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JULIA MARGARET CAMERON

by

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INTRODUCTION

Julia Margaret Cameron was a photographer active when photography was still in a critical stage of development. It was a very cumbersome process to produce just one picture, yet she produced some three thousand prints during her career. She came to photography late, at the age of forty eight, having raised a family of five children. It was her oldest child, also called Julia, who,

> In a spirit of light-heartedness, introduced her mother to the latest London craze, with the comment "it may amuse you, Mother, to try to photograph during your solitude at Freshwater".
>
> (Hopkinson, 1986).

A gift that was intended to ease Cameron's loneliness quickly became an obsession.

Photography was a controversial invention, and it caused much discussion in the contemporary art world, both in England and France. In Chapter I, I investigate the symbiotic relationship between painting and photography, in the work of French artists such as Delacroix and Courbet.

It is evident that arguments also arose as to whether photography could be called Art, with a capital 'A', or whether its only use was a documentary one. Intrinsic to this argument was the use of sharp or soft focus; sharp being the desired focus to capture documentary scenes, whereas soft focus was used to infer a subject with feeling; to elevate it to the status of Art. This argument is personified in Julia Margaret

Cameron and John Ruskin, Cameron being in favour of soft focus, and Ruskin sharp.

Cameron's slipshod working methods caused the British Photographic Press to look unfavourably on her. I discuss her technique and the reception her photographs received from critics, as well as including some contemporary photographers to establish an idea of some of the many different avenues photographers chose to take at this time.

In the second chapter my concern is to see if Cameron would depict women from a woman's point of view, at a time when women held no power in society. To do this, first it was necessary to establish the patriarchal view of woman at the time. Notions such as a married man and woman sharing the same soul, and woman being likened to a delicate flower were prevalent at this time. Above all, women were required to be pure of body, mind and soul. It interested me to see if Cameron would contest this notion of woman, or if she would reinforce it through her photographs of women.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement was contemporaneous with Cameron, and because women were one of the main subjects to both Cameron and the Pre-Raphaelites I was curious to see if they had any influence on each others' work. Furthermore, as the Pre-Raphaelites were painters and Cameron was a photographer any direct influence of one on the other would strengthen the contemporary argument that painting and photography were symbiotic.

CHAPTER I

> No, the daguerreotype does not deprive the landscape painter of his bread and butter; on the contrary, he can make it yield profitable returns. He can photograph a locality with the daguerreotype in a few minutes, to serve as a sketch for a painting in any desired proportions at home.
>
> (Jules Janin, 1839, in Scharf, 1974, pg. 26)

Jules Janin was one of the first critics to notice the usefulness of the new medium of photography to painting. Many historians and critics have explored the symbiotic influence of painting and photography. It is a fact that photography had a great influence on painting, yet according to Peter Galassi in "Before Photography":

> The photographic vision, the informality and directness of approach that we admire in photography had been already prepared in painting from the late eighteenth century on, particularly in painted studies or sketches of landscape.
>
> (Galassi, 1981).

Galassi continues with the idea that Degas and even the Impressionists were not the first to use the unusual perspectives and particular lighting effects that we associate with photography. To demonstrate this Galassi mentions painters such as Léon Cogniet (1794-1880). "A Landscape Study" (Illustration 1) by Cogniet painted at Lake Remi near Rome in Italy is astonishing in as much as it resembles certain effects of photography, such as the change of colour values that takes place as a result of the distance that an object is from the viewer. The tree nearest the viewer is painted in

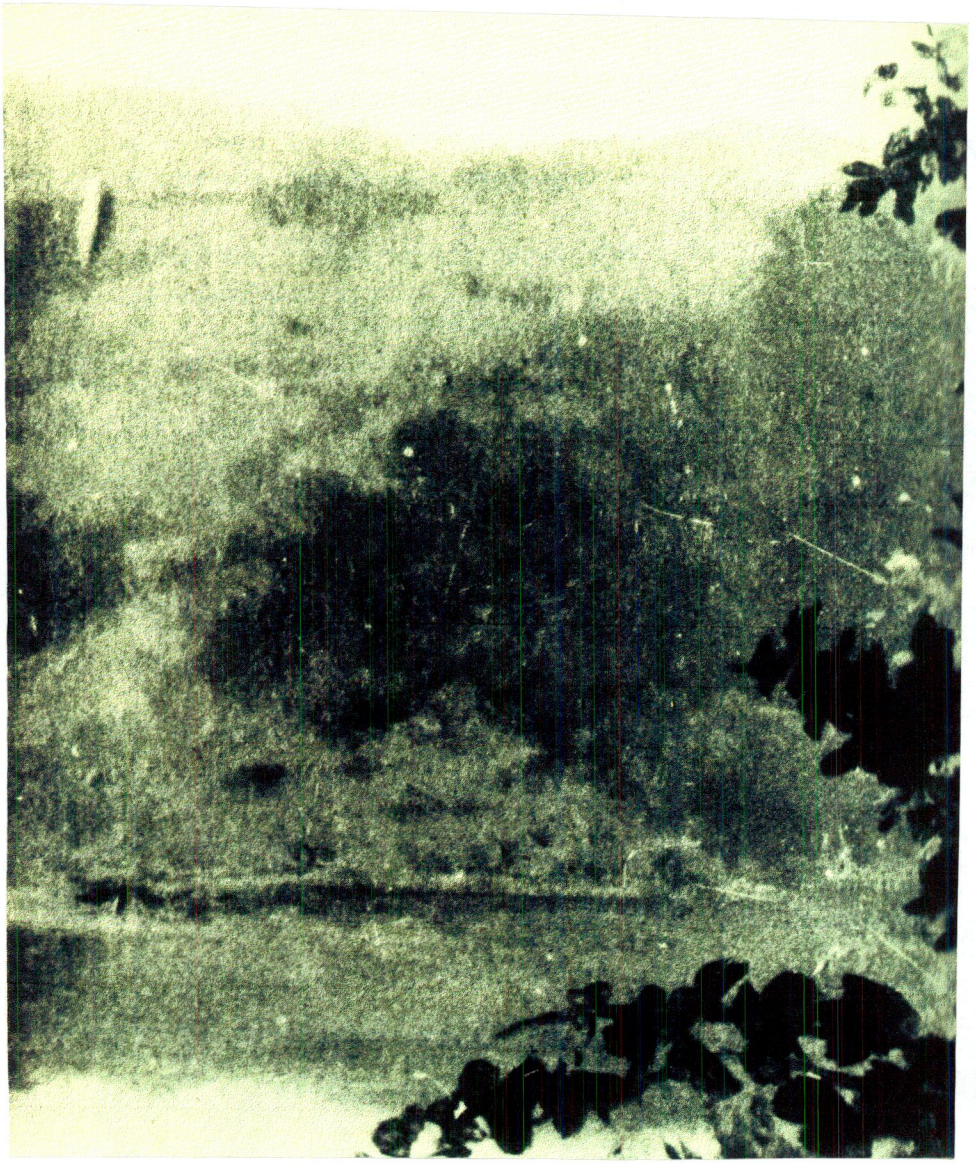

Illustration 1: "A Landscape Study", by Léon Cogniet, oil on canvas, c.1817-1824.

the most detail while the rest dissolve into a blur as they recede into the background. The same effect would be achieved if a photographer focused on the foremost tree. Also, the picture is cropped as a photograph would be; only part of the tree on the right is visible. This may be because of the use of a camera obscura; a forerunner of photography that isolated areas of reality and projected them onto a plane so that the artist could use this image originally for tracing and later as a preliminary sketch.

Delacroix believed that the daguerreotype was of great importance to the artist as a preliminary sketch to a painting, as a reference, and a documentary device. Yet he warned that the daguerreotype was a mirror of reality, that "it is still only a reflection of the real, only a copy, in some ways false just because it is so exact ..." (Scharf, 1974). He demonstrated this in his painting of 1857 entitled "Odalisque" (Illustration 2). It is made from a daguerreotype of a girl in a reclining pose. Delacroix elongated the thighs in his painted image, because even though they looked correct in the photograph they would look unbelievable in the painted version. While he used the daguerreotype as a starting point he did not take it as an absolute truth and changed it when necessary.

