control.

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[8] Cowling, 9.

[9] Cowling, 9.

There are unquestionably modern equivalents in terms of stereotyped appearance in models, Hollywood stars, etc. If these are not "scientifically" claimed, they are at least consensually understood.

Indeed, in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the unconscious mind was believed to hide the bestial remnants of humankind's distant heredity.[10] Phrenological and physiognomic imagery reinforced contemporaneous notions of this "beast" located in the unconscious mind. Victorian physiognomists and phrenologists compared human features, by analogy, with those of animals (See Figures 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5). Practitioners suggested that individual "types" and ethnic groups resembled specific creatures, and therefore must share their animalistic traits.[11] Phrenology, which provided graphic diagrams of heads divided into areas corresponding to the brain's "organs," grouped related divisions into several categories. The primitive phrenological faculties that animals share with humans include Amativeness—sexual love; Philoprogenitiveness—the love of offspring; Concentrativeness—the ability to focus on one object; Adhesiveness—the attachment to animate and inanimate objects in one's environment; Combativeness—the tendency to self-protection and courage; Destructiveness—the desire to meet and overcome obstacles; Constructiveness—the tendency to construct; Acquisitiveness—the inclination to acquire; and Secretiveness—the instinct to conceal unbecoming behavior and thoughts. These "organs" that harbored the so-called animal propensities associated human passions and emotions with animal behavior.

According to physiognomists and phrenologists, certain shapes in human faces

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[10] See Carole G. Silver, *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), and Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth, eds., *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts 1830-1890* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

[11] Cowling, 34-38.

According to phrenologists, the primitive phrenological faculties that animals share with humans include: Amativeness—sexual love; Philoprogenitiveness—the love of offspring; Concentrativeness—the ability to focus on one object; Adhesiveness—the attachment to animate and inanimate objects in one's environment; Combativeness—the tendency to self-protection and courage; Destructiveness—the desire to meet and overcome obstacles; Constructiveness—the tendency to construct; Acquisitiveness—the inclination to acquire; and Secretiveness—the instinct to conceal unbecoming behavior and thoughts.
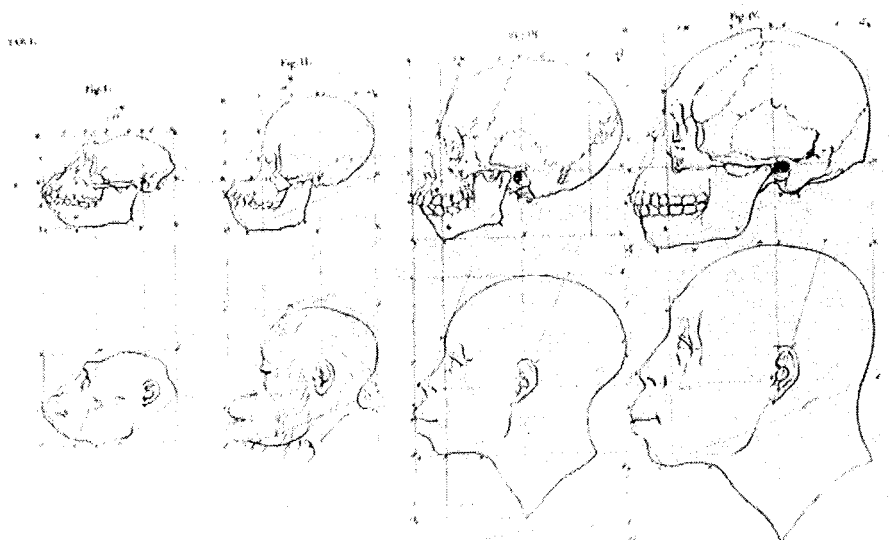
Figure 1.3
"Camper's facial angle applied to the profiles and skulls of apes and human beings: (I) tailed monkey, 42 degrees; (II) orangutan, 58 degrees; (III) Negro, 7 degrees; (IV) Kalmuck, 70 degrees," 1794
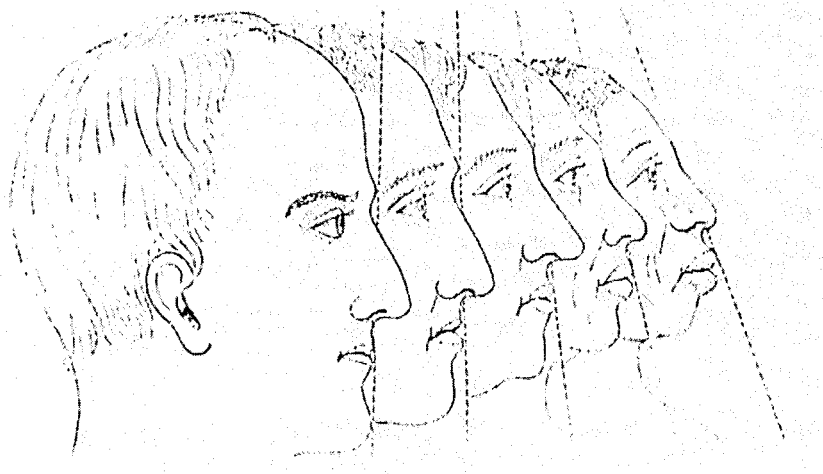
Figure 1.4
"Grades of Intelligence indicated by the size and shape of the forehead." S.R. Wells, *New System of Physiognomy*, 1866
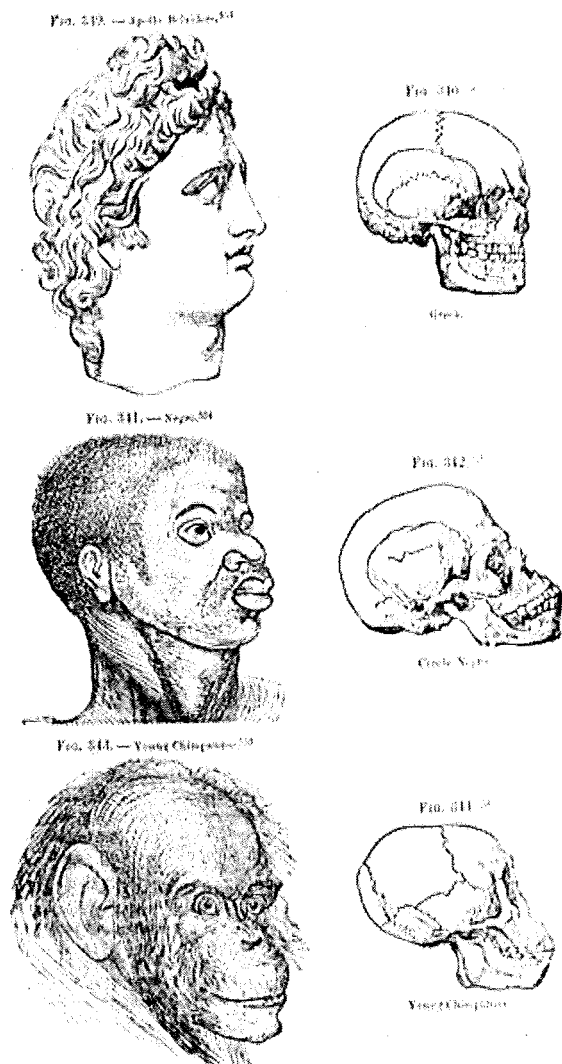
Figure 1.5
"The heads and skulls of Apollo, a negro and a chimpanzee compared. Apollo represents the best type of the Caucasian race." S.G. Morton ed. Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 1854

and heads suggest these animal propensities. Rackham's fairies—many of whom are visual hybrids of humans and animals—are often depicted using these same shapes. Like phrenological and physiognomic diagrams, Rackham's fairy imagery—such as that in "White and Gold Lizzie Stood," uses sharp-angled features and staring eyes for affective purposes. In *Physiognomy Made Easy*, nineteenth-century phreno-physiognomist Annie Isabella Oppenheim [1887] writes that a sharp nose belongs to an individual "who is hatching plots, listening behind doors...and...to be feared and avoided" and that shrewdness is characterized by "Sharpness of features generally."[12] In his essay on "Personal Beauty," preeminent nineteenth-century psychologist Herbert Spencer [1854] likewise describes how sharp, protruding facial features signified not only lack of intelligence, but aggressive and destructive temperament.[13] In phrenological and physiognomical diagrams, sharp features are consistently associated with animal faculties and repugnant psychology. Eyes—traditionally called the mirrors of the soul—are significant physiognomical indicators as well. Oppenheim, for example, notes that round eyes signify audacity, voluptuousness, and stupidity.[14] In this chapter, I reveal the ways that staring eyes and angular features—reinforced by the visual vocabulary of phrenology and physiognomy—translate into intimidating cerebral and facial features in Rackham's drawings.

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[12] Annie Isabella Oppenheim, *Physiognomy Made Easy. A Compilation of Extracts from the Works of Dr. Redfield, S. R. Wells, and Others; with Diagrams of the Face and an Introductory Explanation of the Use of Physiognomy* (London: L. N. Fowler, 1887), 89, 118.

[13] Spencer correlates extremely sharp-angled features with low intelligence:
"If the recession of the forehead, protuberance of the jaws, and largeness of the cheekbones, three leading elements of ugliness, are demonstrably indicative of mental inferiority—if such other facial defects as great width between the eyes, flatness of the nose spreading of the alae, frontward opening of the nostrils, length of the mouth, and largeness of the lips, are habitually associated with these, and disappear along with them as intelligence increases, both in the race and in the individual, is it not a fair inference that all such faulty trials of feature signify deficiencies of mind?" Herbert Spencer, "The Haythorne Papers No. VIII "Personal Beauty," *Leader* 5 (1854): 357.

[14] Oppenheim, *Physiognomy Made Easy*, 107, 119.

In physiognomic portraits, sharp-angled features consistently reveal base and animalistic character. Female beauty, which was characterized by lush curves, threatened this physiognomic standard. Although phrenology and physiognomy suggested that well proportioned, symmetrical features signify positive traits, there was a pervasive notion in Victorian culture that no matter how visually balanced, voluptuous female beauty could disguise hidden evil (this may explain Oppenheim's association between round eyes and the bearer's consequent voluptuousness and audacity). Perhaps Victorians unconsciously feared that lush beauty would cloud the purportedly clear-cut insights gleaned from phrenological or physiognomic analysis—in this case, appearances were indeed at once deceptive and revealing. Carole Silver suggests that fears about beautiful female fairies were expressive of Victorian cultural anxieties about women.[15] A female fairy, Silver explains, could shape-shift and appear as an erotically beautiful woman who

> simultaneously embodies the male fear of the female as dominating and
> anarchic and the widespread anxiety about women as parasites...she is
> ostensibly a fairy "follower" or "sweetheart"; but she is really a lamia or
> succubus, draining the life and energy of the man to whom she attaches
> herself...In various guises she becomes a cliché of *fin de siècle*, decadent
> painting.[16]

Rackham often indulged in this cliché; indeed, his images of young female fairies frequently embody this terrible beauty. Suddenly appearance is no longer a trustworthy

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[15] Perhaps the notion of sirens or seductresses distracting men from rational pursuits bears some relationship to the idea of illustration as distraction from the seriousness of the written word. For example, Puritanism, Judaism, and Islam all have a history of iconoclasm.

[16] Silver, 178.

guide. In his illustration, sensual fairy *femmes fatales* tempt Victorian distrust of female physiognomy and thus the female psyche. The female fairies' sensually drawn features, along with accompanying images of castrated looking male fairies, amplified the perception of threatening physiognomic "portraits" in Rackham's beautiful female fairies. Rackham's fairy *femmes fatales* reinforced the perceived duplicity of European women by suggesting that they are likewise difficult to read; both beautiful and homely women were suspect. Phrenology and physiognomy unwittingly reinforced predictable docile femininity and encouraged fear of castrating female power. Victorian phrenology and physiognomy evidenced cultural anxieties and belief systems—including pervasive, threatening images of both enchanting beauty and monstrous forms—that also characterized Rackham's fairies.

In this chapter, I explore several of Rackham's fairy illustrations—in the Grimm brothers' *Rumpelstiltskin* (1900), in Washington Irving's *Rip van Winkle* (1905), JM Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906), in the Germanic legend the *Ring* series (1910), in John Milton's *Comus* (1921), in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* (1933), and in Edgar Allen Poe's book of short stories, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (1935)—as design artifacts that express the physical side of mid-to-late nineteenth-century psyche. Although many of these illustrations do not fall within the timeframe we commonly call the Victorian era, Rackham's attitude was distinctly · Victorian. Rackham biographer Fred Gettings explains:

> In his lifetime Rackham had witnessed the most far-reaching social changes and upheavals ever forced upon a world in the short span of half a century, and yet the curious fact is that the life and work of this man in no way testifies to these vast changes and alarms. It is perhaps in this fact that we find the secret

of Rackham's artistic success and fame—a secret which may be termed

escapism by the less sensitive…In essence, heart, outlook and style, Rackham

remained a Victorian, with the dreams of a Victorian.[17]

It is clear from his illustrations that Rackham accepted widely held Victorian ideas

about the expression of character in the head and face. The disagreeable qualities

demonstrated by a number of his fairies—for example, fierceness, greed, evil,

seductiveness, and callousness—correlate with negative physiognomical and

phrenological designations that hint at the beast within. It is unclear whether Rackham

was consciously aware of the impact of sharp versus curved lines, or physiognomical

and phrenological principles on his imagery per se. He did, however, absorb

nineteenth-century ideas about the visual expression of character and notions of a

stable physical self in a rigorously ordered universe. In fact, what makes Rackham a

consummate Victorian illustrator—unlike Beardsley who frequently parodies and

challenges these widely accepted notions, or Sime whose work is suggestive of a more

disembodied psyche—is that Rackham's fairies continued to foreground the physical

expression of character well into the twentieth century.

Rackham's Fairies-Human Nature

Fairy traits, behavior, and origins were serious and valid research subjects in

nineteenth-century social science.[18] It is important to understand that fairies studied by

Victorian social scientists, unlike their charming twentieth-century cousins, embodied

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[17] Fred Gettings, *Arthur Rackham* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 9.

In some ways Rackham seems to be assimilating the changes witnessed by a previous generation. His interest in folk myths, horror themes, and mythology characterized the "Romantic" period of the early nineteenth century.

[18] Silver, 33-57.

the unbridled animalism of some nineteenth-century notions of the unconscious mind. As I have already noted, fairies were equated with long-standing and newly discovered "primitive" peoples, who were considered to be distinctly inferior to their European male counterparts. Rackham's popular illustrations played an important role in perpetuating this Victorian image of fairies. His fairies can also be understood as visual stand-ins for a range of "primitive" human beings, simultaneously disclosing hidden implications for the Victorian psyche.

The visual designations for faces and heads spelled out in the physiognomy and phrenology confirmed the animalism of "primitives" and fairies, and simultaneously reinforced the notion of the deranged beast hidden in the unconscious mind of "civilized" people. Popular art anatomy books, which were typically written by scientists, perpetuated these ideas by introducing artists to clear-cut techniques for depicting hierarchical physiognomic "types" that rhymed with scientific designations. These hierarchies commonly show an "evolution" from apes to white Europeans, with the "Negro," American Indian, and other non-European races in between (See Figures 1.3-1.5). Europeans whose features resembled those of animals were thus considered to harbor especially "primitive" tendencies. Rackham's images, which frequently portray versions of these physiognomic "types," perpetuate ideas about the deranged animalism of the mind based in some Victorian neuroscientific discourse.

As I have noted, I am not aware of any direct evidence that Rackham utilized art anatomy texts. He was quite involved in the art and illustration establishment, however, and these sorts of how-to books for artists were relatively common, so it is fair to assume that Rackham was at least familiar with their contents. In this chapter, I compare Rackham's drawings with images from physician William Rimmer's *Art Anatomy* [1877] (See Figures 1.7, 1.18, 1.23, and 1.27), and with illustrations from

other scientific sources that feature physiognomical and phrenological renderings.[19]

Art anatomy books such as Rimmer's digested physiognomical and phrenological designations, accepting without question the sciences' physical and psychological types. In physiognomy, these same propensities feature low facial angles akin to those found that characterize the faces of apes (See Figure 1.3 and note 13). The so-called animal propensities are most relevant to this study of Rackham's grotesque hybrids since they specifically target those attributes common to both humans and animals.[20] In Rackham's illustrations, round, bulging eyes, prominent noses and chins, and low facial angles—the physical qualities that portray strong animal propensities—grace fairies of all ilks (with the exception of seductive females). Grotesque features that render monstrous hybrids of the human and the repugnant confirm the brutish nature of his fairies.

The animalism depicted so definitively in art anatomy books like Rimmer's is blatantly obvious in Rackham's illustration of the orangutan from Edgar Allen Poe's 1841 short story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*. Although I intend to focus mainly on Rackham's fairies in this chapter, his rendering of Poe's ape is an important sidebar to my argument that Rackham internalized and expressed the visual vocabulary of physiognomy and phrenology.

At first glance, Rackham's orangutan appears to be a convincingly drawn ape (See Figure 1.6). Poe—who was, incidentally, a serious proponent of phrenology—describes the orangutan acting like a human. He introduces the orangutan: "Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a looking glass attempting the operation

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[19] William Rimmer, *Art Anatomy* (Boston: Little Brown, 1877, Reprint New York: Houghton, Mifflin and company, 1893). See also Pieter Camper, *The Works of the Late Prof. Camper, on the Connexion between the Science of Anatomy and the Arts of Drawing, Painting, and Statuary &c.,* ed. T. Cogan (C. Dilly, 1794), and Charles Le Brun, *Passions Delineated in Nineteen Studies for Students, and All Who Wish to Read the Various Expressions of the Human Face* (W. Tegg, 1863).

[20] George Combe, *Elements of Phrenology* (Edinburgh: John Anderson Jr., 1824), 23.

of shaving."[21] The ape escapes and kills Madame and Mademoiselle L'Espanaye, after he climbs through their apartment window. He slits Madame's throat and strangles Mademoiselle—very un-apelike behavior indeed.

Poe explains that the orangutan tears out some of Madame L'Espanaye's hair. She lies dead on the blood-soaked floor on the right side of Rackham's illustration, whatever hair is left on the top of her head just visible at the edge of the page. Poe and Rackham would likely have been aware of the legend that American Indians "scalped" their captive enemies. Although there is no obvious reference in Rackham's illustration of the ape to human "evolution" found in the comparative physiognomy of art anatomy texts, Rackham's straight razor wielding ape holds bloody hair in his other hand. One might assume that Rackham's illustration—the ape, with razor in one hand and a clump of bloody hair in the other—depicts a scene in which the orangutan has "scalped" Madame. It may be that the scene's similarity to a "scalping" was unintentional on Rackham's (and Poe's) part. American Indians, however, were regularly compared to apes in art anatomy books.

In the page entitled "Debased Heads" (See Figure 1.7) from *Art Anatomy*, Rimmer includes depictions of several American Indian heads in contrast to the Anglo Saxon "Highest Average Outline" head. He describes the Indians as having "Retreating Chin. Nose...more or less flat...Deep Jaws. Deep Mouth. Retreating Forehead"—in short, very apelike features. Rimmer explains of these "Debased Heads" images that, "The descent toward the animal form in the Human Head is toward the Animal in Human nature, and not toward the Animal as it exists in Animal

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[21] Edgar Allen Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," in *The Prose Romances of Edgar A. Poe* (Philadelphia: W.H. Graham, 1843), reprinted in *Tales of Edgar Allen Poe* (New York: Random House, 1944), 86.

Figure 1.6
"Orangutan"
Arthur Rackham, 1935
from "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"
in Edgar Allen Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*
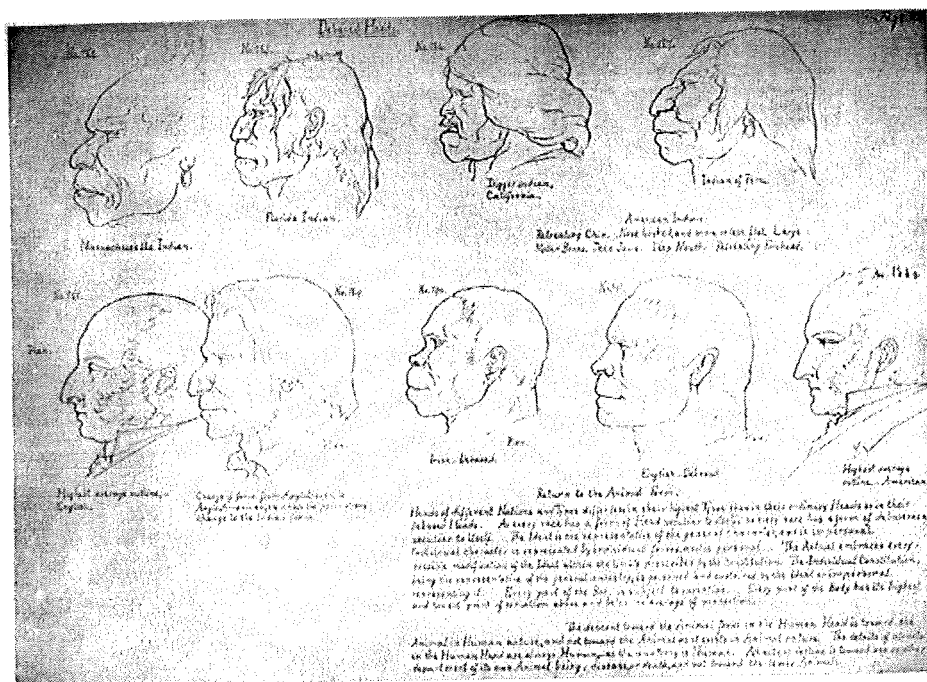
Figure 1.7
"Debased Heads"
from William Rimmer's *Art Anatomy*, 1877

nature."[22] According to Rimmer's theory, then, Rackham's (and Poe's) human-like

ape is representative not of an animal in his behavior, but of "the Animal in Human

nature." This ape represents the out-of-control beast hidden in the human psyche that

many Victorians believed could emerge under the right circumstances. His simian

facial features—the sort of facial features that are frequently compared with those of

American Indians—are in strange contrast with his violent human behavior,

suggesting that he is not animal, but sub-human.

Nineteenth-century psychologist Frederick Myers [1886] describes a relevant

case study in which this disturbing side of a white European boy's personality

suddenly emerges:

> Louis V. began life (in 1863) as the neglected child of a turbulent mother. He
>
> was sent to a reformatory at ten years old, and there showed himself, as he has
>
> always done...quiet, well-behaved, and obedient. Then at fourteen years old he
>
> had a great fright from a viper—a fright which threw him off his balance and
>
> started the series of psychical oscillations on which he has been tossed ever
>
> since...His character became violent, greedy and quarrelsome...he is constantly
>
> haranguing anyone who will listen to him, abusing his physicians, or preaching
>
> with a *monkey-like* [italics mine] impudence rather than with reasoned
>
> clearness...[23]

The abnormal Louis V. is "monkey-like"; his unconscious self—his dark, bestial

side—has overtaken his rational side. As I have already noted, the emergence of the

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[22] Rimmer, 28.

[23] Italics are my emphasis. Frederick W. H. Myers. "Multiplex Personality," [*Nineteenth Century*, 20 (Nov. 1886), 648-56] in *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890*, eds. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 134.

hidden beast within was a familiar theme in Victorian culture; in the story *Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde* written by Robert Lewis Stevenson in 1886, for example.[24]

This same attitude is pervasive in Rackham's imagery in which animal and human come together in sub-human grotesques. Rackham's hybrid combinations grip our emotions; we interpret an image as grotesque when we perceive it as a mixture of the normative and the loathsome.[25] Admixtures of the typical human form and the grotesque renditions of it strike a chord in the human psyche because we relate to the familiar aspects and we recoil in horror from their combination with extreme deformity. Rackham's fairy illustrations give form, visually and conceptually, to the threat that grotesque features and seductive beauty pose. Rackham biographer James Hamilton claims that:

> in dealing with issues of good and evil...the beautiful and the grotesque, Rackham expressed in graphic form, and at their most elemental, feelings and qualities that every human has experienced....Rackham found and struck a chord in the human psyche....[26]

Although Hamilton probably didn't intend to do so, he lends credence to the idea that Rackham intuited the suggestive power of graphic combinatory representations. Rackham reinforced clear-cut Victorian notions of good by representing evil. His repugnant fairy hybrids and lustful fairy *femmes fatales*—fortified by notions of

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[24] Interestingly, it was a fearful reaction to a frightening animal itself that brought out the savage in Louis. Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (New York: Scribner, 1886).

[25] Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 122.

[26] James Hamilton, *Arthur Rackham* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1990), 9.

twisted Darwinian evolution in which humans evolve from apes—hint at the beast within the unconscious mind. Such imaginative hybrids were a consistently potent feature of his fairy illustrations according to biographer Fred Gettings.

> This remarkable ability to combine the human and the animal in one figure lies at the root of many of Rackham's fine pictures. His goblins are human (some of his humans are goblins—perhaps he sees no clear distinction between the devic world and the human plane), his animals are often merely human after all, and even his trees and shrubs are best described as humanoid.[27]

Despite their apparent charm and allure, there is more substance to Rackham's imagery than animals that are "merely human after all." Like his razor-wielding orangutan from *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, Rackham's hybrids present not only the grotesque, animal portion of the self, but also the aspect desirous of illicit power (especially sexual power) and release. Rackham's imagery, however, buffered Victorian fears of illicit power by presenting hybrid monsters as inferiors whose physiognomies could easily be read by the audience. The power, then, was in the *viewers'* hands—and in their minds. Interestingly, Beardsley also illustrated the scene that features the orangutan in the L'Espanaye apartment from *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*. In the next chapter, I compare Rackham's and Beardsley's depictions of the murderous orangutan and contrast the ways that the two images embody very different renditions of turn-of-the-century neuroscientific meaning in their respective illustrative environments.

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[27] Gettings, 82.

In this chapter, though, my intention is to establish Rackham's work as a baseline for the analysis in the next three chapters. My intent in the first few sections of the chapter is to establish how the total visual environments in Rackham's work evoke specific visages and underlying principles of physiognomy and phrenology. While physiognomical and phrenological charts and diagrams suggest an inherent animalism in some or all human beings, their theoretical underpinnings stress the notion of a broad continuum in nature—of which the mind is a constituent part—which can be understood through the process of visual observation and description.

I begin this discussion by showing how Rackham's fairies are in synch with the richly detailed landscape environments in which he places them—a distinct animal physiognomy inheres in both fairy and ground. Rackham's animalistic fairy trees, discussed in the next section, likewise reinforce the continuum between mind and nature. At the same time, they are evocative of long-standing folkloric tradition in which threatening and destructive fairies inhabit trees—a situation that could be easily conflated with of the out-of-control beast some Victorians believed inhabited the unconscious mind. One entity inhabiting another appears to be constant theme in this chapter. In the next sections, I observe the ways that animal traits inhabit Rackham's human-like fairies, producing visual grotesques—*in-between* hybrids—with insidious appetites. Even more insidious is the way Rackham's physiognomically perfect, but covertly sexual female fairies manifest the viewers' bestial appetites. In the last few sections of the chapter, I argue that Rackham's images of beasts inhabiting humans reflect the visual material of physiognomy and phrenology.

The Phrenological Landscape

According to Cowling, nineteenth-century practitioners claimed that physiognomy and phrenology were based in objective observation; they believed their techniques were on a par with observational methodologies used in other natural sciences. Cowling explains this idea:

> Most Victorian physiognomists pleaded the scientific respectability of human physiognomy, arguing that is was based on the same methods of scrupulous observation which scientists had developed in their studies of the natural world. In fact, the physiognomical approach was often quoted as synonymous with scientific observation, and as demonstrating the application of the Baconian method to human nature: a method by which inductions were to be formed only on the basis of painstaking observation…Phrenology was claimed equally as a Baconian science.[28]

Both physiognomy and phrenology stressed the idea that the mind and the natural world were related in a great continuum—each aspect of which might be understood through detailed direct observation. According to Cowling, "Not infrequently, nineteenth-century physiognomists…speak of the physiognomy of forms in terms of a specific, symbolic arrangement through which the nature of all things, organic and inorganic, might be made known."[29] Similarly, eminent British phrenologist George Combe claimed that both social and personal reforms were supported by the mind's innate continuum with nature. Rackham's fairy imagery is evocative of this great continuum. Rackham draws unambiguous connections between the individual and its

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[28] Cowling, 10.

[29] Cowling, 9-10.

environment, creating a visual world in which he frequently overlays animal, vegetable, and mineral. The greater physical environment in his illustrations enhances the meanings drawn from analysis of his fairies' features.

The first two illustrations for "Some say, no evil thing that walks by night/In fog, or fire, by lake of moorish fen/ Blue meager Hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost/ that breaks his magick chains at curfew time/No goblin or swart faery of the mine/Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity" from Milton's *Comus* (See Figures 1.13-1.15) present bizarre animalistic creatures and frightening anthropomorphic trees drawn in landscapes that mimic their physiognomies. In the first image, the shrubs in the distance resemble the branches of the tree and the wispy hair of the goblin. The trees in the background of the second image—shadowy figures that seem to march along in zombie-like fashion—mimic the horrid creatures who "walk at night" in the first image.

In a similar fashion, the visual axis oscillates between the parts and the whole, between the physiognomical and phrenological traits of the characters and the cumulative vision of the illustration "A Band of workmen who were sawing down a toadstool, rushed away, leaving their tools behind them" from *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (See Figure 1.8). All the fairies have low, sharp-angled foreheads, which signify both little intelligence and small organs of Veneration and Benevolence. When small "organs" of Veneration and Benevolence are overcome by Combativeness and Destructiveness, as they are in this case, "cruelty," according to Combe [1824], "may result." The fairy in the middle of the composition has an enormous portion of his skull above his ears; therefore his organs of Combativeness and Destructiveness are extremely large. Overactive Combativeness, according to Combe, "inspires with the love of contention of its own sake; and pleasure may be felt in disputation or in
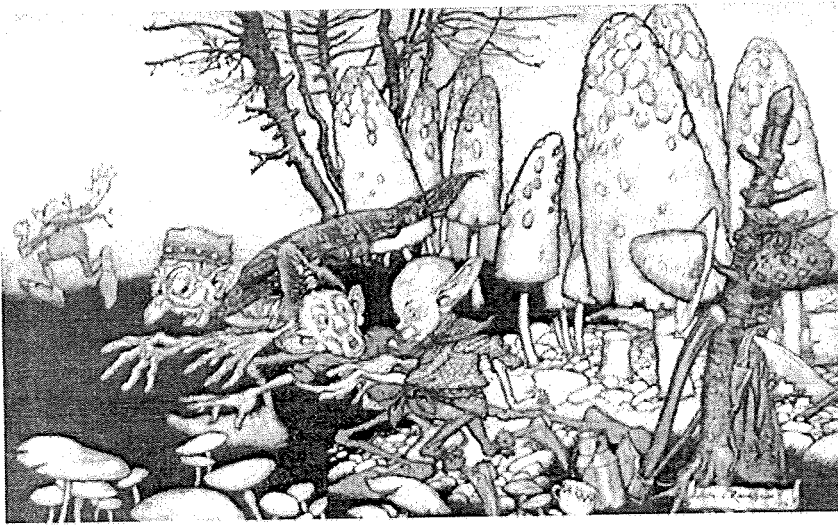
Figure 1.8
"A band of workmen who were sawing down a toadstool, rushed away,
leaving their tools behind them"
Arthur Rackham, 1906
from J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*

Figure 1.9
"They will certainly mischief you"
Arthur Rackham, 1906
from J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*

fighting."[30] He says of Destructiveness, "The organ is conspicuous in the heads

of...persons habitually delighting in cruelty."[31] These gnomes' facial structures, gaunt,

skull-like, and angular, match Rimmer's debased types with masculine features to

excess (See Figure 1.7). The gnomes' eyes are disconcerting too. The fairy in the

middle of the composition has eyes that are far set, oval, and lizard-like. The two

fairies in front of him have bulging oval eyes with prominent dark pupils that resemble

eyespots. Annie Isabella Oppenheim [1887], in her book *Physiognomy Made Easy*,

explains the prominent role eyes play in physiognomy. She explains that the eyes'

proximity to the brain means they are external forms expressive of the bearer's

intellect—deeper set eyes signify more and superficially set eyes signify less astute

intellectual capacity.

> The eyes being located directly under the brain, are the features of intellect and
>
> intelligent emotions...Whatever we perceive is conveyed to the brain by means
>
> of the optic nerve, thus the deeper the eyes are set in the head, the greater their
>
> proximity to the brain...A projecting eye more readily receives impressions
>
> from surrounding objects, it indicates ready and universal observation, but a
>
> lack of close scrutiny and perception of individual things...Round-eyed
>
> persons see much and live much in the senses, but think less.[32]

Rackham's gnomes seem stupid and animalistic—their staring eyes and their

physiognomy confirm this impression for the audience. Although these fairies flee in

fright rather than attack, their eyes range from repulsive to unnerving in appearance.

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[30] Combe, *Elements of Phrenology*, 33.

[31] Combe, *Elements of Phrenology*, 37.

[32] Oppenheim, *Physiognomy Made Easy*, 18.

These fairy characters dovetail with their environment—Rackham's overall composition. In this image the shapes of the fairy's faces and bodies mesh with the shapes of the toadstools and trees. The toadstool illustrations look like bumpy bald heads—the gnomes are bald as well—rendered in such an engaging and vital fashion that viewer can practically "feel" the bumps. In the greater image, the shapes of toadstools and gnomes resemble lumps on a landscape surface (their varied expressions and skull shapes suggest a strong dose of Destructiveness or Combativeness and a missing capacity for Veneration or Benevolence). These jagged-featured gnomes fearfully scuttle away through a landscape replete with sharp angles. The angular shapes point in all directions, leaving the viewer anxious about finding a visual way out of the composition around sharp rocks, thorns, and bony fingers.

Rackham pushes this anxiety in the image "They will certainly mischief you" (See Figure 1.9) from *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. In this illustration a little girl is caught in sharp thorns and held by bony goblin fingers. Two impish male fairies (and a tree with claw-like branches) yank on her clothes—this image is typical of popular stories about trees inhabited by destructive fairies.

The fairies' eyes bulge unattractively and are oval with large, dark pupils. In *Phrenophysiognomy*, Annie Isabella Oppenheim details her approach to reading people's features in a how-to manual that merges the visual vocabulary of the two sciences of the mind. In this treatise, Oppenheim claims that round, prominently projecting eyes signify "coarseness" and "stupidity." These fairies' eyes, which suggest their dark side, would have been clearly understood by Rackham's audience. Just as disturbing, the drawn line cuts a multitude of sharp angles that make up the faces and bodies of the fairies and the tree which resemble a spider's web. Rackham incorporates jagged curves peppered with small, sharp thorns in the tree branches,

Figure 1.10
"If displeased the old squaw would brew up clouds as black as ink"
Arthur Rackham, 1905
from Washington Irving's *Rip van Winkle*

which instill disconcerting anxiety in the viewer. The composition meshes with the physiognomic expression of the fairies' phrenological traits and the physical features of the fairies intertwine with the threatening landscape and anxious line. All these coalesce to create a sense of wickedness in the illustration.

In the illustration "If displeased the old squaw would brew up clouds as black as ink" (See Figure 1.10) from Washington Irving's *Rip van Winkle*, a witchy "squaw" brews up dark clouds at the top of a mountain peak. Her head is narrow from side to side, suggesting large organs of Combativeness and Destructiveness. Physiognomically, she resembles Rimmer's "Cunning-Rapacious-Treacherous-Hypocritical-Fanatical" type; she also looks like a great, horrible bird of prey perched on the mountain. Rackham renders the squaw as a beastly, terrifying spirit. Irving's [1819] description, however, is less malevolent:

> The Kaatsberg, or Catskill Mountains, have always been a region full of fable. The Indians considered them the abode of spirits, who influenced the weather, spreading sunshine or clouds over the landscape, and sending good or bad hunting seasons. They were ruled by an old squaw spirit, said to be their mother. She dwelt on the highest peak of the Catskills, and had charge of the doors of day and night to open and shut them at the proper hour. She hung up the new moon in the skies, and cut up the old ones into stars. In times of drought, if properly propitiated, she would spin light summer clouds out of cobwebs and morning dew, and send them off from the crest of the mountain, flake after flake, like flakes of carded cotton, to float in the air; until, dissolved by the heat of the sun, they would fall in gentle showers, causing the grass to spring, the fruits to ripen, and the corn to grow an inch an hour. If displeased,

however, she would brew up clouds black as ink, sitting in the midst of them like a bottle-bellied spider in the midst of its web; and when these clouds broke, woe betide the valleys![33]

One has to wonder how much of Rackham's rendering of the "squaw" was based in prevalent nineteenth-century notions about the savagery and animalism of American Indians (I note again the impact of these American Indian "types" on Rackham's depiction of the orangutan in Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*). If one looks beyond the "squaw" as an unearthly spirit, it becomes clear that, in part, her fierce animalistic features resemble a dramatic version of the sloping forehead and hooked nose of Rimmer's American Indian figures (See Figure 1.7).

At the same time, her face is reminiscent of the craggy peaks of the Catskills on which she sits. The jagged, zig-zaggy lines of her face rhyme with the lines that define the mountain, and with the sharp angled peak of the mountain itself. Behind the "squaw" is a clutch of fairies (these creatures are recognizably Rackham fairies) some of who resemble Rimmer's "Lustful-Gluttonous-Mirthful-Unintellectual" type (See Figure 1.18). Others look like insects with sharply angled faces and body parts.

All the creatures seem to almost emerge from the mountain and the clouds. They are at once the "squaw's" offspring—sitting as they do under her, like baby birds in a nest—and extensions of the bumpy landscape. Rackham's "squaw" and her physical environment present a holistic, but exaggerated phrenological landscape that manifests fearsome animalism and sharp-angled anxiety. The visual interconnections between Rackham's fairy characters and the landscapes in which they exist, is evocative of the continuum between mind and nature stressed in physiognomy and

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[33] Washington Irving, "Rip van Winkle," *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (New York: C.S. Van Winkle, 1819, reprint London: Heinemann, and New York: Doubleday, 1905), 32.

phrenology. The fairies, cocooned within their landscape environment, could be understood to represent the Victorian notion of a psyche physically located in the brain. The "squaw" could be considered to be the mind expressed in the face and head. As visually complex as "If displeased the old squaw would brew up clouds as black as ink" is, Rackham's audience nevertheless would have been able to tap the conglomerate psychological meanings suggested in the fairies' features and their intimate visual relationships to the landscape. Rackham's backgrounds—which are based in his deep connection with nature—reveal the psychology coded into his illustrations.

It is interesting to note that, in contrast, Aubrey Beardsley's landscapes are anti-natural—according to Beardsley critic Milly Heyd, to "mask the inner nature of his personages is part of Beardsley's notion of landscape."[34] Heyd says that his background imagery masks rather than reveals the psychology of an illustration:

> Masking inner nature is also expressed through Beardsley's concept of landscape. Landscape is usually the focal interest of artists attracted to nature and the natural—as it represents that which is not man-made. Beardsley, however is "against Nature". He makes no landscapes in their own right but rather uses or treats them as backgrounds to illustrated scenes.[35]

Beardsley's background imagery is ironic. His "landscapes" obscure and parody the meanings behind his characters, both on their own and in conjunction with their physical environments. Beardsley's anti-natural environments call into question the

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[34] Milly Heyd, *Aubrey Beardsley: Symbol, Mask, and Self-Irony* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 198-199.

[35] Heyd, 198-199.

inevitability of the rational observation of entities like nature and the mind, while Rackham's landscapes—especially his anthropomorphic trees—reinforce Victorian ideas about the mind and the natural world.

Fairy Trees: Botany's Human Face

Rackham's landscapes are colored by prevailing presumptions about the natural world and its connections to the mind, as Cowling explains:

Physiognomists seized on the apparently undeniable, and innumerable, examples which nature provided. The writer of an enthusiastic article on 'Physiognomy', for the *Anthropological Review* (1869), pointed out that throughout nature, from the vegetable to the human kingdom, physiognomy served as a true indicator of organization. W. Hatfield, in his guide to *Face Reading*, similarly argued that: 'The more you study botany and the animal world, the more you see that the shape and type go together all throughout nature'; and that in the human field also, 'shape and quality tell the whole story and reveal the various powers and differences of character among men'…A.L. Vago, who advised artists on the application of phrenology to painting and sculpture, reminded the reader that 'there is not a single object in nature which in its outward form does not bear physiognomic indications of its internal nature.'[36]

Rackham's trees (and his landscapes) surely fit within Vago's grand physiognomic scheme. Overgrown with grotesque features, Rackham's fairy trees evoke images of

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[36] Cowling, 12.

both base humanity and evil tree spirits. According to Carole Silver, some Victorian social scientists likewise "connected various groups of supernaturals to the plant and animal species of the biological world and to the tribes and races of Victorian ethnology."[37] Nineteenth-century scientific ideas about the evolutionary relationship among nature, fairies, and "primitives" made their way into Rackham's grotesque anthropomorphic trees. Rackham's nephew, Walter Starkie [1963], describes Rackham's imaginary symbiotic relationship among fairies, animals, and trees; in this relationship, his trees become animals, which are milked by fairies for their sap:

> He would make me gaze fixedly at one of the majestic trees with massive trunk...He would say that under the roots of that tree the little men had their dinner and churned the butter they extracted from the sap of the tree. He would also make me see queer animals and birds in the branches of the tree and a little magic door below the trunk, which was the entrance to Fairyland. He used to tell me stories of the primitive religion of man which, in his opinion, was the cult of the tree....[38]

Rackham's ideas culminated in animistic notions of the supernatural; his narratives were generated from a deep visual engagement with the perceived physiognomy of the natural world.

Rackham's fairy trees are particularly expressive of the scientific notion of a continuum between nature and the human mind; at the same time, his illusory fairy realms were based on Victorian social scientific understanding of fairy tradition. According to this tradition, fairies live within trees and milk them for butter. Such a

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[37] Silver, 5.

[38] Walter Starkie, *Scholars and Gypsies* (London: John Murray, 1963), 18-19, quoted in Hamilton, 72.

view has its basis in long-standing notions of fairies "clearly derived from animistic

perceptions of nature" and centuries of ideas regarding fairies inhabiting trees and their

love of milk.[39] Twentieth-century scholar Lewis Spence explains the connection

among fairies, trees and milk:

> In all British countries fairies are regarded as great thieves of milk. Indeed one
>
> of their chief haunts is the dairy...it was believed that fairies took away cows at
>
> night in order to milk them, and sent them back in the morning....[there is a]
>
> legend in the Hebrides which tells how a fairy once a year issued from a tree to
>
> distribute "the milk of wisdom" to the women of the district.[40]

Milk sustains not only the rudimentary needs of infants, and those of their primitive

fairy counterparts, but milk extracted by tree fairies nourishes human psychology as

well. The shared "milk of wisdom" not only emphasizes a material connection

between nature and the mind, it reinforces the animate physicality of the Victorian

psyche.

His tree illustrations also depict fairies as elementals that are part and parcel of

this nature/mind continuum. In Rackham's illustrations there are both

anthropomorphic trees that stand as creatures, and anthropomorphic trees that house

fairies. The fairies that inhabit Rackham's trees can be understood as a metaphor for

Victorian ideas about the psyche that physically inhabits the brain. His stand-alone

anthropomorphic trees are frightening. They are at once plant, animal, and human,

woven into a single grotesque creature. Both sorts of Rackham tree images reaffirm

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[39] Silver, 44-45.

[40] Lewis Spence, *The Fairy Tradition on Britain* (London: Rider and Company, 1948), 215, 321.
See also Silver, *Strange and Secret Peoples*.

the physicality of the psyche; they are both associated with the material world of nature, and they both manifest physiognomical evidence of fairy animalism.

Notable for this study of Rackham's anthropomorphic trees are the varieties of threatening fairy trees detailed in folklore and studied by nineteenth-century social scientists. Silver reveals fairies that are "trees like MacDonald's alder or MacManus's demon thorns that trapped or tripped wayfarers"[41] She describes these spirits as extremely dangerous:

> The annir-choille...haunted the woods and snared men...One group of two thorn trees and a boartree..."is guarded by three malevolent demons who, after dark, haunt that stretch of the road"...Passersby...have had their arms grabbed with marks to show for it, heard inhuman laughs "and even caught glimpses of dim and horribly misshapen figures." Others passing hostile trees have sensed from them "feelings of vicious, bitter evil"...Hatred of humans literally emanated from their branches.[42]

Rackham's tree illustrations capture this grotesque horror in a powerful and unique way. The English periodical *The Outlook* [1908] described Rackham's anthropomorphic tree illustrations from *A Midsummer's Night Dream* (See Figure 1.11): "a Rackham tree; one of those trees, gnarled and black and twisted.... appearing as trees that only one man has ever perceived and drawn...."[43]

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[41] Silver, 155-156.

[42] Silver, 151-152.

[43] *The Outlook* 21 Nov. 1908, as quoted in James Hamilton, *Arthur Rackham* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1990), 170.

Figure 1.11
"Come, now a roundel"
Arthur Rackham, 1930
from William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

In the illustration "They will certainly mischief you" from J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (See Figure 1.9), a thorny tree (and several knobby-bodied fairies) ensnares a girl by grabbing her clothes. The tree, a less malicious version of MacManus's demon tree, nevertheless catches her on its sharp, spiky thorns. The trees branches and thorns are drawn sharp and angular—disturbingly uneven and reminiscent of base sharp-angled physiognomic features. Likewise, the tree in the image "The Indians considered them the abode of the Spirits" from Washington Irving's *Rip van Winkle* (See Figure 1.10) has sharp thorn-like branches. The jagged lines of the branches crisscross each other, creating an anxiety-ridden angular environment. This fairy tree leans and stretches, attempting, like a carnivorous predator, to snag a jackrabbit that hurries out of its reach. The tree has three horrible faces—one of which looks like a hooded snake about to strike—and a host of fairies at its roots. In fact, the ground at the base of the tree is drawn like a cut away view that shows the fairies cocooned in pockets like seeds, suggesting that demon trees come from or are nourished by fairies. Many of the fairies merge with the form of the tree; other fairies are drawn as various admixtures of human and animal.

Just as horrible are Rackham's three illustrations for the text "Some say, no evil thing that walks by night/In fog, or fire, by lake of moorish fen/ Blue meager Hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost/ that breaks his magick chains at curfew time/No goblin or swart faery of the mine/Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity" from Milton's *Comus* (1921) (See Figures 1.13-1.15). *Comus* (or *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle*) presents the story of a young girl who is accosted by a sorcerer while lost in a forest. The sorcerer encourages her to drink a potion he claims will make her more beautiful; in actuality, the potion transforms the face of whoever partakes into that of an animal. In the end, the virtuous lady overcomes the sorcerer and remains beautiful (and chaste)

Figure 1.12
"The Indians considered them the abode of the Spirits"
Arthur Rackham, 1906
from Washington Irving's *Rip van Winkle*

Figure 1.13
"Some say, no evil thing that walks by night/In fog, or fire, by lake of moorish fen/
Blue meager Hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost/ that breaks his magick chains at curfew
time/No goblin or swart faery of the mine/Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity"
Arthur Rackham, 1921
from John Milton's *Comus*
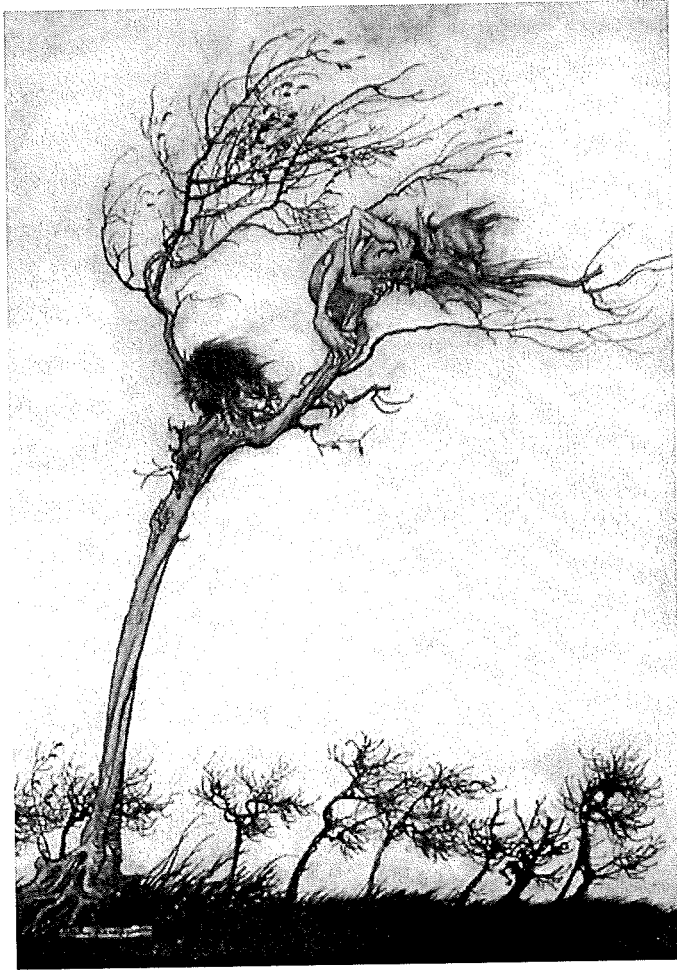
Figure 1.14
"Some say, no evil thing that walks by night/In fog, or fire, by lake of moorish fen/
Blue meager Hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost/ that breaks his magick chains at curfew
time/No goblin or swart faery of the mine/Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity"
Arthur Rackham, 1921
from John Milton's *Comus*

Figure 1.15
Maiden figure
"Some say, no evil thing that walks by night/In fog, or fire, by lake of moorish fen/ Blue meager Hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost/ that breaks his magick chains at curfew time/No goblin or swart faery of the mine/Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity"
Arthur Rackham, 1921
from John Milton's *Comus*.

by refusing the disfiguring draught. Trees, drawn with jagged, uneven lines, figure prominently in all three of the Rackham images of this passage. The one exception is Rackham's portrait of the maiden (See Figure 1.15), in which a smoothly drawn tree mimics her form. The maiden is drawn with calm line and expression; the tree behind her is drawn with graceful curves.

In the first illustration (See Figure 1.13), a horrible animalistic fairy and a frightening anthropomorphic tree "walk by night." Both the creature and the tree are bent and gnarled. The tree's face looks like a combination of devil (there is a snake coiled behind his head that serves as lookout) and animal skull; Rackham draws its deathly face with harsh angular lines. This devil tree, with his triangular shaped skull-head, brings to mind Lauvergne's [1841] description of Satan's head cited earlier in this chapter. Lauvergne's characterization fits Rackham's tree and Milton's story: "This head announces the monstrous alliance of the most eminent faculty of man, genius, with the most pronounced impulses to rape."[44] After all, in Milton's story and in Rackham's illustrations, the maiden is defending her virtue.

The devious snake—a symbol for both Satan and the penis—coiled around the Satan-tree's head seems to come out of his brain. The snake looks as if he might be an unrestrained phrenological "organ." The snake's eyes see what is ahead, while the tree's eyes are ghostly and hollow looking. Snake and tree merge—the snake, acting as the tree's arm, holds on to what looks like a wooden crutch or walking stick. His body is barely discernable from the trees trunk and branches. The branches that grow out of the tree's "head" resemble the wispy, scraggly hair of the other fairy (according to

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[44] Hubert Lauvergne, *Les Forçats* (Paris: J.B. Ballière, 1841), cited in Havelock Ellis, *The Criminal* (London: Walter Scott, 1890), 50.

Oppenheim, hair is indicative of the animal propensities) suggesting a continuum between the snake, the tree fairy, and the human-looking fairy.[45]

In the second illustration (See Figure 1.14), a diabolic goblin perches on a tree branch along with a horrid cat-like creature. The thin tree bends under their weight. Although the tree in the foreground is not as anthropomorphic as some of Rackham's trees are, the trees in the background of the image resemble ghoulish shadowy figures moving along the horizon.

In the third illustration (See Figure 1.15), the young female protagonist stands between two trees, one, which I have already noted, mimics her face and form. In the background, the top of the tree trunk is suggestive of a maiden's face casting her eyes up to heaven. Both faces resemble Rimmer's ideal female (See Figure 1.23) with perfect nose, and small sensitive mouth. The maiden casts her eyes down and the maiden/tree looks to God; neither directly confronts her tempter or temptation. Indeed, in his 1789 essay "On Physiognomy," Lavater [1789] explains that a woman is "not only easily tempted, she is capable of being formed to the purest, noblest, most seraphic virtue; to everything which can deserve praise or affection."[46] Along with lovely, even features, then, must come placidity and virtue. Both of Rackham's maiden physiognomies—the woman and the tree—fit these Victorian ideals.

Below the face on the tree, the trunk resembles a flowing gown—the gently curved lines offer a calm respite from the aggressively jagged shapes in the rest of the image. Subtly ghoulish faces appear at the top of the foreground tree trunk. A "swart faery" (swart, of course, means "black") emerges from beneath its roots and another

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[45] Oppenheim, *Physiognomy Made Easy*, 68.

[46] John Caspar Lavater, "On Physiognomy," *Essays on Physiognomy*, [trans. T. Holcroft (1789), 9th edn. (London: William Tegg, 1855), 6-7, 9-10, 54-5, 64-5, 339-40, 379-84, 400-3] in *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890*, eds. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 16.

one peeks out from a separate opening, reaffirming the connection among tree fairies, the "lesser" races, and animal desires. The roots of this tree look like claws or hands that have pulled open the flesh of the tree to reveal the fairies, which is suggestive of the emergence of the hidden unconscious. In remarkably Beardsleyesque fashion, an animalistic—and very phallic—face with a long nose extends from the base of the tree in front of the maiden's skirt. This face not only resembles an erect penis complete with testicles, it is rife with base physiognomic features; such as low a forehead and weak chin. The maiden literally stands between her two choices, ruin or redemption. A combination of base fairy, plant, and animal, this threatening tree is representative of the animalistic sexuality that Victorian's believed they could read in features of the head and face.

Cowling notes that "Seen as an expectation held of the world in general, and one apparently sanctioned by modern science, the belief that the human face and body should indicate the inner nature of the individual becomes more comprehensible.[47] Rackham's anthropomorphic trees draw conceptual power from combinations of accepted beliefs and suggestive imaginary scenarios; they draw visual power from his perverse juxtapositions, human and animal, familiar and grotesque, repugnant and beautiful.

In-Betweens: **Rackham's Fairy Folk**

Erin O' Connor argues that in the nineteenth century "Monsters were nothing if not materially grounded…The physical density of the monstrous body—its palpable uncertainty—was…apprehended as a density of disparate associations."[48] In this section, I would like to reiterate that one must look beyond Rackham's hybrid

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[47] Cowling, 12.

[48] O'Connor, 177.

characters' superficial charm in order to explore their material grounding. Their

grotesque forms are dense with cultural meaning. The shapes of Rackham's fairy

heads reveal strong "animal propensities" in large phrenological "organs" of

Combativeness, Secretiveness, and Destructiveness (found just above and behind the

ears). Their sharp-angled facial features match physiognomical drawings of

"primitive' throwbacks. But the person-like fairies I discuss in this section—I will call

these fairies *in-betweens* to distinguish them from Rackham's fairy trees—are not

merely base human/animal hybrids. Rackham's grotesque *in-betweens* reassure the

audience, inferring that the beast hidden in the mind is present only in hideous

inferiors. Although they are monstrous, Rackham's hybrid fairy folk reaffirm

Victorian ideals regarding appearance and behavior. Beardsley critic Linda Zatlin, in

fact, argues that grotesque and sexually suggestive imagery was acceptable as long as

it reinforced Victorian social mores:

> the Victorians continued the eighteenth-century convention of the grotesque as
>
> ridiculous, so long as it conformed to middle-class specifications; a painted
>
> figure could be physically grotesque, a fictional character could be bizarre if
>
> the artist did not celebrate such looks or behavior as morally desirable
>
> attributes.[49]

Rackham's approach fits Zatlin's description. His human-like fairies, portrayed as

physically and morally reprehensible, abide by Victorian notions of unacceptable

looks and behavior. In doing so, they help codify a range of physical features that

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[49] Zatlin, Linda. *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 173.

describe widely accepted embodied "truths" that delineate a material psyche expressed in the physical features of the human face and head.

In the Victorian era, monstrous human bodies were understood, to borrow O'Connor's terminology, to be a "density of disparate associations." One could say the same of Rackham's *in-betweens*. J.M. Barrie's story *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* plays on these ideas as well—the protagonist, Peter, is halfway evolved from a bird to a boy. In the image "The Kensington Gardens are in London, where the King lives" (See Figure 1.16), Rackham presents a version of Barrie's take on Darwinian evolution in which birds, like Peter, become baby boys and girls, and kings become zoological specimens. Rackham biographer Gettings quotes Barrie when he describes his strange associations—an imagistic intermingling of the humanity with fairy animalism:

> there is a picture of King Edward standing outside the Garden railings almost as though he were in a zoo with all the other humans being examined by the pixies, gnomes, animals and bird...The elements of humanity are to a certain extent merged into this strange devic world of Kensington Garden...."but this is a very quiet secret place. It is where the birds are born who afterwards become baby boys and girls..." As on earth itself, the devic forms, the animals, birds, and humans hold a contiguous evolutionary ascent and descent...This is the reason why the King seems so out of place, almost like a zoological specimen.[50]

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[50] Gettings, 112.

Figure 1.16
"The Kensington Gardens are in London, where the King lives"
Arthur Rackham, 1906
from J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*

Rackham's "secret place" is a hidden world—not unlike the Victorian characterization

of the unconscious mind—in which humans evolve from animals and devolve back

again. This world is also a material reality, like that depicted in physiognomical and

phrenological charts, whose psychology is expressed in the visual form of the

creatures that inhabit and interact in it.

