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'For God's Sake Look at This!': Physiognomy in *Bleak House*

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- 1 Physiognomy—one of the many 19th-century pseudo-sciences that Annie Escuret could illuminate with her inimitable combination of erudition and humour—and its importance for 19th-century novelists, in particular Dickens, has received some notable critical attention in the past half-century. To name but three names: first, Graeme Tytler, a British-born Germanist who was a fellow graduate student of mine at the University of Illinois in the 1960s, whose Ph.D. thesis eventually became *Physiognomy in the European Novel: Faces & Fortunes*, published by Princeton University Press in 1982, which is still, I think, for English-speaking readers, the most useful general introduction to the subject of Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente* as a vital source among Victorians and others for the principle in the novel of reading character through external bodily features. Specifically focussed on physiognomy in Dickens, offering penetrating readings of a number of novels but with rather less emphasis on Lavater, is a book by the Canadian Juliet McMaster which appeared five years later, in 1987: *Dickens the Designer*, published by Palgrave Macmillan. Much more recently, connecting Dickens and other English novelists with Lavater, and with a title that has fairly precise relevance to the present essay, is an important study by a German scholar Eike Kronshage of Chemnitz, entitled *Vision and Character: Physiognomics and the English Realist Novel*, and published by Routledge in 2018.¹
- 2 Despite all this, I am not sure that the specific case of physiognomy in *Bleak House* has as yet received all the attention it deserves—if not, the present paper is intended as a partial closing of that gap. The word itself appears from time to time in the novels and minor writings—twice here and in *Our Mutual Friend*, once each in *Pickwick Papers*, *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* and *Edwin Drood*—and on more than one occasion Dickens seems to indicate that he regarded the study of physiognomy as a science. One of these occurs in *David Copperfield*, in a quasi-humorous context in connection with the inscrutable countenance of Aunt Betsey, of which the narrator, David himself, declares:

'what my aunt saw, or did not see, I defy the science of physiognomy to have made out, without her own consent. I believe there never was anybody with such an imperturbable countenance when she chose. She might have been a dead-wall on the occasion in question' (*DC*, 435). Dickens, steeped in Shakespeare, his work full of quotations from plays like *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* in particular, is likely to have remembered the tragic irony of Duncan's remarks about the Thane of Cawdor, 'a gentleman upon whom I built an absolute trust' (*I*, 4), now executed as a supposed traitor, moments before the entry on stage of Macbeth himself—'There's no art to find the mind's construction in the face' (*I*, 4)—whenever he wrote about people he saw as human oysters, of whom Aunt Betsey appears here as one, and of which there are a number of less appetising specimens in *Bleak House*.

- 3 Once only does Dickens refer to Johann Kaspar Lavater, the Swiss theologian with whom the 'science' can indisputably be said to originate, and this too in a humorous context, when Mrs. Wilfer, as self-appointed expert student and practitioner thereof, shivers as she contemptuously expresses revulsion at Mrs Boffin's face and appearance —'to whose countenance no disciple of Lavater could possibly for a single moment subscribe' (*OMF*, 201)—a thoroughly erroneous assessment that Mrs Boffin triumphantly refutes throughout the book in countless acts of kind-heartedness. But the two most important references to the 'scientific' study of human appearance are to be found in minor writings. The first is that in the 1859 novella *Hunted Down*, with a title of relevance to *Bleak House* which marks it likewise as another early contribution to detective fiction, where it is referred to as an 'art', the narrator declaring at the outset that 'there is nothing truer than physiognomy, taken in connection with manner. The art of reading that book of which Eternal Wisdom obliges every human creature to present his or her own page with the individual character written on it, is a difficult one, perhaps, and is little studied. It may require some natural aptitude, and it must require (for everything does) some patience and some pains . . . these are not usually given to it' (*HD*, chapter I). Two things are worthy of note here. To begin with, there is the pun on the word 'character', suggesting as we in fact find as we study physiognomy in Dickens, that this, in its conventional sense, meaning fictional 'actants' in a novel, can also be taken to mean the writing or signature (or, if you like, 'soul') of a person, to be read in external bodily signs by an observant reader of human personality. The other is the qualification that merely to scrutinise someone's face to determine their character is not enough, and that the study of faces must be linked with a study of 'manner' or 'gesture,' i.e. what nowadays might be called 'body language'.
- 4 The second occurs in a section of *The Uncommercial Traveller* entitled 'A Little Dinner in an Hour,' which actually runs through a number of such would-be sciences, albeit again in semi-serious fashion: 'I hold phrenology, within certain limits, to be true; I am much of the same mind as to the subtler expressions of the hand; I hold physiognomy to be infallible; though all these sciences demand rare qualities in the student. But I also hold that there is no more certain index to personal character than the condition of a set of casters is to the character of any hotel' (*TUT*, chapter 33). We note similar emphases here, in particular the idea of a related 'science' of reading hand gestures, albeit given inferior status to the 'infallible' truths unveiled by judicious application of the principles of physiognomical observation of the human face itself. The humorous conclusion of the passage also gives us a clue to another of these in Dickens's fiction—that, because of the wholesale mixing of animate and inanimate in Dickens's vitalist