One of Delacroix's compatriots, Courbet, was famed for his use of photography in painting. He was part of the School of Realism in France. Realists believed that photography could help them achieve pictorial objectivity. Courbet relied heavily on photographs to produce his paintings which shocked many who regarded his paintings as too truthful and ugly.

Illustration 2A: Photograph of a Female Nude from the Delacroix Album.
Illustration 2B: "Odalisque", Delacroix, oil on canvas, 1857.

At this time photographs of nudes in different poses could be bought cheaply and used as an aid to painting. They were called Académies, Études Photographiques, Études Académiques and Services des Élèves-de-L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts. (Scharf, 1974, pg. 131).

Julien Vallou de Villeneuve, who worked as a painter and lithographer in the 1820's and 1830's produced most of these photographs in Paris. Scharf says it is these photographs that Courbet's paintings resemble. (Scharf, 1974, pg. 133). Courbet's "Woman with a Parrot" (Illustration 3) and "Bather" (Illustration 4) of 1853, for example, resemble photographs greatly.

Both Delacroix and Courbet were strongly influenced by the photographic image, but while Delacroix selectively changed areas of his images to appear more natural to the human eye, Courbet worked much more directly from photographs with the result that the public were shocked at the ugliness of his paintings.

John Ruskin, one of the greatest minds of the nineteenth century, took a keen interest in photography. In his autobiography "Praeterita", Ruskin recalls how in his last days at Oxford in 1841, two years after the invention of photography, he first heard about Daguerre's experiments. His friends in Paris sent him some plates, yet he was not overly impressed with them. It was not until 1845, on a visit to Venice that he discovered the importance of the daguerreotype.

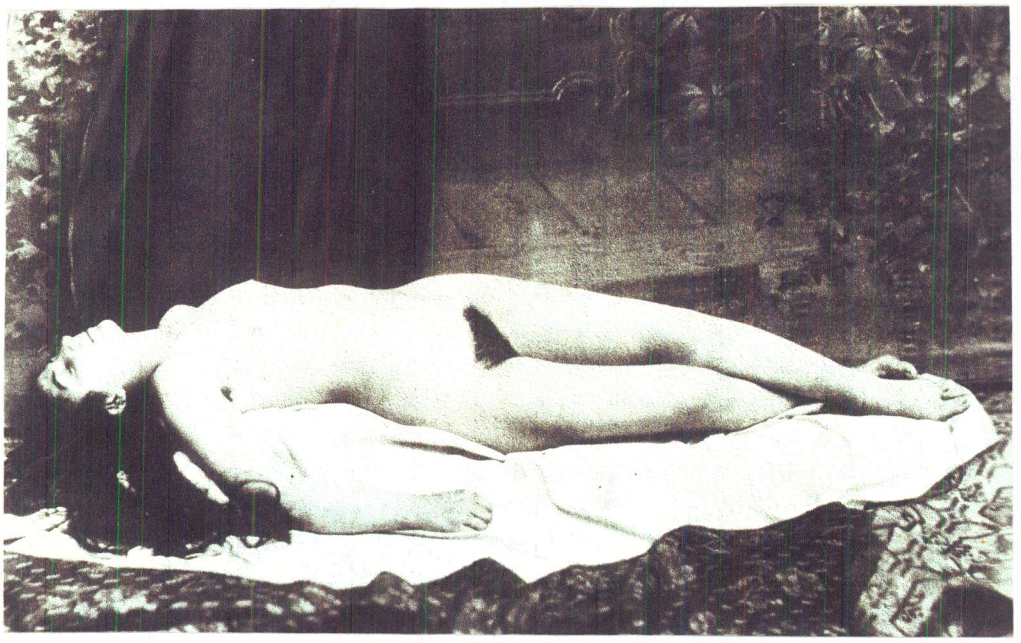

Illustration 3A: "Nude Study", Anon., photograph, no date.

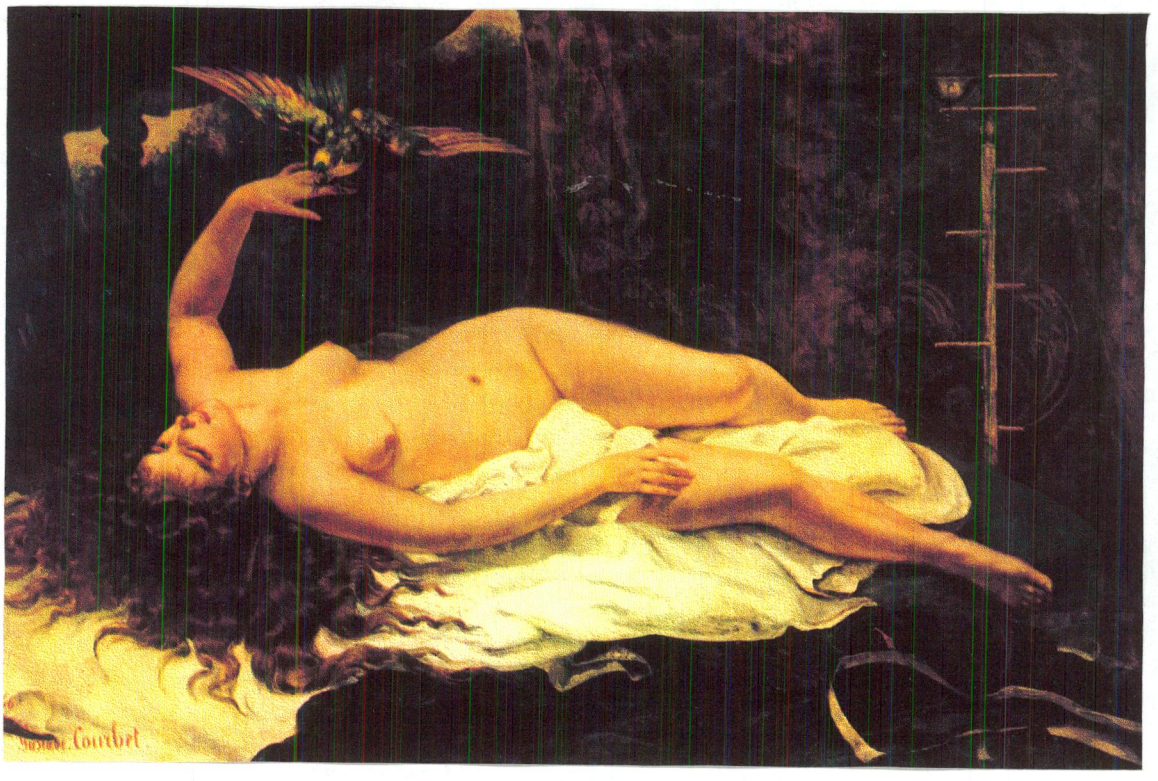

Illustration 3B: "Woman with a Parrot", Gustave Courbet, oil on canvas, 1866.

