"MIRROR WITH A MEMORY": PHOTOGRAPHY AS METAPHOR AND MATERIAL OBJECT IN VICTORIAN CULTURE

Sarah Worman

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2017

Committee:

Piya Pal-Lapinski, Advisor

Kim Coates
In the Victorian period, photography was associated with the ghosts of history, con artists in the streets of London, and cultural anxieties about the future of Victorian society. The Victorian practice of photographing ghosts, or spirit photography, showed how Victorians viewed the past, present, and future. By examining the cultural artifact of Georgiana Houghton’s *Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings* (1882), it becomes clear how photography affected Victorian literature as well as Victorian culture. In the short stories, “Oke of Okehurst” (1886) and “A Wicked Voice” (1887), Vernon Lee compared Victorian produced art to art from history. For Lee, the fast paced and highly commercialized art, which was influenced by photography, was not as powerful as art with historical context. An earlier work, Thomas Hardy’s *A Laodicean: A Story of To-Day* (1881), also showed the connections between photography, history, and uncertainty. The characters try to use photography to try and preserve a crumbling medieval castle, but their attempts end in failure. While technology like telegraphs gives Paula a sense of power, the novel leaves her wishing she had a more stable connection to the past and the future. These examples of Victorian literature show that photography affected Victorian culture at a deeper level than previously thought. Photography changed the way Victorians thought about the past, present, and future.
This is dedicated to anyone who has seen a ghost or wishes they could.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my parents for letting me choose my own books, even the creepy ones. Thank you for teaching me to love reading and thinking critically. I couldn’t have done this without your love and support. Thank you to my sister Susan for always listening and sending me cute dog pictures when I’m having a bad day.

Thank you to my partner, B.A., for your unending patience and support. Thank you for being my cheerleader and listening to me gush about Victorian ghost stories. You have been an amazing partner and best friend through the entire journey.

Thank you to my entire cohort and fellow ATLAS officers, Elena, Stephanie, and Derek. Your belief in me has made me more self-confident and willing to try new things. My life is much better for having met you all.

Thank you to all my instructors at BGSU. I’d like to give a special thanks to Dr. Hershberger for helping me better understand photography and photographic theory.

Finally, I’d also like to thank Dr. Piya Pal-Lapinski and Dr. Kim Coates for being on my committee and giving me their support and guidance. You both kept me on the correct path and gave me a chance to work on a dream project. Thank you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PHOTOGRAPHY’S GHOSTS: AN INTRODUCTION TO SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY AND VICTORIAN LITERATURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit Photography</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Studies</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Overview</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER I. VERNON LEE, *THE APPARITIONAL LESBIAN*, AND PHOTOGRAPHY AS METAPHOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As Metaphor</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER II. BURNING PAINTINGS AND SCORNED LOVERS IN THOMAS HARDY’S *A LAODICEAN*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WORKS CITED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spirit, with American photographs</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mamma extending her hand towards me</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mr. Herne and his double</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The unclad spirit</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Alas! for her whose white robe of innocence became a filthy rag</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Joan of Arc</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>King Arthur</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PHOTOGRAPHY’S GHOSTS: AN INTRODUCTION TO SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY
AND VICTORIAN LITERATURE

Victorian photographs not only reveal what Victorians looked like; the way Victorians used photography reveals what they believed. In the contemporary moment, photography is an accepted part of our everyday lives, but there were mixed reactions to photography when it first became popular in the Victorian period. Photography’s invention excited scientists looking for a more accurate documentation tool, but photography also raised fears about technology going too far and making painting obsolete. Some critics feared the new technology, while others praised it as a miracle. The wide range of reactions to photography created a space where anything was possible. Photography, as a material object, was used to make invisible abstract concepts visible for Victorians. Through spirit photographs, Victorians tried to preserve their personal and national history; loved ones wanted photographs of those who had died and spiritualists wanted to capture images of abstract values, like morality. Georgiana Houghton was a spiritual medium who worked with spirit photographer Frederick Hudson. While spiritualists like Houghton believed in these photographs, others were skeptical and saw them as frauds. Because it was associated with failures to capture the past, in Victorian literature photography was used to symbolize uncertainty in the future. Georgiana Houghton’s writings about spirit photographs (1882), Vernon Lee’s stories “Oke of Okehurst” (1886) and “A Wicked Voice” (1887), and Thomas Hardy’s A Laodicean: A Story of To-Day (1881) all use photography to make connections between the past, present, and future. Victorian literature and photographs are connected because they both deal with the desire to return to a stable version of the past, but these attempts to connect to the past with photography are always destructive or dangerous. Photography was confusing to look at for Victorians because it turned an immaterial image into a
physical object quickly and with very little effort. At the time of photography’s invention, it was met with amazement, but it also became associated with trickery and false images. This double image of photography as reliable and also unreliable led to its use as a site of uncertainty in Victorian fiction.

Previous studies of the relationship between photography and Victorian literature focuses on naturalistic photography. Victorianists like Jennifer Green-Lewis draw a connection between Victorian novels with a realist style and realism found in photography. Roland R. Thomas also connects limits his discussion to Victorian detective fiction and photography. These approaches only look at photography in a superficial way, as something which depicts reality, instead of looking at the deeper ways photography affected the way Victorians thought and the past, present, and future. As a slight departure, Daniel A. Novak compares composite (or pieced together) photographs with George Eliot’s vision of realism. While this is different from naturalistic photography, Novak only addresses photographs which the photographer openly admitted were creations from multiple exposures. Victorians knew composites were artistic creations, but spirit photographs were different. Spirit photographers refused to admit their photographs were manipulated in any way. They claimed to reveal ghosts from the past in their photographs through a connection to the spirit world. By presenting spirit photographs as authentic, spirit photographers made Victorians question the relationship they had with the past. If spirit photographers were telling the truth, it meant that the past could still be accessed in the present. Victorian literature reflects the way spirit photography sought to explain the present by looking towards the past. In Vernon Lee’s stories and Thomas Hardy’s A Laodicean, the characters connect to history in different ways. Like how spirit photographs were used to explain what happens after death, Victorian literature looked to photography to connect the past, present,
While photographic realism affected Victorian literature in ways that have been discussed, spirit photography made Victorian authors use photography to explore abstract concepts, like history, in a different way.

While there is some debate on the topic, most art historians agree that the first photographic process was invented in 1839 by the French painter, Daguerre. Scientists and artists both adapted photography to their needs, but photography was heavily commercialized for the common citizen as well. Unlike painted portraits, which took days or weeks of work by an expensive artist, photographs were relatively quick and did not take as much highly intensive training to create well. While this meant those who could not afford a painted portrait were able to have their likeness recorded, it also opened the door for scammers to take advantage of ignorant customers. One of these con artists was documented in Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor Vol. III* (1861). Under the category of “Street Performers,” Mayhew included an interview with a man making a living as a portrait photographer. The photographer explained a scam where he claimed to have a special brightening chemical which made photographs that failed to develop properly after a few hours. He only dipped them in water, knowing the photograph was not salvageable, but he hoped the customer would not return and demand a new one (218). He also explained how he sold previously taken photographs of past customers, used as advertisements, to new customers and claimed it was a picture of them (218-219). He claimed it was easy to convince a person a photograph of a stranger was a photograph of themselves because, “The fact is, people don’t know their own faces. Half of ‘em have never looked in a glass half a dozen times in their life, and directly they see a pair of eyes and a nose, they fancy they are their own” (219). People did not know how to recognize their own face or how photographs developed, and scam artists took advantage of the ignorance of
their customers. The fast and easy replication of images also made writers like Vernon Lee question the artistic integrity of photographs. The photographer is using public ignorance about the photographic process to try and make an easy profit. Lee questioned the ethics of commercialized art which is divorced from the process of creation, which I will discuss more in Chapter One. The street photographer scammers are also reminiscent of Dare from Thomas Hardy’s *A Laodicean: A Story of To-Day* which I will discuss in Chapter Two. Dare’s mastery of trick photography gives him power over characters who are ignorant of photographic processes. The London photographer could make wild claims about the scientific abilities of their chemicals, and they could also convince a customer they were ignorant of their own appearance. This was the historical moment when spirit photography became incredibly popular. People’s uncertainty about photography’s abilities and the lack of education about how photography created images help made the phenomenon possible.

**Spirit Photography**

Victorian spirit photographs looked to history and science to prove people had souls, to ease anxieties about shifting identities, and to ease fears about new technologies. The Victorian period was filled with social change, and this created a lot of cultural anxiety about where society was headed. Darwin’s theories about sexual differentiation came at a time when more women were entering the public sphere. Mady Schutzman agrees that Darwin led to anxiety about gender roles in her book, *The Real Thing: Performance, Hysteria, & Advertising*. She reports that, “In Darwin’s evolutionary frame, woman’s sex no longer determined her capacity to compete in the public realm but rather the likelihood of her succeeding. Men and women are equal in terms of potential, but women are inferior in terms of realization of that potential”
(Schutzman 25). She compares Victorian images of women to contemporary advertisements, but the anxiety about women abandoning their socially constructed roles is also visible in spirit photography. Some Victorians looked to the spirit world to understand their own roles in society and to find a nostalgic, comforting version of the past. The ghosts which Victorian spiritualists sought out often confirmed Victorian ideas about gender, class, and race. While these concepts are usually abstract, photographs made these ideas easy to categorize, label, and identify.

Spiritualists believed that the soul, which was normally invisible to the naked eye, could be photographed. These photographs showed physical proof of invisible concepts such as morality and love through spiritual mediumship.

Spiritualists believed that the camera had the power to see spirits which are invisible to the human eye. They took photographs of spiritual mediums or important objects, and during the development process a ghost-like figure would appear. Instead of looking to the future or recording the present, these photographs often served to prove that people from the past still existed in another form. Spiritual mediums worked as a connection between the spirit world and the physical world, which normally would not be possible. These mediums believed their special powers drew spirits to the physical world. Georgiana Houghton was one of these spiritual mediums. She worked with spirit photographer Frederick Hudson as a spiritual medium and published a book about her experiences, *Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings and Phenomena Invisible to the Material Eye: Interblended with Personal Narrative* (1882). Her role was to imbue the photographic space with her spiritual power in the hopes of capturing the image of a spirit. Her writing indicates that she believed in her powers and that she believed Hudson had the ability to make spirits appear in developed photographs. She was not involved with the production of the photographs, and she wrote that Hudson said to her that the spirits told him she
could not be in the room while he worked on developing the photographs (Houghton 9). According to her book, Houghton did not believe there was any fakery or photography tricks going on, even though she was aware of these allegations made by others. Her conviction is an example of how some Victorians believed in the power of spiritualism and ignored any inconsistencies in the process. While skeptics saw Hudson’s refusal to allow others to view his process, spiritualists like Houghton believed in the sensitive nature of capturing the invisible in a photograph and took Hudson at his word.

Theories dating all the way back to ancient Greece help shaped the Victorian view of photography and spiritualist beliefs about what it could do. In the article “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph,” Oliver Wendell Holmes traces the photographic theory to Democritus of Abdera. Democritus argued, “all bodies were continually throwing off certain images like themselves, which subtle emanations, striking on our bodily organs, gave rise to sensations” (69). Holmes goes on to explain that subsequent theorists believed something which he called “films” peel off all objects and project themselves into reflections in a mirror. When the object is removed, the mirror no longer reflects the object’s “film” and the image is gone (69). Holmes called the invention of photography a “mirror with a memory,” by which he meant a photograph acts like a mirror, but it can capture a person’s “film” and preserve it even when the object is removed (70). Holmes was not alone in his theories about photography. Honoré de Balzac, the French novelist, also believed a photograph was a captured piece of a person’s essence, and would only allow himself to be photographed once. The famous novelist’s fear of being photographed was shared by many Victorians. Felix Nadar put Balzac’s fears in perspective in his article, “My Life as a Photographer.” While he does not mention spirit photography directly, he hints why photography was linked to the supernatural. He writes, “Nothing was lacking for a
good witch hunt: sympathetic magic, the conjuring up of spirits, ghosts. Awesome Night- dear to all sorcerers and wizards- reigned supreme in the dark recesses of the camera, a made-to-order temple for the Prince of Darkness” (8). Nadar points out how the camera is associated with darkness, and this darkness leads people to imagine supernatural powers. He explains Balzac’s theory, that “all physical bodies are made up entirely of layers of ghostlike images, an infinite number of leaf like skins laid one on top of the other” (9). Balzac reasons something cannot be created from nothing, according to the laws of science, so a photograph must contain one of these layers. He does not understand how the immaterial image of a person could become a material photograph. Balzac insisted that having your picture taken over and over would mean a loss of “the very essence of life” (9). Like many theorists after him, such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, Balzac associated photography with his own impending death. While this theory leads to a sense of dread in some, in others it opened-up the possibility of capturing someone’s essence after they are dead. The numerous mysteries behind photography all led to the impression that photography had a kind of mystical power: the image was captured by a strange box, the chemicals used to develop the image were dangerous, and the secrecy of the dark room seemed like witchcraft.

