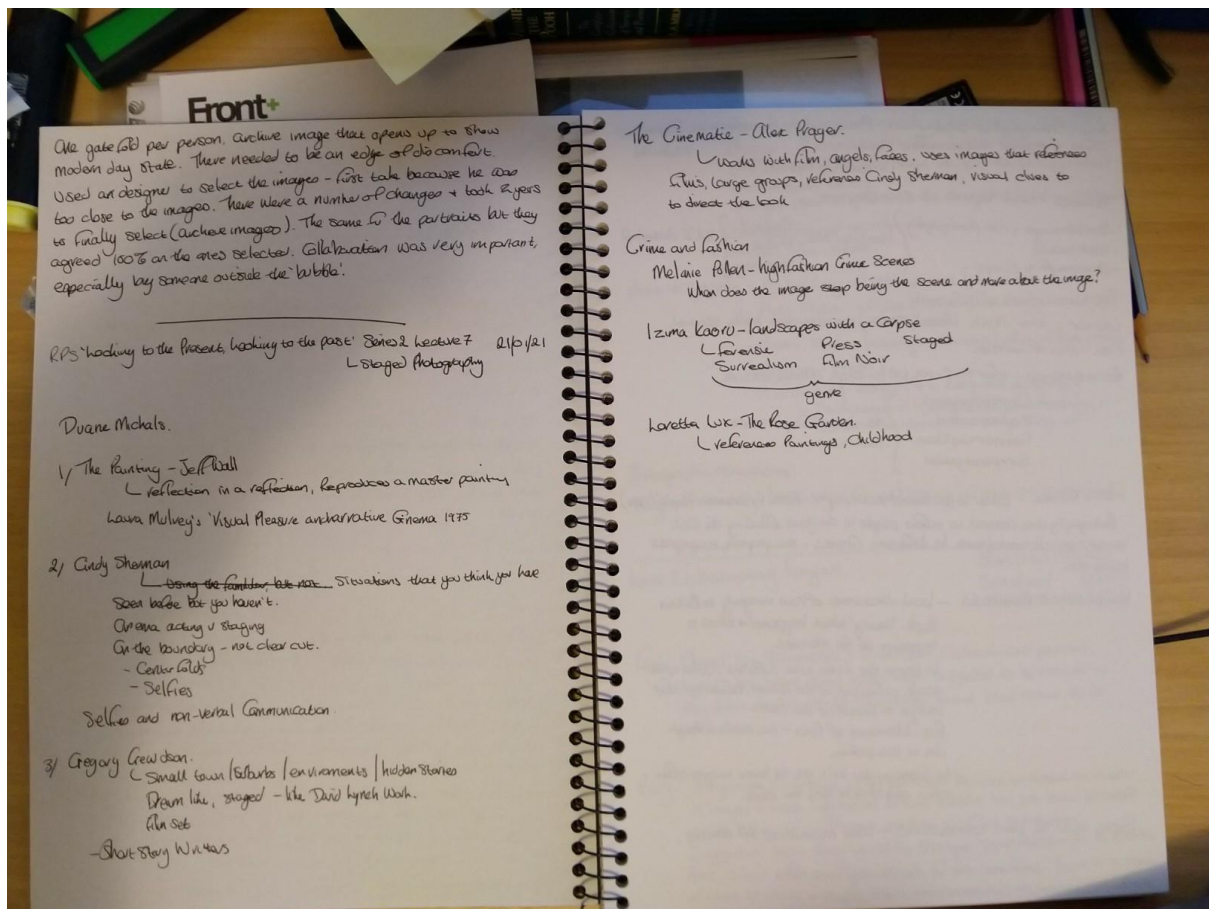


## Lecture 7 Series 2 and Notes



# Looking to the present, looking to the past

## Series 2 – lecture 7 Staged Photography

with Colin Pantall

## Staged Photography



Oscar Rejlander - Two Ways of Life, 1857



'Mary Constable and her Brother' (1866)

# Duane Michals

## A FAILED ATTEMPT TO PHOTOGRAPH REALITY

How foolish of me to believe that it would be that easy.  
I had confused the appearances of trees and automobiles,  
and people with reality itself, and believed that  
a photograph of these appearances to be a photograph  
of it. It is a melancholy ~~the~~ truth that I will  
never be able to photograph it and can only fail.  
I am a reflection photographing other reflections  
within a reflection. To photograph reality  
is to photograph nothing.



