

# **Invention of Hysteria**

Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière

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Translated by Alisa Hartz

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## Contents

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And the fruit of its invention is an ethics of seeing. This is called, in the first place, the glance [*coup d'oeil*], which also implicates the “fine sensibility” with which the clinical gaze identifies. It is an “exercise of the senses”—an exercise, the acting-out of seeing: glance, diagnosis, cure, prognosis. The clinical glance is already *contact*, simultaneously ideal and percussive. It is a stroke [*trait*] that goes directly to the body of the patient, almost palpating it.\*

Charcot went “further” in percussion in a straight line, in ideal contact and the instantaneity of the stroke [*trait*]; he armed his gaze for a more subtle, less tactile percussion, for he was disputing with neurosis, an intimate, specific intertwining of ground and surface.

And he armed himself with photography.

[*Coup d'oeil*, signifying “glance,” literally means the “blow of an eye.” Here as elsewhere, Didi-Huberman draws on the notion of the glance as a blow. He also works with the various meanings of *trait*, including trait, line, draught, and shaft of an arrow.—Trans.]

## Legends of Photography

### “Behold the Truth”

Behold the truth. I’ve never said anything else; I’m not in the habit of advancing things that aren’t experimentally demonstrable. You know that my principle is to give no weight to theory, and leave aside all prejudice: if you want to see clearly, you must take things as they are. It would seem that hystero-epilepsy exists only in France and only, I might say, as has sometimes been said, at the Salpêtrière, as if I had forged it through the power of my will. It would be truly fantastic if I could create ailments as my whim or fancy dictate. But, truth to tell, in this I am nothing more than a photographer; I inscribe what I see. . . .<sup>1</sup>

—And this seems to say everything.

To the detractors and quibblers who reproached him for “cultivating” if not inventing hysteria at the Salpêtrière, Charcot thus retorts that, in the first place, it would be too fantastic and must therefore be false, a fiction (but we will see that what is fantastic exceeds fiction by realizing it, despite the fiction). Moreover, and above all, Charcot responds with a remarkable *denial of theory*, doubled with an *allegation of “script”*: an inscription-description (a fantasy of writing) understood as recording, the immediacy of recording: I inscribe what I see.

Charcot puts this argument forward to defend his project from the refutations of any potential heckler: I am not inventing—(since) I take things as they are—(for) I photograph them. And this was no metaphor.

### The Museum, Sublation of the Real

Or rather, yes—it was a metaphor, but *sublated* in reality. It was the collusion of a practice and its metaphorical value (its epochal value, that of the first half-century of the history of photography). It was, in fact, like the original declaration that the ideal of an absolute clinical eye and an

absolute memory of forms was on the verge of being realized. Indeed, photography was born at a moment when not only the end of history<sup>2</sup> but the advent of absolute knowledge were awaited. When Hegel died, Niepce and Daguerre were nearing their second year of collaboration.

As for Charcot, inaugurating his famous "Clinical Chair of Diseases of the Nervous System" (which still exists), he himself did not fail to underline the epistemological and practical coherence of an *image factory* with its triple project of science, therapy, and pedagogy:

All this forms a whole whose parts follow logically from one another, and which is completed by other affiliated departments. We have an *anatomo-pathological museum* with a *casting annex* and a *photographic studio*; a well-equipped *laboratory of anatomy* and of *pathological physiology*. . . ; an *ophthalmology service*, an essential complement to any Institute of neuropathology; the teaching *amphitheater* where I have the honor of receiving you and which is equipped, as you can see, with all the modern tools of demonstration.<sup>3</sup>

The metaphor is grafted onto reality and meddles with it. As I said, when Charcot first entered the Salpêtrière, he felt like a visitor or a new guard of a museum; and now twenty years later, as the head conservator of a real museum, he was toasting the museum's opening.

(The nineteenth century was the great era of the medical museum. Charcot had a large collection of catalogs: the Pathological Museum of St. George's Hospital, the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, the Orifila and Dupuytren Museums, etc. There was also the traveling museum of the [quack] Doctor Spitzner, who would go from fair to fair, with his exhibit number one hundred: a life-size group representing a "Lecture of Professor Charcot"!)<sup>4</sup>

In this way, photography, for Charcot, was simultaneously an experimental procedure (a laboratory tool), a museological procedure (scientific archive), and a teaching procedure (a tool of transmission). In reality it was far more than this, but note that photography was in the first place a museological authority of the sick body, the museological agency of its "observation": the figurative possibility of generalizing the *case* into a *tableau*. And its modality of signification was initially envisaged only as a "middle" state of the trace, between the always incomplete *outline* [*trait*] (a diagram, a clinical note) and the commonly practiced, but very time-consuming *live casting* (figs. 5, 6).



Figures 5 and 6

Two museological procedures of diseases.

Fig. 5: photograph excerpted from one of Charcot's clinical dossiers;  
fig. 6: cast of the same "case."

## Graphics

Photography precedes, first and foremost, from the *graphic*. More precisely, it is the development and supplement of the graphic, if one is to believe Marey, the proponent of the famous “graphic method”: a profusion of extraordinary apparatuses (pantographs, odographs, myographs, pneumographs, and so forth), a profusion of script-tools (instantaneous recorders).

The goal of Marey’s “graphic method” was to push aside the two “obstacles of science”: on the one hand, the mediacy of language (here practically reduced to a bare minimum), and on the other hand, the all too distracted and defective immediacy of “our senses.”<sup>5</sup> Marey’s “graphic method” began to appropriate the photograph as an extension of the spatial point of view of the scale of movements to be recorded—this was just before he fully embraced his famous *chronographic* project. I’ll return to this, but first this, from Marey: “When the moving body is inaccessible, like a star whose movements one wishes to follow; when the body executes movements in various ways, or of such great extension that they cannot be directly inscribed on a piece of paper, photography compensates for mechanical procedures with great ease: it reduces the amplitude of movement, or else it amplifies it to a more suitable scale.”<sup>6</sup>

## The “True Retina”

Photography: “The Pencil of Nature” (Talbot 1833)—“the Photographer needs in many cases no aid from any language of his own, but prefers rather to listen, with the picture before him, to the silent but telling language of Nature” (H. W. Diamond, the first photographer of madness, 1856).<sup>7</sup> In photography, everything is already objective, even cruelty; in it one can see, so they say, “the very least flaw.” It was already almost a science, humility made into the absence of language. This message without code<sup>8</sup> thus always says more than the best description; and, where medicine is concerned, it seemed to fulfill *the very ideal of the “Observation,”* reuniting case and *tableau*. This is why, in the nineteenth century, photography became the paradigm of the scientist’s “true retina.”

In the words of Albert Londe, director of the photographic department of the Salpêtrière in the 1880s, “*the photographic plate is the scientist’s true retina.*” In the first place, it is designed to complete the “observation,” the document established under the scrutiny of the physician, containing all the information about the history and current state of the patient. “If the photograph is not always necessary, it is, to the contrary, indisputably useful when the manifestations of the illness are translated by exterior de-

formations affecting the whole or a certain part of the individual. One might even say that, in many cases, a simple print before the eyes tells far more than a complete description.”<sup>9</sup>

The photograph thus produced a historic change in sight, such that “you cannot claim to have really seen something until you have photographed it.”<sup>10</sup> But why not?

## Iconographics and Foresight

Perhaps because sight thus armed not only *certifies* what is seen and what in normal *time* would be invisible or merely glimpsed, but also becomes capable of *foresight*.

The photographic image has *indexical* value, in the sense of evidence;<sup>11</sup> it designates the one who is guilty of evil [*le mal*], it prejudices his arrest. It is as if photography makes us susceptible to evil’s secret origins, nearly implicating a microbial theory of visibility (we know that in medicine “the germ theory of contagious disease has certainly owed much of its success to the fact that it embodies an ontological representation of sickness [*le mal*]. After all, a germ can be seen, even if this requires the complicated mediation of a microscope, stains and cultures, while we would never be able to see a miasma or an influence. To see an entity is already to foresee an action”).<sup>12</sup>

Photography’s capacity of foresight is also a function of its own special “sensitivity”: “We know that the photographic plate is not sensitive to the same rays as our retina: thus, in certain cases, it can give us more than the eye, showing what the eye could never perceive. This particular sensitivity has its own special value that is not, in our opinion, the least important of photography’s properties.”<sup>13</sup>

It is indeed on the basis of photography’s capacity for (diagnostic, pedagogical) certification and (prognostic, scientific) “foresight” that Charcot’s *iconographic impulse*, as it has been called, must be understood:

Knowing that images speak more vividly to the mind than words, he gave images a place of the highest order. With Paul Richer, he published *The Deformed and the Ill in Art* [*Les Difformes et les Malades dans l’Art*]; he created the *Nouvelle Iconographie de la Salpêtrière*. . . . Since then, this iconographic impulse has extended to all branches of medicine. To appreciate this fact, one need only open a treatise published in 1880 and compare it with one of our current treatises.<sup>14</sup>

Sight and foresight, *anticipating* knowledge in sight: of course. But something lingers, like a doubt. For example, this anticipation may also have been effective in obscuring or conjuring up another efficacy, the efficacy

of sight as presence. And in reversing its affective motions, in any case—like what Freud called *Verkehrung ins Gegenteil*, the reversal into the opposite.

