Perspectives

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Published by The Ohio State University Press

Shires, Linda M.
The Ohio State University Press, 2009.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/27781.

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But besides holding your head still, you must, when you try to trace the picture on the glass, shut one of your eyes. If you do not, the point of the brush appears double. . . . Perspective can, therefore, only be quite right, by being calculated for one fixed position of the eye of the observer; nor will it ever appear deceptively right unless seen precisely from the point it is calculated for. Custom, however, enables us to feel the rightness of the work on using both our eyes, and to be satisfied with it, even when we stand at some distance from the point it is designed for.

—John Ruskin, The Elements of Perspective (1859), 241–42

To say that our culture has been and continues to be shaped, informed and programmed at bedrock level by the perspective paradigm is more than wordplay—though language requires that perspective not be an object like any other, because, metaphorically speaking, it has a bearing on the conditions determinant of all objectivity, of perception of objects, from whatever angle or point of view they might be considered in relation to a horizon line or a set distance.

—Hubert Damisch, The Origin of Perspective (1995), 52

Written while he was teaching art to young girls at Winnington Hall School, John Ruskin’s manual on perspective, quoted above, was meant to be read in conjunction with the first three books of Euclid. No doubt, his appreciation for geometry as well as art and “right” seeing fueled his interest in writing and illustrating such a book. How useful it may have been to schoolgirls sketching landscapes or to amateurs learning to draw cathedrals in scenic views is another matter. Still, Ruskin firmly believed that all artists should learn the basic rules of Renaissance linear perspective, distance, horizon line, and standing point. He bemoaned the fact that few painters knew the complexity of the rules, and fewer still followed them. Even his favorite painter, J. M. W. Turner, though appointed Professor of Perspective at the Royal Academy years before executing his later, most abstract paintings, knew nothing, Ruskin maintained, about perspective.
This interdisciplinary book reopens the question of classical perspective and its vicissitudes in aesthetic practice from the 1830s through the 1870s in England. The impulse to tackle such a demanding and slippery concept as perspective emerged from my study of Victorian poetry, particularly the dramatic monologue and double poem. These innovative Victorian poetic forms, reconceiving the relationship between subject and object, caused me to question how and why both the visual and verbal texts of the nineteenth century came to be more widely created (if not always received) as self-conscious and skeptical representations. What relationship might there be among a growing secularization, the creation of novels and long narrative poems involving double narratives and multiple tellers, and the shifting fortunes of a transcendental "I" in poetry and a mastering eye in painting or photography? Did not art forms, as much as new technologies and the rise of science, educate readers and viewers into new ways of knowing? And, most importantly, what do nineteenth-century literary and visual texts themselves have to say about modes of viewing and knowing, not entirely through theme, but through their forms? Might we maintain that the verbal and visual are separate languages (Mitchell 1994), yet theorize a relationship between them that pivots on perspective and point of view, particularly in an increasingly ocularcentric Western culture? While I would not claim perspective to be the key to all mythologies, it is an especially important concept to unravel because, while most pertinent to optics and the history of vision, it comes to us mediated by metaphor and thus inflects art history and literary history with questions of epistemology.

The scholarly answers available to my questions did not satisfy me, nor did the frequent focus by critics on one genre to the exclusion of others. Although Victorian poetry, in particular, has often been studied in formal terms by itself, nineteenth-century verbal texts are mutually intertextual and, even more important, mutually imbricated with visual texts in social and cultural formations transcending specific genres, modes, or discourses. For some time, I have advocated an interdisciplinary study which explores issues across genres and not only pertaining to poet-painters. In connecting the concepts of visual perspective with literary point of view, and exploring nineteenth-century examples of both, I am purposefully bridging seemingly separate realms of art.

Much important work has been conducted on vision and the nineteenth century over the past twenty years (Kemp; Flint; Crary 1992 and 2001; Christ and Jordan). Not surprisingly, technology and science, including the science of optics itself, play a role in a narrative of influence (Crary 1992). The central technology of photography has
been credited with shaping novel form (N. Armstrong) and impacting Pre-Raphaelite and fin de siècle women’s poetry (L. Smith; A. Vadillo). Conflicting nineteenth-century discourses about photography have been connected to realism and romance (Green-Lewis) and to nonfictional prose and lyric (L. Smith; Groth)—to different ends. While I agree with many of the details of these and other specific studies, technology is only one of many forces shaping permutations in aesthetic form. It should not be privileged alone as a cultural force, so that it comes to seem deterministic. Moreover, as Mirzoeff suggests, any neat parallel between scientific advances and visual representations simply does not hold up to close scrutiny (1999, 38).