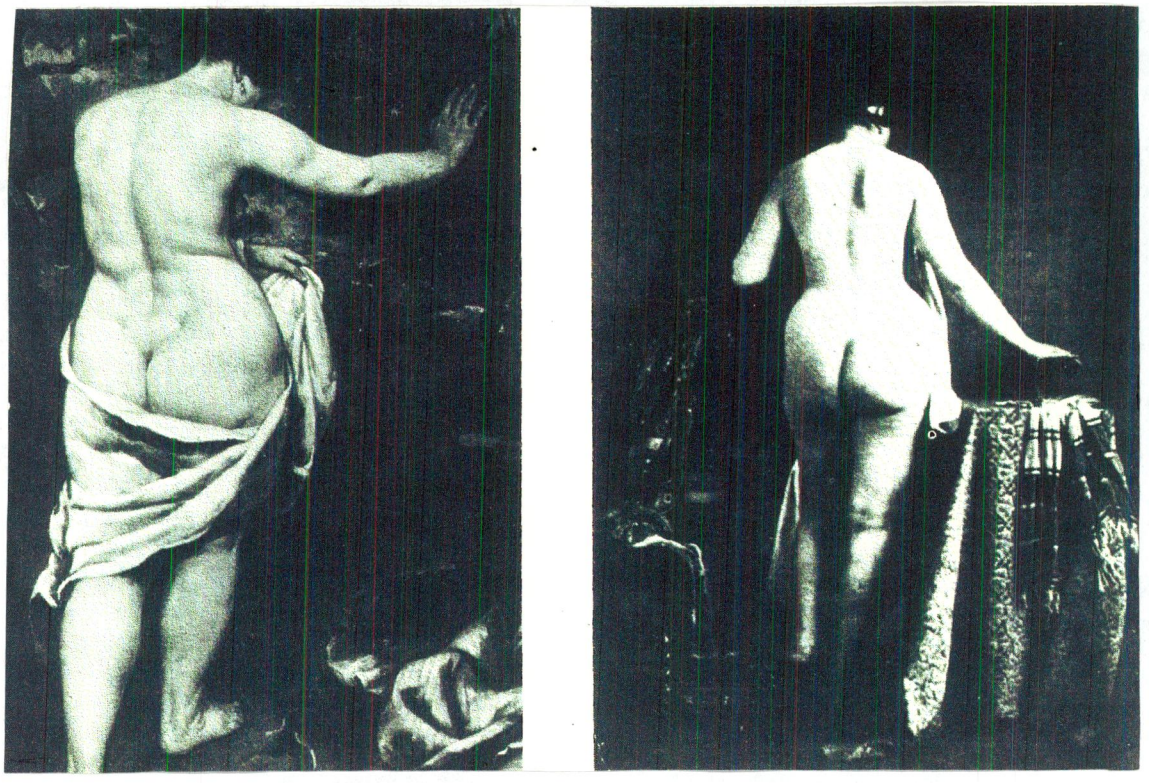

Illustration 4A: "Bather" (detail), Gustave Courbet, oil on canvas, 1853.
Illustration 4B: "Nude Study", Villeneuve, photograph, acquisition date 1853.

Seemingly, he bought some small daguerreotypes of some palaces he was trying to draw, as he wrote in a letter of 7 October 1845,

> It is a noble invention, say what they will of it - and, anyone who has worked and blundered and stammered as I have done for four days and then sees the thing he has been trying to do so long in vain, done perfectly and faultlessly, in half a minute won't abuse it afterwards.
>
> (Scharf, 1974, pg. 97).

So, originally photography made a big impression on him. He was full of enthusiasm for an invention that could record every detail of a scene even more meticulously than he could, in an infinitely shorter time. For Ruskin believed in truth to nature, and he tried to imitate every detail of a scene when he was drawing it. Yet he discovered that the daguerreotype beat him in the recording of detail, so in 1846 he bought his own daguerreotype outfit, although he preferred the role of director, while his valet, George Hobbs carried the heavy equipment and chemicals around.

It is difficult for us, who accept photography as a part of our everyday lives, to think of a world without it. We cannot appreciate the shock, fear and excitement that surrounded the birth of photography, and that made the painter Paul Delaroche, when he saw a daguerreotype for the first time, dramatically exclaim, "From today painting is dead".

Naturalist painters and draughtsmen, who prided themselves on their ability to reproduce nature truthfully, suddenly were threatened by this new wondrous

invention. The portrait miniaturists felt the effect of the new medium first. The daguerreotype gained popularity as it was cheaper than a miniature painting. As it was also a wonderfully exciting invention people were eager to possess their own image taken 'from life'. Many of the portrait painters found employment hand-tinting daguerreotype portraits from the middle of the nineteenth century. Firms such as 'Beards' advertised that their daguerreotype miniatures were "finished as paintings in water colours or crayons" and "are equal to the best miniatures, with this advantage, that the likenesses are marvellously accurate". (Scharf, 1974, pg. 43).

It was thought that the eye of the camera was more discerning than that of the human, with the result that the camera could render a 'marvellously accurate' likeness. Ruskin wrote in a letter of 12 August 1846 that photography was,

> Certainly the most marvellous invention of the century, given us, I think, just in time to save some evidence from the great public of wreckers. (1)

When in Venice researching his book "The Stones of Venice" Ruskin had daguerreotypes and calotypes made. He used these photographic reproductions of buildings as an aid to his drawings for a book entitled "Examples of Architecture in Venice", which was published at the same time as "The Stones of Venice" in 1851. He says of this,

> I have used the help of the daguerreotype without scruple in completing many of the mezzotinted subjects and I much regret that artists in general do not think it worth their while to

> perpetuate some of the beautiful effects which the daguerreotype alone can seize. (2)

It was in 1846 that Ruskin began to doubt "the ultimate benefit of the daguerreotype for art". (Scharf, 1974, pg. 97). Yet he continued to use it as an aid to his drawing. It is not clear what prompted his change of view as he did not state what his reason was for becoming increasingly disheartened with it.

It can be speculated that technical deficiencies played a large part in his change of view. One of Ruskin's main reservations concerned "inadequate objectivity", by which he meant that the details were lost in the lightest and darkest parts of the photograph. He illustrated the difference between a drawing and a photograph in "Modern Painters Volume IV", 1856. He placed a drawing and a photograph of the "Swiss Towers of Fribourg" (Illustration 5) beside each other and wrote,

> The other day I sketched the towers of the Swiss Fribourg, hastily from the Hotel de Zahringen ... I have engraved the sketch adding a few details, and exaggerating the exaggerations ... the next day, on a clear and calm afternoon, I daguerreotyped the towers ... and this unexaggerated statement, with its details properly painted, would not only be the more right, but infinitely the grander of the two. But the first sketch nevertheless conveys in some respects a truer idea of Fribourg than the other and has, therefore, a certain use. For instance, the wall going up behind the main tower is seen in my drawing to bend very distinctly, following the different slopes of the hill. In the daguerreotype this bend is hardly perceptible.
>
> (Scharf, 1974, pg. 105).

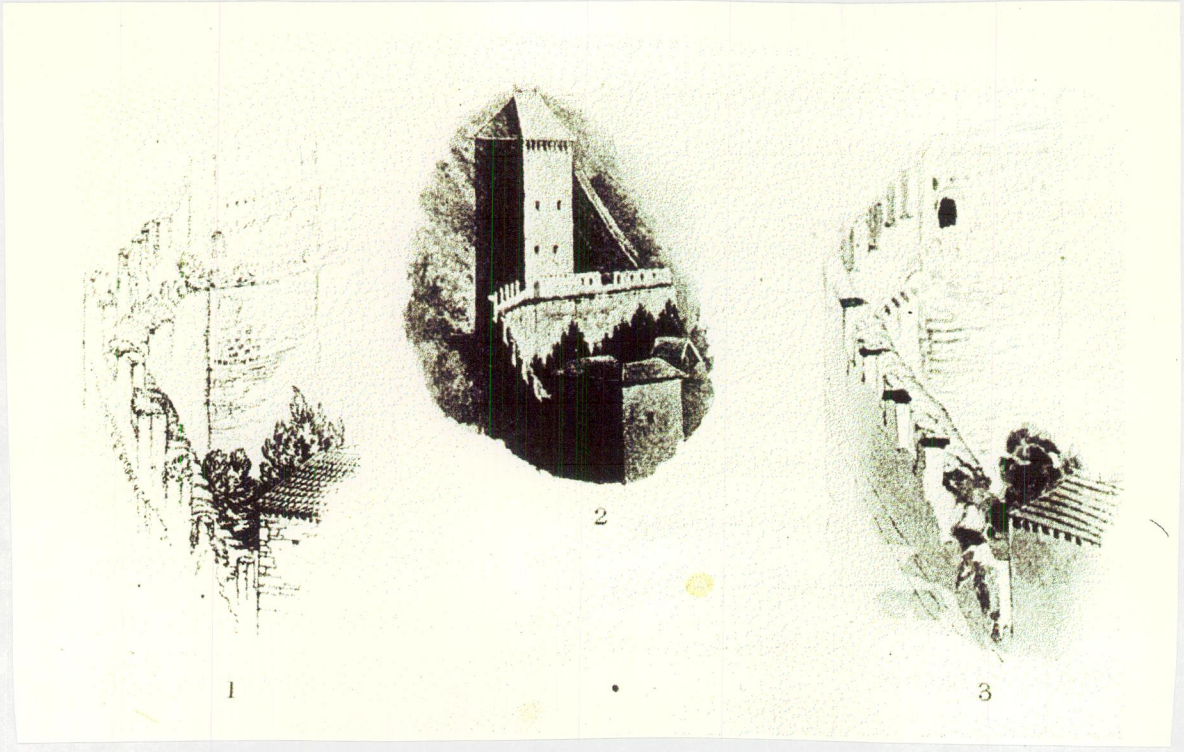

Illustration 5: "Swiss Towers of Fribourg", John Ruskin, photograph, 1856.
(1) Drawing in the "Dureresque" style which he supported.
(2) Daguerreotype of the Towers.
(3) Drawing in the "Blottesque" style which he neglected.