### The Least Flaw

Until now, this is all hypothesis, but it grips me. Before all these photographs, I always think, stupidly, about the anxiety the physician-photographer must have felt. (I recall—is it relevant?—the story of Jumelin, a famous anatomical modeler of the time. One day, he made a cast of a liver freshly extracted from a man suffering from “pox,” and, not in the least anxious and even a bit distracted, he happened to blow his nose on the cloth that had wrapped the organ to be “reproduced.” He, too, died of pox, a victim of his art and of some jovial refusal to be anxious about dissecting other people’s bodies, sick bodies.)

In the 1860s, photography made its triumphal, triumphalist entry into the museum of pathology. Photography, showing the least flaw. And what an impression it made: photographic endoscopy, finally able to unveil the most secret anatomy—as it is. The seat of nervous illnesses could finally be seen, and in person.

### Swollen Style

In 1869 the *Revue photographique des Hôpitaux de Paris* became the great review, I stress, of pathology, surgery, ophthalmology, dermatology, and so on. It had its own stars, its anonymous teratological stars.

In Montméja and Rengade’s presentation of the review (see appendix 4), the word “horror” naturally does not figure (instead, there is “the honor to offer the medical public” (my emphasis) a veritable spectacle—the veritable spectacle of “the most interesting” and “rarest cases” of pathology. In this preface there are also words such as “truth,” “advantages,” “magnificent,” “total success,” and so on). But for us, sensitive creatures (who are not “in the trade”), it is a true catalog of horrors; this is to state the obvious, but it should not for all that be neglected. For it is truly glaring.

When we hold these works in our hands, we are also struck by the now cracked accents of paint and colored ink that “clarify” and “embellish” certain photographic images. And it is no less striking to find an occasional signature, the great return of pictorial tradition—for example: “A. de Montméja—*Ad naturam phot. et pinx.*”<sup>15</sup>

This review also defined a page layout that was to become canonical—leaving a large space for the legend, notably. Its use of the close-up tends to isolate the monstrous organ: the space of the image collapses on

the organ, as the depth of field is reduced—the prodigy and the abomination, in their aggressive incongruity, are doubly framed. It is the same incongruity in which Bataille sought the element of a “dialectic of forms”:

Any “freak” [*phénomène*] at a fair provokes the positive impression of aggressive incongruity, somewhat comical but far more generative of a malaise. This malaise is obscurely linked to a profound seduction. And, if there is a question of a *dialectic of forms*, it is evident that one must, first and foremost, take into account this sort of gap which, although most often defined as against nature, is unquestionably nature’s responsibility. Practically this impression of incongruity is elementary and constant: it is possible to assert that it manifests itself to some degree in the presence of any human individual whatsoever. But it is hard to sense. Thus it is preferable to define it in reference to monsters. . . . Without addressing, here, the question of the metaphysical foundation of a dialectic as such, it is permissible to assert that defining a dialectical development of facts as *concrete* as visible forms would be a literal upheaval.<sup>16</sup>

A “style” sometimes swells in the approach to or the *parergon* of the photographed (for the teratological subject, even alive, is *already* a work, a museum piece); it swells and comes to produce chancy resonances—but are they always by chance?—with the very thing the abomination of which it elsewhere attempts to contain. Bourneville, as can be seen in his battle with a leg’s improbable contortions, comes close to losing himself in a far too twisted description of the phenomenon: “the femurs are considerably curved, concavity directed inwards, and convexity looking outward. The leg bones present curvatures in the opposite direction, that is, with external concavity, and internal convexity.”<sup>17</sup> Then, as if the leg itself were not enough for its own exhibition, he confirms the wonder with the adventitious support of a chair whose legs are no less twisted (fig. 7).

### Traits of Madness

I am now coming to the madwomen. The problem of their representation was no less labyrinthine. It is, in the first place, a physiognomic problem, as if the portraitists of the madwomen had not ceased seeking an *adequate line* [*trait*] for the expression of their passions (figs. 8–10).

The “expression of the passions” is a classic problem of painting: in 1668 Le Brun consecrated a conference and a whole series of figures to it. For the problem was posed in terms of *graphic notation* (in reference to a weave, a system of coordinates almost like a musical staff)—the graphic notation of movements, I mean, the *movements of the soul in the body*: he

# REVUE PHOTOGRAPHIQUE

DES HOPITAUX



Plaque XVIII.

RACHITISME, N° 1

Figure 7

Layout of the *Revue photographique des Hôpitaux de Paris* (1871).

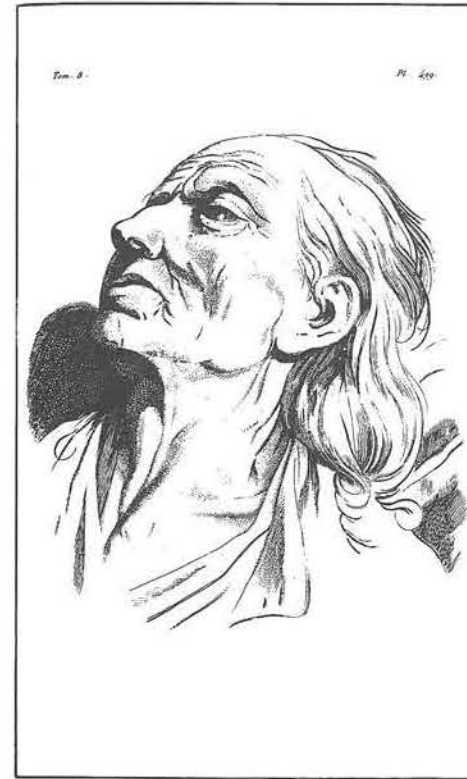


Figure 8

Lavater, *Physiognomy of a madwoman*,  
*L'art de connaître*  
(1835 edition).



Figure 9

Gabriel, *Head of an insane woman*,  
drawn for Esquirol  
around 1823.

defines expression, in fact, as the “part that marks the movements of the soul, that makes visible the effects of passion”; and further on, he writes that “*Passion* is a movement of the soul that resides in the sensitive area, which is formed to follow what the soul thinks is good for it, or to flee what it thinks is bad, and, ordinarily, everything that provokes passion in the soul causes some *action* in the body.”<sup>18</sup> Le Brun right saw this action as something like a *symptom*, the visible figure of the passions. But he counted them only up to twenty-four, perhaps terrified of this in fact transfinite mathematics, the mathematics of symptoms that he had lighted upon; so he stopped with an alphabet.<sup>19</sup>

Of course, this alphabet was expanded by Lavater, among others.<sup>20</sup> As early as 1820 (when Moreau came out with the new edition of Lavater’s work, in ten volumes), Esquirol asked Gabriel, draftsman and disciple of the great physiognomist, to sketch him some madmen and madwomen: “The study of physiognomy of the insane is not an object of



**Figure 10**  
Tardieu, *Physiognomy of an insane woman*, engraved for Esquirol,  
in *Les maladies mentales* (1838).

futile curiosity," he wrote. "This thing helps untangle the nature of the ideas and affections that sustain the delirium of these patients. . . . I've had over 200 insane people drawn for this purpose. Perhaps one day I will publish my observations on this interesting subject"<sup>21</sup> (see fig. 9). The failure of this project was perhaps due to the fact that the alphabet was still not fully the "silent but telling language of nature."

#### First Run

The first photographs of lunacy were portraits of the madwomen of the Surrey County Asylum in Springfield, calotypes executed beginning in 1851 by Doctor Hugh W. Diamond, militant and herald of the "silent but telling language of Nature," founder and president of the Royal Photographic Society of London (1853), director of the *Photographic Journal*, and so on, and so on.

In regard to these extraordinary images, I will mention only that a *passage into line* [*passage au trait*], the drawing of an engraving based on a photograph, was still a necessary operation for the pictures to be used and transmitted. This may seem surprising, in that the technique of the calotype (negative on paper) was meant to resolve the problem of the picture's reproducibility (for one can print an unlimited number of proofs from a negative, which is impossible with a daguerreotype).

In this passage something was always forgotten, something yielded despite Diamond's alleged passion for exactitude—something about the situation, for instance. Take this woman positioned outside, doubtless in a courtyard where there would be more light, with a curtain placed behind her (already an attempt to make the situation abstract) (fig. 11); in the engraving this woman is nowhere—how could her gaze not appear insane, drawn without space or destination? A pure question (fig. 12). And something was also forgotten in the split between the essential or the significant, and the merely accessory. In the images of the same woman, her printed dress, for example, becomes "uniform" in the engraving. (Although this multicolored pattern itself may have been a signifier in her own madness, which was, they say, melancholia on the verge of mania—pure hypothesis.) The posture, too, is graphically bent, or rather, straightened so as to provide more convincing meanings: for example, the clasped hands, rendered symmetrical, of a woman who in fact suffers from "religious madness" (figs. 13, 14). And let me note, finally, that the legends of these engravings serve to designate not an attribute of the referent ("melancholic") but a concept ("Melancholia"), the referent of which—this particular madwoman here—is only an attribute.

