

Times letter, Ruskin says the Pre-Raphaelites draw either “what *they see*, or what *they suppose* might have been the actual facts of the scene [my italics].” The distinction is slight but extremely significant; for what Ruskin does is to suggest that the weakness of Pre-Raphaelite art is its capacity to fold the epistemological representation into the phenomenological experience. According to Ruskin, the emotional response to nature and art must be encouraged and, at once, contained because its only function can be a moral one. Ruskin states forthrightly:

Now the term “aesthesia” properly signifies mere sensual perception of the outward qualities and necessary effects of bodies; in which sense only, if we would arrive at any accurate conclusions on this difficult subject, it should always be used. But I wholly deny that the impressions of beauty are in any way sensual; they are neither sensual nor intellectual, but moral: and for the faculty receiving them, whose difference from mere perception I shall immediately endeavour to explain, no term can be more accurate or convenient than that employed by the Greeks, “Theoretic.”⁵³

What is more by revising the idea of the beautiful from a sensual, aesthetic perception of physical form into a moral, theoretical one, Ruskin allows for a correspondence between nobility and so-called “ordinary truth”:

Physical beauty *is* a noble thing when it is seen in perfectness; but the manner in which the moderns pursue their ideal prevents their ever really seeing what they are always seeking; . . . When such artists look at a face, they do not give it the attention necessary to discern what beauty is already in its peculiar features; but only to see how best it may be altered into some thing for which they have themselves laid down the laws. Nature never unveils her beauty to such a gaze. She keeps whatever she has done best, close sealed, until it is regarded with reverence. To the painter who honours her, she will open a revelation in the face of a street mendicant; but in the work of a painter who alters her, she will make Portia become ignoble, and Perdita graceless.⁵⁴

By shifting the emphasis from “aesthesia” to the “theoretic,” or from feeling to viewing, Ruskin disrupts the distinction between subject and object, and so alters the viewing position of the beholder in relation to the painting. Rallying for the value of “peculiar features” and “inner beauty” against the apparent ignobility and gracelessness of ideal beauty, Ruskin continues to expostulate that “the strange intricacies about the lines of the lips, and marvellous shadows and watchfires of the eye, and wavering trceries of the eyelash, and infinite

⁵³ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, II, p.13.

⁵⁴ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, II, p.73.

**THE GRAMMAR OF EXPRESSION?:
PHYSIOGNOMY AND THE LANGUAGE OF THE EMOTIONS
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores modes of perception and forms of physiognomic interpretation that were involved in the discussion of expression in nineteenth-century English culture. Concentrating on studies of anatomy, art, literature, and science in nineteenth-century England, my argument focusses on the resistance that a series of mixed figures of the face exert on the specifically Victorian impulse to fix and to classify the human figure in the phenomenal world. Far from being a stable or singular analytical tool, these selected studies indicate that physiognomy acted as a dynamic repertoire of critical methods for understanding what the visible order of the face and its expressions could signify.

Chapter One describes the close but complex relation between the disciplines of art and anatomy in communicating the physiognomic method of interpretation in the early part of the nineteenth century. Taking Charles Bell's *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting*, first published in 1806, as an instance of this interdisciplinarity, I argue that the language of the face articulated by such works illuminates the epistemological and phenomenological problems inherent in visualising the mobile, and often mixed, features of the face.

Chapter Two examines a series of early paintings by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood which cluster around the Keats poem "Isabella" (1818). The paintings--Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Faust: Gretchen and Mephistopholes in Church" (1848) and "Dante Drawing an Angel on the First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice" (1848-9); William Holman Hunt's "Lorenzo at his Desk in the Warehouse" (1848-50); and John Everett Millais' "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil" (1848-9)--are considered as the intersection of pictorial realism and theatrical performance that conspires to perplex the established physiognomic order of the visible.

Chapter Three investigates the use of the female face as an index of physiognomic knowledge in mid-nineteenth century accounts of beauty and narratives of sensation. In particular, I draw on the work of Alexander Walker and Wilkie Collins to assert that an understanding of masculinity and femininity at this time can only be acquired by reconfiguring the complex correspondence between appearance and character type in terms of affect, intellect, and sexuality.

Chapter Four analyzes the rhetorical strategies employed in the writings of Charles Darwin to foreground scientific over physiognomic methods of interpretation. Darwin seeks to separate scientific from physiognomic forms of visual knowledge through his physiological formulation of expression. But it becomes clear that the questions Darwin asks most frequently and most pressingly refer to the validity of the facial sign as an index of emotion and character and the legitimacy of the physiognomic method of interpreting the face.

The Conclusion draws together the argument of the thesis to emphasise the importance of physiognomy and the language of the emotions to nineteenth-century English culture as a form of visual knowledge that both represents and smooths over the visible and invisible order of things.

INTRODUCTION

**FICTIONS OF THE FACE: SOME PERSPECTIVES,
SOME THEORIES, AND SOME PROBLEMS WITH
THE GRAMMAR OF EXPRESSION.**

I

In one of the earliest detailed discussions of portrait painting, Roger de Piles (1635-1709) seeks to unfold the complex nuances of the term expression:

Expression, when speaking of painting, is completely confused with *passion*. They differ, however, in that *expression* is a general term which signifies the representation of an object according to the character of its own nature, as well as the particular emphasis the painter has designed to give it for the purposes of his work. *Passion*, in terms of painting, is a movement of the body together with certain features of the face, marking some agitation of the soul. It follows that every *passion* is an *expression*, but every *expression* is not a *passion*. There is no object in a painting that does not possess its own *expression*.¹

To paraphrase De Piles, expression refers to a number of different functions in early eighteenth-century art: it represents the character of the pictorial object; it marks the style of the painter; and it is distinct from the movements of the human figure that characterise passion. What is clear, though, is that fundamental to de Piles' attempt to define the term expression is the question of whether it is possible to separate out expression from passion. De Piles argues in the affirmative for, he claims, although passion refers to expression, expression does not necessarily refer to passion. The conundrum--"every passion is an expression, but every expression is not a passion"--may seem reasonably straightforward, if asymmetrical; but, in fact, the answer remains unconvincing because the philosophical problem de Piles grapples with is whether a discussion of expression necessarily involves a consideration of emotion, or whether the external characteristics of expression are commensurate to the internal impulses of emotion. The challenge that de Piles seeks to resolve is twofold: first, to explain expression;

¹ Roger de Piles, *Course de Peinture par Principes* (Paris, 1708). I quote from the English translation: *The Principles of Painting, translated into English by a painter* (London, 1743). See also de Piles' earlier work: *The Art of Painting, with the Lives and Characters of above 300 of the most Eminent Painters: Containing a Complete Treatise of Painting, Designing, and the Use of Prints. With Reflexions on the Work of the most Celebrated Masters, and of the several Schools of Europe, as well ancient as modern. . . . Translated from the French of Monsieur De Piles* (London, 1699), 2nd ed. (London, 1744). For a detailed account of de Piles' theories of expression in painting, see Thomas Puttfarcken, *Roger de Piles' Theory of Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

and second, to conceive how it functions.

Whilst I do not want, at this point, to provide a history of expression in order to assess de Piles' theory in greater detail, his exposition of expression is instructive for the attention it draws to the linguistic slipperiness of the word and the philosophical complexity of the relations to which it refers. To unravel some of the complexities involved in describing expression, it is worth looking at its dictionary definition. The second edition of *The Oxford English Dictionary* claims expression is derived from the medieval Latin word 'expressare' which variously means to press out; to form (an image) by pressure; to represent in sculpture or painting; and to represent or set forth in words or actions; and in modern usage it connotes the act of pressing something out; a representation in words or symbols; an utterance of intention; an algebraic quantity; and the capacity to speak of feeling or character.² There is, however, a difficulty here because the *OED*, with its admittedly literary examples, casts expression as the representation of an act of expulsion, when in fact the study of expression can be seen as the encounter of two determinations: on the one hand, the constituents of expression and on the other, the conceptual connection of external surfaces to internal structures. Expression is, at once, an articulation, an emotion, a locution, an appearance, and an exhibition: it is the study of modes of perception and forms of physiognomic interpretation, and it involves a comprehension of a visible and an invisible order of knowledge.

The grammar of expression describes a series of widely differing attempts in the nineteenth century to come to terms with expression as a double articulation. By focussing on studies of anatomy, art, literature, and science in nineteenth-century England, this thesis considers how physiognomy and the language of the emotions acted as a dynamic repertoire of critical methods for understanding the visible order of the face as a reflexive and a generative figure. For the grammar of expression communicates a parallel and a tension between epistemological and phenomenological modes of perception and it represents and smooths over the intersection of scientific observation and physiognomic interpretation in the nineteenth

² *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

century. At stake is the problem of how to visualise the complex relation between the invisible and the visible order of the face, that is, how to conceptualise the connection between facial expression and physiological emotion. The hand, the pantomime, the female face, and the eye: these are the organising metaphors for my inquiries into expression. What each of these shares with the other is an engagement with perception and a resistance to classification; what each reserves from the other is a distinctive address to the visual knowledge of the face; and what each disputes when compared to the other is the question of the conceptual value--the physiognomic fiction--of the face.

Before going any further, however, I would like to make it clear that although I examine the expressions of the face, I do not pretend that this thesis is a discourse on the body, a history of vision, or a psychology of the subject in the nineteenth century. I am not primarily concerned with the power of institutions, the organization of social space; the formation of cultural paradigms, the systematization of scientific knowledge, or the analysis of sexuality in the nineteenth century.³ Nevertheless, one can scarcely deny the contribution that readings of Foucault's work, especially *Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, and *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, has had on the way in which the nineteenth century is studied. Of particular relevance to my research is *The Order of Things* for Foucault argues in this work that the figure of man emerges to take up a position in the field of knowledge during this period, ending the

³ I am thinking here specifically of the work of Michel Foucault, Ernst H. Gombrich, and Jacques Lacan on these areas. See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, (1961), trans. A. M. Sheridan-Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967); *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, (1963), trans. A. M. Sheridan-Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1973); *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (1966), trans. from the French (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970); and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (1969), trans. A. M. Sheridan-Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972); Ernst H. Gombrich, Julian Hochberg and Max Black, *Art, Perception, and Reality*, (Baltimore, MA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972); Ernst H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977); and *The Image and the Eye: Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1982); Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, (1966), trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977); *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, (1973), ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979).

privileged role of discourse in the episteme of Western culture and configuring a new relation of words to things. “From the nineteenth century onwards,” he proclaims:

the theory of representation disappears as the universal foundation of all possible orders; language as the spontaneous *tabula*, the primary grid of things, as an indispensable link between representation and things, is eclipsed in its turn; a profound historicity penetrates into the heart of things, isolates and defines them in their own coherence, imposes upon them the forms of order implied by the continuity of time; the analysis of exchange and money gives way to the study of production, that of the organism takes precedence over the search for taxonomic characteristics, and, above all, language loses its privileged position and becomes, in its turn, a historical form coherent with the density of its own past. But as things become increasingly reflexive, seeking the principle of their intelligibility only in their own development, and abandoning the space of representation, man enters in his turn, and for the first time, the field of Western knowledge.⁴

The fundamental problem with Foucault’s account of this “mutation”⁵ within Western culture lies with his identification of an “epistemological level of knowledge (or scientific consciousness)” and an “archaeological level of knowledge.”⁶ Because to argue, as Foucault does, that these two levels of discourse, and only these two, define the organisation of knowledge from the seventeenth century onwards imposes an unnecessarily rigid and, at times dogmatic, formalism onto an extremely complex process in the development of intellectual thought.

The proliferation of books on the body which has emerged in recent years--more often

⁴ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.xxiii. An earlier passage is also instructive for Foucault outlines the precise nature of his methodology. He says:

I am not concerned, therefore, to describe the progress of knowledge towards an objectivity in which today’s science can finally be recognized; what I am attempting to bring to light is the epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility; in this account, what should appear are those configurations within the *space* of knowledge which have given rise to the diverse forms of empirical science. Such an enterprise is not so much a history, in the traditional meaning of that word, as an ‘archaeology’ (p.xxii).

⁵ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.xxiii. Foucault explains that “archaeology, addressing itself to the general space of knowledge, to its configurations, and to the mode of being of the things that appear in it, defines systems of simultaneity, as well as the series of mutations necessary and sufficient to circumscribe the threshold of a new positivity.”

⁶ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.xiii.

than not in response to Foucault's emphasis on the importance of social institutions and practices in determining the nature of this knowledge--is a further case in point.⁷ The prominence of the body in contemporary literary theory cannot go unnoticed, but what worries me about the recovery and fetishization of the body is the tendency to display its categories abstractly and unproblematically, which in turn disguises a misplaced commitment to a mode of classification bereft of rigour. In an astute critique of the Foucauldian preoccupation with 'the social' and the organization of its space, Terry Eagleton claims that body as relation has shifted to body as object, and talk of having a body has been replaced by talk of being one. He says:

Nothing is more fashionable in modern cultural theory than talk of objectifying the body, feeling somehow that it is not my own; but though plenty of objectionable objectification goes on, not least in sexual conduct, the fact remains that the human body is indeed a material object, and that this is an essential component of anything more creative we get up to. Unless you can objectify me, there can be no question of relationship between us. The body which lays me open to exploitation is also the ground of all possible communication. It was Marx who ticked off Hegel for equating

⁷ The list is extensive, but for a range of examples, of greater and lesser relevance to this study, see Katherine Adler and Marcia Pointon, eds., *The Body Imaged: Representations of the Body in Western Art since the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Teresa Brennan, *The Interpretation of the Flesh: Freud and Femininity* (London: Routledge, 1992); Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Anthea Callen, *The Spectacular Body: Science, Method and Meaning in the Work of Degas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); William A. Ewing, *The Body: Photoworks of the Human Form* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994); Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur, eds., *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987); Mary Jacobus, Evelevyn Fox Keller and Sally Shuttleworth, eds., *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science* (London: Routledge, 1990); Stephen Kern, *Anatomy and Destiny: A Cultural History of the Human Body* (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1975); Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greek to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Edward Lucie-Smith, *The Body: Images of the Nude* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981); Helen Michie, *Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Dorinda Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class and Political Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); Marcia Pointon, *Naked Authority: The Body in Western Painting 1830-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and the Unmaking of the World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), and, Scarry, ed. *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons* (Baltimore, MA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992); Michael Shortland, "The Body in Question: Some Perceptions, Problems and Perspectives of the Body in Relation to Character c.1750-1850", 2 vols., PhD. Diss. (University of Leeds, 1984); Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986); Barbara Maria Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991); Judith Still and Michael Worton, eds., *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

objectification with alienation, and the rampant culturalism which marks today's avant-garde theory needs to learn the lesson anew.⁸

In other words, what Eagleton terms this "new somatics" renders the body as the place "where something--gazing, imprinting, regimenting--is being done to you."⁹

Barbara Maria Stafford's *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* is one such book on the body (with a specific relevance to my study due to its emphasis on physiognomy) but it is a far from straightforward example.¹⁰ Arguing that "explicitly or implicitly, nondiscursive articulations suffer from the fact that they do not say or read,"¹¹ Stafford adopts the stylistic device of, what she terms, "metaphorology," in order "to rethink, reformulate, and perhaps even constructively reshape the abiding yet changing problem of the relation of image to text, imagination to reason, and body to soul."¹² Metaphorology is, it seems, Stafford's response to the "pernicious dualism" inherent in the aesthetic debate and its concomitant logocentrism¹³: it is a "history of perception" and a "summons to create a new visual discipline or hybrid imaging art-science for the future"¹⁴; and, "as in an Enlightenment encyclopedia," it is also "a stratigraphy of increasingly complex

⁸ Terry Eagleton, "It is not quite true that I have a body, and not quite true that I am one either", Rev. of *BodyWorks: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*. by Peter Brooks. *London Review of Books*, 15 (1993): p.7.

⁹ Eagleton, "It is not quite true that I have a body, and not quite true that I am one either", p.7.

¹⁰ See also Stafford's "'Peculiar Marks': Lavater and the Countenance of Blemished Thought", *Art Journal*, 46 (1987): pp.185-92.

¹¹ Barbara Maria Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), p.6.

¹² Stafford, *Body Criticism*, p.7.

¹³ Stafford, *Body Criticism*, p.34.

¹⁴ Stafford, *Body Criticism*, p.35.

relationships that are revealed. . .through lateral cross-references.”¹⁵ Quite apart from the expansive and somewhat tautological claims of this particular gambit, it becomes clear as Stafford goes on to affirm the distinctiveness of her metaphoric methodology--employing images of dissecting, abstracting, conceiving, marking, magnifying, and sensing to overcome the hierarchy fundamental to the correspondence of outer to inner¹⁶--that her argument is based on exactly the sequence of binary oppositions which she not only labels “pernicious” but also purports to systematize “through lateral cross-references.” What is even more alarming, however, is the damage Stafford does to the intimacy of the relation between physiognomics and pathognomics, which she glosses as “corporeal connoisseurship” and “the pursuit of looks.”¹⁷

By contrast, I argue that far from being a stable or singular analytical tool, the grammar of expression is an incredibly dynamic discourse, at once epistemic and phenomenological,

¹⁵ Stafford, *Body Criticism*, p.38. In this section, “Surface or Depth,” Stafford explains in full:

A word about my method. This book is organized into six chapters. Although each is headed by a gerund, my approach is not abstract but practical and particular. I continually search for the direct evidence of the relationship between art and medicine. As in an Enlightenment encyclopedia, each section is centred around a constitutive metaphor with its variants and antitheses. Basic to my classificatory scheme is a stratigraphy of increasingly complex relationships that are revealed, however, through lateral cross-references. The foundation of this study rests upon the metaphor of dissection and its anatomical, surgical, and physiognomical cognates.

¹⁶ Stafford, *Body Criticism*, pp.28-29. “Behind current methodological and disciplinary debates,” Stafford writes, “stretches the shadow of a long tradition composed of different but related contraries”:

In the early modern period. . .it hardens into a system of antithetical absolutes that I am characterizing as the still unresolved tension obtaining between the visible and the invisible. Physiological insights into ‘profound’ or ‘obscure’ bodily hollows were gained by means of the same relational or comparative system of ruling metaphors that governed eighteenth-century geographical and anthropological discussions concerning distant ‘foreign’ countries and remote ‘alien’ customs. These far-fetched analogies depended upon establishing a movement from inferior to superior, appearance to essence, public to private, surface to depth, visual to verbal, known to unknown. Fundamentally, such hierarchical correspondences between the outer and inner of anything devolve upon the fact that the content of one. . .of the paired terms is invisible, uncertain, or unclear with respect to the other.

¹⁷ See Stafford, *Body Criticism*, pp.47-129. In particular, see the section “Physiognomics, or Corporeal Connoisseurship”, pp.84-103; and “Pathognomics, or the Pursuit of Looks”, pp.120-29.

taxonomic and sensational, which permeates nineteenth-century culture, and, as the title to my study indicates, is made manifest in physiognomy and the language of the emotions.

Moreover, I contend that the physiognomic method of interpretation--which refers to facial structure and facial movements--physiognomy and pathognomy, properly so called--and is described by the language of the emotions--positions the face as the locus of perception, the pivot in the relation of cognition to recognition. Stafford, meanwhile, understands the relation of physiognomy to pathognomy somewhat differently. She writes:

Physiognomics considered the face grammatically, “abstracted from all the fleeting signs which paint the actual situation of the soul.” Pathognomics, on the other hand, hunted after symptomatic behavioural and gestural meaning in the layout of the exterior. Like the tracking of ambiguous traces and vanishing spoor, it was an unfolding art of pattern recognition. The body was no longer a wayward figural language requiring surgical management by correcting words. With pathognomics, it became the subject of sport. Puzzling, subtle, elusive expressions eluded language but not perception.¹⁸

Whereas I would insist that any study of expression must necessarily involve both the structure and the movements of the features--that is, physiognomy *and* pathognomy--Stafford appears to be labouring under the illusion that it is not only legitimate but also ‘sporting’ to uphold the distinction in this way.

To put it simply, the subject of my study is the face. This can be explained quite clearly by referring to an anonymous review article of Thomas Cooke’s *A Practical and Familiar View of the Science of Physiognomy*, which appeared in the 1820 edition of *Blackwood’s Magazine*. The author rapidly dispenses with the term physiognomy, as an imported, unnecessary, and ambiguous Greek word, in favour of the terms “face, countenance, and visage.”¹⁹ Then, having chastised Cooke for following Johann Caspar Lavater in omitting the ears in his discussion of the face, the reviewer proposes that those who limit their observations to the face should be called “prosopologists” or, he continues, “discourers on the face, in

¹⁸ Stafford, *Body Criticism*, p.121.

¹⁹ [Anon.], “On the Science of Physiognomy”, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 6 (1820): pp.650-55.

contradistinction to craniologists, discoursers on the skull [*sic*].”²⁰ Despite this distinction between the examination of the face and that of the skull--more familiarly, between physiognomy and phrenology--the reviewer is unbending in his assumption that “prosopologists” and “craniologists” can both read the surface of the face and head, and so construct a materialist science of the self. What is more remarkable, though, is the reviewer’s recognition that the practice of physiognomy as prosopology does, indeed, make faces by employing a method of reading which posits fictions of expression on the surface of the face.

The physiognomic method of interpretation identifies the face as a figure and a figuring process. For the fictions of the face are reflexive and generative expressions, and the face is a mixed figure which embodies and moves beyond the disciplinary contexts of anatomy, art, literature, and science in the nineteenth century. It is important to point out that the disciplinary boundaries of these different types of knowledge are less important than the slippage of these figures across physiognomic practices and temporal moments. Because, as I suggested earlier, the grammar of expression is not a history of the face and its expressions in the nineteenth century, but the encounter of two determinations: on the one hand, the constituents of expression and on the other, the connections expression forges between the external and the internal elements of the face. I argue that the hand, the pantomime, the female face, and the eye act as four figures which are constitutive of this dual impulse because they contain their own coherent unity and yet they surpass the demands of a specific structuring device in a distorting, and often perplexing, manner. Furthermore, I confess that my fascination with the face derives from the work of Paul de Man on the function of rhetorical figures in the Romantic tradition. I am thinking here of three essays which appear consecutively in de Man’s *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*--namely “Autobiography as De-Facement,” “Wordsworth and the Victorians,” and “Shelley Disfigured--because together they address the difficulties of understanding the face as a figure and a figuring process.²¹

²⁰ [Anon.], “On the Science of Physiognomy”, p.651.

²¹ Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp.67-81, pp.83-92, and pp.93-123, respectively.

Following the logic of Wordsworth's *Essays upon Epitaphs* (1810), *The Prelude* (1805), and Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* (1810) extremely closely, de Man attempts to read the rhetorical patterns made by the tropological models and the tropes in these poems. So, analysing the *Essays upon Epitaphs* de Man contends that "Wordsworth's claim for restoration in the face of death. . . is grounded in a consistent system of thought, of metaphors, and of diction that is announced at the beginning of the first essay and developed throughout." And he continues:

The system passes from sun to eye to language as name and as voice. We can identify the figure that completes the central metaphor of the sun and thus completes the tropological spectrum that the sun engenders: it is the figure of prosopopoeia, the fictions of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech. Voice assumes mouth, eye, and finally face, a chain that is manifest in the etymology of the trope's name, *prosopon poien*, to confer a mask or a face (*prosopon*). Prosopopoeia is the trope of autobiography, by which one's name, as in the Milton poem, is made as intelligible and memorable as a face. Our topic deals with the giving and taking away of faces, with face and deface, *figure*, figuration and disfiguration.²²

And yet, as Cynthia Chase points out, to translate prosopopoeia as the giving of a "face" or "mask" as de Man does proffers an unusual, if not unique, reading onto this rhetorical trope.²³ The specular pattern of reversals which, according to de Man, make up Wordsworth's *Essays*, occur because of the tropological turning action of prosopopoeia as "face and deface, *figure*, figuration and disfiguration." To paraphrase de Man, prosopopoeia makes face or name through the rhetorical patterns of language and as such, it figures the face as a disembodied

²² De Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement", pp.75-76.

²³ Cynthia Chase, "Giving a Face to a Name", *Decomposing Figures: Rheotrical Readings in the Romantic Tradition* (Baltimore, MA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p.83. Chase cites the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition for prosopopoeia as "a rhetorical figure by which an imaginary or absent person is represented as speaking or acting," and she explains further, "it gives the derivation from the Greek as "*prosopon*--face, person, and *poiein*--make": De Man's translation or definition of prosopopoeia is already a reading, and is in fact a giving of face. Translating *prosopon* as "face" or "mask," and not as "person," is to imply that a face is the condition--not the equivalent--of the existence of a person. On de Man's use of tropological models, see also Neil Hertz, "Lurid Figures", and Rodolph Gasche, "Indifference to Philosophy: de Man on Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche", both in *Reading de Man Reading*, eds. Alan Waters and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp.82-104 and pp. 259-93, respectively.

figure which is detached from the face. De Man insists:

As soon as we understand the rhetorical function of prosopopoeia as positing voice or face by means of language, we also understand that what we are deprived of is not life but the shape and sense of a world accessible only in a privative way of understanding. Death is a displaced name for a linguistic predicament, and the restoration of mortality by autobiography (the prosopopoeia of the voice and the name) deprives and disfigures to the precise extent that it restores. Autobiography veils a defacement of the mind which is itself the cause.²⁴

I am aware that too overt an emphasis on de Man's rhetorical style of reading may well provide my own reading of expression with more problems than it either can or would want to solve. This is not my intention. I recognise also that deconstruction according to de Man and the Yale School of Critics has now been largely discredited, not least because of the furore over de Man's wartime activities.²⁵ But the significance of de Man's three essays on prosopopoeia is that they demonstrate an understanding of the face as a reflexive and a generative figure which, at once, posits a face as trope and deprives that face of linguistic meaning: it is a mask, a hollow form, which disguises the extent to which the face, now lost, is defaced.

While there is not a great deal of research on the face as it is figured by theories of expression, physiognomy, or the language of the emotions in the nineteenth century, the studies which do exist can be divided into quasi-biographical studies of Lavater and the influence of physiognomy in Germany; and a series of accounts which variously refer to physiognomy, legibility, the body, and the novel.²⁶ A quick glance at the most recent of these

²⁴ De Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement", p.80.

²⁵ See Cynthia Chase, ed., *Responses: To Paul de Man's Wartime Writings* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991).

²⁶ The studies worthy of note are: Maria Allentuck, "Fuseli and Lavater: Physiognomical Theory and the Enlightenment", *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 15 (1967): pp.89-112; Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); John Graham, "The Development of the Use of Physiognomy in the Novel", PhD. Diss. (Johns Hopkins University, 1960); "Character Description and Meaning in the Romantic Novel", *Studies in Romanticism*, V (1966): pp.208-18; "Lavater's Physiognomy in England", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXII (1961): pp.561-72; and *Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Bern: Lang, 1979); Richard Gray, "The Transcendence of the Body in the Transparency of its En-Signment: Johann Caspar Lavater's Physiognomical 'Surface Hermeneutics' and the Ideological (Con)text of Bourgeois Modernism", *Lessing Yearbook*, 23

texts--Ellis Shookman's edited volume *The Faces of Physiognomy*--confirms this characterisation. In no particular order, but dedicated to "judging from appearances,"²⁷ the essays discuss physiognomy as pseudo-science, Lavater, soul semiology, Lavater and Lichtenberg, Lavater and stereotype, physiognomy and caricature, physiognomic description, Balzac and physiognomy, Lavater and the novel, and, finally, perception. Although the range of these essays might seem, at first, reasonably expansive, there is a distinct lack of mobility in the accounts they give of physiognomy, perhaps because their field of reference is limited to Lavater. To be blunt, it is more than likely that the weakness of the volume lies with its refusal to consider physiognomy as anything other than a fixed system of perception which encodes human faces into types. And, although I am reluctant to admit it, this is the kind of work which calls itself interdisciplinary but which gives interdisciplinarity a bad name because it seems almost designed to prompt the reader to take the advice: for Lavater read nothing. Furthermore, Shookman's volume is by no means unique in approaching physiognomy as a stable and singular representational strategy.

Mary Cowling's study of the connection between art and anthropology in the Victorian period is another example because even though it sets out with a more rigorous agenda than the

(1991): 127-48; Ellis Shookman, ed., *The Faces of Physiognomy: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Johann Caspar Lavater* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993); Michael Shortland, "Barthes, Lavater and the Legible Body", *Economy and Society*, 14 (1985): pp.273-312; Graeme Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel: Faces and Fortunes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982); Judith Weschler, *A Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982). An important exception to these eighteenth and nineteenth century studies is Elizabeth C. Evans, "Physiognomics in the Ancient World", *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 59 (1969): pp.5-97.

²⁷ Shookman, "Preface", *The Faces of Physiognomy*, p.ix. The themes of the volume are anticipated in the soporific tones of Shookman's opening lines:

Judging from appearances is an art long considered a science under the rubric of physiognomy. Ever since antiquity, endeavours in the fields of literature, visual art, science, and philosophy have helped lend academic credence to the everyday habit of finding character revealed in facial features. Indeed, to thinkers of every stripe, physical casts and contours have seemed to signify moral, social, and aesthetic qualities that otherwise remain secret. Their writings, art-work, and research are often as subtle as strange, and many of them have been no less popular than pilloried. Physiognomy accordingly has a long, controversial, and fascinating history.

Shookman volume, Cowling quickly falls prey to the idea that physiognomy performs a stabilising role in Victorian society.²⁸ And Graeme Tytler's account of physiognomy in the European novel is a further example, though it does admit to an overtly literary bias.²⁹ Tytler's work is particularly pertinent here for he claims that the nineteenth-century European novel describes and defines "that phase in the history of Western physiognomy which, beginning in the early 1770s and ending roughly in the 1880s, may be called essentially 'Lavaterian'."³⁰ According to Tytler, the emphasis of his study is less on the "historical perspective" than on the "development of literary portraiture" which emerges from this 'Lavaterian' phenomenon: the revival of interest in physiognomy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is, therefore, determined by "various cultural forces" which, Tytler says, are profoundly literary.³¹ Tytler's assumption that the relation between what is literary and what is Lavaterian in the nineteenth

²⁸ Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art*. Cowling asserts: "in Victorian England, the encoding of human types through physiognomy, in art as in life, was a means of bringing order into an ever-increasing, even bewildering variety of human types and social classes: a localized variation of what was being performed on a global scale by anthropologists" (p.xix). There are two elements in this interpretation of the function of physiognomy in the Victorian period which concern me: first, the notion of physiognomy as a one-way process of reading order from variety; and second, that Cowling's claim to discuss the role of typology and character in Victorian art consists of frequent references to an extremely small group of mid-century genre painters, such as William Powell Frith, William Maw Egley, George Elgar Hicks, and Abraham Solomon. The problem is that the canvas of physiognomic types which Cowling delineates is too limited and too literal to reflect accurately the constitutive as well as the generative nature of the expressions of the face.

²⁹ Graeme Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel: Faces and Fortunes*.

³⁰ Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*, p.xiv. Explaining his intention, Tytler writes in full: "my main purpose. . .is to suggest how far the nineteenth-century European novel. . .may be regarded in some measure as an expression of that phase in the history of Western physiognomy which, beginning in the early 1770s and ending roughly in the 1880s, may be called essentially 'Lavaterian'."

³¹ Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*, p.xv. Tytler explains:
[. . .] in providing only a compendious survey of earlier periods of physiognomy, such as would be sufficient to enable the reader to see Lavater's achievement in some historical perspective, I was guided by two considerations: first, that the essence of earlier physiognomical thought is contained in Lavater, and secondly, that Lavater's theories (and those of his successors) have a more obvious relevance to the development of modern literary portraiture than does much physiognomical theory of the classical, medieval, and Renaissance eras.

century can be read in purely novelistic terms must be addressed here. It alarms me that Tytler suggests such a limited sense of literariness, while at the same time applying a much broader sense to the term Lavaterian; because in so doing he bestows on physiognomy in the nineteenth century a continuity and coherence which I do not think it has. Tytler papers over any suggestion that literariness could involve different languages and different acts of writing and instead pursues a singular understanding of the literary as the novel.

It is the aim of my thesis to redress this kind of inadequacy, perhaps even inaccuracy, which goes under the name of interdisciplinary studies, by conveying the reading practices and the perceptual systems, the impulses and the uncertainties, involving expression, physiognomy, and the language of the emotions over a period which spans approximately eighty years of the nineteenth century.³² I cannot deny that my research has a marked interdisciplinary aspect, yet I want to avoid bestowing upon the grammar of expression too narrow a contextual focus or too linear a model of development and, instead, to focus on the slippage of a series of mixed figures of the face between distinct disciplines, languages, and acts of writing. For the question which is asked most frequently, most pressingly, and most anxiously throughout these pages is directed at the conceptual value of the expressions of the face: how to imagine, to visualise, to read, and to describe the physiognomic fictions of the face offered by its expressions. Evocations of expression, whether given a currency by the hand, the pantomime, the female face, or the eye, as I contend, always already refer to the visible and invisible order of things. The nature of this order, however, is far from certain. What assumptions the visible order of things contains; how they are articulated; and why they reconfigure so frequently and so rapidly are some of the more obvious questions explored in the following chapters.

A word here is necessary to explain the selection of my material. As a practice and a system in the nineteenth century, physiognomy provided a visual language of the face, a

³² I base this timespan on the range of the two texts which form the parameters of this thesis. Charles Bell's *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression* was first published in 1806 whilst Francis Galton's *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* was first published in 1883.

taxonomy of signs, and a paradigmatic mode of interpretation variously referring to God, nature, and emotion. Physiognomy had, at once, a distinctively private moral face as a language of the soul, and a public typological face as a mark of character; but my studies indicate that far from functioning on a chronological narrative model, the analysis of expression operates through a series of intricate movements which place and replace, figure and refigure, the fictions of the face. To pursue this approach does pose certain questions about the material I refer to in each chapter, and the way in which I structure this material both within and between the chapters: for example, why concentrate on four metaphors (the hand, the pantomime, the female face, and the eye)?; what function do they serve and how do they relate to each other?; and why privilege aesthetic, philosophical, and scientific theories of expression rather than the accounts given in the numerous popular handbooks on physiognomy which emerged from the mid nineteenth century? Even if it is disingenuous to say so, there is, unfortunately, no easy answer to be given here. I have determined to examine a series of fictions of the face in order to illuminate the epistemological and phenomenological problems inherent in visualising the mobile, and often mixed, features of the face. Yet the very term 'fiction' should alert the reader to the sense in which I conceive of physiognomy and the language of the emotions in this period as a narrative with an (often) extremely suspect relation to fact; for the physiognomic referent is the face and the expressions which appear on its surface allude to a series of very different connections between the visible and the invisible order of things. An account of the content of my thesis should help to clarify this.

The first chapter--which provides the foundation of this study--describes the complexities inherent in the connection of the disciplines of art and anatomy in the first third of the nineteenth century. Bearing in mind that bodily examination was important to art and anatomy before the onset of the nineteenth century, I explore the resonances implicit in the education of the senses followed by both the artist and the medic undertaking the practices of dissection, observation, and drawing. I focus specifically on Bell's *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting* because this is a work which quickly became, and remained, prominent throughout the nineteenth century, and it is exemplary of the interdisciplinary relation between

art and anatomy; but I do not claim for Bell either a privileged or a radical position in this context, simply an instructive one. By drawing attention to the collaboration between Bell and Benjamin Robert Haydon, I argue that the problem Bell and his contemporaries confront is double-edged: how to represent adequately the mobile and often contradictory features of the face and how to interpret accurately the graphic forms which result. Moreover, by addressing the place of natural theology, comparative anatomy, and debates on creation and production--fuelled by the theories of French naturalists, Georges Cuvier and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck--in the connection of art to anatomy, I suggest that works such as Bell's illuminate the complex epistemological and phenomenological problems involved in visualising expression.

The second chapter examines the configuration of pictorial expression and theatrical performance in a series of early paintings by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood that cluster around John Keats' "Isabella" (1818). The paintings--Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Faust: Gretchen and Mephistopholes in Church" (1848) and "Dante Drawing an Angel on the First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice" (1848-9); William Holman Hunt's "Lorenzo at his Desk in the Warehouse" (1848-50); and John Everett Millais' "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil" (1848-9)--are important as they demonstrate the prominence of the face in formulating a representational strategy, and they affirm the close relation between art and anatomy in the visual arts of the nineteenth century. What is so striking about this particular group of paintings is the way in which the Brotherhood artists exchange specific gestures and expressions which portray the act of looking as an anxious occupation, poised between directness and indirectness or the gaze and the glance. Borrowing Ford Madox Brown's notion of a "pantomimic art," I contend that these conceptions represent the intersection of the narrative tradition of history painting with a mechanistic idea of art which thematizes its own production in the very act of being beheld. Together, the mass of detail and the evocative gestures displayed in the paintings question the Ruskinian paradox of scientific empiricism and imaginative passion and, I think, perplex the physiognomic order of the visible.

The third chapter discusses the correspondence between the figuring of the face and the construction of female identity in mid nineteenth century accounts of beauty and narratives of

sensation. Because left out of Bell's work, and explicit but not explained in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's paintings, is the function of the beautiful female face in determining the language of the emotions. With this in mind, I look at the work of Alexander Walker and Wilkie Collins, admittedly methodologically and aesthetically distinct, in order to inquire into the use of the female face as a form of physiognomic knowledge which appears to exceed the correlation of appearance to character and to indicate, instead, the precarious instability of the categories of gender and sexuality. The act of reading, scanning, interpreting sexualizes observer and observed, subject and object, interior and exterior, and throws into question the relations between male and masculine and female and feminine. What is more, it becomes clear that the female face employed to articulate this hesitancy in the sensation fiction of Wilkie Collins functions, at once, as a secretly disguised physiological and an openly displayed psychological conception of beauty.

The fourth chapter analyzes the challenge the narrative of evolution poses to the physiognomic method of interpretation through the scientific writings of Charles Darwin. I have already referred to the connection which can be drawn between Bell and Darwin through their work on expression, but what is so significant about Darwin's place in the grammar of expression is that he tries, and fails, to replace physiognomy with science. In the process of distinguishing scientific observation from physiognomic interpretation and emphasising quantification over description, what emerges in Darwin's work is a parallel and a tension between ways of classifying and ways of seeing, or, between the scientific desire to measure and the physiognomic desire to look. In particular, speculating on Darwin's lifelong study of expression, I claim that the importance of the resulting text, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), lies less with the account it gives of behavioural and social instincts, than with the rhetorical strategies Darwin employs to foreground a physiological understanding of expression. I describe the negotiation of Bell's work that Darwin undertakes in *The Expression*, and the prominent position the voyage of the *Beagle* must be given in any discussion of Darwin's theories on expression. Then, in the light of the attention I place on these intricacies of expression, observation, and interpretation, I suggest that Francis Galton's

impulse to quantify the physiognomic method of interpretation, statistically and photographically, in order to identify a composite type of face, provides a provocative addendum to Darwin's work. Because at issue here is the scientific legitimacy of the recourse to physiognomy and the language of the emotions in order to interpret the face.

II

As a preliminary to the first chapter and to accentuate the significance of Charles Bell's work, I would like to sketch the development of debates about expression, physiognomy, and the language of the emotions up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. One of the earliest philosophical treatises on physiognomy is a work generally thought to be written by pseudo-Aristotle entitled the *Physiognomica*.³³ Although there is a frequently recurring use of physiognomical observations as a rapid means of forming valid interpretations in early classical literature, pseudo-Aristotle's treatise is seen as possibly the first attempt to describe this interpretative process in more precise methodological terms. In medieval times, the interest in the rhetorical term, 'blazon' or *effictio* (meaning 'fashioning') denoted a form of personal description articulated in the erotic head-to-toe itemization of a character; whereas Renaissance writers, such as Petrarch, Quintilian, and Seneca, were drawn to the role of physiognomic signatures in the phenomenal world as a form of prophetic vision and an essential tool of medical diagnosis. Inextricably linked to the theory of signatures, physiognomy became associated with the occult practice of divination which pre-empted and even interfered with Providential design and, therefore, posed a threat both to the order of the natural world and to religious doctrine. Indeed it was from this application--that is, the consideration of

³³ For an incredibly detailed study of classical theories of physiognomy, see Elizabeth C. Evans, "Physiognomics in the Ancient World", *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 59 (1969): pp.5-97.

physiognomy as a mystical, deterministic mode of perception--that Galen notably dissented, allowing physiognomy only a minor significance as a limited source of scientific knowledge.

In England, a law passed during the later years of Elizabeth I's reign prohibited the exercise of physiognomy to the extent that anyone publicly articulating a "knowledge of phisnognomie" stood in danger of being "openly whipped untill his body be bloudey."³⁴ More than a century later, George II passed an Act of Parliament in 1743 whereby any persons "pretending to have skill in physiognomy" were condemned as "rogues and vagabonds. . . liable to be publicly whipped, or sent to the house of correction until next sessions." Strictly speaking, possession of this "knowledge" and "skill in physiognomy" was a criminal offence until 1824 despite the fact that it could be construed and invoked on widely varying principles. It could, for example, be implemented by simply engaging in the act of judging character from the features of the face or the form and lineaments of the body; or by making a representation or portrait of the face; or, more recklessly, by foretelling future destiny from the lines of the face and hand. An entry in the fourth edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1810) devotes more than six pages to an exposition of the historical development and the major theorists of physiognomy. Physiognomy, it proclaims, "is a word formed from the Greek for *nature*, and *I know*," evolving from what naturalists term the theory of signatures and coming to mean "the knowledge of the *internal* properties of *any* corporeal existence from the *external* appearances."³⁵ Furthermore, it explains that physiognomies "among physicians, denote such signs as, being taken from the countenance, serve to indicate the state, disposition, &c. both of the body and mind: and hence the art of reducing these signs to practice is termed *physiognomy*." It was, nevertheless, the physiognomic capacity for prediction and

³⁴ John Arbuthnot, *Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus, written in collaboration by the members of the Scriblerus Club*, ed., C. Kerby-Miller (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950), p.208.

³⁵ *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 4th ed., 20 vols. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1810), XVI, p.439. It is worth noting that the *Encyclopaedia* describes the usage of signatures as "those external marks by which physiognomists and other dabblers in the occult sciences pretend to discover the nature and internal qualities of every thing on which they are found."

determinism in particular which frightened and unsettled the public. With this brief survey of the fictions of the face in mind, I want now to try to show how an understanding of physiognomy is subsumed within any study of expression; indeed, it is possible to claim that any emphasis on physiognomy rather than expression evolves because the former presents the promise of a method of interpretation, whilst the latter offers no such promise.

The study of expression was, to the artists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a study of the passion of the soul represented through the gestures and features of the face and body. According to Charles LeBrun's *Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière*, delivered to the Parisian Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1668, for instance, the pineal gland in the middle of the brain receives the images of the passions for the soul, but it is, somewhat surprisingly, the eyebrows, not the eyes, that actually represent the passions.³⁶ As Jennifer Montagu makes clear, Le Brun's study of expression is derived from Descartes' physiological theory of the mind which divides the passions into simple and mixed, and also the traditional scholastic division of the passions into two appetites (the concupiscible for the simple passions like love, hatred, desire, joy and sorrow, and the irascible for the mixed passions like fear, courage, hope, despair, anger, and fright). Concentrating on the eyebrows in this scheme, Le Brun asserted that there were four movements, depending on whether the passion was concupiscible or irascible, simple or mixed (Figure 1): "[the movement of the eyebrows] which rises up towards the brain expresses all the gentlest and mildest passions," LeBrun observes, and "that which slopes down towards the heart represents all the wildest and cruellest passions"³⁷; and "in proportion as these passions change their nature, the movement of the eyebrow changes its form, for to express a simple passion the movement is simple, and,

³⁶ For an informative study of Le Brun's theory of expression as recognition of the expressive potential of colour and landscape, and a physiognomic system, see Jennifer Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions: The Origin and Influence of Charles LeBrun's 'Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière'* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994). Norman Bryson also discusses Le Brun in *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

³⁷ Cited by Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions*, pp.126-28.

if it is mixed, the movement is also mixed; if the passion is gentle, so is the movement, and if it is violent, the movement is violent.”³⁸ Le Brun’s lectures on expression and physiognomics--reconstructed from surviving texts and drawings, and the recollections of Nivelon, Le Brun’s former assistant--were based on three key areas of research: the heads of ancient rulers and philosophers with historically defined characters (Figure 2); the comparison of the heads of men and animals; and specific studies of the eyes of men and animals (Figure 3). It is, nonetheless, significant that Le Brun’s theory is not confined to the observation of human form; for it is impossible to ignore the striking similarity between Le Brun’s heads of men and animals and Giovanni Battista della Porta’s study of man-animal physiognomy (Figure 4) in his *Della fisionomia dell’uomo*, translated into French in 1655 and 1665, and surely familiar to Le Brun.³⁹

³⁸ Cited by Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions*, p.128.

³⁹ Giovanni Battista della Porta, *Della fisionomia dell’uomo* (Padua, 1623). Della Porta’s earlier work is also of interest here, see *De Humana physiognomia* (Vico Equense, 1586). For a more detailed analysis of the overlap between della Porta and Le Brun, see Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions*, pp.20-30.

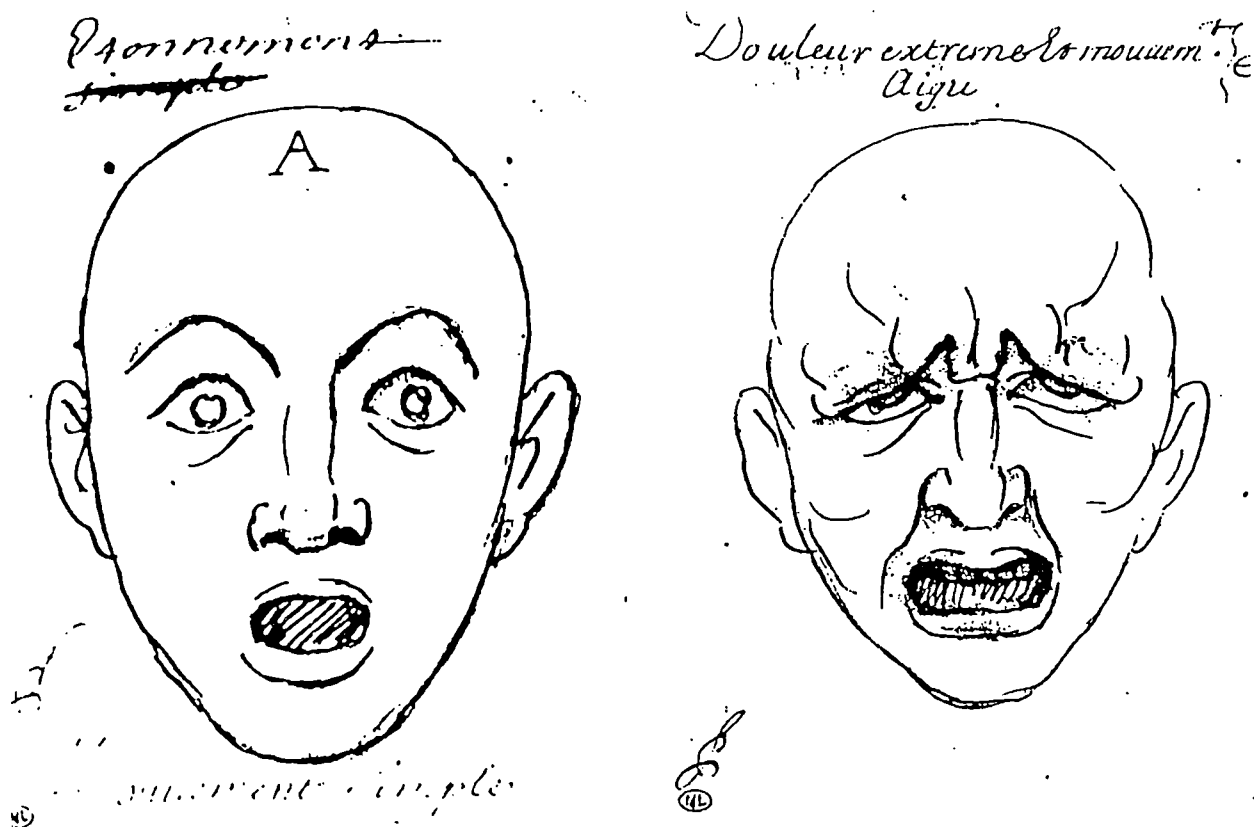


Figure 1 Charles Le Brun, *Etonnement--mouvement simple; Mouvement composé; Attention; Douleur extreme et mouvement Aigu*, black ink over chalk, 14 x 10.5cm. (Paris: Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins, 1698); rpt. in Jennifer Montagu, *The Expressions of the Passions: The Origin and Influence of Charles Le Brun's "Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière"* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), p.129.

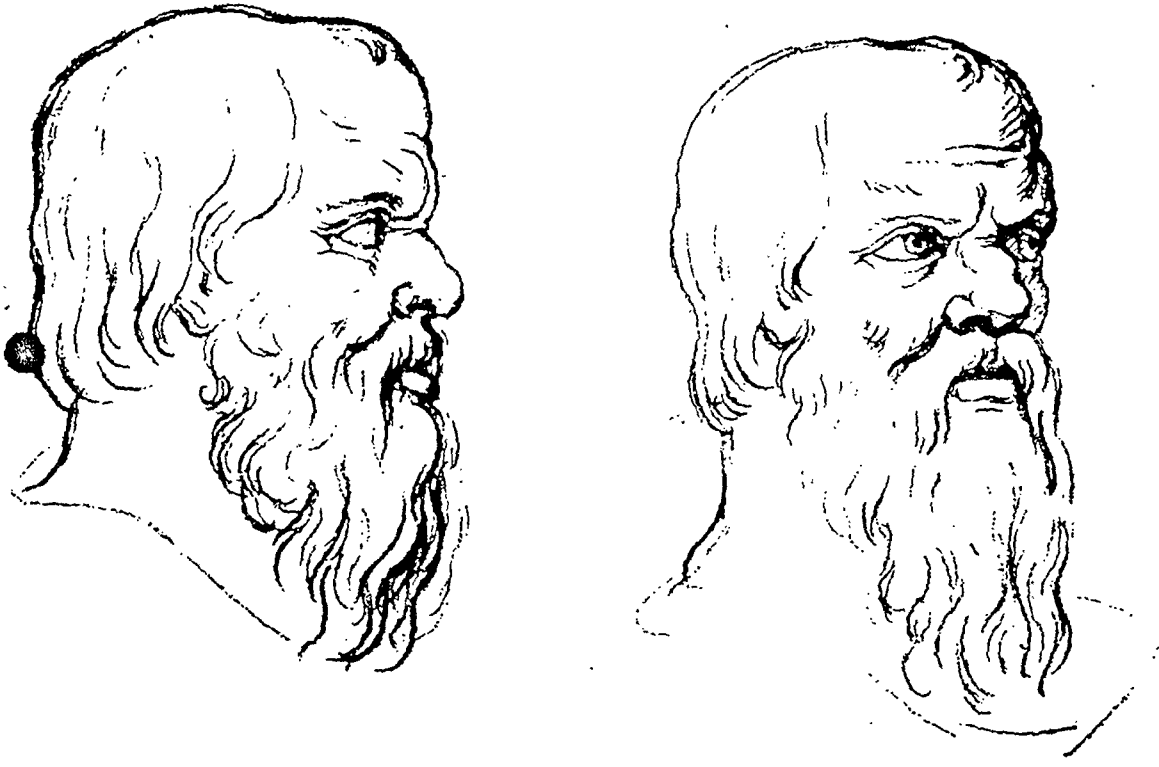


Figure 2 Charles Le Brun, *Socrates*, engraving (Paris, 1698); rpt. in Montagu, *The Expressions of the Passions*, p.21.

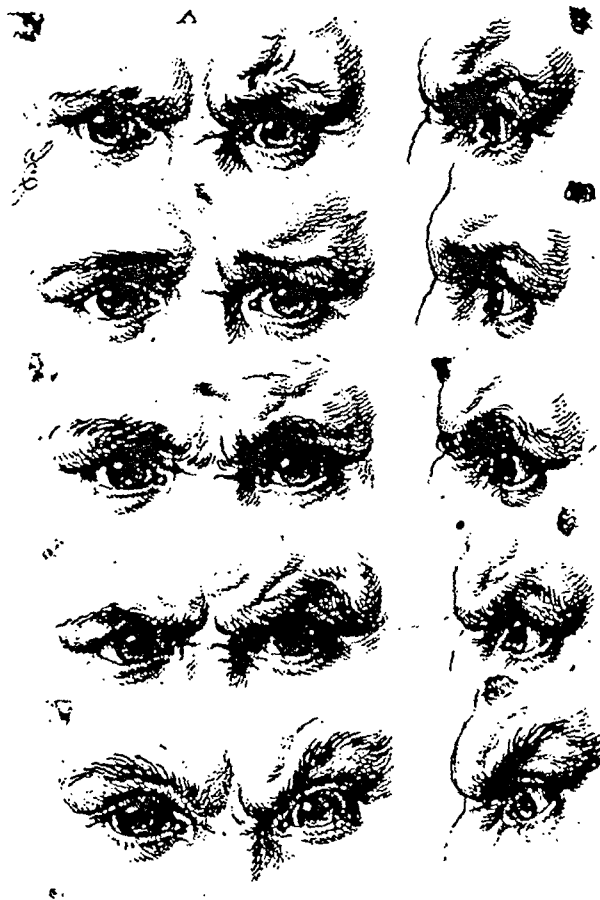


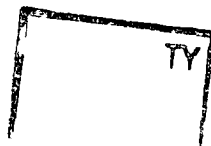
Figure 3 Charles Le Brun, *Studies of Human Eyes and Eyebrows*, engraving, (Paris, 1698); rpt. in Montagu, *The Expressions of the Passions*, p.29.



Figure 4 Charles Le Brun, *Boar-Man and Pig-Man*, engraving, (Paris, 1698):
rpt. in Montagu, *The Expressions of the Passions*, p.20.



Figure 5 Giovanni Battista della Porta, *Bull-Man*, engraving (Padua, 1623):
rpt. in Montagu, *The Expressions of the Passions*, p.20.



To Johann Caspar Lavater, what is of central importance to the establishment of a physiognomic theory of expression is the construction of an alphabetical system of representation designed to firmly, and indisputably, fix the unity of character in a hierarchical scheme of spiritual recognition.⁴⁰ Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy; Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*--first published in Germany (1775-8)⁴¹--reinvigorated the public fascination with reading the features of the body as signs of internal character and provided for the popular development of physiognomy in the middle of the nineteenth-century as a paradigmatic discourse of the face; for Lavater emphasises the decoding of the inner, and decidedly moral, character from the outer signs. "Let it always be recollected," Lavater counsels, "that the external characters are designed to unfold the internal; that every species of human knowledge must quickly cease, if we should lose the faculty of judging the interior form from the exterior."⁴² "What is to observe?," asks Lavater, and then, answering his own question, he replies:

⁴⁰ I would like to point out that although I am familiar with James Parsons' Crounian lecture, "Human Physiognomy Explain'd: In the Crounian Lectures on Muscular Motion for the year MDCCXLVI", *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 44 (1747): pp.1-82; I have omitted it from this account for the sake of clarity.

⁴¹ Lavater's work was first published in England in a five volume edition, *Essays on Physiognomy; Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, trans. Henry Hunter, 5 vols. (London, 1789), shortly followed by a three volume edition, *Essays on Physiognomy; for the Promotion of the Knowledge and Love of Mankind; Written in the German Language by J. C. Lavater, and Translated into English by Thomas Holcroft*, trans. Thomas Holcroft, 3 vols. (London, 1789-93). There were several other editions published in the 1790s, most notably by Samuel Shaw, C. Moore, and George Grenville, but it was Holcroft's edition that was reissued more than eighteen times over the succeeding eighty years. Priced at three shillings and sixpence, Holcroft's version generated the wider public audience which Lavater had originally intended whereas Hunter's three guinea edition proved to be accessible and attractive to only a very small number of the middle classes; and it is interesting to note that Holcroft's edition of Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* (1789-93) was produced in abridged versions in 1793; 1800; 1806; 1808; and 1825. There is, however, an implicit irony that it was Holcroft's edition of Lavater's work that commanded a large audience because the two men had strikingly different allegiances--to radicalism and divinity respectively--and yet formed a peculiar, if indirect, partnership to instruct the reading public in the subtleties of physiognomical interpretation. I shall be referring to Holcroft's edition throughout this chapter.

⁴² Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, I, p.83.

[It is] to form a clear and distinct idea of what distinguishes, determines. . . , renders it what it is--in a word, to acquire such an accurate perception of the individual qualities of an object, separately, and in their combination, as never to confound the characters which belong to it, with those which distinguish other objects, whatever resemblance there may be between them.⁴³

But, as he explains elsewhere, this language of contrast involves not only the recognition of “the individual qualities of an object,” but also the “comparison,. . . classification,. . . [and] approximation of objects” into a series of types.

Although his system of physiognomical perception is based on what he readily admits to be a commonsense response to the human form couched within a theological context, Lavater strives throughout his work to align this empirical process of observation and experiment with a scientific method of analysis. Without disavowing its public and, perhaps, political appeal, it is clear from the emphasis on the technicalities of physical description that Lavater anticipated the importance of his work to lie with artistic and medical practitioners. It is known, for example, that in addition to Holcroft, Mary Wollstonecraft translated Lavater’s work in 1788; Henry Fuseli and Mathew Lewis were ardent supporters, and William Godwin a more grudging one.⁴⁴

Rather than accept physiognomy as merely an art of heightened intuition or, worse, as a mystical practice, Lavater attempts to synthesise the concerns of art and science to form a system of perception wherein the external features of the human figure are the symbolic characters of a scientific mode of classification: “every truth, every species of knowledge, which has distinct signs [and] which is founded on clear and certain principles, is scientific; and it is so, as far as it can be communicated by words, images, rules, determinations.” And he goes on:

The only question, therefore, is to determine if the striking and incontestable difference of human physiognomies and forms may be perceived not only in an obscure and confused manner, but whether it be not possible to fix the

⁴³ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, I, p.108.

⁴⁴ See Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*, pp.123-65, for details of the influence Lavater exerted on these late eighteenth century writers.

characters, the signs, the expression of that difference; in other words, whether it be possible to class them scientifically.⁴⁵

Although Lavater never gives any immediate examples of the source of these frozen figures, his work is illustrated throughout by recourse to over 800 contemporary and historical figures--political and religious leaders, royalty, philosophers, artists, and poets, predominantly male--who lend his work a certain authority (Figures 6 and 7). The combination of these figures presents a visual narrative which, to put it rather crudely, is held together by its interpretation of dead bodies and statues.

The corpse and the Antique cast provide just the paralysed state of "rest" with its fixed expressions which Lavater speaks about. Because what Lavater terms "the combination and play of the feature"⁴⁶ and "the various changes and transitions, or what is called the play, of the features"⁴⁷ is not the action and reaction of the features of the body but the interplay between different examples of the same object embodied in various shapes. He explains:

Every judgement we form is, properly speaking, nothing but comparison, and classification; nothing more than the approximation of objects, and the contrasting those we do not know, with those of which we have some knowledge. . . Every term which expresses a general idea, is nothing but the name of a class of things, or of the properties, the qualities which resemble each other, and which differ nevertheless in many respects.⁴⁸

And yet, it is only by fixing the "characteristic signs" of the human figure, based upon the model of the fixed, legible body found in the art academies and dissecting room, that Lavater is able to advance this essentialist language of the perception.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, I, p.63.

⁴⁶ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, I, p.4.

⁴⁷ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, I, p.17.

⁴⁸ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, I, pp.104-105.

⁴⁹ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, I, p.69. Lavater describes his purpose in full as "to discover what is evidently determined in the features, and to fix the characteristic signs, the expression of which is generally acknowledged."



Figure 6 Johann Caspar Lavater, *Heads of Literary Men*, engraving, *Essays on Physiognomy* (London, 1789-93), I, p.1.



Figure 7 Johann Caspar Lavater, *Heads of Contemporary Men*, engraving, *Essays on Physiognomy*, (London: 1789-93), I, p.216.