This is one point where Ruskin identifies one of the technical deficiencies that made him lose faith in photography as a recording tool. He voiced other misgivings about the technical deficiencies of photography, especially halation which accordingly to the Oxford Dictionary was caused by 'internal reflection in the support of the emulsion, and resulted in the spreading of light beyond its proper boundary'. Halation was most common between 1848 and 1851. It caused the outline of a form to become blurred, especially in landscape photographs. In Ruskin's "Elements of Drawing", 1857, he wrote that because of the "chemical action of the light" it is seen to extend "much within the edges of the leaves". He went on to say that no form photographed against a bright sky would be "drawn" truly. (Scharf, 1974, pg. 90).

While Ruskin could only see halation as a technical deficiency, others, such as the French Impressionists Camille Corot, were inspired by it. It seems more than coincidental that Corot's style changed from his hard-edged style to a softer depiction of forms around 1848, the same year that halation began to appear. This indistinct rendering of outline can be seen in his painting of circa 1855-60, "The Bent Tree" (Illustration 6).

Ruskin identified other faults in photography and aligned it with his anti-mechanical argument. Being a lover of nature he hated machines and the pollution they belched into the environment. In "The Cestus of Agalia" of 1865 he wrote,

> I tell you dogmatically, if you like to call it so, knowing it well, a square inch of man's engraving is worth all the photographs that were ever dipped in acid (or left half-washed

Illustration 6: "The Bent Tree", Camille Corot, oil on canvas, c. 1855-1860.

> afterwards, which is saying something). Only it must be man's engraving, not machines' engraving ... Believe me, photography can do against line engraving just what Madam Tussaud's waxwork can do against sculpture, that and no more!

Again, in 1870 in his "Lectures on Art" he reiterated his anti-mechanical standpoint on photography,

> ... Almost the whole system and hope of modern life are founded on the notion that you may substitute mechanism for skill, photograph for picture, cast iron for sculpture. This is your main nineteenth century faith, or infidelity.

In "The Eagle's Nest", of 1874 he sums up conclusively,

> ... Anything more beautiful than the photographs of the valley of Chamouni, now in your print-seller's windows, cannot be conceived. For geographical and geological purposes they are worth anything, for art purposes, worth a good deal less than zero.

Ruskin contradicted himself many times in his writings and this is one point where he does so. When referring to the drawing and photograph of the Swiss towers of Fribourg in "Modern Painters Volume IV" (1856), he concludes that his drawing of the towers "conveys in some respects a truer idea of Fribourg than the other"; the other being a daguerreotype of the towers. Yet, eighteen years after this was published, he wrote in "The Eagle's Nest" of the photographs of the valley of Chamouni that "for geographical and geological purposes they are worth anything", thus dismissing his earlier conclusion that a drawing conveyed a truer idea of the

subject than a daguerreotype. He had previously expressed dismay with photography's inherent technical deficiencies, proving that it was incapable of reproducing every detail of a scene with perfect precision. What he wanted from a photograph was an accurate record of the subject, which in his opinion it could not produce.

When referring to the photographs of Chamouni he concludes that "for art purposes" they are "worth a good deal less than zero". Therefore, he acknowledged that they held some merit geologically and geographically, as they gave a general idea of Chamouni, yet they were not art. It is interesting to note that Ruskin also thought of his own drawings as purely analytical; as accurate records of places, and not pieces of art.

Julia Margaret Cameron, while wishing to produce a 'true to nature' image actually used what John Ruskin would refer to as a technical deficiency, to her advantage. Over the fifteen years that Julia Margaret Cameron practised photography (1863-1878) she produced some three thousand photographs, her portraits being the most famous and the best of her works. By all accounts, she threw herself into any new venture that she believed in with energy and diligence. Because she had no training in art, or indeed science, her technical skills left a lot to be desired, yet this could additionally be accounted for by her impatience and enthusiasm to capture an image.

In the first two years of her artistic career (1863-1865), she printed photographs from damaged and scratched negatives, produced unevenly developed prints, and kept and

exhibited prints that had spots and stains on them. We must remember, however, that photography was a different phenomenon from the relatively easy technique that exists today. Daguerre made his first relatively permanent photograph in 1837, by using common salt as a fixative, while the calotype invented by Fox Talbot was made public in 1839. Cameron, therefore, was working with a technique that was still in its relative infancy, and was still not refined technically.

When looking at Cameron's photographs it soon becomes evident that they are taken slightly out of focus. This has been ascribed to three things:

1] Her lenses.

2] An attempt to be artistic

3] A general lack of technical knowledge of how to use photographic equipment.

Peter Henry Emerson was interested in having Cameron's lenses examined professionally, to see if they had any effect on the focus of Cameron's photographs. Emerson, author of "Sun Artists 5", 1890, asked the well-known British optical instrument maker, Thomas Dallmeyer, to look at Cameron's lenses. He reported that the 'Jamin' lens was fixed at F/6 and had chromatic aberration. This meant that even though the image appeared sharp on the ground glass screen it was virtually impossible for Cameron to obtain a crisp, sharp image.

Emerson goes on to say that even when she bought an 18 x 22 Dallmeyer Rapid Rectilinear lens she used it at large aperture which resulted in a gradual falling off of sharpness from the central area of the image to its perimeter.

This new Dallmeyer Rapid Rectilinear lens was capable of producing sharp images but Cameron deliberately used it at large aperture to achieve a blurred effect. Even if at first she produced soft-focus images, because of the setting of her Jamin lens, she continued to produce soft-focus images when her new lens gave her the choice of sharp or soft focus. Cameron wrote to her good friend Sir John Herschel, in relation to this subject,

> ... That roundness and fullness of force and feature, that modelling of flesh and limb which the focus I use only can give, though called and condemned as 'out of focus'. What is focus - and who has a right to say what focus is the legitimate focus? (3)

It is quite surprising to find that she wrote this in 1864, at the beginning of her career, and two whole years before she purchased the more sophisticated Dallmeyer lens. Therefore this proves that even though her first lens, the Jamin lens, had a fixed aperture of F/6, and was only capable of producing slightly blurred images it is evident that Cameron was well aware of the blurred state of her images and actually preferred them that way. Having established that it was a conscious decision by Cameron to produce portraits out of focus the next question to ask is why?

Many historians have attributed this blurring to Cameron's attempt to be artistic, her son Henry Herschel said that,

> What was looked for by her was to produce an artistic result, no matter by what means ... In photography, as in other art, the process is nothing, the final result everything.
>
> (Gernsheim, 1975, pg. 71).

In Cameron's work this use of 'soft focus' blurred and suppressed detail that she thought was superfluous, and only served to distract the viewer from the important part of the image which was usually the sitter's head. It also made the sitter appear more ideal, less realistic. For Cameron claimed that her aim was not just to produce an outward representation of her sitter, she wanted to "capture their inner being", their soul. She wrote in "Annals of my Glasshouse",

> My whole soul has endeavoured to do its duty ... in recording faithfully the greatness of the inner as well as the features of the outer man.