Although they are delightful at first glance, Rackham's fairies in "The

Kensington Gardens are in London, where the King lives," belie their material

grounding. On closer inspection, the male fairies feature animalistic traits: low

foreheads, signifying small phrenological organs of Veneration and Benevolence. :

Although, nineteenth-century British phrenologist George Combe explains that

animals do not possess the faculty of Veneration, he goes on to say that, "A deficiency

of it [Veneration] does not produce profanity…it only renders the mind little sensible

to the respectful and reverential feelings before described [respect and reverence], and

in consequence, leaves the other faculties at liberty to act without modification by its

influence." Combe says of Benevolence, "The lower animals possess this organ, but

the faculty in them seems to be limited…those…in which it is small and depressed are

ill-natured. It is depressed in all the ferocious tribes of animals, and also in nations

remarkable for cruelty."[51] In other words, this combination of physical traits precludes

devotedness and empathy for others respectively.

The physiognomy of these fairies' sharp-angled weak chins and sloping

foreheads also infers bestial heredity. In both Camper's "evolutionary" physiognomy

and Nott and Gliddon's comparative physiognomy (See Figures 1.3 and 1.5), a

"Negro" is equated with a chimpanzee. The "primitive" and the beast are rendered

with short, sloping foreheads indicative of low intelligence and animalistic character.

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[51] Combe, *Elements of Phrenology*, 59.

S.R. Wells' scientific illustration (See Figure 1.4) confirms this interpretation. Cowling notes that artists utilized these sorts of sources so "that art should look to science, both for specific information and for a methodology which would assist the artist in his conscious effort to attain a convincing image of nature." [52] Whether or not he utilized such resources, the imagery in art anatomy books and physiognomic texts lent scientific respectability to Rackham's *in-between* portraits.

In *Goblin Market*, two sisters are tempted by the forbidden fruit offered by a band of goblin men. One sister, Laura, succumbs and wastes away until her sister Lizzie exacts retribution by refusing to be tempted, thereby vanquishing the goblins. The illustration "White and gold Lizzie stood" depicts the goblins' intoxicating temptation and Lizzie's stalwart fortitude. Rackham goes to all lengths to blur boundaries between animal and human. Some goblins are mostly animal with subtle human nuances.

Two goblins at the bottom right resemble a cat and a rat respectively. However, the cat's sneer is more human than feline, the rat's long nose and beady eyes are exaggerations of the nose and eyes of the other, more human, goblins in the image. Another goblin on the left side of the image looks like a werewolf, his sharp teeth fang-like and his nose flat against his face. Yet another goblin who offers fruit is green with a large beak. His hand is webbed like a duck's. He resembles a vulture until one notices a grotesque smile below his beak. The smile transforms the beak into a large hooked nose, which is an exaggeration of the hooked nose of the fairy directly across from him in the image. This double interpretation compels the viewer to function as distorting instrument through which can be seen the goblins' combinatory physical appearance and psychology. These hook noses are very like the nose in Rimmer's

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[52] Cowling, 93.

"Cunning, Rapacious, Treacherous type" in Figure 1.18; they are also evocative of noses in depictions of physical stereotypes of Jews and other unacceptable ethnic groups.

Rackham's image "The Masqueraders" (See Figure 1.17) from Poe's *The Mask of the Red Death* similarly features creatures with hooked noses. Although the characters in this illustration are not fairies, their human/animal masked faces are reminiscent those of Rackham's fairy *in-betweens*. I suspect that Poe's plot and text encouraged Rackham to push the grotesque character of the faces in "The Masqueraders." In the story, Prince Prospero invites a thousand of his friends to hide from the "Red Death"—a horrible disease that is killing off his subjects—in his secluded castle. The prince arranges a masquerade party at which the Red Death, who attends the fete dressed in deathly garb, decimates the revelers. Poe [1855] describes the revelers: "they were grotesque. There was much glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm...There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, and much of the *bizarre*, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust."[53]

In "The Masqueraders" Rackham presents a variety of strange animal/human hybrid masks along with animal masks, such as those that look like a goose or an owl. There are many different physiognomic types that a Victorian audience would understand as debased, gluttonous, or overly sensual. The face of the mask in the center of the illustration, in fact, resembles Rimmer's lustful and gluttonous type. This

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[53] Edgar Allen Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," *Poe's Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (London: Clarke, Beeton, and Co., 1855) reprint *Tales of Edgar Allen Poe* (New York: Random House, 1944), 383.

Beardsley's list of masks detailed in *The Story of Venus and Tannhauser* is reminiscent of this bit of Poe's text. See Aubrey Beardsley, *The Story of Venus and Tannhauser or "Under the Hill."* London: Leonard Smithers, 1907, in the reprint *The Story of Venus and Tannhauser* (London: Academy Editions, 1974), 36.

Figure 1.17
"The Masqueraders"
Arthur Rackham, 1935
from Edgar Allen Poe's "The Mask of the Red Death"
in *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*

masquerader's long, wide nose hangs over his mouth—as in his debased

physiognomical counterpart—and his mask is wide and corpulent at the jaw line.

Rimmer says of his lustful, gluttonous type, "A course, massive jaw is supposed, in

any head, to stand as the representative of brutal and immoral instinct."[54] Like a brute,

this masquerader's disguise features a short forehead that appears to slope back at a

sharp angle—a clear indication of low intelligence in both phrenological and

physiognomical parlance. A number of the other masks sport long beak-like noses and

sloping foreheads; other, more ghastly masks resemble devils or harpies. The female

reveler in the center of the illustration wears a beautiful facemask, but she looks as if

her body is completely nude; the hairy back of the "gluttonous and lustful" male

creature in front of her hardly conceals her bare breast. Indeed, a huge, round flesh-

colored shape with what looks like a nipple seems to peek out from behind his hairy

back. Although her mask is lovely, what appear to be large breasts and her proximity

to this "lustful" type suggest that she—like her "primitive" fairy counterparts—is

over-sexed. Rackham's masks focus on the face; his masks reinforce the belief that

faces personify the interior self.

  Rackham's "Masqueraders" was clearly influenced by Beardsley's work.

Indeed, Rackham biographer Hamilton describes the bizarre imagery in "The

Masqueraders" as "Beardsleyesque." Although this may be Rackham's only image

featuring masks, they are a repeating motif in Beardsley's work. I suggest, however,

that the two artists used mask imagery in subtly and sometimes distinctly different

ways.[55]

  Twentieth-century Beardsley critic Milly Heyd considers Beardsley's work

ironic because it "suggests paradoxes and absurdities and contradictions in human life

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[54] Rimmer, 30.

[55] Hamilton, 43-45.

in general." [56] Heyd believes that Beardsley's mask imagery "underlines his ways of looking at reality, which are indirect."[57] Unlike Beardsley's masks, Rackham's facemasks are not ironic in the sense that they do not present the audience with paradox or contradiction. Rackham's grotesque masks in "The Masqueraders," like his images of fairies, portray certain physiognomical features—repugnant admixtures of human and animal—whose psychological meanings were unambiguously clear to Victorian audiences. These *in-betweens* stand for Victorian psychological "types" that present physical manifestations of the unconscious mind. Their distortions expand the variety of morphing heads and shifting facial expressions and help fashion a phrenological landscape blanketed with disfigurement.

Goblins and Dwarfs: Evil Personified

Rackham's dwarfs were *in-betweens* with real human counterparts who were studied by Victorian scientists. Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination,* the book of short horror stories that includes *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *The Masque of the Red Death*, begins with a justificatory essay that lobbies for a phrenological organ called Perverseness. Perverseness, according to Poe, "is a radical, a primitive impulse—elementary." Perverse indeed is *Hop-Frog,* the story of a dwarf who, when mistreated by the king, tricks him and his seven ministers into dressing up as orangutans, trusses them up, and burns them alive. Hamilton explains that at first, Rackham was concerned that he wasn't up to the task, that his images wouldn't be grotesque enough:

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[56] Heyd, 12.

[57] Heyd, 198.

Rackham admitted that he did not enjoy the commission, being afraid that he

would be unable to make the illustrations sufficiently gruesome. He need not

have worried, however, for not only does he cope masterfully in a

Beardsleyesque manner with the *grand guignol* of the *Masque of the Red

Death*, but carefully injects a virus of sadistic horror, more appalling than

anything in his 1900 Grimm, into two drawings from *Hop-Frog*.[58]

Rackham confessed that his illustrations for *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* were

"so horrible I was beginning to frighten myself."[59] He was understandably frightened

by his own images in the short story *Hop-Frog*, portraying behavior so cruel as to be

unimaginable—even for a dwarf (Victorian dwarfs, real and supernatural, were

considered brutish and crude). We recognize Hop-Frog's behavior. Hop-Frog is acting

human. Premeditated cruelty for cruelty's sake, the sort only humans are capable of,

verifies that people behave worse than either supernatural dwarfs or animals do. The

beast that is the unconscious mind, then, demands a combination of bestial savagery

and the human ability to conceptualize.

Although many attractive humans have acted horrifically, Rackham gave Hop-

Frog the physiognomical face of evil. In the illustration "Tripetta advanced to the

monarch's seat, and, falling on her knees before him, implored him to spare her

friend" (See Figure 1.19) Hop-Frog has a low forehead that slopes back at a steep

angle, bulging oval eyes, high cheekbones, a large and grotesque nose, snarling lips

and a protruding chin. Rackham has drawn him as the "Cunning-Rapacious-

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[58] Hamilton, 153.

[59] Marita Ross, "The Beloved Enchanter," *Everybody's Weekly*, Sept. 27, 1947, pp. 10-11. Quoted in Hamilton, 153.
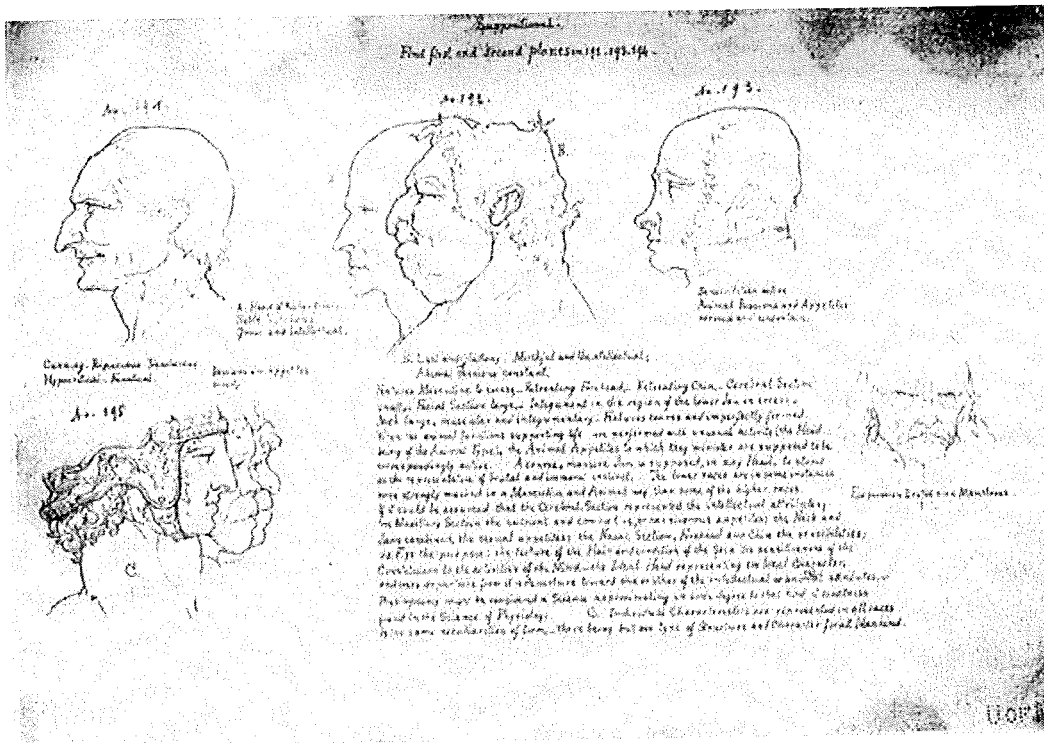
Figure 1.18
"Cunning, Rapacious, Treacherous Type" and
"Coarse-featured, Lustful, Gluttonous Type"
from Rimmer's *Art Anatomy*, 1877

Figure 1.19
"Tripetta advanced to the monarch's seat, and, falling on her knees
before him, implored him to spare her friend"
Arthur Rackham, 1935
from Edgar Allen Poe's "Hop Frog"
in *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*

Treacherous-Hypocritical-Fanatical" type described in Rimmer's *Art Anatomy* (See

Figure 1.18).[60] Rimmer [1877] says of this type:

> Features Masculine to Excess—Reatreating Forehead—Retreating Chin—
>
> Cerebral Section small…When the animal functions supporting life are
>
> performed with unusual activity (the Head being of the Animal Type), the
>
> Animal Appetites to which they minister are supposed to be correspondingly
>
> active…The lower races are in some instances more strongly marked in a
>
> Masculine and Animal way than some of the higher races. If it could be
>
> assumed that the Cerebral Section represented the intellectual attributes; the
>
> Maxillary Section the nutrient and combative, or carnivorous appetites; the
>
> Neck and Jaws combined, the sexual appetites; the Nasal Section, Forehead,
>
> and Chin the sensibilities; the Eye the purpose…the Ideal Head representing
>
> the Ideal Character, and every departure from it a departure toward one or other
>
> of the…animal attributes—Physiognomy might be considered a Science
>
> approximating in some degree to that kind of exactness found in the Science of
>
> Physiology.[61]

Rimmer—while stressing that the "lower" races features tend to the animalistic—

suggests to his artist audience that physiognomy may be almost an exact a science as

physiology.

A black and white illustration (See Figure 1.20) shows Hop-Frog's skull wide

above the ears, which indicates large organs of Combativeness and Destructiveness.

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[60] "One of [nineteenth-century showman] Barnum's most popular 'freaks' was a legless dwarf named Samuel D. Parks but called 'Hop the Frog Boy,' after the protagonist in Edgar Allen Poe's tale." Silver, 119.

[61] Rimmer, 30.

The black and white illustration is criss-crossed with sharp angles that seem to point like an arrow to the image of Hop-Frog. He is drawn from a series of sharp angles, which focus the viewer's eyes onto his face. Here, one finds thick, short lines angled anxiously from his nose backward. His expression is that of a wild beast. These designations are augmented by a deep-rooted fear of dwarf animalism based in part in Victorian anthropology. Silver explains the perceived similarities among dwarfs, primitives, and beasts:

> While debate raged about the place of Pygmies and "ape-like men" in creation, actual and supernatural dwarfs lost, in both fiction and the popular mind, their individuality and their "civilized" traits and skills…Through a sort of fusion…the traits of African and Asian Pygmies were conflated with those of the dwarfs of Victorian sideshows and the supernatural hobs of folklore and recombined to create figures of preternatural and simian evil.[62]

In Poe's story and in Rackham's illustration, Hop-Frog the beast takes the devil's work into his own hands and gleefully exacts fiery retribution. It is interesting to note that the king and his ministers—who dress up at orangutans—resemble the type who exhibits these traits: "Lust and gluttony; Mirthful and Unintellectual; animal passions constant" (See Figure 1.18).

Rackham also draws an animalistic goblin for his illustration "Round the fire an indescribably ridiculous little man was leaping, hopping on one leg, and singing" (See Figure 1.21) from Grimm brothers' fairy tale *Rumpelstiltskin*. The sneaky Rumpelstiltskin, who plans to carry off the queen's baby—once she loses a bet with

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[62] Silver, 146.

Figure 1.20
A black and white illustration of Hop-Frog
Arthur Rackham, 1935
from Edgar Allen Poe's "Hop Frog"
in *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*
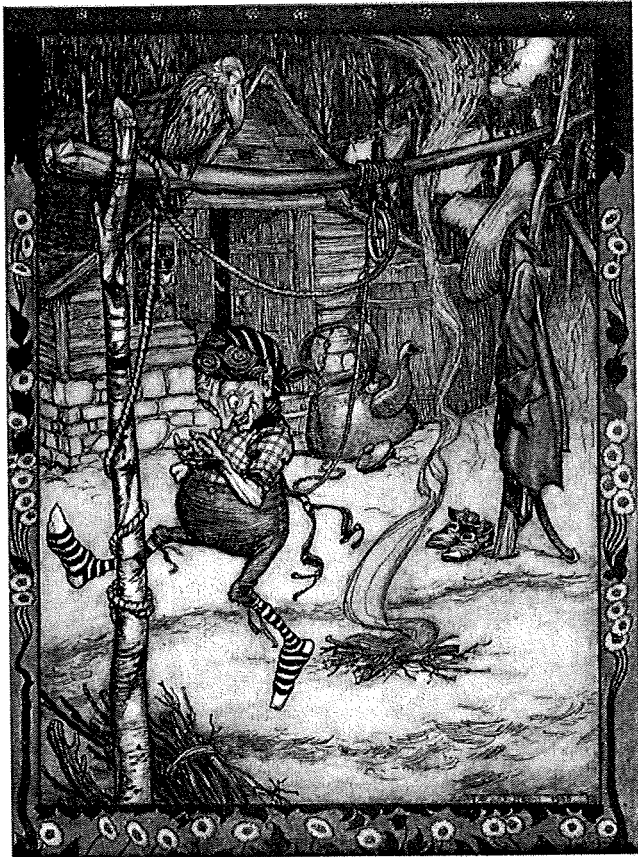
Figure 1.21
"Round the fire an indescribably ridiculous little man was leaping,
hopping on one leg, and singing"
Arthur Rackham, 1900
from Grimm brothers' *Rumpelstiltskin*

him that requires her to guess his name—resembles a fox or weasel. He has bulging, round eyes, a long, pointy snout, pointy ears, and a weak chin. His forehead, which, according to physiognomical principles is where intelligence lies, is practically non-existent. Rumpelstiltskin's phrenological organs of Combativeness (located behind the ears) and Secretiveness (located right above the ears) are large in relation to the rest of his head. Rumpelstiltskin is also a modified version of Rimmer's "Cunning-Rapacious-Treacherous-Hypocritical-Fanatical" type (See Figure 1.18).

Physiognomically and behaviorally, Rumpelstiltskin is part man and part beast. Rumpelstiltskin loses the bet (and the child) and, according to the Grimm brothers, "in his passion, he seized his left leg with both hands, and tore himself asunder in the middle." He struggles in vain to remain composed; his animal side emerges—he is sneakily acquisitive (another animal propensity that determines the inclination to acquire) until he is overtaken by rage, at which time he tears himself in two like a wild beast (I wish Rackham had rendered this scene). Rackham illustrated the Grimm's fairy tales in 1900, and a late nineteenth-century audience would not have been surprised by the dwarf's destructive rage. In the Victorian era, dwarfs were considered brutish, and such abnormal behavior would have been attributed to the beast within—which was considered to be even closer to the surface in "primitives" like dwarfs. Silver notes that dwarfs were believed to have an abnormal and bestial sex drive:

> Throughout the Victorian period, dwarfs—natural and supernatural—had been conflated with each other and equated with goblins (a generic name for small hostile, unattractive, grotesque, and almost exclusively male supernatural creatures) and thus with malice and evil...Notable for their ancient-looking,

ugly faces, their hairiness, and their dirty, wizened bodies, they were voracious

in their sexual appetites and bestial in their behavior.[63]

Victorian psychologists were fascinated by the boundaries between the normal and

abnormal, which they paralleled with the border between the conscious, rational mind

and the unconscious mind. The unconscious mind was believed to be similar to the

out-of-control Rumpelstiltskinian beast, which could emerge under the right

circumstances. The unconscious thus took on a sinister physical and sexual quality.

Although we do not get an opportunity to observe the typical goblin "voracious

sexual appetite" in *Rumpelstiltskin* or *Hop-Frog*, Rackham's illustrations for Christina

Rossetti's *Goblin Market* explore this fully. Because there are no females among them,

goblins must kidnap human women. In the illustration "White and Gold Lizzie Stood"

(See Figure 1.1) Rackham shows a sister enticed by goblins, who swarm over her like

insects and claw at her body. The implications are both sexual and ruinous—if she

succumbs, she will ultimately wither away and die. The luscious fruit they peddle

conceals from Lizzie a grotesque array of evil intentions, which are expressed in their

demeanor.

At the very center of the image is a second rat. Both cat and rats have very

wide skulls near their ears (also a very infantile skull configuration), which indicate

large organs of Destructiveness and Secretiveness. These three, who offer Lizzie fruit,

are intent on tempting her to taste her own destruction. This bird-goblin has similar

physical characteristics to Rimmer's coarse-featured, lustful, gluttonous type (See

Figure 1.18). He too evidences large organs of Destructiveness and Secretiveness.

Combe [1824] explains that too great an endowment of Secretiveness, "when not

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[63] Silver, 117.

regulated by strong intellect, and moral sentiments, produces abuses. The individual then mistakes cunning for prudence and ability...and he may even be led to practice lying, duplicity and deceit."[64]

Right next to Lizzie in the center of the illustration, a more human-looking goblin offers Lizzie fruit both down over her shoulder (juice runs down her chest) and up by her waist, pointing directly to her bare shoulder and full breast. The fruit near her waist that the leering goblin fondles are suggestive of breasts; here is the voracious goblin sexual appetite. According to Silver,

> What marks...Rossetti's goblin men as particularly threatening...is their grotesque materiality; their physical ludicrousness combined with their "primitive" sexuality. Their assaults on women are rapes; perceived as disgusting phallic figures, they suggest the grotesquerie of the erotic...And all are depicted as subhuman; that they are bestial and primitive is suggested by their characteristic hairiness as well as by their explicitly animal features. [65]

All the goblins in this illustration are more or less animalistic. What is interesting about the specific goblin who assaults Lizzie—he is the most human looking of the bunch—is the uncanny juxtaposition of animal features with *human* ones. What makes him Rackham's most effective choice for rapist is that he is simultaneously human enough to allow the viewer to imagine the act, and animalistic enough to make the act unimaginably horrible. The fleshy fruit creates a plant/human in-between that suggests cannibalism as well. The viewer is not sure whether the goblin intends to rape Lizzie or eat her.

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[64] Combe, *Elements of Phrenology*, 47.

[65] Silver, 128.

According to Silver, in the nineteenth century, dwarfs who were once considered foolish and vulnerable "took to murder, rape, and cannibalism."[66] She explains how distorted notions of Darwinian evolution and prejudicial beliefs about the animalism of primitive races (especially pygmies) altered ideas about the character of supernatural dwarfs.

> In effect, the Rumpelstiltskins of the world grew fangs, developed the prognathous jaw, and sprouted body hair…As the distorted image of the Pygmy joined with a devalued image of the dwarf, post-Darwinian science and belief raised and played on cultural anxieties.[67]

Dwarfs were not only conflated with "savage" peoples, they were also considered by some to be simian throwbacks, products of thwarted Darwinian evolution more akin to apes than humans.

It would once again be useful to reiterate my argument that (Poe's and) Rackham's razor wielding orangutan clasping a handful of bloody hair from *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* depicts of a "savage" scalping. This conflation of apes with "primitives" and dwarfs—which was supported and reinforced by nineteenth century scientific rhetoric and physiognomic imagery—found its way into Rackham's visuals. The savagery of his orangutan in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and the unbridled goblin sexuality evidenced in "White and Gold Lizzie Stood" are clear indications that, for Rackham, appearances are telling.

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[66] Silver, 146.

[67] Silver, 146.

Feminine Characteristics in Excess

In contrast to the two sisters in *Goblin Market*, the youthful female fairy in the illustration "The fairies are exquisite dancers" (See Figure 1.22) is temptress rather than tempted. Female fairies are animals under cover. Graceful and lovely features eclipse an immense sexual appetite, accompanied by the fairy propensity to bring ruin to humans who cross their paths. The beast within expressed itself openly in fairies. Silver explains the Victorian point of view: "women were closer to 'nature,' less rational and more instinctual, hence more prone to regress to the beast within. Fairy brides, to many, embodied that tendency."[68]

The dancing fairy in "The fairies are exquisite dancers" is lovely. In fact, she—as are most of Rackham's fairies—is charming. Their charm, however, does not detract from my argument that Rackham's fairies express the animal propensities depicted in physiognomy and phrenology. Physiognomically, this fairy has Rimmer's ideal female facial characteristics; round head, aquiline nose, concave lips (See Figure 1.23). However, her hair, which flies out behind her as she dances, prevents the viewer from assessing her "organs" of Philoprogenitiveness and Concentrativeness. Philoprogenitiveness and Concentrativeness are organs that, when large, accentuate a woman's domestic side. Her domesticity is in doubt and her sexuality is suspect. The curved, sensual drawn line of her face and figure lull the viewer and obscure her sexual hunger. The fairy's clothes are translucent and the viewer can see her body underneath, a tantalizing erotic overture. A spider dances behind the fairy, in almost the exact pose. Her web lies underneath the two dancers, waiting to ensnare a victim. Grasses point upwards to the spider and to the fairy's legs and crotch, which add to the eroticism of the illustration.

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[68] Silver, 100.

Figure 1.22
"The fairies are exquisite dancers"
Arthur Rackham, 1906
from J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*
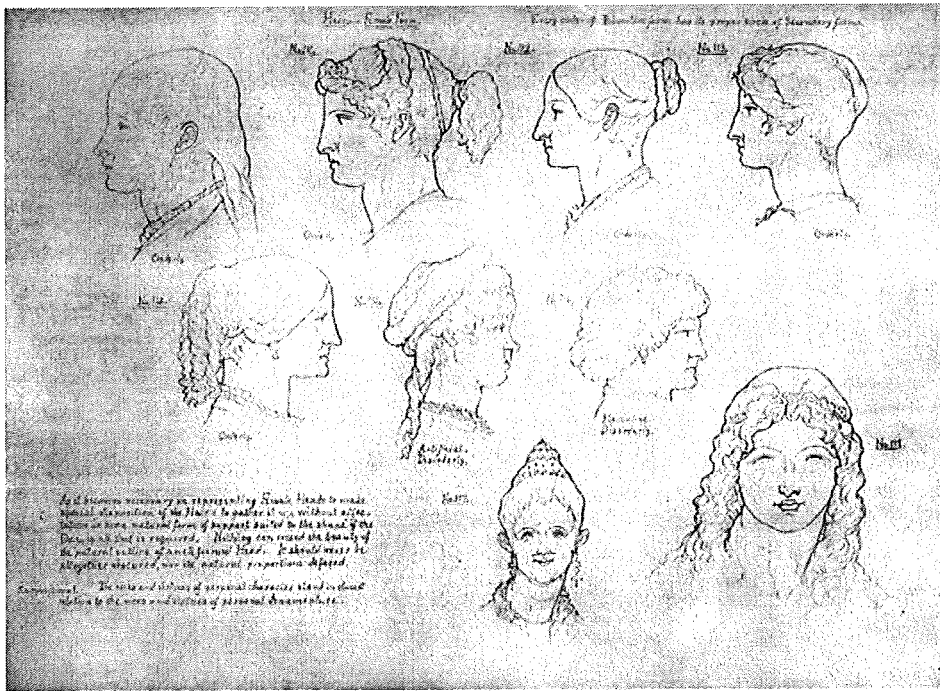
Figure 1.23
"Ideal Female Facial Characteristics"
from Rimmer's *Art Anatomy*, 1877

Likewise, the female fairies in the illustrations "By all the nymphs that nightly dance/Upon thy streams with wily glance" (See Figure 1.24) and "By dimpled Brook, and Fountain Brim/ the Wood-Nymphs, deckt with Daisies trim/ Their merry wakes and pastimes keep" (See Figure 1.25) from *Comus*, wear diaphanous gowns that reveal their sensuous bare breasts and bodies. In both of these illustrations, the fairies tempt the audience with "come hither" looks, but their features are like those of Rimmer's "perfect" Victorian ladies (See Figure 1.23). As in the image "The fairies are exquisite dancers," however, the backs of these fairies' heads remain obscure. Streaming or loose hair hides their phrenological "organs" of Philoprogenitiveness and Concentrativeness (except for the fairy on the right in "By all the nymphs that nightly dance/Upon thy streams with wily glance"). In *Art Anatomy*, Rimmer [1877] admonishes that in "orderly" female physiognomy, the shape of the head should be obvious:

> As it becomes necessary in representing Female Heads to make special disposition of the Hair: to gather it up without affectation in some neutral form of support suited to the shape of the Face is all that is required. Nothing can exceed the beauty of the natural outline of a well formed Head. It should never be altogether obscured, nor its natural proportions defaced. Suppositional. The vices and virtues of personal character stand in closest relation to the vices and virtues of personal ornamentation.[69]

A close fitting hairstyle, then, not only displays a woman's physiognomical traits, but her choice of hairstyle also reveals her character. Wild hair equals wild female. Of

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[69] Rimmer, 16.

Figure 1.24
"By all the nymphs that nightly dance/Upon thy streams with wily glance"
Arthur Rackham, 1921
from John Milton's *Comus*

Figure 1.25
"By dimpled brook and Fountain Brim/the Wood Nymphs deckt with Daisies trim/
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep"
Arthur Rackham, 1921
from John Milton's *Comus*

course, hairstyles change—*Art Anatomy* was first written in 1877, and Rackham

illustrated *Comus* in 1921. The so-called "orderly" hairstyles depicted by Rimmer are

more typical of those of the 1870s and 1880s, but women commonly wore their hair up

in the 1910s and 1920s. According to the web site reVamp, "Hair styling during the

teens was defined by voluminous sihouttes [sic] shaped softly around the face" (See

Figure 1.26).[70] Rackham's fairies in these two illustrations, however, mostly have long

sensual hair worn down like a turn-of-the-century woman's hair would be before bed.

The luscious hair that flows behind and around their heads in these illustrations not

only hides Rackham's fairies' physiognomies, it is also suggestive, along with their

writhing bodies, of the sorts of sensual gestures and postures usually reserved for the

bedroom. Indeed, one could even imagine each fairy, in bird's eye view, as an enticing

young seductress reclining on a bed.

Rackham did not set out to depict mortal women, though, and it is water

nymphs that tempt the audience in "By all the nymphs that nightly dance/ Upon thy

streams with wily glance." Silver explains that "Female river spirits…vampirishly

thirsted for human victims…The English nix or nixie was an equally dangerous

version of the murderous siren 'who allures the young fisher or hunter to seek her

embraces in the wave that brings his death.'"[71]

Mortal women, however, were frequently believed to have these destructive

traits as well. Indeed, Victorian medical science advanced the notion, according to

Shuttleworth and Taylor, that the "unrestrained sexual energy" of mortal women made

them capable of "insane cunning."[72] In an anonymous essay originally published in

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[70] ReVamp, Chapter VI, "Authentic Coiffures," http://www.revampvintage.com/index1.html.

[71] Silver, 156.

[72] Taylor and Shuttleworth, 170.
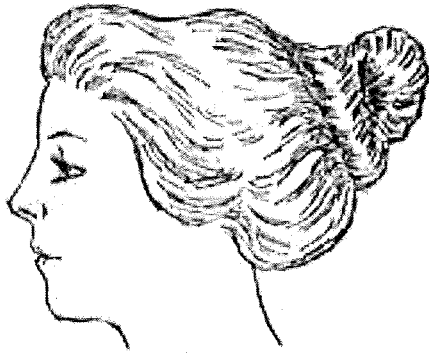
Fig. 98
THE PSYCHE KNOT

Fig. 103
COIFFURE, INCLUDING BRAID

Figure 1.26
Popular hairstyles of the 1910s
from *revamp*, http://www.revampvintage.com/index1.html

1851 entitled "Woman in Her Psychological Relations," and republished by

Shuttleworth and Taylor, women are described in terms that are strikingly similar to

those used to describe seductive female fairies. These insanely cunning, oversexed

women, according to an anonymous author [1851], harbor "morbid appetites,"

including cannibalism.[73] The author suggests that these traits are

> most likely to occur in the female who is hysterical from excess of sexual
>
> development—one possessing the utmost modesty of deportment, and grace of
>
> figure and movement, for the modesty itself springs out of that feminine
>
> timidity—...Hence, when, after numerous struggles to repress them, the
>
> propensities, excited into such fearful and almost supernatural activity, by the
>
> ovarian irritation, burst forth beyond all control...what seems to be vice... is
>
> really moral insanity.[74]

A once physically graceful and emotionally placid woman is now dominated by her

"almost supernatural" sexual desire—an uncontrollable desire that precipitates her

insane, once hidden twin. It is interesting to note that the author chooses the term

"supernatural" to describe the transition from gracefully placid lady to highly sexed

maniac. Like the modest Victorian lady who becomes an oversexed monster, or the

beautiful siren that is in reality a hideous beast, Rackham's water nymphs proffer

pleasurable means that hide destructive ends.

Which end will be destroyed, though? In each of these two illustrations,

emasculated-looking male fairies sit in the background and watch the goings on. In

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[73] Anon., "Woman in Her Psychological Relations," [*Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 4 (1851), 18, 21, 23, 24-5, 30-5], in *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890*, eds. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 172.

[74] Anon., "Woman in Her Psychological Relations," 174.

both "By dimpled Brook, and Fountain Brim/ the Wood-Nymphs, deckt with Daisies trim/ Their merry wakes and pastimes keep" and "By all the nymphs that nightly dance/Upon thy streams with wily glance," the male fairies resemble Rimmer's portrait labeled "Masculine Characteristics Deficient" (See Figure 1.27), suggesting the erotic, but castrating, power their female cohorts wield.

Even more tantalizingly erotic is the illustration "The Rhine-Maidens obtain possession of the ring and bear it off in triumph" from Richard Wagner's *The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie* (See Figure 1.28). This is Rackham at his most sexually suggestive. Two nude water nymphs tease the elf Alberich while they battle him for the possession of the ring—one restrains him from behind and the other from the front—in a tussle that has strong sexual overtones. They appear to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. The third Rhine-Maiden gleefully holds up the ring, exposing a sinuous body with full breasts, long legs and a barely concealed pubic area. Their faces are perfectly beautiful, matching Rimmer's designation of well-balanced female features. Victorian "ladies" whose sexuality had been "civilized" would never be portrayed in this fashion; however, fairies, with their primitive impulses, could. This image functions as soft-core pornography—it stirs up common male sexual fantasies, including one man together with several women.

Likewise, Rackham's illustration for "The water Nymphs, That in the bottom plaid/Held up their pearled writs and took her in" (See Figure 1.29) from Comus perform a common male fantasy: female-on-female sex play. These perfectly beautiful naked water nymphs—with wild, flowing hair—tempt male viewers to their destruction through their own erotic and—according to Victorian standards— extremely immoral fantasies. Male fear of female sexual power, represented by the *femme fatale*, is a turnabout for male anxiety about male sexual fantasies. Rackham's
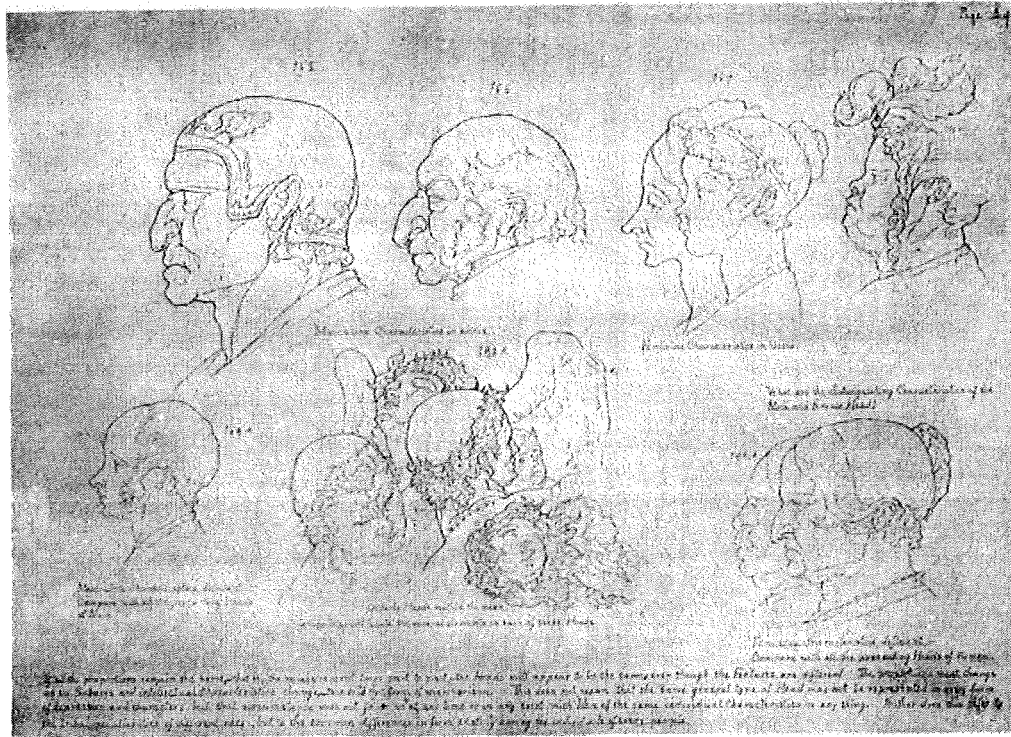
Figure 1.27
"Masculine Characteristic Deficient" and "Feminine Features to Excess"
from Rimmer's *Art Anatomy*, 1877

Figure 1.28
"The Rhine-Maidens obtain possession of the ring and bear it off in triumph"
Arthur Rackham, 1910
from Richard Wagner's *The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie*

Figure 1.29
"The water Nymphs, That in the bottom plaid/ Held up their
pearled writs and took her in"
Arthur Rackham, 1921
from John Milton's *Comus*

water nymphs could "behave" in very unladylike ways and were ideal protagonists for

the narrative of male sexual fantasies. Victorian culture projected the sexual beasts

hidden within the male unconscious onto female fairies.

Beneath a beautiful exterior lurks a hideous beast; but excess femininity,

Rimmer's renderings suggest, expresses itself in ugly, animalistic features. On the

same page of *Art Anatomy* on which the portrait of "Masculine Characteristics

Deficient" is rendered, Rimmer shows faces with "Feminine Features to Excess" (See

Figure 1.27). Rackham understandably chooses to illustrate the significant bit of text

from *Comus* that reads "Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear...All other parts

remaining as they were/ And they so perfect is their misery/Not once perceive their

foul disfigurement/ But boast themselves more comely than before." This passage

from *Comus* explains that those who drink the sorcerer's magic potion turn into ugly

beasts, but believe they are more beautiful than they were before.

The female character in the foreground of this image (See Figure 1.30) looks

like a cat, but she also has features that resemble the two images farthest to the right

that are labeled "Feminine Characteristics in Excess" in *Art Anatomy*. Rackham's cat

woman's nose is wide and turned up with nostrils that resemble those of a pig, and her

face is has wide jowls and cheeks, and a weak chin—interestingly, it is enchantment

that prevents her from perceiving herself animalistic features. In *Physiognomy Made*

Easy, Oppenheim [1887] says that noses are "the most essential feature as regards

character."[75] She goes on to say that "nostrils which run up the front of the nose

indicate great coarseness of tastes, they resemble more the snout of a pig" and "noses

that are wide at the bridge, and spread onto the face, show acquisitiveness and love of

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[75] Oppenheim. *Physiognomy Made Easy,* 30.

Figure 1.30
"Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear...All other parts remaining as they were/ And they so perfect is their misery/Not once perceive their foul disfigurement/ But boast themselves more comely than before"
Arthur Rackham, 1921
from John Milton's *Comus*.

gain."[76] She explains, "Where the jaws maintain nearly the same breadth as the brain then the intellect has a fight with the passions."[77] Rackham's depiction of Milton's vain woman of "foul disfigurement" matches Rimmer's coarse and acquisitive female face (See Figure 1.27).

Conclusion

In his 1866 book, T*he Gay Science*, Eneas Sweetland Dallas compares the workings of the unconscious with an invisible, "tricksy" fairy:

> The hidden efficacy of our thoughts, their prodigious power of working in the dark and helping us underhand, can be compared only to the stories of our folklore, and chiefly to that of the lubber-fiend who toils for us when we are asleep or when we are not working...Our backs are turned and it is done in a trice, or we awake in the morning and find that it has been wrought in the night.... We have such a fairy in our thoughts, a willing but unknown and tricksy worker [78]

Dallas contrasts the light and dark character of conscious and unconscious thought respectively. Dallas' fairy is a hidden, underhanded fay who only appears when it is dark. Victorian fairies represent the unconscious—the unknown part of the mind that lurks in the dark recesses of our animal past, waiting for an opportunity to rear its ugly head.

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[76] Oppenheim, *Physiognomy Made Easy*, 40, 42.

[77] Oppenheim, *Physiognomy Made Easy*, 58.

[78] Eneas Sweetland Dallas, "On Imagination," [*The Gay Science*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1866), i. 193-6, 201, 207-8], in *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890*, eds. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 92.

Likewise, Rackham's sneaky fairies, "all more or less in hiding until after dusk," wait for the chance to strike; Rackham's trees are threatening "like MacDonald's alder or MacManus's demon thorns that trapped or tripped wayfarers;" his goblins are grotesque and bestial; and his young female fairies are depicted as sensual and seductive.[79]

The crude, animalistic, and even sexually charged traits assigned to the "lower" races and fairies, were meshed with their assigned physical characteristics. The soothing, sinuous features attached to Rackham's female fairies hid an overcharged sexual appetite, while his male fairies were pictured as grotesque admixtures of man and beast, or as emasculated little creatures. Perceptions of these physical characteristics found their way into negative phrenological and physiognomical designations, into cultural stereotypes, and into Rackham's fantasy illustration.

The Victorian engagement with physiognomy, phrenology, and ideas of the beast within the unconscious mind is an intensification of universal concerns about the causes and motivations of human behavior. Many Victorian psychologists searched for and formulated explanations of behavior, which tended either to normalize or to pathologize. This "black or white" method of categorization produced pervasive images of abnormal animalistic behavior and grotesque appearance that were, in turn, codified by the tenets of late nineteenth-century sciences of the mind. Rackham's work was not immune to these influences. He was both a conduit of cultural mores and a creator of them. The hue and spirit of Rackham's work had a tremendous impact on late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century conceptions of fairyland.[80] At the same time, common Victorian beliefs about animalistic "primitives" are boldly suggested in

[79] J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1902), 50. Silver, 155.

[80] For a discussion of Rackham's influence on Walt Disney, see Robin Allan, *Walt Disney and Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

the narrative of Rackham's compositions in a number of ways, for example by a goblin's voracious sexual appetite. Animalism is also inferred by images of fairies with unsavory cranial and facial features and by seductive looking female fairies.

Rackham's fairy imagery represents the widely held late nineteenth-century notion of a material mind—a stable mind considered to be physically located in the brain and then expressed in the features of the face and head. The rigid positivism of some Victorian sciences of the mind, however, imbued Rackham's illustrations with inimical narratives of anxiety about illicit power and fears about loss of control over base beings and fractured selves. Selves, however, were fracturing nonetheless. Alex Owen argues that:

> The 1890s were the years during which the coherence and rationality of the "ego," and the "I" of personal consciousness, were increasingly called into doubt…It was this doubt, and perhaps in particular a sense of the alienation of consciousness from itself, that was to become synonymous with what it means to be undeniably "modern."[81]

Mired as it was in materialism, Rackham's visual rhetoric guarded against these changes. Fellow illustrator Aubrey Beardsley's visual narratives, however, reveled in the interstices of the growing sense of "alienation of consciousness from itself."

Rackham was only three years older than Beardsley, yet Beardsley's fame (and infamy) had a distinct impact on Rackham. Hamilton describes the state of Rackham's career in the mid-1890s, at the height of Beardsley's fame:

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[81] Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 247-248.

In 1897, Rackham was thirty years old. His achievements, however, had come

nowhere near the proportions of those of Aubrey Beardsley, three years his

junior, and also for a while a clerk in a London fire insurance office, the

Guardian Life. Beardsley had been able to leave his fire office early in 1893,

the year after Rackham had made his own escape, to take up a contract with

J.M. Dent to supply 350 designs for *Morte Darthur*. Three years after putting

Beardsley under contract, Dent commissioned the *Zankiwank* illustrations from

Rackham, when Beardsley's own genius and fame were at their height, with his

Rape of the Lock illustrations (1896), and his contributions to *The Savoy*. [82]

Rackham's *Zankiwank* illustrations (See Figure 1.31) are charming and they suggest

the scope of Rackham's imagination. However, these images are distinctly Victorian—

they portray "types" that Victorians understood and found inoffensive and reassuring.

More interesting is the Rackham image "The Influenza Fiend" done in 1893 (See

Figure 1.32), in which Rackham depicts the horrors of that year's flu epidemic. This

illustration, clearly influenced by Beardsley's approach, offers great insight into

Rackham's attitude to Beardsley and his work. The grotesque horror of a destructive

Fiend—out of anyone's control—which seems to be everywhere at once, could easily

symbolize Rackham's discomfort with the power of Beardsley's work and the extent

of his fame.

Although Beardsley addressed some of the same material as Rackham did, the

two men's approaches differed significantly. Rackham had mixed feelings about

Beardsley's work. Hamilton explains:

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[82] Hamilton, 43-45. Mostly from Rackham family archives.

Figure 1.31
"The Zankiwank"
Arthur Rackham, 1896
from the *Zankiwank and the Bletherwitch* by S.J. Adair-Fitzgerald

Figure 1.32
"The Influenza Fiend"
Arthur Rackham, 1893
Westminster Budget, 22 December 1893

Although Rackham often mentioned his colleagues and rivals in friendly terms in letters, writings, and reminiscences, there seems to be only two references to Beardsley, of whose work and fame Rackham was of course well aware— indeed Rackham owned a set of the two-volume Dent edition of *Morte Darthur* illustrated by Beardsley. It is clear that Rackham regarded Beardsley very highly as an artist, and included his name in a list of the '33 Greatest Painters of the XIX Century' written out in his own hand among his papers...Nevertheless, Rackham made a lampoon on Beardsley's work, much more caustic than his later *New Fiction* cover, for the *Westminster Budget* at the height of the controversy over Beardsley's illustrations in *The Yellow Book*. The drawing is captioned *Nightmare: Horrible Result of Contemplating an Aubrey Beardsley After Supper*. Beardsley's exotic nature and talent, which has defined the *fin de siècle* mood of the period, had the effect of disturbing the creative and commercial outlet of Rackham's own expression.[83]

"Nightmare: Horrible Result of Contemplating an Aubrey Beardsley after Supper" (See Figure 1.33) shows a young man, perhaps Rackham himself, encircled and tormented by Beardsleyesque figures and *in-betweens*. It is interesting that Rackham chose a nightmare scenario as the setting for this parody; in the next chapter I discuss how certain Beardsley imagery is evocative of the ways in which pre-Freudian psychology understood dreams and nightmares.

Beardsley most likely had opinions about Rackham's work as well. According to Hamilton, "Rackham, although still a young man, was probably included in

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[83] Hamilton, 43-45. Mostly from Rackham family archives.

Figure 1.33
"A nightmare: horrible result of contemplating an Aubrey Beardsley after supper.
Arthur Rackham, 1894
Westminster Budget, 20 July 1894

Beardsley's swipe at 'old black-and-white duffers'."[84] Unlike Rackham's illustration,

Beardsley's provocative visual work unmasked and toyed with Victorian mores. Zatlin

explains the pervasive connections between physical appearance and morality in late

nineteenth century culture.

> The Victorians seem to have erected a standard of beauty which demanded
>
> formal congruity and moral tone, partly as a bulwark against non-compliant
>
> and therefore offensive artistic portrayals. Using the criteria of this standard,
>
> they marked a further boundary, one which dictated that depiction of a
>
> balanced character manifest itself in harmonious, or regular, facial
>
> features...They marginalized anyone who incorporated into the conventional
>
> the non-normative and who thereby broke the code of acceptable public
>
> decorum, which included a ban on displays of suggestive sexuality for its own
>
> sake...Victorian ideas of acceptable behavior would linger into the 1890s, and
>
> reviewers continued to orchestrate the reception of works of art according to
>
> this moral gauge.[85]

In her discussion of the grotesque in Victorian art, Zatlin makes a strong case for a set

of clearly defined physical and moral standards that rendered visual depictions

acceptable or offensive. This cultural construct is in line with the convergence of

behavior and physical appearance spelled out in Victorian physiognomy and

phrenology—and in Rackham's work.

      Beardsley's imagery, which confronts what Zatlin calls the Victorian "standard

of beauty which demanded formal congruity and moral tone," also suggests the

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[84] Hamilton, 43-45. Mostly from Rackham family archives.

[85] Zatlin, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal*, 173.

coexistence of notions of a psyche physically located in the body and a disembodied psyche that is hard to characterize. A discerning reader can unearth aspects of this psychology in the visual narrative of Beardsley's work. Indeed, contemporary Beardsley critic Christopher Snodgrass suggests that:

> Although Beardsley was thoroughly of the nineteenth century in most of his aesthetic assumptions, he anticipated and routinely employed what has been termed "conjunctive ambiguity,"…a rhetoric…which confronts an "inherently disconnected and fragmented" world and seeks to control those disconnections aesthetically by shaping them conjointly into an equipoise of opposites…His pictures came to signal, in the only means available before the final stylistic fracturing of the mimetic tradition, what was, in effect, a visual-arts equivalent of Einstein's relativity theory and Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle"—those theories, we recall, that revealed the impossibility of establishing simultaneously both an object's position and its definitive identity, thereby annulling the laws of noncontradiction and ushering in a potentially absurdist world of constantly shifting, logically self contradicting meanings and values. Beardsley's shocking but fundamentally equivocal art not only captured the central metaphysical contradictions and basic paradoxical vision of the Victorian Decadence itself; it also represented in its very modernity a striking example of the Decadence's attempt to forestall what it sensed to be the approaching metaphysical deluge of the twentieth century.[86]

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[86] Christopher Snodgrass, *Aubrey Beardsley: Dandy of the Grotesque* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 23-24.

I wholeheartedly agree with Snodgrass's assessment, and while re-emphasizing his point that Beardsley "was thoroughly of the nineteenth century in most of his aesthetic assumptions," I would like to reaffirm that Beardsley indeed tapped into novel strands of early twentieth century thought. I also would like to note, however, that the same innovative thinking that led to Einstein's relativity theory and Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle," also precipitated new ideas about the function of the mind at the turn-of-the-century. I suggest that Rackham's illustrative approach guarded against such innovations and relied heavily on comforting notions of predictable "natural laws" grounded in Victorian materialism. Beardsley, on the other hand—with one foot remaining in nineteenth-century presumptions and the other foot extending into twentieth-century thought—produced work that was representative of the emerge of ideas of an intangible mind and a diffuse self.

Chapter Two

In His Wildest Dreams: Aubrey Beardsley's Visionary Fusion

Introduction

As noted in the previous chapter, phrenology and physiognomy were widely popular and meaningful in the Victorian era. According to historian Lancelot Law Whyte, the unconscious was already "fashionable talk" by the 1870s.[1] Gillian Beer asserts that versions of Darwin's work were accessible to most people.[2] The proliferation of Darwinian theory coincided with continuing interest in models of a material unconscious and exploration of innovative models of a subjective psyche. This somewhat baffling (and sometimes contradictory) scientific mélange had a significant impact on late nineteenth-century culture.[3] Beer explains that new scientific theories seem to intertwine the purportedly hard facts of reality with the surreal, concocting an odd picture of the world.[4] I propose that the ideas emerging from evolutionary biology and pre-Freudian psychology helped to produce ideas of fragmented perception in late nineteenth-century culture.

This instability of perception—which may be a consequence of new scientific thinking re-animating "primitive" and mythic ways of thinking—is manifested in a number of Aubrey Beardsley's (1872-1898) grotesque and surreal visuals.[5] A close

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[1] Lancelot Law Whyte, *The Unconscious Before Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1960), 163.

[2] Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4-5.

[3] Martin Fichman claims that "phrenology, mesmerism, and psychical research…which were associated in both the scientific community and the broader public with the potent issues of assessing human nature…were often linked to evolutionism in the Victorian era."
Martin Fichman, *Evolutionary Theory and Victorian Culture* (New York: Humanity Books, 2002), 41.

[4] Beer, 1.

reading will find in his fetus, ape, dwarf, and mask imagery multifarious renderings of the material mind and the ethereal self, and of scientific fact and scientific fiction. Evolution is a material process that is demonstrated by subliminal heredity and facilitated by hidden mutations—it converges with Victorian psychology in its combination of material and hidden aspects. This synthesis of scientific theory provoked the broad question of the place of self in the cosmos. It supplied no clear-cut answers. Beardsley's provocative fetus, ape, dwarf, and mask imagery stirs up similar queries, likewise left unresolved in his work.

This unsettled array of ideas about the human condition in the late nineteenth century called accepted beliefs into question and augmented those beliefs with what seemed like fantasy. Beardsley's dream-like visuals, featuring transformation and mutation, in particular, are expressive of this liminal cultural phenomenon. These images point up the concrete nature of perceptions—they offer imagery that elevates the substantive qualities of materialism. At the same time they challenge the stability of perception by examining, distorting, and reconfiguring what was seemingly immutable.

Beer insightfully points out that evolutionary processes present a narrative—which she describes as "multivalent...felt as either plentitude or muddle"—that infiltrated nineteenth-century fiction. [6] In this chapter, I describe how the late-Victorian evolutionary/psychological cultural amalgam provoked a similarly multivalent narrative of plentitude and muddle in Beardsley's fetus, ape, dwarf, and mask imagery. This Beardsley imagery features grotesque visuals that are evocative

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[5] Frances Power Cobbe, "Dreams, as Illustrations of Involuntary Cerebration," [*Darwinism in Morals and Other Essays* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1872), 336-8, 361-2], in *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts 1830-1890*, ed. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 113-115.

[6] Beer, 7.

of the materiality of Darwinian evolution and also of the "imaginative turmoil" it generated.[7] The work suggests notions of a mind physically located in the brain and expressed in the body, but also ideas of a psyche partly removed from the constraints of physical manifestation. I believe that Beardsley's intricate and ambiguous fetus, ape, dwarf, and mask imagery is grotesque, in great part, precisely because of these bizarre and unresolved juxtapositions.

A facile interpretation might suggest that Beardsley's fetuses symbolize human development, that apes and dwarfs imply degenerate evolution, and that masks infer the hidden self. Below the surface, though, the narrative interrelationship among the motifs in these images is less obvious and much more complex. For example, Beardsley's mask imagery—a motif which contemporary critic Milly Heyd extrapolates to the "external mask-like features of Beardsley's art and the symbols concealed behind them"—can also be examined in the context of the Victorian materialist take on physiognomy and phrenology.[8] This motif is, in fact, suggestive of a Victorian urban myth that had people "going 'masked through the streets' in order to avoid surveillance when the physiognomical 'epidemic' was at its height."[9] In this urban myth, masks were thought to conceal the immutable expression of the mind in the face.

Victorian phrenology and physiognomy, which were touched on in the Introduction and applied in the last chapter, are germane to the visual narrative of Beardsley's work discussed in this chapter. Aspects of his illustrations will be considered in the context of a Rackhamesque materialist interpretation. Unlike

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[7] Beer, 10.

[8] Milly Heyd, *Aubrey Beardsley: Symbol, Mask, and Self-Irony* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 13.

[9] Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth, eds., *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 3.

Rackham, whose fairy imagery is expressive of a singularly materialist notion of the mind, however, many of Beardsley's grotesques also suggest the Victorian fascination with the instability of a malleable unconscious as expressed in dreams and hallucinations. Victorian dream theory, which was grounded in brain anatomy, nevertheless sought to characterize the unpredictable transformations and irrational plot twists of the dreaming mind.

Darwin's work likewise foregrounded a startling and novel narrative of transformation, mutation, and growth, and the Victorians reacted in myriad ways to his controversial ideas.[10] Martin Fichman explains that satire was one way for individuals to address their discomfort:

Evolutionary theory clearly had numerous pathways by which its controversial ideas could make their mark on popular culture in the Victorian era. The two most widespread responses were either to embrace or to reject the theory and its many implications for human society. Another response was satire.[11]

I propose, however, that there are other, less evident, responses that Fichman has overlooked—for example, grotesque irony that generates visual narratives that "replay" both the themes expressed in evolutionary theory and their broader implications. Beardsley's complex grotesque irony differentiates his work from, say, the bold *Punch* cartoons that conspicuously satirize evolution (See Figure 2.1). As contemporary Beardsley critic Linda Zatlin explains, some of Beardsley's drawings

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[10] Beer, 1.

[11] Fichman, 47.

THE LION OF THE SEASON.
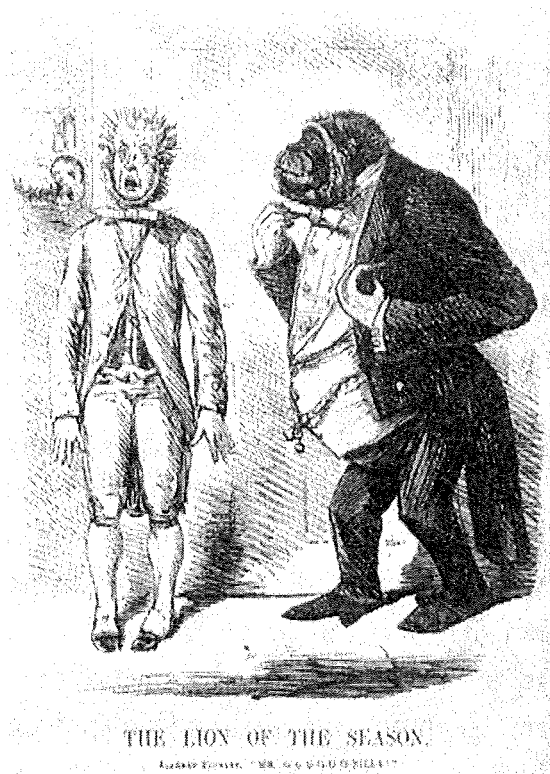
Figure 2.1
"The Lion of the Season"
Punch Cartoon lampooning evolutionary theory
Punch 40, 1861

are characterized by an "ambiguity [that] provides for a spectrum of interpretation."[12]

Zatlin also proposes that "the grotesque uses physical exaggeration, deforming or

distorting normative structures and reassembling them in ways which command

attention... Constituted of dissimilar parts, these exaggerated images present a

distortion of the material world."[13] I suggest that Beardsley's grotesque fetus, ape,

dwarf, and mask imagery simultaneously accepted, rejected, dissected, and

reconfigured aspects of a cultural amalgam of Victorian science. Beardsley, however,

not only played out the themes germane to the science, he also played out the

uncertainty and instability generated by its coexistence.