## A FAILED ATTEMPT TO PHOTOGRAPH REALITY

How foolish of me to believe that it would  
be that easy. I had confused the appearances  
of trees and automobiles and people with reality  
itself and believed that [sic] a photograph  
of these appearances to be a photograph of it.

It is a melancholy truth that I will  
never be able to photograph it  
and can only fail.

I am a reflection photographing  
other reflections within a reflection.  
To photograph reality is to photograph  
NOTHING



1. The Painting - Jeff Wall
2. The Autobiographical – Gregory Crewdson
3. The Filmic – Cindy Sherman
4. The Cinematic? – Alex Prager
5. Crime and Fashion – Melanie Pullen and Izima Kaoru and
6. Childhood – Loretta Lux

# Jeff Wall

'But I am not trying to imitate painting. But people seem to choose not to see that.'



Jeff Wall, A Picture for Women, 1979

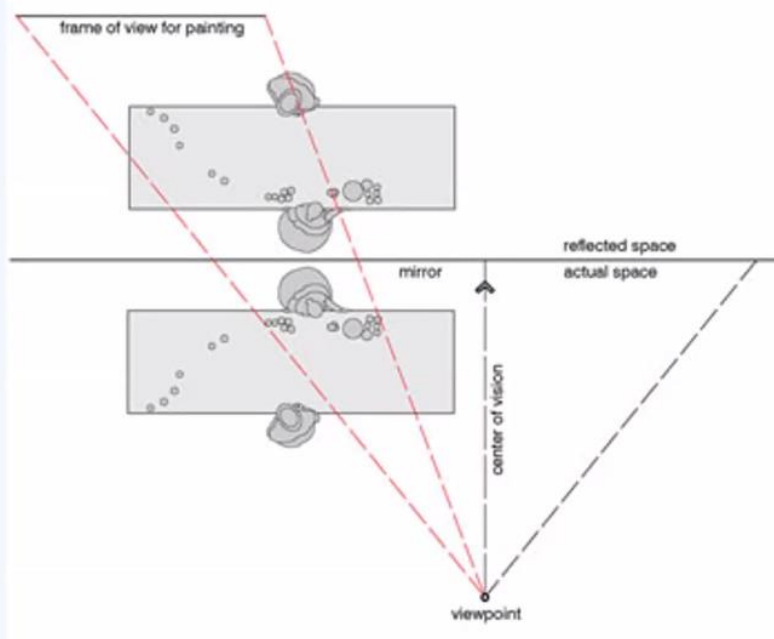
'It is important not to think of contemporary photography's affinity to figurative painting as simply one of mimicry or revivalism; instead, it demonstrates a shared understanding of how a scene can be choreographed for the viewer so that he or she can recognise that a story is being told.' (Charlotte Cotton)

'...elements such as point of view and the gaze, influenced by Manet's painting in figure 1 '...are worked out in advance and drawn together to articulate a preconceived idea for the creation of the image.' (Cotton, 2014; 8)