world, the science of physiognomy can be, and is, applied to things as well as to people, to dead walls as well as to Aunt Betsey.

- 5 In both these passages it is evident that the question of what combination of innate gifts of observation and practical experience and study of human nature makes for the successful reading and understanding of physiognomies is paramount. This is especially so in the case of *Bleak House*, which opens with a famous and brilliant evocation of the impediments to all visual activity of a 'London particular' fog, a condition in which, as Esther observes, 'the streets were so full of dense brown smoke that scarcely anything was to be seen.' (BH iii 29). These impediments seem to preclude the very conditions of physiognomical discrimination between one individual and other, for 'dogs are indistinguishable in mire'—which seems to mean that it is even difficult to recognise such muddy dogs as dogs at all—and 'horses, scarcely better'. Moving, theoretically at least, up the chain of being, human individuals are also seen simply *en masse*, 'tens of thousands' of them gathered into an illegible crowd made up of indistinguishable units 'slipping and sliding since the day broke', and 'jostling one another's umbrellas in a general infection of ill-temper' (BH i 5).
- 6 Thus, the first part of what follows is a brief and partial survey of some of the characters who watch or gaze at or observe others about them—which includes virtually everyone in the novel, for this is a society in which watching and being watched is endemic. In this section I shall attempt to distinguish between those who, as physiognomers, manage to overcome such impediments to vision as are presented symbolically in the fog of the opening chapter in order to successfully read internal essences from external appearances, and those who do not.
- 7 This will be succeeded by a similarly brief introduction into what it is that accurate physiognomers see in the novel. First, how individual characters reveal themselves in their appearance and gestures, and finally to what the novel reveals of the physiognomy of London as a whole. For *Bleak House* can be approached as a novel of revelation aimed at those who might have been taken in by the glittering display at the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park in 1851. As Robert Tracy has shown in a brilliant article, it can be seen as a counter-exhibition of the dark side of the city and the civilization it represents, designed, in Conrad's words, 'to make you see' the appalling condition of mid-century Victorian Britain.

Those Who Observe

- 8 I shall put at the head of my list of successful physiognomers in *Bleak House* not the most obvious possessor of sharp detective eyes in the novel, which obviously belong to Inspector Bucket, but Esther herself. In realist fiction, especially in its habit of introducing characters by means of detailed and often lengthy descriptions of their appearance, there seems to be an intimate connection between physiognomising and narration. So, it is as if, in order to qualify as a narrator at all, Esther must be in possession of sharp powers of observation, discrimination, and interpretation of bodily signs—a condition recognised by John Jarndyce when he exclaims at the end of the novel 'What a Dame Durden it is to read a face!' (BH lxiv, 750) This remark is a response to her having declared of his plan to settle her with Alan Woodcourt—also, as we shall see, a notably successful physiognomer—that 'I have seen this in your face for a long while', implying a persistence in her of the habit of observing faces that may be said to

have begun in childhood with her gazing at the face of her doll, 'with beautiful complexion and rosy lips,' who stares back at her. And although in these early pages of her narrative she disavows any acuteness of perception—'I have not by any means a quick understanding'—it seems that part of the condition of successful insight into the meaning of appearances is empathy, for 'when I love a person . . . it [my intelligence] seems to brighten', (*BH* I iii, 17) and with empathy Esther is well endowed.