Critics studying interconnections between visual art and literature who are not concerned with science or technology, usually focus on thematic connections or on how the pictorial shapes various art forms (Meisel; Andres). While we have separate studies of literary point of view and visual perspective, the task of analyzing varied art forms of the same period in terms of their experimentation with classical linear perspective and realist point of view has not, to my knowledge, been attempted. Moreover, in looking for innovative or experimental forms, critics usually favor the end of the period as the prelude to Modernism and cinema. In so doing, they follow the stereotypical rupture narratives about modernity—whether in terms of science (Einstein’s theory of relativity and the destruction of pictorial space in cubism) or literary form (the advent of stream of consciousness, imagism, and alterations to subjectivity and objectivity) or the history of the gaze (the flâneur, window shopping, the glance and new mobilities in new spaces).

Those intellectual historians locating formal innovation in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth have insisted on “delayed artistic repercussions” to the waning influence of geometric optics (Jay 1996, 97). Many have supported the stereotypical view of Victorian art and aesthetics, summarized by Rachel Teukolsky recently as: “sentimental, moralizing, and straitlaced,” a view, moreover, “cemented by British modernists, whose violent rejection of their predecessors made it difficult to see beyond the twentieth-century caricatures of these figures” (712). While Teukolsky’s summary is admittedly reductive, used for heuristic purposes, it retains enough truth to indicate that we need to review freshly how we read Victorian texts and how we view Victorian artworks.

This book offers analyses of individual texts and raises questions that will hopefully help move us further in that direction. First, isn’t there a more nuanced explanation for the history of perspective than
the “waning of geometric optics,” which is based in a teleological and
developmental model? Second, could we not insist that experimentation
with optics and perspective in the visual arts, at least, occurred from the
Renaissance (see Elkins 1994) right through modernism and beyond?
Moreover, the mimetic and metaphoric uses of perspective mean that
these dimensions are historically related and conceptually similar, but
not identical. There is a looseness built into the perspectival paradigm
and its meanings from the beginning.

Unlike critics who argue for delayed artistic repercussions in the late
nineteenth century or who still support the now discredited modernism
rupture theory, I contend that influential writers and artists experiment-
ed with varied techniques for perspective in the early to mid-nineteenth
century. Their work should not be overlooked as part of a continuing
historical process of often coexisting models and paradigms for seeing
and knowing. The nineteenth-century cultural texts I examine experi-
ment with types of perspective, while questioning any unmediated,
objective, single, or easily won consensual “truth” purported by linear
perspective or classic realism in visual or verbal art, respectively.

This book demonstrates that the cultural revaluation of the relation-
ship of subject to object taking place from the 1830s through the 1870s,
via experiments with perspective, can be located across visual and verbal
media—from painting to poetry to photography to fiction. As Ruskin’s
comment above indicates, and as many artists and writers of the time
well understood, vision is intimately bound up with the physiological
space of the viewer and all his or her senses, as well as with habits and
ideological assumptions that go beyond the mathematical “sureties” of
geometry or of a disembodied, fixed-gaze, camera obscura model. It is
not that Turner did not know perspective, but that it was far less inter-
esting to him than other ways the eye organizes objects and sees them.

The linear perspective paradigm, however, based as it is in stable,
reassuring, single-point perspective, continued to exert a dominant sway
in culture—maintaining accustomed ways of looking and of knowing,
as Damisch states in my second epigraph.2 Given its metaphoric links
to naturalism and realism, this “Enlightenment invention” remained a
major paradigm for modern vision and thought.3 Our ideas about uni-
fied pictorial space and reality, via Alberti’s metaphor of the transparent
window as a frame for perspectival views, run very deep (see Friedberg
2006). Despite the complications and subversions introduced by artists
and critics, the geometric organizing of distance and of objects in space
remains central to our modern, Western cultural imagination. The per-
sistent importance of Renaissance perspective and its elevation to an
explanatory model in varied systems of thought stem from its accessibility as a system of projection that allows us to think we have knowledge about the world that we apprehend. On the one hand, it makes the world intelligible; on the other hand, it seems to duplicate the real (see Moxley, Melville 1990, and Elkins online work in progress, 5).