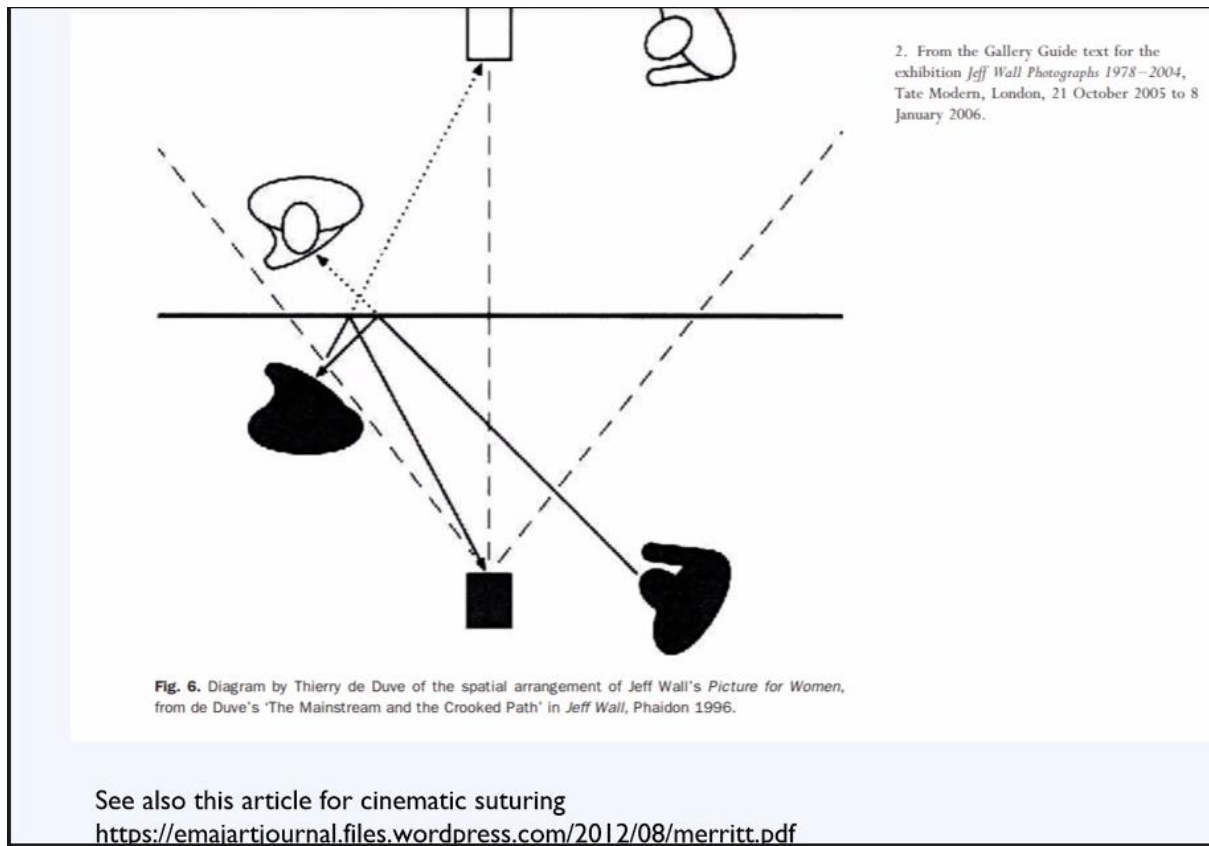




Édouard Manet, A Bar at the Folies-Bergère, 1881-82.



[http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/manet\\_bar/looking\\_glass.html](http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/manet_bar/looking_glass.html)



'A century on, Wall looked back and saw Manet's *Bar* as a historically specific image and a contemporary one, relevant to the problems of both eras.' (Campy, 2007; 17)

'Foreground clutter closes off image. This unopenedness 'functions to announce that this still life belongs to the public world of commerce rather than the private one of domicile, and thus to possession.' (Armstrong, 1996; 31)

'The multiplicity of looks in and around any photo is at the root of its ambiguity, each gaze potentially suggesting a different way of viewing the scene.' (Lutz and Collins, 1991; 146)



‘Moreover it is not unrealistic to read *Picture For Women* as a visual illustration of the central tenet of what is perhaps the key essay of visual culture of the 1970s, Laura Mulvey’s ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (1975).’