#### Gorged with Images

But all this—I'm thinking of photography—was not just the whim of one man; it was in the air, as they say. Could a budding art have made psychiatrists recognize their nosological shortage of the *visible signs* of this or that madness? The fact remains that almost everywhere in Europe, madwomen and madmen found themselves *obliged to pose*; their portraits were being taken, one outdoing the other.

A few prodigious collections remain to us today, at the Bethlem Royal Hospital of Beckenham (where the painter Richard Dadd, committed for patricide, was photographed), and the San Clemente hospital in Venice (an immense clinical and administrative record of madwomen—thousands of images)<sup>22</sup> (figs. 15, 16).





Figures 11 and 12

Engraved version (fig. 12) of a photograph (fig. 11) by H. W. Diamond. Engraving published under the title *Melancholy passing into Mania* in *The Medical Times* (1858).



Figures 13 and 14

Choice of poses: photograph by H. W. Diamond and engraving in the *Medical Times* ("Religious Mania," 1858).


<b>FRENOCOMIO</b>		101
FEMMINILE CENTRALE VENETO		ISOLA S. CLEMENTE VENEZIA
N.° d'ordine <u>150</u>		N.° progressivo generale
ANNO <u>1880</u>		—
		
<b>TABELLA NOSOLOGICA</b>		
Diagnosi della frenopatia desunta dai documenti accompagnatori		N.° e Data del documento accompagnatorio
di		
Entrata il <u>15 Maggio</u>		
Paternità, maternità, e condizione dei genitori <u>24 Luigi e Floriana Turpi</u>		Costituzione fisica <u>Robusta</u>
Età <u>35'</u>		Stato della nutrizione <u>buon</u>
Religione <u>cattolica</u>		<b>Diagnosi frenopatica</b>
Luogo di nascita <u>Prova di Gorizia</u>		<u>Fren. pelloprosa</u>
residenza <u>Medana</u>		Cause <u>Volta insufficiente. Ereditaria</u>
provenienza <u>Prova Turpi</u>		Epoca dell' invasione <u>Aut. 1880</u>
Occupazione o mestiere <u>collina</u>		Recidività <u>—</u>
Stato civile <u>maritata</u>		Indole del delirio <u>monomane</u>
Denominazione e occupazione del marito <u>Budaja Giovanni</u>		Epifenomeni <u>lacrime al pianto</u>
Figliolanza <u>8</u>		Nevropatie e processi morbosi concomitanti
Stato economico <u>moderato</u>		Successioni morbide
Spettanza della retta <u>Prova Turpi</u>		Esito <u>guarita</u>
Data d' uscita <u>12 Nov 1882</u>		
Giornate di permanenza		

Figure 15

Clinical certificate from the San Clemente Hospital in Venice (1873).



**Figure 16**  
Registry from the San Clemente Hospital in Venice (1873).



In France there was an attempt to consider method. For instance, a certain session of the medico-psychological society in Paris, on April 27, 1867, was organized around the theme of “the application of photography to the study of mental illness.” Participating in this session were, notably, Moreau de Tours, Baillarger, and Morel. Considering a method did not so much mean questioning photography’s epistemic interest—for this appeared to everyone as evident, *all too evident*—but rather establishing the basic protocol for the transmission of these images. The problem of the reproducibility and literary treatment of images was on the agenda.

Psychiatric treatises of the day were thus enhanced with plates, images, and proof of nosologies in progress: Baillarger and Bourneville’s idiots, Dagonet’s lypemaniacs, Voisin’s sthenic madwomen, Magnan and Morel’s degenerates, and others.<sup>23</sup>

If I thus speak of a veritable gorge [*engouement*]\* of photographs, it is to draw on the profoundly equivocal nature of the phrase, for the claim that psychiatry simply became besotted with photography would be correct, of course, but it does not account for the profound complexity of the phenomenon. Gorging oneself [*s’engouer*] with something signifies that you’re madly in love, and so you “stuff your face,” as they say, gobbling and swallowing until you can’t go on. And you suffocate from it: *l’engouement* is obstruction, strangling, from too much love.

### Salpêtrière, Photographic Service

But the great image factory was still the Salpêtrière, where the fabrication was methodical and nearly theoretical; it became truly canonical (Tebaldi’s work, for example,<sup>24</sup> published in Verona in 1884, reproduced the exact typographical arrangement of the Salpêtrière’s plates).

The whole thing was put into place when a “devoted and able” photographer, Paul Régnard, was able to settle in for good at the Salpêtrière and indulge his predation at any opportune moment. It seems that the album completed in 1875<sup>25</sup> convinced Charcot to sponsor a clinical publication, organized around this body of images, and written by Bourneville. This publication appeared in 1876 and 1877: the first volume of the *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* (see appendix 5), followed by a second volume, whose printing technique was a little less do-it-yourself (see appendix 6), and a third in 1880.

\*[Didi-Huberman evokes not only the common meaning of *engouement*, generally translated as enthusiasm, but also its etymological meaning of strangulation.—Trans.]

And then there was nothing: a silence of almost ten years, during which Bourneville and Régnard disappeared, in a way, from this circulation of images. In fact, they were relieved of their functions by Albert Londe, much fussier about the organization, who made the most of the means conferred on him by the official inauguration of Charcot’s chair.

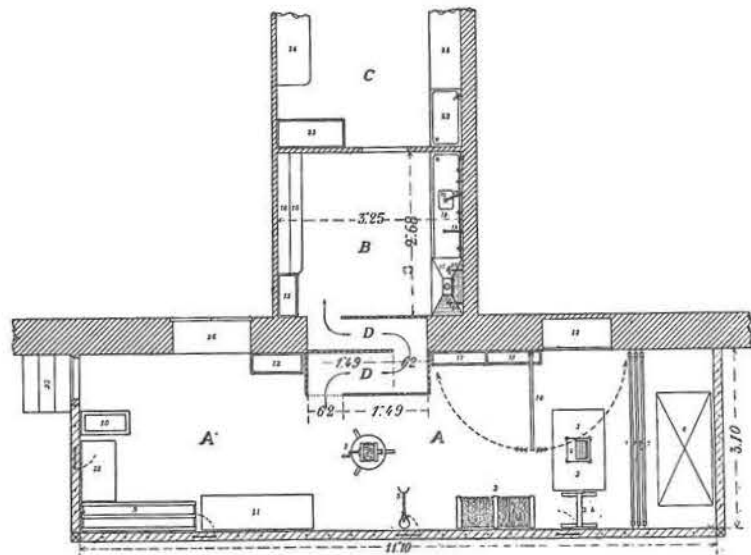
Londe maintained a strange silence about his predecessors;<sup>26</sup> were their photographs that much more beautiful than his own?—Mere hypothesis. Then, in 1888, the first volume of the *Nouvelle Iconographie de la Salpêtrière* appeared, still under Charcot’s auspices, by Gilles de la Tourette, Paul Richer, and the selfsame Londe.

In this way the practice of photography attained the full dignity of a hospital service.<sup>27</sup> That is, it had its own domain: a glass-walled studio, dark and light laboratories<sup>28</sup> (fig. 17). It had its official equipment: platforms, beds, screens and backdrops in black, dark gray, and light gray, headrests, gallows (fig. 18 and appendix 7). Its photographic technology grew more and more sophisticated, as the phrase so aptly goes: the proliferation of all kinds of lenses and cameras (figs. 19, 20), the use of artificial lighting,<sup>29</sup> “photochronography,”<sup>30</sup> and all the latest developments in development,<sup>31</sup> and finally, it had its clinical and administrative procedures of archiving: a whole itinerary of the image, from the “observation” all the way to the filing cabinet (see appendixes 8 and 9).

*Service* is nonetheless a horrible little word; it already contains servitude and abuse [*sévice*]. My question is not only what purpose photography served, but also who, or what, at the Salpêtrière, was subjugated to the photographic images?

### The Legend of Memory

These images were, in fact, supposed to serve a memory. Or rather, the fantasy of a memory—a memory that would be absolute, quite simply: in the moment of the shot, the photograph is absolutely immediate, “exact and sincere.”<sup>32</sup> And it endures: it is, “like all graphic representations, a faithful memory that conserves, unaltered, the impressions it has received.”<sup>33</sup> I call it a fantasy, in the first place, because the technical problem of the *permanence of images* was never, in fact, self-evident. And the first fifty years of photography still bear the mark of a major anxiety, more or less expressed, over the *toning* and *effacement* of prints. All efforts aimed either at perfecting the calotype or at allying photographic reproduction with the lithographic technique, in ink and carbon, supposed to be indelible. The earliest period of the *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière*



Plan du Service photographique de la Salpêtrière (\*).

