

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of Scientific Aspects of Graphology—a Handbook

REFERENCE: Nevo, B., Ed., *Scientific Aspects of Graphology—A Handbook*, Charles C Thomas, 2600 S. First St., Springfield, IL 62708-4709, 1987, \$40.50.

When first asked to review a book entitled *Scientific Aspects of Graphology* it was assumed by the reviewer that this was the slimmest volume published since the *Collected Wit of Millard Fillmore*.

This collation of graphological esoterica has four major sections: (1) basic concepts and methods of graphology; (2) developmental and situational matters such as determining stress in individuals; (3) the use of graphology in personnel selection, job performance, identification of criminal disposition, and intellectual abilities; and lastly, what we have all been waiting for, (4) the section on validity and reliability.

Now try these profound nuggets of "scientific" wisdom—"volitional movement expresses the personality of the willing personality. The volition itself is not expressive, and the aim of the volitional movement is not important in this respect either; the only thing that is of decisive importance is the individual course of the movement." I am sure our dedicated readers will be able to apply that remarkable insight in the next case involving the identification of a check forger.

The chapter on the graphology of individuals under stress brings forth such profundities as "the emotional state engendered by parachute jumps is similar in its intensity to anxiety states, encountered in the clinical context" and that undying bit of folk lore "parachuting and especially night jumps are fraught with uncertainty." Regrettably the authors did not provide us with the long awaited data on writings made by people descending in the parachutes, after thoroughly titillating our interest.

There are refreshing parts of this book. In a great little chapter on "Graphoanalysis for Military Personnel Selection," the authors admitted that they ended up with poor reliability coefficients, and that graphology was not worth a damn in picking candidates for Officer Training Schools.

Those devotees of the field of forensic science research will enjoy the chapter on the use of graphology in criminal cases. It is claimed that one versed in the arcane arts of the graphologist or graphoanalyst can examine handwriting in criminal cases and determine "the physical (body) type, the intelligence and the dominant needs of suspects at a specific time in their lives." Remarkable!

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It is well known that in Western Europe and in Israel the two distinct fields of graphology and forensic document examination are somehow intertwined. A careful reading of this book will help the casual observer to understand why forensic document examiners in the United States run from the warm embrace of the graphologist.

On the positive side, this book does provide basis to show how graphology has now moved up from its humble origins and is now ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with its equals in the fields of phrenology, palmistry, tarot deck reading, and dedicated astrology. The reviewer, of course, being somewhat conservative, has always maintained that chicken entrail reading is more precise than graphology in the scientific prediction of human behavior.

The reviewer has searched, lo these many years, for an appropriate occasion to use the word "oxymoron" in print. One cannot toss this word about indiscriminately, it must be used in exactly the right circumstances. At last the occasion has arisen—the title of this book is the perfect oxymoron.

It is incumbent upon the reviewer of any book to make a recommendation as to whether a specific book would be of use to others in the profession. In all seriousness, it must be said that *Scientific Aspects of Graphology* is too heavy for use as a paper weight, too light to be used as a door stop, but just about right for holding down the shredded cabbage in a fermenting sauerkraut crock.