Spirit photography was more than a passing fad; it met some sort of cultural need which no other product could fill. In her article, “Viewing History and Fantasy through Victorian Spirit Photography,” Sarah Willburn gives a detailed history and cultural reading of Victorian spirit photographs. She explains spirit photographs began in America, but then they quickly spread to England and France. In England, Frederick Hudson became world famous for his photographs of spirits, and unlike his American and French counterparts, he was never sued for fraud (Willburn 362). Victorians had a unique relationship to spirit photography. Previous scholars have seen a
connection between spirit photography and Victorian attitudes about death. In her article, “Spirit Photography and the Victorian Culture of Mourning,” Jen Cadwallader argues that spirit photography was an extension of post-mortem photographs, and she insists that spirit photography shows a cultural shift to commodify mourning via physical objects. Saving a lock of hair from a loved one or using material items in a funeral were common mourning rituals. However, she argues, unlike a post-mortem photograph, a spirit photograph features the person who is grieving. She writes, “In a society where mourning was highly visible in dress, but where grief was all but taboo, the spirit photograph provided a space to gain conceptual control over one’s feelings” (16). While people wear all black clothes to show they are “in mourning,” they were not encouraged to show their emotions in public. Mourning practices became a symbol of class status, such as showing off with expensive coffins and funeral clothes, instead of a way to cope with loss. The growing middle class wanted to imitate the upper class, and so mourning practices became much more extravagant than it had been in the past. Cadwallader sees spirit photography as an extension of public mourning which put more focus on the relationships between the living and the dead. However, her theory does not explain all types of spirit photographs, including ones which featured a spirit not immediately related to the sitter. These photographs were quite common, and are not explained by Cadwallader’s association between spirit photographs and mourning.

Why was it not obvious to these Victorians that the ghostly image did not look like their mother, or son, or whatever person it was meant to be? How were they so easily fooled? The visual inconsistency was explained by the belief that a person’s spirit doesn’t look the same as their body. Instead of caring about physical appearances, spirit photography enthusiasts would say the image “accurately represented [their relative’s] essence or personality” (Willburn 366).
In these photos, it did not matter if the spirit had the likeness of a lost relative, spiritualists were happy if the spirit took on the social role the person had in life. These photos confirmed the social roles, which were nebulous and abstract, with a visual representation. Darwin’s theories about sexual differentiation led to anxieties that women would succeed in the public realm and abandon their roles in the family (Schutzmzan 24-25). A spirit photograph showing a woman being “motherly” by hovering over her child was more concrete than these fluctuating social roles.

In some cases, recognizing the spirit was not important. Spirit photographers, and those devoted to them, found other explanations for why they did not recognize the spirit and why an obvious connection to the living was not needed. These photographs include unknown spirits, moral messages from the spirit world, and even dead celebrities. The spiritual medium Georgiana Houghton worked with spirit photographer Frederick Hudson starting in 1872, and she wrote *Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings and Phenomena Invisible to the Material Eye: Interblended with Personal Narrative* (Houghton 1). The book contained a collection of Houghton’s thoughts, letters she had written to several spiritualism publications, and a few letters written by other spiritualists and critics. She also included six plates with nine photographs each. One photo exemplified how unimportant it is to recognize the spirit, and how much spiritual power photographs contained. This photo shows a ghostly figure standing over some photographs and letters, titled “Spirit, With American Photographs” (Figure 1). The spirit was not attached to a person, instead, the spirit appeared to show an emotional attachment to a material photograph. This is interesting because it demonstrates Georgiana Houghton, and other Victorians, viewed photographs as powerful enough to draw a spirit to them. There are not any
Figure 1: “Spirit, with American photographs”
*Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings* Plate 3, No. 26
other examples of spirits alone with objects in Houghton’s book, so photographs must be a special case. In most cases, a medium or spiritually powerful person was needed to make a spirit appear. Houghton sent “Spirit with American Photographs” to the original owner of the objects shown with the spirit, and she explained in her book that the owner of the photographs and letters did not recognize the spirit. She wrote, “there are some spirits to whom we are dearer than they are to us, for they hold us in charge, for which we, in ignorance, are not properly grateful” (Houghton 229). Houghton was not looking to spirit photographs to see a specific loved one. Instead, she was pleased that photographs gave her a glimpse of an unknown world. She did not know why the spirit was attached to those particular letters and photographs, but she was still glad that she was able to use her power to see it. It was not important who the spirit was in life. To Houghton, it was only important to capture proof of the existence of spirits. This confirmed her own power to make them appear, and it confirmed photography’s power to capture what was invisible to the naked eye.

Photography has a strong association with many abstract concepts, including death. This connection made it easy for spiritualists to see photography as a tool to reach the world of the dead. In Camera Lucida, Roland Barthes writes about how being photographed makes him feel he is dying. He feels his essence is being captured and turned from a living being to a physical object (14). Barthes is not discussing spirit photography, but instead he is discussing his views on photographs of loved ones. He describes his feelings about losing his mother. He writes, “For what I have lost is not a Figure (the Mother), but a being; and not a being, but a quality (a soul)” (75). He goes on to say that a photograph means “I can never deny that the thing has been there” (76). Barthes looks to photographs to confirm his mother’s existence, and shows he believes a photograph captures a part of the person’s essence, or soul. This was also true for Hudson’s spirit
photographs. Photography was a way to capture a soul. Spirit photographs proved that humans all had these souls, because photography easily created a material object to represent something which was originally invisible.

Victorians tended to describe spirit photographs as a kind of magic. In Houghton’s index, each photo has a title, which usually tells us who is in the photo and what they are doing. She often did not use particular language to distinguish between spirits and living subjects. Spirits and living people were treated as if they are the same. One title reads, “Mamma extending her hand towards me” (Houghton ix). Georgiana did not describe the figure in the photograph with her as the spirit of her mother, instead, she described the image as her mother (Figure 2). The spirit’s face was covered, so the only indication that Houghton has that this spirit was her mother is her own connection to the spirit world. The figure was also taking on the motherly role, reaching for her child. This illustrates the importance social roles played in Victorian spirit photographs. Houghton’s mother was easily identified because she was behaving in a “motherly” way, and not because of an individual defining feature. Her mother’s position also eased anxieties that women would not play out their roles as mothers, which were caused by Darwin’s theories. Not only is her lack of distinction between living and dead of note, it is also significant to understand that she titled the photograph as a description of a person, and not a photograph of a person, meaning she did not call it “A photograph of Mamma extending her hand towards me.”

While this distinction seems common place in contemporary language, it says something about how Victorians viewed photographs. Houghton’s writing can be difficult to understand at times because of this lack of distinction between the spirit world and the physical world. In one anecdote, she described having a rabbit placed in her lap for a photograph. However, it is not until the next page that it is clear that the rabbit was only spiritually placed in her lap, and was
Figure 2: “Mamma extending her hand towards me”
Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings Plate 1, No. 1
not an actual physical rabbit (Houghton 6-7). In one of her early stories, she described feeling a wreath of flowers placed on her head (2). She described this happening to herself several times and to other mediums in the book, but most of the time the physical feeling was only a sign from the other world that a spirit was present.

Houghton’s lack of distinction between physical presence and immaterial presence of a thing is not unique to spirituality; photographs have often lead to confusion about what is materially present and what is only a representation. In an excerpt from his book, The World Viewed, Stanley Cavell spends some time discussing photography. His primary focus is film, but he also discusses why we should examine our tendency to describe a photograph as the real thing (Cavell 241). For instance, we do not say “that’s a photograph of your grandmother,” we say, “that’s your grandmother.” Cavell thinks this confusion is unique to photography, and wants to understand why. Like other theorists, he also sees a connection between photographs and the supernatural. Cavell writes, “The image is not a likeness; it is not exactly a replica, or a relic, or a shadow, or an apparition either, though all of these natural candidates share a striking feature with photographs – an aura or history of magic surrounding them” (241). Photographs were so much more technologically advanced compared to other art forms that Victorians used supernatural vocabulary to describe them. Photographs were so strange they already viewed them as ghostlike. Holmes also said photographs weren’t a mere representation of a thing. He implied physical objects will be replaced with photographs, saying “Give us a few negatives of a thing worth seeing, taken from different points of view, and that is all we want of it. Pull it down or burn it up, if you please” (70). Holmes went so far as to say that physical objects will not be needed anymore once we have a photograph, which leads into Cavell’s theories about the history of photography. While Cavell does not address spirit photography directly, by showing
photography’s connection to the supernatural he makes it easier to see how the scientific breakthrough was used as a tool for the spiritual. Cavell argues, “we have forgotten how mysterious these things are, and in general how different different things are from one another, as though we had forgotten how to value them” (242). By this he means we do not remember the sense of wonder and magic felt by Victorians when they looked at early photographs.

Holmes was an example of Victorian who compared photography to a fairy tale. He described three Victorian inventions which sounded like magic artifacts in a tale from the Arabian Nights: the railroad car is a flying carpet, the telegraph is a magic tube which allowed the user to see what a friend is doing miles away, and apple scented chloroform is a magic apple which cures illness just by its smell (69-70). Photography was the next invention to amaze the Victorians with its magic qualities: the mirror with a memory. These were things Victorians’ ancestors only dreamed of, and they marveled at them. Not knowing how to describe these miracles of science, Victorians turn to the stories and legends of the past. Ghosts and spirits did not seem like a faraway dream anymore, and for many, the photograph was magical enough to capture the spiritual world they believed was hidden around them all along.

Houghton’s interest in spiritualism was deeply connected to her religious beliefs, and she claimed her time and money spent on spirit photography were in “advancement of what [she knew] to be God’s Cause” (Houghton 4). She also reported that at a séance she heard, “A great body of spiritual beings are feeling and saying, ‘Oh! Blessing that has come! we shall be able to allow our friends to see our faces once more from this side!’, ” when she questioned them about spirit photography (5). Her connection to the spirit world is a religious one, and she believes it is her mission to help the spiritual beings come to public view. She was fascinated by seeing the
Figure 3: “Mr. Herne and his double”
*Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings* Plate 5, No. 43
beauty of the human soul visualized in a material representation through photography. In her book, Houghton wrote that one of Mr. Hudson’s photographs, “Mr. Herne with his double,” had been accused of being a double exposure, meaning it is a fake spirit photograph created by Hudson and Herne by using the same plate to photograph Herne twice (Figure 3). The photograph shows one Mr. Herne seated in a chair while a double is wrapped in white cloth and drops a flower crown on the seated Herne. Houghton argued that this photograph must have been real, because she believed the double was a representation of Mr. Herne’s soul. She wrote:

Mr. Herne is clearly entranced… his spirit has gone forth from him, and as he is not ‘all there’ he has become partially transparent, his physical surroundings being also, to a certain extent, spiritualized. But it was the inner man externalized who taught me the most, for it shewed me that the glorification of self was the chief aim of the whole individual, to strew flowers upon the outer man being thought of the ‘soul,’ for that is the term generally applied to mediums to their visitors when they are the spirits of living persons, and such experiences are very frequent (30-31).

Houghton saw the doubled figure as material proof of Mr. Herne’s soul, and did not see this a photography trick. She also saw the flower crown held by the spirit as an indication of Mr. Herne’s purity. For Houghton, this photograph confirmed her belief in her spiritual powers and her religious beliefs. Mr. Herne was in a typical spiritualist stupor, and his soul was indicating that he was a good person. Not all souls were good, and Houghton also collected wretched souls to warn others of the punishments for immoral behavior.

