



# Gordon Crook and the Wolf-Man

Peter Stupples<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Private Scholar, Wellington, New Zealand

Corresponding author: Peter Stupples ([pams@actrix.co.nz](mailto:pams@actrix.co.nz))

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## Abstract

Gordon Crook (1921–2011) became a significant Wellington artist after his arrival in Aotearoa, New Zealand in 1972. He produced tapestries, prints and banners. In the 1980s, he turned from celebratory public works to more introverted, private imagery, particularly after acquiring a copy of Muriel Gardiner’s *The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud*. In Freud’s analysis of Sergei Pankeev (The Wolf-Man), Crook discovered a set of ideas that enabled him to explore his own infantile neurosis, the result of childhood traumas and his psycho-sexual difficulties in human relationships. The result was a major series of works (1990–91) embracing tapestries and black-and-white prints, two sets of which are in the collection of Te Papa. This paper is based upon Crook’s correspondence over the period of the development of his turn towards more introverted subject matter, as well as a close study of the relationship of Crook’s images to the text of Gardiner’s book.

## Keywords

Gordon Crook, Freud, Wolf-Man, psychoanalysis, infantile neurosis, tapestries, prints

“Ask yourself if the symbol you have detected is not your own footprint”,  
Vladimir Nabokov,

(V. Nabokov, “Satire is a Lesson, Parody is a Game”,  
*Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, vol. VIII,  
no. 2, spring 1967).

essential material for art and for the practice of art as a vehicle for self-expression, even for self-healing from the effects of childhood trauma.

This paper is an attempt to place Crook’s reading of Freud and his work immediately leading up to the Wolf-Man exhibition, into the context of his own life history—his childhood, sexual orientation, interest in dreams and the occult.

## Part I

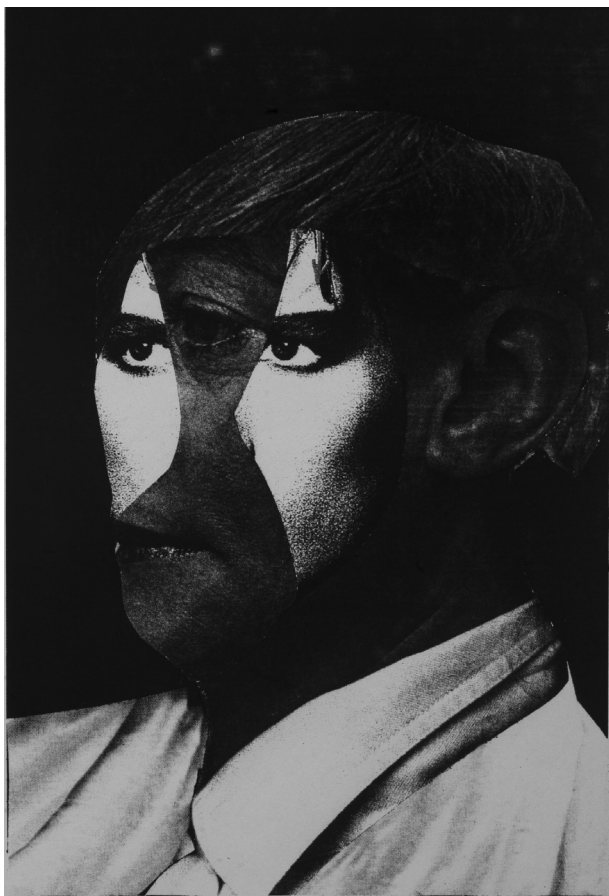
### Introduction

In 1991, the Wellington-based artist Gordon Crook exhibited his latest “series”, or groups of works on a theme entitled *The Wolf-Man*, based upon his encounter with the book *The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud*, edited by Muriel Gardiner.<sup>1</sup> Crook felt an affinity with Freud’s “patient”, Sergei Pankeev and a personal resonance with his life experience and symptoms. More generally, Crook believed that reading Freud provided support for his own belief in the significance of the subconscious in providing

### Overview

When Crook arrived in New Zealand in 1972, he was fifty-one years old. In Britain, he had worked for decades as a teacher of textile arts and design, as well as exhibiting tapestries and paintings. An award-winning wallpaper designer, he had come to New Zealand to join a putative interior design company that collapsed before it was formed. Crook was stranded. In his mind, he had burned his boats—indeed he had a ceremonial burning of his artworks before parting with friends in England.

<sup>1</sup> Gardiner M (Ed.) (1973), *The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 396 pp.



**Figure 1.** Gordon Crook, *The Wolf-Man*, Wolf-Man Series III, xerox print, 1991, 510 × 400 mm. Private collection. © All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission from MB and VA Winter Family Trust.

In order to make a living—which he struggled to do until the last years of his life—Crook had to remake himself as a practising artist in New Zealand. He did so by turning his back on teaching as a solution.<sup>2</sup> This was not necessarily a deliberate decision, but one that served him well. The energy he had poured into his teaching in London, it could be argued, militated against the advancement of his career as an artist.

In Wellington, Crook had to adapt his talents to his social situation—designing book jackets, theatre sets, murals for schools and working as a jobbing artist. He also exhibited, using the contacts he had made through his friendship, forged earlier in Britain, with artists John Drawbridge and Tanya Ashken. It was at these exhibitions that his talents as a tapestry designer, weaver and printmaker, came to the attention of Wellington's artworld aficionados, such as Jim and Mary Barr. His work was bought by the Dowse Art Museum and local collectors. Crook began to make a name for himself and was taken up by gallerists, including Elva Bett and Janne Land.

Crook had to create for himself a new life in a new country, with its own art world and traditions. This was an almost impossible task, which, in retrospect, he did

with outstanding success. At first, he tempered his talents to some extent to the market—producing small tapestries and prints for small rooms and modest pockets. His style was firmly Modern—the shadows of Kazimir Malevich and Henri Matisse played out in his lively, playful designs.

As his reputation grew, Crook was tempted to make more ambitious work—larger tapestries, using the talents of Trish Armour and Lesley Nicholls.<sup>3</sup> Through contacts with Frank Corner, an art collector and Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as with the architect Miles Warren, Crook received commissions to create textile banners for the Great Hall of the Chancery of the New Zealand High Commission in Washington D.C. and for the newly-built Michael Fowler Centre in Wellington.

It was only when his reputation was more secure that Crook could turn from pleasing his clients, who demanded decorative Modernism and address more personal imperatives. He began to come out from behind a mask of cautious respectability, plunging into his selfhood, the pain and anguish of his childhood and attachment issues in adult life, to articulate his own life-narrative. These inward reflections were first manifest with his exhibitions of pastels in 1985, *Egyptian Cigarettes* in 1988 and *Riddle and Rebus* in 1989, but, even more explosively, in the Wolf-Man project of 1990–91.

This was not a sudden turn. The issues he now addressed had been frequently aired in his correspondence and other writing. However, they began to take on a public, visual face. To some extent, this shift shocked his collectors and supporters. The sexuality of his subject matter was unexpected, too direct. This was pioneering work in the New Zealand art landscape. While the formalism of Modernism was already familiar to Wellingtonians through the work of Drawbridge, Milan Mrkusich, Gordon Walters and Ralph Hotere, amongst many others, Crook's Wolf-Man project demanded a different style of imagery, a narrative, pre-Modernist symbolism. It also plunged the viewer into an uncomfortable intimacy with the biography, feelings and personal relationships of the artist, as well as possibly arousing, bringing into consciousness, the viewers' own suppressed issues of attachment and sexuality. This was a province of art that Europeans had to come to terms with through the dark matter of Symbolism and Surrealism. However, in this series, Crook was directing attention to the fabulistic and metaphorical prose of Freud, altogether too outrageous, even 'pornographic', expressed in unambiguous language enough to make the bourgeoisie squirm through fear it might directly press on their own fantasies and carefully concealed desires.

Crook never hid his own fantasies, his confused and painful sexual drives, from his correspondents. They confronted him only too frequently in his dreams, with which he was obsessed and he expected, in turn, that his correspondents would engage with their own inner phantoms.

Crook read widely, often immersing himself in theories of numerology, astrology and alternative worlds. He had

2 Crook taught drawing and painting in Wellington briefly in the early 1970s outside of any institution.

3 See Stupples, P (2020), 'Gordon Crook: tapestries', *Tuhinga*, 31, 70–90.

long been an admirer, if sceptical, of the writing of Carl Jung, but the discovery of Freud, especially through Muriel Gardiner's edited collection of Wolf-Man material around late 1989–early 1990, pushed every other writer aside for some time.<sup>4</sup> At last, he felt he had a frame, a structure that made sense. Freud impressed him as more explicitly attachment-, sexuality-orientated, than any writer he had previously come across. He felt he shared the Wolf-Man, Sergei Pankeev's, diagnosis of infantile neurosis, his problems with a father figure, the Oedipal competition for the love of mother-father, the working through of the stages of sexual development. Indeed, Crook began to understand that his own neurosis was more acute than that of Pankeev, that he had failed to pass the Oedipal barriers to mature sexual development, that he was indeed stuck, could not make progress and that he was deeply wounded psychologically. Crook understood all this intellectually, but that understanding did not overcome the entrenched phobias with which he lived and that would continue to dog him for the rest of his life. He realised, however, that art could help him articulate the problem, if not lead to a cure. Indeed, he would have read, in Gardiner's book, that though Pankeev appreciated his analysis with Freud, he never felt 'cured'. As Freud pointed out to Pankeev early on and Pankeev clearly understood, "his [Pankeev's] intelligence was, as it were, cut off from the instinctual forces which governed his behaviour in his few relations of life that remained to him".<sup>5</sup> As Pankeev wrote many years later: "Theoretically, it is interesting how insidious the 'id' can be. How it can dissemble, apparently following the commands of the 'ego' and the 'superego', but in secret preparing its 'revenge' and then suddenly triumphing over these apparently higher courts. Then the old emotional conflict breaks out and the apparently subdued mourning for the great loss which one suffered so many years ago makes itself felt again. Freud says that the unconscious knows no time; but, as a consequence, the unconscious can know no growing old".<sup>6</sup> Certainly, Crook's unconscious only too frequently sought revenge, but the artist in the man was able, in the Wolf-Man series, to turn that struggle in his body-mind into a powerful work of art.

## Part II

### Collection of memories and reveries

Gordon Crook wrote about his preoccupation with his own "self-hood", including his dream-worlds, in letters to his

many correspondents. He also wrote poetry, short prose passages and notes towards at least two autobiographies, on the same interrelated themes. One of these sets of autobiographical notes I have entitled *Collection of Memories and Reveries*, as well as a near-final draft of a "Chapter 2".<sup>7</sup> Crook began to put this "Chapter" together in 1987, judging from opening remarks about the fabric hanging, *Aviary*,<sup>8</sup> on which he was currently working, but he also referred to later events from the mid-1990s. Obviously, the "Chapter" was worked and reworked over time, but particularly over the period when he was working on the Wolf-Man material. The text does not cover a specific period, but ranges forward and back, to create a kaleidoscope of his preoccupations frozen at the moment he lost interest in further revisions. We glimpse "free association" more freely here, perhaps, than in most literary attempts to create unconstructed, largely uncensored, but purposeful utterances revelatory of life-consciousness.

### Correspondence

Whilst Crook's "autobiographies" are sources of the workings of the artist's mind, even more "revelatory" are the nuggets of his life-story contained in his vast body of correspondence, interwoven with comments on his dream-world, his art practice and his daily life in Wellington. Crook was in the habit of rising early. He was penning his first letters shortly after six o'clock, stopping for breakfast between eight and nine. Then into the studio. He entertained visitors in the mid-afternoon. This routine was maintained over many years. Crook made carbon copies of most of his letters, kept all mail sent to him, as well as post-cards, birthday cards and other ephemera, all in date order. A great deal of his correspondence is available in the collection of the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington.

Kate Derum, a Melbourne-based weaver who became a firm friend, astutely commented that Crook's correspondence was "more of a soliloquy than a conversation". She described how "the poet Rilke kept up a voluminous correspondence which was a medium for poetic meditation rather than personal contact. He cherished love as an inspiration, but shunned it as an entanglement. Perhaps Gordon [Crook] cherishes friendship in this way, so [that] his letters become a way of lending himself out into the world".<sup>9</sup>

Around 1997–1999, Derum and Crook found they shared a passion in reading the Portuguese writer

4 For Crook's discovery of Gardiner's book see p. 9.

5 Gardiner 1973, 158.

6 Gardiner 1973, 361–2.

7 This chapter of memoirs can be found in Alexander Turnbull Library (hereafter ATL) MS-Papers-11213-120. From hereon the chapter is referred to as *Memoirs*.

8 *Aviary* exists as a felt-on-paper wall hanging, 990 × 650, 1987, in the Wallace Arts Trust collection 97.078, as well as a print collage in the BNZ collection.