Even though the expert artistic and medical practitioners of physiognomy possess the skill to open up a panoramic spectacle of the contours of the heart, brain, and soul from the observation of the body, in so doing they reveal the theoretical problems faced by Lavater in trying to mediate the experiential basis of physiognomy with more esoteric principles. “Physiognomy. . . is a new eye,” exclaims Lavater, “a source of delicate and sublime sensations. . . which perceives in the creation a thousand traces of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, and which contemplates in a new point of view, the adorable Author of Human Nature, who possessed the skill to introduce so much truth and harmony into this work of his hands.”⁵⁰ This “new eye” and “new point of view” is a sense of perspective which enriches the observer for it requires a penetrative movement into the internal form of the observed whereby spectator and spectacle fleetingly merge into one:

With secret ecstasy the benevolent Physiognomist penetrates into the interior of his fellow-creature, and there perceives the noblest dispositions, at least the germs of them, which will not perhaps be completely unfolded till the world to come. He distinguishes in characters what is original from what is the effect of habit, and what is habitual from that which is accidental: thus he judges Man only by himself.⁵¹

The “benevolent Physiognomist” foretells the “noblest dispositions” from the human figure by separating originality from habit and habit from accident. There is, however, a difficulty here because as long as the physiognomist judges man according to the sensations of his own body there can be no place for Lavater’s objective model of the legible body to provide a structured system of perception: “the benevolent Physiognomist. . . judges Man only by himself.”

Such was the appeal of Lavaterian physiognomy as a source of character reading in the early years of the nineteenth century, that an article in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* for 1808 suggests that written references could be replaced by a Lavaterian system of decoding the face of prospective employees:

The giving of characters, a duty which is seldom faithfully performed, either

⁵⁰ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, I, p.77.

⁵¹ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, I, p.77.

from pique or want of discernment, might have been dispensed with, each applicant carrying a certificate in his, or her forehead, eyes, nose, or chin, and would have been readily supplied with places, according as their masters had a confidence in one feature more than another.⁵²

However ludicrous this notion of certificating the face according to prescribed codes of perception now appears, it is difficult to deny that Lavater's work became popular precisely because it appeared to avoid constructing any elitist barriers for its use. The face is interpreted as a resource of signs which were directly connected to and indicative of the emotional, intellectual, and, most importantly, the moral life of the individual. Over seventy years after its original publication, the eighth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1853-60) described Lavater's *Essays* in sensationalist and somewhat hyperbolic terms. "Its publication created everywhere a profound sensation," it claims, and continues: "admiration, resentment, and fear were cherished towards the author. The discoverer of the new science was everywhere flattered or pilloried; and in many places, where the study of human character from the face became an epidemic, the people went masked through the streets."⁵³

So, far from stabilizing the notions of taste and connoisseurship inscribed in the visual languages of the eighteenth century, Le Brun's and Lavater's theories of expression and physiognomy signal a distinction, and potential disjunction, between aesthetic and semiological concerns. To introduce Bell to the discussion, however, is to suggest a rather different approach. Because according to Bell--like Le Brun, writing with a specific artistic audience in mind--the physiognomic theory of expression presents a series of signs that hover uncertainly between natural and artificial performance. As the site of production for the signs of expression, the face is a complex formation and combination of sensation and motion and, as such, the

⁵² [Anon.], "The Projector, No. XC", *The Gentleman's Magazine*, LXXVIII (1808): p.1085. An earlier issue of the periodical states that: "a servant would, at one time, scarcely be hired till the descriptions and engravings of Lavater had been consulted, in careful comparison with the lines and features of the young man's or woman's countenance" *The Gentleman's Magazine*, LXXI (1801): p.124.

⁵³ *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 8th ed., 22 vols. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1853-60), XVIII, p.576.

place of endless activity. The signs of expression make up a complex linguistic system designed to display what Bell describes as “the characters of living action,” according to the anatomical structure, physiological organisation, and psychological anxieties that motivate the expressive features of the face.⁵⁴ So, far from being simply an arbitrary, self-generating, semiological model of production, the face is, to Bell, a form that depends for its expressive identity on the relation between the signs of face and the sensation and motion that produce those signs; a relation, that is, between the external surface of the face and its internal movements, that physiognomists traditionally claimed refers to God.

By encoding the signs of the face as letters that can be put together to make up a grammar of expression, Bell allows for the process of making that, in large part, determines the movements of expression. Indeed, it is important to remember that the Latin form of the word face, ‘facere,’ meaning ‘to make,’ connotes this process of making. There is, however, a problem here because the difficulty of observing accurately the signs of one’s own face as they are produced, forces the eye to look to other faces for a means of comprehending the signs of expression. The signs of one’s face are only ever interpreted in relation to the signs of other faces, and, as such, they depend upon a language of contrast, difference, and identification for articulation. Figured as the physical space of production for the signs of expression, the face participates in a process of making identities, fictions of the face, which translates and combines physical, experiential forms into letters and icons, or verbal and visual signs. And if we now turn to look more closely at Bell’s work and the structures and the representations of expression that he examines, then we can understand more clearly the particular difficulties involved in making visual these fictions of the face which, in the preface to the first edition of his essays he described as the “certain character to be given to the body. . .legibly impressed on the whole figure, and prescribing every motion and position of the body.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Charles Bell, *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1806), p.204.

⁵⁵ Bell, *Essays on Anatomy*, p.ii.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SIGN IN THE EYE OF WHAT IS KNOWN TO THE HAND: VISUALISING EXPRESSION IN CHARLES BELL'S ESSAYS ON ANATOMY.



MADNESS

Figure 8 Charles Bell, *Madness*, (1806), engraving, *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression, as Connected with the Fine Arts*, 7th ed. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1877), p.160.

I

In a letter, written in 1805, Charles Bell, skilled anatomist, surgeon, draughtsman, and physiologist, offers his interpretation, diagnostically and pictorially, of the character of madness for his brother's response. "Tell me," he asks, referring to his sketch of madness (Figure 8), "if this man be mad enough." With a discrete apology for the exploratory nature of his work, Bell continues:

The idea I give of madness is, that it is a mixed expression,--a fierceness united to terror,--and, like that of a brute, takes its origin in apprehension. The history of madness supports this idea. The general character--sooty black, stiff, bushy hair,--large deep-coloured veins, muscular, rigid,--his skin bound,--his features sharp,--his eyes sunk: his body is shrunk together as if afraid, but there is a defect--a want of wildness in the eyes of this figure. This will be given by showing a little of the white above the iris.¹

Although Bell admits to the similarity between his drawing and one by Fuseli in Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*, the physiognomy of madness that he describes revises Lavater's notion of the essential unity of expression by focusing on the character of "mixed expression," and the relation between intellect and physical expression or, to put it more crudely, between mind and muscle. The version of the madman that Bell reproduces in the first edition of his *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression*², is one in which the intersection of fear and ferocity, and the animal-like "apprehension," appears to inflect the operation of mental and muscular energy and produce the "knitting of the eyebrows, and the peculiar conformation of the lips

¹ Charles Bell, *Letters of Charles Bell*, ed. G.J. Bell (London: John Murray, 1870), pp.48-49.

² Charles Bell, *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1806). A second edition was published as *Essays on the Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression*, 2nd ed. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1824); and a substantially revised third edition was issued as *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression as Connected with the Fine Arts*, 3rd ed. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1844). Enduring proof of the widespread appeal of Bell's book in the nineteenth century is confirmed in the subsequent publication details for editions were published in 1847, 1865, 1873 (New York), 1877, and 1890. Unless otherwise stated in the text, I shall be referring to the seventh edition (1877)--in the abbreviated form of *The Anatomy*--throughout this chapter. References to the first edition will be abbreviated as *Essays on Anatomy*.

from the orbicular muscle.”³ But although the muscles responsible for this face of madness appear to produce an expression which resembles that of an animal, Bell is careful to point out that animals do not have these muscles. Having observed the “smoothness of the brow” exhibited on the countenance of madmen, Bell suggests that “when the mind is quite gone, the muscles lose their action” because he adds somewhat tautologically, “the action of the muscles are never in action when the mind is destroyed.”⁴

Assuming that madness is a disease that obstructs and, indeed, corrodes the activity of the mind, Bell’s madman does not display the characteristic traits of madness, later more clearly described in *The Anatomy* as that “peculiar look of ferocity amidst the utter wreck of the intellect.”⁵ Bell goes on to pronounce with incredible precision:

To represent the prevailing character and physiognomy of a madman, the body should be strong and the muscles rigid and distinct, the skin bound, the features sharp, the eye sunk; the colour of dark brownish yellow, tintured with sallowness, without one spot of enlivening carnation; the hair sooty black, stiff and bushy.⁶

This prototype figure of madness is, it would seem, according to Bell’s theory of mind-muscle, not mad at all.⁷ It is, rather, the expression of a contradiction—a “mixed expression”

³ Bell, *Letters*, p.52.

⁴ Bell, *Letters*, p.52.

⁵ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.161.

⁶ Bell, *The Anatomy*, pp.160-61.

⁷ The study of madness in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is well-documented. See, for example, William F. Bynum, *Medical Fringe and Medical Orthodoxy, 1750-1850* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); William F. Bynum, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd, eds., *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, 3 vols. (London: Routledge, 1985-88); Anne Digby, *From York Lunatic Asylum to Bootham Park Hospital* (University of York: Borthwick Papers, 1986), no. 69; Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity*, (1961), trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984); Sander L. Gilman, *The Face of Madness* (New York, NY: Brunner/Mazel, 1976); “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature”, *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (1985): pp.204-42; and *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); Roy Porter, “Madness and its Institutions”, *Medicine in Society: Historical Essays*, ed. Andrew Wear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.277-301; Andrew Tennant Scull, *Museums of Madness: The Social Organization of*

and a dialectical figure--functioning through the co-operation of mind and muscle, which plays out a complex and synecdochic relation between the parts and the whole of the face. Moreover, it is interesting that although Bell draws the full figure of the madman, what he actually describes is specifically focussed on the face, that is, the head detached from, but representative of, the expression of the whole body; and although only one of Bell's essays in *The Anatomy* discusses the whole body, seven out of the remaining nine essays concentrate on the form and features of the face.

Born in Edinburgh in 1774, Bell received his early training in "Arts of Surgery & Pharmacy" as an apprentice to his elder brother John, Professor of Medicine at the Edinburgh School of Medicine.⁸ Whilst still a medical student in Edinburgh, Bell published *A System of Dissections, Explaining the Anatomy of the Human Body, the Manner of Displaying the Parts, and their Varieties in Disease*, (1798), a work of consummate detail which displayed an impressive enough knowledge to secure Bell's position alongside his elder brother, John, as an expert in anatomy and surgery.⁹ Together with his brothers--John and George--in Edinburgh, Bell was part of a large circle of men including Francis Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, and Henry Brougham, founders of *The Edinburgh Review* (1802)¹⁰; and was strongly influenced by the

Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982); V. Skultans, *Madness and Morals: Ideas on Insanity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1975).

⁸ *Sir Charles Bell, His Life and Times*, ed. G. Gordon-Taylor and E.W. Walls (Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone Ltd., 1958), pp.178-80. The indenture states quite clearly:

Charles Bell hereby becomes bound apprentice to the said John Bell in his Calling of Surgery and Pharmacy for the space of five years. . . During which space the said Charles Bell binds & obliges himself to serve the said John Bell faithfully & honestly by day & night holy day & work day and shall not hear of his masters damage at any time during the said space without giving notice thereof to him and hindering it to the utmost of his power.

⁹ Charles Bell, *A System of Dissections, explaining the Anatomy of the Human Body, the manner of Displaying the Parts, and their Varieties in Disease*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme, 1810).

¹⁰ A letter from Francis Jeffrey to Henry Horner on hearing of Bell's imminent departure from Edinburgh to London, affirms Bell's repute, and, at the same time, translates the image of London into that of a mental institution. Jeffrey writes melodramatically:

late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century Scottish medical and philosophical traditions.¹¹ It is, perhaps, significant that in addition to the various editions of his *Essays on Anatomy*, and his *System of Dissections*, Bell produced a further textbook on anatomy, *Engravings of the Arteries, of the Nerves and of the Brain* (1801-2)--two papers for the Royal Society--"Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain," (1820) and "On the Nerves of the Face," (1829)-- three texts with natural theological themes--*The Hand: Its Mechanisms and Vital Endowments as Evincing Design* (1833); *Animal Mechanics, or, Proofs of Design in the Animal Frame* (1838); and *Familiar Treatises on the Five Senses* (1841), and an edition of Paley's *Natural Theology*, with Henry Brougham.¹² Furthermore, Bell was involved in a long-running, and often heated,

All the world migrates towards London. My good friend Charles Bell is about to follow your bad example; he has almost determined to fly and establish himself in the great asylum. I have a warm regard and esteem for him. I can assure you that you will find him extremely unassuming, intelligent, honourable, grateful.

Cited in G.Gordon-Taylor and E.W. Walls, *Sir Charles Bell, His Life and Times*, p.12.

¹¹ I am thinking here of Scottish moral philosophical writers such as Thomas Reid, Robert Whytt, Dugald Stewart, Thomas Brown--and slightly later James Mill--who were interested in the growth of physiological ideas within the sensualist tradition of John Locke, David Hartley, and Joseph Hume, and the French school of Condillac, Tracy, Cabanis, Richerand, and Magendie. For general surveys of the importance of the Scottish school, see G. Bryson, *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1945); S. Grave, *The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960); and R. Olsen, *Scottish Philosophy and British Physics 1750-1880* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975). For studies of the French school, see S. Deane, "The Perception and Reputation of Some Thinkers of the French Enlightenment in England between 1789 and 1824", PhD. Diss. (University of Cambridge, 1968); and A. Vartanian, *Diderot and Descartes: A Study of Scientific Naturalism in the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960). See also Karl Figlio, "Theories of Perception and the Physiology of Mind in the Late Eighteenth Century", *History of Science*, 12 (1975): pp.177-212; and "The Metaphor of Organization: An Historiographical Perspective on the Bio-Medical Sciences of the Early Nineteenth Century", *History of Science*, 14 (1976): pp.17-53; and Roger Smith, "The Background of Physiological Psychology in Natural Philosophy", *History of Science*, 11 (1973): pp.75-123; for more specific accounts of the predominance of the nervous system in physiological writings of this time.

¹² Charles Bell, "Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain", *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, (London, 1811), *Selections from the Writings of Sir Charles Bell. Medical Classics*, I (1936): pp.105-120; "On the Nerves; giving an Account of some Experiments on their Structure and Functions, which lead to a New Arrangement of the System", *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 111 (1821): pp.398-424; "On the Nerves of the Face. Being a Second Paper on That Subject", *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* (London, 1829), *Selections from the Writings of Sir Charles Bell. Medical Classics*, I (1936): pp.154-69; *The Hand: Its Mechanisms and Vital Endowments as Evincing Design* (London: William Pickering, 1833); *Animal Mechanics, or,*

debate with Françoise Magendie concerning what is now perceived to be their joint discovery of the sensory and motor functions of the spinal nerves.¹³

The first edition of Bell's study of expression, *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression*, inscribed "to Sir Joseph Banks from the author as a testimony of very sincere respect," consists of six essays which address the fundamental importance of understanding expression in the disciplines of art and anatomy.¹⁴ Starting with "Uses of Anatomy to the Painter," and concluding with "Of the Economy of the Living Body as it relates to Expression and Character in Painting," the essays attempt to articulate the visual language of the face in terms of the form of the head, the muscles of the face, and the changes which occur from infancy to age and, in so doing, to provide a graphic account of the difficulty of reading and representing the face.

Bell explains in a meandering passage from the sixth essay:

In every possible condition and state of existence there is a certain character to be given to the body. It is alive or dead; still or in motion; it has the spirit and buoyant spring of youth, the massiness of manly strength, the grace and elegance of female beauty, or the

Proofs of Design in the Animal Frame, Library of Useful Knowledge. Natural Philosophy IV (London: Baldwin & Craddock, 1838); *Familiar Treatises on the Five Senses, being an account of the conformation and functions of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, illustrated by twenty colour plates* (London: Henry Washbourne, 1841); and William Paley, *Natural Theology*, ed. Charles Bell and Henry Brougham (London, 1836).

¹³ For contemporaneous accounts of this debate, see [Anon.], "Mr Bell on the Nervous System", *Edinburgh Medical Journal* 25 (1826): pp.106-134; Alexander Shaw, *Narrative of the Discoveries of Sir Charles Bell in the Nervous System* (London: Longmans, 1839); *An Account of Sir Charles Bell's Discoveries in the Nervous System* (London: Longman, 1860); and *Reprint of Idea of A New Anatomy of the Brain, together with extracts of letters showing the origin and progress of his discoveries in the nervous system* (London: Macmillan, 1868); John Shaw, "An Account of Some Experiments on the Nerves; by M. Magendie: with Some Observations by J. Shaw, Esq., Lecturer on Anatomy in Great Windmill Street", *London Medical and Physical Journal*, 48 (1822): pp.95-104; and "Remarks on M. Magendie's Late Experiments Upon the Nerves", *London Medical and Physical Journal*, 52 (1824); and R. Todd, "Physiology of the Nervous System", *Cyclopedia of Anatomy and Physiology*, ed. R. Todd, 5 vols. (London, 1835-59). See also Paul F. Cranefield, *The Way In and the Way Out: François Magendie, Charles Bell, and the Roots of the Spinal Nerves* (New York, NY: Futura, 1974); and Robert M. Young, "Experimental Sensory-Motor Physiology and the Association Psychology", *Mind, Brain and Adaptation in the Nineteenth Century: Cerebral Localization and its Biological Context from Gall to Ferrier* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp.54-100.

¹⁴ It may be useful to point out a statue of Joseph Banks--Professor of Anatomy at the Royal Academy--completed by Francis Chantrey in 1826 can be found displayed prominently on the first landing of the grand staircase at the Natural History Museum, London.

cautious timidity and constrained motions and postures of old age, legibly impressed on the whole figure, and prescribing every motion and position of the body.¹⁵

The body acquires character according to age and gender, says Bell, receiving the marks of this character as legible impressions on a temporal scale which encompasses living and dead, static and dynamic forms simultaneously. A comparison of the contents of the first edition of 1806 with the revised third edition of 1844 gives an interesting insight into the nature of these legible impressions, not to mention the shifting priorities in the study of expression, and the intellectual preoccupations of the different cultural moments of these editions.¹⁶ The differences of the essay titles apart, there are two elements, in particular, which are striking. First, the emphasis placed on expression as a distinctively moral language of the soul, communicated by the muscular signs of the face. And second, the way in which this physiognomic translation from experiential to verbal and visual modes of perception is complicated by Bell's model of neurological activity which rejects from the established idea of

¹⁵ Bell, *Essays on Anatomy*, pp.178-79.

¹⁶ The index to the first edition reads:

- Essay I. Uses of Anatomy to the Painter.
- Essay II. Of the Skull and Form of the Head.
- Essay III. Of the Muscles of the Face in Man and Animals.
- Essay IV. Of the Expression of Passion.
- Essay V. Idea of a Living Principle in the Expression of Emotion.
- Essay VI. Of the Economy of the Living Body as it relates to Expression and Character in Painting.

Whereas the index to the third edition is revised as follows:

- Essay I. Theory of Beauty in the Countenance.
- Essay II. Changes from Infancy from Age.
- Essay III. Of those Sources of Expression in the Countenance which cannot be explained on the Idea of a Direct Influence of the Mind Upon the Features.
- Essay IV. Of the Muscles of the Face in Man.
- Essay V. Of the Expression of Passion.
- Essay VI. Of Expression in the Human Countenance.
- Essay VII. Of Pain.
- Essay VIII. Of Expression in Reference to the Body.
- Essay IX. The Study of Anatomy as Necessary to Design.
- Essay X. Uses of Anatomy to the Painter.

the whole brain as a “common sensorium.”¹⁷

Bell’s work is concerned with not only how to read and represent adequately the mobile, and often mixed, expressions of the face, but also how to conceptualise these expressions in a context which purports to be both moral and physiological, or, in general terms, physiognomic and scientific. Some sixty-six years on from the first publication of Bell’s *The Anatomy* one can recognise the same movement between a physiognomic and a scientific interpretation of the face, though inflected in a slightly different manner, in Charles Darwin’s *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, (1872).¹⁸ But whilst the intervening years from Bell to Darwin witnessed an increasing uncertainty regarding the order and organization of the natural world, exacerbated by the theories of evolution propagated by Charles Lyell, William Whewell, and, of course, Darwin; the reconstruction of nature’s own order—which we are sometimes led to believe Darwin singlehandedly undertook—cannot simply be explained in terms of the erasure of a physiognomic by a scientific order of the visible world. A more accurate model might be found by superimposing Claude Bernard’s description of the history of medicine as a movement from theological to empirical to scientific

¹⁷ Bell, “Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain”, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, (London, 1811), *Selections from the Writings of Sir Charles Bell. Medical Classics*, I (1936): pp.105-106. Bell writes in full:

The prevailing doctrine of the anatomical schools is, that the whole brain is a common sensorium that the extremities of the nerves are organized, so that each is fitted to receive a peculiar impression; or that they are distinguished from each other only by delicacy of structure, and by a corresponding delicacy of sensation; that the nerve of the eye, for example, differs from the nerves of touch only in the degree of its sensibility.

See Figlio, “Theories of Perception and the Physiology of the Mind in the Late Eighteenth Century”, for a detailed analysis of the model of the brain as a ‘common sensorium’ which “underlay and organized late eighteenth century thought on the nature of brain structure and function, on the relationship between the psychological and the physiological, and on the nervous system as a common substrate of mind and body” (pp.177-78).

¹⁸ Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, (London: John Murray, 1872); rpt. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1965). See also Chapter Four of this thesis: “The Human Countenance in the Social Economy of the World: Picturing Descent and Measuring Development in the Scientific Writings of Charles Darwin and Francis Galton”, pp.187-242.

concerns onto the natural order of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Yet I argue, throughout this thesis, that the grammar of expression resists this kind of linear model of development and presents instead a series of figures, mixed figures, at once reflexive and generative, which slip across physiognomic practices and cultural moments. Because to use the terms physiognomy and science, as I do, to refer both to an order of the visible world and a method of interpretation, quickly renders the two terms interchangeable; in fact, they seem almost to collapse into each other, and quite deliberately so. Let me explain.

Bell's representation of a madman who is not actually mad brilliantly articulates the nature of mixed expression as a figure of embodiment and surplus which contains and moves beyond its constitutive knowledge. The madman is described in terms of a sequence of physical signs which read the nature of his condition from the surface of his body: "the idea I give of madness is, that it is a mixed expression,--a fierceness united to terror,--and, like that of a brute, takes its origin in apprehension. The history of madness supports this idea."²⁰ This is a physiognomic description of character because it defines the external features of the body according to an internal function, namely, madness. And yet, it is also a scientific description of character for it assumes that the evidence of this madness can be determined through a comparative study of suitably mad specimens. At their crudest levels, physiognomy and science could be separated on the basis of their respective theological and objective impulses. However, Bell's work on the connection between the mixed figures of expression and the physiological structure of mind and body provides an instructive illumination of the epistemological and phenomenological problems inherent in attempting to visualise a natural order which is, at once, physiognomic and scientific. For it tries to see the signs of nature as evidence of theological design and, at the same time, to organize the natural order of things according to nature's own living and inert properties.

Bell's writings exemplify an attachment to the natural theology of William Paley and an

¹⁹ Cited by Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p.15.

²⁰ Bell, *Letters*, pp.48-49.

alignment with creationists such as Georges Cuvier (and explicitly against transformists like Jean-Baptiste Lamarck). There need not be any confusion regarding this kind of approach as I intend to demonstrate what philosophical resonances a discussion of the epistemological and phenomenological problems involved in the natural order of the visible world contains. Therefore, by referring to Bell's "Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain," I explore the significance of the creationist natural order it presents as a direct engagement with Paley's notion of natural theology; and, implicitly, an attempt to negotiate the theories of French naturalists, Cuvier and Lamarck, on creation and production. But I suggest that what emerges subsequently in the Bridgewater Treatise, *The Hand: Its Mechanism and Vital Endowments as Evincing Design*, written by Bell in 1833, is a developing tension between the theological investment in the theory of mechanical organisation and the materialist idea that science had a coherence of its own. For focussing on the hand as an unified but invisible structure, and a physical symbol of the correspondence between physiology and psychology, I contend that it is essential to visualise the hand as a projective display of natural design and a reflexive rhetorical figure of writing in order to understand the translation from experiential to verbal and visual models of the natural order of things.

I am not claiming for Bell an especially prominent or radical position in the history of nineteenth-century science²¹; he was, in fact, a conservative anatomist and surgeon of the philosophical school, strongly opposed to the radical transformist politics of the Lamarckian,

²¹ Although my emphasis is slightly different, Ludmilla Jordanova suggests that "it is important to search for the underlying unity, not just in Bell's preoccupations but in his contacts with others." And she goes on:

His form of conservatism was quite historically specific. It seems that neither art historians nor medical historians have known quite what to do with Charles Bell, or, indeed with other figures like him. In proposing ways of examining him, I am therefore speaking about Bell both an unusually rich case study for social and cultural history and as an example for historiographical debate.

"The Representation of the Body: Art and Medicine in the Work of Charles Bell", *Towards a Modern Art World, Studies in British Art I*, ed. Brian Allen (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), pp.80-81.

Robert E. Grant, which challenged the creationist myth of nature's function.²² Rather I am suggesting that Bell's work on expression and the physiological structure of mind and body demonstrates the difficulties involved in talking about a physiognomic and a scientific order of the visible world. Placed within the context of the London Medical Schools and the Royal Academy Life Class, Bell makes clear the particular disciplinary problems bound up with making visual what, in the preface to the first edition of the essays he described as the "certain character to be given to the body. . . legibly impressed on the whole figure, and prescribing every motion and position of the body."²³ Because, as an attempt to work out the close but complex relation between the disciplines of art and anatomy, the language of the face visualised by Bell in *The Anatomy* anticipates, and indeed, already addresses, many of the complexities involved in giving expression a physiognomic and a scientific, or a moral and a physiological, face.

²² Adrian Desmond's study of pre-Darwinian debates on evolution is the best analysis of the issues involved in these arguments on the construction of the order of nature, as he teases out the intricate philosophical problems and the often fraught intellectual affiliations which emerged in London, in particular, around the 1820s and 1830s. See *The Politics of Evolution: Morphology, Medicine, and Reform in Radical London* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989); together with two of his earlier articles which contribute to this study: "Robert E. Grant: The Social Predicament of a Pre-Darwinian Transmutationist", *Journal of the History of Biology*, 17 (1984): pp.189-233; and "Richard Owen's Reaction to Transmutation in the 1830s", *British Journal for the History of Science*, 18 (1985): pp.25-50. For a sequence of essays which focus on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1816) as the embodiment of a specific myth of creation, see Stephen Bann, ed. *Frankenstein: Creation and Monstrosity* (London: Reaktion Books, 1994).

²³ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p. ii.

II

Until William Whewell's pronouncement in his *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*, published in 1840, on the need for a name to describe "a cultivator of science in general," the word scientist was not in common usage as a term of description.²⁴ Whewell actually used the term a few years earlier to describe a heated discussion which occurred at the newly founded British Association for the Advancement of Science in Cambridge in 1833. He explains:

Philosophers was felt to be too wide and too lofty a term, and was very properly forbidden them by Mr. Coleridge, both in his capacity of philologist and metaphysician; *savans* was rather assuming, besides being French instead of English; some ingenious gentleman proposed that, by analogy with *artist*, they might form *scientist*, and added that there could be no scruple in making free with this termination when we have such words as *sciolist*, *economist*, and *atheist*--but this was not generally palatable.²⁵

Whewell's narrative of the process of naming 'the scientist' quite obviously finds its closest parallel in Noah's act of naming the creatures of the animal kingdom in the fifth chapter of the Book of Genesis. But Whewell's narrative also acts as a timely reminder of the way in which the abstract notion of 'science,' 'the scientific,' and 'the scientist,' do not necessarily fit with a conceptual context able to order and organize the natural world. For considered in rather general terms, the term 'science' connotes category, classification, collation; it is figured as abstract theory, empirical logic, and rigid formalism; and its history has been written as a history of ideas or a history of popularization.²⁶

Explaining precisely this separation of the notion of science from its philosophy and its

²⁴ William Whewell, *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*, (1840), 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: J.W. Parker & Sons, 1847), p.8.

²⁵ Whewell, *Quarterly Review*, 51 (1834): p.59.

²⁶ Some of the more traditional surveys are, for example, S.F. Cannon, *Science in Culture: The Early Victorian Period* (New York, NY: Dawson and Science History Publications, 1978); William Coleman, *Biology in the Nineteenth Century: Problems of Form, Function, and Transformation* (New York, NY: John Wiley, 1972); David Knight, *The Nature of Science: The History of Science in Western Culture since 1600* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1976); and *The Age of Science: The Scientific World-View in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); and J.T. Mertz, *A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1904-12).

popularization in historiographical writing, Karl Figlio claims “the problem can be stated in equivalent terms as science *vs* its intellectual context, science *vs* its social context, or science *vs* ideology.”²⁷ He continues:

In each case, what is not science is an obvious product of human activity, while science seems different—more a discovery than a product. In the writing of the history of science, the debates between the ‘internalists’ and the ‘externalists’ . . . reflect the unanalysed tension between historicity and a-historicity; between what is *human activity* and *what is natural*. . . What is needed is the acknowledgement that science is a human activity dedicated to the *naturalization* of both experience and ideology, and to the expression of that achievement in language. It has, therefore, a double nature made up of (1) abstract, theoretical, observational elements, and (2) covertly communicated but persuasive impressions which convey an ideology.²⁸

Furthermore, as Figlio concludes, the notion of order and organization is often called to mind without accounting for the ambivalent questions of agency, image, and process which determine the various senses of its conceptual framework.²⁹ Questions of terminology and definition notwithstanding, histories of nineteenth-century science increasingly recognise that the theories concerning the internal and external link between the object and its representation (or sign and referent)—such as comparative anatomy, theories of types, and evolutionary

²⁷ Figlio, “The Metaphor of Organization: An Historiographical Perspective on the Bio-Medical Sciences of the Early Nineteenth Century”, p.18.

²⁸ Figlio, “The Metaphor of Organization”, pp.18-19.

²⁹ Figlio, “The Metaphor of Organization”, pp.44-45. Summarising “the senses of ‘organization’ implied in the French/British dispute,” Figlio writes in full:

I shall begin with the basic spring of human action and work down through society, behaviour and physical organization, to the force of animation. In doing so, I shall leave ambiguous the ambiguities in the concept of organization: egoism *vs* sympathy; wilful effort in society *vs* gradual moral improvement; man as self-willed and a form of final cause *vs* man as a percipient of moral order and active only as an efficient cause; man’s capacity to analyse by his intelligence *vs* perception by his nature; the belief that behaviour shows an intelligent force *vs* the idea that behaviour shows design; the belief that organization shows an animating force *vs* the idea that life *is* organization; animism or materialism *vs* physico-moral correlation. In its varied senses, ‘organization’ can hold all these notions together and can communicate them even when it becomes part of a particular scientific system.

On the specific inferences implied by the use of organisation as a structuring metaphor, see also L.S. Jacyna, “The Physiology of Mind, the Unity of Nature, and the Moral Order in Victorian Thought”, *British Journal of the History of Science*, 14 (1981): pp.109-32; and “Immanence or Transcendence: Theories of Life and Organization in Britain”, *Isis*, 74 (1983): pp.311-29.

thought--which emerged in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, challenge the dominance of philosophical concepts of truth and representation, and emphasise instead the fundamental importance of empirical observation and the social application of natural laws.³⁰

Foucault's archaeological theory of knowledge has been extremely influential here in distinguishing between the formal sciences of mathematics and physics, for example, with their claim to truth based on the internal consistency of an object of knowledge, compared to the non-formalized, positive sciences of biology, medicine, psychology, for example, with their representation of real objects.³¹ Arguing for a series of shifts in the paradigmatic order of science in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Foucault declares that this period of scientific activity is characterized, in particular, by the replacement of a taxonomic with an organic organization of thought. He pronounces dramatically and at some length:

At the institutional level, the inevitable correlatives of this patterning were botanical gardens and natural history collections. And their importance, for Classical culture, does not lie essentially in what they make it possible to see, but in what they hide and in what, by this process of obliteration, they allow to emerge: they screen off anatomy and function, they conceal the organism, in order to raise up before the eyes of those who await truth the visible relief of forms, with their elements, their mode of distribution, and their measurements. They are books furnished with structures, the space in which characteristics combine, and in which classifications are physically displayed. One day, towards the end of the eighteenth century, Cuvier was to topple the glass jars of the Museum, smash them open and dissect all the forms of animal visibility that the Classical age had preserved in them. This iconoclastic gesture, which Lamarck could never bring himself to make, does not reveal a new curiosity directed towards a secret that no one had the interest or courage to uncover, or the possibility of uncovering, before. It is rather, and much more seriously, a mutation in the natural dimension of Western culture. . . . And it was also to be the beginning of what, by substituting anatomy for classification, organism for structure, internal subordination for visible character, the series for tabulation, was to make possible the precipitation into the old flat world of animals and plants, engraved in black on white, a whole profound mass of

³⁰ See, for instance, Barry Barnes, *Scientific Knowledge and Sociological Theory* (London: Routledge, 1974); William F. Bynum, "Time's Noblest Offspring: The Problem of Man in the British Natural Historical Sciences, 1800-1863", Ph.D. Diss. (University of Cambridge, 1974); James R. Moore, ed., *History, Humanity & Evolution: Essays for John C. Greene* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); M. Teich and R.M. Young, eds., *Changing Perspectives in the History of Science: Essays in Honour of Joseph Needham* (London: Heinemann, 1973).

³¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*. Following a related theme, see also Foucault's first 'archaeological' exposition, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, (1963), trans. A. Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1976).

time to which men were to give the renewed name of *history*.³²

Foucault's sweeping survey of a historical period which witnesses a series of extremely complex reformulations of the intellectual theories of science in a relatively short space of time is not without its problems. Nonetheless, between 1785 and 1825, roughly speaking, the analysis of physical form did become increasingly linked with medical attempts to theorise the anatomical and the physiological form of the human body as a scientific model of organic organisation.³³ These scientific models could, for instance, be Hippocratic, mechanical, physiological, and later psychological in character, organising the body according to the four temperaments, the structural design, the nervous system, and the unconscious, respectively. Le Brun's diagrams of écorché heads based on Andrea Vesalius' *De Humani corporis fabrica*; Petrus Camper's notion of a body calculus geometrically mapped according to a series of facial lines and angles³⁴; Bichet's idea of the body as a layering of functional processes; and Cuvier's theory of comparative anatomy with his belief in a finite number of types in the animal kingdom, organised into four embranchements; are a few very obvious examples of the use of

³² Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp.137-38. In his section, "Labour, Life, Language", (*The Order of Things*, pp.263-79), Foucault later substantiates his claim for Cuvier as a pivotal figure in the history of science on the basis of his belief in the essential discontinuity in the chain of beings.

³³ In addition to Desmond's analysis of this process in relation to the experience and ideologies of nineteenth-century science, see Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organisation of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Roger French and Andrew Wear, eds., *British Medicine in an Age of Reform* (London: Routledge, 1991); Ian Inkster and Jack Morrell, eds., *Metropolis and Province: Science in British Culture 1780-1850* (London: Hutchison, 1983); Harriet Ritvo, "Professional Scientists and Amateur Mermaids: Beating the Bounds in Nineteenth-Century Britain", *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 19 (1991): pp.277-91; Andrew Wear, ed., *Medicine in Society: Historical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and A.J. Youngson, *The Scientific Revolution in Victorian Medicine* (New York, NY: Holmes, 1979). Also, for a broader historical context on the significance of bodily models in medicine, see William F. Bynum and Roy Porter, eds., *Medicine and the Five Senses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

³⁴ See Chapter Four, "The Human Countenance in the Social Economy of the World: Picturing Descent and Measuring Development in the Scientific Writings of Charles Darwin and Francis Galton", 187-242, for a more detailed critique of Camper's overtly deterministic theory of facial angles.

medicine to inflect the organisation of the body.

The challenge which these, and other, writers of the time confront is how to visualise a natural order of the body in the phenomenal world that is invisible, concealed, and disguised; or, in other words, how to communicate the correspondence between the external and internal, extrinsic and intrinsic, outside and inside, of objects in the natural world. I have already alluded to the importance of medicine in this process; and it is quite clear that the provision of a model of physical organization acts in a manner that is almost, yet not quite, metaphoric; but it would oversimplify matters to assert that the apparent desire to reconstruct nature's own order which preoccupies the intellectual thought of nineteenth-century science can be explained in term of a Foucauldian move from a taxonomic to an organic order of things. Instead, I am suggesting that the medical impulse to conceptualise nature's own order which Bell makes manifest is, simultaneously, physiognomic and scientific. Although this medical impulse is not inherently natural theological, to Bell it becomes a means of perceiving the signs of nature as evidence of theological design and, at the same time, organizing the natural order of things according to its own living and inert properties. Bell's "Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain," (1822), attempts to do both these things.

Having despatched "the prevailing doctrine of the anatomical schools" which asserts the unified structure of the brain, Bell writes a long, expository passage:

When in contemplating the structure of the eye we say, how admirably it is adapted to the laws of light! we use language which implies a partial, and consequently an erroneous view. And the philosopher takes not a more enlarged survey of nature when he declares how curiously the laws of light are adapted to the constitution of the eye.

This creation, of which we are a part, has not been formed in parts. The organ of vision, and the matter or influence carried to the organ, and the qualities of bodies with which we are acquainted through it, are parts of a system great beyond our imperfect comprehension, formed as it should seem at once in wisdom; not pieced together like the work of human ingenuity.

When this whole was created. . .the mind was placed in a body not merely suited to its residence, but in circumstances to be moved by the materials around it; and the capacities of the mind, and the powers of the organs, which are as a medium betwixt the mind and the external world, have an original constitution framed in relation to the qualities of things.

It is admitted that neither bodies nor the images of bodies enter the brain. It is indeed impossible to believe that colour can be conveyed along a nerve; or the vibration in

which we suppose found to consist can be retained in the brain: but we can conceive, and have reason to believe, that an impression is made upon the organs of the outward senses when we see, or hear, or taste.³⁵

One can identify four strands of thought in Bell's argument: the adequacy of language; the conception of process; the relation of difference; and the sensibility of impressions. But this formulation of creation must be unravelled in greater detail because, as I hinted earlier, it entails an engagement with Paley's notion of natural theology; and a negotiation of the writings of Cuvier and Lamarck on the relation of science to nature's own order.

In Paley's terms, the structure of the phenomenal world is anthropocentric and synecdochic: it privileges the human eye and involves a mode of reading nature as a series of signs which stand for a coherent whole.³⁶ Paley's *Natural Theology* frequently slips into a mimetic style of exposition to justify the use of examples severed from their context, and yet the significance of his work lies with its physiognomic method of interpretation, (as Bell's frequent reference to the commensurability of part to whole of creation displays). According to Paley, nature is a book which can be read in order to comprehend its mechanism, and, it should be noted, though this is by no means unique, it is an ironic testament to Paley's belief in the unifying presence of God in the phenomenal world that he can only construct a system of organic organisation by fragmenting parts of the natural world to sustain this concept of design. However, as a subsequent sentence of Bell's essay reveals, the issue can be stated even more succinctly: "the operations of the mind are confined not by the limited nature of things created, but by the limited number of our organs of sense."³⁷ The equation reads, therefore, creation, unified in form and infinite in conception, circumscribes the phenomenal

³⁵ Bell, "Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain", pp.107-108.

³⁶ William Paley, *Natural Theology, or. Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature: together with: A Defence of the Considerations on the Propriety of Requiring a Subscription to Articles of Faith: Reasons for Contentment, Addressed to the Labouring Part of the British Public* (London: N. Hailes, 1825), vol 1 of *The Works of William Paley*, 5 vols. (1825-38). See also *Natural Theology: Selections*, ed., Frederick Ferre (New York, NY: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc, 1963).

³⁷ Bell, "Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain", p.109.

world and mediates between the activity of the mind and the function of bodily organs. There is, nonetheless, a problem with this equation; a problem which inquires into the relation of science to nature's own order, and which underlies the intellectual thought of Cuvier and Lamarck on the activity and importance of creation and production.

Although a distant philosophical affiliation between Bell and Cuvier could be claimed from Bell's "Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain," the connection between the two men is implied rather than proven.³⁸ For, in parallel with Paley in a rather narrow sense, Cuvier held that the hierarchy implicit in the organization of the nervous system corresponded to the degree of perfection in the animal faculties.³⁹ With this Lamarck agreed, but with Cuvier's taxonomical laws of correlation and subordination, Lamarck disagreed.⁴⁰ Because while on the

³⁸ Bell was a gentleman Whig, opposed to new Benthamite morphologists like George Bennet and Robert E. Grant, and, as such, his belief in philosophical anatomy bears more relation to the intellectual thought of Cuvier's comparative anatomy than it does to that of Lamarck's deistic transformism. See Desmond's *The Politics of Evolution*, pp.41-81 and pp.92-100; for an account of the French debates and Bell's response to the new morphologies, and also his "Lamarckism and Democracy: Corporations, Corruption and Comparative Anatomy in the 1830s", *History, Humanity and Evolution: Essays for John C. Greene*, ed., James R. Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.99-130.

³⁹ Georges Cuvier, *Leçons sur l'anatomie comparée*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1800-1805), I, article iv; *Essay on the Theory of the Earth*, ed. R. Jameson. (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1813); *Le règne animal distribué d'après son organisation pour servir de base à l'histoire naturelle des animaux et d'introduction à l'anatomie comparée*, 4 vols. (Paris: Deterville, 1817); "Nature", *Dictionnaire des sciences naturelles*, 34 (1825): pp.261-68. English translations of Cuvier's work are rare, however for a detailed study of his career and ideas, see William Coleman, *Georges Cuvier, Zoologist. A Study in the History of Evolution Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964). More recently, Dorinda Outram gives an informative account of Cuvier and his position in the French scientific community of the time in *Georges Cuvier: Vocation, Science and Authority in Post-Revolutionary France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

⁴⁰ Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, *Philosophie zoologique* (Paris: Dentu, 1809); rpt. (New York, NY: Hafner Publishing, 1960), I, pp.82-101. The only, somewhat unreliable, English translation is *Zoological Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Elliot (New York, NY: Hafner Publishing, 1960). Critical studies of Lamarck tend to be of a biographical kind. For example, F. W. Burkhardt, *The Spirit of System: Lamarck and Evolutionary Biology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); M.B. Maudale, *Lamarck: The Myth of the Precursor* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982); and A.S. Packard, *Lamarck: The Founder of Evolution. His Life and Work* (London: Longmans, 1901). For a succinct summary of Lamarck's theories and his ideological position in French/British scientific thought, see Ludmilla Jordanova, *Lamarck* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

one hand, Cuvier asserted that structure in comparative anatomy was based on function, with the organism a unified whole, relative to specific requirements, (such as respiration, for instance), and organized according to four distinct types.⁴¹ On the other, Lamarck declared that the principal property of the animal species was irritability, concentrated in special organs, with the organism a product, rather than creation, of nature's labours, and made up of fourteen classes organized into six developmental levels of the nervous system.⁴² To align Bell's physiological writing with creationists such as Cuvier, and explicitly against transformists like Lamarck, is far from straightforward; for these kinds of physiological investigation centre on the nervous system as the link between the philosophical examination of the soul and the nature of man and animals, and the anatomical survey of their structure and function.⁴³ Nonetheless,

⁴¹ Cuvier, *Leçons sur l'anatomie comparée*, I, article iv.

⁴² Lamarck, *Philosophie zoologique*, I, pp.269-357. Ludmilla Jordanova analyses this aspect of Lamarck's work in "Nature's Powers: A Reading of Lamarck's Distinction between Creation and Production", *History, Humanity & Evolution: Essays for John C. Greene*, ed., James R. Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.71-98. Also, an interesting gloss on the opposition of creation to production can be found in the work of Pierre Macherey on the function of creation and production in the process of literary composition. Arguing for a suppression and systematic replacement of the term creation with production throughout his text, Macherey explains:

The proposition that the writer or artist is a creator belongs to a humanist ideology. In this ideology man is released from his function in an order external to himself, restored to his so-called powers. Circumscribed only by the resources of his own nature, he becomes the maker of his own laws. He creates. What does he create? Man. Humanist thought. . .is circular, tautological, dedicated entirely to the repetition of the single image. . .Now, art is not man's creation, it is a product (and the producer is not a subject centred in his creation, he is an element in a situation or a system): different--in being a product--from religion, which has chosen its dwelling among all the spontaneous illusions of spontaneity which is certainly a kind of creation. . .If man creates man, the artist produces works, *in determinate conditions*; he does not work on himself but on that thing which escapes him in so many ways, and never belongs to him until after the event. . .All speculation over man the creator is intended to eliminate a real knowledge: the 'creative process' is, precisely, not a process, a labour; it is a religious formula to be found on funeral monuments. For the same reasons, all considerations of genius, of the subjectivity of the artist, of his soul, are *on principle* uninteresting.

A Theory of Literary Production, (1966), trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge, 1978), pp.66-68.

⁴³ Although the debate between Cuvier and Lamarck is infinitely more complex than the mere outline I have given may indicate, to explore the epistemological and phenomenological problems involved in their conceptions of the natural order of the visible world at greater length

what emerges subsequently in Bell's Bridgewater Treatise, *The Hand: Its Mechanism and Vital Endowments as Evincing Design*--written according to the Earl of Bridgewater's Paleyite decree in 1833--is a developing tension between the theological investment in the theory of mechanical organisation and the materialist idea that science had a coherence of its own.⁴⁴

III

The hand is, to Bell, a unified but invisible structure, a projective display of natural design, and a reflexive figure of writing: it is a physical symbol which represents the correspondence between psychology and physiology, philosophy and anatomy, and the translation from experiential to verbal and visual models of the natural order of things. In a theoretically intricate and technically entangled passage from the last chapter of his Bridgewater treatise on *The Hand*, Bell gathers together his ideas on the simple, but often overlooked, relation between the hand and the eye in order to articulate the complexities involved in visualising the anatomy of the brain and the nerves of the body. Explaining the importance of conceiving the eye as part of the "muscular apparatus" of the body, that is, "its exterior appendages of muscles, . . . its humours and the proper nerve of vision," Bell directs the reader:

demands the attention of a separate essay. This I have not, at this stage, the space to accomplish. For those wishing to pursue the debates of early nineteenth-century French/British scientific thought, see Toby Appel, *The Cuvier-Geoffroy Debate: French Biology in the Decades before Darwin* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Dorinda Outram, "Politics and Vocation: French Science, 1793-1830", *British Journal for the History of Science*, 13 (1980): pp.27-43.

⁴⁴ The standard work on the Bridgewater Treatises is Charles C. Gillespie, *Genesis and Geology: A Study in the Relationships of Scientific Thought, Natural Theology, and Social Opinion in Great Britain, 1790-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951). See also Jonathan R. Topham, "Science and Popular Education in the 1830s: The Role of the Bridgewater Treatises", *British Journal for the History of Science*, 25 (1992): pp.397-430. The latter article is drawn from Topham's thesis "'An Infinite Variety of Arguments': The *Bridgewater Treatises* and British Natural Theology in the 1830s." PhD. Diss. University of Lancaster, 1993.

When, instead of looking upon the eye as a mere camera, or show-box, with the picture inverted at the bottom, we determine the value of muscular activity; mark the sensations attending the *balancing of the body*; that fine property which we possess of adjusting the muscular frame to its various inclinations; how it is acquired in the child; how it is lost in the paralytic and drunkard; how motion and sensation are combined in the exercise of the hand; how the hand, by means of this sensibility, guides the finest instruments: when we consider how the eye and hand correspond; how the motions of the eye, combining with the impression on the retina, becomes the place, form, and distance of objects--*the sign in the eye of what is known to the hand*: finally, when, by attention to the motions of the eye, we are aware of their extreme minuteness, and how we are sensible to them in the finest degree--the conviction irresistibly follows, that *without the power of directing the eye*, (a motion holding relation to the action of the whole body) *our finest organ of sense*, which so largely contributes to the development of the powers of the mind, *would lie unexercised* [my italics].⁴⁵

According to Bell, the value of the eye lies with its capacity for guiding, corresponding, positioning, and sensitising its muscular actions. The eye is analogous to the hand only if it is experienced as a combination of “motion and sensation” which exercises the faculty of perception, and yet depends on “the balancing of the body.” Unlike the immediate sensation experienced by the hand, the eye is minutely mediated by the translation of muscle into sense and, as such, acts as a summarising sign of what the hand has already felt. The “motions of the eye” are, Bell argues, “the sign in the eye of what is known to the hand.” For, Bell argues, touch, not sight, is the determining link between internal and external in all forms of physical life. It is “the common sensibility. . .the most necessary of the senses,. . .enjoyed by all animals from the lowest to the highest in the chain of existence.”⁴⁶ Although it was not particularly unusual to place the experience of seeing as a sensation inside the body in the early nineteenth-century, Bell’s treatise is instructive for the attention it draws to the physiological structure of the body and, in particular, the representation of emotion and sensation through the action of the muscles.

By aligning the tactile and optical sensorium in a symbolic way, Bell forges an alliance

⁴⁵ Bell, *The Hand*, p.255. For an instructive account of the significance of Bell’s treatise, see Ludmilla Jordanova, “The Hand”, *Visual Anthropology Review*, 8 (1992): pp.2-7.

⁴⁶ Bell, *The Hand*, p.214.

between muscle and sensation that not only privileges the hand as an educational instrument and a source of exquisite sensations, but also focusses on the eye's function as a muscular activity that occurs inside the body. Discarding the idea of the eye as a camera, and so, collapsing the distinction between internal and external forms, Bell figures the act of looking as an act of touch that is physiologically and psychologically aware of "the place, form, and distance of objects." An abbreviated version of the passage helps to make Bell's sense clearer:

When. . .we determine the value of muscular activity; mark the sensations attending the balancing of the body; . . .when we consider how the eye and hand correspond; how the motions of the eye, combining with the impression on the retina, becomes the place, form, and distance of objects--the sign in the eye of what is known to the hand. . . when. . .we are aware of their extreme minuteness. . .the conviction irresistibly follows, that without the power of directing the eye. . .our finest organ of sense. . . would lie unexercised.⁴⁷

At stake is undoubtedly "the power of directing the eye" and, as Gillian Beer has suggested (in relation to Darwin), it is almost as if the movements of the eye involved in this particular act of looking delicately caress the external world with each movement of the body.⁴⁸ Because "accompanying the exercise of touch," Bell points out in an earlier passage, "there is a desire of obtaining knowledge; a determination of the will towards the organ of the sense." And he carries on: "In the use of the hand there is a double sense exercised; we must not only feel the contact of the object, but we must be sensible to the muscular effort which is made to reach it, or to grasp it in the fingers."⁴⁹ It is quite obvious that what Bell strives to communicate is the dual function of the hand: it embodies the physical feeling experienced when objects touch; and, at the same time, it transmits impressions of that feeling to the brain. The trouble is how to visualise this complicated connection between touch and sight in order to convey the potency of the hand as a physical source of knowledge.

⁴⁷ Bell, *The Hand*, p.214.

⁴⁸ Gillian Beer, "Four Bodies on the Beagle: Touch, Sight, and Writing in a Darwin Letter", *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices*, eds. Judith Still and Michael Worton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); especially pp.119-20.

⁴⁹ Bell, *The Hand*, pp.148-49.

Bell's treatise examines the function of the hand as a display of natural design and a rhetorical figuration of a writing surface and instrument which, taken together, make the hand into a trope for expression. A letter to his brother--written in August 1830 to invite Bell to write a Bridgewater Treatise--is illuminating here. "Behold," exclaims Bell, "with what I point. . . This hand, how exquisite in form and motion. But first turn over--use it and learn to admire!" And, in an uncharacteristic display of exuberance and jocularity, he continues:

I have a letter this morning from the President of the Royal Society, who, with the counsel and approbation of the Archbishop of Canterbury have proposed to me to write on the *Human Hand*. . . I think I know now what to engrave on my seal--a hand. I shall introduce it on all occasions, sometimes doubled. . . as implying the pugnacious nature of the man--sometimes smooth and open, as ready to receive--sometimes pointing, as from the master. In short, I shall make use of this hand until they acknowledge me a handy fellow!⁵⁰

Bell's pleasure in the scientific and religious commendation implicit in the proposal is evident in his rhetorical play upon the verbal and visual associations of the word "hand" and the transference of the expression of character onto the anatomical parts of the body. So, for instance, whilst the "doubled" hand indicates "the pugnacious nature of the man," the "pointing" hand refers beyond man to the action of the Creator. Although the consistent use of the hand as an anthropomorphic symbol in literature and history provided Bell with a theological context in which to place his work, the abiding fascination of Bell's treatise lies in his efforts to mediate the language of Paleyite natural theology decreed by Bridgewater with the wider concerns of his interest in the application of scientific theory to living, and particularly human, forms.

A word here about the Bridgewater treatises. A series of essays whose subject-matter was predetermined in the will of the 3rd Earl of Bridgewater, the Treatises were intended to extol certain scientific theories within the fixed agenda of natural theology. The dedication of these essays to "the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, as manifested in the Creation; illustrating such work by all reasonable arguments" alerts the reader to the religious orientation of the treatises but it does not prepare one for the constant mediation between the organic and

⁵⁰ Bell, *Letters*, p.314.

the mechanical which gradually unfolds.⁵¹ The nine Treatises, written between 1833 and 1837, include essays by Peter Mark Roget on *Animal and Vegetable Physiology* (1834), and William Whewell on *Astronomy and General Physics* (1833), and are collectively intended to address a general middle-class audience seeking material proof of God's presence in the natural world through a philosophy which perceives the mechanical organisation of the natural world as evidence of the design of God. This personalised method of constructing the universe by dissecting its contents did, however, bring certain problems for the Bridgewater authors because whilst they took Paley's concept of design as the starting-point for their treatises, it is clear from the work of Whewell, Roget, and to a lesser degree, Bell, that there is a developing tension between the theological investment in the theory of mechanical organisation and the materialist idea that science had a coherence of its own. Nevertheless, far from subverting the preordained keynote for all the Treatises, that is, the Paleyite doctrine of design, these authors attempt to negotiate the distinct claims of religious and secular philosophies.

What evolves in *The Hand*, then, is more than just a theological narrative of the presence of God's hand in the natural world; because Bell undertakes to develop his existing theories of expression as sensation by employing the hand as a vehicle for description and dissection. It is, at once, a motif of character, a "seal;" a mode of performance, "doubled. . . smooth and open;" and an indicator of God, "pointing." As a part of the body invested with such an array of potential interpretations and representation, the hand is Bell's central organ of expression and the major trope of the human figure able to mediate between the internal and the external structures of the body. And as a figure of expression, the hand acts on different levels as an exposed surface to read and to write outside the body; a tactile experience of sensation inside the body; and as a double-edged instrument of instruction to describe and dissect the surface and the sensations of the body. Through the anatomical process of dissection accomplished by the hand, Bell illustrates that it is possible to figure the strategies for reading and writing the surface of the body through the almost rhythmical movements of the muscles.

⁵¹ Bell, *The Hand*, "Notice".

To the artist and the anatomist, the hand operates through the sensibility of touch, is figured by the scalpel and the pen, and in its twin processes of dissection and description reveals its complicity with the eye. The sensibility of touch is aligned with the sensibility of sight as a method of observation which looks inwards and outwards by first exploring its own body and then making contact with other bodies: “the knowledge of external bodies as distinguished from ourselves, cannot be acquired until the organs of touch in the hand have become familiar with our own limbs.”⁵² Bell draws the observer into the body to feel the affect of the sensations of the muscular frame and to participate in the production of figures which it observes. The hand and the eye become interchangeable as synaesthetic modes of perception which rely upon the symmetry of the body in order to locate the experience of seeing as sensation occurring inside its structure. As the symbolic place of intersection between anatomy and art, expression operates as a reflexive mode of representation which encodes the silent gestures, movements, and transformations of the body with a distinctive linguistic character. The hand is the technical instrument which opens up the structure of the human figure in order to determine the essential characteristics of the figures of expression manifested on the surface of the body.

Bell penetrates into the physical form of the hand and dissects its composition in order to describe the muscular process which makes its actions possible, and to attribute its compositional design to the Paleyite theory of mechanical organisation. This “muscular sense,” which Bell terms a “sixth sense,” is “an internal sensibility corresponding with the changing conditions of the muscles”⁵³; or, in Bell’s words:

The property in the hand of ascertaining the distance, the size, the weight, the form, the hardness and softness, the roughness or smoothness of objects results from the combined perception through the sensibility of the proper organ of touch and the motion of the arm, hand, and fingers.⁵⁴

⁵² Bell, *The Hand*, p.190.

⁵³ Bell, *The Hand*, p.193.

⁵⁴ Bell, *The Hand*, pp.202-203.

The action of the hand outside the body is stimulated by the action inside the body of the “nerves of motion and. . .sensation” which enable the expansion and contraction of the muscle fibres to exercise the hand whilst conveying the intensity of that sensation to the intellect.⁵⁵ As Bell explains, the hand is, like the face, a microcosmic, and synecdochic, example of the network of relations that make up the system of muscles and nerves. It indicates the robust physiological structure of the physical body whilst simultaneously suggesting the delicacy of its neurological impressions:

With the possession of an instrument like the hand there must be a great part of the organisation, which strictly belongs to it, concealed. The hand is not a thing appended, or put on, like an additional movement in a watch; but a thousand intricate relations must be established throughout the body in connection with it--such as nerves of motion and nerves of sensation.⁵⁶

It is just these “intricate relations,” the nerves of motion and sensation, that provide a crucial means of visualising expression.

In *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration: On Thomas Eakins and Stephen Crane*, Michael Fried considers the representation of writing in nineteenth-century art and literature as an attempt to visualise the complex process of expression and composition.⁵⁷ Examining the work of painter Thomas Eakins and writer Stephen Crane, Fried analyses the material representations of the scene of production--figures of pens, pencils, scalpels, and poles in Eakins’ work and streetcars, railways, ambulances, serpents and snakes in Crane’s--as emblematic constructions of the image of painting/writing. Less an extended narrative on representational strategies, than a parallel text which reads Eakins and Crane together, Fried argues that there is a tension or

⁵⁵ Bell, *The Hand*, p.211. As Bell explains, adopting the Paleyite metaphor of the watch: With the possession of an instrument like the hand there must be a great part of the organisation, which strictly belongs to it, concealed. The hand is not a thing appended, or put on, like an additional movement in a watch; but a thousand intricate relations must be established throughout the body in connection with it--such as nerves of motion and nerves of sensation.

⁵⁶ Bell, *The Hand*, p.211.

⁵⁷ Michael Fried, *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration: On Thomas Eakins and Stephen Crane* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

disjunction in Eakins' painting *The Gross Clinic*--between "the inner space of the representation and the surface of the picture considered as a worked artifact"⁵⁸--which is mirrored in Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* as a gap between the rhetorical figures of writing and the structure of the narrative. This tension can, Fried claims, be considered as a conflict between the different "spaces" of painting and writing/drawing on vertical and horizontal planes and their "competing modes of seeing," pictorially and graphically:

The vertical or upright plane of painting is, although not literally the object of "pictorial" seeing, at any rate the determining form or matrix of that object;. . . the horizontal, which is to say perspectival, plane of writing/drawing is the arena of the first, projective or participatory [the graphic], mode of seeing.⁵⁹

Applied to Crane's work, Fried explains that the "implicit contrast between the respective "spaces" of reality and of literary representation. . . required that a human character, ordinarily upright and so to speak forward-looking, be rendered horizontal and upward-facing so as to match the horizontality and upward-facingness of the blank page on which the action of inscription was taking place."⁶⁰ By structuring the "spaces" of painting and writing/drawing in this way, Fried's analysis asserts the position of the observer, or subject, in relation to the object which is represented only, almost immediately, to break down the gap that this relationship makes visible through the correspondence of the eye and the hand. The "upright, forward-looking" perspective of the observer of Eakins' paintings is replaced by the supine, "upward-facing" perspective of the observer of Crane's writings/drawings, and yet both modes of seeing firmly locate the observer within the process of representation.

