

MIS-SHAPINGS

The Art of Deformation and the History of Emotions

QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, 13TH SEPTEMBER 2018
ARTS ONE BUILDING, ROOM 128



Niccolò Boldrini, Caricature of the Laocöon, after Titian, 1540



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Organised by Paolo Gervasi, coordinator of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie research project *Misshaping by Words*, in association with the Queen Mary Centre for the History of Emotions.

MIS-SHAPINGS

The Art of Deformation and the History of Emotions

A well established and long-standing bond exists between the representation of the forms and postures of the human figure and the expression of emotions. But how does this change when the body represented is deformed or mis-shapen? This is a question that an interdisciplinary range of scholars, covering a wide chronological period that extends from the Renaissance to the 20th century, will explore in the one-day *Mis-Shapings* conference.

Aby Warburg's classic research on what he called *pathos formula* explored how particular gestures and movement in art can be interpreted as signs conveying emotional meanings. Similarly, physiognomic studies sought to connect facial expressions with inner states and emotional fluctuations. There resulted a repertoire of images – both verbal and visual – which registered a language of emotions. The physiognomic gaze overlapped, moreover, with medical and scientific analyses which sought to detect from the surface of the body what was going on underneath. More recently, psychology has also posited multiple connections between physical appearance and states of mind, while neuroscience has also begun to enhance our understanding of how the human brain reacts to deformation, recognising emotions in the changing dispositions of shapes and colours. Given this context, both deformed representations of the body and representations of the deformed body have associations with the emotions that need to be understood historically.

PROGRAMME



James Gillray, John Thelwall "Preaching" to a Crowd", 1795

9.00 WELCOME COFFEE

9.15 INTRODUCTION

9.30 - 11 KEYNOTES

Jean-Jacques Courtine

(Auckland University / Queen Mary University of London)

The Twilight of Monsters. Deformities, Disabilities, and Differences in 19th and 20th Century France

Colin Jones

(Queen Mary University of London)

Shape, Posture and Difformity as Social Critique of French Ancien Regime Élites.

11 – 11.30 COFFE BREAK (Arts One Foyer)

11.30 – 1 pm SESSION ONE. DEFORMATION IN THEORY:

FROM PHYSIOGNOMY TO NEUROSCIENCE

Chair: Elena Carrera (Queen Mary University of London)

Paolo Gervasi (Queen Mary University of London)

Physiognomy Unchained. Caricature as Emotional Intelligence

Kasia Murawska-Muthesius (Birkbeck College)

Perfetta deformità: Caricature and Embodiment

Tomohiro Ishizu (University College London)

The Representation of Biological Beauty in the Brain

1 – 2.30 LUNCH (Arts One Foyer)

2.30 – 4 SESSION TWO. DEFORMATION IN PRACTICE: ART AND LITERATURE
Chair: Colin Jones (Queen Mary University of London)

Richard Taws (University College London)

Charles Meryon's Crypto-Games

Ulrika Maude (University of Bristol)

A Kind of Catatonia: Samuel Beckett's Ghost Trio

Beatrice Sica (University College London)

**Necessary Deformations. Caricatures and Parodies of Mussolini
condottiero in Post-WWII Italy**

4 – 4.30 COFFEE BREAK (Arts One Foyer)

4.30 – 6 FINAL ROUNDTABLE: EMOTIONS AND THE BODY

Elena Carrera, Thomas Dixon, Rhodri Hayward, Tiffany Watt Smith

6 – 7 WINE RECEPTION (Arts One Foyer)

ABSTRACTS



Honoré Daumier, *Le ventre législatif*, 1834

The Twilight of Monsters. Deformities, Disabilities, and Differences in 19th and 20th Century France

Jean-Jacques Courtine

(Auckland University / Queen Mary University of London)

In the second half of the 19th century, Paris was without any doubt a city where you could watch lots of shows and have plenty of fun. But some of the shows that drew crowds to fairground stalls, cafes' backrooms and boulevards' theatres would certainly not seem that funny today: this paper will examine the 19th and early 20th century visual culture and entertainment industry, natural sciences and medicine, literature and emotions to understand how the extremely ancient and popular exhibition of abnormal bodies vanished from public places; and why a major shift in the history of the gaze on the human body can be perceived in this disappearance.