A Theoretical Diagram in an Empty Classroom’: Jeff Wall’s *Picture for Women*



Jeff Wall, *Mimic*, 1982

‘Wall’s exploitation of the look of street photography in *Mimic* amounted to a new conception of the genre, according to which the traditional strategy of capturing subjects who appear unaware of the camera is reasserted at the same time as the picture itself more or less openly proclaims its identity both as a deliberate artistic construction (on the level of depiction) and as an image intended to be hung on the wall and viewed by beholders in a face-to-face relationship.’

Michael Fried

<https://americansuburbx.com/2016/06/evocations-of-the-everyday-the-street-pictures-of-jeff-wall-2009.html>



CLOSE READ

## A Picture of Change for a World in Constant Motion

By Jason Farago Aug. 7, 2020



<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/08/07/arts/design/hokusai-fuji.html>



A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)  
1993



"Pair of interiors" (2018)



<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/15/arts/design/jeff-wall-gagosian-photography-review.html>

# Cindy Sherman



“I use myself the way I would use a mannequin. They’re not autobiographical. They’re not fantasies of mine. I like to work completely alone, so instead of using models I use myself.” (Freeman, 2016)





David Salle: Untitled (Coffee Drinkers) 1973. Gelatin silver prints with affixed product advertisement

- Cindy Sherman describes the David Salle's inspiring photographs as "quasi-soft porn, cheesecakey things and it was hard to figure out what was going on in any of them, they were totally ambiguous" adding that she "just loved that". (Sherman, 2003, p.6)



'Cinema acting came into its own with the advent of the psychologically charged close-up. Paradoxically the close-up requires the actor to act as little as possible and tends to be reserved either for moments of reaction or contemplation. This makes the close-up quite uncinematic. ...'



Sherman, C. (1977). Untitled Film Still #2

An Imaginary role in an imaginary film with an imaginary plot on the boundaries between film, photography, fiction and biography?

You decide was the way Sherman leaves it...

But the decision is based on a visual world that we share and which Sherman taps into



Directed by Jean-Luc Godard, *Le Mepris*, 1963



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Stills #13*, 1978

## Posing or Acting

‘Cindy Sherman as Sherman; Sherman playing an unknown woman; Sherman playing an unknown woman playing an actress; Sherman playing an unknown woman playing an actress through the eyes of the male gaze.’ (Minnisale, 2013, p.209)









## Centerfolds



Sherman “managed to convey the ambiguities of women playing gender cliché roles and even Ms. Sherman's own unease at casting herself in them” (Glueck, 2003)

<https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/261/3359>

## Selfies....



## Selfies and Non-verbal Communication

Camera angles  
Preferred sides  
High, frontal, low viewpoints  
Proxemics

In Portraits, In cinema, in selfies

‘These “selfie-specific” proxemic cues may serve the purpose of non-verbally communicating the selfie-taker motivations, intentions, or emotional states (see, [15]). Several studies [16–20] have documented a bias for presenting the left over the right cheek to the camera when posing for a selfie.’

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0238588>

‘First, is the sex-related difference in vertical camera angle confined to contexts that underscore mate selection, or does it generalize to other contexts of non-verbal communication?’



MUSEUM SELFIE DAY - Janu...  
nationaltoday.com



Why We Have a No-Selfie Policy ...  
psychologytoday.com



Selfie - Wikipedia  
en.wikipedia.org



Selfies are as damaging to skin as ...  
nypost.com

## Gregory Crewdson





‘Crewdson’s photographs expose the ostensibly idyllic world of rural, small-town America as an unsettling cinematographic dream, full of darkness and mystery.’

(H. Cantz, Gregory Crewdson, Pg 7)



‘Crewdson's continual assertion of work going on "down below" in the fecund earth— both grave and womb—is the self-same gothic sensibility which compelled the boy artist to put ear to floorboards and listen to the secret murmurs emanating from his psychoanalyst father's office in the family's Brooklyn basement.’





'His depictions of suburban America are used 'as metaphors for his own neuroses, anxieties, and longings.'