9 Crook, Derum and Mack 1993, 31.

Fernando Pessoa's *Book of Disquiet* (1982), exchanging their thoughts about this long and complex work. Pessoa's conflation of musing, philosophical aphorisms, consideration of the occult and his acute difficulty in human relationships, as well as the poetry of despair, countered by a love of the natural world, suited the mind of both these thoughtful textiles artists. Indeed, Pessoa's unrequited homosexuality found echoes in Crook's own reticence in sexual intimacy, so much so that Crook could be not ungenerously described as the Pessoa of New Zealand artists. As Pessoa wrote: "mild sexual inversion...stops in my spirit. But whenever I've paused and thought about myself, I've felt uneasy, for I've never been sure, and I'm still not sure, that this inclination in my temperament might not descend to my body. I'm not saying I would practice the sexuality that corresponds to the impulse, but the desire would be enough to humiliate me. There have been many of us in this category down through history, and through artistic history in particular".<sup>10</sup>

## Family relationships

Crook's memories, referred to constantly within these memoir fragments and thousands of letters, painfully spun about a core of family relationships and experiences. He was born in Richmond, Surrey, England, in 1921. As an infant, he experienced the chronically and chaotically interrelated lives of his father, Reginald and his mother.<sup>11</sup> He described their marriage as "incompatible ...from the beginning, beset with constant conflict".<sup>12</sup> His older brother Kenneth gave him a hard time, taking the high ground as the first born, causing Crook to "...dream of brother rivalry, after all these years, my brother presumed he had rights (sic) of passage and I did not, unless I behaved like him".<sup>13</sup> Derum emphasised that Crook's "was an unhappy childhood with painful experiences of loss and betrayal".<sup>14</sup> Crook's parents separated around 1925, when he was four years old. He bitterly regretted never growing up with a father. In 1985, Crook wrote to Bill Mason, the New Zealand wall-paper designer, whom he had known in London immediately after the Second World War, that he pined for:

"...a father, the peace and security of family love. That absence of a father in my life has corrupted every moment of beauty...has filled any beauty with either

a sense of loss, a feeling of guilt, the feeling that all was not right, that something was concealed from me, [or] that what was otherwise perfect has in its core an imperfection I could not accept. And so indeed it led me...towards an idealism which was founded and based on the imperfect, on the yearning to put right a past that was wrong. Of course [it was] doomed from the start. Not that I could see it...Far from [it]. One carries one's past around like a prized possession. Not realising it's the one possession that has to be unloaded and [to] be free from it is by way of acceptance. Not by way of hope [can] the past [be] changed or made good. It is what it is. And the more I have wanted to make it different, the more times I have gone into the experience of it, the more I have longed for a change for the better, then the worse the experience has got. Darker, more barren, more frightening, without growth or life. To every moment in my life, I have brought the re-living of the experience of not having a father, spoiling the experience of what something else is, not giving it a chance to 'be', to come to fruition. And, because it didn't come to fruition, then thinking it, itself, was at fault, faulty. So obvious now I understand the mistake. It has been a long trip in this purgatory."<sup>15</sup>

After his parents' separation in 1925, Gordon's mother placed him in a series of foster homes, some of which he reminisced as contrasting favourably with his own: "When I was very young, I lived in a house with eight children. The family was a happy one, but poor. I cannot remember we ever saw nuts and oranges in the house except we found them there on Christmas morning in the foot of our stocking".<sup>16</sup> However, other memories of those years were far from positive and later re-emerge in dream sequences, nightmares: "Do you remember," he wrote to Derum, "I once told you of a dream I often had when six or seven years old? A 'sensation' dream—muzzy, like I am smothered to suffocation under billowing, cottonwool clouds! A 'deadness' infuses my body...The paradox of this sensation of a dead state. Of numbness".<sup>17</sup>

When Crook was aged eight or nine, his mother secured a place for him as a boarder in the Blue Coat Oliver Whitby School in Chichester, the town in which she had been living since her separation from his father. He was miserable at Oliver Whitby. He hated every moment. On the other hand, he enjoyed wandering in the eleventh-century Chichester Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, fascinated by the carvings, stained glass,

10 As quoted by Colm Tóibín in his review of Richard Zenith's *Pessoa: An Experimental Life*, *London Review of Books*, 12 August 2021, 24.

11 He never records his mother's Christian name in any of his writing.

12 Crook, Derum and Mack 1993, 14.

13 Letter to Kate Derum, 18 June 1994, ATL MS-Papers-10790-01. See also letter to Val and Mark Winter, 7 January 1985 and letter to Malcolm and Linda 28 June 1985. ATL MS-Papers-11213-017.

14 Crook, Derum and Mack 1993, 14.

15 Letter to Bill Mason 2 September 1985, ATL MS-Papers-11213-017.

16 Undated reminiscence in a green folder, ATL MS-Papers-11213-128.

17 Letter to Kate Derum 17 June 1995. ATL MS-Papers-10790-02.



monuments to its rich past on the walls and floors, Crook wrote to artist Clive Humphreys:

“My mother’s family was from farm labouring stock. It’s from them I have love of the country... English countryside, its denizens. And the cottage garden with sweet-peas and raspberries and red currants. Cornfields bordering the inland water at Dell Quay [Chichester]. My impression is that of ‘enclosure’, as if a screen separates that world from schooling and growing up in town. A hawthorn hedge neatly trimmed and sheared surrounded the school playing-field...Four poplars grew at the end of the sports field. They were wind breaks, but they did not stop me shivering on the football pitch.”<sup>18</sup>

Crook always took delight in food and the sensory memories it invoked: “Back to my mother’s breakfast table. The smell and sizzle of bacon coming from the kitchen...the warmth of crumbs on the tablecloth which is white damask. The marmalade jar with a spoon in it. Summertime”.<sup>19</sup>

When Crook was fourteen his mother remarried and later gave birth to his two stepbrothers, David and Colin Barnes. Crook recalled that, on his sixteenth birthday, he was invited into his mother’s bedroom. She told him she had a present for him and proceeded to unwrap a baby, his stepbrother. He was horrified. Instead of regarding the baby as “a present”, he took this “presentation” as a cruel joke, a betrayal.<sup>20</sup> He tried to run away from home:

“Escaping mother’s nagging. Why don’t I get a job etc., etc. I am at the gate when she comes out and stops me. She didn’t mean it—whatever she said. I am caught between temper and tears. Pleased not to be on the road. Where would I go and what would I do.”<sup>21</sup>

Crook was desperate to escape the stifling feelings he associated with ‘home’, the petty rules of the house and the penny-pinching so typical of the English lower middle class.

“There was the carpet cleaner, the Ewebank...the front room which had carpet on carpet on the floor... the top carpet “protecting and conserving” the one below it. I suppose the feeling [I] must have had that abundance and bounty was limited, that you must look after and take care of stock possessions. A sort of, what you didn’t use...or what was not used lasted forever...

I grew up with these attitudes and they became ingrained. Part meaning of the dishevelled, unmade bed...the bed that’s been slept in and now needs remaking. Attitudes formed at home during early life and adolescence. The rethink required. “Time” to “clean up my act”... “sweep things clean,” remove the debris and dust-fluff. Of the column missing from the clock [in brackets on the side of Gordon’s letter]...The subtle analogy of “time damaged by my mother”... keeping her house in order...providing me a home. We are damaged and conditioned by what we observe, by what is happening around us, often put into clothes we don’t want to wear, fixed into the image and persona of them. Easy to see the oneself in them now and feel the fit of them.”<sup>22</sup>

Despite feeling, in turn, abandoned, then stifled, often nagged by his mother, Crook was also closely tied to her and found himself constantly repeating her aphorisms. He recalled he and his mother “laughing together, happy and looking good. This image probably a repeat of myself and mother when I was twelve years old and on a trip to Portsmouth by Southern Railway. Once there we would visit the photographer’s ‘Studio’ and have our picture taken, then walk to the zoo and gardens and shop and have vanilla ice-cream at the Italian corner shop...or was it an Italian ice-cream at Aggie Weston’s? We’d return on the train, laden, surfeited with pleasure. Those special outings”.<sup>23</sup>

Later, when working as a textile artist and teacher in London, Crook would visit his mother and stepfather. His memories of these visits were painful: ‘This philosophy to lay carpet on carpet—my mother and stepfather are finally submerged by it’..<sup>24</sup>

His departure for New Zealand in 1972 was, he wrote to Derum, “...coloured by death—mother, father, stepfather, uncle [who lived with the family], nephew in an accident on a scooter I’d just given him...all in the space of a year!...Back in the ‘70s I lived (part of me did) on the edge, a personality with its centre fenced-off and not ‘receiving’, the blinds down”.<sup>25</sup> In 1999, he described to Derum his feelings about the loss of a parent:

“Whatever one’s feelings at the end (the relief that the suffering is over) the going, the departure, the finality, never to see again those who brought one into the world, suddenly to cope with the void that is left behind...the nothingness, it changes one forever. It’s a

18 Letter to Clive Humphreys 18 April 1996, ATL MS-Papers-11213-107. In 1972 he included horrific memories of the ogreish headmaster at Whitby School in letters to Penny Olds. MS-Papers-11213-111.

19 Letter to Kate Derum, 23 October 2000, ATL MS-Papers-11213-079.

20 Crook told this story to Val Winter, who passed it on to the author in 2020.

21 Letter to Kate Derum, 10 July 1999, ATL MS-Papers-10790-06.

22 Letter to Kate Derum 20 April 1996, ATL MS-Papers-10790-03.

23 Letter to Eddie Squires 7 February 1992, ATL Ms-Papers-11213-112.

24 Letter to Kate Derum 20 April 1996, ATL MS-Papers-10790-03.

25 Letter to Kate Derum 25 January 2002, ATL MS-Papers-11213-079 and to Norma 11 December 1972 ATL MS-Papers 11213-001.

bit like the wind has blown one half of oneself away—the roof off the house in a gale.”<sup>26</sup>

## Sexual orientation: relations with others

In his *Memoirs*, Crook gives many examples of his difficulties with relationships within his family, at school and in adulthood. These stemmed from a perceived “difference”, probably an early realisation that he was homosexual, but also from experiencing the unsatisfactory sex life of his mother and father. He confessed in his *Memoirs*: “I was damaged in that area [sexuality] by the time I was four. To put it mildly, it made all my relationships, my love affairs difficult. I know where I am when I’ve a paintbrush in my hand”.<sup>27</sup> His musings on gender and sexual identity were articulated in letters to Derum:

“I am beginning a book entitled *She and Me*, a sociological, psychological study of human relationships.<sup>28</sup>...I read in the book that every person is a man and woman...light in darkness, dark in light etc. I have known this a very long while. I think we are misfortuned by our sexuality...it prevents the natural vacillations between two qualities of self, and firmly fixes a dissatisfied ‘I’ in the middle. It makes the ‘I’ imagine what it is not...As a child I resented the uniformity of gender identifications, that the boys wore trousers and the girls wore skirts...I really hated that intensely. The social distinctions made which weren’t natural....”<sup>29</sup>

In his adult life, Crook had attachments to both men and women but never enjoyed long term intimate relationships with either. His most significant attachment seems to have been during the Second World War with an air force officer, John, who was later shot down over the English Channel when Crook was serving in Cyprus.<sup>30</sup> He also mentions the “love of his life” whom he met at the Central School of Art and Design in London.<sup>31</sup> On another occasion, he recalled that, in 1952, his “emotional life soared to great heights and then plummeted. The search for the ideal lover. Returning one night in total despair...I went to a tree opposite the house and put my arms round its trunk and cried for consolation!”<sup>32</sup> What is

striking about these hints at relationships is that, even with close friends, he never offered specific details about the “other”. He had a deeply ingrained reticence, a reluctance to reveal the identities of those arousing his desire or the specific circumstances of his failure to develop mature relationships.

Crook regretted the “devious ways we attempt to get others to love us without our learning to love them. And when we think others love us...and our self-deception (and sometimes their self-deception) is revealed—that’s loneliness”.<sup>33</sup> He asked: “Why is it we don’t love with passion the too-familiar? It is human nature to concentrate on what is absent, what isn’t there and stoke the fires of desire for that! Perhaps we need powerful magnifying glasses to examine what *is* there then discover the unfamiliar beauty?”<sup>34</sup> Crook often repeated “that I spend my life trying to ‘unite’. There’s the problem always of ‘extent’ and ‘degree’. Does this also occur inside a partnership? I have known when a smile suffices. And when nothing does!”<sup>35</sup> He knew he was a ‘difficult’ person, brittle, easy to take offence, particularly wary of touch, writing:

“I do not care for close, emotional ties with anyone; and I have attempted to manoeuvre the imbalance between us to some more congenial level where the respective intelligence could be employed...I am involved with myself...almost totally in the realm of feeling: it is a private and personal affair. The only way I wish to share my feelings with the world of people is through painting and my work. Sometimes a kind of rapport with others is possible...but then sometimes it is not...You must realise that I choose to make my own discoveries, choose my own route to self-awareness, choose to go it alone.”<sup>36</sup>

He often philosophised his feelings in attempts to articulate his sense of self:

“Unconsciously I suppose certain people personify (represent) the different aspects of myself (psyche)—we discover ourselves, experience and intensify our feelings and ‘being’ through others, recognising in them some part reflection of self. (It would account for the power of love...its wider scope of self-knowledge, eh?)...thoughts and feelings are forms too, real as

26 Letter to Kate Derum 20 January 1999, ATL MS-Papers-10790-06.

27 *Memoirs*, 99A.

