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Introduction

If one were to suggest that the study of motion and speed in the nineteenth century was crucial to the attempt to understand the nature of time, then a central role in that study must be assigned to photography—its own invention of the nineteenth century. From tracing the intricate, slow motion of the stars and planets to defining the swift trajectory of missiles and birds, the camera quickly became the essential tool for stopping movement, capturing both what the eye could not see and what the hand could not accurately describe. For those scientists who early recognized its potential, the camera was employed to record motion in such disparate fields as astronomy, physics, chemistry, zoology, geology, and paleontology.

In the area of human and animal locomotion, where the camera was widely used to record what had hitherto been invisible, the two most noted investigators were the Anglo-American photographer Eadweard James Muybridge and the French scientist Etienne-Jules Marey. (Both men were born [in 1830] and died [in 1904] within weeks of each other.) Muybridge, who made his reputation with the photography of the Western and Central American landscape, took up the study of movement in 1872 at the behest of Leland Stanford, the governor of California and racing connoisseur, who utilized Muybridge’s talents to acquire data that could be applied to the training of his horses. Marey, a physiologist who came to photography rather late in a scientific career filled with official honors, took up the camera after he saw Muybridge’s photographs of Stanford’s horses, which were published in the French scientific journal La Nature in 1878.1 Subsequently, Marey refined and developed his photographic machines, making them a part of a long list of instruments he had invented to trace movement in men and animals since 1859.2

The difference in the backgrounds and formation of these two men has, until now, not seemed an important factor when comparing their work. We have always assumed that the contribution of both to the study of locomotion was a scientific one: objective, accurate, analytic, systematic. This assumption certainly holds for Marey. His experimental methodology, the widespread applicability of his results, and his eminent standing in the field do not conflict with the categories of thought or activity we attribute to scientific endeavor.

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The assumption is probably also valid for the photographs Muybridge made for Stanford insofar as Stanford had specific goals or theories he wanted verified and he, not Muybridge, directed the work that went on from 1872–1879 in California. But Muybridge’s later work—that vast compendium commissioned by the University of Pennsylvania in 1883 entitled Animal Locomotion (Muybridge 1887)—is different. Although carried out under the rubric of science, Muybridge’s method and conclusions are inconsistent with what we understand to be scientific experiment in the analysis of locomotion. These photographs show us the vulnerability of a number of our assumptions about the nature of science and movement. They also show us the dangers of believing what we see.

Background to the Pennsylvania Work

In 1879, Muybridge’s work for Stanford was completed.3 He spent the next two years preparing a book on the subject (Attitudes of the Horse in Motion, published in 1881) and giving lectures that were highlighted by the use of his zoopraxiscopes to animate and project the images he had made.4 In the summer of 1881 he set sail for Europe. The trip was paid for by Stanford, who had preceded him there, paving the way for Muybridge’s introduction to the most eminent scientists and painters of the time.

The photographs of Stanford’s horses had been widely published in Europe, and their appearance had caused a sensation; Muybridge, the author of these magical feats, was in turn greeted with enormous excitement and interest. Marey was the first to honor him, at a fête at his home in Paris on September 16,5 where he presented the American to such scientific luminaries as Helmholtz, as well as to the photographer Nadar and the French authority on horses, Col. E. Duhousset.6 In November a second reception was given by the painter Meissonier who introduced Muybridge to the Parisian art world; and in December, with Meissonier as interpreter, Muybridge presented his work to the Cercle de l’Union Artistique. In London, where he arrived in March 1882, the enthusiastic reception continued, and he spent the month lecturing to the Royal Society, the Royal Academy, and the Savage Club, among others. These experiences—Muybridge’s meeting with Marey and Meissonier in Paris, his introduction to the marvels of the dry-plate process by Marey, and the celebrity status accorded him everywhere he went—left him with an ever-increasing desire to expand the work begun in California, a desire that could only be satisfied by finding a new source of funding. Stanford could no longer be depended upon. For, on April 20, 1882, while Muybridge was lecturing in London,
Muybridge’s notebooks show that originally twelve lateral and twenty-four foreshortened views of this action were made and that he subsequently redid eight of each. Only six remain, and these are arranged sequentially and numbered consecutively even though the missing phases of movement are quite apparent.

Stanford’s account of the California project had been published. This version, The Horse in Motion, contained five of Muybridge’s photographs and ninety-one lithographs made from the rest of his pictures, but it appeared without his name anywhere on the title page. Stanford had relegated Muybridge to the role of technician, and Stanford’s chosen editor, Dr. J. B. D. Stillman, had relegated Muybridge’s lengthy written introduction (which he had hoped to see published with the photographs) to the waste bin. The appearance of The Horse in Motion marked the beginning of Muybridge’s break with Stanford and the end of the governor’s patronage. Muybridge alone could not carry out the kind of comprehensive investigation of animal and human locomotion he had in mind. His only source of funds was the proceeds from his lectures and from the sale of individual photographs and zoetrope strips of the moving animals. No one in Europe seemed particularly interested in backing him. The possibility of “funds for an exhaustive investigation” from the Royal Society was subverted when the Society saw the Stanford book. It was futile to argue his part in the work: “no explanation could avail in the face of the evidence on the title page and in the book before the council.” The suggestion of a collaboration with Marey, Meissonier, and an anonymous capitalist (on a book “upon the attitudes of animals in motion as illustrated by both ancient and modern artists . . . which will hand the four of us down to posterity”) never came to fruition.

In spite of all these setbacks, Muybridge’s return to America in June of 1882 saw the beginning of an extended lecture tour on the east coast and no abatement whatever in his hope to expand the work. By March 1883, he had already produced a second prospectus for “a new and elaborate work upon the attitudes of man, the horse and other animals in motion,” which was to include “photographs of actors performing their respective parts, works of art from the Museums, Picture Galleries and Libraries of Europe,” an essay by Marey, and finally (if all that were not enough), the right on the part of the would-be subscriber to “send a horse or other animal or subject to my studio for a special photographic analysis of its movements which will be illustrated without extra charge” (Muybridge 1883).

At last, in the early summer of 1883, Muybridge’s prospectus found a receptive audience at the University of Pennsylvania. Through the combined efforts of the painter Thomas Eakins and the sportsman-engineer-art patron Fairman Rogers, both of whom had heard Muybridge’s lecture in Philadelphia...
the previous February, the provost of the university, William Pepper, was persuaded to put the grounds of the newly created Veterinary Department at the photographer’s disposal and to put together a committee that would guarantee, initially, $5,000 to him for the undertaking. A formal invitation was issued in August of that year by the university, and after securing the necessary equipment, Muybridge began making photographs the following spring as soon as the weather was sunny enough. The work was completed in 1886 and subsequently offered for publication by subscription in 1887 under the title Animal Locomotion. Comprising 781 plates assembled from 19,347 single images, this enormous undertaking proved to be identical in scope to Marey’s locomotive investigations in Paris.

But unlike Marey, Muybridge was not trusted to carry out his investigations on his own. The university prescribed both the nature of the experiments and the conditions under which they would take place. It appointed a commission to oversee Muybridge: “it was represented to the Trustees of the University that several individuals appreciating the importance of the proposed work to art and science would unite in guaranteeing all expenses connected with the investigation if a University Commission would be appointed to supervise the entire affair and thus insure its thoroughly scientific character” (Marks, Allen, and Dercum 1888:5, my italics).

This was a very unusual procedure. Perhaps it was necessary because of concern about using nude human beings as subjects for either scientific or artistic investigations. (Eakins, for example, was fired from the Academy of the Fine Arts in 1886 for undraping a male in a mixed class.) It is also possible that the university officials had reservations about Muybridge’s character. Certainly they knew of his unsalubrious personal history: his trial for the murder of his wife’s lover in 1874 and his reputation for “eccentricity.” They also may have been aware that Muybridge conceived of and promoted himself as an artist rather than a scientist.

For indeed, Muybridge was not a scientist. He had no training in any scientific field and no knowledge of medicine, anatomy, or physiology. He was a photographer and a photographer of repute. When he found that Stanford had published what he considered his original work, the blow to his pride was enormous, so much so that Muybridge instituted a lawsuit against Stanford (which he eventually lost in 1885). Stanford had seen Muybridge as an employee. Muybridge saw himself as an artist, a perception supported and encouraged by the acceptance he found in artistic circles as he traveled and lectured: it was the artistic community that took the dominant interest in and benefit from his work after the first surprise of the photographs wore off; it was for the delectation of artists and as entertainment for a paying audience that Muybridge used his zoopraxiscope (his lectures in London, for example, and the attendant publicity, made one commentator describe him as “the most talked about entertainer on two continents”); although scientific journals in America and Europe had published the results of the California work, it was not scientists but artists, “dilettanti” and “literati,” who subsequently made up the audiences at his lectures and demonstrations and were the subscribers to the portfolios of his photographs. The scientific view was that Muybridge’s photographs were inaccurate: Since he used more than one camera, the object was not photographed from a constant perspective or from a single point of view or at equal intervals of time. The intermediary phases of the movement were too hard to piece together from the ones that were pictured because the distance separating them was too large. Muybridge failed to represent the trajectory of the movement. He “could not avoid errors which inverted the phases of the movement and brought to the eyes and spirit of those who consulted these beautiful plates a deplorable confusion.” Muybridge himself accepted the commission with aplomb—“I am neither a physiologist nor an anatomist [therefore they] are assisting in the work to give it additional weight and value” (Mozely 1979:xxxvi, my italics). But the attempt by the university to ensure scientific accuracy (and perhaps short-circuit any indecorous behavior on Muybridge’s part) would prove to be only partially successful.

The Photographs

To begin with, Muybridge’s multicamera system did not produce images that gave the viewer a sense of ongoing motion. He photographed the subjects as they moved along a track with up to three batteries of twelve cameras each: one battery parallel to the subject (the resulting images are called “lateral”) and the other two batteries at sixty degrees or ninety degrees to it (producing either “front,” or “rear foreshortenings”). Each photograph was made by a different camera (in tandem with the subject) against the same background as the one before and after it but from a subsequent vantage point. Thus the subject never seems to go by us. The two essential components of our perception of locomotion are missing: there is no sense of the space traversed by the subject and no notion of time passing. As the subject moves, the camera moves with it, or so it seems. The camera and subject moving in unison effectively cancel out the sense of movement; the only things that change are the gestures of the subject. Movement has to be reconstructed by the viewer from these gestures from frame to frame.
The primary aid in this reconstruction is actually the sequential structure in which the individual images are arranged by Muybridge in the final print. That is, Muybridge took the frames made by each camera and arranged them in rows. The resulting assemblage, which contained from one to six of these rows (and combined both lateral and foreshortened views in a number of variations that will be described below), was then rephotographed and printed. The print was to be read both horizontally (from left to right for the most part) and in the majority of cases vertically. The horizontal sequence provided a temporal succession, while the vertical row displayed a spatial ordering, i.e., the figure was seen from two or three different points of view that (supposedly) had been taken simultaneously.

This sequential ordering of the images dictates our perception of the relationship among them. The sequence endows its component parts with movement because we believe any sequence to be orderly, logical, and progressive. It is the sequence which cues us, in fact, to believe that the action represented was ongoing and that it took place exactly in the order in which we see it reproduced. Thus our perception is directed by our belief in this structure to dissolve in our imaginations the black borders marking off each individual part and then to fill in the missing parts—the gaps between the separate phases of the movement supplied by each single image. The sequence invites us to cooperate in creating the illusion of motion. Our faith in the sequence allows us to suspend disbelief.

Muybridge noted the temporal intervals between one image and the next in his prospectus to Animal Locomotion and also the exposure times. In the same pamphlet, however, are general and specific caveats he appended to these measurements. First, on page 9, he stated that the “perfect uniformity of time, speed and distance was not always obtained.” And, among his twenty-four reference notes to the plates, he detailed eighteen possible irregularities in the exact measurements of the intervals between phases. These irregularities apply to 25 percent of the plates. Based on visual evidence only, I would hazard that an additional 10 percent are also irregular: these are sequences in which the images could not possibly have been taken at the stated temporal intervals. Such irregularities (noted or not) are evident only by an examination that discards the sequence and tries to recreate the relation between one single frame and the next. Otherwise the sequential structure has the effect of making them invisible.

Although there is absolutely no possibility of knowing if such an effect was intended, Muybridge did employ additional tactics which ensured invisibility and internal consistency. In Figure 1, for example, the sequences seem, at first glance, logical enough. The images in each horizontal series are consecutively numbered, and the vertical numbers are identical for each phase of the movement. (This numbering is a crucial device in our acceptance of the arrangement as given.) Nevertheless, it is obvious that from frame 3 to 4, the smith has changed position to such a degree that we must surmise that a phase (or phases) of the movement has not been recorded. Moreover, the expectation that the missing phase in the lateral series would have been caught by the camera in a foreshortened series is frustrated: the views match up both in the subject’s poses and in the numerical order. It seems too much of a coincidence that the corresponding cameras all failed at the same time and yet how else to explain why the identical phases are missing in each series? Only, I believe, by understanding that the system of consecutive numbers, as well as the alignment of foreshortenings and laterals, is a post facto assignment.

From the notebooks Muybridge kept on the work (now housed at Eastman House, Rochester), it is evident that with six exceptions he always made twelve lateral and twelve or twenty-four foreshortened views of each movement, yet in Figure 1 only six of each remain. Thus, although the frame numbers may belie it, phases are missing. And if a phase of the movement did go unrecorded (or if a negative was damaged), then the corresponding view also must have been removed. What remained was made congruent in its placement on the page and in its numerical order. Figure 2 makes this clearer. Like the first example, the plate is internally and numerically consistent. But in the last four frames of the bottom row, two sets of different numbers can be distinguished. Those in white, which are in reverse, were those from the original negatives, while the black ones were added after the frames were assembled to create the final print. In his juxtaposition and numbering, then, Muybridge created what seems to be (and what we have been led to expect to be) a rational succession. Once we begin to question this sequence, given not only the enormous gaps between the images, but also the conflicting numbers in some of the frames, the integrity of the whole plate becomes doubtful.

Then again, the logic of any sequence may be suspect. Figure 3 is a lateral series. Each of the twenty-four frames is consecutively numbered, but it has absolutely no continuity as a series, even though some groups of two or three look successive. It is a composite of negatives taken from three different picture-making sessions—the separate session numbers can be made out clearly at various points in the foreground. The plate demonstrates to us the vulnerability of our assumptions both about sequential structures and about what Muybridge was up to. Even though it
Figures 2 and 2a (detail) Plate 504: Ascending and descending stairs. Two distinct sets of numbers, one white, which belongs to the original negative, and one black, which has been added before the final printing to make the sequence look unified, can be made out in the last four frames of the bottom row. For similar occurrences see also plates 67, 164, 212, 277, 299, 444, 494-495, 498, 500, 505, 515, 517.

Figure 3 Plate 299: Playing with ball. This plate is a compilation of three sessions: 1482, 1483, and 1485. The notebooks show that four out of twelve cameras failed during session 1482. See also plates 321, 501, 503; and 776-779.

Figure 4 Plate 498: Miscellaneous phases of the toilet. The model (Miss Blanche Epler, who can also be seen in Figure 2) removes her chemise in the seventh frame only to find it on again in the eighth. See also plates 493-498, 501-503, 516-517, 660. For more of Miss Epler dressing and undressing, see plates 415, 425, 493-495, 497.
looks right, there is no guarantee that any of its images are related to each other—formally, temporally, or logically—except in Muybridge’s perception of a pictorially acceptable final print.

The necessity for congruency between lateral and foreshortened views often seems to override other factors we would take to be imperative in the analysis of motion, such as the recording of a complete movement or the capturing of all of its phases. The results are intriguing. Where gaps between phases are most blatant, the leftover pieces are still assembled, numbered consecutively, but titled “miscellaneous” (Figure 4). The direction given by the title in these cases (which are, in fact, only exaggerated examples of what is going on in many other plates) only partially neutralizes the direction given by the sequential structure. Of the twelve “miscellaneous” plates, nine are accounted for in the prospectus by note 4: “Isolated phases photographed synchronously from the various points of view”; while three are explained by note 3: “Successive phases photographed at irregular intervals of time synchronously from the various points of view.” In practice, the difference is hard to understand.

It is even harder to understand just what criteria Muybridge used to title a plate “miscellaneous.” Thirty-three plates in Animal Locomotion have notes 3 and 4 appended to them (or, in the case of a lateral series, note 7: “Isolated phases of motion from a single point of view”) but no “miscellaneous” in their titles (Figure 5). And there is an additional group of fourteen plates that is as irregular as the “miscellaneous” plates but has neither a title calling our attention to this fact nor any notation in the prospectus whatsoever (Figure 6).

A subset of the “miscellaneous” plates illustrates successions not even of phases of movements but of poses (Figure 7). Yet these too are accounted for in the prospectus by note 4. The poses have been put into a sequence, but such a sequence resists any attempt at a reading for chronological succession. While the vertical relations may seem intelligible, the horizontal series is dictated not by time, but by the formal qualities of the figure and by the symmetry in which Muybridge has arranged poses, that is, by aesthetically rewarding juxtapositions.

The necessity for congruency or internal consistency does not always result in the elimination of a negative from one series when the corresponding negative in another series is lost. Instead, alternative strategies are deployed so that the viewer is prompted to overlook or not see that there are pieces missing. In Figure 8, a photograph of the empty backdrop, taken from a viewpoint consistent with the rest of the series, stands in for a missing foreshortened view. In Figure 9, two frames have been left uncropped so that they take up the space of one that is missing. In still a third example, an extraneous image has been inserted into a series (Figure 10). Again, that such disjunctions have remained unnoticed is not too surprising. The series are aligned with each other and on the page, obliterating any cues that would prompt us to compare them more closely. Also, we presume that if one sequence is “right,” the others must be too.
Figure 6 Plate 150: Descending stairs, stooping, lifting a pitcher, and turning. The missing phases of movement among frames 5, 6, and 7 are not accounted for by any reference notes, though originally twelve lateral and twenty-four foreshortened views were made. See also plates 73, 150, 223, 308, 331, 381, 408, 412, 413.

Figure 7 Plate 530: Various Poses. The sequential structure and the consecutive numbering cue us to look for ongoing motion. The rhythm created by symmetrical juxtaposition, on the other hand, redirects our interest to a consideration of the pictorial elements and their interrelation within the page. The final two frames in each series are missing so that the intended symmetry of the arrangement is spoiled. See also plates 529, 531. [Ed. Note: Damaged frame is on original.]

Figure 8 Plate 34: Walking and carrying a fifteen-pound basket on head, hands raised. A view of the background has been inserted to substitute for the missing rear foreshortened view in frame 5. See also plate 119.
Figure 9  Plate 137: Descending stairs and turning around. The second and third frames in the bottom row have not been cropped so that they take up the space left by the missing frame. For the lateral series Muybridge used a $4\frac{1}{4}'' \times 5\frac{3}{16}''$ plate holder, exposing an area of $3\frac{3}{16}'' \times 4\frac{5}{16}''$ on the negative. Beginning in the late summer of 1885, the plate size for the foreshortened views was ca. $2\frac{3}{8}'' \times 3''$. Muybridge cropped his negatives according to the demands of the page format and the quality of the images. See also plates 219, 274, 301, 429, 463, 548.

Figure 10  Plate 202: Dropping and lifting a handkerchief. Comparison of the third lateral and foreshortened views shows that the handkerchief's position is different in each. The foreshortened view is a reprint of the first frame in the series. See also plates 9, 69, 180, 202, 342, 616.

In Figure 11, no frame is missing, but the first five laterals seem to have been contracted. Here vertical and horizontal alignment has dictated the rupture of normal perspectival relations in the frame. The central portion of the image has been removed and the two remaining halves have been abutted so that the image is made the same size as the corresponding foreshortened views. The real distance between the two subjects has been changed in the lateral view, but the final print is again internally consistent. These tactics—insertion, expansion, and contraction—are all useful in making one series look as if it belonged with another as well as look logical in its own right; the uniformity in the numbering of the images supports this seeming consistency. Surprisingly, Muybridge threw such attempts at caution to the winds in other plates. The missing numbers in two out of three sequences in Figures 12 and 13 are quite apparent. They signal to us that there are missing phases. Nevertheless, the structure of the whole ap-
Figure 11 Plate 448: Woman descending stairs with goblet meets another woman with a bouquet. To make the lateral and foreshortened views congruent, the central portion of the first five laterals has been removed and the remaining halves abutted and printed. See also plates 45, 215, 330, 429, 447, 450, 452.

Figure 12 Plate 43: Walking, sprinkling water from a basin, and turning around. The missing numbers in the two lateral series signal missing phases, but the structure helps us to overlook the gaps. We “see” relations that are not there.

Figure 13 Plate 300: Football, drop kick. The lateral series is the only one relatively complete and is printed first. See also plates 301, 341, 429, 566.
pears rational and the gaps remain unseen. In both cases the one unbroken sequence is printed at the top of the page, the sequences are aligned on the page, the internal relations are perceived as legitimate.

While each sequence determines our perception of the images contained within it, the structure of the whole plate—Muybridge's disposition of more than one series on the page—determines our perceptions of the relations among sequences. The most common arrangement—a lateral series printed on one line with a rear foreshortened view beneath it and a front foreshortened view under that—is only one of the thirty-six variations he has devised. These variations tell us what to look for and what to overlook. For example, when the continuity of a lateral series is interrupted on the plate by a foreshortened series, the reconstruction of the event in time is made difficult, and the viewer is thus persuaded to focus on the vertical (or spatial) relations. This may, in fact, be precisely the point, because missing phases, renumbered or unnumbered images, and disjunctions between frames are then made less visible. The opposite operations are involved in those cases in which the front and rear foreshortened views are printed together but on a different plate than theilaterals to which they belong (Figures 14 and 14a). Here the lateral series is complete, but the foreshortened views have pieces missing. As they are printed on separate plates, they cannot be compared. Figure 15 is an example of another variation and its use. It seems to consist of three lateral sequences, yet the bottom row is not a sequence of movement but a series of "track shots" (described below). The arrangement of the plate helps us perceive movement where there is none.