(H. Cantz, Gregory Crewdson, Pg 7)



‘At the heart of Crewdson’s spectacular over-production was the same basic human gesture, a sort of exhausted standing around, slump-shouldered with the vacant face of a daydreamer. The gap between inactive humans amid the grotesquely overactive photography was so extreme as to be comic. Although I’m not sure this was intentional.’

Posing, Acting, Photography  
David Company

## Short Story Writers

- Richard Yates
- Raymond Carver
- John Cheever
- And then see Robert Frank
- And 1950s sci-fi
- And the flip side of the Family of Man as mentioned in an earlier lecture

## The Cinematic – Alex Prager



Alex Prager The Extras 2019



Alex Prager: The Big Valley (2008), Eve, 2008



Alex Prager: The Big Valley (2008), Annie



Alex Prager: Face In The Crowd (2013), Crowd #2 (Emma)



Alfred Hitchcock, sequence from Spellbound, 1945

## Filmic v Cinematic

‘Alfred Hitchcock said that when the storyboard is made, the movie is made. I know what he meant.’ (Prager, interviewed by Herschdorfer, 2018; 81)





Alfred Hitchcock, sequence from Rear Window, 1954

‘I focus on women whom I can use to emulate’ what I am going through myself.’ (Prager, interviewed by Herschdorfer, 2018; 78)



<https://www.alexprager.com/despair>

Camera Angle  
Left Behind  
Bernard Hermann very-lite  
Eyes  
Frontal Gaze  
Tracking  
Crowd  
Vertical Tracking  
Ending

‘These are, after all, not pictures of women, nor are they the loaded narratives constructed by Cindy Sherman, whom she references to heavily; instead, Prager’s photos are of tropes.

They depict kinds of women in kinds of situations, ones that have already been created and have already been referenced.’ (Weaver, 2010)



Alex Prager, sequence from *Despair*, 2010

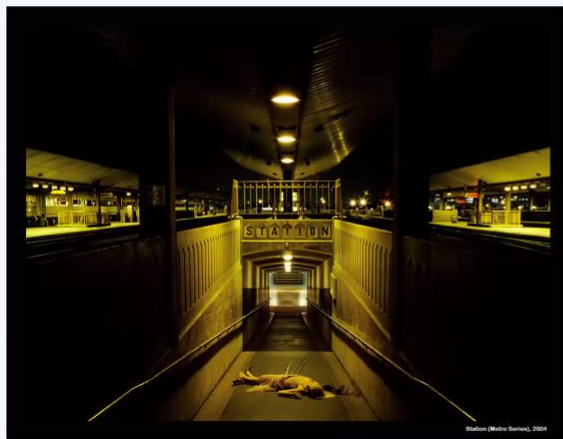
## Crime and Fashion

'The crime scene aesthetic is now part of the vocabulary of many major fashion photographers, and a number of contemporary artists use both fashion and crime to question popular perception of these images.'

'These re-imaginings and re-uses raise questions about the impact of staged imagery on the perception of authentic imagery.'

March 2012: 79-102 The Transforming Aesthetic of the Crime Scene Photograph: Evidence, News, Fashion, and Art  
Brittain Bright

## Melanie Pullen: High Fashion Crime Scenes



<https://www.melaniepullen.com/high-fashion>

it was a book of early crime scene photos that happened to be mixed in with some other books in a bookstore, and I opened it and thought, "what the hell is this?" Suddenly, your first moment with mortality, and these horrific crimes, it haunted me for a long time. And then years later, I came across another book that was much worse, like, the worst crime scene book. The same store, everything, I guess they had some section on death and the dark side of everything...but I'm looking through it, and at that time I was oblivious and looking at the shoes, the crime scene photos, like "woah, look at that wallpaper" and then on my drive home, I thought to myself, "hey, I was looking at crime scenes but didn't notice the death."

