



PART  
ONE  
1860 – 1900

## Modern Types

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# Modern Types

## 1

### Sleuthing Towards America: Visual Detection in Everyday Life

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In the early 1960s special investigator Tom Scarborough was sent to Granada, Mississippi, to investigate rumors that the out-of-wedlock child recently born to a local white woman was fathered by a black man. Employed by the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, Scarborough's task was to see if the birth was in fact part of what many Southern politicians called the "mongrolization" of the races. As reported in the *New Yorker Magazine* by Calvin Trillin, Scarborough's report details the critical role that visual evidence and the physical body played in such investigations. "I was looking at the child's finger nails," wrote Scarborough, "and the end of its fingers very closely." Apparently searching for noticeably developed half-moons at the cuticles, Scarborough hoped to establish the African ancestry of the child, and hence its complicity in undermining the "sovereignty" of the State of Mississippi. He went on to report however, that the exam had been inconclusive. "We both agreed we were not qualified to say it was a part Negro child, but we could say it was not 100 percent Caucasian." As an indicator of mixed blood, the fingernail inspection proved effective, but without other physical clues that would only come with age, the infant body proved disappointing. Whether sensing their doubt as Trillin suggests, or simply describing the child's father, the mother shrewdly carved out a position of in-betweenness: the baby's father, she told investigators, was Italian.<sup>1</sup>

State concern over "race mixing" kept the Sovereignty Commission (the commission had files on about 10,000 people) unusually busy throughout its career tracking down suspected cases in order to both verify events and prevent what the commission believed to be the soft underbelly of white sovereignty: miscegenation. Trillin writes, for example, that in 1964 Governor

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Paul Johnson received a letter from a couple in Biloxi. "Dear Governor Johnson," it began, "We regret to say that for the first time in our lives we need your help very badly. We are native Mississippians and are presently living in Biloxi. Our only daughter is a freshman at the University of Southern Mississippi. She has never before given us any worry. However, she is in love with a Biloxi boy who looks and is said to be part Negro . . ." <sup>2</sup> Johnson quickly wrote back to assure the couple that he would have the matter investigated and, in a 3,000-word report, Scarborough says once again that, while the boy in question cannot be verified as a Negro, he is clearly not Caucasian. According to his investigations, the boy came from a group of people living in Vancleave, Mississippi, who were known as "red bones" or "Vancleave Indians," a population long rumored by neighbors to be black despite their attendance in the town's white schools and churches. How this story ends is unclear (Trillin suggests there were plans to draft the boy and send him to Vietnam but he was under-age), but like the tale of the "Italian" child born out of wedlock to a "white" mother, Scarborough's lengthy narrative of the "red bones" suggests the degree to which "race" as a measure of human difference, depended upon popular, if inexact, modes of visual indexing – the pseudo-scientific practice, that is, of simultaneously looking at, ordering, and ranking the body according to culturally shaped codes of taste and meaning. In the cartography of the modern body, "Race" took place.

As Scarborough discovered, however, bodies are difficult maps to read. Consider, for example, the case of John Svan. Born in Finland, Svan came to the United States sometime before 1882. As the new century began he and sixteen of his countrymen decided to remain in Minnesota and become US citizens. Their applications, however, were rejected. According to the US Department of Justice, Svan was not "white" because as a Finn he carried within him the blood of his "Mongolian" ancestors. Indeed, according to federal laws at the time, American citizenship was reserved only for "aliens being free white persons and to aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent." Had Svan been black or white he would have been eligible, but as a Mongolian he fell into a newly emerging categorization that racialized immigrants from China, Japan, India, and the Philippines as different from both of these designations. Through a sequence of laws enacted by Congress in 1882, 1917, 1924, and 1934, Asians, Orientals, and Filipinos were configured as a particular type of non-white persons, as "yellow" and declared ineligible for naturalization. Furthermore, because the Chinese had been barred from legal entry to the United States under the Chinese Exclusion Acts, Svan and his group were also threatened with deportation. <sup>3</sup>

Just as the state of Mississippi struggled to define whiteness, the Minnesota courts wrestled to delineate the parameters of "the yellow race." Was Svan,

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born in Finland and calling himself white, really a Mongolian and hence Chinese? Were Finns actually white despite ethnological claims to a Mongol origin “in very remote times?” To the former, the lower courts answered in the affirmative, thus denying Finnish immigrants the right to citizenship and opening the path to their deportation as “illegal” immigrants. The issue, however, was far from settled, although Judge William A. Cant, deciding in Svan’s favor, overturned the lower court’s ruling, declaring in 1908 that “the Finnish people are not members of the yellow race.”

Cant came to his conclusions in two ways, both of which are worth a little exploration. His first line of reasoning took on the issue of origins, and here he agreed with ethnologists that Finns were of Mongol origin. But Cant argued that such ancestries radically changed over time so that a number of groups said to be of Mongolian extraction were now “among the purest and best types of the Caucasian race.” Furthermore, noted the judge, “the various groupings of the human race into families is arbitrary, and, as respects any particular people, is not permanent but subject to change and modification . . .” Having noted the mutability of human classifications and the apparent impermanence of racial “stock,” Cant turned to what he believed was the only reliable measure of racial difference: the body, writing that:

The chief physical characteristics of the Mongolians are as follows: They are short of stature, with little hair on the body or face: they have yellow-brown skins, black eyes, black hair, short flat noses, and oblique eyes. In actual experience we sometimes, though rarely, see natives of Finland whose eyes are slightly oblique. We sometimes see them with sparse beards and sometimes with flat noses; but Finns with a yellow or brown or yellow-brown skin or with black eyes or black hair would be an unusual sight. They are almost universally of light skin, blue or gray eyes, and light hair.

Indeed, in Cant’s opinion they had the lightest skin of any foreign-born person “applying for the full rights of citizenship” in the region. Svan won his case, then, because the judge believed Finns to be white even though they had once been “yellow.” “The question,” declared the judge, “is not whether a person had or had not such an ancestry, but whether he is now a ‘white person’ *within the meaning of that term as generally understood*” (emphasis added). Race, in other words, existed only to the extent that people “generally understood” it, and social value accrued in relation to the body’s proximity to whiteness. What Svan understood was that his looks had the power to make him citizen or pariah, an American or an “illegal,” depending upon the particular social meanings afforded at any given time. As Matthew Frye Jacobson argues, “social and political meanings . . . generate a kind of physiological surveillance” that renders racial difference into a particular set of

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physical traits. “The visible markers may then be interpreted as outer signs of an essential, immutable, inner moral-intellectual character; and that character, in turn – attested to by physical ‘difference’ – is summoned up to explain the social value attached . . . in the first place.”<sup>4</sup> Had the Finns *looked* like Mongolians, the official eye would have seen “yellow” and defined them as “undesirable aliens.”