Perhaps this extraordinary variety of arrangements could be explained in terms of a common narrative structure: the chronological succession of events differs from the path the author chooses to disclose those same happenings. In other words, what we may have is the equivalent to the literary distinction between "plot" and history: Muybridge may be telling a story. But because the photographic sequences exist all at once before our eyes, the path of disclosure is created not only by Muybridge's disposition on the plate (his plot), but also by choices made by the viewer.
Figures 14 and 14a  Plates 349 and 350: Fencing. The irregular foreshortened views are printed on a separate plate so that comparison with the laterals cannot be made. See also plates 336 and 337; 338 and 339; 340 and 341; 565 and 566.

The degree to which cosmetic, aesthetic, or narrative requirements supplant the need for analytically verifiable data can be located in the "stepped prints" and the "track shots." In the former (Figure 16), one series is printed out of alignment—either to the left or the right of its counterpart. This pattern usually hides missing frames or an incomplete series and forces the viewer to consider each sequence as a discrete entity. The track shots (I have borrowed the name from cinema) are groups of pictures in which the subject never moves but it seems that the camera has. Muybridge arranged his cameras in a semicircle around the subject; they go off simultaneously, providing a 180-degree view of one position. As with the stepped prints, finding correspondence between lateral and foreshortened views is not an issue, for there are no laterals or foreshortenings per se. Yet, because Muybridge has printed more than one series on the page, the viewer is prompted to construct some kind of arrangement or strategy that will incorporate all the individual frames and the separate sequences into an intelligible unit. Some possibilities are illustrated in Figures 17 and 17a.

In the illustrations discussed so far, and inferentially in all the pictures Muybridge made in Philadelphia, we cannot on the basis of visual perception alone, and without additional contextual information, be sure that what is seen is not a tableau—preconceived and choreographed gestures of what continual movement would look like in fragmentary stages portrayed by actors and actresses. Since so many of these pictures are demonstrably fragments, what guarantee do we have that any of them were made either simultaneously or sequentially? What guarantee is there that the images in these plates were not made days or even weeks apart and then assembled to approximate what we would expect the photographic notation of movement to look like?

In spite of the anonymity of the gridlike background in these pictures, the seeming objectivity of the camera and authenticity of results, and even in spite of the evident seriousness of the direction under which the work was carried out, these pictures are incongruent with what we understand to be scientific analysis of locomotion. The unsystematic and inconsistent aspects of the photographs effectively obscure any knowledge of the underlying laws governing the me-
Figure 15 Plate 487: A: Ascending step; B: Lifting a handkerchief from the ground; C: Walking; D: Running. A and B are phases of one movement each, C and D comprise six shots each of one position photographed simultaneously—the model does not move. Arranging the series in which movement has been photographed with one in which there is no movement provokes a tendency to see movement in the latter. See also plates 321 (a combination of a sequence and a series of poses), 483, 486, 488–492, 519, 555–557, 651, 776–778 (combinations of different lateral series).

Figure 16 Plate 356: Kneeling, firing, and rising. There are eight frames in the top row, seven in the middle, and six in the bottom. Stepping the lateral and foreshortened views makes it easier for us to overlook the anomalies. See also plates 167, 247, 254, 303, 463, 635, 694.

Figures 17 and 17a Plate 527: A–C: Spanking a child; and Plate 520: A–C: Wrestling; D: Sparring without gloves. The sequential structure helps us to endow the images with movement. Actually, no ongoing motion has been photographed. Some movement may be determined by reading plate 527 vertically, but the subject was posed. Plate 520 is made up of sequences containing one phase of a movement captured at one instant by a battery of cameras. All of the "track shots" were made in the summer of 1884. The grid background was not yet in place, and only six cameras were being used. See also plates 520–528.
chanics of movement. In many cases the moving limbs are hidden by drapery. The very movements that have been chosen for scrutiny—in the human realm at least—are often unrepresentative. The scientific purpose served by a study of one woman chasing another with a broom (Figure 18) or a girl falling into a pile of hay (Figure 19) is impossible to fathom without directions. And are we to understand that there are constant factors that govern "fancy dancing" (the subject of Plates 187–189 and 191–194) or practical applications that can be derived from "chickens being scared by a torpedo" (the final plate of the set)?

But while the photographs may not be scientific experiments in the mechanics of locomotion, they are certainly a treasure trove of figurative imagery as well as a compendium of social history and erotic fantasy. Indeed, Muybridge often used his camera not as an analytic tool at all but as an instrument of representation, and the results are at least as absorbing as what he was ostensibly producing. Take, for example, sexual difference. In these pictures, both men and women walk, run, jump, and lift objects (men concentrate on big rocks and poles, while women spend an exaggerated portion of their time with jugs and vases). Both men and women are depicted throwing buckets of water (ad nauseum: Muybridge's fascination with "freezing" drops of water in midair provides an obsessively recurring motif [Figure 20]), but the men also wrestle, box, play baseball, fence, and do "men's work": carpentering, laying bricks, and horse-shoeing. In addition, they play leapfrog and tip their hats with evident seriousness and enjoyment. As we might expect, the women sweep, dust, wash and scrub floors, dance, arrange their drapery, flirt with their fans, dress and undress extensively, stumble, and fall. This going about the occupations deemed natural to each by social mores is only part of the story. The women also engage in particularly awkward or ungraceful actions and what were, at that time, certainly forbidden activities.
Figure 20  Plate 406: Woman pouring a bucket of water over another woman. This event occurs three times in Animal Locomotion, in plates 406, 407, and 408. Originally, the titles were "Miss A. giving Miss C. a bath." Muybridge seems as interested in "freezing" the motion of water as in the movement of pouring. See also plates 398, 399, 400-404, 409, 440, 462, 485.

Figure 21  Plate 452: Woman kneels and drinks from the water jar of another woman and both walk off. See also plates 182-184, 203, 445, 453.

Figure 22  Plate 247: Sitting down and placing feet on chair. See also plates 239, 245.

Figure 23  Plate 429: Woman disrobing another. The notebooks show that Muybridge's original title for this and for plates 427 and 428 was "Inspecting a Slave (white)." The theatrical bent of Muybridge's imagination is also evident in the costumes in Animal Locomotion—they include "peasant" and "Greek" girls—and in the scenarios, which include "crossing a brook over stepping stone," "walking in a gale," and "relinquishing drapery for nature's garb," which is the notebook title for almost every sequence of a woman undressing.
Muybridge used his camera to disclose those aspects of human activity that usually remained unseen: unseen, not because invisible to the naked eye, but because social conventions and morality dictated that they remain concealed except in the imaginative world of private fantasy. The photographs objectify erotic impulse and extend voyeuristic curiosity in a language we now recognize to be taken from the standard pornographic vocabulary (Figure 21). Naked women meet and kiss, kneel in supplication, crawl around on their hands and knees and on all fours. They disrobe each other, pour water down each other’s throats and dump buckets of it over each other’s heads. They also smoke—a practice confined at that time to actresses or other “loose” women. And “smoking” is the only description given in his notebooks for these plates, even though Muybridge’s public titles declare that the subjects were engaged in other activities (Figure 22).

Conclusion

Muybridge’s concern is with stories, not with movement. We are invited to share in this concern. The setting in which the photographs were made, by dint of its familiar three-dimensional construction, stimulates more than just an interest in the rhythms of gesture and posture. Each sequence and each single image within the sequence invites us to transform the models into dramatis personae frozen into unaccustomed postures of beguiling attraction (Figure 23). We are not limited to a purely formal consideration of the contours of the body or the shape of any action but are impelled beyond, into the world of dramatic narrative and biography. Light and perceived depth (the strong modeling and the vigorous foreshortening) call our attention to the human interest of the subjects and the photographer’s artistry in putting them through their paces, while titles such as “Turning around in surprise and running away” (“Ashamed” in the notebooks) help to establish the tale (Figure 24). The faces demand scrutiny; the concentration with which they go about their tasks and the sheer individuality of each cajole us into a psychological identification with them. We are compelled by the subject’s fascination with his or her own performance and by the photographer’s fascination with them.
Muybridge's fascination is made clearer in the description of his models from the prospectus. Males were cataloged by profession (including the photographer himself as an "aging athlete") and females by marital status, weight, and age. In the notebooks, one can also find hip, bust, and even shoe size. Although Muybridge may have been aware that the mechanical nature of the medium in which he was working provided a distance that dematerialized the nakedness of the female body, the singularity of such individuals as the 340-pound naked lady (age twenty and unmarried) attempting to stand up cannot be diminished by his stated photographic purpose (Figure 25).

We have always assumed that Muybridge was photographing movement in time, that he was showing us how humans and animals get from one place to another by stopping time and freezing motion. But what seems evident is that he was telling stories in space—giving us fragments of the world that we could construct into people's lives, into dramas or jokes or fantasies—so that we would immediately recognize what we have never seen before. Muybridge, under the guise of offering us scientific truth, has, like any artist, made a selection and arranged his selection into his own personal truth. Why this has not usually been seen or commented upon seems clear: the contract between the viewer and the single photograph, which is based on the unshakeable belief that the camera cannot lie, has been extended by the viewer to include the arrangements. Muybridge's claim to science thus rests on the viewer's belief in the objectivity of the camera and the structure of the sequence. As such, it is suspect. But if the explanations and representations of movements that make up Animal Locomotion are not scientific, they are still the most convincing illusion of natural movement that had hitherto been achieved. They call for a shifting of our belief in the nature of the work so that Muybridge the artist might rival or displace Muybridge the scientist.

Acknowledgments

David Wooters, print archivist at Eastman House, Rochester, Joel Snyder, professor at the University of Chicago, and Blake Fitzpatrick drew my attention to a number of facts contained in this article. Financial assistance for the research was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

This study began under the direction of Hollis Frampton, who sadly is no longer here to thank.

Notes

1 "Dear Friend, I am in admiration of M. Muybridge's photographs published in the issue before last of La Nature. Could you put me in touch with the author? I would like his assistance in the solution of certain problems of physiology so difficult to resolve by other methods. For instance, on the question of birds in flight, I was dreaming about a kind of photographic gun for seizing the bird in an attitude, or better, in a series of attitudes which impart the successive phases of the wing's movement..." (Marey to Tissandier in a letter written on December 16 and published in La Nature on December 29, 1878.) Muybridge responded, and he did make pictures of birds, which he brought with him in 1881, but the results were so disappointing (see note 5) that Marey immediately got to work on his photographic gun and had it operating successfully by the winter. Mozely 1972 and 1979 translates "je rêvais"—"I was dreaming" or "I was musing"—as "I have devised," which inaccurately pushes back the invention of the photographic gun by more than four years.

2 For the development of Marey's cameras, see Braun 1983; Frizot 1977; and Marey 1895.

3 Muybridge's California work is fully documented in an excellent study edited by Anita Ventura Mozely: see Mozely 1972.

4 Muybridge's zoopraxiscope comprised a magic lantern that illuminated and projected revolving discs upon which were painted images from his photographs, giving the illusion of movement. This instrument is thought to substantiate his claim as the "father of motion pictures." But Emil Reynaud had already "invented" animated film (i.e., drawn or painted images on strips and a projecting mechanism that gave them the illusion of motion) in 1877. Moreover, Reynaud's films had spoolcket holes in their sides so that they could be advanced evenly. Later Muybridge did use photographs in his zoopraxiscope, and in his desire to establish his position in the history of cinema, he felt it necessary to request that his painted discs
be "utterly destroyed so that no remnants of them will remain. I now much regret having made them as they are not calculated to enhance my reputation. The original figures photographed from life are those I prefer to leave behind me and I shall feel more comfortable when you write me of your having completely destroyed them" (letter of June 16, 1899, to E. Faber, University of Pennsylvania archives).

5 On his part, Muybridge presented Marey with the photographs of birds Marey had requested three years previously. Marey's reaction to this picture was not wholly positive—Muybridge had frozen a group of pigeons in midflight rather than the successive positions of the wing of one bird. Marey invited the American to his laboratory at the Collège de France and out to the Bois de Boulogne, where his physiological station (where he would carry out his photographic experiments) was being constructed. In a letter to Frank Shay, Muybridge changes the ownership of the physiological station: "make me a visit to my [sic] Electro Photo studio in the Bois de Boulogne and I will give you a welcome" (Dec. 23, 1881, Huntington Collection, Syracuse University). Muybridge was taking a risk with his invitation, because the station was not finished until the late summer of 1882.

6 All of Muybridge's lectures—which compared the treatment of the horse in art photography—were taken from Duhousset's 1874 book and Marey's 1878 article in La Nature.

7 Transcription of Muybridge letter to Stanford, May 2, 1892, in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

8 Muybridge to Shay, December 23, 1881, Huntington Collection, Syracuse University. The many requests to Marey to participate in this venture are documented in the transcripts of four Muybridge letters to Marey in the California State Library, Sacramento.

9 Eakins had been in correspondence with Muybridge since 1878 when he had written Muybridge a letter urging him to develop and use a more accurate system of photography (Alta, California, November 21, 1878).

10 This committee (not to be confused with the supervisory commission described below) consisted of C. C. Harrison, future provost of the university; Thomas Hockley; Samuel Dickinson; Edward Coates, chairman of the Instructional Committee of the Academy of the Fine Arts; J. B. Lippincott, the Philadelphia publisher; and Pepper. Originally Muybridge was given $5,000, which came either out of Lippincott's pocket (Haas 1976:146) or directly from Pepper (Mozely 1979:xxvi). Then each of the six members advanced $5,000, probably at the time of the formation of the supervisory commission (Mozely 1979:xxvi). According to Hendricks (1975:153) the committee comprised one Joseph Harrison, a philanthropist; George Barker, physicist; Lippincott; Coleman Sellers; and Pepper. Dr. F. X. Dercum, a participant in the Pennsylvania work, stated that Pepper "secured the co-operation of Mr. C. C. Harrison, Mr. Edward Coates, and Mr. Hockley. . . . These four gentlemen formed a pool giving the sum of $10,000 each toward the expenses of the undertaking" (letter to G. Nitzsche, May 10, 1929, University of Pennsylvania archives). As for the total cost of the work, again reports differ; in another (undated) letter in the University of Pennsylvania archives from E. Faber to Nitzsche, the sum is fixed at $35,000, of which Muybridge repaid $30,000 from sales of the portfolios. According to the Provost's Report of October 1887, "the output for lenses apparatus and other purposes exceeded $30,000" (although his introduction to Animal Locomotion: The Muybridge Work . . . . . Pepper states that the outlay was "nearly $30,000"). Hendricks gave the total cost as more than $40,000 (p. 154), and Mozely put it at $50,000 (p. xxxiii). Muybridge himself did not say how much he received, but the sales of the work were too low to repay the outlay: "I am not very high in favor with any of my guarantors and perhaps shall not be unless they occupy the thousand 4 dollars or so they are each of them out of pocket as contributors to the worlds knowledge and the Universities honor" [sic] (letter to Jessie Burk, August 5, 1895, University of Pennsylvania archives).

11 Muybridge made a diapositive from each of the original negatives provided by his cameras. From the diapositives a composite gelatin negative was made, and a final collotype positive was then printed. The collotypes varied in dimension from 12 x 19 to 6 x 18 inches. They were printed 19 x 24-inch linen paper and sold by Prospectus to subscribers at $100 for a portfolio of 100 plates. Six hundred dollars would buy all eight portfolios, as the extra 181 plates were included free. Only thirty-seven perfect sets of the complete work were produced. Sales of the work in this form were a failure. Later Muybridge published selections of the work in book form in London: Animals in Motion (1899) went through five editions; The Human Figure in Motion (1901) went through seven editions.

12 The university sent a formal invitation to Muybridge on August 7, 1883, the commission was formed in March 1884. Usually these events are understood to have happened at the same time. In his acceptance letter to the university of September 3, 1883, Muybridge reiterates the terms of the university's invitation, but the commission is not mentioned. Therefore, its establishment is most likely the product of some hesitation or doubt on the part of the university.

13 "The actual facts are from beginning to end he was an instrument to carry out my ideas" (Stanford to Stillman, January 1883, Huntington Collection, Syracuse University).

14 Marey 1899, my translation. For similar views, see Gastine 1897:13ff.

15 Muybridge began his photographic work at Pennsylvania using three systems. The first, a single camera and lens with a slotted-disc shutter (or two, revolving in opposite directions on a single axis), originated with Marey (the shutter was called a Marey wheel). It was used extensively by Eakins, who perhaps imposed it upon Muybridge, since it afforded greater accuracy than his multiple cameras. The second was a single camera with eight lenses in a corona and a slotted-disc shutter. Muybridge had already written to Marey in July 1882 describing a similar machine. He told Marey he was going to patent it but apparently could not do so (transcription of this letter is in the California State Library, Sacramento). Finally, Muybridge used his own multilens camera, but without much success. By August 1884, he still had "not yet done any work with his series of lenses and I hear they do not work. The shutters are too clumsy and slow. The university people are dissatisfied with the affair as he cannot give them the result they expected. Which was to photograph the walk of diseased people paralytics etc. so that they could show their peculiarities to the medical student. This it seems however cannot be done even with the best known contrivances So they would like to tire the whole concern but they have gone too far to back out" (from Thomas Anschutz to J. Wallace, August 1884, Archives of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Descriptions of the various cameras used are to be found in this letter and one dated June 18, 1884). There seem to be only fourteen plates in Animal Locomotion from the summer of 1884. See Figures 17 and 17a.

16 The foreshortened views have their genesis in the work done for Stanford, in which Muybridge photographed a phase of the horse's (and man's) gait simultaneously from up to five different viewpoints. The results, however, were not published in a sequential arrangement (Muybridge 1881: photographs 110 and 187–191). In the same volume Muybridge published fifteen separate athletic poses (photograph 123), which, like the separate poses in Animal Locomotion, are arranged together in sequences on one page.

17 By 1885 Muybridge had incorporated a tuning-fork chronograph to measure the intervals between exposures (a full description is given in Marks, Allen, and Dercum 1886:26). However, the times given in the prospectus cannot all be found in the notebooks Muybridge made during that year. The notebooks do show, however, the range of inaccuracies to which his system was prone—out of 778 experiments recorded, there were 118 without any time record, 52 camera failures, 28 chronograph failures, and 95 darkroom-related mishaps, such as fogging, breaking, etc.
By contrast, Marey’s photographs are obviously and overwhelmingly graphic and two-dimensional. There is no measured-off backdrop in the images to suggest space, and no clue to depth or recession can be perceived within the frame.

None of the authors who has written on Muybridge in this century found any anomalies in Animal Locomotion. MacDonnell thought that “it is doubtful whether [Muybridge] approached the work quite as seriously as is sometimes supposed” (1972:127), and “he probably thought it all pretty hilarious” (1972:10). Hendricks found that “sometimes [Muybridge] was hard put to decide what to have his models do,” and “[he] decided a light touch might do the publication some good” (1975:186. 187). But like Mozelfy, for whom “Muybridge was a man who assumed a scientific attitude very gradually” (1979:xxx), none of these writers has drawn any implications for the work from these comments.

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Torrentius and His Camera

Erik Barnouw

The known facts about Johannes Torrentius can be briefly stated.

Born in Holland in 1589, he was a painter in the greatest age of Dutch art. A contemporary of Hals and Rembrandt, Torrentius produced works that were hailed as among the most brilliant. They were bought by collectors far and wide, including King Charles I of England.¹

His work came in two sharply contrasting styles. He sometimes painted nudes, tending toward the scatological and irreverent. Many people considered them not only offensive but very crudely painted. His still lifes, on the other hand, won ecstatic praise from connoisseurs. The Swedish ambassador in The Hague, planning Dutch art purchases, sought advice from a leading engraver, Michel le Blon, who urged him to buy Torrentius still lifes. Le Blon wrote to the ambassador:

I know of nothing in the world that can compare with these works, which are believed by some of the principal masters, and not without reason, to be the work of magic... One sees nowhere any crust of paint, neither beginning nor end to the entire work. It seems to have been poured or blown upon the panel rather than painted.²

Constantijn Huygens, cosmopolitan littérateur and private secretary to the Prince of Orange, wrote memoirs in which he commented discerningly on the artists of his time. About Torrentius he wrote:

As to his art, I find it difficult to restrain my use of words in asserting that he is, in my opinion, a miracle-worker in the depiction of lifeless objects, and that no one is likely to equal him in portraying accurately and beautifully glasses, things of pewter, earthenware, and iron so that, through the power of his art, they seem almost transparent, in a way that would have been thought impossible until now... Torrentius exasperates skeptics as they look in vain for any clue as to how he uses, in some bold manner, colors, oil, and if the gods desire it, his brushes.

According to Huygens, Torrentius had been heard to say that his gift had come to him suddenly by divine inspiration. Huygens expressed puzzlement that this inspiration should have fallen so far short in his painting of living people.

... for he is so disgracefully incapable of painting human beings and other living creatures that leading connoisseurs consider their attention wasted on that part of his work...³

Torrentius did everything in bravura style. His real name was Johan van der Beeck, meaning “of the brook.” In latinizing it, he gave himself an aura of distinction and also transformed the brook into a torrent. The added intensity seemed to fit him. He dressed with dash and was followed everywhere by admirers (see Figure 1). When he visited his barber, they were said to go along to help bring water, towels, comb, and curling tongs. He delighted his entourage with ribald and anticlerical jests. He was said to have proposed a toast to the devil. He had married early, but his marriage soon broke up, and he subsequently lived a life that was described as dissolute. He was said to have boasted, on one occasion, that all the loose women of Holland paid him tribute. Asked how he painted his extraordinary still lifes, he gave cryptic, provocative answers. He did not paint these as other men painted, he said. Neither easel nor brush were used. He said that his panels lay flat on the floor and that as he worked, a musical sound would emerge from the panel, like that of a swarm of bees. He was once quoted as saying: “It isn’t I who paint; I have another method for that.” Once, at a party, he said he had to rush back to his studio, or there might be an explosion. He said he did not have to lock his studio, as the pungent odors kept people away.

All his still lifes were small. A painting owned by Charles I of England was described as follows in the catalog of the royal collection:

Item in a black ebony frame two Rhenish wine glasses, wherein the reflexion of the steeple of Haarlem is observed, given to the king by Torrentius by the deceased Lord Dorchester’s means. 7½ x 6 inches.⁴

Torrentius infuriated some of his rivals; some charged him with using magic or sorcery. Even more he aroused the suspicion and anger of Holland’s Calvinist elders. In 1623 they instigated an investigation of him. They charged heinous crimes against God and religion, and hinted at collaboration with demonic forces. A campaign was launched to discredit him and to warn others not to associate with him, on the ground of his alleged dealings with the devil. In 1627 he was arrested by authorities of the city of Haarlem, where he lived and worked. Some of his paintings were seized—from Torrentius himself and

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² According to Huygens, Torrentius had been heard to say that his gift had come to him suddenly by divine inspiration. Huygens expressed puzzlement that this inspiration should have fallen so far short in his painting of living people.