28 I have been unable to trace this book. It is possible that Crook misremembered the title.

29 Letter to Kate Derum, 17 September 1994, ATL MS-Papers-10790-01.

30 This is possibly referred to in a letter to Eddie Squires on 24 March 1992, ATL MS-Papers-MS-Papers-11213-112.

31 Letter to Kate Derum 27 September 1995, ATL MS-Papers-10790-02.

32 Letter to Clive Humphreys 21 July 1996, MS-Papers-11213-104.

33 Letter to Esther 31 December 1981, ATL MS-Papers-11213-128.

34 Letter to Kate Derum 7 May 2003, ATL MS-Papers-11213-080.

35 Letter to Kate Derum 27 October 1998, ATL MS-Papers-11213-079.

36 Letter to Lee 20 July 1975, ATL MS-Papers-11213-111.



**Figure 2.** Gordon Crook, *Gymnasium*, pastel on paper triptych, 1985, each 3060 × 1420 mm. Purchased 1985 with New Zealand Lottery Board funds, Te Papa: 1985-0018-1/A-C to C-C. © All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission from MB and VA Winter Family Trust.

any of the others we see”.<sup>37</sup> “Whilst it is true to life that we are introspective creatures who try to make contact with our inner being, it’s important to have some grasp as to what ‘being’ is, what is involved, at what level and on what plane it is happening. We are never independent in the sense of being able to make the rules—whatever ‘world’ we happen to be in, from conception to birth—metaphysically and physically that is so...The so-called “external” world is not what we make it. It ‘is’ in many ways a reflection of ourselves, but it is also Itself too. That we interpret externals through the five senses (or more) and are aware of the inter-relationship we have with them, readily blurs our consciousness of those unique and original laws that govern life...we can fall into the trap of substituting weak ones of our own, and ignore some fabulous discoveries.”<sup>38</sup>

This philosophising gave rise to telling insights about his views about the relationship between the inner self and the environment:

“For some years I have believed that every individual’s environment is a reflection (MIRROR) of the Inner Self. The world and the person are One. This is another way of saying that our lives exist in the nature of ‘duality’, that every ‘one’ is made of two, and of the opposites. This is the biggest-ever lesson to learn; everything follows from it, and from it everything can be understood, even the most strange, mystical, or difficult...or seemingly unacceptable.”<sup>39</sup>

### Pastels: 1985

In 1985, Crook exhibited a series of pastel works, *In Memoriam*, at Janne Land Gallery, Wellington. He had never worked with pastels before. He also engaged with new subject matter, new visual and conceptual material related to his speculations about self and identity philosophised/articulated in the above correspondence. He had begun working on the pastels towards the end of 1984. Their origin lay in preparatory photocollages made from cut-outs from popular magazines, that were constantly rearranged and edited, until they made some sense to the artist’s mind.

The final images, which seemed quite unrelated to each other, were like private windows on to memories relating to aspects of the depression that had long dogged Crook’s days and nights, images rooted in his emotional biography: attachment to his mother/estrangement from his mother, attraction to male figures/disappointment in love, ‘misfortunate’ as he was by his sexuality (Fig. 2).

While the tapestries he completed over the same period have a celebratory, joyful character, the pastels are introspective, sounding the depths of his depression. They have their origins within his self, his coming to terms with and recognising—in particular, the beginning of life, his infancy and childhood – where and when the foundations of his depression were laid, as well as the beginnings of new creative projects. He asked: “How to begin something? I think we are reminded perhaps of something, some encounter, some promise of adventure as in a dream...some personal thing which rings a bell or

37 Letter to Michael Whinam 4 March 1985, ATL MS-Papers-11213-017.

38 Letter to Nan (?) 12 March 1985, ATL MS-Papers-11213-017.

39 Letter to Linda Cocks 18 February 1992, ATL MS-Papers-11213-112.

touches upon a forgotten experience or time which was never quite explored".<sup>40</sup>

Crook explained his intentions in an artist's statement that accompanied the exhibition:

"...it could be said of these pastels that they show the darker side of my life, what Jung would call "the Shadow." With aging I understand my task the more clearly, to master those feelings of loss and betrayal and threat which have always dogged my heels, and which by running away from, erroneously, I expected to escape. No such luck. I find with age that I must walk backwards as it were, into these shades, and to know them as projections of myself. To try to throw some light on what's obscure. Until this is done, I am sure 'the Shadow' will remain as a blind spot in the eye of my vision...I really want to say of this present selection of pastels that I set out to explore a deep feeling of depression and to give face to it. This meant that I had to stick with a particular and isolated feeling rather as one holds fast to a memory and resists the flow of change. It was not a way I had worked before—no, that may not be true, I may have done so but not fixed in "a depression," in the negatives. I have generally preferred to burnish the brighter side of my nature. I have the belief that misery leads on a downward spiral to further misery. I also believe that artists should be very thorough in everything they do, especially in their explorations".<sup>41</sup>

## Egyptian Cigarettes and Riddle and Rebus

In Crook's 1988 exhibition, *Egyptian Cigarettes* (26 October–12 November, Janne Land Gallery, Allen Street, Wellington), he took as his subject his tragic affair during the war with the English pilot, John. The exhibition showed three tapestries woven by Lesley and Fiona Nicholls, including *Requiem*, in flamboyant memory of a lost love—in which frenetic, ghostly apparitions appeared, fragmented and influenced in design by his preoccupation with collage. This imagery also underpinned nine exhibited screen prints. The exhibition was a snapshot of his years during the Second World War in Egypt, Cyprus and Italy and only incidentally concerned with sexuality.

The following year, in the exhibition *Riddle and Rebus* (7–25 November 1989), the focus was on the ambiguity of sexual relations, on desire, on erotic suggestion, the riddle of love and lust, the puzzle of sign and image. The focus is less on specific memory than on the visual

symbols of a generalised desire. The exhibition consisted of fifty-two works (one for each week of the year), collages and cibachrome prints made with the assistance of C.N.Z Lab and the photographer Helen Mitchell.

Crook wrote in his *Memoirs*:

"I have directed my thoughts...to the ways we look at people in our quest for love...feeling our way with imagination and fears, and sometimes with desires, like 'the erotics of engagement' (a term used by Jane Gallop about sexuality in art).<sup>42</sup> I try to record the sensual, formed from close observation, and from my emotional responses to things and people, and how we see, as it were, from the instinctual, from a shared and common sexuality. I attempt to show the Freudian metaphor and pun upon gender and genitals, seen in most things when we look, and that an arm and an elbow, a twinkle in the eye and a smile on the lips have this extra form and erotic dimension..."

My *Riddle and Rebus* show was about the viewer, no titles, no names for the fifty-two pieces in picture form, a collage image and a Ciba print of it in each frame, the images separated by a strip of mirror to emphasise the fact we always see a reflection of the self, or, "there but for the Grace of God go I". It disconcerted viewers. Some vindictive in their annoyance supplied titles to chill my bones. We are talking 1989 NZ: to all intents and purpose, babies come washed-up with the tide—the erotic/sexual content was perhaps not well enough disguised. With every giving comes a taking. My work was received without grace."<sup>43</sup>

Sadly, the show was a financial failure. However, this did not put a stop to Crook's determination to pursue this new subject matter further. He wrote.

"Despite lack of sales, *Riddle and Rebus* was not a waste and reviews were good...The content, intentionally erotic, sexual, caused the fear no doubt a purchase could be read as identification with the image. The unexpected reactions confuses my mind as to what next. I want to illustrate Freud's Wolf-Man story, more focus on the unlimited power of sex. I need an audience for my work and must hope it earns me a living...The word Riddle keeps everybody guessing."<sup>44</sup>

40 Gordon Crook, *Notes: Wolf-Man*, Easter Sunday 1991, 1. There are copies of these notes in the Te Papa Archives, CA 000409/003/0001, the Hector Library, Museum of NZ, Te Papa Tongarewa and Armour Archive. Originally prepared for Gregory Flint for the exhibition in Auckland, but Crook also later sent a copy to the Brooker Gallery in Wellington.

41 Crook, Derum and Mack, 1993, 40.

42 Gallop, 1984, 10.

43 Chapter 2 of Gordon Crook's *Memoirs*, ATL MS-Papers-11213-120, 30.

44 Ibid., 33.



## Freud

In his *Memoirs*, put together between 1987 and the mid-1990s, Crook reported his interest in the writings of Sigmund Freud<sup>45</sup>, stating:

“I enjoy Freud, I have come to reading him late in life. He is more advanced than his successors, most of whom focus upon one or other aspects of his teaching while veering away from the idea central to his work, that everything gets back to sex, I firmly believe that too. My fascination is in getting to see behind the complexities of disguises.”<sup>46</sup>

Crook recognised the frequently levelled criticisms of Freud’s writing, observing: “And of Freud, no, he is not all the time ‘technical as a mag on engine repairs’. He uses narrative and story-telling and does it well. Much of his writing is gleaned from personal experience. Much may seem far-fetched and maybe is, who can tell”.<sup>47</sup> Crook focussed on Freud’s insistence on the significance of the Oedipal Complex, the father-son and mother-son relationships that are so crucial for Crook’s own sense of self, his sexual discontents and difficulties in forming lasting and deep relationships:

“I am reading Freud’s *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, his thesis culture comes at the expense of instinctual gratifications, a repression originally created by paternal authority, the father figure who to be cock-of-the-coop, king of the chicken pen, has to subjugate all other males, in particular his sons who way back in time rebelled and assumed authority. According to Freud this memory remains but the aggression is turned inwards and for this he invents the ‘superego’, big daddy, the conscience that berates the conscious thinking man. Freud stretched this description of the individual into a metaphor of society itself, society being the curbing authority...do this, do not do that, wouldn’t you know, in the name of love, Eros the great unifier. The more love the more demanding the conscience and the superman denial of gratification. This turns into a death wish that manifests as sadism and masochism, the superego punishing the conscience...difficult eh, I struggle to keep up.”<sup>48</sup>

Crook was also fascinated by the Freudian significance of dreams and of the way subconscious memories can be triggered by chance events in the present: “Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*...murder of the father is suppressed in the unconscious then to emerge when some incident or turn of events touches upon the forgotten memory...I am gripped by this story”.<sup>49</sup>

## Part III

### Crook and The Wolf-Man

Crook’s interest in Freud was further fuelled by accounts of one his most famous cases, The Wolf-Man, that triggered memories of Crook’s own relationship with the parental dyad. This provided rich material from which Crook’s celebrated sets of works, *The Wolf-Man Series*, would spring. As we have seen, Crook was fascinated with the beginnings of creative processes, by the triggers that set off new projects, what caught his attention so strongly that he paused, imagined a development, started research, thought around the technical possibilities and potential outcomes. On Easter Sunday, 1991, he put together his *Notes: Wolf-Man (aka Easter Sunday Notes)*.

He began by describing his fortuitous introduction to Freud’s ‘Wolf-Man’:

“For the Wolf-Man project, I am indebted to a nice lady who used to work at Nathaniel’s Bookshop in Wellington. I had recently read Freud’s provocative essay, ‘Moses and Monotheism’ and wanted put aside any further works of his that might by chance come in. Her phone call a day or so later telling me, yes, something of interest maybe, a not-in-very-good-condition paperback called ‘The Wolf-Man and Sigismund Freud’ edited by Muriel Gardiner, and that it included actual memoirs written by the Wolf-Man, and an account of his analysis by Freud, as well as Freud’s own writings on the subject...from the first page I was hooked into it. I suppose without realising, often reading into an account of my own life and feelings and predicaments.”<sup>50</sup>

He expanded on his identification with the subject, noting that:

45 On psychoanalysis in Russia, see Daniel Rancour-Laferrriere (ed.), *Russian Literature and Psychoanalysis* (Amsterdam: Benjamin Publishing Company, 1989) in the series *Linguistic and Literary Studies in Eastern Europe* 31. In particular, in that book, see Magnus Ljunggren, ‘The Psychoanalytic Breakthrough in Russia on the Eve of the First World War’, 173–192, especially 184 on Konstantin Pankeev, the Wolf-Man’s father, who was a prominent non-Marxist Liberal, eventually a senior member of the Cadet Party and deputy to the Duma in 1905–06. Ljunggren mentions both the suicide of Anna in 1905 and their father in 1906. For a more general view of the relationship between Wulffian and Russian psychiatry at this time, see Ruth Kloocke, *Mosche Wulff: Zur Geschichte der Psychoanalyse in Russland und Israel* (Tübingen: Diskord, 2002).

46 *Memoirs*, p. 27.

47 *Ibid.*, 29.

48 *Ibid.*, 2.