What becomes difficult to fully appreciate in the racially and ethnically inflected world of today is the degree to which categories like race and ethnicity, as well as gender and even sex, emerge in power-charged, unequal situations. As a measure of difference and as a marker of some “body” – the “colored” infant, the “mulatto” boy, the “yellow” Finn, even the “white” parents – race became part of a modern regulatory force spawned in the service of white supremacy.<sup>5</sup>

Like all modern categories then, race is “unreal”; more a regulatory ideal than a stable identity. It exists, that is not in the body but rather as part of a complex discourse about bodily difference that depended upon and helped shape modern habits of seeing. To simultaneously look, order, and rank the body of others according to culturally shaped codes of taste and meaning was not new to Mississippi. As we shall see, the modern body was a coded site. The modern body had tales to tell.

But how did these codes develop? Why did they take on such importance in modern life? When did physical appearance, bodily shape, and skin color become central modes of classification, hierarchy, and differentiation? By what alchemy does a Finn become a Mongolian, a Mongolian “yellow,” “the white man” a colorless figure, “a Negroid” a specific percentage of blackness, an Italian something in between? Where did state officials like Tom Scarborough or Judge Cant learn that a half-moon on a child’s cuticles was a sign of African or “mixed” parentage? Or that Mongolians were “yellow-brown”? More intriguing still is how an untrained mother in Mississippi could beat state officials at their own game by employing visual codes of heredity only to turn them on their head. Her shrewdness warns us as well that the state was not alone in its fascination with the social meanings of the body and its telltale parts. Indeed, as Trillin tells it, the physical inspections of Scarborough brought back memories of his own youth in Missouri where popular wisdom held it that Japanese people had yellow blood. Like much of the South’s obsession with what Trillin aptly calls “yard-sale anthropology,” such physical differences became popular indices of mental and moral character. “Any number of white people,” recalled Trillin, “would explain to me . . . that the brains of black people were capable of processing specific statements but not general or abstract statements.” As in Minnesota fifty years earlier, the characteristics of the body signified a “race,” a “race” marked a body, the marked body then rose or fell according to the anthropological codes of the street, the

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yard, the country store, the university, the courthouse. Visual indexing was never benign or neutral.

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### The City as Theater

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Because narratives of identity take shape and derive meaning in and through a system of differences, the physical minutiae of bodies take on heightened importance in modern societies where, as the German philosopher Martin Heidegger observed, “the world becomes picture.”<sup>6</sup> Visual detection and physical differentiation become a constant, if unrecognized, practice of everyday life. Indeed, both Scarborough and Judge Cant were following a long tradition of scientific convention that sought to measure (and thus rank) racial differences through anatomical characteristics. Enlarged half-moons at the cuticles of a child’s fingers conformed to nineteenth-century racial taxonomies that suggested an affinity to “non-Aryan” populations. In some ways, of course, the MSSC was unique in the annals of American history, but if Mississippi state officials were unusual in their diligence in tracking down and rooting out racial mixing and preserving the purity of white Caucasians, they were certainly not alone in their attempt to link political sovereignty, social stability, and cultural identity with notions of racial purity and sexual restraint. Indeed, by conflating the body politic with “white” bodies, and by representing the social body with images of the physical body (the head of state, the arm of the law, etc.) state officials in Mississippi were speaking a symbolic language that many nineteenth-century Americans would have understood. The very “minutiae” that fascinated investigators – a person’s cuticles, the contours of a nose, the texture of hair, and even the lilt of a voice – obsessed the Victorian middle classes, who suffered from what some scholars refer to as a “semiotic breakdown,” a confusion of signs. As historian John Kasson points out, urban Americans needed to decode the city by learning how to “read” it. “Of all the voluminous texts produced in the nineteenth century,” writes Kasson, “among the most massive and challenging were the new metropolises themselves. They were recognized by writers of all sorts as the great signifying structures of the age: vast, intricate repositories, dense with meaning, out of which more specific texts might be created.”<sup>7</sup>

To read such a text, however, was not an easy task. By the late nineteenth century urban populations were rapidly increasing, with rates as high as 50 percent in some decades. The growth of very large cities such as Chicago, New York, and San Francisco was by any measure spectacular. New York City increased its population fourfold between 1860 and 1910, while Chicago, “the wonder of the West,” was home to just over 2 million by 1910. Even smaller towns like Omaha, Kansas City, Wichita, and Minneapolis

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experienced rapid demographic change and striking growth. It was the large metropolitan areas, however, that reflected the magnitude of change that became the hallmark of modernism. Self-supporting women, wealthy moguls, struggling artisans, prostitutes, factory workers, Anglo-American businessmen, middle-class shoppers, African American seamen, and newly arrived immigrants shared city streets, trolley cars, workplaces, neighborhoods, and places of leisure. As face-to-face patterns of deference weakened and finally collapsed, new public spaces emerged where social identities could be masked, and/or created.

As urban populations increased and diversified, new social arrangements and possibilities emerged, as did a wide range of confusing and, at times, beguiling social “types.” By 1900, “mashers,” “dandies,” “flirts,” “snoozers,” “flim-flam men,” “swells,” and “bowery gals” comprised only a few of the new types to walk down metropolitan sidewalks and onto the social imagination of modern American.<sup>8</sup> Far more troubling to the respectable classes, however, was the urban imposter who found in the anonymity of the city the means to conceal his or her “real” identity and character. In stories such as Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Man of the Crowd” or Herman Melville’s *The Confidence Man*, social deception and detection became highly charged themes that resonated with a public besieged by tabloid exposés of men and women living “double lives,” of daring masquerades, and countless stories of forgeries and counterfeits. “The line that separated a shopper from a shoplifter, a gentleman from a confidence man, and respectability from criminality,” Kasson notes, “could be disturbingly thin” in the modern city.<sup>9</sup> Simply by adopting the codes, mannerisms, and postures of the genteel, urban imposters – male and female – could shield themselves and their villainy from the eyes of both the authorities and their victims. “Perhaps the real crime of the confidence man,” notes the sociologist Erving Goffman, “is not that he takes money from his victims but that he robs all of us of the belief that middle-class manners and appearance can be sustained only by middle-class people.”<sup>10</sup> To enter the modern city was to negotiate a landscape of subterfuge and charade.