- 9 Thus, we soon find her exercising as narrator a capacity for minute, critical observation of body language, first in the case of Conversation Kenge, who 'appeared to enjoy beyond everything the sound of his own voice He listened to himself with obvious satisfaction, and sometimes gently beat time to his own music with his head, or rounded a sentence with his hand.' (*BH*, I iii, 22) This is Esther at work on the observation of 'manner', but she is encouraged in the case of George Rouncewell by 'something so genuine in his speech and manner' to confide to him that 'I remember faces very well', to which he replies 'so do I, miss' (*BH* xxiv, 305). It seems as if in this case and others, it is the empathetic reciprocity of the gaze that is the guarantor of physiognomical understanding, most notably in the case of the relation between Esther and Jarndyce in the passage at the end of the novel already quoted or on the earlier occasion when he writes a letter inviting her to become his wife, and is described 'looking down into my face with the same genuine freshness and faithfulness of manner' (*BH* xlv, 536). Here clarity of vision and transparency of manner meet in recognition of one another, as they do in the case of other, less central characters who also understand one another—Mrs. Bagnet and George Rouncewell, for example: 'I see sold up in your face, George, as plain as print' (*BH* xxxiv, 420).
- 10 Moving on to Bucket himself, the same principle of reciprocity is to be noted—less obviously than his sharpness of vision of others, but equally importantly, for he is described on his first appearance as 'a quick keen man—and he takes in everybody's look at him, all at once, individually and collectively, in a manner that stamps him as a remarkable man' (*BH* xlix, 593). Thus Esther is herself quick to see in her narrative his own physiognomic quickness of vision in a triadic relationship of looks involving herself, Bucket and Woodcourt, recorded by her thus: "Mr. Woodcourt," said Mr. Bucket, who had eyed him closely as we came along, "our business takes us to a law-stationer's here; a certain Mr. Snagsby's. What, you know him, do you?" He was so quick that he saw it in an instant' (*BH* lix, 706).
- 11 Turning to the third term in this triad, it is clear that Woodcourt is another distinguished observer of human appearance, as is first stressed in Esther's narrative when she notes with obvious approval his solicitude for Richard Carstone expressed in 'a perception that all was not well with him. He frequently glanced at his face, as if there were something in it that gave him pain' (*BH* xlv, 549). It is obvious that this pain stems from long patient professional praxis, as he checks off in his mind Richard's relation to a whole series of previously observed faces: 'I never saw so remarkable a look in a young person' (*BH* xlv, 550). In delivering Esther to him at the novel's end, Jarndyce recognises the fitness of these two observers of the human countenance for each other.
- 12 But to complement this review of some of the benign skilled physiognomers in *Bleak House*, it is necessary to add to these benign instances a brief look at some malignant ones. There is Tulkinghorn, for instance, who, as a professional, has like Woodcourt built up a whole library of observed impressions of others, though in his case these are

not at all disinterested, but conditioned by one of the absolute principles of legal practice in the book—to make money. They are thus essentially about obtaining and maintaining power over others, particularly of course the person he scrutinises here throughout, Lady Dedlock, observing her vulnerability, for instance, when she is momentarily forced to drop her mask: 'she falters, trembles, and puts her hand confusedly to her head. Slight tokens these in any one else, but when so practised an eye as Mr. Tulkinghorn's sees indecision for a moment in such a subject, he thoroughly knows its value' (*BH* xli, 510). There is likewise Vholes, of course, 'fixedly and slowly looking at his client' Richard Carstone, 'following him close with his eyes wherever he goes', indeed 'always looking at the client, as if he were making a lingering meal of him with his eyes as well as with his professional appetite' (*BH* xxxix, 485).