Physiognomy Unchained. Caricature as Emotional Intelligence

Paolo Gervasi (Queen Mary University of London)

Physiognomy has been a long-standing and pervading presence in Western Culture. Over time, it has registered the multiple and diverse attempts to connect what is visible of the human body to what is invisible and concerns souls and minds; to establish a relationship between the outside and the inside; to find homologies between superficial lines and deep forces, physical outlines and moral attitudes. In the treatises that belong to the galaxy of physiognomy, the deciphering of the human face is generally enabled by deformation.

To grasp the essence of humanness the average human face needs to be confronted with a *divergent* form. Building on this assumption, this paper will discuss the intimate historical link between physiognomy and caricature: both disclose the *true* nature of humans by deforming their traits. Caricature creates a permanent tension between physiognomy and pathognomy – i.e., the representation of emotions, and can be described as a “physiognomy unchained”, a particular physiognomic practice in which the psychological com-

prehension is obtained precisely by forcing the rules and constraints of “official” physiognomy. Caricature activates the instinctual physiognomic consciousness harboured in the human mind, and the equally instinctual capacity of the mind of recognising passions in the alteration of lines.

The Representation of Biological Beauty in the Brain

Tomohiro Ishizu (University College London)

In this talk, I will discuss brain systems for aesthetic judgment in vision, inspired by Francis Bacon's artworks. I do so especially with reference to the representation of faces and bodies in the visual brain. I will review the evidence which shows that faces and bodies ('biological' stimuli) have a privileged status in visual perception, compared to the perception of other stimuli, including man-made products such as houses, chairs, and cars ('artefactual' stimuli). I will then show that viewing face and house stimuli that diverge significantly from a normal representation of their forms, which can be found in many of Bacon's paintings, entails a significant difference in the pattern of brain activation produced, compared to viewing their regular counterparts. I will propose two different concepts, inherited and acquired one, in visual perception and explore what insights into the understanding of the brain they give.

Shape, Posture and Difformity as Social Critique of French Ancien Regime Élites.

Colin Jones (Queen Mary University of London)

For over three decades, the court embroiderer at Versailles, Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, kept a secret journal of caricatures which lampooned members of the Parisian and Versailles elites. This paper will explore how he sought to hit his targets through graphic commentary on physical and bodily appearance.

A Kind of Catatonia: Samuel Beckett's *Ghost Trio*

Ulrika Maude (University of Bristol)

Samuel Beckett's second television play, *Ghost Trio* (1975), stages a seeming disparity between its affectively-challenging subject matter, and the deliberate aestheticism and formalism of its representational strategies. F, the Male Figure – no longer a character – is one of a long line of late-Beckettian 'players'. Through careful attention to gesture, posture and costume, he assumes a highly-abstracted form – so abstracted, that for whole stretches of the play he resembles one of its many rectangles. This evacuation of subjectivity is reinforced by the fact that F's face is only encountered in the third and final act of the play. Dehumanization is also at work, rather differently, in the way that F may be said to belong to Beckett's long line of catatonics. The disparity between the play's subject matter and its form is made even starker by the austere formal qualities of its medium: the limited, rigidly-framed TV screen, its flatness, the shades of grey in a black and white broadcast, the 'omnipresent' televisual light, produced by the firing of a cathode tube onto the television screen, the 'flat' or 'indifferent' tone of the play's voice-over and the often 'staring' camera eye, as Beckett called it in his manuscript drafts. And yet, the answer to how the play's affective content is communicated seems to reside precisely in the unusualness and precision of its form, in the clinically-framed shots and the abstracted, calculatedly affectless set, in its detailed foregrounding of the artifice of representation, in its late-modernist, minimal, pared-down style, even in the brevity and semantic reticence of its script. This paper will consider the question of affect and the resistance to affect in Beckett's television work.