- A. Atelier vitré.
- B. Laboratoire noir.
- C. Laboratoire clair.
- D. Entrée en chicane du laboratoire noir.

Figure 17

Map of the photographic service of the Salpêtrière.

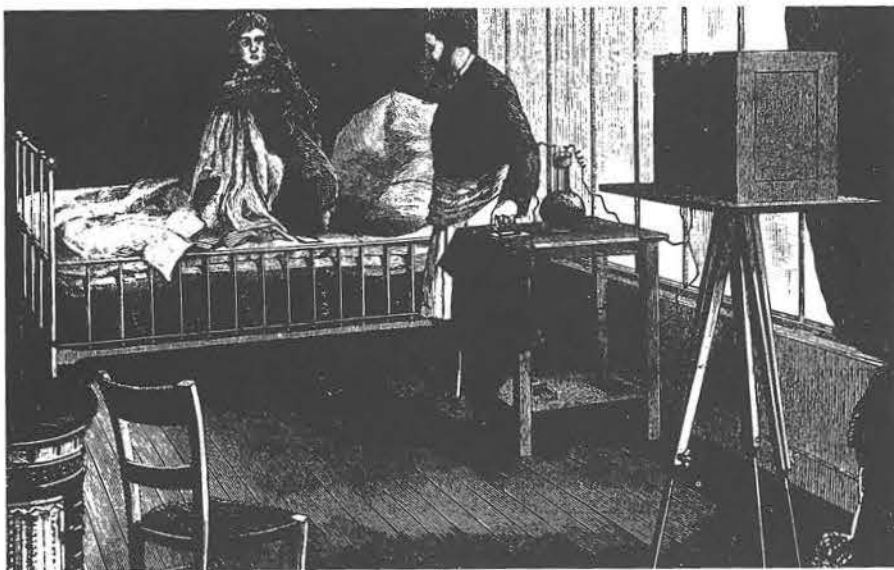
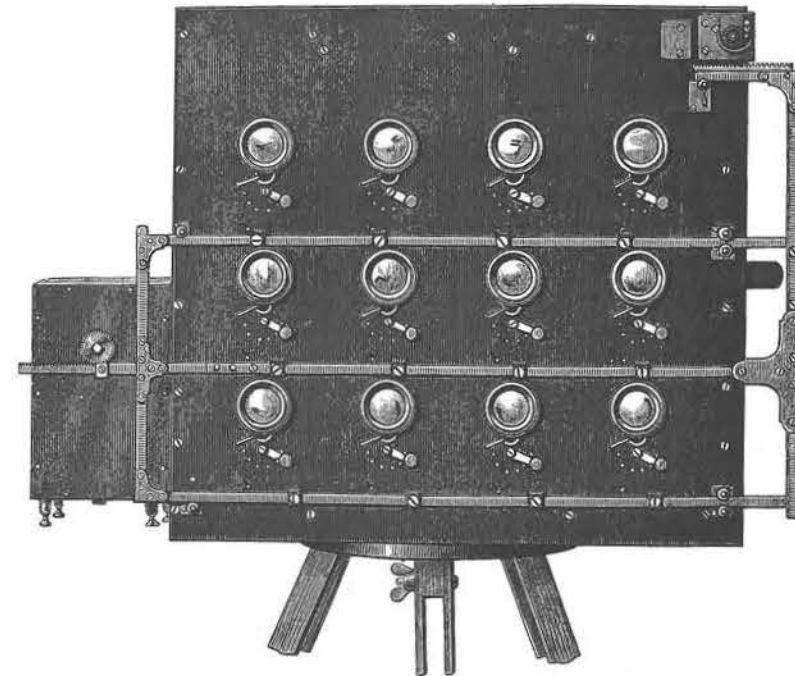
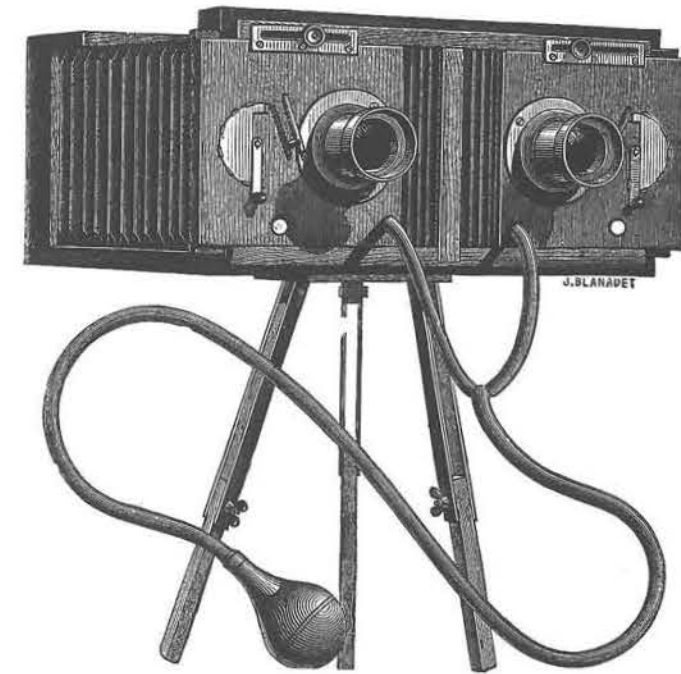


Figure 18

Poyet, *Photography at the Salpêtrière*  
(Bibliothèque nationale, East Wing).



Figures 19 and 20

Albert Londe's stereoscopic camera (fig. 19) and camera with multiple lenses (fig. 20), *La photographie médicale* (1893).

was marked by this effort and anxiety. Only a few years later, Albert Londe's discourse flaunted the triumphalism of an absolute photographic memory. For he had behind him the birth of photomechanical procedures, photocollography, photoglyphy, heliogravure, similigravure,<sup>34</sup> and so on.

The same goes for Photography, with a capital "P"—I mean the ideal of photography, an incontestable Trace, incontestably faithful, durable, transmissible. Photography, far more than a mere scientist's cheat-sheet,<sup>35</sup> had the duty of being knowledge's memory, or rather its access to memory, its mastery of memory. "It is a question, in fact, of preserving the durable trace of all pathological manifestations whatsoever, which may modify the exterior form of the patient and imprint a particular character, attitude, or special facies upon him. These impartial and rapidly collected documents add a considerable value to medical observations insofar as they place a faithful image of the subject under study before everyone's eyes."<sup>36</sup>

And Photography, in the end, was supposed to allow for a single image, or a series of images, that would crystallize and memorize for everyone *the whole time of an inquiry* and, beyond that, the time of a history ("obtain anterior photographs: one will thus have the proof that the existing anomalies are indeed the consequence of the illness and did not exist before"<sup>37</sup>).

Photography had to crystallize the case into a *Tableau*: not an extensive tableau, but a tableau in which the Type was condensed in a unique image, or in a univocal series of images—the *facies*.

Determining the facies appropriate to each illness and each affection, placing it before everyone's eyes is precisely what photography is able to do. In certain doubtful or little known cases, a comparison of prints taken in various places or at distant times provides the assurance that the illness in different subjects who were not on hand at the same time is indeed one and the same. This work has been accomplished to great success by M. Charcot, and the facies belonging to this or that affliction of nervous centers is now well-known. With the prints thus obtained, it would be easy to repeat Galton's experiment and obtain, through superposition, a composite print providing a type in which individual variations disappear, bringing to light their shared modifications.<sup>38</sup>

A facies is that which is bound and determined to summarize and generalize the case, determined to make *foresight* possible: and this, in the aspect of a *face*.

### The Legend of the Surface, the Facies

*Facies* simultaneously signifies the singular *air* of a face, the particularity of its aspect, as well as the *genre* or *species* under which this aspect should be subsumed. The facies would thus be a face fixed to a synthetic combination of the universal and the singular: the visage fixed to the regime of *representation*, in a Hegelian sense.<sup>39</sup>

Why the face?—Because in the face the corporeal *surface* makes visible something of the movements of the soul, ideally. This also holds for the Cartesian science of the expression of the passions, and perhaps also explains why, from the outset, psychiatric photography took the form of an *art of the portrait*.

In any case, this portraiture was a very particular art, in which "face" was understood as "facies." It was an art of *surface territories*, yet always seeking a more intimate localization, the concomitant convolution in the brain. Doubtless, this was a legacy of that strange territorial or configurative science, if I may put it like that, of Gall's phrenology. Gall was passionately interested, for instance, in a certain woman's face; he even took her delicate head in his hands—but his caressing fingers were only seeking the region, bump, or cephalic fold corresponding to the lady's monomania. And in his other hand, opposite her, he held a death's head—I mean a skull—for comparison (fig. 21). I speak of a legacy because phrenology lost no time in positing itself as the theoretical basis of all psychology under the ensign of positivism;<sup>40</sup> Charcot's cerebral localizations are affiliated, as it were.