Not only did Georgiana Houghton collect photographs of people with their deceased relatives in spirit form, she also collected photographs of herself and others with anonymous spirits, spirits telling cautionary tales, and famous figures from history. Houghton described two
photographs taken by Hudson which she believed were sent to teach a lesson to the living. In one photograph, a man, described by Houghton as a spirit, is shown in a loin cloth next to a fully clothed man sitting for his portrait (Figure 4). Houghton said the photograph came with an explanation; “I am told by my unseen teachers that it is one who, while upon earth, lived for self alone, weaving himself no garments for eternity by clothing the naked, therefore he is himself now naked and earth-bound” (38). One cannot help thinking of the spirit of Marley coming to visit Scrooge and showing him his ghostly chains. Accompanying this photograph is another of a woman in rags. The photograph is titled, “Alas! for her whose white robe of innocence became a filthy rag” (Figure 5). Houghton continued, “and yet more alas! for him, who may first have led her from the path of rectitude. Woe, woe to the land where unseemly lives are not pointed at by the finger of scorn” (39). Not only was the fallen woman shamed, but the society which created her was blamed as well. These titles and descriptions were not vague about why they ended up the way they did, and they came with lessons about what people can do in their lives to prevent these fates. These spirit photographs also conformed to Victorian gender ideals. Men had to clothe the naked in life or they would be naked in death; Women had to be pure and innocent in life and Victorians had to scorn those who took the innocence of women. These types of photographs were not meant to connect a deceased family member to the living, but they were instead meant to show the living a glimpse of the afterlife if they did not conform to Victorian moral codes. By making souls visible, Hudson’s spirit photographs gave the material world a more concrete answer to what happened after death. These spirits, Victorians were told, were visitors sent to warn them of their follies and sins and what punishments they could expect in the next life. The photographs confirmed Houghton’s religious beliefs while providing the answers religion often could not. Spirit photographs proved that the afterlife
Figure 4: “The unclad spirit”
*Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings* Plate 5, No. 44
Figure 5: “Alas! for her whose white robe of innocence became a filthy rag”
*Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings* Plate 5, No. 45
existed by using a scientific method. In an age which valued science and reason, finding scientific proof of souls and punishment in the afterlife for sins made Victorians feel more secure in their beliefs. Houghton’s attitude contrasts to the way Terry Castle writes about gender, sexuality and spirits in *The Apparitional Lesbian*. In Chapter One, I explain how Vernon Lee’s stories use ghosts to deviate from Victorian gender and sexual norms. Thomas Hardy also challenges gender norms by giving Paula control over her own life through technology, which I explain in further detail in Chapter Two. Victorian literature used photography as a site of transgression for social norms, while Hudson’s spirit photography was used to try and reinforce more traditional gender roles.

Famous historical figures also appeared in spirit photographs. One photograph in Houghton’s book is simply called, “Joan of Arc” (Figure 6). Georgiana described her excitement when she saw the photograph of Joan with an unnamed French sitter (240). Historians at the time were very interested in Joan of Arc, and she was a popular figure once she was nominated to become a saint. These types of photographs had no emotional connection to the sitter except for an interest in history. However, photographic technology gave Victorians a way to connect to the past that had not been possible before. Houghton described the history of Joan of Arc to her readers. She wrote, “Among the English themselves there existed a belief in her sanctity… For the rest, we see in this sublime figure, not a French heroine, but a heroine of the Church and humanity” (244). The spirit photograph took Joan of Arc out of the context of French history and connected her to an English audience. In her short stories, Vernon Lee deals with the way photography removes historical context from art and leads to danger. Because she removed the historical context from Joan of Arc’s image, Houghton understood the photograph as
Figure 6: “Joan of Arc”
*Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings* Plate 4, No. 35
confirmation that England believed in Joan of Arc all along, and that her soul is truly powerful and deserves to be made a saint. Houghton’s interest in Joan of Arc downplayed and ignored the part England played in the war with France and Joan of Arc’s ultimate execution. Instead, Houghton placed the blame on the French, who she said abandoned Joan (242-243). The spirit photograph helped re-write history to make England the hero to Joan of Arc. While she appeared for a French sitter, it was an English spirit photographer who made her appear. In spirit photography, the camera was not used to capture the present. Instead, the camera was used to look back to the past to make sense of history. By capturing the spirit of Joan of Arc, they had created a version of history made to justify the actions of the English in the past, and the present.

The connection between spirit photography and history was one way Victorian Literature was affected by photography. In Chapter One, I explain how Vernon Lee used her stories “Oke of Okehurst” and “A Wicked Voice” to critique the Victorian culture of photography. Because photography was new, it did not have authentic connections to history. Instead, photography co-opted images of history to make false connections. Like Georgiana Houghton’s Joan of Arc, these images of the past were taken out of context from history so that they would serve their Victorian audiences. Vernon Lee’s stories are about works of art from the past which are much more powerful than any art being created in the Victorian period because art created before the Victorian period is not affected by false images of the past. There is also a connection between Thomas Hardy’s A Laodicean: A Story of To-Day, spirit photography, and the past. The photographer, Dare, uses photography to try and preserve images Paula’s medieval castle and old paintings. Even though she owns them, Paula has no ancestral connection to the castle and paintings. To legitimize her ownership, Paula takes on projects to preserve history. In Chapter Two, I show how photography fails to give Paula an authentic connection to the past.
With this project, I explore the connections between Victorian literature and photography in a more in-depth way than other Victorianists have. I examine photography as a material object in Victorian culture, but I also interpret the metaphorical use of photography in Victorian literature. Photography in Victorian literature is not heavily researched, and the few pieces on photography in Victorian literature only examine photography in relation to a novel’s plot. By taking a metaphorical approach, I am adding more to the conversation around Victorian literature and photography. Historians Sarah Willburn and Hilary Grimes thoroughly examine spirit photography as a material object in Victorian culture. They connect spirit photography and Victorian anxieties about social identity, but I take this research further and apply it to literature as well. Willburn’s and Grimes’s works also overlook photographic theory and therefore miss opportunities to develop their ideas about Victorian photography. Using theoretical texts like *Camera Lucida* by Roland Barthes and *Athens Still Remains* by Derrida makes my argument unique from other researchers. It is through these theories that I make a connection between photography, death, and the future.

There is a surprising lack of research about photography in Victorian Literature. There are not many Victorian novels which feature photography, but part of my argument is that photography influenced Victorian literature in a metaphorical sense as well. Even though photography is barely mentioned in the Vernon Lee stories, they are still heavily influenced by the culture of photography. Vernon Lee scholars tend to split her up into two different people: one version of Vernon Lee was a lesbian woman writing about queer sexual desire, and another version of Vernon Lee was an art critic concerned with aesthetics and the ethics of consuming
art. By focusing on one or the other, theorists like Dennis Denisoff\textsuperscript{14}, Catherine Maxwell\textsuperscript{15}, and Patricia Pulham\textsuperscript{16} overlook the deeper connections between Vernon Lee’s different points of view. Her writings about aesthetics, ethics, and queer desire are all related to each other, and by using photography as a metaphor I make those connections clear.

The other text I examine is Thomas Hardy’s novel, \textit{A Laodicean: A Story of To-Day}. I included it in my project because the text directly references photography, but it also features the Victorian culture of photography on a metaphorical level. Photography is used to move parts of the plot along, but the entire story is about attempting to preserve the past while looking to the future. \textit{A Laodicean} is one of Thomas Hardy’s least studied works. Most of the research done on the novel focuses on Thomas Hardy’s work as melodramatic. While I do agree that \textit{A Laodicean} is a melodramatic work, I insist that the novel has more to it. I agree with Jay Clayton\textsuperscript{17} that the way Hardy uses technology in the novel says something about power and gender. However, researchers like Clayton are missing the larger picture when they don’t examine how photography destabilizes Victorian notions about time and what they expected from the future. My work connects photography with the overarching themes of the novel, not just the parts that include references to photographs.

\textbf{Chapter Overview}

In Chapter One, I analyze Vernon Lee’s short stories “Oke of Okehurst” and “A Wicked Voice.” Both stories use images of a person as a connection between the past and the present, which leads to an unhealthy obsession. While there are not many references to photographs as artifacts in these stories, I argue that Lee purposefully compares older art forms with Victorian photography culture. Vernon Lee saw photography as part of consumerist culture, which she was critiquing in her supernatural stories. Vernon Lee’s stories also show how consumer culture
limited gender and sexual identities in the Victorian period, especially when compared to history. To analyze the queer sexual desire in “Oke of Okehurst” and “A Wicked Voice,” I apply Terry Castle’s work, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*. Castle’s work gives me the framework to explore the subversive love triangle in “Oke of Okehurst” and the coded lesbian desire in “A Wicked Voice.” I also use Susan Sontag’s book, *On Photography*, to explore the way photographs and portraiture fracture identity and make human beings into collectibles.

In Chapter Two, I examine Thomas Hardy’s *A Laodicean: A Story of To-Day*. While *A Laodicean* is less studied than some of his other work, it illustrates the varying ways photography was highly valued yet distrusted in the Victorian period. To help me make the connection between photography and death, I apply Derrida’s *Athens, Still Remains: The Photographs of Jean-François Bonhomme*. In his collection of a friend’s photographs with his own commentary, Derrida argues photographs are a reminder of our oncoming deaths. Along these lines, *A Laodicean* shows the decline and destruction of a medieval castle and the aristocratic family who once owned it. The novel presents photography as a tool to capture and preserve the past, but the family and castle are both destroyed by the photographer. The text also reflects Victorian anxieties about women stepping out of traditional gender roles. Paula Power has more autonomy than many Victorian women due to her wealth and her mastery of technology. However, this change from the traditional gender dynamic leads to confusion for the characters. In this chapter, I look to photography to explain how women like Paula were empowered but also uncertain about what their future would hold.

When we look at these works within the context of photography, we can find deeper connections between Victorian culture’s relationship with the past and the future. Photography is
simultaneously a connection to the spirit world and a form of scientific documentation, which gives it a unique position compared to other art forms. Victorians believed photography could do anything, including bring the past to life, but these attempts at connection were never satisfying. While Victorians thought of photography as a stabilizing force in their culture, Victorian literature shows photography was incredibly unstable, and it even further destabilized the things Victorians wanted to preserve.
VERNON LEE, THE APPARITIONAL LESBIAN, AND PHOTOGRAPHY AS METAPHOR

Georgiana Houghton was excited by the spirit photograph of Joan of Arc because it was a connection to history. However, not everyone believed that spirits could be captured in a visual medium. Vernon Lee was a skeptic, and in her essay, “Faustus and Helena: Notes on the Supernatural in Art,” she argued that art and the supernatural were incompatible (Lee 295). Lee would have seen Houghton’s “Joan of Arc” photograph as a failed attempt to connect to history. Vernon Lee’s supernatural stories referenced her discomfort with the fast-paced production of art in the Victorian period. While she did not comment on it overtly, photography influenced the way art was produced and consumed in the Victorian period. Vernon Lee contrasted the Victorian attitudes with her conception of art from the past. The specter of photography haunts her stories as the symbol of commercialized and soulless art. In the stories “Oke of Okehurst” and “A Wicked Voice,” photography is only mentioned in passing, but that does not mean her stories have nothing to do with photography. Instead of photographs, Lee writes about the power of painted portraits and etchings from the past. Her stories show how a portrait from history can haunt viewers with a subject’s presence, while modern works of art are less powerful. Kristin Mahoney furthers this argument in her article, “Haunted Collections: Vernon Lee and the Ethical Consumption.” She claims that Lee used ghosts to critique separating art from its historical context (Mahoney 51). Victorian culture tended to focus on the consumable end-product of an art work instead of the process. For Lee, this was an ethical dilemma.

Vernon Lee’s supernatural stories are also about desire across time. In her stories, portraits of people who are long dead haunt characters in the present. The hauntings open the story to queer forms of sexuality and gender. As a lesbian writer, Vernon Lee’s own desire and sexuality were part of her writing. In “Lesbian Postmortem at the Fin de Siècle,” Kate Thomas
writes about Vernon Lee’s sexuality and furthers the argument that Lee’s writing was influenced by her sexuality. Like Alice Oke in “Oke of Okehurst,” Lee kept a portrait (in this case a photograph) of one of her dead lovers with her throughout her life. After Annie Meyer died, Lee kept a photograph of Annie’s dead body above her bed (Thomas 122). Lee was obviously aware of photography and saw that it had uses in her life, but she also used photography as a symbol to comment on Victorian culture because it represented the way the art world had become more focused on consumption instead of creation. Lee kept the photograph of a dead lover above her bed, which showed her association between photography, sexuality, and death. Gender, sexuality, and consumer culture were all connected, and Lee’s supernatural stories used photography to show that these connections lead to obsession and death.