49 *Ibid.*, 33.

50 *Ibid.*, 2.

"To some extent, we share each other's history, if not actuality then sometimes by way of metaphor and analogy. This hapless man who subsequently lost a fortune and then had to fend for himself. The bewildered child so soon inhibited in finding expression for love in a world of adult privilege and behind-the-scenes love-making. The child who sees what he is not meant to see and is not thought to have seen, the sexual frolics of his young parents one hot summer's afternoon. Things and scenes remembered. Frightening puzzles which needed to be solved, mysteries to unravel, injuries to heal. The long hours spent with Freud in analysis, uncovering and providing startling illustrations of his not-so-well-understood 'castration' theory—that wounding for unseemly behaviour—those complex, sexual relationships between the father, son, and loved mother, light projected into these dark areas."<sup>51</sup>

Finally, he identified the beginnings of his creative response to the story:

"I did not deliberately embark upon a Wolf-Man project. The story became content of my own dreams and drawings, stirring memories and the flames of desires forgotten. I began to put Wolf-Man's adventures beside my own, and from such remembrances and reverie another multi-dimensional portrait started to emerge...notes, writings, thoughts and pictures forming to a book I had always wanted to make ... That book is still to come! As it was I settled to printmaking to illustrate the story, and for the time being anyway, side-step the business of finding a publisher etc."<sup>52</sup>

Kate Derum reported that initially, "...Gordon had wanted to make a book to illustrate this [*The Wolf-Man*] story. The book would incorporate three layers: the actual story of the Wolf-Man, the dreams that he (Gordon) was having at the same time as reading the story, and his own writing. This proved impossible for lack of a publisher and the practical difficulties in realizing unusual projects."<sup>53</sup> Instead, these ideas came to fruition as works of art on paper, as screen and xerox prints and as tapestries, developed and executed from June/July 1990 into the first months of 1991.

As was usual for Crook, he collected images from magazines, cut out those that suited his purpose, shuffled them around, enlarged or reduced them, added drawn elements and assembled them into final collaged versions. In this case, all related to specific events in both the Wolf-Man's (Sergei Pankeev's) memoirs and Freud's

analysis, as published in Gardiner's compilation. Crook described how he "... derived all the images through the Xerox process...[and] I made a further translation using the screen print techniques, well, that's to satisfy anyone who has an obsession about the 'archival'".<sup>54</sup> His "Xerox process" was explained in more detail by Derum:

"Beginning as coloured photomontages, [the images] have been photographed many times and gone through many changes. The photocopy then being re-collaged and copied again until it was 'right'. The photocopy changes tone and density, gives a new emphasis, flattens out sometimes, and gives an even dense black across the image. His use of photomontage as 'drawing' which translates to prints and tapestry sees a refinement of a way of working and exploring of images that is, for Gordon, a long process."<sup>55</sup>

Crook's *Easter Sunday Notes* continued with references to the tapestries:

"I have been really fortunate here to have been able to call on the fine weaving skills and sensitive interpretations of my work by Trish Armour. She has simply rendered the impossible! Marvellous! For the Auckland show include just one tiny spot of colour—this to emphasise my deliberation not to use colour in the project, not to risk the diversions which colour creates, and to keep my images as unrelentingly intense and minimal as possible.

Having said this, for my Wellington show during May I hope to include in it a little lenient treat for myself, the project as it were being completed...three small, still black and white tapestries, but each with accents of sparkling colour—flames!"<sup>56</sup>

Crook ended his notes: "The Wolf-Man is the first time I have produced a body of work which has not taken advantage of the descriptive power of colour. Truth is, we do not dream in colour as often as supposed, rather, we 'think' it". In addition, he pointed out that "Titles for the work have been taken from the actual text" of Muriel Gardiner's book.<sup>57</sup>

The stark black and white of the majority of the works exhibited was indeed an innovation for Crook. It was as if he wanted to remove the images from our multi-coloured quotidian world into an original symbolic space—not the archaic dream world of Max Ernst's collages, but into a desolate, not seductive, but bleakly erotic fantasy world.

51 Ibid., 2–3.

52 Ibid., 3.

53 Crook, Derum and Mack 1993, 44

54 Ibid., 5.

55 Crook, Derum and Mack 1993, 45–6

56 Ibid., 5.

57 Ibid., 5.

## The case of the Wolf-Man

Freud's published notes served as the basis for Crook's print series, which directly relate to key events in Pankeev's life. In his response to and interpretation of the 'case of the Wolf-Man', Crook observed:

"Freud's analysis of an infantile neurosis, called the Wolf-Man, fiction pales beside it. Incredible inside story about a man's life that developed from sexual experiences when three years old [sic]...an intricate and exacting network of problems and instincts that defy the average imagination. Yet the logic is stunning, not to be faulted. Surprises all the way"<sup>58</sup>... "I want to illustrate Freud's Wolf-Man story, more focus on the unlimited power of sex."<sup>59</sup>

Sergei Pankeev (1886–1979), a Russian aristocrat, was born into a large landowning family with estates in southern Russia (now in the Ukraine). His older sister, Anna, was much loved by their father Konstantin. Anna committed suicide in 1906, when in her early twenties. Their father, a manic depressive, died from aortic stenosis after taking an overdose of sleeping tablets in July 1908. As a young man, Sergei suffered from acute neurosis. In the months before his father's death, he sought medical advice from a range of physicians and psychologists, amongst them Leonid Droznes, a pioneer Russian psychoanalyst working in Odessa, where the Pankeevs had a residence. In February 1910, Droznes arranged to take Pankeev to Vienna to meet Sigmund Freud, as a result of which Pankeev had analysis with Freud until July 1914. Freud wrote up the case at the end of that year, in which he sketched the progress of Pankeev's descent into neurosis. It was published in 1918. The two met again briefly for further sessions in 1919.

Pankeev was born on Christmas Eve (Fig. 3), the anniversary of Christ's birth. In addition, Pankeev was born with a caul, "for that reason [he] always looked on himself as a special child of fortune whom no ill could befall".<sup>60</sup>

At the age of one and a half [Crook print Series I/2], Pankeev fell ill with malaria. (Fig. 4) "Probably for the very reason of this illness, he was in his parents' bedroom...and woke up, perhaps because of rising fever, in the afternoon, [Crook print Series I/3] possibly at five o'clock, the hour which was later marked out by depression...we suppose that his parents had retired, half

undressed, for an afternoon siesta. When he woke up, he witnessed a *coitus a tergo* (Fig. 5), three times repeated: he was able to see his mother's genitals as well as his father's organ; and he understood the process as well as its significance".<sup>61</sup> Later in his notes, Freud qualified this interpretation: "Observation of his parents copulating; or observation of them when they were together, into which he later introduced a phantasy of them copulating".<sup>62</sup> The "waking up" may allude to that "attentive looking", when our consciousness is particularly engaged and material is implanted into our memory more emphatically. "I've been thinking a lot about looking," Crook wrote to Derum on 12 August 1990:

"...the act of looking, different types of looking—stare, glance, close-up, scrutiny, distant gazes etc. I'm trying to work out what we do when we look at a map. We project from the diagram an imagined picture and place ourselves acting into the picture. A projection. We do that, too, when we read, but not when we look at art. Or do we. I'm not sure, I'm thinking about it and making some assemblages which allow for this imaginative projection by the viewer. Or onlooker. ONLOOKER is an interesting word. Looking on. Implying distance. I'm an onlooker I think, not really an actor, centre stage".<sup>63</sup>

In dreaming, we are often more onlookers than actors. In his relationships with others, Crook, like Pankeev, often preferred the role of onlooker. The thought that he might be expected to participate caused him to panic, to become angry, even abusive.

Just before the age of two and a half, Pankeev caught sight of the maid Grusha's behind (in Russian "grusha" can also mean "a pear") as, kneeling, she scrubbed the floor, giving rise to anal sexual phantasies. [Crook print Series I/7] "When he saw the girl scrubbing the floor he had micturated in the room and she had rejoined, no doubt jokingly, with a threat of castration."<sup>64</sup> "When he saw the girl on the floor engaged in scrubbing it, and kneeling down, with her buttocks projecting and her back horizontal, he was faced once again with the posture which his mother had assumed in the copulation scene. She became his mother to him; he was seized with sexual excitement owing to the activation of the picture; and, like his father (whose action he can only have regarded at the time as micturating), he behaved in a masculine way towards her. His micturition on the floor was in reality an attempt at a seduction and the girl replied with

58 *Memoirs*, 35.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

60 Gardiner 1973, 263. Crook always referred to Pankeev's birth as "on Christmas Day".

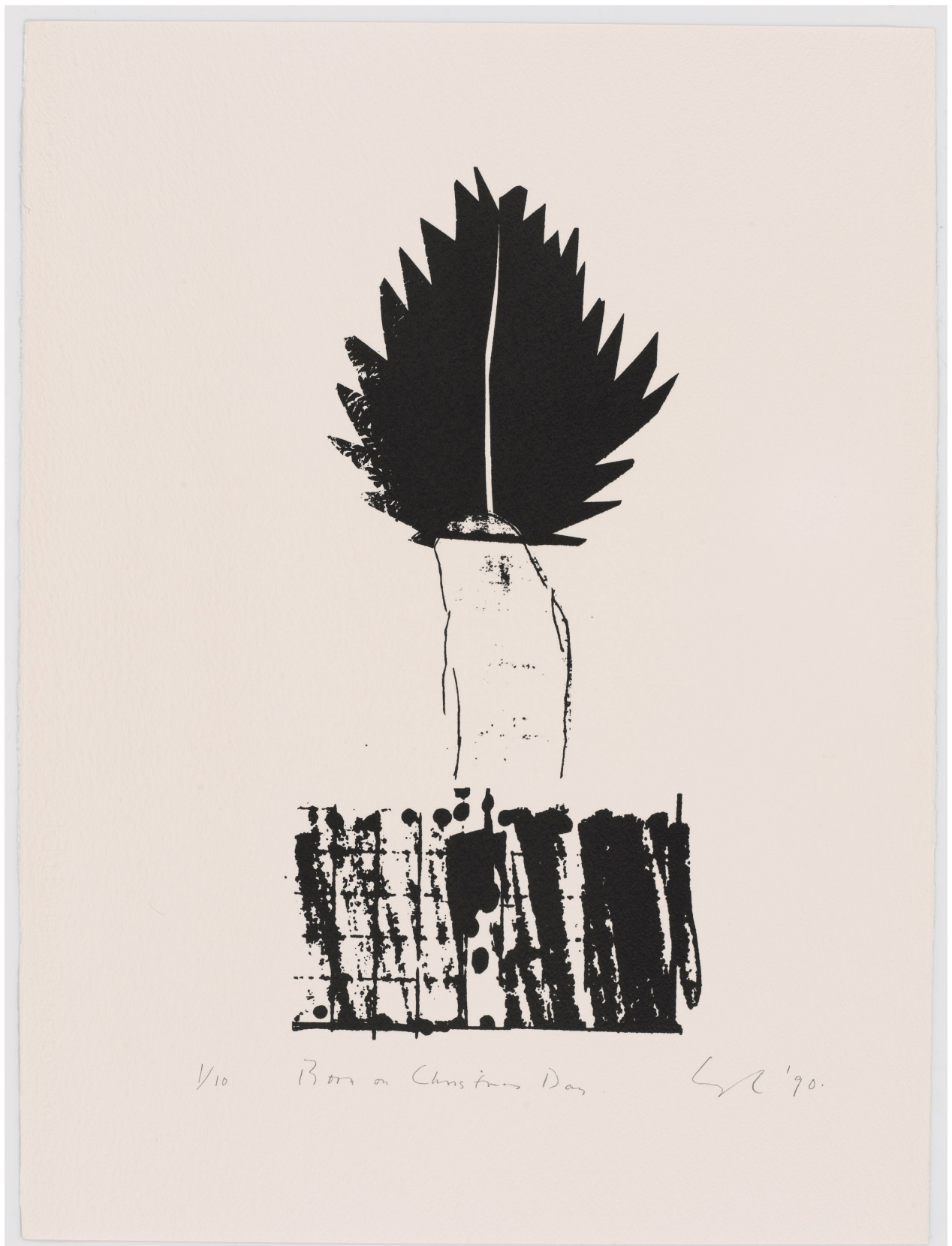
61 Gardiner 1973, 200.

62 Gardiner 1973, 285, further elaborated by Freud, 223.

63 Alexander Turnbull Library. MS-Papers-11213-079.

64 Gardiner 1973, 255.





**Figure 3.** Gordon Crook, *Born on Christmas Day*, Wolf-Man Series I, 1990, 760 × 570 mm, screen print on Fabriano paper. Gift of Peter Stupples, 2021, Te Papa: 2021-0012-1/2-24. © All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission from MB and VA Winter Family Trust.





**Figure 4.** Gordon Crook, *the child at one-and-a half-years old*, Wolf-Man Series I, 1990, 670 × 570 mm, screen print on Fabriano paper. Gift of Peter Stupples, 2021, Te Papa: 2021-0012-1/3-24. © All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission from MB and VA Winter Family Trust.



