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**CHELSEA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
13TH MARCH 2008**

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Camille Silvy:  
A Photographer of Modern Life

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### **Camille Silvy: A Photographer of Modern Life**

Professorial Platform lecture, University of the Arts London  
by Mark Haworth-Booth, Visiting Professor of Photography,  
University of the Arts London and Senior Research Fellow,  
London College of Communication.

It is a great pleasure to be invited to give this first Professorial Platform lecture. I must be frank: I very much wanted to give this lecture for purely selfish reasons. My research connects with many different areas of expertise across our university and I really need the feedback this audience can uniquely provide. (I've put my email address in the title-slide screen in the hope that people will contact me). Among the topics I want to touch on tonight – and to explore more fully at the Getty Research Institute in the near future – are these: the question of 'maverick' picture-making by photographers around 1860, the study of photographic studios as businesses, visualisations of London as a modern city around 1860 and representations (in words and images) of 'Oriental' immigrants to London and Paris at the same period. Thank you for coming out tonight.

I'd like to put up on the screen, right away, Camille Silvy's *River Scene, France* (1858), which is in the V&A collection – as it happens, the photograph is currently on show in the Museum's Photography Gallery (until 13th April). [ SLIDE] Some of you are already very familiar with this photograph but I'd like those new to it to have the opportunity of getting to know it as I make my opening remarks.

I think it is five years since I gave my inaugural lecture as Visiting Professor of Photography. On that occasion I quoted from another inaugural lecture, which I had heard as a postgraduate student of art history at Edinburgh University back in 1969. It was delivered by the admirable historian, Geoffrey Best. I was deeply impressed by Professor Best's idea that the practice of history is connected with justice and that it can be equivalent to a 'final court of appeal'. I'd like to alter my good friend's phrase slightly: perhaps we can think of history as a 'further', rather than final, court of appeal. History constantly changes as contemporary circumstances change: we naturally reflect these back in our studies. This helps to make history self-replenishing. The court is constantly reconvened.

This is a good moment to be writing history. There are some wonderful practitioners at work. Among the texts I have found

most inspiring lately are John Burrow's *A History of Histories* (2007), which traces the discipline from its roots in ancient Greece to our own time. Another work of extraordinary erudition, and literary felicity, is Charles Nicholl's *The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street* (also 2007). Beginning with the few lines of Shakespeare's only reported speech, from a legal document of 1612, Nicholl creates a fresh and detailed account of a crucial period in Shakespeare's life and art. His book demonstrates that history is a work of the imagination, grounded in fact – the richer the imagination the more abundant and persuasive the facts. The facts must, of course, be judiciously sifted. At one point Nicholl, when considering what Shakespeare's living quarters in Cripplegate might have been like, writes: 'I do not want to mock up a room full of early-Jacobean furnishings (and anyway early Jacobean- rooms were not exclusively filled with early-Jacobean furniture)'. (p.75) He considers what was in other recorded writers' rooms of the time. However, what matters is what was actually present. Nicholl comes up with the very few items traced by archaeologists to two sites just south of Silver Street. These include a 'small bowl in Valencian lustreware, decorated in blue and copper lustre with motifs suggestive of Arab calligraphy – a flicker of exotic colour in a sombre Cripplegate interior'. (p.72) This vessel is surely of far more genuine imaginative power than a pantechicon of period stage props. Nicholl

speculates on why Shakespeare should have chosen to live among immigrants – he lodged with French makers of ‘tires’, elaborate and highly fashionable adornments for the hair – especially at a time of rioting by the London Mob against foreigners. He notes very appositely, on the one hand, that Victoria Beckham spends £6000 a year on hair-pieces made from real hair and, on the other hand, rather more thought-provokingly, that a play titled *The Booke of Thomas More* contains an eloquent speech, attributed to Shakespeare, in defence of the rights of immigrants. No doubt Nicholl’s sensitivity to the question of immigration in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean London relates to the question of immigration, on a different scale, in late 20th century and early 21st century Britain (and, of course, in Europe as a whole). What I shall say and show you this evening reflects some of the same kind of contemporary concerns back onto the years around 1860.