- 13 These two exemplars of extreme watchfulness, along with others such as the Smallweeds, or Krook, or in a more comic register Coavinses ('he'd set upon a post at a street corner, eight or ten hours at a stretch, if he undertook to do it' (*BH* xv, 187), in the testimony of the boy whom Jarndyce and Esther discover pathetically 'fondling and sucking the spikes' (*BH* xv, 187) of an iron wicket gate at the bailiff's office where he works, as if these were his mother's breasts highlight a prominent theme of *Bleak House*, for this is indeed a book in which human prey is 'hunted down' by human predators. The hunting theme is humorously introduced into the novel in contingent fashion through Mrs Snagsby's corruption of the name 'Nemo' into Nimrod, the 'mighty hunter' of the Bible. But the concept also draws upon a primary tradition of physiognomic thinking, which is to link the appearance of human faces with those of different hunting species in the animal kingdom in a kind of Aesop *moralisé*: thus Krook, described by Tony Jobling as having 'a biting screw of an eye' (*BH* xxxii, 399), to take one example among many, is portrayed as a fox with his eyes fixed on Jarndyce as his prey: 'his watchfulness of my Guardian was incessant. He rarely removed his eyes from his face. If he went on beside him, he observed with the slyness of an old white fox' (*BH* xiv, 181). Just like Tulkinghorn in relation to Lady Dedlock in the passage quoted above, which begins 'he had conquered her,' Krook is after power and control, the ultimate form of which would be to swallow his victim as an animal his prey, as glimpsed in the following image of an open mouth: 'when we stood still, he got opposite to him, and drawing his hand across his open mouth with a curious expression of a sense of power, and turning up his eyes, and lowering his grey eyebrows until they appeared to be shut, seemed to scan every lineament of his face' (*BH* xiv, 181).
- 14 Thus, the portrait of Vholes's professional chambers would not be complete without the epiphany of the office cat 'patiently watching a mouse's hole' (*BH* xxxix, 485). But its point is to maximise the distance between purely instinctual predation of another species for food—even that of snakes, who provide the analogy with Vholes's briefcases, 'blue bags hastily stuffed out of all regularity of form, as the larger sort of serpents are in their first gorged state' (*BH* xxxix, 484)—and the monstrous cannibalism of Vholes and his ilk. Again it is Esther who registers this, her imaginative physiognomical insights seeing through his own, perceiving his fixing of his human prey with his eyes as the expression of undead vampiric appetite: 'so slow, so eager, so bloodless and gaunt, I felt as if Richard were wasting away beneath the eyes of this adviser, and there were something of the Vampire in him' (*BH* lx, 720).
- 15 On, even more briefly, to some contrasting examples of an inability to pierce through the fog of *Bleak House* and perceive and interpret city appearances correctly. All of them

are in some degree comic, and so we return to the satiric mode of presenting physiognomy in the novels glimpsed above in the case of Mrs Wilfer. This is true, first, even of a relatively benign and 'correct' physiognomer like Mrs Bayham Badger, whose comic hobbyhorse it is to praise and memorialise the sequence of her husbands and who correctly interprets the external signs of Richard Carstone's behaviour because she is ludicrously proud to 'still pursue those habits of observation which were formed during the lifetime of Captain Swosser, and adapted to new and unexpected purposes during the lifetime of Professor Dingo' (BH xvii, 206). They lead her to pronounce the incontrovertible judgement 'that he has not chosen his profession advisedly' (BH xvii, 206).

- 16 In a vein that comes closer to tragicomedy there is the entire chapter 25, 'Mrs Snagsby sees it all,' whose purpose is to show that Mrs Snagsby sees nothing at all. Despite, that is, her behaving in the manner of all the hunters on display in the novel, from Hortense and Guppy on up to Bucket himself, 'so perpetually on the alert, that the house becomes ghostly with creaking boards and rustling garments'. In her case, though, she is imaged less as an animal in pursuit of its prey than as a dentist determined to extract 'the tender double tooth' she imagines to be the hidden secret of her husband's paternity of Jo. 'Ha, ha! Mrs Snagsby sees it all' (BH xxv, 317) is the climactic marker of her wildly mistaken comic and parodic misuse of the powers of physiognomer and detective alike.
- 17 And finally, there is yet more tragicomedy in the central case of Mrs Jellyby's inability to see what is nearest at hand. It is obviously impossible to operate as any sort of physiognomer if, like her, one is always looking beyond the particulars of the real here and now—as Esther sees when she describes Mrs Jellyby 'looking far away into Africa straight through my bonnet and head' (BH xxiii, 296). Her daughter Caddy Jellyby comments on the same comic longsightedness whenever she tries to make sure that her mother is aware of the date of her marriage, for 'when she is told it, she only gives me a placid look, as if I was I don't know what—a steeple in the distance' (BH xxx, 370). Jarndyce's great cry to Esther, getting her to see the thirteen-year-old Charley Neckett going out to work to provide for her younger brother and sister as an emblem of the appalling conditions under which so many live in the great city at the heart of a world empire—'for God's sake look at this!' (BH xv, 188)—is aimed at all those, like Mrs Jellyby, who simply do not see what is in front of their nose in the society about them.

That Which is to Be Observed

- 18 What we have regularly on display to students of physiognomy in *Bleak House* are the 'marks of weakness, marks of woe' that Blake observes in the streets in his great poem 'London'. These may be superficially light and trivial, such as those borne by the 'stubborn little girl with a sulky forehead, a deep voice, and an inanimate dissatisfied mamma' (BH xxiii, 292) whom Prince Turveydrop attempts to teach ballet against her wishes, or profound and hopeless, as borne by Jo, who, suddenly illuminated by Bucket's torch, 'stands amazed in the disc of light, like a ragged figure in a magic lantern, trembling to think that he has offended against the law in not having moved on far enough' (BH xx, 280–81) as in the great Doré illustrations regularly used with utter appropriateness as cover illustrations for major editions of *Bleak House*, such as the Norton edition used here. Seen as borne by city humanity in the mass, there is the

crowd of loungers in Lincoln's Inn, brilliantly set against the shadow of its trees: 'on many such loungers have the speckled shadows of those trees often fallen; on the like bent head, the bitten nail, the lowering eye, the lingering step, the purposeless and dreamy air, the good consuming and consumed, the life turned sour' (BH xxxix, 489).