It was also an art of the detailed, the tenuous, the fragmented—an art of the *commisure* of territories, but always in search of a law prescribing their minuscule differences. Bourneville photographed idiots and, on the basis of his portrait gallery, sought a concept of Idiocy in the minute anatomical pinpointing of buccal openings, the commissure of the lips, the form of cheeks, the roof of the mouth, gums and teeth, uvulas, soft palates.<sup>41</sup> Duchenne de Boulogne also sought the differential muscular commissures of every emotion, pathos, and pathology<sup>42</sup> (fig. 22). And Darwin, extending the same research to the whole animal kingdom, used it as the basis for his great phylogenetic history of the expression of emotions.<sup>43</sup>

The face subsumed under a facies thus allowed for a logic and etiology of its own accidents. It did so through a subtle and constant art of the *recovering of surfaces*, always seeking depth—conceptual depth—in the filmy fabric or stratum he constructed: the depth of the Type. Galton was a virtuoso of this art of recovering: he *produced* the Type through the regulated superposition of portraits he had collected. If the *facies* obtained

L'ARTISTE



PHRENOLOGIE.

Figure 21

Phrenology, print (Musée d'Histoire de la Médecine, Paris).

was a bit blurred, what did it matter; it still constituted a figurative probability, rigorous in itself, and thus a "scientific" portrait<sup>44</sup> (fig. 23).

Albert Londe, at the Salpêtrière, was searching for exactly that: the rigorous figurative probability that would find its law in time and the differences of a face:

The study of the facies in nervous pathology was carried out in a remarkable manner by the School of the Salpêtrière, and, without exaggerating, it can be asserted that Photography was of no small assistance in the circumstance. Certain modifications of the face that themselves cannot in isolation constitute the sign of any malady whatsoever, take on great importance when found in similar patients. Unless, perchance, one has patients presenting these characteristic facies at the same time, they can often pass unnoticed. To the contrary, when photographs are brought together, numerous specimens can be compared and the typical modifications that constitute this or that facies can be deduced. . . , creating, through superposition, composite types in which all individual particularities are effaced and only common characteristics persist, and so determine the *facies* appropriate to this or that malady.<sup>45</sup>

. . . This result is important, for once the type is defined it remains engraved on the memory and, in certain cases, can be precious for diagnosis.<sup>46</sup>

In this way the aspect of the face, subsumed under a facies, became amenable to a codifiable, recordable state of signification; through a vigilant inquiry into forms, it opened the way for something like *signalment*.

#### The Legend of Identity and its Protocol

The physicians of the Salpêtrière thus resembled "scientific constables," in search of a criterion of difference understood as *principium individuationis*: a criterion that could ground "signalment," that is, the recognition or assignment of identity. And indeed, the "scientific police" is not a mere fable.

For there was a remarkable complicity, tacit and impeccable, between the Salpêtrière and the Préfecture de police. Their photographic techniques were identical and sustained the same hopes (the techniques were equally implicated in an art: the first identity photographs were oval, just like family portraits; and above all, it seems to me that *at a certain moment*, any passion for forms and configurations implicates an art. The way in which the École des Beaux-Arts aided the Salpêtrière and the Préfecture de police in their efforts must also be interrogated).



DUCHENNE (de Boulogne), phot.

SPÉCIMEN  
D'UNE EXPÉRIENCE ÉLECTRO-PHYSIOLOGIQUE

Faite par l'Auteur.

Figure 22

Duchenne de Boulogne, "Specimen of an Electro-physiological Experiment," *Mechanism of human physiognomy* (1862) (frontispiece plate).

**SPECIMENS OF COMPOSITE PORTRAITURE**

**PERSONAL AND FAMILY,**



*Alexander the Great  
From 6 Different  
Medals.*



*Two Sisters.*



*From 6 Members  
of same Family  
Male & Female.*

**HEALTH,**



*23 Cases.  
Royal Engineers,  
12 Officers,  
11 Privates*

**DISEASE.**



*6  
Cases*



*9  
Cases*

*Tubercular Disease*

**CRIMINALITY,**



*8  
Cases*



*4  
Cases*

*2 Of the many  
Criminal Types*

**CONSUMPTION AND OTHER MALADIES**

I



*20  
Cases*

II



*36  
Cases*



*56 Cases  
Co-composite of I & II*

*Consumptive Cases.*



*100  
Cases*



*50  
Cases*

*Not Consumptive.*

In any case, the development of psychiatric photography in the nineteenth century emerged from the same general movement as forensic photography.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the pivotal discipline of criminal anthropology occupied an eminent strategic position in this movement; it took as much interest in the photographic portraits of criminals and the insane as it did in their skulls (fig. 24, 25).

A certain Lacan, taking stock of photography's miraculous progress, did not hesitate to equate "the accusatory image" of criminals with "Dr. Diamond's erudite work":

What convicted criminal could escape police vigilance? For even if he escapes the walls where punishment restrains him; even if, once liberated, he breaks the order that prescribes him a residence; even then his portrait is in the hands of the authorities. He has no escape. He cannot but recognize himself in his accusatory image. And, from a physiognomic point of view, what studies are these collections in which the nature of the crime is inscribed along side the culprit's face! One could read the history of human passions in this book with each face as a page, and each feature an eloquent line! What a philosophical treatise! What a poem, which light alone can write! If we pass from illnesses of the soul to those of the body, we again find the photographer ready to play an important role. Before my eyes I have a collection of fourteen portraits of women of different ages. Some are smiling, others seem to be dreaming, and all of them have something strange in their physiognomy: one understands this at first glance. If one considers them longer, one is saddened despite oneself: all these faces have an extraordinary expression that gives pain. A single word suffices to explain everything: they are madwomen. These portraits are part of a scholarly work by Dr. Diamond.<sup>48</sup>

Simply note, for the moment, that in this subtle complicity between physicians and police, a concept of identity was necessarily elaborated on the basis of a combination of scientific or forensic petitions and their technical and photographic responses. What's more, photography was the new machinery of a legend: *the having-to-read of identity in the image*.

This having-to-read found its "theoretical basis," its "philosophy," under the pen of its own practitioners: I am thinking of Alphonse Bertillon, creator of Signaletic Anthropometrics, who died in 1914, and whose "system" was adopted by police forces across the Western world starting in 1888. He was the director of the photographic service of

**Figure 23 (previous page)**

Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculties* . . . (1883) (frontispiece plate).

the Préfecture de Paris (the first in the world, created as early as 1872 by Bazard).<sup>49</sup>

Alphonse Bertillon's "theoretical considerations of signalment"<sup>50</sup> sprang from a reflection on the nature of and means for a "descriptive analysis of the human figure," on the "mathematical rules" of the "mysterious distribution of forms" and the "distribution of dimensions in nature."<sup>51</sup> These considerations then opened the way to establishing the technical means for the identification and anthropometric classification of individuals.

Whether one is concerned with a dangerous repeat offender concealing himself under an assumed name, or an unknown cadaver deposited in the Morgue, or a child of a young age who has been lost intentionally, or an insane person stopped on the public highway who persists, out of imaginary fears, in concealing his identity, or a poor man struck with sudden paralysis in the street, and incapable of pronouncing his name and address; the end in view is always identification and the means of action is Photography.<sup>52</sup>

Thus this having-to-read was above all the commandeering of the efficacy of sight, defined in photographic procedures. These procedures included, in the first place, a standardization of the pose and shooting of portraits (the uniformity of procedures would ensure that differences are identified and fully measurable):<sup>53</sup> "And it is furthermore desirable that photography coupled with signalment come as close as possible to the well-defined uniform type, adopted, according to my indications, by the central Archives of the Identification Service."<sup>54</sup> Bertillon had a number of gadgets perfected, including a "posing chair mechanically assuring the uniformity of reduction between full-face photographs and those in profile."<sup>55</sup> the subjects had to be bent into the type of image required, this face and that profile, to bring out, with regulated specificity, their physiognomic-criminal clues (appendix 10; fig. 26). An art of warders. And the only thing left to do was to *archive*, a weighty problem when there is such a multiplicity of images and clues: making it possible to locate a certain suspect of a certain crime from among some 90,000 photographs taken by the Identification Service of the Préfecture between 1882 and 1889,<sup>56</sup> in accordance with the well-named process of "Bertillonage."