The fantastic nature of the modern metropolis put new pressure on one’s ability to read a face, to interpret correctly the character, even the emotion, underneath the clothing, or behind the manner and, especially, the facial expression. In the new and fashionable “department stores” where even “ladies went a-thieving,” managers valued store clerks and detectives for their skills in the popular art and “science” of physiognomy and phrenology, the belief that character, behavior, and even intelligence could be *seen* in, and thus determined by, the shape and/or position of a person’s head, nose, ears, or brow. As historian Elaine Abelson points out, in the ambiguous and often chaotic environment of the department store, shoplifting, especially among the seemingly well coifed and well to do, posed new problems in criminal



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detection, shoring up the belief among dry-goods management that “the best clerk is a reader of human nature.”<sup>11</sup>

But for others the modern metropolis seemed thoroughly unreadable, a nefarious landscape where deception and trickery, rudeness and chaos, greeted the respectable at every corner. Overwhelmed by the complexity and human diversity of Boston in 1900, writer Henry James found the modern city “illegible,” a tangle of confusion, a riot of “multiplicity,” and he joined a generation of Americans who both sought and helped to create a visual language with which to negotiate its landscape and understand its terrain. How to represent oneself in the midst of such multiplicity? How to read others? And, most importantly, how to make clear these differences and shore up the boundaries between the respectable and the vulgar and distinguish the “authentic” from the counterfeit, the civilized from the savage, the “man” from the “stuffed shirt” or the “sissified” – in short, between “us” and “them”?

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### The Art and Politics of Modern Detection

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As early as 1850, technological inventions such as photography provided at least a partial solution for those who sought to “tame” urban life by exposing its dangerous classes. In Boston, police had developed a weekly “show-up of rogues” whereby petty thieves, known troublemakers, and other suspicious persons were paraded before department operatives who wrote down their physical descriptions and memorized their features in hopes of “getting a spot” of the criminal as he or she walked the streets or mingled among unsuspecting crowds.<sup>12</sup> But “spotting” was at best an imprecise and tedious affair in a city of several thousands and it had the disadvantage of exposing the face of the policeman to the suspect. The photograph, on the other hand, allowed operatives to see without being seen. Hanging the portraits of suspected felons on department walls in a “rogues’ gallery,” police could study the criminal face undetected. Rogues’ galleries also provided victims with a means of identifying their assailants without having to “spot” and round up the “usual suspects.” But perhaps the most powerful result of the police photo was its ability to shore up and popularize the “scientific” links between anatomy and character.

As early as the 1830s, American proponents of phrenology and physiognomy found a large audience for the claim that the outward appearance of the body, especially the head and face, bore the clues to inner character. Based on what was actually an ancient belief, phrenology took on new importance in the 1770s when the Swiss theologian Johann Casper Lavater systematized visual precepts of physiognomy by isolating the skull in order to

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map the mental faculties hidden in the brain but revealed in the contours, shape, and size of the head and face.<sup>13</sup> Both “sciences” depended on an interpretive process whereby physical characteristics such as the size and shape of ears, brow, chin, eyes, nose, etc., conformed to specific types. Encouraged by many self-styled “professors” whose lucrative “How To” books and lecture tours brought widespread prestige to phrenology and physiognomy, an enthusiastic public set out to master these interpretive codes. To be sure, phrenology had its critics, including a highly skeptical Mark Twain. When Huck Finn’s companion, the fast-talking Duke of Bridgewater, promotes himself up and down the Mississippi as the “celebrated Dr. Armand de Montalban of Paris who would lecture on the Science of Phrenology at ten cents admission, and furnish charts of character at twenty-five cents apiece,” readers no doubt recognized a scoundrel at work. But in its desire to map the “inner” man or woman with the outward compass of the body phrenology discovered its own enduring appeal. Long after it had been discredited as a pseudo-science in the late nineteenth century it continued to play a significant role in popular culture as a kind of “yardsale” or “commonsense” anthropology through which one could casually decipher in the bodies of strangers the supposedly hidden terrain of temperament, character, and morality. Indeed, as the childhood memories of Calvin Trillin attest, the lessons of Dr. Armand de Montalban continued to flow up and over the Mississippi well into the 1960s.

It was the police photograph, however, that helped keep physiognomy in the public eye long after the “How To” books faded from view. A product of both new methodologies and technologies, the “mug” shot systematized topologies of the body, bringing emblematic images of “the criminal” into focus and into the social imagination. The rogues’ gallery generated as well a new logic of seeing: the art of the “public look,” what historian Allan Sekula describes as “a look up at one’s ‘betters’ and a look down at one’s ‘inferiors.’” The specimen-like photograph ascribes value to particular images by both quantifying the body and its characteristics and placing them in a circulating system that continually measures their worth and value by emphasizing their similarity to, or difference from, other sorts or categories. In the case of the gallery, the look of the vicious is observed in relation to that of the virtuous. Embedded within the visual empiricism that supposedly served “to distinguish the stigmata of vice from the shinning marks of virtue,” was a social and moral hierarchy that implicitly framed every private look and marked each individual body. The portraits of criminals were viewed not with innocent eyes of objectivity, but with eyes already practiced in the art of the “public look.” The continually comparative and relational act of looking thus shadowed the modern photographic experience, turning what on the surface appears a simple response to technological innovation into a profoundly

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complex and powerful cultural practice of image-making and social meaning. "We can speak then," writes Sekula, "of a generalized, inclusive *archive*, a *shadow archive* that encompasses an entire social terrain while positioning individuals within that terrain."<sup>14</sup> The private moments of looking were always and also social moments of public spectatorship.

Here we would do well to remember that the terms "daguerreotype" and "stereotype" came into popular discourse together.<sup>15</sup> The former recognized the French inventor Louis Jacques Daguerre's 1839 method for fixing an image onto a silver plate, but over time it came to connote the type of precision and detail representative of this type of photographic picture-making.<sup>16</sup> Stereotype, on the other hand, was a method of duplication introduced in the early nineteenth century to standardize plates cast from a printing surface or mold. By mid-century it was widely used to indicate a generalized kind of reproduction. The archive described by Sekula drew its logic from the slippage between these two realms: the details of the daguerreotype and the generalized form of the stereotype. By holding up to public scrutiny the bodily characteristics and faces of criminals and rogues who were then arranged and ordered in relation to each other, the complex relationship between the specifics of the daguerreotype and the generic codes of the stereotype collapsed. In their place emerged the banal image of "the type."<sup>17</sup> Because both physiognomy and phrenology were built around comparative, taxonomic classifications that sought to both quantify and display the entire range of human diversity, Sekula implicates them in the hierarchical construction of the very archive they claim to interpret. These disciplines, in other words, did not simply sort out and arrange bodily types, but, in very real ways, they worked to invent them.