This instability was especially discernable in the realm of nineteenth-century

dream theory. Heyd presents a "psychologically oriented reading of Beardsley's art

and...the self-irony involved in it" in her book *Aubrey Beardsley: Symbol, Mask and

Self-Irony*.[14] She perceptively notes that ideas about dreams had an impact on art, and

were clearly influential in Beardsley's imagery:

> Dreams have created a new visual language in art, altering the concept of
>
> space. Images may float in the air governed by no laws of gravity or
>
> perspective, but obeying a leading line of association...Beardsley seemed to be
>
> fully aware of the significance of dream situations and hallucinations in his
>
> works.[15]

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[12] Linda Zatlin, *Aubrey Beardsley and Victorian Sexual Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 6.

[13] Linda Zatlin, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 171.

[14] Heyd, 4.
Heyd approvingly says this of nineteenth-century critic Arthur Symons' book, *Aubrey Beardsley* (London: John Baker, 1967).

[15] Heyd, 223.

Yet, she comes at these ideas from a strictly twentieth-century Freudian standpoint; she does not investigate pre-Freudian psychology. I want to argue that pre-Freudian notions about the unconscious mind—which turned to dream activity for much inspiration—have at least as much to teach us about the Beardsley work I discuss.

Scholar Tony James calls nineteenth-century philosopher Hervey de Saint-Denys "the most perspicacious observer of dreams before Freud." He argues that, "For Hervey de Saint-Denys dreams were creative in the sense that they produced strange and new images, or invented convincing characters in the manner of a playwright."[16] Beardsley's strange and new images had the exaggerated theatricality of such a dream. Biographer Ian Fletcher says of Beardsley's work: "so far as the actual presentation goes, theatre furnishes the appropriate metaphor; the shrill tone, the sensationalism, all suggest theatre..."[17] Some nineteenth-century critics, moreover, found Beardsley's sensational visual narratives to be utterly wanton. Zatlin writes that Beardsley's contemporaneous critics

> seem obsessed with accusing Beardsley of a preoccupation with debauchery...they refer to his works as 'vulgar in idea and offensive' (Daily chronicle, 12 July 1894, p. 3), 'thoroughly morbid' (The Academy, 28 July 1894, p. 67)... [and] 'repulsive' The Times, 8 Mar. 1894, p. 12)...One of the earliest reviews...dismissed Beardsley's drawings as 'flat blasphemies against art' (London Figaro, 20 Apr. 1893, p. 13). [18]

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[16] Tony James, *Dream, Creativity, and Madness in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 157.

[17] Ian Fletcher, *Aubrey Beardsley* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987), 27.

[18] Zatlin, *Aubrey Beardsley and Victorian Sexual Politics*, 5.

Whether considered wanton or theatrical, Beardsley's visual narratives discussed here

fit with Victorian ideas about the nature of dreams. Nineteenth-century phrenologist

Robert Macnish [1830] understood dream images as unregulated mental associations.

He explains them to be "a series of thoughts or feelings called into existence by certain

powers of the mind, while the other mental powers which control these thoughts or

feelings, are inactive."[19] In other words, Macnish believed that dreams were made up

of a series of frequently irrational and sometimes shocking mental associations.

Victorian dream theory adapted eighteenth-century associationist notions (in

which strings of ideas are linked or associated in the mind) and materialist

designations of the unconscious.[20] Associationist models of the mind suggested

transition and transformation of intangible thought, even though some nineteenth-

century associationist theory was based in brain anatomy and physiology. The

convergence of these two strands of nineteenth-century psychology stimulated

ongoing deliberation about whether the unconscious mind—and by extension dream

processes—was a material or intangible entity.[21] Indeed, Jenny Bourne Taylor and

Sally Shuttleworth point out that combination materialist/dynamic models of the mind

"emphasized that mental processes are embodied in the mind as an evolving organism

rather than being represented in abstract images." These same models inferred that

"just as apparently solid rock formations are actually in a continual state of flux, so the

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[19] Robert Macnish, "The Prophetic Character of Dreams, and Nightmares," [*The Philosophy of Sleep* (Glasgow: W. R. M'Phun, 1830), 50-3, 117-18, 124-8, 136-9, 143], in *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890,* eds. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 102.

[20] Edward S. Reed, *From Soul to Mind: The Emergence of Psychology from Erasmus Darwin to William James* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1997.

[21] Taylor and Shuttleworth, 67.
Much nineteenth-century psychology characterized the unconscious as a mix of material and dynamic phenomena.

very substance and contents of the brain are undergoing constant transformation, and that a stable identity is an illusion."[22]

Beardsley intuited these juxtapositions, which translate into powerful visual images. The Beardsley fetus, ape, dwarf, and mask imagery presented in this chapter is simultaneously evocative of Victorian notions of a material mind physically located in the brain (and expressed in the face and body) and also of a less tangible psyche in constant flux (evocative of dreams and hallucinations). Beardsley's grotesque work discussed here is lush with strange admixtures of plants, animals, humans, mythological and fairytale creatures, and decorative elements that suggest—as Darwinian evolution and new ideas of an intangible psyche did—that a "stable identity is an illusion." Beardsley is an alchemist of sorts, stirring into the cauldron disgust and fascination with Victorian science. His lead turned to gold and back to lead, resulting in the plethora of provocative and grotesque images of fetuses, apes, dwarfs, and masks discussed in this chapter. Beardsley transforms the written text he illustrates into multi-layered imagery meaning based, in great part, in the cultural narratives of contemporaneous science.

Fetuses

In the late nineteenth century, fetal development was widely believed to recapitulate the stages of human evolution.[23] Although not literally based on Darwin, many of Beardsley's fetus images read like nightmarish Darwinian theory in which fetus-monsters are the protagonists in bizarre fairy tale-like narratives (See Figure 2.2). The notion that human beings evolved from monkeys and apes was also

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[22] Taylor and Shuttleworth, 68, 71.

[23] Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977).

Figure 2.2
"Dreams"
Aubrey Beardsley, 1894
from Lucian of Samosata *True History*

widespread in the Victorian era. As Colin Trodd, Paul Barlow, and David Amigoni

point out, such ideas resonated in Victorian culture as grotesque fantasy and not as

reality:

> For Darwin...the grotesque was a continual threat to his scientific claims. As
>
> Gillian Beer has pointed out, the 'ludicrous' idea that one animal might
>
> become another led Darwin's critics to satirize passages such as the one in
>
> which he appears to claim that a bear could easily turn into a whale. These
>
> were identified quite specifically as flights of fancy, a fantastical jumbling and
>
> dismembering of real forms.[24]

Interestingly, Beardsley's fetal imagery could also be described as "a fantastical

jumbling and dismembering of real forms." One creature evolving into another was

experienced as fantasy whether in embryology or in art. Indeed, metamorphosis has

been a longstanding theme in both fairytales and legends. Frogs turning into princes or

hags turning into ravens fill the pages of English and German fairy lore.

Fetal development can be seen as fantastic and grotesque in and of itself.

Theories describing primitive embryonic structures that evolve into more advanced

structures intermingled with widespread notions of transformation and metamorphosis

from myth and fairy tale. Beardsley's fetuses materialize and mythologize fetal

development through grotesque interpretations of the processes of human growth and

transformation. Zatlin points out that in the grotesque, "physical exaggeration is used

to undercut a subject by ridicule...or else to create a sense of horror, menace, or a fear

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[24] Colin Trodd, Paul Barlow, and David Amigoni, *Victorian Culture and the Idea of the Grotesque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 9.

of helplessness..."[25] A primary interpretation of Beardsley's fetus images, then, would likely be that the visual narratives in many of these illustrations undercut embryology or human development. Digging deeper into the visual narrative, moreover, reveals that this imagery undercuts public perceptions of evolutionary theory. Since ontogeny was believed to recapitulate phylogeny (the phenomenon in which fetal development replays the course of human evolution), images of distorted fetal development would have much to say about the impact of evolutionary theory on late nineteenth-century culture.

Beardsley's presents tragicomic fetus-focused narratives, and then dares viewers to make sense of it all. Zatlin's description of the convoluted logic of "humorous grotesque" rhetoric is apt. This complex narrative expression is also characteristic of much of Beardsley's work discussed in this chapter:

> A humorous or menacing tension arises between the (potentially) fearsome, which is depicted, and the harmonious, which is an ideal implicit in the depicted. Humor is present when a human frailty, physical or emotional, renders the life-threatening or sinister element harmless. The humorous grotesque is decidedly more complex, expressing not simply fears, but implicit censure or attacks on these fears.[26]

Beardsley's physically exaggerated fetal forms, however, also render the harmless as menacing. They suggest a horrible ontogeny—in which human fetuses become monsters—that tapped into and toyed with Victorian fears about their own grotesque animal phylogeny.

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[25] Zatlin, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal*, 171.

[26] Zatlin, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal*, 171.

Beardsley produced fetal imagery obsessively in the period from 1892-1895.

Early twentieth-century Beardsley biographer Haldane MacFall [1928] focuses on

Beardsley's imagined psychology, responding with disgust to Beardsley's, "repulsive

interest in the unborn embryo," and explaining that, "He harped and harped on it like a

dirty-minded schoolboy."[27] But this focus on Beardsley's psychology ignores the

greater cultural context in which Beardsley worked. MacFall's revulsion to

Beardsley's fetuses is a testament to the universal power of grotesque images in which

human and sub-human merge.[28]

Elizabeth Menon—who points out how popular public displays of fetal

specimens were in the nineteenth century—astutely notes that the "success of the fetus

as a motif in Symbolist art [and in Beardsley's work] was due to its multivalence.

Because it was new and untried (and shocking to boot), its meaning had not been

fixed."[29] Menon portrays the connections between the fetus and evolution and

degeneration in nineteenth-century French artists' grotesque depictions of human and

animal hybrids.[30] She links this fetus imagery with, among other things, degeneration,

which she describes as "the physical mental, and moral decline of the human race."[31]

I would like to build on Menon's ideas by suggesting that widely accepted

Victorian notion that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny is key to one of the untried

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[27] Haldane MacFall, *Aubrey Beardsley: The Man and His Work* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1928), 10.

[28] A number of other critics have discussed Beardsley's fetuses in relation to his personal psychology. Please see Linda Zatlin, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Brian Reade, *Aubrey Beardsley* (New York: Viking, 1967), and Christopher Snodgrass, "Beardsley's Oscillating Spaces," in *Reconsidering Aubrey Beardsley*, ed. Robert Langenfeld (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1989).

[29] Elizabeth Menon, "Anatomy of a Motif: The Fetus in Late 19th-Century Graphic Art" *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 3, no. 1 (2004): 1.
Available from: http://19thcartworldwide.org/spring04/articles/meno.html.

[30] Menon, "Anatomy of a Motif: The Fetus in Late 19th-Century Graphic Art."

[31] Menon, 5.

meanings generated by fetal imagery. Recapitulation is explained in this embryology text from the 1890s: "Evolution tells us that each animal has had its pedigree in the past. Embryology reveals to us this ancestry because every animal in its own development repeats its history, climbs up its own genealogical tree."[32] Recapitulation, then, stood as a potent link between fetuses and evolution. Beer points out the magic feel of recapitulation: "It offered the pleasure of miniaturization and of magical speed. The whole evolutionary process was condensed within the embryo."[33] Fetuses, then, were powerful and, in a subliminal way, "magical" symbols of human evolution.

The Victorians believed that growing human fetuses pass through all the phases of human evolutionary development—and therefore harbor all previous primitive and animalistic forms. Nineteenth-century zoologist Ernst Haekel [1905] wrote that "all human embryos, those of nobles as well as commoners, are scarcely distinguishable from the tailed embryos of dogs and other mammals during the first two months of development."[34] If the fetus contains all this primitive "material," what then are the implications for white European adults? Recapitulation puts yet another spin on Menon's discussion of the degeneration of the human race—and the function of the mind, which was commonly believed to be physically located in the brain and expressed in the forms of the face and head. After all, fetuses have primitive brains, faces, and heads that could be read in physiognomical and phrenological contexts. Beardsley's multivalent fetus imagery can, then, be understood as expressive of the stuff of evolution and the matter of the mind. Beardsley's fetuses also evoke Victorian racial hierarchies, which include "primitives" and elementals.

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[32] W. Colman, *Biology in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: John Wiley, 1971), 71.

[33] Beer, 99.

[34] Ernst Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man*, 2 vols., translated by J. McCabe from 5th edition of *Anthropogenie* (London: Watts and Company), 1905, as quoted in Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 78.

Critics have noted that Beardsley's fetuses resemble wizened old men.[35] I would like to suggest that Beardsley's fetuses resemble changelings—fairy children left in place of "stolen" human children. As I discussed in the first chapter, in the nineteenth century fairies were considered primitive throwbacks to base human ancestors. According to Victorianist Carole Silver, the Victorians were obsessed with changelings—folklore and fiction describing changeling events were popular among middle class readers. Changelings were described in terms reminiscent of fetuses. They were considered to be very ugly with "especially large heads and stunted bodies"—a description that is particularly apropos for Beardsley's fetuses.[36] Neither a fetus nor a changeling looks particularly human; both look monstrous. For each—one has been substituted for a human and the other is potentially human—a "magical" transformation process is required to release a person. According to Silver, there were a multitude of magical rites that could be performed to restore a human child who had been replaced by a changeling:

> Leaving the child outdoors was a simple and effective method, and hills, especially those ostensibly inhabited by fairies, were favorite places for such expulsions…if such rites were not effective…fairy doctors [who specialized in forcing fairies to return a stolen child] and others would have resorted to even more severe, measures.[37]

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[35] Christopher Snodgrass, *Aubrey Beardsley: Dandy of the Grotesque* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 177-189.

[36] Silver, 62.

[37] Silver, 66.

These rites took place in intimidating environments, for example in cairns, in ditches, or on graves, and required severe processes in which the changeling was thrown on a dung heap or placed on a hot shovel over a fire. Extreme visual environments—in which strange iconography and bizarre interplay contextualize the fetus—also characterize some of Beardsley's fetal imagery.

Both changelings and fetuses have the potential to produce a child. A fetus, like the prince within the frog in the Grimm Brother's *The Frog Prince*, contains the germ of a fully formed adult human. According to Darwinian theory, the fetus contains the blueprint for a human being, mutations and all. Spontaneous mutation is one of the main tenets of evolutionary theory. Beardsley's fetuses portray a host of mutated outcomes—they exhibit surprising plant, animal, landscape, and mythological traits.

Beardsley's fetuses exude, to use Beer's term, the "magic" of evolution. They range from embryos with tails and gills to more fully developed fetuses with legs and arms, some recognizably fetal and others humanoid, animalistic, or fantastic (See Figures 2.2, 2.5 and 2.6). Many appear mutated, with strange appendages and extensions. Most have amoeba eyes, which reinforce the fetus' primeval nature. At the same time, the fetus' amoeba eyes suggest a creature—usually visible only through a microscope lens—within a creature, giving these images a multimodal quality. From a different vantage these eyes are primordial creatures within a primordial creature. The flip-flop between eye and amoeba is interesting in that it makes a connection between vision and a fundamental unit of life, the cell. It is almost as if Beardsley is demonstrating the "magical speed" of recapitulation in one fell swoop.

In "Enter Herodius" (1894) from *Salome* (See Figure 2.3), a large fetus/dwarf with gills, a bulging head, and amoeba eyes holds Herodius' train. Herodius' breasts
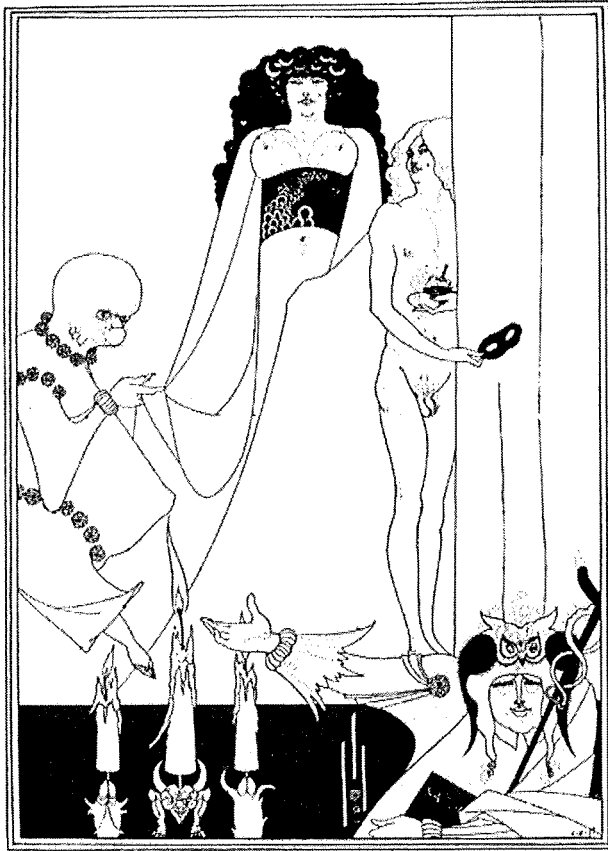
Figure 2.3
"Enter Herodius"
Aubrey Beardsley
from Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, 1894

Figure 2.4
Fetus design for a headpiece in *St. Paul's* magazine
Aubrey Beardsley, 1894
St. Paul's, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1894

are swollen, as if they are full of milk. The fetus has a large erection, a bizarre and grotesque appendage for an undeveloped creature. According to Trodd, Barlow, and Amigoni, Darwin was cautious about pushing the idea that strange appendages were the result of natural selection for attention-getting traits in mating. They explain that Darwin "treads warily when invoking the grotesque, suggesting that the apparently strange, excessive bodily growth in some animals may have developed from the female experience of 'beauty' in males competing to attract them."[38] Darwin was cautious about assigning causality to such grotesque physical traits.

In Beardsley's image, this primordial creature has sprouted an extension that normally belongs to a mature man. The result is not as clear as it is in the Darwinian example. Does this appendage attract or repel Herodius, the nude male servant, the flame of the candle, the viewer, or any combination of the above? Or is it a medical oddity (the image of Wilde in the lower right corner carries a caduceus and gestures toward the erection) demanding more scientific study? The interpretations shift as does the perspective and the visual elements.

The transformational potential of the fetus in "Enter Herodius" is dramatic; its monstrous potential is pushed to the edge. Contemporary critic Christopher Snodgrass discusses the relationship between the Victorian Gothic monster and Beardsley's fetuses:

> As in the *fin-de-siècle* revival of the gothic monster, so in Beardsley's foetus-monster we have the incarnation of an intense consciousness of time and fear of change, particularly those dreaded changes that mark decay, death.[39]

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[38] Trodd et al., 9.

[39] Christopher Snodgrass, "Beardsley's Oscillating Spaces," 37.

Beardsley's fetuses also incarnate evolutionary time. The fetus from "Enter Herodius" marks recapitulation. This fetus is fully-grown, yet it is a primitive monster. Beardsley seems to suggest that this monster is the epitome of evolutionary development, but the artist twists and distorts the evolutionary process and outcome. He foregrounds the material aspects of evolution by featuring the fetus and its ontogeny—entities that normally remained hidden—prominently in this illustration. Yet he portrays the terrifying Victorian fears and fictions, spawned by evolutionary theory, about unanticipated malformation and uncontrolled degeneration. Here, in a Victorian nightmare of grotesque transformation, is Snodgrass' "intense consciousness of time and fear of change."

And yet this threatening fetus in the image "Enter Herodius" is unanchored. It also exists in an environment that presents an intense consciousness of space. The viewer is not sure if the fetus is in the foreground or middle ground, or if it is merely floating. Herodius seems to be in the background behind a partition but the fetus/dwarf holds her train. In another fetus image from a design for *St. Paul's* magazine (See Figure 2.4), a bare-breasted mother stares lovingly at her fetus offspring who floats in a specimen jar on a table (It is interesting to note that the mother's face and hair together resemble a tadpole-like fetus and that the design on her skirt and the cushions look like invisible creatures seen under a microscope). Both of these fetuses float, like fantastic beings suspended in the infinite ether of Never Never Land, unable to set foot on solid ground and unable to reach the breast to suckle.

In the nineteenth century, floating or flying sensations were closely associated with dream narrative. In his 1893 essay "The Dream as Revelation" Victorian philosopher and psychologist James Sully notes "the common dream experience of flying," which he ascribes to dreaming being the "outcome of a maimed

consciousness...[in which] the mechanism of the mind does not work as a co-ordinated whole, but only in disjointed fashion."[40] Sully summarizes his ideas by saying that the disjointedness of dreams offers us insight into to our animal heredity:

> Our dreams, by restoring the bodily factor of consciousness to its primitive supremacy, may properly be described as revelations. By noting this aspect of our dreams, we may learn much concerning that organic substrate of our conscious personality which links us on to the animal series.[41]

Beardsley's floating monstrous fetuses, whose phylogeny has been stifled, will never evolve further. They are, however, fully formed nightmares that exist in a disjointed dream narrative. Beardsley's fetuses are grotesque and ironic fantasies that dissect and display Victorian discomfort with Darwinian narrative. Like Sully's description of disjointed dream narratives, Beardsley's fetal narratives read like "some letter in a cipher...[that] when scrutinized closely loses its first look of balderdash and takes on the aspect of a serious, intelligible message."[42] Beardsley's fetus images challenge the viewer to make rational sense of the irrational, disjointed meanderings of the dreaming mind.

Nineteenth-century essayist William Hazlitt wrote in his 1826 essay "On Dreams," "There is...a sort of profundity in sleep...we may sometimes discover our tacit and almost unconscious sentiments...The curb is taken off from our passions and

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[40] James Sully, "The Dream as Revelation," [*Fortnightly Review*, 59 (March 1893) 354-65], in *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890,* eds. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 117.

[41] Sully, 119.

[42] Sully, 121.

our imagination wanders at will."[43] Beardsley's imagination brings us the illustration

"Dreams" from *Lucian's True History* (See Figure 2.2). The image is a portrait of

Beer's "plentitude" and "muddle." It is lush with complex visual symbolism and

innuendo. "Dreams" manifests a veritable web of meanings, which must be teased out

from the jumbled visual narrative. A grotesque fetus is front and center in the image.

This fetus, in fact, presents "a demonstration that his dreams are really nightmares" to

the "haggard quester" in the story, according to Snodgrass.[44] In Lucian's text the

protagonist seeks out the oracle Antiphon, the interpreter of dreams, who encourages

him to sleep and dream. Lucian [c.120-180] describes these dreams:

> These dreams are not all alike either in nature or shape, for some of them are
>
> long, beautiful and pleasing: others again are as short and deformed. Some
>
> make show to be of gold, and others to be as base and beggarly, Some of them
>
> had wings, and were of monstrous forms: others set out in pomp, as it were in
>
> triumph, representing the appearances of kings, gods, and other persons. Many
>
> of them were of our acquaintance, for they had been seen by us before...and
>
> took us and lulled us asleep...promising beside all other entertainment which
>
> was sumptuous and costly, to make us kings and princes.[45]

The image that accompanies this text presents a dense visual narrative due, I suggest,

to its dream content. Zatlin claims that the imagery in "Dreams" "incarnates" the text

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[43] William Hazlitt, "On Dreams," *The Plain Speaker: Opinions on Books, Men, and Things*, (London: H. Colburn, 1826), 45.

[44] Christopher Snodgrass, "Beardsley's Oscillating Spaces," 37.

[45] Lucian of Samosata, *Lucian's True History* (c. 120-180) reprint (London: A. H. Bullen, 1902), 99-100.

about sleep and dreams. This is an interesting choice of words, considering the

material basis of much Victorian dream theory. According to Zatlin:

> *Dreams* incarnates the chronicler's narration about sleep, which includes
>
> visions of pleasure as well as more menacing and more grotesque images.
>
> Stressing the nightmares, *Dreams* features a fetus similar to the infant form in
>
> the *Bon-Mots*: its body bent, its head too heavy for its neck, its hand extends,
>
> its lidless eyes glare.[46]

Beardsley's imagination once again gives the viewer a fetus with characteristic

amoeba eyes and claws for hands presented by a frightening "madonna." The fetus'

face looks like a mask with wrinkles on its forehead. Here Beardsley links fetus and

mask, focusing on fetal face and head.

Strange mask faces sit below strangely divided skulls in some cases. Several

fetuses exhibit what appear to be designations of phrenological organs.[47] In two of

Beardsley's vignettes in the *Bon-Mots* of Smith and Sheridan (see Figure 2.5 and 2.6)

and in "Dreams" (See Figure 2.2), the fetuses' heads are divided into sections that are

reminiscent of phrenological diagrams. These divisions—which are fewer in number

and larger than the real "organs" in contemporary phrenological diagrams—are now

visible on a living form. In these fetuses, a portrait of a living creature is transformed

through its combination with a scientific diagram. The phrenological designations

become a grotesque rendering of the development/evolution of the human mind. The

fetus brain is turned inside out in a grotesque transformation. Are we seeing the head

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[46] Zatlin, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal*, 212.

[47] For other discussion of Beardsley's fetal imagery in the context of phrenology, please see Linda Zatlin, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal*, 209-217.
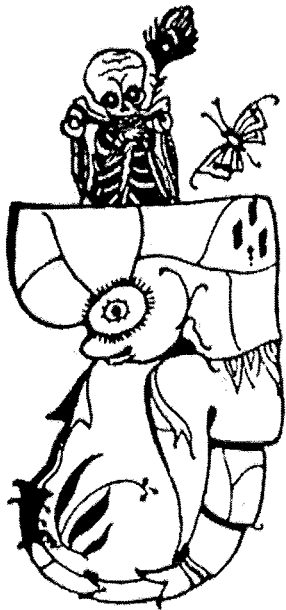
Figure 2.5
Fetus vignette 1 *Bon-Mots* of Smith and Sheridan
Aubrey Beardsley, 1893
Vignette from p. 88 in *Bon Mots of Sydney Smith and R. Brinsley Sheridan*, 1893

Figure 2.6
Fetus vignette 2 *Bon-Mots* of Smith and Sheridan
Aubrey Beardsley, 1893
from p. 192 in *Bon Mots of Sydney Smith and R. Brinsley Sheridan*, 1893

or the brain of the fetus? This transformation could signify the emergence of the hidden beast within the unconscious mind or the physical manifestation of human phylogeny. The phrenological designations are clear—even the ones human's share with beasts mentioned in the Chapter One—making the personality coded into the brain's organs more available.

Zatlin further reads and interprets the phrenological and physiognomical character of Beardsley's fetuses, using Annie Isabella Oppenheim's popular nineteenth-century texts *Physiognomy Made Easy* (1887) and *Phreno-Physiognomy* (1892) as her field guides.

> The eyes of the embryos have large pupils around which can be seen little of the cornea, but Beardsley's fetus has small pupils around which large areas of the cornea are visible. According to Oppenheim, large corneas signify restlessness and passion, and the overhanging brow indicates shrewdness and accuracy of perception without discursiveness. Wide eyelids add to the characterization of "intensity and keen perception," the broad nose and nostrils to "boldness and courage," "secretiveness," as well as a "great deal of character," while the full and stiff upper lip exposes "self esteem." The mouth is thin-lipped and clamped shut, suggestions of "self control," "coolness and precision." Analyzed according to the rules" of phrenology, then, the embryo's facial characteristics denote an intelligent being, fascinated with its surroundings, willing to take risks, and possessed of self-control. At the same time it is a face which expresses the "hypocrisy of satisfied self esteem" in its lowered head, brilliant eye, and compression of the mouth. The fetus personifies self-centeredness—in all phases of the human life cycle and in all

the texts in which it appears. The exaggeration of this unborn creature's head, which phrenologically embodies traits human beings begin to develop during childhood, makes it grotesque, while at the same time this magnification ridicules phrenology and Beardsley's brief life.[48]

Zatlin points out that Beardsley ridicules phrenology. I suggest Beardsley also elevates the science by giving it such an important role in his visual narrative. Rendering the phrenological divisions visible—according to phrenological principles they are the outward manifestations of "organs" in the brain—points up the material nature of the mind. At the same time, Beardsley's lush nightmare narrative in "Dreams" plays out nineteenth-century anxiety about uncontrolled evolutionary change. Snodgrass, in fact, argues that, "the foetus is…[an] overdetermined hybrid figure…Most of Beardsley's drawings seem to intimate that ultimately the grotesqueness of his figures (and configurations) is but the incarnation of a fundamental erosion of categorical distinctions."[49] Beardsley consciously or unconsciously mimics what Taylor and Shuttleworth describe as, "the active process of transformation which takes place in the work of dreaming."[50] The image "Dreams" presents an interwoven narrative suggestive of dreams, evolution, and the material nature of the mind. Beardsley's fetus imagery not only erodes the distinctions among, but also conflates Victorian notions of the mind, dream theory, and Darwinian evolution.

The two fetus examples from the *Bon-Mots* of Smith and Sheridan are expressive of this scientific soup. In its first appearance in an early vignette from the *Bon-Mots* (See Figures 2.5), the fetus has seven divisions on its head, once more both

[48] Zatlin, Beardsley*, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal*, 215.

[49] Snodgrass, "Beardsley's Oscillating Spaces," 40.

[50] Taylor and Shuttleworth, 70.

mocking and elevating phrenology. In a second vignette (see Figure 2.6) from the *Bon-Mots* of Smith and Sheridan, the fetus has six divisions it its skull, amoeba eyes, a scorpion tongue and animal hooves and claws. Like Beardsley's other fetuses, this second vignette has round, staring eyes surrounded by a circle with amoeba-like ciliated eyelashes. The face looks like a removable mask. One of the divisions of the skull ends in a zigzag pattern that suggests a jigsaw puzzle edge that can be pulled apart to reveal the interior…or to reveal its brain. It is especially interesting to note that, in the first vignette, the fetus' head is cut open to reveal a skeleton holding a peacock feather and it is sucking its scorpion-like tail, which has an umbilical-like plant growing from it. Snodgrass argues that in this particular *Bon-mots* the juxtaposition of skeleton and embryo signify a link between creation and death. He notes that this fetus image looks like a prawn

whose tail curls back into its mouth as if emblematizing the circularity of life. Out of the figure's truncated, sheared-off head arise a Whisterlerian butterfly (the customary iconographic emblem of the soul now being made distinctly decadent) and a skeleton waving the familiar Aesthetic peacock or ostrich feather, which had become for Victorians "almost synonymous with funerals"…The juxtaposition of embryo and skeleton underscores Beardsley's grim conception of the paradoxical link between creation and death…Beardsley's figure of the hybrid fetus-old man, in whom beginnings and ending meet paradoxically in the identical physical form, is surely an emblem of not of life's hope but of a self-reflexive prison of death.[51]

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[51] Snodgrass, *Aubrey Beardsley: Dandy of the Grotesque*, 181.

Snodgrass' insightfully writes that Beardsley must have held a grim attitude to the cycle of life and death. Specifically, he implies that the skeleton in this vignette symbolizes some aspect of death. Art historian Andrew Wilton discusses how, in 1881, Austrian physician Josef Breuer observed a young woman, Anna O., who had frequent hallucinations. Wilton—who, like Heyd, unfortunately neglects widespread ideas of the unconscious before Freud—also stresses the symbolic potential of what he sees as a recurring skeleton motif in nineteenth-century imagery.

> The imagery of Anna O.'s vision is striking not so much because of its relationship to this twenty-one year old girl's illness...but on account of its resonances in late nineteenth-century culture as a whole. The details of hair as snakes, or of skeletons and death's heads, and the image of the young woman in the tree, are recurrent features of the literature, painting, sculpture and even the decorative arts of the late nineteenth century...When such images appear in works of art, they can be interpreted either literally or symbolically, as 'metaphors' for aspects of the human condition. A skull represents Death, snakes stand for Evil or Original Sin. Death is often symbolized by the image of Sleep.[52]

I would like to augment Snodgrass' and Wilton's arguments by reinterpreting the skeleton as symbolic of a spectral illusion.[53] Nineteenth-century psychologist Henry

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[52] Andrew Wilton, "Symbolism in Britain," in *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain, 1860-1910*, eds. Andrew Wilton and Robert Upstone, (London: Tate Gallery, 1997), 11.

[53] A vignette in the Bon-Mots of Smith and Sheridan pictures a silhouette of skeleton hanging from a suspiciously Rackhamesque tree. Rackham produced a number of silhouette images. The tree appears to be weeping from several eyes on its trunk, and a stylized silhouette cat with arched back stands in the foreground.

Holland describes how spectral illusions fit into a continuum from sanity to delirium to insanity:

> Much has been written on the subject of spectral illusions; and not without reason, from their strange and mysterious nature—from the seeming warrant they give to the wildest tales of credulity—and yet further, from the link they form in the chain betwixt sound reason and madness. Without repeating instances which have become familiar, I may remark that these singular phenomena—while connected on one side with dreaming, delirium, and insanity—are related on the other, by a series of gradations, with most natural and healthy functions of the mind.[54]

I propose that— if interpreted as a hallucination—the skeleton in this vignette functions like Holland's spectral illusions. Like his phantasm, this skeleton is suggestive of the link between reason and madness. The skeleton pops out of the fetal brain like a freakish jack-in-the-box. It is interesting to note that the fetus' scorpion tail is reminiscent of the tube of a hookah. If the fetus is understood to be a pipe, then the skeleton becomes the smoke—or the hallucination. Seen another way, the fetus becomes both smoke and pipe. This Escher-like composition adds another twist to Snodgrass' "circularity," by manifesting the circularity of reality and fantasy. In the next chapter, I will discuss the ways in which Victorian ideas about hallucination play out the circularity of reality and fantasy in Sidney Sime's imagery.

This fetus' phrenologically divided skull also delivers a butterfly. The butterfly, a symbol of metamorphosis (and the soul, as Snodgrass argues) emerges

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[54] Henry Holland, "On Sleep, and the Relations of Dreaming and Insanity," [*Chapters on Mental Physiology* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), 78-9, 90-4, 113-15, 125-8], in Taylor and Shuttleworth, 108-109.

from the fetus' skull. Perhaps this fetus is dreamer and dream together. Out of the

physical matter of the "organs" of its mind emerges a symbol of a metamorphosed

psyche. This newborn psyche, like Beardsley's butterfly, leaves its connection with the

physical brain and body behind. The skeleton, however, remains behind stuck in the

material mind described by phrenological science.

This multimodal reading of the fetus vignette is evocative of the late

nineteenth-century scientific mélange—coexistent notions of a univalent and material

self and a fractured and intangible one. Alex Owen argues that, at the turn-of-the-

century, the belief in an everlasting single consciousness is replaced by the

understanding of a more fragmented self. In fact, these ideas coexisted at the

turn-of-the-century; ideas of a fragmented self did, however, come to the fore.

Owen describes a

> variously conceived but invariably fragmented or multiple self, formulated
>
> through complex processes of remembering and forgetting, and one in which
>
> the conscious "I" of the moment is inherently unreliable or unstable…In this
>
> model the idea [that] rationality was that which illuminates and brings cohesion
>
> to the whole…was replaced by a sense of the limits of rationality and
>
> impossibility of integrating all those elements signified by the self in one
>
> illuminated moment. At the very least, the psychologized self as it emerged at
>
> the turn of the century appears to be characterized by the exchange of a
>
> nonrational spiritual dimension (the soul) for a secularized irrational (the
>
> unconscious) as integral to the process of self-constitution.[55]

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[55] Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 115.

Owen infers that cracks appeared in the foundation of materialist Victorian psychology. I would argue, though, that widely accepted notions of a material mind were merely overtaken by theories of a malleable and intangible mind anchored in irrationality. Beardsley's *Bon-Mots* fetus—head open to reveal skeleton and butterfly (which, as Snodgrass says, symbolizes the soul)—could easily be read in the context of Owen's ideas. This imagery signifies at once the death of the material mind located in the brain and the expulsion of the everlasting soul, and the birth of a more fragmented psyche freed from the body's physical constraints.

Dwarfs

Dwarfs bodies, considered physically grotesque and evolutionarily regressive, were equated with primitives, animals, and supernatural creatures in nineteenth-century lore. Silver explains:

> like Eskimos, African natives, and South American Indians, dwarfs of all varieties were exhibited to a curious public; physically different from Anglo-Saxons, they both titillated and fed the curiosity of the populace. Moreover, they spoke to the rising philosophical interest in the origin, nature, status, and significance of distant races. For, as the century progressed, living dwarfs came to be considered more than just "freaks of nature"; instead they were perceived as a separate race, survivors of an aboriginal "Turanian" dwarf population. Additionally, because of new or revivified strands of belief, they received renewed attention through their connections, based on lore rather than reality, with the creatures of folklore and with the elementals, especially the gnomes,

made popular by Theosophy and related occultist movements toward the end of the century.[56]

Silver writes that Turanian dwarf theory, which proposed that "dwarfs were descended from a race older and other than *Homo Sapiens*," confirmed the widespread nineteenth-century belief that dwarfs are aboriginal.[57] Dwarf imagery manifested both late nineteenth-century scientific "fact" and the fictions that augmented this science. As I detailed in Chapter One, Rackham's dwarf portraits match Silver's description of dwarfs as genetic throwbacks and base elemental creatures. Rackham incorporated well-established nineteenth-century stereotypes based in Darwinian evolution and phrenological and physiognomical designations into his dwarf illustrations.

Beardsley's dwarf imagery, on the other hand, is more enigmatic. When Beardsley's dwarfs do resemble Africans, for example, the likeness is meant to be *provocative* rather than depictive. Heyd says of Beardsley's dwarfs: "He becomes a provocative and seductive character, connected to the world of carnal desires. Nevertheless, the dwarf also appears carrying books, connected to the intellectual world."[58] Beardsley's seductive dwarfs are portrayed with irony—sometimes suggesting a twisted phrenology and physiognomy and often pre-configuring Freud's intense spotlight on neurotic sexuality—an approach that most pre-Freudian psychologists assiduously avoided.[59]

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[56] Carole G. Silver, *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 119.

[57] Silver, 137.

[58] Heyd, 74.

[59] Although popular books such as *Psychopathia Sexualis*, written in 1886 by Austrian physician Richard von Krafft-Ebing detailed sexual perversions, most of the work of late-nineteenth century psychologists did not revolve around sexuality. Whyte notes that "Freud's work was treated with angry professional scorn from 1905-1915…Why were Freud's doctrine and methods found so despicable—a

Beardsley frequently conflates dwarf imagery with embryo, ape, and mask imagery. These hybrid dwarfs and their complex visual environments beg for multiple interpretations. Snodgrass points out that Beardsley's grotesques "reflect the disorienting contradictions we find difficult to assimilate, incarnating not comprehensible reality but the absurd, the unnatural, a fundamental dissolution of meaning itself."[60] Beardsley's dwarfs embody the idea of the hidden animalism of the unconscious mind, and depict the well-accepted idea of a string of absurd and unnatural images that make up dreams. Beardsley's dwarfs offer, as his fetuses do, multiple meanings that are open to interpretation. Victorian psychology likewise offered a volatile spectrum of theories that attempted to explain the unconscious mind. I suspect that what Snodgrass calls the dissolution of meaning in Beardsley's dwarf imagery is due, in part, to Beardsley's internalization and expression of this unstable rhetorical mix of late nineteenth-century science.

Silver refers to Beardsley's dwarf images when she argues that such images can be understood as portraits of Victorian racial stereotypes:

Little goblin men, in general, took a new hold on the Victorian imagination. Aubrey Beardsley's creatures, for example, especially the grotesque little monsters of the illustrations for *Salome* (1894-95) are less eccentric and unique when seen as outgrowths of the Turanian theory. At least one of them, the little dwarf-slave on the right in *The Eyes of Herod* [See Figure 2.7], closely

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matter of official taboos and police action—if the background had been so long prepared and he was to be recognized as a major figure a generation later? The answer is perhaps that Freud's explicit and narrow emphasis on sexuality as the source of neurosis disturbed many who were not ready—as Freud was—to admit into theory and clinical practice what they had inhibited…to be told that sexual conflict was the cause of all neuroses and that the fear of incest lay at the bottom of everything, this was hateful and Freud was duly hated."
Whyte, 167-168.

[60] Snodgrass, *Aubrey Beardsley*, 30.

resembles an African Pygmy. Fetal, somewhat Africanoid-looking creatures like the figure in *The Kiss of Judas* [See Figure 2.8] suggest Beardsley's own imaginative version of ontology recapitulating phylogeny.[61]

Silver is not wrong. Beardsley's dwarfs do indeed reference nineteenth-century racial stereotypes. I'd like to suggest, however, that Beardsley's dwarf imagery ought not to be reduced to mere unwitting expressions of Victorian social theory. Rather, taken as a group that includes Silver's examples, his dwarfs are illustrative of the perplexing hodgepodge of Victorian scientific rhetoric. Racial stereotypes relating dwarfs and "primitives" are only one aspect of this rhetoric. Silver's interpretation glosses over the sorts of multiple reads described by Snodgrass and Heyd.

To her credit, Silver scratches the surface of Beardsley's complex narratives when she points out that the figure in "The Kiss of Judas" is "Beardsley's own imaginative version of ontology recapitulating phylogeny." In this illustration the dwarf has the body of an infant and the face of an old man with "Africanoid" features. I propose, however, that we understand that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny in this creature because Beardsley combines *infant* body—not dwarf body—with Africanoid face in this dwarf. Taylor and Shuttleworth show that nineteenth-century psychology, in fact, related infant to savage: "The idea that the 'savagery' of childhood must be both acknowledged and controlled depended on and contributed to ideas about 'race' and racial difference that had become almost completely dominant by the 1870s."[62] Loss of control of savage impulses, furthermore, is part and parcel of the Victorian unconscious and dream theory. I would like to argue then, that Beardsley's dwarf in

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[61] Silver, 139.

[62] Taylor and Shuttleworth, 290.

Figure 2.7
"The Eyes of Herod"
Aubrey Beardsley, 1894
from Oscar Wilde's *Salome*

Figure 2.8
"The Kiss of Judas"
Aubrey Beardsley, 1893
The Pall Mall Magazine, July 1893
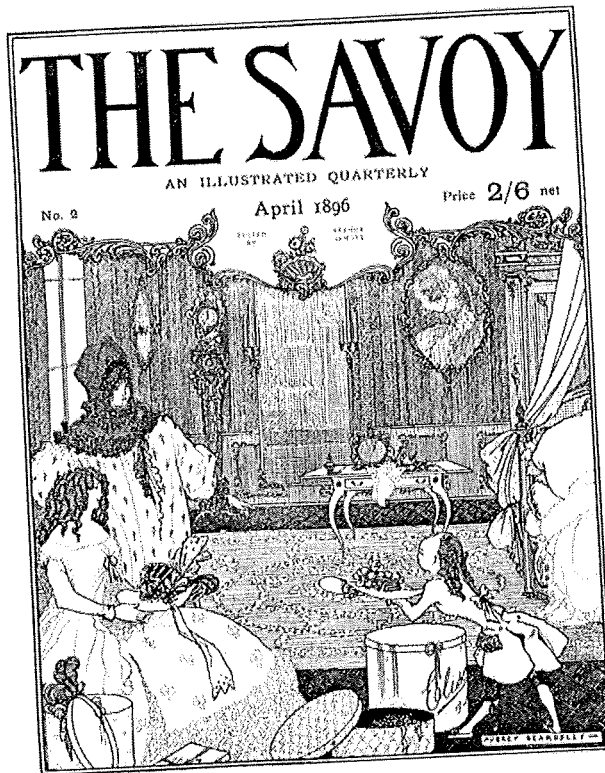
Figure 2.9
"Choosing the New Hat"
Aubrey Beardsley, 1896
front cover of the *Savoy*, No 2, 1896

"The Kiss of Judas"—a deadly evil hybrid child/savage about to kill—is the stuff of

Victorian psychology.

Beardsley's dwarf hybrids are evocative of the sorts of irrational dream

narratives described by Victorian psychologists.[63] Like these dreams, his illustrations

feature unexpected visual and narrative sequences. At the same time, they are

expressive of the grotesque combinatory possibilities inherent in evolution, myth and

fairy tale. Beardsley says of the dwarf who hands out hats in his image "Choosing the

New Hat," (See Figure 2.9) from the *Savoy*, No 2 "The little creature handing hats is

not an infant but an unstrangled abortion."[64] This intentional affiliation between dwarf

and embryo can be interpreted in multiple ways. Most obviously, Beardsley's embryos

and dwarfs are both underdeveloped and grotesque. According to art historian Milly

Heyd, Beardsley's dwarf is "a creature which should have been miscarried while still

in an embryonic state. The dwarf, like his embryonic double, is an incomplete

creature, unformed, or more precisely, deformed."[65]

The dwarf from the image "Enter Herodius" (See Figure 2.3) exemplifies this

sort of grotesque creature. Seen one way the fetus/dwarf in the image "Enter

Herodius" looks like an elderly dwarf, but viewed another way he is a large fetus. As a

fetus, he has a large head, but his curved body is hidden under a gown. He is as tall as

a dwarf, and behaves like an adult dwarf would—acting as Herodius' servant. In this

image, fetus and dwarf conflated also suggest mutation and metamorphosis because of

the grotesque combination of a developing creature with a fully formed one. The

fetus/dwarf is sexually aroused, which is itself a transformational process. Sexuality

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[63] James, 169-183.

[64] Aubrey Beardsley, *The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley*, ed. Henry Maas, J. L. Duncan and W. G. Good (Rutherford, N. J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1970), 120.

[65] Heyd, 70.

and transformation, found in both fairy tales and Darwin, provoked a discomfort in the Victorians. Gillian Beer explains that Darwinian theory

> aroused many of the same dreads as fairy-tale in its insistence on the obligations of kinship, and the interdependence between beauty and beast. Many Victorian rejections of evolutionary ideas register a physical shudder. In its early readers one of the lurking fears it conjured was miscegeny—the frog in the bed—or what Ruskin called, 'the filthy heraldries which record the relation of humanity to the ascidian and the crocodile'. In its insistence on chance as part of a deterministic order it perturbed in the same mode as the Arabian Nights—though more profoundly, because claiming the authority of science, not exotic fiction.[66]

Beer points out that Victorian novelists tended to reframe Darwin's ideas so that they centered on humans. Beardsley brings humans to the center of evolution, but refuses to elevate them. He carries out his own brand of artificial selection by actively choosing to mix and match embryo and dwarf body parts, creating a strangely mutated fetus or dwarf suspended in time and development. Dwarf and embryo are both stunted—their growth is halted before their potential is reached. According to Beer, Victorians were fascinated with the idea of individual growth. Recapitulation brought individual growth and Darwinian evolution together. The monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* exemplifies this association among growth, evolution, and the grotesque. He is created fully grown, unable to evolve.

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[66] Beer, 7-8.

When Mary Shelley came to describe a monster in *Frankenstein* she shows a creature denied the experience of growth. He is fabricated…out of organic bits and pieces…Though he is a creature capable of undergoing the full cultural development of a man, he is excluded from humanity because he has never partaken of the primary experience of humankind: that of physical growth.[67]

Shelley's monster is reminiscent of Beardsley's stunted dwarf/embryo monsters. Both are monstrous because they are assembled from bits and pieces, and because they don't grow. Erin O' Connor, in fact, describes the hybridization of discrete forms in monsters as a monstrous gesture—"an abortion, incapable of useful symbolic life. Such reading is complicated, however, by the frankly happy, even gleeful, tone of the freak show."[68] It is no coincidence that—like Beardsley who calls the dwarf from "Choosing the New Hat" "an unstrangled abortion"—O' Connor associates the grotesque mixing that characterizes monstrosity with an abortion. This monstrous assemblage is also evocative of a version of miscegeny that creates something that is not quite human. Beardsley's dwarf illustrations are more than a nod to dwarfs as aristocratic playthings, or an expression of Victorian racial theory or Beardsley's own debilitating disease.[69] They are the freak shows of Victorian science.

Conglomerate forms and grotesque sexuality also characterize Beardsley's dwarfs who are not part fetus. The supernatural dwarf was pervasive in Beardsley's images, instilling the ambience of a grotesque fairy tale, or the spectacle of a traveling

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[67] Beer, 103.

[68] Erin O'Connor, *Raw Material: Producing Pathology in Victorian Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 170.

[69] A number of critics have pointed out that Beardsley's deformed grotesques are a reflection of his psychology and related to his tuberculosis. There is certainly merit to these arguments, but I would like to suggest other, less personal, explanations.

See Heyd, 70, and Snodgrass, *Aubrey Beardsley*, 27-40.

show, in which magic power is coupled with sexuality plus metamorphosis. The

gnome in Beardsley's image from the frontispiece to the fairy tale *Pastor Sang* by

Bjornstjerne Bjornson (See Figure 2.10) threatens the village below. He has distorted

human facial features, his body is hairy, like an ape's, and he has claws. His eyes

bulge, his nose is large, and he is sticking out his tongue; he is reminiscent of a

Renaissance grotesque gargoyle found in a cave (the word grotesque comes from the

word grotto, which means cave in Italian). The gnome's chin looks like testicles, and

his tongue, which hangs out of his mouth, looks like a semi-erect penis. In an ironic

twist, a bird's nest with two birds (birds have long been a symbol for the penis) sits on

the side of the mountain. This nest looks like pubic hair with two erect penises,

however the ogre has a flaccid, immature animal sort of penis. He looks hungrily

down from his cave to the village below. One is not sure whether he plans to ravage or

eat the villagers (or whether he is even capable of ravaging them). According to Silver

dwarfs were considered to be rapists in both German and English fairytales.

> rape…being enslaved and used by grotesque, non-human beings…is implicit
> in…Rumplestiltskin and, in his English equivalent, Tom-Tit-Tot. Depicted as
> large-headed grotesques, they share the threatening and malevolent nature of
> such typical Grimms' fairytale creatures as the evil dwarf in "Snow White and
> Rose Red."[70]

There are several other Beardsley dwarfs with similar protruding tongues and

testicular chins: in "The Repentance of Mrs…," (See Figure 2.11) which seems to be a

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[70] Silver, 125-126.

Figure 2.10
Frontispiece to the fairy tale *Pastor Sang*
Aubrey Beardsley, 1896
from Bjornsterjne Bjornson, *Pastor Sang*

Figure 2.11
"The Repentance of Mrs…"
Aubrey Beardsley, 1895
The Yellow Book, Vol. IV, January 1895

Figure 2.12
"The Stomach Dance"
Aubrey Beardsley, 1894
from Oscar Wilde's *Salome*

Figure 2.13
Beardsley's bookplate
Aubrey Beardsley, 1896

reworked version of "The Litany of Mary Magdelen," and also in "The Stomach

Dance" (See Figure 2.12) from *Salome.*

The dwarf in "The Stomach Dance" has little circular demarcation on his

forehead precisely in the position of the phrenological "organ" of Benevolence (See

Figure 1.1). Nineteenth-century phrenologist Combe says of Benevolence, "It is

depressed in all the ferocious tribes of animals, and also in nations remarkable for

cruelty, as the Caribs, &c," suggesting the dwarf's cruelty (the dwarf from the

frontispiece to *Pastor Sang* also has hints of phrenological organs on its forehead).

The circular form on the "The Stomach Dance" dwarf's head also resembles

Beardsley's characteristic fetus eyes. With this round shape as eye, the right side of the

dwarf's face looks like a distorted fetus with a semi-erect penis.

Beardsley's dwarfs are not all overtly threatening. In a design for his own

bookplate (See Figure 2.13) Beardsley places a large naked woman alongside a midget

carrying a plate of books on his head (note the joke on bookplate). At first glance, the

midget seems subservient to the woman. At closer inspection, more is elevated in this

image than a plate of books. The midget has an erection, a potential threat to the naked

woman. The dwarf in Beardsley's bookplate is reminiscent of Rumplestiltskin—he

appears to be harmless, but is quietly eager to take advantage of the woman.

The connection among dwarf sexuality, metamorphosis, and myth is clear in

Beardsley's depictions of Alberich (the dwarf from the Wagnerian legend *The*

Rheingold) (See Figure 2.14) in his book *The Story of Venus and Tannhauser.*

Beardsley describes, "the black, hateful sounds of lovemaking."[71] Beardsley adored

Wagnerian opera and produced several illustrations of Alberich. In the legend,

Alberich forges a magic ring from the Rhinegold. This ring offers the bearer the power

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[71] Aubrey Beardsley, *Story of Venus and Tannhauser or "Under the Hill,"* (London: Leonard Smithers, 1907), reprint (London: St. Martin's Press, 1974), 57.

of metamorphosis. Heyd explains, "This power in the end causes his destruction, as the gods lust for the ring. The sly gods convince him to turn into a serpent and then into a midget frog...At this stage they chain him and take away his power."[72] Alberich metamorphoses from a dwarf to a frog in order to gratify his lust for gold. This destructive power ultimately renders him impotent. In Beardsley's illustration Alberich is bound in a fetal position with ropes. Like a fetus, his head is huge in comparison to his body, which is covered with fur and his feet are animal claws. In *The Story of Venus and Tannhauser* [1907], Beardsley explains that "Alberich's savage activity and metamorphoses...make the tableau (of the opera) the least reposeful, most troubled and confusing thing in the whole range of opera."[73] Beardsley links Alberich's animalistic sexual sounds with his metamorphosing into an animal.

Unlike the Rackham Alberich, who is pictured as a strong, but rugged, man tussling with three enticing females, the Beardsley Alberich's uncontrollable metamorphoses and pathological sexuality converge in his monstrous physique. Monsters signified, according to O'Connor, the unpredictable and disconcerting changes of modern life. She explains that in the late nineteenth century:

> Monsters gave shape to ideas in ways that were beyond established modes of verbal and visual communication...Over the course of the nineteenth century the grossly deformed came to image the convolutions of progress, their variously stunted and skewed physiques providing an apt figure for the

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[72] Heyd, 83.

[73] Beardsley, *The Story of Venus and Tannhauser*, 58.

Figure 2.14
Alberich
Aubrey Beardsley, 1896
from Beardsley's *The Story of Venus and Tannhauser*
The third in a series of four illustrations intended for *The Story of Venus and Tannhauser* "The Comedy of the Rheingold"

irregular and unpredictable process of change itself. With their missing limbs and extra parts, spotted skin and misshapen flesh, monsters displayed a remarkable capacity for defamiliarizing the status quo.[74]

To O'Connor, then, gross deformity represented the twisting paths (O'Connor actually uses the term "convolutions," which is a term suggestive of brain anatomy) of change. At the turn-of-the-century, a multitude of ideas about the place of the self stirred up discomfort and anxiety about uncontrollable change. Unlike Rackham's ogres and elves, Beardsley's dwarfs manifest conflicting messages: the comforting notions of a material mind embodied in external physical form, and also the disconcerting propositions of a disjointed unconscious and dreaming mind freed from physical constraints. Beardsley's dwarfs present a portrait of this contemporaneous scientific rhetoric and the anxiety it provoked.

Monkeys and Apes

Dwarfs were equated with monkeys and apes by Victorian physical anthropologists. Pygmy dwarfs were described as having a considerable prognathism (in which the jaws extend beyond the upper face), large teeth, short neck and long arms, which were "indicators of the Pygmies' simian nature." They also had large, distorted feet which "implied the goblinesque."[75] Turanian dwarf theory cast African dwarf pygmies as a simian "missing link."[76] This theory, hooked up with misinterpretations of Darwin's work, blurred the boundary not only between dwarf and ape, but also between reality and fantasy. Misunderstood as claiming that humans

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[74] O'Connor, 161-162.

[75] Silver, 131.

[76] Silver, 137.

evolved from apes and monkeys, Darwinian theory was caricatured in critiques and cartoons. Late nineteenth-century science writer and Darwin advocate Thomas Henry Huxley, attempted to win over a skeptical audience when, in his essay, "On the Natural History of the Man-Like Apes" [1863], he compares mythology, imagination, and dreams with *real* discoveries.

> Ancient traditions, when tested by the severe processes of modern investigation, commonly enough fade away into mere dreams; but it is singular how often the dream turns out to have been a half-waking one, presaging a reality....the Atlantis was an imagination, but Columbus found a western world; and though the quaint forms of Centaurs and Satyrs have an existence only in the realm of art, creatures approaching man more nearly than they in essential structure, and yet as thoroughly brutal as the goat's or horse's half of the mythical compound, are now not only known, but notorious.[77]

For the Victorians, these newly discovered lower primates were akin to Centaurs and Satyrs. The existence of previously unknown groups of dwarfs and apes—who resembled European human beings, but were nevertheless considered bestial—was hardly more comprehensible than the existence of mythological creatures.

Turanian theory merges dwarf and simian. Recapitulation unites embryo and lower primate. In recapitulation, a human embryo must pass through the "simian stage" before it reaches maturity. Just as the embryo is at first an amoeba-like creature—a creature found within Beardsley's embryo imagery—the embryo is, at one point, monkey-like, complete with tail.

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[77] Thomas Henry Huxley, "On the Natural History of the Man-Like Apes, "*Man's Place in Nature* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863) reprint (London: J. M. Dent, 1906), 1.

Beardsley plays on these ideas by making his monkeys and apes look and behave human. His monkeys and apes resemble descriptions of African pygmies with "long upper lip, ape-like mouth, [and] receding chin."[78] They commit murder by slitting the victim's throat with a razor blade in Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (See Figure 2.15), and appear in uniform carrying a sedan chair in ancient Rome in Juvenal's *Satires* (See Figure 2.16). In the real world, humans, not uniformed monkeys, carry sedan chairs. The murderous orangutan and sedan chair hoisting monkeys, like Huxley's mythological Centaurs and Satyrs, can exist only in the realm of fantasy and dreams.