³ Torrentius did everything in bravura style. His real name was Johan van der Beeck, meaning "of the brook." In latinizing it, he gave himself an aura of distinction and also transformed the brook into a torrent. The added intensity seemed to fit him. He dressed with dash and was followed everywhere by admirers (see Figure 1). When he visited his barber, they were said to go along to help bring water, towels, comb, and curling tongs. He delighted his entourage with ribald and anticlerical jests. He was said to have proposed a toast to the devil.

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from others—and apparently destroyed. Descriptions of some of these remain:

- A woman sitting somewhat oddly with her hand under her leg.
- A woman pissing in a man’s ear.\(^5\)

Brought to trial, Torrentius heard testimony on curious and cryptic remarks he had made over the years, all solemnly quoted as proof that he trafficked with the devil. He was convicted. The prosecution demanded that he be burned alive at the stake. In prison he was repeatedly tortured to force a confession of sorcery. Depositions by several torturers—four worked in relays—remain extant, and make clear that he confessed to nothing and gave no information beyond what he had said in court. The defense was not allowed a final statement, on the ground that it would be unseemly for the public to hear a defense of one so infamously guilty. He was sentenced to twenty years in prison, probably the equivalent of a death sentence. The trial caused wide agitation. A committee of three painters, one of them Frans Hals, was allowed to visit him in jail; it reportedly found him in woeful condition from his torture. The Prince of Orange urged the city of Haarlem to release him so that he might go to some other city or country to pursue his art; Haarlem authorities declined. Then a letter—in French—came from King Charles I of England to Frederik Hendrik, Prince of Orange:

Dear Cousin,

Having heard that one Torrentius, painter by profession, has for some years been in prison in Haarlem, sentenced by a court of justice in that city for some profanation or scandal committed against the name of religion . . . be assured that I do not seek to favor him as a challenge to the rigor of that sentence . . . which we trust was justly imposed for so enormous a crime; yet nevertheless, in view of the reputation he has won for his artistic talent, which it would be tragic to allow to be lost or to perish in prison, we are moved by the pleasure we have taken in the rare quality of his work to beg you . . . to pardon him and to send him to us . . . where we shall take care to keep him within the bounds of the duty he owes to religion . . . that we may employ him at this court in the exercise of his art.

At our Westminster Palace, 6 May 1630, w.g. Charles R.\(^6\)

The Prince forwarded the letter to authorities in Haarlem. When they still declined to act, the Prince took matters into his own hands, sending an order direct to the Haarlem jailer to release Torrentius to the custody of the English ambassador, Sir Dudley Carleton. This was done, and Torrentius was quickly escorted to England. At Sir Dudley’s suggestion, he took with him one of his early still lifes.

Thus Torrentius became in 1630 a court painter in the service of Charles I. Physically he seems to have been in bad shape. There appears to be no record of any work done in England. He never again produced any of the miraculous works that had made him famous. An English account speaks of him giving “more scandal than satisfaction.”\(^7\) In 1642 he returned to Holland, where he died two years later.

These facts about Torrentius, with detailed documentation from surviving judicial and other records, were assembled in 1909 by the Netherlands art historian A. Bredius, long associated with Amsterdam’s Rijksmuseum and a specialist on the Age of Rembrandt. He published the assembled information in a booklet titled Johannes Torrentius, Schilder (Johannes Torrentius, Painter). A thought-provoking revelation was that Bredius had been unable to find, anywhere in Europe, a work by Torrentius. Various obscene and irreverent works had apparently been destroyed at the time of the trial. But the still lifes too had vanished, a disappearance that seemed extraor-
ordinary in view of their celebrity and the high prices paid for them. Bredius expressed hope that some might turn up.

Far from closing the book on a mystery, the scholarly Bredius account proved only the beginning. Stimulating new research, the account set off speculations and inquiries of various kinds—technical, aesthetic, religious, political. The Torrentius story turned into a complex saga, a lens through which to view a turbulent age.

The booklet prompted an immediate anonymous letter in a Dutch newspaper, suggesting that Torrentius must have used the camera obscura. Perhaps he had even, long before others, found a way to preserve its image—i.e., had invented photography. The disappearance of his works might simply mean that he had failed to fix them permanently. They may have gradually blurred and been discarded. The small size of the pictures, and the choice of subject matter, seemed to support the photography idea. Torrentius must have needed long exposure periods, ruling out living subjects. With still lifes he could also keep his methods secret. And he obviously pursued chemical experiments.8

This letter was quickly followed by an article in a German periodical, Photographische Korrespondenz, by one A. P. H. Trivelli of Scheveningen, Holland, which made a surprising contribution. He pointed out that the Constantijn Huygens memoir that had been cited by Bredius, relative to the rare quality of the Torrentius still lifes, included a further passage about Torrentius that Bredius had not noted, a passage of unusual significance.9

In 1621 Huygens had visited England, and made the acquaintance of an ingenious Holland-born experimenter, Cornelis Drebbel, who lived and worked in England and whose experiments were financed by funds supplied by King Charles. His experiments apparently ranged from optics to alchemy, and he was said to have invented a perpetual motion machine. Huygens' father warned his son against Drebbel, suggesting that Drebbel probably had dealings with the devil. But Constantijn Huygens passed off this warning and became fascinated with Drebbel. In Drebbel's workshop he had his first glimpse of a camera obscura. It was portable, box-shaped. It showed its images upside down but the images enchanted Huygens, and he took such an instrument back to Holland from Drebbel's workshop.10

In Holland, as Huygens recounts in his memoir, he demonstrated the device at a gathering in his father's house, to the delight of all. Among those present was Torrentius. And it seemed to Huygens that Torrentius was so exaggerated in his expressions of amazement that Huygens concluded that Torrentius already knew the device and had acquired "especially by this means . . . that certain quality in his paintings which the general run of people ascribe to divine inspiration." Huygens mentioned an "astounding resemblance of Torrentius's pictures to these images. . . ."11

If Torrentius already knew and used the device, he may have been the first Dutch painter to do so. It had evolved from observations of much earlier times. Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) mentioned in his notebooks that if, on a bright day, a pinhole is made in one wall of a very dark room—camera obscura—images of the outside world will appear on an opposing surface in the room. The images would "present themselves in a reversed position, owing to the intersection of the rays." Giovanni Battista della Porta, in a 1558 edition of his encyclopedic Natural Magic, uses similar language, with the picturesque detail that "people passing in the street will have their feet in the air." In an edition published some thirty years later he speaks vaguely of the use of lenses and mirrors to improve the image, and asks: "Would you like to see this apparition set upright? This is very difficult, often attempted, but nobody has succeeded." By the seventeenth century this playful use of a darkened room had evolved into something quite different: a portable room that could be taken into the field and set up at any chosen site, for observation or study. A painter could enter the room—resembling a tent, but opaque—and copy or trace the received image. In 1611 the astronomer Kepler was described as having such a portable, tentlike room. There are also references to portable rooms constructed like sedan chairs.12

Such devices could help a painter solve problems of perspective, but were hardly convenient. Eventually a more truly portable "camera" came into existence in the form of a box with a translucent screen in one side, allowing the observer to study the image from outside instead of inside the "camera." It was such a device that Huygens found in Drebbel's workshop in 1621, and that Torrentius may have acquired even earlier.

But could Torrentius possibly, as some were suggesting in response to the Bredius booklet of 1909, have taken a further step, a chemical step, preserving the image? Among those who speculated, few believed this possible. Most assumed that he had focused the camera obscura image on a panel flat on the floor and applied paint mixtures—some formula of his own—over the image to reproduce as closely as possible its shapes and qualities. They assumed his mixtures had not stood the test of time.

These speculations were thrown into some confusion by an astonishing event of 1913. A Torrentius still life turned up (Figure 2). It was found in a Dutch grocery store, used as the lid for a vat of currants. Torrentius had signed and dated the work—1614. Details of the painting revealed it to be the picture that Torrentius had taken to England in 1630 to
present to King Charles. The stamp of Charles I on the back of the panel identified it as a part of the royal collection. How it had made its way back to Holland, and to a grocery store, no one could explain. But its authenticity was accepted. It hangs in the Rijksmuseum, the one extant work considered by authorities the creation of Johannes Torrentius. Why had it—and it alone—survived?  

The resurrected still life now provided a focus for inquiry. Brush markings were not in evidence. The subtlety of the shadows and reflections caused considerable amazement. It was noted that the reflections in the wine glass showed clearly—that the studio had leaded pane windows. The words of the song occasioned surprise. Instead of an ode to Bacchus, it was a warning against excesses.

What goes beyond restraint  
Soon turns to unrestraint.

The arrangement of objects in a circular setting caused speculation. It seemed to some observers to represent Rosicrucian symbolism. The Rosicrucians were obsessed with circles, which could represent the heavens, perfection, eternity, wholeness, or inner unity. But what did Torrentius mean by his assemblage?  

The Rosicrucian connection gradually became the center of interest. For the secret, mysterious Rosicrucian brotherhood, a storm center in early seventeenth-century Europe, was said to have been especially strong in Holland, and Torrentius was considered its leading figure. Curiously, this was never mentioned in the trial. But accumulating evidence has suggested that this was indeed the key element in the decision of church authorities to move against him with crushing force. There were reasons for the trial that never appeared in the trial.

Until recently, the elusive Rosicrucians have been considered beneath the attention of serious scholars. But recent investigations, such as the 1972 study by Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, have changed this. And it has helped provide a new focus for the Torrentius story.  

The Rosicrucians burst on the consciousness of Europe with dramatic suddenness in 1614. That year saw the publication in Germany of a manifesto whose title page read:

Universal and General Reformation of the whole wide world; together with the *Fama Fraternitas* of the Laudable Brotherhood of the Rose Cross, addressed to all the learned men and rulers of Europe; also a short statement contributed by Herr Haselmayer, for which he was seized by the Jesuits and put in irons on a Galley. Now put forth in print and communicated to all true hearts. Printed at Cassel by Wilhelm Wessel, 1614.  

This Rosicrucian proclamation, or *Fama*, had circulated in manuscript, but this was the first time anything about the Rosicrucians had appeared in print. The *Fama* was followed by a second manifesto, known as the *Confessio*. Both were promptly translated from German into other languages and caused excitement throughout Europe—according to Frances Yates, "a frenzied interest . . . a river of printed words." Scores of pamphlets were published during the following half-dozen years, in several languages, praising the ideas of the brotherhood and expressing interest in joining their wondrous work. Some of the authors said they had not yet succeeded in making contact with the brothers, but hoped to do so. The brothers seemed to be elusive.

The manifestos ascribed the origin of the Rosicrucian movement to one Christian Rosenkreutz, whose name incorporates the linked Rosicrucian symbols of the rose and the cross. Today he is considered a mythical figure, since no historic evidence of his existence has turned up; but the account of him in the manifestos was accepted at the time they were published. According to that account, he was born in the fourteenth century of a noble but impoverished German family, and raised in a convent. At sixteen he embarked on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. But during the journey, in Damascus and elsewhere, he became aware of the scientific knowledge and age-old wisdom of the Arabs, which gave his life a new direction. He traveled throughout the Arab world, all the way to Fez, and was impressed by the way its sages shared their knowledge and findings with each other. Returning via Spain to the European world, he wanted to win its savants to a similar sharing. They tended to hoard their secrets. In view of the rapidly accumulating knowledge about the world and the mysteries of nature, Rosenkreutz proclaimed that a sharing of knowledge would soon bring mankind to a more glorious life on earth. This apocalyptic sense of being on the verge of great changes in the condition of man apparently communicated itself to many readers, who must have included a spectrum of scientists/alchemists, astronomers/astrologers, physicians/quacks, and diverse scholars and mystics. Some rulers also took notice.

In Rosicrucian symbolism the cross apparently represented a pious dedication to the envisioned earthly salvation—not to religious hierarchies that had become an obstacle to research. The rose represented the unfolding of the secrets of nature.

Rosenkreutz was said to have enjoined his followers not to wear distinguishing dress. Wherever they went, they were to dress like others in that place. They were to use their knowledge everywhere to heal the sick, always gratis. The movement was to maintain secrecy for a hundred years.
That it should be secret, and given to cryptic communication, was perhaps inevitable at a time when heretical experimenters and thinkers were being imprisoned or burned at the stake in substantial numbers. At the same time, the secrecy and mystery fed rumor and suspicion, eventually providing the basis for counterattack.

Much about the Rosicrucian movement remains an impenetrable mystery. Were the manifestos that started the hubbub a description of an organization in actual existence? So almost everyone assumed. Or were they perhaps, as Frances Yates had suggested, intended as a call to form an organization? Whatever the truth, Yates feels that the resulting ferment did stimulate communication and meetings among scholars and experimenters "in the Rosicrucian spirit."

Perhaps the manifestos actually created, almost overnight, a Rosicrucian movement. If so, this seems to have happened with intensity in Holland. 19

"There is no country in the world," wrote a French writer of the time, Sorbiere, "more suitable than Holland for the Brotherhood of the Rose Cross, and where those who have the secret of the great work have more freedom." 20 All this seems to have unnerved the Dutch Calvinist hierarchy, as it did religious establishments elsewhere. The Rosicrucians seemed to have forgotten about heaven and hell.

Figure 2  Only known surviving work by Torrentius. It was once owned by Charles I of England and was rediscovered in 1911.
Wide religious counterattacks on the Rosicrucians commenced in Paris in 1623 in a publication titled *Horrible Pacts Made Between the Devil and the Pretended Invisible Ones*. In this their secrecy was pictured as a sharing of diabolical secrets. The rule against distinguishing dress was pictured as a sinister infiltration tactic. The piety of the movement was described as devil worship. Similar attacks erupted in Holland, where a 1624 publication asserted that "they conclude abominable pacts with Satan; they are instantly transported from one place to another; they make themselves invisible; they read plants, and can tell the secrets of human thoughts."21

The Calvinists were meanwhile urging an official investigation of the Rosicrucians. They enlisted the aid of the theological faculty of Leyden University, which concurred that the sect was "greatly in error and heretical, harmful to the Republic, rebellious, and full of deceit." Pressure was brought on the city of Haarlem for legal action. A memorandum presented to Haarlem authorities stated:

As we have learned... certain persons who call themselves the Brothers of the Rose-Cross and who have had their residence in the city of Paris have now come also into these provinces, and are engaged in activities very harmful to the interests of the State... The memorandum said that meetings of the sect were found to have been held in various cities including Haarlem. It then mentioned "a certain Torrentius who is said to be one of the foremost of this sect." It was this memorandum that launched the campaign against Torrentius.22

If the Rosicrucian connection was never mentioned in the trial, or in the prosecutor's final summation, there was a reason. The Rosicrucians apparently had support among intellectuals and well-to-do patricians. One document in the prosecution file suggests that there were meetings of Rosicrucian members in the palace of the Prince of Orange himself. The Calvinist leaders dared not attack this elite directly and chose to move against the sect obliquely by discrediting the individual most prominently mentioned in connection with it, a man whose mysterious activities and pronouncements made him a ready target for the charge of sorcery. His trial became, in effect, a historic show trial, comparable to other such trials. The real target was neither Torrentius nor his method of painting, but a heretical movement.

Holland's judicial procedure did not at this time call for testimony and cross-examination in court. Instead, both prosecution and defense arranged for witnesses to appear before magistrates in their places of abode and give testimony there. This was all written down. Those mentioned might be called and questioned, for further information or corroboration. The resulting depositions could be used selectively in the trial for arguments pro and con. The voluminous depositions in the Torrentius case, a case that became a cause célèbre accompanied by wild public excitement and alarm, have been preserved in the Haarlem archives and were extensively quoted by Bredius and by later commentators.

The archives make clear the determination of religious and civil authorities to blacken and convict Torrentius. In the city of Delft an innkeeper and his wife, at whose place Torrentius had sometimes stayed, were called for testimony. When questioned they spoke of a particular evening, several years earlier, when Torrentius in the company of other guests had ridiculed various stories in the Bible, spoken countless blasphemies, and even scoffed at the story of the Passion, until the innkeeper put a stop to it, telling Torrentius: "Shame on you! If this were Spain they would burn you alive at the stake!" Asked to mention others present, they mentioned the names of two other guests. When these were later summoned to testify, they remembered an evening when Torrentius had twitted the innkeeper on various matters, but they recalled no mention whatever of the Bible. The innkeeper and his wife were called back and questioned further, and finally confessed that their statements had been false. They had merely tried to be helpful to the authorities. They said the Haarlem prosecutor and another official, along with two Calvinist ministers, had visited them at the inn and explained how dangerous Torrentius was. They had given her a paper on which was written the sort of testimony that was needed. The wife had memorized it.23

To support the charge that Torrentius was in league with the devil, the prosecution relied heavily on the testimony of one Dr. Jacob Hogenheym. He and Torrentius had on several occasions taken walks together; Torrentius apparently enjoyed mystifying the doctor. On one walk they passed a boy, who greeted Torrentius effusively but ignored the doctor. The doctor commented on this. Torrentius replied: "That boy has an evil spirit."

The doctor found this remark thought-provoking. How could Torrentius know that someone was possessed of an evil spirit unless he himself dealt with evil spirits? Besides, Torrentius had used the same phrase on several occasions.

On one walk they came to a farm, where a man spoke to Torrentius: "You want a hen, don't you? I know you need them!" Hogenheym was puzzled. "How would that fellow know you needed a hen?" Torrentius said: "That man is possessed of an evil spirit."24

When Torrentius, after his arrest, was confronted with the doctor's testimony, he explained about his need for hens. He said that he sometimes mixed his colors in an empty eggshell, resealed it, and had a hen sit on it for as long as three weeks, to keep the
mixture at a steady warmth until it was just right. The explanation suggests a sophisticated technician. Torrentius apparently explained nothing further about his techniques.25

As a show trial, the action against Torrentius appears to have been an unqualified success. It virtually snuffed out the Rosicrucian movement in the Netherlands and helped to weaken it elsewhere. There is little evidence of a Dutch Rosicrucian movement in the following years. Copies of the Dutch translation of the Fama disappeared. Apparently no copy now remains in existence. After the trial, Prince Frederik Hendrik seems to have given his protection to the Freemasons rather than the Brothers of the Rose Cross. Here and in England, a strengthened Freemason movement seemed to rise from the Rosicrucian crisis. In France, too, the movement seemed to vanish. Descartes, who had been rumored to be a Rosicrucian, made a point of denying that he had ever been a member of the brotherhood. To make clear he was not one of the invisibles, he made himself widely visible in Paris.

In many ways, the world of Johannes Torrentius had been a microcosm of the era. Microcosm—a favorite word of the Rosicrucians. To them, every human being was microcosmus.

The role of Torrentius as a Rosicrucian, member of a knowledge-sharing brotherhood, may help to explain his early acquisition of the camera obscura. Whatever his use of the camera, it also touched a central theme of Renaissance art. It was a time when painters became obsessed with perspective, and with that kind of realism we can now call photographic—an obsession unquestionably aided and abetted by the evolving camera obscura.

Its evolution was also a story of science, a field still hedged by perils. In the public mind it was still so closely linked to necromancy that probes into the nature of things were risky, bringing some to prison, others to the stake.

The role of Charles I in the Torrentius case raises interesting questions. He had a sister, the Princess Elizabeth, who in 1613 married a German prince from the Palatinate, named Frederick. This couple became, for a brief season, 1619–1620, King and Queen of Bohemia, reigning from Prague. There they were said to be among the crowned heads who were receptive to Rosicrucian ideas. When they were overthrown, with the king defeated in battle by Counter-Reformation forces, they fled to Holland. The young couple became popular among its social elite. They are mentioned here and there in the journal of Constantijn Huygens. For many years Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia in exile, held court in The Hague.26

Was King Charles I's rescue of Johannes Torrentius in any way related to Elizabeth's espousal of the Rosicrucian brotherhood? There is no evidence of it. Yet it is possible, perhaps even likely. Even more interesting questions revolve around Constantijn Huygens. Was he among those involved in Rosicrucian gatherings in the palace of the Prince of Orange himself? Again, no answer is available. But the story of the Huygens family reflects dramatically the seventeenth-century transition in scientific research. The father of Constantijn Huygens, Christiaan Huygens the elder, feared that his son's scientific inquisitiveness would lead to involvement with the devil. Constantijn passed off these fears but witnessed the destruction of Torrentius amid similar terrors. No such fears would hound the career of Christiaan Huygens the younger (1629–1695), son of Constantijn. Born during the time Torrentius was experiencing prison and torture, this Christiaan Huygens would do his work in another kind of age. He would perfect his lenses and his telescope, freely probe the heavens, unravel planetary mysteries, and contribute to knowledge on earth with the magic lantern, the pendulum clock, the spiral watchspring, and other wonders. So science made its transition.

Amid the transition lived the hapless, brilliant, flamboyant Torrentius. It was a violent and devil-haunted time—a time when, as Frances Yates put it, "the Renaissance disappears into convulsions of witch-hunting and wars, to emerge in the years to come—when these horrors were overcome—as enlightenment."27
Notes

Translations from non-English sources are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

1 Our summary is based mainly on Abraham Bredius, Johannes Torrentius, Schilder, 1589–1644 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1909). In Dutch. Other sources as noted.

2 Ibid., pp. 6–7.

3 Huygens wrote his memoirs in Latin. They did not see publication until the late nineteenth century, when fragments of the text along with Dutch translations appeared in the bimonthly periodical Oud-Holland, IX, 1891. Bredius quoted from this source. Major compilation of passages from the memoirs, with annotations by A. H. Kan, was published under the title De Jeugd van Constantijn Huygens: door hemzelf beschreven (The Youth of Constantijn Huygens, described by himself; Rotterdam and Antwerp: Donker, 1946). The book contains a valuable appendix on Torrentius.

4 Bredius, op. cit., p. 10, quoted from Public Records Office, London.

5 Ibid., p. 9.

6 The French text can be found in Bredius, pp. 60–61; or in A. J. Rehorst, Torrentius (Rotterdam: Brusse, 1939), pp. 226–227.


14 Rehorst, op. cit., provides the most massive compilation of Torrentius documents, with emphasis on the Rosicrucian connection. Some far-fetched inferences.


