The Diagnosis of Art: exophthalmos—Gustave Doré's ogre

Gustave Doré (1832–1883) was France's greatest illustrator. He first came to prominence through his illustrations for Rabelais's *Gargantua et Pantagruel* (1854) and Balzac's *Contes Drolatiques* (1856). Other works that he illustrated included Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, starting with the *Inferno* in 1861 and adding the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* in 1886–1888, *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1862), the Bible (1865), *Paradise Lost* (1866), Raspe's *Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1866), La Fontaine's *Fables* (1867), and Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1870). Although primarily a humorous illustrator, Doré was attracted by the darker side of Dickens's works and illustrated them in sombre engravings. Those who have seen Roman Polanski's recent version of *Oliver Twist* will have appreciated the use that he made of Doré's work as backdrops to the opening titles. Doré's interest in London was stimulated by Blanchard Jerrold, the son of the writer Douglas Jerrold, who in 1869 commissioned him to produce a portrait of the city, resulting in the 180 engravings that were published in *London: A Pilgrimage* in 1872.

In Perrault's *Contes*, which Doré illustrated in 1862,¹ we read the adventures of Le Petit Poucet (Hop o' my Thumb), who, as fairy-tale characters often do, meets an ogre, who prepares to kill him and his six brothers. The ogre's wife, however, persuades him to put off the deed until the following morning. Overnight, Poucet exchanges the brothers' bonnets for the crowns worn by the ogre's seven daughters. When, in the middle of the night, the drunken ogre decides to kill the brothers he kills his daughters instead. Doré's horrific illustration shows him about to perform the act.

The most striking feature of the ogre is his exophthalmos, or proptosis, to give it its older, less specific, name. His peripheral vasodilatation is presumably due to alcohol. Exophthalmos is surprisingly uncommon in works of art. Its most notable occurrence is in *The Last Judgment* by Michelangelo, where it features in a woman who has been identified as Saint Monica; the painting is in colour and her eyes have all the features of exophthalmos due to thyrotoxicosis.²

Exophthalmos is most commonly associated with Graves' disease, but Doré's ogre does not look thyrotoxic. Could he have had Graves' disease that burnt out leaving him myxoedematous? He is certainly overweight, his hairline is receding, his eyebrows are sparse, and he has bouts of restless violence, all features that were described by Richard Asher in patients with the psychosis that can occur in severe hypothyroidism.³ He also gets very tired in his seven-league boots, although Perrault does say that that is a feature of the boots. And exophthalmos can persist even when thyrotoxicosis resolves.

Figure 1 The ogre and his daughters (1862) by Gustave Doré

Other causes of bilateral exophthalmos include lymphoma,⁴ multiple myeloma,⁵ Wegener's granulomatosis,⁶ Erdheim-Chester disease (a form of histiocytosis),⁷ myasthenia gravis,⁸ and acute orbital pseudotumour;⁹ some of these are possible diagnoses. Alternatively, perhaps the ogre can protrude his eyeballs at will, as has occasionally been described in individuals with abnormal extraocular muscles.¹⁰

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A Picture of Health

Photographs by Julia Fullerton-Batten

Exhibition 6 June – 10 September 2006 Supported by Deloitte

London: The National Portrait Gallery

A Picture of Health is made up of 16 enigmatic images that can perhaps best be described as 'epic portrait-scapes'. Fullerton-Batten's use of complex yet subtle set lighting makes this collection truly fit for the big screen. And as well it might, for each sitter has contributed more to the positive advancement of healthcare than many that have received far grander pictorial homage.

Fullerton-Batten's work reveals the photographer as a true artist. Her genius here lies in her ability to project a strange suspense around her subject whilst actually doing little more than dishing out the facts. Huge attention to the most fitting environment has been given to each well-researched sitter, suspended in flawless cinematic lighting. In fact you would be forgiven for wondering if these images were in some way digital montages, as the exceptional clarity produces deep layers of colour and light within each print. The breathing space allowed in each image pays homage to the professional field that has supported the sitter in their individual work. This of course only adds to the attractive surrealness of this collection and amplifies still further the viewer's intrigue toward each sitter.

Sir Derek Wanless, Professor Lord Robert Winston, Professor Sir Brian Jarman, Claire Rayner, Professor Sir Ian Kennedy, Sir Iain Chalmers, Professor Sir Cyril Chantler,

Nick Partridge, Christine Hancock, . . . the list of notables goes on into the night . . . Warmly frozen in time, this collection is a significant anthropological record of contemporary medical excellence.

We see Ray Shannon, Chief Executive of South Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust, photographed behind the sliding glass window of what appears to be an A&E check in desk. He holds a phone poised and away from his face with respectful intent. A ponderous glint in his eyes inadvertently invites the viewer to speculate on the huge task of effectively modernising the ambulance service.

Sheila Kitzinger is compassionately framed by the rich continental colours of the drapes and quilts of her four poster bed, where she often works. Fullerton-batten aims high and hits the mark when trying to summarise Sheila's massive contribution to midwifery by the use of this caring, vibrant and most fertile of locations.

Another image shows Nola Ismael OBE—standing tall and calm, highlighted with strong positive light amongst the relative uncertainty of the randomly positioned desks surrounding her. A book is placed confidently to her right suggesting assurance in her responsibility for ethnic minority health issues and ethnic staff development in the NHS.

The NPG and Fullerton-Batten have confidently delivered a most important and enjoyable body of work that rewards and educates the viewer whilst showing deep gratitude to each sitter's contribution to healthcare.

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