What Fried had identified in Eakins' paintings as a problematic disjunction between "the inner space of representation and the surface of the picture" is actually overcome by the movement of the hand to reformulate a close connection between the structure of the representation and its topography. The hand enters into the different strategies of representation

⁵⁸ Fried, *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration*, p.74.

⁵⁹ Fried, *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration*, pp.76-77.

⁶⁰ Fried, *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration*, pp.99-100.

because it is, at once, a mode of description and dissection, capable of sensitivity, violence, and pain, and it is possessed with the sense of touch to forge a link between the observer and the source of observation. Whilst the perspectival positions of the painter and the writer described by Fried are less significant to Bell, where his analysis is pertinent and provocative is in its appreciation of the potent network of relations between the anatomist, the artist, and the writer, articulated through the figure of the subject. Gillian Beer, writing on the images of the body in Darwin's account of the *Beagle* voyage, suggests that the fascination of this network lies in "its recognition that the *subject* (in both senses) is not only the figure painted or described. It is also," she continues, "the subjectivity and subjection of the viewer experiencing empathetic desire--and the interpellated subjectivities of the writer too. The activity of writing or drawing is figured in that which is described, even while it figures it."⁶¹ In fact, the hand which Bell presents functions in this way--as figure and figuring--and in so doing effects the translation from experiential to verbal and visual models of the natural order of things.

IV

I have argued that Bell's work on the physiological structure of mind and body demonstrates the difficulties involved in talking about a physiognomic and a scientific order of the visible world. I have explored the philosophical resonances implicit in the theory of mechanical organisation, and hinted at the French/British debates on the notion that science had a coherence of its own. And I have suggested how Bell's understanding of the hand depends on the contingency between the physical feeling experienced when objects touch, and the impressions of that feeling in the brain. But turning to Bell's study of expression in *The*

⁶¹ Gillian Beer, "Four Bodies on the *Beagle*: Touch, Sight and Writing in a Darwin Letter", *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices*, eds. Judith Still and Michael Worton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp.117-18

Anatomy, I want to make clear the epistemological and phenomenological problems involved in attempting to visualise a natural order of expression which is, at once, physiognomic and scientific.

The fictions of the face perceived by Bell play out a series of figures and narratives of expression that hover uncertainly between natural and artificial performance; and yet as the site of production for the signs of expression, the face is a complex formation and combination of sensation and motion and, as such, the place of endless activity. The signs of expression make up a complex semiological system designed to display, not the anatomical structure of the face, but the figures of identity, described by Bell as “the characters of living action.”⁶² Far from being simply an arbitrary, self-generating, semiological model of production, the face is, to Bell, a form that depends for its expressive identity on the relation between the signs of face and the sensation and motion that form those signs; a relation between the external surface of the face and its (internal) disruptions, that, according to physiognomists, ultimately depends on God. By encoding the signs of the face as letters, that together make up the grammar of expression, Bell makes the face function as a figure in the language of the emotions.

However, the difficulty of observing accurately the signs of one’s own face as they are produced forces the eye to look to other faces for a means of comprehending the signs of expression. Because the signs of one’s face are only ever interpreted in relation to the signs of other faces, and, therefore, they depend on a language of contrast, difference, and identification for articulation. So, figured as the site of production for the signs of expression, the face appears to participate in a process of making identities that translates and combines physical, experiential forms into letters and icons, or verbal and visual signs. For, as I explained in the introduction, Lavater constructs an alphabetical system of representation designed to firmly, and indisputably, place what he perceives as the homogenous figures of

⁶² Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.204.

identity in a hierarchical scheme of recognition.⁶³ And yet, the fiction of the face that Bell presents is, in fact, figured prosopopoeically as the embodiment of a particular combination of the signs of expression, that literally makes faces to represent types of expression.

The *Essays on Anatomy* was a well-known and widely used textbook for artists, anatomists, and writers alike throughout the nineteenth-century, but, despite its large audience amongst the educated classes, it was not reprinted in a cheap form until the seventh edition in 1877. John Flaxman, Henry Fuseli, Benjamin Robert Haydon and David Wilkie, and somewhat later Ford Madox Brown, John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt, and Charles Darwin were amongst those who read and admired Bell's work, not to mention Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, and Princess Elizabeth.⁶⁴ Emerging from the growing interest in the application of anatomy to art, the *Essays on Anatomy* formed the basis for the course of lectures in anatomy, surgery, dissecting, and operating that Bell offered from his London house. Although designed initially for medical students, the increasing commercialisation of both the practices of art and medicine, together with the development of an informal exchange of techniques between the Royal Academy and the London medical schools, meant that it became almost standard practice to instruct young artists and their medical contemporaries in the language of anatomy and the practice of dissection.⁶⁵ A knowledge of the language of anatomy made it possible for the artist and the medic to see the body not only in terms of

⁶³ See Introduction. "Fictions of the Face: Some Perspectives, Some Theories, and Some Problems with the Grammar of Expression," pp.26-32.

⁶⁴ Hearing that the Queen spent two hours one evening reading his work, Bell is reputed to have remarked nonchalantly: "Oh happiness in the extreme, that I should ever write anything fit to be dirtied by her snuffy fingers." See G. Gordon-Taylor and A.W. Walls, *Sir Charles Bell. His Life and Times*, p.21.

⁶⁵ For an informed account of the role of the Life Model compared to statuary, and the developing relationship between artistic study and the scientific analysis of the human figure in the early nineteenth century, see Ilaria Bignamini and Martin Postle, *The Artist's Model: Its Role in British Art from Lely to Etty* (Nottingham: Nottingham University Art Gallery, 1991). And, in addition to Desmond's description of the medical reforms in this period, see Irvine Loudon, "Medical Practitioners 1750-1850 and the Period of Medical Reform in Britain", *Medicine in Society: Historical Essays*, ed. Andrew Wear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.219-47.

surfaces, but also, as Bell directs, in terms of the underlying structure of those surfaces.

In a letter to his brother, Bell proclaims exactly this “pleasure. . .in anatomy” as “the pleasure I have in investigating *structure*. Everything there so perfect, so curiously fitted. . .”⁶⁶ The anatomy theatre and the Life Class became the complementary spaces in which observation and demonstration were used to educate the senses and to instruct artists and medics how to apply the range of sensory knowledge available to the hand and the eye.⁶⁷ And, it is not surprising that, at this time, the advancing process of cultural exchange between art and medicine was located more around the proliferating private anatomy schools, than the established institutional power structures of the Royal Academy or the London medical schools.

Although Bell admits to the importance of the living model, but not the Antique, in the representation of the human figure, he carefully points out that posed as it is, without reference to the movement of the muscles in action, or the expressions of the face, the living model presents a distorted, asymmetrical, and constrained version of physical form. The living model displayed in the Life Class is not adequate to the task, according to Bell, because he/she uses ropes to support and sustain a “position of exertion”—a position, that is, of instability and artificial appearance—that simplifies the method of observation by ignoring the “effect produced upon the surface of the body and limbs by the action of the muscles.”⁶⁸ “When a man clenches his fist in passion,” Bell contends, “the other arm does not lie in elegant relaxation; when the face is stern and vindictive, there is energy in the whole frame; when a man rises from his seat

⁶⁶ Bell, *Letters*, p.251.

⁶⁷ See Ludmilla Jordanova, “The Art and Science of Seeing in Medicine: Physiognomy 1780-1820”, and Susan C. Lawrence, “Educating the Senses: Students, Teachers, and Medical Rhetoric in Eighteenth-Century London”, *Medicine and the Five Senses*, eds. William F. Bynum and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.), pp.122-33 and pp.154-78, respectively, for two closely connected studies of the system of medical education as an instruction of the senses.

⁶⁸ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.200.

in impassioned gesture, a certain tension and straining pervades every limb and feature.”⁶⁹ There is none of the “consent and symmetry” of the parts to the whole exhibited in “natural action.” What the artist must learn is the structure of the bones and the groupings of the muscles so that he can “observe attentively the play of the muscles and tendons when the body is thrown into action and attitudes of violent exertion;. . .[and] mark especially their changes during the striking out of the limbs.”⁷⁰ And Bell reiterates the basis of his philosophy:

How much more beautiful is the picture when the anatomy is displayed, the thinness of a care-worn face, the ridge of the frontal bone highly illuminated, the veins in their course over the temple, the delicate transparent colours of the skin, the shade of floating grey hairs. So much character will often be produced by the simplest touch presenting the true anatomy.⁷¹

Having learnt to draw the human figure in this way, the artist should then make the model perform some actions--such as pitching, throwing, striking, so that he can advance his representations of the “character of muscular expression.” For “in the free actions of the limbs,” according to Bell’s theory, “a few muscles only swell out, while their opponents are relaxed and flattened.”⁷²

It is clear that bodily examination, internally and externally, was important to the practices of art and medicine in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, though somewhat tentative in procedure.⁷³ The study of the Antique, the living model, and anatomy

⁶⁹ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.200.

⁷⁰ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.202.

⁷¹ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.8.

⁷² Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.202.

⁷³ For detailed accounts of the cultural politics surrounding the physical examination in eighteenth and nineteenth-century medicine, see Ludmilla Jordanova, “Body Image and Sex Roles”, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), pp.43-65; Sander Gilman, “Touch, Sexuality and Disease”, and Roy Porter, “The Rise of the Physical Examination”, both in *Medicine and the Five Senses*, eds. William F. Bynum and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.198-224, and pp.170-197, respectively.

had formed the three main components of an artist's training, however informally, since the Renaissance, and yet the early academies in England at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth-centuries, and later, the Royal Academy, tended to neglect the study of anatomy in favour of the study of the Antique and the Life Class. In fact, it was only with the constitution of the Royal Academy that the study of the living model and the Antique were actually brought together as subjects of comparative analysis which was crucial to the development of an organised visual language of art. Moreover, it was not until the early nineteenth-century that anatomy came to be seen as a practice of dissection, observation, and drawing--rather than simply the reproduction of plates from handbooks like those of Albinus and Vesalius, as Le Brun's reproduced heads illustrate--and as such, a legitimate alternative to the study of the Antique. Whilst Bell's emphasis on the organs of the body forms the framework for his idea of the structure of the body, the particular interest of his work lies in its attempt to find an adequate form of language both to describe this invisible network of expression, and to negotiate the competing claims of medicine and art.

Benjamin Robert Haydon's enthusiasm for Bell's work became such that he attributed the completion of his studies in anatomy to his attendance at Bell's lectures. Haydon was a student of Bell's at his private theatre of anatomy in 1806, and wrote in his *Autobiography and Journals* for that year that his instructor "had great delight in his subject and was as eager as ourselves. Poor and anxious for reputation, he was industrious and did his best. He had studied and fully understood the application of anatomy to the purposes we wanted."⁷⁴ Schooled by Bell to study the structure and muscular expression of the body from close quarters, Haydon adopts his method of observing the human figure as a complex network of nerves and muscles which demands a precise and extremely intimate anatomical knowledge in order to represent a series of active figures, rather than a single, static figure. Haydon's enthusiastic dedication to "Drawing--Dissection--and High Art" was, in these early years, so

⁷⁴ Benjamin Robert Haydon, *The Autobiography and Journals of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, ed. Malcolm Elwin (London: Macdonald & Co. Ltd., 1950), pp.37-38.

insatiable that he would spend hours every day pouring over plaster casts, anatomy books, and whatever parts of dead bodies he could get his hands on. Almost a year after his arrival in London, having been invited to breakfast by a new acquaintance, David Wilkie, Haydon arrives early to discover, to his acute embarrassment, that Wilkie was completely naked and utterly engrossed in drawing his exposed figure through a mirror. Haydon explains:

I went to his room rather earlier than the hour named, and to my utter astonishment found Wilkie sitting stark-naked on the side of his bed, drawing himself by the help of the looking-glass! "My God, Wilkie," said I, "where are we to breakfast?" Without any apology or attention to my important question, he replied: "It's jest copital practice!"⁷⁵

Haydon remarks that having "rallied" Wilkie on his "copital practice," he "shall never forget his red hair, his long lanky figure reflected in the glass, and Wilkie with port-crayon and paper, making a beautiful study."⁷⁶ And, despite his incredulous response to this unexpected exposition of Wilkie's artistic practice, there are numerous examples of similar, though perhaps more abstract, anatomical drawings in Haydon's early sketchbooks; for example, his *Studies of Feet* and *Anatomical Drawing of Two Legs*, both probably drawn between 1805 and 1810.

A year later in 1805, Haydon had gushed excitedly at the experience of surveying a dissected body and its organs. "The sight of a real body laid open," exclaims Haydon, "exposed the secrets of all the markings so wonderfully that my mind got a new spring. The distinction between muscle, tendon, and bone was so palpable now that there could be no mistake again for ever."⁷⁷ Later, in an entry in his *Autobiography and Journals* for 1810, Haydon describes the process of dissecting a lioness, in erotic terms, as an experience of vigorous and almost ecstatic pleasure:

While I was furiously at work on Macbeth, Charles Bell sent up to me to say that he had a lioness for dissection. I darted at it at once and this relieved my mind. I dissected her and made myself completely master of this magnificent quadruped. It was whilst meditating on her beautiful construction, and its

⁷⁵ Haydon, *Autobiography and Journals*, p.36.

⁷⁶ Haydon, *Autobiography and Journals*, p.36.

⁷⁷ Haydon, *Autobiography and Journals*, p.34.

relation in bony structure to that of man, that those principles of form since established by me arose in my mind.⁷⁸

The sudden, excitable movement by Haydon towards the animal, “I darted at it at once,” and the immediate sensation of relief which it evokes, “this relieved my mind,” suggests that, to the artist, the act of dissection involved both surgical exploration and erotic caress. There appears to be a moment of engagement between Haydon and the dead carcass which transfigures the ruptured animal and Haydon, as one, into an heroic embodiment of majesty and physical prowess: “I dissected her and made myself completely master of this magnificent quadruped.” The tactile exploration of bodily form, that aligns the hand and the eye, appears, for Haydon, to satisfy a personal and a professional desire for pleasure and knowledge, by locating the experience of seeing inside the structure of the body.

Such was Haydon’s aesthetic delight in the dissected parts of the body as a mechanics of the body, that it is not surprising that the training of his “School” of art, formed around 1815 and including Charles and Thomas Landseer, William Bewick, and Charles Eastlake, started with anatomical drawings and then progressed to dissecting cadavers, before finally drawing from the Elgin Marbles at the British Museum. Moreover, it was to Bell’s series of anatomy lectures that Haydon’s students were sent to learn the theoretical and practical procedures for dissection and to perfect the artistic methods of its representation, assisted, of course, by the essential textbook, Bell’s *Essays on Anatomy*, of which Haydon remarks nonchalantly: “the consequence certainly was a reform in the painting of the School, for though anatomy was considered a part of the study of the student it was not taken up as I took it up—*thoroughly*; and made my pupils do so.”⁷⁹ William Bewick’s recollections of his studies at Bell’s anatomy classes provide a gloss to this method of instruction, for he narrates how he “dissected at Sir Charles Bell’s theatre of anatomy for three seasons with the Landseers. We dissected every part of the muscles of the body, and made drawings in red, black, and white

⁷⁸ Haydon, *Autobiography and Journals*, p.122.

⁷⁹ Transcribed by A.N.L. Munby, “The Bibliophile: B. R. Haydon’s Anatomy Book”, *Apollo*, XXVI (1937): p.345.

chalk, the size of nature. These drawings were thought by the professor [Bell] the finest ever made from dissection.”⁸⁰ And, as Haydon’s own copy of Bell’s *Essays on Anatomy* illustrates (Figure 9) the extensive annotations and marginal sketches of the human figure superimposed on Bell’s text vividly challenge the traditionally lifeless representation of the human figure derived from Antique casts.

⁸⁰ Cited by Bignamini and Postle, *The Artist’s Model*, p.32.

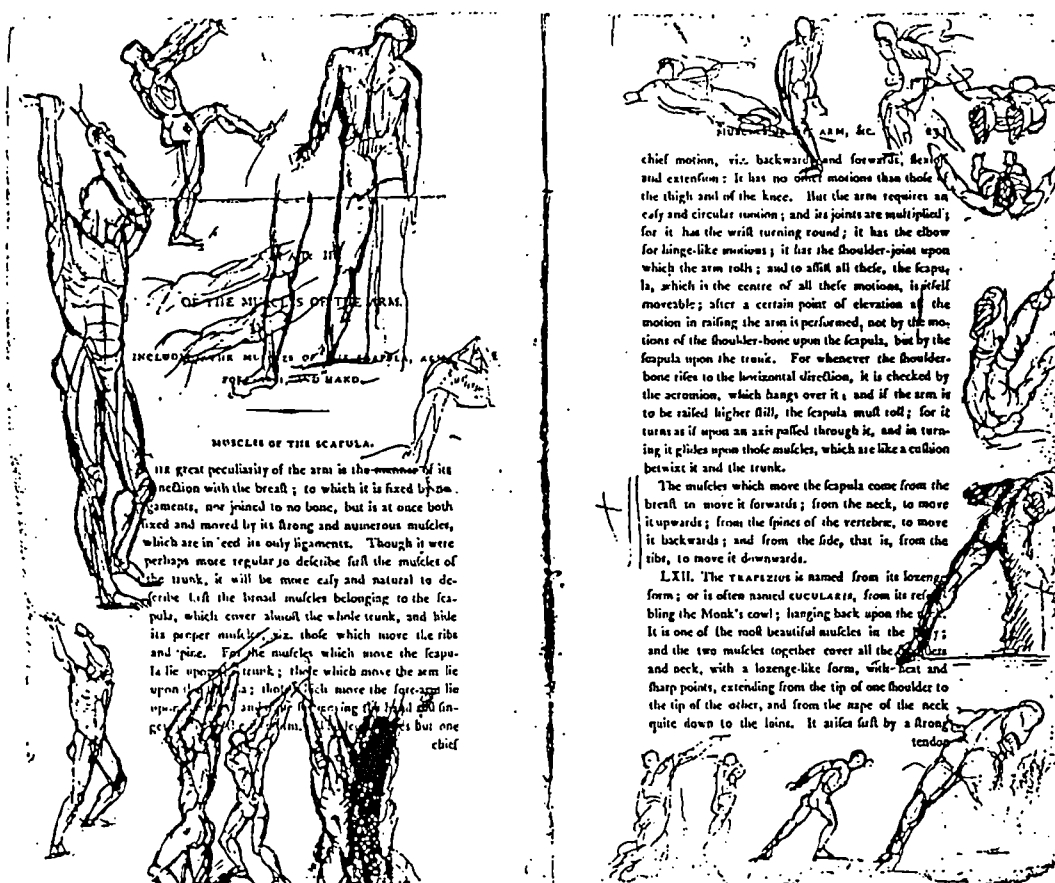


Figure 9

Benjamin Robert Haydon, *A Page from Bell's Anatomy, with Sketches by Haydon, Illustrating the Action of the Muscles*, (1807(?)); rpt. in A.N.L. Munby, "The Bibliophile: B.R. Haydon's Anatomy Book", *Apollo*, 26 (1937): pp.345-47.

V

For Bell, using the language of anatomy as an artistic technique provides both a structural scheme to represent the expressions and a vocabulary to describe the movements of the features. Bell's appeal to artists to cultivate a functional understanding of the anatomy of the human figure depended on the formulation of a grammatical basis for the language of visual art by emphasising the combination of sensation and motion as the signs of expression. Only through a knowledge of the internal structure of the body, Bell argues here, and throughout his *The Anatomy*, can the response of the body to emotion and physical pain and pleasure be scrutinised for signs of expression and translated into a visual language. "The organs of the body," are, Bell claims, "the links in the chain of relation between it and the material world"⁸¹ -and the point of distinction between man from animals⁸²-- and once recognised as such, it is clear, Bell maintains, that "the frame of the body, constituted for the support of the vital functions, becomes the instrument of expression." Or, as he expands later:

An extensive class of passions, by influencing the heart, by affecting that sensibility which governs the muscles of respiration, calls them into co-operation, so that they become an undeviating and sure sign of certain states or conditions of the mind. *They are the organs of expression* [my italics].⁸³

These "organs of expression," represented by the muscles and the nerves of the body provide a model of organisation for the complex network of relations that underlie, and, in fact, disrupt, the surface of the body (Figure 10). Whilst he takes the face as a representation of the whole body, Bell does, at the same time, insist upon what he describes as the "consent and accordance of expression" represented on the face. "It is," he claims, "not upon a single feature

⁸¹ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.77.

⁸² Bell, *The Anatomy*, p. 40. Bell explains: "If the function be allied to intellect, or connected with mind. . .then there is no incompatibility with the human countenance, though the organ may bear a resemblance to the same part in a brute; but, if it has a relation to the meaner necessities of animal life, as the jaws, or the teeth, the effect is incompatible, and altogether at variance with human physiognomy."

⁸³ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.88.

that the emotion operates; but the whole face is marked with expression, all the movements of which are consentaneous [*sic*]. . .the peculiar expression of individual emotion being distinguished by the action and determination of certain features.”⁸⁴ Furthermore, the tenth essay of the *The Anatomy*, subtitled “Uses of Anatomy to the Painter,” clarifies Bell’s interpretation of anatomy--as “the examination of that structure by which the mind expresses emotion, and through which the emotions are controlled and modified”--and reformulates it to artistic ends.

⁸⁴ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.140.



PLATE II.

Figure 10 Charles Bell, *Of the Muscles of the Face*, (1806), engraving, *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression, as Connected with the Fine Arts*, 7th ed. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1877), Appendix, p.249.

Expression figures the surface of the body, and particularly the face, as the canvas upon which the complex expressions of sensation are displayed by the actions and gestures of its different muscular parts. For, in its association with “the arts of design,” anatomy is “not merely the study of the individual and dissected muscles of the face, or body, or limbs,—but the observation of all the characteristic varieties which distinguish the frame of the body or countenance;”⁸⁵ it is “the grammar of that language in which they address us.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, he explains:

The expressions, attitudes, and movements of the human figure are the characters of this language, adapted to convey the effect of historical narration, as well as to shew [*sic*] the working of human passion, and to give the most striking and lively indications of intellectual power and energy.⁸⁷

Through the study of anatomy, according to Bell, the artist will learn “to observe nature, to see the forms in their minute varieties. . .to catch expressions so evanescent that they must escape him, did he not know their sources;”⁸⁸ anatomy develops “a knowledge of the peculiarities of infancy, youth, or age; of sickness or robust health; or of the contrasts between manly and muscular strength and feminine delicacy; or of the appearances which pain or death present”⁸⁹ (Figure 11).

And yet, Bell was well aware of the limitations that an ignorance of the principles of anatomy had on artists, for he saw in the art education offered by the Royal Academy an imperfect system of knowledge about the human figure. “Suppose,” suggests Bell, in a direct attack on the art education offered by the Academy, “that a young artist, not previously grounded in anatomy, is about to sketch a figure or a limb, his execution will be feeble, and he

⁸⁵ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.194.

⁸⁶ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.2.

⁸⁷ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.2.

⁸⁸ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.194.

⁸⁹ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.194.

will commit many errors if he endeavour merely to copy what is placed before him--to transcribe, as it were, a language which he does not understand." He then explains:

He sees an undulating surface, with the bones and processes of the joints faintly marked; he neglects the peculiar swelling of the muscles, to which he should give force, as implying motion; he makes roundings merely; he is incapable of representing the elegant curved outline of beauty, with decision and accuracy, and of preserving at the same time the characters of living action. Drawing what he does not understand, he falls into tameness or deviates into caricature.⁹⁰

An understanding of the language of anatomy, Bell argues, provides a guarantee against such error and misreading, by teaching the art student to see the function and the structure underlying the surface which causes "the peculiar swelling of the muscles. . .the elegant curved outline of beauty. . .[and] the characters of living action." Expression is discussed in terms of the connection between the physiology of emotion and the representation of beauty, but it is important to recognise that unlike Lavater, the type of beauty Bell discusses is determined by the motion of the features, rather than the permanent form of the head.

Bell focusses on expression rather than beauty in order to emphasise the mobile relations, internally and externally, between the signs of expression, rather than simply their static shape. "A countenance which, in ordinary conditions, has nothing remarkable," Bell remarks, "may become beautiful in expression. It is expression which raises affection, which dwells pleasantly or painfully on the memory."⁹¹ Influenced by late eighteenth-century theories of beauty and sublimity, and in particular by Archibald Alison, whose *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790) Bell almost certainly read, Bell perceives beauty in the parts of the face and the relations between these parts, rather than in the form of the whole head. Furthermore, ideal beauty is believed by Bell to undermine, and indeed erase, the "truth of expression and character" because it fails to accommodate that momentary "display of muscular action in the human figure" and refuses to acknowledge the natural sense of proportion in "the

⁹⁰ Bell, *The Anatomy*, pp. 203-204.

⁹¹ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.18. See Frederick Cummings, "Charles Bell and *The Anatomy of Expression*", *The Art Bulletin*, 46 (1964): pp.191-203; for an interesting account of Bell's aesthetic design in advancing the beauty of expression.

effect produced upon the surface of the body and limbs by the action of the muscles.” Artists must, according to Bell’s theory of expression, draw the figures they see in everyday life, rather than select, or imagine, figures appropriate to a particular artistic convention: “beauty is consistent with an infinite variety of forms. . .its cause and origin is to be found in some quality capable of varying and accomodating itself, which can attach to different forms, and still operate through every change.”⁹²

By focussing on the “infinite variety of forms,” that is, the mixed nature of expression, Bell is able to provide a series of narratives for different facial expressions in terms of their distinctive muscular and sensational actions. Laughter, weeping, and grief; pain, demoniacs, convulsions; despair, joy; admiration, jealousy; rage and remorse, are just some examples of the faces that produce narratives of the movements of expression and fictions of the face by referring to already encoded typological representations (Figures 12 and 13). So, for example, in laughter:

The muscles concentring [*sic*] to the mouth prevail; . . .they retract the lips, and display the teeth. The cheeks are more powerfully drawn up, the eyelids wrinkled, and the eye almost concealed. The lachrymal gland within the orbit is compressed by the pressure on the eyeball, and the eye suffused with tears.⁹³

Whereas in sorrow:

A general languor pervades the whole countenance. The violence and tension of grief, the lamentations, and the tumult, like all strong excitements, gradually exhaust the frame. . .The lips are relaxed and the lower jaw drops; the upper eyelid falls and half covers the pupil of the eye. The eye is frequently filled with tears, and the eyebrows take an inclination similar to that which the depressors of the angles of the lips give to the mouth.⁹⁴

⁹² Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.181.

⁹³ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.135.

⁹⁴ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.138.



Figure 11 Charles Bell, *Age and Infancy*, (1806), engraving, *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression, as Connected with the Fine Arts*, 7th ed. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1877), p.42.



LAUGHTER

Figure 12 Charles Bell, *Laughter*, (1806), engraving, *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression, as Connected with the Fine Arts*, 7th ed. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1877), p.134.

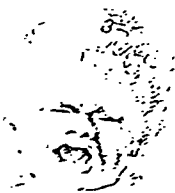


Figure 13 Charles Bell, *Weeping*, (1806), engraving, *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression, as Connected with the Fine Arts*, 7th ed. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1877), p.136.

In joy:

The eyebrow is raised moderately, but without any angularity; the forehead is smooth; the eye full, lively, and sparkling; the nostril is moderately inflated, and a smile is on the lips.⁹⁵

Whereas in jealousy:

The eyebrows are knit, and the eyelid so fully lifted as almost to disappear, while the eyeball glares from under the bushy eyebrow. There is a general tension of the muscles which concentrate around the mouth, and the lips retract and shew [*sic*] the teeth with a fierce expression; this depends partly on the turn of the nostril [Bell adds], which accompanies the retraction of the lips.⁹⁶

By identifying both the practical and the muscular movements of the face in graphic form in this way, the process of visualising the physical activity of expression becomes a dialectical process of negotiation between the compulsion to classify and to fix the signs of expression and the resistance that the combination of the motion and sensation exert on this apparently hierarchical taxonomy.

The difficulty, for the artist, is not really how to observe accurately the relation and proportion between the signs of expression displayed on the face, but how to visualise these signs of expression as representations of physiological and psychological features, each with very specific characteristics. One solution to this problem, Bell suggests, in an essay entitled “On the Sources of Expression,” is that the artist engage in a series of intellectual exercises based on the passions which, he believes, are of vital importance in distinguishing the organs of sense from what he terms “the organs of expression.”⁹⁷ “So in grief,” Bell directs, “if we attend to the same class of phenomena [as a man of fear], we shall be able to draw an exact picture.” He continues:

⁹⁵ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.155.

⁹⁶ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.158.

⁹⁷ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.88.

Let us imagine to ourselves the overwhelming influence of grief on woman [*sic*]. The object in her mind has absorbed all the powers of the frame, the body is no more regarded, the spirits have left it, it reclines, and the limbs gravitate; they are nerveless and relaxed, and she scarcely breathes; but why comes at intervals the long-drawn sigh?--why are the neck and throat convulsed?--what causes the swelling and quivering of the lips, and the deadly paleness of the face?--or why is the hand so pale and earthly cold?--or why, at intervals, as the agony returns, does the convulsion spread over the frame like a paroxysm of suffocation?⁹⁸

By making the expression of emotion refer to a specific rhetoric of the body that visualises the body according to its anatomical structure, Bell frames the grieving type “woman” within a physiological and psychological model that attempts to break down the distinction between the external signs of grief and the internal anxiety of the emotion. For the grieving woman, the fraught activity of the mind appears, at first, to absorb all the muscular energy of her body, and yet what fascinates Bell is the disruption of this trance-like state by the sporadic reflexions of the muscles. The neck and throat convulse; the lips swell and quiver; the face pales; the hand cools; and a suffocating shudder sweeps the body.

The Anatomy attempts to educate the senses, through observation and demonstration, to describe and dissect the representation of emotion as it is represented, rather than experienced, by the human body, and particularly the face. As a language of the face designed to visualise expression, *The Anatomy* complicates the established physiognomic translation from experiential to verbal and visual modes of perception by reading the movements of expression as a distinctively moral language of the soul communicated by the muscular signs of the face; and, at the same time, by conceiving the neurological function of those signs. The problem is twofold: on the one hand, how to read and represent adequately the mobile, and often mixed, expressions of the face; and on the other, how to conceptualise these expressions in a philosophical context which purports to be both moral and physiological and physiognomic and scientific. And yet, Bell’s work illuminates the epistemological and phenomenological difficulties involved in attempting to visualise a natural order which is, at once, physiognomic and scientific. For the language of the face Bell presents is, quite simply,

⁹⁸ Bell, *The Anatomy*, p.82.

a visual mode of expression but the negotiation between external and internal, motion and sensation, and physical, physiological, and psychological, that is required in order to make this equivalence should not be underestimated.

Note. A shorter version of this chapter was given to the Eighteenth Century Research Group at the University of York and the Cabinet of Natural History at the University of Cambridge. A rather different version, delivered at the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine at the University of Oxford, will be published in the Spring 1996 volume of *Textual Practice*.

CHAPTER TWO

**A PANTOMIMIC ART WITHOUT THE AID OF TEXT:
GESTURE, MIMICRY, AND EXPRESSION IN THE EARLY
PAINTINGS OF THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD.**

I

“We have no need to go abroad to study ethnology,” Eliza Lynn asserts boldly in an article in Charles Dickens’ weekly journal, *Household Words*, entitled “Passing Faces,” for “a walk through the streets of London will show us specimens of every human variety known.”¹ “It is,” proclaims Lynn, “perfectly incredible what a large number of ugly people one sees.” And in astonished, and somewhat defamatory, tones, she goes on to describe a scene of busy London life:

One wonders where they can possibly have come from,—from what invading tribe of savages or monkeys. We meet faces that are scarcely human,—positively brutified out of all trace of intelligence by vice, gin, and want of education; but besides this sad class, there are the simply ugly faces, with all the lines turned the wrong way, and all the colours in the wrong places.²

Considered as a racial and zoological spectacle, exhibiting “specimens of every human variety,” the streets of London present the discerning eye, “the educated perception,” with a threatening panorama of “scarcely human,” indeed “positively brutified,” faces, displaying “all the lines turned the wrong way, and all the colours in the wrong places.” Lynn identifies these lines and colours as the distinguishing marks of identity in the social hierarchy and, she explains, though the artist is trained “to trace the original lines through the successive shadings made by many generations of a different race,” the astute observer can still recognise “those lines. . . seen by all who know how to look for them, or who understand them when they are before them.”³ Motivated by this desire to fix identity and character in terms of race and likeness, Lynn articulates a peculiarly Victorian obsession to preserve the authenticity and integrity of the self through a narrow frame of exacting lines and colours. But it is my contention in this chapter, that the intersection of empirical observation and imaginative fancy

¹ Eliza Lynn, “Passing Faces”, *Household Words. A Weekly Journal; Conducted by Charles Dickens*, XI (1855): p.261.

² Lynn, “Passing Faces”, p.262.

³ Lynn, “Passing Faces”, p.261.

which occurs so graphically in Lynn's article perplexes, rather than affirms, the physiognomic order of the visible world determined by the face; and so provides an engaging context in which to place the early paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Let me elaborate.

Lynn exclaims, "look at that pale woman, with red eyes, sunken cheeks, and that painful thinness of the shabby genteel":

She is the wife of a gambler, once an honourable and a wealthy man, now sunk to the lowest depths of moral degradation--fast sinking to the lowest depths of social poverty as well. . . She has come to-day to pawn some of her clothes; the first time in her miserable career that this task has been forced on her: by this day next year she will have known every pawnbroker's shop in the quarter. Lucky for her, if she does not come to know every ginshop as well!⁴

To Lynn, and her readers, the surface of the body, and especially the face, comes to represent the "surface of society" by providing visible, somatic emblems of social position; for Lynn's alignment of the body with the representation of the city draws on an inherited image of the social body derived from the correspondence between the language of anatomy and the organisation of the state.⁵ The "red eyes, sunken cheeks, and. . . painful thinness" of the "pale woman" singled out by Lynn point to the liminality of her position as a gambler's wife, posed precariously between "moral degradation" and "social poverty." Whereas, in contrast, the husband of an heiress walks briskly along, "humming an opera tune" and contemplating his

⁴ Lynn, "Passing Faces", p.264.

⁵ For an account of the analogy between the representation of the body and the organisation of social space, see Roy Porter, "Consumption: Disease of the Consumer Society?", *Consumption and the World of Goods*, eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), pp.58-81. Mary Poovey gives an interesting reformulation of this image of the social body in nineteenth-century culture. See "Anatomical Realism and Social Investigation in Early Nineteenth-Century Manchester", *Differences*, 5(1993): pp.1-30. Poovey claims that:

In adapting the age-old analogy between the human body and social organizations to a social situation that was new in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Whig reformers helped forge from inherited representational strategies and epistemological assumptions a genre that brought a new version of the city into visibility in a new way. . . I will call this genre anatomical realism (p.2).

See also Dana Aaron Brand, *The Spectator and the City: Fantasies of Urban Legibility in Nineteenth-Century England and America* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1986); and Nicholas Green, *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); Deborah Epstein Nord, "The City as Theatre: From Georgian to Early Victorian London", *Victorian Studies*, 31 (1988): pp.159-88; and William B. Thesing, *The London Muse: Victorian Poetic Responses to the City* (Athens, GE: University of Georgia Press, 1982).

own good fortune, whilst jostling out of his way a “downcast man stalking moodily along [who] has just lost his last farthing on the Stock Exchange.”⁶ Caught amidst the visual culture of London which Lynn portrays, the features of the face provide the perceptual clues to the history, social condition, and by implication, class, of the numerous “passing faces.” And in this way, as Elizabeth Eastlake makes clear in an article on physiognomy, the face acquires a specific, and extremely valuable, currency in society as a mediating form of identification.⁷

Writing an article for the *Quarterly Review* of 1851, Eastlake--wife of Sir Charles Eastlake (onetime President of the Royal Academy and first director of the National Gallery) and, more importantly, an influential mid-nineteenth century critic--enthusiastically describes “the tremendous responsibility given to the human countenance, in the social economy of the world, as the great medium of recognition between man and man.”⁸ The face is, according to Eastlake, not only the “badge of distinction” and the “proof of identity,” but also “the sole proof which is instantaneous--an evidence not collected by effort, study, or time, but obtained and apprehended in a moment,” and as such a form of preservation against “the most bewildering confusions and fatal mistakes”⁹; because by fixing the interpretation of character in a particular social position, “it is,” Eastlake claims, “the spirit within witnessing. . .with the spirit of the gazer, which alone touches the electric springs of recognition.”¹⁰ Spiritual healing aside, Eastlake is, however, quick to point out, that the modesty, propriety, decorum, and reserve which can be perceived from the face depend upon the relation of a particular face to its ideal type: “Each sex and every age of life has a physiognomy proper to itself, and only to be rightly defined by its dissimilarity to that of another. Each has a beauty *after its kind*, which it

⁶ Lynn, “Passing Faces”, p.264.

⁷ [Elizabeth Eastlake], *Quarterly Review*, 90 (1851): pp.62-91.

⁸ [Eastlake], *Quarterly Review*, p.62.

⁹ [Eastlake], *Quarterly Review*, pp.62-63.

¹⁰ [Eastlake], *Quarterly Review*, p.72.

belongs to the true artist to observe and to the true physiognomist to discriminate.”¹¹

It is obvious from Lynn’s and Eastlake’s articles, set against a spectacular backdrop of rapidly moving and transforming faces, that what is at stake is not just the ethnic origin, or social signs of a face, but the stability of the lines and colours that mark out its particular identity; or, at least, a desire to underwrite that identity with a degree of permanence and finitude so that the kind of perceptual discrimination described by Eastlake can be achieved. The matter is clearly paradoxical because although Lynn and Eastlake structure their representations on an empirical veracity to truth, they also appear susceptible to imaginative flights of passion. To take a slightly different example, a physiognomical handbook on the connection between “linear and mental portraiture morally considered, and pictorially illustrated,” written in 1852 by Thomas Woolnoth, similarly invokes an image of the peripatetic observer of the face as collector of expressions. Woolnoth explains:

In walking the streets of the metropolis, we have the finest opportunities of enlarging our facial observations: for in such a collection, all the expressions seem brought together as though for immediate comparison; hence we find in the great multitude the mixed Expression is the prevailing one, and has that neutralizing effect upon the mass, that they move on as undistinguished as if they had no Expression at all. . . What arrests the eye in passing is that more turbulent and depraved condition of face, which does not average above one in a hundred, of such as are not to be brought suddenly or severely under physiognomical survey.¹²

The streets of London proffer a collection of expressions: specimens for physiognomical survey, and mixed expressions which ‘neutralize’ the faces of the crowds; but it is the face which exceeds the enlarged knowledge of facial observations, “that more turbulent and depraved condition of face,” which strikes and perplexes the eye. For, as Woolnoth makes clear, on the one hand, expressions of the face are classified empirically according to physiognomic type, that is, usually “mixed expression”; and on the other, a small number of

¹¹ [Eastlake], *Quarterly Review*, p. 71.

¹² Thomas Woolnoth, *Facts and Faces: or the mutual connexion between linear and mental portraiture morally considered, and pictorially illustrated by a series of twenty-four graphic heads of all the dispositions of the mind; with a dissertation on personal beauty, showing what it is, and what is mistaken for it, by a comprehensive view of constructive, ornamental, and expressive beauty, and their relative importance to each other: also, an essay on complexion of character* (London: Thomas Woolnoth, 1852), p.209.

faces resist this form of classification and exceed the physiognomic method of interpretation to present an expression at once precarious and terrifying, “turbulent and depraved,” to the observer’s eye. Furthermore, returning to the conclusion of Lynn’s article, one can see this uneasy relation between taxonomic and imaginative faces worked out in dramatic fashion.

Evoking the endless activity, changeability, and fluidity made manifest in a kind of theatricality that daily confronts the inhabitants of the metropolis, Lynn directs the reader:

Past the Circus--up Regent Street. . .--through Oxford Street, and towards Marble Arch--crowds on crowds still meet; and face after face, full of meaning, turned towards you as you pass; signs of all nations and races of men pass you, unknown of all and to themselves whence they came; beasts and birds dressed in human form; tragedies in broadcloth, farces in rags; passions sweeping through the air like tropical storms, and silent virtues stealing by like moonlight; LIFE, in all its boundless power of joy and suffering--this is the great picture-book to be read in London streets; these are the wild notes to be listened to; this the strange mass of pathos, poetry, caricature, and beauty which lie heaped up together without order or distinctive heading, and which men endorse as Society and World.¹³

So, as a “great picture-book” of “LIFE, in all its boundless power of joy and suffering,” the streets of London are aligned with the theatre in terms of their correspondent display of contrasting representations of emotion, and spectacular figures of identity. “Birds and beasts dressed in human form; tragedies in broadcloth, farces in rags; [and] passions sweeping through the air” act as embodiments of contemporary theatrical types, performing instantly recognisable dramatic gestures of behaviour amidst that “strange mass of pathos, poetry, caricature, and beauty” which constitutes “Society and World.” By encoding the faces in the crowd in this way, as personifications of legible types of expression—sympathy, sentiment, satire, and splendour—Lynn draws attention to a theatricality that may be inherent, or at least directly involved, in everyday experience, and which lends its performative power to represent the changing nature of individual character by recourse to the changing nature of the urban landscape.

It is worth pausing, momentarily, here to consider the complexities of talking about

¹³ Lynn, “Passing Faces”, p.264.

theatricality in the nineteenth century.¹⁴ As Jonas Barish acknowledges in his survey of antitheatricality in Western culture, an account of the visual culture of the nineteenth century must recognise a dual impulse: an “antitheatrical prejudice” and a “cult of the theatre.” He writes: “Antitheatrical prejudice is far from having the last word in the nineteenth century [because]. . . as the century advances we begin to encounter not only a tolerance for the theatre, and an enthusiasm for the theatre, but a cult of the theatre--if not for the theatre as an institution, as least for theatricality as a mode of existence.”¹⁵ Moreover, Nina Auerbach claims that the term is used to denote a “fluidity of character that decomposes the uniform integrity of the self”: theatricality is, she claims, the antithesis to an almost sanctified form of sincerity and an erosion of the authenticity of the self.¹⁶ But the distinction between theatricality and integrity, fluidity and stasis which Barish and Auerbach make--admittedly in slightly different ways--is a problematic one because the significance of the theatre at this time lies with its capacity to perform a movement between the representational strategies of art, nature, and science. Michael Fried’s study of Diderot and the art of the eighteenth century is instructive here for Fried argues that far from being antagonistic to the figure of the beholder, theatricality describes a mode of performance and a state of mind which brings the beholder into the

¹⁴ For studies on the importance of theatricality to Victorian culture, see Nina Auerbach, *Private Theatricals: The Lives of the Victorians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); and “Victorian Players and Sages”, *The Performance of Power: Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, eds. Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa, IO: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp.183-198; Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986); Joseph Litvak, *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986); and Judith Weschler, *A Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

¹⁵ Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981), p.350.

¹⁶ Auerbach, *Private Theatricals*, p.4.

painting through a series of self-conscious and self-referential gestures.¹⁷ Defined in the *OED* as that which “plays a part. . . simulates, or is simulated; artificial, affected, assumed,”¹⁸ I suggest that theatricality assumes a prominent role in the middle-third of the nineteenth century as a representation which slips between nature and art; art and science; and science and nature; and which challenges the validity of the bodily sign as an index of emotion through the transformation of character on stage.

Having suggested some of the resonances implicit in reading the face by applying the physiognomic method of interpretation to the popular culture of the time, I want to explore the ways in which the notion of theatricality illuminated by Lynn, Eastlake, and Woolnoth might be implicated in the construction of the art of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in the mid-nineteenth century. To be precise, I refer to an exacting form of art which Ford Madox Brown, writing on the composition of painting in 1850, described as “a pantomimic art without the aid of text.”¹⁹ This conception of art, I argue, is distinctively Pre-Raphaelite because it positions the face as the locus of the tension between theatrical performance and pictorial realism: it draws attention to the paradox inherent in forging a physiognomic link between mechanism and organicism, art and nature, individual and type. This conflation is an extremely difficult one and, as it will become clear, it is not satisfactorily resolved by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; but my interest lies less with the artistic debates generated by the Brotherhood’s paintings, than with their attempt to work out a method of painting which could be both theatrical, in the sense

¹⁷ Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980). See also, Fried’s article “Toward a Supreme Fiction: Genre and Beholder in the Art Criticism of Diderot and his Contemporaries”, *New Literary History*, 6 (1975): pp. 543-85.

¹⁸ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). It is interesting to note that the *OED* cites Thomas Carlyle’s *French Revolution* (1837) as the first use of the term “theatricality:” “By act and word he strives to do it; with sincerity, if possible; failing that, with theatricality.”

¹⁹ Ford Madox Brown, “On the Mechanism of an Historical Picture: Part I. The Design”, *The Germ: Thoughts Towards Nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art* (London: Aylott and Jones, 1850), p.71.

of a self-consciously referential art (as in Fried's analysis); and moral, that is, referring to the invisible order of the visible world. The conception of art as pantomimic dramatises the resistance to and acceptance of the notion of theatricality as embodiment. For the pantomimic makes visible the slippage between nature and art, art and science, and science and nature, by playing out an epistemological form of visual experience which relies upon empirical observation and imaginative passion for its communicative power.

With the increasingly widespread popularity of theatricality in the mid nineteenth century as a mode of reading the surface of the body in relation to character, it is important to understand what the physiognomic order of the visible which Lynn, Eastlake and Woolnoth detail might involve. The visual culture of London as described by them endows the face with a valuable currency as the representation of a specific type; but, as the accounts of these three writers illustrate, the face possesses the capacity to frustrate this typological classification and to embody, instead, an individually distinctive countenance which cannot be read in these terms. So, directed by a close reading of Ford Madox Brown's essay, "On the Mechanism of an Historical Picture," I explore what the physiognomic order of the visible might entail if it is conceived in terms of both the tradition of history painting advocated by Joshua Reynolds in the eighteenth century; and the aesthetic designs of the Brotherhood. I suggest that the support the Brotherhood received for their paintings from Ruskin, as a reluctant champion of Pre-Raphaelite ideals, was qualified by his own uneasy awareness that their desire to negotiate art, science (or more exactly anatomy), and nature on canvas illuminated the paradox of his concern with what he termed theoretic rather than aesthetic nature. *But this tension apart, what the Pre-Raphaelites share with Ruskin is an engagement with the phenomenal world and a desire to deprivilege the imaginative response of the perceiving subject and encourage, instead, a conception of art that displays a visual field saturated with detail, resonating with signs of the natural order of things and obsessed with the face.*

I discuss the work of two theorists of dramatic art, Henry Siddons and George Grant, and a painting--William Holman Hunt's "The Eve of St. Agnes" (1848)--in order to pursue still further the function of theatricality in forging a connection between art, nature, and science

through its pantomimic embodiment. For whilst it is clear that the physiognomic order of the visible already operated as a conflation of type and individual by the time, in the late 1840s and early 1850s, that the Brotherhood paintings were produced, it is, nonetheless, important to consider how the availability of theoretical models for dramatic representation might inflect this connection. Far from claiming that the Brotherhood artists were familiar with theories of drama, however, I suggest, that the rhetorical patterns advanced by Siddons or Grant provide one way of glossing the Brotherhood's conception of a pantomimic art manifest in Hunt's painting. Then, to bring the correspondence between pantomime and art into sharper focus, I examine a series of paintings by the Brotherhood which cluster around the Keats poem "Isabella" (1818). I discuss the paintings--Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Faust: Gretchen and Mephistopheles in Church" (1848) and "Dante Drawing an Angel on the First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice" (1848-9); William Holman Hunt's "Lorenzo at his Desk in the Warehouse" (1848-50); and John Everett Millais' "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil" (1848-9)--in terms of the intersection of empirical observation and imaginative fancy that conspires to perplex the established physiognomic order of the visible; and in relation to the prominence of the face, repeatedly occurring in these paintings, which almost acts as an embodiment of this pantomimic conception of art. Graphically portraying "passion, [and] multiform character," Madelaine's face in "The Eve of St. Agnes," Margaret's face in "Faust," Dante's face in "Dante Drawing an Angel," and Lorenzo's face in "Lorenzo at his Desk," and "Isabella," all portray the act of looking as an uncertain occupation, poised between directness and indirectness, voluntary and involuntary response, the gaze and the glance.²⁰

²⁰ I am here borrowing directly from Norman Bryson's *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1983). Bryson claims that whereas the "activity of the gaze" is "prolonged, contemplative, yet regarding the field of vision with a certain aloofness and disengagement, across a tranquil interval," that of the glance is "a furtive or sideways look whose attention is always elsewhere, which shifts to conceal its own existence, and which is capable of carrying unofficial, *sub rosa* messages of hostility, collusion, rebellion, and lust" (p.94). Departing from the Saussurean (and then Jakobsonian) concept of the sign as an operation occurring on at least two axes of combination and selection, Bryson superimposes the structure of language on the structure of painting in order to show that, he concludes, "painting *as sign* must be the fundamental assumption of a materialist art history; that the place where the sign arises is the *interindividual* territory of recognition; that the concept of the sign's meaning cannot be divorced from its embodiment *in context*" (p.131). It is also worth recalling

II

Before reading Brown's description of "pantomimic art," published in "On the Mechanism of a Historical Picture" for the second number of *The Germ*, it is as well to have before us some details of the origins and aims of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Founded in September 1848, in London, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had seven members,--John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, James Collinson, Thomas Woolner, Frederick George Stephens, and William Michael Rossetti--though art historians tend to consider the Brotherhood largely in terms of the work of Millais, Hunt, and Rossetti.²¹ As a group of young artists dedicated to expanding the range and depth of English art by recourse to what Hunt termed "fuller nature," and the techniques of the Italian Quattrocento painters, the Brotherhood shared a commitment to an empirical style of art concerned with representing the physiognomy of the natural world by faithfully recording the vitality, circumstantiality, and transitions of some of its various forms.

In opposition as much to the frivolity of contemporary art, as the classical ideals

the explanation of the gaze given by Jacques Lacan for it articulates the slippage which I suggest is involved in the notion of theatricality. "In our relation to things," he writes, "in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it--this is what we call the gaze." *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, (1973), (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), p.73.

²¹ For specific discussions of the Pre-Raphaelite artists and their work, see Stephen Adams, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: New Burlington Books, 1988); William E. Fredeman, *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Bibliocritical Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); Timothy Hilton, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970); John Dixon Hunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination: 1848-1900* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968); Jan Marsh, *Pre-Raphaelite Women: Images of Femininity in Pre-Raphaelite Art* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987); Graham Ovenden, ed., *The Pre-Raphaelite Photography* (London: Academy Editions, 1984); Leslie Parris, ed., *Pre-Raphaelite Papers* (London: The Tate Gallery, 1984); Marcia Pointon, ed., *Pre-Raphaelites Re-Viewed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); James Sambrook, *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974); Julian Treuherz, *Victorian Painting* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993); and R. Watkinson, *Pre-Raphaelite Art and Design* (Greenwich, CO: New York Graphic Society, 1970). The only available catalogue of Pre-Raphaelite art is Alan Bowness, ed., *The Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate Gallery and Penguin Books, 1984); but see also J.A. Gere, *Pre-Raphaelite Drawings in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 1994); and Andrea Rose, *Pre-Raphaelite Portraits* (Yeovil: Oxford Illustrated Press, 1981).

disseminated by the Royal Academy, the Brotherhood aimed to expand the range and depth of English art by representing an intense and immediate correspondence between nature, in all its external manifestations, and spirituality, as a source of internal meaning. Explaining the choice of name for the group, Hunt attacks the overt concentration on domestic manners and morals, by artists such as Sir David Wilkie, William Mulready, and Thomas Webster, in early-nineteenth century genre painting. "The name of our Body," he expounds, appropriating an anatomical metaphor of organisation, "was meant to keep in our minds our determination ever to do battle against the frivolous art of the day, which had for its ambition "Monkeyean" ideas, "Books of Beauty," Chorister Boys, whose forms were those of melted wax with drapery of no tangible texture."²² Holding "our great Hogarth" as the leading "van of all modern-life art worthy of the name," the Brotherhood determined to deal with "passion, multiform character, real business and action, incident, historic fact," not "boys playing games, girls listening to organ-grinders, cottagers smoking quiet pipes, or preparing homely dinners."²³ In retrospect, William Michael Rossetti described the principles of the Brotherhood style as follows:

1. To have genuine ideas to express;
2. to study Nature attentively, so as to know how to express them;
3. to sympathise with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote;

²² William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1905), I, p.101.

²³ William Michael Rossetti, "The Royal Academy Exhibition, 1861", *Fraser's Magazine*, (1861): p.62. In his article on the 1861 exhibition, Rossetti seems to almost directly echo Hunt's attack on the "frivolous art of the day." He writes:

Of subjects recommendable to our school as a body. . .the best, we think, are clearly those of our own day. But there is a distinction here. Mere domestic art, as mostly understood and practised, is a very meagre affair. . .boys playing games, girls listening to organ-grinders, cottagers smoking quiet pipes, or preparing homely dinners. Or we have a touch of the most poverty-stricken religious feeling--a grace before meat, or a girl at a tombstone. . .Such art as this is strictly analogous to the juvenile tale or the religious tract; and it would be just as sensible to exhort our men of letters to disport themselves in those mildest fields of literature as to inspirit our painters to corresponding relaxations in art. Modern art, to be worthy of the name, must deal with very different matter; with passion, multiform character, real business and action, incident, historic fact. . .Our great Hogarth led the van of all modern-life art worthy of the name.

4. and most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues.²⁴

So, directed by these principles; a more formal list of rules, probably drawn up by William Michael Rossetti; and a list of “Immortals,” composed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Holman Hunt, and including such luminaries as Jesus Christ, Dante, Raphael, Shakespeare, and Keats among its numbers²⁵; the Brotherhood determined to convey an art of the “inner self” capable of representing the human figure in action as an expression of the soul—not dissimilar to the aims of Charles Bell—and to counsel against the “tawdry glitter and theatrical pomposity” which, according to Hunt characterised contemporary English art.²⁶

Hunt explains:

Pictured waxworks playing the part of human beings provoked me, and hackneyed conventionality often turned me from masters whose powers I valued otherwise. What I sought was the power of undying appeal to the hearts of living men. Much of the favourite art left the inner self untouched.²⁷

It was, in fact, just the concern with realistic expression and anatomical accuracy—which Hunt articulates and William Michael Rossetti echoes—that prompted many of the Brotherhood artists to reject the posed models of the Royal Academy in favour of ordinary subjects, often observed

²⁴ William Michael Rossetti, ed., *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family Letters, with a Memoir*, 2 vols. (London, 1895), I, p.135

²⁵ See William Michael Rossetti, *The P.R.B. Journal: William Michael Rossetti's Diary of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood 1849-1853*, ed. William E. Fredeman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p.96. In a letter to William Rossetti, Dante Rossetti writes playfully:
[William Holman] Hunt and I have prepared a list of Immortals, forming our creed, and to be pasted up in our study for the affixing of all decent fellows' signatures. It has already caused considerable horror among our acquaintance. I suppose we shall have to keep a hairbrush.

Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, eds. Oswald Doughty and J.R. Wahl, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965-67), p.35

²⁶ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, p.48.

²⁷ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, p.48. It is interesting to note that Hunt conflates the fashion for waxwork figures in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, most visibly asserted in the subsequent opening of Madame Tussauds, with the constrained poses of the Academy models in the Life Class.

in the streets of London, and much to the disgust of most contemporary art critics.²⁸ What is more, it is exactly this attention to detail fostered by a knowledge of anatomy which determines the Brotherhood's conception of art as pantomimic. For, as Julie F. Codell suggests, "understanding the ties between anatomical language and the symbolic meaning of that language as a social and moral nexus of values may help to explain the vehemence of critics' attacks against the PRB depictions of faces and bodies."²⁹ With these aesthetic principles in mind, I want now to consider Brown's article, "On the Mechanism of a Historical Picture" in detail.

Counselling the artist on the difficulties of "giving body to his idea," and providing a material framework for his composition, Brown directs:

Having, by such means, secured the materials of which his work must be composed, the artist must endeavour, as far as lies in his power, to embody the picture in his thoughts, before having recourse to paper. He must patiently consider his subject, revolving in his mind every means that may assist the clear development of the story: giving the most prominent places to the most important actors, and carefully rejecting incidents that cannot be expressed by *pantomimic art without the aid of text*. He must also, in this mental forerunner of his picture, arrange the "grouping" of his figures,-- that is, the disposing of them in such agreeable clusters or situations on his canvass [*sic*] as may be compatible with the dramatic truth of the whole, (technically called the lines of a composition.) He must also consider the color [*sic*], and disposition of light and dark masses in his design, so as to call attention to the principal objects, (technically called the "effect.") [*my italics*]³⁰

²⁸ For an invaluable collection of Victorian critics' responses to contemporary art, see John C. Olmstead, ed., *Victorian Painting: Essays and Reviews*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1980). See also Herbert Sussman, "The Language of Criticism and the Language of Art: The Responses of Victorian Periodicals to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood", *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 19 (1979): pp.15-29; for a discussion of the reception of the Brotherhood paintings.

²⁹ Julie F. Codell, "Expression over Beauty: Facial Expression, Body Language, and Circumstantiality in the Paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood", *Victorian Studies*, 29 (1986): pp.255-90. Codell concludes:

While the PRB shifted the "discursive formation" of painting away from the nexus of didactic, cultural idealism and toward an empirical, psychological realism, their intention was to reorient the treatment of human figures in order to analyze human responses as pluralistic and undetermined. Their art reflects life not simply as an imitation of its surface, but as an experience within a complex field of forces-- psychological, social, historic, and economic (p.289).

³⁰ Brown, "On the Mechanism of a Historical Picture", pp.70-77.

This “pantomimic art without the aid of text” is the dramatisation of a metaphoric moment that selects its subjects in relation to “the clear development of the story,” “the ‘grouping’ of his figures,” and “the dramatic truth of the whole.” Although performing a gradually unfolding dramatic narrative, articulated through the actions, gestures, and expressions of the figures represented, Brown’s pantomimic art makes the construction of its narrative coincidental with the actual interpretation of the story. Indeed, Brown’s article, by its very title “On the Mechanism of an Historical Picture,” appears to invoke precisely that grand tradition of history painting, as advocated by Sir Joshua Reynolds, that this “pantomimic art” would seem to challenge. A pantomimic art, Brown makes clear, is a selected, self-conscious, mechanistic representation which relies on the patterning of the visual field in order to convey its “dramatic truth”: it constructs an epistemological form of visual experience which appears to foreground empirical observation over imaginative passion. In contrast, Reynolds’ theory of art insists on the importance of generality over circumstantiality, poetic sentiment over mixed expression, the Antique over the life class, and as such counsels the artist to develop a mode of representation that empowers the subject as an abstract, ideal figure to display the universal qualities of a particular class, rank, “sentiment [or]. . . situation,” in all its glory:

A Painter of history shews the man by shewing [*sic*] his actions. . . He has but one sentence to utter, but one moment to exhibit. . . The painter has no other means of giving an idea of the dignity of the mind, but by that external appearance which grandeur of thought does generally, though not always, impress on the countenance; and by that correspondence of figure to sentiment and situation, which all men wish, but cannot command. . . He cannot make his hero talk like a great man; he must make him look like one.³¹

Relying on action and appearance to determine the stature of the subject, Reynolds’ conception of history painting is communicated in a civic language of art that refers for its legitimation to that “grandeur of thought” and that “sentiment and situation” which defines the heroic and the

³¹ Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), Discourse IV, pp.58-61.

beautiful within the bounds of polite aesthetic taste.³² Moreover, opening his lecture series to the Academy, Reynolds addresses the duty and patriotism of this “great, . . . learned, . . . polite, . . . commercial nation,” that legitimates the Academy as a public “ornament” to the “elegance and refinement” of the British empire.³³ The subject of history painting is, therefore, invested with a discursive power, and a concomitant responsibility, to convey both “those expressions alone. . . which their [the subject’s] respective situations generally produce,” and “that expression which men of his rank generally exhibit.”³⁴

What Brown does is to reformulate Reynolds’ conception of history painting—largely unchallenged up to this point in the nineteenth-century—from a critique of the role of taste in the public sphere of the arts, into an examination of the ways in which the private, lived experience of art can be represented. Describing his painting, “The Last of England,” composed in 1852, Brown elucidates his understanding of the narrative of history painting still further. “This painting is,” Brown asserts, “in the strictest sense historical”:

³² For an engaging account of the function of painting in the commercial society of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, see John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: ‘The Body of the Public’* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986). Though mainly eighteenth century in context, see also Brian Allen, ed., *Towards a Modern Art World. Studies in British Art I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Stephen Copley, “The Fine Arts in Eighteenth-Century Polite Culture”. *Painting and the Politics of Culture: New Essays on British Art 1700-1850*, ed. John Barrell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp.13-37; Ronald Paulson, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); Iain Pears. *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768* (London; Yale University Press, 1988); Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians: Eighteenth-Century Portraiture and Society* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1990). A similar history of the function of the arts in the nineteenth century has yet to be written.