Therefore, this book maintains that Renaissance perspective did not simply disappear in the early nineteenth century through a growing psychologization of vision and loss of belief in the truth of the eye, but that it remained as a popular and sometimes still dominant force in the visual and verbal arts. At the same time, as the visual field expanded, alternative models of vision and of the viewer developed side by side. The shift from a single, seemingly objective, universal perspective to an increasing preoccupation with the processes of perception produced an experimentation with flattening, dissolution, and combination in the visual arts, and multiplicity of perspective in the verbal arts. In questioning how we see and know, such experiments inevitably reworked the key elements of perspectival vision: fixity, space, the relationship of subject and object, veracity.

DEFINITION—WHAT IS CLASSIC LINEAR PERSPECTIVE?

As a term relating to vision and geometry, perspective refers to a system for representing visible objects in three-dimensional space on the surface or in two dimensions of a picture. By keeping one eye open and one shut, as Ruskin suggests, seeing in perspective is monocular, with all the focus and the limits that term implies. Perspective derives from the Latin perspicere, meaning to see clearly, to look at closely or examine, but, due to its metaphorical travels, it also carries the meaning now of a mental outlook or view (American Heritage Dictionary). It is worth noting that the early connection of vision and light would have lent perspective a metaphysical meaning of divine truth and knowledge from ancient times to the Enlightenment (see Guillén 287). After Milton and seventeenth-century philosophy and literature, though, a growing secularization through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries altered this connection. For Descartes, for instance, vision and light were associated with human reason, not a divine eye.

Following Erwin Panofsky's Perspective and Symbolic Form (1927), an argument based in Cassirer's theory of "symbolic forms," it has been customary to associate linear perspective with the Renaissance, the
period Panofsky privileged as developing the concept. Panofsky’s narrative of the origin of perspective is a modern, retrospective construction which has had enormous influence on the discipline of art history, but has not gone unchallenged. Art historians note that perspective was not understood as such in the Renaissance, nor was perspective practiced as a single technique, nor was space as a concept familiar to Renaissance artists in the same way it is to us (see Guillén; Melville 1990; Elkins 1994, 8; and Mirzoeff 1999, 38, 51).

The codification and historization of the perspective paradigm and representational realism, then, has a vexed and complicated history. Moreover, it is a history that spans several disciplines, not only art history but philosophy, literature, literary criticism, and literary theory. While it cannot be the purpose of this book to untangle all the knots of this history, or even to mention them all, still, the stakes of this project cannot be fully understood without a brief historical account of the literal and metaphorical dimensions of this crucial concept.

Important steps were taken towards a theory of single-point linear perspective prior to the Renaissance, for example by the Greeks and Romans, who deployed a sense of depth in their architecture and by Abu Ali Hasan Ibn al-Haitham or Alhazen (965–1039), known as the father of modern optics, an Islamic mathematician who studied vision, physics, and geometry. Yet classic or linear perspective did not become formalized until the fifteenth century in Italy. Usually Brunelleschi is mentioned as the first person to understand, through mathematical principles, that parallel lines in a plane appear to meet, as they extend further from the viewer, along a horizon line where they vanish. Brunelleschi also understood scale—that the size of visible objects decreases the farther away they are from the viewer. Other artists famous for employing perspective included Masaccio, Ghiberti, and Uccello.

Using such rules of perspective helped painters gauge the size of objects in relationship to the eye and to distance. It was left to Leon Battista Alberti to codify the rules of perspective for artists in *De Pictura* (1435), in which he introduced the image of the window frame, and for the literate public in his vernacular text of the following year, dedicated to Brunelleschi: *Della Pittura*. Single-point perspective was not the only perspective used; for example, multiple vanishing points, anamorphosis, and aerial perspective were also employed. When I speak of linear or classical perspective, I am referring to a single fixed monological, mechanical viewpoint of a stable observer perceiving a world outside of the self in terms of a geometric grid with a single vanishing point. This method was used by artists to create a picture resembling reality, as if the eye mirrored the reality outside it.
Scholars have often characterized Western modernity from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century as dominated by the visual, not only because of the hold of the perspective paradigm in art, but also because of the rationalization of seeing in the philosophy of René Descartes (Discourse on Method 1637). Yet how did perspective become linked with subjectivity, thus solidifying its massive influence through what Martin Jay has termed Cartesian perspectivalism?

