



The Physiognomy (The Well-Built City Trilogy)

By Jeffrey Ford

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Offering a freshly-imagined world of bizarre creatures and strange customs, this unique and sardonic allegory explores the power and price of science and the ambiguity of morality. Humorless and drug addicted, physiognomist Cley is ordered by the Master of the Well-Built City to investigate a theft in a remote mining town. Well-versed in serving justice, arrogant Cley sets out to determine the identity of the thief using the pseudo-science of judging people by their features, but becomes distracted from his task by a beautiful girl from town. When the young-but-wise woman rejects him, he loses faith in his abilities, and in a drug-induced frenzy he “remakes” her features. The subsequent horror of what he has done, what he represents, and the shallow life he leads forces him to seek atonement and true justice, risking the Master’s wrath, which may entail death by head explosion.

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The Physiognomy (The Well-Built City Trilogy) By Jeffrey Ford Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In the Well-Built City, Cley is the perfect judge and jury, the infallible arbiter of life and death, for he is trained in the art/science of physiognomy. To the physiognomist, body shape and facial features reveal every aspect of personality, expose every secret, and even predict the future. When Drachton Below, Master of the Well-Built City, sends his premier physiognomist into the primitive outlands to uncover the thief of an unperishing fruit that may grant immortality, Cley discovers love and the truth about physiognomy. His discoveries unleash horrific destruction and plunge him into Hell--and neither he nor the Master can foresee their revolutionary fate of their world.

A *New York Times* Notable Book and the winner of the 1998 World Fantasy Award, *The Physiognomy* may be read with equal success as either fantasy or SF, but it does not much resemble the fiction of either genre. This novel's closest relatives are *In the Well-Built City*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Kafka's black allegories, and Caleb Carr's crime thriller *The Alienist*. The brilliant and sardonic Physiognomist Cley is SF/F's most entertainingly arrogant narrator since Richard Garfinkle's *Celestial Matters*. You won't believe that this strange, ambitious, and *sui generis* work is Jeffrey Ford's first novel. --*Cynthia Ward*

From Kirkus Reviews

Humorless, inflexible, drug-addicted physiognomist Cley is ordered by Drachton Below, Master of the Well-Built City, to investigate a theft in the remote mining town of Anamasobia. The miners of the town, while delving for blue spire--a coal-like mineral that eventually turns the miners into blue statues--have discovered in a cavern the living mummy of a strange being, the Traveler, holding a perfect white fruit (now missing) that Below believes will confer immortality. Cley pronounces the guilt or innocence of the townsfolk by studying their physiognomies, but he becomes distracted by the beautiful and knowledgeable Arla, whose father Cley suspects of having stolen the fruit. In a delusional frenzy brought about by withdrawal symptoms, Cley attempts to improve Arla's disposition by mutilating her face according to physiognomic principles--but then the Master impatiently sends in troops to slaughter the townsfolk and capture Arla, the Traveler, and the fruit; Cley is condemned to the sulphur mines. He is later pardoned, deliberately re-addicted, and brought back to the Well-Built City, where Drachton Below, having eaten the white fruit, is suffering headaches so dreadful that they're causing explosions and threatening the destruction of his empire. Can the reformed Cley defeat the mad Master and save Arla and the Traveler? Seriously, logically, stunningly surreal: a compact, richly textured, enthralling fantasy debut--even if the publishers prefer to bill it as an "unconventional literary novel." -- *Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

"A modern allegory in the manner of Franz Kafka...." -- *The New York Times*

"A modern allegory in the manner of Franz Kafka...." -- *The New York Times*

"Ford is a gifted writer who has produced a real page-turner of a moral allegory..." -- *Locus*

"Ford is a gifted writer who has produced a real page-turner of a moral allegory..." -- *Locus*

A New York Times Notable Book -- *NY Times*

Ford writes equally well about the scientific cult of precision and the acceptance of ambiguity. You don't

have to embrace his antiscience message to appreciate the care and skill that went into its framing. -- *The New York Times Book Review*, Gerald Jonas

Winner of the 1998 World Fantasy Award -- *Unknown*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Diana Chung:

The e-book untitled The Physiognomy (The Well-Built City Trilogy) is the publication that recommended to you to see. You can see the quality of the guide content that will be shown to an individual. The language that author use to explained their ideas are easily to understand. The article writer was did a lot of research when write the book, so the information that they share to you personally is absolutely accurate. You also could possibly get the e-book of The Physiognomy (The Well-Built City Trilogy) from the publisher to make you more enjoy free time.

Sang O\'Connor:

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