**Figure 5.** Gordon Crook, *of coitus a tergo*, Wolf-Man Series I, 1990, 760 × 570 mm, screen print on Fabriano paper. Gift of Peter Stupples, 2021, Te Papa: 2021-0012-1/6-24. © All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission from MB and VA Winter Family Trust.



a threat of castration just as though she had understood what he meant”<sup>65</sup> This threat was also associated, in Pankeev’s mind, with memories and feelings towards his father, who “was turning into the terrifying figure that threatened him with castration...in man’s prehistory it was unquestionably the father who practiced castration as a punishment<sup>66</sup> and who later softened it down into circumcision”.<sup>67</sup>

When he was about three, Pankeev developed a habit of heavy breathing out when he saw “cripples, beggars and such people”. [Crook print Series III/1] It began when he saw his father in hospital and was repeated when he met a deaf mute, of whom he was fond, on the estate,— “an undoubted father surrogate”.<sup>68</sup>

At three years three months, Pankeev “...began to play with his penis in his Nanya’s [nanny’s] presence and this, like so many other instances in which children do not conceal their masturbation, must be regarded as an attempt at seduction. His Nanya disillusioned him; she made a serious face and explained that that wasn’t good; children who did that, she added, got a ‘wound in the place’.<sup>69</sup> This pre-Dream period is much elaborated by Freud, as Pankeev observes his sister and her friend micturating, sees their “wounds”, observes his father beating a snake to death, all contributing to his conflicting fears of castration.

At around the same time, Pankeev was seduced, on a number of occasions, by his sister. [Crook print Series I/10] These seductive activities gave rise to a sense of humiliation, that he was being “used”, leading to aggression against his sister, even rages played out in the wider family and his tendency throughout his life to debase his love-object.<sup>70</sup>

## The Dream

At the age of four, Pankeev recalled, he had the Wolf dream that Freud later used as the seminal material in his analysis, famously rechristening Pankeev as “The Wolf-Man”.

“I dreamt that it was night and that I was lying in bed. (My bed stood with its foot towards the window; in front of the window there was a row of old walnut trees. I know it was winter when I had the dream, and night-time.) Suddenly the window opened of its own accord,

and I was terrified to see that some white wolves were sitting on the big walnut tree in front of the window. There were six or seven of them. The wolves were quite white, and looked more like foxes or sheep-dogs, for they had big tails like foxes and they had their ears pricked like dogs when they pay attention to something. In great terror, evidently of being eaten up by the wolves, I screamed and woke up. My nurse hurried to my bed, to see what had happened to me. It took quite a long while before I was convinced that it had only been a dream; I had had such a clear and life-like picture of the window opening and the wolves sitting on the tree. At last I grew quieter, felt as though I had escaped from some danger, and went to sleep again.”<sup>71</sup>

The dream reminded Pankeev, notes Freud, of a story recounted by his grandfather about a tailor at work on his bench (Russian tailors sat crossed legged on a raised dais within their workroom) when a wolf jumped in through the open window: “The tailor...caught him by his tail and pulled it off, so that the wolf ran away in terror”. Subsequently, when attacked by the maimed wolf in the forest, the tailor called out as he had before: “‘Catch the grey one by his tail!’ The tailless wolf, terrified by the recollection, ran away...” Freud commented that this story provided “an unmistakable allusion to the castration complex”.<sup>72</sup> [Crook print Series I/9]

Pankeev also remembered his sister tormenting him:

“There was a particular picture-book, in which a wolf was represented, standing upright and striding along. Whenever he [Pankeev] caught sight of this picture he began to scream like a lunatic that he was afraid of the wolf coming and eating him up. His sister, however, always succeeded in arranging so that he was obliged to see this picture, and was delighted by his terror.”<sup>73</sup>

A final wolf story came from Pankeev’s childhood: “The Wolf and the Seven Little Goats”, the number seven having relevance in the context of the Dream.<sup>74</sup> Freud adds, “The effect produced by these stories was shown in the dreamer by a regular animal phobia”.<sup>75</sup>

In Freud’s opinion, Pankeev’s fear of his father provided the strongest motive for his neurosis. A wolf was his first father surrogate, then in an inversion, the tailor and other “monstrous” figures—such as cripples, the deaf and dumb—the “breathing out” that occurred in

65 Gardiner 1973, 256.

66 Castration fear is the basis of Pankeev’s hallucination of the loss of a finger, Fig. 6.

67 Gardiner 1973, 250.

68 Gardiner 1973, 251.

69 Gardiner 1973, 187–8.

70 Gardiner 1973, 182–3 and 257.

71 Gardiner 1973, 192.

72 Gardiner 1973, 193–4.

73 Gardiner 1973, 179.

74 Gardiner 1973, 194.

75 Gardiner 1973, 194–5.

their presence arising from both his fear and excitement. Pankeev's ambivalent attitude towards every father surrogate was the dominating feature of his life as well as his behaviour during the treatment.<sup>76</sup> Freud, as usual, expands upon the possibilities deriving from this rich material, suggesting that by "playing" with little Sergei his father may have indulged in "affectionate abuse", writing "...it is possible that during the patient's earlier years his father...may more than once, as he caressed the little boy or played with him, have threatened in fun to 'gobble him up'".<sup>77</sup>

The "animal phobia" alluded to by Freud, manifested itself soon after *The Dream*, when Pankeev began to be cruel to animals. [Crook print Series I/13] He would "torment beetles and cut caterpillars to pieces" and enjoyed beating horses.<sup>78</sup> He would "catch flies and pull off their wings". Freud claims that this regressive, anal-sadistic phase was also, in part, because of Nanya's suppression of his expression of sexual desire through masturbation, interfering with his progress through the natural stages of his sexual life.<sup>79</sup> Pankeev sometimes turned this sadism against himself, in the form of masochism. He would fantasise about himself, "the heir to the throne" (his father's only son) being beaten, particularly on the penis.<sup>80</sup> At this stage, Freud argues, Pankeev was "deep in a phase of the pregenital organisation which I regard as the predisposition to obsessional neurosis...From the time of the dream onwards, in his unconscious he was homosexual [in Freud's genital sense], and in his neurosis he was at the level of cannibalism".<sup>81</sup>

*The Dream* was a recasting of fragments of memory "in an inexhaustible variety of new shapes. Indeed, dreaming is another kind of remembering, though one that is subject to the conditions that rule at night and to the rules of dream formation"<sup>82</sup> (Fig. 6: Crook prints Series I/15). Crook was always fascinated with dream formation and interpretation. In his correspondence, he delighted in recounting his dreams in great detail and hinting at their significance in light of his biography and feelings. Some correspondence is particularly dominated by exchanges of dreams, such as his letters to the younger fellow artist Clive Humphreys.<sup>83</sup> The significance of dreams within the analysis of Pankeev would have been very attractive to Crook: he was familiar with Freud's mentor Wilhelm Stekel's *Interpretation of Dreams* (published in English 1943), as well as Freud's own book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899).

Freud puts the whole trauma of the Wolf-Man's experience of the primal-scene—his parents' intercourse—

[Crook print Series I/4] into a final assessment of the *deferred action* of the neurosis, concluding:

"At the age of one and a half, the child receives the impression to which he is unable to react adequately: he is only able to understand it and be moved by it when the impression is revived in him at the age of four; and only twenty years later, during the analysis, is he able to grasp with his conscious mental processes what was then going on in him."<sup>84</sup>

This was certainly true of Crook, reviving past trauma in his work with pastels, *Egyptian Cigarettes*, *Riddle and Rebus* series, working through to arrive at a position of acceptance and integration.

## Therese

Freud ceased Pankeev's analysis in 1914. His essay on the Wolf-Man does not deal with Pankeev's adult relationships with women, one of which was developing during the process of analysis. Crook, however, is obsessed with Pankeev's tragic romance and marriage to Therese. Crook, after all, was using the material of the Wolf-man to explore his own tortured sexual orientation, his own fear of castration, his aversion to being touched, his own violent swings from benevolence, kindness and generosity, to his rejection of others, to rages and the most obscene verbal abuse. Pankeev's memoirs, included with Freud's essay in Gardiner's compilation of Wolf-Man material, provided Crook with a wealth of post-Dream material for him to work on. This included Pankeev's experiences with prostitutes in "high-class establishments" encouraged by an uncle during trips to Paris and Odessa, leading to a gonorrhoeal infection when he was eighteen [Crook print Series I/19]. The very invasive treatment Pankeev endured for this condition in 1904 drove him to seek treatment abroad.

Pankeev first met Therese in 1908, when he became a patient at a Bavarian sanatorium to treat his neurosis, his "lack of relationships", before commencing his analysis with Freud.<sup>85</sup> Pankeev was immediately struck by Therese's beauty:

"She was perhaps in her middle or late twenties...Her blue-black hair was parted in the middle, and her features were of such regularity and delicacy that they might have

76 Gardiner 1973, 195.

77 Gardiner 1973, 195.

78 Gardiner 1973, 180, 189, 227.

79 Gardiner 1973, 189, 227.

80 Gardiner 1973, 189, 227, 332.

81 Gardiner 1973, 227.

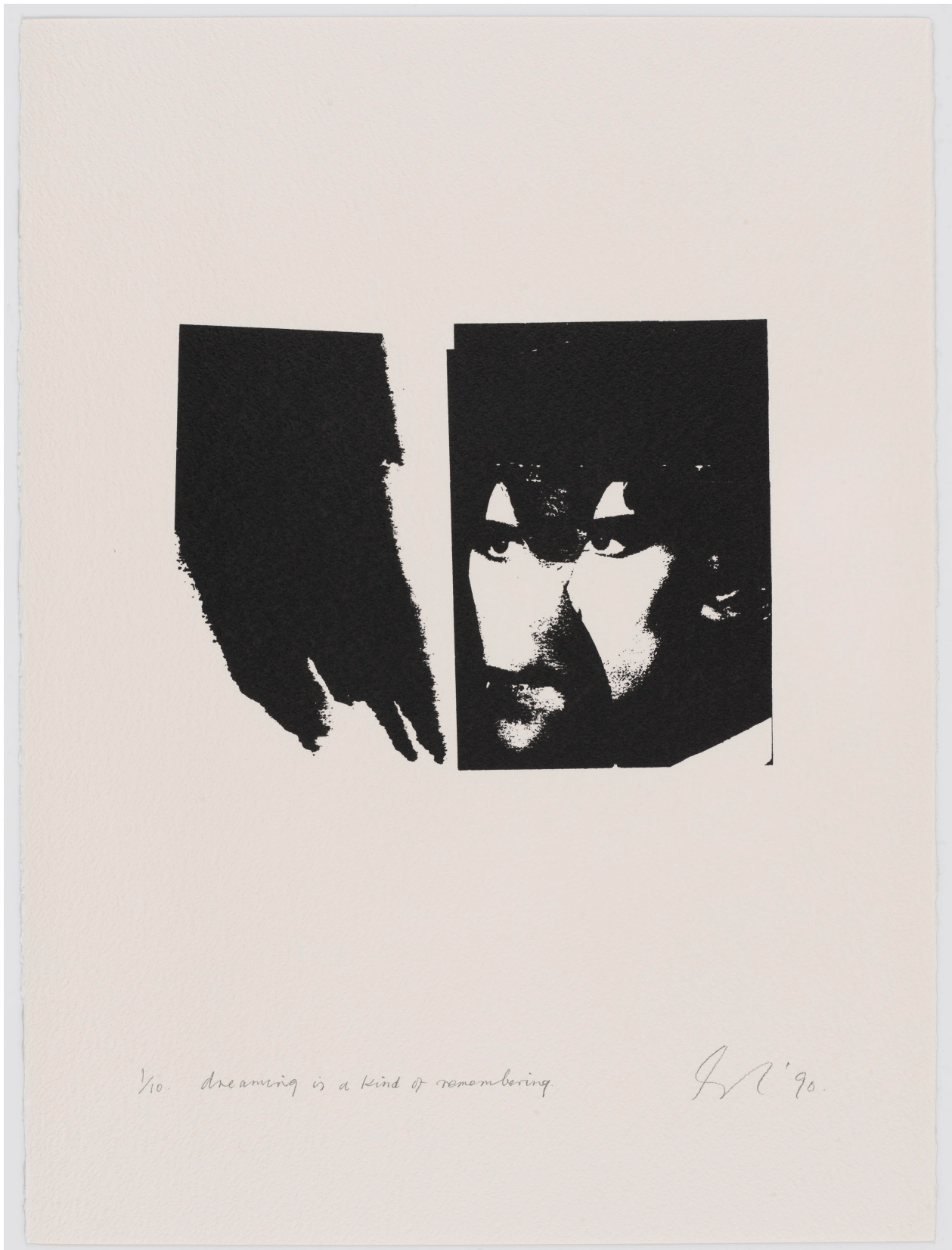
82 Gardiner 1973, 215.