18 For a history of the movement see especially Frans Wittemans, A New and Authentic History of the Rosicrucians, translated from the Dutch by Francis Graem Davis (Chicago: Aries, 1938).


20 Wittemans, op. cit., pp. 50–54.

21 Ibid., p. 38, quoted from Wassenaers Historisch Verhaal, 1624.


23 Ibid., pp. 31–36.


25 Ibid., p. 41.

26 A detailed account of the “winter King and Queen of Bohemia” is in Yates, op. cit., pp. 1–29.

27 Ibid., p. 224.
Visual Language in Science and the Exercise of Power: The Case of Cartography in Early Modern Europe

Chandra Mukerji

The so-called scientific revolution of the seventeenth century was in large part a shift toward a new kind of empiricism in science, an emphasis on observation that privileged visualization as a way of knowing. Bruno Latour’s recent work on the importance of illustrations in scientific monographs returns our attention to this element in science (Latour 1982a). Latour suggests that when scientists examine visual evidence, they are often looking not at nature but at visual representations of more digested data. Graphs and charts are inspected directly and compared to one another just as plants or pollen structures might be. Equation of direct study of nature with direct study of tables and graphs in the practice of science permits scientists to manipulate each new level of analyzed data as though it were primary data; thus scientists reach new and more abstract theories with more or less the same scientific practices (Latour and Woolgar 1979; Latour 1982a).

The substitution of simple visual representations for complex sets of data allows scientists to create layered analyses, some three or four times removed from natural processes or patterns. As a result, when they think they are coming to know more about the world, they are often just coming to know more about their depictions of the world (or the systems by which they create these depictions). This is clearly true of maps, the kind of scientific system of representation that I want to discuss here. Complex measurements of location and direction are used to produce slight curves in pictures of coastlines; thousands of soundings are used to locate the ocean ridgeline in the Atlantic at a particular latitude, although this effort yields merely a point on a chart. The results are then used to study plate tectonics (in the second case) or to revise earlier models of coastlines and their formation.

In examining the ways in which the simplification of visual evidence in science is used cognitively, it is easy to overlook the way it is used to enhance the power of science in society. Information that is taken for granted in documents may be crucial to their interpretation. Outsiders, who are not schooled in the established rules of simplification, may be unable to understand or use the information in the documents. While scientists themselves do not always understand all the previously established rules of simplification, they have at least learned conventions for using them so their ignorance is no hindrance to their work (Latour and Woolgar 1979).

Simplification in science, then, makes current knowledge about nature esoteric enough to be used effectively for maintaining the power of scientists as interpreters of natural processes; it is, in Foucault’s terms, a technology of power (Foucault 1979). It also means that nonscientists as well as many scientists themselves are never in a position to examine the presuppositions of science that may limit its growth or areas of application. The result is that the legitimacy of science and its social functions are easier to protect from attack (Latour 1982a).

Paradigm shifts or any massive change in the rules for accumulating and simplifying evidence constitute shifts in power, since they can disrupt existing monopolies over information about nature (Foucault 1979:184–194; Foucault 1980, chap. 6). It is no mere coincidence that the rules of evidence and simplification that came to life with the “scientific revolution” were constituted after the growth of secular education and printing moved the socially legitimate study of nature from the church and into communities of scholars (Thrower 1972, chap. 6; Crone 1953, chaps. 5–6; Parry 1963:107–113; Smith 1978; Lister 1970:21–34).

Playing with the form and content of visual documents of nature can constitute, then, a ritual of power that reflects and reinforces patterns of control. This is clear in the changing form/content of cartography from the late Middle Ages to the scientific revolution. Maps had to be redrawn as shifting politico-economic rivalries accompanied the formation of the capitalist world economy. European expansion was a crucial element in the new economic system, and it both depended upon and yielded accurate geographical information. In addition, new interest in scientific geography, resulting from the revival of classical texts, helped to foster experiments in measuring land areas and projecting them on a two-dimensional surface. The interests of science and commerce combined to yield a language of cartography that on the one hand emphasized the size and shape of territories and on the other hand provided the navigator with tools to facilitate ocean travel. This language assumed the primacy of property and trade and thus tied scientific cartography to the emerging politico-economic system.

The fact that the language of maps changed radically with the growth of scientific cartography underscores the importance of Latour’s attention to visual language in science. But the history of cartography also challenges Latour’s idea that simplification is a peculiar hallmark of modern science (Latour 1982a). Late medieval maps are quite as simple as modern ones. The most prevalent form, the T and O map, was a simple circle divided by a T shape. This form was actually replaced by much more complex imagery with the initial movement toward scientific geography.
Only after the dimensions of scientific geography were clearly established did anything like simple medieval geometry reappear in European maps. What this suggests is that when there is a powerful, dominant paradigm for finding meaning in nature, there can be simple images of natural forms. Simplicity in visual language is only achieved where an economy of line can convey an abundance of information. In T and O maps the form was simple, but the meaning was complex; the map was a religious icon that took for granted that the world itself was a sign of God’s will.

During transition periods, when new meanings and old coexist or compete, simplicity is difficult to achieve; too many assumptions of the image-maker can be called into question. Thus information deemed relevant by nascent and dying paradigms will tend to be included in the same document. This is precisely what happened as scientific cartography was coming to life. The simple medieval map was replaced during the Renaissance by enormously complex maps, filled with the strangest bricolage of images, from careful measurements of distances to sea monsters and alchemical symbols to images of Jesus or St. Christopher (Mukerji 1983; Crone 1953, chap. 8; Thrower 1972:55–60; George 1969; Schilder 1978; Pointer 1978; Lister 1970:3; Brown 1960, chap. 7).

The scientific cartography that fit Latour’s model actually appeared later, when highly ornamental works began to be replaced (as serious geography) by simpler and more specialized maps. It was in this period that cartography was returned to a world of specialists, who debated the proper measurement and presentation of information about the earth. The meaning of land as property to be controlled and used by Europeans was written into the language of maps just as the meaning of the world as a sign of God had been in the late Middle Ages. When scientific materialism was finally entrenched, then cartographic imagery could become both simpler and more esoteric again (Brown 1960, chaps. 9–11; Mukerji 1983; Thrower 1978, chap. 6; Schilder 1969:39–46; Lister 1970:47–51, 75–85; Petty 1967; Taylor 1971, chaps. 10–11).

Both before the decline of medieval cartography and after the growth of scientific mapmaking, scholars used maps as sources of their authority and autonomy vis-à-vis the powerful in society. Between these two periods, scholarly cartography grew enormously, but it was not controlled by a group of specialists. European expansion made geography interesting to more people, and the new appeal of maps made possible their commercial development. They were no longer monopolized for power, but exchanged for profit. The business community as a whole did not depend on the successful monopolization of maps, so the merchants who actively developed the map trade often left the use of cartography and the definition of its forms to whoever would pay for it. Needless to say, this usually left new support for and uses of maps in the hands of the politically and economically powerful (see Wallis 1978; Woodward 1978:167–168; Eisenstein 1979:478–484; Schilder 1981; Pointer 1978; Lister 1970:52–75, 35–47; Brown 1960, chap. 7).

This brief sketch outlines three stages of map design in the late medieval/early modern period: (1) the early period of simple design where scholarly cosmology was in the hands of the church, (2) the period of elaborately decorated and detailed maps that accompanied commercial exploitation of maps, and (3) the beginning of simplified scientific imagery in maps. In the visual language of maps, these three stages together sketch a paradigm shift in geography that marked a change in the use of maps as a technology of power. The relative control over images, the complexity of their content, and the institutional location of their production and distribution all combined to shape three periods of cartographic image making.

**The Early Modern Period**

Most of the scholarly literature devoted to the social meaning of maps during the early modern period has focused almost exclusively on the way these images helped to express and regulate the relationship between Europe and the people, places, plants, animals, and wealth of the New World or the East (Bucher 1981; Elliott 1970; George 1969; Foss 1974). Certainly, pictures of Indians looking like Greek gods or shown in degraded forms or poses are emblems of European cultural domination, and the catalogs of resources recorded on European maps are a tribute both to curiosity and greed. However, they do not express the fundamental meaning of maps during expansion. Europeans did not travel to India, the Spice Islands, or the New World in search of natives and animals to master; they had those from elsewhere. They went there in search of other valuable forms of property, from gold to furs to spices to trade goods of all sorts, and in order to compete economically with other European states (Elliott 1970; Foss 1974; Wallerstein 1976; Mukerji 1983; Parry 1963, chaps. 1 and 2; Evelyn 1674; Linschoten 1598; Beaglehole 1966).

Not surprisingly, the conventional way of representing land masses in maps in the early modern period—the way that began in the Renaissance and became fundamental to scientific cartography—was a language of property; what mattered were the boundaries of continents and kingdoms rather than the sym-
symbols of their centers. Also important were the natural resources and the natural forces that made estates, trading stations, or natural waterways more accessible or useful to Europeans (George 1969; Foss 1974; Evelyn 1674).

This vocabulary of symbols is easy to overlook in the powerfully beautiful and symbolically complex maps from the transitional period in early modern cartography,4 and it is so deeply embedded in later scientific maps that it is hard to see at all. The ascendance of scientific cartography was only possible when the language of property became so basic and taken-for-granted that it lost visibility. At that point, the intellectual program of science could serve or at least not undermine the power of the social system. We can see evidence of this language if we look carefully at the "instructions" mapmakers left for the interpretation of maps, not just in legends and captions but in decoration and structure of presentation. The shape of the maps, the content of their borders, and the selection of details to fill or surround the land masses all provide a context for reading the geographical facts.

I try to interpret these elements of decoration/design here by studying in detail twelve maps and a title page to an atlas made in Europe between the late Middle Ages and the end of the seventeenth century (the period of the scientific revolution). These images are either representatives of a genre common to the period or recognized landmarks of cartography. Most of them are the latter.

To try to indicate how typical the "language" of a given map is for its period or genre, I have tried to select and present here more than one of each style in order to show where I think we are facing variations on a common theme. The portolan chart is perhaps an exception, but the Catalan atlas was in many ways a member of the portolan tradition.

This choice of maps could be faulted because it consists almost entirely of landmarks, powerful images with long-term significance. But for the early period there is little alternative, because few maps from this period remain. And landmarks have an advantage in the later period, since they indicate what experiments in cartography served best the interests of those making and/or using maps. This kind of evidence is clearly insufficient to prove a thesis, but the interpretation suggested here is modest enough to be supported by it. And that is all that can be sought.

The virtue of making the analysis is that it produces a three-stage model of image changes during a paradigm shift in science, and this model can be tested more systematically with contemporary evidence.

Let me begin constructing this model by pointing to a shift in the central geometry of the images from the medieval to the scientific period. Late medieval geography was written in circles. The T and O maps that constituted the most common form of medieval world map are good examples; the other common maps of the period, portolan charts, used webs of lines radiating from compass roses to organize the information in them. In contrast, more "scientific" maps emerging from the fifteenth century relied on the rectangle as the basic map shape and the grid as the frame for internal orderliness. Borrowing ideas from Rudolf Arnheim (1982), one can argue that the circle, as an image of perfection, absolute power, the sacred, was the appropriate language for maps in an age of church domination, and that the Cartesian grid, symbolizing the profane, contestable, measurable, and impersonal, was the appropriate language for scientific domination of images of nature. Michel de Certeau (1980) argues that the change in the form of maps in this period represents a movement from a kind of self-referential imagery, one of personal vision and visionary knowledge, to a kind of impersonal and external imagery. The subjective is expressed one way in the sacred world of the T and O map, where belief triumphs over observation; it finds another form in medieval travelers' maps that list landmarks along a route instead of presenting an overview of a region. Each type of medieval map is centered on the subject or subjective experience. Scientific maps, on the other hand, are presented as though they had no au-
Figure 1  Twelfth-century T and O map. By permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Figure 2  Simple T and O map, fifteenth century. By permission of the Bibliothèque Royale Albert 1er, Brussels.
There is an irony here that words cannot adequately describe. It is not so much that this kind of religious icon lasted into the fifteenth century when European expansion was in early but full bloom; it is that the island/continents are presented with a Renaissance naturalism that seems an odd medium for carrying such a traditional message. There is a strong sense of perspective in the image of Asia; it is not scientific perspective, but it is dramatic in its successful evocation of depth. Moreover, the three male figures are dressed in rather exotic clothes reminiscent of Renaissance costume books. The empiricism that was the foundation for both Renaissance naturalism and the impulse to collect costume designs (Vecellio 1977; Baxandall 1974; Antal 1947; Burckhardt, n.d.) did not alter the iconographic depiction of geography in this map. Ecological symbolism that might have been used to distinguish continents is not evident; differences in the architecture are not invented; and even dress is not carefully linked to specific cultures. Old geographical symbolism is presented in a contrastingly contemporary visual language.

Traditional T and O maps were not the only form of medieval geography; they existed alongside some other more empirical images of the world. Some were clearly hybrid forms, in which a sense of empirical location intersected with fundamentally religious imagery. One of these is the Ebstorf map of the thirteenth century (Figure 3). This map distinguishes land and water as physical spaces in a circular world, vaguely differentiating three continents but not in the simple geometry of the T and O maps. The Ebstorf map depicts a more natural geographical environment, where wind and weather fashion complex shorelines and the three continents are divided by interconnecting waterways running to the Mediterranean. Still the map is filled with religious im-

Figure 3  Detail of Ebstorf map, thirteenth century. By permission of the William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
Figure 4  Cataluan atlas, 1375. By permission of the British Library, London.
agery. Christ's head, hands, and feet emerge from the earth. The top half of the map depicts the East, which is still associated here with the Holy Land; this location places the East around and under the large face of Jesus; the center of the map is maintained at Jerusalem, where camel and Christ intersect; and next to the area marked India lies a picture of Adam and Eve being tempted by the snake in the garden of Eden. Allegory and geographical space coincide here in a world that is visually distinct both from the formal T and O maps and empirical maps of continents.

The Catalan atlas of 1375 (Figure 4) is at first glance not unlike the Ebstorf map, since it also depicts identifiable geographical spaces with images that seem more fanciful than empirical. Distances are not always carefully measured and reproduced, and symbols of nongeographical information abound. But while the Ebstorf map is primarily a catalog of religious beliefs, the Catalan atlas is more a vehicle for presenting the experience of medieval travelers. For one thing, the Catalan atlas drops altogether the religiously based convention of depicting the world as a circle; this map is a long rectangular shape. Religious figures are not eliminated from the map altogether, but they must share it with Marco Polo going to "Asia" with a pack of camels. The story of the end of the world is told here, as are other sacred stories; there is also a circular diagram for determining the religiously favorable and unfavorable days of the year that combines geometrical simplicity with religious significance like a T and O map. But the European coastline along both the Atlantic and Mediterranean is drawn with a geographical accuracy that any seaman routinely sailing those waters would have appreciated. The insides of the continents also show information particularly pertinent for traders: the locations of mountains, a "list" of landmarks along coasts, and a series of castles representing places to stop along major trading routes. There are even large pictures of kings who presumably control the regions around them. The world is shown here as a space to move through, with major pitfalls (like mountains, large bodies of water, and political powers) described. In this way the atlas declares itself to be a traveler's map.

At the same time, the Catalan atlas also depicts a world without conventional top or bottom; the castles and illustrations are oriented toward all sides of the map. And in spite of its empirical basis, it still remains something of an allegorical map; the traveler's tale may supplement the biblical story, but it functions as much as a source of allegory as a source of information. The simultaneous empiricism and allegorical nature of the Catalan atlas indeed reflect its two sources. On the one hand, the Catalan atlas was the heir to the portolan tradition in Europe, the late medieval practice of recording accurately the details of the European coasts that were useful and used by mariners "coasting" on those shores; on the other hand, the Catalan atlas was an attempt to add the information recorded by travelers to the East to the well-known information from the portolan tradition. And travelers' tales are notorious for their inaccuracy. Looking at the image of Europe in the atlas makes this map seem very "modern" and accurate; looking at its eastern edge creates a feeling closer to that created by the Ebstorf map. This "world," like the ones dominated by religious iconography, is drawn from fanciful as well as empirical narrative.

The Roselli chart of the Mediterranean (1456), shown in Figure 5, is useful in demonstrating the similarities between the world depicted in the Catalan atlas and other works in this tradition. For one thing, the chart is organized within a grid of lines known as rhumb lines; they radiate from a series of compass roses that ring a central rose placed (aptly enough) in the Mediterranean. In their circular arrangement these roses recreate some of the geometry of the T and O map in this more empirical representation of the world. This geometry stands in direct contrast to the grids of latitude and longitude derived from Greek geography and typical of modern maps. The portolan charts are travelers' maps; with the rhumb lines they provide a language of directionality for organizing the empirical information gathered in them. While later maps emphasized land and careful inventories of its size and contents, these charts drew attention to the major "roadway" of the period: coastlines. The interior spaces in the chart are like those in the Catalan atlas; the imagery used there seems more allegorical than factual. Power centers may be marked with castles and flags, but the symbolic representations are crude. The images of the interior are also oriented in different directions. They foil our attempts to see this map as rationally oriented around the two poles. The general lack of information about interiors contrasts sharply with the delicate detail of coastal landmarks and shorelines. Some late portolans, like the Joan Oliva map of 1599, are more delicate in depicting features of the continents themselves but sustain nonetheless a strong contrast between the coastlines, jammed with information, and the interiors, spotted with occasional points of interest (Penrose, n.d.: 18–19; Crone 1953: chap. 3; Lister 1970:20–21).

The portolan charts, T and O maps, and travel chronicles used to inform or shape the Catalan atlas comprised the three major strains of geographical recording that dominated medieval Europe. Another influence, the classical works, particularly the work of Ptolemy, reintroduced some ideas about scientific geographical measurement, but they did not immediately destroy the religious or portolan traditions of medieval geography. In the fifteenth century, however, a large number of reproductions of his work were put out by publishers, including the Ulm Ptolemy of 1486 shown in Figure 6. They stimulated interest in devis-
Figure 5  Roselli chart of the Mediterranean, 1456. By permission of the Newberry Library, Chicago.

Figure 6  World map from Ptolemy, Cosmographia, Ulm, 1482. By permission of the Rare Book Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.
ing a "scientific" grid system for displaying a three-dimensional earth on a two-dimensional piece of paper and using it to make more systematic empirical observations about geography (see Tooley 1978:6-7; Penrose, n.d.:255–261; Febvre and Martin 1976:248–252, 257–276).

Ironically, the out-of-date images of Ptolemaic geography were all too often considered more authoritative than accurate new data. This hampered the growth of an empirical geographical science and did not serve the Europeans who were looking for trade routes to the East. Ptolemy envisioned Africa as part of a great southern continent and had no idea that a fourth continent existed. But his world was an empirically measured one, systematically represented on a two-dimensional plane. Nothing could have been more useful to Europeans who needed to develop a visual language of property or territory in order to inventory their "discoveries" (see Eisenstein 1979:514–516).

The 1513 publication of Waldseemüller's Geographica, which added geographical information culled from the voyages of discovery to traditional Ptolemaic maps, was the next major move toward the new geography. It was important both because it made public information that had not been readily available before, and because it began to incorporate new findings in a larger system of scientific geography.

The world map in this volume seems drawn from a manuscript map of 1502, the Cantino map (Figure 7) (Penrose, n.d.:257–258, 277, 291–292; Tooley 1978:26), but while the Cantino map was drawn with a web of rhumb lines, the Waldseemüller maps are framed by the classical type of "scientific" grid based on measurements of latitude and longitude. In addition, the Waldseemüller maps contain new geographical data. The map of the Atlantic shows the shape of the New World even more clearly than the Cantino map. The work was a major cartographic breakthrough, but it also relied on relatively crude woodcut maps that were poor imitations of the subtle images commonly available on portolans. It was a start toward a new geography, not its most developed expression.
Commercial Exploitation of Maps

Systematic collection and distribution of detailed information about the coasts and continents began later, during what has come to be called the Age of Atlases. In this period extensive collections of geographical details were made in greater quantity, not for the use of cosmographers or navigators alone but for a more general public. Carefully drawn maps were now frequently set in elaborately decorated books. Businessmen took the lead in geography, and what they provided seemed admirably suited to their commercial interests. Their highly decorated atlases and wall maps with an elaborate bricolage of images covered a range of European views of world geography and appealed to a wide range of tastes.

This experimentation with the commercial use of maps in the last half of the sixteenth century in the Netherlands led to an enormous growth of the map publishing business. It also produced two major atlases: the first published by Ortelius in 1570 and the second published by Mercator in the 1590s. Antwerp was the logical site for this kind of innovation because it was, before Charles V’s death, the seat of the Habsburg empire. This empire joined together the two centers of European expansion, Spain and Portugal, so most new geographical information brought to light by expansion was likely to find its way to Antwerp.

Geographical publications were also likely to find an audience there, since many residents of that region had either an economic or an intellectual interest in understanding world geography (Wallerstein 1976:173–177; Steinberg 1959:104, 129–131).

Abraham Ortelius was in a good position to bring this information to the reading public. He was a leading cartographer and moved in the circle of people around the emperor; he also knew many cartographers in other parts of Europe. The atlas he produced (see Figure 8) has been called the first truly modern atlas because it contained only contemporary geographical information, no Ptolemaic geography. It was drawn from regional maps, maps from the discoveries, and sailing charts (Crone 1953:chap. 8; Penrose, n.d.:260–261; Lister 1970:chap. 2). In this sense it was a scientific or empirical atlas, but it was encyclopedic rather than selective. The maps within it were designed not to produce a simple model of geographical patterns but to record all available information about geography. In this way Ortelius’s atlas bears strong resemblance to the Catalan atlas and the Ebstorf map, prescientific images of “totality.”

Even the idea of an atlas, the collection of all the world in one volume, suggests some residual influence of medieval encyclopedism. But there was also a fundamental modernity to Ortelius’s work; he had the maps drawn in a system-
atic way. The atlas form that Ortelius used was not original with him. Italians had collected maps of various sizes and styles and put them in a single publication. Ortelius improved on this practice by having all the maps in his atlas engraved in the same decorative style, showing their sources with citations at the bottom. His world map from the atlas is also drawn in a tight grid of latitude and longitude; the fact that the world is a globe is indicated by a roundness at the corners of the world map, but the frame of the images is clearly a grid. The modernity of Ortelius’s geography is apparent in the familiarity of the world he depicts to the modern eye. Both Africa and Europe are easily recognizable; the Indian and South Asian peninsulas have come closer to their proper relationship than in Ptolemaic maps; and while the Spice Islands are oversized, they reflect an understandable European interest in the area.