The origin story of a work of art begins with the intent of the artist. In “Oke of Okehurst,” the artist narrates a story about a married couple he is hired to paint, and along with the ghost story, we learn who the artist is by the portrait he wants to paint. He tries to be an impartial scientific observer, but Lee shows a destructive side to the painter’s work. According to Mahoney, during the Victorian period there is an “erasure of labor contexts of origin” (48). Mahoney uses collecting as an example of Victorian behavior which favors the consumer’s response to an object and separates the object from its historical or social context (48). I argue that photography is another example of Victorians separating an object from the final product. Photography is easy to mass produce, and it’s harder for outsiders to judge the artistic ability demonstrated in a photograph rather than a painting. There are not any visible brushstrokes to be judged in a photograph, and it is easy for multiple photographers to take identical photographs if they have the same subject and equipment, making photographs less unique than a hand drawn image. By choosing to write about a portrait painter instead of a photographer, Lee drew
attention to the artistic process. In fact, Lee took the time to point out that Mr. Oke owns a photograph of his wife, which emphasizes that the process of having a portrait painted is more important than a reproducible image (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 128). There are parallels between the “Joan of Arc” spirit photograph and Mr. Oke’s photograph of Alice. Houghton believed she understood Joan of Arc because she had a photograph of her, but in fact she only removed Joan of Arc from her place in history. Mr. Oke removes Alice from her context by placing the photograph of Alice in his office, which is a room in the house she never goes in. The items on Mr. Oke’s desk are under his control, but this is in opposition to how little control he has over her within the context of their lives. The painter tries to understand Alice by painting her, but he also suffers from a lack of context.

Vernon Lee structured “Oke of Okehurst” to make the painter’s intentions the main-focus. Helga Ramsey-Kurz agrees, in her article, “Portraits of Fractured Selves or Fractured Self-Portraits?” She relates the opening scene of “Oke of Okehurst” to the Browning poem, “My Last Duchess.” The narrator for “Oke of Okehurst” is an unnamed artist hired to paint Mr. William Oke and his wife, Alice Oke of Okehurst. He is relating the story to a listener, whom we never learn the identity, just as in the Browning poem. Ramsey-Kurz writes, “Robert Browning collates the tyranny of the patron vis-à-vis the artist with the tyranny of the husband vis-à-vis his wife, which, as the duke unwittingly betrays, is the actual cause of the duchess’s death” (203). The duke’s portrait of the late duchess is a sign of his cruelty and his desire to have her all to himself. Ramsey-Kurz argues that the portrait artist in “Oke of Okehurst” has the same possessive tendencies. The painter wants to capture the image of Alice Oke to make the best portrait possible, even if it means harming her. According to the painter, the best possible portrait must reveal the complete truth, even in cases where this upsets his clients. He is desperate for a job
after a patron complained he made her look old and vulgar, “which, in fact, she was” (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 108). The painter’s attitude shows he is more interested in his own interpretation of his subjects than how they want to see themselves.

Not only is the painter accurate with physical appearances, but he is also proud of his ability to discover the psychological root of his subjects. He uses psychological jargon and often discusses the mental state of his patrons. One of the first things he notes about Mr. William Oke is a wrinkle between his eyebrows, which he calls a “manic-frown,” a term he picked up from his “mad-doctor” friend (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 108). Victorian mad-doctors used photography to diagnose patients based on their facial features. Famous mad-doctor Hugh Welch Diamond used photography while he was superintendent of the Female Department of the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum in England from 1848 to 1858. He suggested that symptoms of mental illness were visible on the face, and he used photographs as evidence (Schutzman 74-75). The painter in “Oke of Okehurst” also believes in diagnosing a person by their face, especially William Oke’s “manic-frown”. Once he arrives at the estate and meets Alice, he moves on to trying to diagnose her as well. He describes her as not having a body, but instead being a serious of lines and a “strangeness of mind” (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 114). He becomes obsessed with capturing her mental state in a portrait, and he is willing to feed into her unhealthy obsession with her ancestor to do it.

Alice Oke looks like her ancestor of the same name, and she is obsessed with the family legend that her ancestor murdered her lover, the poet Lovelock, with the help of her husband. The painter finds her mental state fascinating, and decides to paint her in a way that captures her obsession. Ramsey-Kurz notes that he is willing to damage his career and Alice’s sanity to accomplish his goal (208). The painter’s psychological profile of Alice becomes his only goal,
and ultimately, he witnesses the downfall of the whole family. Ramsey-Kurz’s belief is that the painter ignores the obvious cause of Alice’s condition: Alice suffered a miscarriage early in her marriage and never recovered (210). However, by focusing on Alice’s lost role as a mother, Ramsey-Kurz overlooks an important aspect of Alice’s character. She is not concerned about her lack of children and has been obsessed with the story since she was very young. Alice used to force her cousin, now husband, to act out the story when they were small children (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 123). She even says to the painter, “We have no children, and I don’t suppose we shall have any. I, at least, have never wished for them” (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 134). This leads to the conclusion that her obsession was caused by reasons other than losing a child. The painter wants to collect and study her image partly because of her rejection of gender roles, such as motherhood; he owns a sketch of her in a boy’s cap (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 105). His collection of images becomes the only thing left of her, which exemplifies how violent and destructive capturing someone’s image can be.

Even the language photographers use has violent connotations: shoot, capture, take, and cut. To theorists like Susan Sontag, photography is a violent and possessive art form. In her book *On Photography*, Sontag writes about the ethics of photography. Sontag also compares cameras to cars and guns; all three are dangerous “fantasy-machines whose use is addictive” (14). She sees photography as trying to collect images to poses the subjects. She writes, “the most grandiose result of the photographic enterprise is to give us the sense that we can hold the whole world in our heads—as an anthology of images. To collect photographs is to collect the world” (Sontag 3). Cameras give their users a sense of power and control over the world in the same way collectors have a sense of power over what they collect. This connects to Mahoney’s argument that collecting removes the original object from its historical and social context (48).
Lee was concerned with consumerist culture because she believed removing history from art took away its individual power. She started to consider not only the art object itself, but its consumption as well (Mahoney 41). Lee’s concerns led to ghost stories which reinforced the power of history and social context. Instead of creating his own version of Alice Oke, the painter decides to imitate the painting of her ancestor (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 129). He wants to remove the Victorian Alice from context and place her in the past to show her obsession. He fails at completing this imitation, showing he is incapable of recreating the art of the past. The portrait of Alice Oke is not only about aesthetics, but Alice Oke’s story of love and betrayal come to life and directly affect the present. Showing the strength of Alice’s connection to the past reinforces the weakness of her husband and the painter to not understand her.

In “Oke of Okehurst,” Alice Oke and the painter both have obsessive collecting tendencies; Alice surrounds herself with the objects and stories of her ancestor, and the painter is obsessed with collecting images of the Victorian Alice. While they both have an obsession, Alice Oke’s attachment to history is stronger than the painter’s attachment to Alice. He never finishes his image of Alice, so Alice is more powerful because she can connect with spirits and affect the world. Sontag also argues that photography, collecting, and the past are all connected, saying, “Like the collector, the photographer is animated by a passion that, even when it appears to be for the present, is linked to a sense of the past” (77). While historians try to put things in order, collectors aim to confirm the legitimacy of their objects within their own system (Sontag 77-78). The painter shows an obsession with collecting images of Alice Oke, much like a photographer. He is continually sketching her and planning her portrait, and he has an entire sketchbook dedicated to her (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 106). The sketches are quickly done and incomplete, like snapshots. The painter’s collection of sketches also has violent overtones. He says, “That’s
her head,” meaning a sketch of her head, but it can also be read as referring to a severed head (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 106). He imbues the unfinished portrait with a life of its own, and he asks to turn the portrait towards the wall before her starts to tell the story (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 107). The painter has taken life from the real Alice and put it into his painting. Sontag notes the connection between photography and death, which can be extended to portraits. According to Sontag, “The contingency of photographs confirms that everything is perishable” (Sontag 80). Trying to preserve something’s image means admitting it will die. The images also imply a kind of ownership. Sontag continues, “Photography is acquisition in several forms. In its simplest form, we have in a photograph surrogate possession of a cherished person or thing, a possession which gives photographs some the character of unique objects” (155). Alice Oke’s images are collectible items for the painter, which he uses to show off his intimate knowledge of the story of her death. He brags to the unnamed listener, “I suppose newspapers must have been full of it at the time” (Lee 106-107). He seems to be enjoying his fame, since his studio is now busy and full of paintings. After having no work before, he takes possession of the story to his own benefit.

The painter’s lack of patrons was a real-life problem for artists in the Victorian period. Photography was a quicker and more affordable way to have portraits done. Dennis Denisoff agrees in his article, “The Forest Beyond the Frame: Picturing Women’s Desires in Vernon Lee and Virginia Woolf.” He writes, “In addition to challenging portraiture’s elitism, photographers were adding pressure to the painter’s claim of capturing the essence of a subject” (Denisoff 254). The painter in “Oke of Okehurst” prides himself on capturing the truth of his subjects, so much so that he is accused of painting an unflattering portrait of a woman (Lee 108). His obsession with getting Alice Oke’s portrait as authentic as possible is a result of feeling pressured to paint
more like a photograph. The Victorians’ obsession with science might have also led him to taking a scientific approach to his art, hence his obsessive focus on Alice’s mental health and William Oke’s “manic-frown.” His interest in science also explains how much attention the painter gives to Alice’s eccentric behaviors and deviations from gender and sexual norms.

Alice’s obsession with her ancestor is transgressive in several ways. First, as Denisoff notes, she is living in the past and often dismisses the present. She is unconcerned with her current marriage because she is obsessed with the relationships of her past ancestor (Denisoff 255). Beyond her transgression in time, the ancestor Alice also disobeyed conventions about gender and sexuality for a woman in her time-period. According to family legend, Nicholas Oke and his wife Alice Oke conspired to kill Alice’s lover, the poet Christopher Lovelock (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 121). The ancestor of Alice Oke disguised herself in men’s riding clothes, which, according to the Victorian Alice, she wore often (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 138). While conventionally Lovelock would be the “phantom lover” referred to in the story’s original title, Alice is much more fascinated by the woman with whom she shares a family history and name. Lovelock is merely secondary in her imagination, and her life is dedicated to resembling the other Alice Oke. Denisoff argues that Alice is killed for her connection to another woman, and not for having a male lover (256). Lovelock has a stronger connection to William Oke, who claims to see him several times. The narrator describes William’s deteriorating mental state, including a scene in which William claims there will be no hops this autumn, even though the plants are clearly full of hops (Lee 147). The Victorian Alice is more concerned with wearing her ancestor’s clothes and thinking about her rather than her male lover, which is a disruption of the typical love triangle in Western literature.
Alice Oke’s relationship with her ancestor is an example of female bonding which displaces heteronormative relationships. Terry Castle supports this in her book, *The Apparitional Lesbian*. She builds on Eve Sedgwick’s theory from *Between Men* to illustrate how woman/woman relationships interrupt the m/m/f triangle and disrupt male homosocial relationships. Eve Sedgwick theorizes that the Western literature canon focuses on strengthening the homosocial bonds between men through love triangles. Relationships are structured with a singular woman as an outlier in a triangle with two men. Sedgwick argues that the connection between two men in a love triangle is much stronger than the heterosexual relationships with the woman in the triangle (Castle 68-69). In *The Apparitional Lesbian*, Castle critiques Sedgwick’s underdeveloped examination of female bonding, saying, “Female bonding, at least hypothetically, destabilizes the ‘canonical’ triangular arrangement of male desire, is an affront to it, and ultimately—in the radical form of lesbian bonding—displaces it entirely” (Castle 72). By adding one woman to the equation, the center of the triangle is destabilized and shifts everything towards women.

The narrator’s obsession with Mrs. Oke and his bond with Mr. Oke fits the traditional love triangle. The narrator often remarks on his fascination with the modern Alice Oke, including her beauty. As an example, the painter says to his unnamed listener, “I must repeat and reiterate over and over again, that she was, beyond all comparison, the most graceful and exquisite woman I have ever seen” (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 113). The narrator goes to the estate to stay with the married couple while he works on their portraits, but he also forms a bond with Mr. Oke. After Alice teases Mr. William Oke about his fear of ghosts, the narrator observes, “I don’t know why, but as I sat and watched him, with his florid, honest, manly beauty, working away conscientiously, with that little perplexed frown of his, I felt intensely sorry for this man” (Lee,
“Oke of Okehurst” 128). While the narrator and Alice Oke only connect via his obsession with psychoanalyzing her, the narrator and Mr. Oke have in-depth conversations about many things. Mr. Oke is even willing to confide in the narrator when he believes his wife is being unfaithful, and the narrator attempts to comfort him and dissuade him from believing Alice Oke is having an affair (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 148-149). The two men spend time together managing the Okehurst estate, which reinforces the separation between women’s spaces and men’s spaces. They reinforce homosocial activities and make Alice Oke an outsider to be studied or understood.