83 ATL MS-Papers-11213-104 Humphreys/Crook Correspondence.

84 Gardiner 1973, 207.

85 Gardiner 1973, 65.





**Figure 6.** Gordon Crook, *Dreaming is a Kind of Remembering*, Wolf-Man Series I 1990, 760 × 570 mm, screen prints on Fabriano paper. Gift of Peter Stupples, 2021, Te Papa: 2021-0012-1/16-24. © All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission from MB and VA Winter Family Trust.

been chiselled by a sculptor". Pankeev discovered that she was German but with a Spanish mother. "Sister Therese" Keller (her maiden name) worked as a nurse in the sanatorium. She had been married, was now divorced. She had a daughter, Else. Pankeev set about a long and elaborate courtship, or, in 21<sup>st</sup> century parlance, a harassment and predatory pursuit. Freud, however, according to Pankeev, regarded the courtship as positive, the "breakthrough to the woman" and his "greatest achievement."<sup>86</sup>

Pankeev hired a hotel room in Munich to pursue his affair away from the glare of other patients at the sanatorium, but this got off to a bad start. Therese failed to arrive for a rendezvous and Pankeev took a heavy dose of sleeping tablets, a half-hearted attempt at suicide he described as "my unsuccessful trip to Munich, my desolate emotional state".<sup>87</sup> Adding to his desolation was the death of his father in Russia, to where Pankeev briefly returned.<sup>88</sup>

Yet he could not give up thoughts of Therese. He met her on fleeting visits to Germany before taking up his regular psychoanalysis with Freud in Vienna, which did not stand in the way of his meeting up with her from time to time.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, Therese herself visited Freud with Pankeev in Vienna. According to Pankeev, Freud was much taken with her, "she looked like a tsarina...So my intention to marry Therese now met with his full approval".<sup>90</sup> The couple were married in Odessa late in 1914. In September 1918, when Odessa was occupied by Austro-German forces after the Russian Revolution, Therese left to join her fatally sick daughter in Freiburg, Germany, where Else had been living with Therese's family.

Shortly afterwards, it became apparent to Pankeev that he had lost the fortune he had comparatively recently inherited with the complete collapse of the tsarist financial system and its replacement by Communism. No compensation was offered to the aristocracy for the sequestration of their assets. With great difficulty, Pankeev made his way to Vienna where he was reunited with Therese, the dying Else and Freud, with whom he renewed his analysis from the spring of 1919 until Easter 1920.

Subsequently, he worked in an insurance office in Vienna, where Pankeev and Therese lived fairly satisfactory lives until, in March 1938, after the Anschluss

and a gradual descent into depression, Therese took her own life [Crook print Series I/21]. For Pankeev, this was yet another suicide in his immediate family. That he then lived in Vienna through the Second World War and on until the age of ninety-one says much for the value of Freud's analysis.<sup>91</sup> Crook's image of Therese depicts a femme fatale, her eyes closed, masked or in shadow, her lips offered—aloof but desiring, dangerous, yet desirable. An enigma, as women were to Crook (Fig. 7).

## The Nose

Crook went on to read the essay by Ruth Mack Brunswick, in Gardiner's compilation, written in 1928,<sup>92</sup> which documented Pankeev's later analysis with her in 1926–7. At the time Pankeev first met Brunswick, "he was suffering from a hypochondriacal *idée-fixe*. He complained that he was the victim of a nasal injury caused by electrolysis, which had been used in the treatment of obstructed sebaceous glands of the nose. According to him, the injury consisted of a scar, a hole or a groove in the scar tissue. The contour of the nose was ruined". Brunswick could see nothing wrong with "the small, snub, typically Russian nose of the patient"<sup>93</sup> [Crook print Series I/22]. Crook depicts the Wolf-Man with his nose covered with deep shadow, a third eye and a canine mouth. (Fig.1) The Wolf-man/Crook is a monster, growling at the world, keeping it at bay.

Pankeev's 'nasal injury' is a manifestation of his fear of castration, fear of his father, the original neurosis, reminiscent of the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol's short-story *The Nose* (1836) in which Collegiate Councillor Kolovoyov wakes up one morning to find his nose missing, but meets it later, now monstrously enlarged, walking down the street. When, finally, Kolovoyov recovers his nose, he finds himself once more able to flirt with women. Freud would have immediately associated this story with fear of the father, of castration and an aspect of the Oedipus complex. Crook's interest in Freud does not cease with the *Wolf-Man Series*. His reading on the subjects it uncovered for him continued for the rest of his life. For example, in July 1998, he was reading

86 Gardiner 1973, 71.

87 Gardiner 1973, 86.

88 Pankeev inherited immense wealth from his father's will and, later, from an inheritance from his Uncle Peter.

89 It is of interest that Freud never mentions Therese in his article on the Wolf-Man. He concentrates exclusively on Pankeev's infancy, infantile neurosis. He only asked Pankeev not make any decisions about marrying Therese until after he had completed his analysis, which occurred at the time of the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, that soon led to the opening of the First World War.

90 Gardiner 1973, 106.

91 Gardiner 1973, 390–1.

92 Ruth Mack Brunswick, 'A Supplement to Freud's *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*' (1928), in Gardiner 1973, 286–331. Reprinted from *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, IX, 1928. Pankeev had analysis with Brunswick, one of Freud's closest colleagues at the time, from October 1926-to February 1927, at Freud's suggestion.

93 Gardiner 1973, 287.





**Figure 7.** Gordon Crook, *Therese*, 1991, Wolf-man Series III/6, 510 × 409 mm (image size 98 × 90), xerox print on Goatskin paper (mounted). Private collection. © All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission from MB and VA Winter Family Trust.

Jeffrey Mousaieff Masson, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*.<sup>94</sup>

## Part IV

### The Wolf-Man Exhibitions

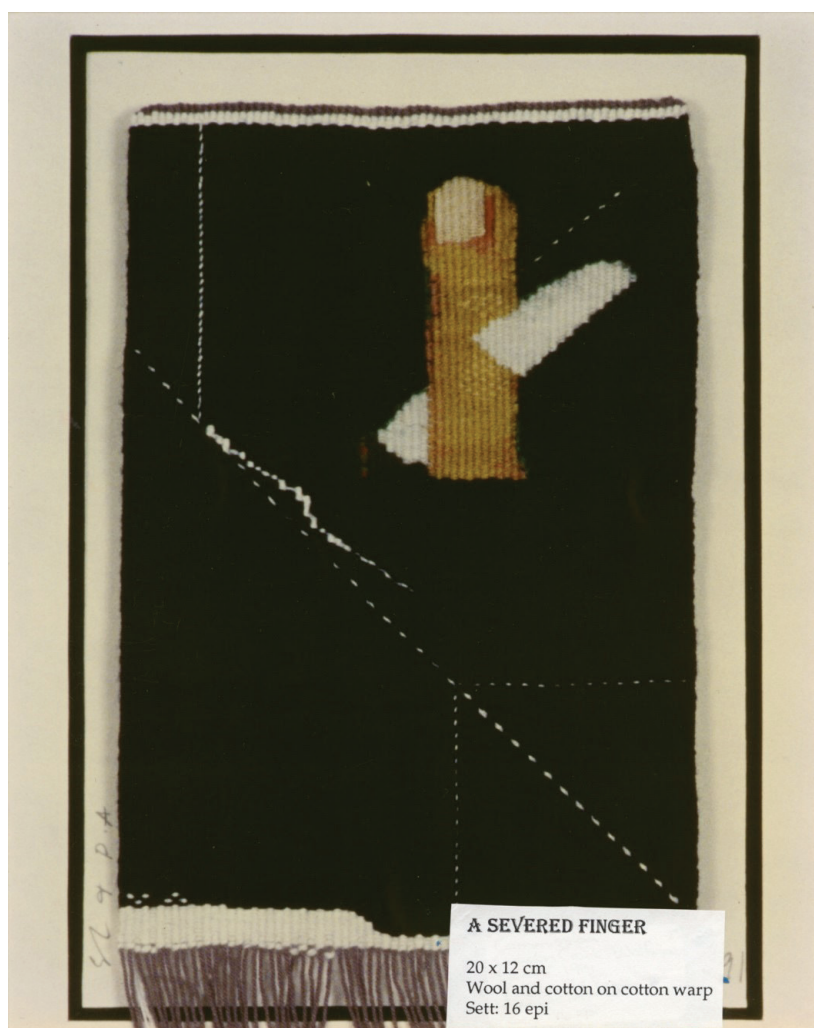
Crook's Wolf-Man project was exhibited in Auckland at the Gregory Flint Gallery in The Strand in mid-April 1991, before moving to the Brooker Gallery, 44 Upland

Road, Wellington, from the 13 May to the 1 June. A smaller and slightly different grouping of the works was then shown at the CSA Front Gallery in Christchurch, 18–30 June 1991. The Wellington iteration was entitled "Wolf Man Print Series. Illustrations of Freud's Analysis of an Infantile Neurosis, The Case of the Wolf-Man".

### Tapestries

Despite the title, the exhibition included eight, mainly black and white, tapestries designed by Crook and

94 Letter to Kate Derum 28 July 1998. ATL MS-Papers-11213-079.



**Figure 8.** Gordon Crook, *Untitled [A Severed Finger]*, 200 × 120 mm, sett. 16 epi., private collection.

executed by Trish Armour, all *Untitled* in the catalogue, dated 1991 and priced at \$1800 each<sup>95</sup>. The wool, or wool and cotton, on cotton warp tapestries were of various sizes and setts, but were sold framed with uniform dimensions 670 × 520.5 × 45 mm.

- *Untitled [The Wolf-Man]* 200 × 150 mm, sett: 16 epi.
- *Untitled [Three Sets of Eyes]* 300 × 210 mm, sett: 12 epi.
- *Untitled [Nanya and Grusha]* 400 × 205 mm, sett: 16 epi. Included in Crook's 1993–6 *Retrospective*.
- *Untitled [A Severed Finger]*, 200 × 120 mm, sett. 16 epi., private collection, the finger is coloured ochre with a pale pink nail (Fig. 8).

- *Untitled [Possibly Off to Switzerland]*. Top: black and white landscape, below: coloured object on blue ground] 200 × 120 mm, Sett: 16 epi.
- *Untitled [Black and White]* 150 × 200 mm, sett. 16 epi.
- *Untitled [To Breath out Noisily]* 300 × 200 mm, sett: 12 epi
- *Untitled [Two-Horned Devil in Flames]* 200 × 120 mm, sett: 16 epi. This contains a horned head framed by lateral red and pink flames. Crook exclaimed, "These beige 'horns' worry me! Oh dear. Speak of the devil...like to"<sup>96</sup> (Fig. 9).

In addition, Armour produced two very small tapestries, included in the exhibition, but not in the catalogue:

95 Trish Armour met Crook in Wellington at a tapestry workshop run by the British weaver Lynne Curran in 1990, when Curran was a visiting artist-in-residence at Waikato Polytechnic. Crook saw the work Armour was producing at the time and told her "that he could work with her". When Lesley Nicholls, who was Crook's long-term weaver, was overseas (1990–94), Crook followed up his original meeting and invited Armour to work on the Wolf-Man series. From the author's conversation with Armour, 11 August 2021.

96 Letter from Crook to Trish Armour, 28 April 1991, Armour Archive.





**Figure 9.** Gordon Crook, *Untitled [Two-Horned Devil in Flames]*, tapestry woven by P. Armour, 200 × 120 mm, sett: 16 epi. Whereabouts unknown. Photo Armour Archive. © All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission of P. Armour.

- *An Eye*, black and white, 50 × 70 mm, wool on cotton warp, sett: 16 epi.
- *A Woman's Portrait* [T. J. McNamara's *femme fatale*, probably depicting Therese]<sup>97</sup>, coloured, 50 × 40 mm, cotton on cotton warp, sett: 16 epi. This tapestry was stolen from the exhibition.

Armour's archive also contains a photograph of another black and white tapestry that includes a segment with an eye. There are no dimensions or title indicated. Armour also has two small 'samples', a *Wolf-Man* and *An Eye*. Crook believed that the tapestries were worthy of collections outside New Zealand. He wrote to Armour that he had sent photos of "your [Armour's] tapestries to a friend in England [probably Eddie Squires] who will take them to the Cooper [Hewitt] Museum in New York and to the V&A in London. We must live in hopes? Yes".<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately, Crook's hopes were not fulfilled.

## Prints

There were four *Wolf-Man* Print Series produced by Crook that closely follow Freud's text. Many titles in the notes below are followed by page numbers in square brackets. These numbers refer to the pages in Gardiner's book to which the titles refer, demonstrating Crook's close adherence to Freud's text, both the chronological order and subject matter. Other titles are more generic than specific. The four Series were sold as boxed sets. In addition, some examples from each set were framed for exhibition. As Crook was at pains to point out: "It is in terms of 'series', of one image to the next, I consider the story is told".<sup>99</sup>

The various sets are constituted as follows:

***Wolf-Man Series I***, a boxed collection of 22 screen prints on Fabriano paper in an edition of 10, each print 760 × 580 mm, dated 1990 and priced at \$4000. Boxed sets are in the Collection of The Museum of New Zealand

<sup>97</sup> McNamara 1991, 2.2.