³³ Reynolds, *Discourses*, I, p.13. Reynolds explains in full:
It is indeed difficult to give any other reason, why an empire like that of BRITAIN, should so long have wanted an ornament so suitable to its greatness, than that slow progression of things, which naturally makes elegance and refinement the last effect of opulence and power.

³⁴ Reynolds, *Discourses*, I, pp.60-61.

It treats of the emigration movement which attained its culminating point in 1852. I have, therefore, in order to present the parting scene in its full tragic development, singled out a couple from the middle classes, high enough, through education and refinement, to appreciate all they are now giving up, and yet depressed enough in means, to have to put up with the discomforts and humiliations incident to a vessel 'all one class'.³⁵

And attending closely to the symbolic structure of his painting, Brown continues:

The husband broods bitterly over blighted hopes and severance from all he has been striving for. The young wife's grief is of a less cankerous sort, probably confined to the sorrow of parting with a few friends of early years. The circle of her love moves with her. . . Next to them in the background, an honest family of the green-grocer kind. . . Still further back a reprobate shakes his fist with curses at the land of his birth, as though that were answerable for *his* want of success; his old mother reproves him for his foul-mouthed profanity, while a boon companion, with flushed countenance, and got up in nautical togs for the voyage, signifies drunken approbation. The cabbages slung round the stern of the vessel indicate to the practised eye a lengthy voyage; but for this their introduction would be objectless.³⁶

As Brown points out slightly later in the exhibition catalogue, "my object. . . in all cases is to delineate types, not individuals."³⁷ It is, nonetheless, the publication of Brown's essay "On the Mechanism of an Historical Picture" in *The Germ*--the literary and artistic journal published by the Brotherhood in 1850--which ensures that his instructions represent the aesthetic concerns of the whole Brotherhood.³⁸

The Germ was composed with a double-edged intention in mind: "to encourage and enforce an entire adherence to the simplicity of nature; and also to direct attention, as an auxiliary medium, to the comparatively few works which Art has yet produced in this spirit,"

³⁵ Ford Madox Brown, *The Exhibition of Work and Other Paintings* (London: McCorquodale & Co., 1865), p.8. For two studies of Brown which in various ways draw attention to his notion of history painting, see Ford Madox Ford (Heuffer), *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of his Life and Work* (London: Longman's Green, 1896); and Lucy Rabin, *Ford Madox Brown and the Pre-Raphaelite History-Picture* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1978).

³⁶ Brown, *The Exhibition of Work*, p.8.

³⁷ Brown, *The Exhibition of Work*, p.26.

³⁸ "Advertisement", *The Germ: Thoughts Towards Nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art* (London: Aylott and Jones, 1850); rpt. *The Germ: The Literary Magazine of the Pre-Raphaelites* (Oxford and Birmingham: Ashmoleum Museum and Birmingham City Museums and Art Gallery, 1979).

Although poor sales meant that only four editions of the periodical were produced between January and April 1850, *The Germ* is the most direct and unified proposal of the Brotherhood's aesthetic ideology, if such a coherent statement of intent can be drawn from the work of a number of different, though closely related, artists, writers and poets. In addition, as the first journal to be produced by such an intimate artistic group, *The Germ* fulfils an important, though potentially problematic, role in constructing a cohesive, public identity for the Brotherhood.

It is well-known that Hunt, Millais, and possibly other members of the Brotherhood, drew a great deal of their knowledge of the relation between anatomy and expression from Bell's handbook, *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression, as connected with the Fine Arts*, in order to supplement the Royal Academy training focussed on the study of the Antique. In a passage criticising the younger school of Royal Academy Associates for their overt concentration on theatricality, Hunt expresses his sense of frustration with the system of artistic training that the Academy perpetuated:

The fault we found in this younger school was that every scene was planned as for the stage, with second-rate actors to play the parts, striving to look not like sober live men, but pageant statues of waxwork. Knights were frowning and staring as none but hired supernumeraries could stare; the pious had vitreous tears on their reverential cheeks;. . . homely couples were ever reading a Family Bible to a circle of most exemplary children; all alike from king to plebeian were arrayed in clothes fresh from the bandbox. With this artificiality, the drawing was often of a pattern that left anatomy and the science of perspective but poorly demonstrated.³⁹

Although Hunt seems to challenge the dramatic nature of expression, and so implicitly disavow any connection between theatre and art in his painting, what emerges in this passage is an important distinction between the worst kind of theatrical artifice, and a mode of expression that is only dramatic in the symbolic, or substitutive, sense. This is a differentiation, moreover, that separates the representation of transparent, superficial, and abstract posturing from that of real, experiential, timely situations, a difference, that is, between "pageant statues of waxwork" and "sober live men." And by emphasising the importance of interiority in this manner, Hunt

³⁹ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, p.51.

allows for a representational strategy that is motivated by a process of transference and supplementarity to link the physical with the psychological.

For example, Frederick George Stephens' call for an empirical approach to the Arts based on truth, in the second edition of *The Germ*, demands that what is seen should be the subject of what is shown on canvas. Stephens, using the pseudonym John Seward, reasons:

If this adherence to fact, to experiment and not to theory,--to begin at the beginning and not fly to the end,--has added so much to the knowledge of man in science; why may it not greatly assist the moral purposes of the Arts? . . . Truth in every particular ought to be the aim of the artist. Admit no untruth; let the priest's garments be clean.⁴⁰

Receptive to this intention, though admittedly writing after the initial controversy, Sidney Colvin recognises in the Brotherhood paintings "the intellectual realization of human character as brought out by circumstance and as expressed in gesture and facial expression."⁴¹ And yet the resistance encountered by the Brotherhood in presenting "anatomy and the science of perspective" as the key principles of their theory of art lay in the belief, held by many critics at this time, that the representation of "the minute *accidents* of their subject, including, or rather seeking out, every excess of sharpness and deformity" undermined the value their art.⁴²

According to the most vociferous of critics, the expressions and gestures of everyday life were deemed too minor, incidental, and circumstantial for artistic representation, in fact, too undramatic, especially when translated onto religious, historical and contemporary subjects.

Millais, for instance, was vehemently criticised for "giving to the higher forms, character and meanings a circumstantial art-form from which we recoil with loathing and

⁴⁰ John Seward [Frederick George Stephens], "The Purpose and Tendency of Early Italian Art", *The Germ*, 2 (1850): p.61.

⁴¹ Sidney Colvin, "English Painters of the Present Day, VIII, Ford Madox Brown", *The Portfolio*, 1 (1870): pp.82-85.

⁴² [Anon.], *The Times*, 6 (May 1851). Hunt quotes this review in *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, p.249. Stephanie Grilli discusses the assimilation of a medical discourse, particularly referring to epidemics, the Public Health Act, and the medical profession in the 1840s, into the art critical language that attacked Brotherhood paintings in her "Pre-Raphaelite Portraiture, 1848-1854", Ph.D Diss. (Yale University, 1980), pp.5-10.

disgust.”⁴³ Whilst the influential critic Ralph N. Wornum tirades in more general and impassioned terms against this correspondence of art to anatomy. He asserts:

When painting is the mere handmaid to morbid anatomy, its path is clear and its duties fixed; it is then no longer Art, but an administrator to science, and it is without the pale of artistic criticism; but so long as painting is employed as an Art, its duty is to instruct and delight, certainly not to disgust. . . No exalted sentiment can possibly be aided by either ugliness or disease; . . . The physical ideal alone can harmonise with the spiritual ideal: in Art, whatever it may be in Nature in its present condition, *the most beautiful soul must have the most beautiful body*; lofty sentiment and physical baseness are essentially antagonistic.⁴⁴

Although Wornum’s riposte against “ugliness and disease. . . and physical baseness” is indicative of a large number of critical responses to the transitional paintings of the Brotherhood--particularly to Millais’ “Christ in the House of his Parents” (1849) and Hunt’s “A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary from the Persecution of the Druids” (1850)--there are two aspects of this passage which strike me as significant: first, the overwhelming sense in which art is incommensurable to anatomy because it is based on the “exalted sentiment” of “the most beautiful body”; and second, its failure to read the Brotherhood’s concern with realistic expression and anatomical accuracy as a symbolic mode of representation and recognition.⁴⁵ For in William Michael Rossetti’s opinion, the Brotherhood had “a determination to realise incident, and especially expression, from the painter’s own point of view--to make the thing as intense and actual as he could, quite careless whether the result

⁴³ [Anon.], *The Athenaeum*, 1179 (1 June 1850): pp.590-91.

⁴⁴ Ralph N. Wornum, “Modern Moves in Art: ‘Christian Architecture.’ ‘Young England’”, *The Art-Journal*, 12 (1850): pp.117-18. For a discussion of the reception of the Brotherhood paintings, see Herbert L. Sussman, “The Language of Criticism and the Language of Art: The Responses of Victorian Periodicals to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood”, *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 19 (1973): pp.15-29.

⁴⁵ See, most notably, “Royal Academy”, *Athenaeum*, (1850): pp.508-509; pp.533-35; pp.558-60; pp. 590-91; pp.615-17; and also Charles Dickens, “Old Lamps for New Ones”, *Household Words: A Weekly Journal, conducted by Charles Dickens*, I (1850): pp.265-67; and, less aggressively, David Masson, “Pre-Raphaelitism in Art and Literature”, *British Quarterly Review*, 16(1852): pp.197-220.

would be voted odd, *outré*, horrid, frightful, and the rest of it.”⁴⁶

Rejecting the conventional, mediating languages and traditions of painting, then, (at their own peril), the Brotherhood resolved both to represent the body in its everyday activities and to penetrate into the inner life of that body through a combination of naturalism and imagination. Moreover, in an essay in *The Germ*, entitled “The Subject in Art,” John Tupper argues for the immediacy and transparency of this correspondence between forms of visual knowledge in life and art: “the semblance of what in nature delights.”⁴⁷ He explains: “[if] *Fine Art* shall regard the general happiness of man, by addressing those attributes which are *peculiarly human*, by exciting the activity of his rational and benevolent powers. . . then the subject of Fine Art should be drawn from objects which address and excite the activity of man’s rational and benevolent powers.”⁴⁸ And he goes on: “Art, to become a more powerful engine of civilization, assuming a practically humanizing tendency. . . should be made more directly conversant with the things, incidents, and influences which surround and constitute the living world of those whom Art proposes to improve.”⁴⁹ Tupper is clearly emphasising the role of the organic, the vital, which runs through the Brotherhood’s works, in making the

⁴⁶ William Michael Rossetti, *Fine Arts, Chiefly Contemporary* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1867), p.187.

⁴⁷ [John Tupper], “The Subject in Art. (No.1)”, *The Germ*, 1 (January 1850): p.14. The complete sentence disavows the Antique as an adequate model of art “for, according to that faith demanded as setting out, fine art delights us from its being the semblance of what in nature delights us.”

⁴⁸ [Tupper], “The Subject in Art. (No.1)”, p.15.

⁴⁹ [Tupper], “The Subject in Art. (No. 2)”, *The Germ*, III (March 1850): p.122. It is interesting that a few pages earlier, Tupper invokes the, by now familiar, representation of the city in order to distinguish between active and passive poets, or those that see and feel compared to those that feel but do not see. Tupper speculates:

For let a poet walk through London, and he shall see a succession of incidents, suggesting some moral beauty by a contrast of times with times, unfolding some principle of nature, developing some attribute of man, or pointing to some glory in the Maker: while the man who walked behind him saw nothing but shops and pavements, and coats and faces; neither did he hear the aggregated turmoil of a city of nations, nor the noisy exponents of various desires, appetites and pursuits: each pulsing tremour of the atmosphere was not struck into it by a subtile [*sic*] ineffable something willed forcibly out of a cranium (p.120).

subject of art “directly conversant with the things, incidents, and influences” of the phenomenal world.

Obsessed with ensuring the validity of any enthusiasm for nature, Ruskin informed the readers of *The Times*: “[the Brotherhood] will draw either what they see, or what they suppose might have been the actual facts of the scene they desire to represent, irrespective of any conventional rules of picture-making.”⁵⁰ And yet, the relation of scientific empiricism and imaginative passion was particularly fraught for Ruskin as he seeks desperately to explain in a subsequent letter:

Pre-Raphaelitism has but one principle, that of absolute, uncompromising truth in all that it does, obtained by working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only. . . [Ruskin note:] Or, where imagination is necessarily trusted to, by always endeavouring to conceive a fact as it really was likely to have happened, rather than as it most prettily *might* have happened. . . all agreeing in the effort to make their memories so accurate as to seem like portraiture, and their fancy so probable as to seem like memory.⁵¹

Recognising the alignment of the precision required for this method of observation and reproduction--the “working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only”--with an imaginative conception of authenticity, Ruskin conflates memory with fancy, and portraiture with memory, in order to assure the accuracy and probability of the

⁵⁰ Ruskin, *The Times* (13 May 1851); rpt. *The Art Criticism of John Ruskin*, ed. Robert L. Herbert (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1964), p.373. In his subsequent letter to *The Times* dated 31 May 1851, Ruskin enthusiastically concludes:

And so I wish them all heartily good speed, believing in sincerity that if they temper the courage and energy which they have shown in the adoption of their systems with patience and discretion in framing it, and if they do not suffer themselves to be driven by harsh or careless criticism into rejection of the ordinary means of obtaining influence over the minds of others, they may, as they gain experience, lay in our England the foundations of a school of art nobler than the world has seen for three hundred years.

The Art Criticism of John Ruskin, p.378.

⁵¹ Ruskin, *The Times* (31 May 1853); rpt. *Art Criticism*. pp.383-84. For an interpretation of Pre-Raphaelite art in terms of the methods and techniques of nineteenth-century portraiture, see Grilli, “Pre-Raphaelite Portraiture”; and Lewis Johnson, “Pre-Raphaelitism, Personification, Portraiture”, *Pre-Raphaelites Re-Viewed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp.140-58. For an interesting study of the role of portraiture in the formation of eighteenth-century social space, see Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England*; and also Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians: Portraiture and Society*.

representation. A painting must, to paraphrase Ruskin, represent a material reality and, at the same time, encourage the beholder to enter into the very process of its representation, to see not only the construction of a painting, but also the difficulties complicit in attaching value and meaning to recognition. To recall Tupper, “art should be made more directly conversant with the things, incidents, and influences which surround and constitute the living world”; but principally, Ruskin says, to licence against an overt reliance on the impressions of the senses. I have already suggested that Ruskin was a somewhat uneasy champion of Pre-Raphaelite principles. There is not space here to give a detailed account of Ruskin’s theories of art to confirm this assertion, nevertheless, I shall attempt the briefest of summaries in order to clarify the problematic aspects of what I have called the physiognomic order of the visible.⁵²

Exercised by the problematic relation of the perceiving subject to the landscape, Ruskin was reluctant to admit that a belief in the visible order of the natural world, such as he professed, might entail both scientific empiricism and imaginative passion. So in his first

⁵² The list of Ruskin criticism is exhaustive but for the more notable studies of Ruskin’s interpretation of nature and art, see Jay Fellows, *The Failing Distance: The Autobiographical Impulse in John Ruskin* (Baltimore, MA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); and *Ruskin’s Maze: Mastery and Madness in his Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); Elizabeth K. Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Robert Hewison, *John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); George P. Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971); Lindsay Smith, *Victorian Photography, Painting and Poetry: The Enigma of Visibility in the Work of John Ruskin and William Morris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Richard Stein, *The Ritual of Interpretation: The Fine Arts as Literature in Ruskin, Rossetti, and Pater* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); and Herbert Sussman, *Facts into Figures: Typology in Carlyle, Ruskin, and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1975). For more general studies of the function of the arts in the nineteenth century, which include accounts of Ruskin’s role, see Patricia Ball, *The Science of Aspects: The Changing Role of Fact in the Work of Coleridge, Ruskin and Hopkins* (London: The Athlone Press, 1971); Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); John B. Bullen, *The Sun is God: Painting, Literature and Mythology in the Nineteenth-Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Stephen Eisenman, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Art: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994); Lindsay Errington, *Social and Religious Themes in English Art, 1840-1860* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1984) Hilary Fraser, *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Linda Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York, NY: Englewood Cliffs, 1989); and Carl Woodring, *Nature into Art: Cultural Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

Times letter, Ruskin says the Pre-Raphaelites draw either “what *they see*, or what *they suppose* might have been the actual facts of the scene [my italics].” The distinction is slight but extremely significant; for what Ruskin does is to suggest that the weakness of Pre-Raphaelite art is its capacity to fold the epistemological representation into the phenomenological experience. According to Ruskin, the emotional response to nature and art must be encouraged and, at once, contained because its only function can be a moral one. Ruskin states forthrightly:

Now the term “aesthesia” properly signifies mere sensual perception of the outward qualities and necessary effects of bodies; in which sense only, if we would arrive at any accurate conclusions on this difficult subject, it should always be used. But I wholly deny that the impressions of beauty are in any way sensual; they are neither sensual nor intellectual, but moral: and for the faculty receiving them, whose difference from mere perception I shall immediately endeavour to explain, no term can be more accurate or convenient than that employed by the Greeks, “Theoretic.”⁵³

What is more by revising the idea of the beautiful from a sensual, aesthetic perception of physical form into a moral, theoretical one, Ruskin allows for a correspondence between nobility and so-called “ordinary truth”:

Physical beauty *is* a noble thing when it is seen in perfectness; but the manner in which the moderns pursue their ideal prevents their ever really seeing what they are always seeking; . . . When such artists look at a face, they do not give it the attention necessary to discern what beauty is already in its peculiar features; but only to see how best it may be altered into some thing for which they have themselves laid down the laws. Nature never unveils her beauty to such a gaze. She keeps whatever she has done best, close sealed, until it is regarded with reverence. To the painter who honours her, she will open a revelation in the face of a street mendicant; but in the work of a painter who alters her, she will make Portia become ignoble, and Perdita graceless.⁵⁴

By shifting the emphasis from “aesthesia” to the “theoretic,” or from feeling to viewing, Ruskin disrupts the distinction between subject and object, and so alters the viewing position of the beholder in relation to the painting. Rallying for the value of “peculiar features” and “inner beauty” against the apparent ignobility and gracelessness of ideal beauty, Ruskin continues to expostulate that “the strange intricacies about the lines of the lips, and marvellous shadows and watchfires of the eye, and wavering traceries of the eyelash, and infinite

⁵³ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, II, p.13.

⁵⁴ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, II, p.73.

modulations of the brow, wherein high humanity is embodied, are all invisible. . .to the lover of ideal beauty.”⁵⁵ Contrary to the resolute tone of his theorising, all that Ruskin actually does is to draw attention to the paradox inherent--in his own work and that of the Brotherhood’s--in forging a physiognomic link between mechanism and organicism, art and nature, individual and type.

III

It should by now be clear that the very visual pantomimic language of the body conceived by the Brotherhood artists appropriates the rhetorical gestures of the theatre and uses the face to articulate the tensions inherent in rehistoricizing both representation and pictorial space. But given the claim I am making for the conception of pantomimic art as the embodiment of an epistemological form of visual experience which relies upon empirical observation and imaginative passion for its communicative power, I want to consider the structure and appeal of pantomime in more detail. To its audience, choosing to attend and able to pay for the privilege, the mid-nineteenth century theatre provides a sense of inclusion in commercial society and a participation in the almost inevitably moral version of the spectacular doctrine that it constructs between virtue and vice. It is the material reality of the spectacle the theatre offers, coupled with an increasing fascination with optical entertainment, that enables the natural and pictorial display of emotion to be presented on the stage through a series of gestures and expressions. Enhanced by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century development of an array of visual apparatuses, such as the eidophusikon, the panorama, the diorama, and more famously, the daguerrotype, to represent nature, and coupled with the proliferation of pictorial portrayals of

⁵⁵ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, II, p.73. Ruskin proclaims further that “to the observer who has accustomed himself to take human faces as God made them, will often find as much beauty on a village green as in the proudest room of state, and as much in the free seats of a church aisle, as in all the sacred paintings of the Vatican or the Pitti.” (pp.73-4).

narratives through the mass production of cheap newspapers, magazines, and serialised novels, the theatre framed the stage as a living picture, or a dramatic tableaux vivant. Richard Altick gives a definitive account of the technologising of spectacular display and observation throughout the course of the nineteenth-century⁵⁶; and yet, as the Examiner of Plays, William Bodham Donne, points out in 1855, by mechanizing the process of viewing in this way, theatre audiences came to demand an immediate material and emotional perception of the narratives played out before their eyes. Donne writes:

We are become, in all that regards the theatre, a civil, similar, and impassive generation. To touch our emotions, we need not the imaginatively true, but the physically real. The visions which our ancestors saw with the mind's eye, must be embodied for us in palpable forms. . .all must be made palpable to sight, no less than to feeling.⁵⁷

By conflating the material with the theatrical in this way, an art of expression is produced that foregrounds the “physically real” in front of the “imaginatively true,” and so concentrates the attention of the observer on the often rapid transformations of the human figure that unfold before the eye. To paraphrase and repeat Donne’s sense, the function of the theatre must now, unlike past times, be to embody, rather than to imagine, the visible order of things: “the visions which our ancestors saw with the mind’s eye, must be embodied for us in palpable forms. . .all must be made palpable to sight, no less than to feeling.”

An anonymous review article in the *Quarterly Review* for 1856 entitled “The Physiognomy of the Human Form,” affirms the value of the physical spectacle above the

⁵⁶ Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978).

⁵⁷ Cited by Michael R. Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre, 1850-1910* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p.2. Booth goes on to point out that the gaslight illumination of the London streets between 1814 and 1820, and the introduction of plate glass for shop window displays, inflected the culture of consumption in a specifically technical manner that paralleled innovations in modes of theatrical viewing (pp.4-5). On this subject see also Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1815-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

imaginary vision in nineteenth century theatrical culture.⁵⁸ “To symbolise is,” it claims, “not, indeed, the chief or primary object of the construction of these parts [of the body]; but neither is it so of any of the features of the face. The general law of symbolical construction is,” it goes on, “that forms are made to be significant without interfering with the fitness of the parts for other purposes than those of symbolising.”⁵⁹ The symbolic value of the human body depends, in other words, on the correspondence between type and individual which determines the physiognomic order of the visible:

The body and the mind, the sign and the thing signified, do not correspond as effect to cause, but as things derived from a common origin, and planned with one design. They are in no relation of sequence. . .but. . .there is perfect congruity between them; the body is the image of the mind, and, in the visible, the invisible is revealed.⁶⁰

In fact, the reviewer suggests there are four different types of symbols in the human form--the general, that is, masculine and feminine; the intellectual; the inorganic, or surface shape; and the transient--and it is the ability to recognise and to interpret these types that enables the observer to comprehend character. Gauging character from physique, he advances further, is an essential and inherent means of recognition in the “natural pantomime of life” that can be practised by educating the judgement with the dominant formations of the human figure.⁶¹ The implication is that this mode of representation is far from an illusory or false means of expression for by aligning pantomime with the natural forms of life, a language of the body can be produced that focusses on conveying the psychological articulations of character through the physical symbols of gesture and expression.

Literally meaning to mimic all and probably first applied to Roman actors performing in

⁵⁸ [Anon.], “The Physiognomy of the Human Form”, *Quarterly Review*, 99 (1856): pp.457-61.

⁵⁹ [Anon], “The Physiognomy of the Human Form”, p.457.

⁶⁰ [Anon], “The Physiognomy of the Human Form”, p.458.

⁶¹ [Anon], “The Physiognomy of the Human Form”, p.461.

dumb shows whereby various characters and scenes would be represented by mimicry,⁶² the pantomime has its more immediate origins in the ‘*commedia dell’arte*’ troupe of travelling artists, and the distinctively English eighteenth-century pantomime of Harlequin and Columbine. The nineteenth-century pantomime is a fantastic spectacle of an “other” world of transcendental illusions and pictorial effects⁶³, structured around an opening and closing transformation scene of fairy enchantment, with the final scene restoring order and love amidst a haven of blissful happiness, transposed from the London streets. Relying on spontaneity and role-playing, rather than a formal structure and script, the pantomime exhibited such a mass of colour, processions, and technical illuminations that it appealed to a working and a middle class, adult and child, audience and, by the 1840s, had become the Christmas institution that it remains today.⁶⁴ In addition, the theatre restriction of the spoken word to the patent theatres in the early nineteenth century until the Theatre Regulation Bill in 1843 meant that pantomime shared with melodrama an emphasis on body language as a means of expression.⁶⁵

An extract from a ballad, written by the playwright George Gilbert, in the 1860s, paints

⁶² The *OED* citation splits pantomime etymologically into “panto-,” meaning ‘imitator of all,’ and “mime,” meaning ‘mimic.’ Pantomime is, accordingly, that which is expressed by a dumb show and a series of quick or sudden transformations.

⁶³ See Michael R. Booth, ed., “Pantomimes, Extravaganzas and Burlesques”, *English Plays of the Nineteenth-Century*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), V, pp.1-63. According to Booth, the pantomime offered its audiences a double bill: “the formality, relative refinement and solemnity, romantic illusion, scenic splendour, idealized love, and ordered progress of the opening were complemented by the fast-paced, extravagant low comedy of a world of ideal order and chaos” (p.5).

⁶⁴ For a contemporary account of the appeal of theatrical entertainment at this time, see Charles Dickens, “The Amusements of the People. I and II”, *Household Words*, I and III (1850): pp.1-24 and pp.49-72; and George A. Sala, “Getting up a Pantomime”, *Household Words*, IV (1851): pp.289-96; but for an eyewitness account of a London pantomime produced in 1855, *The Prince of Pearls, or Harlequin and Jane Shore the Queen of Grapes*, by Francis Wey, a Frenchman visiting London, see Booth, “Appendix C. Pantomime Production, Rehearsal, and Performance”, *English Plays*, pp.485-87.

⁶⁵ See Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre*, pp.60-92; Kenneth Richards and Peter Thomson, *Essay on Nineteenth-Century British Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1971); and George Taylor, *Players and Performances in the Victorian Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); for surveys of the theatre and its regulations in this period.

a vibrant, humorous, and pointedly satiric, picture of the physical activity and the body language involved in mid-Victorian pantomime:

Seedy sprites forever vaulting, seedy metre ever halting,
Men of 'property' cobalting eighteen-penny devil's face:
And the foolish culmination in a weary 'transformation,'
Whose complete elaboration takes a twenty minutes' space!⁶⁶

Whilst the incredible pace of the pantomimic spectacle is colourfully conveyed in Gilbert's ditty lines, it is by no means insignificant that what is portrayed is actually a disruptive activity, that swings between "vaulting" and "halting," in order to emphasise the transformative nature of the performance. Leigh Hunt, somewhat earlier in 1817, claims that the attractions of the pantomime are inherent in just this kind of frantic activity: "its bustle, its variety, and its sudden changes."⁶⁷ Impressed by the reality of the spectacle that pantomime displays,⁶⁸ another of Leigh Hunt's several essays on pantomime expostulates on the glorious abundance of energy that emanates from the pantomimic production. He exclaims with undisguised glee:

Not to like pantomimes is not to like animal spirits: it is not to like motion; not to like love; not to like a jest upon dulness and formality;. . .not to laugh; not to fancy; not to remember that we have been children ourselves; nor that we shall grow old, and be as gouty as Pantaloon, if we are not as wise and as active as they. . .its life, its motion, its animal spirits, are the thing. We sit among the shining faces on all sides of us, and fancy ourselves at this moment enjoying it. What whim! what fancy! what eternal movement! The performers are like the blood in one's veins, never still; and the music

⁶⁶ George Gilbert, "Pantomimic Presentiments", *Fun*, (1865). The ballad continues:

Then the green and crimson fire, and the women hung on wire
Rising higher, rising higher--oh, their bony, baggy knees!
And the never-failing 'rally,' and the fine old crusted sally,
And the 'Ladies of the Bally,' and the fays who sniff and sneeze!

All the stockings gone in ladders--then the sausages and bladders,
And the chromes and greens, and madders, that I've seen five thousand times;
And the glitter, gauze, and spangle, and the clown turned in the mangle,
And the everlasting jingle of the mutilated rhymes.

⁶⁷ Leigh Hunt, "On Pantomime, continued from a late paper. January 26, 1817", *Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism 1808-1881*, ed. L.H. & C.W. Houtchens (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p.144.

⁶⁸ Leigh Hunt, "On Pantomime. January 5, 1817", *Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism*, p.140. "There is something *real* in Pantomime," Hunt writes, "there is animal spirit in it. . .who so busy and full of glee as the understrappers and the Banbury-cake men? What so clever, in their way as the heels of Harlequin and the jaws of the Clown? And what so gay and eternal as the music, which runs merrily through the whole piece, like the pattern of a watered gown?"

runs with equal vivacity through the whole spectacle, like the pattern of a watered ribbon.⁶⁹

If Leigh Hunt is to be believed, the appeal of the pantomime is with its capacity to organize physical forms into spectacular patterns of rapidly transforming shapes. But these transformations produce their most articulate forms on the surface of the face so that, as Edmund Ollier observes in an earlier edition of *Household Words*, “a face becomes of itself a drama of profound and pathetic interest—too often a tragedy in its ending, though sometimes a triumph;” and, he adds, “in any case a tremendous spectacle.”⁷⁰

Writing around the same time as Leigh Hunt, Henry Siddons and George Grant employed very different strategies to enlarge upon the practice and science of acting. Siddons’ *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action; adapted to the English Drama: From a work on the subject by M. Engel, member of the Royal Academy of Berlin*, first published in 1807, articulates a highly coloured epistolary account of pantomime as a rhetorical art of expression directed by intricate patterning and rapid transformations.⁷¹ Whereas, on the other hand, Grant’s *An Essay on the Science of Acting*, published in 1828, provides a more theoretical reading of the truly proper way to present oneself on stage.⁷² Affirming the link between art and theatre, Grant says that “there is an art of colouring peculiar to dramatic writing, which, though in many respects it may be different from that in painting, yet it is to be conducted by the same rules; we require of both,” he continues, “the same strength of tint, and the same distinctions in the distribution of the brightness and shadow, the same caution in observing the gradation of lights, and the same art in throwing objects to a distance, or in

⁶⁹ Leigh Hunt, “Pantomimes”, *Essays*, ed. Arthur Symons (London: Walter Scott Ltd., 1899), pp.98-99.

⁷⁰ Edmund Ollier, “Faces”, *Household Words*, X (1854): p.97.

⁷¹ Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action; adapted to the English Drama: From a work on the subject by M. Engel, member of the Royal Academy of Berlin*, 2nd ed. (London: Sherwood, Neely & Jones, 1822).

⁷² George Grant, *An Essay on the Science of Acting* (London: Cowie & Strange, 1828).

bringing them immediately under the eye.”⁷³ Concentrating on the structure of a composition, it is the degree of tint, the distinctions of shade, and the depth of focus that suggest, to Grant, the analogy between painting and drama.

What is lacking in Grant’s thesis, but enlarged upon in Siddons’ version is an account of the similarity between painting and drama as strategies of representation that depend for their articulation on the performance of a series of figures, physically and rhetorically. The emphasis Siddons places on gesture and expression as linguistic forms with a specifically encoded vocabulary is, moreover, a distinctively pantomimic one that inflects the notion of theatricality and, in so doing, illuminates something of the significance of pantomimic art to the Brotherhood. By observing nature and recognising the grand design and aim of art, the actor will, according to Siddons, be able to express the variety of the passions without recourse to mechanical or illusory actions. A pantomime represents an action and strives to interest and excite its audience, says Siddons, through “the modifications of the body, which depend upon the co-operation of the soul.”⁷⁴ As Siddons points out, unwittingly adopting a vocabulary that anticipates, in part, the work of Derrida, a pantomimic language challenges the primacy of the spoken word because it is, by its nature, predicated upon visual, not verbal, signs. By removing the use of speech in this way, a pantomimic language rewrites itself on the surface of the body as a “play of gesture” that signals “the expressions of the different situations of the soul.”⁷⁵ And, an earlier passage makes clear, this “play of gesture” functions as a form of mimicry that refers to the visible, physical actions of the body to the invisible, psychical movements of the soul. Siddons explains:

If the gestures are exterior and visible signs of our bodies, by which the interior modifications of the soul are manifested and made known, it follows that we may consider them under a double point of view: In the first place, as visible changes of

⁷³ Grant, *Science of Acting*, pp.6-7.

⁷⁴ Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action*, pp.17-18.

⁷⁵ Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action*, p.279.

themselves;--secondly, as the means indicative of the interior operations of the soul.⁷⁶

To put it another way, the “play of gestures” participates in a process of mimicry not only on the surface of the body, but also between the surface and its internal actions. Conceived in this way from a double, and interdependent, perspective, gestures operate visually and reflexively as linguistic supplements to the already encoded figure of the body.⁷⁷ Moreover, it is interesting that the representation of the body as a system of signs roused enormous controversy when it emerged, later in the nineteenth-century in the eroticized form that is infamously and irrevocably associated with the actions of Oscar Wilde.⁷⁸

By aligning artistic terminology with dramatic gesture, Siddons goes on to describe the gestures that are “visible changes of themselves” as “the gestures picturesque,” and the

⁷⁶ Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action*, p.27. It is interesting to compare this mediation of the visibility and invisibility of gestures with Jacques Derrida’s concept of the play of space-writing as a precursor to, and refusal of, the assurance of meaning. In *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), Derrida writes:

I try to *write* (in) the space in which is posed the question of speech and meaning. I try to write the question: (what is) meaning to say? Therefore it is necessary in such a space, and guided by such a question, that writing literally mean nothing. . . To risk meaning nothing is to start to play, and first to enter into the play of *differance* which prevents any word, any concept, any major enunciation from coming to summarize and to govern from the theological presence of a center the movement and textual spacing of differences (p.14).

⁷⁷ For Derrida’s exposition of the “movement of play” as a “movement of *supplementarity*,” see “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences”, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), pp.278-292. Derrida explains:

Play is the disruption of presence. The presence of an element is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain. Play is always play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence (p.292).

⁷⁸ For an informed and engaging account of this process of signification, see Moe Meyer, “Under the Sign of Wilde: An Archaeology of Posing”, *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, ed. Moe Meyer (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.75-109. Meyer claims that Delsatre’s notion of art-making as the display of the artist’s interiority, appropriated by Wilde on his American lecture tour of 1882, involves two important movements:

First, there was the construction of a sign consisting of an exterior display (art object) that signified a displaced interiority (the artist). Second, composing oneself as a work of art was the result of “the application, knowingly appropriated, of the sign to the thing,” that is, the appropriation of the sign to the signifier accomplished by collapsing the signifier and signified so that the entire sign could be played out on the surfaces (p.80).

gestures that are the “means indicative of the interior operations of the soul” as “the gestures expressive.”⁷⁹ Picturesque gesture--no doubt derived from the picturesque mode of perception popularised by William Gilpin, Richard Payne Knight, and Uvedale Price at this time--proposes an “animated representation of its object, and the striking images of visible phenomena,” and directs the beholder to imitate the representation: “each complete and intuitive representation of a thing. . .is accompanied by an impulse, or an attraction, which leads us to the imitation of it.”⁸⁰ It is a form of mimicry that has no resolution, only repetition, of the action performed: “mimicry is connected with the picturesque play. . .The picturesque play is the sole true one, or, at least, is totally irreprehensible, when the design of exciting more lively ideas of certain aspects predominates, or while the individual sentiment of the interlocutor voluntarily gives place; because it is only in fulfilling this design he [the actor/painter] is able to satisfy himself.”⁸¹ Expressive gesture is, meanwhile, discerned by Siddons as motivated, analogous, or physiological; it operates along physiognomical lines to communicate the internal character.

Mosche Barasch argues that human gesture, as a medium of communication, “must be divided into two essential parts: movements we believe to be part of “Nature”, and movements based on a (more or less) deliberate use of available cultural conventions”⁸²:

Gestures of the first kind are performed spontaneously, involuntarily, and perhaps even without our being aware of the fact that we are performing them. Blushing or turning pale, jerking back before a danger suddenly revealed to us--these are examples we know from everyday life. . .The other type of gesture may be termed conventional. As ‘symptomatic’ gestures are derived from nature, the conventional gestures is considered as a product of what we call culture. . .Most important in our context is that conventional gestures are in the first place conceived as means of communication. The readability of the natural gesture is a side- or after-effect; it has little to do with the aim

⁷⁹ Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action*, p.21.

⁸⁰ Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action*, pp.33-34.

⁸¹ Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action*, p.218.

⁸² Mosche Barasch, *Giotto and the Language of Gesture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.3. See also Richard Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983).

of the gesture. The conventional gesture is--at least in its origins--performed in order to convey a message.⁸³

Moreover, ancient text books on rhetoric, devoted to the art of oratory, divide the mode of delivery, *hupokrisis* or *actio*, into two parts, *vox* and *gestus*, the latter being both posture and gesticulation.⁸⁴ What intrigues me in Barasch's argument, though, is the attention he draws to the distinction of natural from cultural, symptomatic from conventional, gestures. The implication is that these two types of gesture do not share the same kinds of intention in their performance, and so do not produce the same reading response; but the problem is a perceptual one for whilst both perform in order to communicate, the so-called 'natural' movements refer to the invisible, whilst the 'cultural' movements refer to the visible order of the phenomenal world. To be more specific, translated from Barasch's medieval context to the mid-nineteenth century that is my concern, the distinction of natural from cultural gestures is not satisfactory. By turning now to Hunt's painting, "The Eve of St. Agnes" (Figure 14), it will become easier to see why this might be the case.

⁸³ Barasch, *Giotto and the Language of Gesture*, pp.3-4.

⁸⁴ See Fritz Graf, "Gestures and Conventions: The Gestures of Roman Actors and Orators", *A Cultural History of Gesture*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Oxford: Polity Press, 1993), pp.36-58.



Figure 14 William Holman Hunt, *The Flight of Madelaine and Porphyro during the Drunkenness Attending the Revelry (The Eve of St. Agnes)*, oil on canvas, 77.5 x 113cm (Guildhall Art Gallery, Corporation of London, 1848).

Successful in gaining acceptance for the 1848 Royal Academy exhibition, Hunt's painting, originally called "The Flight of Madelaine and Porphyro during the Drunkenness Attending the Revelry (The Eve of St. Agnes)" was completed in just two months. The painting was glossed in the exhibition catalogue with the penultimate stanza (XLI) of Keats's poem, "The Eve of St. Agnes":

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide;
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flaggon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:--
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;--
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.⁸⁵

A tale of luxury and festivity, Keats's poem narrates the story of two lovers, Madelaine and Porphyro, estranged by familial decree, but re-united on St. Agnes' Eve to break their forced separation and their ties of kinship and escape together. Yet, Judith Bronkhurst observes, Hunt's longer, original version of the title, "The Flight of Madelaine and Porphyro during the Drunkenness Attending the Revelry," is an intentional misreading of the Keats poem wherein the lovers escape only after "the whole blood-thirsty race" have drunk themselves unconscious.⁸⁶ This slight, retrospective, shift in time from the poem to the painting enables Hunt to display a scene which, although ostensibly composed in a manner intended for display in the Royal Academy, demonstrates the alignment of morality with gestural and expressive actions which Hunt would pursue, almost to its extreme, throughout his career. "The story in Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes*," claims Hunt, "illustrates the sacredness of honest responsible love and the weakness of proud intemperance, and," he adds, "I may practise my new principles to

⁸⁵ John Keats, "The Eve of St. Agnes", *Poetical Works*, ed. H.W. Garrod (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), p.206.

⁸⁶ Bowness, ed., *The Pre-Raphaelites* (London: The Tate Gallery Publications and Penguin Books, 1984), p.57.

some degree on that subject.”⁸⁷

“Coming home at nine,” writes Hunt in his autobiography, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, “I worked on my canvas by the light of a lamp.” He continues:

The architecture I had to paint with but little help of solid models, but the bough of mistletoe was hung up so that I might get the approximate night effect upon it; the bloodhounds I painted from a couple possessed by my friend, Mr. J. B. Price; my fellow-student, James Key, sat to me for the figure of the sleeping page and for the hands of Porphyro, so I was enabled to advance the picture with but little outlay.⁸⁸

It is interesting to note that the head of the baron playing host in the background, and the left hand of the porter were actually drawn by Millais, in exchange for Hunt drawing part of the drapery around Iphigenia for Millais’ contemporaneous Academy piece, “Cymon and Iphigenia.”⁸⁹ What is more, a lengthy conversation between Hunt and Millais on the function of art, retold by Hunt, clearly announces Hunt’s and Millais’ aesthetic intention to represent “living creatures” not “waxen effigies.” Hunt explains to Millais that in his “Cymon and Iphigenia” painting he has “made beings of varied form as you see them in Nature. You’ve made living persons, not tinted effigies.” But, he retorts, playfully, “that’ll never do! it is too revolutionary.”⁹⁰

Although Hunt concentrates on the scene of the lovers’ departure at the end of the poem, the tension and emotion of this incredibly sensual, evocative poem, lavishly seductive and beguiling, is translated into Hunt’s painting through the gestures--expressive and picturesque--of the characters. Madelaine and Porphyro stand framed within the open door, symbol of their freedom and their bond of love, and yet, as such, they occupy a liminal

⁸⁷ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, p.85.

⁸⁸ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, p.98.

⁸⁹ Millais’ work was submitted to the Royal Academy for its 1848 exhibition but it was rejected because, according to Hunt, it was unfinished. The painting was, however, bought by the Oxford collector and dealer, James Wyatt, in 1849 for £60, whereas Hunt’s accepted work was, somewhat reluctantly, chosen by Charles Bridger, the winner of the Art-Union’s £60 lottery prize.

⁹⁰ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, pp.85-86.

position on the margin between visibility and invisibility, discovery and escape. The visual field of the painting is constructed through a complex series of physical movements: Madelaine's bare arm, reaching across Porphyro's fully-clothed body, and Porphyro's hand, stretching outwards to clasp the open door, communicates the precariously vulnerable nature of their position; but whilst their glances are both directed diagonally into the hall, towards the stirring bloodhounds, their arms point away from and, in fact, out of the hall.⁹¹ With the riotous festivities continuing unabated in an adjoining room, the sleeping page slumped in a chair and the porter slouched on the floor are placed in the foreground of the painting, framed by the debris of their evening and the watching bloodhounds. By framing the painting in this way, around the collapse of the porter and the page in their drunken stupor and the tentative, self-conscious, standing posture of the lovers, frozen in anxiety and anticipation, the moral structure of the composition is emphasised through physical gesture.

There is an important distinction of gesture to be made in this painting that clearly indicates the difficulties--unresolved by Barasch--involved in representing the gesture of the face in a pictorial frame. The lovers' anxious glance across the room encourages a panoramic movement of the eye in the narrative space, compelling the beholder to engage with the drama of the moment and, simultaneously, to interpret that moment in terms of the extended narrative of the plot. This single, frozen moment of the painting, in other words, stands in for the larger tableau-style narrative of Keats's poem, with its expansive actions and extended temporality, and represents this particular moment as the converging space of hostility, rebellion, and desire. Madelaine's face immediately and hypnotically captures the attention of the beholder's gaze, not necessarily from any sense of its attractiveness, but because of the subtlety of movement with which Madelaine turns to the bloodhounds. The gentility and fragility of Madelaine's features, particularly her almond-shaped eyes, elegant nose, and beguiling red lips, contrasts with the rapacious muscularity of the bloodhounds, and the downcast glance of

⁹¹ See Paul Barlow, "Pre-Raphaelitism and Post-Raphaelitism: The Articulation of Fantasy and the Problem of Pictorial Space", *Pre-Raphaelites Re-Viewed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp.66-82; for a detailed discussion on the organisation of the visual field of Hunt's "The Eve of St. Agnes."

Porphyro, but it is Madelaine's face that seems to guarantee the safety of the lovers' escape. With her wide-eyed glance almost, but not quite, facing out of the painting, Madelaine is displayed as an arresting figure whose startled arm gestures belie the control her glance exerts on the narrative space. In effect, Madelaine's face and the activity of looking that it represents forms the focus of the painting, the point to which the beholder constantly returns, and the glance that embodies the intricate nature of this pantomimic art.

IV

To draw the strands of my argument together I would like to examine a series of paintings by the Brotherhood which cluster around the Keats poem "Isabella" (1818), and are striking for their repeated display of the same anxious face. The group of paintings--Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Faust: Gretchen and Mephistopholes in Church" (1848) and "Dante Drawing an Angel on the First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice" (1848-9); William Holman Hunt's "Lorenzo at his Desk in the Warehouse" (1848-50); and John Everett Millais' "Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil" (1848-9)--some publicly exhibited, some privately circulated amongst the forerunner of the Brotherhood, the Cyclographic Society⁹², vividly take up the question of how to communicate the pluralistic and undetermined nature of the activity of looking within the apparently deterministic pictorial frame. Portrayed in the act of looking, the face displays the uncertainty of its occupation, poised between directness and indirectness, voluntary and involuntary response, and seemingly resistant to characterization as portraiture. And yet, as Stephanie Grilli, for instance, claims, "a Pre-Raphaelite portrait was intended as a revelation of

⁹² The Brotherhood is only the most well-documented group to which the Pre-Raphaelites belonged; the continuation of a number of literary and artistic societies with which various members of this group of artists were associated, ranging from the Cyclographic Society (1848) and the Sketching Club (1843), to the slightly later the new Folio Sketching Club (1854) and the Hogarth Club (1858).

all depths of consciousness, and it was hoped that the person portrayed would be a better one for the knowledge granted.”⁹³

The repetition of the face that occurs in Rossetti’s “Faust: Gretchen and Mephistopheles in Church;” “Dante drawing an Angel on the First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice;” and “Ecce Domini Ancilla;” Hunt’s “Lorenzo at his Desk in the Warehouse,” and Millais’ “Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil,” almost simultaneously invokes a correspondence between physical and psychical representation and unsettles the consequentiality of that relation. At stake in these paintings is the very process of making the face function as a symbol which is disrupted by an act of looking that intrudes into the pictorial space of production. Or, to put it another way, the fascination of the Brotherhood artists with representing the face, evident from the numerous reworking of faces in many of their paintings⁹⁴, imposes a corresponding anxiety on the pictorial space whereby the face is implicated in, rather than just determined by, the process of representation.⁹⁵

Rossetti’s “Faust: Gretchen and Mephistopheles in Church” (Figure 15), for example, taken from Goethe’s *Faust*, and possibly drawn in an earlier version in 1846, is headed on the Cyclographic Society sheet with the explanation: “Margaret, having abandoned virtue and caused the deaths of her mother and brother, is tormented by the Evil Spirit at Mass, during the

⁹³ Grilli. “Pre-Raphaelite Portraiture”, p.130. For a stimulating account of the production and consumption of portraiture in the eighteenth-century, see Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England*. Pointon observes that “portraits as objects have high symbolic value. As signifiers,” she continues, “what they signify is often connotative rather than denotative, despite the apparently close relationship between the signifier, an image of a particular human being, and the signified, the idea of the actual human being denoted by that image” (p.5).

⁹⁴ See Lindsay Smith’s essay, “The Elusive Depth of Field: Stereoscopy and the Pre-Raphaelites”, *Pre-Raphaelites Re-Viewed*, ed. Marcia Pointon (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp.83-99, for an explanation of the multiple revisions of the face in Millais’ “The Woodman’s Daughter.”

⁹⁵ According to the OED, the etymology of the Latin ‘facies,’ could refer either to the Latin ‘facere,’ meaning to make, or to the root, ‘fa-,’ meaning to appear, to shine. In semantic terms, however, the face connotes the front part of the face; the representation of visage; the countenance or physical features; and suggests both the sense of construction and configuration.

chant of the 'Dies Irae'." It is important to note that the Cyclographic Society, the immediate forerunner of the Brotherhood--involving nearly all the Pre-Raphaelites and founded by Walter Howell Deverell, N.E. Green, and Richard Burchett--was designed to stimulate constructive criticism amongst its members by circulating various drawings and sketches, often preliminary and tentative in composition, amongst its members. Although little is known about the ideological ambitions of the Society, three criticism sheets of the Cyclographic Society have been preserved, dated March, 27 July, and 14 September 1848, and commenting on Rossetti's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," "Faust: Gretchen and Mephistopheles in Church," and "Genevieve." Headed with the title "Cyclographic Society./Criticism Sheet [*sic*]" and with a space provided for the "Subject of Picture or Quotation," the instructions for the members beneath make interesting reading. "The Members of the C.S.," it states, "are requested to write their remarks in Ink, concisely and legibly, avoiding SATIRE or RIDICULE, which ever defeat the true end of criticism, and are more likely to produce unkindly feeling and dissension." What follows is a series of almost consequential precis by the members, referring both to the drawings and to the preceding comments, that goes some way to communicate the shared discourse of pantomimicry engaged by the Brotherhood.



Figure 15 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Gretchen and Mephistopheles in Church*, pen and ink, 27.3 x 21cm. (Private Collection, 1848).

Rossetti's pen and ink drawing depicts the church nave, crowded with parishioners intently following the service and displaying suitably contemplative, reverential profiles, and forms the physical and moral backdrop to the dramatic figures of Margaret and the devil. For Margaret slumps over a pew, almost doubled in despair, with her face covered by her arms, whilst the devil appears to torture her senses. A young girl and a child occupying the pew in front of Margaret momentarily deflect the beholder's attention from the devil's machinations, in part because of the too sharply drawn perspective of the pews, but it is the startling absurdity of the devil's hat and horns that really attracts the attention of the gaze. Commenting on what he described as "a very clever and original design, beautifully executed," Millais expresses distaste for Rossetti's depiction of the devil: "the devil is in my opinion a mistake; his head wants drawing and the horns through the cowl are common-place and therefore objectionable." Admitting that "the drawing and composition of Margaret are original and expressive of utter prostration," Millais also remarks on the flaming sword in the immediate foreground of the drawing as an instance of typological symbolism that deserves its place in the composition.

The emphasis placed by Rossetti, and observed by Millais, and Hunt, on the movement between the devil and Margaret clearly organises the subject-matter of the drawing into a dramatisation of the play between physical, visible gesture and expression, and psychological, invisible character. Margaret's identity becomes split in a complicated movement of displayed and displaced surfaces, that seeks to arrest the static nature of art and assure the demonstrative power of the drawing, by conflating her physical presence with her psychological consciousness as it is embodied by the devil. The subtlety of Rossetti's dramatic narrative depends for its representational power on the recognition of the devil as a metonym for Margaret's guilt. Effectively represented, the devil is employed to invoke a pre-determined symbolic meaning and to provide the artist with a surface upon which to displace the anxiety of Margaret's past. But the loss of Margaret's face threatens to disrupt the focus of the drawing, namely the interplay between the devil and Margaret, and construct in its place a correspondence that moves horizontally across the drawing from Margaret and the devil to the young girl and the child in the immediate foreground. Deprived of a face to figure her character and emotions,

Margaret's identity is dramatised through a complex mediation between the recoiling pose of her body and the intrusive gaze of the devil's face that, once recognised, emphatically articulates the complexities of this, specifically pantomimic, representational process.

What is manifest in Rossetti's "Dante Drawing an Angel on the First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice" (1848-9) (Figure 16), and Hunt's "Lorenzo at his Desk in the Warehouse" (1848-50) (Figure 17), is this "pantomimic art" which plays out the disruptive nature of the gaze through a scene of production and consumption and so represents an intrusive and interrupted moment. Whilst Rossetti's drawing, composed just after he completed a translation of the *Vita Nuova*, appears to bear little thematic similarity to Millais' and Hunt's "Isabella" drawing, all three drawings share a representational strategy that focusses on the construction of the face at the moment of an interruption. The abruptness and severity of the figures represented, particularly in Rossetti's drawing, seems to freeze and to flatten out the features of the figures into a series of perpendicular lines, and yet all the scenes are located around an intrusive action into a private sphere. Conceived from differential positions, Rossetti's drawing dramatises the unnoticed, and unwelcome, entry of observers into Dante's study whereas Millais' and Hunt's paintings depict the symbolic relation between Isabella and her lover, Lorenzo. The scenes of activity are all spaces of production, artistic and/or commercial, that negotiate and renegotiate the gesture of the intruded upon--whether Dante's or Lorenzo's--with that of the intruders. And, incidently, together with Millais' contemporaneous drawings, "Lovers by a Rosebush" (1848) and "The Disentombment of Queen Matilda" (1849), both Rossetti's and Hunt's drawings bear the initials "P.R.B." and are dedicated to one member of this triumvirate.

Inscribed with the words, "Florence, 9th June 1291: The first anniversary of the death of Beatrice," Rossetti's drawing of "Dante drawing an Angel" (Figures 16 and 17), is glossed at the bottom of the frame with Rossetti's translation of a passage from the *Vita Nuova*:

On that day on which a whole year was completed since my lady had been born into the life eternal,--remembering me of her as I sat alone, I betook myself to draw the resemblance of an Angel upon certain tablets. And while I did thus, chancing to turn my head, I perceived that some were standing beside me to whom I should have given a courteous welcome, and that they were observing what I did: also I learned

afterwards that they had been there a while before I perceived them. Perceiving whom, I arose for salutation, and said: "Another was with me." See Dante's *Autobiography of his early life*.⁹⁶

In some ways similar to Rossetti's poem, "The Portrait"⁹⁷, this description of the dramatic narrative of the drawing conflates the physical representation of external form with the psychic complexities of retrospection and anticipation, remembrance and resemblance. Translated by Rossetti into the phrase, "remembering me of her as I sat alone, I betook myself to draw the resemblance of an Angel upon certain tablets," the private sphere of the artist's consciousness is almost immediately, and somewhat rudely, converted into a public sphere of observation and display: "chancing to turn my head, I perceived that some were standing beside me to whom I should have given a courteous welcome, and that they were observing what I did: also I learned afterwards that they had been there a while before I perceived them." Attached to the drawing, and possibly intended as part of a series of illustrated passages to the poem, the passage constructs a linkage of verbs that describes the activity of production, inside and outside the drawing.

⁹⁶ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Early Italian Poets*, ed. Sally Purcell (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1981), p.200.

⁹⁷ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "The House of Life", (1868), *The Poetical Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (London: Elvins and Elvey, 1900), p.78. The lines I am thinking of are:

O Lord of all compassionate control,
 O Love! let this my lady's picture glow
 Under my hand to praise her name, and show
 Even of her inner self the perfect whole: . . .
 Lo! it is done. Above the enthroning throat
 The mouth's mould testifies of voice and kiss,
 The shadowed eyes remember and foresee.
*Her face is made her shrine. Let all men note
 That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this!),
 They that would look on her must come to me [my italics].*

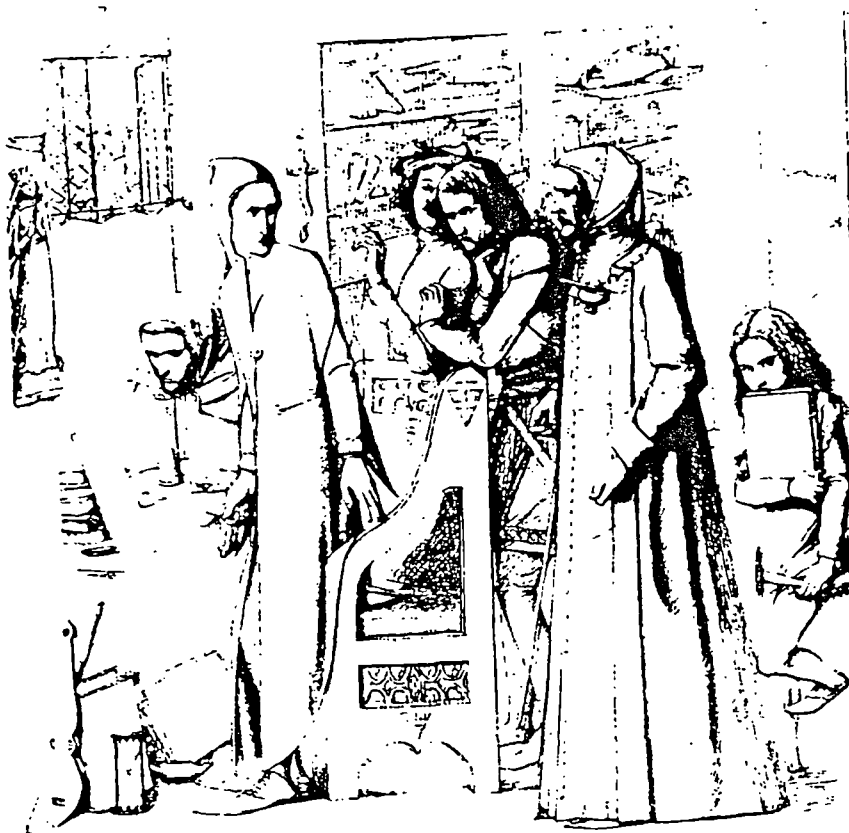


Figure 16 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Dante Drawing an Angel on the First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice*, pen and ink, 39.4 x 32.6cm. (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1848-49).



Figure 17 William Holman Hunt, *Lorenzo at his Desk in the Warehouse*,
brush and ink, with traces of pencil, 22.9 x 33.5cm.
(Paris: Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins, 1848-50).

The verbal connection of “remembering”--“resemblance”--“draw”--“observing”--“perceived” depends upon the positioning of the act of composition, that is, to draw, as a pivot that moves between private cognition and public recognition. Placed at the centre of this scene, the artist mediates between the formulation of his art and the exhibition of its principles. The startled expression and slightly crouched, inhibited pose of Dante, with the fingers of his left hand tentatively feeling for the chair as support, forms a direct contrast with the rigid, upright form of the foregrounded figure of what is probably his patron. The catalogue entry from the Tate Gallery exhibition, *The Pre-Raphaelites*, suggests that this visitor was perhaps Guido Cavalcanti, wearing a costume reproduced from a figure in the fourteenth-century Spanish Chapel in Florence, and depicted in Camille Bonnard’s *Costumes Historiques*.⁹⁸ Displaying an angular, and apparently harsh, profile, with a sharply contoured nose, deep-set eyes, and a protruding chin, slightly masked by a beard, the patron figure directs his forbidding gaze upon the figure of Dante and receives the desired courteous response from him. By placing two courtiers between, and two outside, the artist and the patron, however, the directness of the gaze is disrupted, the scene of activity is displaced from private possession to public display, and the space of composition moves from the studio to the gallery. The face peering into Dante’s depiction of an angel (only vaguely discernable) in the left, and the conspiratorial courtiers placed at the centre, of the drawing, mimetically enact the beholder’s role in the process of surveying and comprehending the art object and in so doing, collapse the distinction between the painting and the beholder. Literally and figurally drawn into the painting in this way, but inhabiting an uncertain position between visibility and invisibility, the beholder participates in a process of mimicry that emphasises the liminality of the artist, sheepishly caught in an act of drawing that is made to figure as an act of viewing. Like the young child, on the right of the drawing, nervously scratching a leg and pulling the

⁹⁸ Although the Tate Gallery catalogue suggests that the patron-figure in the right of Rossetti’s drawing is Guido Cavalcanti, it is interesting to note that the discovery of a fourteenth-century portrait, reputed to be of Dante, in the 1840s aroused a debate that could recast this character in Rossetti’s drawing as Cimabue. For details of this debate and possible revisions of the figures, see Steve Ellis, “Rossetti and the Cult of the *Vita Nuova*”, *Dante and English Poetry: Shelley to T.S. Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.102-139.

tunic, the artist and the beholder re-present gestures of uncertain resemblance that are mimetic only in so far as they provide for likeness and its disruption.