Let us return to my subject, Albert Londe who, in his own orbit (the Salpêtrière, a quasi-city, complete with its own seedy areas and surveil-

**Figures 24 and 25 (see overleaf)**

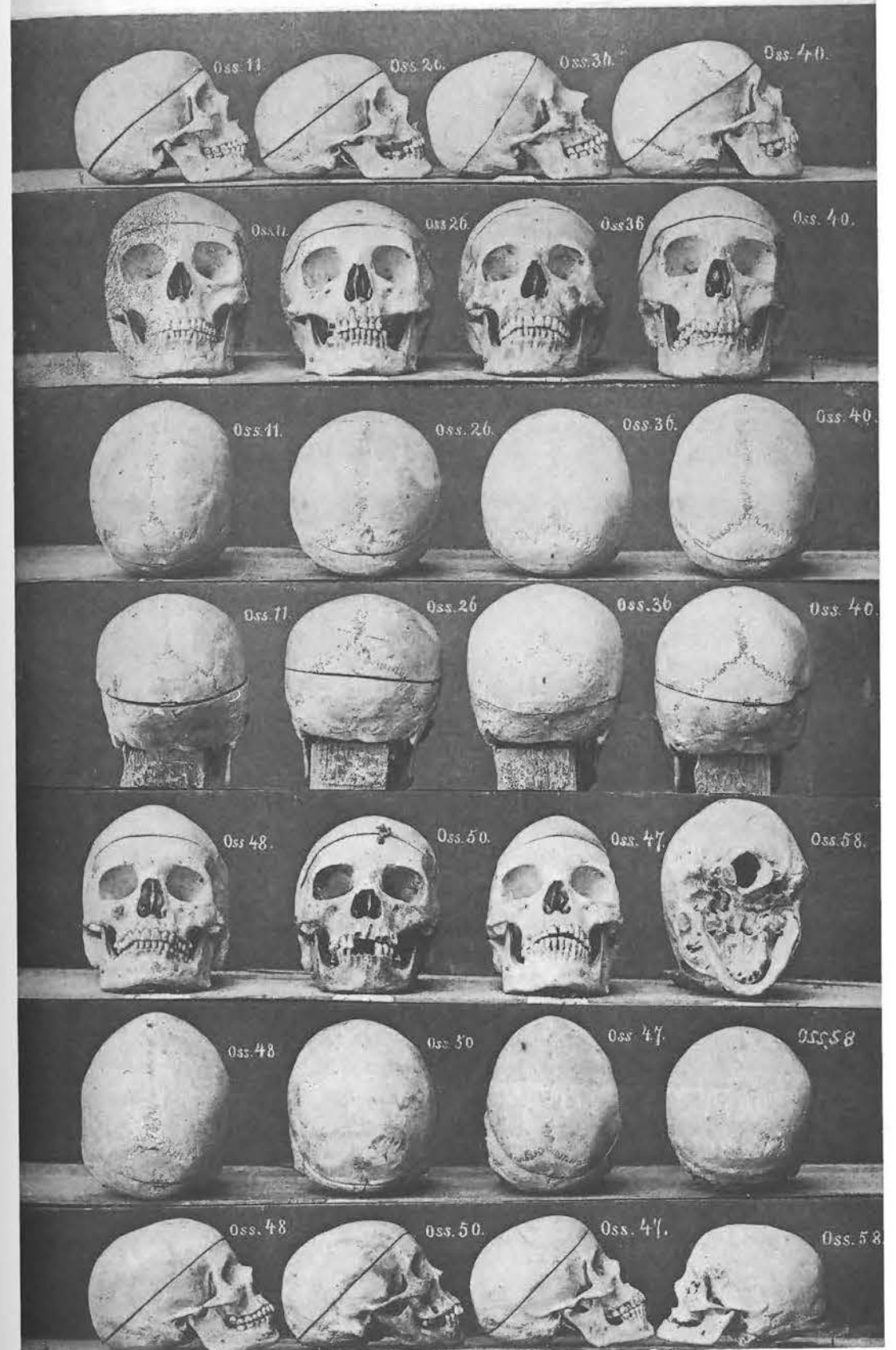
Portraits and skulls of criminal women, collected by Lombroso and reproduced in his *Atlas de l'homme criminel* (1878).

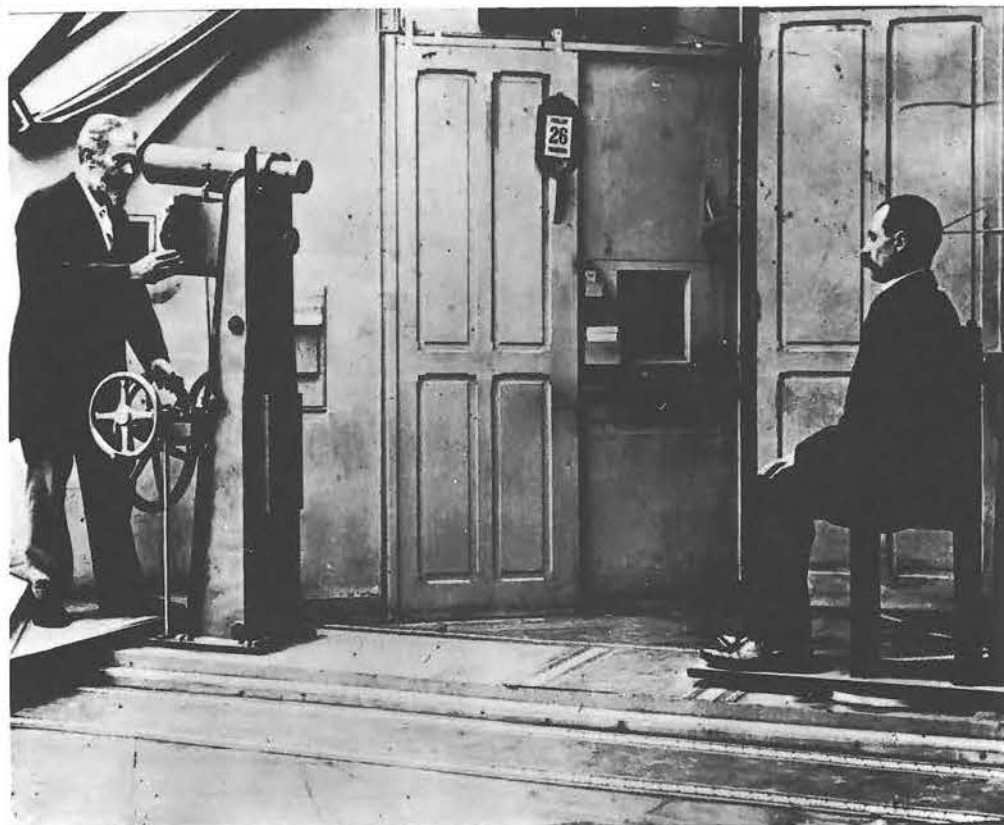


PORTRAITS DE CRIMINELLES ALLEMANDES.



CRANES DE CRIMINELLES.





**Figure 26**  
“Bertillonage” at Police Headquarters in Paris (1893).

lance services), was posing analogous questions and inventing analogous procedures so as to regulate the conditions of visibility of symptomatic bodies, so they would produce signs and signalments. He regulated the conditions of their exhibition and even the advent of differences, so as to derive a unique concept and adopt a programmable “curative” conduct with no risk of surprise. For example: “For a photograph of the feet, the subject must be elevated on a table or some support such that he is placed at the level of the camera. In every case, and principally where modifications bearing on the dimensions of the limbs are concerned, it is advisable to photograph a metric scale at the same time, or else the hands and feet of a normal person. In this way the comparison will be all the more telling.”<sup>57</sup> As for the feet, so for the face, which had to be raised to the level and disposition of the camera. This is how the “face of madness” became the “pathological facies of nervous illness,” meaning that the face lost its aura.

But let us return to my subjects, Bourneville and Régnard, who, a few years before Londe, were—still hesitating. They confined themselves to procedures that were more aleatory; their predation of images, in regards to hysterics, was still marked by something adventurous, and the portraits they took still left room for the *aura*, I mean, the temporal tenor of images that were so much more complex, equivocal, and troubling. And, doubtless, this happened despite their intentions.

Bourneville, for one, later compensated for such hesitations regarding both Bertillonage and wardership, by photo-measuring the children in his service at the Bicêtre hospital (figs. 27–30).

But while at the Salpêtrière, Régnard and Bourneville were still exposed to the *risk* of a more intimate paradox of photographic practice. They were searching for the facies in faces and they attempted to deny all paradoxical effect, of course; but they were only partially successful. This is why their images, more than others, are still enigmatic and disconcerting. The *facies* is not yet the policing of the image, not quite a subject detained for observation. It still offers itself, I would say, as a *spectacle* (also signified by “*facies*” in Latin), never wholly cloistered in fixed stage-scenes. The *facies* still offers itself as an act, a *factitive* (that which “gives”—*facit*—something)—an event of the portrait.