The decorative qualities of the atlas also help to identify it as a consumer item, designed with an eye to public sale. When Ortelius decided to reproduce the maps in a single style, he could just as easily have made the decision for commercial as for intellectual reasons. Similarly, the type of decoration Ortelius used for the map borders had both commercial and intellectual meaning. When I look at the background to the first edition of the world map, the swirling clouds or fog that surround the map and fill the space behind it, I am not only impressed by its decorative beauty but also by its power as a metaphor for the state of European cartography at that time. The world seems to have emerged from a fog through its “discovery.” Interestingly, this type of border appeared in a number of maps of the period. Le Tetsu’s map of the world of 1566 also has the hemispheres emerging from clouds (George 1969:196). Postel’s woodcut map of 1581 cradles a polar projection of the world in clouds that protect this vulnerable circle from the severity of a rectangular frame (Shirley 1980:3), and de Jode’s 1593 world map using a polar projection again fills the gap between circle and rectangle with clouds.

This use of clouds can be read as an effort to place the world as a globe in the heavens. After all, clouds were commonly used to divide the celestial from the terrestrial in Baroque painting. But Ortelius also used clouds where he was ignorant of geographical details. North America is shrouded in fog, as is the great southern continent. These facts reinforce my first reading; that clouds are emblems of “the unknown,” and what emerges from the border of clouds is the world becoming “known” through its mastery by European geographers. Perhaps these two interpretations can be merged if we see the world emerging here from the celestial sphere as knowledge of it is secularized.

This emerging world has become Europe’s terri-

tory—its property and focus of interest. The exaggerated size of the Spice Islands is evidence for this reading; the method for depicting political or economic centers is too. They are shown as castles on this map, as they were in the Catalan atlas, but here they are relatively small. Territories, rather than kings and tents, fill the continents; boundaries or edges are made visually more potent than centers. The division of land by boundaries is a modern Western convention based on the definition of land as private property, not as a common resource. So it is not just that Europeans learned more about the edges of continents, mountain ranges, rivers, and so forth, in this period, although that is true; they also paid attention to and cataloged the features of world geography that were important to them at home. As a result, atlases like this made the world a piece of European culture in two ways: by using European values to shape the language of maps and by using the power of maps to

Figure 9 Mercator, title page to the Atlas. By permission of the William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
Visual Language in Science and the Exercise of Power: The Case of Cartography in Early Modern Europe

The title page to Mercator’s 1595 Atlas (Figure 9) illustrates most clearly the European sense of superiority to the world and its form. Atlas himself sits expectantly on the edge of his seat, not lifting the world as a burden on his shoulders but holding it like a basketball in his hands, measuring it with his fingers, tools, and eyes. The world is modeled below him in a globe that is not clearly related to the one above it; it seems perhaps the reproduction of it made ready for human exploitation. This world is not troublesome or mysterious. It is cute and only a little difficult to see because it is small. Atlas, as our surrogate, the symbol of Western culture in its encounters with earth, has taken the globe into a human space; he works in an arch of classical architecture that is on the one hand reminiscent of Raphael’s “School of Athens” and on the other a ladder to the angels and the stars. The hubris of humanism pervades this image.

Figure 10 Blaeu, world map from the Novus Atlas. By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
Mercator’s Atlas was a work of cultural hubris. Mercator developed a grid projection system for maps that compensated for the curvature of the earth in a new way. It allowed mariners to draw straight lines to chart their courses. His grid form made map use easier for the navigational interests, and thus his projection system seemed the perfect “scientific” form for European maps. Land could be recorded systematically in a grid, but the grid was designed to facilitate trade by simplifying navigation. Directionality in maps was joined to inventories of property in a single writing system. The fact that the atlas was first published with an incomplete set of maps at Mercator’s death diminished its early commercial value. However, Jodicus Hondius acquired Mercator’s plates, completed the atlas, and made this work a popular commodity as well as a recognized scientific achievement (Crone 1953:chap. 8; Penrose, n.d.:261–263; Lister 1970:chap. 2).

The sense of European domination of the world and ownership of its contents is again dramatically symbolized in the maps by Willem Blaeu and his successors. The 1606 world map, revised in 1641 (Figure 10), is a marvel of decoration and symbolism. The map’s border is a tribute to civilization, particularly Western culture. The bottom depicts the seven wonders of the world—marvels of the human hand; the left side shows the Aristotelian elements: earth, air, fire, and water; the right side depicts the four seasons; and the top displays the seven planets as powers of the heavens. Numerology and imagery combine to harness human, natural, and supernatural power. The world is held in check by these powers, tamed by human mastery of them. There are European ships in all corners of the world. They may share this realm with sea monsters, but these threats are isolated terrors, not the kind of fundamental mysteries that the world had held for the author of the Ebstorf map. Even doubts about the interior of North America do not seem to be an embarrassment; Canada is covered with a cartouche that fills the space but does not cover European ignorance of the region. Its oval shape echoes the framing along the border of the map just as Ortelius’s fog over North America reinforced and informed the use of clouds around his globe. But here the cartouches are emblems of Western culture that assert its dominance in spite of its limits.

The eclectic array of details marks this map as commercial/transitional. Climatic zones are marked out along with latitude and longitude, giving this map both of the types of grids used by the ancients; coastal landmarks are jammed along the continents as they were in portolans; and extensive information about the interiors of Africa and South America shows that new empirical observations have been added to these traditional sources of European geography.

Colonies or zones of influence are carefully placed and recorded, marking European expansion over world politics as well as geography; rivers and mountain ranges are found far into the interiors; and the inventories of plants, animals, peoples, and their dwelling patterns are rich, showing the partnership between expansion and the growth of sciences other than geography. Information is presented in almost unmanageable quantities, and the mixing of categories for analyzing information makes the encyclopedism here, like that in many atlases from this period, more preclassical than classical in form and effect.

The Blaeu atlas is a landmark in cartography precisely because it is so rich. It is a world presented between paradigms; it can take no background for granted. It is the logical outcome of an effort to accumulate geographical information and put it all in one place. It also suffers because there is no accepted system for organizing it. But its attention to the border of the page and boundaries of territories, along with the sumptuousness of presentation, show clearly the triumph of the commercial mind. This is a glorious commodity, a marvel of packaging; the attention to political boundaries reverberates with the attention to the border of the maps; the richness of design in both the borders and the maps themselves expresses symbolically the desire for wealth that drove Europeans to improve their cartography and fill the images of distant continents with images of their natural resources. The commercial language of maps is entrenched here, easily taken for granted.

The Beginning of Simplified Scientific Imagery

Not surprisingly, simpler statements about geography were beginning to develop at this time. They were more specialized pieces that addressed one or two specific problems in even greater detail but took some basic geographical knowledge for granted. This more specialized and technical imagery comes closer to the kind of scientific imagery described by Latour.

The specialized maps made by Halley in the late seventeenth century are good examples of this newer, more scientific, genre. Halley’s 1686 map of the trade winds (Figure 11) and his map of magnetic variations are visually more like the early T and O maps than Blaeu’s world map in that they are simple line drawings without extensive decoration. The former follows the general lines of the trade winds over the world’s oceans. That the winds are only shown on the oceans suggests the practical importance of the piece; it is clearly a useful kind of information for ocean sailing. Knowing how to use these winds efficiently in charting a course could prove extremely
beneficial for navigators. Being able to consider this problem in isolation from others by designing a map devoted to just this subject also makes practical sense. The general outlines of the continents are here—all one would need to know about them while using the winds as "natural resources" for sailing.

Many of the same comments could be made about the map of magnetic variations. Efficient use of compasses, like the clever use of trade winds, was another pragmatic attempt to marry European technique with natural forces to improve ocean travel (and presumably to maximize profits in trade). European domination of the world’s oceans and intercontinental trading remain the dominant themes in this map. The "scientific" image of the world presented here takes European struggles over the world economy for granted. This may not be apparent immediately because it no longer needs stating; competing systems for assigning meaning to the earth’s form have been abandoned more or less. But this is one aspect of scientific simplification that becomes possible when the paradigm shift is complete.

Interestingly, a few decorative elements are maintained in this simpler, more measured world. Some palm trees, a few natives, a little drapery, and a light hand along the coasts give this map a nostalgic feeling; it alludes to the great decorated maps of a slightly earlier period, while beginning the movement toward a geography of specialists that required accuracy and geographical literacy from its readers. The public geography of the earlier era was dying here while it was being cited.

Wilma George's study of the images of fauna in European cartography is useful to consider here. She noticed a change in the character of the decoration on maps in this period. She found a great increase in the number of animals recorded in maps during the sixteenth century but a growing tendency by the end of this century to use particular animals as symbols of particular regions of the world. The elephant became a symbol for Africa; the opossum, toucans, and macaws came to represent South America. This kind of simplification of imagery on maps coincided with and to some extent predated the simplification of coastlines of the sort evident in Halley's map. Both came when scientific evidence was abundant and systematic records of data were commonplace. This kind of symbolism, while perhaps nostalgic, did not represent abandonment of the scientific project but its outcome. Some elements of information typical of earlier geography were sketched rather than depicted so that others could be presented in even greater detail. The paradigm finally allowed the mapmaker to rank the relevance of information for the record.

Conclusions

The movements in the depiction of geography described here between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries mark the growth of a mature, scientific geography in Europe. Some might call it the development of an empirical geography that made ideology secondary to direct observation. But that would be too simple a view. One system of ideology, religious imagery, was replaced by another: inventories of nature for politico-economic exploitation. Since the latter was more efficiently carried out with accurate measures of natural resources, it spurred the growth of an empirical science of geography. During the transition between paradigms, the inventories became increasingly complex and difficult to contain in a unitary form; this provided some pressure for maps to begin to be simplified and specialized. But the urge to simplify was not enough to make them that way. Simplification was possible when the primary visual language of maps became more conventional and maps could be moved back into the hands of experts. Further simplification gave scientific maps evolving forms, but it did not destroy the materialist assumptions of the geographical vision. It helped to fashion a more esoteric language for geography that served the interests of its new experts.
A redefinition of European society at the end of the Middle Ages and the growth of capitalist trade and agriculture relied on increasing understanding of land—both its forms and possible uses. For nature to become open to new uses, it had to be understood in new terms. And a substantial change of interpretation of nature required an institutional reorganization of scholarship. During the long period of transition, geography found its sponsors in business and the state. It necessarily became a more public form of study; the new ways of thinking about geography were tried out for usefulness and market appeal. Once the commercial values determining the usefulness of geography to the politico-economy were incorporated into the language of maps itself, then maps were returned to the world of experts. With this step, early modern Europeans made the world theirs in symbol and to some degree in fact. What we read in old maps tells us this; what others once read in them three and four centuries ago helped to make this true.

Notes

1. Bruno Latour first pointed out the decline of simplicity in these maps to me, and I am grateful that he did. Eisenstein quotes Brown (1960) on the lack of progress in maps and cites Sarton on the strange interest in nonempirical symbolism as well as direct observations in maps of the period. Perhaps both could be seen as artifacts of this bricolage. See Eisenstein 1979:479–484.

2. For a discussion of scientific materialism, see Mukerji 1983.

3. The distribution of this information was not completely dominated by commercial values, since religious and economic rivalries were influencing patterns of trade.


5. A similar configuration is in the Hereford map and to some extent the thirteenth-century “Psalter” world map.

6. This is a point I made in an earlier paper (see Mukerji 1978:241–252). There is ample evidence of fabrication by travelers in the Mandeville stories and many other bits of medieval travel writing. And there is a plenty of evidence that this trend continued, albeit somewhat abated, into the early modern period. See Bucher 1981, chap. 2; Fevre and Martin 1976, chap. 2; Beagelhole 1966.

7. The encyclopedism of medieval and enlightenment Europe differed in ways that Foucault captured best in The Order of Things. The systematic effort to accumulate all the great ideas of civilization in the eighteenth century differed markedly from earlier efforts to record all kinds of information together, even when they bore little relationship to one another. For Foucault the latter is the hallmark of prescientific thought.

8. The solidity of a globe in contrast to the circle makes it less appropriate as a symbol of spiritual perfection.

9. Polar projection was a popular form for mapmaking in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It seems a wonderful example of how Europeans accommodated the circle and the grid at the same time and in the same images during the transition period. These maps drew the world as a circle but one divided by a kind of grid structure. See Shirley 1980.

10. My thanks to César Graña for pointing out the relationship between Raphael’s painting and this title page. I should also point out that images of Atlas are not always like this. He is not consistently in such control of the world. Cornelius Wytfliet’s map of the hemispheres in his atlas of America shows Atlas bearing the world as a burden overhead. He kneels below it with modestly turned-down eyes, but he holds the two hemispheres with his fingers, not his arms or shoulders. And he is less important as a decorative image than as a cartouche at the top of the map that asserts with authority that this is in fact the map of the hemispheres.

11. It is interesting to compare the use of the seasons and elements in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century maps to the use of Noah’s sons in maps during the late Middle Ages. The thought of the ancients takes the place of sacred texts. Moreover, the power of nature and human efforts to understand and control that power take the place of the power of God.

12. Some John Speed maps and Danckerts’s map of 1680 are similarly sumptuous and powerfully framed, suggesting that seventeenth-century decorative maps often shared these features. The commercial mentality depicted in maps of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is almost parodied by George Wildey’s map of North America. The map is dedicated to King George; an inscription on a monument states that this is the case. A miniature of King George is also suspended in the clouds overhead with an angel, putti, and a figure of Mercury. Beside the monument stands a female Indian, symbolizing America. At her feet are images of tobacco, pineapples, and snakes, symbolizing good fortune. Below this scene is a picture frame surrounding a variety of consumer goods—from combs, forks, knives, and purses to globes and reading glasses. These items are displayed neatly above the words, “... these and many other useful curiosities are made and sold wholesale and retail at the Great Toy Shop by G. Wildey” (University of Michigan Museum of Art 1973).
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Ethnocriticism:
Israelis of Moroccan Ethnicity Negotiate the Meaning of “Dallas”
Tamar Liebes

Introduction
The following conversation took place before, during, and after viewing an episode of Dallas entitled “Little Boy Lost,” in which J. R. loses custody of his son to Sue Ellen, who has left him and is living with her (impotent) lover, Dusty, the scion of a competing oil dynasty. The episode is from the second season of the American television serial as broadcast in Israel, with subtitles in Hebrew and Arabic, during the winter of 1983.

Approximately fifty such conversations were taped by us in four ethnic communities in Israel (Arabs, Moroccan Jews, Russian Jews, and kibbutz members) and among nonethnic Americans in Los Angeles. The object of the study is to observe the process by which foreign audiences “decode” American television programs. The Israelis will be compared with the Americans and the several ethnic groups with one another. We are not attempting to demonstrate “effect”; rather, we are interested in those processes that are prerequisite to possible effect, namely, understanding, interpretation, and evaluation, both explicit and implicit. We wish to address the question of how American films and television programs cross cultural and linguistic frontiers so easily and to assess the extent to which foreign viewers “read” these texts in the ways that critics and content analysts assume they do. The allegation of cultural imperialism cannot be tested by content analysis alone.

Each of the discussion groups consists of three married couples, friendly with one another and familiar with the program. Interviewers were trained to assemble such groups on the basis of ethnic and age homogeneity, to observe them as they view the program (off-air in Israel and on videotape in Los Angeles), and to stimulate a conversation. Interviewers were equipped with guidelines for open-ended questions.

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This method of focus interviews, or "constructed conversations," as William Gamson calls them, was chosen in the belief that talk about shared viewing experiences takes place naturally in society and is a key to the process by means of which program content seeps, if it does, into personalities and cultures. That people discuss Dallas in everyday situations and view it together are facts that we can certify from background data as well as from allusions in the discussion groups themselves (Lull 1980; Bryce and Leichter 1983). Whether such constructed conversations are faithful simulations of everyday conversations we cannot say for sure. In any case, Dallas seems a particularly appropriate stimulus for our purposes because of its worldwide popularity, its relative complexity, its agenda of basic values, and, not least, because it is the kind of "visual narrative" that is based—like soap opera—more on words than on action.

The participants in the conversation reported here are three Jewish couples of Moroccan origin who are by now well integrated into Israeli society and who are all good friends. With one exception the participants can all read the subtitles; they do not understand English. Adi, the interviewer, came to the home of Zehava and Yossi; two other couples—Cecile and Itzchak, and Massudi and Machluf—joined them. Even before the episode went on the air, spontaneous conversation on Dallas began, and so taping was started at once. The discussion continued during the viewing, when characters and events on the screen were sometimes incorporated into the conversation. By the time the focus discussion was due to begin, the conversation and the wine flowed quite naturally, making it difficult for Adi to stick to her moderator's role; by that time she was comfortably integrated into the group and some of the points of discussion had already been covered. There is no question in our mind that this is the way these people normally talk to one another, even if it is unlikely that they normally talk in such a sustained way about a television program or, indeed, any issue. In any case, it is a rare documentation of television talk.

This group is of particular interest, we think, because it illustrates vividly how community members "negotiate meanings" by confronting the "text" with their own tradition and their own experience. The conversation suggests that the program serves viewers as a "forum" (Newcomb and Hirsch 1983) for discussion of personal, interpersonal, and social issues (e.g., discussion of justice, notes 36, 46; whether fathers have equal rights in their children, note 66; child-rearing problems, note 58; sex-role differences, notes 23, 29; attitudes toward adultery and divorce, notes 2, 25, 73, 76). Note also the ways in which knowledge of the program is used as a source of status (Cecile, at note 33) just as knowledge of traditional texts conferred status; how the program functions as escape from problems such as cramped quarters (note 77), religious demands (note 20), and the harsh reality of the prolonged Lebanese campaign (note 80); and how other texts—especially religious ones—are invoked (notes 10, 24, 74, 76).

To call attention to these processes, we have annotated the protocol of the conversation and flagged each of the notes with one or more of the following subheadings that may help to clarify what is going on: (1) understanding, for coherent perception of the story line; (2) interpretation, on making sense of the story or of characters; (3) evaluation, on the acceptance and rejection of perceived values in the story; (4) interaction, on the social dynamics of the group; (5) participation, on relating to the characters as if they were real; (6) positive and negative identification with characters; (7) acculturation, on bringing communal or traditional sources to bear on interpretation; (8) mutual aid, group interaction with respect to understanding, interpretation, or evaluation; (9) forum, on spontaneous use of the text as a springboard for discussion of personal, interpersonal, or communal problems; (10) criticism, for statements that reveal understanding of the genre or of the poetic requirements of television fiction; (11) narration, for ethnic or personal patterns of retelling the story or describing the characters; (12) gratifications, for self-defined "uses" of the program in connection with social and personal needs; and (13) methodology.

Also present, in addition to the three couples and Adi, the interviewer, were the observers, Elihu and Gil, who operated the tape recorders and made notes. The present text is slightly shortened from the full transcript.
1 Understanding: Unlike the other participants, Massudi does not know Hebrew and is, therefore, reluctant to answer questions. There are indications that she does watch Dallas and comprehend it, such as her remark during the viewing of the program regarding J.R.’s unsuitably informal dress in court (cf. note 28), which shows that she can both understand and criticize the basic plot. This would explain why her husband fills her in at night on the more detailed Dallas gossip.

A solely visual knowledge of a TV program can lead to serious misunderstanding, especially when the visuals, which are necessarily decoded according to the viewer’s culture, impart meaning that is far from the producer’s encoding. Thus, another, similar viewer was surprised to learn that the beautiful “hotel” Pam was visiting was, in fact, a psychiatric hospital.

2 Interaction: The conversational pattern whereby Cecile repeatedly breaks into her husband’s sentences should not necessarily be looked at as interruptions. In certain cultural settings, this constitutes what sociolinguists call “corporate sentence building” (Bennet 1978). This form of conversation characterizes cultures in which there is need for reassurance and encouragement—being “polite,” therefore, means cooperating in presenting oneself and the other. This does not exist in cultures where the need for privacy and autonomy is considered crucial and, therefore, being polite consists of respecting the boundaries of each individual (Brown and Levinson 1979). Conversations in which there are frequent pauses and strict turntaking belong to the second type of politeness, as it is concerned with respect for the distance among people. The discussion of the Moroccan group under consideration here, characterized by frequent overlaps, is associated with the first type of politeness, which creates an atmosphere of intimacy. Thus, Cecile’s

MACHLUF: Even when I look at it and I know it’s an actor, that it’s only cinema, but they act so much theater, they play it so much from their gut, especially J.R., he’s great.

ADI: Do you understand what he says or do you read the subtitles?

MACHLUF: I understand what he says and what he acts and I understand him.

YOSSI: She [the interviewer] means the translation [subtitles]. Do you read the translation?

MACHLUF: Of course, the translation.

ADI: Anybody here understand English?

MACHLUF: Well, unfortunately we studied French in our town, only French.

YOSSI: Yes, we all read the translation.

CECILE: I was in France a month ago and I saw a few episodes. In French it was simply a pleasure. Here I enjoy it less, that is, there I discovered I enjoyed it more. Because I saw it here all the while without knowing whether I enjoy it more or less. I don’t read Hebrew one hundred percent and it takes me time to read and it’s a pity.

ADI: [To Massudi]: What do you think?

1 MASSUDI: I don’t see Dallas at all.

MACHLUF: I see it for her—and in the middle of the night I tell her everything [general laughter].

CECILE: I always see it even though I get fed up. I anticipate what’s going to happen and sometimes I think, well, what did I sit for? But anyway, I do sit, and watch. .

MASSUDI: You do sit.

MACHLUF: When it’s French she [Massudi] understands.

ITZCHAK: I do watch but I think what’s nice about the program is its richness, the beauty.

2 CECILE: The landscape.

ITZCHAK: The landscape.

CECILE: It’s rich . . .

ITZCHAK: It’s rich like all American movies.

3 MACHLUF: The beach, the pool, the colors, the apartment.

ZEHAVA: The house.

ITZCHAK: But after a while the subject becomes a little tiring because there are unacceptable things.

MACHLUF: For example?

ITZCHAK: Things that don’t happen in life, let’s say things that happen in a family, all the stories. . .

CECILE: They exaggerate sometimes.
overlapping with Itzchak is probably: (1) an indication of intimacy and consensus between husband and wife; and (2) her way of joining the conversation and adding to the discussion rather than interrupting it.