<sup>98</sup> Letter from Crook to Armour, 1 May 1991. Armour Archive. In September 1995 Crook considered sending *The Wolf-Man's Present* to Canada for exhibition, but was again put off by cost. ATL Ms-Papers-10790-02.

<sup>99</sup> Gordon Crook, *Notes: Wolf-Man*, Easter Sunday 1991, 5.

Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington and the Suter Gallery, Nelson.

1. *Born on Christmas Day* [pp. 18–19, 198, 228, 263]
2. *The Child at One and a Half Years Old* [pp. 199–200, 207, 211]
3. *Observing the parents together on a hot summers' afternoon* [pp. 199–200, 222, 251]
4. *The scene or the later phantasy* [pp. 203–06, 210–11, 219, 223–4, 241, 251–2]
5. *Of Coitus a Tergo* [pp. 200–01, 204–5, 223]
6. *The interruption* [pp. 200–01, 223]
7. *Grusha, he was seized with excitement when he saw her scrubbing the floor* [pp. 253–5, 256, 270–71, 275–6]
8. *The parents depart with his sister* [This incident does not appear in Gardiner's book and may be a misreading by Crook]
9. *'Catch the grey one by its tail' origin of the phobia* [pp. 182, 188, 192–4, 207, 210–11]
10. *Three and a half years: the seduction by his sister* [pp. 182–3, 187, 207, 212, 220, 231, 251, 257]
11. *The threat of castration from Nanya* [pp. 182, 194, 197, 199, 207, 209–11, 220, 276]
12. *The loss of a finger* [pp. 207, 248–9]
13. *He began to be cruel to animals* [pp. 180, 189, 227, 232, 273]
14. *The heir to the throne was beaten* [pp. 189, 227]
15. *Dreaming is a kind of remembering* [pp. 182, 215]
16. *'a wound in the place'* [pp. 187–8, 241]
17. *The courting of Therese* [pp. 64–76]
18. *'...my unsuccessful trip to Munich, my desolate emotional state'* [pp. 60–75]
19. *he frequently accompanied prostitutes to their lodgings* [pp. 76, 295]
20. *The non-committed crimes*
21. *His wife had committed suicide* [pp. 30, 37–9, 41]
22. *Then a dissatisfaction with his nose, and resumption of analysis* [pp. 292–303]

**Wolf-Man Series II.** Boxed set of 10 silk screen prints on Arches Lavis Fidelis paper in an edition 10, each print 640 × 500 mm, dated 1991. Price \$3000.

In a draft set of notes for the Brooker exhibition, Crook, somewhat confusingly, adds on page 2, that Wolf-Man Series II (diptych) 'is presented as one work in two frames—one of six prints and the other of four'. Sizes: 1. 1560 × 1302. 1050 × 1300. Price \$4250.<sup>100</sup>

This implies that Series II were sold both as boxed sets and in diptych form.

The only record of the titles for this series can be found in the catalogue sheet for the CSA Front Gallery 18–30 June 1991, where, again confusingly, the last six are attributed to 'Set 3 (On Arches Rivas Paper)'.

1. *Wolf-Man*
2. *The Mother*

3. *A Piece of Sugar Stick*
4. *Hallucination of a Severed Finger*
5. *The Unknown Scene*
6. *The Attentive looking*
7. *Anna's Refusal*
8. *...how did children come into the world?*
9. *a peculiar ceremonial, to breath out noisily*
10. *...when he saw people he felt sorry for*

**Wolf-Man Series III.** Boxed set of 12 xerox prints on Goatskin Parchment (mounted), an edition of 6, each print 510 × 400 mm, priced at \$1800 or sold singly at \$250 each. A boxed set is in the Collection of The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

1. *Breathing Out* [230–1, 251–2]
2. *Off to Switzerland* [97–11]
3. *Beatings* [191]
4. *A sadistic phase* [20]
5. *Observing the Girls*
6. *Therese*
7. *Wolf-Man* [the motif for Tapestry 1]
8. *Recollections*
9. *With Anne*
10. *The Dream*
11. *The Sick Father*
12. *Prizes*

**Wolf-Man Series IV,** edition of 6, xerox on Goatskin Parchment, sold singly for \$150 each, including *Analysis* and perhaps *The Prizes*, *The Dream*, *Wolf-Man*, *Observing the Girls*. No definitive list seems to exist.

While these lists provide an attempt to make sense of the outputs Crook produced drawing on the *Wolf-Man* story, based on catalogue and archival information, it should be noted that Crook was prone to arrive unannounced at any gallery exhibiting his works, where he proceeded to change the hanging arrangement, add new versions of different sizes and generally create difficulties for both gallerists and art historians! When the boxed sets proved difficult to sell, Crook sold many of the more popular prints singly. He later made gifts of sets of the unsold prints. For example, he gifted *Wolf-Man Series I* to the Suter Gallery in Nelson in 1996.

## Reception

On 18 April 1991, T. J. McNamara published a brief review of the "the curious work of Gordon Crook, called Wolf Man" in the *New Zealand Herald*. He wrote:

"The work is a unique combination of prints and small tapestries. The images, which are full of aggression and repressed sexuality are Xerox prints, which have been made, in the artist's words "archival" by being printed on high-quality paper.

<sup>100</sup> This draft catalogue is in Stupples' archive.

The savage combination of two faces [*Nanya and Grusha*] makes Wolf Man—a very potent image of aggression and neurosis; and two faces pushed to the edge of a little print in *Observing the Girls* achieve a remarkable intensity.

Limpness in some images and rigidity in others make these black and white prints farouche images of aspects of sexuality.

With the assistance of Patricia Armour, these images have been translated into tapestries. When woven into small webs with threads hanging below them, the images retain their potency and even gain further in cramped intensity.

A tiny eye or, in the one splash of colour in the whole bizarre show, a femme fatale, has a haunting quality and the threads below are appropriately like bleeding.”<sup>101</sup>

Crook photocopied a cutting of this review, which he included with a letter to Trish Armour on 28 April 1991, writing,

“...No news that anything sold, but early days and with the awful down-market climate these days...I expect Gregory needs time—hopefully—to negotiate a couple or more lucrative deals?...Also some comments creep back to Wellington from one or two artist friends who have seen the show: all encouraging. For a Wellington artist to break into the Auckland scene is a difficult thing to accomplish...”<sup>102</sup>

Stephen Cain, who reviewed the Wellington exhibition for the *Evening Post* on 21 May 1991, pointed out the significance of order and context in making sense of Crook’s work, stating, “Most of these works are not intended to function individually but as components of the narrative which each set constructs. As this may suggest, it is difficult to understand some of these works outside the context of Crook’s reading of Freud’s compelling case study”.<sup>103</sup> This certainly may have affected the saleability of the works to potential collectors.

## The grey file

On 23 November 1999, Crook sent a grey folder containing a file of notes he had written in 1991 to accompany draft prints for the original Wolf-Man project to James Mack, who was putting together an exhibition of the prints to be shown at Featherston in January 2000. The file includes many prints that were not finally included in the project, but the notes relating to two of the more significant prints are worth reproducing for the insights they provide

relating to Crook’s creative process. They are written in pencil in the margins around the draft copies of the prints themselves. About *The Wolf-Man* (Fig. 1), Crook writes: “It just occurs to me that I have taken away the Wolf-Man’s nose in this representation....This portrait of him, when he first visited Freud...totally incapacitated! Something Wolf-Man denied was the case.” About *the child at one-and-a-half years old* (Fig. 4), Crook goes on, “The pointed shape of the hat—its hint/reference to the ‘phallus’? The head wear reminds me of a nun’s/medical wimple—suggesting an ‘intimate’ modesty...the young boy comes from my recollection of the young invalide boy in the film *La Strada*. That he wore a strange hat... that he had a sort of intelligence, only a sympathetic person could contact”.<sup>104</sup>

Though the Wolf-man series must be considered a major achievement for Crook as a creative artist—the intensity of his focus, the closeness to which he keeps to Freud’s complex analysis, the care he lavished on the print-making, the paper, the boxing of the sets, the spare directness of his design—the series were not a commercial success. In contrast to the colourful and decorative positivity of his tapestries and banners, the black and white prints seemed austere, their subject matter not suited to the drawing room. The public was averse, even terrified, of dealing with sexuality as directly as represented in Crook’s visual interpretations of Freud’s analyses.

## Wolf-Man’s Present 1993

After the exhibition of the original tapestries and prints series, Crook invited Armour to weave a much larger tapestry which he called *Wolf-Man’s Present*<sup>105</sup> (Fig. 10). While Armour cannot recall the meaning of the title, the tapestry includes references to motifs from the earlier works, notably the profile of Therese and the ever-fixated eyes. It is possible that Crook was suggesting Gardiner’s book was itself like a personal present to the artist: it gave him the theme for a project that was so rich, so personal, so creatively rewarding—even if the exhibition did not reap financial rewards.

The tapestry was a challenge for Armour. She had to construct a larger frame on which to weave the work and find studio space at the Thorndon Tapestry Workshop, 262 Thorndon Quay, Wellington (Fig. 12). She also became aware that Crook had no sense of the economics of producing a work of this size. She felt that her costs in materials and time would command a weaving price of \$6,000 per square metre. When added to Crook’s “artists fee”, including the enlargement of the cartoon, as well as an agent’s fee, this resulted in a price of over \$18,000 for the work itself. Crook saw this tapestry as the most

101 McNamara 1991, 2.2.

102 Letter from Crook to Trish Armour, 28 April 1991, copy in Stupples archive.

103 Cain 1991.

104 The Grey File formed part of Crook’s estate and was passed on to the writer by the executors Mark and Val Winter.

105 Crook sometimes, in his correspondence, refers to *Wolf-Man’s Presents*. This changes the focus and possible meaning.





**Figure 10.** Gordon Crook, *Wolf-Man's Present*, 1993, wool and cotton on cotton warp tapestry, sett: 10 epi, woven by Trish Armour, 1.6 m × 1.6 m, Wallace Arts Trust, The Pah Homestead, Hillsborough, Auckland, R.009. © All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission of Wallace Arts Trust..

significant work he had designed since he arrived in New Zealand, as indicated in his correspondence related to his touring *Retrospective* (1993–6)<sup>106</sup>.

The process of weaving *Wolf-Man's Present* was not smooth sailing for either artist or weaver. Tensions over two other contemporaneous projects—large tapestries for the Auckland Maritime Museum (1992–4) that never progressed beyond the collage stage due to lack of funding and *The Marines* (1992–3)—led to battles between artist and weaver that ended in ill-will. Their creative relationship came to an end in late 1994, but fortunately not until after the successful completion of *Wolf-Man's Present*.

*The Wolf-Man's Present* was eventually bought by the Rutherford Trust, funded by the Electricity

Corporation of New Zealand and was later presented, on permanent loan, to the Wallace Arts Trust, Hillsborough, Auckland. In 1998, Crook was invited to see the work in situ in Rutherford House, Wellington. He observed that:

“...the Trust had acquired the WOLFMAN'S PRESENTS [sic] tapestry, and was obviously taken by it, showing it to advantage (?)—the garish turquoise-patterned upholstery underneath, and duck egg blue walls (!) It withstood the onslaught—the strength of it did. I always politely swallow my disappointment when the venue for one of my works doesn't strike the harmonious”.<sup>107</sup>

106 For example, letter from Crook to Kate Derum, 16 September 1995, ATL MS-Papers-10790-01.

107 Letter from Crook to Kate Derum, 13 September 1998, ATL MS-Papers-11213-079.





**Figure 11.** Armour and Crook discussing choice of yarns, Wellington, 1992. Armour Archive. © All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission of P. Armour.

## Gordon Crook versus The Wolf-Man

In 1987 Peter Coates, a television feature film and documentary director/producer, who produced segments for the popular arts show *Kaleidoscope*, put together a feature on Crook.<sup>108</sup> In late 1992–early 1993, Crook acted as “creative initiator/adviser” for an Arts Documentary Project, an hour-long film for television, written and directed by Coates for the Avalon National Film Unit, with the working title *Gordon Crook versus The Wolf-Man*. It was to be produced by Ian Johnstone with James Mack as “art adviser”.<sup>109</sup> The brief for the film was:

“A schizophrenic look at the life and art of Gordon Crook, New Zealand’s most eccentric and original artist, through his haunting work, *The Wolf-Man Series*, a series that is based as much on the classic case of infant neurosis, as on Gordon Crook’s dreams of his own despairing childhood./Style: ‘The elements of joy and despair in Gordon’s life will be contrasted with the use of enhanced colour [and] the stark black

and white. Reality and dreams will be intermixed, distorted and then made into works of art through the electronic medium itself. It is as though we are inside the mind of the artist...”<sup>110</sup>

The content of the film was outlined as:

“Dramatic recreations of (a) The Wolfman’s childhood, (b) The childhood of Gordon Crook. Actuality of the artist at work, (a) working with the electronic medium, (b) working in his studio. Interview/voice-overs by the artist in ‘stream of consciousness’ form, work from the Retrospective exhibition. Expert psychological comment.”