This blurring caused controversy and opened an old wound in the then short history of photography. The argument concerning focus was initiated by Sir William Newton who wrote against what he referred to as "sharp articulation" in the Journal of the Photographic Society in 1853. At the time, two distinct schools of thought existed; those who believed photography was there to record facts only, as a documentary aid, and the remaining practitioners who believed that photography could rise above its realistic image-making properties to be art. These two schools of thought were personified in John Ruskin and Julia Margaret Cameron.

A contemporary of Cameron's who also allied photography with art was Nadar. he thought that the only difference between photography and painting or lithography was its medium. Rosen and Zerner, in "Romanticism and Realism", elaborate on Nadar's view,

> The artistic problems were the same; the use of light to compose, to uncover physiognomic structure and create texture, the revelation of quintessential character by pose and gesture.
>
> (Rosen and Zerner, 1984, pg. 100).

Nadar believed that in the genre of portraiture certain rules and regulations had to be complied with regardless of the medium. Julia Margaret Cameron also saw her work as art, not just documenting the existence of a person but actually producing a portrait of them; something that resonates with their essence. Her use of soft-focus helped her to achieve this.

Cameron's technical skills left a lot to be desired. The process she used was called the Wet Callodian process which was invented by Frederick Scott Archer in 1851. This was a very difficult process to perfect, but because it could produce better tones and record better detail than the calotype, its predecessor, it caught on quickly. Collodion was a sticky substance that was produced when guncotton was dissolved in ether. This was then spread on glass with potassium iodide. It was extremely light sensitive and reduced the exposure time considerably.

Cameron had to go through a long and laborious routine to produce the final image. She had to hold the glass plate in one hand and pour the collodion on it with the other, tilting it slowly to ensure an even coverage over the entire plate. The larger the size of the plate, the more difficult this procedure was. The plate then had to be dipped into a bath of the chemical silver nitrate, and since the method only worked when the plate was still moist it had to be exposed and developed immediately.

When the plate had been exposed solution had to be poured over it. Then it had to be fixed, rinsed, and dried. After that it had to be varnished to protect it from scratches and smudges, providing it had not been damaged already. Once the negative was ready to be printed the paper, which could be bought already prepared with albumen, had to be sensitized with silver chloride. Then the image was printed by what is known as contact copying, where the negative and the paper are held together in a frame and exposed to daylight for several hours, after which the image would slowly appear. Then the prints had to be fixed, washed and toned with gold chloride, which tinted the print a sepia colour and also made the image more permanent. The print then had to be rinsed again. Cameron produced three thousand such prints over fifteen years.

There were other photographers working contemporaneously with Cameron whose working methods differed enormously from Cameron's, and from each others. Pictorial photography was a branch of photography that tried to compete with academic painting by "laboriously composing anecdotal, symbolic or allegorical subjects". (Gernsheim, 1975, pg. 59).

The main practitioners of pictorial photography included Oscar G. Rejlander and Henry Peach Robinson. They had both been painters before they turned to photography. Rejlander, while researching the problem of depth of field in photography, portrait photography in particular, discovered the technique of combination printing. Combination printing involved the printing of an image from more than one negative. Rejlander's most well-known piece, "The Two Ways of

Life", which he exhibited at the Art Treasures Exhibition held at Manchester in 1857, was produced by this method. Robert Hunt commented on this work in "The Art Journal", (April, 1858, 21),

> The pose of each figure is good and the grouping of the whole as nearly perfect as possible. We do not however, desire to see many advances in this direction. Works of High Art are not to be executed by a mechanical contrivance. The hand of man, guided by the heaven-born mind, can alone achieve greatness in this direction.
>
> (Haworth-Booth, 1984, pg. 94).

Another contemporary photographer, whose work was the antithesis of Rejlander's and Robinson's, was Clementina, Lady Hawarden. She mainly used her four children, her husband and staff at her home in County Tipperary, and her house in South Kensington, London, as her models.

After examining her photographs of women in particular it is my personal opinion that she is trying to convey a sense of claustrophobia and boredom. In one of her "Photographic Studies" (Illustration 7) of the early 1860's a young woman is seen pushing her head against a wall. I interpret this as an act of frustration. In another "Photographic Study" (Illustration 8) of the early 1860's a woman is photographed elaborately dressed in a beautiful gown. She is seated in a corner and looks decidedly bored and morose.

Lady Hawarden's work was received much better by her contemporaries than Cameron's. Lewis Carroll said of their pieces in the exhibition of 1864, "I did not

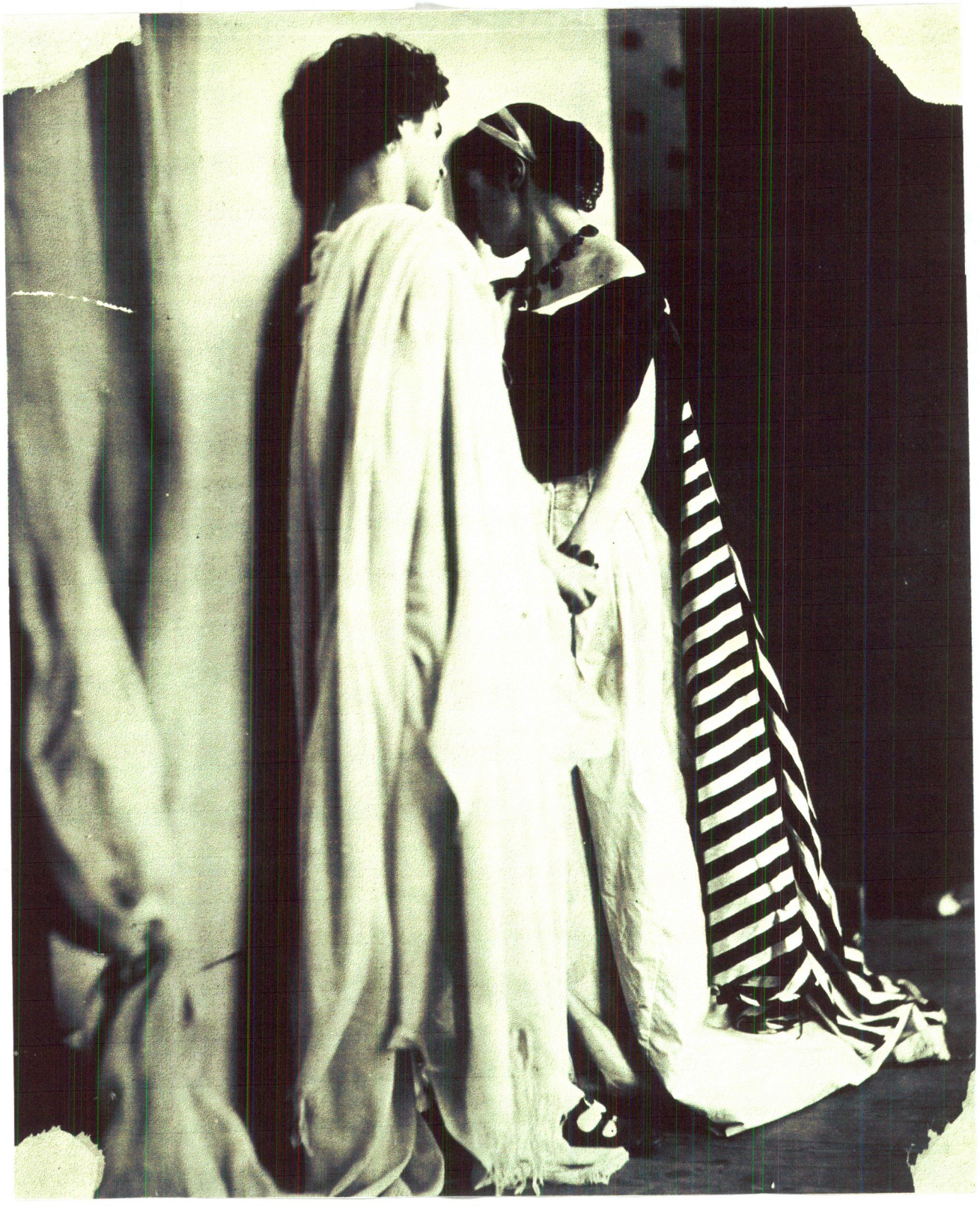

Illustration 7: "Photographic Study", Clementina, Lady Hawarden, photograph, early 1860's, albumen print from wet Collodion negative.