#### Paradox of Evidence

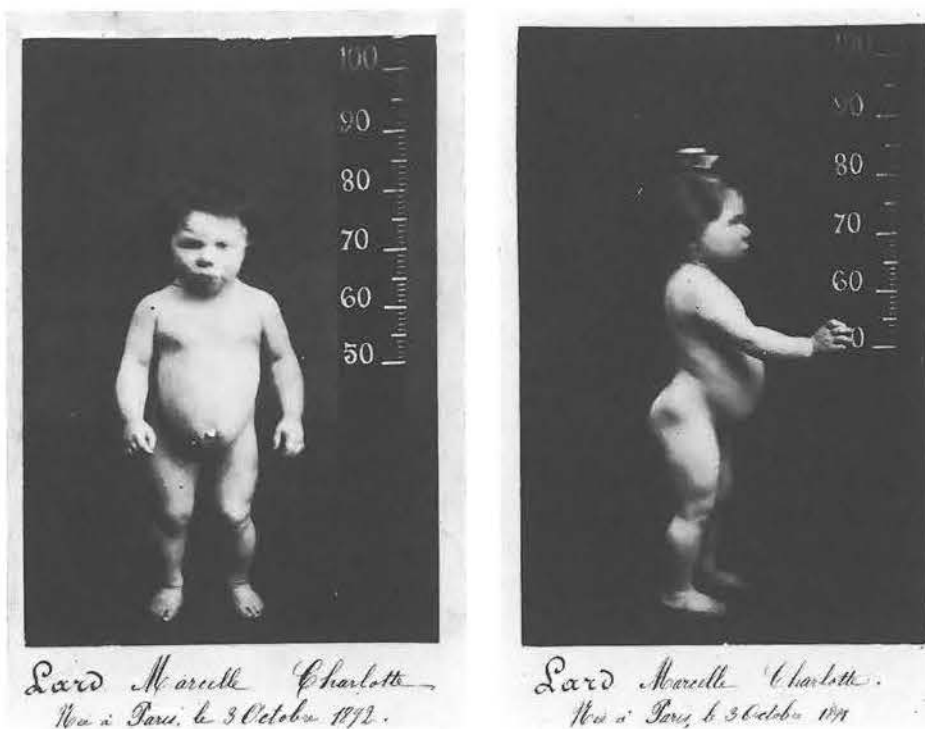
The paradox of photography is what I would call a *paradox of spectacular evidence*.

It is, in the first place, a paradox of a sort of *knowledge* that slips away from itself, despite itself; the endless flight of knowledge, even as the object of knowledge is photographically detained for observation, fixed to objectivity. It is also, precisely, the paradox of photographic *resemblance*, which is not the essence of photography though it wanted to be, and which, in the end, was always only stasis, effect, and temporal drama of its repeated failure. But perhaps this is why the paradox is the paradox of Resembling.

Every image summoned to appear in the *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* confronts us with this paradox. But I will be somewhat more specific, in reviewing its principles.

#### Exactitude?

Baudelaire was aware of a paradox when he railed against photographic exactitude, treating it not as a material effect, a “pure effect” of the photographic act, but as the credo of a “multitude” for whom Daguerre was

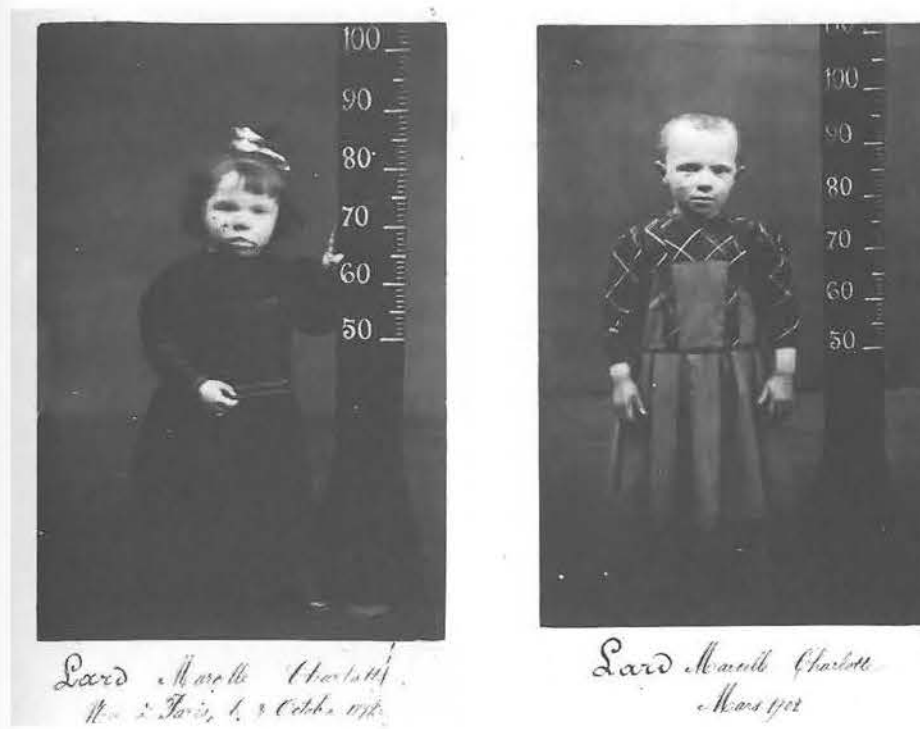


Figures 27–30

Bourneville, “Diagnostic Biography” of a child (extracts),  
taken at the Hôpital Bicêtre.

the “messiah.”<sup>58</sup> What everyone in photography called evidence, Baudelaire was already calling belief. He went further yet, characterizing this belief as adulterous, imbecile, narcissistic, obscene, as modern Posturing and Fatuity, even as blind—and especially as a revenge, industry’s imbecilic revenge on art.<sup>59</sup> The great, tireless quarrel between art and science.

But art or science, art or meaning<sup>60</sup>—the quarrel deserved only to be sublated and exceeded. Perhaps photography never stopped striving for the sublation, *Aufhebung*, of art,<sup>61</sup> a sublation of science, and thus sublation of their mode of coexistence. This sublation first manifested itself as the invention of the twisted and novel means to the figurativity of knowledge. Now, photography is not just any representative system; when it denies that it is self-representational or autoreferential, we always come close to believing it. It can connote, doctor, pose, aestheticize, disconnect its referents, oversyntax the visible, invent new qualities, such as *photogénie* and so on; but it is nonetheless always credited with truth. Not the truth of meaning (precisely because of its capacity for connotative flippancy), but the truth of existence: a photograph is always supposed to



authenticate the existence of its referent, and in this way it always grants us *some* knowledge, and is always justified in pointing to something in itself like a “that has been.”<sup>62</sup> Of course. Is that its exactitude?

### Facticity

But what of this “exact” knowledge? Photography might be right about something (but what?), even as it falls short of what it leads one to believe by virtue of its tricks, points of view, and fabrications of beauty. Inversely, what exactly does it lead one to believe or imagine about that thing whose existence it nonetheless certifies?

Another way to describe this paradox of evidence is to say that photography is a practice of facticity. Facticity is the double quality of that which is *in fact* (irrefutable, even if contingent) and that which is *factitious*. It is a paradox of mendacious irrefutability, as it were.

And what of the photographic *portrait*? This is my concern here. Consider this historical sketch by Lacan:

The portrait was the earliest application of photography. As soon as Daguerre’s procedures were made public, fragile glass constructions

resembling hothouses began to appear on the top floor of buildings, where the public would come to pose with commendable patience under the burning rays of the sun. At the time, one had to pose for up to five minutes, and even then one had, in principle, to cover one's face with whiting to obtain a satisfactory image.<sup>63</sup>

The fact that the photographic portrait required not only studios and make-up (as if to help the light come into its own) but also headrests, knee-braces, curtains, and scenery is a good indication of the terms of the paradox: an existence was authenticated, but through theatrical means. Let us reconsider the history: photography never stopped certifying presences, and at the same time, never stopped ritualizing this certification. One might think that photography would necessarily defy every notion of genre (the portrait, in this case), since it sticks so humbly to the configuration and "existence" of its referent. One is thus obliged to suspect that there is some retortion of its procedure, when one realizes that photography nonetheless a genre. And that it accedes to a standstill in a genre. As if in a very intimate movement, perhaps in the negation of its miraculous technical potential (to graph *hic et nunc* the *hic et nunc* of the visible), photography never stopped desiring to be a formalism. Photography wanted to make the simple exhibition of the body in an image, which it first made possible, into a display of Formality, Ideal, even Morality; at the same time that photography showed bodies, it solemnized them, assigning them to a familial and social rite—and thus *refuted* them through a certain kind of theatricality.

A kind of cutting-up of bodies, cutting-up on stage, a staging aimed at knowledge, knowledge aiming at the *what* (rather than the *who*) of bodies. In this sense, photography entered the domain of anthropological certitude,<sup>64</sup> although it was perhaps a means of undermining it.

Through this cutting up and its staging, photography also incorporated Text, the *Legend*: stage directions for theatrical arrangements, not simply writing in the corner of an image, but indeed a legend, a having-to-read, an explanation: its dramaturgy, in short.

By its dramaturgy I mean its prospect, its own perspective and project, to which it attempts theatrically to subjugate an aspect, and denies this very temptation. Its dramaturgy is the *making* of representational objects from the point of departure—yes, departure—of the singular differences of a photographed "model." This *making* supposes and imposes a conceived identity, a judged or prejudged analogy, of previously conceived oppositions or similarities. And this is how photography invents itself as scientificity, target, generality—although initially it was merely an exemplary act of contingency.

And photography came to imagine that it had the power of a symbol. But this, in fact, is but a still more solemn, and perhaps more crazed, entry into the imaginary. I mean, the imaginary as act: facticity.

### Subject?

This might be called the anchoring of photography in fiction, but in truth, it is far worse.