One final point before we cut to the chase. The phrase ‘a photographer of modern life’ immediately summons up the title of Charles Baudelaire’s most famous essay, *The Painter of Modern Life*. It was first published in 1863, which is after most of the photographs by Silvy to which I think it relates. However, it was probably written in November 1859, the very moment when at least one of Silvy’s modern photographs was made and when

Silvy, newly-arrived in London, was preparing to make other modern masterpieces. Both Baudelaire and the slightly older poet and critic Théophile Gautier wrote frequently of the importance of artistic modernity. It was in the Parisian air – and thanks to Silvy became part of London’s artistic atmosphere.

I first saw Silvy’s photograph, *River Scene, France*, in an Arts Council exhibition held at the V&A in 1972. [SLIDE] This was the epoch-making show *From Today Painting is Dead*, which enthusiastically presented the ‘Beginnings of Photography’. The organisers were perhaps not convinced that merely referring to Nadar photographing from a balloon over Paris was enough – so the whole basket came swinging through the ceiling into the galleries. [SLIDE] However, the show painlessly introduced a new audience to early photographic processes – wet collodion without tears. It gave a vivid impression of the hardware used by such early masters as Silvy – the fine mahogany and brass camera and tripod, together with the mobile darkroom required to coat wet collodion negatives immediately before exposure (and to develop them immediately afterwards). [SLIDE] The elegant set-up in the slide is from the Science Museum collection. This state-of-the art apparatus made taking photographs a highly conceptual activity, as pre-planned as a serious film-shoot today.

So, the young bourgeois couple, preparing for a boating trip, were positioned in advance. [SLIDE] So too, on the other bank, were the working folk taking the air.[SLIDE] The bourgeois pair occupy private property, the 'common people' are on the common land. It is highly retrograde to say such a thing, I know, but in 1972 – having no previous knowledge of or interest in 19th century photography, I simply fell in love with Silvy's photograph. I sent a dark Shenval Press postcard of it, on sale at the exhibition, to all my friends. [SLIDE] It took me years to realise that everything in Silvy's photograph was staged, that the sky must have been printed-in from a second negative, that the deep foreground shadow must have been burned-in, that the roof-line and trees were intricately retouched.

It was John House, at the Courtauld Institute, who taught me (after I'd known the photograph for nearly 20 years) to see it as iconographically, as well as technically, modern – a picture of leisure being 'performed', in the Veblen phrase that John quoted, by more than one class, at the edge of town. [SLIDE] Looking more closely at the photograph, one could see that the men wore the visored caps, possibly surplus from the Crimean War, that denoted leisure. One could also see not only the smock and belt worn by a patriarchal figure on the right bank, but the hand waved by a boy.

The photograph was, thus, despite the large size of Silvy's glass negatives, virtually instantaneous.

I learned that the *River Scene* had been widely praised when it was first seen in art galleries in Edinburgh and London in late 1858 and early 1859. [SLIDE] Then it was shown at the first-ever 'Salon' of photography as a fine art, held in Paris (alongside the Salon des Beaux Arts) in Spring 1859. Comparisons were made between the new generation of landscape photographs, made with wet collodion negatives, and works by the Old Masters. One reviewer accurately compared Silvy's 'wonderful view of a French river' to works by the seventeenth century Dutch painter, Aert van der Neer. [SLIDE] This river scene by him was hanging in the Louvre in the 1850s and could easily have provided the ingredients and compositional skeleton of Silvy's photograph. We note the open foreground, arrangement of trees, houses, men working around boats, the vanishing point to the right of centre, the low right bank. The same model was used by John Crome for a Norwich view around 1815, *Back of the New Mills* in the Castle Museum, Norwich. [SLIDE] Camille Corot adapted the same basic formula twenty years later [SLIDE] and Monet did so again, this time in Holland itself, in 1871. [SLIDE] By the time we get to Monet's version something interesting has happened – and not only in the

handling of paint. The human figure has been transformed from a working boatman into a woman standing beneath a willow tree in a white summer skirt, enjoying the scenery in reverie. Silvy's photograph can be seen as a key moment in this evolution from working-landscape to leisure-landscape.

I was able to set all this down, and write the first outline of Silvy's story, in a book published by the Getty in 1992. [SLIDE] When I received my first copy of the book I noticed something I'd never spotted before. The tree right in the middle has no trunk – it had been painted in, rather perfunctorily, on the negative. I knew that Silvy was an adept in retouching, but his illusionism startled me - and still does.