To be sure, "the type" could be read in a multitude of ways, but because the criminal archive was constructed and organized as a means to identify deviations from a "norm," it simultaneously reflected and produced a standard or non-criminal body against which the "criminal type" was measured. This new logic of seeing received additional support from emerging theories of heredity which argued that criminality was in fact innate, a product less of poverty and environment than of evolution run amuck. Loosely formulated around the theories of the Italian physician Cesare Lombroso, *l'uomo delinquente*, or "the criminal man," was believed to reside in some unfortunate individuals whose savage ancestral past, normally dormant, comes suddenly alive.<sup>18</sup> Thrown back in evolutionary time, these born criminals act as "normal" savages or apes might, but because such acts are committed in civilized time they are deemed abnormal. Lombroso came to his conclusions in the 1870s after studying the anatomical differences between criminals and insane men and discovering a set of atavistic features on the skull of one notorious rogue. "This was not merely an idea," Lombroso tells us, "but a flash of inspiration":

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At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal – an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals. Thus were explained anatomically the enormous jaws, high cheek bones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, handle-shaped ears found in criminals, savages and apes, insensibility to pain, extremely acute sight, tattooing, excessive idleness, love of orgies, and the irresponsible craving of evil for its own sake, the desire not only to extinguish life in the victim, but to mutilate the corpse, tear its flesh and drink its blood.<sup>19</sup>

As biologist Stephen Jay Gould points out in his study of biological determinism, aptly entitled *The Mismeasurement of Man*, Lombroso's theory gave specificity to otherwise vague notions that claimed crime to be hereditary. "Such claims," notes Gould, "were common enough at the time – but a specific *evolutionary* theory based upon anthropometric data" promoted the belief that criminal behavior was inherent, a product of evolutionary biology. "The Criminal" was thus categorized not only as a social type but as a biological "throwback" whose atavism, while both mental and physical, could be read from decisive "stigmata" that marked the physical body.<sup>20</sup> A formidable buttress to the belief that anatomy was destiny, Lombroso's theories invited observers of all sorts to identify and define both the marks of atavism and those "types" marked by them.

Reading Lombroso's "flash of inspiration" we can readily see the importance of appearance and the visual field in the construction and detection of modern types. Both store clerks and good detectives could literally "read a face." Brilliant detectives, it seemed, could also read thoughts. "Do you mean to say that you read my train of thoughts from my features?" asks an astounded Dr. Watson upon hearing Sherlock Holmes do just that. "The features are given to man as the means by which he shall express his emotions," explains a somewhat bored Holmes, "and yours are faithful servants."<sup>21</sup> For Lombroso and his followers, however, physical appearance expressed not simply emotions, but an aesthetic and moral standard based upon romanticized ideals of both classical beauty and "democratic" civilizations. The former was typically represented in the nineteenth century by the neoclassical arts, whose reinvented Greek bodies took on a highly sentimentalized and statuesque ideal of beauty: straight, chiseled noses, strong chins, and high foreheads. Reinscribed by art critics into a Caucasian, Anglo-Saxon type, this idealized body quickly became a popular standard against which derogatory images of non-Western (popularly termed non-Aryan) peoples were measured and judged.<sup>22</sup> At times, artist and anthropologist appeared to be in collusion as hundreds of so-called scientific monographs illustrated the physical similarities between the profiles of the "superior" Caucasian types and

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those of Apollo-like faces and skulls. “Non-Aryans” – such as the Irish, French, and Africans – on the other hand, were sketched in relation to living specimens deemed closer to their “type” and character. In one highly regarded book on comparative physiognomy, for example, the Irishman is paired with a “scrounging, yapping, terrier dog,” a Frenchman with a series of frogs, and the “Creole Negro” with a young chimpanzee.<sup>23</sup> The pictorial criterion for the culturally superior and civilized was, on the other hand, a highly idealized “Greek” type. If not all moderns looked like Apollo in their person, they did when compared to, and remodeled as, their own “best” type. Art becomes life.

Indeed, so popular was this reinvented ideal of classical beauty that hundreds of cities in nineteenth-century America commissioned sculptors to commemorate revolutionary heroes by carving their images with the Apollo-like features of Greek statuary. George Washington, the most popular subject for classical representation, was thus repeatedly chiseled from pure white marble, one arm typically held tightly over a draping toga while the other gestured as if in debate at the public forum. But it was the French sculptor Bartholdi who no doubt did more than most to enshrine the classical body into the American imagination when he presented the Statue of Liberty to New York City in 1886. Deeply influenced by the ideal of classic female beauty, he designed his “daughter Liberty” to look the part of a classical goddess, and even today her visage embodies the visual power of this invented type. It is easy to forget, for instance, that this “bearer of a million dreams” once competed with another powerful and popular type of female figure, Miss Columbia, who was widely depicted not as a Greek or Roman, but as a more ambiguous figure who frequently wore an American Indian headdress.<sup>24</sup> By 1900, however, Bartholdi’s visual ideal had become the measure of the “best” type: what popular commentators soon regarded as “the American face.”<sup>25</sup>

We can begin to appreciate some of the visual complexity that marked modern practices of everyday detection by briefly recalling older forms of sleuthing. During the eighteenth century, for example, the identification and classification of criminals and rogues grew out of their own specialized forms of subterfuge, such as the sham deaf-mute, the fake shipwrecked sailor, or the sighted “blind beggars” whose tin cups rattled the conscience of the bourgeois urbanite.<sup>26</sup> Both Lombroso’s theories and the modern archive, however, significantly shifted attention away from types of crime to types of criminals. As in phrenology, crime was believed to be a kind of disease, but whereas phrenology treated crime as a moral disease that could be corrected with proper treatment, the American followers of Lombroso, many of them physicians, adopted a more biological model. If crime was a disease with physiological roots, they argued, then the criminal was not simply a different kind of person; he was “a separate species – the criminal type.”<sup>27</sup>

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Such arguments emerged in tandem with specific longings among many Americans to see Africans and Indians as a separate and distinct type of humanity. The theory of polygenesis, the belief that certain races of mankind are in fact a separate species, received wide currency and fueled arguments that claimed blacks to be nonhuman, that is a mere sub-species of *Homo sapiens*. Formulated on the eve of the American Civil War, such arguments held great appeal to slaveholders who sought to justify slavery and defend their right to own Africans. But to theorists like Harvard professor Louis Agassiz and Dr. Samuel Morton, whose work on “separate creation” became the basis of the American School of Ethnology, polygenesis was the product of science, not politics. “We disclaim,” declared Agassiz in 1850, “all connection with any question involving political matters.”<sup>28</sup> Here, of course, the problem of fact and fiction, of real things and things made up, confronts us once again. As Galileo found out, science can profoundly alter and destabilize the social order by challenging the very conceptual systems that gave it birth. It can and has brought down regimes of oppressive dogma, and it can also illuminate a factual reality, as Gould points out: the earth is not flat.<sup>29</sup> But science is also embedded in the culture that surrounds it and is thus never free of politics. Despite disclaimers to the contrary, the topological systems that sought to “scientifically” analyze physical differences between European whites and African blacks could not escape the cultural constraints that nurtured them.

The problem, in other words, is not that Agassiz manufactured data to support his views about the superiority of the white “race,” but rather that his data were already a manufactured product of modern habits of seeing. Based upon photos that compared the physical bodies of individual slaves from Southern plantations, his study simultaneously depended upon and helped establish two central “truths”: that “science is disinterested empiricism,” and that photography is transparently real. The proof, in other words, was to be found in the data and not in the narrative traditions that gave them meaning – in this case, in the seemingly unblemished topological photograph whose claims to objectivity and reality were held to be both obvious and self-evident.