Illustration 8: "Photographic Study", Clementina, Lady Hawarden, photograph, early 1860's, albumen print from wet Collodion negative.

admire Mrs. Cameron's large heads taken out of focus. The best of the life ones were Lady Hawarden's". (4)

"Cameron's lack of technical skill prevented the photographic press and especially the British photographic press from recognising the artistic merits of her photographs". (Gernsheim, 1975, pg. 62). Cameron exhibited widely from 1864-1872 in London, Scotland, Berlin, Vienna, Dublin and Paris. In 1864 she exhibited some works at the annual exhibition of The Photographic Society of London. The critics found her work interesting, yet they did not admire her slipshod working methods. "The Photographic News" wrote of her work,

> As one of the special charms of photography consists in the completeness, details, and finish, we can scarcely commend works, in which the aim appears to have been to avoid these qualities.
>
> (The Photographic News, London, 1864, pg. 266).

When Cameron exhibited in Dublin in 1865 the review she received from the critics was not much better. "The Photographic Journal" wrote,

> In these photographs, we conceive Mrs. Cameron does herself and the art she employs alike injustice. Slovenly manipulation may serve to cover want of precision in intention, but such a lack and such a mode of masking it are unworthy of commendation.
>
> (The Photographic Journal, December 1865).

Luckily, Cameron paid little attention to the criticism she received from the photographic press, which mostly concerned her technique. She said it would have,

> Dispirited me very much had I not valued that criticism at its worth. It was unsparing and too manifestly unjust for me to attend to it. (5)

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1] *Quoted from The British Journal of Photography, 26 March 1973, pg. 235.*

2] *Ibid, pg. 236.*

3] *Quoted from a letter to Sir John Herschel, cited in Ford, The Cameron Collection, pg. 141.*

4] *Quoted from Helmut Gernsheim, Lewis Carroll, Photographer, 1949, pg. 55.*

5] *Quoted in Gernsheim, Julia Margaret Cameron, 1975, pg. 64.*

CHAPTER II

The way in which Cameron went about producing photographs of men and women was very different. It is clear that beauty and youth had a strong influence on her (1). This can be seen in images such as "Alethea" (Illustration 9), (1872), "The Three Daughters Fair" (Illustration 10), (1873) and "Beatrice Cenci" (Illustration 11), of 1870. Yet the males she photographed were neither young nor particularly handsome, they were predominantly learned distinguished men. Amanda Hopkinson in "Julia Margaret Cameron" says "women were alien to the worlds of power, politics and intellect; their qualities were those of beauty, delicacy, maternity and spirituality". (Hopkinson, 1986, pg. 110).

Thus Hopkinson identifies the two widely different roles of men and women in Cameron's portraits. While her women were chosen because of their outward appearance, her male sitters were photographed for the workings of their minds. I established earlier that Cameron proclaimed it was the inner and not the outer person that she sought to photograph. Yet, in my opinion while she endeavoured to record "faithfully the greatness of the inner as well as the features of the outer man", "Annals of my Glasshouse", (1874), she only applied this to her portraits of men, and not women. It is revealing that she uses the term 'man', instead of 'person' when explaining her aim to portray the 'inner man'. It could be argued that because she photographs women with flowers, she is reinforcing the notion of the virtuous, pure, ideal woman that was prevalent at this time. She has not portrayed the true inner soul of her women subjects, but the popular notion of what it should be.

Illustration 9: "Alethea", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1872.

Illustration 10: "The Three Daughters Fair", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1873.

Illustration 11: "Beatrice Cenci", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1870.

Even when Cameron photographed women as themselves (rather than a religious type or a character from literature), it was rare that she gave them any identity of their own. Often the women appeared under their husbands' name. Julia Jackson, Cameron's niece, for instance appears as 'Mrs. Herbert Duckworth'. Cameron herself, however, works under her own christian name.

Technically her portraits of male sitters are more dramatic than the female portraits, this she achieved by placing the males in front of a dark cloth. She also covered any superfluous detail, such as fancy clothing, with a black velvet gown. This ensured that the features would be thrown into dramatic shadow, as there was not much light reflected off the black dense fabric onto the sitter's face. This dramatic lighting has often been described as Rembrandtesque, and is evident in many of Cameron's portraits, among them her portraits of "Thomas Carlyle" (Illustration 12) and "John Herschel" (Illustration 13).

The way in which the sitter is posed, in my opinion, is in direct relation to their gender. I have personally observed that in most of her portraits of women their eyes are either turned away from the camera or are looking down towards the floor. Some examples of this can be seen in her portraits of May Prinsep of 1870 entitled "Beatrice Cenci" (Illustration 14), and of "Mrs Herbert Fisher" (Illustration 15) of 1868. The male sitters' eyes seem to be full of knowledge whereas the eyes of her female sitters tend to have a wistful, sad look. The women's gaze holds no power, and this, of course, is entirely consistent with women's role in contemporary society.

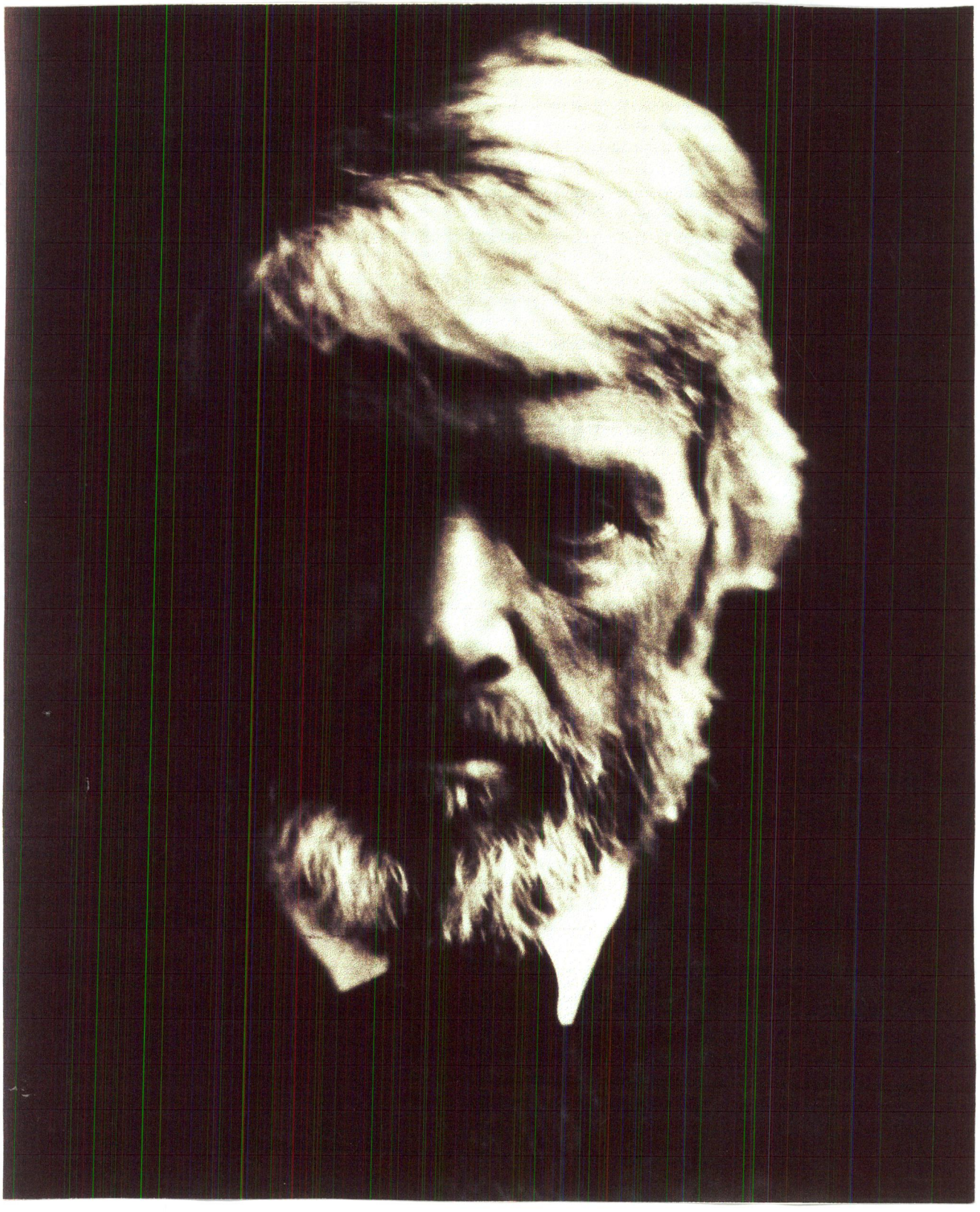

Illustration 12: "Thomas Carlyle", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1867.