The monkeys in the "Frontispiece for Juvenal" behave like servants. Standing upright, they wear fancy uniforms and carry their passenger through the streets of ancient Rome. Their bodies look human except for their "goblin" feet. Their striking facial resemblance to African pygmies puts these creatures at the embryonic stage of cultural and intellectual development. According to Stephen Gould, German anatomist Carl Vogt [1864] wrote that "The Negro brain resembles that of our children, and…the grown-up Negro partakes, as regards his intellectual faculties, of the nature of the child."[79] According to Gould Victorian racial theorist Louis Agassiz [1850], in fact, "had already compared the brain of adult blacks with that of a white fetus seven months old."[80] "And if the African savage was a perennial child," Silver notes, "the Pygmy, still lower in the evolutionary chain, was a permanent fetus, a case of arrested development.[81] These cultural precepts strengthen the case for the influence of racial

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[78] Silver, 131.

[79] Carl Vogt, *Lectures on Man* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1864), 183-192, quoted in Stephen Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 103.

[80] Louis Agassiz, "The Diversity of Origin of the Human Races," *Christian Examiner*, 49:110-145, 1850, quoted in Stephen Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, New York: W.W. Norton, 115.

[81] Silver, 133.
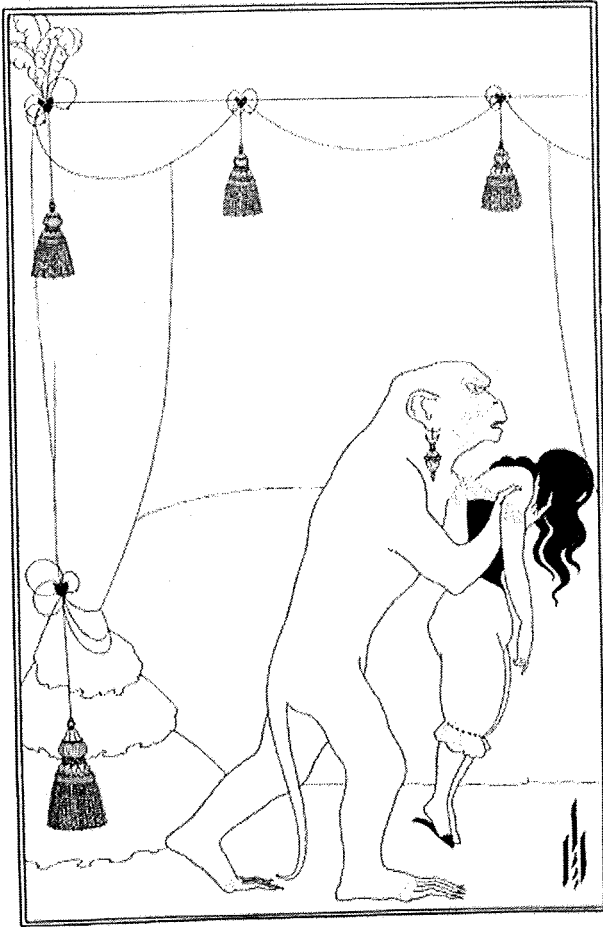
Figure 2.15
Orangutan from "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"
Aubrey Beardsley, 1894-5
The Works of Edgar Allen Poe
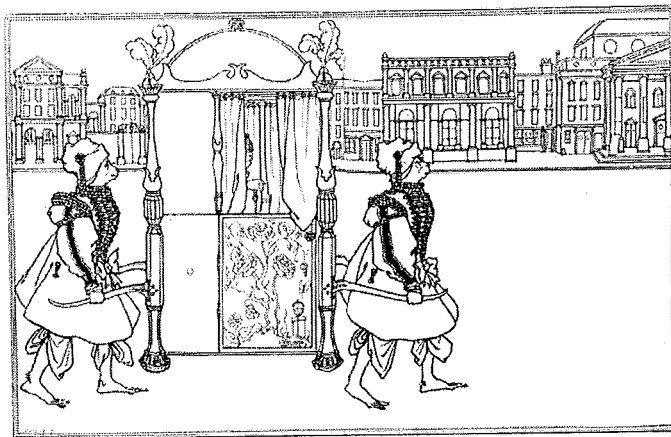
Figure 2.16
Frontispiece for Juvenal
Aubrey Beardsley, 1895
The Yellow Book, 1895

Figure 2.17
An Adult Male Orang-Utan
from Thomas Henry Huxley, "On the Natural History of the Man-Like Apes,"
in *Man's Place in Nature*, 1906

theory and evolutionary theory on Beardsley's images. Silver describes how the

Victorians linked anxiety about the "lesser" races to fear of fairies.

> This fear of the nonhuman horde [a term extensively used for fairies]...vividly
>
> emerges in the fantasy literature of the 1890s...For in fiction, as in reality,
>
> Victorians became increasingly afraid of groups they saw as evolutionary
>
> failures or throwbacks...Moreover, if human beings were essentially apes of
>
> higher development, the possibility existed that something might happen to
>
> consign a group or race to less than fully human status.[82]

Fairies were also perceived as evolutionary failures of the human race: "From

popularizations of Darwin's theories and vitalistic views of evolution came the

widespread notion that fairies were life-forms developed on a separate branch of

evolution." [83] Fairies were frequently described as missing links or as aboriginal

throwbacks.

Like fairies, Beardsley's monkeys and apes are reminiscent of animals that

behave like humans but can't escape their animal nature. In the fairy tale *The Cat and

Mouse in Partnership* by The Grimm Brothers, a cat and mouse agree to live together

in partnership and save food for the winter. The cat sneaks out and eats the food.

When winter comes, and the mouse is hungry, the cat scorns the mouse and then eats

him too. The Grimm Brothers end the story by explaining, "Now that's the way of the

world, you see." Do the Grimms suggest that people are, in fact, animals who can't

control their own natural instincts? The Victorians held similar fears about human

nature, including sexual nature. Zatlin, in fact, says of the "Frontispiece for Juvenal,"

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[82] Silver, 143.

[83] Silver, 51-52.

"Here, sexuality [symbolized by the monkeys] carries the half glimpsed woman to an assignation in a chair with phallic supports and painted roses."[84]

Humans come from apes, and, indeed, according to nineteenth-century embryology practically *are* apes for a time during development. This savage beast—which the Victorians believed inhabited the unconscious mind—had the potential to emerge under the right circumstances. Snodgrass argues that anxiety about humanity's bestial ancestry was rampant at the turn-of-the-century:

> In a world where disorder and isolation had eroded all humanistic kinship, Beardsley's physically deformed and haggard figures struck viewers as a "complete realisation of the essentials of evil,"(Strong 90)...In contrast to the order the classical soul reflects, the monstrous fin-de-siècle soul recalls the degenerative atavism that late Victorians were inclined to see everywhere at the end of the century: "Mr. Beardsley's figures are not men and women: they are but monkeys aping humanity' (Smith 16).[85]

These monkeys were certainly aping a deeply sexualized humanity. Snodgrass quotes Arthur Symons [1924] obituary essay for Beardsley, in which Symons describes the sexual overtones of Beardsley's monkey imagery: "the 'monkeys,' by which the mystics symbolized the earthlier vices...and those cloaked and masked desires...are part of a symbolism...the satire of desire returning upon itself, the mockery of desire enjoyed, the mockery of desire denied."[86] Beardsley plays with such erotic and

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[84] Zatlin, *Aubrey Beardsley and Victorian Sexual Politics*, 183.

[85] Snodgrass, *Aubrey Beardsley*, 175.

[86] Arthur Symons, "Aubrey Beardsley," *Studies in Seven Arts*. Vol. 9 of *The Collected Works of Arthur Symons,* London: Martin Secker, 1924, 99, 100-102, quoted in Snodgrass, *Aubrey Beardsley*, 175.

degenerate fantasies in his illustration for *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* by Edgar

Allen Poe.

Poe's nightmarishly imaginative work lends itself to fantastic illustration.

Beardsley was asked to illustrate a complete works of Edgar Allen Poe in 1894-5.

Beardsley wrote to the Chicago publisher, "I feel Poe's tales would give me an

admirable chance for picture making." Beardsley "knew his own talent," according to

critic Brigid Brophy. "The complete ten-volume edition of the works of E.A.

Poe…contained four of his most masterly and surreal expeditions into the macabre."[87]

In the story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* [1855], a friend of the protagonist solves

a baffling double murder committed by an orangutan. The story itself must have

resonated with Beardsley. Poe's protagonist sets a very nightmarish mood replete with

darkened room:

> It was a freak of fancy in my friend…to be enamored of the night for her own
>
> sake; and into this *bizarrerie*…I quietly fell…The sable divinity would not
>
> herself dwell with us always; but we could counterfeit her presence. At the first
>
> dawn of morning we closed all the massy shutters of our old building; lighted a
>
> couple of tapers, which strongly perfumed, threw out the ghastliest and feeblest
>
> of rays. By the aid of these we then busied our souls in dreams—reading,
>
> writing or conversing, until warned by the clock of the advent of the true
>
> Darkness.[88]

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[87] Brigid Brophy, *Beardsley and His World*, (New York: Harmony Books, 1976), 76.

[88] Edgar Allen Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," *Poe's Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (London: Clarke, Beeton, and Co., 1855) reprint *Tales of Edgar Allen Poe* (New York: Random House, 1944), 51.

Like Poe's story, Beardsley's illustration (See Figure 2.15) has strange twists and intriguing innuendo. In Poe's story, the orangutan is first discovered mimicking his master: "Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a looking glass attempting the operation of shaving."[89] The ape escapes and enters the murder scene through the L'Espanaye family's fourth floor window. There he kills Madame and Mademoiselle L'Espanaye. In Beardsley's illustration, the orangutan carries the murdered body of Mme. L'Espanaye—in the story, he strangles her after slitting her mother's throat. When he realizes he will get caught, he, in very human fashion, attempts to hide the evidence. He throws one body out the window and stuffs the other up the chimney.

Beardsley's orangutan is surprisingly hairless. His body is more like that of a very strong man than an ape (such as the orangutan depicted in this illustration from a book by Huxley) (See Figure 2.17) and he wears an earring, although he has claws and an ape face. Like the proverbial "missing link," he is more a man than an ape.

The illustration is also sexually suggestive. Zatlin explains that monkeys and apes served as metaphors for male virility in nineteenth-century erotic art. Apes also assumed a twisted Darwinian symbolism based on the erroneous notion that humans are descended from apes. Zatlin cites French artist Félicien Rops's aptly titled erotic image *Darwinisme ou tranformisme*, "in which a monkey performs cunnilingus" on a woman. Zatlin, who connects Beardsley's work to this French erotic tradition, explains that although Beardsley toned down the eroticism in his illustration, "For Poe's story, 'Murders in the Rue Morgue,' he lends the ape an almost human sexuality through the

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[89] Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," 86.

earrings he wears, which is culturally associated with pirates or men given to taking what they desire."[90]

The earring also has psychosexual connotations. Like a fetish, the ape's well-hung earring mimics the shape of Mme. L'Espanaye's body and undergarments. The orientation of his fingers is suggestive of a woman's spread legs and vagina. This erotic image implies a host of sexual perversions, including fetishism, necrophilia, and miscegeny. Although many late nineteenth-century psychologists avoided the topic of sexuality, Ellenberger notes that with the growth of psychiatry as a discipline in the nineteenth century, "The medical and psychiatric study of sexual deviations also made decisive progress after 1880."[91] Especially noteworthy is the book *Psychopathia Sexualis*, written in 1886 by Austrian physician Richard von Krafft-Ebing, as the first complete book of "classifications of sexual abnormalities" that included sadism, necrophilia, masochism, and fetishism.[92] Krafft-Ebing's book presented case studies of sexual deviation that "provoked a deep interest that soon reached a wide public, which...was already provided with a great number of novels of the subject of sex."[93]

The narrator in Poe's story notes that the L'Espanaye house was ransacked and that the "bed had been removed and thrown to the middle of the floor."[94] Yet, the curtains and cushiony shapes in Beardsley's background feature a nicely arranged canopied bed similar to the bed in Beardsley's self-portrait (See Figure 2.18). Poe's text notwithstanding, the ape in this illustration looks as if he is carrying a swooning (or dead) Mme. L'Espanaye to bed.

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[90] Zatlin, *Aubrey Beardsley and Victorian Sexual Politics*, 183.

[91] Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 296.

[92] Ellenberger, 297-298.

[93] Ellenberger, 298.

[94] Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," 56.

Although there is also a canopy bed in the corner, Rackham's illustration (See Figure 1.6) does not feature it prominently. There is a subtle sexuality to Rackham's ape—he stands with spread legs over the dead Mme. L'Espanaye. But his realistic, and murderous, orangutan is more likely to stir up the Victorian discomfort with the animalism of "savage" peoples. Rackham's orangutan portrays destructive power of a beast that is rather too close for comfort to its human cousin.

Beardsley's orangutan—which looks like the nineteenth-century physiognomical designations of an "African" (See Figures 1.2 and 1.4)—also fits American physician William Rimmer's description of an American Indian "Retreating Chin. Nose…more or less flat…Deep Jaws. Deep Mouth. Retreating Forehead" that I applied to Rackham's ape in Chapter One. [95] Beardsley's ape illustration for "Murders in the Rue Morgue," however, is not merely expressive of Victorian racial stereotypes, notions of Darwinian evolution, or case studies of psychosexual pathology. This illustration is also reminiscent of dream narratives observed by late nineteenth-century Dutch psychiatrist Frederik van Eeden. According to Ellenberger, van Eeden noted his own "demon dreams, in which he had to deal with demon personalities, that is non-human, acting and speaking independent beings" such as Beardsley's deviant man-like ape. [96] Wolfgang Kayser's description of the artistic grotesque suggests strong connections between Victorian classifications of dream narratives and grotesque narratives:

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[95] William Rimmer, *Art Anatomy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1877). See also Pieter Camper, *The Works of the Late Prof. Camper, on the Connexion Between the Science of Anatomy and the Arts of Drawing, Painting, and Statuary &c.* (C. Dilly, 1794), ed. T. Cogan, and Charles Le Brun, *Passions Delineated in Nineteen Studies for Students, and All Who Wish to Read the Various Expressions of the Human Face* (W. Tegg, 1863).

[96] Ellenberger, 308.
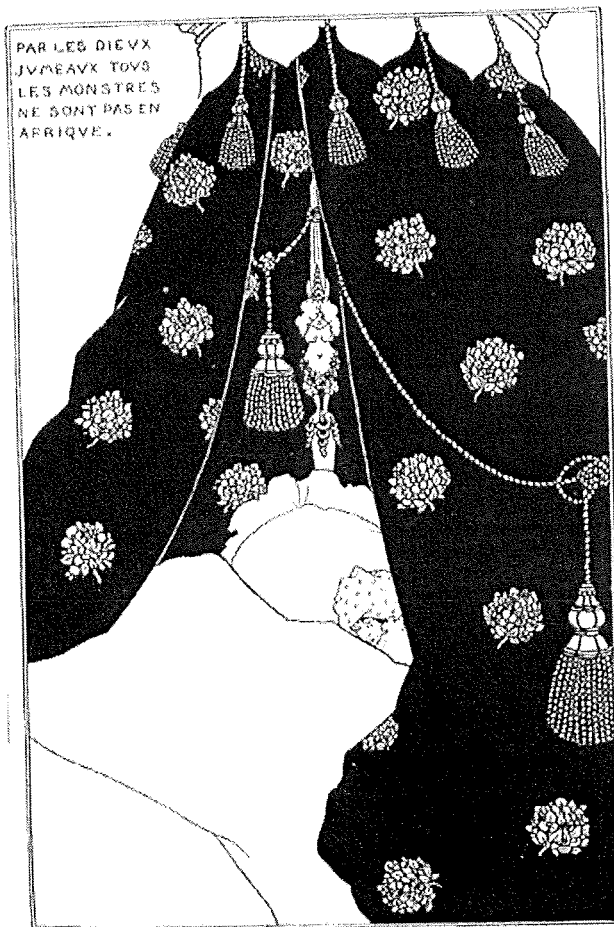
Figure 2.18
Beardsley's self-portrait in bed
Aubrey Beardsley, 1894
No. 1 of "Four Drawings of Aubrey Beardsley" in *The Yellow Book*, 1894

In spite of all the helplessness and horror inspired by dark forces which lurk in and behind our world…the truly artistic portrayal effects a secret liberation. The darkness has been sighted, the ominous powers discovered, and the incomprehensible forces challenged. And thus we arrive at a final interpretation of the grotesque: AN ATTEMPT TO INVOKE AND SUBDUE THE DEMONIC ASPECTS OF THE WORLD."[97]

The hidden forces that "lurk in and behind" suggest the dangerous and uncontrollable aspects of the unconscious mind. Some Victorian psychologists theorized that the convoluted material of these dark forces could be read in the brain's anatomy. Other psychologists proposed that these were subjective actions that were constantly shifting and evolving. I would like to argue, however, that much is missed if one interprets Beardsley's monkey and ape imagery as simply symbolic of unconscious thought or the unconscious. Instead, I suggest this imagery also depicts a shift in scientific notions of *the function* of the unconscious mind—a coexistent mix of pre-Freudian theories of a material mind located in the body and an ethereal psyche freed from physical constraints.

Masks

Miriam Benkovitz neglects pre-Freudian psychology in her discussion of Beardsley's masks. She notes that there are comparable motifs in literature: "Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are, after their fashion, investigations of masks in a society

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[97] Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 188.

without the terminology of psychoanalysis."[98] Benkovitz infers that without the

terminology of Freudian psychoanalysis, mask iconography is merely an instinctive

expression of a yet-to-be discovered unconscious. Both the term "unconscious" and

ideas about the unconscious mind, however, were well established in the late

nineteenth century. Oliver Wendell Holmes characterizes such ideas in a paper entitled

"Mechanism in Thought and Morals" presented in 1870:

> What happens when one idea brings up another? Some internal movement, of
>
> which we are wholly unconscious, and which we only know by its effect. What
>
> is this action, which…in men of wit and fancy, connects remote ideas by
>
> partial resemblances; in men of imagination, by the vital identity which
>
> underlies phenomenal diversity.…There is a Delphi and a Pythoness in every
>
> human breast.[99]

Holmes' ideas exemplify the Victorian notion that the unconscious functions as both

an oracle and beast within the mind. The oracle forms the future and the beast harks

back to the past. Holmes links the unconscious to the creative thought—a widely

accepted Victorian concept—suggesting that surprising or unusual associations may be

the result of unconscious processes.

Beardsley's mask imagery is teeming with complex associations. Yet

Benkovitz, characterizes the mask motif, through its expression in Beardsley's Pierrot

figure, as "a mask of self."[100] She presents a one-sided view of the motif based in the

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[98] Miriam Benkovitz, *Aubrey Beardsley: An Account of His Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981), 78.

[99] Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Mechanism in Thought and Morals," an address before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard University, June 29, 1870 (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1871), quoted in Whyte, 171.

personal psychology of the artist. Heyd likewise calls Beardsley's masks "a medium for declaring his wish to hide,"[101] Although these approaches have merit, I would like to argue that Beardsley's mask motif is much more than a reflection of his psychology or, as Benkovitz also suggests, "a cliché of his intellectual environment."[102] The mask motif's shifting perspectives and multiple narratives demand a mode of complex interpretation that goes beyond mere cliché or superficial analysis of the illustrator's psychology, narrowly construed.

As Benkovitz and Heyd have noted, Beardsley's mask iconography is evocative of the Freudian hidden self. In this study, I reveal the ways Beardsley's masks manifest the *pre-Freudian* hidden self. They embody Victorian notions of the unconscious mind and the dreaming mind. Not just an intellectual cliché, I suggest Beardsley's masks give mind to the limits of physiognomy. Kate Flint believes, in fact, that "the whole Victorian literary fascination with disguise and its capacity to deceive successfully...may be seen as a counter-current to the belief in the sufficiency of physiognomic encodement."[103]

The masks in "Dreams" from *Lucian's True History* (See Figure 2.2) manifest a descriptive physiognomy of disguise. These masks are reminiscent of Beardsley's text that describes fans and masks at a banquet in his own book *The Story of Venus and Tannhauser*:

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[100] Benkovitz, 79.

[101] Heyd, 197.

[102] Benkovitz, 79.

[103] Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18.

There were spotted veils that seemed to stain the skin with some exquisite,

august disease, fans with eye-slits in them through which their bearers peeped

and peered; fans painted with postures and covered with the sonnets of Sporion

and the short stories of Scaramouche, and fans of big living moths stuck upon

mounts of silver sticks. There were masks of green velvet that make the face

look trebly powdered; masks of the heads of birds, of apes, of serpents, of

dolphins, of men and women, of little embryons and of cats; masks like the

faces of gods; masks of coloured glass, and masks of thin talc and of india-

rubber.[104]

Beardsley's text is reminiscent of O'Connor's description of freak show monsters

"with their missing limbs and extra parts, spotted skin and misshapen flesh." This

array of unique grotesque traits, O'Connor argues, demonstrate a "remarkable capacity

for defamiliarizing the status quo."[105] The disconcerting strangeness of deformation

and transformation in the multiple masks from "Dreams" takes center stage and

produces its own unique irrational reality.

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[104] Beardsley, *The Story of Venus and Tannhauser*, 36.

This text suggests intimate conceptual connections, for Beardsley, among depictions of masks, fetuses, and apes. This text from *The Story of Venus and Tannhauser* is also reminiscent of Poe's text from "The Masque of the Red Death": "Be sure they were grotesque. There were much glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm—much of what has been since seen in 'Hernani.' There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these—the dreams—writhed in and about, taking hue from the rooms." Edgar Allen Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," in Edgar Allen Poe, *Tales of Edgar Allen Poe* (New York: Random House, 1944), 383.

"Hernani" refers to Victor Hugo's play performed in France in 1830. Richard Miller explains that "The censors of France had recently prohibited one of his plays from being performed. To ensure that this did not happen to 'Hernani,' Hugo assembled a Romantic Army. They ensured that there was enough of a crowd upon opening night that the play could not be shut down. The arrived in the most absurd styles, and fashions." Richard Miller, *Bohemia: The Protoculture Then and Now* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977), 60.

[105] O'Connor, 161-162.

In "Dreams," masks and fetuses coexist in a nightmare environment. In the bottom left corner there is a one-eyed mask that comes out of curling lines, suggesting the wind or a spider web. In the middle of the right side there is a cat-like mask that partially obscures a theater mask. These masks—grotesque spectators—observe the fetus, who is about as central as a figure could be in this particular piece. The fetus' face is a mask as well. The image, whose subject *is* dreams, provides deeper insights into the ways in which popular ideas of the unconscious mind and Victorian dream theory structure Beardsley's illustration. The masks in "Dreams" come together as a seemingly irrational hodge-podge commonly associated with dreams and the metamorphoses associated with Darwin and fairy tales.

Some nineteenth-century writers equated dreams with fairy lore. In his essay "The Prophetic Character of Dreams, and Nightmare" from *The Philosophy of Sleep*, Robert Macnish (cited by Freud in his discussion of "The Stimuli and Source of Dreams" in *The Interpretation of Dreams*) describes a nightmare in terms similar to those used for those who are pixie led, or forcibly carried away by fairies.

> In every instance, there is a sense of oppression and helplessness; and the extent to which these are carried, varies according to the violence of the paroxysm. The individual never feels himself a free agent; on the contrary, he is spellbound by some enchantment, and remains an unresisting victim for malice to work its will upon.[106]

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[106] Robert Macnish "The Prophetic Character of Dreams, and Nightmare" [*The Philosophy of Sleep* (Glasgow: W. R. M'Phun, 1830), 50-3, 117-18, 124-8, 136-9, 143], in Taylor and Shuttleworth, 104.

Macnish describes how a dreamer is spellbound by enchantment. Frances Power

Cobbe compares dreaming to myth-making and describes it as fairy work in her

popular essay from *Macmillan's* magazine.

> The instant that daylight and common sense are excluded, the fairy-work
>
> begins. At the very least half of our dreams...are nothing else than myths
>
> formed by unconscious cerebration on the same approved principles, whereby
>
> Greece and India and Scandinavia gave to us the stories which we were once
>
> pleased to set apart as 'mythology' proper. Have we not here, then, evidence
>
> that there is a real law of the human mind causing us constantly to compose
>
> ingenious fables explanatory of the phenomena around us...[107]

Cobbe believed that dreaming allowed us to compose myths that explain our

perceptions. According to Cobbe, darkness is requisite for the fairy work of dream

scenarios to commence.

The dark and alternate images, *A Caprice* and *A Masked Woman* (See Figures

2.19 and 2.20), are painted on the back and front of one canvas, respectively. The

masked woman wears a black theater mask through which her gaze is indeterminate.

Brian Reade disregards the possible influence of pre-Freudian psychology when he

characterizes *A Masked Woman*: "The symbolism of the picture is Freudian, and

Beardsley's choice of it is miraculous, considering that Freud's mythology was

unknown in England in 1894."[108] Heyd claims that "in pre-Freudian times artists

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[107] Francis Power Cobbe, "Dreams, as Illustrations of Involuntary Cerebration," [*Darwinism in Morals and Other Essays* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1872), 336-8, 361-2], in Taylor and Shuttleworth, 114.

[108] Brian Reade, *Aubrey Beardsley* (New York: Viking, 1967), 342.

Figure 2.19
"A Caprice"
Aubrey Beardsley, oil on canvas, 1894

Figure 2.20
"A Masked Woman"
Aubrey Beardsley, oil on canvas, 1894

unconsciously used the double image, Freud's contemporaries during the end of the nineteenth century (such as Beardsley) seem to apply the system consciously without being aware of his theories."[109] Both Beardsley critics, however, fail to consider that much Pre-Freudian dream theory suggests that there is an alternate side to each of us that comes out in the dream state—much as the back and front of this painting show alternate sides of the subjects. Taylor and Shuttleworth note that "The notion that the dreaming and the waking state might correspond to two mental worlds, each separate from the other, was further explored in debates about double consciousness."[110] Victorian psychologist James Sully describes the connection between dreams and dual personality. He suggests that the alternate personality personifies a collective primitive state:

> In the case of many persons…this reversion in dreaming to the experience of early life is recurrent…Here we find the dream touching analogically another…region of human experience. Psychology has of late occupied itself much with the curious phenomena of double or alternating personality. By this is meant the recurrent interruption of the normal state by the intrusion of a secondary state, in which the thoughts, feelings, and the whole personality become other than they were.[111]

Frances Power Cobbe believed that this primal self functions as mythmaker, weaving together bits and pieces into an unpredictable but cohesive narrative. This painting presents alternating selves—of a dwarf and a woman—in the fashion of Victorian

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[109] Heyd, 211.
[110] Taylor and Shuttleworth, 70.

[111] James Sully, "The Dream as a Revelation," [*Fortnightly Review*, 59 (March 1893) 354-65], in Taylor and Shuttleworth, 120.

dream theory. On the front, a woman is enticed to follow a faceless black dwarf through an archway. This image is based on a drawing, No. 1 of "The Comedy Ballet of Marionettes," in which the dwarf's face is visible. In this illustration the dwarf, clearly African, leers suggestively at the woman's body. He has a glass or vial in his hand that contains a substance, perhaps a magic draught or sleeping potion. On the back, the woman, enlarged twofold, has removed her outer garments and sits trance-like. A mask covers her eyes. On the table in front of her is a small gray mouse. Heyd describes the strange dual perspective set up by this two-sided painting:

> The woman is invited to enter an archway, which in this case, since we are looking at an oil painting, with depth, means an invitation to the viewer to enter in her wake into the picture. When the viewer tries to discover where he has got to, by taking a look at the back of the painting, the second scene appears. But here it transpires that the characters have undergone a metamorphosis.[112]

In this metamorphosis it is unclear who has enchanted whom. In fairy tale fashion, the African dwarf is transformed into a mouse. The dwarf's animal side is laughingly small and meek. The woman's trance-like eyes are covered with a mask, suggestive of a dream, one personality on one side and one on the other. In this piece, Beardsley conflates fairy lore, Victorian notions of the unconscious, and metamorphosis into a dual dream narrative whose very duality is destabilized.

This image can be rotated indefinitely. Which side of Beardsley's dual painting represents Sully's "normal" state and which his "secondary state?" This multiplicity

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[112] Heyd, 79.

fits Victorian notions of the function of imagination in dreams. Historian Tony James'

explains: "the work of imagination [in dreams] has been to endow with relief and

movement, to combine images seen separately, and to 'create' a moving image never

before seen." [113] *A Caprice* and *A Masked Woman* together do precisely that. Much

like the process of interpreting a moving image, in *A Caprice* and *A Masked Woman*

the viewer is compelled to investigate and assemble two spatially separate narratives

whose order is indeterminate—each with a multitude of shifting meanings—into a

dynamic entity. The mask iconography is an important part of this dynamic entity.

At the same time, Beardsley's masks—which become part of the monstrous

guises of their owners—provocatively suggest a growing focus on vision and new

ways of comprehending identity. O'Connor, who proposes that vision became a

charged topic in the Victorian era, argues that in the late nineteenth century, prurient

interest in observing deformed individuals challenged notions of the self:

> So thoroughgoing was the sense of the freak as a lens through which the world
>
> could be viewed that deformity itself became a metaphor for social perspective.
>
> Thackeray, for instance, used giants and dwarves as figures for problems of
>
> analytical distance. In order to see the same old things from new angles, he
>
> wrote, "we have but to change the point of view, and the greatest action looks
>
> mean; as we turn the perspective-glass, and a giant appears a pygmy" (History
>
> of Henry Esmond 235)…By providing new ways of seeing, monsters
>
> ministered to a historically specific need to revise the contours of human
>
> identity. On the broadest level, freaks provided an alternative viewpoint on

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[113] James, 180.

basic questions about what it meant to inhabit a body, and more broadly, on what it meant to be human."[114]

Beardsley grotesques likewise raise questions about the nature of the immutability of identity and the stability of perception. His black-masked grotesques call attention to the eyes as the organ of sight—simultaneously hiding and drawing attention to the eyes with a bold black shape (See Figure 2.21). According to Flint, "The Victorians were fascinated with the act of seeing, with the question of the reliability—or otherwise—of the human eye, and with the problems of interpreting what they saw."[115] Beardsley's black masks evoke similar questions about the reliability of the eye and interpretation of a visual narrative. Beardsley commonly depicts his masked eyes as small dots inside the mask's eye opening. Like the tiny hole in a pinhole camera, these pinpoint eyes seem to focus the reality depicted in these illustrations in a hazy light. The upward turned shape of many of Beardsley's black theater masks hides the complete expression of the character's eyes and upper face, making each wearer seem as if he or she is laughing or sneering at the scene. The persistent indistinctness of expression of these black masked figures calls the function of the faculty of vision into question. Shaky vision also destabilizes these figures' role in the visual rhetoric of the illustration, and infers that viewers' perceptions are likewise provisional.

Like Rackham, Beardsley illustrated Poe's story "The Mask of the Red Death." The two illustrators' depictions are very different indeed, starting with the moment in the story they choose to illustrate. Rackham (See Figure 1.17) shows the revelers—a group of grotesque *in-betweens*—but not the Red Death. The color that washes over the huddle of masqueraders—which Rackham may have unconsciously substituted for

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[114] O'Connor, 162.
[115] Flint, 1.

Figure 2.21
Black theater masks

"The Burial of Salome"
Aubrey Beardsley, 1894
from Oscar Wilde's *Salome*

"The Scarlet Pastorale"
Aubrey Beardsley, 1898
The London Year Book, 1898

the Red Death character—has the look of a nasty bruise (or of various bodily fluids), which adds a morbid quality. Most of the revelers resemble Rackham's fairies, *in-betweens* whose physiognomy reveals their character: animalistic and corporeal.

Beardsley's Red Death is likewise material, but less visceral than Rackham's figures. Poe describes this figure:

> tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat…His vesture was dabbled in blood—and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror.[116]

The Red Death in Beardsley's illustration is a shrouded, colorless character whose mid-body remains out of sight (See Figure 2.22). As Heyd notes, the visible parts of Beardsley's figure are not speckled with blood—they are completely white, "the mask of the white plague" (tuberculosis was sometimes called the white plague).[117] Heyd and Snodgrass interpret Beardsley's Red Death Pierrot figure in the context of his tuberculosis. Snodgrass says of Beardsley's stark figure "The image of the Plague or Red Death that the carnival revelers confront, is not Poe's masked skeleton but

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[116] Poe, 385.

[117] Heyd, 47.
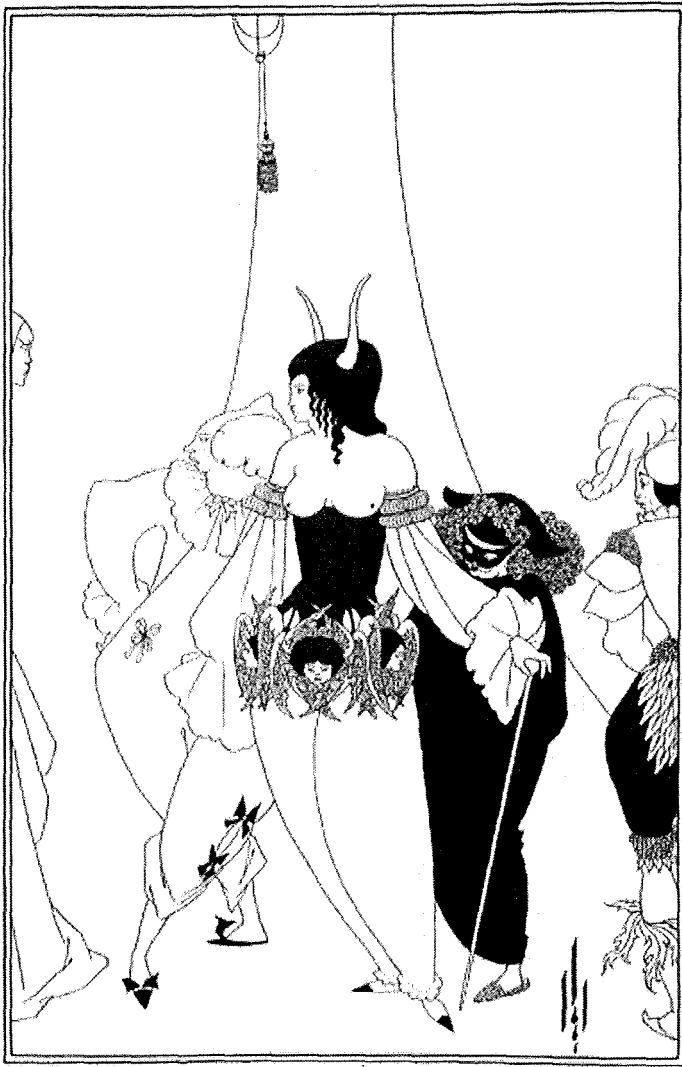
Figure 2.22
"The Masque of the Red Death"
Aubrey Beardsley, 1894-5
from *The Works of Edgar Allen Poe*

Beardsley's autobiographical version of it—an unusually tall (and presumably thin), frowning Pierrot, dressed in what hints to be a shroud. Such an interpretation...once again links Beardsley favorite surrogate to disease."[118] And Heyd, who reaffirms Beardsley's affiliation with his Pierrot figure, writes that Pierrot's whiteness:

> suggests illness as well as detachment from reality...a disillusioned approach is expressed in Beardsley's illustration for *The Mask of the Red Death*...where it is the Red Death itself which is depicted as Pierrot! This is a purely personal interpretation of the mask, and one which deviates from the original Poe story...Pierrot-Beardsley therefore becomes not only the victim of the white plague...but also one who causes death.[119]

Beardsley critics rightly cite his tuberculosis as an influence on his Pierrot motif and the Red Death character. In fact, his Red Death's chest is cropped out of the image, creating a sense of anticipation about the form it might take. But I suggest that the role of tuberculosis in the visual narrative of this illustration could be expanded. In order to unmask the connection between TB and the instability of perception at the turn-of-the-century, it is first necessary to paint a visual portrait of tuberculosis in nineteenth-century Britain.

Tuberculosis produced its own disfigured physiognomy. O'Connor cites Engels' 1845 physiognomic-esque description of a London populace racked with tuberculosis: "pale, lank, narrow-chested, hollow-eyed ghosts...languid flabby faces, incapable of the slightest energetic expression."[120] Tuberculosis is indeed a material

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[118] Snodgrass, *Aubrey Beardsley*, 195.

[119] Heyd, 44.

malady. Like a set of physiognomical traits, consumption expressed itself in a

sufferer's demeanor, giving clues to the outside world. Consumptives also spewed

grotesque material. O' Connor describes the repugnant byproducts of tuberculosis:

> rotting sores; noxious vapors and obnoxious breath; stagnant pools of sewage
>
> and pints of spewed blood; bad drainage and draining pus; choked privies and
>
> endless plugs of putrid sputum, the sticky seals of respiratory
>
> distress…Alternately clear, white, yellow, green or gray, they were streaked
>
> with black matter and shot through with clots. Hawks from strangled lungs
>
> were ubiquitous, festering on floors and mucking up streets; sitting in chamber
>
> pots and saturating sheets; smeared on handkerchiefs, sleeves, and the backs of
>
> hands; crusting into dust and eventually entering other lungs on clouds of
>
> vitiated air.[121]

These grotesque excretions, like mucous-laden abortions, were readily apparent; their

minuscule dried after-products were not. Beardsley's Red Death—a ghostly spectator

whose gaze focuses, through his mask, on the other characters in the illustration like a

deathly ray—embodies the horrible hidden mysteries of tuberculosis. In *Illness as*

Metaphor Susan Sontag describes how tuberculosis (and cancer) become

metaphorically linked with the sufferer's character: "With the modern diseases (once

TB, now cancer), the romantic idea that the disease expresses the character is

invariably extended to assert that the character causes the disease…Passion moves

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[120] O'Connor, 2.

[121] O'Connor, 2-3.
It is interesting to note that O'Connor's description brings to mind the color scheme in Rackham's illustration.

inward, striking and blighting the deepest cellular recesses."[122] In the Red Death,

whose cropped figure hovers off the left edge of Beardsley's page, character moves

inward to consume.

Sontag believes that fantasies about tuberculosis and the sufferer's character

are due to its mysterious cause and uncontrollable course:

> For as long as its cause was not understood and the ministrations of doctors
>
> remained so ineffective, TB was thought to be an insidious, implacable theft of
>
> a life…Although the way in which disease mystifies is set against a backdrop
>
> of new expectations, the disease itself…arouses thoroughly old-fashioned
>
> kinds of dread.[123]

A decrepit phantasm, these all-too-real "hollow-eyed ghosts" spewed psychological

contagion. Like the threatening mélange of new scientific thinking, the terrible

mystery of tuberculosis re-animated "primitive" and mythic ways of thinking.

Sontag's "old-fashioned kinds of dread" are akin to Victorian fears of the

uncontrollable beast within—both are hidden destructive forces that could emerge

under the right conditions. Beardsley's Red Death figure is at once material and

ethereal. Simultaneously visible and invisible, this particular Red Death unmasks

Victorian anxieties about unpredictability and instability of perception at the turn-of-

the-century.

Although Beardsley challenges meaning by using white and black theatrical

masks in a number of illustrations—especially in his Pierrot figure—other intricately

complicated masks are more relevant to the purpose of this chapter. The most

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[122] Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 45.

[123] Sontag, 5.

interesting mask imagery provokes further interpretation by merging with fetus, ape, and fairy tale iconography. The two fetus vignettes from the *Bon-Mots* of Smith and Sheridan (See Figures 2.5 and 2.6) with apparent designations of phrenological "organs" on their heads, look as if their faces are removable masks. Unlike Beardsley's black masks, however, these facemasks fail to hide the character of these fetuses—in fact, considering Zatlin's phreno-physiognomical analysis of these fetuses noted earlier in this chapter, one could say that these divided mask faces completely *reveal* their character.

Rather than pinpoint eyes, these fetus masks have the strange staring amoeba eyes that are common to Beardsley's fetuses. The interpretation shifts if one imagines the outer circle of the eye (with ciliated lashes) as eyeholes in a mask. The true aspect of the fetuses' complete face then becomes a mystery, but what is seen through the eyehole looks like a particular cell seen through the circular lens of a microscope. According to Flint, the varied visual scale offered by a microscope challenged, "at the level of popular perception, the quality of observations made by the unaided human eye."[124] Beardsley's fetus masks in these illustrations challenge ideas of vision and perception by offering multiple interpretive possibilities based in their visual elements. Flint relates compiling a detailed physiognomical map from the particulars of the body to compiling a detailed cultural map from the particulars of a culture. She cites twentieth-century critic Carol Christ's ideas about the impact of this late nineteenth-century phenomenon on perception:

> Carol Christ considered the problems of relating details to the whole at a time
> when the collapse of religious belief, and the co-terminous developments in

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[124] Flint, 5.

political and scientific theories left the individual isolate: 'conceiving of the

universe as a mass of particulars led logically to seeing experience as wholly

subjective and particular.'[125]

Beardsley's mask iconography manifests these ideas by bringing together multiple

meanings that are suggestive of complex turn-of-the-century scientific narrative.

Benkovitz calls Beardsley's use of the mask motif "a cliché of his intellectual

environment...his subjects were an illustrator's. He began by exemplifying the text of

some book...Beardsley's concern was...to 'grace a page' and at the same time to

impose a pattern on convention by means of predictable associations."[126] I would like

to argue that there is much more to Beardsley's mask iconography. Along with more

obvious interpretations that reference Beardsley's hidden self, his masks both

assemble and dismantle physiognomical notions of character in the face. Beardsley's

mask motif references Victorian ideas about the narrative structure of the dreaming

mind—in which identity becomes a fractured and indeterminate moving frame of

reference. And finally, Beardsley's masks are suggestive of nineteenth-century interest

in the nature of sight, which was based, in great part, on scientific inquiry into visible

and invisible phenomena.

Conclusion

The aboriginal and the advanced—ancient fairy lore and cutting-edge

science—coalesced into fantastic fiction. Darwin's work foregrounded sexuality,

growth, transformation, and mutation, which were also integral to fairy lore.

Beardsley's fetus, mask, ape and mask illustrations pose these same themes in

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[125] Flint, 19.

[126] Benkovitz, 78.

suggestive and provocative ways. His fetus, mask, ape and mask imagery plays on scientific certitude by simultaneously denigrating and elevating physiognomy and phrenology. Beardsley's irrational dream-like narratives coalesce with Victorian dream theory, which associated the irrational dreaming mind with multiple selves, and with myth and hallucination. This dream theory, which foregrounds notions of a material psyche while venturing into ideas of an intangible unconscious, fit the perception of a fractured self at the turn-of-the-century. The transitions between multiple selves in dream narrative bring to mind a ghostly filmic identity in which fractured still images come together to create a holistic, but dynamic, narrative. Film narrative is a productive metaphor for some of Beardsley's multiple undercurrents. Indeed, in the fourth, and final, chapter I examine still images from several of the films of two Beardsley contemporaries, French filmmakers Emile Cohl and Georges Méliès, in order to better interpret these sorts of complex components. The still images from Cohl's and Méliès' moving art incorporate irrational dream narratives that bring to mind Beardsley's illustrations. Beardsley's mask iconography—which simultaneously reveals and covers characters' eyes—evokes the faculty of vision. Cohl and Méliès' moving pictures draw on the magic of visible images that are produced by technology that focuses invisible light particles.

Beardsley images dovetail nicely with Sidney Sime's work discussed in the next chapter. Sime's hallucinogenic imagery likewise addresses the provocative relationship between the multiple dimensions of the seen and the unseen. In this chapter, I discussed how in the late nineteenth century, tuberculosis, incurable and mysterious, rhymed with Victorian anxiety about destructive forces hidden in the interior of the body. Like Beardsley's masked Red Death, which harbors implications for the mysterious interior and grotesque exterior of tuberculosis, Sime's work

scrutinizes the permeability of interior and exterior. Sime's illustration also contends with hidden forces. But in his approach, Sime exchanges the beast hidden in the unconscious mind for the ghost in the machine. His illustration is evocative of the dynamic and intangible imagery generated by optical gadgetry, and of a shadowy psyche released from the constraints of the physical body.

Chapter Three

Supernatural Selection: Sydney Sime's Weird Science

Introduction

As discussed in previous chapters, subjective and objective models of

perception coexisted at the turn-of-the-century. This complex and sometimes

contradictory scientific discourse belied popular notions of a material self in a stable

universe; it also contributed to a sense of the instability of perception. According to

Carol Christ and John Jordan, areas of conflict between purely subjective and purely

objective paradigms suggested novel explanations for perception: "the Victorians were

interested in the conflict, even the competition, between objective and subjective

paradigms for perception. The ideas that most powerfully engaged their imagination

were those...that could simultaneously accommodate a uniquely subjective point of

view and an objective model of how perception occurs."[1] Christ and Jordan cite late

nineteenth-century critic Walter Pater's "impressionism" as an approach, which

"combines scientific objectivism with a personally singular subjectivism." According

to Christ and Jordan, Pater's impressionism represents:

> physical life as a "combination of natural elements to which science gives their
>
> names." These elements are in perpetual motion in a set of processes, "which
>
> science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces." Human access to this
>
> world of elements and processes...can only come through the individual's

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[1] Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan, eds., *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), xxiii.

impression...Thus, Pater observes, "The whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind."[2]

Pater's hybrid paradigm is reminiscent of the multiple meanings in Beardsley's fetus, dwarf, ape and mask illustrations discussed in the last chapter. Like the alternating "kinematics" of Beardsley's double painting *A Caprice* and *A Masked Woman* (See Figures 2.19 and 2.20), Pater's natural elements in perpetual motion become impressions, compressed and played back on the screen of the viewer's mind. These constantly moving elements that act out a set of processes, however, ultimately must accommodate a host of shifting perceptions.

Challenges to the certainty of perception were directly related to new scientific thought that foregrounded the limits of the human faculty of vision. If we can't trust our own eyes, the Victorians wondered, what does that infer about well-entrenched beliefs in a self physically located in and described by the physical forms of the body? Beardsley's fetus, dwarf, ape and mask imagery replays these concerns—in them he portrays both material and ethereal selves. Beardsley engages the conflicted interstices of coexisting models of objective and subjective perception. He interrogates the immutability of a concrete material reality. At the same time, Beardsley weaves this materialist pursuit into portraits of a shifting, and frequently irrational, interior domain.

Sidney Sime (1867- 1942) likewise explores the relationship between interiority and exteriority in his imagery. Sime's work probes these issues and presents a range of visual renderings in which interiors are exposed and the invisible is illuminated. At the same time, he uses the power of light and darkness in his visuals

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[2] Christ and Jordan., xxiii-xxiv.

to create what appear to be *projections* of the unconscious mind's machinations. While Beardsley opens a trap door into the irrational narratives of the psyche, Sime focuses and projects these irrational narratives through the lens of his mind's eye. Sime's imagery is suggestive of ethereal matter that, like the light particles of cinematic medium, converges to render mental impressions—the fuzzy image-thoughts of the unconscious mind. One gets the sense that deprived of its unseen energy source, Sime's imagery might suddenly vaporize.

At the same time, Sime—whose work matured after Beardsley's death, in the early decades of the twentieth century—ventures into the abstract worlds of the new physics. Sime's visual worlds illuminate the distorted time/space continuums that exist in unseen dimensions. He presents, in visual form, his interpretation of the invisible *exterior* worlds of newly reframed scientific ideas about the universe. His illustration ventures beyond the expression of the conflicted interstices between objective and subjective models of visual perception, and comes to light in the realms of hazy abstraction and unfathomable configuration.

I have noted that subjective and objective models of perception coexisted at the turn-of-the-century. In the same period, pre-Einsteinian physics offered startling theories that stressed mind-bogglingly subjective depictions of time, space, and motion. Einstein's Special Relativity of 1905 presented new ideas about time and space that were beyond the general public's comprehension. Kern explains Einstein's stunning new ideas about the subjective qualities of space:

> In the special theory of 1905 space was redefined as a quasi-perspectival
>
> distortion. The contraction was not a real change in the molecular construction
>
> of the apparatus but a distortion created by the act of observing from a moving

reference system. This perspectival effect differed from ordinary perspective because it was not due to optics and would occur no matter how far the object observed in motion was from the observer. The relative velocity of the object and viewer was the crucial factor.[3]

I would like to argue that, for the general public, these new notions of time and space were akin to fantasy. This science conjured up dream worlds in which invisible forces distorted material reality. These highly abstract scientific ideas fit with the visual vocabulary of a disjointed and unpredictable hallucinatory realm. Sime's fantastic visuals, which embody this *fin de siècle* cutting-edge physics, draw on contemporaneous notions about hallucination.

Sime's three illustrations from the series *From an Ultimate Dim Thule (A Record of Dreams)* incorporate his own eccentric textual descriptions with hallucinatory visions and abstract forms. His illustrations for the article "Haschisch Hallucinations" are full of bizarre, nightmarish creatures that suggest the force for Sime of the connection between hallucination and imaginative visual imagery. Nineteenth-century psychologists frequently linked the unconscious processes that produced hallucinations and dreams with the creative imagination. Sime sets himself up as an interpreter—a mediator between the imaginary visions of the unconscious mind and the fluctuating realities manifested by new scientific theory.

Isobel Armstrong compares the interpreting eye to glass and explains that for the Victorians the transparency of glass was understood as an invisible mediating force. Armstrong explains that for the eye: "What comes in as perception flows out as

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[3] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 135-136.

thought."[4] Sime's perceptions seem to flow out as imaginative thought. Like Armstrong's glass lens, one could say for Sime's imagery, "in the movement between one state and another, there is a third term. The world is triangulated." Sime's imagery "enables the closely guarded interiority of the individual, its inner private self, to have a social being as it gazes beyond."[5] Sime's creative thought processes function like that "third term" that projects dark and mysterious image-thoughts as an external "social" entity.

Sime's imagination functions as a sort of optical device—a lens that makes visible the internal workings of the unconscious mind. His expressive imagery pushes the relationships among surface and depth, and light and darkness. Flint notes that:

> When Freud's nineteenth-century predecessors set out to map mental life, and, in particular, when they searched for an adequate language in which to describe the life of the mind, and to investigate the presence and workings of the unconscious and of the memory, they were continually drawn to a register of terms which were not only spatial, but highly visual. Above all, these terms drew on a vocabulary of surface and depth, of the hidden and the revealed, of dark and of light.[6]

Sime's imagery suggests the deep and mysterious spaces of the unconscious—and the new science. The elaboration of surface and depth, which relates directly to hidden

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[4] Isobel Armstrong, "Transparency: Towards a Poetics of Glass in the Nineteenth Century," in *Cultural Babbage: New Studies in Victorian Science*, ed. Francis Spufford and Jenny Uglow (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 131.

[5] Armstrong, 131.

[6] Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 140.

and revealed elements in his illustration, is paramount in Sime's atmospheric

chiaroscuro. Light and darkness held great sway for Sime—in his work light is an

active medium that possesses the power to reveal, disintegrate, or destroy. Darkness

is a foil for light in Sime's work. In his illustration, dark areas are fully charged and

bursting with the potential to reveal, at any instant, bizarre and unexpected aspects of

an image.

Sime's visual worlds appear to abide by their own supernatural laws in which

"Material objects should not be looked for in the Realms of Abstraction...over the

borders of and through the Gates of Horn [the threshold of dreams in classical

literature] [1897]."[7] His queries into the strange invisible processes of Darwinian

mutation and natural selection take form in hallucinatory images from Sime's book

Bogey Beasts [1923], which were based on his impressions of Darwin's theory of

evolution. These bizarre creatures' physical forms are determined by their thoughts—

some embody a visual vocabulary of cutting-edge physics.

Late nineteenth-century mathematician Charles Hinton described two-, three-

and four-dimensional worlds in lush visual detail in his popular book *Scientific*

Romances. Although there is no direct evidence that Sime read this book, his interest

in notions of the fourth dimension suggest that he was aware of this science. Like new

scientific and popular optical devices, this new physics amplified the realm of vision,

calling into question the distinction between the visible and the invisible. For Sime,

the variable and intangible universe described in the new physics was just an

extension of the variable and intangible unconscious mind.

Sime was not a passive purveyor of the impact of science on Victorian culture.

He was actively engaged with the discourses of scientific enquiry. Darwinian theory

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[7] Sidney Sime, "From An Ultimate Dim Thule I," *The Idler*, June 1897, 694.

and ideas about the fourth dimension fascinated him. Indeed, Sime seems to imagine his visual inquiries as scientific ones; he speculates and hypothesizes about abstract possibilities much like a scientist would. Sime's visual environments suggest what is possible in a world in which physical and natural laws are pushed to extremes in a multitude of directions. In his work he combines the visual expression of these imaginative possibilities with familiar motifs that provide the viewer a path into his abstract propositions.

Hallucination

Sime uses the visual vocabulary of hallucinations to express these imaginative possibilities. In the late nineteenth-century, some scientists suggested that hallucinations, like dreams, could be a normal product of the unconscious mind, not merely a symptom of insanity. Nineteenth-century writers, who affirmed the creative power of hallucination, supported these scientific ideas:

> Towards the latter half of the 19th century the psychologists received some unsolicited help from the world of literature. The romantic school…was convinced that visions were a proper and extremely valuable source of literary inspiration…Various devices were accepted as leading to the desired "hallucinatory" experiences: alcohol (Poe, Coleridge), opium (de Quincey), hashish (Rimbaud)…and dreams and dream-like states. It is significant in view of the later developments in psychology that Hawthorne stressed that the true vision of dreams continues in hypnogocic states, when they can be captured,

and even in moments of absolute wakefulness when suddenly an insight

catches one, as it were, unawares.[8]

For these authors, hallucinations and dreams held imagination-stimulating powers

that could be tapped while in an altered state. Interestingly, Sime [1908] cites two

authors famous for their hallucinogenic imagination as powerful influences on his

work, "I owe everything to omnivorous and indiscriminate reading, but perhaps if I

mention Poe … [and] De Quincey, it will give you some indication of my preferences

in literature."[9] Sime certainly absorbed the notion that hallucinatory and dreamlike

visualization—in which the mind conjures up shadowy, esoteric worlds that

frequently bear resemblance to the real one—was an important part of the creative

process. Sime must have also understood the belief that hallucinations externalize the

internal machinations of the unconscious mind, producing bizarre combinations of

visuals not based in rational thought. Sime's creative process depended on the

externalization of the workings of the unconscious mind to manifest complex

subliminal perceptions that surrounded broad scientific themes.

Sime's work expresses these subliminal perceptions in visible form. For the

late-Victorians, according to Flint, the unconscious mind was the link between the

visible and the invisible realms:

By the closing decades of nineteenth century, the borders between the visible

and the invisible worlds were increasingly hazy. The mediating concept which

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[8] Theodore W. Sarbin and Joseph B. Juhasz, "The Historical Background of the Concept of Hallucination," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* no. 4 (1967): 350.

[9] E.S. Valentine, "Mr. S. H. Sime and His Work," *The Strand Magazine*, October 1908, 398.

linked the two, which could allow one to hypothesize about the uncertainties and variables of many types of perceptions, was that of the unconscious.[10]

Sime's fantasy imagery reproduces this phenomenon, capturing what ought to be invisible in visible form. His work illuminates and plays out on paper the *terra incognita* of the subjective unconscious mind.

Sime's process resembles the experience of one hallucinator from H.E. Gowers article [1905] (illustrated by Sime) "Haschicsh Hallucinations." This article details actual drug-induced hallucinations described by those under the influence of hashish. The hallucinator, whose eyeballs act as a stereoscope, saw:

two images of each object…reflected on each retina [that] produced a perfect symmetry….all the menageries of monstrous dreams, trotted, jumped, flew or glided through the room. He saw…whimsical beings with the feet of his armchair for legs and dial-plates for eyeballs….Then, with inconceivable rapidity he sketched these gruesome creatures….He found, when the effects of the drug were past, that one of his frantically-drawn sketches bore the inscription: "An animal of the future." It represented a living locomotive with a swan's neck terminating in the jaws of a serpent, whence issued jets of smoke with two monstrous jaws…each pair of jaws had a pair of wings, and on the tail of this fearsome creature was seated the Mercury of the ancients.[11]

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[10] Flint, 284.

[11] George Locke, *From an Ultimate Dim Thule: A Review of the Early Works of Sidney Sime* (London: Ferret Fantasy, 1973), 36-37.

The connection among eyeballs, a stereoscope—an optical device used to view two images at once to create the illusion of a three-dimensional image—and hallucination is interesting in that it makes a direct connection between mediated vision and hallucinatory illusions. The hallucinator's stereoscope eyeballs produced a cinematic experience, captured in his sketches, in which "monstrous dreams, trotted, jumped, flew or glided through the room." Sime created in similar fashion, fantasizing and then drawing. Arthur Lawrence of the *Idler* magazine interviewed Sime in January 1898. In this interview "Lawrence wrote that the artist's conception of his 'weirds' was complete in his mind before he began the actual drawing..."[12] Sime's imagery— including his own "animals of the future not seen in this world" combined with classical motifs—rivaled the most abstruse hallucination or dream.