I now want to fast forward to the present and my new research. [SLIDE] This is the vault of a Paris bank of the belle époque in which a remarkable collection of works by Silvy is preserved by his descendants. It is a wonderful collection but we have no idea what proportion of Silvy's oeuvre it represents. The family's house in the Jura was occupied by retreating German troops in the later stages of the Second World War, and it is possible that photographs were looted or destroyed. Silvy, whom we see in this multiple self-portrait from 1862, [SLIDE] was born in Nogent-le-Rotrou, a market

town about an hour's drive west of Chartres, in 1834. He died in 1910. Thus 2010 is the centenary of his death. I owe to Terence Pepper of the National Portrait Gallery the idea of celebrating the centenary with an exhibition. All going well, the first-ever Silvy retrospective exhibition will be shown both in Paris, under the auspices of Jeu de Paume, and in London at the National Portrait Gallery in 2010. I should like to show you a selection of what I think of as key exhibits.

The show will open with Silvy's journey to Algeria, then a French colony, where he photographed on a mission for the Ministry of Public Instruction in 1857. [SLIDE] Some of the photographs are rather tattered survivals but they show, I believe, that he started - not with wet collodion - but with the simpler and more portable paper negative process. [SLIDE] The number 10 inscribed in the margin of his view of an as yet unidentified port suggests that it is early in Silvy's career and that the number was fluently written on a paper negative rather than scratched into the coating of a glass one. Silvy photographed this Algerian town [SLIDE], also still to be identified, and Moorish buildings such as this [SLIDE] but he also evidently wanted to make pictures rather than record buildings as purely architectural records. [SLIDE] That, I think, must be the conclusion when we look at a photograph of a deeply

shadowed structure at whose centre we find the recumbent form of an Arab. Is he smoking a long pipe? Here is a detail, focusing on the figure. [SLIDE] How do we interpret the figure? As a drugged down and out? Local colour? Or is the Arab dreaming into existence the fabulous architecture that surrounds him? This is a kind of reverie we find in a number of photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson, [SLIDE] for example this one from Ahmadabad in 1966. A figure sleeping on a cot in the street dreams into being a fantastical episode of prancing horses and lion-drawn chariots. An interpretation of Silvy's photograph on these lines is perhaps fanciful. However, I hope we can agree that Silvy made a photograph in which recording architecture is secondary to making a picture.

On returning from Algeria, Silvy devoted himself to learning the wet collodion process. He once stated that his teacher was the wealthy Spanish amateur photographer, resident in Paris, Count Olympe Aguado. [SLIDE] Here we see the count in his studio, standing beside his brother in front of a nicely-painted backdrop. Such grisaille backdrops would become a feature of Silvy's portrait studio. One can see Aguado's influence on Silvy in other ways. For example, Silvy's early experiments included working with animals – rashly, considering the relatively slow exposures

of the time - as in this photograph of two sheep. [SLIDE] Their symmetrical positioning was achieved, as one can clearly see, by roping them tightly to the half-door behind them. He got the idea from Aguado, who also tied up cattle to photograph them. [SLIDE] Here is one of Aguado's most comic specimens, in which he photographed an exotic pheasant tied to a stake. However, the influence goes much deeper.

Most obviously, it was Aguado who, in 1854, invented [SLIDE] the carte de visite portrait photograph which made photography a global industry. In these examples, in the Victoria and Albert collection, Aguado represented himself (pasted on an actual visiting card) as – at the left – leaving town on a journey and - on the right - staying in situ in the Place Vendôme. It is typical of Aguado's conception of himself as an amateur that he did not patent his invention. Aguado also made a host of original photographs, like this portrait of a woman's coiffure [SLIDE] and this of the Île des Ravageurs, [SLIDE] a boating destination at Meudon on the Seine – with the nose of a rented skiff poking into the frame at the right. Perhaps he actually presided over some of Silvy's early landscape attempts. [SLIDE] This is a view across the same river, the Huisne at Nogent-le-Rotrou, where Silvy was to make his masterpiece, the 'River Scene'. You can just make out



a trim, bearded figure in a white jacket, dark trousers and boots standing in the meadow at the right – presumably to animate the empty foreground of this clumsy experiment. [SLIDE] Here he is in close-up alongside one of the Aguado cartes. Possibly they are one and the same. Whether this is so or not, Silvy emulated his teacher in inventing a variety of formats and photographic genres but – in a similar spirit of aristocratic, amateur, sprezzatura or maverick nonchalance - not always developing them further.