Illustration 13: "John Herschel", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1867.

Illustration 14: "Beatrice Cenci", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1870.

Illustration 15: "Mrs Herbert Fisher", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1868.

This downward gaze is common to both Cameron and her contemporary, Lady Hawarden. They both use this look for different effect. In my opinion, Hawarden uses this sad, downward gaze to convey a feeling of claustrophobia while Cameron uses it to portray women as weak, fey creatures.

Hopkinson suggests that because Cameron was determined to be recognised as a professional photographer, and not just an amateur, she situated her women subjects as a male professional photographer would have done. (Hopkinson, 1986). She was trying to be taken seriously in a male-dominated world and therefore she had to produce her portraits in the same 'language' as they did. Although, there are notable exceptions to this rule, such as Cameron's portrait of her niece "Mrs. Herbert Duckworth" (Illustration 16), (1867). The sitter is portrayed as a strong woman, not a drooping, sad invalid. Her strong neck is emphasized by the dramatic lighting, and the line of her profile is sharply focused while the rest of the portrait softly diffuses away from this line. Even though she is wearing an ornate collar, there are no flowers present in this portrait, and I think this is the nearest Cameron got to photographing a woman in the manner she photographed men.

One of the most cherished qualities in women in the nineteenth century was purity. Women were supposed to be pure and virtuous. Indeed the idea that a wife was the keeper of her husband's soul was prevalent at this time. Businessmen had to commit unchristianlike acts to get ahead in the business world so "the notion that the family was, as it were, a 'soul unit', that man and wife shared one soul, rapidly gained appeal". (Dijkstra, 1986, pg. 8). It was believed that if a man's wife was pure and

Illustration 16: "Mrs Herbert Duckworth", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1867.

virtuous it would make up for her husband's misdeeds, and therefore clear his soul of blemishes.

Therefore, the woman had to become a 'household nun'. As Bram Dijkstra in "Idols of Perversity" elaborates,

> Any public - or even private - display of levity or physical energy on the part of woman was a clear indication of the spiritual frivolity of such women and their concomitant inability to serve as efficient vessels for the care and feeding of their husbands' souls.
>
> (Dijkstra, 1986, pp. 8-9).

Manuals teaching women how to be submissive to their husbands went on sale. Sarah Stickney Ellis' book "The Women of England: Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits" (1839) was a hit in both the United States and England.

It is not surprising then that the female was continuously compared to a flower; the flower being a symbol of naturalness and purity. I have personally observed that the majority of Cameron's photographs of women contain flowers; the model wears flowers in her hair, or has a corsage pinned on to her clothing as in the photograph of "Anne Thackeray" (Illustration 17) of 1867.

In others, the sitter holds a flower as if contemplating the comparison between herself and the delicate bloom. In a portrait taken in 1870 of "May Prinsep" (Illustration 18) the model is looking into a hand mirror at her reflection and at the same time holds

Illustration 17: "Anne Thackeray", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1867.

Illustration 18: "May Prinsep", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1870.

a rose up in her right hand to the viewer. In my opinion, two possible readings can be made from this image. First, it could be inferred that Cameron is challenging the notion of the 'fairer sex' being compared to a flower; the expectation that she is to be beautiful, yet inanimate and silent. Secondly, it could be read that May Prinsep is comparing herself to the rose, thus subscribing to the patriarchal notion of how women should behave.

Intellectuals of the day, such as Jules Michelet, thought that for a woman,

> A flower is a whole world, pure, innocent, peace-making; the little human flower harmonizes with it so much the better for not being like it in its essential point. Woman, especially the female child, is all nervous life; and so the plant, which has no nerves, is a sweet companion to it, calming and refreshing it, in a relative innocence. (2)

The major art movement contemporaneous with Cameron was Pre-Raphaelitism. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed in 1848 by William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Because they were working in the same period it was inevitable that their respective work would have an influence on each other. Also, one of Cameron's sisters, Sarah Prinsep, entertained many of the major Pre-Raphaelites at her home, Little Holland House. Sarah's son, Val Prinsep, was a minor Pre-Raphaelite. It is highly probably that Cameron would have met many of these and had a chance to exchange ideas with them. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, Millais, Holman Hunt and Ruskin frequented Little Holland House to talk about "subjects" that "would have interested men of any age" (4).

Helmut Gernsheim in "Julia Margaret Cameron" explains that the affinity between Cameron's and the Pre-Raphaelites work lies,

> Entirely in sentiment and subject matter - she certainly did not share the Pre-Raphaelites devotion to meticulous detail and harshness of colour, preferring a soft outline and broad effects.
>
> (Gernsheim, 1975, pg. 78).

As I have established earlier in Chapter I, Cameron was a believer in the power of soft focus photography. She did not subscribe to the factual sharp focus method advocated by Ruskin. Ruskin believed that art should be mimetic and encouraged the Pre-Raphaelites in their aspirations to paint nature truthfully. It seems that Cameron was not alone in her dislike of the 'truth to nature' axiom to the extent that it became a slur to call work Pre-Raphaelite; as a critic of the Photographic News of 1865 demonstrates,

> We know that nothing is more offensive to the artistic eye than a hard-lined, seared, wrinkled visage, rendered with a more than Pre-Raphaelite faithfulness ... (3)

Notwithstanding their different working methods, as Gernsheim has already stated, the affinity between the two "lies entirely in sentiment and subject matter", (Gernsheim, 1975, pg. 78), and as women were one of the main subjects of both the Pre-Raphaelites and Julia Margaret Cameron it is here that similarities can be found.

Both Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Cameron depicted women with sad, melancholy expressions. It is probable that Cameron admired Dante Gabriel Rossetti's work

greatly, as she tried extremely hard to persuade him to sit for her, which he sternly refused to do. In a letter to William Michael Rossetti, at the time of Cameron's exhibition at Colnaghis in 1866 she wrote "Your brother went to my gallery and his enthusiasm as reported to me was one of my great rewards". (5) Thus revealing her admiration for him, and his for her.

There is a striking similarity between Rossetti's "Beata Beatrix" (Illustration 19) (c. 1864-70) and Cameron's "Call, I follow, I follow - let me die", (Illustration 20) (c. 1867). Cameron's photograph was published by the Autotype Company who cleaned up and retouched the image in so far as it does not display any marks, scratches or stains. The title of the photograph comes from Tennyson's "Lancelot and Elaine", and is very morbid in nature.

Rossetti's "Beata Beatrix" is also morbid in that it is a painting of the artist's dead wife. He began this painting a few years before the death of his wife and returned to it in 1864, "as a symbolic treatment of the death of Beatrice, the moment of her transition from Earth to Heaven". (6)

Rossetti's "Beata Beatrix" shows a marked likeness to Cameron's piece in the way "dead Lizzie Siddal's head" is "haloed in the manner of a top-lit photograph" (Gernsheim, 1985, pg. 132). It is also evident that the blurred background of "Beata Beatrix" owes a debt to photography.