Descartes humanized perspective. He viewed light as an emanation from an object, thus separating light from its metaphysical, metaphorical connection to the divine. In explaining vision, he used common examples, such as that of the blind man, to illustrate his theories about the senses. Even more importantly, as a rationalist, he located perception in the human brain, not the eye, even incorporating Kepler’s new ideas about inversion of the image on the retina into part of the relay process that must exist, he felt, from eye to brain. The brain is the location of judgment: “perception, or the action by which we perceive,” he maintains, “is not a vision... but is solely an inspection by the mind” (Descartes 63). For Descartes, then, the mind registers, processes, and judges the truth and accuracy of what the eye absorbs. Though sometimes misread, perspective for him was thus a mathematical law, based in geometry and the idea of resemblance to reality, but it also, at the same time, was a figuration rather than a faithful mirroring of reality.

Descartes’s ideas about seeing and knowing are usually unhelpfully compressed with elements of Renaissance linear perspective, so that perspectivalism has come to stand for rationalism and his quest for epistemological certainty. In this compression, critics put aside the fact that Descartes’s theory of vision was founded in skeptical doubt about the senses’ certain apprehension of the world. Yet there are obvious connections between the perspectival paradigm and Descartes.

For example, Panofsky himself argues that Renaissance perspective anticipates the work of Descartes, because it inaugurates a mode of thinking about the relationship of subject to object, of mind to thing. Arguing that forms of spatial organization in artworks, of any era, correlate with and influence modes of perception of the ages in which they are produced and received, Panofsky sees perspective as far more than a geometrical schema. He maintains that perspective is a technique and a metaphor for a worldview, that which connects the psychological, cognitive, social, cosmological, and scientific/mathematical practices of a geographical and cultural moment. “For us,” he argues, “perspective
is quite precisely the capacity to represent a number of objects together with a part of the space around them in such a way that the conception of the material picture support is completely supplanted by the conception of a transparent plane through which we believe we are looking into an imaginary space” (77). Just as Descartes is uncertain about the eye and reality, Panofsky sees art as illusionistic.

While some interpreters of Panofsky have focused on the implications of his location of perspective in the Renaissance and challenged his notion of a worldview, and others have complicated his remarks about symbolic form, yet others have argued that Panofsky is more concerned with the self-reflexive qualities of art and the choices of a viewer than the mirroring qualities implied by the model. As Margaret Iverson puts it, for Panofsky, “Art is no longer regarded as a mimetic depiction of objects seen; rather it reflexively includes the acknowledgment that it is a highly formalized kind of performance aimed at a spectator” (4). In other words, on one level art is performative. It does something to someone.

Taking account of subjectivity, rather than implying all viewers are the same, Panofsky sets the stage for later interpretations of visual event “defined by the interaction between viewer and viewed” (Mirzoeff 1999, 13). Panofsky writes: “Perspective subjects the artistic phenomenon to stable and even mathematically exact rules but on the other hand, makes that phenomenon contingent upon human beings, indeed upon the individual: for these rules refer to the psychological and physical conditions of the visual impression, and the way they take effect is determined by the freely chosen position of a subjective ‘point of view’” (67).

Too often, in my view, Cartesian perspectivalism has become a collapsed and overgeneralized concept. Critics have buried Descartes’s doubts about the senses and have similarly slighted Panofsky’s relevant insights into performativity and subjectivity. Grootenboer is right in her assessment: “I think perspective has shaped an image of our visual field that we assume must be correct when we find proof of it in painting and in photography. Hence perspective has provided us with a model of looking and, consequently, with a mode of interpretation, whose consequences we, unlike Kepler, do not quickly recognize” (119). Too often taken as a method of mimetic resemblance and copy, rather than as a self-reflexive representation addressed to a spectator, perspectivalism was easily reduced in complexity and corralled into binarized explanations.