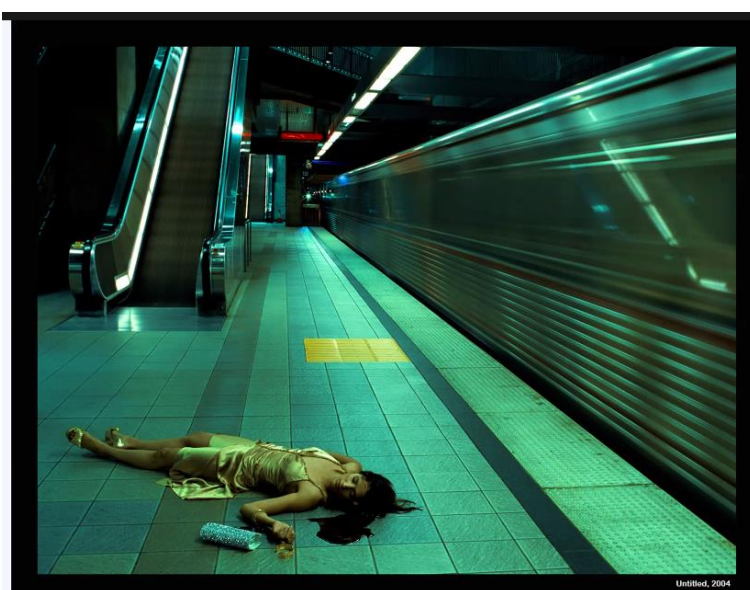
<https://thephotographicjournal.com/interviews/melanie-pullen/>



Weegee, On the Spot, 1939

'The crime scene photograph, which came into being as part of an official evidence-gathering process, evolved through the tabloid news industry in the mid-century United States into a form of entertainment.'

March 2012: 79-102 The Transforming Aesthetic of the Crime Scene Photograph: Evidence, News, Fashion, and Art Brittain Bright





‘...in the New York Daily News, crime coverage rose from six percent of its content in 1920 to twenty-three percent in 1930.’

March 2012: 79-102 The Transforming Aesthetic of the Crime Scene Photograph: Evidence, News, Fashion, and Art Brittain Bright



Weegee, Balcony Seats at a Murder, November 16, 1939.

In Weegee's pictures, 'Police and observers crowd into the press photos, jostling for priority in the image, or to get a better view. Yet the staged images are often very lonely, focusing on a corpse alone, only occasionally including others with a questionable relationship to the dead.'

March 2012: 79-102 The Transforming Aesthetic of the Crime Scene Photograph: Evidence, News, Fashion, and Art Brittain Bright





Nina (Hanging Series), 2004



<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/284718>

‘One of the problems with thinking about photographs that depict “the scene of the crime” is that it is irresistibly tempting to conflate them with work whose purpose is something other than the dispassionate description of a random occurrence. One always has to ask, at what point does the image cease being about the scene and start being about the photograph.’

March 2012: 79-102 The Transforming Aesthetic of the Crime Scene Photograph: Evidence, News, Fashion, and Art Brittain Bright

Wendy Lesser, author of *Pictures at an Execution*, offers an explanation of the desire to form a narrative shell around the event of murder: “One of the reasons we try to view a real murder as theater—a grand tragedy, a significant event, at the very least an authorially constructed plot—is to remove some of the terrifying randomness from it” (190).

March 2012: 79-102 The Transforming Aesthetic of the Crime Scene Photograph: Evidence, News, Fashion, and Art Brittain Bright

## Izima Kaoru: Landscapes with a corpse

‘For each spectacle, Kaoru asks his model to reveal their fantasy about a perfect death. He then asks them which designer clothing they imagine wearing when people discover their dead body.’

<https://mymodernmet.com/izima-kaoru-landscape-with-a-corpse/#:~:text=Landscape%20with%20a%20Corpse%20is,fantasy%20about%20a%20perfect%20death.>





Izima Kaoru, Kuroki Meisa wears GUCCI (461), 2006

Bertillon devised a method to document and study the victim's body and circumstances of death. Using a camera on a high tripod, lens facing the ground, a police photographer made top-down views of the crime scene to record all the details in the immediate vicinity of a victim's body. Early in the 20th century, police departments began to use Bertillon's method to photograph murder scenes.

