

## Book Reviews

human shape. But upon the middle of the body a fire of coals was smouldering; the flesh had been burnt through. The man was dead, but the smoke of his torment mounted still, a black vapour." In detective fiction, W H Auden said, the corpse must shock "not only because it is a corpse, but also because, even for a corpse, it is shockingly out of place, as when a dog makes a mess on a drawing-room carpet." Machen's corpse is rather more than shockingly out of place, rather more than a mess on a carpet. What fascinates him about it is its *shamefulness*: the obliteration of human form, the reduction to burnt flesh and vapour. Sherlock Holmes never had to deal with anything quite like this.

Machen's story belongs to a vigorous late-nineteenth-century revival of Gothic fiction which also included outstandingly nasty contributions from writers such as William Hope Hodgson, M P Shiel, Robert Louis Stevenson, Bram Stoker, and H G Wells. The distinguishing feature of the horror conjured by these writers, as Kelly Hurley notes, adducing a wealth of examples, was its gratuitousness. Not content with scorched flesh in a suburban villa, Machen interpolated into *The three impostors* further stories about people who end up as snakes or oily puddles. This fascination with what Hurley, borrowing a phrase from Hodgson, calls the "abhuman"—with rot and deliquescence, with slug-men and beetle-women—cannot be explained by the requirements of genre. Hurley's explanation for all this abhumanity is "a general anxiety about the nature of human identity permeating late-Victorian and Edwardian culture, an anxiety generated by scientific discourses, biological and sociomedical, which served to dismantle conventional notions of 'the human'". The "discourses" she has in mind are those associated with Darwin, Huxley, Morel, Lombroso and Nordau.

Cultural historians will be grateful to Hurley for the range and perceptiveness of her attention to a genre which still remains, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Dracula* apart, to a large extent unfamiliar. Rather more familiar, by now, are the "discourses" which, in her

view, establish a context for late-nineteenth-century Gothic; but here, too, she proves a lucid and economical guide. For the social historian of science and medicine, there is likely to be less of value. Hurley's most ambitious claim is that the Gothic "seizes upon the opportunity at hand—the evacuation of human identity accomplished within the sciences—in order to experiment with the 'plasticity' of human and other bodies". In general, she has more to say about the seizing than about the opportunity. That late-Victorian science and medicine did evacuate human identity remains a proposition asserted early on in the book, and thereafter taken for granted, but never properly tested.

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**Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon** (eds), *Transports: travel, pleasure and imaginative geography, 1600–1800*, Studies in British Art 3, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1996, pp. viii, 341, illus., £35.00 (0-300-06382-2).

Imaginative geography has been a popular subject of late, being intertwined, as it often is, with the equally fashionable subject of Orientalism. What does this enduring interest in the Exotic signify? Are we all preoccupied with decolonizing our culture; with "brushing our imperial history against the grain"?, as Nigel Leask puts it in his study of *British Romantic writers and the east* (1992). Or is our fascination with the Exotic simply Orientalism in a different guise? I am not being facetious: it is extremely difficult for either "Westerners" or former colonized peoples to think of themselves in anything but Orientalist terms. Notwithstanding the critiques of Edward Said and others, Orientalism is still a living presence; not least, because so many critics of Orientalism have reproduced the structures of domination which they have sought to deconstruct. A hegemonic and monolithic "West" is depicted as intellectually colonizing a monolithic and passive "East", a construct

## Book Reviews

which inadvertently replicates the essentialist categories of the Orientalists.

Thanks to the work of Nigel Leask and others, these crude stereotypes are beginning to break down; students of Orientalism have begun to stress the potentially *unsettling* effects of travel and the instability of categories such as East and West. Although primarily concerned with the Grand Tour of Europe—the “finishing school” of many a young aristocrat during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—this volume clearly owes a lot to the insights provided by Leask and other recent writers on Orientalism, especially in its emphasis on instability. Indeed, the very concept of the “transport”, central to this book, refers specifically to the disorder or agitation produced by travel—the unsettling of mind and body. The essays collected here offer new insights into the ways in which knowledge of the Other—be it Eastern or European—is constructed, and into the literary and artistic devices employed to articulate these differences. Several of the contributors, for example, refer to the use of hyperbole as a way of emphasizing difference and, more especially, as a way of transcending the trivial and the mundane. Whether undertaking the Grand Tour of Europe, or journeying further afield, travellers often sought to traverse more than national boundaries. Their journeys sometimes took them into the realm of the Sublime, provoking psychological and physiological turmoil. This turmoil was commonly depicted in medical terms: for example, the notion of an artistic and spiritual “influence” exerted by such cities as Rome, drew upon contemporary theories of contagion and infection. It was not simply that culture could be “caught”, like fever, in Rome’s infectious atmosphere, but that the emotional disturbances brought about by confrontation with great art seemed to parallel the physiological disturbances caused by disease.

These disturbances often made it difficult for travellers to adopt what might be termed a “colonialist” or Orientalist stance; to reaffirm prior convictions of cultural superiority, or to dominate and transform that which was

foreign. Travel could also unsettle the world-view of Europeans by demonstrating *similarities* rather than differences between other (more “savage”) cultures and themselves. Even where there appeared to be evidence of European superiority, as that provided by the allegedly degraded state of New Zealand Maoris, the two cultures were not portrayed as radically different, but as sharing similar propensities and tensions. While such observations did not entail the abandonment of Enlightenment convictions about liberty, equality, and so forth, both European and “savage” societies were seen as engaged in the same struggle with truth. Although Europeans had seemingly advanced further along the scale of human progress, it was recognized that other civilizations could be instructive (particularly in moral terms), however “backward” they might be.

Such insights are characteristic of most of the essays in this volume. All the contributors tease out, elegantly and lucidly, the complexities of Europe’s encounter with itself and the wider world. Roy Porter writes on travellers’ tales of Georgian London; Rosemary Bechler on Lord Byron’s Grand Tour; Chloe Chard on tourism and the sublime; Helen Langdon on the imaginative geographies of Claude Lorrain; Richard Hambly on vulcanism; E S Shaffer on William Beckford; Nicholas Thomas on J R and George Forster in New Zealand; Ken Arnold on travel and collections of curiosities; and Tzvetan Todorov on the journey and its narratives. The subject matter of these essays is manifestly diverse but they cohere nicely and all develop, in different ways, the central theme of “transports”. Although few of the chapters deal specifically with medical themes, many historians of medicine will be familiar with the conceptual questions raised in this volume and will learn much from the insights it provides.

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