3 Interpretation: As most Israelis live in apartments, Machluf slips into calling the Ewing mansion "the apartment." He is immediately corrected by Zehava who, as we later discovered, was just in the process of trying to find a way to move her own family from a two-room apartment to a slightly larger one.

4 Israel has one television channel. About half of the programs are imported from abroad, mostly from the United States. Subtitles are in Hebrew and Arabic.

5 Gratification: Itzchak's comment suggests that viewing Dallas provides a different kind of experience than, say, viewing Kojak. He is, in effect, saying that the pleasure of watching does not arise from being curious about what the characters are going to do but about how they do it. Not having to worry about the technicalities of the plot, viewers can relax and enjoy following the Ewings they are so well acquainted with, whose idiosyncrasies are anticipated. They thus pay attention to every deviation. For the viewers, the pleasure of seeking out and discovering all the intricate details of the TV program is similar to the pleasure of a reader in reading a novel for the second time (Barthes 1975).

6 One source of information about future developments in the story is Jordanian Television, which is one season ahead of Israeli Television.

7 Evaluation: Itzchak is raising a central moral and philosophical issue concerning the viewing of Dallas. Describing it in terms of the celebration of the success of ruthless power over moral values, of the victory of id over superego, leads him to consider whether this is a reflection of what happens in real life. Itzchak's answer is negative because "normal" to him means "normative."

8 Interpretation, Forum: This leads to a discussion about the "normality" of social norms. Machluf and Zehava argue that norms are not "normal" because people, in general, are attracted by power and glamour and therefore Dallas fulfills the needs of the viewer's self—which is id, not superego.

In interpreting the program's story, they draw on knowledge of life—and vice versa: They generalize about life and this provides an interpretation of the story. Either way, they talk about Dallas as if it were real.

These generalizations about what "people" like contradict what the group members say they themselves like and identify with. They select and evaluate characters on a strictly moral basis: When they are asked to name the central characters in the episode, J.R. is not included. The difference between talking about what "they" ("people," "most women") like and what "we" (Jews, Moroccans) like shows that normative rules are still powerful when speakers feel personally responsible for their statements. In Newcomb's (1984) terms, they might be employing different or even conflicting "discourse systems" in the two cases. Whereas here they talk as if they were participant observers in informal chats about Dallas, later, in answering the interviewer's question, they define themselves in the voice of a particular social and cultural community.

Itzchak: It's exaggerated that they all give in to somebody like that. It's simply not real. It doesn't seem as true to life as it was at the beginning [of the serial]. After a while it starts to become boring. Even annoying.

Adi: But you see it faithfully?

Cecile: Yes, yes.

Itzchak: I see it for two reasons. The first reason, to our regret is that we don't...

Cecile: We don't have programs here.

Itzchak: We don't have very good programs. The second reason is that it's done so well—the setting and all—it attracts one, simply that. But I think it's good they stopped showing it for a time because we became almost slaves to this subject even though I'm sure everybody knew what was going to happen.

Zehava: There are also books [about Dallas].

Cecile: And people see it in Jordan, and it's more advanced.

Itzchak: It's something that almost repeats itself. The same mistakes that J.R. made repeat themselves, and it's no longer a subject for study.

Elihu: What mistakes?

Itzchak: For example, when the father capitulates to J.R.'s mistakes in his business.

Machluf: Which cost many millions...

Itzchak: And he always makes sure that he will succeed at any cost, and the women fall into his arms like I don't know what and this is something in the story which is not really normal in life.

Machluf: Don't forget that J.R. is very good-looking and very rich.


Machluf: Good-looking and rich is something which attracts many women.

Cecile: Everybody, more or less, also in the movie, knows what he's worth.

Adi: What does that mean?

Machluf: His character, his character...

Cecile: That he is not honest in business, with women, in everything. But nevertheless, women continually...

Machluf: ... go after him.

Cecile: Anybody he wants...

Machluf: ... gets caught in his net.

Cecile: ... fall very fast.

Yossi: Are attracted to him.
9 Participation, Acculturation: Zichrona livracha, the traditional Jewish way of alluding to someone who has died, is used ironically in this case. It still gives a sense of how the participants chat about Dallas characters as real people who live or, as in this case, die.

10 Evaluation, Identification (negative): This is just one instance in which Machluf invokes quotations from religious sources as a way of relating to the "invading" world of television. Here a quotation is used to contrast the mores of those of his own culture; thus, he reinforces the traditional values.

11 Participation, Interpretation, Mutual Aid: The debate over J.R. being the father of the baby points to the kind of involvement through speculation that Dallas arouses. The "facts" of the story turn out to be a matter of interpretation. Different, sometimes contradictory bits of information are brought forth as evidence for various ways of understanding the story. Machluf knows the baby is not J.R.'s and proves it with Sue Ellen's words: "She told him the truth." Cecile brings up the laboratory test as proof of the opposite. (Note the mutual aid in the interpretive process; see Katz and Liebes 1984.)

When the group returns to this argument later (cf. note 52), the problems of how to evaluate the various "facts" come up—Can Sue Ellen know for sure? Is the lab test true or "fixed?" Dallas can thus occupy viewers' minds because all solutions are partial and reversible.

12 Methodology: Taping was discontinued here on the assumption that there would be little or no conversation during the viewing. Fortunately, the observers took notes verbatim until the recording resumed.

13 Criticism: Whereas the others assumed some kind of real or objective "truth" behind what is shown on the screen, Yossi—who is not a regular viewer—talks from an uninvolved distance that enables him to analyze Dallas as a TV show rather than as a reality. As such, he places it within the genre of Arab soap operas that are popular on Israeli television. His use of the rhyming words te'una and hatuna accentuates the repetitive, formulaic nature of the plot.

14 Criticism: Here Bobby and J.R. are described as polar opposites. Later in the conversation, two other kinds of characters emerge (cf. notes 51, 52).

9 MACHLUF: Are attracted to him. Kristen, zichrona livracha [may her memory be blessed] was also attracted.

Yossi: The truth is, he's attractive, he's a good-looking fellow.

Cecile: They don't want to believe what they hear. They love him and they don't want to accept the complaints against him. What one hears.

10 MACHLUF: You see I'm a Jew wearing a skullcap and I learned from this film to say [quoting from Psalms] "Happy is our lot" that we're Jewish. Everything about J.R. and his baby, who has maybe four or five fathers, I don't know, the mother is Sue Ellen of course, and the brother of Pam left, maybe he's the father. . . . I see that they're all bastards. Isn't that true Doctor Katz?

Eliehu: Really bastards or bastards in character?

MACHLUF: According to the movie, this son is literally a bastard. She was pregnant from Pam's brother.

11 Cecile: . . . but the tests show that J.R. is the father . . .

MACHLUF: . . . and J.R. recognizes this himself. She told him the truth. She says: "I am pregnant from Pamela's brother." What's his name . . .

12 Discussion while viewing (from observer's notes, not recorded)

13 Yossi: It's only the second time I'm seeing Dallas. It looks like an Arabic film, begins with an accident [te'una], and ends with a wedding [hatuna].

Zehava: The men see the movie because of the beautiful girls.

14 Cecile: And there's a good mother. [On screen: Miss Ellie is reprimanding J.R. because he intends to buy off the judge.] Bravo. Bobby is too good and J.R. too bad, both extremes.

Yossi: J.R. looks like Tony Curtis.
15 Participation: Cecile’s surprised comments on seeing Cliff’s mother sound like those of someone meeting an almost-forgotten old acquaintance. Peripheral characters are typically identified in terms of their family relations, which viewers often have no problem understanding in spite of the complexities and interconnections of the kinship web (cf. conversation at note 11).

16 Evaluation, Forum: An illustration of how Dallas becomes a “forum” for the articulation of social issues (Newcomb and Hirsch 1984) can be found in this discussion, which starts with Itzchak pointing to the message of Dallas. Itzchak chooses to apply a moral criterion for judging characters, which is psychologically gratifying for the group because, although they cannot be as successful as the Ewings, they can be more honest.

Machluf introduces an academic or spiritual standard of measuring success, alluding to tradition and to a type of success where “the children of the poor” may outdo the others. Thus, Itzchak and Machluf suggest two ways of using Dallas as a morality play, useful in defining success in ways that provide “substitute frames for self-judgment” (Merton 1946).

17 Acculturation: Machluf’s metaphor again refers to a traditional source (cf. note 9) by drawing an analogy between the women in the program and Hanukkah candles, which are forbidden for practical use but are there to be admired. Use of this traditional Jewish allusion for defining the pleasures of TV is intended to be funny and serves to contribute to the group’s “oppositional” cohesion “versus” the screen. (Hall 1980, Morley 1980).

18 Understanding: This is a rare example of a viewer who may be said not to understand the plot. Trapped in her theory according to which all women are attracted to J.R., Cecile misses the point of the secretary’s call, prearranged by J.R. in order to carry out his scheme.

19 In Israel, as elsewhere, much is known about the well-publicized private lives of the stars.

20 Forum: Watching the bar scene on screen triggers a discussion of the reasons for the prevalence of drinking in Machluf’s own milieu. The function of drinking as a means of escape from sordid reality is talked about by the group in the same way they talk about the function for them of Dallas (cf. note 80).
21 Interaction: Cecile and Massudi make a play on words in Hebrew in saying that "Mitch" is not mitz—the Hebrew word for fruit juice.

22 Forum, Participation: Machluf and Zehava, by association, are reminded of two similar choking instances they have witnessed. Both give parallel, competing dramatic scenarios resembling the one taking place on the screen, which does not in the least disturb Cecile, who is absorbed in the program and maintains her own dialog with the screen.

23 Forum, Interaction: Yossi uses Dallas as an indirect way of rebuking his wife, who did not follow his instructions. Thus, TV provides shared associations which are activated, as it were, for expressing negative feelings in a subtle way, thus preventing a direct confrontation.

This is only one of the ways in which the program is being used to comment on present problems that occupy viewers in their personal or social lives. Whereas this switch to talking about life deals with sex roles in marriages (cf. note 66), the next transition to real life (note 25) deals with the norms of Israeli society in contrast to the presumed norms of Dallas.

24 This is a quote from the biblical Book of Esther associated with the carnivalesque holiday of Purim, which was being celebrated at the time of the interview session.

ZEHAVA: He is simply a good-looking man [J.R.]. [She turns to the others.] We are always talking about good-looking women—talk a bit about men.

CECILE: [Referring to Mitch on screen] Voilà, le plus beau.

ZEHAVA: Who?

21 CECILE: Mitch, mitz.

MASSUDI: Not meetz tapuzim.

CECILE: [Referring to the woman who was choking on screen] Mitch will help her. He studied medicine.

22 MACHLUF: Something like that happened to us at work, do you remember?

ZEHAVA: My friend almost died because of this. She swallowed a piece of meat.

MACHLUF: One woman actually fasted two days because there was a wedding reception . . .

CECILE: [Referring to Mitch on screen] That's it. They got it out.

MACHLUF: . . . and she came and fell over a tray of turkey meat and put it into her mouth and choked. Thank God, among the guests there was a doctor, he gave her a stroke on the back, pah, got it all out; very, very hard. And she returned to life.

CECILE: That's it. He's saved her.

ZEHAVA: This girlfriend of mine practically choked to death. They took her in an ambulance to the operating theater and the fear, when she saw everything, made her spit it up all at once. And they took it out; the doctor couldn't believe it. He saw this meat and said: "How could she do such a thing?" A friend of mine told her . . .

MACHLUF: It's a whole cow's tongue she swallowed in one breath.

ZEHAVA: She should eat like a human being. [Asked by her husband to serve tea] Sorry, I'm watching [the program]. Otherwise, afterwards, when they [the interviewers] ask me, what shall I answer?

23 YOSSI: With us, it's not like with J.R. With J.R. the woman looks after everything. He's got a servant girl.

[Zehava and Cecile laugh.]

ZEHAVA: Why, do you mean to say I am your servant?

24 MACHLUF: No, this is your house. You will be given "up to half the kingdom"—it is Purim.

ZEHAVA: [Reacting to coffee, offered to Mitch in film] Coffee, Cecile?


MACHLUF: Who's the old man?

CECILE: A doctor.
25 Forum, Evaluation: By comparing J.R. to an Israeli Member of Parliament who went through a well-publicized divorce case, Machluf is assuming (1) that Dallas reflects American society, (2) that America is corrupt, and (3) that Israel is not. Thus, he again uses Dallas to reinforce his own values.

26 Criticism: In order to support Yossi’s argument, Zehava quotes Coca-Cola’s frequently broadcast commercial (in Hebrew). She chooses an example par excellence of America inundating the world with its idea of taste—the equivalent of Dallas in the area of material consumption—where (1) both represent American (consumer) hegemony, (2) both are relentlessly repetitive, and maybe (3) both add flavor to ordinary life.

27 Participation: In conducting a conversation directly with them, Cecile brings the characters into the livingroom, so to speak, so that she can joke with them, give them advice, and even criticize their actions. In rebuking the doctor, she introduces her own social norms, implying that his invitation to Mitch to come for a meal defines their conversation as something more personal than a business transaction, so that offering money seems bad taste.

28 Understanding: Massudi, who cannot read the subtitles and claims she does not understand what is going on on the screen (cf. note 1), nevertheless criticizes J.R. for not showing more respect to the court by dressing more formally.

29 Forum: Although the group’s discussion overtly deals with what is happening on the screen, they are in effect making use of Dallas to enter into a debate on the role of the sexes. Machluf and Yossi voice the traditional position in this debate, while Cecile brings up the concept of the right of women to self-realization. (This discussion happens to follow closely after Zehava’s joking remark about getting an order from “the captain.”)

Yossi: I thought they have some private doctor.

Cecile: [In French, offering her diagnosis] Dépression.

Machluf: Why?

Cecile: Elle veut un bébé and they ask her to wait too long. She wants it too much.

Yossi: The same story all the time. He [J.R.] feels himself strong with his money. I can tell you, who in Israel could get away with that?

Elihu: Can I do it?

Machluf: Akiva Nof, the member of Knesset, had a similar story with his wife. The journalists have shaken the whole country with Akiva Nof until now. In Israel he [J.R.] could not possibly behave in such a way. He and his money, they would be put in prison. He and his money. They would confiscate it. My opinion is that Dallas is not only a long [full-length] film. Every episode is a film in itself. There’s a story. And that’s it. Finished.

Yossi: But it’s a similar story. It’s boring. Every week Dallas. Every week Dallas; it has become like advertising. Not Dallas.

Itzchak: But each time it’s a different story.

Zehava: “The taste of life.”

Cecile: [On screen: Mitch is having breakfast with a plastic surgeon and his wife whom he saved from choking.] But [please] without the bones.

Cecile: [The plastic surgeon offers to pay Mitch.] You both invite him and also give him $5,000?

Zehava: A good offer.

Cecile: Great, the future is now Mitch’s.

Massudi: (Change of scene: J.R. comes to the court.) He came without a jacket.

Zehava: [Asked again to bring some tea] Well, I got an order from the captain so I have to bring it.


Machluf: Why does Pam go to work? Her husband is so rich.

Cecile: But they have no satisfaction in life. So they search …

Yossi: Satisfaction in life.

Cecile: What does it mean, why does she go to work? What will she do? Wait until Bobby comes home?

Yossi: Does she lack anything? Of course she does not have to wait that much for her salary. She couldn’t care less. I stand in queue in the bank on the first of the month.
30 Criticism: Cecile's relief upon hearing the formal definition of family relationship is a sign of her awareness that Dallas scripts hover on the borderline of kinship taboos, which the characters constantly threaten to—and sometimes do—break (cf. note 64). Cecile intuitively senses that this policy of brinkmanship is caused by (1) the need to produce new entanglements within the rather closed Dallas circle (a new relative has to provide a new twist in the plot), and (2) the need to provide new excitement to viewers who, due to the socializing influences of television, become more and more immunized against shock.

31 Yossi's observation (prompted by seeing Cathy's striking blue eyes) is interesting mainly because it is definitely not true of Dallas characters in general and thus can only express what must be his image of what WASPs look like.

32 Acculturation: It is not clear whether Zehava considers the Dallas custody trial real or not when she compares it to the Beit Din, which deals with cases of marriage and divorce in Israel.

33 Participation, Gratification: The same norm that is behind participants' embarrassment over public discussions of sex (see discussion of Dusty "not [being] a man," below) may also underlie Cecile's reluctance to see Dusty's impotence made public in the show. Another, less conscious, reason might be that one of the sources of enjoyment of the series is the viewers' "privileged" position over that of other characters in the show in knowing secrets. Thus, the disclosure of Dusty's secret "deprives" Cecile, the avid viewer, of a position of power.

34 Interaction: Cecile's tactful way of describing Dusty's impotence is indicative of the way group members tend to use euphemisms and literary or biblical expressions—or may even leave sentences unfinished—when sex is being discussed.

35 Interpretation: The discussion provides a running commentary on what is happening on the TV screen, beginning with definitions of the conflict (Cecile sees it from Sue Ellen's point of view—money versus heart; Itzchak sees it from the court's point of view—sex versus love), moving on to predictions about the outcome of the trial and speculation about Sue Ellen's motives. Note that the implicit question in Machluf's statement that Dusty is "not a man" is understood by Cecile to mean, "Why should Sue Ellen want to stay with Dusty?" and is answered accordingly. For her, not having sex is proof of true love.

Cecile: Too much money.
Yossi: [On screen: Another glamorous woman appears in a car.] She doesn't work. [Everybody laughs.]

Cecile: [Cliff is introduced to his new sister.] Suddenly he discovers a half-sister. It's lucky that she said to him she's a sister, otherwise, he could have fallen in love with her.

Yossi: They all have blue eyes.
Cecile: They all have blue eyes.
Cecile: Now, please [quiet]. That's the trial for the child.
Zehava and Yossi: Moroccans want only food.
Yossi: Not Dallas.
Cecile: [Responding to the general noise.] You've no heart, this is a trial about the child.

Zehava: [If] it was a Beit Din [rabbinical court]—this would be a trial. Of course the child will go back to his mother.
Yossi: Is this Sue Ellen's lawyer?
Zehava: [When Gil gestures her to stay in her seat rather than get the tea] I get up—immediately he looks at me. [To the interviewer] Don't worry. You will ask me, I will answer you.

Cecile: [On screen: Sue Ellen's lawyer discloses he has doctor's certificate about Dusty.] Oh, what they're going to discover now. It's not nice, in public like that.
Gil: What is not nice?
Cecile: What they're going to discover.
Gil: Do you know what they'll discover?
Cecile: I know.
Gil: How do you know?

Cecile: For some time he's not been a man.
Gil: From former episodes?
Zehava: Yes.

Cecile: Since the accident.

Zehava: And he told her beforehand: "It's a pity for you to go on with me, I don't want to go on." And it was because of her. He was in the airplane because of her.

Cecile: [Sue Ellen's lawyer calls her "the girl he (Dusty) intends to marry—his future wife."] "His future wife." Here, at least, there's a nice contrast. The second family she's falling into—people . . . not just . . . people with heart, people—not just money.
Itzchak: Just for that, she will get the child now.
Cecile: Yes, sure. It's people . . . not just the money.
Machluf: After the accident he is not a man any more.
Ethnocriticism: Israelis of Moroccan Ethnicity Negotiate the Meaning of “Dallas”

36 Forum: Cecile introduces here a new concept of distributive justice: equal allocation of babies. The basic facts of the story—that J.R. has had a baby with his wife’s sister and later buys the baby from her—serve only as the basis for an argument over whether J.R. has a right to another baby. The total destruction of the institution of the family passes by, unnoticed and uncriticized.

36 Cecile: But she wants to be with him. Also he had the accident because of her.
Itzchak: So they shouldn’t think as if she wanted . . .
Machluf: (To lawyer on screen) Because of love—that’s right.
Cecile: J.R.’s lawyer is not pleased.
Zehava: (Repeating lawyer’s words) “True love.”
36 Cecile: [On screen: Sue Ellen’s lawyer says: “How can we deprive her of the only child she’ll ever have?”] J.R. already has Kristen’s son. It’s enough.
Itzchak: [Sue Ellen’s lawyer wins.] She beat him.
Cecile: He [J.R.] killed her [Kristen] and the child remains.
Yossi: But the judge is corrupt. He talked to J.R. in the cafe. He is corrupt.
Itzchak: They didn’t show a bribe.
Cecile: In the former . . . she was pregnant and she came to get money out of him . . . to blackmail [J.R.] . . . if not she would tell her sister the truth.
Yossi: The judge . . . he talked to him in the cafe . . . he’s corrupt.
Machluf: It looks like the end.
Cecile: And Cliff came in at that moment and accused him of murder.
37 Machluf: I don’t understand one thing. J.R. knows, he heard from his wife that the child [John Ross] is not his and in spite of that he wants to take him.
Cecile: But it’s his name. His . . . how do you say his nom propre, his name in the world.
Zehava: That’s right.
Cecile: His name. It’s the principle. It’s his wife. It has to be his son. If not his whole name collapses, his whole honor in the world rises and falls with this.
Massudi: I never see it [the program].
38 Machluf: [Judge’s decision about the money Sue Ellen gets for maintenance is announced.] $5,000 a month times 360.
Zehava: It will increase. Until then it’s linked.
Cecile: [Anticipating the announcement on screen] It was given to his mother. [On screen: . . . “to Sue Ellen Ewing . . .”] Marvellous.
Zehava: I knew.
Yossi: $1,000 a month [for the baby].
Cecile: Oh, no. [J.R.’s smile at the end of the show.] What a marvelous look.
Zehava: Finished. Now the examination [the interview session].

37 Criticism: Machluf calls attention to the improbability of some of the dynamics of family relations in Dallas. How can babies be bought, sold, and transferred? In their answers, Cecile and Zehava avoid the issue of how J.R. can accept the fact that the baby has another father.

38 Acculturation: The award is immediately translated into Israeli currency, and Zehava remarks that with the rate of inflation in Israel, this amount of money will increase considerably within a short amount of time.
Acculturation: Machluf alludes to his earlier joke about Hanukkah candles (cf. note 17). Just as with the Dallas women, the amounts of money that are paraded on the show are only to be admired from a distance.

Methodology: To a large extent, this is true, as most of the questions that were supposed to be brought up in the focus discussion were already touched on before the formal discussion took place. These questions focused on characters' kinship relations and their personalities as well as on how realistic they are as people, the extent to which Dallas reflects America, the concern with babies, and the gratifications of watching Dallas.