The best time for showing the film was estimated to be around the opening of the National Exhibition on 18 January 1993.<sup>111</sup> Unfortunately, the project never got beyond the proposal stage. Later, Crook reflected upon on the project, writing to Kate Derum:

“Ideally, had Peter Coates been given the go-ahead to make the ‘Wolf-Man versus Gordon Crook’ video [Crook’s note in the margin: ‘Peter’s awful title’], it would neatly have fitted the bill...I was prepared to by-pass the TV moguls and make the video with Peter on lesser resources. But he wasn’t interested. He was positively scathing. His professional standing as a film producer regarded such an undertaking as ‘amateur’, and he’d need to steer clear of that. A pity! Not to mention the grossness he inadvertently used against my own talents? As if, likewise, amateur!”<sup>112</sup>

## A final flourish

James Mack was the key figure in the final flourish of the *Wolf-Man* print series. Mack was a major figure in the New Zealand art world in the late twentieth century. After working in the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, the Waikato Museum and Art Gallery, studying in the East-West Centre, Honolulu, he became the Director of the Dowse Art Museum in Lower Hutt 1981–88, before spending the final years of his public career working at the National Museum and Art Gallery, Wellington. Mack had an uneasy relationship with Crook when at the Dowse. They had much in common, both being quixotic, eccentric. Mack was openly homosexual. He recognised Crook’s outstanding talents as an artist, particularly as a designer of tapestries. Yet their experience at the Dowse had been far from positive. Plans were made in 1983 for a Crook

108 See Douglas Jenkins, “Man of Dreams”, *The Listener*, October 24–30 1987

109 A cyclostyled booklet, outlining the project, is to be found in ATL MS-Papers-8351-01.

110 The writer of the brief was probably Peter Coates himself, but there is no clear evidence to this effect.

111 ATL MS-Papers 8351-01.

112 Letter from Crook to Kate Derum, 10 Jan. 1994, ATL MS-Papers-10790-01.



**Figure 12.** *Wolf-Man's Present* on the loom with cartoon, Wellington, 1992–3. Armour Archive. © All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission of P. Armour.

retrospective at the Dowse that did not materialise. Crook blamed this in Mack, writing:

“Last week (Oct. 83) I wrote to James Mack at the Dowse and cancelled my proposed retrospective there. He will be annoyed. He is impossible to work with and never answers my questions. He has already formulated what he intends to present, cannily avoiding discussing this with me, while stringing me along at the same time. I lost several commissions because of his failure to let me know his intentions. He has not responded to my letter...”

Despite that setback, Mack persisted in plans to have “the best show ever of the work of Gordon Crook”, that simmered through 1984–5 before going off the boil.<sup>113</sup> Mack continued to be interested in Crook’s work, however and in March 1993, he put together an unpublished article on Crook’s creative output, based on their correspondence in 1992. Part of these notes refer to *The Wolf-Man*:

“In 1990 Gordon started reading about Freud’s *Wolf-Man*...What did emerge was a monumental series that consumed 18 months of his life. A magnum opus of prints that is seminal to his oeuvre. The prints, either xerox or serigraph, were in black and white,

charged with emotional colour. The works are psycho-sexual and Crook got inside the pervading myth and is looking out with his own artistic eyes. His brain has been unable to secure the focus. He has forced foreshortenings, played with abstraction, classicism, realism. The images charged with emotion are dismembered, castrated, cut, sliced.

The 22 screen prints on Fabriano paper...are masterful. They do things on screen that is redolent with the black power of aquatints. Emotionally the images are supercharged with sinister hallucinatory power. They are great works of art created in a controlled state of heightened consciousness. They elucidate Freud and illuminate the *Wolf-Man*.

They are still alive, but in a world he changed  
Simply by looking back with no false regrets  
All he did was remember  
Like the old and honest like children. [W.H.Auden]

Throughout the history of humankind each generation has exposed a truly imaginative individual of superior intellect who has marshalled their creative powers to expose themselves so that the rest of us might see ourselves better.

<sup>113</sup> Letter from James Mack to Crook 26 Jul 1984, ATL MS-Papers-11213-014.





**Figure 13.** *Wolf-Man's Present* on the loom at a later stage, Wellington, 1992–3. Armour Archive. © All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission of P. Armour.

One can but pay homage to an artist of Gordon Crook's stature and know that as a recorder of our time, we have been magnificently served."<sup>114</sup>

In 1999, Mack opened his own Marsden Art Gallery in The Old Post Office, Fitzherbert Street, Featherston in the Wairarapa, inviting Crook to hold an exhibition of *The Wolf-Man* material. Crook was more than happy to do so, but it involved considerable labour to bring the works back together. Crook held unsold tapestries and many prints in his Wellington house, but as a consequence of leaks and flooding, his studio was in disarray. He was also unsure of the whereabouts of work that had been sold over the past few years. Crook reported to Mack on 9 November 1999:

"Dear James...It's worse than a case of regression, this search for the Wolf-Man. Today I have listed/ found for you, twenty-one mounted xeroxes—(mount size is 64 × 50 cms). And there are some unmounted ones which I will send should they be required. The

next hunt is for the larger prints on Fabriano...to find a complete edition which I have some place, I know. (Interestingly/usefully paper size is 64 × 50 cms). Come to light are 2 small tapestries from the series (framed) and there may be some more, framed works. This to let you know I'm busy on the job."<sup>115</sup>

Postcards followed almost daily, reporting on lost and founds works. During these preparations, Crook also sent to Mack a grey folder containing a file of notes he had written in 1991 to accompany draft prints for the original *Wolf-Man* project.<sup>116</sup>

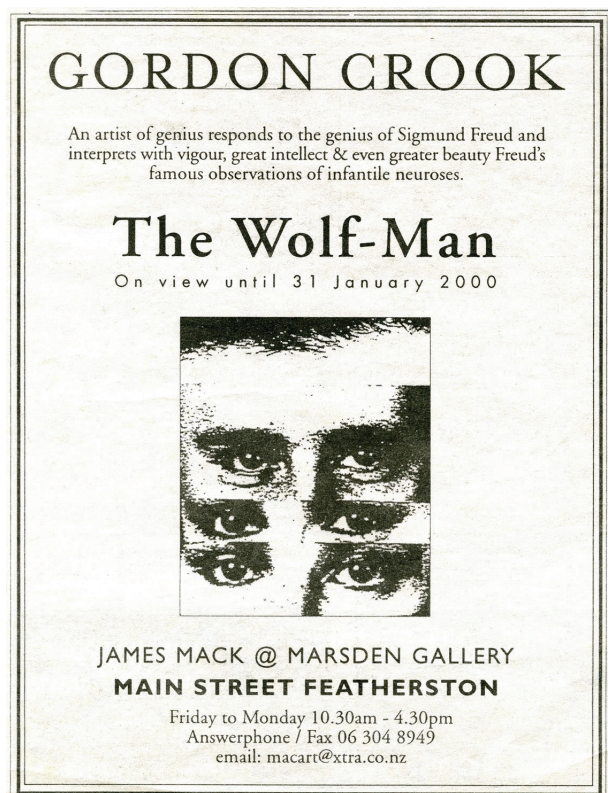
Eventually, the exhibition came together. *The Wolfman by Gordon Crook* opened on New Year's Day, 1 January 2000 and ran for the whole month. Mack went to considerable trouble to publicise the show—"after you have celebrated the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, come and encounter one of the great works of Art created in New Zealand in the 20<sup>th</sup> century"<sup>117</sup>—and to garner interest around the world. He regarded *The Wolf-Man* as the greatest of Crook's projects, in which, "...an artist of

114 James Mack, unpublished article on Crook, 1992, ATL MS-Papers-8351-01.

115 Letter from Crook to James Mack, 9 November 1999, ATL MS-Papers-8351-01.

116 The Grey File formed part of Crook's estate and was passed on to me by the executors, Mark and Winter, in 2022, for my archive.

117 James Mack's invitation poster, that concluded with his effervescent prose: 'mysterious, aweinspiring, spiritually uplifting, divine, filled with a sense of divine influence or energy.' Stupples archive.



**Figure 14.** Notice for Wolf-Man exhibition. Marsden Gallery, Featherston, *City Voice* (Wellington), 13 January 2000.

genius responds to the genius of Sigmund Freud, and interprets with vigour, great intellect and even greater beauty Freud's famous observations of infantile neuroses", the advertisement in Wellington's *City Voice* proclaimed. Mack wrote to the Curator of Prints, Auckland City Art Gallery, 13 January 2000, offering to sell *The Wolf-Man*, Series 1, 1990, 22 silkscreen prints (760 × 670 mm) on 100/100 Fabriano paper:

"The edition I have for sale is 4/10 and the only remaining complete set of this masterwork. It is for sale unframed for \$7000...Crook has been regionalised which is unfair, his work deserves greater visibility throughout the country. He has a magnificent, sustained oeuvre. His exhibition is impeccable. He constantly addresses issues of substance. He is always pushing boundaries. He is 78, a committed maker, who has added lustre and guts to our visual landscape since he arrived here in 1974 [sic].

Also available, *The Wolf-Man*, Series II, 1991, X10 silkscreen prints on Lavis Fidelis MBM, edition 6/10 (640 × 500), \$3000, edition to be sold as set: *The Wolf-Man*, series III, 1991, ×12 Xerox on Goatskin Parchment, edition, 1/12. A4 various image sizes, boxed plus tapestry, *Off to Switzerland*, woven by

Patricia Armour, \$3500, to be sold as a set. Series III archivally matted and boxed by Ron Barber.

Gordon Crook spent 18 months of his life making imagery—couched in his experience—to elucidate Freud's treatise *The History of Infantile Neurosis*. Crook read virtually everything he could find about the seriously disturbed Russian aristocrat Sergei Pankejeff and his psychoanalysis by Freud. The treatise was given the sobriquet *The Wolf-Man* by Freud based on a discovered dream. Making collages and manipulating them in a Xerox machine Crook developed four series of prints, numerous collages and a small suite of tapestries woven to his specification and under his instruction. The prints are not only superb examples of the printmakers Art but also visually interpret with great intellect and beauty one of the seminal markers in the understanding of the human brain."<sup>118</sup>

The exhibition was a success. Katy Corner wrote in the *City Voice*:

"With one wall painted black, the other white, Crook's black and white images intensify the impact of their surrounds...In a recent aside to Crook, Mack interpreted one visitor's reaction to 'Wolfman'. 'She thought it was like being at the last interview of Dennis Potter with Melvyn Bragg. This particular person's awareness of any number of issues—exposure, anxiety, incest...was confirmed.'"<sup>119</sup>

*Artscape* included *A Collage of Gordon Crook*, including an interview with the artist, in its January/February 2000 edition.<sup>120</sup>

There were modest sales of prints from Series I and IV and one tapestry, in all making \$3690. Less James's commission, Gordon received \$2460, a satisfactory, if not triumphant conclusion to a drawn-out saga.

## Conclusion

Ellen Handler Spitz wrote that 'tragedy...has to do with the project of attempting to wrest meaning from the ambiguities, arbitrariness, and devastation of human life'.<sup>121</sup> The lives of Pankeev and Crook had all the elements of tragedy and devastation—of childhood trauma, of loss and the struggle of reparation. To a significant degree both managed to live with their traumas rather than succumb to them, to find enough meaning in their lives to survive. Pankeev's analysis enabled an uncharacteristic stoicism to emerge within him. Crook, in turn, was enabled, by his creative drive, constantly to confront his own traumas and even to share them with a curious, if not always

118 Letter from James Mack to Curator of Prints, Auckland City Art Gallery, 13 January 2000, ATL MS-Papers-8351-01.

119 Katy Corner, 'Underlying Visions in Black and White', *City Voice*, 13 January 2000.

120 'A Collage of Gordon Crook', no acknowledged author, *Artscape*, January/February 2000, 4–6.

121 Ellen Handler Spitz, *Image and Insight* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1991) 181.



fully appreciative, public. In his quest, he was greatly encouraged and inspired by the reading of Freud and by the narratives of Pankeev's heroic struggle.

This paper, for the first time, brings together Crook's Wolf-Man print series with the sources of their inspiration in the work of Freud and the autobiographies of Sergei Pankeev, Freud's 'Wolf-man', together with the words of Crook himself, both from published material and from his varied and vast correspondence.

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Whilst Crook cannot be said to have engaged significantly with New Zealand art and artists, there is no doubt that his years in Wellington freed up his creative strengths to explore personal themes he felt unable to pursue freely in Great Britain. In this endeavour, he was supported by sympathetic collectors and gallerists in Wellington, attracted by his original creative energy, his eccentric erudition and brilliant—in many meanings of the word—works of art.

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