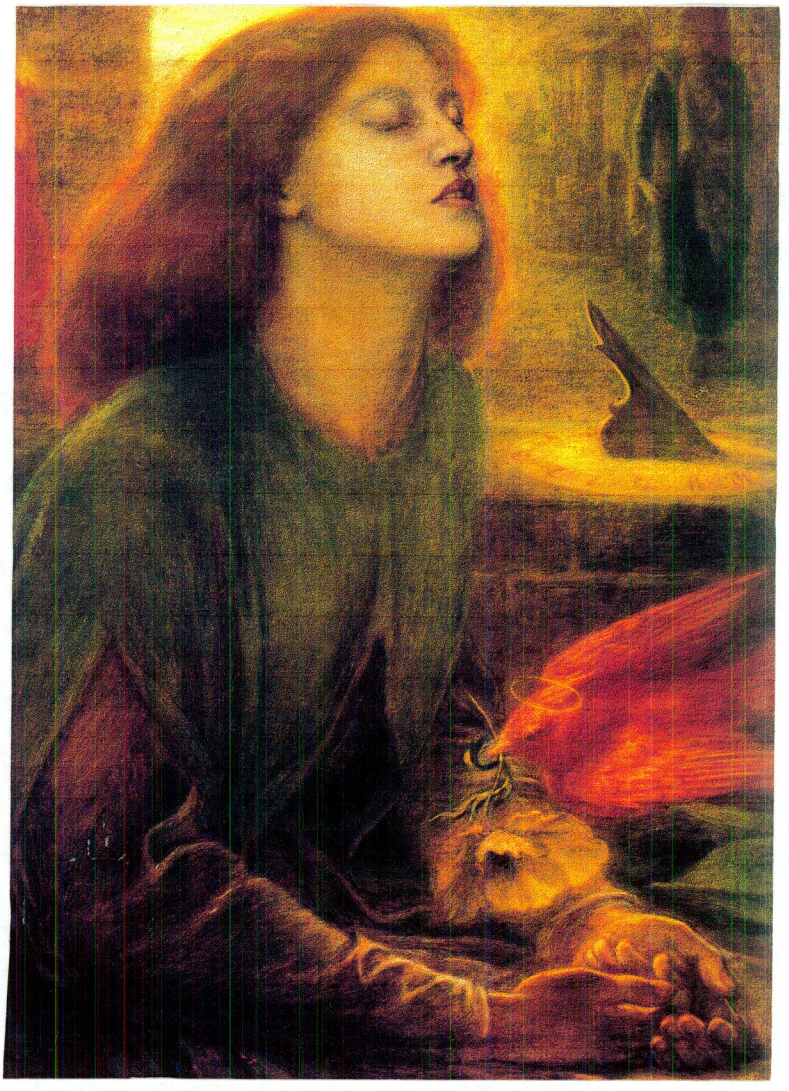

Illustration 19: "Beata Beatrix", Dante Gabriel Rossetti, oil on canvas, c. 1864-1870.

Illustration 20: "Call, I follow, I follow - let me die", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, c. 1867.

A further resemblance that exists between the work of the Pre-Raphaelites and Cameron is their mutual portrayal of women with long, loose, unkept hair. In Victorian times women's hair was always worn pinned up. The only opportunity women had to let their hair loose was at bedtime. Long, loose hair, therefore was a symbol of freedom from constraint. Dickens, in an 1865 article, wrote that no woman could "be ugly, or even plain, if she have a profusion of hair .... a girl combs it out and lets the sun into it". The "great wealth of beauty that lies in the hair is permitted to flow out in natural luxuriance to delight the eyes of men" (7), thus reaffirming the role of women, there to "delight the eyes of men".

Long hair was linked with drooping, or an inability to stand up, as signifiers of strong emotion. (Bartram, 1985, pg. 141). Cameron's husband, Charles Cameron, linked drooping and long hair with the expression of grief in his "Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful", written in 1835,

> Everything ... which droops ... has a sorrowful and beautiful expression. Hence it is that the painters when they fill the mind with images of grief, not only dispose the heads and limbs of their figures as grief would dispose them, but take care that the hair and the drapery shall also droop. (8)

Drooping, for women, was also quite fashionable. As Bram Dijkstra in "Idols of Perversity" explains,

> For many a Victorian husband his wife's physical weakness came to be evidence to the world and to God of her physical and mental purity.
>
> (Dijkstra, 1986, pg. 25).

Women were supposed to be weak, helpless creatures, and their constant fainting only confirmed this notion, as well as proving their purity. The message the Victorian woman was given was that to be weak was to be pure, and all women aspired to purity.

A Victorian female writer, Abba Goold Woolson, wrote in her book of 1873 entitled "Woman in American Society" that,

> With us to be ladylike is to be lifeless, inane and dawdling. Since people who are ill must necessarily possess these qualities of manner, from a lack of vital energy and spirits, it follows that they are the ones studiously copied as models of female attractiveness.

Woolson continues that among the leisure class female invalidism had become a cult; the cult of Invalidism.

This drooping is evident in many of the works of this period. John Everett Millais; "Mariana" (Illustration 21) (1857) curves herself over a table in an expression of grief. Cameron's "Mariana" (Illustration 22) (1874) emulates this pose; it is clear to see the influence of Millais' piece on Cameron's. Another piece where Cameron employs the 'drooping woman' is in her portrait of 1870 of May Prinsep, which, in its title "Pre-Raphaelite Study"(Illustration 23), acknowledges its source of influence. Gernsheim states that this Pre-Raphaelite study is modelled on Holman Hunt's "Isabella and the pot of Basil" (Illustration 24) (1866-68).

Illustration 21: "Mariana", John Everett Millais, etching, 1857.

Illustration 22: "Mariana", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1874.

Illustration 23: "Pre-Raphaelite Study", Julia Margaret Cameron, photograph, 1870.

Illustration 24: "Isabella and the pot of Basil", William Holman Hunt, oil on canvas, 1866-1868.

In my opinion in Cameron's photography of women she does not break the boundaries and present women as people in their own right. Instead she stereotypes them, photographs them with flowers and with long hair, and refuses to show women in a different light than merely as objects of men's delight.

NOTES ON CHAPTER II

1] *Indeed, I have not yet come across any portraits Cameron took of older women. The oldest woman photographed would appear to have been her niece, Julia Jackson, who was middle-aged when photographed.*

2] *Quoted in Dijkstra Bram, Idols of Perversity, New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1986, pg. 16.*

3] *Photographic News, 8, 4 March 1865, pg. 109.*

4] *Quoted from Letter of the Hon. Mrs. Edward Tinsleton, London: 1928.*

5] *Quoted in Gernsheim, Helmut, Julia Margaret Cameron, London, Gordon Fraser: 1975, pg. 34.*

6] *Quoted from Henderson, Marina, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, London, Academy Editions: 1973, pg. 50.*

7] *Quoted from All the Year Round, 14, (1865-66), 12 August 1865, pp. 60-62.*

8] *Charles H. Cameron, Two Essays, London: 1835, pp. 60-62).*

CONCLUSION

From an oeuvre of circa three thousand prints, covering such diverse genres as allegory, literature and portraiture, it is in the final category, that of portraiture, that Cameron is today considered to have achieved the most success.

It is my view that in her portraits of women she was strongly influenced by the patriarchal view of women. It is evident that she did not try to show women as differing from the popular notion of femininity that many held at the time. As Hopkinson, in "Julia Margaret Cameron", explains, "Cameron was determined to be recognised as a professional photographer, and not an amateur, so she situated her women subjects as a male professional photographer would have done" (Hopkinson, 1986). Yet, photographing women as a male would have done did not help Cameron to achieve this professionalism in her own lifetime. Her work was based on what she described as "the recognition of the Individual ... the men great through genius, the women through love". (Hopkinson, 1986, pg. 162). It could be argued that this synopsis of her work could just as easily apply to the gender stereotyping that formed the backbone of nineteenth century culture and society. Men were valued for their minds, and women for their love, or beauty. Cameron's work is a direct product of the century she lived in, and communicates to us today the different roles men and women played in that society.

Up until 1975 when "enormous publicity" was generated by the campaign to "save her pictures for the nation" (Hopkinson, 1986, pg. 2) only photographic specialists

had a knowledge of her work. The publicity from this campaign made it possible for an increasing number of people to come in contact with her work. Today, for many, she is ranked among the best nineteenth century photographers.

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