Composed between 1848-9, "Isabella" (Figure 18), was the first painting Millais completed for exhibition after the formation of the Brotherhood, and marks out his affiliation to the society with the placing of the initials "P.R.B" on both the carved bench in the lower right corner of the painting, and after his signature. Briefly, Keats's "Isabella," written in 1818, and based on a Boccaccian tale of Renaissance Italy, tells the ill-fated story of two lovers, Isabella, daughter of a wealthy Florentine merchant, and Lorenzo, clerk to her family. Ruthlessly determined to marry Isabella to a wealthy landowner and so endow the family business, Isabella's two brothers respond to her love for Lorenzo by murdering him. Having embarked upon their dangerous game of greed, the brothers are then surprised to discover that, far from being an exchange commodity, Isabella refuses to transfer her affections from the memory of the absent Lorenzo. Indeed, prompted by a dream-vision, Isabella locates Lorenzo's body, cuts off his head, and plants it, literally, in a pot of basil. The brothers, meanwhile, observing Isabella's devotion to the basil plant, steal the pot, comprehend its significance, and hastily depart from Florence, leaving Isabella to pine to death. A tale of the rupture of familial bonds by capitalist desires, "Isabella" was, in fact, denigrated by its reviewers in the 1820s for its explicit attack on commercial interest. Keats condemns the brothers for their avarice and harshness to employees; but the critic John Scott argued in return, following the Boccaccian source of the poem, that the brothers' familial pride finds an equivalence with the lovers' devotion. The publication of a biography of Keats by Houghton in 1848 fueled the debate still further for Houghton depicted the poet as a propagandist for an erotic taste for poetry and a youthful, aesthetic, emotional form of art.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ For an account of the controversial reception of Keats's biography and poetry around this time, see G.H. Ford, *Keats and the Victorians: A Study of his Influence and Rise to Fame, 1821-1895* (London: Yale University Press, 1944).

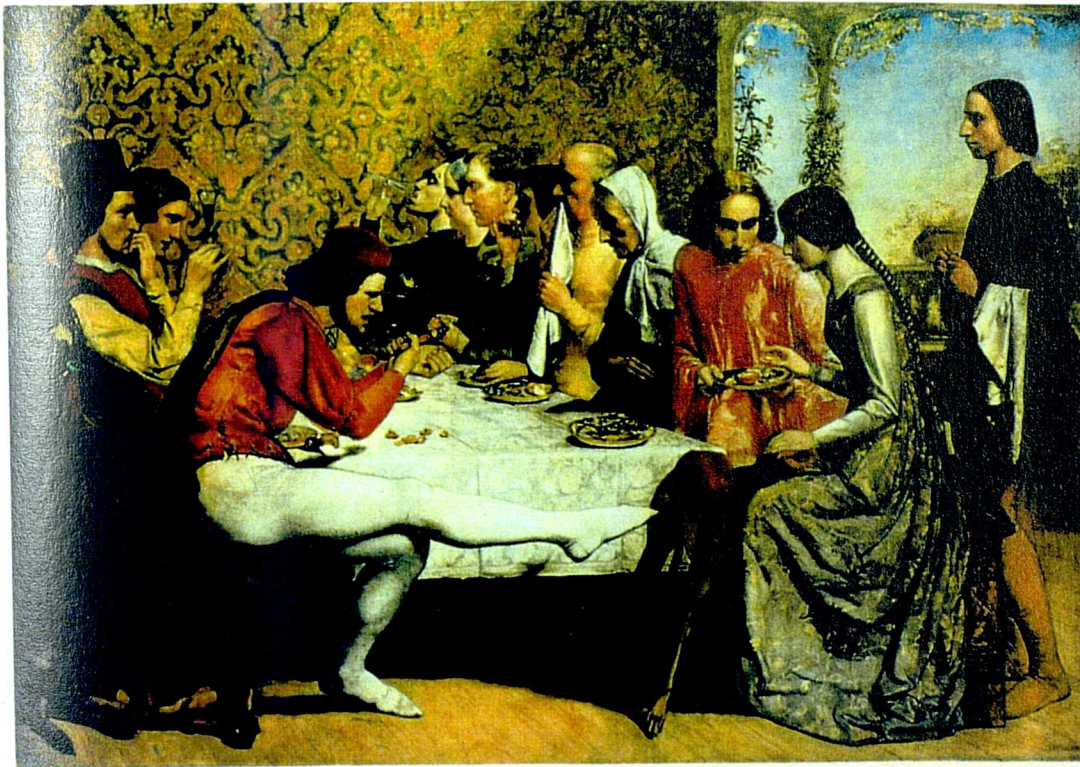


Figure 18 John Everett Millais, *Isabella*, oil on canvas, 102.9 x 142.9cm.
(Liverpool: Walker Art Gallery, Merseyside County Council, 1848-49).

As a visual language of gesture, mimicry, and expression that displays a gallery of faces, arrayed in self-conscious fashion around the familial table, Millais' painting records the ambivalent and disjunctive nature of the gaze.¹⁰⁰ Referring to members of Millais' family and friends, the figures reappropriate and reformulate the eighteenth-century tradition of portraiture, and the conversation piece, popularised by Hogarth, and appear arranged in horizontal lines either uninterested, intensely intimate, or portentously intrusive.¹⁰¹ The painting was accompanied in the Royal Academy catalogue for 1849 with the following verses from an early part of Keats's poem:

Fair Isabel, poor simple Isabel!
Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love's eye!
They could not in the self-same mansion dwell
Without some stir of heart, some malady;
They could not sit at meals but feel how well
It soothed each to be the other by. . .

These brethren having found by many signs
What love Lorenzo for their sister had,
And how she loved him too, each unconfines
His bitter thoughts to other, well nigh mad
That he, the servant of their trade designs,
Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,
When 'twas their plan to coax her by degress
To some high noble and his olive-trees.¹⁰²

Framed by the churlish brother, his leg kicked out in childish displeasure, and the meekly attentive servant, and almost encircled by the family profiles, Lorenzo and Isabella share a blood-orange in a gesture of fatal tenderness. The plate in front of the lovers on the table, the two passion flowers on the balcony, the garden pots, and the hawk tearing a white feather

¹⁰⁰ For a persuasive interpretation of the complicated intertextuality and family drama of Millais' "Isabella" as a recasting of Millais' relation to the Brotherhood and his own family, see Julie F. Codell, "The Dilemma of the Artist in Millais's *Lorenzo and Isabella*: Phrenology, the Gaze and the Social Discourse", *Victorian Studies*, 14 (1991): pp.51-66.

¹⁰¹ George P. Landow gives an account of the Hogarthian qualities in Hunt's work, and particularly the idea of psychological characterization. See *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), pp.38-39 and pp.47-59.

¹⁰² Keats, *Poetical Works*, p.179 and p.184.

apart, significantly placed between the brothers, all dramatically symbolise the nature of the lovers' fate. Criss-crossing the painting from the brothers, to the lovers, and to the extended family, the directed movement of the eye articulates the likeness and difference between the figures represented. To the (profit-related) gaze of the brothers' that holds the scene of action in place, Lorenzo is a dangerous intrusion and yet, as is clear from his effeminate face with its close-set eyes, thin nose, small mouth, and pointed chin, he is also vulnerable. For Lorenzo's gaze towards Isabella communicates not only his devotion to Isabella, but also the determination of his destiny. Risking censure to turn face-on to Isabella, and so become the only figure not to be viewed in profile, Lorenzo exposes his adoration and, as is evident by Isabella's lowered eyes, effectively severs himself from his lover. It is almost as if the exhibition of Lorenzo's face erases the possibility of his presence in the dramatic narrative, for although detached from the source of the action and at the same time reproducing that action, Lorenzo is constructed as a figure that mediates between a consciousness of his own presence and a cancelling of that presence.

There is a striking similarity between the way in which Hunt's drawing, "Lorenzo at his Desk in the Warehouse" (Figure 17), seems to share the figures of Lorenzo and Isabella with Millais, simply re-presenting them in an industrial environment. Millais conveys the cruelty of the brothers directly through their body language, whereas Hunt symbolically suggests their heartlessness by juxtaposing their haughty gestures and disapproving faces with tantalising glimpses of their exploited employees. Millais organises his painting around the family table--a symbol of communion and exchange that the brothers' actions subvert, and perhaps even signifying the shared discourse of the Brotherhood--whereas Hunt reformulates the dramatic space into a factory scene to represent the divisions always already present in the familial structure of the narrative. Although admittedly taken from different parts of Keats's poem, (in fact Hunt's scene precedes Millais' according to the time-span of the poem), Lorenzo's and the brothers' faces, the two greyhounds, and the brothers' headgear are all displayed in both paintings and confirm Hunt's autobiographical account of the composition of the drawings as a joint project between Millais and himself. It is possibly significant that

Hunt's drawing was intended to be part of a series of illustrations to the poem, of which Millais' painting is the most famous; furthermore, it has been suggested that it was Rossetti, rather than Millais or Hunt, who proposed eight subjects from the poem be drawn by the Brotherhood artists.

Taking up an interest in the connection between commerce and art, Hunt's drawing focusses on the activity of production and its disruption.¹⁰³ Apparently unperturbed by the entrance of his lover, the sideways glance of the eyes and the slight gravitation of his legs away from the curious brother to his sister, betray Lorenzo's awareness of Isabella's intrusion into this, his very public sphere. Underpinned by the lucrative commercial benefits enjoyed by Isabella's brothers, Lorenzo uneasily inhabits the centre of the scene of production and is precariously positioned at the place of intersection between the brothers, the workers, and Isabella. The critical gaze of the brother in the foreground, that intrudes upon Lorenzo's work, closely scrutinises the book displayed on the desktop as his right arm reaches out in exploration, but his left hand reveals the failure to comprehend its significance as it rests on the chin in puzzled bewilderment. Hovering at the threshold, poised between visibility and invisibility, and yet ironically requiring neither to communicate with Lorenzo, the slight droop of Isabella's chin and the half-realised focus of her eyes on Lorenzo, re-present the modest, almost shameful, appearance of Dante in Rossetti's drawing.

Clearly, this method of privileging an idealised beauty over the vagaries of expression formed the impetus for the Brotherhood's continued and concerted attack on the Antique and, somewhat ironically, provides a narrative for the Brotherhoods' repetition of the face in their paintings of 1848-50. The faces of Margaret and Dante in Rossetti's paintings, and Lorenzo in

¹⁰³ Although exhibited at Hunt's Glasgow retrospective in 1907 with the first two lines of stanza three of Keats's "Isabella": "He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch/ Before the door had given her to his eyes;" Hunt's drawing takes stanza fourteen of the poem as the point of departure for its dramatic narrative:

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt,
Enriched from ancestral merchandize,
And for them many a weary hand did swelt
In torched mines and noisy factories,
And many once proud-quiver'd loins did melt
In blood from stinging whip.

Hunt's and Millais' paintings, in particular, portray the private sphere of the subjects' consciousness in the process of its disruption by calculating observers. A close inspection of the faces in these paintings, moreover, reveals that the face of Dante in Rossetti's painting and the two faces of Lorenzo in Hunt's and Millais' painting are actually the same face, with the same youthfully effeminate form, simply re-placed in slightly different narrative contexts. This oval face with its high forehead, its lowered, deep-set eyes, its delicate nose, its tentative tilt of the chin, and its noticeably fair hair, presents an arresting image that immediately captures the attention of the beholder through a mixture of fragility and puissance, reticence and fortitude. A largely supportive reviewer for *Once a Week* points out that "if all the parts of a picture are *truly* painted, the interest of the human face will give it due dominance in the composition."¹⁰⁴ And as Millais' "Isabella" most famously exhibits, the anxiousness of the repeatedly recurring face--very obviously the only face in the paintings to turn almost face-on and nearly look out of the composition amidst a gallery of profiles--articulates the pantomimic conception of art as a paradoxical embodiment which mediates empiricism and imagination, epistemology and phenomenology to inflect theatrically the physiognomic order of visual experience.

Note. A shorter version of this chapter was given to the Department of English at the University of Leeds and the Department of History at the University of York. A rather different version was delivered to the Nineteenth Century Research Seminar at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

¹⁰⁴ [Anon.], *Once a Week*, 25 (1875): p.557.

CHAPTER THREE

**SYMPATHIES THAT LIE TOO DEEP FOR WORDS:
THE SEDUCTIONS OF SENSATION, THE SENTIMENT OF
BEAUTY, AND THE WORK OF WILKIE COLLINS.**

I

Recalling his first glimpse of Laura Fairlie, the elusive and enigmatic heroine of Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1860), Walter Hartright momentarily despairs over his failure to provide an accurate portrait of "Miss Fairlie." "How can I describe her?" Hartright laments, "How can I separate her from my own sensations, and from all that has happened in the later time? How can I see her again as she looked when my eyes rested on her--as she should look, now, to the eyes that are about to see her in these pages?"¹ Despite his anxiety, the relation that Hartright constructs--between description, sensation, action, and perception--is instructive not only as a lament on the inadequacy of language to define sensation as feeling, feminine type, and appearance, but also as an account of some of the difficulties bound up with reading and representing beauty, femininity, and character in the nineteenth century. The lengthy passage that ensues, worth quoting in full as a striking articulation of such difficulties, gives voice to an evocative sketch of the complex correspondence between character and appearance:

The water-colour drawing that I made of Laura Fairlie, at an after period, in the place and attitude in which I first saw her, lies on my desk while I write. I look at it, and there dawns upon me brightly, from the dark greenish-brown background of the summerhouse, a light, youthful figure, clothed in a simple muslim dress, the pattern of it formed by broad alternate stripes of delicate blue and white. . . Her hair is of so faint and pale a brown--not flaxen, and yet almost as light; not golden, and yet almost as glossy--that it nearly melts, here and there, into the shadow of the hat. It is plainly parted and drawn back over her ears, and the line of it ripples naturally as it crosses her forehead. The eyebrows are rather darker than the hair; and the eyes are of that soft, limpid, turquoise blue, so often sung by the poets, so seldom seen in real life. Lovely eyes in colour, lovely eyes in form--large and tender and quietly thoughtful--but beautiful above all things in the clear truthfulness of look that dwells in their inmost depths, and shines through all their changes of expression with the light of a purer and a better world. The charm--most gently and yet distinctly expressed--which they shed over the whole face, so covers and transforms its little natural human blemishes elsewhere, that it is difficult to estimate the relative merits and defects of the other

¹ Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, ed. Harvey Peter Sucksmith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.40. For a biographical account of Wilkie Collins' life, see Catherine Peters, *The King of Inventors: A Life of Wilkie Collins* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1991). And for an accessible selection of contemporary critical responses to Collins' work, see Norman Page, ed., *Wilkie Collins. The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).

features.²

What is so appealing about Hartright's portrait is the minuteness and the particularity of the physical detail which he uses to draw attention to Laura's character: her hair "ripples naturally as it crosses her forehead"; and her eyes "are of that soft, limpid, turquoise blue. . .so seldom seen in real life." And yet, he claims, there is a difference, a lack of correspondence even, between the "water-colour drawing" of Laura and the image of her that occupies his mind. This is, Hartright explains, an image of "a fair, delicate girl, in a pretty light dress, trifling with the leaves of a sketch-book, while she looks up from it with truthful innocent blue eyes--that is all the drawing can say, all, perhaps, that even the deeper reach of thought and pen can say in their language, either."³ The language of "drawing" is set apart from the language of "thought and pen," but the problem is that in distinguishing visual from mental and verbal forms of representation in this way, Hartright draws attention to the inadequacy of both in describing accurately the configuration of real beauty and femininity that Laura seems to embody. Although the difference between the watercolour sketch displayed on his desk, the sensational image coveted in his mind, and the fictional narrative is explained as a largely temporal difference, it is clear that what unsettles Hartright is the absence of any commensurability between the drawing, the image, and the narrative.

Observing Laura, at the time of their first encounter, Hartright later transcribes this image into a water-colour drawing, which then becomes the means of reconstructing his impressions of her beauty for the reader. The image of Laura which Hartright presents is retrospective, yet its claim for remembrance is disrupted by Hartright's self-conscious musings on the physical details and the inner truth he discerns from Laura's face. For as the embodiment of beauty and truth, Laura poses a challenge to the powers of Hartright's interpretative method of (verbal and visual) representation. "Think of her," Hartright subsequently implores the reader, "as you thought of the first woman who quickened the

² Collins, *Woman in White*, pp.40-41.

³ Collins, *Woman in White*, p.41.

pulses within you that the rest of her sex had no art to stir.” And he enthuses further:

Let the kind, candid blue eyes meet yours, as they met mine, with the one matchless look which we both remember so well. Let her voice speak the music that you once loved best, attuned as sweetly to your ear as to mine. Let her footstep, as she comes and goes, in these pages, be like that other footstep to whose airy fall your own heart once beat time. Take her as the visionary nursling of your own fancy; and she will grow upon you, all the more clearly, as the living woman who dwells in mine.⁴

Discarding the water-colour drawing as an inadequate form of representation, Hartright’s mind is crowded with the sensations which, he asserts, are instinctive upon first viewing the living embodiment of beauty; and yet the narrative account he gives of Laura’s beauty and the seductive charms of her face, particularly her eyes, is what actually engages the attention of the reader. The vocabulary Hartright uses to explain the complexities of the different forms of representation—especially to emphasise the shortcomings of the water-colour drawing and the narrative portrait—express some of the uncertainties bound up with the function of the female face in physiognomic forms of representation in this period of the mid nineteenth century.

What is left out of Bell’s work, and encountered, though not fully explained, in the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, is an account of the female face in determining the language of the emotions. I do not claim that the female face (and a beautiful one at that) suddenly appeared on the physiognomic landscape of the nineteenth century with the publication of Collins’ novels and the advent of sensation fiction. But I do question the essentialist idea that beauty possesses a coherence and a unity of its own which is always already determined as female. Beauty is a physical, a moral, and a philosophical concept: it connotes a form of knowledge which is erotic, psychic, and scientific; and its corresponding terms nature, truth, and consciousness acquire a curious stability, which belies their precarious fluidity, when represented as the type ‘woman.’ Beauty, figured as feminine, appears to be a conceptual unity and, more problematically, a linguistic lacuna. Because while it is relatively easy to describe beauty in a physically detailed form, as Collins and Hartright demonstrate, it is relatively difficult to analyse beauty as a philosophical (or perhaps even rhetorical) abstraction.

⁴ Collins, *Woman in White*, p.42.

To ask what happens to beauty when it is detached from objects, bodies, and landscapes, may seem a rather disingenuous line of inquiry, particularly in relation to Collins' work; but it is my contention that the prominent representation of the female face in the novels of Wilkie Collins indicates an attempt to understand beauty in this abstract, fragmented, and disembodied manner: the female face represents a coherent physical beauty which veils the nebulous and enigmatic adequacy of language to conceptualise beauty without bodies.

What interests me in Collins' use of the female face is that it provides a type of circumstantial detail of the features which, though both constitutive and generative, promises a psychic and a scientific knowledge that it cannot fulfil. The female faces that recur throughout Collins' *Basil*, *The Woman in White*, *No Name*, and *The Moonstone*, in particular, are presented as objects of sensational contemplation that seem to command the attention of the narrative and the subject that narrates it, and to complicate the relation between female beauty and male desire. The beautiful female face serves as an index of erotic, scientific, and psychic knowledge, for it plays out an uncertain understanding of masculinity and femininity by reconfiguring the complex physiognomic correspondence between appearance and character type in terms of affect, intellect, and sexuality.⁵ The act of interpreting the face in this genre of fiction is presented by a sensationalized narrator of beauty as an interpretive act that dramatizes fantasies and fears about unseen and unmappable interiors, surfaces without depths, and spaces without names. And the knowledge offered by the female face is made manifest in the narrative as an uncertain knowledge of shape and structure which uneasily aligns the plot of

⁵ For a provocative account of the female face as the means of translating economic to symbolic knowledge, see Kathy Alexia Psomaides, "Beauty's Body: Gender Ideology and British Aestheticism", *Victorian Studies*, 36 (1992): pp.31-52. Drawing on Alfred Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott" and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Jenny," Psomaides asserts that:

As the basis for an entire ideology of art that rests on the possibility of simultaneously knowing and not knowing that art serves no function and yet is bought and sold, holds a place for privacy and yet is implicated in public activity, feminine icons like the Lady of Shalott are both the content of Aestheticist art and its necessary support (p.33).

See also Graeme Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel: Faces and Fortunes*, for an account of the evolution of the composite physiognomic portrait in the nineteenth-century European novel.

sensation narrative with the gendered representation of the face.⁶ The expression of feeling which accompanies the act of talking about the beautiful female face is, in fact, bound up within an analytic inquiry on beauty that tries to break away from any idealized or prescribed notions of the masculine and feminine character of beauty, and instead seeks to confer, without affirming, aspects of pragmatism, intelligence, and pleasure onto the countenance.⁷

Nonetheless, to search for a conceptual comprehension of beauty which is detached from the face but which relies on the face for its knowledge as Collins does, almost inevitably unsettles gendered differences and prompts the reader of Collins to question the very impulse to seek a beauty without a face.

Indeed, Collins' novels trouble the idea of masculine and feminine as discretely gendered constructions of beauty, and pursue a narrative strategy which, at once, sexualizes subject and object, and throws into question the relations between male and masculine, female and feminine. Laura's face, for instance, acts metonymically for her body and character as a lucid and an intelligible form of beauty; but as the narrative gradually unfolds, Hartright's

⁶ For a Marxist approach to the narrative strategy of sensation fiction that emphasises its ability to reveal social contradictions, see Jonathon Loesberg, "The Ideology of Narrative Form in Sensation Fiction", *Representations*, 13 (1986): pp.115-38; and also Walter M. Kendrick, "The Sensationalism of *The Woman in White*", *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 32 (1977): pp.18-35. See also Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (London: Verso, 1976); Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as Socially Symbolic Act*, (1976), (London: Methuen & Co., 1981); and Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*; for the 'classic' Marxist surveys of the relation between narration and social criticism.

⁷ For an informative discussion of the connection between the evolution of heroine description and the increasing popularity of physiognomy in the nineteenth-century, see Jeanne Fahnestock, "The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and the Conventions of Heroine Description", *Victorian Studies*, 24 (1981): pp.325-350. Fahnestock argues that the 1860s mark a change in representations of heroines for vague descriptions are replaced by "a virtual inventory of the heroine's features." And, she goes on to ask:

When novelists begin to create irregularly featured heroines who deviate from the standard of beauty, what happens to the female character behind the faces? The characters are allowed imperfection, too. The face remains an accurate mirror of the character, for the heroine of irregular features is capable of irregular conduct. She can act, make mistakes, learn from them, and grow, exercising a privilege usually only the hero's (pp.330-31).

For the relevance of physiognomy to the eighteenth-century novel, see also Julie McMaster, *The Index of the Mind: Physiognomy in the Novel* (Lethbridge, AL: University of Lethbridge Press, 1990); and Fanny Price, "Imagining Faces: The Later Eighteenth-Century Sentimental Heroine and the Legible, Universal Language of Physiognomy", *British Journal of the Eighteenth Century*, 6 (1983): pp.1-16.

attempt to read this face as a sign of beauty discloses a specific interpretative act that articulates its own undoing. The difficulty is that, conceived as a “poor portrait” and a “dim mechanical drawing,” the sketch-book figure of Laura Fairlie perplexes Hartright because it seems, by his own admission, unable to convey the “charm” of Laura’s eyes with their capacity to radiate a “clear truthfulness of look” over her face and convert the “little natural human blemishes” into an ideal, almost classical, beauty.⁸ Yet, he readily admits that there may well be a linguistic, as well as a representational, problem involved in embodying the seductive charms of this beauty. “The woman who first gives life, light, and form to our shadowy conceptions of beauty,” Hartright declares, “fills a void in our spiritual nature that has remained unknown to us till she appeared.” He goes on to eulogise enthusiastically:

Sympathies that lie too deep for words, too deep almost for thoughts, are touched, at such times, by other charms than those which the senses feel and which the resources of expression can realise. The mystery which underlies the beauty of women is never raised above the reach of expression until it has claimed kindred with the deeper mystery in our own souls. Then, and then only, has it passed beyond the narrow region on which light falls, in this world, from the pencil and the pen.⁹

These “sympathies that lie too deep for words, too deep almost for thoughts” seem to exhaust the possibilities offered by these languages of feeling and articulation, to produce, instead, a form of beauty which exceeds the strategic capacities of verbal and visual forms of representation. As Hartright’s perplexingly constructed articulation suggests, the problem is the descriptive movement from the exterior charm of “the beauty of women” to the implicit

⁸ Collins, *Woman in White*, p.41. Hartright explains:

It is hard to see that the lower part of the face is too delicately refined away towards the chin to be in full and fair proportion with the upper part; that the nose, in escaping the aquiline bend (always hard and cruel in a woman, no matter how abstractedly perfect it may be), has erred a little in the other extreme, and has missed the ideal straightness of line; and that the sweet, sensitive lips are subject to a slight nervous contraction, when she smiles, which draws them upward a little at one corner, towards the cheek. It might be possible to note these blemishes in another woman’s face, but it is not easy to dwell on them in hers, so subtly are they connected with all that is individual and characteristic in her expression, and so closely does the expression depend for its full play and life, in every other feature, on the moving impulse of the eyes (p.41).

⁹ Collins, *Woman in White*, pp.41-42.

organization of this beauty which gives the surface depth. For the difficulty with beauty is the difficulty of analysing a type of mediation which apparently resists any notion of a causal relation between sympathetic affinity and formal utterance, sensation and organization, exterior and interior, surface and depth.

To read closely Hartright's rather oddly layered spatial metaphors serves to reinforce the slippage at this point in the narrative from a highly gendered account of the seductions of beauty—figured by woman—to a puzzling representation of the male sexual identity—figured by the narrator, the pencil, and the pen. Following Hartright's thoughts, two descriptive sequences, referring to the visible and invisible order of things, are woven into the narrative: "sympathies. . . words. . . thoughts. . . charms. . . mystery. . . deeper mystery. . . pencil and the pen"; and "deep. . . deep. . . touched. . . feel. . . realise. . . underlies. . . raised above. . . in. . . passed beyond." The act of interpreting the "beauty of woman" becomes clearly implicated in a process of figuration that dramatises its own linguistic inadequacies through a series of intricate reflexive and projective moves. What is so intriguing, however, is that the "mystery that underlies the beauty of women" is only translated as a mystery which underlies the visible features at the moment when it forges a connection with the internal impulse of the soul. So, figured on the surface of the face, beauty appears to be explicit, intelligible, and, more often than not, female. But denied access to the descriptive range of Hartright's "pencil and the pen," an analytic inquiry into beauty writes the face out of its speculations and challenges the assumption that beauty must be female, rather than "kindred with the deeper mystery in our own souls."¹⁰

¹⁰ Mary Elizabeth Braddon's famous portrait of Lady Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret*, (1862), provides a notable contrast to Collins' fiction, particularly because it is articulated by a female narrative voice. Presented as a Pre-Raphaelite portrait, embodying all the marks of an amplified form of femininity, the narrator searches for a means of relating Lady Audley's image to her character:

No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have painted, hair by hair, those feathery masses of ringlets with every glimmer of gold, and every shadow of pale brown. No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have so exaggerated every attribute of that delicate face as to give a lurid lightness to the blonde complexion, and a strange, sinister light to the deep blue eyes. No one but a pre-Raphaelite could have given to that pretty pouting mouth the hard and almost wicked look it had in the portrait. It was so like and yet so unlike; it was as if you had burned strange-coloured fires before my lady's face, and by their

To acknowledge that there are very different types of mystery involved in talking about beauty, as Hartright does in separating “the mystery that underlies the beauty of women,” from “the deeper mystery in our own souls,” suggests that Hartright is trying to construct a dialectical account of beauty that operates according to the oppositions of physical and psychical; external and internal; objective and subjective; surface and interior. Moreover, this account clearly indicates the tension that emerges between feminine display and disguise, which is couched within a discussion of the character and the characterlessness of female beauty. An unsigned review published in the *Saturday Review*, (25 August 1860), claims derogatively that “like the woman in Pope, most of Mr. Wilkie Collins’s characters have no character at all.”¹¹ In fact, the anxiety that Hartright expresses when confronted with Laura Fairlie as the living embodiment of his idea of beauty is an anxiety about the capaciousness and, more significantly, the precariousness of using the gendered terms embedded in the language of sensation to articulate an emotional affinity that slips so rapidly between different narrative layers and metaphors. The implication is that the very act of talking about beauty is a form of concealment, rather than revelation, that actually masks the elaborate erotic, psychic, and scientific structures which together make up what one nineteenth-century writer on beauty

influence brought out new lines and new expressions never seen in it before. The perfection of feature, the brilliancy of colouring, were there; but I suppose the painter had copied quaint mediaeval monstrosities until his brain had grown bewildered, for my lady, in his portrait of her, had something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend.
Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret*, ed. David Skilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.70-71.

¹¹ [Anon.], *Saturday Review*, 10 (1860): pp. 249-50. Allowing for one exception in the figure of Count Fosco, the reviewer writes in an earlier passage:

Mr Wilkie Collins is an admirable story-teller, though not a great novelist. . .He does not attempt to paint character or passion. He is not in the least imaginative. He is not by any means a master of pathos. The fascination which he exercises over the mind of his reader consists in this---that he is a good constructor. . .With him, accordingly, character, passion, and pathos are mere accessory colouring which he employs to set off the central situation in his narrative. All the architecture of his plot tapers to one point, and is to be interpreted by one idea. Men and women he draws, not for the sake of illustrating human nature and life’s varied phases, or exercising his own powers of creation, but simply and solely with reference to the part it is necessary they should play in tangling or disentangling his argument (p.249).

termed “the emotion of the beautiful.”¹² Whilst developments in the different forms of narrative and modes of production in the mid nineteenth century undoubtedly assisted in mobilising a debate on the beautiful.¹³ The encounter with the female face in the sensation fiction of the 1860s dramatically realises an imagined ideal of physical beauty whilst searching for a means of theorising an unseen, and perhaps unknown, psychic beauty.

For instance, Hartright is vividly sensible to an enigmatic and elusive space in the form of female beauty as he gathers together his thoughts on Laura in relation to the curious absence in her character that her external appearance cannot mask. Amidst the seductive charms of Laura’s face, there was “another impression, which, in a shadowy way, suggested to me the idea of something wanting. At one time it seemed like something wanting in *her*; at another, like something wanting in myself, which hindered me from understanding her as I ought.”¹⁴ And, he explains:

The impression was always strongest, in the most contradictory manner, when she looked at me; or, in other words, when I was most conscious of the harmony and charm of her face, and yet, at the same time, most troubled by the sense of an incompleteness which it was impossible to discover. Something wanting, something

¹² Reverend John G. MacVicar, *On the Beautiful, the Picturesque, the Sublime* (London: Scott, Webster & Geary, 1837), pp.19 and 25. Grappling with the philosophical problem of beauty as “merely an emotion of the mind” compared to “an external object of regard,” MacVicar concludes: “as every one who uses the term *Beauty* in the natural exercise of his taste, understands by it a something in an external object of regard, and not a state of mind in the observer, I shall uniformly make use of the term in this sense, calling the corresponding state of feeling *the emotion of the beautiful* (p.19).

¹³ For information on the Victorian publishing industry, see Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957); John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (London: Croom Helm, 1988); and Walter C. Philips, *Dickens, Reade, and Collins: Sensation Novelists* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1919). For a variety of different, largely Marxist, analyses of the relation between the production and consumption of novels in Victorian culture, see N. N. Feltes, *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Terry Lovell, *Consuming Fiction* (London: Verso, 1987); Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990); Jennifer Wicke, *Advertising Fictions* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1988); and Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, (1960), (London: The Hogarth Press, 1993).

¹⁴ Collins, *Woman in White*, p.42.

wanting--where it was, and what it was, I could not say.¹⁵

Hartright's observation is particularly pertinent because it negotiates the competing claims of male and female identity within a frame where the image of female beauty has been delicately produced only to frustrate the erotics of desire. As the narrator of Collins' subsequent novel, *No Name*, explains, "the promise of. . . [Magdalen Vanstone's] face failed of performance in the most startling manner."¹⁶

In a recent book on sensation fiction--*Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism*-- Ann Cvetkovich argues for the importance of a history of affect, and, in so doing, challenges nineteenth and twentieth century theories of the reactionary nature of the expression of feeling.¹⁷ Cvetkovich explores the relation between the Victorian fascination with the sensation novel of the 1860s and the politics of affect that is used to politicize the personal, particularly in the recent practices of the feminist movement and AIDS activism. The underlying assumption of Cvetkovich's book--derived, she claims, from the nineteenth-century discourse of sensation that makes affect meaningful, (and no doubt strongly influenced by the Foucauldian body-power paradigm)--is that "affective expression forms the basis for political action and itself constitutes a political act."¹⁸ The focus of the book is, according to Cvetkovich, "how affect is generated and fixed, particularly in the figures of the mysterious woman and the suffering woman."¹⁹ Yet a weakness emerges here because by figuring the private expression of affect as a public and political action, Cvetkovich appears to

¹⁵ Collins, *Woman in White*, p.42.

¹⁶ Wilkie Collins, *No Name*, ed. Virginia Blain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.12.

¹⁷ Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

¹⁸ Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings*, p.6.

¹⁹ Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings*, p.7.

collapse the complex nuances accrued to these terms in the nineteenth century and to present a narrative wherein it seems all too convenient to effect a transference that makes “the personal . . . political precisely because it is constructed as not being political.”²⁰ A more pressing question might be how nineteenth-century writers constructed ways of talking about female beauty, and what it might mean to participate in such conversations, but also why the representation of identity as beautiful and female should require such complex calculations.²¹ In particular, I think that the representation of almost exclusively beautiful heroines in the sensation fiction of the 1860s--popularised by Collins, along with Elizabeth Braddon, Charles Reade, and Sheridan Le Fanu--in terms of an elusive and inarticulate absence in their internal form indicates the inadequacy of the narrative form to communicate beauty.²²

Drawing on the novels of Wilkie Collins from the 1850s and 1860s--especially *Basil* (1852), *Hide and Seek* (1854), *The Woman in White* (1860), *No Name* (1862), and *The Moonstone* (1868)--I want to explore the relation between the figuring of the features of the face and the construction of female identity in sensation fiction.²³ Focussing on the prominence of the faces of female characters in Collins’ fiction as the manifestation of a desire to define and

²⁰ Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings*, p.3.

²¹ Cvetkovich later argues that “the question to ask, then, is not just what the female body signifies, but why it so powerfully sensationalizes or embodies other meanings.” And she expands: “constructed as the repository of secrets, the woman’s body both reveals and conceals, making visible, because it embodies them, otherwise invisible social determinations, and at the same time embodying invisibility, characterized as the beautiful woman’s unfathomable charm”, *Mixed Feelings*, p.93.

²² Jeanne Fahnestock. “The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and the Conventions of Heroine Description”, argues that it is not so much a problem of language as a shift from a classical ideal mode of description to a scientific mode of interpretation. Although I agree that this is certainly the case, I will argue that far from revealing any greater knowledge of the complexities of female identity, the kind of incredible intimacy with the features of the female face in Collins’ fiction actually collapses the gender differences of masculine and feminine identity and attempts to install a highly charged but curiously absent identity in its place.

²³ For an interesting discussion of the relation between sexual fidelity and the representation of femininity in eighteenth-century literature, see Carolyn Williams, “The Changing Face of Change: Fe/male In/constancy”, *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 12 (1989): pp.13-28. See also Roy Porter, “Making Faces: Physiognomy and Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England”, *Etudes Anglaises*, 4 (1985): pp.385-96.

determine the configuration of beauty, femininity, and character, it is my contention that the fascination with the seductions of sensation can be read as an attempt to provide a formulaic model of the interpretative act used to describe the beautiful which unwittingly dissolves the gendered differences of that account. While conveying an intimacy and physicality of detail in representing the idiosyncracies strikingly displayed on the faces of beautiful females, what emerges in the work of Collins is an uncertainty as to what interpretation might be attached to these half-realised representations of female identity. Or, how to display a form of beauty which may use its femininity to dispense a physical charm, but which may also promise a psychic knowledge of an interior structure that it is unable to fulfil, to satisfy, or to reveal.

A pertinent, though anonymous, article entitled “Our Female Sensation Novelists,” published in the 1863 edition of the Christian journal *Our Living Age*, adds an interesting inflection to the interpretation of female character in contemporary fiction of the 1860s. The reviewer identifies “the very language of the school [of sensation fiction]” employed in the representation of the heroine as evidence of a “drop from the empire of reason and self-control” to the manifestation of a “consistent appeal to the animal part of our nature.”²⁴ “A whole new set of words has come into use,” the writer claims, “and they are caught up and slipped into. . . to express a certain degradation of the human into the animal or brutal, on the call of strong emotion.”²⁵ The difficulty for this reviewer is clearly the implication of presenting such a morally dangerous idea of femininity, cast as “the victim of feeling or passion [that] sinks at once into the inspired or possessed animal, and is always supposed to be past articulate speech.”²⁶ Because “the *cry*, the *smothered cry of rage*, the *wail*, the *low wailing cry*, the *wail of despair*,” that seem to characterise the language of the sensation heroine are at odds with

²⁴ [Anon.], “Our Female Sensation Novelists”, *Our Living Age*, 78 (1863): p.354. It is, perhaps, important to point out that this article reviews Mrs Norton’s *Lost and Saved* (1862), Mrs Henry Wood’s *East Lynne* (1862) and *Verner’s Pride* (1863), Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) and *Aurora Floyd* (1863).

²⁵ [Anon.], “Our Female Sensation Novelists”, p.354.

²⁶ [Anon.], “Our Female Sensation Novelists”, p.354.

what the reviewer believes to be the conventional codes of narrative form and the accepted behavioural habits of “domestic life.”²⁷ The passionate, and almost animalistic, heroine of sensation fiction cannot, and should not, according to this reviewer, be equivalent to the virtuous and angelic wife and mother.²⁸ However, it will become clear the striking animation of fantasies and fears about the possibility of not knowing and not naming these concealed psychological spaces of beauty unfolds, in sensation fiction, as a play between the nerves and the heart that threatens to legitimate this “animal part of our nature.”

In casting Collins’ novels as an attempt to work out the relation between masculinity, femininity, and character, I suggest that the sensation narrative communicates the problems of beauty posed by the specific act of interpreting the female face, and so indicates a complex intersection of conceptions of gender and sexuality. But starting with a discussion of the tensions involved in making the term beauty necessarily refer to the emotions of pleasure and desire, I explore the work of Alexander Walker, a middle-class radical Lamarckian, indebted to the Enlightenment tradition. In particular, I am intrigued by the different models that were available to describe the elusive and enigmatic nature of beauty in the mid nineteenth century. Because what emerges in Walker’s text, and much of the philosophical writing of this time, is, it seems, a desire to realize not only what Hartright called the “mystery that underlies the beauty of women,” but also that “deeper mystery in our own souls” by recourse to a series of

²⁷ [Anon.], “Our Female Sensation Novelists”, p.354. The reviewer writes in full:
Thus the victim of feeling or passion sinks at once into the inspired or possessed animal, and is always supposed to be past articulate speech; and we have the *cry*, the *smothered cry of rage*, the *wail*, the *low wailing cry*, the *wail of despair*, with which, if our readers are not familiar, *ad nauseam*, we can only say we *are*. The curious thing is, that probably no writer ever heard a woman utter this accepted token of extreme emotion, which would indeed be a very intolerable habit in domestic life; but it is evidently accepted by a very large circle as *the* exponent of true, thoroughgoing passion.

²⁸ See Coventry Patmore, “The Angel in the House”, (1862); and John Ruskin, “Of Queen’s Gardens”, *Sesame and Lilies: Two Lectures* (London: George Allen, 1897), pp.110-80. For my discussion of this issue, see this chapter pp.162-63.

female models of physical form.²⁹ I consider accounts of beauty--some contemporaneous, some earlier, and some later than Walker, (by Reverend John G. MacVicar and John Ruskin, Alexander Cozens, and Walter Pater, most notably)--in terms of the increasing interest in scientific explanations of the structure of beauty and a complementary fascination with the practice of physiognomic interpretation. By speculating on the main issues raised by the representation of the female body in the nineteenth century, I want to examine the way in which the beauty of the female face may symbolise a form of bodily knowledge that upsets the ideal of classical proportions, collapses the gender distinctions applied to discussions of the nature, function, and value of human beauty, and strives to present a formulaic "science of beauty."³⁰ Furthermore, I argue that the language of sensation, inextricably linked to the novels of the 1860s, acts as a response to the problem of comprehending the conceptual mystery of the beautiful by gathering together the expression of a feeling of emotional affinity; the dramatisation of an idiosyncratic type of female identity; and the index of a secretly disguised sentimental knowledge of an internal, psychological beauty.

II

In the advertisement to Alexander Walker's *Beauty: Illustrated Chiefly by an Analysis and Classification of Beauty in Woman*, first published in 1839, the author firmly declares not only the universal appeal of a critique of beauty in woman, but also the apparent absence of such an

²⁹ See D.A. Miller, "From *Roman Policier* to *Roman-Police*: Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*", *Novel*, 13 (1980): pp.153-70. This is an important Foucauldian discussion of the use of detection or surveillance as a narrative form that allows for multiple narrative voices as a substitute for the figure of the detective or policeman. Miller argues that in this way detection is aligned with ordinary experience in the novel. See also his "Discipline in Different Voices: Bureacracy, Police, Family, and *Bleak House*", *Representations*, 1 (1983): pp.59-89.

³⁰ See footnote 75.

account of beauty in nineteenth-century writing.³¹ “There is,” the advertisement states, “no subject more universally or more deeply interesting than that which is the chief subject of the present work.” “Yet no book,” the self-promotion announces, “even pretending to science or accuracy, has hitherto appeared upon it. . . . Not one has been devoted to woman, on whose physical and moral qualities the happiness of individuals and the perpetual improvement of the human race are dependent.”³² Aligning itself with such notable theories of beauty as the eighteenth-century accounts offered by Hume, Hogarth, Burke, Knight, and Alison, not to mention the classical accounts of Leonardo da Vinci, Winckelmann, Mengs and Bossi, the advertisement for Walker’s work emphasises the distinctiveness of this “new view of the theory of beauty” as its project of combining “anatomical and physiological knowledge with the critical observation of the external forms of woman.”³³ It is, Walker subsequently explains, an account of “the laws regulating beauty in woman, and taste respecting it in man.”³⁴ What the advertisement, and indeed Walker’s text, suggest is that the application of the scientific disciplines of anatomy and physiology to female beauty provides a form of knowledge that refines the judgement of beauty, and replaces the “mystical and delusive” character of female beauty with one that seeks, first, to “unravel the greater difficulties which that subject presents”³⁵ and, second, to make beauty “the external sign of goodness in organization and function.”³⁶

³¹ Alexander Walker, *Beauty: Illustrated Chiefly by an Analysis and Classification of Beauty in Woman. Preceded by a Critical View of the General Hypotheses respecting Beauty, by Hume, Hogarth, Burke, Knight, Alison, etc. and followed by a similar view of the hypotheses of beauty in sculpture and painting, by Leonardo da Vinci, Winckelmann, Mengs, Bossi, etc.*, 2nd ed. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1846).

³² Walker, *Beauty*, p.vii.

³³ Walker, *Beauty*, pp.vii-viii.

³⁴ Walker, *Beauty*, p.148.

³⁵ Walker, *Beauty*, pp.viii-ix.

³⁶ Walker, *Beauty*, p.xiv.

Nonetheless, it is first necessary to recognise the significance of the writers Walker identifies in the title of his *Beauty* book as exemplary of both the distinct philosophical traditions that his text addresses, and the wider question of the limitations of the different models available to describe beauty at this time. The full title of Walker's book--*Beauty: Illustrated Chiefly by an Analysis and Classification of Beauty in Woman. Preceded by a Critical View of the General Hypotheses respecting Beauty, by Hume, Hogarth, Burke, Knight, Alison, etc. and followed by a similar view of the hypotheses of beauty in sculpture and painting, by Leonardo da Vinci, Winckelmann, Mengs, Bossi, etc.*--appears to place eighteenth-century theorists of beauty alongside Renaissance practitioners (loosely-termed); and yet, a close inspection of the ensuing text reveals that Walker goes to some length to align himself with the 'Renaissance' tradition heralded by Da Vinci, and against the eighteenth century tradition led by Hume.³⁷ Edmund Burke, Richard Payne Knight, and Archibald Alison receive the largest amount of criticism from Walker because they pursue a conception of beauty which he claims is abstracted from the phenomenal world and from any relation to physical forms. What is so interesting about this manoeuvring, though, is less Walker's dissension from beauty as an abstract, conceptual unity, than his association with the particular 'Renaissance' tradition symbolised by the work of da Vinci, Winckelmann, Mengs, and Bossi.

Walker seeks to stabilise beauty by reifying it; to mark out a "new view of the theory of beauty" simply by reconfiguring "woman" at the centre of the discussion. "In this work," he says:

It is the form of woman which is chosen for examination, because it will be found. . .to involve knowledge of the form of man, because it is best calculated to ensure attention from men, and because it is men who, exercising selection, have alone the ability thus to ensure individual happiness and to ameliorate the species, which are the objects of this book.³⁸

³⁷ It is interesting to note that Robyn Cooper claims that Walker's work is "taken directly and without acknowledgement" from T. Bell's 1821 work on beauty: *Kalognomia or the Laws of Female Beauty: being the Elementary Principles of that Science*, 2nd ed. (London: Walpole Press, 1899).

³⁸ Walker, *Beauty*, pp.12-13.

So placed within a frame of reference that always already refers to man, woman issues forth a physical knowledge that, according to Walker, at once invites interpretation and analysis and licenses against corruption: “be it known that the critical judgement and pure taste for beauty are the sole protection against low and degrading connexions.”³⁹ And, he adds, somewhat later, “our vague perceptions. . .and our vague expressions respecting beauty will be found to be, in a great measure, owing to the inaccuracy of our mode of examining it, and, in some measure, to the imperfect nomenclature which we possess for describing it.”⁴⁰ While this is almost certainly true, Walker not only rolls the type ‘woman’ to the foreground of the text, but also presents an overtly moral method of interpreting beauty in order to overcome this dual problem of observation and classification.

There are, he announces, three species of female beauty--the locomotive, the vital, and the mental--derived from the three different classes of human organs--levers, cylindrical tubes, and nervous particles. And, to summarise, locomotive beauty is figured by the limbs; vital beauty on the stomach; and mental beauty on the face and head. Walker states:

It is evidently the locomotive or mechanical system whose figure is precise, striking, and brilliant. It is evidently the nutritive or vital system which is highly developed in the beauty whose figure is soft and voluptuous. It is not less evidently the thinking or mental system which is highly developed in the beauty whose figure is characterized by intellectuality and grace.⁴¹

But, Walker declares, the trouble is that the “art of distinguishing and judging of beauty in woman” confronts the informed observer with the unmistakable truth that just one of these

³⁹ Walker, *Beauty*, p.20. Walker’ sense of this political influence on the arts is notable in its longer version. He writes:

A just sense of this truth [the critical judgement and pure taste for beauty] will give high encouragement to sculpture and painting--arts which may everywhere be looked upon as the best tests, as well as the best records, of civilization. Such encouragement they need in truth; for the monstrous monopoly of landed property and the accumulation of wealth in few hands--the great aim of our political economy, renders art poor indeed. . . .A diffusion of wealth alone can give encouragement to art; nor can this ever be, while British industry is crushed under the weight of enormous taxation (p.22).

⁴⁰ Walker, *Beauty*, p.147.

⁴¹ Walker, *Beauty*, p.161.

physical types-- namely, vital beauty--prevails when describing beauty in woman.⁴² With one stroke Walker appears to render the purpose of this classificatory system defunct. It seems his ideal of female beauty--the Venus de Medici (Figure 19)--derives from the Greek model of beauty, whose eighteenth-century propagandist, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, charges its narrative with a potent erotic content which is clearly at odds with the more fragmentary, and perhaps disembodied, formulations of the beautiful in the eighteenth century.⁴³ Moreover, the figure of the Venus de Medici is significant to Walker because her physical form presents exactly the embodiment of "woman at that age when every beauty has just been perfected." Justifying his choice, Walker continues with undisguised ardour:

⁴² Walker recapitulates this claim in his companion volume to *Beauty*, entitled *Woman, Physiologically Considered as to Mind, Morals, Marriage, Matrimonial Slavery, Infidelity and Divorce* (London: A.H. Baily & Co., 1839). He writes in the latter work:

I have in my work on BEAUTY, shown that beauty of the mental or thinking system is less proper to woman than to man--is less feminine than beauty of the vital or nutritive system; and that it is not the mental, but the vital system, which is, and ought to be, most developed in woman.--Still less is it mere cerebral or intellectual, considered apart from mere sensitive beauty, which ought to characterize her (p.13).

⁴³ John Barrell gives an excellent analysis of the role of the figure of Venus in affirming civic humanism as a fantasy of masculinity in the eighteenth-century discourses on the arts in "The Dangerous Goddess: Masculinity, Prestige and the Aesthetic in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain", *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1992. pp.63-87). Arguing that the notion of a civic character may not exclude the possibility of aesthetic pleasure, Barrell suggests that "the claim made by the civic discourse, that it is possible to subtract the sensual from the aesthetic, or to detach the aesthetic from the sensual, and so to enjoy Venus's body on aesthetic terms while remaining unmoved by her sensuality, may have come to serve some new purposes" (p.83). See also Alex Potts on this theme in *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994). In what is a striking account of Winckelmann's role in reformulating the history of art, Potts writes: "His [Winckelmann's] is a very complex reading of the formal purity of the ideal figure, in which a deathly stillness mingles with eruptions of desire and violent conflict. A powerful dialectic is set up between beautiful bodily form and suggestions of extreme psychic and physical disquiet" (p.2). And for further accounts of the theory of the fine arts in the eighteenth-century, see Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: 'The Body of the Public'* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); Stephen Copley, "The Fine Arts in Eighteenth-Century Polite Culture", *Painting and the Politics of Culture: New Essays on British Art, 1700-1850*, ed. John Barrell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.13-37; and David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

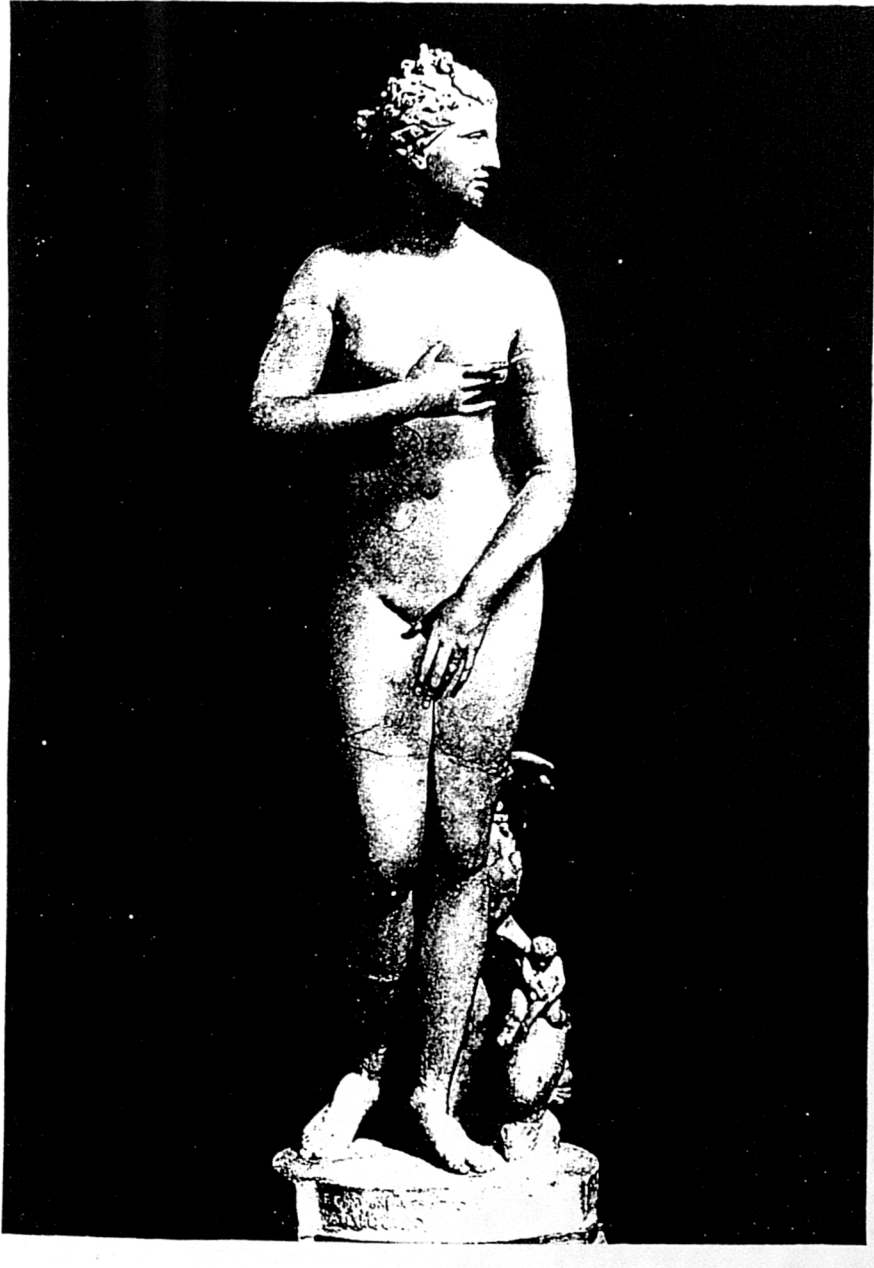


Figure 19 *Venus de Medici*, artist and date unknown, 1.53m., Uffizi (Tribuna), Florence.

These exquisite details [of the head, eyes, nose, and mouth], and the omission of nothing intellectually expressive that nature presents, have led some to imagine the Venus de Medici to be a portrait. In doing so, however, they see not the profound calculation required for nearly every feature thus embodied. More strangely still, they forget the ideal character of the whole: the notion of this ideal head being too small is especially opposed to such an opinion. . . In short, I know no antique that displays such profound knowledge, both physiological and physiognomical, even in the most minutest details; and all who are capable of appreciating these things, may well smile at those who pretend to compare with this any other head of Venus, now known to us.⁴⁴

If Walker is to be believed, beauty contains a knowledge of physiology and physiognomy which, for those able to read its physical features, transforms what may not be available for public display—that is, an illicit, private eroticism predicated on its hidden nature—into the embodied fulfillment of physical pleasure.

Acknowledging the problem that lies at the heart of his work, Walker draws attention to the importance of his discussion in relation to contemporaneous debates on decency and morality, motivated, no doubt, by a concern to point out that decency and nudity need not be viewed as opposite poles in any debate on sexual propriety. Because, as Robyn Cooper reminds us, it is important to place Walker's work within the religious context of the Evangelicalism of the time with its growing unease about the representation of the female body and, especially the nude, as an expression of the fallen state of man and the corrupting influence of the flesh.⁴⁵ The emphasis that Walker gives to the interior structure above the external shape of the female body depends, he claims (somewhat bizarrely), on the notion of sexual decency as a national, climatological, and cultural construction which can be divided into artificial and artful decency. For example, on the one hand, artificial decency is determined by

⁴⁴ Walker, *Beauty*, pp.365-66. For a lucid survey of the way in which particular antique sculptures acquire privileged status in different historical periods, see Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: the Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).

⁴⁵ Cooper, "Victorian Discourses on Women and Beauty", p.38. In particular, Cooper draws attention to the furore over the exhibition of William Etty's *Ulysses and the Sirens* in Manchester in 1838 when public feeling was such that the painting was hung with its face to the wall. For a more detailed account of the controversy surrounding this picture, see Stuart MacDonald, "The Royal Manchester Institution", *Art and Architecture in Victorian Manchester*, ed. John H.G. Archer (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p.38.

climate, decreeing the concealment or exposure of the body in response to cold or hot conditions; while on the other, artful decency, as illustrated by coquetry, deliberately conceals the body in order to heighten what Walker describes as the “sensual and seductive power. . .[of] momentary exposure.”⁴⁶

Short of explicitly promoting the appeal of “living nudity,” Walker identifies the life class at the Royal Academy and the dissecting room of the London Medical Schools as spaces that are suitable for the display of “natural purity,” without offence to the traditional mores of climate and custom. For, Walker proclaims, “the familiarity of both these classes with natural beauty leads them only to seek to inform their minds and to purify their taste.”⁴⁷ The pleasures associated with this type of knowledge are, Walker insists, insufficient in themselves and act, instead, as a mediating means of translating fleshliness into knowledge. The beauty of the female body is perceived to be a source of illicit, and potentially elitist, desire because, to paraphrase Herbert Marcuse’s essay, “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” it displays the possibility of a pleasure that may not be openly offered to the public gaze. Or, to rephrase this, its promise of pleasure lies in the possibility of display.⁴⁸ Marcuse pronounces: “the medium of beauty decontaminates truth and sets it apart from the present. What occurs in art occurs with no obligation.”⁴⁹ Furthermore, he places the conceptual value of beauty in the private realm of culture, separated from the public sphere of commodified production and exchange; a realm that is, provocatively and, somewhat, paradoxically, visualised through the vision of the

⁴⁶ Walker, *Beauty*, p. 17.

⁴⁷ Walker, *Beauty*, p. 18.

⁴⁸ Herbert Marcuse, “The Affirmative Character of Culture”, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, trans. J.L. Shapiro (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1968), p.115. Explaining the need for beauty to be situated in the realm of art in bourgeois culture, Marcuse writes that “beauty is fundamentally shameless. It displays what may not be promised openly and what is denied the majority.”

⁴⁹ Marcuse, “Affirmative Character of Culture”, p.114.

soul as the space of ideal fulfilment and gratification.⁵⁰

Considering the implications of constructing beauty as a form that makes visible the pleasures of a knowledge that cannot be seen, Walker strives to place his desire for knowledge of the female figure as a desire for “natural beauty.” As this manoeuvre will enable an intimacy of its physical form to be socially acceptable by defining it as a specifically moral, and not necessarily erotic, mode of inquiry. Walker makes clear that ideal models of beauty are pleasing “not merely because their forms are disposed and combined so as to effect agreeably the organ of sight, but because their exterior appears to correspond to admirable qualities, and to announce an elevation in the condition of humanity.” And, he goes on, “such do the Greek monuments appear to physiologists and philosophical artists whose minds pass rapidly from the beauty of forms to that locomotive, vital, or mental excellence which it compels them to suppose.”⁵¹ The difficulty is that the movement from “beauty of forms” to what Walker describes as “that locomotive, vital, or mental excellence,” can only be achieved by making beauty act as the external sign of internal goodness; it is an internal goodness, moreover, that seems conceived so as to frustrate the immediate, and apparently local, pleasures of “optical enjoyment.” For Walker contends that the “sentiment of beauty” which is intimately and inevitably associated with the female body combines “ideas of goodness, of suitableness, of sympathy, of progressive perfection, and of mutual happiness,” and so provides a moral imperative for correspondence between external beauty and internal goodness.⁵²

Walker’s solution to the difficulty of visualising the interior frame of the female body is

⁵⁰ Marcuse, “Affirmative Character of Culture”, p.119. Marcuse uses the category of beauty in order to separate art from philosophy and religion, and so enable art to provide gratification through the “illusory reality” of gratification in the present moment. He writes:

If the individual is ever to come under the power of the ideal to the extent of believing that his concrete longings and needs are to be found in it--found moreover in a state of fulfillment and gratification, then the ideal must give the illusion of granting present satisfaction. It is this illusory reality that neither philosophy nor religion can attain. Only art achieves it--in the medium of beauty (p.119).

