

constitue un bel apport à la connaissance. Jean Bérenger a d'ailleurs tenté un véritable tour de force en dressant un bilan de ces textes en conclusion.

Ce livre est important. Il ne concerne pas seulement les spécialistes du phénomène militaire qu'on a trop souvent tendance à étudier en vase clos, ce contre quoi, d'ailleurs, Corvisier, par ses travaux, n'a cessé de lutter avec tant d'à-propos. Les mises à jour initiées dans cet ouvrage — parce qu'elles débordent, plusieurs d'entre elles en tout cas, le cadre strict de l'histoire militaire — intéresseront aussi les spécialistes de l'histoire européenne qui désirent se tenir au courant de l'évolution des connaissances en histoire de l'Europe à l'époque moderne et contemporaine.

André Corvisier est un universitaire chevronné qui a consacré sa vie à la recherche et à l'enseignement. Les « Mélanges » qui lui sont dédiés constituaient donc un endroit approprié pour le vibrant appel de Roland Mousnier en faveur des universités « en déclin un peu partout et menacées de disparaître, sinon en principe et en apparence, mais en fait » (24). Puisse son exhortation être entendue.

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Mary Cowling — *The artist as anthropologist. The representation of type and character in Victorian art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Pp. xxii, 391.

Certainly during the past decades, fascination with the events, celebrities, and relics of the Victorian epoch has swelled impressively. Students of politics have applied the strategy of the computer to electoral and legislative landmarks that had been surveyed formerly by conventional means and, then, to those that still eluded observation. Victorian women, whether noble, downtrodden, or of middling description have acquired eager partisans. One scorned ornaments of Victorian taste have been restored to honored niches in trendy households.

Such are a few many facets contained in the generous dimensions of Victoria's long reign that have caught the attention of zealous scholars and astute critics as well as the arbiters of public taste. The sovereign lady herself has attracted a flotilla of biographers who are providing, at long last, a discerning analysis of a complex woman whose ordinary demeanor should not be permitted to camouflage her remarkable legacy of a populist monarchy for a democratic society.

Included in this vigorous revival of interest in the Victorian record is a fresh appreciation of the shapes, forms, and colors of Victorian fashion and arts. This renewed study leads directly to the dusty storehouse of painting and other artifacts of the period. A few artists, such as Tenniel or the pre-Raphaelites, never lost their admirers, but the greater number of Victorian artists were consigned to the scrap heap by successive waves of revolutionists led by the prophets of radical technique and theme.

Among those intent on rehabilitating Victorian artists and their works is Mary Cowling who offers a perspective evaluation of a concept pressed upon the pictorial studies of the markedly dissimilar men and women inhabiting the Victorian canvas by

the advocates of physiognomy. This methodology was in vogue during the nineteenth century, and though its tenets are no longer widely accepted, once it exercised undisputed authority. Defined as a system of judging human character from facial and cranial features, physiognomy was employed to classify men and women into racial, social, and cultural categories that conveniently suited the premises of the day.

To demonstrate the dependence of artists upon the theories of physiognomists, Cowling has fixed arbitrarily upon the canvases of William Powell Frith (1819-1909), a now neglected painter, and two well-known illustrators for *Punch*, John Leech (1817-1864) and George Du Maurier (1834-1896). Unlike Frith, in recent years, both Leech and Du Maurier have enjoyed a considerable revival. Their lively sketches for *Punch* reveal much about the Victorian scene and the remarkable characters who populated it. Leech accomplished his work in the first half of the Victorian age, and his drawings, therefore, despite a raw and rambunctious middle class striding aggressively to command a pivotal spot in politics and society. Du Maurier, on the contrary, recorded an affluent mercantile class allied with the survivors of ancient lineage to form a plutocracy that exercised dominance with easy self assurance.

Frith made his reputation as a painter whose canvases seldom departed from prevailing ideas of his time in subject and style. Though known to Turner, Frith did not follow that artist's innovative use of light and texture as effective instruments to suggest reality but not to provide a graphic description of landscape and objects. Instead, Frith was content with familiar topics drawn from the tales of popular writers, like Goldsmith, Johnson, Addison, or Scott. Also, he completed pictures recalling the turbulence of the English past, like the tragic fate of Charles I, and any number of renditions in oil of the heroics of Roman antiquity or of the sentimentality of his contemporaries.