The love triangle is complicated, however, by the ghost of Lovelock and Alice Oke’s obsession with her ancestor. The modern Alice Oke is listless and disinterested in everything except the story of her ancestor. Alice Oke’s bond with her relative disrupts the love triangle and shifts the center towards a female/female bond. The modern Alice Oke is so obsessed with looking like her ancestor that she wears the same white dress her relative wore in a portrait hanging on their wall (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 130). On the other hand, Mr. Oke is terrified of the legends about his family, and he wishes his wife would not spread the story around. He fears his wife is being improper and will embarrass the family with her obsession with the past (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 121). Alice’s obsession disconnects her from her present role as a wife and possible mother, which makes her deviant. Alice Oke’s longing for the portrait of her dead relative is reminiscent of Lee’s “dead and photographic” lover in her real life (Thomas 123). Desire for an image of a dead woman is an expression of a queer desire, not only because it is for a person of the same-sex, but because it crosses over a distance between two different worlds; the spirit world and the physical world.
Alice Oke’s obsession with her ancestor mirrors Victorian spiritualists’ obsession with Marie Antoinette’s spirit. This fascination had a connection with queer desire and sexual taboos. In 1890, spiritual medium Hélène Smith claimed she was Marie Antoinette in a previous life (Castle 107). Her fascination with the French Queen was not unique, and other spiritualists also claimed to see Marie Antoinette’s ghost and identified with her. An anonymous woman wrote in a psychology journal about her lifelong obsession with Marie Antoinette. She imagined the ghost of the French Queen gently caressing her face while she slept (Castle 110). The same woman recounted dreaming about being a young man in the presence of the Queen (Castle 111). The unnamed woman’s fantasies had erotic overtones, and by taking on the male role she showed sexual aggression and desires that she could not have as a woman. There were also two women who claimed to see Marie Antoinette’s ghost during a trip to Versailles (Castle 112-14). These women were both spinster school administrators, and lived together in a relationship others described as “husband and wife” (Castle 124). These women could not find sexual role models in life, so they looked to ghosts from the past to satisfy their needs. According to Castle, during Marie Antoinette’s life there were rumors she had affairs with other women, but, in the Victorian age, biographers insisted she was innocent (140). Castle writes, “the very fiction of Marie Antoinette’s innocence, so feverishly adumbrated in the biographies, facilitated the subversive workings of lesbian romance” (140). Ironically, Marie Antoinette’s mandated innocence makes her a safe connection to lesbian desire. Her distance through time and death also make her a non-threatening outlet for physical desire for another woman. There is no way to physically touch a Queen who has been dead for years, so fantasies about her are harmless and will never become reality. Alice Oke’s fascination with her ancestor could be just an innocent interest in family
history, but it is clear the figure she has chosen to emulate also deviates from social and sexual norms.

In “Oke of Okehurst,” Alice Oke and her ancestor of the same name both wear men’s clothing. The narrator has a sketch of the modern Alice Oke wearing a boy’s cap in his studio (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 105). According to the family legend, the original Alice Oke wears men’s clothes to murder her lover (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 121). The modern Alice Oke wears the same costume during a masquerade party in front of all her guests (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 138). The narrator says, “there is something questionable in the sudden appearance of a young married woman, the mistress of the house, in a riding-coat and jack-boots; and Mrs. Oke’s expression did not make the jest seem any less questionable” (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 138). Alice Oke’s choice of clothing is not only deviant because of her cross-dressing, but the clothing also signifies her obsession with another woman. Even though the other woman is not physically present, her spiritual presence puts Alice Oke’s sexuality into question. The narrator describes the scene at the dinner party as a mad house (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 138). Unexpectedly, he does not use the term “hysterical” to refer to Alice, but instead he calls Mr. William Oke a “hysterical woman” (Lee, “Oke of Okehurst” 144). Alice and William have flipped roles, and Alice is calm and in control as William becomes hysterical and loses his mind.

In “A Wicked Voice,” the narrator is also haunted by a ghost from the past which deviates from gender and sexual norms. The narrator is a music student studying opera in Venice. He declares himself a “follower of Wagner,” but he is ridiculed for it (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 155). Here, Lee was also subtly critiquing consumer culture through the narrator, Magnus. He is annoyed by the tourists and cheap commodities sold on the streets in Venice, including cheaply produced photographs, and, like Alice Oke, he attains a strong connection to
an image created in the past (Mahoney 51). Sometimes he curses his own passion, saying, “I am but half-bewitched, since I am conscious of the spell that binds me. My old nurse, far off in Norway, used to tell me that were-wolves are ordinary men and women half their days, and that if, during that period, they become aware of their horrid transformation they may find the means to forestall it. May this not be the case with me?” (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 155). He equates his obsession to transforming into a supernatural beast, and he hopes for a cure. Magnus tries to deflect people from engaging him about his interest, but he cannot help but answer questions. When he’s asked about the singer Zaffirino, he says, “I hear my own voice, as if in the far distance, giving them all sorts of information, biographical and critical” (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 157). Zaffirino was a castrati: Castrati were singers who had their testicles removed as young boys. Their voices developed differently, and they hit higher notes and held a note for longer than any other men or women singers. The narrator’s passionate feelings make him lose control over his own body, which is why his hatred comes from the reliance on human voices in music. He says, “For what is the voice but the Beast calling, awakening that other Beast sleeping in the depths of mankind, the Beast which all great art has ever sought to chain up, as the archangel chains up, in old pictures, the demon with this woman’s face?” (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 156). His hatred is also focused on an etching of castrati singer Zaffirino, saying, “Why, the sight of this idiotic engraving, the mere name of that coxcomb of a singer, have made my heart beat and my limbs turn to water like a love-sick hobbledehoy” (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 158). Magnus is disturbed by the parts of music which come from the body. He focuses his hatred on Zaffirino’s face and voice because they make him lose control of his own body.

The language in the story is reminiscent of language usually reserved for erotic lesbian desire. Catherine Maxwell also draws a parallel between the narrator’s reactions to Zaffirino and
Sappho’s poetry in her article, “Sappho, Mary Wakefield, and Vernon Lee’s ‘A Wicked Voice.’” She notes that the narrator in Vernon Lee’s story uses the same language to describe his feelings as Sappho used to describe her own desire for other women, which usually involved intense feelings in her body which were beyond her control (Maxwell 961). Maxwell also notes that Zaffirino’s name is a reference to lesbian women in the Victorian era. Not only is it reminiscent of Sappho’s name, but it’s also possible gay women exchanged sapphire rings to express their “Sapphic” love for each other (Maxwell 960-961). Magnus’s behavior is also reminiscent of desire between opera divas and female fans. In The Apparitional Lesbian, Terry Castle writes, “At best, the diva-worshipper is a kind of parody adult, a maker of silly sounds and fatuous conceits—a sort of gurgling, burbling, semi-idiot” (201). She continues that to worship a diva’s voice is to worship her body (201). Magnus is captivated by the voice because it is on the verge of losing control over the body. He remarks that the voice sounds like it is withholding a “passion of tears” (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 170). Losing bodily control is a sign of weakness, but it is also a sign of great physical desire and pleasure. Since the castrati transgressed gender, Magnus is experiencing a sexually transgressive desire. Magnus describes the voice as “a man’s voice which had much of a woman’s” (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 170). Zaffirino’s smile is also “cruel and mocking like a bad woman’s” (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 180). The gender fluid identity of the voice adds to Magnus’s confusion and loss of control.

Like Alice Oke, Zaffirino’s portrait haunts the narrator. The narrator tries to destroy the image to end the haunting, but immediately feels ashamed of his passionate rage (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 168-169). It’s also futile because the voice and ghost of Zaffirino continue to haunt him. This story confirms Vernon Lee’s own beliefs about portrayals of the supernatural. In her essay, “Faustus and Helena: Notes on the Supernatural in Art,” she argued that supernatural
things can never truly be captured in art. She wrote, “What do we obtain? A picture, a piece of music, a story; but the ghost is gone” (Lee, “Faustus and Helena” 310). Magnus’s attempt to destroy the ghost by destroying the etching fails because the real ghost is in his own mind. According to Vernon Lee’s writing on the supernatural in art, we cannot show our ghosts to each other, but they can live in our imaginations (Lee, “Faustus and Helena” 319). Alice Oke’s ghost also only lives in her mind, while Lovelock’s ghost only lives in William’s mind. He cannot escape his desire, and seeks out the voice, like a “lover awaits his beloved” (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 165). He wants to capture the voice in his work, but it ultimately drives him mad. In the age of spirit photography, Magnus’s desire to capture the invisible is not unique. Like the painter in “Oke of Okehurst,” Magnus seeks control through a person’s image. However, while the painter wants to control Alice through his art, Magnus tries to reclaim control of his own body by destroying Zaffirino’s image. Since he is still haunted after the image is destroyed, Lee also shows in “A Wicked Voice” that the historical and social contexts of the original artwork are stronger than the consumable art object. Magnus comments on other failures of Victorian art. He dismissingly describes “Alvise’s fat mother gabbling dialect in a shrill, benevolent voice behind the bullfights on her fan” (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 174). By painting Spanish bullfights on a fan, they have lost their historical and cultural context and appear false. The woman herself is also unable to create anything meaningful. Later, the “old Countess [is] knitting a garment of uncertain shape and destination” (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 176). Magnus thinks very little of the Countess because she owns mass produced objects and cannot shape her knitting into a useable garment. He also ignores her advice and goes out when she warns him of the dangers (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 176). Just as spirit photography removed Joan of Arc from her place in history, other mass produced works of art were removed from artistic inspiration. The Countess
symbolizes the mindset of Victorian culture of photography, and if Magnus had listened to her, he would have been separated from Zaffarino’s voice.

By continually seeking out the voice for his own opera, Magnus makes his own desire come to life. In “Lesbian Postmortem at the Fin de Siècle,” Kate Thomas also connects the power behind lesbian women writing about supernatural desire. Not only do these women write about their desire, but they also write about their own creative process. For Thomas, these “authors were not asking is it possible to be a lesbian but were instead navigating what it might mean to be both a lesbian and an author and asking what their social, sexual, and literary fates would be” (126). Magnus is not only expressing desire, but his desire is reflected in his art. He is haunted by the voice, but he also envisions it as part of his opera and even seeks it out (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 168). We see him put himself in great danger to get closer to the voice. Ignoring warnings about mosquitoes and deadly fever, he opens his window and ventures out into the night looking for the voice (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 176-177). Even though he does not openly admit to his obsession, he pursues it under the cover of darkness, and at great personal risk. Magnus’s behavior shows an artist trying to incorporate their desires into their work, and that it is also dangerous to do so. Lee telegraphs to the reader how she must write to disguise her own desire. In the scene where Magnus catches up with Zaffirino, there is a small crowd surrounding a swooning woman on a couch (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 179). While it is in this moment that Magnus realizes his true desire for the voice, he identifies the woman as Zaffirino’s true victim, while his own pain and suffering are merely incidental (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 179-180). To disguise the intimacy of the moment between Magnus and Zaffirino, Lee inserts a woman in a traditional role. The woman and the crowd with her are not mentioned before or after this moment, so their appearance seems abrupt and contrived. This performance of traditional
femininity is used as a shield between the two non-conforming lovers. This scene shows the power of the artist’s desire as well as the ways an artist copes in order to protect themselves.