Perfetta Deformità: Caricature and Embodiment

Kasia Murawska-Muthesius (Birkbeck College)

Bodily distortion reaches back to ancient art and the medieval marginalia, but it was the theoretical reflection on the seventeenth-century Italian caricatura which valorised deformation as an artistic convention by situating it within the wider framework of the discourse on beauty. Anti-canonical and belligerent, caricature emerged as a

novel art form in the Carracci Academy in Bologna, and was practiced by the top Seicento artists, from Guercino and Bernini to Pier Francesco Mola. It was also discussed by major Seicento art scholars, including Giovanni Antonio Massani, writing on Annibale Carracci (1642), the first chronicler of the Bolognese art world Carlo Cesare Malvasia (1678) and Filippo Baldinucci, the biographer of Bernini (1681). This paper will focus on the ways of theorising multiple paradoxes of this subversive art form, which strives for *perfetta deformità* instead of perfect beauty, which is capable of achieving likeness through deformation, and which serves as a catalyst in bringing communities together by poking fun on the bodily deformities of their members instead of hiding them.

Necessary Deformations. Caricatures and Parodies of Mussolini condottiero in Post-WWII Italy

Beatrice Sica (University College London)

In Fascist Italy, images of Mussolini on horseback could be seen everywhere: in newspapers, magazines, postcards, stamps, artworks, paintings, statues, murals, novels, poems, school textbooks and workbooks. Standing on his horse, Mussolini appeared as *the* military leader: people would see in him the Roman emperor and the Renaissance *condottiero*. His images on horseback became so ubiquitous, that reality mixed with fantasy and the real man developed into a myth, an idealized model that embodied the core Fascist values: virility, strength, and military command.

Immediately after the fall of the regime, built images were physically removed; yet the mental image and the myth needed to be deconstructed and challenged differently. Thus, from the mid-1940s to the 1960s, caricatures and parodies of men on horseback were made in Italy that depicted unseated, mutilated, and defeated knights and *condottieri*. Although most of them were not of Mussolini, it can be argued that these caricatures and parodies function as implicit deformations of the Duce's figure, which was still vivid in the memory of Italians in those years. In other words, by enacting disguised caricatures and parodies of the icon of Mussolini on horseback that had circulated in Fascist Italy, they offer a disfigurement of the body of the Fascist power.

Charles Meryon's Crypto-Games

Richard Taws (University College London)

This paper will focus on several prints made by Charles Meryon around the mid-1850s, which might, in various ways, be considered 'mis-shapen'. Analysis of Meryon's work has been dominated by the outsize influence of his two primary interpreters, Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, for whom Meryon's vertiginous etchings of the capital – constituting, in Benjamin's words, "the death mask of old Paris" – operated as allegories for the dialectical character of modernity. Here I take a different tack, approaching works Meryon produced in ensuing years, shortly before he was committed to the Charenton asylum, where he died in 1868. My focus is a remarkable pair of relief prints of 1855, identified as proofs for share certificates for a fictional, potentially fraudulent, Franco-Californian company, and, especially, a set of etchings of 1860 titled *Le malingre crypto-game*. These last prints show a twisted, deformed fungus, identified by Meryon as a cryptogam, a plant which reproduces not by flowers or seeds but by spores, doubled back on itself in an agonizing contortion. Read alongside one another these works allow a different perspective on Meryon's visual practice, one in which the body and mind in crisis play a central role.

SPEAKERS



William Hogarth, *Characters and Caricatures*, 1743

Jean-Jacques Courtine began his academic career as a linguist in France, where he worked in the field of discourse analysis (*Analyse du discours politique*, Paris: Larousse, 1981; and, more recently: *Meta-morfoses do discurso político. Derivas da fala pública*, São Carlos: Editora Claraluz, 2006). He then turned to the cultural history of XVI-XIXth century facial emotions (*Histoire du visage*, with Claudine Haroche, Paris: Payot, 2007 [1988]), of the body (*Histoire du corps, XVI-XXème siècle*, co-ed. with Alain Corbin & George Vigarello, 3 vol., Paris: Le Seuil, 2005-2006; *Déchiffrer le corps. Penser avec Foucault*, Grenoble: J. Millon, 2011), and of masculinity (*Histoire de la virilité, de l'Antiquité au XXIème siècle*, co-ed. with A. Corbin & G. Vigarello, 3 vol., Paris: Le Seuil, 2011). Ultimately, he co-edited with Corbin and Vigarello a three volumes *Histoire des émotions*. His work has been translated into 16 foreign languages.