Abstraction, according to nineteenth-century psychologist Hervey de Saint-Denys, is one means of combining images in dreams in which qualities are transposed from one subject to another. Sime's work frequently does just this. In his image for the Ta-Ta from *Bogey Beasts* [1923] (See Figure 3.1), Sime's "Realm of Abstraction" produces a creature who has exchanged his brain for a kitchen. The Ta-Ta strolls down a path, roof on his head. His intoxicated-looking blank stare suggests that the smoke streaming from the chimney on the roof originates from some mind-bending substance. The Ta-Ta has transposed his brain with a domestic space, a phenomenon reminiscent of Hervey de Saint-Denys' description of the transposition of qualities in dreams:

A dreamer may be struck by the scrawny nature of a horse dragging some

ramshackle cart in a dream, and if the cart makes him think of some farmer

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[12] Locke, *From an Ultimate Dim Thule*, 17.
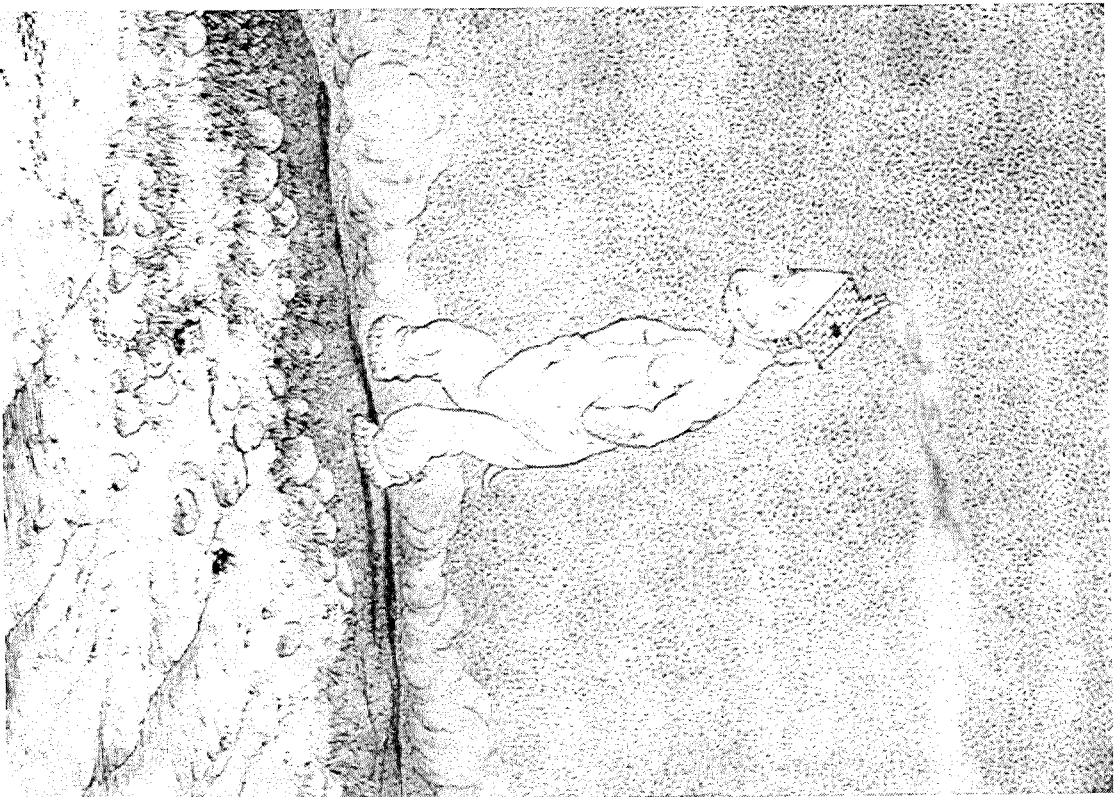
Figure 3.1
"The Ta-Ta" from *Bogey Beasts*
Sidney Sime, 1923

Figure 3.2
"The Quest of the Oof-Bird"
Sidney Sime
from "From an Ultimate Dim Thule" (A Record of Dreams)

who has a similar one, he may transpose the abstract idea of thinness and wasting away onto this farmer, who turns up in the middle of the dream at death's door.[13]

In the abstraction of a dream, qualities are transposed from one subject to another. Like Hervey's farmer who takes on the emaciated quality of the dreamer's horse, the Ta-Ta takes on the homey qualities of a living space. Sime's text for the Ta-Ta describes his interior:

There is /A cozy Kitchen / Inside his roomy head / Also /A tiny bedroom / In which / He goes to bed / [14]

The Ta-ta is not just two entities at once—like Beardsley's double painting *A Caprice* and *A Masked Woman*, the Ta-ta's interior domestic space transposes with his exterior in an ongoing fashion. Sime explains:

So when his walk / Is ended / And he no more would roam / Inside out / he turns himself / To find himself / At Home.../ And when his / Chores / Are ended / And he would walk about, / Outside in he turns / Himself / To get himself / Turned out.[15]

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[13] Tony James, *Dream, Creativity, and Madness in Nineteenth Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 179.

[14] Sidney Sime, *Bogey Beasts*, (1923 reprint) (Newport News: The Purple Mouth Press, 1975), 59.

[15] Sime, *Bogey Beasts*, 59.

The Ta-ta's transposition feels dreamlike because it is so irrational. His body contorts—a confusing distortion of physical mass. Transposition of the visual qualities of space characterize Sime's image "The Quest of the Oof-Bird," (See Figure 3.2) *From an Ultimate Dim Thule* (A Record of Dreams). Dreams are the subject matter for this three illustration series. In "The Quest of the Oof-Bird," two African children, exotic questers, wander into an abstract landscape of Escher-like optical illusions. The African children's bodies bend at the same angles as the black tree in the background—the flat black shape of these two figures is abstract as well— and create a fork in the strange path in the foreground. Because of the unusual perspective, the path seems to fall like a curtain on either side of the children. At the top of the page it disappears into the hill in the background. This path leads the children and the viewer on a journey through space, time, and mind. Sime describes the process: "Away down the Valley of the Bho-Jees, over the Mountain of the Shadder-Jax, through the attenuated Limbo of the Cree-Pee...ensorcelled for countless aeons by the wiles of the Pewking Peout...away we quested in search of the nest of the Oof-Bird. Material objects should not be looked for in the Realms of Abstraction."[16] For Sime, the mind's dream maneuvers—the realms of abstraction in which seemingly material objects appear, mutate, and vaporize—are like a journey through distorted time and space. The children escape "over the borders and through the Gates of Horn," out of the dream.

Sime must have been aware of the commonly held belief that the mind "traveled" during hallucination. "A Tale of London" from Lord Dunsany's *The Last Book of Wonder* begins with a Sultan asking his hashish eater to "dream to me now of London." The hashish eater "travels" to London and then hallucinates a city of houses

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[16] Locke, *From An Ultimate Dim Thule*, 47.

"of ebony and cedar which they roof with thin copper plates that the hand of Time turns green…golden balconies in which amethysts are where they sit and watch the sunset." This vision was clearly a phantom; late nineteenth-century London was hardly the wonderful, exotic place that the hashish eater "sees." Unfortunately, Sime did not illustrate this chapter, but these words set the hallucinatory tone for the illustrations to come. This chapter does not necessarily suggest that Dunsany and Sime used hashish. It does suggest that they were synchronized with the belief that hashish hallucinations not only inspired creativity, but also contributed to the phenomenon of experiencing two places at once.

The image, "He was moving over the desert in a barque of mother-of-pearl" (See Figure 3.3) from "Haschisch Hallucinations" [1905] illustrates a text in which the hallucinator "travels" to both real and fantastic places.

> Mr. Taylor…fancied himself at the foot of the pyramid of Cheops. He wished to climb up, and immediately found himself at the top. Looking down, the pyramid appeared to be built out of Cavendish tobacco.…He was moving over the desert in a barque of mother-of-pearl, studded with jewels of surpassing size and lustre, and soon reached a waterless land of green and flowery lawns, where honey was drawn up in dripping pitchers.[17]

Mr. Taylor travels to the top of the pyramid merely by thinking about it. He journeys in a ship over desert to a mostly realistic scene that has a bizarre plant with eyeball fruit (as in the image "The Pst" from *Bogey Beasts*) (See Figure 3.4) and an ear or fetus at its base. The eyeballs stare at the audience, tempting them to become part of

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[17] H. E. Gowers, "Haschisch Hallucinations," *The Strand* No. 180, Vol. 30, December 1905, 659.
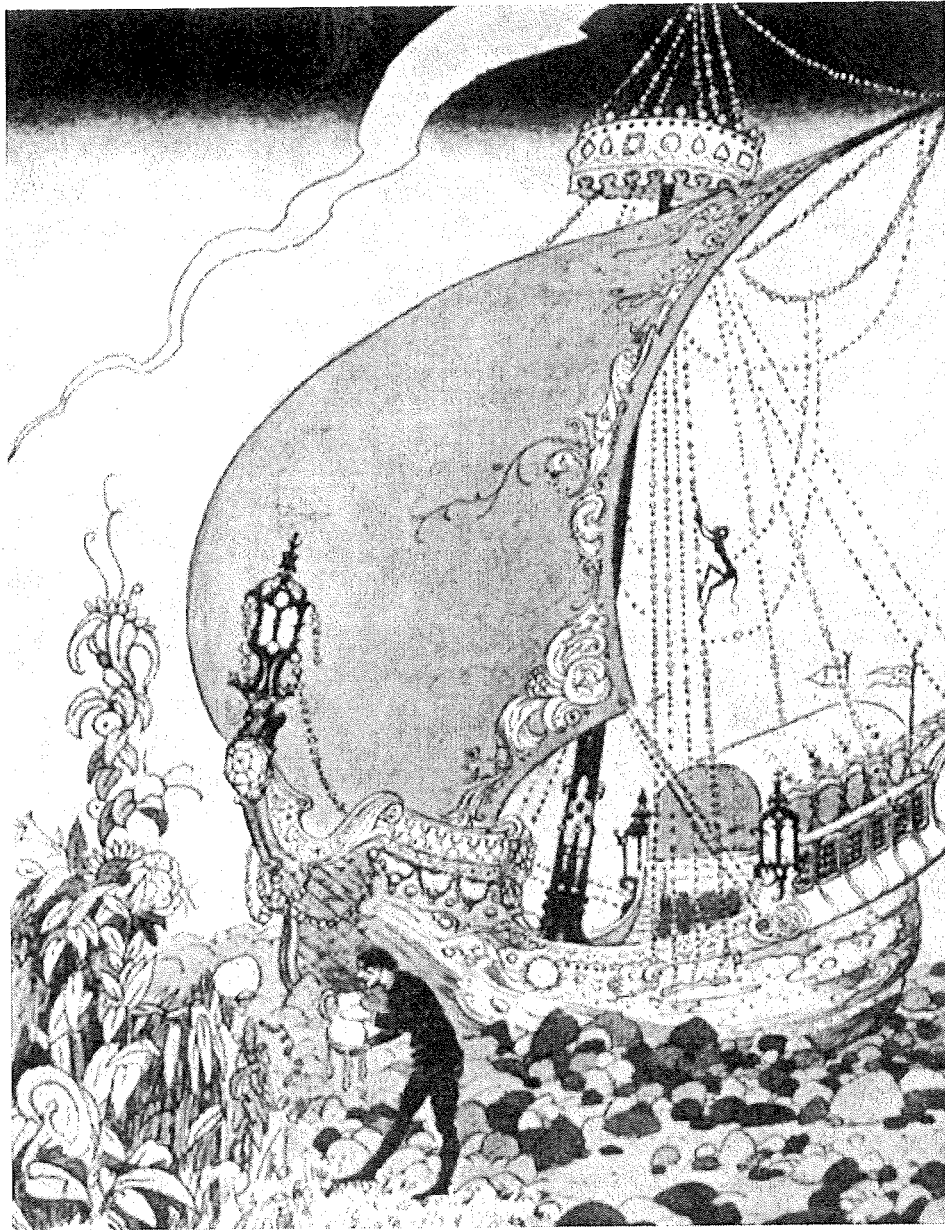
Figure 3.3
"He was moving over the desert in a barque of mother-of-pearl"
Sidney Sime, 1905
from "Haschisch Hallucinations" by H.E. Gowers
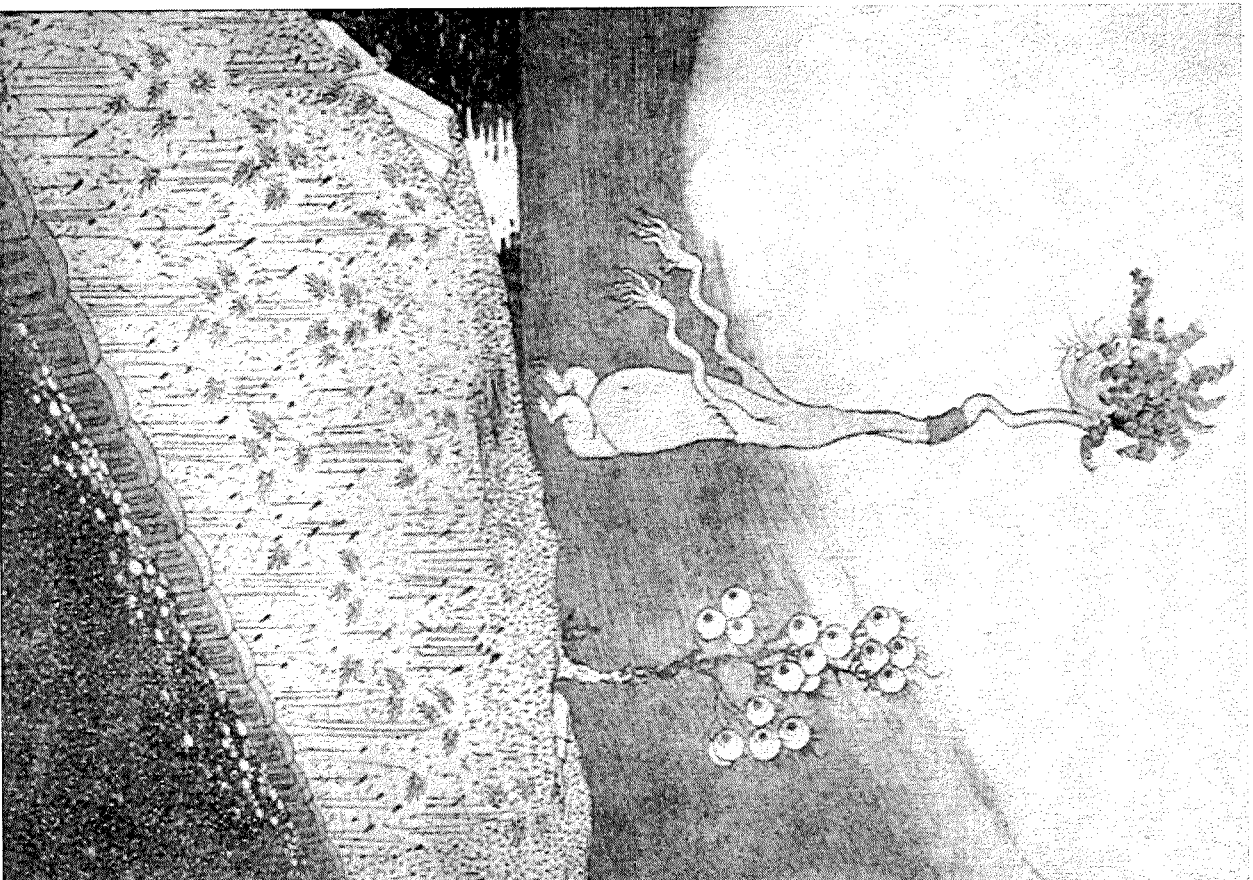
Figure 3.4
"The Pst"
Sidney Sime, 1923
from *Bogey Beasts*

the journey. Strange fruit, these eyeballs scrutinize the realm of "seeing," canvassing

real and surreal constructs in the image. The journey through Sime's text and image

allows the viewer to see into the mind of the hallucinator, muddying the distinction

between visible and invisible.

The Ta-Ta from *Bogey Beasts* also addresses visible and invisible realms. He

actually lives in the physical environment of his own head. When he is ready to join

the world outside his head, then "Outside in he turns himself /To get himself turned

out." [18] The Ta-Ta's contortions allow him to transition between interior and exterior

at will. Likewise Sime's image "He distinctly saw within himself the drug he had

chewed," from "Haschicsh Hallucinations" (See Figure 3.5) reckons with interior

spaces. Tony James notes that nineteenth-century French physician Moreau de Tours,

who studied the effects of hashish, believed that: "The main advantage of hashish…is

not just that it procures illusions, visions, and other unusual states. It is that it

produces these states while leaving consciousness intact, and thus enables the states

to be observed, as they unfold, from the inside."[19] Sime illustrates a passage in which

a user's state—as Moreau says—unfolds from the inside. The hallucinator can see his

eyelashes and the hashish as an emerald in his own stomach "from which thousands

of sparks were emitted. His eyelashes grew rapidly, and when two feet long twisted

themselves like golden threads around little ivory wheels which whirled rapidly."[20]

In the illustration two floating orbs that are bloodshot eyeballs emit beams of

light that focus internally on the emerald. The emerald, which is reminiscent of a

crystal ball, is among creatures that are half animal and half plant that stand among

other orbs that look like eyeballs. Whirling ivory wheels that also resemble eyeballs

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[18] Sime, *Bogey Beasts*, 58.

[19] James, 99.

[20] H. E. Gowers, "Haschisch Hallucinations," *The Strand* No. 180, Vol. 30, December 1905, 662.
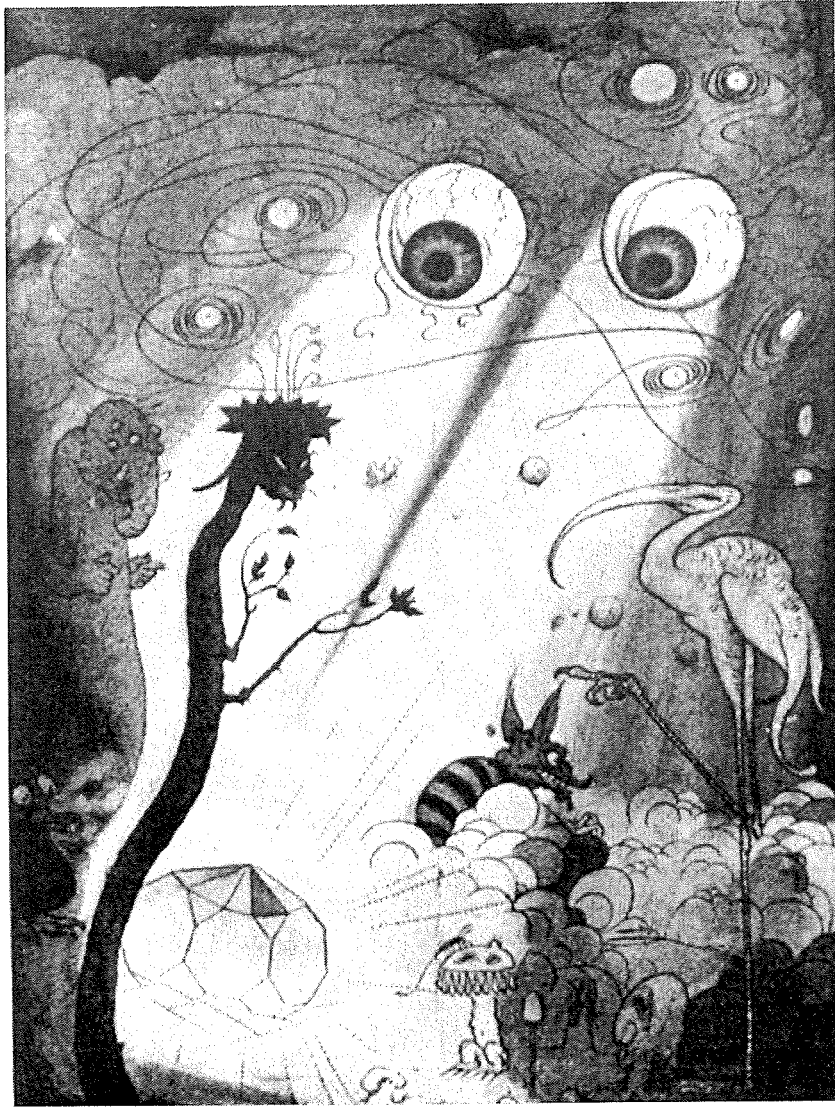
Figure 3.5
"He distinctly saw within himself the drug he had chewed,"
Sidney Sime, 1905
from "Haschisch Hallucinations" by H.E. Gowers
The Strand, December 1905

make manifest the illusory content of the hallucinating mind. The eyeballs, emerald, and other orbs literally illuminate his interior. The powerful light rays energize and expose the invisible, allowing the viewer an entrée into the hallucination.

Hallucinatory Darwin

Sime ponders the illusory aspects of Darwinian science in his series of drawings for "Beasts that Might have Been" and *Bogey Beasts*, and in the illustration "The Zagabog" from *Fancy Free* by Eden Phillpotts." Sime conjures up a host of imaginary creatures in his illustrations for "Beasts that Might have Been" (1905), illustrations inspired by "Men that Might Have Been," a series of drawings by W. Heath Robinson that were based on Darwinian theory. "Beasts that Might have Been" features monsters with startling physical characteristics placed in familiar landscapes. These strangely mutated creatures could, according to Darwinian principles, have been selected into the natural world. Most of the illustrations from "Beasts that Might have Been" are reproduced in Sime's book *Bogey Beasts*. Each illustration has its own accompanying verse written by Sime (the verses have been set to music by Sime's friend Josef Holbrooke and the musical scores accompany the text and images) that describes the traits and environment of each beast. In *Bogey Beasts* Sime addresses two primary aspects of Darwin's theories: the intangible evolutionary relationship between humans and their animal ancestors, and the outward expression of traits brought about by the hidden process of natural selection. In Sime's evolutionary world, however, creatures do not evolve through natural selection acting on genetic mutations. Instead, their physical forms are an expression of their own complex fantasies.

Victorians understood that the transformation from beast into human was imperfect. Uncouth animalistic behaviors and desires, Victorians believed, lurked deep inside each person. According to Gillian Beer, Darwinian theory exuded a mythic quality, which resonated with Victorian fears about the course of evolution.

> Darwinian theory takes up elements from older orders and particularly from recurrent mythic themes such as transformation and metamorphosis…It rearranges the elements of creation myths, for example substituting the ocean for the garden but retaining the idea of the 'single progenitor'—though now an uncouth progenitor hard to acknowledge as kin.[21]

The concept of the primordial ancestor became linked, for Victorians, to the surreal aspects of mythology. For Sime the concept of the primordial *cum* mythic ancestor resonated with the erratic mental imagery of hallucination. The visual and written narrative in *Bogey Beasts* emphasizes this union. Sime—in the guise of one creature—allows other creatures to introduce themselves. The Seekim (See Figure 3.6) seeks his evolutionary heritage from "necessitated ghosts":

> "The Seekim" vexatiously insists that nothing is anybody's, but a mere legacy from necessitated ghosts. My very nose, he says, with no undue pride, was bestowed on me by my insufficiently extolled ancestors; and they also do their rampageous thinking in my long suffering insides in spite of mere me. Things

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[21] Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7.

Figure 3.6
"The Seekim"
Sidney Sime, 1923
from *Bogey Beasts*

Figure 3.7
"The Moonjim"
Sidney Sime, 1923
from *Bogey Beasts*

come into my unsuspecting head that would make a monkey blush—but everyone knows what nonsense ghosts do gabble.[22]

The Seekim's ghost is no mere ancestral spirit. It is interesting to note that Thomas de Quincey, one of the authors Sime names as influential to his work, described the human brain as a scroll on which images of memories remain as "ghostly presences." Flint explains that Freud theories were influenced by:

> Thomas de Quincey's…description of the human brain as a 'natural and mighty palimpsest', a scroll on which experience is forever rewritten, and yet on which traces of the past cannot be entirely obliterated, but remain as ghostly presences: 'Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And yet in reality not one has been extinguished.' By way of confirmation, he cites the case of a girl who, on the point of drowning, finds her whole past life radiantly arranged and illuminated in her consciousness; and tells how those who are 'martyrs' to opium are, likewise, subjected to experiencing visions of their past.[23]

The Seekim is hallucinating his evolutionary past. The "rampageous thinking" in his "long suffering insides" is the constantly playing delicately layered scroll of his heredity, The Seekim's thoughts are more shocking than a monkey's—even to him. These shockingly uncontrollable thoughts suggest a clear connection, for Sime, between evolutionary history and hallucination. In reality, the Seekim is a silly

---

[22] Sime, *Bogey Beasts*, preface.

[23] Flint, 141.

looking dream monster who strides through the night surrounded by moths and a

crescent moon. He walks upright like a man, but has a dark hairy face, a hairy body,

four fingers, and three claws on his feet. This inane quester: "May seek/What he

wants/When he knows/What/He aimlessly/Seeks/But/Any old Quest/Is followed

with/Zest/and keeps him/Demented/For weeks."[24] Clearly, the Seekim's journey to

find his evolutionary origins is a hallucinatory one that keeps him demented for

weeks.

Sime's illustrations for *Bogey Beasts* straddle the boundary between causal and

chance expression of traits. Some creatures in *Bogey Beasts* betray their psychological

inwardness outwardly. Their psychological state, rather than their behavior, has a

causal impact on these beasts' appearance. The Moonjim and the Two-Tailed Sogg

become what they experience. The waif-like Moonjim (See Figure 3.7) is a nocturnal

creature who has been molded by his own abstract conceptions; he literally embodies

his thoughts as if he was a product of psychological evolution. These thoughts are the

selective forces that make him who he is. He floats above the ground, strands of hair

streaming to the left. The text that accompanies the Moonjim infers that he is a

creature of the fourth dimension: "Just to prefer /What is Not there / To what has not

yet / Been. /Yet He himself Is neither here / Nor yonder; / In a remote dimension /

Doomed to Wander."[25] Moonlight illuminates him and darkness engulfs him. The

Moonjim wanders the liminal spaces between dreams and the fourth dimension. His

eyes, orbs that float in front of his face, are dark where Sime normally puts eye

imagery. Moonjims, according to Sime, have evolved in response to their very

isolated esoteric environment of abstract thoughts: "They dawdle / Only in those outer

spaces / So far apart / From all the other / Places / That lie outside / Your furthest

---

[24] Sime, *Bogey Beasts*, 7.

[25] Sime, *Bogey Beasts*, 47.

thought / Between The / Is and Not. / Oh! / Things crawl there / That never dare / Seek / Any other spot."[26] The ethereal Moojim is a very select breed indeed. He is a physical manifestation of obscure thought.

The Two-Tailed Sogg (See Figure 3.8) is a denizen of dreamland who stands by the "shores of the Bright Faerie" sea in "The Regions of Fancy." Although he is "a phantom," a bright light that shines on him casts a strong shadow on the ground. The Two-Tailed Sogg, like a phantasmagoric apparition, is made apparent by an intense light source. Interestingly, The Two-Tailed Sogg has some features in common with a magic lantern apparatus (See Figure 3.9): his mouth looks like the lens that projects the image, and his feet are reminiscent of equipment legs. The Sogg looks solid enough from the side, but if viewed from above, he would vanish against the sandy hills and plants. Only his shadow remains to infer his existence. He is a visual projection of a dream, an external expression of an internal phenomenon.

The Moojim and Two-Tailed Sogg are products of evolution rife with intentionality. Like Lamarck's giraffe whose neck lengthens over generations in response to stretching to reach for food in tall trees, these beasts' physical appearances stretch to adapt to their mental states. They are Sime's visual expression of the evolution of an intangible: the abstract conceptions that inhabit the imagistic realm of hallucinatory imagination.

The Snaitch (See Figure 3.10), on the other hand, is an extinct creature whose ancestral "fossil debris/ Might be found/By a scrutiny/Keen/Of the Primaeval Shores/On an Eocene Sea/Or/In slabs/Of the old/Miocene." He has the claws of a bird and the face of a prehistoric monster. The verse for the Snaitch is reminiscent of that in "The Zagabog" [1901] (See Figure 3.11) written by Eden Phillpotts and illustrated

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[26] Sime, *Bogey Beasts*, 47.
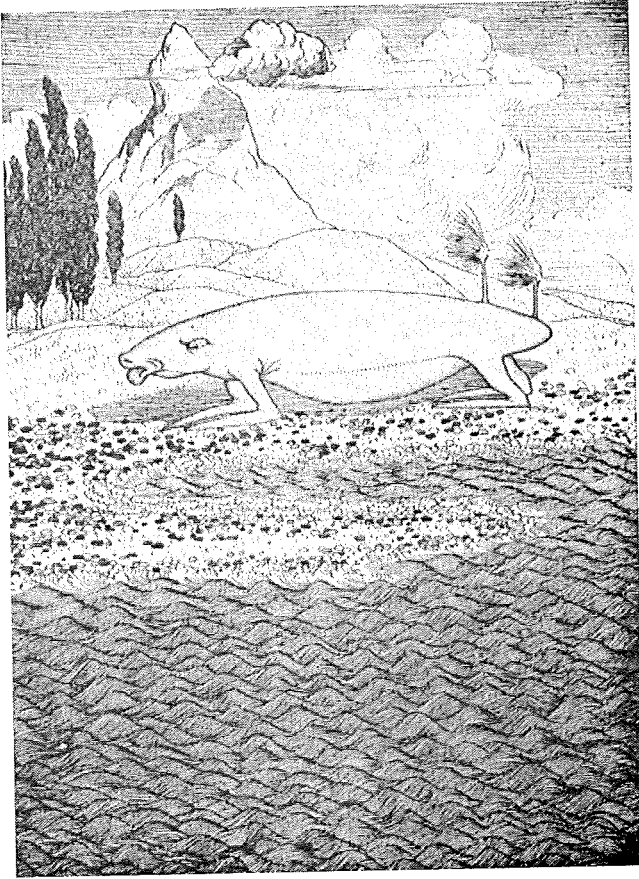
Figure 3.8
"The Two-Tailed Sogg"
Sidney Sime, 1923
from *Bogey Beasts*
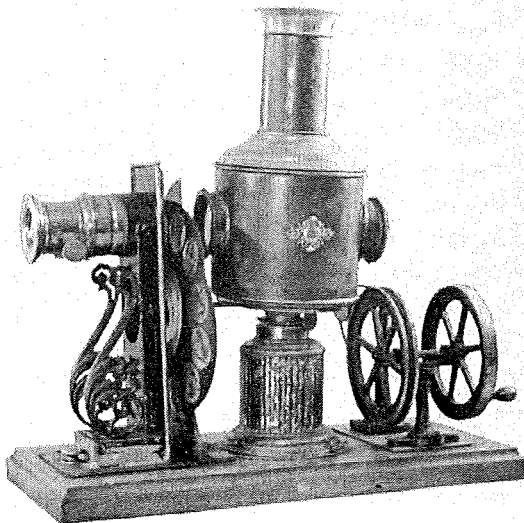
Figure 3.9
Magic Lantern Apparatus
Replica of the Rudge Lantern Slide Projector, invented c. 1875

Figure 3.10
"The Snaitch"
Sidney Sime, 1923
from *Bogey Beasts*

by Sime. Like Darwin's Galapagos creatures, the Zagabog lives on a pre-Cambrian island among a host of other odd creatures. In Sime's illustration, the Zagabog carries himself like a human—a ruler seated on a throne, he rubs his chin with his very human-looking hand and places the other hand on his knee. He is hairy; he has an animal snout, and sports a set of ram's horns. His contemplative pose is very human indeed. The Zagabog thinks like man, but remains a beast. Phillpotts' text explains that:

> From periods ante-Primary he dated, as we know /And with the greatest interest observed that wondrous show /Of shells and fish, of monstrous newts, of dragons on the wing / Then chronicled the changes that the rolling ages bring / That scientific Zagabog / That most observant Zagabog [27]

The Zagabog doesn't just wonder about his evolutionary past or become extinct. He is a scientist who, like Darwin, observes and chronicles. Even a rational scientist can be a fantastic creature—a hypothetical beast that has endured through evolutionary time—and even rational science can be described by fantasy. The text of "The Zagabog" explains that "More ages passed, more monsters passed, and others took their place; The Zagabog he still endured from endless race to race."[28] The text that accompanies this strange scene explains that the Zagabog survives through all the changes, and finally accepts newly arrived human creatures. He remains, however, the monster in charge.

The illustration shows the Zagabog and fellow monsters behind a field full of human infants. Sime illustrates the gathering crammed with strange hallucinatory

---

[27] Eden Phillpotts, "The Zagabog," *Fancy Free* (London: Methuen, 1901), 3.

[28] Phillpotts, 5.

monsters— monsters reminiscent of Gowers' "menageries of monstrous

dreams…whimsical beings with the feet of his armchair for legs and dial-plates for

eyeballs"—that are more likely to be inhabitants of another realm than of prehistoric

earth. The creatures in the dark (right and top) part of the image stare with huge

glistening eyes, while the monsters in the rest of the image, including the Zagabog,

have closed eyes. This stark difference gives the viewer the impression that the dark

creatures are figments of the others' hallucinatory imaginations. One strange one-

eyed creature at the right side of the page stares straight ahead at the audience with

his bloodshot eye (perhaps suggestive of the physiological effects of hashish).

The Zagabog is indeed hallucinating. He conjures up the fantastic illusion that

surrounds him. In fact, his hat resembles a giant hookah (See Figures 3.11 and 3.12)

that sits atop his brain. His chin rests in his hand as he contemplates his vision with

eyes closed. The Zagabog calls on the invisible force of supernatural selection, a drug

induced state that precipitates the monstrous forms that surround him. In some twisted

Lamarckian formulation, Sime's Zagabog and all his fellow creatures take their visual

form from his thoughts. Indeed, Beer points that Lamarck's ideas are reminiscent of

the myths of many cultures:

> Lamarck proposes a world of intelligent desire rationally satisfied. His work
>
> also follows the pattern of all stories of how things came to be the way they
>
> are: need brings about change or—in more admonitory versions—bad
>
> behaviour results in loss and degradation. It is a pattern of story which has been
>
> predominant in so many cultures…It is extraordinarily difficult to eradicate the

Figure 3.11
"The Zagabog"
Sidney Sime, 1901
from *Fancy Free* by Eden Phillpotts
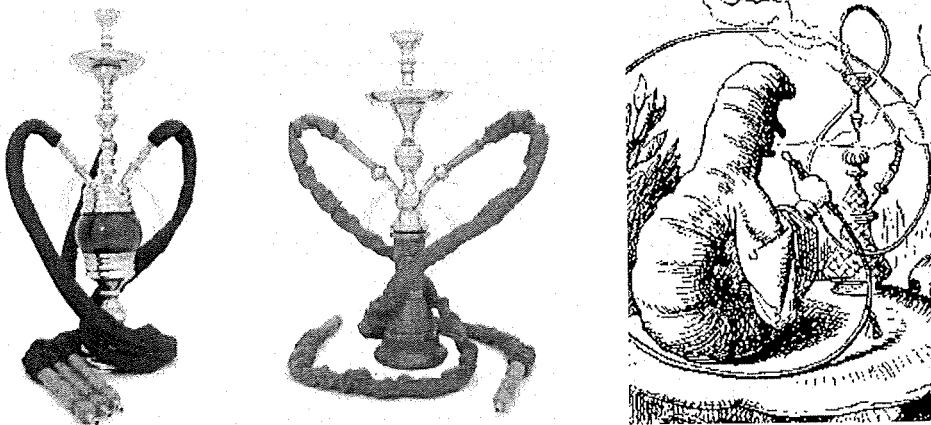
Figure 3.12
Examples of Hookahs

language of intention from accounts of evolutionary development. Darwin

himself never entirely succeeded.[29]

Intentionality was much easier to imagine as a cause for the physical expression of

traits than chance was—in part due to the prevalence of intentionality in mythology

and folktales, and in part due to the way the human mind seeks solutions by examining

causality. The Zagabog has created his own mythological universe that spans

unfathomable time. Sime's creatures in "The Zagabog" call to mind the frightening

monsters that inhabit the unknown reaches of the world in early modern maps—these

monsters span unfathomable space (See Figure 3.13). In the foreground, for example,

a dark furry animal that resembles a harpy flies over the babies. Sime, in fact,

illustrated a map of dreams that mimics such maps (See Figure 3.14). In Sime's map

the frightening monsters come from the unknown reaches of the hallucinating or

dreaming mind. In "The Zagabog," Sime manages to merge evolution with illusion by

suggesting that irrational thought begets irrational form.

Sime frequently renders the surfaces and deep spaces of "The Zagabog" and

his bogey beast scenes with intense dark and light areas. Light was a requirement for

the new popular and scientific lens-based optical gadgets that offered unusual and

sometimes bizarre ways of seeing. Light's effect on prepared glass—it ability to

reveal and represent—captivated the Victorians' imagination and was suggestive of

the emergence of the visual unconscious in dreams and hallucinations. The revelatory

power of Sime's focused light rays is reminiscent of the disclosive power of glass and

liquid in this dream described by Hervey de Saint-Denys [1867]:

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[29] Beer, 19.

Figure 3.13
"Here Be Dragons"
Monsters in early modern maps
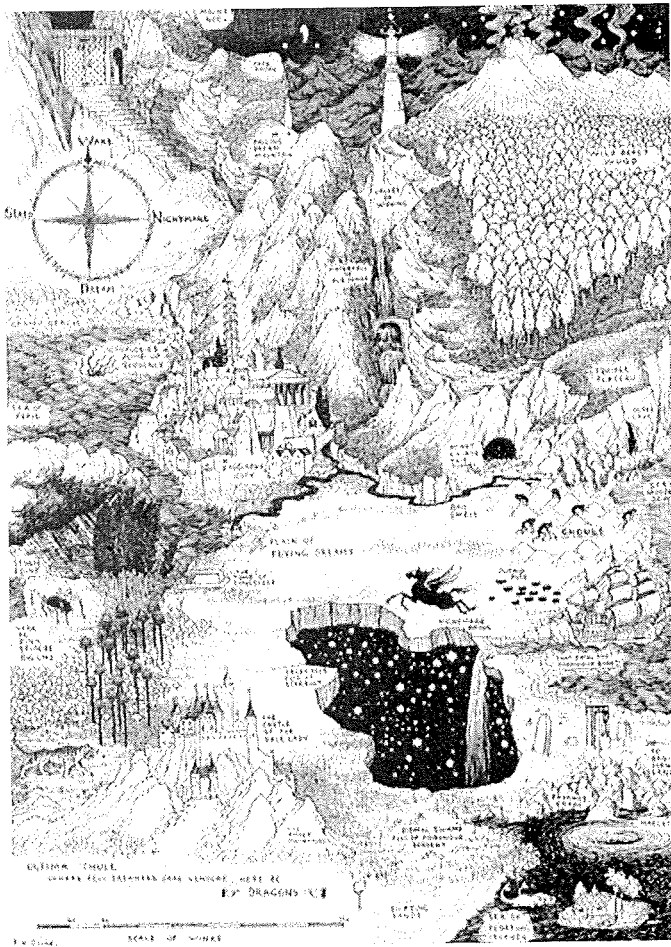
Figure 3.14
"Map of Dreams"
Sidney Sime, 1905
The Sketch, 1905

A piece of glass apparatus, with a bizarre shape, is in front of me…It appears to be full of water, and some character or other tells me that this liquid has the power to make any animal which is steeped in it for a few moments transparent, without however, taking its life….A cat was miaowing…in a corner of the bedroom; I pick it up, throw it into the apparatus and examine the result. Now, I see the animal slowly lose its initial appearance and glow, becoming translucent, diaphanous, like crystal glass. It…soon catches a mouse transparent like itself…then, thanks to the singular transmutation which these two beings had undergone, I can discern the remains of the poor rodent sinking into the stomach of its ferocious enemy.[30]

The glass and liquid miraculously allow a view of the interior of living creatures during the gyrations of the unconscious mind in a dream. Nineteenth-century French physician Brierre de Boismont [1856] suggested that artists are suited to transposing such hallucinatory experience: "those with a powerful imagination, a strong will and dynamic faculties have seen their ideas become coloured, take on a perceptible shape and be reflected as if in a real mirror."[31] The reflective mirror and Hervey de Saint-Denys' crystal glass apparatus serve as portals between the external world and the inner world of the unconscious mind.

Sime's illustrations function like the images seen in this reflective mirror or glass apparatus. His work has the character of a dream or hallucination in which irrational abstractions of the mind are experienced as reality. Sime's work records

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[30] Hervey de Saint-Denys, *Les Rêves et les Moyens de les Diriger*, published anonymously (Amyot, 1867), 274-5, quoted in James, 179.

[31] Brierre de Boismont, "ceux chez lesquels l'imagination est puissante, le volonté forte, les facultés énergiques, ont vu leurs idées se colorer, prendre une forme sensible et se réfléchir comme dans un miroir véritable," *AMP³* 2 (1856), quoted in James, 160.

such moments, simultaneously addressing the phenomenon of light's ability to reveal

in the visual narrative. His visuals, manifested by pen on paper, serve as an

expression of the creative imagination. Sime's work draws some bizarre and

provocative connections between invisible scientific phenomena and hallucinatory

cerebration. The visual manifestation of these powerful hidden entities is suggestive

of a subjective unconscious mind freed from the physical constraints of the body.

Scrying, Magic Lantern Shows, and X-Rays

Late nineteenth-century psychologist Northcote Thomas [1905] suggests that a

number of objects can be used to extract the hidden imagery of the unconscious mind:

"A great variety of objects are used to promote the externalization of subliminal

images…the plain crystal, or…the black stone…the mirror, and the primitive

substitute of water."[32] Optical gadgets such as magic lanterns function in a similar

fashion by rendering imaginative activity visible. X-rays open portals to internal

physical spaces by penetrating flesh with invisible beams, a phenomenon that must

have seemed very bizarre indeed to the Victorians. The ghostly black and white

images of one's insides, produced by this new technology, could easily fit into the

realm of fantastic visualization.

Scientific advances in optics and optical technology in the nineteenth century

coalesced with developing ideas about the function of the eye, the brain, and "vision."

According to Victorianist Susan Horton:

A look at scientific experiments carried out in the early nineteenth century is a

good place to begin to understand the legacy of Victorian visuality. From 1820

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[32] Northcote W. Thomas, *Crystal Gazing* (London: Alexander Morning, 1905), 32.

to 1840 huge numbers of experiments were conducted on the physiology of the eye and on the processes of vision; the more that was learned about vision, the more unreliable it seemed to be…. During the 1830s other experimenters were discovering that the retina could be made to "see" light when sufficient pressure was applied to the eyeball, that the eye would "see" light if exposed to electrical stimulation, and that a blow to the head would make a person "see" light.[33]

The notion that an individual could "see" by "other" unexpected means, broadened the possibilities for vision, giving credence to supernatural ways of seeing.

Scrying, or crystal gazing, was one such technique. Scientist Andrew Lang was a proponent of the scientific study of crystal gazing. In his 1894 book *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, Lang claims that crystal gazing has been unfairly dismissed by science as quackery:

A substratum of fact may be so overcrowded with mystic mummeries, incantations, fumigations, pentacles; and so overwhelmed in superstitious interpretations, introducing the faeries and spirits, that the facts run the risk of being swept away in the litter with dust and nonsense. Science has hardly thought crystal gazing worthy even of contempt, yet it appears to deserve the notice of psychologists.[34]

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[33] Susan R. Horton "Were They Having Fun Yet? Victorian Optical Gadgetry, Modernist Selves," in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, eds. Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 3.

[34] Andrew Lang, *Cock Lane and Common-Sense* (London: Longmans, Green, 1894), 222.

Lang believes that there is a scientific basis for scrying, and urges that it be studied as a "serious" psychological subject. He draws psychological connections among the visions seen during crystal gazing, drug-induced hallucination, and dreams, citing the work of well-known nineteenth-century dream psychologist Alfred Maury:

> There are others…who can…enjoy visions as beautiful as those of the opium eater, without any of the reaction…In some way their fancy is enlivened, and they can behold, in the glass, just such vivid pictures as many persons habitually see between sleeping and waking, *illusions hypnogogiques*….Maury, in his book on dreams has recorded and analyzed them.[35]

Lang suggests that scrying taps stored unconscious perceptions in a fashion similar to dreams and hallucinations. Good visualizers, he believes, are likely to have an innate ability to access these perceptions and see them as visions in a crystal. Lang notes that "It seems probable that people who, when they think, see a mental picture of the subject of their thoughts…are likely to succeed best with the crystal…some of them can visualize purposely, in the crystal."[36] As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Sime was very skilled at conjuring up bizarre mental images. I suppose he would have had, according to Lang's definition, an innate ability to see visions in a crystal.

There is no evidence that Sime attempted crystal gazing, but a number of his illustrations have the feel of crystal ball imagery transplanted onto paper. Some of

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[35] Lang, 213.

According to Tony James, Alfred Maury wrote "the single most important work on dreams before Freud." Maury's work had a very strong influence on the work of Hervey de Saint-Denys. James, 7.

[36] Lang, 214.

Sime's images resemble the sorts of misty unfamiliar landscapes described by scryers. His settings and characters seem to materialize out of the haze before they come into focus. Author Theodore Besterman [1924] describes what a scryer might see while an image materializes:

> the scryer sees 'a kind of milky obscurity cover the ball, which then seems to become clear and black...Sir Walter Scott calls it a shifting of light and darkness. Maxwell call this appearance an opalescent milky tint, and adds, "I know a sensitive and well-educated lady—who compares this impression to that produced on the eye by rising mists and fleeting clouds. For her, the milky tint in the crystal is in movement. It breaks away like a cloud or a mist, to disclose the hallucinatory image completely formed.[37]

In Sime's illustration "The Dreams of Mana-Yood-Sushai" from Lord Dunsany's *The Gods of Pegana* [1905] (See Figure 3.15), an opalescent fog dissipates to reveal the seated figure of Mana-Yood-Sushai. Clouds swirl at his feet, creating the sense that he has arisen from them. As in Besterman's description, the illustration has areas of shifting light and darkness that seem to move sweepingly to the right. Orbs that look like crystal balls surround Mana-Yood-Sushai's head, displaying his dreams. He dreams with closed eyes (which reaffirms the interpretation that the closed eyed creatures in "The Zagabog" are hallucinating). Some of this imagery is landscape or cityscape. Other imagery is purely abstract. These image-laden orbs that are Mana-Yood-Sushai's dreams reaffirm the Victorian belief in the common origins of dream imagery and illusions seen in crystal balls. The source for this imagery, the misty

---

[37] Theodore Besterman, *Crystal Gazing* (1924; reprint New York: University Books, 1965), 108-109.

Figure 3.15
"The Dreams of Mana-Yood-Sushai"
Sidney Sime, 1905
from Lord Dunsany's *The Gods of Pegana*

Figure 3.16
"The Soul of La Traviata"
Sidney Sime, 1908
from Lord Dunsany's *The Sword of Welleran*

depths of the unconscious mind, contains abundant material that only need be projected on the proper substrate.

A witchy creature with Medusa hair sits at Mana-Yood-Sushai's feet.[38] Mana-Yood-Sushai, who looks like a rocky extension of the mountain behind him, sits perfectly still in the midst of a mystical vision that rises out of his dark stony cape. Black stone was, in fact, one of the objects scryers used to conjure up visions. The Medusa beats two drums out of which stream what appears to be curling smoke or hose (this material also looks like an umbilical cord), suggesting drug intoxication. Indeed, the Medusa, who points her two drumsticks in the direction of the smoke, is shaped like a hookah (See Figure 3.12). The two hoses or streams of curling smoke run among Mana-Yood-Sushai's dreams, creating a circular band that holds his dreams within the swirling dark and light areas of the vision.

The freakish image of La Traviata is likewise rendered among shifting areas of light and dark in Sime's illustration "The Soul of La Traviata" from *The Sword of Welleran* [1908] (See Figure 3.16). In the story, La Traviata (which means fallen woman) dies of her sins and her soul drifts around the streets of Paris. The dreaming narrator explains that her soul then

> rushed upwards, as the sea mist when it beats against a cliff, and streamed away to Paradise, and there it was judged. And it seemed to me, as I watched from my place of dreaming…that clouds came rushing up from the far Paradisal hills and gathered together over the head of God, and became one

---

[38] "Medusa was a terrible monster who had laid waste to the country. She was once a beautiful maiden whose hair was her chief glory, but as she dared to vie in beauty with Athena, the goddess deprived her of her charms and changed her beautiful ringlets into hissing serpents. She became a cruel monster of so frightening an aspect that no living thing could behold her without being turned into stone." http://www.loggia.com/myth/medusa.html from *Bulfinch's Mythology*.

black cloud; and the clouds moved as swiftly as shadows of the night when a

lantern is swung in the hand, and more and more clouds rushed up"[39]

The dreamer sees bright clouds rushing up, gathering and transforming into black

clouds that ultimately lead to the fate of La Traviata. The viewer experiences the

narrator's dream much as a scryer experiences a vision. The viewer is drawn into

milky areas that seem to give way to darkness and the glowing figure of La Traviata

(who incidentally also has snake-like Medusa hair). Because of her sins, the soul of

La Traviata has been transformed into a "great pink flower that was horrible and

lovely."[40] A circular light, like a crystal ball, surrounds the flower (a horrible and

lovely, pink, vulva-shaped flower), which is planted in plain view of Hell. This

strange flower emerges from among dark and light mists and bright crystals; its two

staring eyes with no eyelids doomed to incessant vision. La Traviata stares out of the

page, insisting on the viewer's direct gaze.

La Traviata's staring eyes are reminiscent of those described by a scryer in

fantasy writer H.G. Wells' story "The Crystal Egg" [1897]. Sime was, in fact,

familiar with Wells' work; Sime illustrated a Wells short story published in the

magazine *The Butterfly* [1899].[41] In "The Crystal Egg," Mr. Wace, assistant

demonstrator at a London hospital, validates the powerful images seen by scryer Mr.

Cave. The following excerpt describes Cave's perceptions of a conjured scene in

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[39] Baron Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett Dunsany, *The Sword of Welleran, and Other Stories* (London: G. Allen, 1908), 231-232.

[40] Dunsany, *The Sword of Welleran*, 235.

[41] *The Butterfly*, September, 1899, "Three full page illustrations to a fantasy entitled 'A Vision of Judgment.' By-lined D.O., author actually H.G. Wells. One illustration shows a group of newly deceased ascending to Heaven over the spoken caption: 'The last note jerked me out of my grave like a hooded minnow.'" Locke, *From an Ultimate Dim Thule*, 40, 60.

which Martians are staring back at him from Mars from their own crystals. Wells

describes Cave's experience:

> He was surprised to find the light not steady, but writhing within the substance
>
> of the egg, as though that object was a hollow sphere of some luminous
>
> vapor...His next clear vision...showed him the view down the length of the
>
> valley...And suddenly something flapped repeatedly across the vision, like the
>
> fluttering of a jewelled fan or beating of a wing, and a face, or rather the upper
>
> part of a face with very large eyes, came as it were close to his own and as if
>
> on the other side of the crystal.[42]

"The Soul of La Traviata" is likewise on "the other side" from which inhabitants may

look back at this world. Her staring eyes meet the viewer's; the eye-to-eye contact

forcing what is apparently unreal to be taken in as reality.

All eyes—except those of the viewer—are closed in the misty illustration

"Mung and the Beast of Mung" from *The Gods of Pegana* [1905] (See Figure 3.17).

The deathlike figure of Mung has journeyed, according to Sime's text, "into a waste

of Afrik." He appears out of a swirling imagistic "milky obscurity" of the sort

Besterman describes. Mung comes upon a beast, the "drought Umbool," a

mythological creature of the desert that seems to hang over the edge of the earth.

Strange plants and mushrooms grow around the two figures. Umbool exhales hot

misty breath out of which Mung seems to rise. It is unclear whether the vision is

coming into focus or disintegrating in the cloudy scene. Although Sime's illustration

is rendered on paper, like a crystal vision, it offers a glimpse of a dynamic interaction

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[42] H.G.Wells, "The Crystal Egg," 1897, reprint *The Complete Short Stories of H. G. Wells* (London: Ernest Benn, 1966), 633-635.

Figure 3.17
"Mung and the Beast of Mung"
Sidney Sime, 1905
from Lord Dunsany's *The Gods of Pegana*

that existed before and will continue after the scene portrayed. Besterman, in fact,

describes the movement of images in a crystal as an unpredictable, time-based

experience:

> The pictures in the speculum sometimes pass continuously like a
>
> cinematographic film; sometimes one picture succeeds another as with a magic
>
> lantern; sometimes unrelated pictures appear after intervals. A single picture
>
> lasts sometimes only a moment, sometimes longer.[43]

Crystal balls, portals into invisible spaces, stretch the realm of the tangible. Like

crystal ball imagery, Sime's illustrations suggest a temporal, and frequently fleeting,

illusory reality. His misty scenes project the movement of layered imagery—like that

believed to be stored in the unconscious mind—transcribing the invisible storylines

for the viewer.

Magic lantern shows, or phantasmagorias, also challenged clear-cut notions of

visible versus invisible and internal versus external realms. Often frighteningly real,

they replicated the hidden domain of the imagination. In a typical magic lantern

show,

> Showmen turned a darkened room in which a transparent screen had been
>
> dropped between an audience and a lantern filled with one or another form of
>
> illuminant into a quite sophisticated version of a phantasmagoria. If the slides

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[43] Besterman, 113.
Besterman attributes these ideas to Victorian psychical researcher Paul Joire, *Psychical and Supernormal Phenomena* (London: F. A. Stokes, 19--), 165.

were of the "dissolving" or "sliding" type, ghosts would appear to open and close their mouths, eyes to shift, skeletons to advance and retreat. [44]

In "Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie," Terry Castle explains that although magic lantern show projectionists lectured "on the fallacy of ghost-beliefs," the shows were often such terrifying spectacles that some audience members attempted to fend off the phantoms. The darkened room and focused light from the magic lantern contributed an edgy discomfort to the experience, allowing fantasy free reign. Castle suggests that, over the last few centuries, we have absorbed the supernatural realm into the world of thought.

Even as we have come to discount the spirit-world of our ancestors and to equate seeing ghosts and apparitions with having "too much" imagination, we have also come increasingly to believe, as if through a kind of epistemological recoil, in the spectral nature of our own thoughts—to figure imaginative activity itself, paradoxically, as a kind of ghost-seeing. Thus…we "see" figures and scenes in our minds…we are haunted by our thoughts…our thoughts can, as it were, materialize before us, like phantoms, in moments of hallucination, waking dream, or reverie.[45]

Like hallucinations, waking dreams, or reverie, the illusions of magic lantern shows materialized before the audience. Like the mind, these shows played out time-based interludes complete with ethereal characters and surreal plots. Indeed, according to

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[44] Horton, 3.

[45] Terry Castle, "Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie," *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 1 (1988): 30.

Castle, "nineteenth-century empiricists frequently figured the mind as a kind of magic

lantern, capable of projecting image-traces of past sensation onto the internal "screen"

or backcloth of the memory.[46]

Like phantasmagorias, Sime's illustrations offer dynamic, but irrational,

fantasies projected on an *external screen*; in doing so they suggest a subjective

unconscious freed from the physical constraints of the body. Sime mixes and matches

image-thoughts in the midst of restless dark and light areas, often projecting irrational

rationale much like a dream or magic lantern show could. In fact, Hervey de Saint-

Denys compares the combination of stored memory impressions (*clichés-souvenir*) in

dreams to a magic lantern show in which two slides are inserted at the same time,

> Using the magic lantern as analogy, he imagines inserting two slides at once; if
>
> one slide is not properly removed and the other is half in, two incongruous
>
> images may be juxtaposed and Tom Thumb be seen opposite Bluebeard; or
>
> they may be superimposed, in which case Bluebeard may have two disparate
>
> heads, four legs, or an arm coming out of his ear.[47]

Sime's imagery often has such incongruous juxtapositions. The illustration

"Departure of Hothrun Dath" from *Time and the Gods* [1906] (See Figure 3.18) has

the feel of two incongruous superimposed images that come together to produce one

narrative. Harsh light illuminates the beastly Famine, while Hothrun Dath seems to

rise into the atmosphere on the beam of light. "Good-bye" from *The Sword of*

Welleran (See Figure 3.19) shows a young man in contemporary clothes standing in a

pool of swirling water with a very tall death figure behind him. The young man's

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[46] Castle, 29.

[47] James, 177.
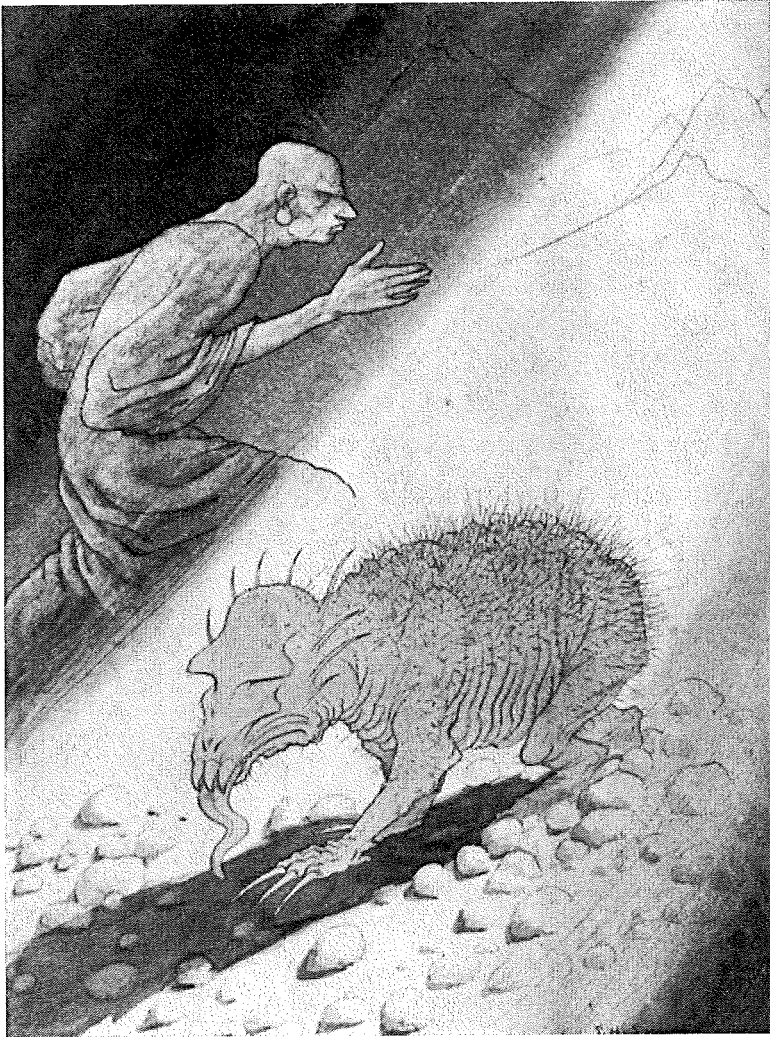
Figure 3.18
"Departure of Hothrun Dath"
Sidney Sime, 1906
from Lord Dunsany's *Time and the Gods*

Figure 3.19
"Good-bye"
Sidney Sime, 1908
from Lord Dunsany's *The Sword of Welleran*

face is rendered against a bright light, but his body is flat, drawn mostly with line. His head becomes the focal point around which swirl phantom images of stars, mountains, birds and the face of a young woman along with more realistically drawn fish. Lord Dunsany's text for this illustration has the disjointed quality of a near-death narrative.