⁵¹ Walker, *Beauty*, pp.3-4

⁵² Walker, *Beauty*, p.3

instructive because his application of the scientific disciplines of anatomy and physiology to the surface of the body initiates a move that seeks to objectify the physical shape of the body, and so, present a physical knowledge that is moral, rather than erotic, in content. The question is how to address beauty as a physiognomic type of organization which is able refer to science in order to translate the “sentiment of beauty” into a classificatory and a symbolic system. Yet, the conjunction of the terms that Walker employs to define the “sentiment of beauty” clearly articulate the contradiction implicit in reading and representing the female body as beauty and moral knowledge. Goodness, suitableness, sympathy, perfection, and happiness refer to the structure of beauty as an internal form of virtue and, as such, attempt to inscribe a version of the beautiful upon what appears to be an invisible, or at least concealed, physical space. What is more, the use of terms such as “sentiment” and “sympathy,”--terms that have a complex history and suggest a more personal, subjective, perhaps even psychological, interpretation of the beautiful--threaten to undermine Walker’s avowed intention to reformulate and reclassify the language of beauty by concentrating on models of beauty that are classical in appearance. This apparent confusion in Walker’s account of beauty is important for the attention it draws to the restricted availability of the different models with which to read and to represent female beauty. Walker’s “sentiment of beauty” goes some way to expressing these difficulties by drawing attention to the peculiarities involved in revealing the anatomical and physiological organization of the female body. But, it should be clear that far from displaying the intricacies of female anatomy, Walker’s account of beauty disguises those details within a discussion of the three species of organs, visible on the surface of the body, that determine the three species--locomotive, vital, and mental--of beauty. By placing the appeal of female beauty within a moral framework, Walker attempts to allow for the possibility of realizing the pleasures associated with the female form by referring the expression of desire to a spiritually-crafted internal structure of knowledge.

III

Having suggested that Walker presents his ‘new’ view of beauty as an analysis of the external sign of internal goodness through which “the sentiment of beauty” mediates between “optical enjoyment” and “ideas of goodness, of suitableness, of sympathy, of progressive perfection, and of mutual happiness,” I want to consider briefly some of the different models used to describe and analyse beauty which are significant in the nineteenth century.⁵³ For example, Reverend John G. MacVicar (a contemporary of Walker’s),⁵⁴ and Alexander Cozens (writing in the late eighteenth century),⁵⁵ both explore ways of classifying beauty that largely diverge from Walker’s concerns, because the point of contention for these writers on beauty is how to reconcile the need for a theoretical framework in which to place beauty with the desire to talk about beauty in a language that unsettles the theoretic stability of the very system they seek. Cozens’ idea of “simple beauty,” with its attendant variations, “deviating from the simple principle of beauty, but not incompatible with it,”⁵⁶ can be compared to MacVicar’s bifurcation of beauty into “simple beauty,” that is, “inexpressive beauty, or the beauty of repose,” and “expressive beauty,” or “mixed beauty, the beauty of animation, dynamical beauty, the beauty

⁵³ Walker, *Beauty*, p.3.

⁵⁴ MacVicar, *On the Beautiful, the Picturesque, the Sublime*.

⁵⁵ Alexander Cozens, *Principles of Beauty, Relative to the Human Head* (London: James Dixwell, 1778).

⁵⁶ Cozens, *Principles of Beauty*, p.2. He states in full:
 My doctrine therefore is, that a set of features may be combined by a regular and determinate process in art, producing simple beauty, uncharactered and unimpassioned. From this, as from an harmonious and simple piece of music, many variations may be derived by certain arrangements of the features, expressive of various characters or impressions of the mind, deviating indeed from the simple principle of beauty, but not incompatible with it (p.2).

of expression.”⁵⁷ It is, however, ironic that what these writers share with Walker is a failure to address the practical problem of how to describe living beauty; that is to say, how to translate these abstract theories of female beauty into a practical mode of analysing the female body. One solution to this predicament is proffered by the many articles and handbooks on physiognomy circulated amongst the middle-classes at this time.

An entry in *The Phrenological Miscellany*, subtitled *The Annuals of Phrenology and Physiognomy, from 1865 to 1873*, is encouragingly informative on the production and display of what it calls “personal beauty.”⁵⁸ “There is nothing more attractive and fascinating,”

Reverend W.T. Clarke asserts, “than personal beauty.” And he continues:

All men instinctively admire a handsome form and face. They go to the opera, the theatre, the church, wherever people congregate, to feast their eyes upon human beauty. They pay the highest price for the painted counterfeit of it, however imaginary the semblance to adorn their parlour walls. We do not wonder that men are so fascinated by it, and sometimes are so smitten by the sight of it, that they pine away in misery if they can not call its possessor theirs. We do not wonder that people resort to all devices and expedients to preserve and cultivate it, and that the aid of costly clothing, paints, and cosmetics are invoked to conjure up its semblance and prolong its spells.⁵⁹

Although the issue here is, clearly, the value of beauty as a commodity—exhibited, copied, bought, and preserved, at one and the same time—the writer nonetheless tries hard to insist that

⁵⁷ MacVicar, *On the Beautiful*, pp.37-38. He explains rather abruptly:

SIMPLE BEAUTY: the members in the first order characterized, the one by hardness, angularity, and brilliancy, of the objects included in it, and of which the spectra of the *Kaleidoscope* may be taken as a type; the members in the second order by the softness, continuity, and grace of the objects included in it, and of which *Arabesques* may be taken as a type, and a Grecian vase as an example.

EXPRESSIVE BEAUTY: the one, including objects remarkable for their variety, ruggedness, and spirit, but yet for a certain finiteness also, both in their extent and expression, which admits of their being easily mastered by the imagination at sight; and which coincides with what is commonly called *the Picturesque*: the other, including objects remarkable for a certain aspect of power or vastness, infinity or sameness, in their expression, before which the imagination of the beholder expands, attempting, but in vain, to embrace them; and which coincides with that which is called *the Sublime* (pp.37-38).

⁵⁸ Rev. W.T. Clarke, *The Phrenological Miscellany: or, The Annuals of Phrenology and Physiognomy, from 1865 to 1873* (New York, NY: Fowler & Wells Co., 1887), p.325.

⁵⁹ Clarke, *The Phrenological Miscellany*, p.325.

the attractions of physical beauty must refer to the actions of the soul. Devoting two long sections to the task of “How to be Beautiful,” and “How not to be Beautiful,” Clarke speculates on the connection between beauty and virtue, readily acknowledging, that confronted with “a beautiful person--mankind has always gone down on its knees before it as the shrine of a god,” because “to be beautiful is one of the spontaneous ambitions of the human heart.”⁶⁰ And, what is more, Clarke reminds women everywhere, “it is not only right, but a duty, to try to be beautiful.”⁶¹ The practical question of how to fulfil this responsibility is easily answered for whilst “beauty of form and feature, a particular cut, contour, and colour of face and countenance,” are “admirable,” there is a higher order of beauty, “a beauty of expression which enfolds the features in an atmosphere of indelible fascination”--“a beauty of mind, of disposition, of soul, which makes us forget the absence of regular features and lovely tints where they are not, and overlook their presence where they are.” Clarke continues expansively: “everybody has seen men and women of irregular features and ungraceful form who, notwithstanding their physical defects, were so irradiated and glorified by the outshining of noble thoughts and kind affections that they seemed supremely beautiful.”⁶²

The determining idea, then, is that by making beauty reside in the soul rather than the body--in “noble endeavours and holy living” rather than “the symmetric form and the finely chiseled face”⁶³--beauty is adapted from the ideal, public form, upheld by Cozens, Walker, and MacVicar, for instance, into a real, personal activity. According to Clarke, beauty is a state of mind, an intellectual endeavour, that can and should be stimulated through the pursuit of knowledge: it “realizes our ideal and wins the admiration of all cultured minds.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Clarke, *The Phrenological Miscellany*, p.325.

⁶¹ Clarke, *The Phrenological Miscellany*, p.326.

⁶² Clarke, *The Phrenological Miscellany*, p.326.

⁶³ Clarke, *The Phrenological Miscellany*, p.326.

⁶⁴ Clarke, *The Phrenological Miscellany*, p.327.

Nonetheless, couched within the terms of a neo-Platonic discussion on beauty, what makes Clarke's observations so noteworthy is the provision of a culture of, and potentially for, beauty that relies on organic metaphors of growth and decay for its articulation. Beauty is continually "built up,"⁶⁵ cultivated, fed, and replenished. And, what is more, in one gloriously romantic sentence, it "increases with age, and, like the luscious peach, covered with the delicate plush of purple and gold which comes with autumn's ripeness, is never so beautiful as when waiting to be plucked by the gatherer's hand."⁶⁶ Translated into a description of female beauty, this phrase becomes more than suggestively erotic, but, despite his opening lines, Clarke is at pains to point out that his desire lies with developing the instruction of beauty as an educative, rather than a voyeuristic, skill. Indeed, like Ruskin in *Modern Painters*, Clarke seems to be committed to writing an understanding of morality into the appreciation of the beautiful.⁶⁷

Although it is difficult to judge the exact nature of the influence that such specialised journals as *The Phrenological Miscellany* exerted on contemporary Victorian culture, a rapid survey of the popular periodicals of the time, such as *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, *The Cornhill Magazine*, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, *The Saturday Review*, and *The Westminster Review*, confirms the physiognomic fascination with beauty that Clarke

⁶⁵ Clarke, *The Phrenological Miscellany*, p.326.

⁶⁶ Clarke, *The Phrenological Miscellany*, p.328. It is interesting to note that in the preamble to this phrase, Clarke uses an anaphoric sentence sequence to validate his conviction. For example, he writes:

To be beautiful, we must feed the spark of intellectual fire by reading and meditation, until it burns in steady flame, irradiating the face by its brilliancy, suffusing the countenance with light. *To be beautiful*, we must fill the brain with great thoughts and live in an atmosphere of ideas. *To be beautiful*, we must put a great, organizing, and ennobling purpose into the will, and concentrate our thought and affection upon it until enthusiasm wells up in the heart, and suffuses the countenance, and rebuilds the body on its own divine plan. *To be beautiful*, we must cherish every kind impulse and generous disposition, making love the ruling affection of the heart and the ordering principle and inspiring motive of life (p.328), [my italics].

⁶⁷ See John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 5 vols. (London: George Allen & Sons, 1908), I, pp.29-31. Ruskin makes a distinction, however, between moral and intellectual ideas of beauty. He explains: "Ideas of beauty, then, be it remembered, are the subjects of moral, but not of intellectual perception. By the investigation of them we shall be led to the knowledge of the ideal subjects of art" (p.31).

addresses.⁶⁸ E.S. Dallas, well-known critic, and author of *The Gay Science*, first published in 1866,⁶⁹ produced two notable reviews of the science of physiognomy in *The Cornhill Magazine* of 1861 which confront the attendant problems of the practice and the status of physiognomy as a mode of interpretation.⁷⁰ In the first, and I think more significant, of these articles, Dallas adjudges phrenology to have exerted a negative influence on physiognomy, and claims that, in contradistinction, the merit of physiognomy lies in its comprehension of the whole body. “Every part of the body that has free play,” says Dallas, “indicates more or less clearly the character of the in-dwelling mind, and according to the nature of that character we shall find its most eloquent expression now on the hand, now on the face, and now on the skull.”⁷¹ What Dallas tries to do is to invest the science of physiognomy with a mobility and a sensibility by making the expressions of the features refer to the pulsations of the nervous system. Given this correspondence, Dallas’ notion of the “free play” of the body functions as a “neurometer, . . . [a] nerve-gauge” that provides a physiological means of estimating character. “The physiognomy of the face,” Dallas reveals, “is the physiognomy of a fleshly, mobile substance, which is intermingled with the nervous system, lives and palpitates amid a

⁶⁸ See [Anon.], “Noses: A Chapter out of Lavater” *Temple Bar*, 5 (1862): pp.522-27; [Anon.], “On Beauty and Other Conditions of the Face”, *London Magazine*, 7 (1823): pp.526-32; [Anon.], “Woman’s Faces”, *Once a Week*, 9 (1868): p.531; H. Calderwood, “The Expression of the Emotions on the Countenance”, *International Review*, 6 (1878): pp.195-204; C.A. Collins, “On the Expression of the Eye”, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, 14 (1866): pp.357-63; Francis Gerry Fairfield, “Good Looks”, *Cornhill Magazine*, 14 (1866): pp.334-41; and Fairfield, “Beautiful Women”, *Appleton’s Journal*, 16 (1876): pp.328-32; Daniel H. Tuke, “How the Feelings Affect the Hair”, *Popular Science Monthly*, 2 (1872): pp.158-61.

⁶⁹ E.S. Dallas, *The Gay Science*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1866). It is worth pointing out that *The Gay Science* is an important attempt to give the practice of criticism an analytical agenda by demonstrating that “a science of criticism is possible, and that it must of necessity be the science of the laws of pleasure, the joy science, the Gay science” (p.6).

⁷⁰ [E.S. Dallas], “On Physiognomy.” and “The First Principle of Physiognomy”, *The Cornhill Magazine*, 4 (1861): pp.472-81 and pp.469-821.

⁷¹ Dallas, “On Physiognomy”, p.475. Dallas writes in full:
Quite as much as the want of adequate collections, and perhaps even more, the false start made by phrenology has retarded the progress of physiognomy. The part usurped the place of the whole, and gave its own bad name to it. Physiognomy we are to understand as embracing the entire form (p.475).

network of delicate filaments, and derives from them form and texture.”⁷²

The similarity between Dallas’ physiognomy of the face, and Walter Pater’s evocative description of “that which is without—our physical life,” in his infamous “Conclusion” to *The Renaissance*, first published as an individual essay in 1868, is too provocative to be ignored.⁷³ Where Dallas writes about “the physiognomy of a fleshly, mobile substance, which is intermingled with the nervous system, lives and palpitates amid a network of delicate filaments,” Pater writes of “the whole physical life” as “a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names.” And, in an attempt to extend the compass of this “physical life,” “those elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibres, are,” Pater insists, “present not in the human body alone: we detect them in places most remote from it”:

Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the waste and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the nodification of the tissues of the brain under every ray of light and sound—processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces.⁷⁴

Indeed, placed alongside *The Renaissance*, Dallas’ article and his book, *The Gay Science*, proffer a slightly different account of beauty in the nineteenth-century to the one that, I suggest, might derive from Walker. The difference in time apart—Walker’s work is published in 1836, compared to Dallas’ in 1866 and Pater’s in 1873—it would seem that to talk about beauty in the nineteenth century is, in fact, a double-edged process. For, to speak about beauty at this time is not only to construct a system of classification with which to ascribe value to external form, but also to communicate a language of sensation that, ironically, exceeds the representational frame that claims to hold the “science of beauty” in place.⁷⁵

⁷² Dallas, “On Physiognomy”, p.479.

⁷³ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry. The 1893 Text*, ed. Donald L. Hill (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), p.186.

⁷⁴ Pater, *The Renaissance*, p.186.

⁷⁵ David Brett’s useful explanation of early nineteenth-century attempts to create a ‘science of art’ places the change in intellectual ideas in relation to a paradigm shift from, what he defines as, the Academic to the Industrial. See, “The Aesthetical Science: George Field and the ‘Science of Beauty’”, *Art History*, 9 (1986): pp.336-50. Brett quotes D. R. Hay, a key

Dallas' conclusion to *The Gay Science*, "The Ethical Current," is particularly instructive for its description of the pressure exerted by, what Dallas calls, somewhat pejoratively, "the feminine influence. . .[in] literature" on the fiction of the time.⁷⁶ Surveying a literary marketplace of female authors and fictional heroines, Dallas readily acknowledges that there are some positive advantages to be gained from this situation for the traditionally male authorial voice. "Woman," Dallas proclaims in a stereotypical manner, "embodies our highest ideas of purity and refinement." But, he says "now, when the influence of women is being poured into our literature, we expect to feel within it an evident access of refinement." And yet, he says, quickly qualifying his assertion, "we find the very opposite":

The first object of the novelist is to get personages in whom we can be interested; the next is to put them into action. But when women are the chief characters, how are you to set them in motion? The life of women cannot well be described as a life of action. When women are thus put forward to lead the action of a plot, they must be urged into a false position. To get vigorous action they are described as rushing into crime, and doing masculine deeds. Thus they come forward in the worst light, and the novelist finds that to make an effect he has to give up his heroine to bigamy, to murder, to child-bearing by stealth in the Tyrol, and to all sorts of adventures which can only signify her fall. The very prominence of the position which women occupy in recent fiction leads by a natural process to their appearing in a light which is not good. This is what is called sensation. It is not wrong to make a sensation; but if the novelist depends for his sensation upon the action of a woman, the chances are that he will attain his end by unnatural means.⁷⁷

What is so commanding about Dallas' pronouncement is that it seeks to remove the possibility of any link between women, character, and narrative action by presenting it in opposition to falsity, crime, and, perhaps unknowingly, masculine deeds. Nevertheless, it is ironic that in constructing his argument around the heroic idea of "doing masculine deeds"--an idea that is, apparently, antagonistic to feminine "refinement"--Dallas encloses the figure of the male character within a sphere of crime, deception, illusion, and intrigue, from which the female

protagonist in the aesthetical science writers, with his avowed intention to form: "a science of beauty [which] must be founded on fixed principles after the manner of natural sciences. . .a precise and systematic education in the true science of beauty must certainly be useful" (p.346-47).

⁷⁶ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, p.295.

⁷⁷ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, p.297.

character should be excluded--because her inclusion starts to unravel the conventional understandings of gendered differences--but is not. And it seems as if Dallas recognises, and fears, the slippage at stake here between masculine and male, feminine and female identities.

Clearly, the connection between women and beauty resonates throughout Victorian culture, and, as Robyn Cooper points out, in an article entitled "Victorian Discourses on Women and Beauty," it inflects the discourses of art, science and religion, and attempts to define and describe gender, gender differences and relations, as well as to ascribe gender roles. "The 'speaking' of women and beauty," Cooper explains, "is multivocal and conflictual," and, she continues, "the subject is. . .complicated. . .because of the connections of the female body with the emotions of love and the sensations of desire."⁷⁸ Although Cooper acknowledges that the possibility of ascribing beauty to men and women was available in Victorian England, she claims that the distinction between male and female beauty corresponds to the "gender polarization" of the period. It is, she argues, evidence of "the general preoccupation of many Victorian men and a number of Victorian women with the subject of woman."⁷⁹ Whilst this assertion may well be valid, what troubles me about Cooper's description is its virtually unproblematic recourse to the construction of opposite male and female spheres without challenging the terms of that polarity. In recent years, some feminist critics--Kate Millett, Sandra Gilbert and Susan M. Gubar, and Elaine Showalter,⁸⁰--have seized upon the work of Coventry Patmore and John Ruskin as evidence of this so-called separate

⁷⁸ Robyn Cooper, "Victorian Discourses on Women and Beauty: The Alexander Walker Texts", *Gender and History*, 5 (1993): p.35. See also Cooper's "Definition and Control: Alexander Walker's Trilogy on Woman", *History of Sexuality*, 2 (1992): pp.341-64.

⁷⁹ Cooper, "Victorian Discourses on Women and Beauty", p.34.

⁸⁰ See Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (London: Virago, 1972); Sandra Gilbert and Susan M. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979); Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Bronte to Doris Lessing* (London: Virago Press, 1978).

spheres ideology, but I am more uncertain about this argument.⁸¹ What seems to occur is, I think, a move to comprehend the interior structure and physiological organization of women that manifests itself in a series of anxious gestures to the correspondence of external surface and internal structure in both men and women.⁸²

Ludmilla Jordanova's persuasive account of the cultural intertwining of science and sexuality makes clear that "taken as oppositions, women versus men, and nature versus culture, became key terms in medical conflicts of the period." "They were," she continues, "especially prominent in the heated debates, rivalries and struggles around child care and midwifery, which hinged on the ideological tensions between superstition and tradition on the

⁸¹ For more recent accounts of the role of gender in the nineteenth-century, see, for example, Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Richard Barickman, Susan MacDonald, and Myra Stark, *Corrupt Relation: Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Collins and the Victorian Sexual System* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1982); Christine Crosby, *The Ends of History: Victorians and "The Woman Question"* (London: Routledge, 1991); Eleonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 1987); Elisabeth K. Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets, and William Veeder, ed., *The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and America, 1837-83* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1983); Sally Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class, and Women's Reading, 1835-1880* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Press, 1981); Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); and Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (London: Virago Press, 1989).

⁸² For description of sex from the ancients to the moderns, that, at times, lurches from the suggestive to the misleading, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). Laqueur positions his work as an investigation of the development of the one-sex and two-sex model of the human body. "The one-sex body of the doctors," Laqueur explains, "profoundly dependent on cultural meanings, served both as the microcosmic screen for a macrocosmic, hierarchic order and as the more or less stable sign for an intensely gendered social order" (p.115). But, he attempts to argue, this model was powerfully challenged by "a biology of incommensurability in which the relationship between men and women was not inherently one of equality or inequality but rather of difference that required interpretation" (p.154). For an account which is more specific to the nineteenth century, see Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992); and also Nancy Cott, "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology 1790-1850", *Signs*, 4 (1978): pp.219-36.

one hand and enlightenment and progress on the other.”⁸³ And, in an article on the first illustrations of the female skeleton in eighteenth-century anatomy, Londa Schiebinger offers a complementary account of how modern science could arbitrate over the admission of civil rights to women, whilst it could, at the same time, deny the inclusion of women professionals in science.⁸⁴ Schiebinger claims that the category ‘woman’ was “vigorously investigated by a scientific community from which women (and the feminine) were almost entirely absent.” And she goes on:

As a consequence, women had little opportunity to employ the methods of science in order to revise or refute the emerging claims about the nature of women. As science gained social prestige in the course of the nineteenth century, those who could not base their arguments on scientific evidence were put at a severe disadvantage in social debate. Thus emerged a paradox central to the history of modern science: women (and what women value) have been largely excluded from science, and the results of science often have been used to justify their exclusion.⁸⁵

In this light, it is easy to see how the female body can be figured as the site for making visible the anxieties bound up with pleasure and desire that were determined intellectually as masculine in character in this period of the mid-nineteenth century.

⁸³ Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p.30. Jordanova earlier claims that science and medicine were inevitably associated with Enlightenment investigations of sexuality in three ways:

First, natural philosophers and medical writers addressed themselves to phenomena in the natural world such as reproduction, sexual behaviour and sex-related diseases. Second, science and medicine held a privileged epistemological position because their methods appeared to be the only ones which would lead away from dogma and superstition towards a secular empirically-based knowledge of the natural and social worlds. Third, as activities, science and medicine were understood through sexual metaphors, for example by designating nature as a woman to be unveiled, unclothed and penetrated by masculine science (p.24).

See also Jordanova’s article, “Natural Facts: A Historical Perspective on Science and Sexuality”, *Nature, Culture and Gender*, eds. C. McCormack and M. Strathern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.42-69.

⁸⁴ Londa Schiebinger, “Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy”, *The Making of the Modern Body*, ed. Thomas Laqueur and Catherine Gallagher, pp.42-82. See also Schiebinger’s book, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Marina Benjamin’s *Science and Sensibility: Gender and Scientific Enquiry, 1780-1945* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

⁸⁵ Schiebinger, “Skeletons in the Closet”, p.43.

It is, perhaps, worth pausing here to consider a brief history of the female body and its representations. In an article on the female body in the Victorian period, Casey Finch identifies a marked change in the “[female] body’s relation to itself, to its clothing, to reproduction, to its political and architectural environment. . .in the second half of the nineteenth century.”⁸⁶ Clearly, there is a shift in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the Renaissance ideal of the voluptuous softness of the female body to the extremely angular curvature of the late Victorian corseted female body. It is, as Finch points out, a question of re-figuring desire onto a different, and, potentially, more elusive, erotic zone, as “by the end of the nineteenth century. . .the female body’s erotic zones had shifted from the belly backward to the posterior and from the pelvis outward to the breast and limbs”⁸⁷: that is, the “fertile, belly-centred body was replaced by the so-called hourglass shape as the desideratum.”⁸⁸ Although the art historian Kenneth Clark places the classical nude, (the underlying model for the Victorian hour-glass shape), at the beginnings of Western art’s idealization of femininity,--its origins with at least the *Knidian Aphrodite* of Praxiteles in the fourth century B.C.--the history of the representation of the body that he tells is figured architecturally as a balancing of ideal and function that

⁸⁶ Casey Finch, “‘Hooked and Buttoned Together’: Victorian Underwear and Representations of the Female Body”, *Victorian Studies*, 34 (1991): p.340. Without any obvious sign of irony, Finch declares that “Victorian underwear provides not only a useful blueprint for the new architecture of the female body but a convenient grid against which equally new technologies of representation can be traced” (p.340). See also Sander Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature”, *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (1985): pp.204-42; Ann Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1978); and Helene E. Roberts, “The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman”, *Signs*, 2 (1977): pp.554-69; Mariana Valverde, “The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse”, *Victorian Studies*, 32 (1989): 169-88; and, on a more overtly political level, see Elaine Scarry’s provocative book, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁸⁷ Finch, “Hooked and Buttoned Together”, p.341.

⁸⁸ Finch, “Hooked and Buttoned Together”, p.341. And, Finch later recapitulates this assertion as part of a strategy of tantalising concealment. Finch says: “the new pictorial strategies for figuring the body and its clothes themselves came to rely, not on explicit articulations of the female body as a site of (re)production, but on covert representational methods--visual puns, tropes, and uncanny confrontations--that mapped the body as the place where secrets lie” (p.347).

manifests itself on the surface of the body. Indeed, in a curiously formalising gesture, Clark maintains that “like a building, the nude represents a balance between an ideal scheme and functional necessities.”⁸⁹

According to Clark, the nude is constructed in terms of a movement between the fleshy rotundity of the stomach, with its open display of fertility, and the breasts, posterior, and limbs, with their covertly disguised eroticism. In fact, to use Clark’s words, the classical nude represents “the dominating rhythm. . . [of] the curve of the hip,” whereas, what he defines as the “Gothic ideal of the female body,” represents the dominating rhythm of “the curve of the stomach.”⁹⁰ However, as feminist art historians--most notably Marcia Pointon and Lynda Nead--have recently pointed out, an instructive critique of Clark’s work must start by recognising that the figure of woman, and especially the nude, acts in this narrative as an index of male artistic creativity.⁹¹ Challenging Clark’s assumption of the essential unity of the female

⁸⁹ Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1956), p.17. Clark continues: “the figure artist cannot forget the components of the human body any more than the architect can fail to support his roof or forget his doors and windows.”

⁹⁰ Clark, *The Nude*, pp.317-18.

⁹¹ See Marcia Pointon, *Naked Authority: The Body in Western Painting 1830-1908* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.1-34; and Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.1-33. Pointon argues for an interest in “how the nude functions not as a category with clear parameters but as a form of rhetoric.” And she continues: “it is the way the body functions in the grammar of representation, invoking ideologies of the body and its economy, that is significant rather than its erotic power as estimated by any particular viewer, or its pose, or the extent of its covering” (p.14). See also Jain Kelly. ed., *Nude: Theory* (New York, NY: Lustrum, 1979); Edward Lucie-Smith, *The Body: Images of the Nude* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981); Gill Saunders, *The Nude: A New Perspective* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1989); and Edward Snow, “Theorizing the Male Gaze: Some Problems”, *Representations*, 25 (1989): pp.30-41. For an interesting earlier attempt to challenge Clark, that is analysed by both Pointon and Nead, but which manages only to invert his naked/nude binary, see John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972). In a well-known passage, Berger writes:

To be naked it to be oneself. To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognised for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude. . . Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is to be placed on display. To be naked is to be without disguise. . . They [female nudes in the European high-art tradition] are no longer nudes--they break the norms of the art form; they are paintings of loved women, more or less naked. . . In each case the painter’s personal vision of the particular woman he is painting is so strong that it makes no allowance for the spectator. . . The spectator can witness their relationship--but he can do no more; he is forced to

nude, Nead draws on psychoanalytic and poststructuralist theories of the subject in order to suggest that the female body may, in fact, represent something outside the domain of art and aesthetic judgement, which notions of artistic taste, form, and style bring insistently within the pictorial frame.⁹² Nead writes: “the female nude can almost be seen as a metaphor for these processes of separation and ordering, for the formation of self and the spaces of the other.”

And she continues:

If the female body is defined as lacking containment and issuing filth and pollution from its faltering outlines and broken surface, then the classical forms of art perform a kind of magical regulation of the female body, containing it and momentarily repairing the orifices and tears. This can, however, only be a fleeting success; the margins are dangerous and will need to be subjected to the discipline of art again. . .and again. The western tradition of the female nude is thus a kind of discourse on the subject, echoing structures of thinking across many areas of the human sciences.⁹³

Translated into a nineteenth century context, Nead’s analysis offers one way of comprehending the often fraught reading of the female body and its representations in middle-class society. For what emerges in the mid-nineteenth century, I think, is a cultural fascination with the idea of embodiment that is visualised in a desire to master and determine the limits of display in a way that unwittingly uncovers and unsettles this apparent stability.

IV

With these theoretical difficulties in mind, I want to draw together my discussion on beauty by considering how Collins’ novels--specifically, *Basil* (1852) and *No Name* (1862)--articulate the problems of figuration posed by the specific act of interpreting the female face, and place their response to these problems in the complex intersection of beauty, gender, and sexuality.

recognise himself as the outsider he is. He cannot deceive himself into believing that she is naked for him. He cannot turn her into a nude (p.57).

⁹² Nead, *The Female Nude*, p.25.

⁹³ Nead, *The Female Nude*, p.7.

An early Collins novel, *Mr Wray's Cashbox; or, The Mask and the Mystery*, published in 1852, explicitly dramatises the complexities involved in the configuration of femininity, beauty, and character.⁹⁴ Upon entering “the commercial establishment of Messrs. Dunball and Dark” to buy a pot of lip-salve, a young girl—Annie Wray—becomes the object of an immediate and penetrating scrutiny: “She is neatly dressed; looks about eighteen or nineteen years of age; and has something in her face which I can only characterise by the epithet—loveable.” “There is a beauty of innocence and purity about her forehead, brow, and eyes,” the description continues, “a calm, kind, happy expression as she looks at you. . .Mixed up. . .[with] a look of firmness. . .that gives a certain character and originality to her face.”⁹⁵ Collins goes on haltingly:

Her figure—I stop at her figure. Not by any means for want of phrases to describe it; but from a disheartening conviction of the powerlessness of any description of her to produce the right effect on the minds of others. If I were asked in what particular efforts of literature the poverty of literary material most remarkably appears, I should answer, in personal descriptions of heroines. . .We have read all this attentively and admiringly, as it deserves; and have yet risen from the reading, without the remotest approach to a realisation in our own minds of what sort of a woman the heroine really was. We vaguely knew she was beautiful, at the beginning of the description; and we know just as much—just as vaguely—at the end.⁹⁶

The attraction of this representation of Annie Wray lies with the remarkably direct intrusion of the authorial voice into the passage in order to point out the impotency of verbal and visual forms of representation to inscribe the features of female character with noticeable beauty. The exact nature of “the right effect” is implied as a desire for specificity in “personal descriptions of heroines” that can somehow compensate for the weakness of the narrative in this question of representation.

According to Collins, the profusion of physical detail that hovers uncertainly on the surface of his fiction acts as a means of enticing the reader to enter into the heightened

⁹⁵ Wilkie Collins, *Mr Wray's Cashbox; or, The Mask and the Mystery*, “A Christmas Sketch”, (London: Richard Bentley, 1852).

⁹⁵ Collins, *Mr Wray's Cashbox*, pp.4-5.

⁹⁶ Collins, *Mr Wray's Cashbox*, pp.5-6.

psychological drama that underlies, and indeed, stimulates, the narrative intrigue.⁹⁷ Miss Garth's reflections on hearing of the dreadful ignominy of illegitimacy facing her former pupils, Norah and Magdalen Vanstone, in *No Name*, search for a convincing answer to the question of the correspondence between physical detail and psyche. Pivoting her inquiry on the hypothesis that "we are not born with blank faces," Miss Garth's philosophical debate on mind and morals is intriguing for the manner in which it promotes psychological determinism through its rhetorical construction:

Does there exist in every human being, beneath that outward and visible character which is shaped into form by the social influences surrounding us, an inward, invisible disposition, which is part of ourselves; which education may indirectly modify, but can never hope to change? Is the philosophy which denies this, and asserts that we are born with dispositions like blank sheets of paper, a philosophy which has failed to remark that we are not born with blank faces--a philosophy which has never compared together two infants of a few days old, and has never observed that those infants are not born with blank tempers for mothers and nurses to fill up at will? Are there, infinitely varying with each individual, inbred forces of Good and Evil in all of us, deep down below the reach of mortal encouragement and mortal repression--hidden Good and hidden Evil, both alike at the mercy of the liberating opportunity and the sufficient temptation? Within these earthly limits, is earthly Circumstance ever the key; and can no human vigilance warn us beforehand of the forces imprisoned in ourselves which that key *may* unlock?⁹⁸

The suggestion that this, indeed, may be the case has already been subtly anticipated in the description of Magdalen Vanstone for Magdalen is introduced into the narrative in terms of the difference in her physical appearance compared to her parents: she "presented no recognizable resemblance to either of her parents," and, the narrator asks, "how had she come by her hair? how had she come by her eyes?"⁹⁹ Sketching Magdalen's face, the narrator expands:

Her eyebrows and eyelashes were just a shade darker than her hair, and seemed made expressly for those violet-blue eyes, which assert their most irresistible charm when

⁹⁷ For a pertinent account of Collins' novels as the exploration of social and psychic identity, see Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In the Secret Theatre of the Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1988). Taylor argues that sensation fiction, and specifically Collins' fiction, "raises an intricate set of questions about how to historicize the formation of psychological and fictional conventions, about how to interpret their significance in the light of our own theoretical concerns" (p.15).

⁹⁸ Wilkie Collins, *No Name*, ed. Virginia Blain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.146.

⁹⁹ Collins, *No Name*, p.13.

associated with a fair complexion. But it was here exactly that the promise of her face failed of performance in the most startling manner. The eyes, which should have been dark, were incomprehensibly and discordantly light: they were of that nearly colourless grey, which, though little attractive in itself, possesses the rare compensating merit of interpreting the finest gradations of thought, the gentlest changes of feeling, the deepest trouble of passion, with a subtle transparency of expression which no darker eyes can rival.¹⁰⁰

Orchestrated by an arresting inversion of the colour of her eyes, from dark to light, Magdalen's eyes possess "a subtle transparency of expression" that articulate "the finest gradations of thought, the gentlest changes of feeling, the deepest trouble of passion," and so begin to explain her character. And, in a provocatively constructed passage, the description continues:

Thus quaintly contradictory in the upper part of her face, she was hardly less at variance with established ideas of harmony in the lower. Her lips had the true feminine delicacy of form, her cheeks the lovely roundness and smoothness of youth—but the mouth was too large and firm, the chin too square and massive for her sex and age. Her complexion partook of the pure monotony of tint which characterized her hair—it was the same soft warm creamy fairness all over, without a tinge of colour in the cheeks, except on occasions of unusual bodily exertion, or sudden mental disturbance. The whole countenance—so remarkable in its strongly-opposed characteristics—was rendered additionally striking by its extraordinary mobility. The large, electric, light-grey eyes followed each other over the plastic, ever-changing face, with a giddy rapidity which left sober analysis far behind in the race.¹⁰¹

The fascinating thing is that these "strongly-opposed characteristics" of Magdalen's face, which, I think, signal the confusion of gendered differences of identity, are taken in contemporary criticism to refer only to a slippage within conceptions of femininity, rather than to a more unsettling slippage between conceptions of femininity and masculinity.

A skilfully ironic critique of the character of Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name*, written,

¹⁰⁰ Collins, *No Name*, p.13.

¹⁰¹ Collins, *No Name*, pp.13-14. It is noteworthy that, having discussed Magdalen's figure, with its "seductive, serpentine suppleness," the narrator uses her physiological organization to conclude the description:

She bloomed in full physical maturity of twenty years or more—bloomed naturally and irresistibly, in right of her matchless health and strength. Here, in truth, lay the mainspring of this strangely-constituted organization. Her headlong course down the house stairs; the brisk activity of all her movements; the incessant sparkle of expression in her face; the enticing gaiety which took the hearts of the quietest people by storm—even the reckless delight in bright colours, which showed itself in her brilliantly-striped morning dress, in her fluttering ribbons, in the large scarlet rosettes on her smart little shoes—all sprang alike from the same source; from the overflowing physical health which strengthened every muscle, braced every nerve, and set the warm young blood tingling through her veins, like the blood of a growing child (p.14).

though unsigned, by Mrs Oliphant--a regular reviewer for *Blackwood's Magazine*, and a central figure in directing the critical response to sensation fiction--takes up the question of the morality that is, apparently, abnegated in precisely the form of female character that Magdalen represents. Mrs Oliphant writes:

Mr Wilkie Collins, after the skilful and startling complications of the *Woman in White*--his grand effort--has chosen, by way of making his heroine piquant and interesting in his next attempt, to throw her into a career of vulgar and aimless trickery and wickedness, with which it is impossible to have a shadow of sympathy, but from all the pollutions of which he intends us to believe that she emerges, at the cheap cost of a fever, as pure, as high-minded, and as spotless as the most dazzling white of heroines. The Magdalen of *No Name* does not go astray after the usual fashion of erring maidens in romance. Her pollution is decorous, and justified by law; and after all her endless deceptions and horrible marriage, it seems quite right to the author that she should be restored to society, and have a good husband and a happy home.¹⁰²

Placed within a frame of reference that foregrounds such models of female character as "the most dazzling white of heroines" and the "maidens of romance," it is, perhaps, not surprising that Magdalen Vanstone's actions are judged wanting. But what causes Mrs Oliphant the greatest alarm, apparently, is the universal nature of the appeal that sensation fiction makes to "the passions and emotions of life."¹⁰³ Relying on a "simple physical effect," this type of fiction is "totally independent of character, and involves no particular issue. . . The effect is pure sensation, neither more nor less; and so much reticence, reserve, and delicacy is in the means employed. . . that the reader feels his own sensibilities flattered by the impression made upon him."¹⁰⁴ And, a contemporaneous review of female sensation novelists makes clear that

¹⁰² [Mrs Oliphant], Rev. of *No Name*, by Wilkie Collins, *Blackwood's Magazine*, 94 (1863): p.170.

¹⁰³ [Mrs Oliphant], "Sensation Novels", *Blackwood's Magazine*, 91 (1862): p.568. In this earlier, slightly more complimentary review, Mrs Oliphant proclaims:
the rise of a Sensation School of art in any department is a thing to be watched with jealous eyes; but nowhere is it so dangerous as in fiction, where the artist cannot resort to a daring physical plunge, as on the stage, or to a blaze of palpable colour, as in the picture-gallery, but must take the passions and emotions of life to make his effects withal.

¹⁰⁴ [Mrs Oliphant], "Sensation Novels", p.572. An unsigned review of *The Woman in White* that appeared in the weekly magazine, *Critic*, casts its criticism within the same terms. The reviewer warns:

This is not a novel which evokes the better feelings of human nature; it does not go

this “appeal to the nerves rather than to the heart” serves only to convey “a picture of life which shall make reality insipid and the routine of ordinary existence intolerable to the imagination.”¹⁰⁵ The result, according to this anonymous reviewer (in a sentence I quoted earlier), is nothing less than the development of “a whole new set of words” that are “caught up and slipped into. . .to express a certain degradation of the human into the animal or brutal, on the call of strong emotion.”¹⁰⁶ Far from welcoming this engagement with the imaginative fancy as an intrinsic part of the fictive process, it is clear that Mrs Oliphant and the latter reviewer believe that the profound disquiet of this “new” language of sensation lies with its desire to uncover a vocabulary of the “nerves”; that is to say, to reconfigure everyday experience by dramatizing unknown and unmappable interiors, surfaces without depths.

In the “Letter of Dedication. To Charles James Ward,” that prefaces *Basil*, illuminating something of his aesthetic intention, Collins explains that he “founded the main event out of which this story springs, on a fact within my own knowledge.” And, he continues:

I have guided it, as often as I could, where I knew by my own experience, or by experience related to me by others, that it would touch on something real and true in its progress. My idea was, that the more of the Actual I could garner up as a text to speak from, the more certain I might feel of the genuineness and value of the Ideal which was sure to spring out of it. . .By appealing to genuine sources of interest *within* the reader’s experience, I could certainly gain his attention to begin with; but it would be only by appealing to other sources (as genuine in their way) *beyond* his own experience, that I could hope to fix his interest and excite his suspense, to occupy his

home to you; you acknowledge its artistic construction, but you feel the want of nature; it rouses your curiosity, it thrills your nerves, it fills you with admiration, contempt, indignation, hatred, but your softer feelings are seldom played upon. . .That there is an inclination of over-minuteness we cannot deny, but pre-Raffaelitism [*sic*] is in the ascendant. We were more struck by the general tendency of the book to sacrifice everything to intensity of excitement.

[Anon.], *Critic*, 21 (1860): pp. 233-34.

¹⁰⁵ [Anon.], “Our Female Sensation Novelists”, *Our Living Age*, 78 (1863): p.352. The reviewer proceeds to cite a definition of sensation fiction given in the prospectus to *Punch*’s spoof, *Sensation Times*: “It devotes itself to harrowing the mind, making flesh creep, causing the hair to stand on end, giving shocks to the nervous system, destroying conventional moralities, and generally unfitting the public for the prosaic avocations of life” (p.352).

¹⁰⁶ [Anon.], “Our Female Sensation Novelists”, p.354.

deeper feelings, or to stir his nobler thoughts.¹⁰⁷

The narrative that ensues in *Basil*--a narrative that is, at once, "within" and "beyond" the reader's experience--communicates the troubled burden of namelessness and placelessness that an uncertainty about the marks of sexual identity imparts upon the novel.¹⁰⁸ Early in the narrative, the description of Basil's omnibus trip--that first, and fatally, brought him into contact with Margaret Sherwin--is tantalisingly built up as a narrative of female unveiling before watchful male eyes.¹⁰⁹ Evocatively transfixed, Basil details Margaret in an enchantingly intimate physical manner:

Her veil was down when I first saw her. Her features and her expression were but indistinctly visible to me. I could just vaguely perceive that she was young and beautiful; but, beyond this, though I might imagine much, I could see little. . . We had been moving onward for some little time, when the girl's companion addresses an observation to her. She heard it imperfectly, and lifted her veil while it was being repeated. How painfully my heart beat! I could almost hear it--as her face was, first for the first time, freely and fairly disclosed! She was dark. Her hair, eyes, and

¹⁰⁷ Wilkie Collins, *Basil. A Story of Modern Life* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1980), pp.iii-v. Collins gives a more light-hearted account of his creative principles in response to a reader's request. Collins explains:

I have got my idea; I have got three of my characters. What is there to do now? My next proceeding is to begin building up the story. Here my favourite three efforts must be encountered. First effort: To begin at the beginning. Second effort: To keep the story always advancing, without paying the smallest attention to the serial division in parts, or to the book publication in volumes. Third effort: To decide on the end.

Wilkie Collins, "How I Write my Books: Related in a Letter to a Friend", *The Globe*, (1887): p.6.

¹⁰⁸ Collins, *Basil*, p.169. In the midst of his delirium, Basil laments despairingly:

I had sensations, I had thoughts, I had visions, now--but they all acted in the frightful self-concentration of delirium. The lapse of time, the march of events, the alternation of day and night, the persons who moved about me, the words they spoke, the offices of kindness they did for me--all these were annihilated from the period when I closed my eyes again, after having opened them for an instant on my father, in my own study.

And he continues melancholically:

My first sensation. . . was of a terrible heat; a steady, blazing heat, which seemed to have shrivelled and burnt up the whole of the little world around me, and to have left me alone to suffer, but never to consume in it. After this, came a quick restless, unintermittent toiling of obscure thought, ever in the same darkened sphere, ever on the same impenetrable subject, ever failing to reach some distant and visionary result. It was as if something were imprisoned in my own mind, and moving always to and fro in it--moving, but never getting free (p.169).

¹⁰⁹ For a critique of the gendered implications of the veil/unveiling metaphor, see Jordanova, "Nature Unveiling Before Science", *Sexual Visions*, pp.87-110.

complexion were darker than usual in English women. The form, the look altogether, of her face, coupled with what I could see of her figure, made me guess her age to be about twenty. There was the appearance of maturity already in the shape of her features; but their expression still remained girlish, unformed, unsettled. The fire in her large dark eyes, when she spoke, was latent. Their languor, when she was silent--that voluptuous languor of black eyes--was still fugitive and unsteady. The smile about her full lips. . .struggled to be eloquent, yet dared not. Among women, there always seems something left incomplete--a moral creation to be superinduced on the physical--which love alone can develop, and which maternity perfects still further, when developed. I thought, as I looked on her, how the passing colour would fix itself brilliantly on her round, olive cheek; how the expression that still hesitated to declare itself, would speak out at last, would shine forth in the full luxury of its beauty, when she heard the first words, received the first kiss, from the man she loved!¹¹⁰

The playful movement between the veil and the face, concealment and revelation, disguise and display, performs a seduction that blurs the relation of seducer to seduced (originally Basil to Margaret) by removing the availability of Margaret's whole body as a figure to be read from the eager gaze of Basil's eyes. Indeed, in a phrase that finds an echo in Hartright's perception of "something wanting" in Laura Fairlie, Basil announces that "among women, there always seems something left incomplete." The absence may be alluring, but, as Basil eventually discovers, the problem is how to read that incompleteness, that hollowness, accurately as the expression of concealment and disguise, rather than revelation and display; that is to say, how to visualise the interior psychic structure that apparently underlies the surface shape.

To put it simply, Basil's misfortune lies with his failure to comprehend the full implications for his own self of the veiled and never-to-be-fulfilled promise that Margaret's beautiful face proffers. While Margaret's veil literally separates her face from Basil's eager gaze, it also figuratively symbolises Basil's seduction by the language of sensation that is generated by Margaret's physical appearance and that, at the same time, it promises to guarantee. Unable to read this screen as anything other than an enthralling prologue to a relationship, though, Basil seems to surrender the perceptual and rational powers of his mind in favour of an absorption into his own nervous sensibility¹¹¹: the narrative lurches from the

¹¹⁰ Collins, *Basil*, pp.29-31.

¹¹¹ Believing himself to have disposed of Mannion in a gruesome encounter, the enormity of Basil's action seems to dawn on his sensibility in terms of a morbid fear of madness:

"MAD!"--that word, as I heard it, rang after me like a voice of judgement. "MAD!"--a

passions of his heart to the senses of his nerves as Basil pieces together the story of his insecurity, his melancholy, and his fragile masculinity. "In the ravelled skein," Basil philosophises, "the slightest threads are the hardest to follow":

In analysing the associations and sympathies which regulate the play of our passions, the simplest and homeliest are the last we detect. It is only when the shock comes and the mind recoils before it. . .that we really discern what trifles in the outer world our noblest mental pleasures, or our severest mental pains, have made a part of ourselves--atoms which the whirlpool has drawn into its vortex, as greedily and surely as the largest mass.¹¹²

In other words, these trifling "noblest mental pleasures" and "severest mental pains" animate the "play of passions" and, in so doing, are amplified beyond the control of associative or sympathetic affinity. What results is a narrative that is precariously vulnerable because it places the rhythm of the nerves over the rhythm of the heart.

Despite his astute interpretation of Mrs Sherwin, Basil fails to translate the tragic signs displayed on her face into a tragedy in which he is already, irrevocably, immersed:

Her pale, sickly, moist-looking skin; her large, mild, watery, light-blue eyes; the restless timidity of her expression; the mixture of useless hesitation and involuntary rapidity in every one of her actions--all furnished the same significant betrayal of a life of incessant fear and restraint; of a disposition full of modest generousities and meek sympathies, which had been crushed down past rousing to self-assertion, past ever seeing the light. There, in that mild, wan face of hers--in those painful startings and hurryings when she moved; in that tremulous, faint utterance when she spoke--*there*, I could see one of those ghastly heart-tragedies laid open before me, which are acted and re-acted, scene by scene, and year by year, in the secret theatre of the home; tragedies which are ever shadowed by the slow falling of the black curtain that drops lower and lower every day--that drops, to hide all at last, from the hand of death.¹¹³

Even the conclusion to Basil's narrative expresses a sense of profound discontent with the need to step out of this form of sensational affinity in order to end the story. In a painfully personal passage, Basil implores the reader:

fear had come over me, which, in all its frightful complication, was expressed by that one word--a fear which, to the man who suffers by it, is worse even than the fear of death; which no human language ever conveyed, or ever will convey, in all its horrible reality, to others (p.165).

¹¹² Collins, *Basil*, pp.144-45.

¹¹³ Collins, *Basil*, pp.75-77.

How are the pages which I am about to send to you to be concluded? In the novel-reading sense of the word, my story has no real conclusion. The repose that comes to all of us after trouble. . .is the end which must close *this autobiography: an end, calm, natural, and uneventful; yet not, perhaps, devoid of all lesson and value. Is it fit that I should set myself, for the sake of effect, to make a conclusion, and terminate by fiction what has begun, and thus far, has proceeded in truth? In the interests of Art, as well as in the interests of Reality, surely not!*¹¹⁴

The implication, quite simply, is that the conclusion of the narrative marks the conclusion of Basil's life in so far as the sensational body that makes up the sensational text has, apparently and fatally, broken down its own physiological system.

V

To end the matter here, however, would be to ignore the function of the exclusively male narrators in Collins' work in responding to the variously beautiful female faces. I have already argued that the prominence of the faces of female characters in Collins' fiction acts as the manifestation of a desire to define the configuration of beauty, femininity, and character. And I have discussed how this fascination with the female face may be a reflection on, response to, and revision of the attempts to provide a formulaic language with which to fix the beautiful in Victorian culture. What remains incompletely explained, nonetheless, is how the figure of the male narrator might be constructed as the embodiment of the language of sensation used to describe female beauty. How, in other words, the expression of the inadequacy of language to articulate sensation by the male narrator is, in fact, the expression of an inability to read beauty and character (both male and female) in the face. To explain this, I want to turn, briefly, to consider the first meeting between Basil and Mannion; an encounter that, unusually for Collins' fiction, is notable for the description it provides of a male countenance--Mannion's--which

¹¹⁴ Collins, *Basil*, p.339.

dramatises the incommensurability between face, beauty, and character.

Deeply, and, at this time, happily, immersed within the intrigue of his secret marriage to Margaret, Basil places his meeting with Mannion within the context of a series of changes which began to unsettle “the calm uniformity of the life at North Villa.” The flurry of restless activity that anticipates the expected arrival prompts Basil to ask, impatiently, “who was this Mr. Mannion, that his arrival at his employer’s house should make a sensation?”¹¹⁵ His question is soon answered when Mannion enters the room, but, as he quickly discovers, there is something in the physical appearance of Mannion that leaves his desire for information unsatisfied. “I looked at him with a curiosity and interest,” Basil recalls, “which I could hardly account for at first.”¹¹⁶ Deriving an idea of male beauty from the correlation of an “extraordinary regularity of feature” with “a handsome man,” Basil relates his first impression of Mannion to the reader:

Viewed separately from the head (which was rather large, both in front and behind) his face exhibited, throughout, an almost perfect symmetry of proportion. His bald forehead was smooth and massive as marble; his high brow and thin eyelids had the firmness and immobility of marble, and seemed as cold; his delicately-formed lips, when he was not speaking, closed habitually, as changelessly still as if no breath of life ever passed them. There was not a wrinkle or line anywhere on his face.¹¹⁷

The reference to classical statuary is clear in the vocabulary, for here is a man that appears, to Basil, to be more like a statue than a living person. What is more, the parallel with the classical ideal continues in Basil’s analysis of the expressiveness of Mannion’s face. “Such was his countenance in point of form,” he says, “but in that which is the outward assertion of our immortality--in expression--it was, as I now beheld it, an utter void”:

Never before had I seen any human face which baffled all inquiry like his. No mask could have been made expressionless enough to resemble it; and yet it looked like a mask. It told you nothing of his thoughts, when he spoke: nothing of his disposition, when he was silent. His cold grey eyes gave you no help in trying to study him. They never varied from the steady, straightforward look, which was exactly the same for

¹¹⁵ Collins, *Basil*, p. 109.

¹¹⁶ Collins, *Basil*, p. 109.

¹¹⁷ Collins, *Basil*, p. 110.

Margaret as it was for me; for Mrs Sherwin as for Mr Sherwin--exactly the same whether he spoke or whether he listened; whether he talked of indifferent, or of important matters. Who was he? What was he? His name and calling were poor replies to those questions. Was he naturally cold and unimpressible at heart? or had some fierce passion, some terrible sorrow, ravaged the life within him, and left it dead for ever after? Impossible to conjecture! There was the impenetrable face before you, wholly inexpressive--so inexpressive that it did not even look vacant--a mystery for your eyes and your mind to dwell on--hiding something; but whether vice or virtue you could not tell.¹¹⁸

Fuelled by a sense of the impenetrability of Mannion's face, Basil's description is troubled with an anxiety as to what this marble face might signify that is, in turn, translated into an anxiety about the powers of perception and comprehension. Mannion's face is, at once, "an utter void"; "expressionless"; "no mask" and yet "a mask"; "a mystery." The question is how to interpret these different forms of representation.

As Basil later comments to Margaret's father, Mr Sherwin, Manion is "a complete walking mystery" that almost seems to invite analysis whilst simultaneously displaying an elusive something in his countenance that resists this invitation.¹¹⁹ But, drawn dangerously towards this mysterious absence, Basil determines "to penetrate the mystery connected with him," in order to revel in the pleasure of the idea that Mannion's face offers of "a promise of future excitement. . .of no ordinary kind."¹²⁰ Although the suggestion of homoeroticism in this account is extremely slight, the sexual overtones of the language Basil uses are, I think, quite obvious. What is more, the narrative that unfolds from this encounter swiftly replaces Margaret with Mannion at the centre of Basil's consciousness. The veil concealing Margaret's beauty, once so attractive to Basil, comes to mark their increasing separation, as Basil transfers his obsession with reading character to Mannion and enters into a frenzied pursuit designed to translate the mystery of Mannion's face into the meaning of his character. Conceived as an act of reading, Basil's failure to comprehend the complexities of Mannion's character is, in fact, a

¹¹⁸ Collins, *Basil*, pp.110-11.

¹¹⁹ Collins, *Basil*, p.114.

¹²⁰ Collins, *Basil*, p.117.

misreading of the connection between face, beauty, and character. And yet, conceived as gendered form of representation, Basil's misreading dramatises the inadequacy of the language of sensation to articulate the incredibly vulnerable intersection of conceptions of beauty and sexuality.

D.A. Miller's immensely influential, and strongly Foucauldian, analysis of the conjunction of sensation and gender in *The Woman in White* expands this body as text metaphor further to suggest that the kind of manic nervousness that is often articulated in sensation fiction--which I have discussed in *Basil*--is made, by literary critics, to be responsible for the marginal status of sensation fiction in the literary canon. Miller claims that "by a kind of Cartesian censorship, in which pulp-as-flesh gets equated with pulp-as-trash, the emphatic physicality of thrills in such literature allows us to hold them cheap. . .sensation is felt to occupy a site entirely outside of meaning, as though in the breathless body signification expired."¹²¹ And, arguing for a psychosomatic comprehension of sensation fiction, Miller insists that the act of reading these texts is an interpretive act that involves reading not only the sensations of the narrators' body, but also the sensations of the reader's body. In this way, Miller suggests, it could be that sensation fiction communicates "certain things for which our culture. . .has yet to develop another language."¹²² The central issue for Miller is how this impulse introduces a homoerotic content into the sensation novel, exemplified, in this case, by *The Woman in White*. Miller explains:

The specificity of the sensation novel in nineteenth-century fiction is that it renders the liberal subject the subject of a *body*, whose fear and desire of violation displaces, reworks, and exceeds his constitutive fantasy of intact privacy. The themes that the liberal subject ordinarily defines himself against--by reading *about* them--are here inscribed into his reading body. Moreover, in *The Woman in White* this body is gendered: not only has its gender been *decided*, but also its gender identification is an active and determining *question*. The drama in which the novel writes its reader turns on the disjunction between his allegedly masculine gender and his effectively feminine gender identification (as a creature of "nerves"): with the result that his experience of sensation must include his panic at having the experience at all, of being in the position

¹²¹ D.A. Miller, "Cage aux folles": Sensation and Gender in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*", *Representations*, 14 (1986): pp.107-108.

¹²² Miller, "Cage aux folles", p.108.

to have it. In this sense, the novel's initial assumption that its reader is male is precisely what cannot be assumed. . .since his formal title--say, "a man"--is not or not yet a substantial entity--say, "a real man."¹²³

Miller's astute questioning of the stability of the act of gender identification elucidates the complicated problem of determining the links between sensational narrative and the objects of its attention. For by foregrounding the "nerves" above the "heart," the sensation narrative articulates an unknown, and apparently unmappable, interior that produces exhilarating pulses of excitement from a position that, though constructed as "feminine," is usually articulated by a male narrator. In other words, the search for interiority in beauty, particularly female beauty, gives voice to a perplexing construction of gender and sexuality which disorders and confuses the discrete identities of masculine and feminine.

Collins' sensational narratives exhibit the destabilizing of gendered differences through the act of reading, scanning, interpreting, which sexualizes observer and observed--subject and object, exterior and interior--and throws into question the relations between male and masculine, female and feminine. What is more, the female face is used to dramatize this anxious hesitancy about the correspondence between gender and sexuality as a representational figure that dismantles its own figuration through the features of the face. The female characters in Collins' fiction are presented variously in terms of a puzzling absence or contradiction in their faces--a mixed expression--that serves to frustrate not only the expectations of the sensational narrator, but also the complex physiognomic relation between beauty, gender, and sexuality. So, far from being simply the expression of desire, the expression of feeling that accompanies the act of talking about beauty in Collins' texts unfolds into a perplexing inquiry into the problems of figuring beauty as masculine or feminine, male or female.

¹²³ Miller, "*Cage aux folles*", p.117.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HUMAN COUNTENANCE IN THE SOCIAL ECONOMY OF THE WORLD: PICTURING DESCENT AND MEASURING DEVELOPMENT IN THE SCIENTIFIC WRITINGS OF CHARLES DARWIN.



THE KEEPER'S NIGHTMARE.

ONE OF THE OFFICIALS AT THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS HAS A BEWILDERING NIGHTMARE. HE DREAMS THAT ALL THE ANIMALS HAVE BROKEN LOOSE AND SWAPPED HEADS, AND HE DOESN'T KNOW "WHICH TO FEED WITH

Figure 20

"The Keeper's Nightmare", *Punch's Almanack for 1871*, engraving, *Punch; or, The London Charivari*, 60 (1871), p.ii.

I

In 1871, a sketch appeared in the July edition of *Punch* entitled “The Keeper’s Nightmare” (Figure 20).¹ With the explanation, “one of the officials at the Zoological Gardens has a bewildering nightmare. He dreams that all the animals have broken loose and swapped heads, and he doesn’t know ‘which to feed with what’,” the image is eye-catching for its representation of a Darwinian world of nature that calls into question not only the continuity of the animal species, but also the place of man at the centre of the natural world. The keeper is depicted gazing upward, with a look of utter surprise and dismay on his face, surrounded by a variety of animals that are only half recognisable by their physical characteristics. An owl-elephant, an hippopotamus-giraffe, a snake-zebra, a crocodile-kangaroo, and a boar-ostrich, to name a few, are some of the more remarkable animals that can be identified from this curious zoological exhibition. And, as the caption makes clear, the abiding anxiety mockingly expressed by the sketch is not just that the animals have escaped from their separate cages and mingle freely together, but that they have “swapped heads” and so completely mixed-up their physical appearance. The animals, peering intently towards the keeper, resist any sort of classification that would enable the keeper to feed them, and present instead a fantasy of chaotic and gigantically crossed proportions.