Methodology: having the participants recount the story of the Dallas episode was intended to reveal: (1) the extent to which people in various cultures, who depend on subtitles or less, understand the basic plot; (2) the extent to which this understanding is shared or universal and the points at which it varies; and (3) differences in styles of narration that reflect variations in what may be called "critical distance" from the story as well as various traditions in storytelling.

Interaction: Zehava demurs, passing the task on to someone else, thus betraying a slightly awkward feeling now that the group has entered into organized discussion. They soon forget about this.

Interpretation: By "the law of Texas," Yossi means the law of the "jungle" where those with power do as they please (cf. Yossi's comments at note 46).

Narration: Dallas is almost impossible to relate in a story form because it is actually a succession of segmented subplots. One way of recounting what goes on is by pointing out a main theme—which is what Machluf does.

GIL: So she got $1,000 for the child as well?
CECILE: It's nothing to him . . .
ZEHAVA: It's nothing to him . . .
ITZCHAK: $5,000 maintenance and $1,000 for clothes.
ADI: $5,000 goes straight into the fuel for the car.
ITZCHAK: Nonsense, what is $1,000? It's like 1,000 lirot here [comparing it to Israeli money].
MACHLUF: $6,000 times 360 lirot.
ZEHAVA: He talks in millions, not in thousands.
ITZCHAK: [Repeats] There a thousand dollars is 1,000 lirot here.
MACHLUF: That's what we're condemned to. "We can but admire them."
[Program ends, discussion begins]

CECILE: [To interviewer] I think you got your answers within this—while we were watching the movie, right?
GIL: Let's start so we can all get some sleep.
ZEHAVA: If not you can [all] sleep here tonight, with the snow we've got here.
ELIHU: It's actually snowing?
ZEHAVA: Yes, wet snow.
45 Narration: Machluf goes on to tell the story of that theme in terms of one linear plot. It is useful to look at his version in light of Propp's scheme for analyzing folk tales, according to which the basic narrative unit is called a "function"—an act of a character defined from the point of view of its significance to the course of the action (Berger 1981). Since each episode of *Dallas* is a segment of a larger story, the Proppian analysis is, necessarily, incomplete, but it gives one a good picture of the roles attributed to the different characters.

In Machluf's version of the kidnapping attempt, Miss Ellie is described as the "hero," "owing to his mother being honest. . . ." She fights the "villain," J.R., "wanting to kidnap his child" ("struggle") in order to repair the harm caused to a member of the family ("villainy") because she understands what "a baby means to her mother." She returns the child to Sue Ellen, thereby repairing the harm caused to a "family member" ("liquidation"). Thus, the "princess" gets what "she lacked and wanted" when "the child went back to his mother and she also received alimony."

It should be noted that, due to *Dallas* being different from the classical folk tale (1) in its cyclical, unending nature and (2) in J.R.'s alternating functions as villain and hero, Sue Ellen's future wedding—which completes this sequence—is actually a remarriage to the villain-turned-hero.

46 Evaluation. Narration: Unlike Machluf's account, Yossi's is paradigmatic rather than sequential. The story theme, according to Yossi, involves the carrying out of "dry law"—or unjust law—which contradicts justice. By judging the story in this way, he is in fact defining his own notion of justice: that law should consider intentions and actions and not their accidental outcomes.

The suspicion that beliefs or values precede the logic of the argument—i.e., that Yossi's definition of justice is derived from his disapproval of Sue Ellen's and Dusty's romance—is supported when he joins Machluf in using opposite logic in arguing the justice of another case (cf. conversation at note 66).

47 Narration: Cecile tells the story as two interconnected subplots in which, according to Proppian terminology, J.R. is the "villain." She describes him in the first subplot—as does Machluf—as acting in contradiction to his mother and in the second as a new cause of Pam's misfortune.

In terms of Proppian theory, Cecile describes Pam as "lacking and wanting"—"She wants to adopt a child and they won't give it to her." The functions Cecile elaborates on in her narrative about Pam are: (1) "trickery," where the "villain" (J.R.) uses information he receives ("delivery") about his "victim" wanting a baby to try to trick her into changing her course of action—"He hurts her [by telling her] that it's because of his son that she wants a child"; and (2) "complicity"—J.R. influences her "so much that Pam thinks he's right," i.e., "The victim submits to deception."

45 Machluf: Last week the whole episode was based on J.R. wanting to kidnap his child. He came with a helicopter and tried to make use of his mother for kidnapping the son and owing to his mother being honest and she understood what might happen to her, and understood as a mother what a child and a baby means for his mother, she didn't want to follow him and she returned the son to Sue Ellen. Here in this movie, I think the main thing is that J.R. wanted to get back his son at any cost and in the end the court decided what it decided and we saw at the end that the child went back to his mother and she also received alimony for her and the child.

Adi: Anybody else want to tell what was in the film?

46 Yossi: I will tell you. The law, the trial, you saw today in the film, it's called dry law. Why is it dry law? It's law that doesn't have any law, does not have a sujet, how do you call it?

Cecile: Sue Ellen.

Yossi: Not Sue Ellen. The basis of the law, the subject. This law is dry like . . . I don't know how to describe this. Who says that the court should have to decide that the child should stay with the woman? Whose fault is it if he had an accident? Was it J.R.?

Cecile: [Correcting] No, her friend.

Yossi: His friend.

Machluf: No, her friend.

Yossi: Yes, her boyfriend, and he can't go to bed or make children with her, or something. Whose fault is it? She shouldn't have betrayed him, and the court should not have cleared her so that she can get the child.

Adi: But other things happened. Tell me as if I hadn't been here.

Cecile: Just a moment. Do you want us to tell the story or to analyze?

Adi: Tell us what happened as if I didn't know.

47 Cecile: Here the film starts after J.R. wanted to kidnap the child and the mother did not agree to it. His mother, of course. Actually, that's what we saw in the beginning of the movie. It's also about Bobby and Pamela who passed through a difficult period that she wants a child as if she's in a depression . . .

Machluf: A child at any price.

Cecile: She wants to adopt a child and they won't give it to her in the near future; and she's passing through a very difficult period; and J.R. tells her openly, he hurts her, that it's because of his son that she wants this and I think that J.R. on every subject is trying to influence people with his opinion so much that Pam thinks he's right.
Thus, from being under the influence of the villain (cf. note 51) to being a nurturing mother and nurse.

According to Herzog-Massing (1984) who interviewed German viewers, identifying with characters who represent extremes of very good and very bad characters (cf. note 14), the type of character who has moved—through her contact with a child and an impotent lover—to being a nurturing mother and nurse.

Our choice of the child who has barely appeared on the screen indicates that "central character" was understood by the participants in terms of the character's dramatic function in the plot and not in terms of his or her actual (speaking) role or length of appearance in the show.

Criticism: The choice of the child who has barely appeared on the screen indicates that "central character" was understood by the participants in terms of the character's dramatic function in the plot and not in terms of his or her actual (speaking) role or length of appearance in the show.

Criticism, Identification, Evaluation: Two surprises emerge from the group's choice of central characters: (1) all three of them are women, of whom two are victims; and (2) although it is stated right at the beginning that "everyone" is attracted to J.R. (see Itzchak's comment at note 7 and the conversation at note 8), he is not made one of the central figures. This indicates that the choice of main characters is based on a moral criterion, that is, the group chooses characters they can approve of and identify with. According to Herzog-Massing (1984) who interviewed German viewers, identifying with characters who represent the superego (e.g., Miss Ellie) legitimizes the viewer's pleasure in watching the character who acts the id—J.R. Our group's choice probably has a similar meaning.

Interpretation, Evaluation: Machluf defines Sue Ellen as the type of character who "commutes" between the extremes of very good and very bad characters (cf. note 14). Thus, from being under the influence of the villain (cf. note 45) who makes her into a promiscuous alcoholic, Sue Ellen has moved—through her contact with a child and an impotent lover—to being a nurturing mother and nurse.

MACHLUF: There are some points in the film, which she hasn't told. There are several points. Here it is not only about J.R. and about the child; it's about Pam, it's about her brother, how he succeeded with his child. It's about Pam. In my opinion Pam loves the child [Sue Ellen's]. Why does she love the child?

ADI: Who do you think is the most important character today [in today's episode]?

CECILE: The trial.

ZEHAVA: The child, the child.

ADI: No, the most important among the actors.

CECILE: Sue Ellen.

ZEHAVA: Yes.

MACHLUF: I agree with her. In the trial today we discovered that Sue Ellen went with her boyfriend, begging your pardons, without the sexual contact, that's what the judge says. Sue Ellen, in her role at the beginning of the films, in all the episodes, she always went after alcohol, after men—wanted to revenge herself against her husband. Her husband also always went with women, she also says, "I'll also go."

ZEHAVA: She wanted to compete with him.

MACHLUF: But today we say something special that we knew from the lawyer: that she went faithfully and that she went, like Cecile says, to look after an invalid and her own child.

ADI: Who's Sue Ellen, what are her connections? I haven't seen [the program] before.

CECILE: She's J.R.'s wife and was unfaithful in the beginning with Cliff, with Pam's brother.
Therefore, the baby's father, as such ambiguity might be forming other twists in the plot. The group's way of interpreting Sue Ellen's motives, evokes a more analytic or "distanted" kind of argument which might state that the program's writers themselves have not decided—or prefer to leave open—the identity of the baby's father, as such ambiguity might be useful in creating other twists in the Dallas plot.

Analyzing characters' motives from their own point of view, or from the point of view of other characters, rather than using the critical or "poetic" code (which would mean looking at the demands of the plot and the genre), is typical of this discussion. The group's way of relating to characters as if they were real often leads them to speculate on "the moral of the story" or to discuss life in general or their own lives.

Sometimes it seems that character analysis is used as a means for viewers to bring up their own problems. In the following, Zehava, who is overtly discussing Sue Ellen's motives, evokes a popular truisms about unhappy wives "taking it out" on their children. Since at this point Sue Ellen is definitely not "taking it out" on her children, Zehava's interpretation suggests that she is making use of Sue Ellen's predicament to voice her own unrevealed problems or to air guilty feelings that are easy to express while discussing Dallas.

This very romantic image of Sue Ellen is described consistently by the group, which attributes those aspects of her behavior considered dubious to external forces ("ambitious mother") and her so-called positive actions to her "real will" ("she understood," "she came to the conclusion"). Thus, the participants cast her in a far more stereotyped role than is played by her on the screen. (See the reactions to Machluf's meek response attempting to cast doubt on Sue Ellen's disdain for material things.) It is possible that the group's normative approach makes it vital for the participants to idealize Sue Ellen in order to allow themselves to empathize with her. The way in which they do this is demonstrated in the following note.

And from this the child was born.

From this they say that this is the child. And afterwards there was an examination in the laboratory and we saw that J.R. bribed the doctor so we as spectators don't know exactly who the father is. Even if the result of the lab really says that it is Cliff's son, because we saw J.R. bribing the doctor in the lab, so we don't know . . .

But Sue Ellen said to J.R. explicitly that it's not his son.

Because of the troubles her husband caused her. And her revenge . . . where does she take it out?

The jealousy she has against her husband . . .

It's not jealousy.

Jealousy and the principle of it.

It's natural that when the husband and wife quarrel, where does all the tension go? Onto the children. The wife hasn't got anybody to unload it on. On the neighbor? No, she can't. On the children.

I think that actually she understood that she made a mistake when she married J.R. at all and she came to the conclusion that the life she has lived with him until today was not a clean life. And she didn't find the love, the honesty, the normal life. All in all, according to what we understood from other scenes, she has an ambitious mother who pushed her onto J.R., to marry him because of the money, because of the economic situation and today she has already understood she's happier with her boyfriend . . .

Don't forget, Itzchak, that he's also very rich.

Not because of the money.
what is perceived to be the manifest message of the pro-
economic success is the
groups (some of the American groups, for
aware that Sue
These viewers
themselves
false
for the
happy end of a
imulate
concept may not be
for the
standards. Through Sue
this one-sided,
Sue
success can more
ment (Merton 1946). Through her,
material
explanation functionally,
in the sense that Sue
money as to live a regular and normal family life
Cecile
To live in a quiet, normal atmosphere.
Machluf: You touched a point about which I wanted
to speak.
Machluf: [In French] L'argent ne fait pas le bonheur.
Itzchak: That she doesn't care that much about the
money as to live a regular and normal family life


Sue Ellen's move from the ranch of one oil-dynasty family to
another is, therefore, interpreted as a radical ideological change.
Thus, the group makes her out to be an example
that provides them with a substitute framework for self-judge-
ment (Merton 1946). Through her,
standard for
for success can more easily be superseded by moral
standards. Through Sue Ellen, who has it all but rejects
wealth, viewers who do not have it can reject the notion that
economic success is the only criterion for self-judgment.
Note that this "pedagogic" interpretation of Sue Ellen's beha-


The discussion treats Sue Ellen's current state as the
happy end of a classical "closed" narrative. This may be
due to lesser experience with TV serials, or it may be
explained functionally, in the sense that Sue Ellen is being
used as an anchor for the rejection of the values of the
program.

Critical theorists may well argue that such rejection of
what is perceived to be the manifest message of the pro-
gram may imply acceptance of its intended (latent) mes-
sage! According to this position, viewers will be misled into
false justification of their own social status by comparing
themselves to the unhappy lot of the Dallas characters.
These viewers would then be considered to have been no
less "hegemonically" influenced than viewers who chose to
emulate the affluence of Dallas. Thus, both the "dominant"
and (ostensibly) "oppositionist" readings (Morley 1980)
manipulate the viewer. If both readings may, indeed, be con-
sidered hegemonic then Newcomb and Hirsch (1984) are
correct in saying that the concept "is so wide as to keep
everything out or allow everything in." In other words, the
concept may not be useful in explaining "differences" in
reading. For a similar analysis of these two related themes
in prime-time television fiction generally, see Thomas and
Callahan (1982), who conclude that the message is, "Just in
case you don't make it, don't worry. It's not so great at the
top."
**Narration:** In describing Sue Ellen’s past, Cecile acquires the rhetorical flair of a storyteller and uses parallel, contrasting phrases that emphasize the conflict in their meanings. This accentuates the paradox of Sue Ellen’s state—where she had everything but had nothing, she was rich but she was poor—and strengthens the group’s stereotypical concept of Sue Ellen, which is much more one-sided than what is presented on the screen (cf. note 54).

56 **Interpretation, Gratification:** The choice of Pam as the second central character is an indication that she provides similar gratifications to those provided by Sue Ellen, who is seen by this group as a spiritual saint. Assuming that the prevailing role models for women in American culture are those of homemaker/wife, career woman, or glamour girl, Pam clearly represents the last, whereas the image of mother is usually related to those qualities that suggest virtuousness and lack of glamour.

In seeing Pam, who is glamorous and rich, as an unhappy woman who longs for a child, the women in the group, who are occasionally cramped by their roles as housewives and mothers as well as by their husbands (who support this role), are reassured of their own status. Thus, they are strengthened in their belief that their own lives are more rewarding than those of rich and glamorous women like Pam. Her wealth and glamour are no compensation for what is every woman’s “natural” desire for children. She would like nothing better than to be a mother—hence she is to be pitied and not envied.

The extent to which discussion group members adhere to Pam’s pious image is striking particularly in light of evidence which suggests that viewers tend to regard a character as less two-dimensional by supplementing his or her image on screen with information about the actor’s real life. Thus, Herzog-Massing’s (1984) survey of German viewers suggests that J.R. is seen as less evil and Pam as far less loving by virtue of such extramural knowledge. The present line cannot be dismissed as caused simply by ignorance about the stars’ lives, as the group expresses considerable knowledge about what happens behind the scene (cf. note 68).
**58 Interpretation, Participation, Mutual Aid:** The fact that Cecile updates Machluf on Pam's situation demonstrates the participants' willingness to "play the game" that Pam is real. This kind of involvement can be explained by: (1) the nature of TV series, which, unlike films for instance, occur regularly and independently of whether people view them or not, thus creating an illusion of another, real world that carries on on its own (Booth 1982); (2) the ongoing story of TV serials like Dallas that never end and therefore occupy viewers' minds between episodes, while TV series that are composed of (episodes of) complete stories are forgotten once they are over; and (3) the slow pace of serials, where the same unsolvable problems are dragged out endlessly, with slight variations, which give them a lifelike quality.

Thus, arguments about the facts of the story can arise easily—even between regular viewers—because of the abundance of information. Viewers bring to the story their own experiences, which they believe give them a better understanding of the plot. This can lead to heated debates, especially when the story involves elements that are controversial or related to personal issues. In this case, Cecile and Machluf discuss the issue of adoption, which is a sensitive topic, and their arguments reflect their different perspectives on the matter.

**58 CECILE:** But I think that you're making a mistake because you didn't see one chapter.

**MACHLUF:** Possibly, possibly.

**CECILE:** They've already come to the conclusion that she can have healthy children. There is no fear of that. By now she can have...

**MACHLUF:** Nevertheless, she always doubts...

**CECILE:** ... once she did not want to have one because they told her such and such and such. But later they found out it was not true. Any child can be healthy but the problem now is...

**ITZCHAK:** On the whole, Pam... her story...

**MACHLUF:** ... is more painful than anybody's. She wants a child at any cost.

**ITZCHAK:** Her story...

**ZEHAVA:** God bless her.

**MACHLUF:** Wants to adopt it. And even in that she has no luck. Even in adoption she has no luck. She has to wait...

**CECILE:** Let's put it this way. I think that apart from the main story in this whole J.R. film the problem of Pam with her husband is more [important] than anything. And this, I think, is the second character in this... [general noise].

**ITZCHAK:** This is the second character in the whole film. The most popular one. It's her story. She and her husband and all the problems she goes through—in order to adopt a child and in order to give birth to a child. And she objects, she very simply objects—as we have seen in the last episode—to go to a psychiatrist, Pam.

**ADI:** Why? Why does she object?

**ITZCHAK:** The doctor, the doctor... She did go through—here in this sequence—go through a depression, and he suggested to her that it's not his specialty, the general practitioner's, that she can go to a psychiatrist who can help her. And this is the second character in this film. The most popular one. It's her story. She and her husband and all the problems she goes through—in order to adopt a child and in order to give birth to a child. And she objects, she very simply objects—as we have seen in the last episode—to go to a psychiatrist, Pam.

**ADI:** Why do you think she objects to going to a psychiatrist?

**ZEHAVA:** So that he won't discover, perhaps...

**YOSII:** Her illness.

**ZEHAVA:** Her illness, her drinking.

**MACHLUF:** No, with Bobby she does not drink. We're talking about Pamela...

**MACHLUF:** Bobby's wife.

**ZEHAVA:** I just now... I just now thought about the glass you [Yossi] were drinking [general laughter].

**YOSII:** The glass I was drinking?
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Interpretation, Gratification: Differences in meaning emerge clearly when the psychiatrist's "function" in Itzchak's version is compared to his "function" according to Cecile. Here his role tends to be one of a "villain" rather than of a "magical agent." The psychiatrist may "trick" Pam by undermining her own will and convincing her to "comply" with him and abandon her goal: "He'll... tell her... [will advise her against having a child] and she wants it so." At this point both narratives are legitimate. Only in retrospect will it be possible to define the psychiatrist's "function" in the story. But meanwhile, the pleasure participants derive from watching the weekly Dallas installments comes from the ability to interpret the story according to their inclinations and thereby to forecast various sequels to the plot.

ZEHAVA: When you said "One glass I had—"
YOSSI: Am I known to count?
ZEHAVA: I said to myself: "How many glasses did he have?"
MACHLUF: He drinks, she went crazy [everybody laughs].
YOSSI: It's finished and I still don't feel anything.
ZEHAVA: Ah, he still didn't feel anything...
MACHLUF: It doesn't matter.
ADI: Why does she not want to go to a psychiatrist? Why... not?
CECILE: [Assisting Adi] What prevents her?
MACHLUF: I think she's afraid of the illness—that she'll bring a baby into the world—and she can bring a baby—and later he will die.
ZEHAVA: If everybody were to think so they'll never have babies.
ITZCHAK: I think that she is simply afraid to go to the psychiatrist, maybe because of what Sue Ellen went through, when she was...
MACHLUF: ... was in treatment with a psychiatrist.
ITZCHAK: Was in treatment—maybe it can affect her—and also she believes in her incapacity to bring a child and that surely stops her, prevents her from going to a psychiatrist. That's my opinion.
CECILE: Maybe the psychiatrist will discover some defect in her or something and will tell her she is not able to look after a child and she wants it so much.
MACHLUF: There's a difference between Sue Ellen and Pam.
ADI: Let's leave Pam now and tell me...
Evaluation, Mutual Aid: Group members blame Pam—to different degrees—for her "slip," though all of them regard her as a victim. Cecile sticks to the definition of Pam as a good "polar type" character (cf. note 14), absolving her of all blame in the seduction attempt: "She didn't try [to be unfaithful] . . . it came by itself." Cecile seems to identify most with Pam in ascribing the incident to external factors, thus excusing Pam in the same way in which she would excuse herself. Machluf describes Pam as a shift or "changeable type": "Once she tried to be unfaithful"—thus blaming the event on her own will, while Yossi remains undecided: "She was persuaded."

Analyzing this sequence in terms of narrative building, the context should be kept in mind. Up until now Pam was described as the "princess" who "lacks" what she most desires. Therefore she is easy prey for an interested "villain"—i.e., potential lover—who gathers information about her trouble ("reconnaissance"), and receives it ("delivery"). Within this context, Machluf and Cecile describe the seduction attempt as: (1) "trickery"—"Pam is not a drunk and not an adulteress," "it came by itself"; (2) "complicity"—"It wasn't intended but it came; and [the adulterer] had to be caught"; (3) "victory," where the "villain" is defeated by the "hero"—". . . and one telephone call . . . a ring from Bobby saved the whole situation."

It is easy to see how the same pattern of plot can occur while different characters play the role of villain. Both J.R. and the psychiatrist were described as deceiving Pam into not wanting a baby (notes 47, 59) thus making her more desperate so that the potential lover could seduce her and make her betray her husband.