> Then I was alone, with nothing round about me; I could see no light, but it was not dark—there was absolutely nothing...I thought perhaps I was dead, and that this might be some kind of eternity; when suddenly some great southern hills rose up all round about me, and I was lying on the warm grassy slope of a valley in England...I looked everywhere for something on which to rest the eye. Nothing. Suddenly a low gray sky swept over me...a great plain rushed up to me from the edge of the clouds[48]

As in magic lantern shows, there is a sudden, disjointed, change in imagery. The illustration "Good-bye" likewise has the feel of a magic lantern show in which two slides—one with the image of the young man's head, and the other with his body, the death figure, swirling birds, stars and woman's face—overlap to create a disturbing juxtaposition.

These sorts of juxtapositions were often used in magic lantern shows to perform moralistic tales. According to Susan Horton, "phantasmagorias and magic lanterns depict biblical scenes or scenes designed to teach a moral lesson: The Prodigal Son, Death Seizing a Miser, Noah's Ark, and "the Evils of Drink."[49] The magic lantern show slides "The Evils of Drink" (See Figure 3.20) depict a lovely

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[48] Dunsany, *The Sword of Welleran*, 127-137.

[49] Horton, 14.

Figure 3.20
The magic lantern show slides "The Evils of Drink," 1880

Figure 3.21
"Tom O' the Roads"
Sidney Sime, 1908
from Lord Dunsany's *The Sword of Welleran*

woman dressed in classical garb, holding a glass of wine, and playing a tambourine, which dissolves into a figure of a skeleton in tatters striking the same pose, but holding a sword. First one slide is lit, it grows dark, and then the other slide is illuminated. This performance calls attention first to the image of the woman and then to the image of the skeleton. Even though only one fully illuminated slide is visible at a time, the audience understands the intent, in part, due to the proximity of one image to the other in space. The moral is clear: doom awaits the frivolous young woman who ignores this warning.

Like "The Evils of Drink," Sime's illustration "Tom O' the Roads" from *The Sword of Welleran* (See Figure 3.21) is moralistic. Choosing the wrong path seals a Tom's fate. The text that accompanies the illustration is foreboding:

> To and fro, to and fro in the wind swung the bones and the soul of Tom, for the sins that he had sinned on the King's highway against the laws of the King; and with shadows and a lantern through the darkness, at the peril of their lives, came the three friends that his soul had won before it swung in chains.[50]

The illustration expresses danger very clearly. As in a magic lantern show, Sime uses light and darkness to highlight the message. The image can be imagined to be two slides—the dark one at the top partially superimposed over the light one at the bottom. The page is divided roughly in half by dark clouds; the upper portion is an ethereal world where the soul of Tom swings, and the lower portion features the real world inhabited by his evil companions. Imagining this image as if it were a magic lantern show, the half depicting the three criminals looks as if it would be partially

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[50] Dunsany, *The Sword of Welleran*, 121.

covered by the slide of Tom. A lantern carried by the three, who have come to cut
Tom down, illuminates the lower portion of the image. In "The Evils of Drink" the
slide of the woman dissolves into the slide of the skeleton. In "Tom O' the Roads" the
viewer's eye is first drawn to the three criminals, and then this impression dissolves
as the eye moves up to the ghoulish figure of Tom. The viewer's last impression is
horror at the specter of ominous dark clouds offering Tom's decomposing flesh and
exposed skeleton. The body dissolves, but the phantasmagoria remains.

Light and darkness also dissolve a body in Sime's illustration for Poe's poem
"The Moon" (See Figure 3.22). This illustration features the moon as an illuminated
nude female figure that dissipates into a starry night like a slide in a phantasmagoria.
Poe, according to Castle, "used the phantasmagoria figure precisely as a way of
destabilizing the ordinary boundaries between inside and outside, mind and world,
illusion and reality."[51] Sime muddies the interior/exterior distinctions among light,
illusion, and the body, and interprets Poe's penetrating moonlight that "buries strange
woods...spirits on the wing...and every drowsy thing" in a "labyrinth of light" as an
intense deviative force that transforms and transfigures. In the end, Poe's moonlight
enshrouds the world in hypnotic slumber: "And then, how deep! –O deep! Is the
passion of their sleep."[52] The mystical and physical forces of Poe's "labyrinth of
light" are apparent in Sime's illustration. His moonlight has the power to create or
destroy illusory flesh, and to create an altered perception of reality, much as a magic
lantern show does.

Virtual scenes combine with images of reality in Sime's illustrations "Tom O'
the Roads" and "Good-bye." Both of these illustrations mimic the phantasmagorical
effect called transmutation—produced by shifting two magic lantern slides

[51] Castle, 50.

[52] Locke, *Ultimate Dim Thule*, 17.
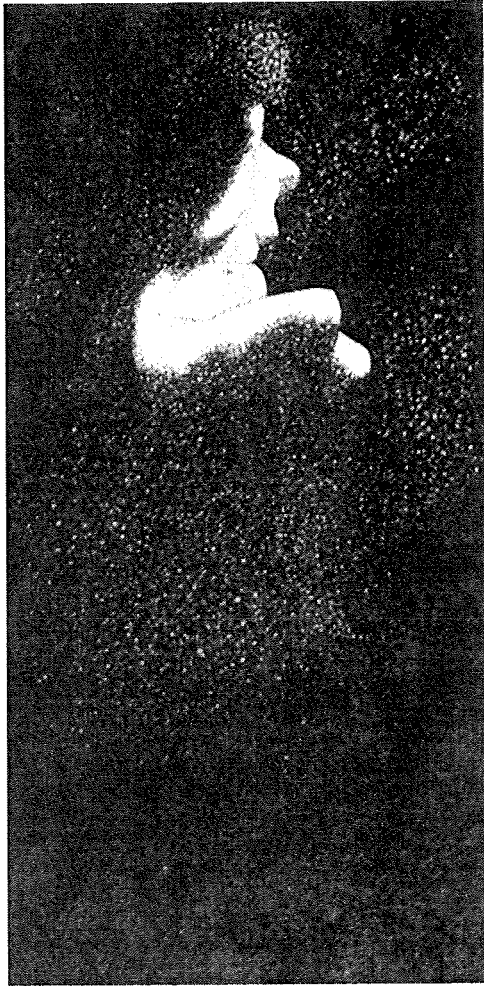
Figure 3.22
"The Moon"
Sidney Sime
from Edgar Allen Poe's poem, "The Moon"
The Idler, 1899

together—in which one phantom transforms into another.[53] These transformations, and the ability of light to alter perception, were inevitably associated with the science behind the shows.

> Nineteenth-century performances were almost always preceded by a brief lecture by the lanternist or projectionist on the wonders of technology and science that made the performance possible....You could watch those magic lantern shows with an easy conscience if what was "really" happening was that you were being educated in and edified by the wonders of modern technology.[54]

Although the technology was demystified for the audience, the fantastic visual spectacle in these shows and the magic lantern technology became conflated in the minds of Victorians. The science fiction-like magic lantern (See Figure 3.9) and the darkened room made an impression and set a scene in which light and darkness readied the viewer for the narrative to come. This bizarre-looking apparatus with its powerful light and lenses worked strange magic—it opened the door into the dark and luminous world of the unconscious mind and allowed the imagination free reign. The prepared mind was then ready, at least temporarily, to experience projected phantoms as real.

Gillian Beer's believes that "Most major scientific theories rebuff common sense. They call on evidence beyond the reach of our senses and overturn the observable world. They disturb assumed relationships and shift what has been

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[53] Castle, 51.

[54] Horton, 14.

substantial into metaphor."[55] Novel scientific procedures and equipment generated by new theory often take on a similar fantastic quality. Late nineteenth-century optics and optical devices manifested light's revelatory power. But—like the powerful light sources in Sime's "Tom O' the Roads" and "The Moon"— late nineteenth-century optics and optical devices happened to manifest the revelatory and potentially destructive power of some focused light rays. At the turn-of-the-century, new technology made what was invisible visible, while new theories questioned what had heretofore seemed visibly obvious.

X-Rays and The Fourth Dimension

In "The Progress of Science" [1887] biologist and science writer Thomas Huxley anticipates the coming of x-rays. Kate Flint comments on Huxley's insights:

> Huxley…drew attention…to the camera's capacity to record spectroscopic phenomena, and reveal 'the existence of rays having powerful chemical energy, or beyond the visible limits of either end of the spectrum.' The most significant development in this respect was Wilhelm Roentgen's invention of the X-ray.[56]

X-rays turned the Victorians understanding of light on its head. Like Poe's labyrinth of light, x-rays offered transformative power that could be perceived as both mystical and physical. X-rays were understood to be a modern diagnostic tool. At the same time x-rays could do what the human eye and mind could not; they could "see" through flesh and produce a record of the interior image. This amazing ability—

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[55] Beer, 1.

[56] Flint, 30.

concentrated in an otherworldly landscape of levers and tubes that produced invisible light rays (See Figure 3.23)—was awe-inspiring. Such focused light rays were sometimes thought of as frightening powerhouses. Images of cone-shaped rays of light, featured consistently in Sidney Sime's illustrations, are very suggestive of Victorian ideas about x-rays. In fact, x-rays are frequently pictured as visible light (See Figure 3.26). Sime might not have consciously intended that his light rays conjure up thoughts of x-rays in his audience. He is likely to have internalized widely accepted ideas about the form of x-rays and engaged them for affective purpose.

Sime's illustration "There the Gibbelins Lived and Discreditably Fed" from *The Book of Wonder* [1912] (See Figure 3.24) by Lord Dunsany suggests the destructive power of focused light. *The Book of Wonder* is particularly interesting because Sime produced the illustrations first, and then Dunsany wrote the text based on Sime's imagery. This illustration features a night scene in which a darkened tower with lit windows stands surrounded by a moat. Hanging along the tower wall is a series of human skeletons illuminated by an intense ray of bright light from a mysterious source. The text explains that the Gibbelins "were waist deep in the water with torches," which would explain the light, but the Gibbelins are nowhere to be seen in this illustration. The light seems to come from the forest, however the forest is dark.

Rather than piles of bones, the illuminated skeletons—which are the remains of the Gibbelins' human prey—hang fully connected; every bone in place like ghostly specters. These skeletons look like full body x-rays, white bones brightly lit and surrounded by darkness. Horrible monsters have devoured their owners' flesh. The lone living quester illuminated in this illustration is doomed as well—he is caught by
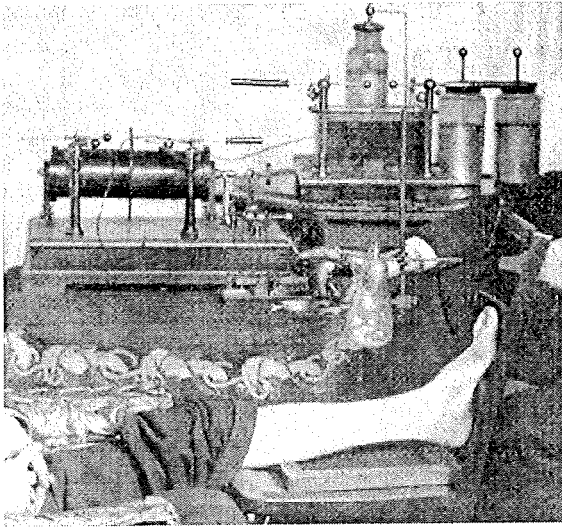
Figure 3.23
X-ray apparatus
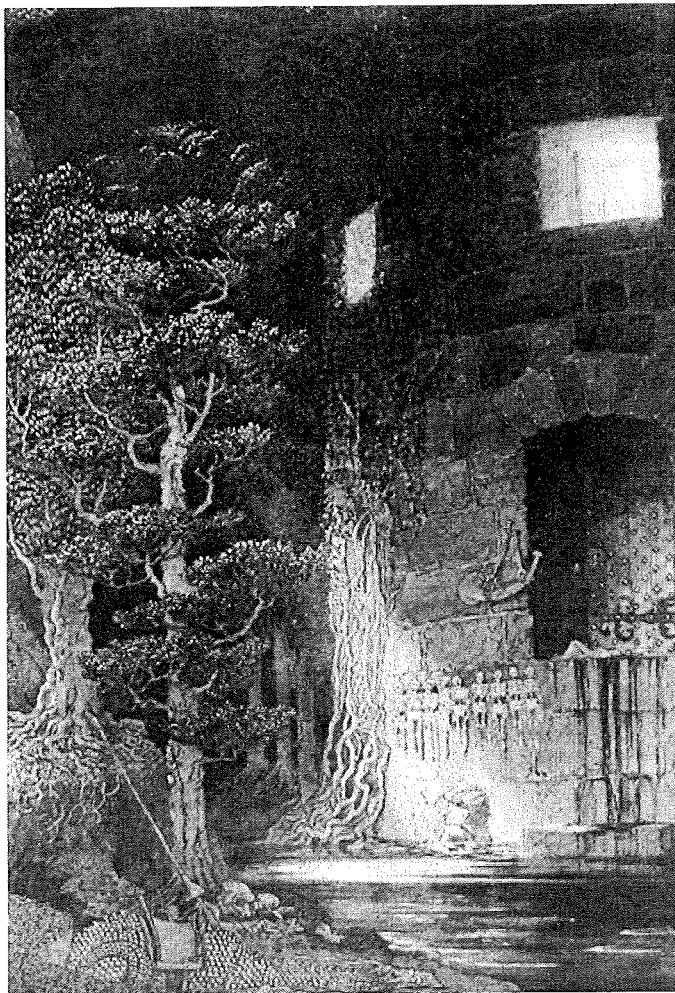
Figure 3.24
"There the Gibbelins Lived and Discreditably Fed"
Sidney Sime, 1911
from Lord Dunsany's *The Book of Wonder*

the light and the Gibbelins and strung up for food. The bright light that shines on him presages the destruction of his flesh and the exposure of his skeleton. Likewise in "The Probable Adventure of Three Literary Men" from the *Book of Wonder* by Lord Dunsany (See Figure 3.25), a ray of light dooms three adventurers who have come to collect a golden box filled with beautiful poems from a castle. Unexpectedly, someone in an upper chamber of the castle "in the night's most secret hour, lit a shocking light, lit it and made no sound." This silent, concentrated ray of visible light, which streams down from a window, is so frightening and powerful that the three fall or jump over the edge of the earth. This powerful ray destroys three literary men, suggesting that even a facile mind cannot protect one from potent destructive forces that are beyond one's control. X-ray technology cast the faculty of vision, and the solidity of the human body, in a whole new light. Thomas Mann details precisely these reactions in *The Magic Mountain*:

> The doctor let Hans view his own hand through the fluoroscope screen [a device invented in 1896 that showed an x-ray image of the body in action], and as the x-ray "disintegrated, annihilated, dissolved" the flesh from his own living body, for the first time in his life Hans understood that he would die. Mann identified the response that many must have experienced as they peered into the interior of the human body for the first time and observed organs within the shell of flesh that the new technology had suddenly pierced.[57]

X-rays, which revealed the body's interior as a ghostly image, pierced the body's surface like a weapon, but without any visible evidence of a wound. This technology

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[57] Kern, 185.
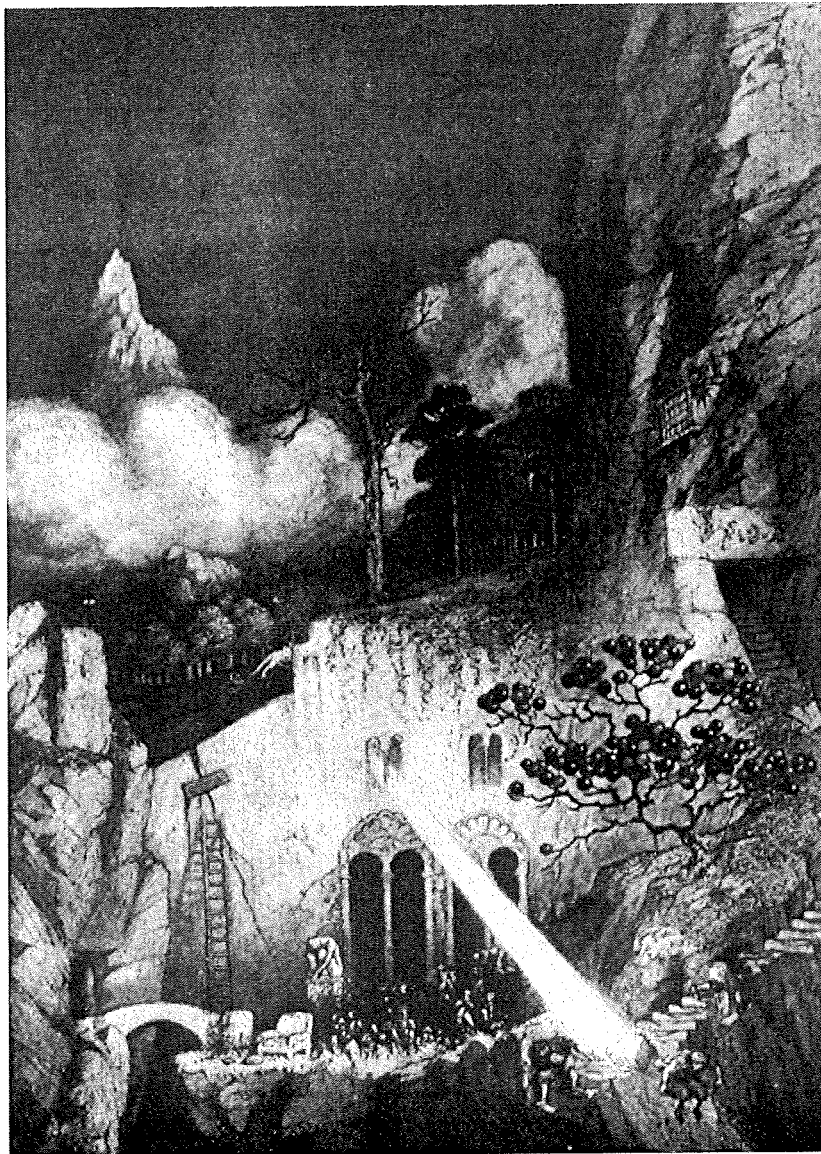
Figure 3.25
"The Probable Adventure of three Literary Men"
Sidney Sime, 1911
from Lord Dunsany's *The Book of Wonder*

Figure 3.26
Advertisement for Sozodont including an x-ray machine and ray,
Illustrated London News, 1896

called into question the previously unassailable belief in the solid opacity of the human body. Suddenly, the body could be perceived as a permeable "shell," that destroyed distinctions between what was heretofore considered interior and exterior. What was typically invisible—unless flesh was cut—could now be made visible by a mysterious invisible light. The association of these unseen rays with death was very common at the turn-of-the-century and clearly persisted into the twentieth century—Mann wrote *The Magic Mountain* in 1924.

Concentrated *invisible* light rays that could penetrate flesh and produce a visible image of the skeleton must have seemed horrifyingly unreal. Further, this ray, discovered by Wilhelm Röentgen in 1895, was emitted from an intimidating, science fiction-looking gadget (See Figure 3.23) that, to some extent, resembled a magic lantern. Physicist Albert Franks explains that x-rays—which Röentgen called x-rays precisely because they were rather mysterious—created quite a stir when they were first used in 1896 (See Figure 3.26):

The fact that x-rays could be used to photograph bones inside the body and to locate foreign bodies such as bullets or swallowed coins captured the public imagination immediately....with headline captions such as *Electrical Photography Through Solid Bodies* (Electrical Engineer, New York), *Illuminated Tissue* (New York Medical Record) and *Searchlight of Photography* (The Lancet, London). Many lecture demonstrations were given during the months of 1896, often with a fee charged to the members of the audience who volunteered to have their hands, purses, etc. x-rayed.[58]

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[58] Alan Michette and Slawa Pfauntsch, *X-Rays: The First Hundred Years* (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 1996), 1.

Some found this newfangled device, with its ability to see through flesh, to be indecent; and, according to Flint, for many Victorians being able to see "that which was not visible did not so much inspire as frighten."[59]

The weirdness of being able to see that which is normally interior and invisible is underscored in "He distinctly saw within himself the drug he had chewed," from "Haschicsh Hallucinations" (See Figure 3.5) This image is suggestive of the x-ray's ability to illuminate interior physical spaces. Like a couple of x-rays, beams of light from two eyeballs "zap" the crystalline drug within the hallucinator's stomach, making the interior spaces visible.[60] The emerald shoots sparks back, like a response to being struck by rays from an electromagnetic gadget. The hallucinator gets a look into the invisible world of his own interior—which is necessarily in physical continuity with his exterior.

His interior is described and inscribed in great detail. It is another world altogether. His interior is like a strange landscape inhabited by fantasy creatures, an anthropomorphic tree, and a seated mushroom with two distorted eyes. Smoky clouds, that suggest the interior/exterior boundary, swirl behind the scene as the hallucinator watches himself. He seems to exist in two spaces at once; one exterior and one interior.

The ability to be in two places at the same time was an artifact of the fourth dimension, according to late nineteenth-century science. If space could bend back on itself, scientists conjectured, then a distant place could be brought near and be perceived simultaneously with one's usual environment. This strange extra-worldly quality permeates Victorian mathematician Charles Hinton's *Scientific Romances*. In

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[59] Flint, 34.

[60] Interestingly, both this image and "The Probable Adventure of Three Literary Men" picture light rays similar to the one in Figure 3.26, the ad for dental x-rays and Sozodont.

this book he discusses one, two, three, and four dimensions in scientific terms, but also in short proto-science fiction stories that demonstrate the same ideas. In this passage, Hinton [1884] imagines a scenario in which space bends back on itself, allowing a being to be two places at the same time:

> Conceive of two beings at a great distance from one another on a plane surface. If the plane surface is bent so that they are brought close to one another...The two beings might be conceived as so placed, by a proper bending of the plane, that they should be absolutely in juxtaposition...The bending might be carried so far as to make one being suddenly appear in the plane by the side of the other. If these beings were ignorant of the existence of a third dimension, this result would be as marvellous to them, as it would be for a human being who was at a great distance—it might be the other side of the world—to suddenly appear and really be by our side, and during the whole time he not to have left the place in which he was.[61]

The weirdness of physical mass contorting to bring two different places together is underscored in Sime's Ta-ta from *Bogey Beasts* (See Figure 3.1). The Ta-ta turns himself inside out in order to enter his own head. Picturing the Ta-Ta's contortions is challenging. What would he look like, and would he even be visible once inside himself?

Imagining this contortion is reminiscent of attempting to picture a three-dimensional object moving in four-dimensional space. In *Scientific Romances* Hinton gave instructions for visualizing four dimensions, "by a complicated set of

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[61] Charles Hinton, "What is the Fourth Dimension?" [*Scientific Romances*, Vol. 1 (London: Swann Sonnenschein & Co.), 1884], in *Speculations on the Fourth Dimension: Selected Writings of Charles H. Hinton*, ed. Rudolf v.B. Rucker (New York: Dover, 1980), 5.

manoeuvres involving imagining sheets of paper, first flat, then overlain, then folded." (See Figure I.3).[62] In some cases, paper that could be folded into cubes was sold along with the book. Hinton [1902] describes the extrapolation of a three-dimensional cube into four-dimensional space:

A four-dimensional cube…which is generated from a cube by a movement of every part of the cube in a fourth direction at right angles to each of the three visible directions in the cube, if it moved transverse to our space, would appear as lasting cube. A cube of three-dimensional matter, since it extends to no distance at all in the fourth dimension, could instantly disappear if subjected to a motion transverse to our space. It would disappear and be gone without it being possible to point to any direction in which it had moved. All attempts to visualize a fourth dimension are futile.[63]

Like picturing four dimensions from Hinton's three-dimensional cube, trying to imagine the Ta-ta's inside-out contortions is ineffective; they are both too abstract to visualize easily. Although the Ta-ta has a window in the side of his temple that allows a clear view of his living quarters, the viewer is unable to see in. The viewer can only imagine the Ta-ta's interior. Like the imaginary picture of four-dimensional space, the image of the Ta-ta's contortions remains in the mind's eye only. Hinton's three-dimensional cube disappears as it moves in the direction of four-dimensional space, which may be what happens to the Ta-ta as he contorts himself.

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[62] Flint, 280.

[63] Charles Hinton, "The Recognition of the Fourth Dimension," [*Bulletin of the Philosophical Society of Washington* 14, (1902), pp. 179-204], in *Speculations on the Fourth Dimension*, 145.

The glass window in the Ta-ta's head which ostensibly allows a view of his interior, serves as a portal into the Ta-ta's home—a separate place from his exterior. Late nineteenth-century proponents of scrying believed that crystal gazing likewise connected a scryer to other places or times. Wells' "The Crystal Egg" links the fourth dimensional phenomenon in which one can be in two places at the same time with crystal gazing. In the story, a Martian stares at Mr. Cave through a crystal, and Mr. Cave sees him staring in the crystal he uses on earth. The narrator, Mr. Wace, speculates about the ways that a crystal could be in two worlds at once:

> we have to believe one of two things; either that Mr. Cave's crystal was in two worlds at once, and that, while it was carried about in one, it remained stationary in the other...or else that it had some peculiar relation of sympathy with another and exactly similar crystal in this other world, so that what was seen in the interior of the one in this world was, under suitable conditions, visible to an observer in the corresponding crystal in the other world; and *vice versa*. At present, indeed, we do not know of any way in which two crystals could so come *en rapport*, but nowadays we know enough to understand that the thing is not altogether impossible.[64]

Two crystals being so *en rapport* was also compatible with ideas, held by many Victorians, that the fourth dimension was as a part of the spirit realm.[65]

Sime knew Wells' work and was certainly aware of contemporaneous ideas about the fourth dimension. He refers to the fourth dimension in the texts that accompany his illustrations "The Wily Grasser" from *Bogey Beasts* and the image of

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[64] Flint, 276.

[65] Rudolf v.B. Rucker, "Introduction," *Speculations on the Fourth Dimension*, xvi.

the Oonrouff-Wuff from *From An Ultimate Dim Thule*. These images have interesting

visual connections with Hinton's ideas about the fourth dimension. Other

illustrations, "The Coronation of Mr. Thomas Shap" from *The Book of Wonder* by

Lord Dunsany (See Figure 3.27) and "The dreams of Mana-Yood-Sushai" from *The

Gods of Pegana* also by Lord Dunsany (See Figure 3.15) are evocative of Hinton's

[1884] descriptions of a two-dimensional world in the science fiction essay "A Plane

World:"

> "Tis a vast bubble blown in a substance something like glass…round these
>
> orbs pass in due order and succession other disks…And one of these orbs is
>
> fitted by nature to be the habitation and home of living beings.…They do not
>
> rise from the surface of the film, but as all matter lies on the smooth surface but
>
> one particle deep…For consider their faces bent in one direction along the
>
> rim…their movements, thoughts, and imaginations are all confined to that
>
> surface on which they are.[66]

"The Coronation of Mr. Thomas Shap" and "The Dreams of Mana-Yood-Sushai" are

loaded with orbs that seem to skim along the surface of some mysterious ether,

although they do move one behind the other. As in Hinton's descriptions, the images

in the orbs appear flat, as if they are on the surface with only one side visible; the

creatures within them have their "faces bent in one direction along the rim."

Sime plays with orb imagery in the illustration of the ethereal creature the Wily

Grasser from *Bogey Beasts* (See Figure 3.28). The text accompanying the music says

"He keeps the 4th dimension in a Cinch!" In this illustration, strange flat plantlike

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[66] Charles Hinton, "A Plane World," [*Scientific Romances*, Vol. 1 (London: Swann Sonnenschein &
Co.), 1884] in *Speculations on the Fourth Dimension*, 23-25.
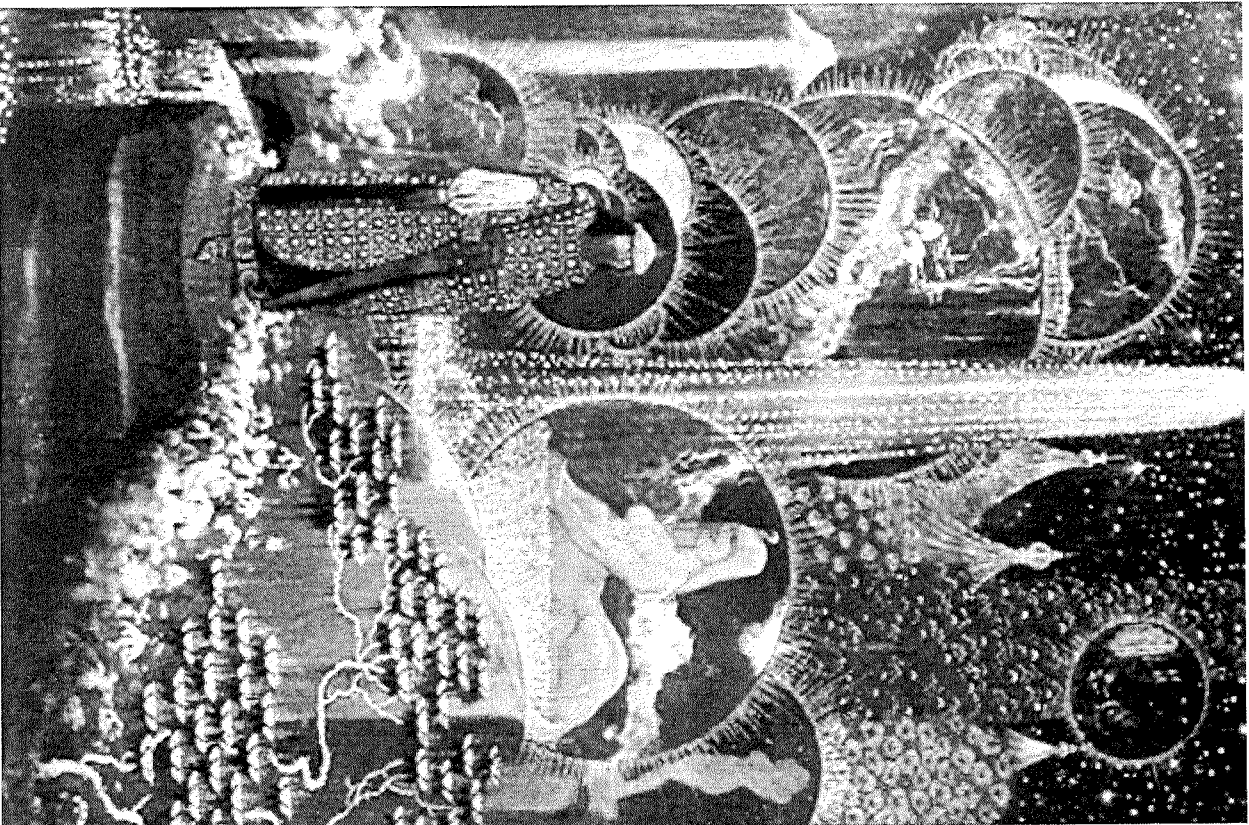
Figure 3.27
"The Coronation of Mr. Thomas Shap"
Sidney Sime, 1911
from Lord Dunsany's *The Book of Wonder*

Figure 3.28
"The Wily Grasser"
Sidney Sime, 1923
from *Bogey Beasts*
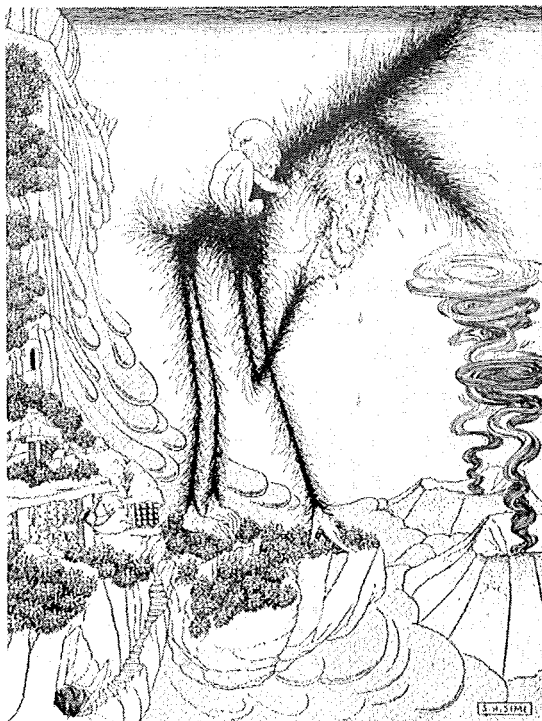
Figure 3.29
"The Oonrouff-Wuff"
Sidney Sime, 1897
from "From an Ultimate Dim Thule" (A Record of Dreams)

creatures float into trees and into the Grasser's face, which is made up of orbs like the ones found in "The Coronation of Mr. Thomas Shap" and "The Dreams of Mana-Yood-Sushai." However, the Wily Grasser is not a creature within an orb or surrounded by orbs, but a creature made up of orbs. Hinton describes his two-dimensional world as a series of orbs on which

> has fallen a thin layer of space dust....The dust is kept on the polished surface by the attraction of the vast film....And here and there are condensations wherein have fallen together numbers of these floating masses, and where the dust condensing for ages has formed vast disks...And these disks are glowing hot—yet no light comes from them into our universe...From each of these glowing disks the luminous influence streams forth...spreading out on every side, it [the bubble] merges into darkness—like the ripples in the center of a vast calm lake gradually become indistinguishable.[67]

Light and darkness characterize both Hinton's imaginary two-dimensional world and Sime's Wily Grasser. Hinton's dusty orbs spread their glowing light along their surfaces, and eventually merge into the darkness. The Grasser's eyes shine and his speckled orbs disintegrate into the darkness below him. The Grasser wonders what happens to light after it is gone and all that is left is darkness: "Said he— / With an air / of doubt— / Can you tell me true / Tell me / When the light goes out / Where / It goes out to?"[68] The Grasser, of necessity a two-dimensional creature, considers time in a four-dimensional frame of mind: "Oh tell me / What the Days / Change to /

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[67] Hinton, "A Plane World," in *Speculations on the Fourth Dimension*, 23.

[68] Sime, *Bogey Beasts*, 11.

When they're done / Tell me / Where tomorrow stays / While / It's unbegun."[69] He dissolves before his questions about light and time are answered. Explanations of the behavior of light and time in fourth dimension remain unexplained or unexplainable. The Grasser holds the fourth dimension, in which time is considered to be a fluid element, "in a cinch." Hinton [1902] suggested that "All attempts to visualize a fourth dimension are futile. It must be connected with a time experience in three space."[70] Without an understanding of time in the fourth dimension, the fourth dimension is inaccessible.

Late nineteenth-century scientists wondered if time, like space, could warp and allow an individual to experience the past or future. The plausibility of time travel in this fashion is considered in Wells' *The Time Machine*. Flint explains:

This concept [of time travel] is most vividly outlined of *The Time Machine*, where it provides the pre-conditions for time travel on which the apparent plausibility of the tale depends...the three dimensions of space—length, breadth, thickness—and the further dimension of time, or duration.[71]

In "The Coronation of Mr. Thomas Shap" (See Figure 3.27) an ancient sphinx and a flat classical sculpture, each within an orb, float above Mr. Shap's head. The images within the orbs resemble crystal ball imagery, illuminated and powered by a cascading waterfall of lights that glows in the center of the illustration. The sphinx suggests the past experienced in the present through a crystal. The sphinx, in fact, is an advisor to Mr. Shap, conversing with him in the present about matters of state.

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[69] Sime, *Bogey Beasts*, 11.

[70] Hinton, "The Recognition of the Fourth Dimension," in *Speculations on the Fourth Dimension*, 145.

[71] Flint, 279.

The Oonrouff-Wuff from *From An Ultimate Dim Thule* (See Figure 3.29) is a donkey-like creature who tries to see the fourth dimension (perhaps Sime is suggesting that only an ass would try to comprehend four-dimensional space). He stands on a piece of earth that is either flying, or has broken away from a cliff and is floating in some liquid substance. Sime's text reads: "I sat on the back of the Oonrouff-Wuff: he paused; sadness overcame him as he gazed fixedly into the fourth dimension, and his tears dropped into the abyss. Then another Brain-cell broke, and something else became me." The Oonrouff-Wuff gazes into the abyss at vortices of fluid matter, which swirl out of two mountains. He contemplates the swirling vortices, apparently unable to comprehend what they mean.

Hinton likewise calls on the remarkable properties of liquid vortices to help his readers imagine plane rotations in the ether that describe the fourth dimension. In his essay, "The Recognition of the Fourth Dimension" Hinton [1902] describes these rotating liquid masses in detail:

On first consideration we should expect a rotating mass of liquid immediately to spread off and lose itself in the surrounding liquid.... But we see eddies in a river strangely persistent. The rings that occur in puffs of smoke and last so long are whirls or vortices curved round so that their opposite ends join together....Lord Kelvin has proposed the hypothesis that portions of a fluid segregated in vortices account for the origins of matter....The further consideration of four-dimensional rotations shows the existence of a kind of

vortex which would make an aether filled with a homogeneous motion easily thinkable.[72]

The Oonrouff-Wuff stares at the vortices of the fourth dimension in wonderment, hand on his chin, tears dropping into four-dimensional space, until finally a brain cell breaks. Visualizing the fourth dimension is so difficult, Sime seems to say, that the brain can't handle the task. After the brain cell broke, the narrator says, "Something else became me." A transformation takes place; the power of the experience turns the narrator into an unknown that Sime offers no clues about and the reader cannot visualize.

According to Flint, Wells' *Time Machine* is "an embodiment of abstract theory, an opportunity…to envision…how the concept of the Fourth Dimension might be understood to exist."[73] Sime imagery works in similar ways, it expresses, in visual form, Victorian scientific beliefs about envisioning and comprehending the fourth dimension.

Conclusion

The depth and fluidity of Sime's visual imagination stimulated the creation of fantasy imagery that muddies the boundaries between the seen and unseen, and between the physical and the ethereal. Sime's illustrations express the essence of Victorian science in visual form. In his discussion of the history of magic, Simon During connects nineteenth-century scientific theories of light and electricity with notions of consciousness, time and space:

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[72] Hinton, "The Recognition of the Fourth Dimension," in *Speculations on the Fourth Dimension*, 153-154.

[73] Flint, 283.

> Thomas Young's…1800 hypothesis of a wave theory of light and his insistence
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> on the importance of the eye as a lens broke into the distinction between seeing
>
> and the seen, allowing optics—in devices like Brewster's own kaleidoscope—
>
> to provide new revelations and visual pleasures. The discovery of "invisible
>
> light" (infrared and ultraviolet rays) undermined the old empirical
>
> philosophies. And, grandiosely, Friedrich Schelling…argued that magnetism,
>
> electricity, and galvanism were the basis of consciousness and nature as well as
>
> of time and space.[74]

During connects science with natural magic; nature's internal power. For Sime,

Darwinian evolution—with its unseen forces that drive the course of the natural

world—suggests the wondrous phantoms of the unconscious mind that drive

behavior. Sime's work was invigorated by the Victorian fascination with the imagery

and the workings of optical gadgets such as crystal balls and magic lantern shows.

The otherworldly aspects of optics and optical gadgetry become associated with

dreams and hallucinations in his work, providing the viewer what During might call a

veritable "kaleidoscope" of "new revelations and visual pleasures."

Victorian interest in and fear of the ghostly images of the body's interior

produced by x-rays resonated with discomfort at the inability to keep the invisible

under wraps. In fact, concentrated rays of light straddled a fine line between their

ability to illuminate or to disintegrate an object. Invisible rays of light, like x-rays,

must have seemed to possess even more destructive power because they "shine"

undetected by the naked eye. The horrible skin diseases contracted by early

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[74] Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 21.

radiologists were tangible proof. The powerful ability of light not only to illuminate, but to penetrate pervades Sime's imagery. His illustrations push the illusory qualities of visible light, suggesting the ability of light to expose phantoms and excavate skeletons from the closet of the unconscious mind.

Late nineteenth-century notions of contorted space and time in the fourth dimension hinted at unseen aspects of nature that were almost beyond human comprehension. Sime's work betrays his fascination with the highly abstract ideas that describe the fourth dimension. He associates these abstractions with arcane visuals that lay bare the mind's limited grasp of the invisible. In his imagery, the fourth dimension takes on an unresolved and irrational dreamlike quality that places it directly in the realm of nightmares, hallucinations, and the unconscious cerebration that they express.

Sime's inward eye functions like an optical gadget, acting as a portal into the visual imagination of the unconscious mind. Projected images transported in focused rays of light, mental exercises done to picture the fourth dimension, and the insertion of psychological intentionality into natural selection brought the unseen and the invisible into focus. Like the products of such processes, Sime's illustrations are visible incarnations of the time-based machinations of unconscious thought. Turn-of-the-century descriptions of the processes of the unconscious mind rhyme with filmic motion—they both present an ongoing sequence of images played out over time. According to Kern, "Arguments for a relativity of time were…made by psychiatrists…'a whole generation' of experimental psychologists and clinicians in the late nineteenth century…investigated subjective time."[75] Time came to be understood as a subjective and "atomistic" commodity. Indeed, the series of

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[75] Kern, 20.

individual images projected in magic lantern shows were a main precursor of cinema. Castle explains that the desire for ever more fantastic phantasmagorias with more "lifelike movement" led to the invention of moving pictures:

> the desire for more compelling illusions also produced momentous changes in the magic lantern itself…Ultimately, of course, the technology of phantasmagoric illusion, like that of the panorama, the bioscope, stereoscopic projection, and related nineteenth-century image-reproduction techniques, provided the inspiration for early cinematography. A desire to give lifelike movement to the ghostly images of the magic lantern prompted Edward Muybridge, for example, to construct a "Zoopraxiscope," which projected some of the world's first moving pictures in 1882.[76]

The first cinema shown in 1896 also broke motion into its discrete parts—individual images. Although Sime's imagery discussed in this chapter is static, it dramatizes the movement of discrete visual entities in space over time. His work features visuals that paraphrase the irrational image-thoughts of a subjective unconscious. Sime's imagery also suggests the abstract manipulations of turn-of-the-century scientific theories that relate motion to time and space. Because of Sime's keen sense of narrative in his imagery—one gets the sense of coming upon his illustrated scenes—his illustration comes across like a discrete film frame taken from an ongoing sequence of frames.

In the next chapter I explore several of the films of French turn-of-the-century filmmakers Emile Cohl and Georges Méliès. Cohl and Méliès, who were contemporaries of Sime (and Rackham and Beardsley), produced fantasy films that

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[76] Castle, 40-41.

are likewise evocative of a subjective unconscious freed from the physical constraints of the body. In order to examine this aspect of their visual narratives closely, I temporarily suspend filmic motion. This approach allows me better access to the discrete individual units that come together to create a sense of motion in their work. Cohl and Méliès savor the fuzzy boundaries between the discursive functions of "realistic" representation and those of abstraction, in much the same way that *fin de siècle* cutting-edge scientific discourse appeared to do. Toward the end of the chapter, I address the ways in which Cohl's and Méliès' hybrid visuals, when brought to life by the sensation of time and motion in cinematic media, project early twentieth-century scientific notions of a universe in flux.

Chapter Four

Moving Pictures: Georges Méliès' and Emile Cohl's Time/Space Continuum

In 1895, the first film, the Lumière brothers' *Sortie des usines* stunned a technology-jaded audience. What appeared to be a common visual experience—a projection of a black and white photograph of workers exiting the Lumière factory— suddenly burst into lifelike motion. In the film, ghostly black and white images of the workers exiting the factory gestured and talked in silence before "disappearing" off the edge of the screen. Over the next few decades, French fantasy cineastes Georges Méliès (1861-1938) and Emile Cohl (1857-1838) constructed cinematic fantasy worlds for audiences that combined hand-drawn illustration with motion. These films depended on light both in their creation and their projection, while the dark environment in which they were shown enhanced their irrational and improbable plots. In these films, two-dimensional black and white imagery hovered about the edge of reality like silent phantoms in a dream scenario. From the projectors, electrically powered black boxes that whirred and clicked, came miraculous beams of light that rendered living motion. Film cameras and projectors seemed magically to capture and then release these moving images out of thin air. The filmic motion impersonated natural motion and recast Méliès and Cohl's fantasies in a believable light.

Popular understanding of early twentieth-century science likewise hovered about the edge of reality. The early twentieth-century public was fascinated with and intimidated by newly introduced notions in physics, electromagnetic theory, astronomy, and microbiology. There was a common thread in this new science—the intent to come to grips with intangible and invisible workings of the universe. Around the same time, the belief that perception is not fixed, but fluctuates under varying

circumstances came to the fore. These startling, but fascinating, ideas strained against established beliefs about objectivity and the absolute nature of space, time—and self. In *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*, Steven Kern explains: "Speculation that there are two- and three-dimensional spaces other than the one described by Euclid and that our experience of space is subjective and a function of our unique physiology was disturbing to the [early twentieth-century] popular mind."[1] Although Kern mentions only investigations into notions of space, people felt similar discomfort with much of the theoretical science that emerged at the dawn of the twentieth century.

These new scientific discourses suggested that the world actually worked in ways that completely defied common sense and day-to-day experience. It was an easy reach for most people to conflate such seemingly irrational workings of the universe— such as Einstein's relativity and optical technology capable of "seeing" and reproducing the unseen—with turn-of-the-century ideas about the hidden and frequently irrational unconscious mind. *Fin de siècle* scientific and optical gadgets that shed light on shifting (and heretofore invisible) physical realms, paralleled new psychological approaches that stressed the subjectivity of the unconscious mind. Kern, whose ideas about an innovative turn-of-the-century culture of time and space were influenced by early twentieth-century "phenomenogically oriented psychiatrists," argues for "a cultural revolution of the broadest scope" at the turn-of-the-century "that involved essential structures of human experience and basic forms of human expression."[2] I would like to argue that the "forms of human expression" Kern refers to includes cinematic work.

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[1] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 134.

[2] Kern, 6.

In this dissertation, I argue that descriptions of the unconscious mind ranged from a material entity physically located in the brain to one understood to be subjective and disembodied. While Arthur Rackham's illustrations disclose implications for the understanding of the physicality of the mid-to-late-nineteenth-century psyche, Aubrey Beardsley's visual depictions suggest a disembodied psyche partly removed from the constraints of physical manifestation. Sidney Sime's imagination stimulated the creation of fantasy imagery that blurs the boundaries between the seen and unseen, and between the physical and the ethereal. His atmospheric imagery—which directly addresses contemporaneous ideas about the subjectivity of time, space, and motion—is evocative of an intangible psyche freed from the material body. Such characterizations of the psyche are framed by their broader cultural contexts. The overarching cultural notion of a subjective self in a fluctuating universe heralded by early twentieth-century scientific discourse, for example, encompasses theories of an unpredictable and intangible unconscious mind.

In this chapter, I discuss the ways in which Méliès and Cohl's fantasy films embody both turn-of-the-century scientific discourse and related discourses of the unconscious mind. Cinema was the perfect medium to represent the invisible workings of the psyche. The darkened room and focused light, which were an intricate part of the cinematic experience, fostered a dreamlike sensation. The projector lens exuded a beam of light that, focused through the film, produced a powerful, yet intangible, visual experience. Unlike illustrations drawn on paper, which can be held and examined, film imagery disappeared once the projector light was turned off. Certainly the celluloid strip can be touched, but the frames are dark; the filmstrip requires focused light to manifest its imagery. This ephemeral quality was heightened by Méliès and Cohl's dream-like worlds in which a hybrid mix of

"real" imagery (moving black and white imagery that reproduced the natural world) and drawing rendered a universe in flux. Their cinema portrayed imaginary parallel worlds in which familiar, but shifting, perspectives were powered by electricity and light—it is almost as if cinema was the necessary medium to describe the new ways of experiencing the world.

Replication of naturalistic motion of "real" and imaginary entities in cinema was an amazing technological advance. The newfound ability to simulate motion added yet another dimension to visual representation and allowed artists/designers to play out narrative concepts over time—a phenomenon that could only be suggested by still images produced on paper. In cinema, representations of physical entities could morph, appear and disappear, and inhabit strange perspectives. Cinematic "worlds"— like the narratives of the unconscious mind and the dynamic realms of cutting-edge science—could be performed in ways that "completely defied common sense and day-to-day experience."

Motion, in fact, was a topic bewilderingly interdependent with notions of light, time, and space in *fin de siècle* scientific theory. Einstein proposed in 1907 "that by slowing down the speed of light, gravity warps space and time." Since the motion of light traverses "the shortest distance between two points, and [is] the basis for all measurements," Kern notes, "[Einstein's] theory altered the very conception of space itself." In 1908 German physicist Hermann Minkowski claimed that "henceforth space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality [1913]."[3]

The line was a very powerful actor in turn-of-the-century science as well. Minkowski, in fact, compared the union of time and space to a point in motion, which

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[3] Hermann Minkowski, "Raum und Zeit," in Hendrik A. Lorentz, Albert Einstein, Hermann Minkowski, *Das Relativitätsprinzip: Eine Sammlung von Abhandlungen*, 56-68, Leipzig: Teubner, 1913, quoted in Kern, 206.

he called a "world-line." I suggest Cohl's (and to some extent Méliès') bizarre environments are propelled by a visual narrative in the grip of the drawn line in motion. Fundamental aspects of Cohl's imaginary worlds are revealed when examined in the context of subjective motion of irrational line and its consequent geometric elements. Indeed, new theories in geometry were crucial to turn-of-the-century ideas about the subjectivity of space. According to Kern:

> These alternative surface spaces contrasted with the planar surface of Euclid's two-dimensional geometry...By the end of the century other mathematicians had developed geometries for all kinds of spaces—a doughnut, the inside of a tunnel, even a space like a Venetian blind.[4]

Cohl's geometric visuals, when brought to life by the sensation of time and motion in cinematic media, play out these early twentieth-century ideas of subjective mental and physical realms.

Before I consider the impact of motion in Cohl's or Méliès' work, though, I would like discuss their work in relation to Sime's and Beardsley's imagery. In order to do so, at the beginning of this chapter I purposely stop motion and examine Méliès and Cohl's sketches and individual stills. Cinematic motion could by itself be considered evocative of early twentieth-century ideas about time, space, and motion. I have therefore decided postpone my discussion of filmic motion in order to tap into the cultural narrative in Méliès and Cohl's *still* imagery, as I did for Rackham's, Beardsley's, and Sime's work. I then address the ways in which Méliès and Cohl's

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[4] Kern, 133.

visuals, when brought to life by the sensation of time and motion in cinematic media, are expressive of the early twentieth-century notion of a universe in flux.

Stop Motion

In this section I examine Méliès and Cohl's film sketches and still frames. Méliès and Cohl's dream-like still imagery is reminiscent of that of Sime and Beardsley. The filmmakers' provocative visual narratives have much in common with those of Beardsley. As in Sime's work, dynamic juxtaposition of light and dark areas creates a sense of movement in Méliès and Cohl's static images. Although the visual qualities of their still images differ significantly, all three men rendered irrational, transitory worlds out of darkness and light. Hidden and revealed forms in their imagery are rich with meaning. Invisibility, and the faculty of vision it invokes, was a potent theme in Sime's illustration and in Méliès and Cohl's stills and sketches.

The discovery of x-rays in 1895 shattered conventions about vision. It was almost unbelievable that invisible light rays could illuminate the interior of the body, but demonstrations of the ray's power seemed like fantasy in their own right. The fascination with the projection of these mysterious rays is clear in this excerpt from a talk given at the British Roentgen Society in 1897.

> November the eighth, 1895, will ever be memorable in the history of Science...The observer, Prof. Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen...What he saw with his own eyes, a faint flickering greenish illumination upon a bit of cardboard, painted over with a fluorescent chemical preparation...All this in a carefully darkened room, from which every known kind of ray had be scrupulously excluded...In that room, a Crooks tube, stimulated internally by sparks from an

induction coil, but carefully covered by a shield of black cardboard, impervious

to every known kind of light, even the most intense. Yet in the darkness,

expressly arranged so as to allow the eye to watch for luminous phenomena,

nothing visible until the hitherto unrecognized rays, emanation from the

Crooks tube and penetrating the cardboard shield, fell upon the luminescent

screen, thus revealing their existence and making darkness visible...The

invisible rays—for they were invisible save when they fell on the painted

screen—were found to have a penetrative power hitherto unimagined.[5]

This science-fiction-like description resembles the screening of a film, complete with

dark room, and black projector emitting a flickering light that is focused onto a

luminescent screen. The painted screen revealed Roentgen's invisible ray, which

penetrated flesh to produce ghostly black and white x-ray images of the human

skeleton. These sorts of experiences and the images they produced, which were made

available to an eager public, must have encouraged Méliès interest in the

phantasmagoric.[6]

The laboratory scenario described above brings to mind a number of Méliès

sketches or stills, such as the set from his film *The Phrenologist and the Lively Skull*

(1901) (See Figure 4.1), in which skeletons are very important visual elements. In this

film set, which features a number of hanging skeletons, a gigantic skull with bulging

eyes sits on a laboratory table and stares down at a kneeling Méliès (who appears to be

trying to move the table). In a bizarre turn of events, the skull, which is balanced on a

flask and a glass bottle that sit on a book (possibly a phrenological manual), sticks out

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[5] Lisa Cartwright, *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 111.

[6] Hammond, *Marvellous Méliès* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1974), 36-40.
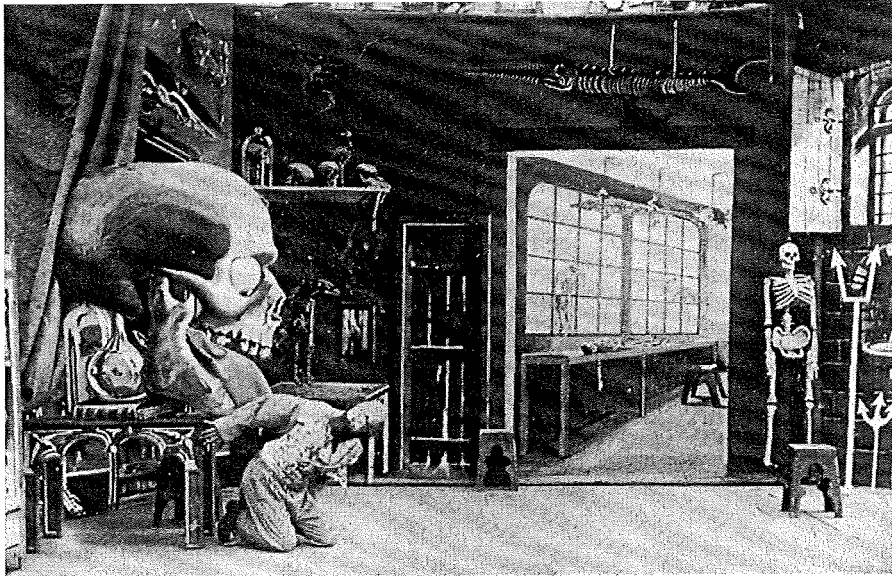
Figure 4.1
The Phrenologist and the Lively Skull
Georges Méliès, 1901
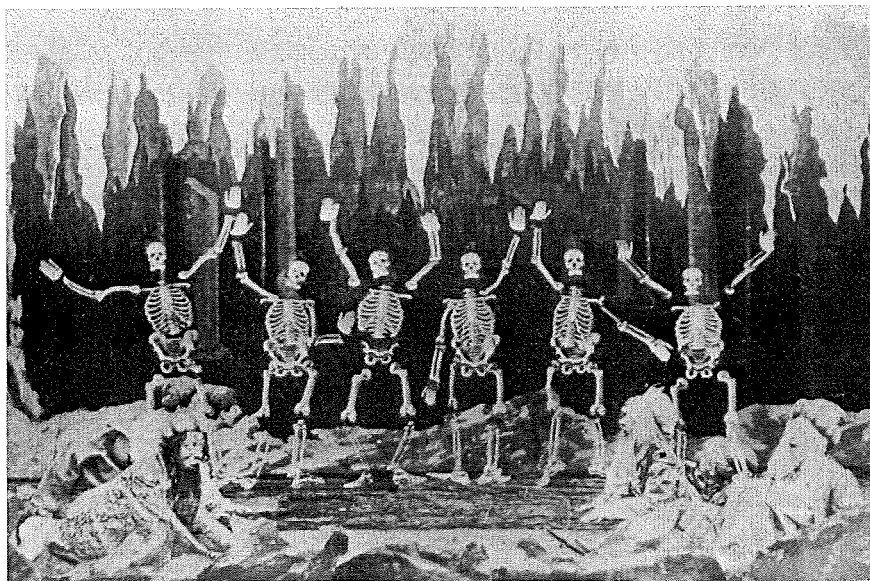
Figure 4.2
"The Phantoms—A Spectre Combat"
A scene from *The Palace of the Arabian Nights*
Georges Méliès, 1905
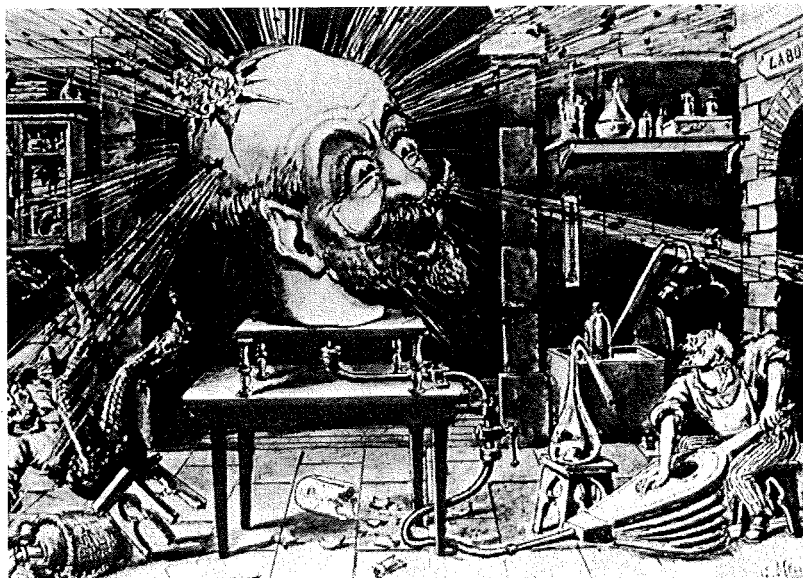
Figure 4.3
Sketch for *The Man with the Rubber Head*
Georges Méliès, 1902

its tongue and licks Méliès' back—so much for phrenology predicting behavior. The flask contents, a bubbling liquid, seem to power the skull; perhaps an allusion to drug induced hallucination. Like a strange crystal ball illusion, a small image of Méliès head appears in the glass bottle.