Drawing out some of the complications, Mieke Bal argues that the Cartesian cogito sustaining objective epistemology is itself a mini-narrative in first person. “Perspective elides the subject, already inscribed, in
the viewpoint seen as the origin of subjectivity” (191). The entire conception of objective knowledge has to be contradictory (Bal 1996, 170–71). The structuralist Hubert Damisch would agree that perspective is characterized by the illusion of neutral objective third-person representation and that it works due to an identificatory effect premised on first person; he goes further to suggest that the subject of perspective, interpellated by a painting and interpellating a painting, “holds by a thread” and is not stable or fixed. He convincingly shows how the classical perspective paradigm is a “formal apparatus like a sentence” (446). Ultimately it can inform perception or orient it, but there is more power in polymorphic perception itself and in what paintings do to a spectator than in what they represent or the paradigm itself.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY ART AND LITERATURE

Theorists in cultural studies, film studies, and art history long supported a single narrative of a hegemonic Cartesian perspectivalism that begins to break down in the nineteenth century (see Crary 1992; Jenks 1995). As is well known, some, notably Crary, have asserted that a new kind of visuality was born in this period that grounded truth in the human body and processes of perception. In his highly influential Techniques of the Observer, Crary explains how specific optical instruments, practices, and institutions of the nineteenth century (stereoscope, kaleidoscope, diorama, panorama, and others) shape both the viewed and the spectator, defining what can be seen and how it can be seen. When optical instruments became sites for power and knowledge, Crary contends, following Foucault, a new form of visuality became dominant. Still, since he recognizes that the history of the observer is “not reducible to changing technical and mechanical practices any more than to the changing forms of artworks and visual representations” (8), he rightly maintains that “art and science were part of an interlocking field of knowledge or practice” (9).

Many critics working within nineteenth-century studies have usefully adapted and corrected some of Crary’s research, particularly in light of the increased speed of time and space and the transience of everyday life in the nineteenth century (see critics on tourism, such as Schivelbusch; on urban aesthetics, Vadillo; and for a corrective reading regarding poetry, see Groth). Others have taken a further look at the impact on the culture of realism of new optical technologies and mass
visuality (Friedberg 1993), while still acknowledging that a nineteenth-century viewer is constructed through many social forms. Such critics have generally agreed that an observer specific to the nineteenth century exists not as a transcendental subject but as an effect of a force field of discursive relations and amidst varied “reality effects.”

Still, as some art historians and literary historians have pointed out, there are aspects to Crary’s argument and method that do not persuade entirely. For instance, how is it possible that visual technologies, varied as they were and dependent on various aspects of perception, disciplined both the observer and the visual field (Mitchell 1994; I. Armstrong 2008)? It is important that Crary emphasizes the domination inscribed in modes of vision. Yet Crary’s Foucaudian model of discourse/counter-discourse leads him to overlook practices of vision or kinds of observers or looks that might be multiple. Mirzoeff thus offers a valuable corrective when he suggests that “visual culture is always contested and that no one way of seeing is ever wholly accepted in a particular historical moment” (1999, 44).

An art historian who is eager to overturn the ‘rupture’ narrative about Modernism, and place change seventy-five years earlier, Crary still offers no analyses of what different art forms were doing at a time when the pictorial was dominant across genres. Though he demands a rethinking of realism, he avoids privileging art forms as a major influence on consciousness, precisely because this strategy has been followed, he says, too often. Nor does he apparently agree with J. Hillis Miller in judging nineteenth-century art to be about consciousness.

Despite his laudable focus on the early nineteenth-century in England, Crary’s neglect of key Romantic and Victorian constructs, in his account of the waning of the perspective paradigm, is hardly unique. Eminent visual studies critics such as Nicholas Mirzoeff and Martin Jay join theorists from Erich Auerbach to philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and numerous others in repeatedly bypassing the bulk of the nineteenth century to cite Impressionism and Modernism as the end point of classical perspective’s hegemony in the visual and verbal arts. One group of art historians places the end even later, when they cite Post-Impressionism and the split of illusionistic painting into component parts as the end of perspectivalism in art. Occasionally, literary critics mention Henry James as a precursor to impressionistic techniques, as we find in Virginia Woolf, because of his explorations of point of view, interior monologue, consciousness, and perception.

However, it is critical to rethink the art works of the early to mid-nineteenth century across a range of genres, precisely to intervene in
histories of the visual which persist in skipping to modernism, despite arguments against an historical model of rupture. For instance, when Nicholas Mirzoeff mentions examples of montage in the 1920s and 1930s as revolutionary, because they extend skepticism to realistic images, he seems entirely unaware of the print history and combination photographic art and editing rooms of the Victorian period. Yet combination photographs in the mid-nineteenth century, as we will see, while aiming to create whole views of reality, betray joins and unstable perspectives that serve to undermine the real, as much as they may mirror it.

