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sciences, maths and physics, than with the “human” aspects of the sciences which directly concern daily experience and the quality of life. Furthermore, the contributors are literary critics and historians, not scientists proper. Though this book is essentially a project initiated by the Humanities Faculty, it should be of wider interest. Its strength is its diversity; while the editors hanker after a “full and coherent theorization” of the study of literature and science, the evidence of the essays proves that science and literature, individually and in conjunction, generate a profusion of forms.

Judith Hawley, Lincoln College, Oxford

MARY COWLING, *The artist as anthropologist: the representation of type and character in Victorian art*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, 4to, pp. xxii, 391, illus., £50.00, \$69.50.

The role of the study of physiognomy in the history of art has been known but not appreciated. Clearly, any study of the “types” represented in Leonardo’s sketchbook needs to refer back to the omnipresent tradition of physiognomy, which makes up a rich heritage of Western culture from the first written records. (Indeed physiognomic treatises are to be found in Babylonian cuneiform.) Mary Cowling looks at a period when the theories of physiognomy had a most specific location in Western thought, the age following its reestablishment as a “science” in the writings of the Swiss pastor Johann Gaspar Lavater. This “Storm and Stress” (i.e., anti-Enlightenment) view of the relationship between mind and body was in no way new, nor was it scientific by any use of the term in the eighteenth century, but it was so understood by Lavater’s contemporaries. Cowling picks up the story at the height of the Victorian era (70 years after Lavater) and presents us with a reading of two major works of art, W. P. Frith’s panoramas *Derby Day* (1858) and *Railway Station* (1862), which were considered to be the major works of art of the day (at least by Queen Victoria, who was amused . . .).

This is an intricate and well-done study. But it remains only part of the story. Using the Frith paintings, Cowling shows us how the theories of physiognomy became part of the visual commonplaces (icons) of Victorian culture, so much so that one could use a “flat nose” or a “high brow” to represent class as well as character. Her opening chapters, which cover the discussion of physiognomy (type and character) from Camper through the phrenologists are richly illustrated and form a composite handbook. The guidelines which she evolves are then applied to the Frith paintings, in order to show us how they were read by his contemporaries. This approach results in a very detailed set of readings of the major figures in the paintings.

Cowling’s readings, however, are “anthropological”, and this is indeed the tone of her study. She understands the role of physiognomy as a means of social and physical classification, of the study of “man” in the sense that the Anthropological Society, that great Victorian creation, used the term “anthropology”. I have two major questions about Cowling’s work: the first is a methodological or theoretical one; the second, one of coverage. Neither question undermines her book—this is a first-rate study which, given its parameters, does precisely what it sets out to do. But rather, I would like to ask whether what Cowling wants to do is necessary as well as sufficient for such a study.

My primary objection to Cowling’s approach is that she assumes a pattern of “influence” or “reception” that is faulty. She assumes that Frith (and the other mid-Victorian painters she uses) “knew” the physiognomic treatises and she postulates these treatises—which are not written as handbook for artists (with some exceptions, such as the work of Sir Charles Bell)—as the “sources” for the readings. This is, of course, a rather difficult question. For the idea that the “influence” runs from the physiognomic treatises to the paintings, from a discourse of (pseudo-) science to a discourse of art assumes a social model which is questionable. It is the “trickle-down” model of the history of ideas. “Great” ideas “decay” into “popular” or “mass” ideas. They move from “serious” realms such as science to more trivial ones such as “art.” (Low art, mind you, never “real” art—this is why Frith is such a good object for such a study.) This model demands a direction for history, one which, I am afraid, cannot be postulated as a given. The flow of influence, if one can speak in these terms at all, is never set. Indeed, one is

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much better off assuming a free flow of images and motives from the art to the science and from the science to art, the existence of parallel discourses. Oscar Wilde was right in concluding that we learn about nature from art, but it also true that we learn about art from nature. The assumption that one can begin with a “source”, the treatise on physiognomy, and thus take the image as secondary, as derivative, is too simple. Ned Lebow, in his study of the image of the Irish in nineteenth-century British thought (a study evidently unknown to Cowling), shows how slippery these images are. They are generated in any number of contexts and reappear with ease in others. Art forms (and is formed by) the theories of physiognomy, each needing an iconic shorthand to create “meaning” and a locus in which to effect this system. And this shorthand, with all of its ideological basis, is formed and used by the science of physiognomy. Anthropology does likewise. And all of these images form a semiotic system that is constantly in flux but that can and does reappear as permanent and unalterable in any given context.

My second “quibble” with Cowling’s reading of “the artist as anthropologist” is that she has neglected a substantial literature on physiognomy that might well have complemented and expanded her “reading” of Frith. The medical literature on pathology during the nineteenth century is fully part of this grand exchange of images. Let me make specific reference to her discussion of the “Jew swindler” in Frith’s *Derby Day*. Using contemporary sources (such as the *Athenaeum*’s discussion of this painting) she pinpoints the image of the Jew with his “heavy jowls” and “avaricious” expression as indicative of the swindler. Indeed, she reproduces a page from Eden Warwick’s classification of noses (1864) in which the Jewish nose, so evident in this portrait, is described as indicating a “facility of turning that insight into profitable account”. This would be sufficient, if we assumed a one-to-one relationship between theories of physiognomy and character, that is, a direct “influence” from one to the other. But a further literature, extensive and important in the nineteenth century, argues that the pathognomic signs of the Jewish body are indicators of disease and corruption, that what we are dealing with in the “Jew swindler” is not merely a sociopathic figure but a physiologically corrupt one. This view of the diseased Jew can have two readings: one, that the specific signs are symptoms of the “Jew swindler” (as with the Scot and Irishman) and set him off from the positive characters in this picture, or that these signs and symptoms mark him as “ill” and therefore as different from certain other Jews.

The 1850s, with its intense debates about Jewish integration into the political and social realities of Victorian England, with the rise of “Jewish” figures of social and cultural importance, needed to have some boundary drawn between the “good” British Jews and the “Jew swindlers”, not merely in terms of the social meaning ascribed to the figure of the Jew, but through the mode of distinguishing the “healthy” from the “sick” Jew, i.e., the Jew who could function within the body politic and the Jew who could not. Here the medical discourse on the Jew that uses the theories of physiognomy to make exact this distinction would help Cowling make a more subtle case. Indeed, it would have been of help in distinguishing between the “healthy” and “sick” Irishman as well. For it is not only “race” and “class” but also “health” that provides boundaries for the icons of difference that Frith offers the viewer. And these are embedded in the social demands for the visibility of difference that are reflected in Frith’s painting but also in the world of the Victorian physician.

This is a most exciting book in spite of my caveats. And my caveats apply not only to this study but to many of the “influence” studies of physiognomy. Cambridge University Press has done a wonderful job in producing a first-rate volume. About the only problem is in the reproduction of the two huge Frith paintings: could they have not been reproduced on fold-out pages rather than divided in the centre so that the very middle of the paintings vanish into the binding? But in general this is a volume worth the price.

Sander L. Gilman, Cornell University and Cornell Medical College

ROGER COOTER, *Phrenology in the British Isles: an annotated, historical bibliobibliography and index*, Metuchen NJ and London, Scarecrow Press, 1989, 8vo, pp. xviii, 431, £47.25. Dist. Bailey Bros & Swinfen Ltd., Folkestone.