The worst is that, fundamentally, the camera is merely a subjective apparatus, *an apparatus of subjectivity*. This would of course make Albert Londe turn in his grave. But Londe, incidentally, could not have been unaware that optics itself, with its perennial laws, functions according to a relation, regulated of course, between real space and something that must indeed be called imaginary space—that is, psychic space.

I would go so far as to say that the camera is a wholly philosophical product; it is an instrument of *cogito*.

The camera produces showers of metaphors, and the stakes are universals. Valéry compared the darkroom to Plato's cave.<sup>65</sup> And photography would seem to have finally achieved the "indiscreet resemblance" that leaves no "gap" between the portrait and the portrayed, and that occupies such a decisive position in Descartes's problem of certainty. Note nonetheless that Cartesian certainty itself, between "*ego sum*" and "*larvatus prodeo*," follows factitious detours, stage directions, feints of exposition, *trompe-l'oeil*, figuration, masks, and portraiture: always *impossible resemblances*.<sup>66</sup> The photographic apparatus would thus be the apparatus of a cogito already unhappy in its certainty, turned chaotic, *torn*.

Finally, in a chapter entitled "Regression" in the *Traumdeutung*, the photographic apparatus appears as the figure for a notion of *psychical locality* in the dream;<sup>67</sup> but the analogy did not prove wholly satisfactory. It was too simple or too complex as a metaphoric machine, and also doubtless unadapted to the vertigo to which the camera condemns us, as subjects. This vertigo implicates, notably, the Freudian dialectic of the subject, perhaps less in terms of topographies or psychical localities than in economic or dynamic terms. It is in any case, or at least, the vertigo of the subject's self-betrayal, an experimental self-betrayal.

### Treachery!

*Tradire*—to transmit, to deliver in all senses—and then, to betray.

An anecdote, in passing: in the spring of 1921, two of those so-called instantaneous photo machines, recently invented abroad, were installed

in Prague. On a single piece of paper they could affix sixteen different expressions of the subject, if not more. And Janouch said to Kafka, in a lighthearted and philosophical tone: "The apparatus is a mechanical *Know-Thyself!*" And Kafka replied, "You mean to say, the *Mistake-Thyself!*" (With a faint smile, of course.) Janouch mildly protested: "What do you mean? The camera cannot lie!" and what an answer Kafka gave: "Who told you that the camera cannot lie?" Then, writes Janouch, Kafka tilted his head toward his shoulder.<sup>68</sup> All those inclined heads in photographic portraits—heads submitted to the image.

Photography *delivers* us, in all senses, as I said. It delivers our image, delivers us to the image, multiplying and repeating the transmission and, in the exactitude of this passage—our modern tradition, in the exactitude of its figurative facilitations, it traffics in our history and betrays it. Its superb "materialist" myth, the filmy production of the double,<sup>69</sup> in fact constitutes *the passing to the limits of evidence*. Exacerbated, multiplied, magnified: evidence passes into simulacrum.

Albert Londe himself was led to demonstrate the essentially fantastic tenor of the photographic portrait, as in this treble figure, thrice present in the same image. Portraitist, portrayed, and portrait, one might say,

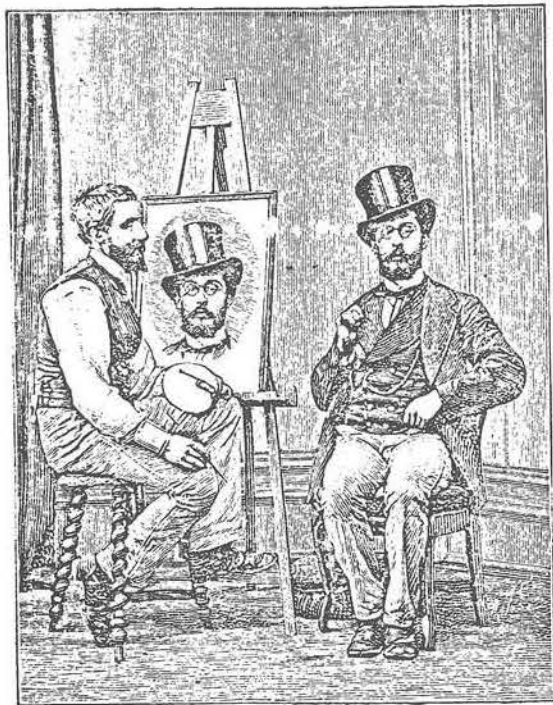


Figure 31

Londe, The "multiple portrait," *La photographie moderne* (1888).

and perhaps a triple self-portrait, a muddling in any case of self- and allo-portrait (fig. 31).

### Resemblance?

Thus photography is ultimately an *uncertain* technique,<sup>70</sup> changeable and ill-famed, too. Photography stages bodies: changeability. And at one moment or another, subtly, it belies them (invents them), submitting them instead to figurative extortion. As figuration, photography always poses the enigma of the "recumbence of the intelligible body,"<sup>71</sup> even as it lends itself to some understanding of this enigma, and even as this understanding is suffocated.

A photographic portrait ("Resemblance Guaranteed," read the bills advertising Daguerrotypes) never presented the "model" "as such." It already represented and *complicated*<sup>72</sup> the model, already chiseled it into something else, perhaps an ideal, perhaps an enigma, perhaps both; the identity of the model was essentially dissociated, twisted, and therefore terribly troubling. This trouble was due to the *evidence of Resembling*: too evident (at risk of being evacuated) not to be theatricalized, "ex-act" resemblance acts out—the act of facticity, the act of *miming* (miming its own obviousness). This is to say that it passes into the invention of an other, alternative temporality of the pose; "here preceding, there recollecting, in the future, in the past, in the false appearance of the present"<sup>73</sup> (why does this mime's sentence demand so imperiously to be thought and rethought?).

And when one comes to pose oneself, before a photograph, paradoxical questions: whom does this photographed face resemble? Exactly whose face is photographed? In the end, doesn't a photograph resemble just anyone?<sup>74</sup> Well, one cannot, for all that, simply push resemblance aside like a poorly posed problem. Rather, one points a finger at Resembling as an unstable, vain, and phantasmatic temporal motion. One interrogates the drama of imaginary evidence.

For "to resemble," or Resembling, is the name for a major concern about time in the visible. This is precisely what exposes all photographic evidence to anxiety, and beyond it, to staging, compromises, twisted meanings, and *simulacra*. And this is how photography circumvents itself—in its own sacrilege. It blasphemes its own evidence because evidence is diabolical. It ruins evidence, from a theater.

### Vide!

"*Me vide!*"—An interjection in old comic performances, "Look at me!" This formula was used to signify something like "Have confidence!"—

But we all know, don't we, that confidence is always meant to be betrayed, especially on the stage of a theater.

So with photography. The treasure of photographic evidence is the confidence accorded to the existence of the referent, a confidence photography pillages at leisure, often devastating something entirely. In place of this devastation, as faint as it might be (a prick, hole, spot, or small cut: *punctum*), a sort of implosion takes place, the always irreparable effect of the shock of the void, something exorbitant.<sup>75</sup> I, too, am chasing after the time of this besmirching of the image in a few portraits of madwomen. It is something in the gaze, or rather something crucified between gaze and representation; it is something about time, the excessive immobilization of a desire, or a counter-memory, or a hallucinatory flight, or a hallucinatory retention of a fleeting present, or who knows what else.

And with these somethings of gaze and time, so photography invents itself a very real proximity to madness.

## A Thousand Forms, in None

### "Behold the Madwoman"

Behold the madwoman who dances by, as she vaguely recalls something. Children chase her with stones, as if she were a blackbird. Men chase her with their gaze. She brandishes a stick, pretending to chase them, and then continues on her way. She loses a shoe on the road and doesn't notice. Long spider legs circulate around the nape of her neck—it's only her hair. Her face no longer looks human, so it seems for an instant, and she bursts out laughing like a hyena. She lets shreds of sentences slip out, which, if stitched back together, would make sense to very few; but who would restitch them? Her dress, torn in more than one place, jerks about her bony legs covered in mud. She walks straight ahead, carried along like a poplar leaf, with her youth, illusions, and past felicity, which she sees again through the whirlwind of her unconscious faculties. Her step is ignoble and her breath smells of brandy. Why does one still find oneself thinking she is beautiful?

The madwoman makes no reproaches; she is too proud to complain and will die without having revealed her secret to those who take interest in her, but whom she has forbidden to address her, ever. Still she calls to them with her extravagant poses. Children chase her with stones, as if she were a blackbird.<sup>1</sup> Men chase her with their gaze.

### *La Bête Noire*

What men were chasing in hysteria was, above all, a *bête noire*; this is quite exactly how Freud described it, in French, in 1888.<sup>2</sup>

Twenty-nine years earlier—and that's not long—Briquet had begun his great "clinical and therapeutic" treatise on hysteria by insisting on the veritable repulsion that "this sort of patient" inspired in him. He wrote: "In order to acquit my conscience, I was obliged to bestow all my attention on this sort of patient, although my taste for positive science did not in the