[SLIDE] Silvy's *River Scene*, as we know it from the version in the V&A collection, is an even more complex work than I realised when I published my book in 1992. Another print emerged in Paris a few years ago. [SLIDE] This print, the eighth that I have come across to date, shows us why Silvy had to trim his landscape to an oval: because (among other reasons) the top glass negative was broken at the corners. This print, now owned by the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, was given by Silvy to his lawyer in 1875 with many annotations on the mount. The most interesting of these [SLIDE] tells us that a triple lens was used, that two wet collodion negatives were involved, that the exposure time was a startlingly brief three to four seconds – and that the 'opérateur', i.e. camera operator, was one Félix Moutarde. Perhaps we might think it less 'Modern' than 'Post-Modern' to find that Silvy delegated the taking of his most

famous photograph to someone else. However, Silvy's own role was the more important one of making, rather than merely taking, the photograph. He was its director.

The V&A print was bequeathed to the Museum in 1868 by its first owner, the Reverend Chauncy Hare Townshend. His collection included other works by modern French landscape photographers and painters, including this work by Théodore Rousseau, *Landscape in Les Landes* (1855), also in the V&A. [SLIDE] Perhaps it was because he had 'gone down well' in both Edinburgh and London, as well as seeing a commercial opportunity, that Silvy took a studio in Bayswater in the summer or autumn of 1859. [SLIDE] The house, which still stands at 38 Porchester Terrace, had been built for himself by the artist John Linnell twenty years before. Silvy took it over from the photographers Caldesi & Montecchi. It became not merely a portrait studio but a photographic factory. [SLIDE] This photograph of the workshops behind the house is from the series of Daybooks from the Silvy studio which are one of the great treasures of the National Portrait Gallery. They record nearly all of the studio's output from 1859 to 1868 (one volume is missing). Silvy had a staff of forty and the set-up included a lab. for rendering-down proof or unwanted photographs to retrieve and recycle their silver content. A long

contemporary magazine article described Silvy's studio as a model factory. The level of quality-control achieved was extraordinary – even today one can generally pick out Silvy studio prints by their excellent state of preservation, thanks to skilful processing and gold-toning. [SLIDE] The Bayswater location, close to Hyde Park, provided Silvy with a venue for equestrian portraits, such as this. Portraits were exposed four, six or eight to a plate and printed out by sunlight in batches. [SLIDE] This is from a set of proofs from the Silvy studio in the V&A collection. Portraits would be cut out and pasted onto card for sale as required. This was about volume production – [SLIDE] – so a print would typically be sold in quantity (forty in the example here). This is Prince Albert, [SLIDE] most senior of the many royals who came – along with the 'upper ten thousand' - to sit. That Silvy was extremely well-connected is shown by the watercolour he painted in his personal album [SLIDE] of the fancy dress he wore (as 'Mephisto') to a ball given by the Péreire Brothers, major financiers to the Second Empire, in 1863 – when he met his wife-to-be, Alice Monnier. There is ample material concerning Silvy's operation as a business, which I hope to explore, with other Silvy scholars, in preparing the centenary exhibition. I hope to work on the exhibition not only with colleagues at the Jeu de Paume and the National Portrait Gallery but also with two Silvy experts in London, Juliet Hacking and Paul Frecker, who are both

far more knowledgeable than I on his cartes de visite production. [SLIDE] Here is Silvy en famille in his studio, about 1866, a grand cradle at the right (containing the first of the Silvys' two offspring) and in the background the Charles the Bold tapestry noted by Nadar in his extensive remarks on Silvy in his book of reminiscences, *Quand j'étais photographe*. Alice Silvy is at the right. She was photographed constantly by her husband in larger format portraits like this, [SLIDE] and in cartes, showing off the sumptuous crinolines of the time, like this. [SLIDE] Silvy experimented with many different formats, such as photo-enamel cameos [SLIDE]. This is part of a set encased in a plush-lined box, possibly as samples to show customers. [SLIDE] He also tried his hand at comedy formats like this, [SLIDE] in which a miniaturised Alice leans nonchalantly from a picture frame, and this [SLIDE] in which his father-in-law, Alexandre Monnier, becomes an impressive visage on a postage stamp. This uncut proof entertainingly shows the way the illusion was set up. Silvy was clearly interested in thinking-up novelty portrait formats for commercial exploitation. Alongside these, he made some surprising artistic experiments. [SLIDE] For example, he made a double portrait of his wife with a 'Madame Méja' (if that is the correct reading of the inscription) in either 1868 or 1869 (it is hard to be sure of the final number in the date inscribed on the back). The women pose on a Juliet balcony set up in the studio.