The idea, initially formulated in European scientific journals, was to create a global photographic archive (not unlike that of the rogues’ gallery) that would represent all human specimens. Agassiz hoped to contribute to such an archive by arranging to have black male and female slaves captured from various African regions photographed to determine their differences from other races and types. Agassiz’s ethnographic research thus mirrored the physiognomic practices employed by criminologists and others who saw in the photograph a tool enabling an impartial methodology. Photographs, after all, don’t lie. But as recent scholars have made clear, neither do they tell the truth, nor show “reality.” Indeed, it is the “seeming transparency of photographic realism” that critics see as implicating them even more thoroughly in

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the production of illusion and distortion.<sup>30</sup> They might produce what Roland Barthes calls a “reality effect,” but this is not the same thing as reality. This is because topological photos, like Lombroso’s classificatory project, were highly comparative in that they depended upon relational images and the cumulative effects of measurement and ordering. Like the “mug shot” they demanded the creation of a norm or a standard against which to evaluate or judge the “evidence.” The body, displayed in photographic sequence and held up next to different types, thus played a critical role in formulating the “look” of physiognomical “difference” and of the racialized other. It also signaled the normal and abnormal, the standard and the deviant, the “best” or “right” type and the “wrong” type. Like the image they purported to capture, photographs were hardly the unmediated truth of the natural body.

Such methodologies, in other words, could not be objective because, while science could record body shape, posture, and proportion without reference to a standard, it could not *compare* or interpret the images of whites and blacks without reference to a pictorial hierarchy that enforced and created a set of divisions and rankings between an imaginary “us” and “them.” Again, Allan Sekula argues that, “Since physiognomy and phrenology were comparative, taxonomic disciplines, they sought to encompass an entire range of human diversity. In this respect, these disciplines were instrumental in constructing the very archive they claimed to interpret.”

But objectivity is further complicated by the narrative traditions that give trajectory and meaning to so-called raw data. To read a photograph in the archive of human topology around the turn of the twentieth century was, in other words, to read a tale of progress and civilization, of white supremacy and black inferiority, of male energy and female stasis. “Inspired” at the height of both European and American imperialism, signs of atavism – hairy brows, full lips, large jaws, high cheekbones, a low and receding forehead, but also tattooing, idleness, and “insensitivity to pain” – both mirrored and shaped anthropological observations and reports of whites working in Africa as well as in America. Viewed as signs of savage or primitive types, such features helped as well to justify in the minds of white Europeans and Americans the colonizing policies of imperialism. The physical characteristics of non-Anglo Europeans quickly became marks of inferior “savage” types; their customs, rituals, food ways, and traditions proof of their low, “animal-like” status on the evolutionary scale.

Perhaps the best way to appreciate the essential links between practices of racialization and economic expansion, and modernist narratives of civilization, progress, and advancement, is to look briefly at the curious business in Western societies of human display and the touring of “exotic” peoples for profit, entertainment, and education. The display of American “Indians” in London and Paris, of course, had thrilled Europeans as early as the sixteenth

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century, but by 1870 the practice took on new entrepreneurial zeal as paid agents combed remote regions of the globe for the sole purpose of procuring primitive types for public exhibition. Typically, these tours contained some claims to ethnographic authenticity, although showmen like Phineas T. Barnum appreciated as well the commercial value of including in his sideshow of oddities and freaks both the Wild Man of Borneo and Fijian man-eaters.<sup>31</sup> By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the display of “primitives” took place as an essential part of industrial expositions, or “world’s fairs.” These were enormous undertakings that brought together government officials, industrialists, and capitalists to promote and celebrate the marvel of Western development, especially technology and industrial innovation. The expositions entailed building temporary exhibit halls, such as London’s Crystal Palace in 1851, as well as restaurants, midways, or as in the case of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, an entire “White City” comprised of dazzling bright marble and palatial reflecting pools.

Organizers, however, did more than just display machines. By incorporating “primitive peoples” into the exposition, they hoped to create for fairgoers an understandable narrative of Western triumph over darkness, of civilization over savagery, of progress over stasis. In New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, San Francisco, and numerous other American cities, world fairs thus touted the nation’s progress by putting on display technological innovations in juxtaposition with exhibits of non-white populations. Cast as the human remnants of a primitive past, the indigenous peoples of Africa, America, Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific Rim became the yardstick by which fairgoers could measure and understand both progress and “the future.” As one organizer put it, “The fair... would illustrate ‘the steps of progress of civilization and its arts in successive centuries, and in all lands up to the present time.’ It would become, ‘in fact, an illustrated encyclopedia of humanity.’”<sup>32</sup> In the narrative structure of the industrial exposition, “primitive” people were essential because they helped define and give meaning to the “modern.”

Indeed, without indigenous peoples to embody the “primitive” how could one recognize the civilized? It was exactly this problem of defining and identifying “our race” that worried Frederick Ward Putnam, director and curator of the Peabody Museum at Harvard, and head of the Ethnology and Archaeology Department, for the Chicago fair:

But what will all this amount to without the means of comparison in the great object lesson? What, then, is more appropriate, more essential, than to show in their natural conditions of life the different types of peoples who were here when Columbus was crossing the Atlantic Ocean and leading the way for the great wave of humanity that was soon spread over the continent and forced



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those unsuspecting peoples to give way before a mighty power, to resign their inherited rights, and take their chances for existence under the laws governing a strange people? The great object lesson then will not be completed without their being present. Without them, the Exposition will have no base.

Strolling down the midway and into the anthropological building, fairgoers could thus marvel at the distance that separated them not only from the donkey-boys of Cairo and the Samoan natives in their re-enacted villages, but also from the paddles of Greenland Eskimos, the tepees of the Crow Indians, and the canoes of the Micmacs. Here was the baseline with which to both measure progress and formulate the Modern. By definition, indigenous peoples had no future.

For most Americans, however, their first and usually only look at “exotic” populations was enabled by pictorial representations in the new mass-circulation publications such as newspapers and magazines, and, increasingly, through the illustrated encyclopedias aimed at middlebrow readers and their families. By the 1890s entire populations were envisioned along an axis of civilization and savagery. Organized, categorized, and ranked in an ascending order based upon the optical measures of physiology, images of generic racial “types” flooded mass publications. In popular encyclopedias like *The Book of Knowledge*, hundreds of topological images accentuated head shape, facial hair, skin color, and the kinds of physical characteristics believed to characterize their “race.” As art historians have pointed out, these kinds of topological photos differed significantly from conventions of portraiture in which the artist sought to express the individuality of the subject. Here, style and composition are a fundamental concern. The type, however, whether displayed in the rogues’ gallery or in the *Book of Knowledge*, works to obscure the individual by emphasizing the body as a representational form of many others. What are subjective distortions and composite images are made to appear as objective facts by presenting the type in a straightforward and non-stylistic manner. The portrait, for example, seeks to convey abstract meaning by showing the subject “in thought” or with particular items and adornments that signify individuality. By contrast, the “type” simply embodies a subject by using a minimum of external information. As art historian Brian Wallis notes, “The emphasis on body occurs at the expense of speech; the subject as already positioned, known, owned, represented, spoken for, or constructed as silent; in short, it is ignored.” In the “type” the complexities of diversity and individual difference diminish and grow mute.