I suggest that this image has less to do with phrenology than with the bizarre workings of the mind and the projection of fantastic image-thoughts.[7] It is interesting to note, that although the lab is full of skulls, not one of them displays any indications of phrenological designations. One does not get the sense from the scene that Méliès is commenting on the nineteenth-century materialist interpretation of phrenology. Rather he seems to be focused on projected images of bizarre characters and the irrational dark and light spatial worlds they inhabit—an approach akin to Sime's.

"The Phantoms—A Spectre Combat" a scene from Méliès' *The Palace of the Arabian Nights* (1905) (See Figure 4.2) also features skeletons against a painted scene with white ray-like shapes against a dark background. Like Sime's illustration "There the Gibbelins Lived and Discreditably Fed" (See Figure 3.24) from *The Book of Wonder*, a ray of light that seems to come out of nowhere illuminates a row of hanging skeletons. Both of these images are suggestive of the x-ray's ability to reveal interiors and to destroy flesh.

The destructive power of light reveals the head's interior in Méliès' film *The Man with the Rubber Head* (1902) In this film Méliès' head expands to fill a scientific laboratory (a room quite like the one in which Roentgen demonstrated x-rays in the description above). Méliès' sketch for *The Man with the Rubber Head* (See Figure 4.3) contains the dynamic energy of the film condensed into an image that depicts one instant in time. In the drawing, Méliès' huge brightly lit head sits on a table in the

middle of a spooky laboratory. His staring eyes, which look at his smaller seated self, bear an uncanny resemblance to the staring eyeballs in Sime's illustration "He distinctly saw within himself the drug he chewed" (1905) (See Figure 3.5) in which a hashish user looks into his own mind. In *The Man with the Rubber Head*, the second Méliès sits to the side looking back, ostensibly pumping his own head up with a bellows attached to a scientific contraption.

In this twist on vision akin to that experienced by Sime's hashish user, the sketched Méliès watches himself. Like the proverbial time traveler, each individual exists in two places at the same time. In his sketch Méliès observes himself destroying his own head while simultaneously watching his own head explode. The explosion is rendered in a multitude of straight lines at dynamic angles— reminiscent of rays (or electrical wires)—bursting from Méliès head and eyes. One Méliès' destructive power exposes the other Méliès' innards, making his brains visible. In Sime's illustration powerful focused light rays likewise illuminate the dark interior of a hashish user's mind. Both Sime's and Méliès' imagery features irrational visual images akin to those in dreams. Film historian Paul Hammond explains the connection between Méliès' work and conjuring, dreams, and insanity.

> Méliès' aesthetic consists of periodic dislocations, of spectacular, metamorphic images supported by subservient ones, of lawless unpredictable pantomime. The ideal forms to cope with this frantic dialectic are conjuring, dreams, odysseys and fairy stories. His marvelous world is one of objects in flux, of objects that find it impossible to retain their identity (and because humans are

treated as objects too, there is just a hint of madness, of schizophrenia, behind

Méliès' genial exterior).[8]

Although Hammond is likely referring to Méliès' cinematic effects, his comment are

also more than relevant to Méliès' sketch for *The Man with the Rubber Head* —this

irrational scene renders a multitude of objects in flux in which Méliès' own head, like

that of Sime's hallucinator, is the central player. Visual analysis of Méliès' stills and

sketches, in fact, reveals that his films are much more than theatrical tricks replicated

in cinematic form. Bodies become malleable objects that behave unpredictably. Méliès

plays with perception—he distorts widely accepted ideas about the stability of vision

using shifting light and odd perspectives. This dark and light imagery that mimics the

irrational narratives of dreams and hallucination is consistent with the outward

manifestation of an irrational unconscious mind—a psychological configuration

encouraged by scientific ideas of a universe in flux. It is not surprising, therefore, that

both Méliès and Cohl parodied science and scientists. These parodies, which are

intimately connected with the fantasmagoric in their work, suggest discomfort with

seemingly irrational configurations of both inner and outer spaces proposed by

science.

Irrational fantasy aptly describes Cohl's work. Film historians have remarked

that Cohl's moving white line on a black background is a direct reference to the

technique of vaudeville lightning-sketch artists of the era—these artists rapidly

sketched a series of related images on an easel in front of an audience. Although both

lightning-sketch artists and Cohl rendered white lines on black backgrounds, the

comparison misses much. Cohl was, of course, influenced by the technique, but his

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[8] Hammond, 89.

content was far darker and more provocative than the glib lightning-sketch artist antics.

Cohl filmmaking spanned the years 1908 to 1923. Cohl's career, like Sime's, continued into the era in which Einstein envisioned and published his highly abstract scientific theories. And like Beardsley and Sime, his fantasy imagery suggests that there are unseen worlds in which beings and objects behave in unexpected ways. The viewer understands the disturbing visions in both Beardsley's "The Black Cat" (See Figure 4.4) and Cohl's *He Poses for His Portrait* (See Figure 4.5), in part, because they are white line on a black background. In the final frame of *He Poses for His Portrait*, the frustrated artist, reaching into the blackness, shouts out the words drawn from white lines, "Can it be I am sane or is it ze dream!" The white line drawings of the cats feel like they could vanish into the darkness at any moment, releasing the nightmare-captivated audience from their horrifying grip.

These dark and light dream worlds are also suggestive of turn-of-the-century descriptions of strange realms in other physical dimensions. Uncanny darkness and light characterized late nineteenth-century mathematician Charles Hinton's [1884] two-dimensional world detailed in his book *Scientific Romances*.[9] Hinton describes a dream scenario of sorts—a two-dimensional place in which bright light morphs into darkness.

In the early twentieth century, new scientific theories detailing the interdependent relationship among space, time, and motion overturned conventional ideas about the physical world. Indeed, Einstein's special relativity of 1905 shattered notions of motion of bodies in space and time. Before Einstein, however, other

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[9] Charles Hinton, "A Plane World," [*Scientific Romances*, Vol. 1 (London: Schwann Sonnenschein & Co, 1884)] in *Speculations on the Fourth Dimension: Selected Writings of Charles H. Hinton*, ed. Rudolf. B. Rucker (New York: Dover, 1980), 23.
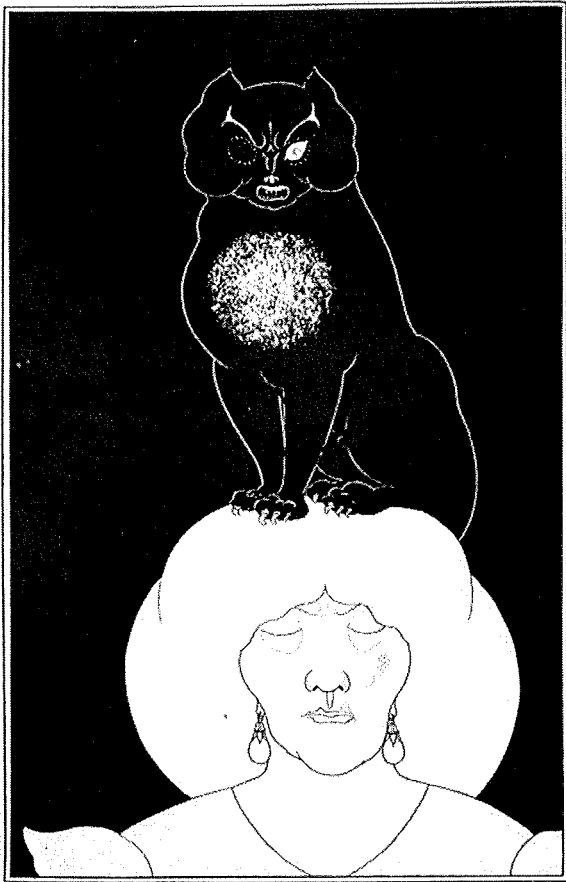
Figure 4.4
"The Black Cat"
Aubrey Beardsley, 1895
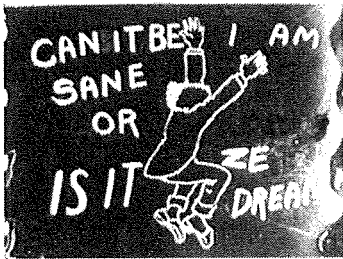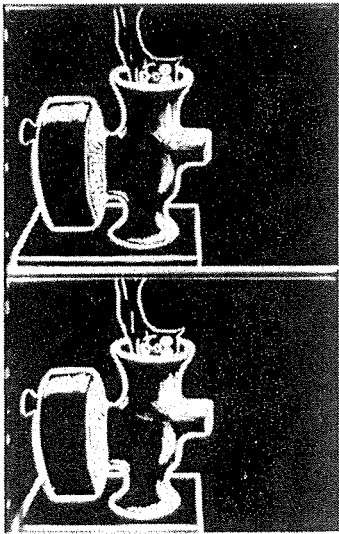
Figure 4.5
He Poses for His Portrait
Emile Cohl, 1913
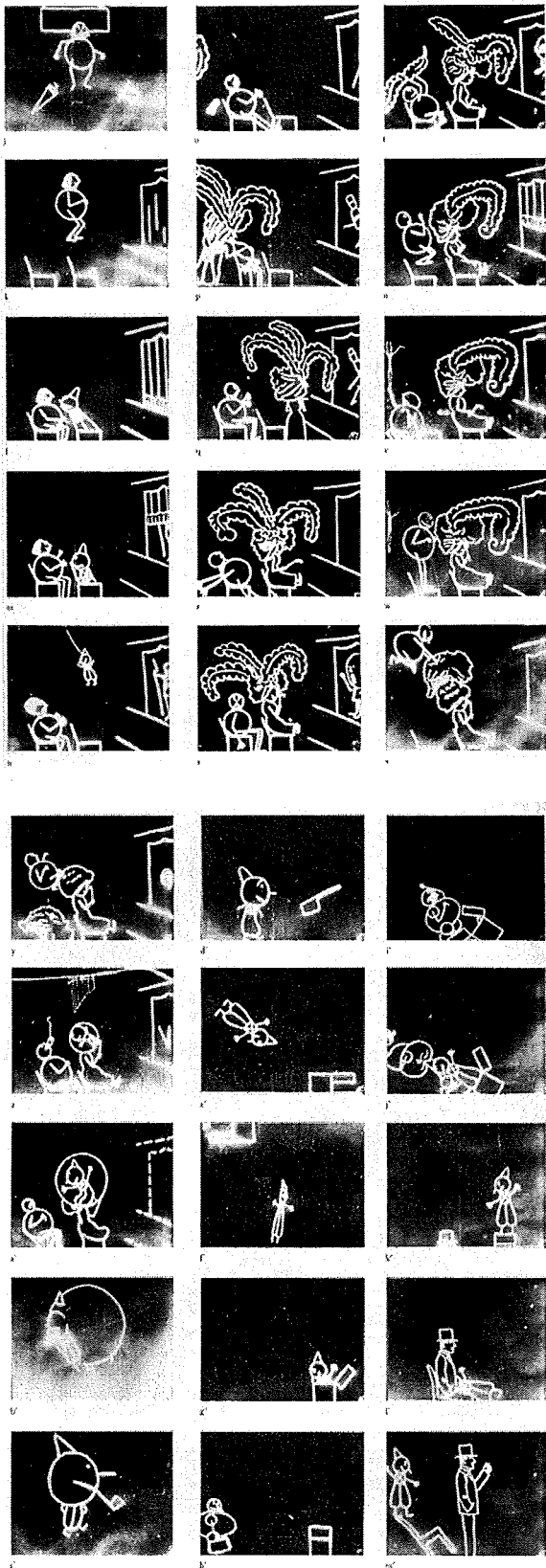
Figure 4.6
Still shots from *Fantasmagorie* in which several different
perspectives exist simultaneously
Emile Cohl, 1908

dimensions were imagined to be bizarre parallel worlds.[10] Interestingly, those who wrote about other dimensions for a lay audience frequently described anthropomorphized geometric shapes inhabiting strange perspectives that suggest Einsteinian distortion. In his film *Fantasmagorie*, Cohl's drawn line renders pseudo-geometric creatures that exist in strange perspectives; there are still shots from *Fantasmagorie* in which several different perspectives exist simultaneously, such as this still (See Figure 4.6), in which the moviegoers could not possibly view the film from where they are seated.[11]

The geometry and disturbing visual perspectives in *Fantasmagorie* are reminiscent of Sime's illustration "The Quest of the Oof-Bird" from *An Ultimate Dim Thule* (A Record of Dreams) (See Figure 3.2). In "The Quest of the Oof-Bird" two African children enter a black and white dream world in which visual perspective is also distorted and strange creatures appear to materialize out of the dark geometry of the environment. In this illustration, the viewer understands that the unknown lies ahead down the zigzag path just as in *Fantasmagorie* the unknown lies beyond the darkness through a *trompe-l'oeil* hole.

Abstract Principals: Méliès' and Cohl's Morphing Perspectives

Hammond says of the set for Méliès' *The Phrenologist and the Lively Skull* (See Figure 4.1): "The power of this image resides in the dialogue between the real and illusory perspective of the three-dimensional props, the two-dimensional cut-outs

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[10] "The years 1890 to 1910 may be considered the Golden years of the Fourth Dimension. It was a time during which the ideas originated by [mathematicians] Gauss and Riemann permeated literary circles, the avant garde, and the thoughts of the general public, affecting trends in art, literature, and philosophy." Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 62.

[11] Donald Crafton, *Emile Cohl, Caricature, and Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 259-260.

and the painted backcloth, grisaille being the common denominator."[12] Cohl's and

Méliès' provocative intersections of illustrative and "real" visual elements challenge

notions of perception—with fascinating and sometimes bizarre results. Both

filmmakers play with perspective; their combinatory cinematic worlds are

unpredictable and distorted. Abstract forms—which can be seen as merely decorative

in early cinema—play as important a narrative role as representational visual elements

do.

Like Sime, Cohl and Méliès savor the fuzzy boundaries between the discursive

functions of representational imagery and those of abstract imagery. Their cinematic

worlds challenge expectations about the roles of drawn versus "real" and abstract

versus figurative characterizations. Despite—or probably because of—these tricky

contrapositions, Méliès and Cohl's imaginary worlds are refreshingly accessible.

These two filmmakers challenge viewers to suspend disbelief in order to

inhabit the machinations of imaginary perspective. Both artists tap into the narrative

power of the drawn line. Cohl uses drawing or animation to simulate hallucinations or

dreams. His animation is the dominant force in his fantasies. Hallucinations or dreams

are the substrate for reality in his work, rather than the other way around. Cohl's

"real" characters are pulled along by the whimsical power of drawing. Likewise,

Méliès' rendered sets propel his imaginative vision. He uses two- and three-

dimensional drawn and painted sets, which together with his "real" characters portray

fantastic scenes not possible using only real-world environments in the three-

dimensional world.

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[12] Hammond, 47.
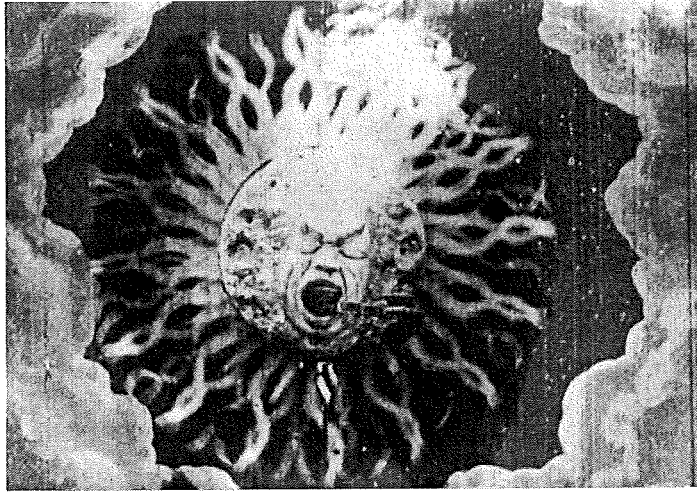
Figure 4.7
The sun from *An Impossible Voyage*
Georges Méliès, 1904

Figure 4.8
The moon from *A Trip to the Moon*
Georges Méliès, 1902
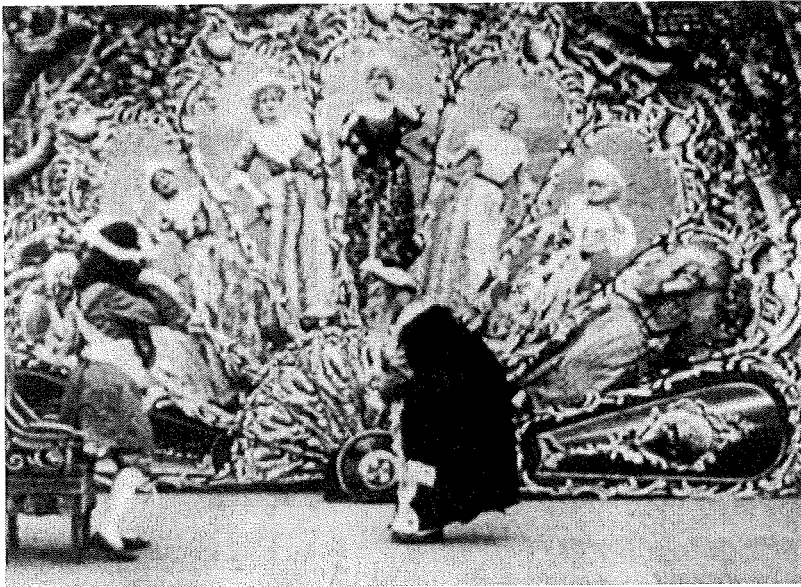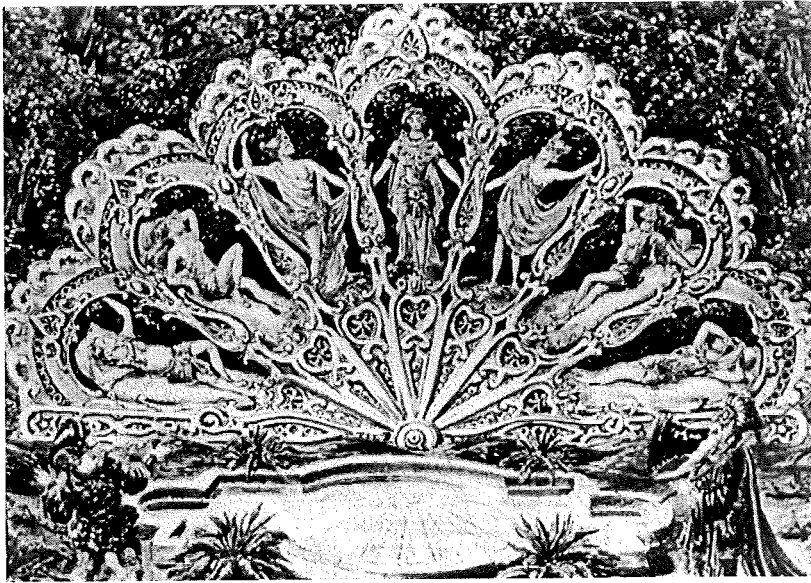
Figure 4.9
Sketch for and frame from *The Wonderful Living Fan,* 1904

Visual Constructions

Although theatrical shows used painted sets with real actors, the flattened

quality of cinematic media acts as a leveler—the real elements and the drawn elements

lose their real world dimension and depth becomes a factor of both artistic vision and

audience perception. In other words, all visual elements in a film become two-

dimensional projections focused on a screen. This flattening allows filmmakers to

merge different categories of visual elements into a fairly unified whole. Add to that a

cinematographic capability to transform elements from one dimensional category to

another in a relatively seamless manner.

Méliès is fascinated with drawn images that morph into "real" images and

morph back again. He frequently fleshes out his bizarre three-dimensional

constructions with the bodies and faces of real actors, as he does in the sun from *An*

Impossible Voyage (See Figure 4.7) and the moon in *A Trip to the Moon* (See Figure

4.8). The rendered constructions are indispensable to the visual narrative in these

films. That "real" actors merge with drawn and painted props makes the venue even

more fantastic.

In Méliès *The Wonderful Living Fan* [1904], female figures rendered in an

enormous fan come to life and then turn back into drawn figures. Méliès' sketch for

the film (See Figure 4.9), which is executed in delicious detail, foregrounds the

meticulous line work in the fan. The strange organic alcoves in the fan are surrounded

by fantastic flora that frame the women. In this film a mechanical device that folds up

to hide its contents opens to divulge a strange animation—the metamorphosis of a

drawing into a hybrid of a drawn image and "real" images. The magical manifestation

and transformation of the human body in *The Wonderful Living Fan* is suggestive of

the hidden inner corpus manifested on x-ray film and of the hidden worlds revealed through the microscope lens.

Cohl's *Joyous Microbes* [1909]—in which "real" characters react to animated goings on under a microscope (See Figure 4.10)—is likewise suggestive of the strangeness of invisible worlds investigated by turn of the century scientists. In the film, a patient visits a doctor who, after looking at samples from swabs of his skin under a microscope, exclaims, "My god, you're full of microbes!" Film historian Donald Crafton explains what happens next.

The doctor identifies five distinct microbes, each of which is illustrated with animated sequences showing them coalesce from moving lines and dots: the microbe of pestilence (or the politician), laziness (or the bureaucrat), rabies (or the mother-in-law), cholera (or the chauffeur), and tetanus (or the wino). The chauffeur sequence is typical. It begins with moving microbes in the shape of dismembered pedestrians. They come together to form a cutout automobile that drives around the circular vignette representing the field of the microscope. The picture changes to an animated drawing of a car's outline, then to a toy auto with the chauffeur inside. Once more around the circle and then he explodes. After viewing the other four microbes, the patient is reduced to a raving lunatic and...smashes a framed picture of a microbe over the head of the doctor and stalks out. [13]

In *Joyous Microbes*, Cohl presents imperceptible creatures that wreak havoc upon humanity. Of course, these "little animals" have been known since van Leeuwenhook.

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[13] Crafton, *Emile Cohl*, 285.
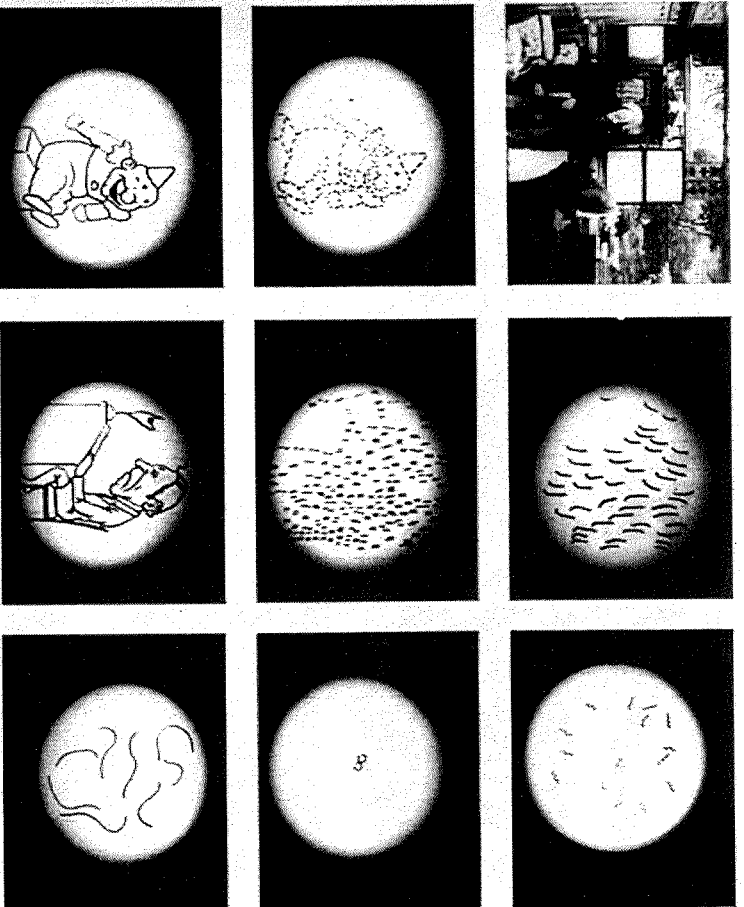
Figure 4.10
Joyous Microbes
Emile Cohl, 1909
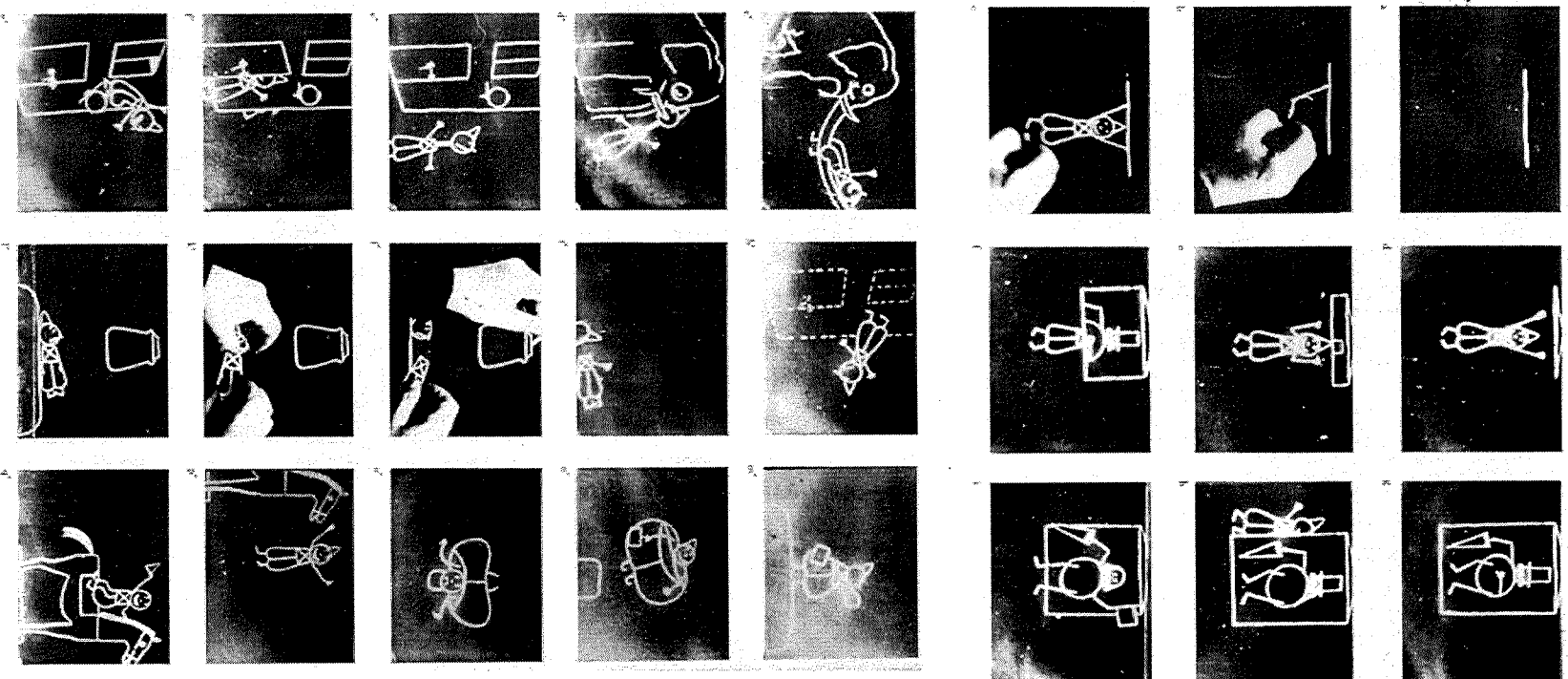
Figure 4.11
Cohl's hands in *Fantasmagorie*
Emile Cohl, 1908

Historian Marina Benjamin explains that by the turn of the century, however, microbes were equated with disease and death:

> By the 1870s…the world of small had become a hostile place. Its fate as adversary sealed in 1877 by Pasteur's paper on the bacterial causes of anthrax. Thereafter, the biologically minute became the invisible enemy, breeding paranoia, fear of contamination and the desire for immunization.[14]

Cohl ridicules the science that privileges these minute microbes. By belittling science, Cohl frees his audience to come to grips with the disconcerting notion of contamination from unseen forces. Cohl's linear creatures don't invade the human body and cause deadly diseases, they invade our imaginations with depictions of the strangeness of human nature. He renders these intangibles with line drawings in a circular field of vision.

Cohl's microbial world grows out of a series of abstract lines and dots that resemble bacteria under a microscopic lens. The doctor and patient, the "real" characters, are hypnotized by the fantastic stunts that characterize this world of morphing visual forms. The drawings evolve from abstract geometric elements to representational elements and back again. Lines and dots serve as a powerful creative force—rendering grotesque or unimaginable aspects of human nature. In one scene, lines come together to form what looks like an amoeba. The amoeba becomes a swirling mélange of detached car and body parts before it turns into the black silhouette of a car. "Real" objects are incorporated into several scenes. These props,

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[14] Marina Benjamin, "Sliding Scales: Microphotography and the Victorian Obsession with the Minuscule," in *Cultural Babbage: New Studies in Victorian Science*, ed. Frances Spufford and Jenny Uglow (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 122.

which come and go quickly from the frames, enhance Cohl's parody and also check fantasy against reality.

The audience is left with the sense that reality is merely an artifact of fantasy and that both are in constant flux. It is almost as if, through the lens of his proverbial microscope, Cohl plumbs the depths of the irrational mind. Marina Benjamin explains the pervasive fascination with the microscope's revelatory capabilities:

> The penetrative powers of the microscope as prosthetic eye were understandably reveled in, the implication being that instead of just seeing, the microscopist was enabled to *see into* or *see through*. Vision that was thus enhanced, superhuman, was, imaginatively speaking, the nineteenth-century equivalent of X–ray specs, and microscopic literature was filled with talk of hidden worlds and unfathomed depths.[15]

Like Benjamin's microscopist, Cohl revels in the microscope's penetrative power. *Joyous Microbes'* audience experiences imaginary worlds enhanced by Cohl's x-ray specs. The abstract forms that inhabit hidden worlds and unfathomed depths in *Joyous Microbes* have tremendous creative and destructive power. Like teeming bacteria dividing under a microscope, Cohl's linear and "real" images together paint a disturbing picture. Using microscope lens imagery augments the power of Cohl's visualizations. Lenses, Armstrong suggests, are much more than mere scientific equipment.

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[15] Benjamin, 106.

The pleasure of deception itself, where the lens can produce deformation, where the atomized detail of the subvisible world on which the microscope relied can dissolve certainty…Possibly the intense allure of these gadgets was their capacity to suggest experiments with different subject positions, control, displacement, obliteration, power, centrality, powerlessness.[16]

In *Joyous Microbes*, the lens reveals Cohl's attempt to displace the discomfort of shifting perceptual paradigms. The morphing drawn imagery endures; the "real" character is haunted by the fluctuating minuscules. The destructive force becomes apparent only upon return to the "real" world when the patient loses his mind, and smashes a framed picture of a microbe over the doctor's head. This visual narrative suggests a link between science, an unstable mental state, and the destructive power of subjective vision. At the same time, the narrative reinforces the centrality of the domain in which the drawn line rules.

Although there is no microscope lens in *Fantasmagorie*, the drawn images juxtaposed against "real" images likewise suggest themes of control, obliteration, and power. Cohl's hands, which appear in this film (See Figure 4.11), draw the animated imagery before the audience's very eyes. Later in the film, his hands come to the protagonist's rescue when he falls off a building and his head pops off. Cubitt compares the opening frames of *Fantasmagorie* to the shocking experience of the first filmic motion in Lumière's film *Sortie des usines* :

The very appearance of the hand in the opening shot of the film is a conundrum…The first of these moments is the equivalent of the moment of

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[16] Armstrong, 143.

shock when the still projection of the Lumière cinematograph suddenly began to move; but it is a new effect in the sense that the transition to a purely machinic vision (negative) and to an animation without the support of a visible maker introduces the sense of the cinema apparatus as autonomous participant in the creation. The drawing hand in the opening frames and the mending hands later on can give us the sense of the structure guiding the relations between human and mechanical collaborators. In the latter case in particular, we are confronted with the three-dimensionality of the *fantoche* who, though flat, can be picked up. The movement between animated and photographed actions works on the paradigmatic axis, integrating two diegeses, one the fictional world of the drawings, the other the "real" world of filmmaking.[17]

Here "real" imagery does indeed have creative power. It is important to note, however, that it is the *artist's* hands and that these hands are working in the service of the drawn characters and their fantastic behavior. In this provocative mix of drawn and "real" images, Cohl again reaffirms the primacy of the drawn line in fantasy.

Méliès and Cohl's morphing reality and fantasy glorify the invisible domains of the imagination and the unconscious mind. Their mix of "real" and drawn imagery—which is ultimately flattened in film media—blurs the boundaries between the two realms. Méliès and Cohl pushed on the shifting borders of perception by creating false distinctions between real and drawn images. In these two filmmakers'

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[17] "According to Crafton (Crafton, *Emile Cohl*, 121, 140) and Abel (Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), Cohl drew the bulk of the film in black India ink on translucent white paper over a lightbox and then printed the film in negative to achieve the white-on-black effect. The effect of the hand drawing the *fantoche* in the opening frames must have been shot by another method, and differently printed, so that the hand would not appear in negative. So the moment at which the hand withdraws and the drawing comes to life is also a moment in which the film process is reversed, as must be the case with the second entry of the hands when they appear to reassemble the *fantoche* after his fall from the house."
Sean Cubitt, *The Cinema Effect* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), 88-89.

work, real and drawn images easily coexist in the same realm; real and drawn images also change into one another, morph, and appear and disappear, suggesting the subjective nature of this joint realm. Cinematic media allowed the presentation of these concepts over time, taking visual narrative to a whole new level.

Moving Shadows

The histories of x-rays, microscopy, and cinema are intricately connected. Early twentieth-century scientists produced film studies of both microscopic and x-ray imagery. Although cinemicroscopic films were used mainly for scientific purposes, this phenomenon was widely publicized. The public—many of whom flocked to shows that featured strange and ghastly x-ray images of the body—relished x-ray cinematography. Those individuals who experimented with early cinematic techniques understood the implications of capturing moving images of the body's interior. Visual culture scholar Lisa Cartwright describes early filmmakers' interest in x-ray cinema.

> The Lumières and Thomas Edison, designated "fathers" of the cinema, experimented with X-ray-sensitive emulsions within months of the publication of Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen's discovery that X-rays could produce images of the skeletal system. Edison promoted the X-ray in popular demonstrations much as he promoted the cinema, publicly announcing in 1896 that he would soon be able to image the brain through the human skull. Though his attempts were never successful…they were nonetheless surrounded by a media blitz that

placed Edison at center stage in the popular frenzy over the "new rays" and

their deathly skeletal images.[18]

Both the Lumières and Edison understood the impact such images would have on

science and on the popular imagination. Kern explains that x-rays not only

"'subverted' all previous conceptions of the action of light by illuminating the interior

of opaque objects...[but] with Edison's discovery of the fluoroscope in 1896 it became

possible to view directly the interior of the human body in action."[19] The invention of

the fluoroscope and then x-ray cinematography linked cinema and x-rays in the public

mind. That these powerful invisible rays could reveal the unseen must have seemed

like pure fantasy. Adding lifelike motion to these images of interior spaces was

unimaginable.

Yet, it was visual imagination that drove the public's perception of this moving

imagery. In her book, *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture*,

Cartwright discusses a fascinating film of flowing blood made by physician Robert

Lincoln Watkins, using a "micromotoscope," an instrument that combined a

microscope and a movie camera. Cartwright notes that such optical technologies

challenged the constancy of vision, suggesting that sight (and, of course, perception)

must become "unfixed" in order to fit with moving images seen through optical

instrumentation.

Sight must become more like the blood: fluid, pervasive, and unfixed from a

locale. The researcher's sense of sight is thus subject to all manner of

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[18] Cartwright, 109.

[19] Kern, 185.

technological augmentation, displacement, and verification; its authority is

dispersed across instruments like the...cinematograph, and the microscope.[20]

The constancy of vision was indeed challenged by active manifestations of otherwise

invisible views, and not just for the researchers Cartwright mentions. The convergence

of the invisible and the replication of motion in cinema shatter the last remnants of

stable visual perception, catapulting it into the shadowy domain of fantastic

imagination and notions of unconscious mind.

Of course, the turn-of-the-century visual imagination was already a prepared

canvas. The title of the Cohl's film *Fantasmagorie* is a direct reference to an

eighteenth-century magic lantern show entitled "Fantasmagorie," which "projected

hovering apparitions before it startled spectators by means of a magic-lantern device

called a fantascope," and Méliès' trick films owe much to moving magic lantern show

illusions.[21] As I mentioned in the previous chapter, magic lantern shows, in which

slides were projected from a special apparatus onto a screen, could be manipulated in a

number of ways to simulate movement. Scholar Susan Horton describes a typical

magic lantern show complete with moving projections of skeletons.

> Showmen turned a darkened room in which a transparent screen had been
>
> dropped between an audience and a lantern filled with one or another form of
>
> illuminant into a quite sophisticated version of a phantasmagoria. If the slides
>
> were of the "dissolving" or "sliding" type, ghosts would appear to open and
>
> close their mouths, eyes to shift, skeletons to advance and retreat. [22]

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[20] Cartwright, 82.

[21] Crafton, *Emile Cohl*, 258.

Skeleton imagery was common in magic lantern shows in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Often frighteningly real, fabricated moving skeletal images produced by magic lantern shows set the stage for the dynamic representation of hidden interior spaces of the body. These ghostly images presaged x-ray cinematography, inextricably linking phantasmagoric skeletons with scientific images of moving interiors, and reaffirming, for the public, the union of technology with fantasy.

The sense that the moving images were somehow real was substantial for audiences of turn of the century cinema. Scholars Harding and Popple explain that early cinema, which straddled the worlds of science and entertainment, offered a "massive potential in terms of representation; a facility to document and preserve virtually every facet of daily life and go beyond into worlds both unfamiliar and unimagined."[23] Like an electrically supercharged phantasmagoria, cinematic motion could mimic reality by projecting one still frame after another in hurried succession. The rate at which these frames were projected approximated the limits of human perception. As designers, Cohl and Méliès understood the power of challenging perception—of portraying unseen worlds in complex image sequences that were projected at a rate just fast enough for the mind to infer real motion.

The more lifelike this machine-made experience was, the more the experience could be distorted and remain plausible. Cohl and Méliès could design believable fantasy films precisely because they were able turn irrational plots and behavior

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[22] Susan R. Horton "Were They Having Fun Yet? Victorian Optical Gadgetry, Modernist Selves," in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed., Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 3.

[23] Colin Harding and Simon Popple, *In the Kingdom of the Shadows* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1996), 18-19.

around realistic movements of their characters. The anthropomorphic motion of Méliès and Cohl's illusory matter enabled the bizarre machinations of the imagination. The darkened room in which these films were shown highlighted the illuminated performance and created a dream-like atmosphere in which illusions were brought to life.

Light focused through lens and ambient darkness also figured prominently in the illusory aspects of x-rays and powerful microscopes. The mediated worlds seen through their ground glass portals presented illusions akin to those Freud associated with the unconscious mind.[24] Because they were one step removed from direct experience, what Armstrong calls "illusory rainbows," and the instruments through which they were seen, took on a supernatural quality.[25] Benjamin, in fact, explains that in the nineteenth-century microscopes were equated with magic tubes.

> In her *Sketches with a Microscope*...the popular science writer Mary Ward talked of the 'microscope's magic tube', while Gosse employed an even more outlandish allusion to the supernatural. In *Evenings at the Microscope* he wrote: 'like the work of some mighty genie of Oriental Fable, the brazen tube is the key that unlocks a world of wonder and beauty before invisible, which one who has once gazed upon it can never forget'.[26]

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[24] Isobel Armstrong describes the metaphorical connection between glass and the psyche: "Freud saw that glass is a philosophical material…because through its mediation ideal images were formed, created by means of matter but not coincident with it. Lacan follows this through, contrasting the sciences which work with a kind of brute literalness on matter or nature itself, with optics, whose object is to use matter to create immaterial phenomena, images—we can photograph the illusory rainbow. The sheer abstractness of glass becomes a way of representing the displacement of consciousness." Armstrong, 125.

[25] Armstrong, 126.

[26] Benjamin, 113.

Add to this otherwise unseen magic "world of wonder" the sense of realistic motion captured and released by the genie of x-ray and cinemicroscopic films. X-ray views of the motion of the shadowy interior of the body documented a reality at once scientific and uncanny. Benjamin describes some of this early x-ray cinematography:

> In 1898 a Viennese physician made a film of a surgically exposed pulsating heart. The camera also looked into the interior space of the human body by means of the new x-rays. An article of 1913 on the "Widening Field of the Moving-Picture" described "Roentgencinematography" of a radiologist at Cornell Medical College who made a film from a succession of x-rays of a mixture of bismuth subcarbonate and buttermilk as it passed through the intestines.[27]

Roentgencinematography of the pulsating heart and undulating intestines offered other views into the workings of the body's interior. It was in this context that the popular cinematograph was perceived as an apparatus that—through the magic of electricity, lenses, and light—likewise cast a stark moving shadow of the real world. Indeed, film historian Richard Abel cites Charles Rearick's description of a spectacularly lit "fairyland of electricity," complete with films projected on enormous screens, at the Paris "Universal Exposition" of 1900:

> The Exposition's planners selected their exhibits and events to pay homage... "to the magic of electricity." The "spectacles of light" on and about the *Champs du Mars* ranged from Venetian celebrations using illuminated boats on

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[27] Kern, 142.

the Seine to *Salles des Fêtes* projections of Lumière films and photographs on

a sixty-by-seventy-foot screen. But perhaps the most popular of these was the

"sparkling Palace of Electricity whose ornate white façade at night" Charles

Rearick has aptly described "as a starry backdrop for a rainbow-brilliant thirty-

foot-wide sheet of water cascading ninety-five feet in a *Château of Eau*."[28]

Such a fairyland of light and electricity was not limited to the "Universal Exposition."

After attending the premiere of the Lumière brothers' film *Sortie des usines* (See

Figure 4.12) in 1895, Maxim Gorky described the dreamlike experience: "You are

forgetting where you are. Strange imaginings invade your mind and your

consciousness begins to wane and grow dim…"[29] Cinema "invades" the mind and, like

a dream, plays out in the unconscious realms of the psyche. Gorky also describes

cinematic imagery as ghostlike—so close to reality, yet so strangely intangible. To

Gorky, this gray, soundless, world was like a shadow of reality:

Last night I was in the Kingdom of the Shadows. If you only knew how strange

it was to be there. It is a world without sound, without colour. Everything

there…is dipped in monotonous grey. It is not life but its shadow, it is not

motion, but soundless spectre…It is terrifying to see, but is it the movement of

shadows, only of shadows. Curses and ghosts, the evil spirits that have cast

entire cities into eternal sleep, come to mind as you feel as though Merlin's

vicious trick is being enacted before you…Under this guise he showed his

grotesque creation into a niche in the dark room…Suddenly something clicks,

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[28] Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1.

[29] Cubitt, 31.

everything vanishes and a train appears on the screen. It speeds straight at you—watch out! It seems as though it will plunge into the darkness in which you sit, turning you into a ripped sack full of lacerated flesh and splintered bones…But this, too, is but a train of shadows.[30]

Gorky experienced *Sortie des usine* as a shadow of the real world, yet it was intended as an accurate documentary of reality. Even this Lumière film of an everyday experience seemed a magical, but "grotesque creation" projected upon the mind to Gorky. It is not surprising, then, that Edison hoped to film the brain using x-rays. Since the late nineteenth century, scientists and the public had a fascination with the unconscious mind. Perhaps Edison hoped to capture the shadowy movements of the mind in the way that other scientists recorded those of the heart and the intestines.

Such pictures of the mind, however, remained elusive. Fantasy films, though, offered a perfect venue for rendering what seemed like mental imagery. I am not claiming that Méliès and Cohl necessarily intended to render moving portraits of the images produced by the unconscious mind. As I noted earlier in this chapter, the early twentieth-century notion of the fluidity of perception—which was underwritten by new ideas in science and cutting-edge technology—made its way into what Kern calls a "cultural revolution of the broadest scope…that involved essential structures of human experience and basic forms of human expression."[31] Méliès and Cohl's representations of the irrational mind in motion were to the unconscious mind what magic lantern show skeletons were to moving x-ray images.

In their fantasy films, Cohl and Méliès pushed moving representations of the interior realm of the mind—like scientists did of the interior of the body—by

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[30] Harding and Popple, 5.

[31] Kern, 6.

embracing irrational visual narratives that were reminiscent of hallucinations, dreams, and of turn-of-the-century notions of unconscious cerebration. They also inadvertently or purposely tapped into the visual vocabulary of turn-of-the-century science. Ambient ideas about moving x-ray and microscopic imagery and popular notions of the workings of cutting-edge physics found their way into Cohl's and Méliès' work. This science—which was already connected in the public mind with cinema—presented glimpses into transient and seemingly illusory time-based realms. X-rays and microscopes offered visual evidence of invisible worlds while the new physics described unperceived physical realms in abstract visual terms. Cohl and Méliès performed these worlds of strange science—whose narratives rhymed with those of the invisible and irrational unconscious mind—in the fashion of dreams or hallucinations.

Méliès' dream-like film *The Infernal Cakewalk* (1903) (See Figure 4.13) reproduces the movements of the Cakewalk, a dance that was all the rage in Europe by 1900. The film, set in Hell, opens as five butterfly women dance in front of two-dimensional painted sets that look like spherical and cylindrical crystals. The crystals part first from the top and bottom of the screen and then from the left and right sides. In this scene the "real" participants, dressed in striped bathing suit-like costumes with flowing diaphanous wings, pass in front of sets of rendered abstract geometric shapes. Méliès' interest in geometric forms ties in with late nineteenth-century mathematician Hinton's [1902] ideas about the behavior of three-dimensional objects in a four-dimensional world: "A cube of three-dimensional matter, since it extends to no distance at all in the fourth dimension, could instantly disappear if subjected to motion

Figure 4.12
Sortie des usines
Lumière brothers, 1895

Figure 4.13
The Infernal Cakewalk
Georges Méliès, 1903
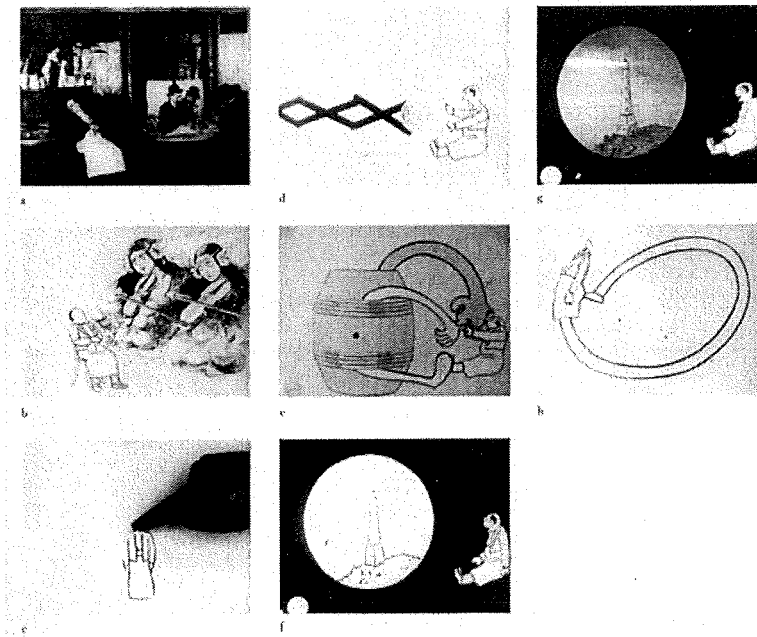
Figure 4.14
Le Songe du garçon de café (The Waiter's Dream)
Emile Cohl, 1910

transverse to our space."[32] Of course, Méliès' sets don't instantly disappear—they move out of the scene at the top and bottom—but they express the popular fascination with mysterious geometric forms moving in space. The devil and satanic imps, however, do suddenly materialize and vanish, often in puffs of smoke or balls of fire. Méliès was originally a magician, and film historians rightly attribute these "tricks" to his background. I suggest, however, that in the context of a fantasy narrative the magical implications need to be explored more deeply. According to Cubitt, Aumont argues that "Méliès 'did not really use editing principles,' rendering his films 'at best mere successions of tableaux.'" Cubitt counters that "Méliès displaces rather than repositions, synthesizes, or assembles, or any of the other principles of editing. Instead, he cuts, not just between but within frames."[33] These cuts—often characterized by sudden appearances and disappearances—fit *fin de siècle* notions of both the physical behavior of bodies in other dimensions and of the workings of the unconscious mind in dreams and hallucinations. Méliès' work structures a different, but equally valid, sort of narrative than the one Aumont refers to— Méliès' is a visual narrative that references a particular scientific moment. In its continuity with contemporaneous science, the phantasmagoric presence in Méliès' cinema far surpasses the cinematographic replication of a showman's gags.

Méliès blurs the boundaries between "real" and rendered imagery from the beginning of the film, setting the scene for the strange dreamlike events to come. What remains is a painted three-dimensional set of a grotto and then the bizarre antics begin. Film historian John Frazer describes the plot:

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[32] Charles Hinton, "The Recognition of the Fourth Dimension," [*Bulletin of the Philosophical Society of Washington* 14 (1902), PP. 179-204], in *Speculations on the Fourth Dimension*, 145.

[33] Cubitt, 42.

Bursts of smoke and masked devils bearing torches provide the fanfare for a white-robed Mephistopheles (Méliès), who rises out of the floor. Six chorines try the cakewalk as flames dance overhead. A couple in blackface...skillfully demonstrates how the cakewalk should be done. Another puff of smoke and Satan reappears, his lumpy goat legs encased in white tights. He takes the stage for himself and goes into a frenetic rubber-legged cakewalk. He lies on his back while his detached legs kick away overhead. He stands up and his detached arms flail away in front of the black grotto. The dance gets so frenzied that Satan explodes. The whole company dances ecstatically back on stage, prancing and circling around in a provincial dance until Mephistopheles again halts the orgy. He sinks back into the stage.[34]

As the film progresses, the audience continues to be treated to a combination of abstract, rendered, and "real" imagery. Unlike Cohl—who typically keeps these three categories discrete— Méliès fuses the three forms. His sets are at once geometrical and rendered, and two-dimensional and three-dimensional. His "real" characters are dressed in outlandish costumes that blend in with his sets. For example, the devil's horns are reminiscent of the shapes that make up the cavern, and his "lumpy goat legs" resemble the cake out of which he appears toward the end of the film. Even the character's movements are linked to the set. The devil enters and leaves the film through a trapdoor in the middle of the set and imps appear from behind rocky outcroppings of the set.

In most of the films I discuss in this chapter, the sense of realistic motion is inconspicuous—the audience must make a conscious effort even to be aware of it. The

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[34] John Frazer, *Artificially Arranged Scenes: The Films of George Méliès* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1979), 105.

fantastic visual narrative in *The Infernal Cakewalk*, however, is anchored in the obvious and familiar movements of the well-known dance. The prominent place of the dance movements makes the stylized, but realistic motion obvious; the characters' jaunty kicks and flapping arms are the audience's portal into Méliès' irrational narrative.

The Infernal Cakewalk is not intended to represent a dream. Yet it is dreamlike because it mixes the irrational with the familiar in unpredictable ways. This mix of the irrational and familiar is not only true of the plot, on which film historians tend to focus, but also of Méliès' choreography of geometric, rendered, and "real" visual elements. This visual narrative has equal billing with the plot. They are interconnected, in part, because both anchor the irrational to lifelike motion in his films.

Cohl's *Le Songe du garçon de café* (The Waiter's Dream, 1910) (See Figure 4.14) likewise portrays the irrational using lifelike motion. The visual narrative in *Le Songe du garçon de café*—which conflates dreams and hallucinations with the irrational workings of the film's strange universe—takes the audience on a fantastic journey through a waiter's dream. The film opens with a "real" shot of a waiter who has fallen asleep in a café. As his dream begins, the waiter transforms into an animated line illustration. He is serenaded by animated gypsy violinists, who emerge out of strange amorphous shapes that resemble bunches of grapes (they also look like testicles). The gargantuan, but lovely, gypsy women are rendered in a chiaroscuro fashion—in misty gradations of darks and lights meant to mimic reality. They loom over the waiter like an approaching storm. Crafton explains what happens next:

> The reverie ends, however, when Cohl's hand enters the picture and squeezes the waiter like a sponge. The tormented character then experiences Saint

Anthony-like visions that are all variations on alcoholic themes. A demon in a

wine barrel plagues him by ejecting a stream of bottles...Seated before a

circular screen, he witnesses a series of transformations that suggest delirium

tremens. Other moving images have no readily apparent interpretation, such as

the picture of the lighthouse beam revolving in the night. At one point the

man's limbs become elastic, and he repeatedly kicks himself, a sort of

masochistic out-of-body experience. The gypsies, who have proven themselves

to be more like sirens, return in the form of a decorative fountain. They spray

the waiter, who wakes up only to find that the customers in the café are all

squirting him with seltzer...here the mechanism is sublimation, the inscription

of everyday activities into the bizarre imagery of the dreamwork.[35]

Unfortunately, Crafton glosses over the relevance of the circular screen and lighthouse

beam in the darkness. Cohl relishes this circular screen motif—it is similar to the circle

featured in his film *Joyous Microbes* (1909) (See Figure 4.10). Cohl frequently

presents a sort of movie within a movie within these lens-like circles. In *Joyous*

Microbes the patient and doctor regard the microscopic circular stage dramatics that

play out in samples swabbed off the patient's body. In *Le Songe du garçon de café*, the

waiter patiently sits and watches his own mind "under a microscope," represented on a

circular screen—a beam of focused x-ray cinematography in the dark interior of his

mind.

By using the circle, Cohl not only questions the subjectivity of vision, he also

sets up his triumvirate of "real," rendered, and abstract geometrical visual elements

that coalesce into the irrational moving image-thoughts of the dreaming mind. All

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[35] Crafton, *Emile Cohl*, 268.

three forms are flat on the screen, of course, but the "real" images appear dimensional. The lifelike motion shared among the three categories of visual form enables their dynamic interaction. The dream narrative is book-ended by "real" imagery at the beginning and the conclusion of the film. The "real" scenes fade into conglomerate visuals that take strange courses. The narrative is unpredictable, but the character of the physical movement is familiar. It mimics the kinetic cadences of the real world.

Cohl's circular device serves as a sort of lens that focuses his irrational vision. Indeed, Freud described the foggy imagery of the mind brought into focus by an imaginary lens-like object.[36] He compared the apparatus of the psyche to a microscope lens. Perhaps the metaphor of a cinemicroscopic film—like the lifelike motion of mixed linear and "real" elements captured in Cohl's circular arenas—is more apt. Replication of real world motion of conglomerate elements in Méliès and Cohl's films functions like Freud's apparatus, it is allows imaginary imagery to "come into being."[37] The complex imagery of the mind is like Méliès and Cohl's elaborate confluence of vision and motion.

In her discussion of scientific motion studies under the microscope, Cartwright insightfully points out that the cinemicroscopic experience provided "an aesthetic of abstraction that includes qualities such as flatness, segmentation, and planar division of space [and] is not, of course, characteristic only of science." She goes on to claim that a "cubist confluence of styles" across artistic and scientific visual culture

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[36] Freud's comparison of the psyche to a microscope or photographic apparatus, mentioned above in the passage by Armstrong, appears in his revolutionary essay *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900): "We should picture the instrument which carries out our mental functions as resembling a compound microscope or a photographic apparatus or something of the kind. On that basis psychical locality will correspond to a point inside the apparatus at which one of the preliminary stages of an image comes into being. In the microscope and telescope as we know, these occur in part at ideal points, regions in which no tangible component of the apparatus is situated."
Armstrong, 125.

[37] Armstrong, 125.

"developed in part as a cultural response...to the epistemological instability of human observation."[38]

However, in her attempt to make up for film history's neglect of scientific filmmaking, Cartwright ignores the obvious. To make her point, she turns to the aesthetic of contemporaneous painting over that of commercial film. The connection between Cartwright's cubist visual culture and the aesthetics of avant-garde Cubist art is interesting, but limited. By making this comparison, she unwittingly eliminates the *replication* (as opposed to the *representation*) of lifelike motion in visual media as a factor in the destabilization of vision. She claims that this overarching "cubist" culture that played out the "instability of human observation" was characterized by a "reverence for the flat and the abhorrence of dimensional form and the corporeal." Méliès and Cohl's powerful fantasy cinema, which clearly fits in this "cubist" culture, challenges Cartwright's ideas. In the filmmakers' work, it is the narrative of apparently flat, dimensional, and corporeal forms—empowered by filmic motion—that plays out the precariousness of perception. Cartwright's destabilization of observation at the turn-of-the-century is, in great part, a result of the emergence of notions of subjective self in psychology and of reconfigurations of time, space, and motion in physics. Commercial cinema was the ideal medium to express concepts of motion over time and to connect the material realm of shifting images with scientific films, and with the abstract realm of scientific theory.

Roll 'em: Time/Space and the Fourth Dimension

The new physics suggested that time and space are not separate entities; perception of time shifts relative to motion and vice versa. According to Kern,

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[38] Cartwright, 111.