On two separate occasions recently, colleagues looking at this photograph for the first time have remarked – ‘Hmm, like the Manet Balcon, isn’t it?’ [SLIDE] Édouard Manet’s *Au Balcon* was first exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1869. Unfortunately the date on the back of Silvy’s carte cannot be 1869: he closed his London studio in July 1868. The compositions may be intriguingly similar but neither depends from the other.

This brings me to a remarkable still life by Silvy. [SLIDE] It is a large-scale print, mounted and signed, in the Dietmar Siegert collection, Munich. By large, I mean the negative was nearly 20 inches high and 15 inches wide. The original is not black and white, as represented in my slide, but the usual warm-toned albumen colour of other Silvy prints. The photograph is remarkable because the composition unites the usual suspects of the traditional still life – a fine fabric, game, table linen, silver coins, a knife, etc., with unexpected and discordant contemporary items: a daily newspaper and, even more startling, a mass-produced bottle of sauce. I wondered for a while if this maverick still life could possibly have been made as a riposte to Roger Fenton’s sumptuous, but artistically retardataire, hot-house still life arrangements, which derive from the paintings of George Lance. [SLIDE] Fortunately, my rather negative theory is untenable: the Times newspaper in

Silvy’s photograph is sufficiently visible for one to be able to make out enough details in the advertisements for passages by ship to establish – thanks to the Times database and the generous help of Paul Frecker – that the newspaper is dated 11th November 1859. Fenton’s still life photographs were first exhibited, so far as is known, in London in January 1861. It seems reasonable to assume that the photograph was made not long after the date of the newspaper. Nonetheless, Silvy’s photograph looks like a deliberate updating of an old formula. It is unlike any other still life photographs of the period that I have come across (except another one by Silvy that survives in very damaged condition) and, so far as I am aware, it also stands outside the painting conventions of its time. Actually, it looks forward to another work by Manet. [SLIDE] *Le Déjeuner* was shown alongside *Le Balcon* at the Salon of 1869. Manet’s painting of lunch in the studio contains, at the right hand side, just such a still life as Silvy’s – in which the traditional ingredients of still life (here they are linen, a lemon, oysters, blue and white porcelain and a glass of wine) are joined by a lowly, labelled bottle of ale. There seems to be something stuffed in the neck to prevent the beer going flat, a wonderfully-observed detail. Surely there is a connection, in artistic spirit if no more, between these works.

Silvy made a number of other radical revisions of received ideas. Before turning to them, I'd like to point out another way in which he seems modern. Silvy was a pioneer of the photographic reproduction of works of art. He shared in the creation of that great repertoire of art imagery accumulated by photographers in the 19th century which became known, thanks to André Malraux, as 'le musée imaginaire' in the 20th. [SLIDE] Silvy established a journal called the *London Photographic Review* as a sales vehicle for his large format photographs. [SLIDE] Among his offerings were copies of the portraits by Sir Peter Lely of Restoration beauties, reproduced from the paintings at Hampton Court. He also set up a Librairie Photographique and published facsimiles of illuminated manuscripts. [SLIDE] The first of these was the *Manuscrit Sforza* in 1860. [SLIDE] Silvy's introduction made an astonishing claim. He argued that photography could not merely record manuscripts but restore them. He claimed that an old, yellowed inscription in the Sforza manuscript had been made legible in his copy. [SLIDE] This was either because collodion negatives read yellow as black or because the matte ink stood out, if carefully lit, from the relatively glossy parchment ground. Silvy also, like his friend Nadar, used magnesium light to photograph underground. [SLIDE] In 1867 he published a series of photographs of the royal tombs in the crypt at Dreux in Normandy. He photographed the rare daguerreotype

of Balzac he owned (which he passed on to Nadar as a gift) and made multiple copies. [SLIDE] Naturally, he also copied his masterpiece, *River Scene, France*, in Warholian streams of cartes de visite. [SLIDE] In 1860 he also used an experimental version of the ink technique later known as collotype to reproduce one of his best-known photographs. [SLIDE] In this elaborate tableau from 1859, Parisian workers crowd around a poster printed with the 'Orders of the Day' issued to his army in Toulon by Napoleon III. Here is the albumen version of the picture. [SLIDE] The Emperor's orders to his army, poised to march into Italy, were transmitted to Paris by electric telegraph, printed as posters overnight and pasted up in the faubourgs at dawn. The point was to demonstrate that, using the latest technology, the Emperor could simultaneously lead his army in a foreign campaign and remain in control of the capital. This was surely an extremely modern subject – but only Silvy recognised it as such.