Because “types” took on form and meaning during a period of intense economic expansion and global competition, they entered into modern habits of seeing as a form of “representational colonialism.”<sup>33</sup> Behind every photographic type or representational model, in other words, stood the shadow of

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whiteness, now a trope for civilization and modern progress against which the typologies of non-Westerners would be measured and evaluated. At the top of the scale stood civilization and progress, while at the bottom lingered the primitive and savage. At times, rankings would be subtly refined, as when Madison Grant in his enormously popular book, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), moved Indians a step up from the bottom by placing them with Mongoloids and Nordics instead of with “the Negro,” whom white supremacists typically placed at the bottom of their charts.

Despite such fine-tuning, representations of savagery seldom varied. In the highly charged atmosphere of turn-of-the-century America, where Jim Crow laws and white lynch mobs were deepening racial divisions in both the north and south, black men were frequently burdened by tropes of savagery, their claims to both manhood and civilization denied by their supposedly “natural” tendency to vice, violence, and brutality, the traits of “normal” savages. As Gail Bederman argues, it was only by constructing “the Negro” as “unmanly and outside civilization” that notions of “the white man” could be made meaningful as the mark of civilization. Indeed, by 1890 and continuing well into the twentieth century, the term “the white man” became virtually synonymous with the term “civilization.” As Bederman points out, “The trope was meaningless unless it was juxtaposed to a reference to non-white races.” Rudyard Kipling defined “The White Man’s burden” as the mission to civilize savage races, while the editors of the *Arena* entitled a symposium on several nonwhite ethnic groups, “The White Man’s Problem.”<sup>34</sup> Conversely, the Negro, like the Indian, was represented in opposition to the “whiteness” of civilized manhood. Take, for example, the remarks of two popular journalists of the Progressive era describing the problem of lynching: “The Negro,” writes Edward C. Gordon, “is especially prone to certain crimes of violence which are particularly obnoxious to the white man... The Negro must, like the Indian, go down and out before the white man...” And here’s the muckraker Ray Standard Baker calling for an end to lynching:

Nothing more surely tends to bring the white man down to the lowest level of the criminal Negro than yielding to those blind instincts of savagery which find expression in the mob. The man who joins a mob, by his very acts, puts himself on a level with the Negro criminal: both have given way to brute passion. For if civilization means anything, it means self-restraint; casting away self-restraint the white man becomes as savage as the Negro.<sup>35</sup>

By avoiding, as Bederman points out, the logical use of a parallel construction which would have situated the “the Negro man” (or “the Indian man”) in tandem with “the white man,” popular discourses like these “linked white

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supremacy, male dominance, and evolutionary advancement in one powerful figure. He ["The white man"] embodied the notion that non-white men were neither manly nor civilized."<sup>36</sup> But popular discourses like these reinforced as well an almost blanket criminalization of the Negro, a term increasingly indistinguishable from those repeatedly paired with it, such as: "brute passion," "savagery," "animal," and "baseness."

It should come as no surprise then, that as a new generation of social scientists and reformers turned their gaze on the nation's increasingly diverse and heterogeneous population, they found a world of both difference and danger. In the images they used, the stereotypes they produced, and the metaphors they deployed, writers, politicians, journalists, reformers, and artists charted an American underworld as strange and alien as the "Dark Continent." Inhabited by "the dangerous classes" or, as Lombroso preferred, "the under-class," the geography of the down-and-out emerged in the minds of armchair explorers and vicarious adventurers, a disturbingly foreign country: an urban "underbrush" that teamed with strange beings, "savagely brutes," and "primitives" of all types. These included not only the waves of "new" immigrants that began to flood American cities between 1890 and 1924, but also many of the children of "old" immigrants – Irish men and women, Native Americans, Finns, and poor children of all sorts who eked out a living as unskilled workers and migrants in factories, shops, boarding-houses, canneries, fields, and mills. It included as well those populations excluded by law from citizenship: the descendants of African men and women, and immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Rim.

But the world of the "dangerous classes" was more than simply a racialized or class-inflected trope used by middle-class Americans to describe others. It also worked to create them. The figure of the domestic "Dark Continent" emerged out of deep-seated fears and anxieties on the part of many ordinary Americans over the increasing fluidity and instability of modern life. All that seemed fixed and certain in the decades of Victorian America now seemed to fall apart as the new century approached. The imagined existence of an "underclass" allowed the respectable classes to both distance themselves from those who had indeed fallen, not only apart, but also "down and out," and to contain those elements in the modern world that seemed most capable of disrupting the codes of "civilization." Unlike radicals and revolutionaries however, who frightened the established order because of what they said and hoped to do, those within the "dangerous classes" troubled authority because they operated below the level of official scrutiny. Like the remote peoples of Africa or Asia, they seemed to live hidden lives in queer places maintaining their own rules, values, and secret codes. They were, wrote social gospel leader Walter Rauschenbusch, an "unknown race." Their very bodies – the hue of their skin, their "shifty" eyes, their "frightful looks," even the clothes they

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wore, or, more infuriating still, “mis-wore,” became the modern embodiment of social devolution and moral anarchy. Together with the immigrant, the poor, and the non-white, the growing ranks of other liminal types – the feeble-minded, the homeless tramp, the sexually non-conforming, the transgendered, even the adolescent – provided in modern society a kind of phantasmagoric “Other” against which “normality” and “Americanness” itself came to be defined and discursively fixed in the social imagination. Seeing was believing.

By 1900, millions of Americans thus entered America’s streets and the social imagination less as individuals with rights to personhood than as representative types dramatically at odds with the civilized world. Stamped by an overwhelming sense of pernicious otherness, their foreignness appeared both strange and illicit. Indeed, as Lombroso’s followers argued, criminality itself appeared as normal behavior among the shadowy denizens of the underclass. Yet, whether figured as savages, primitives, an “unknown race,” inverts, or feeble-minded, the “dangerous classes” provided the conceptual glue with which anxious middle classes hoped to shore up and piece together the flimsy fabric of their own nationhood. By defining who and what they were not, they simultaneously imagined and invented who they were. Like the criminals whose portraits hung in the rogues’ gallery, the nineteenth-century underclass was thus twice framed: once by the material practices that displayed their bodies to the public gaze, and again by the stereotypical images of essentialized difference that visually fixed and summoned up identities of otherness. The traditional cry of the falsely accused – “I’ve been framed” – was perhaps far truer than even the modern rogue suspected.

