

BOOK NEWS

GOTHIC EFFIGY: A GUIDE TO DARK VISIBILITIES

David Annwn Jones

Manchester University Press, 2018

ISBN 978-1-5261-0122-8

262 pages, hardback, £75.00

If you've ever wondered why the architecture of a medieval cathedral, and those young people hanging around its graveyard wearing black lipstick and slightly strange attire, can both reasonably be described as 'gothic' or 'goth', this recent book will give you a few more things to wonder about.

MLS member David Annwn Jones has assembled a fascinating survey taking in architecture, painting, sculpture, waxworks, photography, literature, the projected image, dance, modern music and popular culture – and a lot more besides.

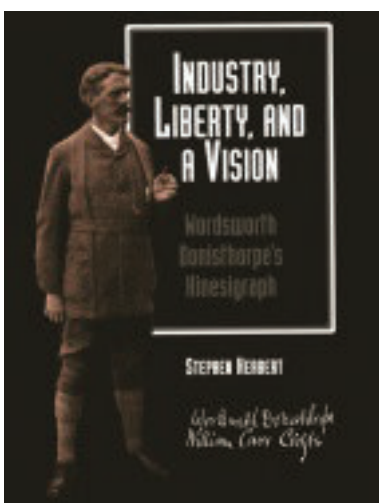
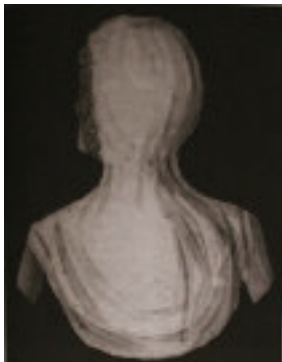
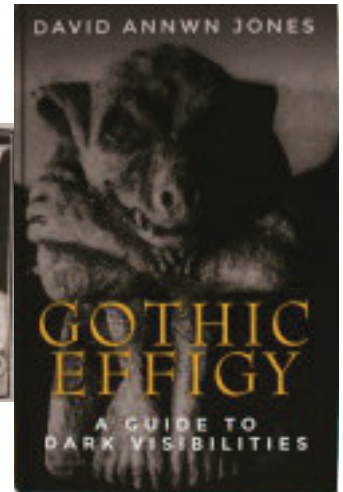
It's an understatement to call this book wide ranging – it takes pretty much every form of art or culture that could, at some time and for whatever reason, be called 'gothic', and finds examples to discuss. In some ways it reads like the catalogue for an unseen exhibition (and what an exhibition it would be, if such an enterprise were ever possible...) – lots of descriptions of things that we cannot immediately see, collected and categorised into a logical order. Some are illustrated here but many others left for us to seek out if we want to learn more.

The phantasmagoria, alongside a number of other visual media, takes its rightful place in this cavalcade. In a relatively short survey, the treatment of any one topic has to be fairly brief, and if you already know about phantasmagoria you probably won't learn much more here. But it seems to me that's not the point – the real value of grouping all these diverse things together is to invite us to think differently about the things 'we know' by comparing and contrasting with the many things 'we don't know'. I'll think a little differently about Robertson's *Phantasmagorie* now that I've seen it put (almost) side by side with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* ... and why not?

For me that's the virtue of *Gothic Effigy* – hugely inclusive though it is, it's not really an attempt to list everything gothic, nor to offer a straight answer to the question of 'what is gothic?' More importantly, it suggests some more questions (mainly, and very positively, 'why is this gothic?' or 'why is *this* gothic?') and some connections between unexpected activities and interests. Good scholarship asks at least as many new questions as it answers old ones.

There's only one problem with this interesting book, and that's its price. Obviously hardback books from major university publishers are aimed more at university libraries than at everyday folk, but I can't help feeling that shuts out many people who would enjoy reading this work and use it to find ways into new areas of interest. Ah, I thought, there must be an e-book version as well ... and there is, but it costs even more (£90)! It's unfortunate that an accessible and entertaining text has to be priced in an inaccessible way.

Richard Crangle



INDUSTRY, LIBERTY, AND A VISION

Wordsworth Donisthorpe's Kinesigraph

Stephen Herbert

The Projection Box, 2017

ISBN 978-1-903000-15-1

Hardback, 222 pages, 72 illustrations

In 1890 Wordsworth Donisthorpe and William Carr Crofts filmed Trafalgar Square, London, with their ingenious motion picture camera. Embroiled in the political ferment of Victorian Britain, the two individualists struggled to create a new visual medium for the 20th century – but time was not on their side.

In 1998 Stephen Herbert and Mo Heard published the first edition of this book as a small paperback. Since then further research has unearthed a great deal of new material, including Donisthorpe's own scrapbook of newspaper cuttings. A working replica of the Kinesigraph film camera has even been constructed. As a result, the text has been extensively revised and expanded – and many illustrations added – resulting in this larger format hardback. As this was an era when the magic lantern was still the most prevalent form of projected image, there is much of interest for MLS members in the book, including a chapter on the magic lantern and its role in elections.

The book is available only from Stephen Herbert (s-herbert@easynet.co.uk) at a special price for MLS members of £20 plus £4 p&p using PayPal (normal price £30 plus p&p). Overseas members should email Stephen for mailing costs.