- 19 The novel's master physiognomer, the two eyes in the shutters of the window to Nemo's room at Krook's house, sees all this, operating fully in the manner of Lavater, who urged physiognomers to study the human countenance as its bearer sleeps, when they look in again after Tony Jobling has taken over, and 'stare at him in his sleep, as if they were full of wonder' (BH xx, 255). And 'wonder' is very much the spirit in which Esther observes the city when she first arrives there, registering its immense contrasts and juxtapositions in a sentence that descends into surprise and astonished bathos: 'I admired the long successions and varieties of streets, the quantity of people already going to and fro, the number of vehicles passing and repassing, the busy preparations in the setting forth of shop windows, and the extraordinary creatures in rags, secretly groping among the swept-out rubbish for pins and other refuse' (BH v, 47).
- 20 If here in general, as in Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper*, 'man siehet die im Lichte, die im Dunkeln sieht man nicht' ('we see those in the light, we don't see those in the dark'), Esther's vision encompasses both, and is specifically physiognomical in the conventional sense when it comes to what looks like a routine throwing of a new character on the fire, in Virginia Woolf's phrase, in the case of Mr. Gridley: 'He was a tall sallow man, with a careworn head, on which little hair remained, a deeply lined face, and prominent eyes. He had a combative look; and a chafing, irritable manner, which associated with his figure—still large and powerful, though evidently in its decline—rather alarmed me. He had a pen in his hand, and in the glimpse I saw of his room in passing, I saw that it was covered with a litter of papers' (BH xv, 167). Here, one specific Lincoln's Inn case is given more acute and detailed attention, which significantly includes a look, not just at him, but at his supposedly 'inanimate' surrounding.
- 21 For Gridley in fact takes us into the heart of the problematics of physiognomy in *Bleak House* where reading the society and the city as a whole is concerned. He keeps sane 'by angrily demanding the justice I never get', but is fobbed off at all turns in his desire to find specific faces to deal with and physiognomically comprehend: 'The system! I am told on all hands, it's the system. I mustn't look to individuals. It's the system' (BH xv, 192, 193). Dickens at this stage of his career is interested in portraying the anonymity of a society in which we are nobodies who can find no one to take responsibility for the condition in which we find ourselves. To 'Nemo' in this novel we can add 'Nobody's Fault,' the original title of *Little Dorrit*, which recapitulates what Gridley is told here by the faceless and nameless representatives of the faceless and nameless powers embodied in the fog of Chancery.
- 22 It is interesting in this context to note that one of the two specific uses of the word 'physiognomy' in *Bleak House* is not concerned with any individual human face at all. Its 'actants', in Greimas's phrase, are all abstract personifications like 'night' and 'day', as, during the night and morning following Krook's death from Spontaneous Combustion, they observe the sleepless surrounding court containing the Sol's Arms. 'Day' physiognomises the place when morning arrives, for it 'may discern, even with its dim London eye, that the court has been up all night. Over and above the faces that have fallen drowsily on tables, and the heels that lie prone on hard floors instead of beds, the

brick and mortar physiognomy of the very court itself looks worn and jaded' (*BH* xxxiii, 405).