Paolo Gervasi is Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow at Queen Mary University of London, working on a project analysing the presence of caricatures and deformations in Italian literary texts. He graduated and obtained his Ph.D. in Italian Literature at the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, where he also worked as a post-doc on the ERC project *Looking at Words Through Images*, dedicated to the relationships between visual and verbal cultures. He published two monographs and several essays on the history of literary criticism; essays on the study of both Renaissance and Contemporary Italian literature from a neurocognitive perspective; theoretical overviews on critical methodologies enabled by both cognitive studies and the digital humanities. He collaborates with blogs and magazines, mainly exploring the transdisciplinary dialogue between sciences and humanities, and he runs a personal blog entitled *Misshaping by words*: <https://blogs.history.qmul.ac.uk/litcaricature>

Tomohiro Ishizu is Senior research fellow in the Wellcome Laboratory of Neurobiology at University College London. He was a research fellow in the same laboratory and Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science in 2010 – 2016 and researcher in University of Vienna, Faculty of Psychology in 2016 – 2017. He has specialized in studying the neural systems that are engaged during aesthetic experiences.

Colin Jones is Professor of History at Queen Mary University of London. He was educated at Oxford and came to Queen Mary in 2006. He has also taught at Newcastle, Exeter, Warwick, Stanford, Renmin, Paris-VIII universities and in 2014 was Visiting Professor at the University of Richmond, Virginia. He held research positions at Princeton, the Collège de France, Columbia University's Paris campus and the National Humanities Center, North Carolina. From 2012-15, he held a Leverhulme Trust Major Fellowship on his current research project which focuses on the day of 9 Thermidor when Robespierre was overthrown. His first publication on the project appeared as 'The Overthrow of Maximilien Robespierre and the "Indifference" of the People, *American Historical Review*, 2014.

Ulrika Maude is Reader in Modernism and Twentieth-Century Literature at the University of Bristol. She is the author of *Beckett, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge UP, 2009) and *Samuel Beckett and Medicine* (Cambridge UP, 2019). She is co-editor of a number of volumes, including *Beckett and Phenomenology* (Continuum, 2009), *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature* (Cambridge UP, 2015), and *The Bloomsbury Companion to Modernist Literature* (Bloomsbury, 2018). In 2016, she co-edited a special issue of the *Journal of Medical Humanities* on *Beckett, Medicine and the Brain*. She is a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Beckett Studies*, and is currently writing a book on modernist literature and medicine.

Kasia Murawska-Muthesius teaches art history at Birkbeck College. She was Curator of Italian Paintings (1981-90) and Deputy Director of The National Museum in Warsaw (2009-11), as well as Guest Professor at the Humboldt University in Berlin (2009, 2013). Her publications include *Europäische Malerei aus dem Nationalmuseum Warschau* (Braunschweig 1988); *Borders in Art: Revisiting Kunstgeographie* (Warsaw 2000); *National Museum in Warsaw Guide: Galleries and Study Collections* (Warsaw 2001); *Kantor was Here: Tadeusz Kantor in Great Britain* (London 2011, with Natalia Zarzecka), *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum* (Farnham, 2015, with Piotr Piotrowski). Her current strands of research engage with the shifts in imaging Eastern Europe and on caricature as artists' art.

Beatrice Sica is Reader in Italian Studies at University College London. She has been the recipient of numerous fellowships, including a Fondazione Sapegno fellowship at the Collège de France in Paris (2010-2011), the Lauro de Bosis visiting fellowship at Harvard University (2011-2012), and a EURIAS fellowship at the Institute of Advanced Studies at the University of Bologna (2017-18). She is the author of *Poesia surrealista italiana* (2007) and *L'Italia magica di Gianfranco Contini: storia e interpretazione* (2013), as well as other essays on Futurism, Surrealism, and magical realism; literature, ideology, and the arts during Fascism; and Franco-Italian cultural exchanges in the interwar period. Her research focuses on twentieth-century Italian culture in a European context, and she is currently working on a book on cavalrymen and knights in twentieth-century Italy.

Richard Taws is Reader in the History of Art at University College London, where he specializes in the visual and material culture of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France. He is author of *The Politics of the Provisional: Art and Ephemera in Revolutionary France* (Penn State, 2013), co-editor of *Art and Technology in Early Modern Europe* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), and co-author, as a member of the 'Multi-graph Collective', of *Interacting with Print: Elements of Reading in the Era of Print Saturation* (Chicago, 2018).



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