In a talk/essay from 2005, Crary refers back to his decision to proceed in *Techniques of the Observer* without featuring artworks. Here he takes up several paintings “as primary pieces of evidence” that problematize the relationship between spectator and image (Crary 2008, 59). “There is a general epistemological inconclusiveness in which perceptual experience had lost the primal guarantees that once upheld its privileged relation to the foundation of knowledge,” an uncertainty he accounts for by external factors (such as developments in lamp light) and an increase in subjectivism (60–61). In the pictures Crary selects, the objects have unstable features. In thematizing the images, Crary reduces the force of his argument. We need a formal analysis of kinds of engagement with vision and knowing, within image and text, with a detailed study of form for what it does to a spectator.

In my view, nineteenth-century art does not offer an epistemic rupture, in the sense of something radically new, but a continuation of the perspective paradigm with a quest for mastery and identification, but also with its uncertainty and performativity foregrounded. At the same time, nineteenth-century art experiments with new visual paradigms. Not enough work has yet been done in point of view or perspective. For instance, our understanding of realism in the Victorian novel, in particular of modes of narration, is still in the beginning stages. Perhaps Jonathan Culler’s recent call to toss out the concept of omniscience is worth further investigation. Moreover, it was not the novel form, but poetry, that saw the most radical transformation of mimetic conventions in literature through its radical reconfiguration of lyric expression by a hybрид relationship to drama. In all nineteenth-century innovation in form, fictional or poetic, a greater burden for meaning is placed onto the spectator, the you, as the “I/eye” and as the connection of light to divinity diminishes in authority.

As is well known, Cartesian perspectivalism was critiqued by twentieth-century theorists for its claims to objective reason and unmediated truth by a dispassionate, monocular observer. As part of this inves-
tigation, theorists have proposed other visual regimes than that of the mastering, male-gendered, disciplining perspectival gaze. For instance, art historians have proposed the glance (Bryson), a quick, mobile, side-ways look at surfaces. Gender critics as well have been especially influential in rethinking and undermining the gaze they have targeted as masculine and straight (see Mulvey; Doane; Irigaray; Fuss). Critics of culture and of film took up Walter Benjamin’s urban stroller (1935) in positing a flâneur and a flâneuse, a mobile viewer, unrestrained rather than fixed (Nord; Friedberg 1993). Moreover, numerous historians of tourism, display, spectacle, and travelogue have stressed that vision is not only historically but also geographically shaped. It matters where one is as to how one sees and to how one looks. Yet despite these advances, it strikes me that few critics have paid attention to the generic range and media-rich heterogeneous regime of vision that enlists divergent observers in the nineteenth century. British artists developed innovative uses of light and space, experimented with ambient viewers and fixed views, fixed viewers and darting eyes, and encouraged oscillations among points of view, as they foregrounded self-reflexive negotiations of forms of mastery.

ON FORMS AND MEDIA

The goals for a book of this size must be modest, though my chapter range is ambitious. In the company of literary and cultural critics such as Isobel Armstrong and E. Warwick Slinn, I am committed to demonstrating the political importance of performative aesthetic forms. Many of the most interesting nineteenth-century texts, visual or verbal, are highly self-conscious about representation and, because directly concerned with hermeneutic problems, demanding of a reader-viewer. I wish to broaden such critical investigation across and between media. Because of the interaction between and among the arts during the nineteenth century and because artists often themselves worked in both literary and visual media, it is important to study the arts as part of a dynamic and changing cultural field rather than in isolation. At the same time, we must retain the distinction that visual and verbal arts are not reducible one to the other. While interesting in their own right, the visual and verbal examples I have chosen also allow me to show the period’s wide range of experiment in England with monocular perspective. These texts enact cultural critique through dialogic and dialectic processes I will examine.
The following chapters form a series of case studies. They are united by the fact that Victorians fully recognized that perspective was itself complex and multifaceted, never singular. An inherited rigid use of Renaissance perspective was, for these artists, whether in painting, photography, or literature, not only reductive and false, but also unwanted as a curtailment of the visual and imaginative processes, mental sensations, and moral sentiments they wanted to retain.

Chapter 1 builds on the Introduction, with examples from J. M. W. Turner, William Dyce, and Romantic and Victorian poetry to show how in the early nineteenth century, both visual and verbal art challenged monocularism, often overtly and even with humor. In drawing attention to visual and verbal forms, I am less invested in content or thematics than in inquiries about formal experiment. The chapter concludes with an examination of William Morris’s early essay on gothic seeing—recording his second visit to Amiens Cathedral—and his optically innovative poem “The Haystack in the Floods.”