- 23 And indeed, that phrase 'brick and mortar physiognomy' resonates widely in a novel that attempts to read the faces of casters and dead walls as much as it attempts to read faces, and in which inanimate objects appear as physiognomical observers themselves. Thus, the street in which the Dedlock town house is located is presented more than once as one in which it 'stares at the other houses in the street of dismal grandeur, and gives no outward sign of anything going wrong within' (*BH* lvi, 667). 'It is a dull street under the best conditions', we are told elsewhere, 'where the two long rows of houses stare at each other with that severity, that half-a-dozen of its greatest mansions seem to have been slowly stared into stone, rather than originally built in that material' (*BH* xlviii, 575). A yet more sinister example of the principle is the metamorphosis of Chesney Wold itself in Esther's mind from a paradise of peace and tranquillity into a vindictively active protagonist in the deadly pursuit of her mother: 'calm and quiet below me in the sun and shade, lay the old house, with its terraces and turrets, on which there had seemed to me to be such complete repose when I first saw it, but which now looked like the obdurate and unpitiful watcher of my mother's misery' (*BH* xxxvi, 452).
- 24 The link between the 'brick and mortar physiognomy' of the house and the physiognomy of the individual is often provided—as in the case of Gridley already touched on—by the physiognomy of the room. At Chesney Wold, George Rouncewell is shown what were Lady Dedlock's rooms but will be so no longer, and remarks: 'rooms get an awful look about them when they are fitted up, like these, for one person you are used to see in them, and that person is away under any shadow' (*BH* lviii, 694). For, in Dickensian physiognomics, as in Balzac's, there is an essential concept of individual 'aura' that imparts itself upon the surroundings of specific individuals and classes of people. The relationship between the two great writers in this respect can best be shown by comparing the office of Fraisier in *Le Cousin Pons*—'*ce cabinet ressemblait absolument à ces petites études d'huissier du troisième ordre, où les cartonniers sont en bois noirci, où les dossiers sont si vieux qu'ils ont de la barbe, en style de cléricature, où les ficelles rouges pendent d'une façon lamentable, où les cartons sentent les ébats des souris*'—with the home of Tulkinghorn in *Bleak House*. The latter is much grander of course, but it can be seen in exactly the same manner as an emanation of personal aura, as if in both cases the surroundings in which they have their being were but the carapace of some low species of life: 'Like as he is to look at, so is his apartment in the dusk of the present afternoon. Rusty, out of date, withdrawing from attention, able to afford it. Heavy, broad-backed, old-fashioned mahogany and horsehair chairs, not easily lifted, obsolete tables with spindle-legs and dusty baize covers . . . environ him' (*BH* x, 119).
- 25 The idea of the human creature in its shell takes us back of course to the physiognomical inscrutability practised by so many of the human oysters in Dickens. And yet *Bleak House* hopes in a manner to shock us, with the aid of physiognomers like Esther and Woodcourt, into a recognition that, despite them, the signs are all there to be seen if one is willing and able to see them. The narrator remarks, *à propos* of Tom-all-Alone's, that 'this desirable property is in Chancery, of course. It would be an insult to the discernment of any man with half an eye, to tell him so' (*BH* xvi, 198), and the implicit rebuke to anyone who does not see this is repeated countless times in the novel's essential appeal to active 'writerly' involvement on the part of the reader. For

the city is described as a 'great tee-totum', that is to say a four-sided top with letters inscribed on it that are, or should be, legible. (BH xvi, 198, 199).

- 26 If they are not, Jarndyce's great cry, 'for god's sake look at this,' is directed at us, and Snagsby's experience at Tom-all-Alone's—'he, who has lived in London all his life, can scarce believe his senses' (BH xxii, 277)—awaits. Starting like Esther, Richard and Ada as 'children in the wood' (BH iii, 34), we are to learn to see physiognomically, and to ask, with Blake, whether what the novel shows us as an exhibition of the condition of England is 'a holy thing to see, / In a rich and fruitful land.'

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NOTES

1. In addition, I myself have made some smaller contributions to the field in a number of essays on Physiognomy in individual novels by Dickens published between 1988 and 1993, and listed in the bibliography below.

ABSTRACTS

This essay hopes to add to the impressive array of criticism and scholarship about the 'science' of physiognomy, derived from Lavater, in Dickens, focussing chiefly on its role in *Bleak House*. I survey the successful observers of physiognomy in the novel, such as Esther and Woodcourt, and what they observe—not just faces but 'manner' or 'body language.' I also explore the physiognomy of things, as this builds into a formidable indictment of the face of Victorian society.

Cet article espère contribuer à la grande masse critique des experts sur la physiognomonie, 'science' inspirée de Lavater, et Dickens, se concentrant principalement sur son rôle dans *Bleak House*. J'étudie les observateurs physiognomonistes qui réussissent dans le roman, comme Esther et Woodcourt, et ce qu'ils observent, à savoir bien entendu les visages mais aussi les manières et le langage corporel. J'explore également la physiognomonie des objets, construction d'une redoutable attaque de la façade victorienne.

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Mots-clés: physiognomonie, Lavater (Johann Kaspar), Dickens (Charles), langage corporel, *Bleak House*

Keywords: physiognomy, Lavater (Johann Kaspar), Dickens (Charles), body Language, *Bleak House*

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