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**Botanizing the Asphalt**


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By 1900 the art of looking became both a powerful and prosaic practice of modern life which frequently blurred the distinctions between social types and biological traits. Readers of the increasingly popular genre of social-scientific writing learned, for example, of a new type, “The Tramp,” whose exploits and dangers filled the pages of both the tabloid press and the middlebrow magazine. The careful reader learned as well that the tendency among certain types of the poor to wander about the countryside in search of food and a job resulted in a “gipsylike” character that would require generations to “breed out of their progeny.” What had for centuries in Europe been a problem of poverty and homelessness – of social inequality and the unequal distribution of wealth – became, in the minds of modern Americans, a problem less of history and power than of heredity and “bad stock.” The

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tramp, it appeared, was both a modern type and a biological possibility: it (rather than poverty and inequality) could reproduce itself.

This is not to say, however, that writers of the “underclass” agreed with Lombroso who so named them. Often, in fact, the reverse was true. In a very popular 1901 exposé, *Tramping with Tramps*, Josiah Flynt took his clues not from the hereditarian school of criminal anthropology, but from Progressive ideas that emphasized the influence of environment and history over racial formalism and biological determinism. Yet, as one student of “down-and-out” literature points out, Flynt’s portrayal of the tramp was a contradictory combination of explicit rejection and implicit emulation of hereditarian thinking. Like an “entomologist poring over his specimens,” Flynt collated his tramps into “classes,” “species,” and “subspecies” according to apparently physiognomically expressed and inherited traits even as he denied their essential difference from members of other social classes.<sup>37</sup> In effect, argues Mark Pittenger, Flynt’s text did as much to construct as to describe a world where the working poor and the home itinerant lived a shadowy existence that was “fundamentally different – a strange breed in classless America.”<sup>38</sup> “Botanizing the asphalt” – to use Walter Benjamin’s phrase – the urban explorer and social investigator simultaneously protested and graphically depicted a topography of difference that gave to unstable identities and social problems a narrative structure of visual strangeness and immutable otherness.

As with explorers to the Dark Continent, the way into the American underclass was through fieldwork and observation. The domestic trek was both “down and out” and it was marked by a combination of reform, education, admiration, and voyeurism. “I went to Paterson,” wrote the young journalist John Reed, “to watch it.” Stirred by what he saw in the silk city during the strike of 1913, Reed returned to New York City, quit his job, and dedicated himself to bringing the story of industrial workers – “the wretchedness of their lives and the glory of their revolt” – into the imaginative repertoire of genteel readers. As he “watched” Paterson, the artist John Sloan “peeped” at his rear-window neighbors on Manhattan’s 23rd Street. “I am in the habit of *watching every bit* of human life I can see about my windows,” wrote Sloan in his diary. I peep,” he explained, “through real interest, not being watched myself.”<sup>39</sup> Others, like reformers Marie Van Vorst and her sister-in-law Mrs. John Van Vorst, joined Flynt by cloaking their peeping in the new garb of social science: participant observation and social documentation. They watched by going undercover. Like Flynt they dressed for the part, exchanging their sealskin coats and kid gloves for the gray serge and wool of a working woman’s budget. Disguised as workers, these two “gentlewomen” entered the ranks of the working class as Bell Ballard and Esther Kelly, names they believed would reflect the dull simplicity of the common worker. Many others, however, simply strolled into the working-class districts of nearby industrial towns or,

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on special occasions, took the ferry to Ellis Island to promenade along the upper balconies and to see for themselves America's exotic new arrivals from eastern and southern Europe. In the decades that bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, explains Martha Banta, "image-making and image-reading had become a major cultural activity."<sup>40</sup>

Because immigrants and the poor seemed as alien and remote to the middle classes as did the populations of the non-Western world, it is not surprising that image-makers deployed a similar set of metaphors and images to recount their experiences among the denizens of the "underbrush." Tenements in New York City thus became both exotic and dangerous places, "a jungle abounding in treacherous quicksand," or at times, "a swamp in which any misstep may plunge you into the choking depths of a quagmire or the coils of a slimy reptile." Here too was a whiff of imperial anthropology as middle-class observers longingly noted a pre-modern sense of spontaneity and simplicity among the poor. The Van Vorsts waxed poetic over the "primitive love of ornament" which New York's knitting-mill girls displayed, while undercover explorer Francis Donovan marveled at the "vulgarity and robustness of primitive life everywhere" along her travels into the world of the waitress.<sup>41</sup> To the popular author Jack London they were both a "new race," and a "People of the Abyss." The Dark Continent had moved to America.

As image-making and image-reading became major cultural activities in America, so too did they become a primary means for understanding and interpreting social difference and economic inequality. Those who became (either because of their poverty, their skin color, or simply their looks) the "Other" increasingly figured as a species apart: a people who appeared, as one social investigator wrote in 1898, "widely severed from all things human."<sup>42</sup> From this perspective poverty and race could be seen as the product, not of politics and history, but of culture and biology, a position recently reintroduced with little modification by anthropologist Oscar Lewis, whose classic work *The Culture of Poverty* has had just this effect on policy-makers today. In newspapers, encyclopedias, magazines, museums, novels, plays, and, by 1914, feature films, Americans learned both the visual codes that marked modern "types" and a way to ensure their segregated position on the margins of modern life.

Yet as looking relations took on new importance for modern Americans at the turn of the century, appearance and physical typologies grew increasingly problematic in the scientific community. Franz Boas, who had served as Frederick Ward Putnam's chief assistant at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, launched a series of attacks on racial formalism and argued that biological determinism was more the result of politics and national chauvinism than of thoughtful study. America's imperialist activities in the 1898 Spanish-American War, along with the rising tide of both racist and

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anti-immigrant sentiment in the first decades of the century, convinced him and many other academics that anthropology in general, and museum display in particular, could be easily manipulated and exploited by those who hoped to profit in either cash or cultural capital. "The American who is cognizant only of his own standpoint," wrote Boas on the eve of World War I, "sets himself up as arbiter of the world."<sup>43</sup> After two decades of jingoist rhetoric and global expansion, Boas retreated from public anthropology and turned to the study of ritual as a source of wisdom and history in human cultures. Boas's ideas, especially those concerning cultural relativism, gained popularity and widespread credibility in the 1930s and 1940s, through works by Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Gunnar Myrdal among others.