Chapter 2 examines the double art of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in which painting and poetry are physically paired and a mobile reader viewer must go back and forth physically and mentally from text to painting in order to “see” and “know,” but also to act. Rossetti’s “double art” subtly but importantly alters the ideal of “unity” proposed in the eighteenth century between the sister arts. It is an extension of work started by William Blake in Songs of Innocence, where he eschews verbal/visual unity in favor of textual and pictorial commentaries on each other. Rossetti shares Blake’s belief in what Northrup Frye first called “composite art”—the joining of distinctly different genres and of different reading and viewing experiences. Especially in his late works, Rossetti importantly attempts to blur differences between image and text at the same time that he solicits and constructs a mobile reader/viewer who must negotiate distance and difference. I wish to complicate our present understanding of Rossetti’s double art and use it productively to open up questions about mobile and embodied seeing.

Chapter 3 explores the illusion of a recreation of reality prompted by the photograph, i.e., as a supposed mirroring of an object that surpasses other forms of mimesis. It concerns the theory and practice of Henry Peach Robinson. His professionally made combination photography, a form which tries to efface spatial disjunction among parts of the photograph, but which reveals gaps and stitches at the same time, raises important questions about who sees what and what is seen. The mirror and natural light photography of the amateur Lady Clementina Hawarden, on the other hand, explores spatial disjunctions that she connects
to that time of life we now term adolescence. While photographs by Robinson and Hawarden may seem wholeheartedly to support classical perspective and its codes of realism, I will argue that Peach Robinson challenges mimesis through the joins of his photographs and through reference to gestural codes and intertextual references to paintings and poems. Hawarden does so, I maintain, through her manipulation of light, shadow, and doubling, inviting fractured, dual, and multiple perspectives.

Chapter 4 studies the challenges to omniscient narration and focalization in fictions of the 1860s, including Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1860) and George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861), as novelistic instances of the techniques of perspective explored brilliantly by Robert Browning in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and in dramatic poems such as “Pippa Passes” (1841) and *The Ring and the Book* (1869). Browning’s, Collins’s, and Eliot’s explorations of point of view also prefigured what such authors as Thomas Hardy in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891) would go on to do in complicating issues of objective truth in fiction and in revealing biased subjectivity at the heart of “third-person narrative,” a supposedly “objective” presentation.12

A Coda encourages new directions for study across media and genres.

It is important to differentiate my interpretive assumptions from those of others. I do not see form as a literal or visual, conscious or unconscious resolution of historical and ideological contradictions or ruptures which the critic can then expose. This interpretive model about form and ideology remains too narrow in its implications about history, authors, texts, and readers, as well as too unquestioning of critical authority. To the contrary, nineteenth-century forms work not to paper over ideological contradictions but to call attention to them as papered over—as irresolvable and as raising questions about their very authority.

In other words, the artwork, not the contemporary critic, does the job of defamiliarization. The artwork, negotiating perspective, holds in solution contradictory perspectives and stages a dialogue which exposes the strengths and limits of perspective, while maintaining gaps for alternative points of view. And it compels a rethinking and reviewing on the part of the viewer and reader about (and these terms are not opposites or serially parallel): representation and experience, viewing and reading, affect and judgment.

Cultural critique is often associated with disidentification or with irony or parody in postmodernist theory. Because the ironic mode is often employed in nineteenth-century literature and visual arts, I want
to make clear that the self-reflexive testing and questioning of monoc-ocular perspective and Cartesian consciousness that I see in the verbal and visual representations I treat here does not always take the form of detachment as a basis for overturning of cultural norms. The process of questioning and testing, via perspectives and double forms, can register a nineteenth-century discomfort with any exclusive view. Still, this kind of art does not necessarily enact critique in the sense of judgment as much as it may explore points of view and expose the strengths and limits of each and place them for a reader or viewer side by side. Often it holds two simultaneous and contradictory attitudes in a tension, where one continually redefines and reopens the question of the other or where they exist as equally tenable because they exist within different systems of understanding and interpretation. Sometimes, as well, resistance to classical perspective simply registers a statement about objectivity or about consensual truth. It may point to a loss of a single truth, resistance to dogmatism, a quest for a redefined truth, acknowledgment of partial truths, or a re-understanding of the complexions and complexities of truth. In some cases, it may give up on truth.