cannot be proven with archaeology and is certainly not reflected in the Hebrew Bible. Don Corleone and Hamlet could not have said it better themselves.

EXHIBITS: HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Facets of Faces

Brandon Brame Fortune

Defining Features is the title of a new book on scientific and medical portraiture and also of an exhibition at London's National Portrait Gallery through mid-September. Both are about "portraits of a specific yet ill-defined group of people over four centuries." Whether we focus on defined features or ill-defined groups, questions of definition are at the heart of Ludmilla Jordanova's two projects. They provide a broad, cross-disciplinary study of portraiture as visual evidence of the developing social identity of those who work in the sciences, medicine, and technology. Her subjects range from Isaac Newton to Susan Greenfield, the current president of the Royal Institution.

Defining Features Scientific and Medical Portraits 1660–2000
Ludmilla Jordanova, Curator
National Portrait Gallery, London, 14 April to 17 September 2000.

Defining Features Scientific and Medical Portraits 1660–2000
by Ludmilla Jordanova
Reaktion Books, London, in association with the National Portrait Gallery, London, 2000. Paper, 192 pp. $24.95, £14.95. ISBN 1-86189-059-1.

Jordanova, an historian of science, is professor of visual arts at the University of East Anglia. She is keen to find in portraiture documents of value for historians who study professional identities, and she is particularly interested in the worlds of scientific and medical knowledge. Her previous publications include important contributions to the burgeoning literature that situates science within social and cultural history.

I found the exhibition and book to be particularly fascinating because Jordanova has done what I would find daunting—explored the role of portraiture in shaping and expressing the identity of British scientists through the 300-year interval during which science took on its modern shape, evolving from "work" done by persons from a variety of social backgrounds to the formidable world of 21st-century research, invention, and medical practice. Jordanova has not, however, attempted an exhaustive study. Instead, she provides an overview—a provocative summary of the ideas that emerge when one thinks deeply about portraiture and its function within the historical and social world of scientists, doctors, inventors, and their work.

The exhibition, which includes objects borrowed from a number of British collections, is fairly small. It is organized into four sections: The introduction includes a marvelous portrait of Messenger Monsey, an 18th-century physician styled by his portraitist Mary Black as a learned man, caught in a moment of deep reflection. A series of portraits exemplifies the diversity of people who have worked in the sciences since the 1650s. A case study focuses on portraits of Edward Jenner, who developed the first vaccination for smallpox. And a series of portraits and sketches for portraits tell us about the interaction between artists and their subjects. Purposefully, Jordanova does not privilege the traditional fine arts of oil painting and monumental sculpture. Rather, she groups together a variety of media: sketches, photographs, engravings, miniatures, large paintings, sculpted busts, mass-produced medallions, souvenir mugs, and books. She even includes a "Bath Oliver" biscuit, which has at its center a profile of William Oliver, an 18th-century physician in Bath. Individual labels convey information about the sitter and the artist. Some also mention the purpose for which the portrait was made, its imagery, or the reason it is included in the exhibition. The display of portraits, however, conveys only part of the story. One should read Jordanova's book before visiting the exhibition, for each image is illustrated and usually discussed more fully in the text.

Learned doctor. Mary Black's oil portrait of the physician Messenger Monsey (1764).

CREDIT: ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS

The book's four carefully constructed chapters, which to a certain extent mimic the divisions within the exhibition, touch on a dizzying array of ideas. In the first chapter, Jordanova considers definitions of portraiture, its media, the importance of portrait prints and their dissemination, visual conventions (particularly those used to define a learned man—often used in portraits of scientists), and portrait collecting. The following chapter, "Boundaries," discusses varieties of scientific, technological, and medical work and the social positions of people who do such work. A third essay offers a lengthy analysis of gender roles and scientific heroism. It includes discussions of portraits of Edward Jenner, the distinctions drawn historically between surgeons and physicians, and the roles of women in science. The last section of the book, on portrait practice, features a variety of portrait sketches and unusual portraits of scientists within the context of the relationship between portrait-maker and his or her subject. Although intended for a general audience, the text has extensive endnotes and a carefully selected bibliography.

Despite the plethora of incisive comments on portraiture in her book and even in her case study of Jenner, Jordanova does not provide an in-depth analysis of the production of one portrait or one series of portraits. I missed that analysis, for it would have helped the reader to understand just how difficult it is to make generalizations about portraiture (and about those who do scientific work) and thus would illuminate the qualifications that fill Jordanova's insightful text. It is often impossible, as she makes clear, to gather sufficient documentation on portrait commissions; on the artist, the sitter, and their interaction; or on the details surrounding the production of medals or engravings of those well known to their colleagues and to the public. But it would have been interesting to have a full history of portraits of one prominent figure and a sense of the sitter's own thoughts, particularly comments about his or her portraits.

Historians, in general, are just beginning to understand the power of visual culture. *Defining Features* offers a thoughtful introduction to the possibilities open to both historians of science who are interested in scientific identity and, more broadly, those who want to explore the agency of portraiture in history.

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