Vernon Lee’s supernatural stories exhibit queer desire, gender non-conformity, and a critique of consumerist culture created by photography in the Victorian period. While these aspects of her writing have been viewed separately, they should all be considered as part of one continuous system. By separating art from its historical context, queer and gender variant identities were also erased. The painter tries to place Alice Oke in the context of her traditional roles, but he fails to see the connection between her and her ancestor beyond a psychological obsession. While the painter in “Oke of Okehurst” attempts to use painting in the same way a photographer uses photography, he fails because he doesn’t understand the context behind the original Alice Oke’s story. Terry Castle’s work in The Apparitional Lesbian explains the historical need for women to portray their same-sex desire as ghost stories. These supernatural tales create space for a kind of desire which doesn’t conform to gender or sexual norms, which might be forgotten when they lose their context. The Victorian Alice Oke is connected to her ancestor through desire, and by not realizing this, the painter fails to recreate the power of the original painting. In “A Wicked Voice,” Magnus feels desire for a long dead human voice. While the image of Zaffirino triggers this desire, ultimately the voice itself is more powerful. The image and voice belong to a gender variant person, which the reader wouldn’t understand if they lose the context of history. The subtle references to Sappho and same-sex desire for opera divas are social contexts which change the story if they are forgotten. Magnus also ignores the commercially successful forms of music and art in pursuit of the voice. By trying to move away from the art of the past, Victorian art loses the power to deeply affect people the way Zaffirino’s voice does. Vernon Lee’s views on art, gender, and sexuality are all connected to the Victorian
culture of photography. Her supernatural stories were reacting to a culture which wanted to produce art quickly and with little-to-no historical context. Victorian mad-doctors also used photography as a scientific tool to define gender and sexuality more definitively than it had ever been before. Because of these limiting ideas about gender and sexuality, Vernon Lee looked to art from the past for more nuanced versions. The portrait of Alice Oke reveals a woman who dresses in men’s clothing and defied Victorian conventions about women’s roles as wives and mothers. The castrati singer had features which are at times masculine and at other times feminine. By incorporating these figures into her stories, Vernon Lee is directly reacting to Victorian photography and the way photography had shaped Victorian culture and art.
Vernon Lee’s supernatural stories made clear connections between the past and present through art. Alice Oke and Zaffirino are figures from the past appearing in the present via art. Lee made this connection between the past and older art because she feared the Victorian culture of photography would make future art less powerful. One of Thomas Hardy’s lesser-known novels, *A Laodicean: A Story of To-Day*, also grapples with the conflict between history, modernity, and the future. Hardy used technology throughout the novel to show the clash between the aging families and new industrialists. Paula Power, the novel’s heroine, updates the medieval de Stancy castle with a telegraph machine. With the ability to control her own fortune, Paula chooses her own husband in a time when many women did not have that option. She shows her mastery over the Victorian world through her telegraphs, but Hardy complicated the trustworthiness of Victorian technology by introducing trick photographs. Photography is particularly adept at tricking viewers because its scientific associations gives photography credibility, even though it is easy to manipulate. Paula takes part in a project to try to preserve old paintings in the de Stancy castle with photography, but the novel ends with the paintings and the castle burnt to the ground. Photography was praised as a tool for scientific use and preservation, but in this work, it was ultimately associated with death and destruction. By turning to photography, Paula continues the destruction of an old aristocratic family and replaces it with an unstable future.

In Thomas Hardy’s *A Laodicean*, Paula symbolizes modern technology and ideas, but she also desires a connection with the past. Paula’s father buys a crumbling historic castle, which Paula inherits. John Power, Paula’s father, made a name for himself building a railway through
the local countryside, and Paula inherits his legacy of modernism along with the historical de Stancy estate (Hardy 35). In her article, “Hardy’s Laodicean Narrative,” Linda M. Austin examines how Hardy’s novel shows the clash between history and modernity. She says that the novel shows a culture “in flux, strewn with metonymic objects of the present and past to signify indeterminacy” (Austin 212). The main plot of *A Laodicean* is a love triangle between Paula and her two suitors: Somerset and Captain de Stancy. Paula is in love with Somerset, but she cannot help but be drawn to Captain de Stancy’s family name and connection to history. Somerset has no history to offer Paula. Somerset’s family name does not hold as much power as the de Stancy name, and his career is only just beginning. Somerset is traveling the countryside to sketch old buildings and churches for practice at the beginning of the novel (Hardy 78-79).

Havill, an older architect in the area, tells Somerset things are different from when he was learning the craft. He says, “nowadays ‘tis the men who can draw pretty pictures who get recommended, not the practical men” (Hardy 79). The past generation, Havill tells Somerset, learned architecture through building and did not need sketching abilities. Somerset’s sketching sets him apart as a modern architect and an artist as opposed to the past craftsmen in the trade. Havill’s use of the feminine word “pretty” also implies he believes Somerset is taking a less masculine approach to architecture. This makes him a great match for the modern Paula, who is also defying typical gender roles. Paula’s interests are, as she says, “eclectic” (Hardy 100). Somerset comes across her room during a castle tour. He takes note of all the objects she has collected, including “nicknacks [sic] of various descriptions, and photographic portraits of the artistic, scientific, and literary celebrities of the day” (Hardy 40). Paula shows interest in scientific and artistic spheres, and she’s dedicated to using her fortune to stay current. She has installed a telegraph, which “costs six pounds a mile” in the castle, and she operates it herself.
Paula has made other improvements to the castle, including a new clock which counts the seconds instead of the hours. Her friend Charlotte tells Somerset, “Paula says that time, being so much more valuable now, must of course be cut up into smaller pieces” (Hardy 37). Paula continues her family reputation as a force for modernization, despite this being a more masculine pursuit.

Paula is an incredibly modern woman, but she is also fascinated with the past. Her renovation plans for the de Stancy castle include building her own “Greek colonnade” with a “fountain in the middle, and statues like those in the British Museum” (Hardy 91). Before the novel begins, she also asks Havill to build a gymnasium for her exercising (Hardy 191). Havill says, “she holds advanced views on social and other matters; and in those on the higher education of women she is very strong, talking a good deal about the physical training of the Greeks, whom she adores, or did” (Hardy 192). Paula remodels the de Stancy castle with a mix of classic Greece and modern technology. The locals criticize her changes to the estate, and she becomes so self-conscious she asks Somerset to cancel the plans for the Greek colonnade. Paula is influenced by popular opinion and says, “I perceive the want of harmony that would result from inserting such a piece of marble-work in a mediaeval fortress” (Hardy 117). She changes her mind about the Greek colonnade after reading a letter printed in the local newspaper accusing her of destroying the castle’s legacy of mediaeval art (Hardy 120). While she was interested in the estate before, after the letter she begins to identify with the castle on a personal level. She complains to Somerset while looking at some of the castle’s statues, “I am persecuted! If I had been one of these it would never have been written” (Hardy 122). She goes on to wish she were a de Stancy, and says, “It is very dreadful to be denounced as a barbarian. I want to be romantic
and historical” (Hardy 123). Her interest in the family continues to develop, and she begins to associate the name de Stancy with romance and history.

Paula’s other suitor, Captain de Stancy, appeals to her desire for a historical connection to the castle she owns. Captain de Stancy walks through the castle with her and gives her more details about the relatives portrayed in the paintings and statues. He even tries to emulate one of his ancestors by wearing an old suit of armor (Hardy 214-215). This moment reveals de Stancy has something Somerset never will, a direct connection to the past. Paula is captivated by de Stancy, but the most alluring quality de Stancy has is his family name. Their marriage would be the perfect resolution to all their problems. The de Stancy family would regain their past wealth and ancestral home, and Paula would be welcomed in the community and no longer treated as an outcast for her new money and modern ideals. While Captain de Stancy’s family attracts Paula, ultimately his own family member ruins his chance for a marriage between the two names. When Paula finds out de Stancy’s illegitimate son has been manipulating their romance from the start, she rejects Captain de Stancy and his family name.

The mysterious figure in the novel, Dare, is Captain de Stancy’s illegitimate son. He tries to use technology to arrange an advantageous marriage between his father and Paula Power. Captain de Stancy, on the other hand, has mixed opinions about technology and romance. De Stancy says of Paula’s ability to use a telegraph machine, “That wire is a nuisance, to my mind; such constant intercourse with the outer world is bad for our romance” (Hardy 234). His use of the word “intercourse” hints at the sexual nature of his critique. Paula’s mastery of technology gives her more freedom than a traditional woman, since she is able to speak with whomever she wants whenever she wants, all without a man’s permission. Since de Stancy’s main attribute is his connection to tradition, anything modern or empowering for Paula threatens him. This shows
the role technology plays in disrupting traditional gender roles. Paula, an unmarried woman, is able to converse with men without supervision. Even if someone were to listen in on her telegraphing, without the knowledge to understand the machine it would be meaningless. Despite Captain de Stancy’s fears, Dare’s mastery of technology is the Captain’s only means to be near Paula. Dare suggests he assist de Stancy in a project to copy and preserve the family paintings with photography (Hardy 219). De Stancy uses the historical project as a contrivance to be near Paula, but he goes too far when he suggests his desire to photograph a portrait of her (Hardy 221-222). He eventually convinces her to agree to the photo, and meets his goal of making her unable to “dismiss from her thoughts him and his persevering desire for the shadow of her face during the next four-and-twenty-hours” (Hardy 227). Instead of a direct portrait, de Stancy thinks he will stand out in Paula’s mind for asking for a photograph of a painting, just the “shadow” of her face. The extra distance between the original subject and the final photograph makes him appear to be a more persistent lover. He has found a way to connect modern technology and his family history in his project, which he believes is the best way to gain Paula’s love.

De Stancy comes to distrust photography after Dare uses negative manipulation to fool Paula. While she is proficient with a telegraph, Paula’s photographic expertise is limited. She and Charlotte de Stancy are both able to use the telegraph machine, and they often use it to communicate with each other. However, the two characters most closely associated with photography are Dare and de Stancy. The two technologies are gendered, with telegraphs being feminine and photographs being masculine. In the book, Charles Dickens in Cyberspace: The Afterlife of the Nineteenth Century in Postmodern Culture, Jay Clayton writes about the role technology plays in A Laodicean. He writes, “The power to manipulate the visual domain through technological mediation symbolizes a masculine aggression whose aim is the possession
of the heroine’s body and castle” (Clayton 70). Somerset also holds power in the field of visual arts; he gains access to Paula’s castle to first sketch the architecture and then becomes her hired architect. Paula has little interest or knowledge in architecture, and purposefully leaves all the decisions to Somerset so not to make an improper choice (Hardy 89). Somerset is in control of his architecture, but Paula still has more power in the relationship as his employer. As a woman with control over her own money, Somerset must follow Paula’s wishes as a hired architect.

Paula’s wealth and interest in modern technology empower her as a woman. Paula operates the telegraph machine herself and often interprets messages for others in the castle. Clayton says that the female telegraph operator is an early example of Donna Haraway’s cyborg woman; she’s a “woman wired into the information network, the interface between a vast technological network and a human system of customers and exchanges” (77). In the same vein as her telegraph, Paula also has control over when others can speak and what they are permitted to say. She asks to keep the love affair between herself and Somerset secret, and she sets rules about what can be said safely. They have a short conversation alone during Paula’s garden party. Somerset asks if he may call her “Dear Paula,” and she answers, “O no—not yet” (Hardy 135). Somerset says he loves her and she refuses to answer in the affirmative whether she loves him or not:

‘But don’t you love me.’

‘I love you to love me.’

‘Won’t you say anything more explicit?’

‘I would rather not’ (Hardy 135).

Paula is in control of when, where, and what they can say to each other. De Stancy also shows deference to Paula’s power of speech when he begs her not to tell his sister about his indecent
request to photograph her portrait (Hardy 222). Paula’s social capital, money, and telegraph give her power which she uses to exert control over her lovers.

De Stancy attempts to manipulate Paula into a romantic plot with him during a performance of Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labor Lost*. Paula agrees to perform in the play for a charitable event, but in one scene Captain de Stancy switches out his lines for a speech from *Romeo and Juliet* which ends with a kiss (Hardy 264-265). In the public space of performing the play, Paula loses her social power, but she gains control back from de Stancy by using her telegraph. She sends a message early next morning to London to hire an actress for the next performance of the play (Hardy 273-274). Paula uses her personal power over technology to counter the social power men hold over her in public. In public, her actions are limited by her class and gender, but by mastering the privacy of technology she avoids de Stancy’s advances. Paula continues to use technology to avoid being controlled by men. Her uncle takes her away to travel Europe, and she fears he will read her letters from Somerset (302). To avoid her uncle’s spying, she asks Somerset to only send telegrams, which are harder for her uncle to intercept as well as faster than letters (288-302). Paula uses her new technology to escape the censure of the older generation and gender norms, but Somerset wants to pursue her as a traditional lover. He continues to send Paula letters which expose his true feelings for her and sets off to meet her when he hears Captain de Stancy is going to join her group (Hardy 309). By choosing not to use technology, Somerset makes himself into the traditional jilted lover. However, Hardy does not present technology as a trustworthy tool either, which complicates the role technology plays in the novel.

Romance in *A Loadicean* is manipulated by Dare and his mastery of modern technology. Dare has travelled all over the world, including “India, Malta, Gibraltar, the Ionian Islands, and
Canada,” and he brags he has invented a new photographic process while abroad (Hardy 59-60). Somerset notices Dare for his photographic skills, but Dare claims to be an architecture draftsman to become Somerset’s assistant (Hardy 111). Somerset believes Dare is a mysterious man of the world happening to stop at the de Stancy castle, but Dare has a direct connection to the de Stancy family. Dare is Captain de Stancy’s illegitimate son, but the two men keep their connection a secret. Dare is using his anonymity to deceive Paula into marrying Captain de Stancy, which will benefit Dare because he will be able to blackmail de Stancy for more money than he already does. His power comes from his ability to see without being seen, which relates to his visual arts skills in photography and drafting. His deceptive nature and association with photography makes photographs seem untrustworthy in the novel. Linda M. Austin notes characters have the most power when they are looking at someone without their gaze being returned (215). Dare gains important information about Paula and Somerset’s romance by spying on them in a dark tent (Hardy 146). He also arranges for de Stancy to spy on Paula during her athletic activities, which he believes will ensure de Stancy falling in love with Paula and start a courtship (Hardy 195). Dare gains advantage over others by spying on them for information, but he uses his mastery of modern technology to manipulate people as well. Photography gives Dare the ability to capture an image and use it for his own ends. He introduces himself to the characters as a photographer, and he is photographing something he wants to claim as his own, the de Stancy castle. He can only reach this goal via a marriage between Captain de Stancy and Paula, so through photography and telegraphs, Dare ruins Somerset’s reputation and makes Paula look to Captain de Stancy as a favorable suitor.