Whilst the sketch alludes to the recent publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Descent of Man and Selection in relation to Sex*, it is important to recall that it appears some twelve years after *The Origin of the Species*, and a year before *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.² Because, the nightmare that it satirically invokes displays much more than the

¹ “The Keeper’s Nightmare”, *Punch’s Almanack for 1871, Punch, or The London Charivari*, 60 (1871): p.ii.

² Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859); *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1871); *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1872). Throughout this chapter I shall be referring to the following editions: *The Origin of the Species*, ed. John Burrow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968); *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to*

malevolent fear and uncertainty which was generated, in part, by Darwin's theory of development, and by the precarious structure of Victorian scientific institutions.³ Given the impression the publication of *The Origin* and *The Descent* made on the Victorian reading public,⁴ it is not surprising that representations of evolution in cartoons and poems became a regular feature of the *Punch* satirists.⁵ Gillian Beer draws attention to the political implications of one of these cartoons that appeared two years after *The Descent*, and shared the same title

Sex (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1965). For convenience, I will use the abbreviations *The Origin*, *The Descent*, and *The Expression* in the text and the notes.

³ For important, and more detailed, accounts of the growing divisions that emerged within and between Victorian scientific institutions even before the publication of *The Origin*, specifically in terms of the leading figures who dominated debates, see Adrian Desmond, "Robert E. Grant: The Social Predicament of a Pre-Darwinian Transmutationist", *Journal of the History of Biology*, 17 (1984): pp.189-223 and "Richard Owen's Reaction to Transmutation in the 1830s", *British Journal for the History of Science*, 18 (1985): pp.25-50 and "Artisan Resistance and Evolution in Britain, 1819-1848", *Osiris*, 3 (1987): pp.77-110; and Evelleen Richards, "A Question of Property Rights: Richard Owen's Evolutionism Reassessed", *British Journal for the History of Science*, 20 (1987): pp.129-71.

⁴ For contemporaneous details of the reception of Darwin's theories, see, most notably, Charles Darwin, *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin and Selected Letters*, ed. Francis Darwin (New York, NY: Dover Publications Inc., 1958); Thomas H. Huxley, "Darwin on *The Origin of Species*", *The Times* (26 December 1859): pp.7-8 and "Time and Life: Mr Darwin's *Origin of Species*", *Macmillan's Magazine*, I (1860): 142-48; [Anon.], "Darwin on *The Origin of Species*", *Edinburgh Review*, III (1860): pp. 487-532; George Henry Lewes, "Mr Darwin's Hypotheses. Parts I and II", *The Fortnightly Review*, 3 (1868): pp.353-73 and pp. 6121-28; [Anon.], Rev. of "Contemporary Literature: Science", *Westminster Review*, 39 (1871): pp 551-52; and [Anon.], "Art. IV.--The Origin of Language", *Westminster Review*, 46 (1874): pp.381-418. For more recent accounts, see A. Ellegard, *Darwin and the General Reader: The Reception of Darwin's Theory of Evolution in the British Periodical Press, 1859-1872* (Goteborg: Universitets Arsskrift, 1958); I. Bernard Cohen, "Three Notes on the Reception of Darwin's Ideas on Natural Selection (Henry Baker Tristram, Alfred Newton, Samuel Wilberforce)", and Peter J. Bowler, "Scientific Attitudes to Darwinism in Britain and America", both in *The Darwinian Heritage*, ed. David Kohn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp.589-607 and pp.641-81, respectively; and Robert M. Young, "Natural Theology, Victorian Periodicals, and the Fragmentation of a Common Context", *Darwin's Metaphor: Nature's Place in Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁵ See, for example, "The Origin of Species. A New Song", *Blackwood's Magazine*, 89 (1861): pp. 614-17; and "The Descent of Man. A Continuation of an Old Song", *Blackwood's Magazine*, 109 (1871): pp. 517-19; "Darwin and Pickwick", *Punch*, 60 (1871): p.145; and "Songs of Sixpence. A Darwinian Ballad", *Punch*, 60 (1871): p.234.

(Figure 21).⁶ As Beer observes, the cartoon “pictures two men in the smoke-laden atmosphere of, perhaps, a gentleman’s club”:

The man sitting on the table. . . is a condensation of an ape, a typical Victorian representation of an African, and Darwin himself, with receding forehead and overhanging eye-brows. That figure is the ‘figurative party.’ The typography claims that he is also Irish. So there he is, oppressed and lowly, but perched high—and full of ontological assurance. The top-hatted smoker, sitting below him, speaks with the effete ‘r’-less accents of the aristocracy. He is the ‘literal party’ as perhaps befits a class obsessed with the anxieties of pedigree and land-inheritance.⁷

And the conversation goes like this:

Figurative Party. “So long as I am a Man, Sorr, what does it matter to me whether me great-grandfather was an anthropoid ape or not, Sorr!”

Literal Party. “Haw! Wather disagweeable for your gwate gwandmother, wasn’t it!”⁸

What concerns me is the way in which the “condensation” of ape, African, and Darwin that Beer points out in “The Descent of Man” cartoon, and the half-and-half animals of “The Keeper’s Nightmare,” both direct the viewer towards the heads of the figures arrayed before the eyes. Despite calling attention to the physiognomic characteristics of the figures so obviously and so satirically, the cartoons deliberately discourage the viewer from deciphering the expressions of the animals and the men: the animals’ heads do not relate to their bodies, whilst the face of the ape-African-Darwin figure does not relate to his pedestal position. For the cartoons invite interpretation and, at the same time, query, and perhaps even undermine, the form that that interpretation may take in Darwin’s work.⁹

⁶ “The Descent of Man”, *Punch*, 64 (1873): p. 217. Referred to by Gillian Beer in *Forging the Missing Link: Interdisciplinary Stories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp.25-27.

⁷ Beer, *Forging the Missing Link*, pp.25-27.

⁸ “The Descent of Man”, *Punch*, p.217.

⁹ For an engaging account of Darwin’s use of language in this context, see Gillian Beer, *Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983). See also Edward Manier, *The Young Darwin and his Cultural Circle: A Study of Influences which Helped Shape the Language and*

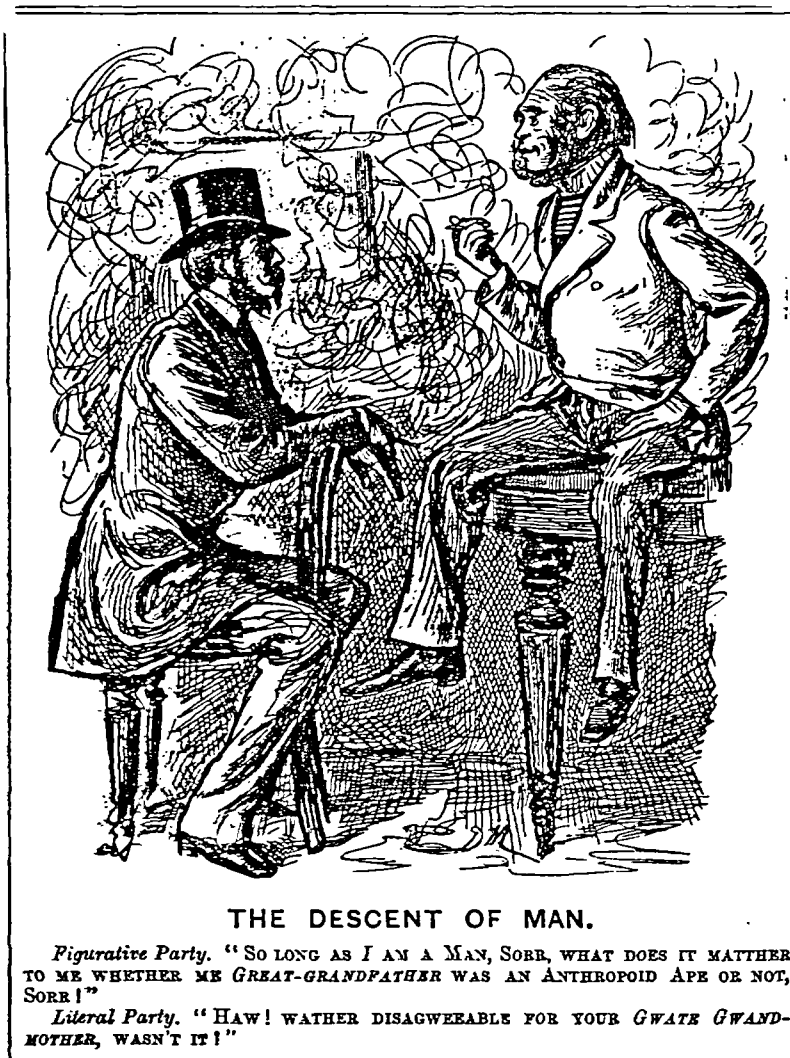


Figure 21 "The Descent of Man", engraving, *Punch; or, The London Charivari*, 64 (1873), p.217.

Logic of the Theory of Natural Selection (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1978); and Robert M. Young, *Darwin's Metaphor: Nature's Place in Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

The cartoons illuminate a situation in which the lack of any apparent contiguity between face and body, external and internal, nature and culture, collapses the notion of a physiognomic translation from outer signs to inner character and replaces the discovery of meaning with the discovery of origins. To put it in other words, the images express forms of contradiction, mixed figures, that seem to resist the method of reading internal character simply by individual bodily signs, and appear to require the viewer to concentrate, instead, on the physical relations and resemblances between the figures. The face of the body, human and animal, may still be a landscape on which the expressions of emotion, intellect, and morality are displayed--as it is in very different ways in the essays of Charles Bell, the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and the sensation fiction of Wilkie Collins'--but it will become clear that what is at stake for the theory and practice of physiognomy, caught in the Darwinian narrative of evolution, is the scientific validity of the facial sign as an index of emotion and character. It is my contention that, unlike Bell, Darwin is troubled by the idea that observation in the nineteenth century involves a version of physiognomy which may not be accessible to evolutionary scientific method.¹⁰ Darwin's theories of development exert manifold influences and pressures on the mid-to-late nineteenth century, too numerous to rehearse here,¹¹ but my

¹⁰ Given the emphasis I place on the connection between physiognomic and scientific method in Darwin's work, it may be useful to clarify the various theories on method in the nineteenth century. See *The Politics and Rhetoric of Scientific Method. Historical Studies*, eds. John A. Schuster and Richard R. Yeo (Dordrecht, HO: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1986), especially Richard Yeo, "Scientific Method and the Rhetoric of Science in Britain, 1830-1917", pp.259-97.

¹⁰ The list of critical works on Darwin and the impact of nineteenth-century biology is extensive. In addition to Beer, Manier and Young (footnote 9), the most notable studies are: Patrick Brantlinger, *Energy and Entropy: Science and Culture in Victorian Britain* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989); William Coleman, *Biology in the Nineteenth-Century: Problems of Form, Function, and Transformation* (New York, NY: John Wiley, 1972); Adrian Desmond, *Archetypes and Ancestors: Paleontology in Victorian London 1850-75* (London: Blond and Briggs, 1982); Susan Gliserman. "Early Victorian Science Writers and Tennyson's *In Memorium*: A Study in Cultural Exchange. Parts I and II", *Victorian Studies*, 18 (1975): pp. 277-308 and 437-59; John C. Greene, *The Death of Adam: Evolution and its Impact on Western Thought* (New York, NY: Mentor, 1961); H.E. Gruber and P.H. Barrett, *Darwin on Man: A Psychological Study of Scientific Creativity; together with Darwin's early and unpublished notebooks* (New York, NY: E.P. Dutton, 1974); Ian Inkster and Jack Morrell, eds., *Metropolis and Province: Science in British Culture 1780-1850* (London: Hutchison, 1983); David Kohn, ed., *The Darwinian Heritage* (Princeton, NJ:

interest lies with the challenge that evolution poses to the physiognomic method of interpretation, that is, a challenge, to the process of observation and its ways of seeing. The implicit assumption of, and impetus for, the physiognomic method of interpretation is that there is an immediate and universal strategy of reading that underlies its explanatory technique. But the evolutionary narrative, with its systems of relation, its affinitive communities, and its relentless drive to collect and describe facts,¹² calls into question the whole notion of the immediacy of facial interpretation and strives instead to construct a scientific method of interpretation that refers objectively to origins, and measures the identification of individuals against types. While Darwin purports to place his emphasis on this kind of empirical and experimental measurement and analysis, rather than observation and description, I suggest that what emerges in his scientific writings is, at once, a parallel and a tension between scientific methods of classifying and physiognomic modes of seeing, between the reflexive desire to measure and the generative (or projective) desire to look.¹³

Princeton University Press, 1985); George Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); James R. Moore, ed., *History, Humanity and Evolution. Essays for John C. Greene* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); J. Paradis and T. Postlewait, eds., *Victorian Science and Victorian Values: Literary Perspectives* (New York, NY: New York Academy of Sciences, 1981); Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Jonathan Smith, *Fact and Feeling: Baconian Science and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

¹² Reconstructing the story of his life for his autobiography, Darwin recalls his fascination with natural history and his enthusiasm for collecting:

By the time I went to this day-school my taste for natural history, and more especially for collecting, was well developed. I tried to make out the names of plants, and collected all sorts of things, shells, seals, franks, coins, and minerals. The passion for collecting which leads a man to be a systematic naturalist, a virtuoso, or a miser, was very strong in me, and was clearly innate, as none of my sisters or brother ever had this taste.

Charles Darwin, *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, and Selected Letters*, ed. Francis Darwin (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1958), p.6.

¹³ For an engaging account of Darwin's "imagistic representation of evolutionary nature," see James Krasner, "A Chaos of Delight: Perception and Illusion in Darwin's Scientific Writing", *Representations*, 31 (1990): pp.118-41. Krasner argues that "seeing evolution comes to the same thing as being constantly involved in an empirical illusion":

for as the mind flashes between the different orderings of the visual field that constitute species and subspecies, as the various different organic forms crowd, overlap, and

“The Keeper’s Nightmare,” placed as it is in the Zoological Gardens, is instructive, then, for its inversion of the customary way of viewing the animals that takes place in the Gardens because it renders man, not animals, the focus of attention.¹⁴ The cartoon presents a version of Darwin’s idea of variation under nature in a dramatic parody of the notions of adaptation, heredity, and hybridity that, according to Darwin, make up the two great laws of organic beings--“Unity of Type and the Conditions of Existence.”¹⁵ As Darwin explains in *The Origin*:

By unity of type is meant that fundamental agreement in structure, which we see in organic beings of the same class, and which is quite independent of their habits of life. On my theory, unity of type is explained by unity of descent. The expression of the conditions of existence. . . is fully embraced by the principle of natural selection. For natural selection acts by either now adapting the varying parts of each being to its organic and inorganic conditions of life; or by having adapted them during long-past periods of time: the adaptations being aided in some cases by use and disuse, being slightly affected by the direct action of the several laws of growth. Hence, in fact, the law of the Conditions of Existence is the higher law; as it includes, through the inheritance of former adaptations, that of Unity of Type.¹⁶

The image borrows the most provocative parts of Darwin’s “principle of natural selection,” namely, the link between environmental adaptation and hereditary transmission, or between

mask each other, they seem to blend together like one organic form evolving into another. Darwinian vision thus makes the process of organizing animals in species as capriciously variable as the process of our visual education by pulling apart the visual combination that make up the appearance of a species into smaller visual (and biological) units (p.139).

¹⁴ See Adrian Desmond, “The Making of Institutional Zoology in London 1822-36. Parts 1 and 2”, *History of Science*, 23 (1985): pp. 153-85 and 223-50, for a captivating account of the institutionalization of zoology in London in the early part of the nineteenth century. Desmond describes the numerous political and philosophical conflict of interests within the Zoological Society whereby gentlemen merchants, like Sir Stamford Raffles and Sir Humphrey Davy, intent upon making the Zoological Gardens a parading public space for the display of “Colonial Possessions,” were opposed by professional anatomists and medical men, like Robert E. Grant and Richard Owen, attempting to reform the scientific structure of the Society through the more private space of the Zoological Museum, though with very different ideological aims. See also Desmond’s *The Politics of Evolution*, pp.134-51, for further discussion of the Zoological Society as an arena for “the sort of democratic challenges that caused these established elites [“Oxbridge dons and wealthy London allies”] to tighten their grip on science” (p.135).

¹⁵ Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, p.233.

¹⁶ Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, p.233.

“unity of type and the conditions of existence,” and casts them in a narrative that draws the focus of the eye across a canvas of curiously constructed types of animals. In the midst of his own nightmare, the keeper, representative of man as type, but, perhaps more specifically, Darwin himself, is unable to read accurately the animals mixed-up around him: there seems to be no “unity of type,” much less a “unity of descent,” at least according to external characteristics, and hence his understanding of the function of each animal disintegrates before his eyes.

The keeper’s problem that the sketch illuminates is not so much recognising the different varieties of animals as they appear, but determining the evolution of their present form. To put it slightly differently, what is represented is not a failure to read the animals’ physical attributes, but an inability to discover the origin of those strange animal forms in order to feed them. Indeed, placed alongside “The Keeper’s Nightmare,” a lyrical ballad, from the 1861 volume of *Blackwood’s Magazine* and continued in the 1871 volume, acts as a more expansive gloss to the *Punch* satires on the question of origins and descent.¹⁷ The poem, “The Origin of Species. A New Song,” opens with the lines:

Have you heard of this question the Doctors among
Whether all living things from a Monad have sprung?
This has lately been said, and it now shall be sung,
Which nobody can deny.¹⁸

And it continues:

A deer with a neck that is longer by half
Than the rest of its family’s (try not to laugh)
By stretching and stretching, becomes a Giraffe,
Which nobody can deny. . .

An Ape with a pliable thumb and big brain,
When the gift of the gab he had managed to gain,
As a Lord of Creation established his reign,
Which nobody can deny.

¹⁷ “The Origin of Species. A New Song”, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 89 (1861): pp. 614-17; and “The Descent of Man. A Continuation of an Old Song”, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 109 (1871): pp. 517-19.

¹⁸ “The Origin of Species. A New Song”, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 89 (1861): p.614.

But I'm sadly afraid, if we do not take care,
A relapse to low life may our prospects impair;
So of beastly propensities let us beware,
Which nobody can deny.

Their lofty position our children may lose,
And, reduced to all-fours, must then narrow their views;
Which would wholly unfit them for filling our shoes,
Which nobody can deny. . .

Thus losing Humanity's nature and name,
And descending through varying stages of shame,
They'd return to the Monad, from which we all came
Which nobody can deny.¹⁹

According to the ballad, *The Origin* upsets the idea of the separate development of man and animals, and offers instead a topsy-turvy world of metamorphosis and endless change wherein all creatures appear to transform into each other. In fact, it assumes a Lamarckian model of development.²⁰ The deer becomes a giraffe; the pig an elephant; the lion a whale; and, infamously, the monkey a man. And, by looking closely at the structure of the ballad, it is clear that, far from simply glorying in this vision of transformation as chaos and catastrophe, this “new song” on *The Origin* proffers its own provocative, not to mention entertaining, critique of the theory of development.

With the derisive refrain of “which nobody can deny” echoing throughout the ballad, the irony and ridicule is compounded by a rapid shift from the idea of the expansion of living species--“stretching and stretching,” and “he managed to gain”--to their contraction--“a relapse to low life may our prospects impair;” “reduced to all-fours. . .narrow their views;” and “descending through varying stages of shame.” To affirm the link between man and animal is to acknowledge a spiralling process of transmutation and descent that exerts the greatest

¹⁹ “The Origin of Species. A New Song”, *Blackwood's Magazine*, 89 (1861): pp.616-17. The lyric is concluded with two extracts from Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) and Erasmus Darwin's earlier work, *The Temple of Nature; or, The Origin of Society, a poem, with philosophical notes* (London, 1803).

²⁰ For my own interpretation of Lamarck's theories of transformism and their impact on the natural theology advocated by Bell, see Chapter One, “The Sign in the Eye of What is Known to the Hand: Visualising Expression in Charles Bell's *Essays on Anatomy*”, pp.45-53.

pressure on the ideals of improvement and civility, and, almost inevitably, results in degeneration. Furthermore, the connection of the words “nature and name” at the conclusion of the ballad points out the apparent fragility of the balance between man and animal, and, implicitly, origins and names, and creation and selection. As the second part of the ballad, published in 1871, suggests parodically:

Thus far Darwin has said: But the root of the Tree,
Its nature, its name, and what caused it to be,
Seem a secret to him, just as much as to me--
Which nobody can deny.

Did it always exist as a great institution?
And what made it start on its first evolution?
As to this our good friend offers no contribution--
Which nobody can deny.²¹

According to this lyrical interpretation, the answer to the mystery of origins, figured in the linkage nature--name--cause, lies with that “great institution,” the “first evolution”; as the difficulty is not only how to picture continuity and descent amongst the species but also how to measure its development in a manner complicit with scientific method.

Concentrating specifically on Darwin’s work on expression, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, and his notebook writings on expression (M and N),²² but drawing also on *The Origin of Species*, and *The Descent of Man*, I examine the correlation between picturing descent and measuring development that is worked out so deftly in these texts. In particular, I argue that the rhetorical strategies Darwin employs in *The Expression* attempt to provide a means of mediating the physiognomic desire to see with the scientific

²¹ “The Descent of Man. A Continuation of an Old Song”, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 109 (1871): p.516.

²² Charles Darwin, *Charles Darwin’s Notebooks, 1836-44. Geology, Transmutation of Species, Metaphysical Enquiries*, eds. Paul H. Barrett, Peter J. Gautrey, Sandra Herbert, David Kohn, and Sydney Smith (Cambridge: British Museum (Natural History) and Cambridge University Press, 1987). It is important to note that notebook M, described by Darwin on the inside front cover as “full of Metaphysics on Morals & Speculations on Expression,” was written from around 15 July to 2 October 1838, followed immediately by Notebook N, “(Metaphysics & Expression),” from 2 October 1838 to around 20 July 1839, though the last entry was made on 28 April 1840.

desire to measure--interpretation and method--but, in so doing, it becomes clear that at issue is the legitimacy of the physiognomic means of interpreting the face. Ostensibly rejecting physiognomy in favour of expression as the subject for his study,²³ Darwin states the aims of his investigations are to achieve an “understanding [of] the cause or origin of the several expressions, and of judging whether any theoretical explanation is trustworthy.”²⁴ He explains:

Whatever amount of truth the so-called science of physiognomy may contain, appears to depend. . .on different persons bringing into frequent use different facial muscles, according to their dispositions; the development of these muscles being perhaps thus increased, and the lines or furrows on the face, due to their habitual contraction, being thus rendered deeper and more conspicuous. The free expression by outward signs of an emotion intensifies it. On the other hand, the repression, as far as this is possible, of all outward signs of an emotion softens our emotions.²⁵

But as Darwin earlier makes clear this may be easier than it sounds:

The community of certain expressions in distinct though allied species. . .is rendered somewhat more intelligible, if we believe in their descent from a common progenitor. He who admits on general grounds that the structure and habits of all animals have been gradually evolved, will look at the whole subject of Expression in a new and interesting light.²⁶

And acknowledging the difficulties of the distinguishing between the existing ways of observing and measuring expression, he goes on:

Besides, judging as well as we can by our reason, without the aid of any rules, which of two or more explanations is the most satisfactory, or are quite unsatisfactory, I see only one way of testing our conclusions. This is to observe whether the same principle by which one expression can, as it appears, be explained, is applicable in other allied cases; and especially, whether the same general principles can be applied with satisfactory results, both to man and the lower animals. . .The difficulty of judging of the truth of any theoretical explanation, and of testing it by some distinct line of

²³ In contrast, the opening sentences of *The Expression* read: “Many works have been written on Expression, but a greater number on Physiognomy,—that is, on the recognition of character through the study of the permanent form of the features. With this latter subject I am not concerned”(p.1).

²⁴ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.18.

²⁵ Darwin, *The Expression*, pp.364-65.

²⁶ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.12.

investigation, is the great drawback to that interest which the study seems well fitted to excite.²⁷

Rather than threatening to prevent Darwin's contribution to the study of expression, the "difficulty of judging of the truth of any theoretical explanation" existed because, as Darwin readily admits, the facility for interpreting the expressions of the face shared with the facility for vision a natural and innate status. The "phsiognominal [*sic*] sensation," Darwin points out, borrowing from Lavater, is as inherent a faculty in man and animals as the faculty of vision.²⁸ And as if to affirm this, Darwin inserts two diagrams from Henle (Figure 22), alongside Bell's diagram of facial muscles (see Figure 8) which make visible the muscular structure of the face and, specifically, the eye.

²⁷ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.18.

²⁸ Darwin, *Notebooks, 1836-44*, Notebook M, p.556. Darwin writes in full:
 Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* translated by Holcroft. Vol I. p.86. "We ought never to forget---; that every man is born with a portion of phsiognominal [*sic*] sensation, as certainly as every man who is not deformed. is born with two eyes. ." I think this cannot be disputed anymore in men. than in animals.--
 Some months later, Darwin recalls with interest that his sister, Marianne, "says she has constantly observed that very young children. express the greatest surprise at emotions in her countenance--before they have learnt by experience, that movements of face are more expressive than movements of fingers", Notebook N, p.573.

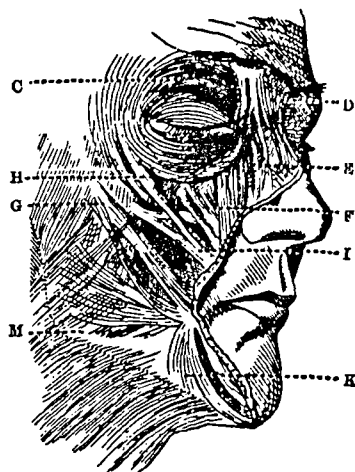


FIG. 2.—Diagram from Henle.

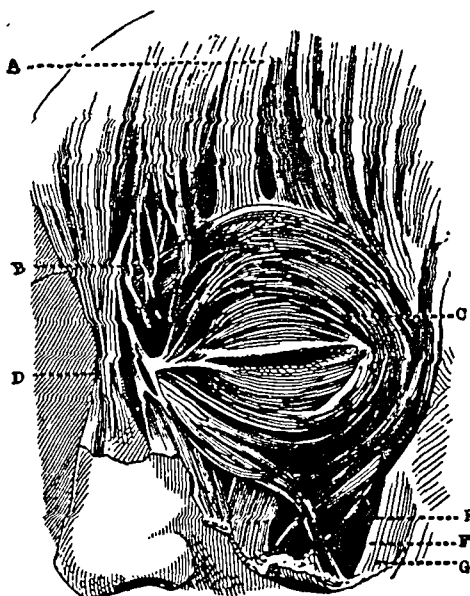


FIG. 3.—Diagram from Henle.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>A. Occipito-frontalis, or frontal muscle.</p> <p>B. Corrugator supercillii, or corrugator muscle.</p> <p>C. Orbicularis palpebrarum, or orbicular muscles of the eyes.</p> <p>D. Pyramidalis nasi, or pyramidal muscle of the nose.</p> <p>E. Levator labii superioris alaeque nasi.</p> | <p>F. Levator labii proprius.</p> <p>G. Zygomatic.</p> <p>H. Malaris.</p> <p>I. Little zygomatic.</p> <p>K. Triangularis oris, or depressor anguli oris.</p> <p>L. Quadratus menti.</p> <p>M. Risorius, part of the Platysma myoides.</p> |
|---|---|

Figure 22

Henle, *Diagram of the Muscles of the Face*, engraving; rpt. in Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, (1872), (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p.24.

The eye is doubly important to Darwin as means of displacing Paley's notion of natural theology and asserting the efficacy of his scientific method. In his recent book, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Jonathan Crary discusses the status of the observer and of representation in the first half of the nineteenth century.²⁹ Crary's claim that "very generally, what happens to the observer in the nineteenth century is a process of modernization; he or she is made adequate to a constellation of new events, forces, and institutions that together are loosely and perhaps tautologically definable as 'modernity',"³⁰ is a useful reminder of the developing technicality of optical devices, such as the phenakistiscope and the stereoscope, for example, in the visual experience of the century.³¹ The Foucauldian influence is unmistakable here, as Crary himself acknowledges, but it is, nevertheless, significant that the emphasis that Crary places on, what I have loosely termed ways of seeing, draws attention to the impact of the increasing technicality of these forms of visual knowledge, particularly in the 1820s and 1830s, on optical and statistical modes of observing the phenomenal world. Furthermore, Crary goes on to assert that "crucial to the development of these new disciplinary techniques of the subject was the fixing of quantitative and statistical *norms* of behaviour."³² The emergence of statistical measurement as a primary

²⁹ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992). Crary explains: "my concern is how the individual as observer became an object of investigation and a locus of knowledge beginning in the first few decades of the 1800s, and how the status of the observing subject was transformed" (p.16).

³⁰ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p.9.

³¹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p.7.

³² Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p.15. Crary suggests that the shift from what he calls "geometrical optics" to "physiological optics," that occurred between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the nineteenth century respectively, required a new understanding of the capacity of the human eye in order to quantify sensation and perception against a 'normative' scale. He explains:

One result of the new physiological optics was to expose the idiosyncracies of the 'normal' eye. Retinal after images, peripheral vision, binocular vision, and thresholds of attention all were studied in terms of determining quantifiable norms and parameters. The widespread preoccupation with the defects of human vision defined ever more

form of observation and classification should not be underestimated and, in fact, writing in a letter to George Robert Waterhouse on 26 July 1843, Darwin proclaims enthusiastically:

According to my opinion, classification consists in grouping beings according to their actual *relationship*, ie their consanguinity, or descent from common stocks--In this view all relations of analogy &c &c &c, consist of those resemblances between two forms, which they do not owe to having inherited it, from a common stock.--To me, of course, the difficulty of ascertaining true relationship ie a natural classification remain just the same, though I know what I am looking for.--This being the case viz ignorance of a distinct object I think, we ought to look at classification as a simple logical process, i.e. a means of conveying much information through single words.³³

According to Darwin, the procedure for classification appears “a simple logical process”; and yet the logic of this passage is far from straightforward. The distinction Darwin seems to make concerns the relation between “consanguinity” and “distinct objects”, or resemblance and difference, for he claims that classification is based on “grouping beings according to their actual *relationships*.” However, this method of “grouping” implies the rather different problem of how to secure an unmediated correspondence between knowledge and perception. For at stake is the means of translating Darwin’s assertion, “I know what I am looking for”, into a scientifically proven technique of judgement able to discern the collapse of “distinct” forms into “descent.” Indeed, in an earlier notebook entry Darwin searches for a means of rationalising this evaluative method of tracing origins according to the physiological function of the eye:

precisely an outline of the normal, and generated new technologies for imposing a normative vision on the observer (p.16).

³³ Charles Darwin, *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, eds. Frederick Burkhardt and Sydney Smith, 9 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985-92), 4, p.138. It is interesting to compare Darwin’s examination of the methodology of classification with Prince Albert’s advocacy of a systematic mode of scientific investigation in his 1859 presidential address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Prince Albert proclaims:

We require, then, for Science--that is to say for the acquisition of scientific knowledge--those two activities of our mind which are necessary for the acquisition of *any* knowledge--analysis and synthesis; the first, to dissect and reduce into its component parts the object to be investigated, and to render an accurate account to ourselves of the nature and qualities of these parts by observation; the second, to recompose the observed and understood parts into a unity in our consciousness, exactly answering to the object of our investigation.

George Basalla, William Coleman and Robert H. Kargon, eds., *Victorian Science: A Self-Portrait from the Presidential Addresses to the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1970), p.50. For an informative study of the BAAS, see Jack Morrell and Arnold Thackray, *Gentlemen of Science: Early Years of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

In my speculation. Must not go back to first stock of all animals, but merely to classes where types exist for if so. [sic] it will be necessary to show how the first eye is formed.--how one nerve becomes sensitive to light.--(Mem whole plant may be considered as one large eye--have they smell, do plants emit odour solely for others parts of creation) & another nerve to finest vibration of sound.--which is impossible.--³⁴

The seeming impossibility of demonstrating the formation of the first eye, and with it the sensitivity of nerves to light and sound, in the “first stock of all animals” is literally made manifest in this embodiment of Darwin’s thought, for through the parenthetical metaphor of plant as eye, Darwin breaks up the logic of his thought and, at the same time, implicitly suggests that the weakness of his theory of development lies, at this stage, with an inability to account for the physiology of vision.³⁵

In a crucial passage from *The Origin*, Darwin affirms his particular understanding of the eye as a physiological mechanism and optical instrument which must be conceived through the logic of natural selection rather than the imaginative myth of creation. Darwin reasons:

It is scarcely possible to avoid comparing the eye to a telescope. We know that this instrument has been perfected by the long-continued efforts of the highest human intellects; and we naturally infer that the eye has been formed by a somewhat analogous process. But may we not assume this inference by presumptuous? [sic] Have we any right to assume that the Creator works by intellectual powers like those of man? If we must compare the eye to an optical instrument, we ought in imagination to take a thick layer of transparent tissue, with a nerve sensitive to light beneath, and then suppose

³⁴ Darwin, *Notebooks, 1836-44*, Notebook D, p.337.

³⁵ Given the connection I am trying to demonstrate between observation and measurement in Darwin’s study of expression, I shall use the phrase ‘physiology of vision’ or alternatively ‘physiology of expression,’ to refer to the specific linkage between physiology, psychology, and nature that is necessarily involved in the physiognomic and scientific ways of seeing that I believe are so important in Darwin’s study of expression. It is, however, helpful to indicate the significance of physiology as a system of organisation which was explicitly related to modes of observation and forms of mental knowledge, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is well-documented by historians of science. See in particular L.S.Jacyna, “The Physiology of Mind, the Unity of Nature, and the Moral Order in Victorian Thought”, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 14 (1981): pp.109-32; Roger Smith, “The Background of Physiological Psychology in Natural Philosophy”, *History of Science*, 11 (1973): 75-123; Robert M. Young, “The Role of Psychology in the Nineteenth-Century Evolutionary Debate”, *Historical Conceptions of Psychology*, eds. M. Henle, J. Jaynes, and J.J. Sullivan (New York, NY: Springer Publishing, 1973), pp.180-204. Also, L.S. Jacyna, “Immanence or Transcendence: Theories of Life and Organization in Britain, 1790-1835”, *Isis*, 74 (1983): pp.311-29 and “The Romantic Programme and the Reception of Cell Theory in Britain”, *Journal of the History of Biology*, 17 (1984): pp.13-48.

every part of this layer to be continually changing slowly in density, so as to separate into layers of different densities and thicknesses, placed at different distances from each other, and with the surfaces of each layer slowly changing in form. . . If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down. But I can find no such case.³⁶

The impossibility of demonstrating the formation of the eye lies with its nervous sensitivity to light and sound. But, as Crary explains, the “separation of the senses,” of touch from sight, in the nineteenth century, projects one way of reformulating the figure of the observer in the field of vision. He writes in full:

The loss of touch as a conceptual component of vision meant the unloosening of the eye from the network of referentiality incarnated in tactility, and its subjective relation to perceived space. This autonomization of sight, occurring in many different domains, was a historical condition for the rebuilding of an observer fitted for the tasks of “spectacular” consumption. Not only did the empirical isolation of vision allow its quantification and homogenization but it also enabled the new objects of vision (whether commodities, photographs, or the act of perception itself) to assume a mystified and abstract identity, sundered from any relation to the observer’s position within a cognitively unified field.³⁷

Indeed, with this “empirical isolation of vision” in mind, and a sense of the problematic nature of the function of the eye in nineteenth-century scientific culture, one notable aspect of Darwin’s study of expression is the emphasis he places on photographs, more than 200 in fact, in order to portray the particular expression he requires. Borrowing images from Rejlander, Kinderman, and Duchenne, among others, Darwin arranges the photographs in sequences to record the various stages of muscular contraction necessary to a physiological explanation of expression, and to underline the connection between word and image which refines the form of judgement integral to the analysis of expression.

To be quite clear, I argue that the importance of *The Expression* lies less with the account it gives of behavioural and social instincts in man and animals, than with the strategies it employs to foreground scientific forms of visual knowledge in the text: measurement and analysis are privileged over observation and description in this study of expression. And yet,

³⁶ Darwin, *The Origin*, p.219.

³⁷ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p.19.

whilst Darwin seeks to make measurement and observation discrete fields of scientific analysis and description (pertaining to genealogy and physiology respectively), what actually happens in the text is that the scientific and physiognomic methods of interpretation merge and indicate implicitly that to observe and conceptualise expression demands an understanding of the visible order of things as almost impossibly invisible and frequently metaphoric. There is, Darwin proclaims, a “hidden bond of connexion which naturalists have been seeking under the term of the natural system,”³⁸ upon which any scientific method of observation depends because it is only by attending to the physiological structure and mechanism which underlies the phenomenal world that it is possible to translate the impressions of the senses into genealogies of descent:

When we no longer look at an organic being as a savage looks at a ship, as at something wholly beyond his comprehension; when we regard every production of nature as one which has had a history; when we contemplate every complex structure and instinct as the summing up of many contrivances, each useful to the possessor. . .when we thus view each organic being, how far more interesting, I speak from experience, will the study of natural history become!³⁹

Borrowing Darwin’s terms, the formula goes from comprehension to history to contrivance to utility, and indicates that Darwin seeks to use his notion of a genealogical form of measurement to offset the idea that the language used to explain this construction of the natural history of observation can only ever be metaphorical.

Starting with *The Expression*, I will consider how the exposition of the language of emotions depends upon a number of key principles, namely, the coherency of expression; the analogue between man and animals; the mental value of expression; the mimicry of expression by experience; and the expressibility of all feeling. And I will discuss the ways in which the

³⁸ Darwin, *The Origin*, p.427. Defining his use of the term genealogy as a means of measuring development, Darwin says:

As all the organic beings, extinct and recent, which have ever lived on this earth have to be classed together, and as all have been connected by the finest gradations, the best, or indeed, if our collections were nearly perfect, the only possible arrangement, would be *genealogical*. Descent being on my view the hidden bond of connexion which naturalists have been seeking under the term of the natural system [my italics].

³⁸ Darwin, *The Origin*, p.456.

fascinating negotiation of Charles Bell's work that Darwin undertakes in *The Expression* serves, at once, to affirm and to question his own theory of genealogical development. In casting Darwin's study of expression as the working out of the relation between the scientific desire to measure and the physiognomic desire to look, I am intrigued by the intersection of utility and sensation in Darwin's process of observation, vibrantly played out during the voyage of the *Beagle*, and its relation to the Baconian method of induction that played an important part in the formulation of nineteenth-century scientific theories. Furthermore, I refer to the work of a mid-century anatomist, Robert Knox and to the theories of Petrus Camper on racial difference in order to discuss one extremely deterministic version of this model of expression.

By focussing on a specific, and highly contentious, type of expression, namely, the act of blushing, it is my contention that far from stabilising ways of seeing by recourse to the man-animal analogue, *The Expression* calls into question the methodology of the evolutionary narrative as an explanation of origins. Darwin claimed, among others, that theories of resemblance and hereditary transmission provided a potent formulation of the community of descent between man and animals. In fact, Thomas Burgess is one of the lesser-known proponents of the role of blushing in visualising the mechanism of descent, and, even though referred to extensively by Darwin in *The Expression*, it is essential to regard his work as an attempt to inflect the study of expression with a natural theological, rather than a physiological, explanation. Then, in the light of the attention I place on the complexities of expression, observation, and interpretation, I suggest, by way of conclusion, that Francis Galton's notions of "generic images" and "pictorial statistics" act as a parallel to and a complication of Darwin's physiology of expression because they produce a composite method of portraiture which combines the desire to see and the desire to measure in self-conscious fashion. I contend that Galton's impulse to quantify the physiognomic method of interpretation, statistically and photographically, in order to identify a generalized type of human face provides a provocative, but ultimately unsatisfactory, addendum to Darwin's analysis of expression.

II

Darwin's study of expression and behaviour began, he says, in 1838, and gained momentum at a time when, already convinced of the principle of evolution, he read Charles Bell's *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression, as connected with the Fine Arts*⁴⁰ and realised that "each expression demanded a rational explanation."⁴¹ The series of speculations on metaphysics and morals that became *The Expression* were originally intended to form a part of *The Descent*, and, as Janet Browne suggests, *The Expression* can be seen to function, in part, as a reply to the criticisms that Darwin anticipated he would receive from the publication of *The Descent*.⁴² Darwin based the foundations of his studies on the observation of his own children,--particularly his eldest child William Erasmus, from his birth-day, 27 December

⁴⁰ It is important to note that Darwin states quite firmly that he is referring to the third edition of Bell's work, published in 1844, for the first edition of 1806 "is much inferior in merit, and does not include some of his more important views" (p.2). For an account of Bell's work, see Chapter One, "The Sign in the Eye of What is Known to the Hand: Visualising Expression in Charles Bell's *Essays on Anatomy*", pp.33-81.

⁴¹ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.19. He explains in full:

It seemed probable that the habit of expressing our feelings by certain movements, though now rendered innate, had been in some manner gradually acquired. But to discover how such habits had been acquired was perplexing in no small degree. The whole subject had to be viewed under a new aspect, and each expression demanded a rational explanation. This belief led me to attempt the present work, however imperfectly it may have been executed (p.19).

⁴² Janet Browne, "Darwin and the Expression of the Emotions", *The Darwinian Heritage*, ed. David Kohn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), p.309. Although there is not an extensive literature on Darwin's intentions in this area, see also S. A. Barnett, "The Expression of the Emotions", *A Century of Darwin*, ed. S.A. Barnett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp.206-235; Janet Browne, "Darwin and the Face of Madness", *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, eds. William F. Bynum and Roy Porter (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985), pp.151-65; Paul Ekman, ed., *Darwin and Facial Expression. A Century of Research in Review* (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1973); Robert B. Freeman and Paul J. Gautrey, "Darwin's *Questions about the breeding of animals*, with a note on *Queries about expression*", *Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History*, 5 (1969): pp.220-25 and "Charles Darwin's *Queries about expression*", *Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History)*, 4 (1972): pp.207-19; Howard E. Gruber and Paul H. Barrett, *Darwin on Man. A Psychological Study of Scientific Creativity* (New York, NY: E. P. Dutton, 1974); and R. J. Richards, "The Influence of Sensationalist Tradition on Early Theories of the Evolution of Behaviour", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 40 (1979): pp.85-105.

1839, to September 1844—recording the stages of infant development, instinctive and acquired, with dispassionate objectivity and unrelenting zeal.⁴³ Curiously devoid of any emotiveness, and clearly obsessed with recording the physiological elements of expression, Darwin's first entry reads in full:

I W. Erasmus. Darwin born. Dec. 27th. 1839.--During first week. yawned, stretched [*sic*] himself just like old person--chiefly upper extremities--hiccupped--sneezes sucked, Surface of warm hand placed to face, seemed immediately to give wish of sucking, either instinctive or associated knowledge of warm smooth surface of bosom.--cried & squalled, but no tears--touching sole of foot with spill of paper, (when exactly one week old), it jerked it away very suddenly & curled its toes like person tickled, evident subject to tickling--I think also body under arms.--more sensitive than other parts of surface--What can be origin of movement from tickling; neck, & armpit between the toes are places seldom touched but are easily tickled--the whole surface of the sole of foot is touched [*sic*] constantly.--so is the resting place of body but the latter is by no means sensitive to tickling--nor are ends of fingers, or surface of limbs--but back bone is.--[author's emphasis]⁴⁴

The attraction of observing infants is, says Darwin, because, like people of old age, “younger children. . . look at people with a degree of fixedness which always strikes me as odd.” And he continues: “it is very like the manner older people only look at inanimate objects—I believe it is, because there is no trace of consciousness in very young children--they do not think, whether

⁴³ As Darwin explains in his autobiography:

My first child was born on December 27th, 1839, and I at once commenced to make notes on the first dawn of the various expressions which he exhibited, for I felt convinced, even at this early period, that the most complex and fine shades of expression must all have had a gradual and natural origin. During the summer of the following year, 1840, I read Sir C. Bell's admirable work on expression, and this greatly increased the interest which I felt in the subject, though I could not at all agree with his belief that various muscles had been specially created for the sake of expression. From this time forward I occasionally attended to the subject, both with respect to man and our domesticated animals. My book sold largely; 5267 copies having been disposed of on the day of publication.

Autobiography of Charles Darwin, p.50.

⁴⁴ Darwin, “Appendix III. Darwin's Observations on his Children”, *The Correspondence*, 4 (1847-50), p.411. Compare this entry to an amusing one some six months later for evidence of Darwin's experimental attitude toward his son:

During last week, when cold water put in mouth & more especially some rhubarb, he made expression of disgust very plainly, accompanied (& made very comical,) by look of surprise & consideration in his eyes, not knowing what to make of it.--The expression is accompanied by form of mouth--allowing what is in the mouth to run out (p.417).

the person, they are looking at, is thinking of them.”⁴⁵ So, the desire to look in the young and the old seems to be arbitrary and unmotivated; it is unconscious and unconstrued, without reference to the eye of vision or the “I” of self. It is not surprising, therefore, that Darwin uses infancy and old age, together with insanity, works of art, race, and animals, to ‘service’⁴⁶ his theories of expression, and, at the same time, to distinguish his work from that of Charles Bell.

According to Darwin, Bell “may with justice be said, not only to have laid the foundations of the subject as a branch of science, but also to have built up a noble structure.”⁴⁷ He goes on:

It is generally admitted that his [Bell’s] service consists chiefly in having shown the intimate relation which exists between the movements of expression and those of respiration. One of the most important points, small as it may at first appear, is that the muscles round the eyes are involuntarily contracted during violent expiratory efforts, in order to protect these delicate organs from the pressure of the blood.⁴⁸

But Darwin’s main objection to Bell’s theory is his insistence that there are muscles in the human face that do not exist in the animal face, and, Darwin claims, that whilst there are several writers, in addition to Bell, whose works “deserve the fullest consideration,”--Moreau, LeBrun, Burgess, Duchenne, Gratiolet, and Piderit, together with Bain and Spencer, for instance--the weakness of almost all these writers is their shared belief in the immutability of the species. “All the authors who have written on Expression,” Darwin says, “with the exception of Mr Spencer--the great expounder of the principle of Evolution--appear to have been firmly convinced that species, man of course included, came into existence in their present

⁴⁵ Darwin, “Appendix III. Darwin’s Observations on his Children”, *The Correspondence*, 4, (1847-50), p.421.

⁴⁶ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.13. The sentence is, in full: “In order to acquire as good a foundation as possible, and to ascertain, independently of common opinion, how far particular movements of the features and gestures are really expressive of certain states of the mind, I have found the following means the most serviceable.”

⁴⁷ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.2.

⁴⁸ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.2.

condition.”⁴⁹ Darwin’s response to such resolute doctrinal belief is clear. “No doubt as long as man and all other animals are viewed as independent creations,” he proclaims, “an effectual stop is put to our natural desire to investigate as far as possible the causes of Expression. . . [For] he who admits on general grounds that the structure and habits of all animals has been gradually evolved, will look at the whole subject of Expression in a new and interesting light.”⁵⁰ And, acknowledging the difficulties of analysing expression, Darwin draws attention to the aspects of his project that are the hardest to determine. He writes:

The study of expression is difficult, owing to the movements being often extremely slight, and of a fleeting nature. A difference may be clearly perceived, and yet it may be impossible, at least I have found it so, to state in what the difference consists. When we witness any deep emotion, our sympathy is so strongly excited, that close observation is forgotten or rendered almost impossible; of which fact I have had many curious proofs. Our imagination is another and still more serious source of error; for if from the nature of the circumstances we expect to see any expression, we readily imagine its presence.⁵¹

In other words, the problem is, first, how to discern difference, and, second, how to prevent the actions of sympathy and imagination from interfering with the study of expression. Only by attending to the “particular movements of the features” and “certain states of the mind” is it possible to begin to examine the correspondence between expression and emotion.⁵² To be sure, the challenge that Darwin confronts is how to convert the physiognomic recognition of the face into a physiological interpretation of expression that seeks to guard against inaccuracy

⁴⁹ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.10.

⁵⁰ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.12.

⁵¹ Darwin, *The Expression*, pp.12-13. Darwin later reiterates the problems associated in studying expression. He writes:

From the reasons above assigned, namely, the fleeting nature of some expressions. . . our sympathy being easily aroused when we behold any strong emotion, and our attention thus distracted; our imagination deceiving us, from knowing in a vague manner what to expect, though certainly few of us know what the exact changes in the countenance are; and lastly, even our long familiarity with the subject,--from all these causes combined, the observation of Expression is by no means easy, as many persons, whom I asked to observe certain points, have soon discovered (pp.18-19).

⁵² Darwin, *The Expression*, pp.12-13.

by making the process of observation accord to three central principles.

Habit, antithesis, and nervous action constitute these main principles of expression, which, Darwin claims, “appear to. . .account for most of the expressions and gestures involuntarily used by man and the lower animals, under the influence of various emotions and sensations.”⁵³ There is, however, a problem here, that is also revealed in the very language that Darwin chooses to explain the complexities of studying expression. The word “sympathy,” juxtaposed between statement and imagination, discloses the tension at the centre of Darwin’s project on expression, and points towards a conflict of the literal and the figurative linguistic levels that permeate this, and his evolutionary, narrative.⁵⁴ Derived from the Latin ‘sympathia,’ meaning ‘having a fellow feeling,’ and the Greek root meaning ‘suffering; feeling,’ sympathy connotes not only an affinity causing corresponding affections, and the transmission of sensations through the bodily organs, but also, less obviously, the reciprocal rise and fall of commodity prices in the economic market. Quite apart from the function the expression of sympathy played in the realist tradition of the mid nineteenth century, it is important to note the conceptual reformulation it acquired following the publication of John Ruskin’s *Modern Painters*, around the same time, as the pathetic fallacy.⁵⁵ As Darwin confesses, it is sympathy that obscures the act of observation and clouds the judgement of the eye, because “the feeling of sympathy is commonly explained by assuming that, the idea of suffering is called up so vividly in our minds that we ourselves suffer.” But, Darwin adds, this “does not account for the intimate alliance between sympathy and affection;” an alliance, Darwin goes on to point out—in a passage that reiterates a section of *The Descent* on the “moral

⁵³ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.27.

⁵⁴ See Beer, Manier, and Young (footnote 9) for detailed accounts of Darwin’s use of language.

⁵⁵ See John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 5 vols. (London: George Allen, 1904), III, pp.161-77.

sense”--that is evident in both human and animal behaviour.⁵⁶

What is so fascinating about this particular aspect of *The Expression* is the way in which it affirms and, at once, undermines Darwin’s construction of a man-animal analogue in *The Descent*. Sympathy, “one of the most important elements of the social instincts,” is an instinct, augmented “by exercise or habit,”⁵⁷ and common to man and animals, which is one of the key constituents of the moral sense, and, as such, an important manifestation of the theory of development. In a long passage from *The Descent*, worth quoting in full for the exposition it gives of the double function of sympathy as an index of the contradiction inherent in the man-animal analogue, and as a term that mediates observation and measurement, Darwin announces:

The moral nature of man has reached the highest standard as yet attained, partly through the advancement of the reasoning powers and consequently of a just public opinion, but especially through the sympathies being rendered more tender and widely diffused through the effects of habit, example, instruction, and reflection. It is not improbable that virtuous tendencies may through long practice be inherited. With the more civilised races, the conviction of the existence of an all-seeing Deity has had a potent influence on the advancement of morality. Ultimately man no longer accepts the praise or blame of his fellows as his chief guide, though few escape this influence, but his habitual convictions controlled by reason afford him the safest rule. His conscience then becomes his supreme judge and monitor. Nevertheless the first foundation or origin of the moral sense lies in the social instincts, including sympathy; and these instincts no doubt were primarily gained, as in the case of the lower animals, through natural selection.⁵⁸

To paraphrase this passage would be to say that the faculty of reason plus the sympathies of habit, example, instruction and reflection (that is, the social instincts) are equal to the moral nature, and, more significantly, are not exclusive to human character. Or, to rephrase it once

⁵⁶ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.216. The passage from *The Descent* reads:

The all-important emotion of sympathy is distinct from that of love. . . But I cannot see how this view explains the fact that sympathy is excited in an immeasurably stronger degree by a beloved than by an indifferent person. The mere sight of suffering, independently of love, would suffice to call up in us vivid recollections and associations. Sympathy may at first have originated in the manner above suggested; but it seems now to have become an instinct, which is especially directed towards beloved objects, in the same manner as fear with animals is especially directed against certain enemies (pp.81-82).

⁵⁷ Darwin, *The Descent*, p.393.

⁵⁸ Darwin, *The Descent*, p.394.

more would be to say that morality, that most distinctive of human characteristics, is found in animals as well as man, because it is, after all, only habit and intellect superimposed upon the social instinct that both man and animals share. What Darwin omits to explain, though, is how exactly the physiological part of this process is measured: how to account for a projective mode of observation which may not be accessible to the scientific method of classifying nature .

In an attempt to widen his observations on his own children, and to provide some sort of guarantee of their empirical validity, Darwin circulated a questionnaire in 1867 to a number of different observers, “several of them missionaries or protectors of the aborigines,” with a request that they respond with empirical evidence rather than just memory.⁵⁹ Putting questions of racial typology aside, Darwin notes that he received thirty-six answers to questions that are instructive for the details they demand of the movement of the features of the face. Whilst the emphasis is placed firmly on the specific value that a combination of description and statement can attribute to facial expression, the questions are detailed as such:

- (1) Is astonishment expressed by the eyes and mouth being opened wide, and by the eyebrows being raised?
- (2) Does shame excite a blush when the colour of the skin allows it to be visible? and especially how low down the body does the blush extend?
- (3) When a man is indignant or defiant does he frown, hold his body and head erect, square his shoulders and clench his fists?
- (4) When considering deeply on any subject, or trying to understand any puzzle, does he frown, or wrinkle the skin beneath the lower eyelids?
- (5) When in low spirits, are the corners of the mouth depressed, and the inner corner of the eyebrows raised by that muscle which the French call the “Grief muscle”? The eyebrow in this state becomes slightly oblique, with a little swelling at the inner end; and the forehead is transversely wrinkled in the middle part, but not across the whole breadth, as when the eyebrows are raised in surprise.
- (6) When in good spirits do the eyes sparkle, with the skin a little wrinkled round and under them, and with the mouth a little drawn back at the corners?
- (7) When a man sneers or snarls at another, is the corner of the upper lip over the canine or eye tooth raised on the side facing the man whom he addresses?
- (8) Can a dogged or obstinate expression be recognised, which is chiefly shown by the mouth being firmly closed, a lowering brow and a slight frown?
- (9) Is contempt expressed by a slight protrusion of the lips and by turning up the nose, and with a slight expiration?
- (10) Is disgust shown by the lower lip being turned down, the upper lip slightly raised, with a sudden expiration, something like incipient vomiting, or like something spit out of the mouth?
- (11) Is extreme fear expressed in the same general manner as with Europeans?
- (12) Is laughter ever carried to such an extreme as to bring tears into the eyes?

⁵⁹ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.16.

- (13) When a man wishes to show that he cannot prevent something being done, or cannot himself do something, does he shrug his shoulders, turn inwards his elbows, extend outwards his hands and open the palms; with the eyebrows raised?
 (14) Do the children when sulky, pout or greatly protrude the lips?
 (15) Can guilty, or sly, or jealous expressions be recognised? though I know not how these can be defined.
 (16) Is the head nodded vertically in affirmation, and shaken laterally in negation?⁶⁰

The list provides the basic structure, and forms the logic, for *The Expression*, because it enables Darwin not only to discover, but also to prove, a number of factors essential to the interpretation of facial expression; that is, the coherency of expression; the mental value of expression; the degree of mimicry between expression and experience; and the expressibility of feeling. At stake is the truth of expression, its innate or instinctive character; for, Darwin points out, the ideal procedure for its measurement is “a definite description of the countenance under any emotion or frame of mind, with a statement of the circumstances under which it occurred, [which] would possess much value.”⁶¹

As I mentioned earlier, Janet Browne claims that in *The Expression*, Darwin is more concerned to answer his critics by using the development of expression to affirm the man-animal analogue, than to analyse the process of observation. “The aim of *The Expression*,” Browne asserts, “was, after all, to concentrate on the evolution of expressions themselves, not the psychology of their identification; on the physical attributes, rather than mental perception

⁶⁰ Darwin, *The Expression*, pp.15-16.

⁶¹ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.16. On the question of value in expression, Darwin notes that on showing several of the photographs to “above twenty educated persons of various ages and both sexes” it was by no means assured that their answers to the question of the type of expression displayed were either accurate or convergent: “Several of the expressions were instantly recognised by almost everyone. . .on the other hand, the most widely different judgements were pronounced in regard to some of them.” “This exhibition,” Darwin concludes:

was of use. . .by convincing me how easily we may be misguided by our imagination; for when I first looked through Dr. Duchenne’s photographs, reading at the same time the text, and thus learning what was intended, I was struck with admiration at the truthfulness of all, with only a few exceptions. Nevertheless, if I had examined them without any explanation, no doubt I should have been as much perplexed, in some cases, as other persons have been (p.14).

and conventions.”⁶² And, she concludes, “Darwin was more interested in the way man’s body actually worked, than in the theory of perception: real phenomena were more useful in the fight to establish continuity between human and other species.”⁶³ One of the most anxious questions Browne’s essay raises, somewhat indirectly, is how to account for the role of physiological function as an essential coefficient of both mechanism and vision; a linkage between the operation of internal organs and external senses, and, perhaps even the impetus for the prominence given to the place of photographic images in the text. The importance of *The Expression*, I repeat, is that it has as its aim the merging of a scientific procedure with a physiognomic method of interpretation. Nonetheless, in a similar fashion to Browne, I think that whilst Darwin was ostensibly concerned to use *The Expression* in order to answer critics of *The Descent*, and to affirm the common descent of man and animals, the implicit agenda of *The Expression*--displayed so clearly in his notebooks M and N and his observations on his children--rests upon the transformation of a series of facial signs into a system of physiological expression.

I want to pause very briefly here to consider closely the description--verbal and visual--of a type of expression, grief, which vividly illustrates one of the chief principles of expression--namely, nervous action--as well as revealing some of the complexities of Darwin’s theory of the physiology of expression (Figure 23). “After the mind has suffered from an acute paroxysm of grief,” proclaims Darwin, “and the cause still continues, we fall into a state of low spirits; or we may be utterly cast down and dejected.”⁶⁴ “Prolonged bodily pain,” Darwin divulges, “if not amounting to an agony, generally leads to the same state of mind.” And he continues, in expansive fashion, to detail the physiology of grief:

⁶² Browne, “Darwin and the Expression of the Emotions”, p.317.

⁶³ Browne, “Darwin and the Expression of the Emotions”, p.317.

⁶⁴ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.176.



Figure 23 Rejlander, *Grief*, photograph; rpt. in Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, (1872), (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p.178.