[SLIDE] I mentioned Silvy's magazine, the *London Photographic Review*. In the introductory issue of Spring 1860 he offered annual subscribers three images titled *Studies on Light*. [SLIDE] The photographs were listed in both French and English: *Brouillard – Soleil – Crepuscule / Fog – Sun – Twilight*. From the prints by Silvy that survive, it seems reasonable to suppose that *Twilight*

is also *Evening Star* and refers to this scene, [SLIDE] in which a servant appears to have stepped outside to buy an evening paper from a boy, who is stationed under a lit street lamp. The paper flutters in the boy's hands, a coin glints as the servant pays and – very surprisingly – a figure is glimpsed moving quickly along the pavement. The sense of movement is conveyed by blur, that old photographic trick. Actually, in 1860, it was a very new photographic trick. In fact, this is quite possibly the first deliberate use of blur in the history of photography. Fog, in the series, appears to be represented by this work, [SLIDE] which is also known as *Les Petits Savoyards*. Italian street musicians are often met with in French and English photographs of the time. However, this one is different in placing the musicians from southerly Savoy among the iron enclosures of a northern capital, where they are enveloped by chilling fog. Silvy's photographs of twilight and fog in the London of 1860 were reprised by another newcomer from Paris about seventy-five years later – by Bill Brandt in the 1930s. [SLIDE] Silvy's London photographs and his *Photographic Review* seem to have been a commercial failure – there's not even a copy of the *Review* in the British Library so far as I can tell – but then Brandt's documentary masterpiece, *The English at Home* (1936) got remaindered. It is not clear which of Silvy's surviving photographs played the role of *Soleil/Sun* in his *Studies on Light*. [SLIDE] Possibly

it was this charming scene of children playing by a garden pavilion from which a bird cage hangs. The subject is a sunny as the light.

Silvy's street photographs connect with the research of Professor Lynda Nead, published in her book *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (2000), whose many valuable leads I am still following up. Her work bears on another London view by Silvy that seems to me unusual in the photography of its time. [SLIDE] Silvy's subject here is the kind of ordinary thoroughfare, workaday activities, strident street signs and idle onlookers that we find fifty years later in some Camden Town Group paintings. Zooming in on the photograph, [SLIDE] we see a group of boys who have clearly been marshalled by the photographer to animate the foreground. At the left we see a man ambling into shot and pausing involuntarily – to leave a ghost impression - as he takes in the camera and dark-tent. A prominent sign advertises Sunday railway excursions (the leisure theme again). An older sign above it tells us that this is the *Veterinary Forge* of J. Yaxley. [SLIDE] Zooming in on the central part of the photograph, we see what looks like a skirt or a bedcover airing on an upper window ledge, white doves in cages hanging on an outside wall and two goats foraging among the straw littering the yard. (Did Silvy have them tied in place?) An example of that

well-known English utility chair, the Windsor, stands ready to take the weight of one of the farriers. Beside it is a ladder, presumably giving access to a hay-loft. There is a French expression which describes the 'English' method of shoeing a horse – an inferior method (as anything 'À l'Anglaise' always is) which involves only one person, who holds the horse and simultaneously shoes it: the superior, French, method, requires two. We see the allegedly French way here (there's even a third man in attendance, just inside the stable) and perhaps Silvy, a knowledgeable horseman, was interested in the scene partly for this reason. [SLIDE] Our third zoom shows other bystanders, working-class flâneurs, some of them successfully choreographed to watch the farriers, others turning incorrigibly towards the camera and the imposing figure of M. Silvy, (and, presumably, a camera operator). [SLIDE] The point of the picture is that all of these activities mix together and that the strident railway sign is part of the urban spectacle. [SLIDE] Much of the spirit and some of the significant ingredients of Silvy's photograph were reprised by Walter Sickert in a painting of the Underground station of Queen's Road/Bayswater (c.1916, Courtauld Gallery) which is currently hanging in Tate Britain. Signage, in particular, became an inescapable – visually stimulating – part of city life during the railway age, as both artists acknowledge.