While gambling in Monte Carlo, Dare sends Paula a telegraph claiming to be Somerset in desperate need of money (Hardy 320). He asks for Paula to send Captain de Stancy with the
money, but when de Stancy sees Dare instead of Somerset at the appointed meeting place, he decides to bring the money back to Paula and tell her Somerset did not show up. He chooses to hide Dare’s involvement to protect himself, and Paula’s faith in technology makes her still believe Somerset is a heavy gambler (Hardy 334). Dare’s next trick is also technological. He reveals a manipulated photograph which makes Somerset appear drunk (Hardy 353). His modern technology is much more effective than gossip would have been. In the article “Deceit, Desire, and Technology: A Media History of Secrets and Lies,” Sam Halliday argues that modern technology has a unique ability to manipulate romance. Halliday writes, “Dare has stolen Somerset’s likeness… the means by which he represents himself, or outwardly manifests his inner nature” (144). Paula, while a modern woman with an interest in science, is ignorant of trick photography and negative manipulation (Hardy 355). She trusts the photograph to reflect truth.

Paula trusts photography because she has been led to believe it was a science. Mad-doctors like H. W. Diamond had been using photography to study his mental health patients since the 1850s, and he was a well-known supporter of photography’s use in science (Schutzman 74-75). However, by the time Hardy wrote A Laodicean in the 1880s, people started to doubt the veracity of photos. In the article “The Unreliable Camera: Photography as Evidence in Mid-Victorian Fiction,” Robert Dingley writes about the changing views on photography in literature. In A Laodicean, “photography’s potential for deception is immeasurably strengthened by a naïve belief in its incapacity for falsehood” (Dingley 45). Paula is inexperienced with photography, and she “would as soon have thought that the sun could again stand still upon Gibeon, as that it could be made to falsify men’s characters in delineating their features” (Hardy 356). Paula’s connection between the sun and photography is supported by a long history. The root words of
photography, “photo” and “graphia,” are Greek for “light writing.” In her Victorian era essay titled “Photography,” Lady Elizabeth Eastlake wrote about whether photography should be considered art. She wrote, “Our chief object at present is to investigate the connexion [sic] of photography with art—to decide how far the sun may be considered an artist, and to what branch of imitation his powers are best adapted” (Eastlake 62). Lady Eastlake argued photographs were not art because they were made by the sun. She suggested photography was best used for scientific purposes, like photographing mental patients and documenting objects (Eastlake 65).

Paula not only believes photography should be used to document, she is unaware of any other use. She also believes in the power of science, so much so that it destroys her love of Somerset.

Charlotte de Stancy, who is less acquainted with science, goes to a photography studio to find out more about how photographs are made. She wants to see a “professor on the point” to learn about photography, and so she visits “an obscure photographic artist in that town” named Mr. Ray (Hardy 423). Charlotte sees a professor and a photographic artist as the same thing, while others might distinguish the professor as scientific and the artist as unreliable. Charlotte, however, is inexperienced enough to not see the difference between the two. The photographer’s studio is split in half. One side of the building is a junk shop, and the other half of the building is a photography studio. The narration indicates the customer sees two completely different shops depending on how they turn their head when they enter (Hardy 424). The shop’s double identity is a clear metaphor for appearances being deceiving, especially in photography. Charlotte asks Mr. Ray about trick photographs like the one she saw of Somerset, and he admits to knowing Mr. Dare, whom invented a process to manipulate photographs so that the subject appears drunk (Hardy 424-25). Dare’s behavior and photographic process are the de Stancy family’s downfall. Once she learns the truth, Paula breaks off the engagement to Captain de Stancy (Hardy 434).
Dare is upset by his plan’s failure, but he decides it was a matter of fate; the de Stancy family was destined to fall (Hardy 473). His thoughts echo a common fear that aristocratic families would die off in the modern age. Dare is the end of the family line, but since his mother was never married to Captain de Stancy, he is not recognized. De Stancy has sworn to never marry, in respect of Dare’s late mother (Hardy 180). Dare, however, is determined to revive the family line, and wants to reap the benefits. He is so determined to claim the family name, he has “DE STANCY” tattooed across his chest (Hardy 182). He attempts to save his family with modern technology, but it ultimately destroys the last chance for the de Stancy family to regain their glory. As an act of revenge, Dare burns all the de Stancy paintings and burns down the castle, destroying every trace of the family history (Hardy 475).

Dare’s actions reflect the story of photography. Since the early days of photography, scientists dreamed it could be used to preserve historical artifacts. In “Report [on the Daguerreotype to the Chamber of Deputies],” François Arago¹⁹ proposes, “Equip the Egyptian Institute with two or three of Daguerre’s apparatus, and before long on several of the large tables of the celebrated work, which had its inception in the expedition to Egypt, innumerable hieroglyphics as they are in reality will replace those which now are invented or designed by approximations” (50). The Daguerreotype replaced hand drawn or painted documentations, and produced more accurate representations of Egyptian history. Photography was used here the same way Georgiana Houghton used it to see Joan of Arc. Arago wanted to remove the Egyptian artifacts from their historical context so France could study them on their terms. He begins his argument by saying, “everybody will realize that had we had photography in 1798 we would possess today faithful pictorial records of that which the learned world is forever deprived of by the greed of the Arabs and the vandalism of certain travelers” (Arago 50). He placed France in
the “civilized” world against the “barbarism” of the Arabs, and justified the colonial conquest of Egypt in the name of science. His desire for preservation was ultimately destructive and possessive in a violent way. He looked to the past to justify France’s actions in the colonized world, just as Houghton looked to Joan of Arc’s spirit to justify her position as an English woman.

Dare’s photography was meant to preserve the family paintings, but ultimately photography leads to destruction of all the things he was trying to preserve. In The Care and Handling of Art Objects, Marjorie Shelley explains why it is important to be cautious when photographing paintings. The handbook warns, “Stress is engendered by the concentration of absorbed heat on one side of the object and the resultant drop in RH and increase in temperature in the surrounding area” (Shelley 71). She continues, “excessive or prolonged heat radiation from photographic lamps will cause such problems as desiccation, warping, shrinkage, cracking, flaking, softening of waxes, attraction of dust, weakening of adhesive bonds, and the breakdown of textile and paper fibers” (Shelley 71). By taking a photograph of a painting, the photographer risks causing damage to the original painting they are trying to preserve. Dare turns to photography to try and preserve his family both figuratively and literally. He tries to arrange a marriage to save his family by using trick photography, and he tries to preserve his family’s images by photographing paintings.

Paintings and photographs are both connected to death in different ways; Paintings capture a past that is decaying, and photographs capture the present which will die one day. In the book Athens, Still Remains: The Photographs of Jean-François Bonhomme, Derrida analyzes a set of photographs taken in Athens, Greece. Derrida, like Barthes and Sontag, associates photography with death. He begins by stating, “We owe ourselves to death,” and he repeats the
same line throughout the book as a reminder of impending death (Derrida 1). Each photograph “signifies death without saying it. Each one, in any case, recalls a death that has already occurred, or one that is promised or threatening” (Derrida 2). The promise of death haunts photographs and reminds us we are going to die. Derrida also connects photography to the sun, but in a different way than Lady Eastlake. He associates the sun with death, since by looking at the sun we are reminded it will die out one day. Derrida connects the sun with death and connects death with photography, so “[e]very photograph is of the sun” (Derrida 65).

Photographs remind us that the subject will eventually be gone. The “acknowledgment of a debt or an IOU with regard to death is signed by everything that reflects in the photographic act as well as in the structure of the photogram” (Derrida 47). By linking the process of photography to death, instead of just the photograph’s subjects, Derrida tells us taking photographs reminds us of our own oncoming death.

Following Derrida’s way of thinking, Dare foreshadows the destruction of the de Stancy family, and himself, with his photography. A photographer is always predicting his own death as well as the death of his subjects because the photographer is present in every photo (Derrida 47). Dare disguises his interest in the de Stancy family by posing as an amateur photographer looking for old buildings to document (Hardy 58). By photographing the ruins, he marks the castle as a sight for mourning the past. His next project, photographing the family portraits, also leads to the destruction of his own family line. Photographs of paintings are “representations of representations,” and further remove the original from the present (Derrida 47). While writing about a photograph of a woman looking at a painting, Derrida says there is a “pseudo-difference of generations” in art form which creates distance from the painter, subject of the painting, viewer of the painting, the photographer, and the viewer of the photograph (45). The paintings
are artifacts of the de Stancy family’s former glory, and photographing them makes them even more distant from the present moment, which diminishes their influence over the Power family. Paula’s father puts restrictions on what property and wealth Paula can use and what must be passed on to her children, but he gives Paula the right to do whatever she wants with the paintings and de Stancy family artifacts (Hardy 469). He “didn’t care for articles that reminded him so much of his predecessors” (Hardy 469). Both father and daughter had strong reactions to the paintings; Mr. Power feared the paintings, but Paula became obsessed with preserving them and fell under their influence. It is not until after they are photographed and Paula has a falling out with the de Stancy’s (because of Dare’s trick photographs) that Paula desires to give them away. Before they were destroyed, Paula planned to give the de Stancy paintings and artifacts to Charlotte as a gift, with the possibility she might disperse them to the rest of her family (Hardy 477). The great irony, then, is that if Dare hadn’t destroyed the paintings, he might have benefited from them. Instead, he is to blame for the utter destruction of the family and its history.

Hardy’s *A Loadicean: A Story of To-Day*, presents a clash between history and modernity. While it may be tempting to say modernity wins, the novel is more complicated than that. The technology of the present (telegraphs, photography, and railways) destroy or drastically alter the relics of history, but the book ends with a look to the past. After seeing the de Stancy castle in ruins, Somerset suggests they can build their own home and be free from the influence of the previous owners (Hardy 481). Paula agrees to “build a new house beside the ruin, and show the modern spirit for evermore,” but, as the final line of the novel, Paula says to Somerset, “I wish my castle wasn’t burnt; and I wish you were a de Stancy!” (Hardy 481). This final lament for the past puts the power of modernity into question. The old family history has been literally destroyed, and Paula chooses her own husband without permission from a male relative,
unlike many women at the time. Paula’s wealth and power are products of modern technology, but technology has also caused problems.

Dare’s mastery of modern technology, like the telegraph and the camera, made it easy for him to manipulate Paula. Photography has the power to destroy the past, but it also leads to the lack of a stable future. Paula builds her castle on technologies like telegraphs and photography, but Dare proves they cannot really be trusted. Not only did this destroy her relationship with Somerset, it takes away her power. In order to get Somerset back, she chases him all over Europe trying to find him, and when she finds him, she says, “There has been a great deception practiced—the exact nature of it I cannot tell you plainly just at present; it is too painful” (Hardy 463). Paula’s behavior has changed drastically from the rest of the book. The loss of technology makes Paula much more submissive and powerless over her life. Instead of telling Somerset she wants to marry him, she says, “if you want to marry me, as you once did, you must say so; for I am here to be asked” (Hardy 464). This is much more passive than Paula usually behaves. By losing faith in technology, Paula is forced to chase Somerset on foot instead of sending a message. Without telegraphs, Paula is “hampered. . . by the circumstance of being a woman!” (Hardy 449). Paula’s life and future are out of her control due to her loss of technology. She fears going back to the castle an unmarried woman, because she fears “some uncanny influence of the dead de Stancy’s would drive me again from [Somerset]” (Hardy 466). Paula now fears the influence of her own castle, and fears she will lose herself. She also cannot trust any of her previously beloved technologies, so she is left without an identity other than Somerset’s wife.