[https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/visibleproofs/galleries/technologies/bertillon\\_image\\_9.html](https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/visibleproofs/galleries/technologies/bertillon_image_9.html)







Izima Kaoru, Hosokawa Fumie wears Tiffany (61), 1995



Izima Kaoru, Karena Lam wears Jean Paul Gaultier (493), 2007



Izima Kaoru, Tomita Yasuko wears Prada (153), 1997



Izima Kaoru, Hasegawa Kyoko wearing Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche



Forensic Photography – landscapes and locations. Private spaces, top down perspective

Surrealism – body parts, detachment (see Hans Bellmer etc)

Press Photography – murder victim, police, observers, lighting, city, gaze

Film Noir – isolation of body, heightening of dramatic tension through lighting etc

Staged Photography – further isolation, heightening of victimization, use of fashion, recontextualizing of earlier tropes

“As readers or viewers of a fictional work, we are meant to be taken in, to be deluded into believing, and we are also meant to understand that what we are believing in is not real, is not life on the same order or under the same rules as we live it”

March 2012: 79-102 The Transforming Aesthetic of the Crime Scene Photograph: Evidence, News, Fashion, and Art Brittain Bright

## Loretta Lux: The Rose Garden





La Infanta Margarita Teresa in a blue dress (aged 8) by Diego Velazquez, 1659



Van Dyck, A. 1635. *George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham and Lord Francis Villiers*. In: Higonnet, A. 1998. *Pictures of Innocence*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.

## Philippe Aries Centuries of Childhood Before the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

- Child is mini-adult
- To be cajoled into righteousness
- Dress represents status and wealth of parents
- Children are weak, irrational and 'contemptible'
- A child is an adult in the making

## The Romantic Child

- Set in natural backdrops
- Threatened by the world (reflecting child mortality rates)
- Body disguised by dress
- Regarded as untainted by the corrupt adult world (see Rousseau's *Emile*, compare to the idea of the Noble Savage)
- On a journey to adulthood
- Child transformed from mini-adult to object of adoration and love
- Child played part in family life



Reynolds, Sir Joshua. 1788. *The Age of Innocence* In: Postle, M. 2005. *Pictures of Innocence*. Bath: Holbourne Museum.

# Age of Innocence

- Originally titled 'A Little Girl'
- Threatening landscape
- Voluminous dress hides body shape
- Feet not visible

Her dress conceals her '...adult erogenous zones' (Higonnet, 1998 p.15). Even her feet are a passive part of nature, "...as the picture insists by pointing her tiny toes right at us' (Higonnet, 1998 p.15).



Cotes, Francis. 1768. *Lewis Cope (Young Cricketer)* In: Postle, M. 2005. *Pictures of Innocence*. Bath: Holbourne Museum.



## The Young Cricketer

- set in a rural landscape , all the better for the trend towards “...the evocation of sensibility” (Postle, 2005)
- the low viewpoint and full framing of the boy give him “... a heroic quality” (Postle, 2005 p.48).
- Dress partly undone, with body contours
- Lyrical landscape full of promise

## Anne Higonnet Pictures of Innocence

According to Higonnet, the Romantic Child has no class, gender or thoughts. The Romantic Child is “Socially, sexually and psychically innocent.”

## The Innocent Child

- Victorian idea of an Innocent Child
- Separate from other age-groups
- Desexualised in the upper classes, fair game in the lower classes (in practice)
- Innocence dependent on class and nationality
- Photographers and artists used dress to change class and nationality (Lewis Carroll)
- Poverty and class as corruptors
- Age of consent in UK 12 (until 1875)



Barnado Photographic Archive, Ilford. c. 1876. *Florence and Eliza Holder, c. 1876.*  
In: Mavor, C. 1996. *Pleasures Taken: Performances of Sexuality and Loss in Victorian Photographs.* London: I.B Tauris. p. 40.