I'd like to conclude with an image which took me by surprise when I recently saw it for the first time in Paris in the collection of Silvy's descendants – to whom I should like to pay a very warm tribute for all the help they have generously given me in my research. [SLIDE] This image is another example, I believe, of a radical revision of iconography. Here Silvy gives a twist to the familiar image of the 'Crossing Sweeper' – well-known in literature thanks to Dickens's pathetic 'Poor Jo' in *Bleak House* (1852-53). The same setting appears in one of Silvy's photographs of a smart carriage and pair and must be close to his studio. An exotically costumed man, with a well-worn brush leaning by his side, extends his palm for payment for the service just performed. He has just, the implied narrative of the photograph runs, cleared a path across a mud and dung-strewn thoroughfare for an unseen client or clients. The *Evening Star/Twilight* photograph [SLIDE] shows us how muddy streets were even in genteel districts like up-and-coming Bayswater in 1860. I first thought of the sweeper as an Arab and imagined that Silvy's time in Algeria sensitised him to the plight of such a person in a northern metropolis. However, it is much more likely that the sweeper was from India. Let us look more closely. [SLIDE] The sunlight is strong enough to cast a sharply-defined shadow of the sweeper on the closed door behind him.

(In fact this photograph could also be a candidate for the *Soleil* photograph in *Studies on Light*). However, his clothes remain, although foreign, drab, his expression downcast, and the main effect one of displacement. It seems to me that here Silvy has revised two photographic types that were fairly visible in London around 1860. [SLIDE] On the one hand, he offers an alternative to Roger Fenton's studio compositions of exotic Oriental types, for which the photographer and his friends dressed up in costumes brought back from Fenton's Crimean expedition. (Fenton exhibited seven of his Oriental studies in London in January 1859: quite possibly he showed some of them in Paris in the Salon a few months later). On the other hand, Silvy brings reality to the subject of the crossing sweeper – which Oscar Rejlander sentimentalised in his 'Poor Jo' (exhibited at the Photographic Society of London in 1861). Rejlander was apparently moved by seeing a real crossing-sweeper in London in 1860 and on returning to Wolverhampton, where he kept his studio at the time, selected a local boy to model the role, providing him with suitably ragged clothes for the shoot. Another event occurred in 1861: Henry Mayhew's two volume *London Labour and the London Poor* came out in a second edition. It contained an engraving, based on a Richard Beard daguerreotype, of a 'Hindoo' tract seller. [SLIDE] Perhaps a mixture of all three images helped trigger Silvy's image. However, seeing

the photograph is a very different experience from the engraving in Mayhew. The dazzling white architecture dwarfs the Indian immigrant and its classicism emphatically underlines his otherness. When I saw this photograph for the first time, it reminded me immediately of something I had encountered in Baudelaire. [SLIDE] I didn't pursue the thought until preparing to give a paper last summer at St Andrews University on *Camille Silvy and Poetry*. I found that Silvy was very attuned to poetry – he recited Hugo's *Les Châtiments* to himself from memory during the dark days of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, in which he served as an officer in the Garde Mobile (Home Guard) and was mentioned in dispatches. Silvy himself wrote poems and published two of them in pamphlets. He made a photograph to accompany one of them. He quoted lines from the Pléiade poet Rémy Belleau (who was born, like Silvy, in Nogent), beneath one of his prints of *River Scene, France*. The lines are from Belleau's ode to the river we see in the photograph, the Huisne. Silvy was a friend of Nadar, Baudelaire's pal, and he photographed Théophile Gautier [SLIDE] in London in 1862 – Gautier, to whom Baudelaire dedicated *Les Fleurs du Mal*. I looked for the half-remembered Baudelaire reference the other day and found it among his early poems. [SLIDE] *À une Malabaraise* tells of a beauty from Malabar, a region of southern India lying between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. This reverie of

the exotic, luxurious, delicately perfumed life of the young woman is contrasted, towards the end of the poem, with the dream that she has of travelling to France. [SLIDE] The poet imagines the reality of such a visit: the sensuous would descend into the sensual – the ‘sailors’ arms’ suggesting prostitution. In the translation by Francis Scarfe, Baudelaire foresees the Malabarise transported to a European capital: ‘Under-clad in flimsy muslins, shivering there in snow and hail...’ Silvy’s crossing sweeper belongs, it seems to me, to the world of Baudelaire’s poem – and to something we understand as Modernity. [SLIDE] Taken together with his other remarkable photographs, that seems an extraordinary thing for Camille Silvy to have accomplished in Paris and London around 1860. I hope you agree! Thank you.

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