With trepidation, in 1852, Frith ventured beyond the time honored rituals of traditionalists into the challenging but disconcerting arena of his own world. Eschewing the radicalism of Turner or the doctrinaire canons of the pre-Raphaelites, he resolved to reproduce on canvas an extraordinary slice of the Victorian panorama. The result was *Ramsgate Sands*, an expansive vista of a popular holiday beach, where he sprinkled all sorts and conditions of folk, from the aged to the young, from families to those still seeking spouses, from the rich to the poor, from disreputable to the pious, and from those wishing solitude to those searching for distraction. Crowd scenes, of course, had long been a stock item in a painter's arsenal. Brueghel had his robust peasants; Michelangelo his tempestuous last Judgment; and Raphael his pensive School of Athens. More recently, David had concocted his stately pageant of Napoleon's coronation, and Delacroix had splashed his bare breasted France leading her men to victory. Despite modern dress, however, such spectacles still represented the classical prescription of noble people executing a grand moment (Brueghel excepted) far removed from the hum-drum routine of the ordinary citizen.

Frith's reputation catapulted to the front range of the artists at the Royal Academy's annual exhibit in 1854. *Ramsgate Sands* attracted a throng of curious admirers, who viewed it from a hastily installed barrier, and on making her inspection, the Queen resolved promptly to purchase it. This canvas, Cowling points out, contains all the definitions claimed by the physiognomists. The laboring poor have brute visages that resemble the coarse ape-like features ascribed to the primitive ancestors of man. Such facial characteristics were stamped uncritically upon hardened criminals, whose animalistic brows and squat heads receive particular attention from

Cowling. Up the social scale, such features are distilled into the sturdy mold of the middle-class face and further refined to the finely chiselled facades of those lucky to enjoy the bounty of comfortable wealth and the prestige of ancient lineage. These themes were repeated by Frith in successive compositions, especially his *Derby Day*, which he presented at the Academy in 1858, and in his *Railway Station*, which he displayed in 1865. Both of these received popular acclaim, and a mourning Victoria did not forget her beloved Albert's praise for Frith's work, which the Prince had delivered personally. She commissioned Frith to paint the official picture of the marriage of her eldest son, Edward, Prince of Wales, to Alexandra of Denmark in Saint George's chapel at Windsor.

In 1871, Frith exhibited his boldest expression of the crowd, the *Salon d'Or* at the Royal Academy. Again, a railing had to be erected to protect his work, which was a glimpse of the ornate gambling halls at Hamburg, the German port and mercantile center. Desperate losers and delirious winners are certainly not the stuff that portray the integrity and nobility of the English gentleman nor the stoic virtues of the Roman warrior. Also, exotic women revealing their sensuous charms can scarcely be an advertisement for womanly purity. In this picture, Frith ripped the veil of Victorian propriety to point up the way some of us, at least, really are.

A similar concern for the principles of physiognomy, Cowling argues, can be found in the illustrations of Leach and Du Maurier. Clearly, she has a point, but the limited purview of her thesis now becomes apparent. Neither Leach nor Du Maurier, nor Frith for that matter, can be boxed into such a narrow focus. Admittedly, she makes no claim to offer a comprehensive interpretation of Victorian portraiture, but physiognomy is not the whole story. Leech, for example, sketches hunting scenes that represented commonly accepted notions on the mannerism of the English gentleman. If gentility is dropped and rugged roguery is substituted, then, the satire of Rowlandson or Gillray has been tapped. Moreover, insensitive depictions of dissolute Irishmen wasted by drink and corrupted by popery reflect common prejudice. Leech's oval faced young misses, on the other hand, are his view of proper English girls whose innocence cannot inhibit their mischievous energy. Du Maurier's drawings of serene women confidently managing their men are his concept of a proud race of upper-class women who had the income to underpin their poise.

Persistent reverence for the dictates of the classical tradition in describing subjects cannot be brushed aside, nor can the saccharine nostalgia for a renaissance or medieval past that has more to do with romance than reality. Still, Cowling has provided a much needed key to a clearer understanding of a heretofore disregarded though significant piece of the intellectual equipment of the Victorian artist. Her service not only to the rehabilitating of the Victorian era but also to the refurbishing of modern scholarship is a major contribution. Her readers should look forward to her further guidance through the dark labyrinths of the unexplored passages of Victorian illustrations and painting.

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