"Einstein argued that the dilation of time was only a perspectival effect created by relative motion between an observer and a thing observed."[39] The new physics shattered the notion of time as a unidirectional phenomenon—according to this physics, time could move backwards, forwards, and time could pause. Space could curve back on itself, making it theoretically possible for an individual to travel in time or be in two different places simultaneously. Film scholar Sean Cubitt describes Méliès' work in terms that are reminiscent of the new physics. Cubitt stresses that Méliès was a master of three-dimensional visual space:

> Méliès is the first master of the cinematic third dimension—that of space—analyzing movement into layers stacked in front of or behind each other. His tableaux identify the boundaries of the screen (and so create off-screen space). Once established, these layered and contiguous spaces create the temporality of hiding and revealing and thus also the possibility of cutting from place to place. Framing, compositing his layers…and jumping from tableau to tableau are all acts of singling out and multiplying, of converting the unstable equilibrium of the pixel into places and objects, organizing the on and off screen, the behind and before into coherent worlds. The innocent but abstracted delight in sensation, in light moving in time, give way to the analytic pleasures of recognizing objects and their movements in space.[40]

Cubitt's description, which is obviously influenced by the terminology of computer-generated design, evokes an image of an unstable physical realm in which

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[39] Kern, 18-19.

[40] Cubitt, 43.

environments suddenly shift and moving objects morph and disappear. Méliès layers spatial elements to create a sense of surface and depth. His darkness and light moving in time, and his hiding and revealing, evoke turn-of-the-century psychologists' characterizations of the unconscious mind. As noted in the last chapter, Flint argues that psychologists used visual terminology to portray "the life of the mind, and to investigate the presence and workings of the unconscious and of the memory...Above all, these terms drew on a vocabulary of surface and depth, of the hidden and the revealed, of dark and of light."[41] This visual vocabulary that described the unconscious mind at the turn-of-the-century rhymed with depictive terminology of the new physics; both entities dealt with ramifications of surface and depth, darkness and light, and hidden and revealed elements.

According to Kern, early twentieth-century artists internalized the new ideas about time and space: "features of traditional time were also challenged as artists and intellectuals envisioned times that reversed themselves, moved at irregular rhythms, and even came to a dead stop. In the *fin de siècle*, time's arrow did not always fly straight and true."[42] Neither did the visual narrative in Méliès and Cohl's films—their surprising plots and visual elements come together in unpredictable ways. The new ideas about time and space—and the unconscious mind—found their way into Méliès and Cohl's work, in which living creatures morph into abstract shapes, elements disappear and appear again, and two-dimensional and three-dimensional entities coexist. The visual narrative in their films, enhanced by expressive drawing and imaginative conceptualization, manifests a multitude of unconventional readings of mind, time, and space.

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[41] Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 140.

[42] Kern, 28.

These unconventional readings are also reminiscent of Freud's description of dream narratives in which "rational 'corrections' are reduced to a minimum and the mind is darting about the universe of experience, mixing self and world..."[43] Méliès literally mixes self and world in *A Trip to the Moon* in which the moon and stars are played by actors who unite their faces with three-dimensional constructions of celestial bodies (See Figures 4.15-4.17). In *Fantasmagorie*, Cohl scans the universe of experience making *irrational* corrections that distort perspective. Both artists' cinematic worlds revolve around their strange conglomerations of imaginative visual form and bizarre visual narrative.

H.G. Wells' science fiction literature and French astronomer Nicholas Flammarion's novel *Masters of Time and Space* influenced Méliès' film *A Trip to the Moon*. According to Flint, Wells' *Time Machine*

> serves as an embodiment of abstract theory, an opportunity for the reader to envision, in their own mind's eye, how the concept of the Fourth Dimension might be understood to exist. Once again, the binary between the visible and the invisible, between the material and the imaginary has been called into question.[44]

A Trip to the Moon (1902) (See Figures 4.15-4.17) captures this cultural ambivalence in the interplay of irrational and rational visual narrative. Méliès assuages audience discomfort with abstract scientific theory—such as incomprehensible theories of the fourth dimension—by portraying scientists as bumbling wizards, yet he plays provocatively with the audience's concept of time and space by replaying scenes from

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[43] Kern, 205.

[44] Flint, 283.

Figure 4.15
A Trip to the Moon, blackboard frame
Georges Méliès, 1902
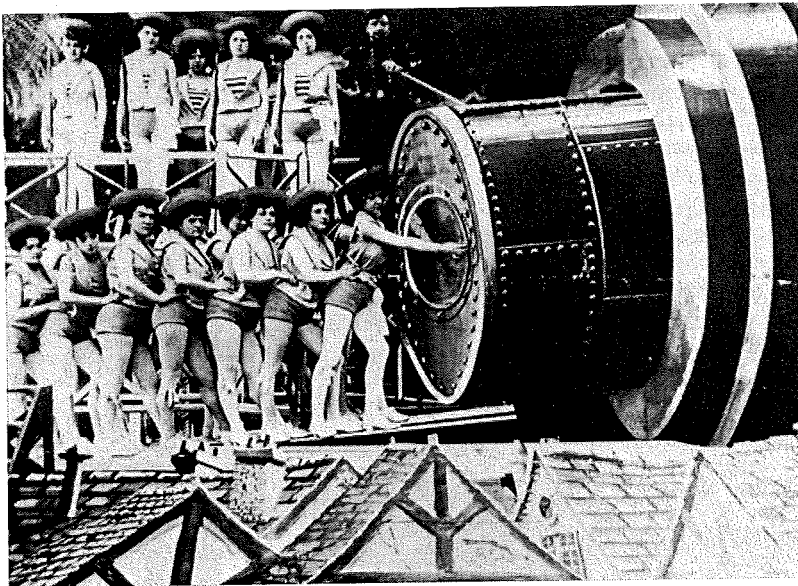
Figure 4.16
A Trip to the Moon, rocket frame
Georges Méliès, 1902

Figure 4.17
A Trip to the Moon, moon frame
Georges Méliès, 1902

bizarre perspectives. Film historian John Frazer discusses the ways that Méliès'

imaginary worlds are expressive of turn-of-the-century cultural anxieties:

> In treading the line between parody and prediction Méliès captured the
> ambivalence felt by people at the turn of the century as they attempted to
> accommodate to the forward rush of science... Méliès' flights of fancy
> satisfied a need not met by the straightforward documentation of the Lumière
> films.[45]

Méliès merges the material and the imaginary in visual form—a moon that is a "real"

human face merged with an imaginative construction—and in visual narrative. While

the "real" scientists sleep on the moon's surface, an animated comet swirls across the

sky overhead.[46]

    A Trip to the Moon opens featuring a group of astronomers—dressed like

medieval wizards with pointed caps—who carry telescopes. The scientists magically

transform their telescopes into stools by holding them up above their heads. On the left

side of the scene is a chalkboard on which the main scientist, Professor Barbenfouillis

(Professor Dullmuddle), draws a simple linear diagram of the coming expedition in

white chalk. This rendering, which contrasts dramatically with the complex visual

detail of the rest of the film, distills the plan to basic geometry (See Figure 4.15). The

scientists' diagram is reminiscent of Cohl's white on black linear imagery, and

although Méliès' linear geometric shapes are not in motion, they suggest the force of

the connection between the new science and geometry. According to Paul Fayter,

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[45] Frazer, 99.

[46] In fact, the whole sequence of events while the scientists sleep is reminiscent of a dream or hallucination.

nineteenth-century astronomer Bernhard Riemann underscored the central role

geometry played in the new physics. Riemann described:

> two-dimensional creatures whose world was a sheet of paper. What would
>
> happen if the flat sheet were crumpled in a third dimension, invisible to the
>
> inhabitants? As the creatures tried to move across their world, they would
>
> experience a mysterious "force" (a wrinkle in three-dimensional space) that, by
>
> pushing against them, prevented straight ahead movement. Then Riemann
>
> imagined our three-dimensional world warped in higher-dimensional space. He
>
> concluded that physical forces—gravity, electricity, magnetism—were the
>
> result of *geometry*, caused by the curving and crumpling of our three-
>
> dimensional world through an unseen fourth dimension.[47]

Riemann's ideas influenced both astronomy and the new literary genre of science

fiction, which helped to popularize intriguing stories of space travel.

Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon* both embraces and ridicules science by fully

immersing the audience in the fantastic voyage while simultaneously dramatizing the

fiction. The bumbling astronomers check and recheck the rocket's construction. On the

day of the launch, the astronauts climb aboard and the rocket is pushed into and fired

out of a cannon. Frazer describes what happens next.

> The scene dissolves to a view of the moon seen at a distance. The moon
>
> approaches through the clouds, suggesting a traveling shot...Suddenly the
>
> rocket ship lands in the moon's right eye, causing the moon to grimace and

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[47] Paul Fayter, "Strange New Worlds of Space and Time," in *Victorian Science in Context,* ed. Bernard Lightman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 265.

shed a custard tear…The unhappy face of the moon dissolves into a view of the lunar surface. The rocket lands again. Narrative continuity has been made subordinate to discrete sensation.[48]

Frazer understands that Méliès' films attempt "to accommodate to the forward rush of science," yet Frazer claims Méliès' "narrative continuity" is a limited one which "has been made subordinate to discrete sensation."[49] I would like to argue that this apparently disjointed segment of the film—which Frazier suggests sacrifices narrative structure—addresses more than just sensation. This segment plays out its script in a non-linear fashion. The film narrative "rewinds" and "replays" a sequence of events from two different perspectives. The recap of this scene has a clear connection to the cultural notion that time is more complex; time does not march on continuously in one direction as common sense dictates. Like popular notions of time travel in the fourth dimension, the two different perspectives in this scene suggest that one individual could be in two different places at the same time. Kern notes that psychologist Hugo Münsterberg [1916], in fact, claimed that

the cinema could appear to take the viewer from one place to another instantly and achieve the effect of his being "simultaneously here and there." In films "we see the man speaking into the telephone in New York and at the same time the woman who received his message in Washington."[50]

[48] Frazier, 96.

[49] Frazier, 96.

[50] Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1916), reprint *The Film: A Psychological Study; The Silent Photoplay in 1916* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970) in Kern, 71.

Although Méliès' two variants of the landing scene are not precisely simultaneous, their repetition from disparate perspectives replicates the themes of theoretical physics. This visual narrative sequence calls the stability of common sense notions of time and space into question.

After the scientists land on the moon they fall asleep; and later they seek shelter in the moon's interior. In this scene Méliès again ponders notions of time. According to Frazer, "The leader sticks his umbrella into the ground; it grows into an immense mushroom...taken from H.G. Wells' description of plants that grew with time lapse rapidity in *The First Men on the Moon*."[51] Time speeds up to produce this mushroom from its visual double, an umbrella. Umbrellas protect the scientists, who are next attacked and captured by moon creatures. A blow with an umbrella is all that is necessary to destroy these creatures, which disappear in a puff of smoke. The scientists hurry to their spaceship and depart for earth. They land in the ocean and are pulled back to land by a master steamer where an adoring crowd greets them as heroes.

At the very end of the film, Méliès has dignitaries present Professor Barbenfouillis with an illustrated statue of himself in which his foot is squashing an illustration of a grimacing moon. The statue is a parody of science and scientists—it is rendered in a style that looks very two-dimensional and cartoonish. This two-dimensional statue stands on a pedestal that is clearly three-dimensional and is inscribed boldly with the word "science." In this last scene, Méliès restates the mix of dimensions that characterize his fantasy worlds.

As I noted earlier, in the late nineteenth century, the fourth dimension was imagined as a possible parallel universe. A few decades later Einstein proposed that

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[51] Frazer, 97.

time ought to be considered as a constituent part of the three spatial dimensions. As I noted earlier in this chapter, German physicist Hermann Minkowski called the union of time and space a "world-line," which he described as

the "everlasting career" of a point as it exists across what was formerly regarded as the independent dimension of time. All events should be conceived in a four-dimensional continuum represented by the coordinates $x, y, z,$ and $t,$ which are to be understood as the same kind of units, not entirely spatial or entirely temporal, not distances or durations but space-time intervals.[52]

Turn-of-the-century physicists defined a line as a point moving in space over time. The cultural currency of these theories found their way into the moving line that is a constituent part of Cohl's fantasy animation.

Cubitt addresses the function of Cohl's line drawing. He explains that "Cohl's line is not his consciousness materialized, but the medium of social exchange. It does not represent: it communicates."[53] I agree that interpreting Cohl's rendering as mere representation of "his consciousness materialized" does not do it justice. I suggest, however, that Cohl's (and Méliès') visuals communicate *and* represent; they communicate cultural unease with the abstractions of cutting-edge science and they represent aspects of early twentieth-century popular consciousness. Indeed, in his essay "Shared Lines" contemporary critic Gerard Curtis notes that "In the Victorian period, 'the line,' whether drawn or written, functions as a trace that constitutes the

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[52] Kern, 206.

[53] Cubitt, 80.

sign of meaning."[54] Curtis argues that "drawings…enable the imagination to inscribe and open virtual realities, leaving, in their lines, traces of the visual imagination."[55]

Visual imagination, however, reckons with more than just superficial visual form. In his discussion, Cubitt likens Cohl's line to artist Paul Klee's line. Cubitt notes that Klee describes his own line as one that is "going for an aimless walk." However, Cubitt misconstrues Cohl's design narrative—which, in my opinion, is anything but aimless—because his analysis of Cohl doesn't go beyond superficial aesthetic considerations and his recognition of both designers' irrational attitude to visual expression. Assuming Cohl's line is indeed "going for an aimless walk," moreover, then we must ask what cultural factors have contributed to a designer's line that "behaves" this way? Cubitt does not do so. Exploring the motivation behind what Cubitt suggests is a meandering, but aimless line would help manifest the cultural meanings encoded into Cohl's imagery.

Even though his comparison is based mostly on aesthetic considerations, Cubitt misses the visual disparities between Cohl's and Klee's line. What happens, for example, to the comparison of Cohl and Klee once cinematic motion is removed from consideration? Klee's line (See Figure 4.18) and the line in stills of Cohl's first animated film, *Fantasmagorie* (1908) (See Figure 4.19 a, b, and c), each describe simple, two-dimensional visual elements. However, here the similarities end. Cohl's line is very even as if it was drawn with a tool used for technical drawing, while Klee's is a very painterly line in which thick and thin strokes abound, even within the same line. I suggest that the filmic motion in *Fantasmagorie*, if taken as a given, can disguise crucial visual information.

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[54] Gerard Curtis, "Shared Lines," in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 27.

[55] Curtis, 39.
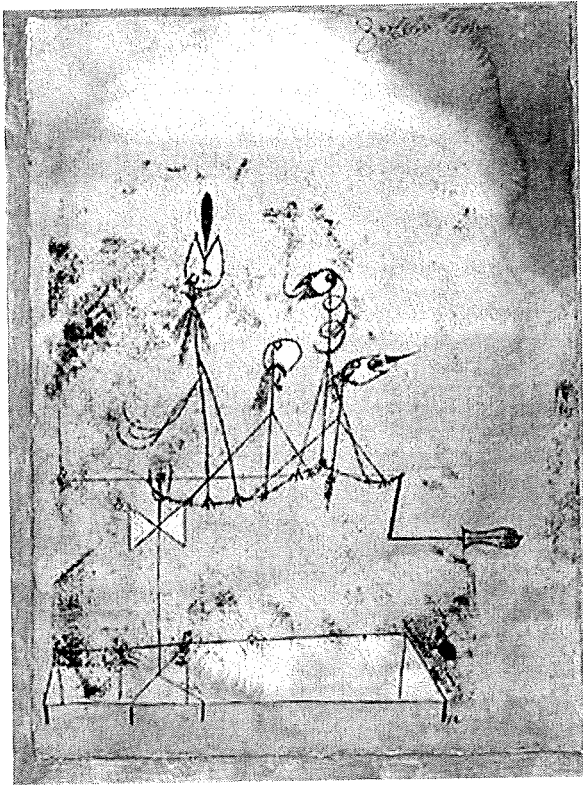
Figure 4.18
Twittering
Paul Klee, 1939
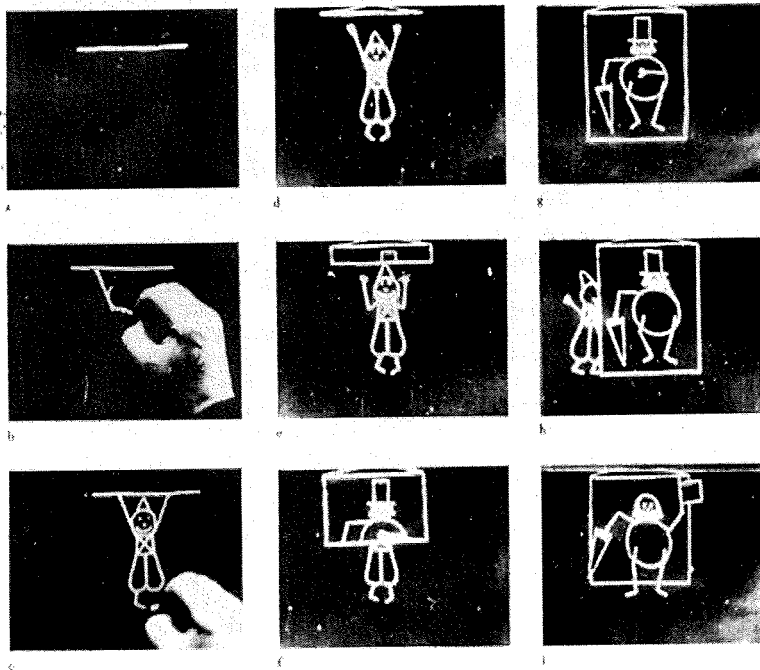
Figure 4.19 a
Fantasmagorie
Emile Cohl, 1908
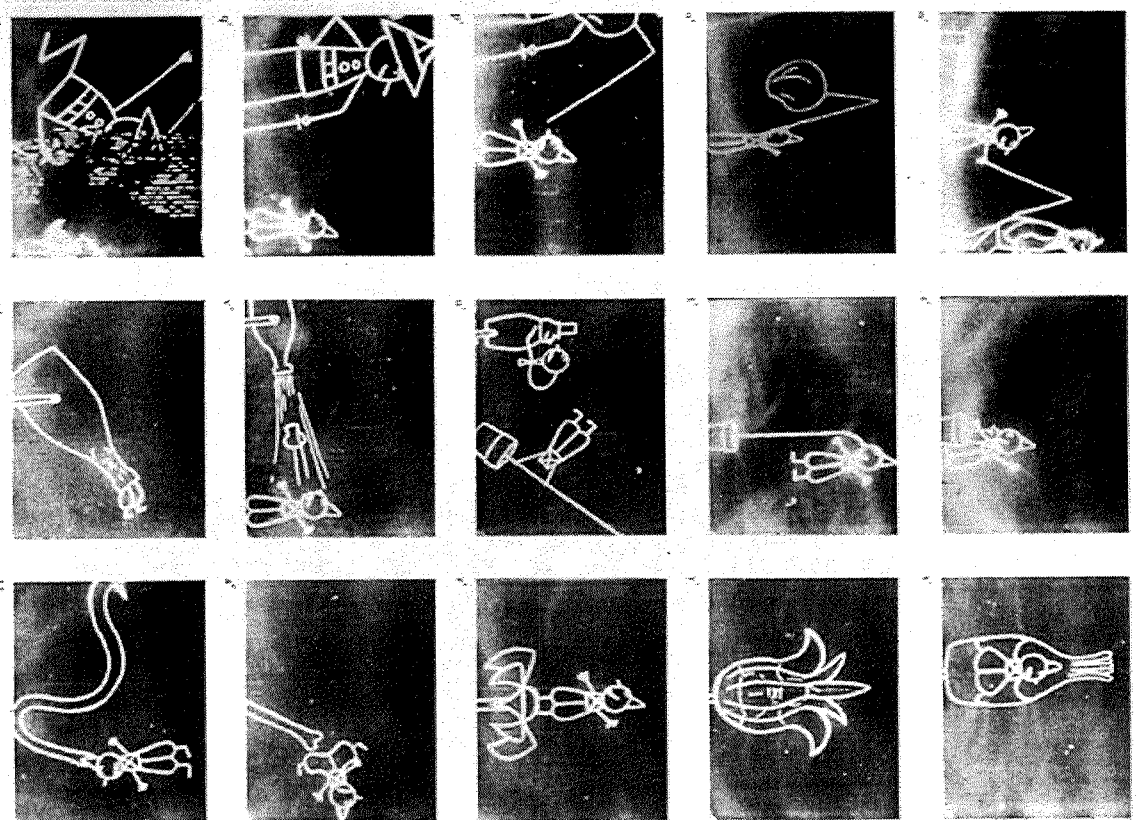
Figure 4.19 b
Fantasmagorie
Emile Cohl, 1908
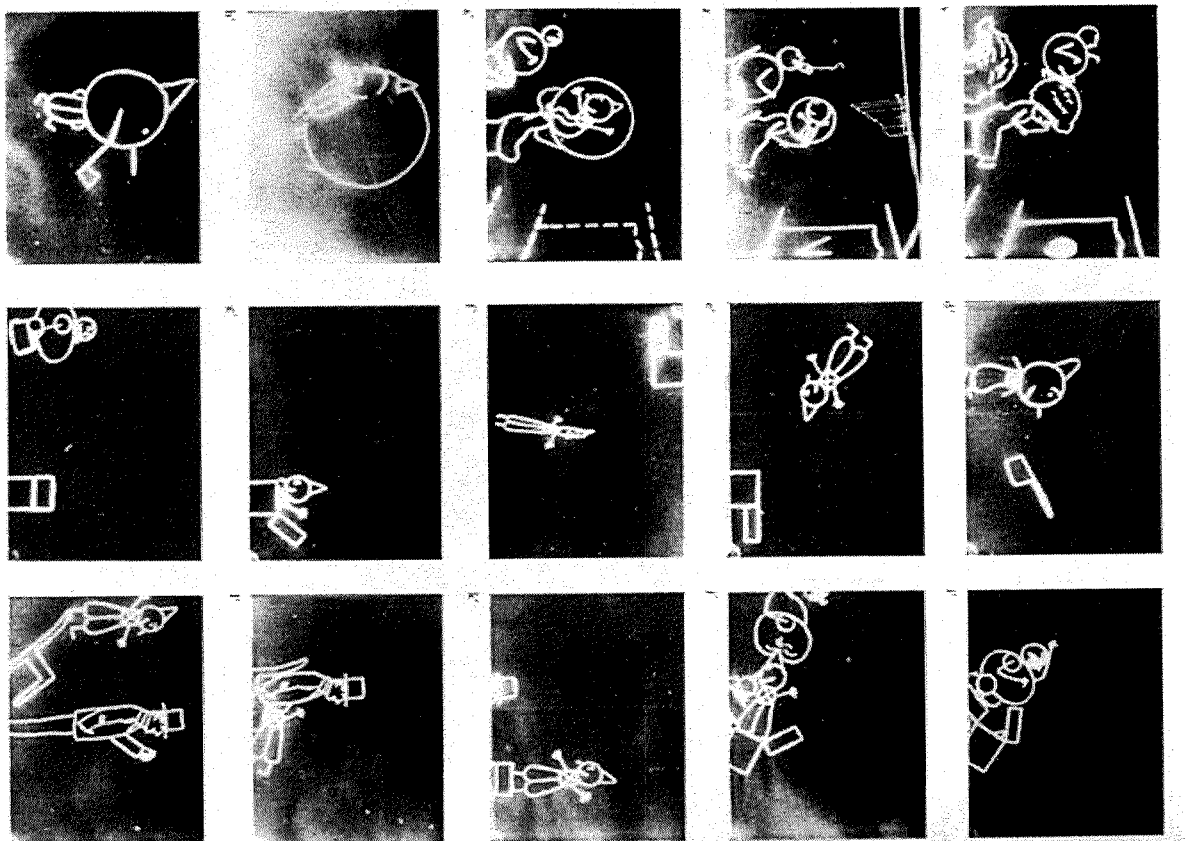
Figure 4.19 c
Fantasmagorie
Emile Cohl, 1908

The drawn objects in *Fantasmagorie* favor geometry. Even the most organic lines in the film, the ones that make up the lady's hat, have geometric overtones. Why are Cohl's lines even and his visual elements geometric? I propose that Cohl's geometric forms are based in popular conceptions of a new physics that had, as its base, nineteenth-century innovations in geometry. These new ideas interconnected geometry with time, space, and motion in ways that were inconceivable to the average person. Those who had a grasp of the new physics explained it using geometric shapes that moved in ways that defied common sense. Cohl's even width line converges to render simple geometric protagonists, who then dissolve into chaos only to re-emerge in another geometric form. This process is evocative of the seemingly irrational behavior of other-dimensional geometric forms in time and space in contemporaneous scientific romances.

Cohl's *Fantasmagorie* (See Figure 4.19a frames 1-3 vertically) opens with one white line drawn on a black background. Once the viewer becomes acquainted with this two-dimensional element, Cohl introduces a three-dimensional object—his hand (See Figure 4.19a, frames 1-3 vertically). Cohl's hand—which, incidentally, fills half the frame and dwarfs the other imagery—moves into view from the bottom of the frame. The hand draws a little clown hanging from the original line, and Cohl then moves his hand out of the frame. Later in the film, both of Cohl's hands move in to reattach the clown's head to his body (the clown's head comes off after he jumps off a building). His hands appear fleshy and are clearly intended as a contrast to the flat looking linear drawings. The large hands continue to alter the perspective in the film— they are the same size as the line drawing of the horse the little clown rides in the final frame. Cohl's hands scoop glue using a two dimensional stick that comes from a two-dimensional glue pot, a strange interaction of two- and three-dimensional objects.

Although the drawn imagery is flat and linear, Cohl's continuously moving

lines produce shifting perspectives that blur the boundaries between two- and three-

dimensionality in these drawn environments. After Cohl renders the little clown

hanging from a line, this line then morphs into a triangle of unclear dimensionality

(See Figure 4.19a, frames 4-9 vertically). Film historian Donald Crafton describes

this confusing spatial perspective: "When the clown releases it, the white line

modifies itself by growing a shallow triangular extension at the top that might be

interpreted as wires from which the 'line' or 'bar' is suspended, or as lines indicating

perspectival recession."[56] *Fantasmagorie* is full of such drawn imagery in which the

visual perspective can be interpreted in various ways. Cohl plays with the audience's

perceptions of perspective, deforming objects in counterintuitive fashion that

challenges the rationality of perception. In 1901, scientist Henri Poincaré described

the relativistic distortions of objects in visual space.

While geometrical space is three-dimensional…and infinite, visual space is

two-dimensional…and limited to the visual field. Objects in geometrical space

can be moved without deformation, but objects in visual space seem to expand

and contract in size when moved different distances from the viewer.[57]

As in Poincaré's illustration, two-dimensional characters and objects in

Fantasmagorie appear and disappear, expand and contract, and change shape.

This odd demeanor fits nicely with mathematician Charles Hinton's

descriptions of the behavior of objects across dimensions. A strange geometry

permeates Hinton's late nineteenth-century *Scientific Romances* [1884], in which he

[56] Crafton, 258.

[57] Kern, 133.

discusses one, two, three, and four dimensions in scientific terms, but also in short

proto-science fiction stories that demonstrate the same ideas. *Scientific Romances* was

intended for the educated layperson, and Hinton used simple geometric shapes as

characters in his stories. In the book, Hinton suggested three possible ways to envision

the fourth dimension. The third method requires picturing a higher dimension as cross

sections of a lower one. Michio Kaku explains Hinton's ideas:

> when Mr. Square is sent into the third dimension, his eyes can see only two-
> dimensional cross sections of the third dimension. Thus he can see only circles
> appear, get larger, change color, and then suddenly disappear. If Mr. Square
> moved past an apple, he would see a red circle materialize out of nowhere,
> gradually expand, then contract, then turn into a small, brown circle (the stem),
> and finally disappear. Likewise, Hinton knew if we were hurled into the fourth
> dimension, we would see strange objects suddenly appear out of nowhere, get
> larger, change color, change shape, get smaller, and finally disappear.[58]

Like Hinton's three-dimensional observer in the fourth dimension, Cohl's audience is

taken on a wild journey through a world in which line drawings of geometric objects

behave unpredictably. For example, a woman's head changes into a sphere in which

the little clown unexpectedly appears as an embryo (See Figure 4.19c, frames 3 and 4

vertically). The film is like a parallel universe in which the behavior of objects over

time does not match the audience's expectations.

Yet there are aspects of *Fantasmagorie* that are grounded in the familiar. For

example, a movie that plays on a screen in the background, or the series of events after

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[58] Michio Kaku, *Hyperspace: A Scientific Odyssey Through Parallel Universes, Time Warps, and The Tenth Dimension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 70.

the little clown sniffs a flower. Crafton describes a scene in which common, everyday elements co-exist with irrational themes:

> [the flower] spurts into growth, lifts him up by his nose, and pops off his head. As his torso rotates around the flower stalk, his head is captured by a strange bottle-shaped man who bounces it up and down in a cup as though it were a rubber ball in the game of Diabolo, a 1908 fad. The bottle man changes into a champagne bottle on a cannon mount and fires its cork at the clown, whose head has been restored. Then the bottle "walks" toward the clown and sucks him inside. The lines of the bottle metamorphose into a lotus blossom. Its petals open, leaving the clown standing on its stalk[59]

The familiar elements—the movie in the background, and the game of Diabolo—are a connection to reality, and simultaneously a passage into the irrationality of the film. Cohl's visual narrative has much in common with Edwin Abbot's 1884 scientific romance *Flatland*. Fayter explains that *Flatland* features a two-dimensional world populated by a host of geometric creatures. This world is structured as a familiar class-based society, with members of each class represented by specific geometric figures. Of course, this book is Abbot's commentary on British society as well as a scientific romance. But the character and behavior of the geometric two-dimensional Flatland also depicts contemporaneous scientific ideas about such realms. Fayter explains how the two-dimensional Flatland would appear to three-dimensional outside observers:

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[59] Crafton, *Emile Cohl*, 265.

Flatlanders have no secrets from three-dimensional beings like us. From our higher perspective, we could see into their very bodies as if with x-ray eyes, or enter and leave locked rooms like ghosts (the walls would appear as outlines on the floor to us). By moving them through the third dimension, we could make objects appear and disappear at will…A three-dimensional object, such as a sphere, passing through Flatland would be perceived only as a series of lines…whose length varied with time.[60]

In *Fantasmagorie* Cohl's geometric creatures likewise seem to appear and disappear, the length and shape of his line varies with time—and the audience serves as the three-dimensional observer. The experience is dream-like. Crafton describes *Fantasmagorie*'s images as "fleeting and evanescent of those of a dream." Cohl's drawn line adds to that dreamlike quality by being suggestive of the seeming irrationality of the geometric realms other dimensions.

Like Abbot's Flatlanders, Cohl's objects are not only dimensionally obscure, they are permeable to each other and to the space around them. The audience can see right through each character to the black background. The black background—which makes manifest what is typically perceived as "empty" space in an illustration—and the drawn images melt one into another as when the clown suddenly appears as what was once a woman's head and then engulfs everything around him. The clown fills a large part of the frame like an expanded balloon (See Figure 4.19c, frame 5 vertically). He is permeable; at the turn-of-the-century, some scientists considered matter to be indistinct from the space that surrounded it. Kern explains:

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[60] Fayter, 265.

If there is no clear distinction between the plenum of matter and the void of space and if matter may be conceived as a configuration of energy alignments, then the traditional understanding of matter as made up of discrete bits with sharply defined surfaces must also be rejected...In 1896 Bergson surveyed several challenges to the corpuscular theory and argued that the division of matter into independent bodies with absolutely determined outlines is "artificial."[61]

The new ideas about time, space, and matter suggested a universe of elements in constant flux, shattering the sense of comfort drawn from more stable renditions of reality. According to Fayter, "space and time were landscapes onto which late-Victorian writers and artists projected their devices and desires and mapped out their *fin de siècle* anxieties and enthusiasms."[62] According to Curtis, in his book *Line and Form*, nineteenth-century illustrator Walter Crane "claimed that 'Line [w]as a Language,' capable of expressing movement, force, action; recording natural fact; and appealing to the emotions."[63] Cohl's *Fantasmagorie* maps out notions of visual space and time by using line as a lasso that embraces but never catches a charged and irrational visual narrative.

Conclusion

At the end of the nineteenth century, clear ideas about how the world worked gave way to the fuzzy boundaries of indeterminacy. Scientific discourse eroded these boundaries in its effort to reveal the abstract and intangible workings of unseen forces

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[61] Kern, 183.

[62] Fayter, 261.

[63] Curtis, 31.

and invisible milieu. Optical instruments like the microscope and the x-ray machine

provided views of invisible miniature and interior worlds. The replication of realistic

motion in cinema added a whole new qualitative dimension to these invisible realms—

moving x-ray and microscopic imagery projected from x-ray and cinemicroscopic film

amplified the thematic harmony between scientific and popular cinema. The new

physics put accepted notions of time, space, motion, and matter on the table and then

turned it. Einsteinian physics reconfigured common-sense relationships between

objects and their environments. Kern explains Einstein's idea that all matter

accelerates and distorts the shape and size of all other matter that is nearby:

> According to Einstein every bit of matter in the universe generates a
>
> gravitational force that accelerates all material bodies in its field and modifies
>
> their apparent size. There are thus no absolutely rigid bodies. Under these
>
> circumstances the grid of a Cartesian coordinate system is useless to plot
>
> movement. Einstein suggested using instead a nonrigid reference system which
>
> he called a "reference mollusk." As a consequence, that ordered geometrical
>
> world, graphically represented in sharp squared Cartesian coordinates, became
>
> a complex and unstable world that could only be represented by the matrix of
>
> gummy reference mollusks that altered their form continuously as they were
>
> accelerated by the varying masses and proximities of countless moving
>
> particles.[64]

Motion could no longer be described simply as an object moving from one point to

another. In this brave new world an object shape-shifted and morphed other objects as

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[64] Kern, 185.

it moved, pulled by a multitude of unseen forces acting upon it. Einstein's ideas made their way into the culture and into contemporaneous fantasy imagery. Kern offers, for example, a fascinating description of the Futurist artists' and designers' Einstein-influenced visual vocabulary:

The Futurists depicted lines of force in space created by movement, light and sounds. In a manifesto of 1910 Boccioni articulated their belief in an active, dynamic space: "To paint a human figure you must not paint it; you must render the whole of its surrounding atmosphere." He gave visible form to his idea in *The Forces of a Street* (1911), where clanging sounds, beaming headlights, and lurching of a streetcar take on substance and modify the colors and forms of the surrounding persons, buildings, and atmosphere. In 1909 Balla filled a canvas with the radiance of a streetlamp, and in 1912 he painted another with scalloped and puff-ball formations of "atmospheric densities." In 1912 the Futurists explained that an object would be expanded by the use of "force-lines" determined by its form at rest, its continuity with surrounding space, it past and future trajectories, and the way it would be "decomposed according to the tendencies of its forces."[65]

Each object in this imaginary Futurist realm has an impact on every other object. The imagery—which created its own force lines—continued, at once, both into the past and into the future. Time was not a separate entity that moved forward in one direction only; it was an intricate part of a complex universe forever unified with dimensional space and motion.

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[65] Kern, 164.

Although this Futurist work certainly evokes the dynamic Einsteinian "matrix of gummy reference mollusks," I would like to again point out the distinction I made earlier in this chapter between the *depiction* of motion in still imagery, as in this Futurist work, and the *replication* of motion in cinematic imagery. Kern, like Cartwright, falls back on the still imagery of painting in this example. Conflating the *depiction* of motion and the *replication* of motion, Kern misses the treasure trove of visual information in cinematic imagery. But even more unfortunate is that he misses an opportunity to address these same Einsteinian themes in moving images—especially Méliès and Cohl's fantasy cinema. Early twentieth-century fantasy imagery in motion, I would like to argue, begins to *replicate* the dynamic turn-of-the-century physical processes it evokes. Kern, to his credit, does note that cinema, by its very nature, suggests the complex interplay among time, space and motion:

> The cinema reproduced the mechanization, jerkiness, and rush of modern times. The very name of the new medium identified its effect—moving pictures. The turning projector supplied movement of images on the screen...The story could change settings as rapidly as the interval between frames, and since the early movies were taken at 16 frames per second and projected at 24, the actors themselves seemed to hurry across the flickering screen. The cinematograph so exaggerated the quickness of movement that some actors moved more slowly than they would in real life in order to give the final result a normal tempo...Some film makers intentionally accelerated motion for special effects: flowers boiled out of buds in seconds, and the metamorphosis of the caterpillar into a butterfly could be compressed from weeks to minutes...These "rushes" dazzled audiences. Erwin Panofsky

concluded that the basis for enjoyment of moving pictures was not the subject matter "but the sheer delight in the fact that things seemed to move."[66]

This new medium that depended on the depiction of movement over time "delighted audiences." It is interesting that any distortion of this time-based movement—using effects such as stop motion, speeding up or slowing down motion, or reverse motion—positively dazzled audiences. Kern suggests that the early twentieth century is characterized by the proliferation of distortion:

> In 1905 Hugo von Hofmannsthal wrote that the nature of his epoch was "multiplicity and indeterminacy" and that "what other generations believed to be firm is in fact sliding"…Musil characterized the change as one in which " sharp borderlines everywhere became blurred, and some new indescribable capacity for entering into hitherto unheard-of relationships threw up new people and new ideas. [67]

The Futurist art that Kern describes fits these ideas, but so do the visuals in Cohl's and Méliès' films—Cohl's and Méliès' films also address these ideas in their *motion*. Cohl and Méliès brought "real" and drawn elements together in a visual narrative that, like contemporaneous science, generated "hitherto unheard-of relationships." [68]

To a wary public, this discourse must have seemed less "scientific" and more akin to irrational and nightmarish visions. In fact, the new scientific discourse dovetailed nicely with contemporaneous notions of dreams and the unconscious mind.

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[66] Kern, 118.

[67] Kern, 182.

[68] Kern, 182.

Cinema, with its shadowy world of motion, was an ideal medium for these convoluted ideas to find expression. Indeed, early twentieth-century French poet and essayist Jules Romains describes the cinematic experience as a sort of "group dream" in his 1911 essay "The Crowd at the Cinematograph." Romains describes the anticipatory atmosphere as a near death experience:

> The lights go down. A cry escapes from the crowd and immediately is taken back. It begins much like the great clamour which dying throngs have wailed into the night down through the centuries. These people are creatures who love the daylight. Their kind emerged from the compressing and transforming power of light. But the night of the cinema is far from long. They scarcely have time to suspect their death and the happiness of imperishable feeling; they are like swimmers who plunge their heads underwater and then keep their eyelids open and lips and teeth tightly clenched, in order to experience a discomfort, an oppression, a suffocation, and then suddenly burst back through the surface into life.[69]

It is almost as if the audience must first perish and then be reborn into the dark realm of cinematic limbo. The sudden illumination of a bright circle of light proclaims the audiences' resurrection. Romains continues:

> The group dream now begins. They sleep; their eyes no longer see. They are no longer conscious of their bodies. Instead there are only passing images, a gliding and rustling of dreams. They no longer realize they are in a large square

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[69] Jules Romains, "The Crowd at the Cinematograph" [*Les Puissances de Paris* (Paris: Eugene Figuière, 1911), 118-120], in *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, 1907-1939*, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 53.

chamber, immobile, in parallel rows a in a plowed field. A haze of visions which resemble life hovers before them.[70]

Cinema as a dream experience infers its strong connection with the moving image-thoughts of the unconscious mind. Like unconscious cerebration this experience is unpredictable. Commenting on the Lumière film *A Dip in the Sea*, Harry Tyrell writing for *The Illustrated American* in 1896 describes how, in his opinion, the cinema replicated a dreamlike experience:

> Sea waves dash against a pier, or roll in and break languidly upon the sandy beach, as in a dream; and the emotion produced upon the spectator is far more vivid than the real scene would be, because of the startling suddenness with which it is conjured up and changed, there in the theatre, by the magic wand of electricity.[71]

The participants lose themselves in the replication of this real life experience. As in a dream, they are not conscious of their physicality. The connection between perception and moving image is paramount.

> Things have a different appearance than they do outside. They have changed color, outline, and gesture. Creatures seem gigantic and move as if in a hurry. What controls their rhythm is not ordinary time, which occupies most people when they are not dreaming. Here they are quick, capricious, drunken,

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[70] Romains, *French Film Theory and Criticism* , 53.

[71] Harry Tyrell, [*The Illustrated American* Vol. 20, No. 3 (July 11, 1896), 76] in *Selected Film Criticism, 1896-1911* by Anthony Slide (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1982), 67.

constantly skipping about; sometimes they attempt enormous leaps when least

expected. Their actions have no logical order. Causes produce strange effects

like golden eggs. [72]

Even the most mundane actions seem to take place in the distorted timeframe typical

of the unconscious mind. As in Cohl's and Méliès' films the narrative is not linear; it

is illogical. But it is profound narrative nonetheless.

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[72] Romains, 53.

Conclusion

Visual Rhetoric: Repositioning Visual Analysis

In his 1880 essay "Mental Imagery," nineteenth-century British psychologist Francis Galton suggests that visual imagination is an integral component of creative thought:

> A visual image is the most perfect form of mental representation...Strategists, artists of all denominations, physicists who contrive new experiments, and in short all who do not follow routine, have need of it...Our bookish education tends unduly to repress the valuable gift of nature. A faculty that is of importance in all technical and artistic occupations, that gives accuracy to our perceptions, and justness to our generalizations, is starved by disuse, instead of being cultivated in the way that will bring the most return.[1]

Galton, who argues that the visual "faculty" is thwarted by "our bookish education," advocates the power of visual thinking in a wide range of disciplines, including those that are not typically considered visual.

Formal education in the late nineteenth century may have been "bookish," and it may not have stressed visual thinking; but, it seems to me that the turn-of-the-century science discussed in this study had distinctly visual aspects. The themes elaborated by various scientific discourses were sometimes expressed by representational visuals or texts. The tenets of phrenology and physiognomy, for example, were detailed by diagrams that related character to physical features—to the

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[1] Francis Galton, "Mental Imagery," [*The Fortnightly Review* (1880), 312-24], in *British Psychologists of the Nineteenth Century: A Collection of Essays by Various Authors*, ed. Robert Thomson, second essay (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1993).

shape of one's nose, or to the height and angle of one's forehead. Even the written descriptions of phrenological and physiognomical traits required the reader to imagine certain facial features and to picture specific behaviors. Evolutionary theory brought to mind—and to both verbal and visual media—images of oddly conglomerate or transformative creatures. Late nineteenth-century dream theory found some of its visual force in renderings of the brain's hemispheres, in picturesque descriptions of the behavior of multiple personalities, or in renditions of memories as palimpsests or storehouses. The unconscious mind was frequently imagined to harbor a hidden "beast," and the irrational scenarios conjured up by the unconscious mind found expression in illustrative descriptions and narrative imagery. Nineteenth-century scientific romances rendered the maneuvers of hypothetical four-dimensional entities in familiar socio-cultural terms. It is clear that visual imagination was crucial to the evolution and circulation of various scientific themes, and that representational imagery made manifest the concrete aspects of scientific theory.

Enigmatic qualities of turn-of-the-century science, though, were frequently described by ethereal or abstract forms in scientific discourses. In his discussion of how lost memories may appear in dreams, for example, Robert Macnish [1830] explains that "an apparition is generally the medium through which the seemingly mysterious knowledge is communicated. The imagination conjures up some phantom that discloses the secret."[2] Clearly, Macnish's verbal depictions owe a debt to nineteenth-century spiritualism; but I would argue that the association of esoteric mental processes with apparitions and phantoms first appropriates and then recasts the visual meaning of the spiritualist terminology. Macnish's verbal description of

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[2] Robert Macnish, "The Prophetic Character of Dreams, and Nightmares" [*The Philosophy of Sleep* (Glasgow: W. R. M'Phun, 1830), 50-53, 117-18, 124-28, 136-39, 143], in *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890,* eds. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 103.

memories recovered in a dream is strikingly visual; it conjures in the mind of the reader the shadowy imagery that dreams are made of. It is possible to picture an apparition of a dearly departed loved one—but an apparition that is, in fact, an obscure memory is doubly removed from the material world.

Mathematician Charles Hinton likewise offers his readers intangible visual worlds in other dimensions in his scientific romance *An Episode of Flatland: or How Plane Folk Discovered the Third Dimension* [1907]. In this precursor to science fiction, Hinton leads his readers into the imaginary realm of the fourth dimension by casting himself as a two-dimensional creature not unlike "a mere line, or triangle, or other geometrical figure" on the surface of a sphere. He asks his readers to visualize the behavior of a two-dimensional creature in a three-dimensional universe. The reader's mental gymnastics are intended as a visual aid for picturing how three-dimensional human beings might function in the fourth dimension. Hinton considers the situation in which this two-dimensional creature "could not have two eyes beside one another as we have, for there is not the thickness in their bodies to place them so." Hinton wondered if one eye was "above the other" or "one eye in front, another in the back of their heads."[3] His fourth dimension requires the reader to visualize anthropomorphized geometric forms acting in abstract visual environments, and although Hinton includes helpful diagrams in the book, picturing these scenarios demands unbridled visual imagination. His creature's Picasso-esque eyes and its strange physical environment may not seem outrageous to us, but I suspect a turn-of-the-century audience would find imagining the creature and the scene a bit daunting.

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[3] Charles Hinton. *An Episode of Flatland: or How Plane Folk Discovered the Third Dimension* (1907), in *Speculations on the Fourth Dimension: Selected Writings of Charles H. Hinton*, ed. Rudolf B. Rucker (New York: Dover, 1980), 165.

The visual and verbal vocabularies of ephemeral aspects of late nineteenth-century science owe a debt to spiritualist visuals, and geometric abstraction in popular scientific texts was beholden to the visual forms of contemporaneous mathematics and physics. The intangible processes that drive evolution, moreover, suggested that worldly phenomena were at once material and ethereal. Evolution inferred that the visible, tangible world is merely the tip of the perceptual iceberg.

The narratives that issued from turn-of-the-century science are fascinating and complex. Four-dimensional space, as described in the popular scientific romances, suggested that one individual could exist in two places at the same time; microbiologists exposed miniscule creatures that thrived within living beings; and psychologists pondered the relationship between the conscious and unconscious mind. The new physics challenged long-standing notions about the character of time, space, and motion. If time could reverse, then what did this mean for the nature of the self? And was it possible to project a rendering of the self by using optical gadgetry, conjuring techniques, or mind-altering drugs? Was the self a single or complex entity? What part did the unconscious mind play in the constitution of the self? Was the self visible or invisible, tangible or intangible...or all of the above?

Late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century ideas about the self were colored by a heady mix of visual motifs found in contemporaneous psychology, sociology, mathematics and physics; these motifs also characterize the visual vocabularies of the design discussed in this study. The science, the renderings of selfhood, and the design I examine in the study interrogate themes of materiality and immateriality, visibility and invisibility, univalence and multivalence, and permanence and impermanence.

Late nineteenth-century culture contended with these dual issues, in great part, through visual thinking. It makes sense that the design in *Dream Work* grapples with these same oppositions, the questions they brought up, and the provisional answers they elicited. These simultaneous opposites drive the visual rhetoric of the design I consider in *Dream Work*. In the body of the dissertation, I discussed how ideas of a material self—inscribed in concrete representations of the head, face, and body— coexisted with notions of an ethereal self, projected in fantastic forms, hazy atmospherics, or visual abstraction. Both of these scientific models frequently posited a hidden realm of the mind that was beyond conscious control. In the design I have considered, as in the contemporaneous scientific discourse, these arcane regions of the mind were often imagined using a suggestive visual vocabulary of corporeal, esoteric, or geometric forms cast in atmospheric light and darkness. The function of the unconscious mind was often equated visually with the disclosive power of optical technology, or with the unseen realms of the fourth dimension.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I tried to show that Rackham's illustrations exposed Victorian discomfort with furtive animalistic or splintered selves. Beardsley reveled in this same discomfort. In the second chapter, I argued that Beardsley used the visual vocabulary of late nineteenth-century dream theory as a structure that allowed him to test the character of the self in his work. In Chapter 3, I discussed the ways that Sime's imagery probes abstract dimensions of the self, cast in strangely material forms, and in Chapter 4 I tried to demonstrate that Méliès and Cohl's work incarnates multifarious illuminated selves that come in and out of focus over time.

Although the designers discussed here were contemporaries, Rackham is more or less a materialist, Cohl is steeped in irrational abstraction, and the others fall

somewhere in between. These delineations—as delineations tend to be—are somewhat arbitrary. As I have already noted, most of the design (and the science) presented in this study contends with a *mix* of opposing forces. The distinctions I have outlined, however, offer a valid substructure for comprehending the dynamic visual rhetoric of the period.

Rackham's male and female fairies replicate common stereotypes about the physical appearance and character of "lesser" races and the "weaker" sex. His work also draws on phrenological and physiognomical ideas that stress a continuum between human nature and the natural world. Rackham's illustration "A Band of workmen who were sawing down a toadstool, rushed away, leaving their tools behind them" from *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (See Figure 1.8), for instance, depicts human-like fairies who display a range of unattractive phrenological traits. Their exaggerated physiognomies correspond to the natural environment in which Rackham places them. These elementals can be seen as degraded beings that represent humans' animal ancestry. Rackham's imagery makes manifest phrenology's connection to the natural world and also the beast hidden in the unconscious mind.

Beardsley was also influenced by phrenology and physiognomy, but the illustrations I discussed evoke contemporaneous discourse about dreams and hallucinations. His fetus, ape, dwarf, and mask imagery contends with the material consequences of the hidden processes of transformation and mutation. Beardsley's illustration "Dreams" from *Lucian's True History* (See Figure 2.2), for example, exhibits invisible phrenological designations on a normally hidden fetus in a complex visual environment. This fetus' monstrous ontogeny recapitulates a grotesque phylogeny. The multifarious rhetorical content of "Dreams" challenges the stability of the visible realm of material objects.

Sime's imagery—which foreshadows geometric abstraction—also questions the material realm. Yet Sime's imagery is strangely materialist. Sime draws the Ta-ta from *Bogey Beasts* (See Figure 3.1) in a representational style. But he expects us to imagine the Ta-ta turning himself inside out, and then returning to his normal "inside in" state. We scrutinize Sime's rendering of his hallucinator's interior in his illustration "He distinctly saw within himself the drug he had chewed," from "Haschicsh Hallucinations" (See Figure 3.5), but the designer expects us to picture the hallucinator's exterior human form. Sime frequently utilizes a hazy chiaroscuro to hide or reveal matter. This visual rhetorical form calls to mind Macnish's dream phantoms that manifest lost memories. Sime's atmospherics also contribute to a sense of time-based motion in his work.

Méliès and Cohl utilized both representational visuals and abstract forms to create dynamic environments. In their films, material objects disappeared or were transformed into geometric constructions, and linear geometric forms coexisted with ghostly gray imagery captured from the real world. Méliès and Cohl's time-based medium, in which real world motion could be replicated by phantom-like protagonists, added another surreal dimension. Turn-of-the-century psycho-physiologist Hugo Münsterberg [1916] compares the real-life event of stage plays with the spectral experience of cinema. He notes that in cinema,

The color of the world has disappeared, the persons are dumb, no sound reaches our ear. The depth of the scene appears unreal. The motion has lost its natural character. Worst of all, the objective course of events is falsified; our own attention, memory and imagination have shifted and remodeled the events

until they look as nature could never show them. What we really see can hardly

be called any longer an imitation of the world.[4]

Münsterberg is right in saying that these soundless black and white images are not an

imitation of the world. Yet, his compulsion to compare cinema with the more life-like

theater is very telling—there is some relationship between the two media that begs for

distinction. Indeed, I propose that the cinema Münsterberg describes is in fact a

rhetorical representation of the world loaded with representative content.

My approach in this study allows me to interrogate the visual rhetoric of

various scientific discourses. In *Dream Work*, I showed how these discourses can

likewise be "read" in the work of Rackham, Beardsley, Sime, and Méliès and Cohl. I

use the verb "to read" because we have no fitting word in English for looking at a

visual artifact and interpreting it with the same depth and intensity as a written text. I

suggest that words fail us in this situation because of a schism generated in western

culture over the last few centuries (this schism may actually originate in the

foundational suspicion of images in Judaism) between verbal and visual reasoning. A

discussion of this schism—which was exacerbated by the advent of printing—is

beyond the scope of this dissertation, but I believe that the hegemony of verbal

discourse has stunted the growth of rich, productive areas of enquiry—visual

reasoning and visual rhetorical analysis.

I turn here to contemporary neurobiologist Antonio Damasio's elaboration of

thought processes. Although Damasio explains that so-called mental images are not

purely visual entities, he uses the term "images" to describe "mental patterns"

comprised of information gleaned from all the senses. For example, Damasio cites the

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[4] Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1916); reprint as *The Film: A Psychological Study; The Silent Photoplay in 1916* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 59.

fascinating example of "somatosensory images that Einstein used in his mental problem solving" which, as Damasio notes, Einstein called "muscular" images. Damasio uses visual language to describe the process by which the mind constructs these "images":

> Images in all modalities "depict" processes and entities of all kinds, concrete as well as abstract. Images also "depict" the physical properties of entities and, sometimes, sketchily, sometimes not, the spatial and temporal relationships among entities, as well as their actions. In short, the process we come to know as mind when mental images become ours as a result of consciousness is a continuous flow of images many of which turn out to be logically interrelated. The flow moves forward in time, speedily or slowly, orderly or jumpily, and on occasion it moves along not just one sequence but several. Sometimes the sequences are concurrent, sometimes convergent and divergent, sometimes they are superimposed. *Thought* is an acceptable word to denote such a flow of images.[5]

Thought has verbal components, but thought is also distinctly visual, cinematic even. Damasio's description of the nature of thought is reminiscent—excluding sound, smell, touch, and taste, of course—of the character of the visual rhetorical narratives I examine in this study. I believe that the parallels are no accident. The images discussed in *Dream Work* are not merely pictures with interesting aesthetic properties or obvious themes. Like Damasio's "images," the design discussed in *Dream Work*

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[5] Damasio, 318.

expresses the narrative meanings among abstract and concrete entities in visual space over time.

Design is everywhere. Even though design is ubiquitous, it remains "invisible" to most people, including many scholars. One of my goals in *Dream Work* has been to spotlight the breadth and depth possible in visual rhetorical analysis of the form of design artifacts. In this study, I call this discursive function of visual analysis "visual communication." I consider the three illustrators and two filmmakers I discuss in this study to be communication designers, and I characterize their work as visual communication.

It is important for me to note here that the term "visual communication design" is commonly used as a synonym for graphic design. I would like to expand the definition of the term "visual communication" so that it includes all designed work. I believe that this inclusive definition makes sense, in part, because what constitutes contemporary graphic design practice and graphic design work is continually expanding. Contemporary graphic design practice includes the production of new media, such as web design, animation, and motion graphics, and contemporary graphic designers are likely to participate in the production of a wide range of designed products. Although illustration and cinema are not typically considered graphic design, I would like to argue that they *are* communication design. I deliberately use the same method to analyze the visual rhetorical narratives in both illustration and film because of a conviction that the communication design element in both has been missed by previous critics.

Visual and Verbal Media

Defining the term "visual rhetoric" is a challenging task, in part because the field of visual rhetoric is still in its infancy. In this study, I have defined visual rhetoric as the cultural narrative that can be "read" in the creation processes, formal qualities, and uses of design artifacts. But it is clear that visual rhetoric has resonance for both visual and verbal media—the visual analysis in this study is detailed in written form, for example, and the visual form of this dissertation, typography on paper, is the medium for its verbal information.

An artifact's rhetorical meanings are expressed through its representative content, its medium, and the formal qualities of both the medium and the representations. These aspects are not easily disentangled from one another. It is difficult to ferret out, for example, whether a "mathematical" sense gleaned from an illustration is suggested by geometric subject matter, the sorts of geometric shapes included in the piece, the relationship of geometric elements on the page, the technical looking pen lines, or the rich black ink on white paper.

The material qualities of and meanings that inhere in design artifacts are likewise indebted to the historical contexts in which they were created or used. Semiotic analysis alone falls short in its ability to reveal these sorts of conjunctural meanings, because an artifact's historical context inevitably shapes its rhetorical content. The cone-shaped rays of light that are prominent in some of Sidney Sime's illustrations, for example, are suggestive of Victorian ideas about the concentrated power of light rays in x-ray technology. Sime's light rays resemble popular depictions in which x-rays appear as cone-shaped visible light. Sime consciously or unconsciously utilized late nineteenth-century ideas about how these invisible light rays might look in order to emphasize revelatory or destructive power in his illustrations. In the illustration, "The Probable Adventure of Three Literary Men" from

the *Book of Wonder* by Lord Dunsany (See Figure 3.25), a "shocking" ray of light

dooms three adventurers who jump or fall over the edge of the earth. Sime thus

reinforces for the viewer that white-colored, cone shaped forms can represent powerful

energy sources, such as x-rays.

Considering the visual rhetorical meanings of design artifacts in their historical

contexts has helped me to formulate a thesis that challenges existing ideas in design

scholarship. This approach has also suggested unforeseen connections among

seemingly unrelated turn-of-the-century discourses. Visual rhetoric serves as a

common language in this study—and as an expressive medium for concepts that cross

disciplines or as a transcendental medium for ideas. Analyzing material aspects of

design artifacts in this study deepened my understanding of the ways design offers

users communicative data that both reflect and influence an array of cultural themes.

And these cultural themes offered me fascinating insights into moments of historical

narrative.

In this study, I challenge the dominion of research methods that utilize verbal

analytical systems to understand design artifacts. These approaches insert visual

artifacts into a web of theoretical constructs derived from verbal phenomena, or

merely elaborate the cultural factors that influence the character of design artifacts. I

do not believe that visual form is mutely aesthetic, or that it can be understood simply

as the historical offspring of its formal visual ancestors—the material of visual form

has its own special eloquence. My goal, however, is not to dispense with the verbal

analysis of visual artifacts. Rather, my intention is to foreground visual rhetorical

analysis as a powerful method for understanding the visuality of both visual and verbal

entities.

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