Academics were not only critics of visual detection. Criminology itself underwent new scrutiny as the amateur sleuth and genteel reader of character became replaced by a professional corps of detectives, floorwalkers, and police. All agreed: the modern criminal was simply too well versed in the habits and haberdashery of the respectable to depend on the untrained eye of the amateur. Cross-class passing could, at least in the mind's eye, go both ways. To the professional detective, the science of phrenology seemed to lack the precision now required to detect "the criminal man," or, in some cases, "the criminal woman." Recalling the career of Catherine Bloch, who successfully shoplifted at New York's finest department stores for over thirty years, a former New York City detective who began his career in 1899, explained the problems of depending on ordinary visual empiricism:

Catherine had the manner that makes department store managers bow on sight. Hard-boiled store detectives would give her a glance of respect whenever she appeared. She looked to be exactly what she represented herself to be, the wife of a rich and distinguished citizen... her expensive clothing, her cultivated voice, her treatment of department store staff were just what might be expected from a matron of the "400."<sup>44</sup>

Because the modern criminal was capable of great deception in the manner of his or her dress, posture, and speech, detection was thought most effective when it depended upon the expert scrutiny of physical characteristics *combined with* a studied knowledge of criminal behavior. The ability to read human nature from physical evidence thus assumed heightened importance among a new class of professional detectives, including the controversial Allan Pinkerton, whose private detective agency recruited and trained the vast majority of undercover agents and company spies employed by the nation's manufacturers to break strikes and prevent union organizing.

But the modern detective also faced the problem of a congested and increasingly chaotic police archive of criminal images. The visual empiricism

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that marked modern modes of detection sagged under the weight of over-exposure. There were simply too many photos of too many faces to watch and observe. By 1890 the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, whose motto was “the eye that never sleeps,” had amassed one of the largest criminal archives in the world. But the problem of identification persisted as the specificity of individual images overwhelmed the physiognomic standards of the day. By 1900, few departments of police maintained any faith in the practice of visual detection. Fingerprinting turned professional detection away from the representative type and towards the invisible mark of individual difference.

Nevertheless, racial and social topologies did not disappear, nor did popular reliance upon them. Between 1890 and 1930 popular interest accelerated as readers of magazines, newspapers, encyclopedias, and popular novels learned to decode the bodies of modern types. Some, as Banta notes, “trundled ashore, loaded down by the baggage of unfamiliar languages, customs, religions, and genes, under the watchful eye of the colossal American Girl set on her pedestal since 1886 in New York’s harbor.”<sup>45</sup> They would be joined by sharecroppers who trekked into southern and then into northern cities from rural farms and delta towns, by migrant farm workers who moved north and south, up and down the two coasts or between the borders of Mexico and Canada, by migrant cannery workers, and by an army of others whose social distinctions registered in the national mind’s eye a physicality of Otherness that in turn confirmed and fixed their social difference. Half-moons at the cuticles, dark skin, “shifty eyes,” low brows were clues to social value and national belonging. Scientifically discredited, the pseudo-science of physiognomy nevertheless continued to influence and shape modern habits of seeing. It was no accident, after all, that Agatha Christie, whose mystery novels would outsell all other books in the twentieth century, created as her first sleuth the amateur detective Anne Beddingfield, whose father “was one of England’s greatest living authorities on Primitive Man.” Puzzled over the disappearance of “The Man in the Brown Suit,” a key witness to murder, police turn to Anne, who has caught a brief but telling glimpse of the poorly dressed suspect. The key to solving Christie’s mystery rests on just one question: “What,” Anne asks the authorities, “do you know of brachycephalic heads?” Like her readers, they knew a great deal indeed.

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**Notes**


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- 1 Calvin Trillin, “State Secrets,” *New Yorker Magazine* (May 29, 1995), 54.
- 2 Ibid. 56.
- 3 The case was based on Section 2169, United States Revised Statutes. For a discussion of the process of Asian racialization, see Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian*



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- American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), especially pp. 16–36.
- 4 Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 174.
  - 5 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London: Routledge, 1993), 123.
  - 6 Martin Heidegger, quoted in Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 6.
  - 7 John F. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1990), 70.
  - 8 See especially Guy Szuberla, "Ladies, Gentlemen, Flirts, Mashers, Snoozers, and the Breaking of Etiquette's Code," *Prospects*, 15 (1990), 169–95.
  - 9 Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*, 109.
  - 10 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), 18 n.
  - 11 Elaine S. Abelson, *When Ladies Go A-Thieving: Middle-Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 136.
  - 12 For a discussion of these and other nineteenth-century police practices see Roger Lane, *Policing the City: Boston, 1822–1885* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 66; Larry K. Hartsfield, *The American Response to Professional Crime, 1870–1917* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985); David Ray Papke, *Framing the Criminal: Crime, Criminal Work and the Loss of Critical Perspective, 1830–1900* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1987).
  - 13 Johann Casper Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy, for the Promotion of the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, 2nd edn. (London: Thomas Holcroft, 1804). Ironically, Lavater's aim was to classify racial types in order to know and therefore love the world's diversity. See Martha Banta, *Imaging American Women: Idea and Ideals in Cultural History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 104.
  - 14 Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," in Richard Bolton (ed.), *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 347.
  - 15 Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 1–35. See also Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill & Wang: 1989), 67. Brian Wallis makes this point and elaborates on the important connection between the two in "Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz's Slave Daguerreotypes," *American Art*, 9:2 (Summer 1995), 48.
  - 16 See Peter B. Hales, *Silver Cities: The Photography of American Urbanization, 1839–1915* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 11–12.
  - 17 For a discussion on the various uses of the term daguerreotype see Alan Trachtenberg, "Photography: The Emergence of a Keyword," in Martha A. Sandweiss (ed.), *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1991), 13–47; Wallis, "Black Bodies, White Science," 48. See also Elizabeth

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- Edwards, "Photographic 'Types': The Pursuit of Method," *Visual Anthropology*, 3 (1990), 5–58: 23.
- 18 Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasurement of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), 122–45; Hartsfield, *American Response*, 62–165.
- 19 Quoted in Gould, *The Mismeasurement of Man*, 124.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box," in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*, vol. 2 (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), 322.
- 22 Brian Wallis, "Black Bodies, White Science," 52. See also Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 1–27.
- 23 Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 35, 37, 61.
- 24 Christian Blanchet, "The Universal Appeal of the Statue of Liberty," in Wilton S. Dillon and Neil G. Kotler (eds.), *The Statue of Liberty Revisited* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 32–3. See also Barbara A. Babcock and John J. Macaloon, "Everybody's Gal: Women, Boundaries, and Monuments," in Dillon and Kotler (eds.), *The Statue of Liberty Revisited*, 79–100.
- 25 Banta, *Imaging American Women*, 116.
- 26 See especially Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 63–7.
- 27 Hartsfield, *American Response*, 163; see also pp. 160–5.
- 28 Wallis, "Black Bodies, White Science," 44.
- 29 This point is nicely made by Gould, *The Mismeasurement of Man*, 22.
- 30 Wallis, "Black Bodies, White Science," 47; Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).
- 31 See especially, Curtis M. Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 344–65.
- 32 Quoted in Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace," 346.
- 33 Wallis, "Black Bodies, White Science," 54.
- 34 Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*. See also Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 115–46; Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 49.
- 35 Edward C. Gordon, quoted in Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 50. Ray Standard Baker, "What Is a Lynching? A Study of Mob Justice, South and North," *McClure's Magazine*, 24 (Feb. 1905), 429.

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- 36 Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 50.
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