If we expect to suffer, we are anxious; if we have no hope of relief, we despair. Persons suffering from excessive grief often seek relief by violent and almost frantic movements. . .but when their suffering is somewhat mitigated, yet prolonged, they no longer wish for action, but remain motionless and passive, or may occasionally rock themselves to and fro. The circulation becomes languid; the face pale; the muscles flaccid; the eyelids droop; the head hangs on the contracted chest; the lips, cheeks, and lower jaw all sink downwards from their own weight. Hence all the features are lengthened; and the face of a person who bears bad news is said to fall.⁶⁵

Using these seven photographs, three of adults and four of children, to exhibit elements of this “state of low spirits,” Darwin impresses upon the reader the transition from the “violent and almost frantic movements,” which signal the physical response to an initial shock, to the almost total seizure of all nervous action that accompanies the painful process of mental realization. Focussing on the forehead and eyebrows of the grieving person, Darwin positions the photographic images in a sequential scheme in order to graphically explain the minuteness of the change in facial expression between the two states of action and passivity that he has described. The photographs seem to act almost independently of the text, and yet, as Darwin himself recalls, their significance lies in their interaction with, rather than detachment from, the account of expression.⁶⁶

An article written in 1878 by H. Calderwood for the *International Review* acknowledges what it claims is the pivotal role played by the art of photography in exhibiting the various and changing expressions of the face.⁶⁷ Photography, according to Calderwood, is able to capture the individual movements of expression in sequence without erasing their physical animation. And in an expository opening paragraph, Calderwood explains:

From our earliest days of conscious life we begin observing the changes which flit over the countenance of those around us. By a kind of unspoken discourse we come to recognise their feelings and to show sympathy or aversion. Many things contribute to the interest we feel in the varying expressions of the face. *The photographic art, which*

⁶⁵ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.176.

⁶⁶ See footnote 61 for Darwin’s own account of the interplay of word and image in the process of observing expression.

⁶⁷ H. Calderwood, “Expression of Emotions on the Human Countenance”, *International Review*, 6 (1878): pp.195-204.

*multiplies portraits and spreads them in large numbers through our homes, has rendered considerable service in this way. It has deepened in our minds the impression that there is a want of interest to us in a face without expression. An expressionless face, whatever it be in general form and in particular features, does not satisfy. There is a flatness, a deadness about it which disappoints us. On the other hand, the power of any face depends on the vividness and variety of expression constantly passing over it. If, then, we all remark the singular diversity of countenance, we must remember that the wealth of influence belonging to social life depends largely on the light and shade of shifting expression. [my italics]*⁶⁸

The “photographic art” is, then, essential to the expression of the vivid and varying movements that manifest themselves on the countenance because it has the capacity to capture the volatile changes of expression from a seemingly disinterested observational position. In other words, the basic appeal of photography to scientific measurement relies on the illusion it offers of an objective and impartial vision of a mobile form.

III

Having discussed the main principles of Darwin’s theory of expression, I want now to explore the intersection of utility and sensation in Darwin’s writing--attenuated during the long voyage of the *Beagle*, not least because of the isolation Darwin experienced--which directs his attempt to formulate a scientific theory of observation. In one of many evocative and instructive letters written from the *Beagle*--proceeding from the Falkland Islands towards Montevideo in 1833--to his friend and mentor, John S. Henslow, Darwin describes his loathing for the landscape of the Tierra del Fuego area, where the ship was currently battling against the climactic elements. “It is now some months since we have been at a civilized port,” laments Darwin, “nearly all this time has been spent in the most Southern part of Tierra del Fuego.” “It is a detestable place,” he sorrows and, in a well-known, but all-too-often abbreviated passage, he goes on:

⁶⁸ Calderwood, “Expression of Emotions”, p.195.

Gales succeed gales with such short intervals, that it is difficult to do anything.--We were 23 off Cape Horn, & could by no means get to the Westward.--. . .we at last run in to harbour & in the boats got to the West by the inland channels.--As I was one of this party, I was very glad of it: with two boats we went about 300 miles, & thus I had an excellent opportunity of geologising & seeing much of the Savages.--The Fuegians are in a more miserable state of barbarism, than I had expected ever to see a human being.--In this inclement country, they are absolutely naked, & their temporary houses are like what children make in summer, with boughs of trees.--I do not think any spectacle can be more interesting, than the first sight of Man in his primitive wildness.--It is an interest, which cannot well be imagined, until it is experienced. I shall never forget, when entering Good Success bay, the yell with which a party received us. They were seated on a rocky point, surrounded by the dark forest of beech; as they threw their arms wildly round their heads & their long hair streaming they seemed a curious mixture of severity and mildness; as far as regards the animal kingdom the former character prevails; I have in consequence, not added much to my collections.⁶⁹

Collapsing the landscape into its inhabitants, the Fuegians are represented as, at once, barbaric, naked, spectacular, and primitive; positioned in the animal kingdom, they are “a curious mixture of severity and mildness,” and yet the description Darwin gives is framed by a sense of natural history that the young naturalist is gradually acquiring which the Fuegians will not fit neatly into. What is more, a further, even more well-known, letter to Charles Whitley, written some fifteen months later in July 1834 from Valparaiso, proves a remarkable gloss on Darwin’s representation of the Fuegians:

I find in Geology a never failing interest, as [it] has been remarked, it creates the same gran[d] ideas respecting this world, which Astronomy do[es] for the universe.--We have seen much fine scenery, that of the Tropics in its glory & luxuriance, exceeds even the language of Humboldt to describe. . .But, I have seen nothing, which more completely astonished me, than the first sight of a Savage; it was a naked Fuegian his long hair blowing about, his face besmeared with paint. There is in their countenances,

⁶⁹ Darwin, *The Correspondence*, I, (1821-36), p.289. It is interesting to compare this to the account Darwin gives of the Fuegians in the journal of his voyages. Charles Darwin, *Journal of the Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries visited during the voyage round the world of H.M.S. Beagle, under the command of Captain Fitz Roy, R.N.* (London: John Murray, 1845), pp.205-206. This later version goes like this:

In the afternoon we anchored in the Bay of Good Success. While entering we were saluted in a manner becoming the inhabitants of this savage land. A group of Fuegians, partly concealed by the entangled forest, were perched on a wild point overhanging the sea; and as we passed by, they sprang up and, waving their tattered cloaks, sent forth a loud and sonorous shout. . .When we came within hail, one of the four natives who were present advanced to receive us, and began to shout most vehemently, wishing to direct us where to land. When we were on shore the party looked rather alarmed, but continued talking and making gestures with great rapidity. It was without exception the most curious and interesting spectacle I ever beheld: I could not have believed how wide was the difference between savage and civilised man; it is greater than a wild and domesticated animal, inasmuch as in man there is a greater power improvement.

an expression, which I believe to those who have not seen it, must be inconceivably wild. Standing on a rock he uttered tones & made gesticulations than which, the cries of domestic animals are far more intelligible.

When I return to England, you must take me in hand with respect to the fine arts. I yet recollect there was a man called Raffaele Sanctus. How delightful it will be once again to see in the Fitzwilliam, Titian's Venus; how much more than delightful to go to some good concert or fine opera. These recollections will not do. I shall not be able tomorrow to pick out the entrails of some small animal, with half my gusto.⁷⁰

Gillian Beer gives an astute account of the intensely tuned shifts, from wild savage, to domestic animal, to the fine arts of painting and music, to brutal dissection, inherent in this passage,⁷¹ but what I find so compelling in these two representations of the Fuegians is the tension that emerges clearly between the desire to analyse these new 'specimens,' and the unwillingness to consider them part of his natural history collections. Indeed, explaining the importance of determining similarities and differences, continuities and disruptions, in the facial expressions of the races of mankind, Darwin affirms that "whenever the same movements of the features or body express the same emotions in several distinct races of man, we may infer with much probability, that such expressions are true ones,—that is, are innate or instinctive."⁷²

Having come under an incredibly exacting physiognomic scrutiny himself, by his captain, Fitz Roy, before acceptance onto the *Beagle* voyage, it is ironic that Darwin's response to the Fuegians transposes almost as close an examination of their faces onto the natural landscape.⁷³ The craggy cliffs, squalling wind, dense vegetation, and putrefying ground of

⁷⁰ Darwin, *The Correspondence*, I (1821-36), p.353.

⁷¹ Gillian Beer, "Four Bodies on the Beagle: Touch, Sight, and Writing in a Darwin Letter", *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices*, eds. Judith Still and Michael Worton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp.116-32.

⁷² Darwin, *The Expression*, p.15. He continues: "conventional expressions or gestures, acquired by the individual during early life, would probably have differed in the different races, in the same manner as do their languages."

⁷³ In his autobiography, Darwin recalls how he only learnt after the voyage that Fitz Roy perceived a potential weakness in his character from the shape of his nose(!). "He was an ardent disciple of Lavater," Darwin reasons, "and was convinced that he could judge of a man's character by the outline of his features; and he doubted whether any one with my nose

Tierra del Fuego all contribute to a dismal panorama, from which “a single glance” convinced Darwin “how widely different it was from anything I had ever beheld.”⁷⁴ Moreover, trying to forge his way through the forested land, Darwin experiences a rapid rush of emotion and a pressing impulse to philosophise:

The gloomy depth of the ravine well accorded with the universal signs of violence. On every side were lying irregular masses of rock and torn-up trees; other trees, though still erect, were decayed to the heart and ready to fall. The entangled mass of the thriving and the fallen reminded me of the forests within the tropics--yet there was a difference; for in these still solitudes, Death, instead of Life, seemed the predominant spirit.⁷⁵

By making the landscape physiognomic in this way--that is, as a source of natural signs that pertain to the living world⁷⁶--the influence of Francis Bacon’s inductive method of interpretation on nineteenth-century modes of scientific observation cannot be ignored.

Bacon’s hold on the scientific methodology of the nineteenth century, at least until the impact of Darwin’s evolutionary thoughts began to be felt from the 1860s, depended upon the emergence of theoretical patterns from the collection of a mass of facts, and, by popular, though perhaps misguided, assent, the authority of this notion of induction derived from its emphasis on a privileging of empiricism above sensory knowledge, observation and experiment over ideas.⁷⁷ Induction, according to Baconian principles, required objectivity,

could possess sufficient energy and determination for the voyage. But,” he notes, triumphantly, “I think he was afterwards well satisfied that my nose had spoken falsely.” *Autobiography of Charles Darwin*, p.27.

⁷⁴ Darwin, *Journal of Researches*, p.205.

⁷⁵ Darwin, *Journey of Researches*, p.211.

⁷⁶ William Benjamin Carpenter’s 1872 address to the BAAS in Brighton calls for exactly this kind of interpretation of the natural world. He says: “we cannot proceed a step, without translating the actual Phenomena of Nature into Intellectual Representations of those phenomena.” Basalla, Coleman, and Kargon, eds., *Victorian Science: A Self-Portrait from the Presidential Addresses to the BAAS*, p.420.

⁷⁷ For an engaging account of this Baconian influence, see Jonathan Smith. *Fact and Feeling: Baconian Science and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Wisconsin, WI.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995; and see Richard Yeo, “An Idol of the Market-Place: Baconianism in Nineteenth-Century Britain”, *History of Science*. 23 (1985): pp.251-90, for a

certainty, ever-widening generalization, evasion of hypotheses, and the methodical removal of possible reasonings. “Man, being the servant and interpreter of Nature,” Bacon had said in the *Novum Organum*, “can do and understand so much and so much only as he has observed in fact or in thought of the course of nature.”⁷⁸ The emphasis was clearly on methodological formulation and yet, following the publication of *The Origin* and *The Descent*, Bacon’s philosophy of science was all-too-often, and almost inevitably, placed diametrically opposite Darwin’s new theory of development and figured in terms of a battle between Baconian man and Darwinian nature. A short poem in *Punch* for 1871 confirms this apparent division between Bacon and Darwin on the evidential basis of knowledge. “But Darwin’s speculation/ Is of another sort,” it jeers, “’Tis one which demonstration/ In nowise doth support”: “Time, theory’s dispeller,/ Will out of mind remove it./ We say. . . ‘Prove it. And he can’t prove it.’”⁷⁹ But, it cannot be coincidental that in an essay entitled “The Boundaries of Science: A Dialogue,” in *Macmillan’s Magazine*, the author goes some way to collapse this binary opposition of Bacon to Darwin.⁸⁰

Two philosophers, Philocalos and Philalethes, discourse on the theory and practice of science. “So, Philalethes,” Philocalos announces, “it is true that you are a convert to this new theory!” He goes on provocatively:

You are a believer in a doctrine which makes the struggle of a selfish competition the sole agency in nature--which, taking one of the most unfortunate, if inevitable, results

similar account of this trend. For a more extensive account of Bacon’s philosophical method, see Antonio Perez-Ramos, *Francis Bacon’s Idea of Science and the Maker’s Knowledge Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

⁷⁸ Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, eds. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath, 14 vols. (London: Longmans, 1857-74). Cited by Basalla, Coleman, and Kargon, eds., *Victorian Science: A Self-Portrait from the Presidential Addresses to the BAAS*, p.412. It is significant that the authority of Baconian induction in the nineteenth century was readdressed in the fifteen or so years succeeding the publication of Spedding’s edition, even though this remains the standard edition of Bacon’s works.

⁷⁹ “Darwin and Pickwick”, *Punch*, 60 (1871): p.145.

⁸⁰ “The Boundaries of Science. A Dialogue”, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, 2 (1860): 134-38.

of an old civilization, transfers it to that world where we hoped to find a beauty and order to which civilization has not yet attained! Poets have spoken of the face of nature as serene and tranquil; you paint it scarred by conflict and furrowed by sordid care! You turn the pure stream where we have been accustomed to find the reflection of heaven, into a turbid current where we can perceive nothing but the dark hues of earth!⁸¹

And, in a speech that illuminates the uncertain position of the “man of science” in nineteenth-century scientific debate, Philalethes replies:

Your objection is one with which I have the greatest sympathy. No doubt all the lines of Truth converge, but it is at too small an angle, and too vast a distance, for us to be able in all cases to perceive the tendency to unite. Moreover, it is the indispensable requisite of the man of science--not that he should ignore or forget this community of direction in all the clues of Truth--but that he renounce any attempt at making his own investigations subordinate to the proof of that conclusion. I do not decide whether such a subject is capable of proof; I only say that, when the student of physical science undertakes it, he is renouncing his own proper study as effectually as the pilot who should attempt to decide on the most favourable market for the goods with which his vessel freighted.⁸²

The status of scientific methodology is clearly under question here, with the principal claim being that sensory knowledge determines the fundamental ideas of scientific knowledge: “it is the indispensable requisite of the man of science. . .that he renounce any attempt at making his own investigation subordinate to the proof of that conclusion.” But the problem which Philalethes tries to resolve is how to forge a link between method and interpretation, seeing and measuring, which is capable of balancing fact and theory in an equivalent, rather than an hierarchical, relation.

William Whewell’s *History of the Inductive Sciences* is helpful here because for Whewell, fact and theory are interdependent.⁸³ Attempting to rework Baconian induction in

⁸¹ “The Boundaries of Science”, p.134.

⁸² “The Boundaries of Science”, p.136.

⁸³ William Whewell, *The History of the Inductive Sciences*, 3rd ed., 3 vols.(London: J.W. Parker & Sons, 1857). Whewell’s subsequent work, *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: J.W. Parker & Sons, 1847), forms the companion volume to the *History*. For an account of Whewell in the scientific debate of this period of the nineteenth century, see Richard Yeo, *Defining Science: William Whewell, Natural Knowledge, and Public Debate in Early Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

accord with the demand of nineteenth-century science for a rigorous logic of endeavour, Whewell declares that two factors are essential to the formation of science: “observation of Things without, and in an inward effort of Thought; or, in other words, Sense and Reason. The impressions of sense,” he continues, “unconnected by some rational and speculative principle, can only end in a practical acquaintance with individual objects,” whereas “the operations of the rational faculties, . . .if allowed to go on without a constant reference to external things, can lead only to empty abstraction and barren ingenuity.”⁸⁴ So, fact and theory are conjoined in a process of observation which has as its avowed aim the classification and analysis of science.

To recall the *Punch* cartoon, “The Descent of Man” (Figure 22), which collapsed ape, African, and Darwin into a compound figure, alongside Darwin’s description of the Fuegians, and the methodological impact of induction at this time, is to remember the pressure that theories of development, most notably Darwin’s, exerted on the validity of the bodily sign as an index of emotion and character. In order to rediscover the origins of natural history, and so to reconstruct the basis of science, the individual nature of the body becomes less important than the type of figure presented. With classification, hierarchy, and origins of central importance in the construction of a pattern on which to frame past, present, and future experience, the Scottish anatomist Robert Knox strove to make the concept of race the conditioning factor of bodily interpretation. Race, Knox avowed in *The Races of Man: A Fragment*, is the principal determinant of behaviour and, as such, defines the organisation of development: “that race is in human affairs everything is simply a fact, the most remarkable, the most comprehensive, which philosophy has ever announced. Race is everything: literature, science, art--in a word civilization--depends on it.”⁸⁵ Moreover, it is interesting that in his

⁸⁴ Whewell, *History of Inductive Sciences.*, I, p.5.

⁸⁵ Robert Knox, *The Races of Men: A Fragment* (London, 1850), p.v. Cited by Michael D. Biddis, ed., *Images of Race* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), p.12. For more detailed information of the role of Knox in nineteenth-century scientific debates, see also Biddis, “The Politics of Anatomy: Dr Robert Knox and Victorian Racism”, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, LXIX (1976): pp.245-50; Desmond, *The Politics of Evolution*. pp.24-100; and Evelleen Richards, “The ‘Moral Anatomy’ of Robert Knox: The Interplay

Manual of Artistic Anatomy, published in 1852, Knox advocated the use of Petrus Camper's "facial line or angle" to measure the differences in the races of man and to secure the high-low relation of man to animal.⁸⁶ In fact, the frequent recourse to a "facial line" or angle in the *Manual* underlines the centrality of Camper's researches to Knox's idea of an anatomy of race.

In brief, Camper (1722-89), a Dutch surgeon and professor of anatomy, devised a statistical mode of perception that constructed the human figure as a body calculus made up of circles, triangles, squares, and rectangles. To construct a head (Figure 24), the artist must first draw two circles SLEW and KUZ to form an oval, together with an horizontal line ST. Then from the centre S, a perpendicular line SQ must be drawn to mark the orifice of the ear and the lobe at E. A line drawn from P to G, outside the circle KUZ, is the facial line, demonstrating the degree of pronation/inclination and marking the forehead, K, the line of the eye, F, the nose, I, and the mouth, H plus a third of IB or IG. Finally, the point Z, at the lower edge of the eye socket, is joined to V and E to complete the oval and a line from G to N marks the start of the neck. Camper's diagram of the face was formed by superimposing a series of precise measurements upon representations of the face as a means of recording the relation and proportion of facial features and, in this way, deciding the degree of civility--and so the moral progress--of the subject. To be sure, Camper's almost architectural scheme of perception applied the techniques of geometry to the study of expression in order to show the artist how to dissect, optically, the form of the face and head; but, as his engraving, *From Ape to Apollo Belvedere*, strikingly illustrates (Figure 25), this perceptual scheme of lines and angles is nothing more than an extreme version of the desire to picture descent and measure development which would intrigue Darwin just less than a century later.

On the one hand, Camper, like Lavater, understood the series of types in an almost Cuvierian manner, that is, as a defence against evolution; whereas, on the other, Darwin

between Biological and Social Thought in Victorian Scientific Naturalism", *Journal of the History of Biology*, 22 (1989): pp.373-436.

⁸⁶ Robert Knox, *A Manual of Artistic Anatomy, for the use of sculptors, painters, and amateurs* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1852), pp.62-63.

predicated his notion of type on his theory of the “unity of descent”: “by unity of type is meant that fundamental agreement in structure, which we see in organic beings of the same class, and which is quite independent of their habits of life.”⁸⁷ The difficulties which resonate from an attempt to define observation as a complex interplay between physiognomic looking and scientific measuring should by now be clearer, but what may remain unclear, nevertheless, is the way in which the physiology of expression might complement or conflict with this conception. The act of blushing is, I argue, a specific type of expression that draws together physical observation and physiological reaction. Darwin makes clear:

From the intimate sympathy which exists between the capillary circulation of the surface of the head and of the brain, whenever there is intense blushing, there will be some, and often great, confusion of mind. This is frequently accompanied by awkward movements, and sometimes by the involuntary twitching of certain muscles.⁸⁸

In fact, Darwin’s particular interest with, and emphasis on, blushing, the act of blushing, and its link to mental attention depended on the coherence it bestowed on expression as an exemplar of habit, antithesis, and nerves. But, at the same time, the possibility of a fundamental failure in the evolutionary narrative to account fully for the discovery of origins is indicated through the act of blushing. More specifically, the representation of a blushing face illustrates dramatically the intersection of sensation and utility that I have been discussing and, at once, uncovers the complexities inherent in the relation between picturing descent and measuring development.

⁸⁷ Darwin, *The Origin*, p.233.

⁸⁸ Darwin. *The Expression*. p.345.

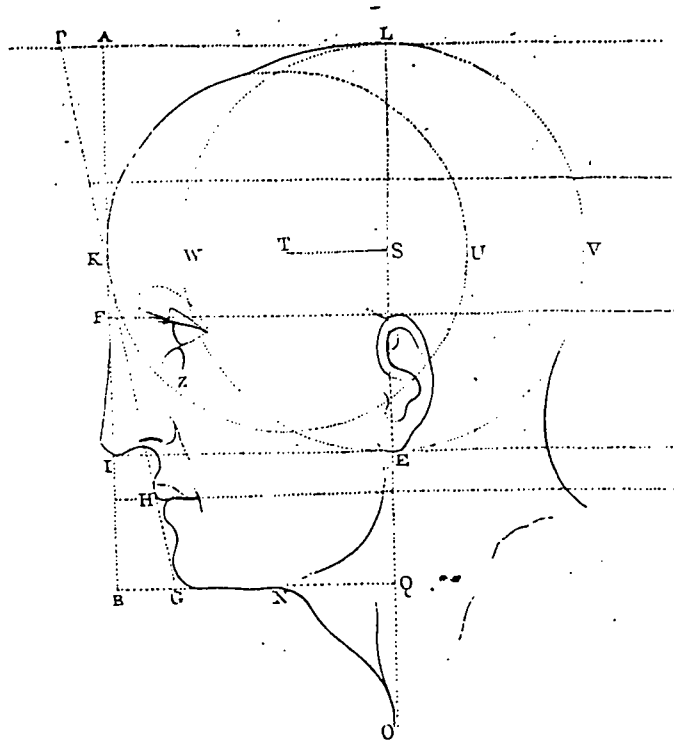


Figure 24 Petrus Camper, *Diagram of the Head*, engraving, *Dissertation physique*, (Holland, 1791); rpt. in *The Works of the late Professor Camper on the Connexion between the Science of Anatomy and the Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary, etc., etc.*, trans. and ed. T. Cogan., 4th ed. (London: J. Hearne, 1821), p.23.

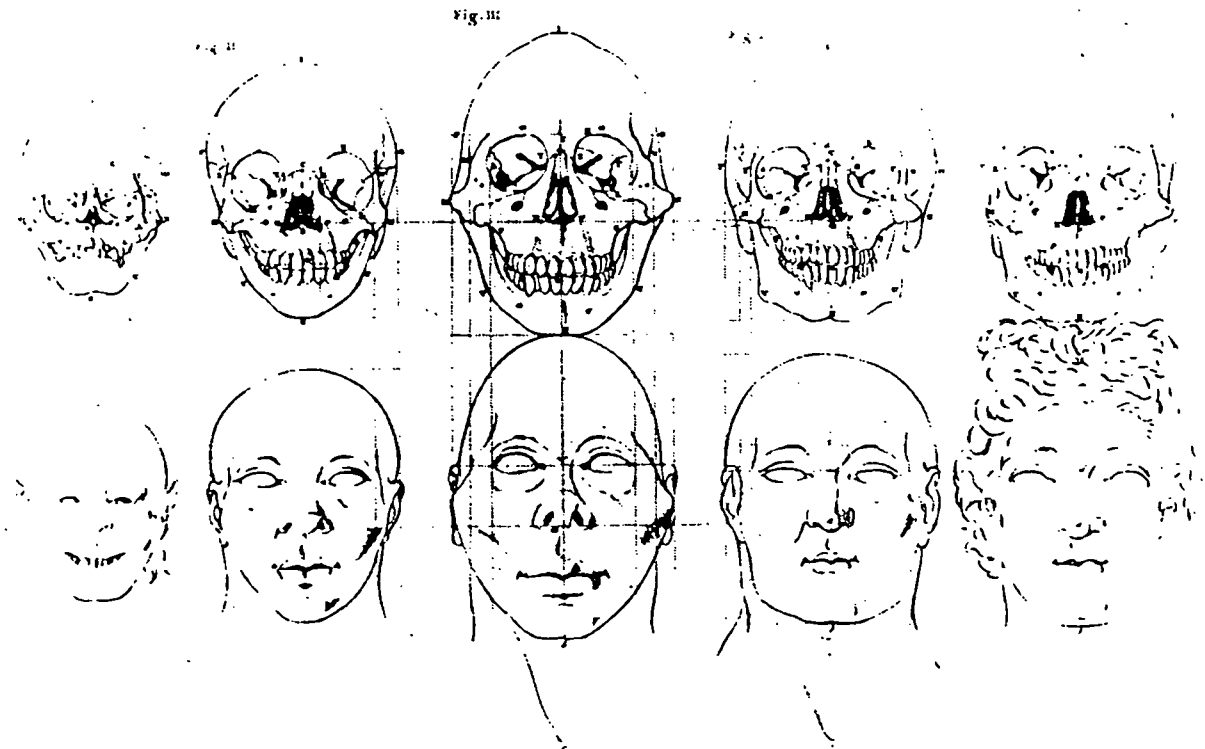


Figure 25 Petrus Camper, *From Ape to Apollo Belvedere*, engraving, *Dissertation physique*, (Holland, 1791), rpt. in *The Works of the late Professor Camper on the Connexion between the Science of Anatomy and the Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary, etc., etc.*, trans. and ed. T. Cogan, 4th ed. (London: J. Hearne, 1821), p.3.

IV

In the early pages of Darwin's Notebook N, "Metaphysics and Expression," an entry on the act of blushing appears curiously caught between two statements on the methodology of science. It is worth quoting the passage in full because it forms a useful parallel to the problem of formulating the methodology of vision that I have been talking about, and it provides a pertinent framework within which Darwin's subsequent discussion of blushing can be placed. Shifting from assertion to speculation, and back to assertion, Darwin writes:

All science is reason acting <<systematizing>> on principles, which even animals practically know <<art precedes science--art is experience & observation.-->> in balancing a body & an ass knows one side of triangle shorter than two. V. Whewell. Induct. Sciences--Vol I p.334

Does a negress blush.--I am almost sure Fuegia Basket did. & **Jemmy, when Chico plagued him**--Animals I should think would not have any emotion like blush.--when extreme sensation of heat shows blood is pumped over whole body.--is it connected with surprise.--heart beginning to beat--children inherit it <<ins>> like instinct, preeminently so--who can analyse the sensation, when meeting a stranger. who one may like. dislike, or be indifferent about, yet feel shy.--not if quite stranger.--or less so.--

When learning facts for *induction*. one is obliged carefully to separate its memory from all ordinary lines of association.--is totally distinct from learning *it by heart*. Do not our necessary notions follow as consequences on *habitual* or instinctive assent to propositions, which are the result of our senses, or our *experience*.--Two sides of a triangle shorter than third. is this necessary notion, ass has it.--[author's emphasis]⁸⁹

The desire to work out the mechanism not only of scientific interrogation but also the act of blushing emerges clearly in this passage because what becomes obvious is that by defining science as "reason acting <<systematizing>> on principles," Darwin calls into question the kind of observation that enables an analysis of expression. Science, Darwin states, succeeds art because art is "experience and observation" whereas science is logic and fact. Even so, further clarification is needed because, as Darwin points out, the application of the inductive method to science rests, at once, on its difference from the "ordinary lines of association" and the method of "learning it by heart," and its similarity to the "habitual or instinctive assent to propositions

⁸⁹ Darwin, *Notebooks, 1836-44*, Notebook N, pp.567-68.

which are the result of our senses, or our experience.” The question is how to educate the memory to organize facts into a coherent structure—a system of “reason acting on principles”—within which “our senses, . . . [and] our experience” can be analysed. In response to his own question, Darwin answers: “as soon as memory improved. [sic] direct effect of improving organization, comparison of sensations would first take place, whether to pursue immediate inclination or some future pleasure.--hence judgement, which is part of reason.”⁹⁰

An entry in Notebook M some months before the speculations on the inductive method and blushing, underlines Darwin’s impulse to organize and analyse emotion and expression:

What is **Emotion** analysis of expression of desire--is there not protrusion of chin, like bulls & horses.--**1838** good instance of useless muscular tricks accompanying emotion.--when horses fighting, they put down ears, when <<turning round to kick>> kicking they do the same. although it is then quite useless--. . . Why does any great mental affection make body tremble. Why much laughter tears.--& shaking body.-- Are those parts of body, as heart, & chest (sobbing) which are most under great sympathetic nerve. most subject to habit, as being less so will.--. . . The whole argument of expression more than any other point of structure takes its value. from its connexion with mind, (to show hiatus in mind not saltus between man & Brutes) no one can doubt this connexion.--look at faces of people in different trades &c &c &c [author’s emphasis]⁹¹

To put it slightly differently would be to say that at stake is the empirical validity of the face as an index of value which both combines physical expression and physiological action, and collapses the subjective process of observation into an inductive method of science. The result is, nonetheless, somewhat contradictory for although Darwin asserts that science is constructed on reason and principle compared to art on experience and observation, the influence of the inductive method on the analysis of expression only serves to confirm the pivotal role of physiological function as an essential coefficient of both science and art, mechanism and vision, measuring and seeing, and the vital energy that links the mind and the face: “the hidden bond of connexion which naturalists have been seeking under the term of the natural

⁹⁰ Darwin, *Notebooks, 1836-44*, Notebook N, p.568.

⁹¹ Darwin, *Notebooks, 1836-44*, Notebook M, pp.556-58.

system.”⁹²

The inquiry, “does a negress blush,” elucidates Darwin’s provocative thoughts on this complex linkage between facial embodiment and scientific reason, for, as a subsequent notebook entry on blushing reveals, the issue is not so much one of racial, but of sexual, representation. Darwin speculates:

Blushing is intimately connected with thinking of ones appearance,--does the thought drive blood to surface exposed, face of man, face, neck--<<upper>> bosom in woman: like erection

shyness is certainly very much connected with thinking of oneself.--<<blushing>> is connected with sexual, because each sex thinks more of what another thinks of him, than any one of his own sex.--Hence, animals. not being such thinking people. do not blush.--sensitive people apt to blush.-- --The power of vivid mental affection, on separate organs most curiously shown in the sudden cures of tooth ache before being drawn,--⁹³

The act of blushing is motivated by a self-consciousness--“thinking of ones appearance”; “thinking of oneself”--which stimulates the physiological mechanism of the body and arouses the sexual instinct. As the sign of mental attention, the face is, apparently, only the most visible part of the body on which the act of blushing can be seen, and, as such, separates man from animals. “Does the thought,” Darwin asks, “drive blood to surface exposed, face of man, face, neck--<<upper>> bosom in woman: like erection.” The concupiscent inference is, somewhat unusually in Darwin’s writing, quite obvious, but it is the way in which blushing, figured as bloom and colour, noun and verb, combines nervous action, antithesis, and habit that renders the act of blushing such a pivotal type of expression in Darwin’s text. In fact, what these notebook entries impart is that fundamental to the question, “does a negress blush” is the problem of how to measure the act of blushing: how to “analyse the sensation” that breaks down the man-animal analogue of the evolutionary narrative but so graphically displays the principles of instinct, habit, nervous action, and hereditary transmission.

At this point it will be best to have before us the published version of Darwin’s theory

⁹² Darwin, *The Origin*, p.427.

⁹³ Darwin, *Notebooks, 1836-44*, Notebook N, p.577.

of blushing as it appeared in *The Expression*. “The reddening of the face from a blush is due,” Darwin discloses, “to the relaxation of the muscular coats of the small arteries, by which the capillaries become filled with blood; and this depends on the vaso-motor centre being affected”:

No doubt if there be at the same time much mental agitation, the general circulation will be affected; but it is not due to the action of the heart that the network of minute vessels covering the face becomes under a sense of shame gorged with blood. We can cause laughing by tickling the skin, weeping or frowning by a blow, trembling from the fear of pain, and so forth; but we cannot cause a blush, as Dr. Burgess remarks, by any physical means,—that is by any action on the body. It is the mind which must be affected. Blushing is not only involuntary; but the wish to restrain it, by leading to self-attention actually increases the tendency.⁹⁴

What is more, in the opening lines of the chapter, Darwin states unequivocally the impossibility of maintaining the man-animal analogue: although “monkeys redden from passion, . . . it would require an overwhelming amount of evidence to make us believe that any animal could blush.”⁹⁵ With the argument of evolution questionable in this case, and the physiological explanation of the act of blushing in mind, Darwin goes on to disprove the idea—propounded by Charles Bell and Thomas Burgess—that the act of blushing is not acquired but is “specially designed by the Creator.”⁹⁶ Whilst Burgess claims in *The Physiology or Mechanism of Blushing* that the function of blushing is to illustrate shame and to check the moral faculties:

Is it not probable that it was with this intention [as an illustration of shame] the Creator of man endowed him with this peculiar faculty of exhibiting his internal emotion, or more properly speaking, of the internal emotions exhibiting themselves, for no individual blushes voluntarily; it would, therefore, appear to serve as a check on the conscience, and prevent the moral faculties from being infringed upon, or deviating from their allotted path.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Darwin, *The Expression*, pp.309-310.

⁹⁵ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.309.

⁹⁶ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.336.

⁹⁷ Thomas H. Burgess. *The Physiology or Mechanism of Blushing; illustrative of the influence of mental emotion on the capillary circulation; with a general view of the sympathies, and the organic relations of those structures with which they seem to be connected*. London: John Churchill, 1839. p.24.

Darwin says that “those who believe in design, will find it difficult to account for shyness being the most frequent and efficient of all the causes of blushing, as it makes the blusher to suffer and the beholder uncomfortable, without being the least service to either of them.” And, he continues, “they will also find it difficult to account for negroes and other dark-coloured races blushing, in whom a change of colour in the skin is scarcely or not at all visible.”⁹⁸ The weakness of the natural theological argument—which claims that the mechanism of the natural world is evidence of the Creator’s design—is, then, a weakness of observation, an inadequacy of seeing, that makes the notion of mechanism reside in the action of the deity rather than of the eye. The assumption is that what is unseen can be deciphered in what is seen and, more importantly, that knowledge acquired in this way has an immediate and universal value. As Darwin makes clear, two factors in particular, namely, shyness and race, undermine this argument of design in a stroke because they cannot be explained in terms of this kind of immediate link between internal and external.

Acknowledging that “blushing is the most peculiar and the most human of all expressions,” Darwin is careful to point out that although youth, gender, lineage, race, and habit all influence the interpretation of blushing, the mental states of shyness, shame, guilt, and modesty exert the greatest pressure on the way in which this type of expression is represented on the surface of the face: “it is not the simple act of reflecting on our own appearance, but the thinking what others think of us, which excites a blush.”⁹⁹ Furthermore, explaining his thesis, somewhat tentatively, Darwin writes:

The hypothesis which appears to me the most probable, though it may at first seem rash, is that attention closely directed to any part of the body tends to interfere with the ordinary and tonic contraction of the small arteries of that part. These vessels, in consequence, become at such times more or less relaxed, and are instantly filled with arterial blood. . . . Whenever we believe that others are depreciating or even considering our personal appearance, our attention is vividly directed to the outer and visible parts of our bodies; and of all such parts we are most sensitive about our faces, as no doubt has been the case during many past generations. Therefore, assuming for the moment that the capillary vessels can be acted on by close attention, those of the face will have

⁹⁸ Darwin. *The Expression*. p.336.

⁹⁹ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.325.

become eminently susceptible. Through the force of association, the same effects will tend to follow wherever we think that others are considering or censuring our actions or character.¹⁰⁰

In other words, the characteristics of shyness, shame, and modesty share this element of self-attention, inflected with a moral sense, which, Darwin asserts, influences the capillary action of the nerves and so provokes a blush. It is, however, important to recognise that the movements and gestures which accompany the act of blushing form a significant part of the physiology of expression because they involve the face in what is often an awkward and averted movement. For example, shyness, one of the most efficient causes of blushing, according to Darwin, is “chiefly recognized by the face reddening, by the eyes averted or cast down, and by awkward, nervous movements of the body.”¹⁰¹ What is more, given its sensitivity to opinion and personal appearance, shyness seems to be explicitly gendered: “many a woman blushes from this cause, a hundred, perhaps a thousand times, to once that she blushes from having done anything deserving blame, and of which she is truly ashamed.”¹⁰² One thing which is clear from Darwin’s examination of the act of blushing is that the value of the face as a form of knowledge depends upon the process of observation and, specifically, the physiological formulation of its ways of seeing. The face is, therefore, an index of a physiological conception of expression insofar as the facial capillaries which stimulate blushing respond, sensitively and habitually, to a consciousness of the physiognomic method of interpretation.

V

I want now, by way of a conclusion, to move slightly away from Darwin’s study of expression to consider Francis Galton’s notion of “pictorial statistics” and his method of

¹⁰⁰ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.337.

¹⁰¹ Darwin, *The Expression*, p.329.

¹⁰² Darwin, *The Expression*, p.329.

composite portraiture. Galton's aim was to construct a system of social betterment through breeding--in effect, the foundation of the eugenics movement--which would take Darwinian theories of resemblance, hereditary transmission, and the 'survival of the fittest' to their most extreme position.¹⁰³ But, placed between the work of his cousin, Darwin, on evolution and Gregor Mendel's on the genetic ratio determining inheritance, it is Galton's attempt to quantify the physiognomic method of interpretation, statistically and photographically, in order to identify a generalized type of human face that interests me.¹⁰⁴ The innovativeness of the mode of composite portraiture notwithstanding, studies of Galton tend to emphasise his eugenicist ideas at the expense of his interest in determining physiognomic typologies.¹⁰⁵ What is so fascinating about Galton's work, nonetheless, is the combination of the desire to see and the desire to measure--so uneasily played out in Darwin's study of expression--within a single composite photographic image, a "generic image," which superimposes together a number of images of the face in order to discover the type at the centre of the composite image.

¹⁰³ See John R. Durant, "The Meaning of Evolution: Post-Darwinian Debates on the Significance for Man of the Theory of Evolution, 1858-1908", PhD. Diss. (University of Cambridge, 1977); and Lyndsay Andrew Farrall, "The Origins and Growth of the English Eugenics Movement 1865-1925", PhD. Diss. (University of Indiana, 1970), for studies on the relation of Galton's theory of eugenics to Darwin's evolutionary narrative.

¹⁰⁴ Galton's main works which display this interest in visualising statistics are: *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences* (1869), 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1892); *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*, (1883), 2nd ed. (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1908); and *Essays in Eugenics* (London: Eugenics Education Society, 1909). In addition, some of his other notable publications are: *The Art of Travel, or Shifts and Contrivances available in Wild Countries* (London, 1855); *English Men of Science: Their Nature and Nurture* (London, 1874); "Generic Images", *Nineteenth Century*, 6 (1879): pp.157-69; "On Generic Images: with autotype illustrations", *Proceedings of the Royal Institution*, 9 (1879): pp.159-165; *Natural Inheritance* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1889); and "Analytical Photography", *Nature*, 18 (1890): pp.381-87.

¹⁰⁵ For such accounts of Galton's career and his place in the history of science, see Karl Pearson, *The Life, Letters and Labours of Francis Galton*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924); D. W. Forrest, *Francis Galton: The Life and Work of a Victorian Genius* (London: Routledge, 1974); and Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *Sir Francis Galton and the Study of Heredity in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1984). The notable exceptions are David Green, "Veins of Resemblance: Photography and Eugenics", *The Oxford Art Journal*, 7 (1984): 3-16; Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848-c.1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.189-203; and Alan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive", *October*, 39 (1986): pp.3-64.

In a significant section on “Features” from his 1883 text, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, explaining the process of observing the face, Galton details the problems associated with the physiognomic method of interpretation:

The difference in human features must be reckoned great, inasmuch as they enable us to distinguish a single known face among those of thousands of strangers, though they are mostly too minute for measurement. At the same time, they are exceedingly numerous. The general expression of a face is a multitude of small details, which are viewed in such rapid succession that we seem to perceive them all at a single glance. If any one of them disagrees with the recollected traits of a known face, the eye is quick at observing it, and it dwells upon the difference.¹⁰⁶

So, although facial difference equals individuality, “the difference in human features” almost seems to evade observation because of the minuteness and rapidity of the movements of the face: “the general expression of a face is a multitude of small details, which are viewed in such rapid succession that we seem to perceive them all at a single glance.” And, in a crucial passage, Galton goes on to point out the essential weakness of existing modes of physiognomical perception. He asserts:

The physiognomical difference between different men being so numerous and small, it is impossible to measure and compare them each to each, and to discover by ordinary statistical methods the true physiognomy of a race. The usual way is to select individuals who are judged to be representatives of the prevalent type, and to photograph them; but this method is not trustworthy, because the judgement itself is fallacious. It is swayed by exceptional and grotesque features more than by ordinary ones, and the portraits supposed to be typical are likely to be caricatures.¹⁰⁷

The problem, then, is not only how to measure the “true physiognomy of a race,” but also how to determine the selective basis upon which “physiognomical difference” can be represented once “ordinary statistical methods” are adjudged to be inadequate. Or, in other words, how to construct a method of interpretation, at once, physiognomic and statistical, able to determine individuals against types; that is, how to overcome “the difficulty of procuring really representative faces.”¹⁰⁸ Composite portraiture acted as Galton’s solution.

¹⁰⁶ Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, p.3.

¹⁰⁷ Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, p.4.

¹⁰⁸ Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, p.6.

According to Galton, the coherence of a race depends upon the existence of an ideal types around which individuals cluster and from which they also deviate. “It is the essential notion of a race,” Galton expostulates, “that there should be some ideal typical form from which the individuals may deviate in all directions, but about which they chiefly cluster, and towards which their descendents will continue to cluster”:

The easiest direction in which a race can be improved is towards that central type, because nothing new has to be sought out. It is only necessary to encourage as far as practicable the breed of those who conform most nearly to the central type, and to restrain as far as may be the breed of those who deviate widely from it. Now there can hardly be a more appropriate method of discovering the central physiognomical type of any race or group than that of composite portraiture.¹⁰⁹

The provocative, and somewhat odious, notion of eugenic selection aside, Galton’s method of composite portraiture appears to promise one way out of the contradictions inherent in the analysis of expression. For what Galton proffers is a method of observation that mediates individuals with types by superimposing facial image upon facial image in a succession of fractional photographic exposures (Figure 28). In an abbreviated form, the procedure goes something like this: first, collect the full-face photographic portraits; second, reduce the portraits to the same size; third and fourth, superimpose and secure the portraits in a book format; fifth, place a sensitive camera inside the ‘book’; and sixth, photograph each page of the ‘book’, without moving the camera or the plate; “so that,” in Galton’s words, “an image of each of the portraits in succession was thrown on the same part of the sensitised plate.”¹¹⁰ The resulting image, or composite portrait, should represent the configuration of those features shared by every individual face, whilst, at the same time, indicating faintly the degree of physiognomical difference.

With the title, “Specimens of Composite Portraiture,” the collection of images given by Galton are divided into eight different composites types--Alexander the Great; two sisters; six members of one family; twenty-three Royal Engineers; fifteen cases of tubercular disease;

¹⁰⁹ Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, p.10.

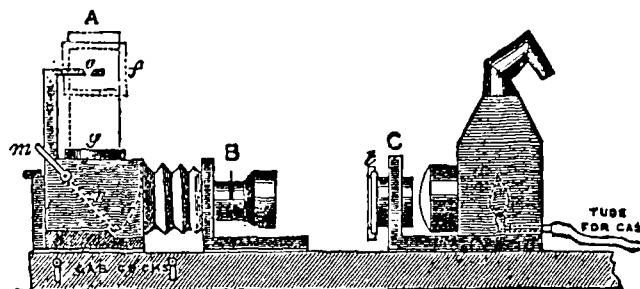
¹¹⁰ Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, p.6.

twelve cases of criminal types; and fifty-six consumptive, and one hundred and fifty non-consumptive, cases--under the categories: personal and family; health; disease; criminality; consumption and other maladies, respectively (Figure 29). But what is so remarkable about this series of images is that Galton describes the portraits as "an ideal composition," and locates their value at the centre, rather than at the edge, of the rather blurred images which result.¹¹¹

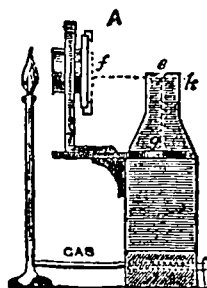
¹¹¹ Galton explains more fully:

The effect of composite portraiture is to bring into evidence all the traits in which there is agreement, and to leave but a ghost of a trace of individual peculiarities. There are so many traits in common in all faces that the composite picture when made from many components is far from being a blur; it has altogether the look of an ideal composition (p. 7).

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE ESSENTIAL PARTS



Side View.

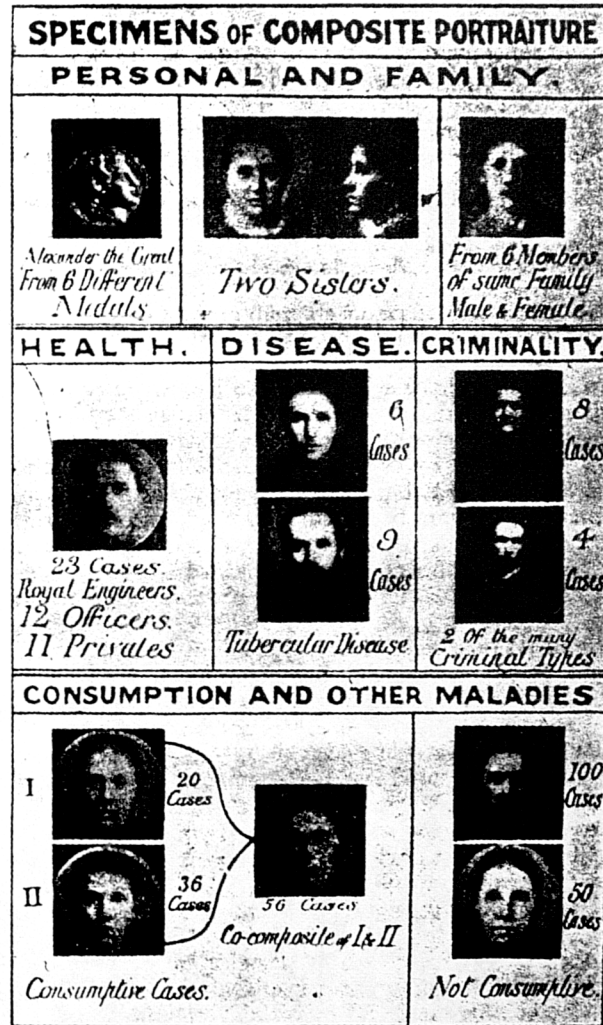


End View.

- A the body of the camera, which is fixed.
 B Lens on a carriage, which can be moved to and fro.
 C Frame for the transparency, on a carriage that also supports the lantern; the whole can be moved to and fro.
 r The reflector inside the camera.
 m The arm outside the camera attached to the axis of the reflector; by moving it, the reflector can be moved up or down.
 g A ground-glass screen on the roof, which receives the image when the reflector is turned down, as in the diagram.
- e The eye-hole through which the image is viewed on *g*; a thin piece of glass immediately below *e*, reflects the illuminated fiducial lines in the transparency at *f*, and gives them the appearance of lying upon *g*,—the distances *f e* and *g e* being made equal, the angle *f e g* being made a right angle, and the plane of the thin piece of glass being made to bisect *f e g*.
 f Framework, adjustable, holding the transparency with the fiducial lines on it.
 t Framework, adjustable, holding the transparency of the portrait.

Figure 26

Francis Galton, *Diagram showing the Essential Parts of the Machine for Composite Portraiture, Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1907), p.235.



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Figure 27 Francis Galton, *Specimens of Composite Portraiture, Inquiries into Human Faculty*, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1907), p.8.

Given the process of layering image upon image, it is, perhaps, almost inevitable that the composite portrait should appear blurred, but a more surprising aspect of this rather mixed method of physiognomic interpretation is the claim Galton makes for it as a form of “pictorial statistics.” “The process of composite portraiture,” says Galton, in one of two slightly earlier articles on generic images, “is one of pictorial statistics, suitable to give us generic pictures of man, such as Quetelet obtained in outline by the ordinary numerical methods of statistics, as described in his work on *Anthropometrie*.” Furthermore, continuing expansively, Galton declares:

By the process of composites we obtain a picture and not a mere outline. It is blurred, something like a damp sketch, and the breadth of the blur measures the variability of individuals from the central typical form. . . Composite portraits are, therefore, much more than averages, because they include the feature of every individual of whom they are composed. They are the pictorial equivalents of those elaborate statistical tables out of which averages are deduced. There cannot be a more perfect example than they afford, of what the metaphysicians mean by generalisations, when the objects generalised are objects of vision, and when they belong to the same typical group, one important characteristic of which is that medium characteristics should be far more frequent than divergent ones.¹¹²

Responding to the need for a means of measuring development, then, Galton proposes a solution in a process of picturing descent as a composite or generic image which will “include the feature of every individual of whom they are composed” and will make “the objects generalised. . . object of vision.” As Alan Sekula so pertinently points out, at stake in this slippage from individual to type, and empirical specificity to generality, is the mode of visualising numbers; of picturing statistics: “in effect Galton believed that he had translated the Gaussian error curve into pictorial form. The symmetrical bell curve now wore a human face.”¹¹³ The method may have shifted to its most extreme form with Galton but the problem

¹¹² Galton, “Generic Images”, *Nineteenth Century*, 6 (1879): pp.162-63. For the companion piece to this article, see “On Generic Images: with autotype illustrations”, *Proceedings of the Royal Institution*, 9 (1879): pp.159-65.

¹¹³ Sekula, “The Body and the Archive”, p.48. Sekula goes on to say of Galton’s composite photograph:

This was an extraordinary hypostatization. Consider the way in which Galton conveniently exiled blurring to the edges of the composite, when in fact blurring would occur over the entire surface of the image, although less perceptibly. Only an imagination that wanted to see a visual analogue of the binomial curve would make this

remains how to visualise the physiology of expression.

It is clear that caught in the evolutionary narrative, the physiognomic method of interpretation must reformulate the value of the bodily sign as an index of emotion and character. It is also clear that the process of observation must be involved in reassessing the validity of bodily surfaces as a form of knowledge within this newer and larger science of human knowledge. For what is at issue in these studies of Darwin and Galton on expression is the connection between not only different forms of science and different ways of seeing, but at the same time, the linkage between materialism and phenomenology, analysis and description. Furthermore, far from fixing the relation of individual to type in this natural history of expression, or securing what appears to be a movement from individual to typological forms of expression, Darwin and Galton merely emphasise a concomitant parallel and tension between the scientific desire to measure and the physiognomic desire to look. Individual and typological forms of expression are held in a precarious balance, and the immediate and universal strategy of reading that the physiognomic method of interpretation once promised is now obsolete; but the question which remains unanswered is how to represent individual bodily signs in a scientific, as well as a physiognomic, manner.

Note. A shorter version of this chapter was given to the the Department of English at the University of Southampton.

mistake, finding the type at the centre and the idioyncratic and individual at the periphery.

CONCLUSION

FACES, FASCINATIONS, AND FIGURES OF EMBODIMENT.

Throughout its long and uncertain history physiognomy is variously lauded and disparaged as a source of knowledge about nature and man and an occult practice of divination. One can ask, does physiognomy involve more than just reading the features of the face and, if so, what implications does this have for the study of the face. From pseudo-Aristotle to Darwin and beyond, the claim for physiognomy as a science depends upon the nature of its relation to ideas of authority, objectivity, and truth. But to assume today or in the nineteenth century that science is a category of knowledge which defines the notion of nature and determines the production of its meaning through classification and analysis is impossible. A rather crude interpretation might suggest that science relies on the formulation of hypotheses; is composed of distinct disciplines; and speaks to an elite group of intellectuals. Yet, I have tried to suggest throughout this thesis that this is not necessarily the case in the nineteenth century.¹

It is by no means certain that science can actually be comprehended in this way because to attempt any critique of scientific ideas and practices in a specific cultural, historical, and philosophical tradition necessarily involves the admission that it is always going to be retrospective: at best it might be an engaging account, at worst a fallacious one. Conceived, in the nineteenth century, as an abstract and objective account of reality, science operates according to theories of living things--animal, human, natural, or material--which it then proves or disproves through a logical process of experiment, observation, and deduction. Nineteenth-century science connotes category, classification, collation; it is figured as abstract theory, empirical logic, and rigid formalism; and its history has been written as a history of ideas or a history of popularization. Nonetheless, it is important to note that a formal system of scientific education did not actually exist at this time, as knowledge was acquired through either general university courses--particularly on medicine, which involved anatomy, natural philosophy, and physiology--or apprenticeships. In addition, it is worth recalling that the nineteenth century witnessed far-reaching changes in the education system and the distribution of knowledge, motivated by the growth of the publishing industry, which secured a broader,

¹ See especially Chapter One, "The Sign in the Eye of What is Known to the Hand", pp.44-53.

less esoteric (though still largely middle-class) audience for the reception of scientific ideas. The term 'science,' therefore, should not be considered in isolation from its conceptual context. It is difficult enough to unravel the intricately entwined nuances of the visible order of the face and its expressions as I have tried to do in this study; but it would be foolhardy to pretend that one could talk about words such as expression, physiognomy, and science without at least hinting at the extensive and multiple resonances which they acquire at a particular cultural moment.

To write about science in the nineteenth century from the perspective of the twentieth century, then, requires the importation of key words, assumptions, principles, and theories which may (or may not) have been available at the time. Physiology and its theories of the cells and the nerves is a prominent case in point, while ideas about psychology and the notion of the unconscious is a further extremely pertinent example. The attraction of a term like 'physiology' is that it makes us think about organic dynamism, and that in turn suggests organic networks, which although disguised, become manifest in the expressions of the face. So I refer repeatedly to physiology in this study as a means of suggesting this hidden connection between the organic structure of the face and the network of nerves which convey the impressions of the senses to the surface of the face. What is more, I argue that an understanding of the conceptual connection between facial expression and physiological emotion is essential to the process of visualising the complex relation between this invisible and visible order of the face. To apply the physiognomic method of interpretation to the face is to do two things: first, to make the face into a figure of an internal structure; and second, to conceive of the physiological process through which the connection of visible to invisible is made. Therefore, to write about the grammar of expression is to entertain a dynamic which holds both epistemological and phenomenological modes of perception in place. Far from emphasising a scientific consciousness over and above a sensational (or a sympathetic one), my thesis demonstrates that the face in the nineteenth century embodies the encounter of a series of mixed figures which, at once, contain their own coherent unity and surpass the fixity of a single structuring device in a perplexing manner.

A word or two is necessary here to clarify the frequent reference I make to epistemology and phenomenology in order to describe expression. It should be clear that I have tried to avoid bestowing upon the grammar of expression too narrow a contextual focus or too linear a model of development. My intention has been to focus on the slippage of a series of mixed figures of the face between disciplines and languages; but rather than signal the movement of the narrative through time by privileging specific dates as culturally significant, I have concentrated on four metaphors which organise my study of expression, four physiognomic fictions which variously inquire into the conceptual value of the face. What bestows upon these four images the promise of a shared narrative and a peculiar kind of coherence is their preoccupation with observation and the form its perceptual modes might take. While the hand, the pantomime, the female face, and the eye each offer discrete addresses to the visual knowledge of the face, what they all hold in common is a relation between scientific observation and physiognomic interpretation. The 'and' is, of course, crucial here for what I have been alluding to in these chapters is the connection expression forges between the external and the internal elements of the face. The process of making faces--physiognomic fictions--depends upon the visible surface of the face as the locus of attention, and yet this thesis has examined how expression acted as a dynamic repertoire of critical methods for understanding the visible *and* the invisible order of knowledge in the nineteenth century. This order of knowledge undoubtedly changes in this period as the impact of new theories of empirical observation (courtesy of Bell, Whewell, Darwin, and Galton, for instance) is felt, but at the same time it stays the same for the focus on the face is retained; for to move from Bell to Darwin, through the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and Wilkie Collins, is to realise that the same issues persistently preoccupy debates about expression--how to imagine, to visualise, to read, and to describe the physiognomic fictions of the face--and the same desire returns to represent the face in a scientific *and* a physiognomic manner.

The cluster of the visual terms around science and physiognomy is peculiar to the nineteenth century because it identifies a sequence of moves away from too overt a reliance on the eye as the sole means of observation and towards a comprehension of different methods

and mechanisms, be they photographic, statistical, quantitative, or composite, to direct and record observation. Following this, I recognise that there are three areas of research, in particular, which I have alluded to in the previous pages but will expand beyond the necessary limits and prescribed parameters of this thesis. First, the impact of Lavater's decidedly moral version of physiognomy on the religious writings of the early part of the nineteenth century. I have discussed the importance of Paleyite natural theology to the work of Bell, but I am thinking here more of the relation which can be drawn between the vision of the phenomenal world advanced by writers such as John Keble and John Henry Newman (key protagonists in the Oxford Movement), and the idea of the pathetic fallacy proclaimed so vigorously by John Ruskin in *Modern Painters*. Second, the address of what in the mid-century was termed moral anatomy, and was couched within an epistemological framework, to racial origins, racial developments, and racial types. I have explored the specific philosophical resonances bound up with Cuvier's notion of type, as well as mentioning the significance of the work of Petrus Camper and Robert Knox to theories of racial determinism. However, I am interested in the way in which the legible guarantee of this appeal to fix physiognomy in a hierarchical classificatory scheme is made manifest in the photographic representations of national and racial identity, especially the anthropometric illustrations of Guillaume-Benjamin Duchenne and the "photometric" illustrations of T.H. Huxley.

And third, the heady and evocative enchantment with the kaleidoscopic array of countenances and the rhythmical gravitations of the phenomenal world which seeps out of the writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins on nature, language, and religion. An entry in Hopkins' journal for 13 June 1866, Commemoration Day in Oxford, enlarges upon this tantalisingly erotic response to nature and physiognomy. Hopkins describes the mode of scanning different vistas through which he rapidly moves from surveying the landscape to focus on its individualising features:

Commemoration.--. . . Was happily able to see the composition of the crowd in the area of the theatre, all the heads looking one way thrown up by their black coats relieved only by white shirt-fronts etc: the short strikes of the eyes, nose, mouth, repeated hundreds of times I believe it is which gives the visible law:

looked at in any one instance it flies.²

With panoramic fluency, Hopkins observes the crowd of unfamiliar faces, uniformly clothed and individually indistinct, and zooms in on the lines constructed by those juxtaposed faces. The Ruskinian emphasis on order and symmetry illuminates the “visible law” from the crowd of faces and concentrates Hopkins’ attention on the repetitious patterning of facial features with which he can become intimately involved. The delineation of “short strikes of eyes, nose, mouth, repeated hundreds of times,” suggests a tactile imaginative response which assimilates the busy scene through a sensual mode of eye contact. “I could find a sort of beauty in this,” Hopkins concludes poignantly, “certainly character--but in fact that is almost synonymous with finding order, anywhere.”³

To write a conclusion is to risk repeating once more what I have been saying since the beginning. A conclusion should be a completion, a resolution, a judgement, but more often than not it is a terrible anticlimax: its promise of closure encourages the expectation of an ending which it can never fulfil. I had thought that to repeat what I have already said using another text, another version, and another formulation of the questions which have concerned me throughout this thesis might be one solution to these problems. And yet it seems that to adopt that approach would have presented me with more problems than either I could or would want to solve. Far from signing off from this study with a discernible mark or signature, I would have been simply copying someone else’s style. This would not be satisfactory. However, I recognise that some thoughts must be offered on the assumptions and principles which have directed my thesis, paying attention to their silences as well as their more explicit articulations. I have reflected, therefore, on the status of expression and the language of the emotions as a physiognomic and a scientific method of interpretation which makes the face the locus of attention and a pivot from figure to process. Because to do this is to comprehend the

² Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, eds. Humphrey House and Graham Storey (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p.134.

³ Hopkins, *Journals and Papers*, p.139.

grammar of expression as the movement of these terms, physiognomy and science, backward and forward through nineteenth-century culture as mixed figures which are at once epistemic and phenomenological, taxonomic and sensational, and reflexive and generative.

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