After hearing about Paula’s marriage, a local farmer wonders if her marriage performed abroad will last or if “it might be some new plan o’ folks for leasing women now they be so plentiful, so as to get rid o’ ‘em when the men be tired o’ ‘em, and hev spent all their money”
(Hardy 468). Paula’s modern ideas about gender and her power over her own destiny make people question the stability of institutions like marriage. Modern technologies have great potential, but they also have dangerous implications. Photographs have a long historical association with death. Every photograph is a reminder of death for the photographer and the subject. Paula thought she could preserve the past with technology, but men holding power over technology lead to the destruction of her castle and what was left of the de Stancy family. Instead of looking forward towards modernity, Paula looks back and wishes she could have saved the past, but she also fears being controlled by the de Stancys. The novel ends with her and Somerset standing in front of a pile of ashes, with no clear indication of whether they will be able to rebuild or if they will be happy. By losing her connection with technology, Paula loses her clear path to the future as well as any connection to the past.
CONCLUSION

Photography is a link between the past and the future. Spirit photographs were a way for Victorians to capture an image of the past which was invisible to the naked eye. This not only made images of ghosts and spirits from the past visible in the present, it was also meant to be preserved for the future. Immediately after it was invented, photography was used to document scientific research. However, as Derrida points out, photographs remind us of death (2). Being reminded of death creates a feeling of uneasiness about the future as well. Photographs are eerie when they remind us of a loss which will happen in the future. As Derrida illustrates, the photographs of old telephones and radios reminds us of their silence and “bear the mourning of sounds and voices” (43). He goes on to say that these photographs leave a “spectral echo” which becomes more real to us than the original sound the objects made (43). What Derrida is saying here is that our distorted memories of things are easier to believe in, so that when we are confronted with reality, we question it. When Paula and Dare use photography to preserve history, they create a false image which replaces the real thing. These photographs were intended to save history for the future generation, but because photographs are always an echo of the real thing, they cannot lead to a stable future. Since photographs are always a manufactured representation, using them to preserve history leads to capturing a false image of that history. Once the de Stancy castle was photographed, it became a “spectral echo” of itself (Derrida 43). Paula is not able to preserve the de Stancy family for the future, so she’s unsure of what her next step should be. Photographic theory shows that photography confirms how fragile everything is by reminding us of death, which means Paula realizes that any future home she makes for herself will eventually crumble like the de Stancy castle. By failing to preserve history, photography confirms that nothing lasts forever.
Julia Margaret Cameron also tried to preserve history with her photography. She was in the same creative circle as many well know Victorian artists. Lord Alfred Tennyson, the Poet Laureate, was a neighbor and often inspires her work. Julia Margaret Cameron illustrates Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*, with a series of photographs in 1874. Tennyson’s inspiration was the legend of King Arthur, and Cameron’s photographs featured characters such as Merlin, Arthur, Lancelot, and Guinevere. In his book, *Julia Margaret Cameron: A Victorian Family Portrait*, Brian Hill describes Julia Margaret Cameron’s photographic career. Hill also describes Julia Margaret Cameron’s photographic process and how she posed her models. He notes that her illustrative photographs are “High Camp [sic]” at best (Hill 122). While Cameron took great pride in her photographs, she was disappointed when she saw “her efforts diminished to small woodcuts in the pages of the book” (Hill 119). Even though Cameron was happy with her own work, the printing process left her unhappy with how the public saw her photographs. The version of the past she tried to capture was not a successful reproduction, and the published photographs were not what she wanted to be preserve for the future. Like all photographs, her work led to an imitation which hurt her future. She was disappointed in the photographs because they did not reveal her true potential as an artist, and she possibly feared they made her look like a failure.

Cameron’s photographic illustrations for *Idylls of the King* revealed Victorian values through the lens of history. Tennyson’s poems deal with themes of loss and mourning, which extends to a sense of mourning for the past. Marylu Hill also discusses the connections between Cameron’s photography and *Idylls of the King* in her article, “‘Shadowing Sense at War with Soul’: Julia Margaret Cameron’s Photographic Illustrations of Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King.*” She emphasizes that the *Idylls of the King* was dedicated to Prince Albert, who died in 1861. She
views King Arthur as a Prince Albert figure, and she argues that photography gives this figure a
sense of power (Hill 447). Just as in the images of ghosts in spirit photography, Julia Margaret
Cameron’s photographs bring the dead to life. The King Arthur in *Idylls* exemplifies Victorian
morals, and photographing him takes him out of history and transplants him into the Victorian
age, further drawing the connection between the past and the present (Figure 7).

While Cameron’s images of the past were idealized and perfect, her photographic process
was far from enjoyable for her models. To play kings and queens from the past, Cameron asked
sitters to stay in uncomfortable positions for long stretches of time. One model complained about
holding onto a porter’s foot for over three hours while lying on the floor (Hill 123). Cameron’s
*Idylls of the King* photographs, however, were meant to portray scenes from a beautiful poem.
The pain her subjects felt was not shown in the photographs, making them ring false. Unlike
other art forms, photography called attention to the role the artistic subjects play in creating a
work of art. While painters can invent a person’s image with their imagination, photographic
portraits need a human subject. Cameron’s photographs accomplished capturing Victorian
subjects mimicking an idealized version of the past, a “spectral echo” instead of the real thing
(Derrida 43). King Arthur is a fantasy version of British history, and Cameron illustrated these
exceptional characters with ordinary people from her life. To Cameron, her husband was on
equal footing with Merlin. This gave the extraordinary figures of myth a direct connection to her
everyday life.

Cameron’s disappointment at the published versions of the photographs highlights how
deeply photography was tied to economics. To combat her feeling of failure, Cameron risked her
own money to print a new volume of her photographs with a higher image quality (Hill 119).
Cameron struggled with finances throughout her career, so this was a very risky venture. While
“King Arthur” Julia Margaret Cameron 1874
The Victoria and Albert Museum
Prints, Drawings & Paintings Collection
her photographs may have been artist successes, she also hoped for financial success. She received praise from her artist friends for her work, but her financial problems made her second guess how many photos she took to get a success due to the expense. Her exposed failures, such as cracks in the glass and smudges prints, might be due to financial concerns as well as artistic choice. While this doesn’t discount the fact that Cameron’s visible failures were an artistic choice, it does mean that her photography should also be considered in economic terms. As illustrated by my analysis of Vernon Lee’s work in Chapter One, photography was deeply ingrained in consumerist culture. Photography was effected by commercialization more than any other art form due to its accessibility and quick production.

Cameron was not the only Victorian photographer looking for a connection to history. By looking at the spirit photography in Houghton’s book, *Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings*, we see how Victorians used photography to make intangible things seem more stable. Abstract concepts like motherhood and moral behavior are invisible to the naked eye, but Victorians believe the miracle of photography can make them materialize in photographs. Georgiana Houghton’s excitement at seeing the spirit of Joan of Arc is obvious (Houghton 240). However, she was not excited because Houghton has a personal connection to Joan of Arc; Houghton’s excitement came from the historical significance of Joan of Arc. By appearing before Houghton, Joan of Arc’s spirit vindicated her belief that Joan belongs to the English people (Houghton 244). By removing Joan of Arc’s spirit from the history of her death, the spirit photograph gave Victorians a chance to control the past.

However, as we see in Vernon Lee’s work, removing objects from their historical context has dangerous implications. Due to the “erasure of labor contexts of origin,” Victorians forget about the ethical implications of creating a work of art (Mahoney 48). Removing ethics from the
artistic process leads to destructive behavior in “Oke of Okehurst.” The painter is not concerned with how his interest in Alice Oke might harm her; he only cares that he will produce an exceptional painting after he psychologically profiles her. While he is not a photographer, Lee draws parallels between his behavior and photographic practices. Like a photographer, the painter is interested in science and documentation. Alice Oke’s sexual and gender deviance intrigues him, not only because her lover is a ghost, but because her obsession is with another woman. For Lee, the original portrait of Alice Oke is powerful because it is attached to history. The Victorian Alice Oke makes sure the story of her ancestor lives on in her lifetime, despite her husband’s insistence that she stop dwelling on it. Alice’s death before her portrait is finished illustrates that the painter cannot capture her image; he does not understand her story. In “A Wicked Voice,” Vernon Lee also shows that the historical context and spirit of a work of art is stronger than the consumable item. Like the painter in “Oke of Okehurst,” Magnus is trying to capture an intangible thing. While the painter wants to capture Alice’s psychology, Magnus wants to capture a voice in his opera. Like spirit photography, Magnus hopes to make an intangible spirit seem more real. However, Magnus loses control over his own body in the process and nearly dies from fever (Lee, “A Wicked Voice” 181). It is impossible to capture the intangible, and it is even dangerous to try.

The main characters in Thomas Hardy’s A Laodicean also learn they cannot preserve something intangible in photographs. Paula’s fascination with classical Greek culture and Victorian technology make her a conflicted character. On the one hand, she admires the past and wants to preserve it, but she also wants to break free from traditional gender roles. She uses the power of a telegraph machine to gain control over her own life, but relying on technology also gets her in trouble. Telegraphs and photography are not as stable as she assumes they are, and
she is manipulated into making a rash decision about her lover. Paula originally believes these technologies will free her to make her own choices, but the technology ends up limiting her. While this makes her future uncertain, she also cannot retreat to the past. Her attempts to preserve the castle and the de Stancy artifacts end when Dare sets them all on fire (Hardy 475). As Derrida says in *Athens, Still Remains: The Photographs of Jean-François Bonhomme*, by photographing them, Paula reinforces that they will die one day (Derrida 2). Since photographs remind the viewer that the subject of the photograph will die, they make the future uncertain.

Julia Margaret Cameron’s work is a culmination of different aspects of photography in Victorian culture. While photography leads to many possibilities, it is also limiting and leads to new problems. By showing mistakes in her work, she shows that photographs are not infallible. However, her portraits of celebrities show a scientific ability to document a person’s appearance for posterity. Victorians had faith in technology because they believed it would lead them to a better future. Photography’s quick, accurate images made it seem like it could do anything, even photograph the spirits of the dead. However, photography was also easily manipulated, which meant Victorians did not trust what they saw. These conflicting beliefs made photography difficult to discuss, which Victorian literature reflected. Vernon Lee did not tell a story about a photographer, but instead she told stories about a painter or musician reacting to the way Victorian culture was shaped by photography. Lee used powerful works of art from the past to critique the less powerful art created in the Victorian period. For example, Julia Margaret Cameron’s photographs are detached from history by their artificiality and narrative about a lost past. Cameron’s illustrations of *Idylls* showed the Victorian attempt to reframe history to support their views on English history and national strength. Just as Houghton used the image of Joan of Arc to justify her beliefs, Cameron used the image of King Arthur to draw a connection between
an idealized past and Victorian political strength. Hardy also presented conflicting ideas about technology in his book, *A Laodicean*. Paula uses technology to free herself from constrictive gender roles, but she is also almost duped out of marrying the man she loves via manipulated technology. Photography leads to an uncertain future, but it also fails at rescuing the past from inevitable destruction. Instead of aiming their lenses to the future, Victorians attempted to create photographs of their history. However, Victorians quickly learned that photographs cannot preserve anything without the reminder of death.
Notes

1 Naturalistic photography, later known as straight photography, was a movement started by Emerson as a reaction to photographs made by combining multiple negatives. Emerson argued that photographs should only be created from one negative, which meant photographers created images with one exposure and with as little manipulation as possible. Emerson suggested that photographers should only adjust their lens to make the focus draw the eye to the focal point of the photograph (Hershberger 84).


5 While we don’t know what exact methods Hudson used, by 1896 Walter E. Woodbury wrote a book called “Photographic Amusements,” which parts of which were later collected in *Magic: Stage Illusions and Scientific Diversions*. Woodbury claimed that the photos in Miss Houghton’s book were the result of faint images left on previously used glass plates or by adding the spirit in later with cutouts from other negatives (432-438).

6 Not to be confused with the kind of film used in photography. At this point photographs were made using glass plates (Gernsheim 54).

7 The early photographs done by Daguerre, called daguerreotypes, were produced on silver plated copper. They have a mirror-like reflective service with the image of the photograph etched onto them (Gernsheim 42).

8 Post-Mortem photographs are photographs of a corpse. These were common in the Victorian period because people often did not get the chance to take a photograph when they were alive, and their family wanted a memento after their death.

9 Houghton received the photographs and letters from an American friend.

10 See Figure 3, which I will describe in more detail further in the paper.

11 I’m assuming the information about the photographs was discovered through medium ship and talking to spirits. Houghton is not always clear about her sources.


18 Mr. Ray’s name hints at a connection to the sun.

19 Arago addressed the report to the French Chamber of Deputies and Secretary of the Academy of Sciences. Thanks to his support, the French government purchased the rights to use the Daguerreotype process from Daguerre. In exchange, Daguerre received a yearly pension of 6,000 francs for his entire life (Hershberger 48).

20 *Camera Lucida*

21 *On Photography*


Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Fordham University Press, 2010.


Green-Lewis, Jennifer. *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism*.