Narration, Attribution: Whereas Sue Ellen and Pam are both victims—Sue Ellen of her circumstances and Pam of her genetics—and participants sympathize with their misfortunes or their "lacks" rather than with any positive attribute (their main attribute, glamour, is never mentioned), Miss Ellie's quality of being "the most logical and honest in the whole family" puts her among the Ewing men—not just as an equal, but as the most virtuous. In relating the sequence of the story described here, group members deal with the problem of J.R. playing alternating roles as victim and hero. In Itzchak's view, Miss Ellie acts as the "father of the princess" who discovered that the person he thought was a hero was, in fact, a "false hero" who "presented unfounded claims." and the false hero is "exposed." "In the last sequence, she really discovered . . . that he's not honest" and so on. But unlike folk tales, Dallas is an unending sequence of plots where nothing is irrevocable and options always stay open. Therefore, the last kidnapping episode having ended, Miss Ellie goes on to propose a "difficult task" to the "hero"—who happens to be none other than the unmasked false hero. His task is a corrective version of his evil act: "She told her son: 'If you want to bring back the child—only with his mother'—he has to bring back the princess with the baby. And like all fairy tales, this sequence will end within a few more episodes in a wedding, although being the cyclical, never-ending Dallas, it will be J.R. and Sue.

MACHLUF: No, just a moment. I'll say what I have . . . the difference between Sue Ellen and Pam. Sue Ellen was a drunk, was an adulteress. Two things, very huge ones. Pam, according to the movie we saw, is not a drunk and is not an adulteress. Once she tried to be unfaithful and one telephone call was sufficient to prevent it.

CECILE: She didn't try.

YOSSI: She was persuaded.

CECILE: No, it came by itself. She didn't try. It wasn't intended. It wasn't intended.

MACHLUF: It wasn't intended but it came; and it had to be caught. The adultery had to be caught and a ring from Bobby saved the whole situation.

ADI: Now, we left the two women, Pam and Sue Ellen. Who is the third person—and this is the last one we'll discuss—the third most important.

ITZCHAK: It's the mother [common agreement in the group].

ZEHAVA: It's the mother really.

MACHLUF: Miss Ellie?

YOSSI: The mother in the last two programs started getting into things.

ZEHAVA: She didn't want any unpleasantness with her daughter-in-law as if she wanted to take away her son. She promised her—she's only coming to visit him . . .

YOSSI: And on one hand she also didn't want to put off her own son.

ITZCHAK: On the whole, in this whole family I think the mother is the most logical and honest, who doesn't get corrupted, not by business and not by money and looks for . . . behaves normally, let's call it that. And in the last sequence she really discovered what she didn't want to believe all the time about J.R. and she really understood that he's not honest and the fact is she told him that: "From today I'm going to keep an eye on you, on everything you do.''

CECILE: She always knew but she looked the other way as if she didn't want to believe it herself.

ZEHAVA: [Fervently] It's after all her son and she didn't want to humiliate him all the time. She looked the other way. She knew everything he was doing . . .

CECILE: And the grandson . . . in spite of the fact that she misses him and will miss him, she told her son: "If you want to bring back the child—only with his mother." In spite of missing the grandson she said: "With mother.''

ADI: One can see the mother believes in her course of action. Does anybody get in her way?
Ellen’s second wedding. It should be noted that Miss Elliot’s instructions, the high points of the two scenes, are retold in direct quotation by Machluf and Cecile, in order to emphasize their dramatic power.

64 Forum: The dominance Miss Elliot acquires, whereby she in effect takes over the role of both mother and father, is threatening to Yossi, who hastens to defend the father’s role. This leads to a heated debate over the “real life” aspects of this issue.

65 Criticism: Here Cecile stops Zehava from attacking J.R. as if he were a real person by reminding everybody that they are talking about a TV show. It is one of the rare instances in which a member of the group has enough distance from the show to draw a clear distinction between real life and Dallas and thereby to relate to its qualities as dramatic genre.

66 Forum: The following is a debate between Zehava and Machluf, who is supported by Yossi on the question of whether fathers have equal rights in their children. This is, in fact, a version of the ancient conflict—between the matriarchal and the patriarchal principles—which is basic to culture and appears as a main theme in Greek tragedy (Fromm 1958). Here it is prompted by Zehava, who interprets Miss Elliot’s special understanding of Sue Elliot’s plight by saying that they both are mothers. Zehava’s underlying argument is that the mother-child attachment is a primordial, precultural relationship that precedes the institution of the family. Her logic is founded in a prefeminist world view: The mother has a special right to her baby precisely because of the differences between the sexes that express themselves (1) biologically and (2) in the specialization of tasks in the home. Zehava claims that productive effort gives the right to the “product” and Machluf claims that “capital investment” does. Machluf’s final joke is a total distortion of her point of view. Feminists would gladly grant equal rights to fathers provided that the men share equally in the tasks in the home.

Had Yossi followed his own logic concerning the “dry law” issue (cf. note 46), wherein he argued that a judge should reward and punish according to goal-oriented effort and not unintended outcomes, he would be on the mothers’ side in this debate. But, in fact, his argument for fathers’ equal rights is founded on the opposite logic of awarding equal parenthood to males for their modest investment. The reason is that his self-interest in this case does not lie on the side of “human” actions and intentions.

Zehava: . . . because she feels it as a mother. If one takes away her son, what would she feel? So, she feels that way herself and doesn’t want others to suffer.

64 Yossi: You speak like a mother.

Ad: Not only about the child.

Zehava: I told you. I repeated it and I repeat again. If he would have loved his wife and child and if he had a little brains, he wouldn’t do everything he did. He wouldn’t . . .

65 Cecile: [laughs] Then there would be no Dallas.

66 Zehava: No, if she asks then I speak my mind, and I explain to my husband. He says why should only the mother? As if one is only on the mother’s side and not the father’s. This is because the mother gave birth to him, the mother suffered for him and she loves him more than the father because it’s from her flesh and blood. And the father is not . . . He is a father. Okay, he loves his child . . .

Machluf: It’s not from his flesh?

Zehava: What’s that?

Machluf: What does it mean from his seed not from his flesh?

Zehava: It’s not the same thing. The mother, she suffered in birth and not the father.

Machluf: They [fathers] haven’t got 50-50 in the child?

Zehava: But the mother looked after the child when he was a baby.

Machluf: Forget the looking after.

Yossi: . . . and thanks to whom was—[unclear]. Thanks to the father.

Machluf: But the [in French] fabrication [production].

Cecile: The production.

Machluf: The production.

Yossi: The production. Who produced it? Who produces this bottle [he holds in his hand the whiskey bottle]. The machine. But who fabricated us? [laughter].

Machluf: [To Zehava] If you don’t plant the seed in the earth . . .

Elihu: This is another study.

Zehava: [To Machluf] Look I always gave you a lot of respect. I never said a word . . .

Machluf: Why, don’t I respect you?

Zehava: It’s not nice . . . I’m only explaining the fact that you say to me . . .
67 **Evaluation:** Some members of the group deal with the question of whether *Dallas* is about real people by creating a dichotomy between "them" and "us." In Israel there are no such people (as those in *Dallas*) because, if there were, they would constitute a part of the society, and that is regarded as a threat. "They" exist safely outside our norms, and because they are rich, they are (1) corrupt—"They do things that we couldn't even imagine to ourselves that they could do" and (2) unhappy—"look for problems" (cf. note 55).

This condemnation of excess is related to the concept of the "golden mean" in Jewish tradition, which advocates moderate, unextreme behavior. In Morocco, as in other feudal societies, people knew that both having too little or having too much is bad. The landlord or king behaved differently from other people. This normative tradition, which characterizes the group here, acts as a buffer against admiring J.R. and accentuates the confrontation between the group's values and those represented by *Dallas."

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YOSSI: What does he say to you?
MACHLUF: I didn't say anything to you. You said the mother, the mother deserves more in the child, more than the father. So I said . . .
ZEHAVA: Yes . . .
MACHLUF: So I said why? It's half-half.
ZEHAVA: The mother, she gave birth to him, she [carried] him for nine months . . .
MACHLUF: That's fine. In our government you [women] ask for equal rights. And you actually want 75 percent.
ADI: Later, it will be all in the tape and they'll say, "What kind of talk went on there?" [laughter].
MACHLUF: I think that people who have a lot of money, like this movie describes, everything can happen with them, even more than that.
ADI: So you think there are such people in real life?

67 **MACHLUF:** Of course there are and there are even worse people.
ZEHAVA: Here, in Israel there are people like that?
CECILE: No, there aren't.
MACHLUF: And all this because of the money. Too much. They have too much. So much so that they do things that we couldn't even imagine to ourselves that they could do. All this because of the money.
CECILE: People who have no problems look for problems.
MACHLUF: That's it exactly.
YOSSI: Yes, I say that the director who directed the whole series and this whole rubbish . . .
ZEHAVA: Don't blush, Yossi.
YOSSI: I don't blush. He has to be quite a genius. Because he engages here a population of 100 to 200 million people, a whole population in Jordan, in Egypt, in Israel, in the whole world . . .
ITZCHAK: You don't have it right.
YOSSI: I mean he got them hooked . . . he got it into them . . .
MACHLUF: He actually made the film with very limited amount of people.
YOSSI: I repeat again Max, Max [Machluf], I'm not talking about Jordan and abroad, I'm talking about here in Israel. Do notice: every second Israeli says to you *Dallas, Dallas*, but nobody understands exactly what happens in this *Dallas*. Nobody.
MACHLUF: From what point of view?
YOSSI: From what point of view? Some people don't understand at all what and you understand, about the [Ewing] family. Whoever didn't see it from the start.
Criticism. In debating the difficulties of those who produce *Dallas*, group members show a rather surprising degree of knowledge in regard to the TV industry, comparable to what one would expect from American viewers. The only difference is that Yossi, Cecile, and Zehava refer to the actors by their characters' names or by their screen roles, whereas Americans are familiar with the stars' names. The confusion over two different newspaper stories (one about Larry Hagman's "J.R. style" financial demands and the other about Jock's death) leads to this argument about the facts behind the scenes.

Interpretation, Participation: Two typical examples demonstrate how participants have no problems in systematically ignoring the interviewer's questions whenever they do not fit naturally into their conversation. In the previous exchange, Yossi brushes away Adi's question and goes on talking about the actors. Cecile here states that she is not going to answer Elihu's question elaborately by declaring, "I've got something to add" and proceeding to analyze characters.

Participation, Acculturation: Cecile is consistent in promoting her rich-poor stereotype (cf. notes 55, 56). It is of great importance for a person's development to grow up in a proper family environment. Cecile's normative model of a family is made clear as the opposite to her non-normative description of Lucy's family. Lucy grew up "without a mother and a father" and therefore was not exposed to norms and thus cannot be normal, since nothing comes from nothing.

For Cecile, the "outrageous" aspect of Lucy's romance with Ray is not in the newly discovered incestuous connection "true, today he is her uncle"—but in the fact that "once he was the servant." Not considering romance with an uncle unacceptable is not surprising in that Jewish law permits marriages between uncles and their nieces.

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ITZCHAK: Maybe he can get used to it . . .
YOSSI: It's not worth his while to see the second and third episode, do you see? But many people just drag along, like I say to you: "I saw a good movie in the Eden Cinema," then you also go to see that good movie. But the director is very clever, he directed it very well. He did a lot of cinema here. Do you [Adi] know what it is? A lot of colors, a lot of tricks, a lot of bluffs, a lot of . . .

ADI: But . . . the people you looked at . . .
YOSSI: The people are actors. They are allocated [parts] and they play according to . . .

ADI: Do they play real parts or like Alice in Wonderland?

YOSSI: Real characters. For instance, I read in the paper that they didn't find anybody to replace J.R.—"who killed J.R."—I read in the paper. They didn't find anybody to replace him.

THE WOMEN: No, the father . . .
YOSSI: The father, that's right.
CECILE: Jack, the father.
ZEHAVA: Jock, the father.
CECILE: Jock passed away and they wanted somebody to replace him.
ELIHU: But do you know such people?

CECILE: No, far, far, far from it. I've got something to add about the mother and the trial, about the child. When J.R. asked the mother if she wants the grandchild back, she refused, both as a mother and as a person who has been through the experience. She has already brought up a granddaughter without a mother and nothing much came of that. She brought Lucy up already. J.R. has already caused problems to the brother, got him out of the ranch and they accepted the daughter, and brought her up and what has become of that daughter?

GIL: Not good?

CECILE: Of course, not good. What did she have? The whole time she suffered without a mother and a father in spite of having a ranch and a grandfather and grandmother and uncles, she always felt . . . who did she fall in love with and who has she been with? True, today he is her uncle but once he was the servant. Ray. She started the story with him. She was his lover. At the end when she got married it was to someone without money. She wanted something but nothing came out of this wedding as well. So she'll [Ellie] bring up a second grandchild without parents . . .
Itzchak: On the whole, I think about this story of Dallas—there might be such cases but I don’t think there can be in the same family such great differences between the brothers, and one cannot imagine [them] in such a business because there are such differences: on one hand, one sees good-hearted honest people in the same family and on the other hand one sees people who cheat all the time, steal all the time, kill and do not get caught. These things are not real. . . . It’s not . . .

Yossi: One could say Mafia . . .

Itzchak: I don’t think . . .

Yossi: One can say that it’s a whole Mafia of J.R.’s. A whole Mafia built in . . .

Itzchak: I don’t believe it can be real . . . that it can happen in any country, in any place.

Cecile: I’ll tell you why. The father always thought that Bobby is ne pas capable, is not capable, and he wanted to show him that is he is. The father always thought that J.R., J.R., J.R., J.R. He always considered Bobby from the business point of view.

Yossi: But who brought them up? Who is their boss? Who decides here for J.R.?

Cecile: Nobody decides.

Yossi: Who has the biggest share of the money?

Cecile: The father.

Yossi: The father, why then doesn’t he decide for them? Why? I’m asking you—why doesn’t he decide for them?

Adi: Explain to me why do they have so many problems in the family. What sort of relationships do they have?

Cecile: They don’t have any brotherly ties.

Adi: Meaning?

Cecile: It’s not clean, the atmosphere is not clean.

Cecile: I think the father had not a little to do with it in the beginning so J.R. follows in his footsteps.

Criticism, Interpretation: Yossi’s attempt to elaborate on the idea that “it’s a whole Mafia of J.R.’s”—which is unfortunately interrupted by Itzchak—recalls a theory put forward in a critical analysis of Dallas (Mander 1982), according to which the show is a serialization of a new American mythology, expressed first in The Godfather, which portrays America’s social institutions as corrupt. Success can no longer be achieved by hard work but only by the power and the backing of “the family.” Individuals cannot be judged as immoral because the responsibility for immorality shifts to society as a whole.

Interpretation: In saying that the father’s criterion for supporting one of his sons was the ability to do business, Cecile demonstrates she sensed the conflict between family and business values underlying all Dallas episodes.

The blatant domination of the business principle, in J.R.’s case, which threatens to destroy the family altogether, is not remarked on explicitly in the discussion, but the surprising choice of the three women as central characters might be a clue to J.R.’s being conceived as a threat to the “normal” family order that hopefully will be overcome by the superior wisdom of the women.

Forum: It is evident that Yossi is bothered by the questions of why the father of the family has lost his authority over his sons, because he keeps returning to it (see his comments at notes 15, 74). Yossi wants to know why there isn’t someone who takes ultimate responsibility and thus reinstates order and prevents the chaos in which each family member fights the other, leading to total destruction. Yossi is from a generation of people whose fathers were immigrants to a new country and who lost their standing in the family. Moroccan Jews who grew up in Israel were deprived of the orderly world of a traditional patriarchal family and abandoned to a world where competition is a free-for-all and not subject to established norms or to fathers’ final rulings.

In spite of the fact that the discussion in this last sequence (notes 71–73) does not follow the rules of a formal debate, the different approaches of Itzchak, Cecile, and Yossi to the problems of anomie and the disintegration of the family can be analyzed. While Itzchak rejects or represses the issue by claiming that it’s not the case in real life, Cecile and Yossi are not satisfied with this answer. Cecile looks for the reasons to explain the process, while Yossi gets very emotional in lamenting the loss of the father’s authority. Although his statement does not formally qualify as saying “it is real,” the emphatic recurring manner in which he brings this up indicates that it is relevant in his life.
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74 Evaluation: In quoting the Ethics of the Fathers from the Mishna, Machluf makes an appeal for Jewish norms, thereby defining himself again as Jewish in his reaction to Dallas (cf. note 10). The “middle” he refers to is the norm of the “golden mean” (cf. note 67). In looking at the psychological functions of Machluf’s insistence that money causes unhappiness, it should be mentioned that Herzog-Massing (1984) has discovered that in German viewers this approach corresponds to people having serious problems in their own lives. Dallas is used by them to escape into daydreaming to comfort themselves in the notion that these people’s problems are no less serious than their own.

75 Evaluation: This presentation of an alternative normative structure—which is “theirs” and not “ours”—might suggest that Dallas is a vehicle for projection: All sorts of impulses that are in contradiction to lower-middle-class and Jewish norms can be projected outside of the viewers’ society and onto Dallas.

74 Machluf: From everything I saw in Dallas, and I followed some sequences in Dallas, I came to the conclusion that a lot of money is no good for the soul. And a lot of women... Whoever has “a lot of property has a lot of worries,” as it says in Pirkei Avot. A person should be in the middle both in money, in honesty, in everything. We learn from the series that a lot of money—what does it cause? Even between brothers one hates the other. [Zehava and Yossi agree.]

Yossi: But Max... Why don’t his father and his mother get into it? Aren’t they the big shareholders?

Machluf: They get into it from time to time.

Cecile: The mother tries to fix as much as she can, but it’s not enough.

Machluf: But sometimes they can’t. J.R.’s influence is very great.

Adi: Does it say anything about the American society?

Itzchak: I don’t believe...

75 Yossi: Yes, Americans usually live in this way. Especially where these people live in Texas, in Dallas. This is their life and this is their way of life and everything is natural. You can see worse things there. It’s the life as it is—the adultery, the bribes, the cheating, all this goes on there in Texas.

Adi: I’ll ask you two more questions—then you can go to bed. The first one is—if you were the director and were told that there’s no money and you had to do the last episode, what would you do to tie it together?

Yossi: We would fix J.R. so that he is put in prison. [Everybody agrees.] So that he digests it properly...

Zehava: So that others would also learn not to steal and not to kill [otherwise] they will pay for it. Otherwise here in Israel, everybody will steal and murder and nothing will be done... I would like J.R. to go to prison; Sue Ellen is also not so innocent, with her adultery, and Pam I would want to be pregnant and to have a baby of her own and everything will...

Itzchak: You talk as an Israeli. I want to tell you one thing...

Machluf: I’ve never been to America.
76 **Interpretation:** Itzchak’s reaction to Zehava’s criticism of Sue Ellen reflects his difficulty in finding himself in a process of historical and social change where people do not behave according to the norms he has internalized and uses to assess the world. He seems to be disturbed by people in his own society who do not act according to norms—and are still not punished. As he cannot deal with this, he takes it out of his world and, as it were, describes it in the context of another—namely, Europe, where it can be “relativized.”

77 Cf. “And shall I not have mercy on Nineveh the city which hath more than 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle?” Book of Jonah, last verse.

78 **Gratification:** Comparing Machluf’s “I want to see it because I haven’t got it” to Cecile’s “I don’t like the children to watch” sums up the conflict participants experience in viewing *Dallas.* Not to “have it” is frustrating, but to “want” or “expect” it is threatening to the group’s precariously balanced normative system. In Cecile’s words, “One doesn’t expect anything of the story” for oneself. Wanting too much is antinormative—it stands for egoism and lust and can endanger a person’s life. It is the old fear expressed in the repeated fairy tale of the fisherman’s wife.

79 *Moked* (“Focus”) and *Mabat Sheni* (“A Second Look”) are current affairs programs on Israeli Television.

80 **Gratification:** Cecile is expressing the classic, often-criticized function of television—that it is an escape from reality. As this conversation was taped in February 1983, when the Israeli army was in Lebanon during what could be described as a war of attrition, the reality in this case is not humdrum and routine but anxiety-provoking and tense.

76 **ITZCHAK:** The word “adultery” in Israel is still a little important but not in Europe. There it’s something completely normal. That means one cannot judge a woman because she was unfaithful; the court would not take it seriously. She did not commit a crime against the law. You talk as a Jew. In a religion like the Jewish faith a wife is not allowed to commit adultery because she is not a wife then. But in Europe . . .

**ADI:** Why do you look at *Dallas?* Why do you watch *Dallas?*

**CECILE:** It’s not better or worse than another series. There is no choice [in programs] here. Also all the beautiful things which one sees—the ranch and the richness. That’s why one views; one enjoys watching, but no more. One doesn’t expect anything of the story.

**MACHLUF:** The film is made out of sequence after sequence, and each is a sequence in itself. In every sequence you see the beginning and the end. Within this they show you the life of Americans.

**CECILE:** So you’re answering the first question—that this is how you imagine America.

77 **MACHLUF:** . . . the richness in America, the luxury. And it’s foreign for me and we love to see it. The private pools, the elegant dress. I live in 64 square meters and there [they have] kilometers and kilometers. And cows. And everything. I want to see it because I haven’t got it.

78 **CECILE:** I, on one hand, don’t like the children to watch . . .

79 **YOSSI:** The Israelis love this series because it was the only one in color in the beginning [general laughter]. I don’t like *Dallas* but I prefer this over *Moked* or some *Mabat Sheni,* or some concert.

80 **CECILE:** I’ll tell you. For me it brings a change. I don’t know if that’s true for everybody. I, for instance, here in Israel, am fed up with the war and with what there is in the news and what there is every day—this one was killed and that one was something else. This way one sees a more quiet life, in this sense. Then we also can think of different kinds of problems.
Conclusions

Although the larger study will compare fifty such conversations, the richness of this one example is enough to suggest a number of "conclusions":

1. The group clearly understands the basic narrative, unimpeached by subtitles and cultural differences. Their focus on primordial passions and the patterns of interpersonal relations may conceal a lesser understanding of the intricate machinations of a particular subplot (cf. note 18, where the meaning of the secretary's phone call to the restaurant is misunderstood). The universality of these elemental relationships seems to be a key to the ease with which the program is understood.

2. Retelling of the narrative by group members is in an interpretative and evaluative mode. They edit the story as if it were more "linear" than it is on the screen by stringing together the segments of only one of the main themes, and they treat it as if it were leading to a final "resolution" rather than to a never-ending and potentially reversible serial. They are certainly closer to Tannen's (1982) Greek storytellers, who define their task as telling an interesting story, than to her Americans, who try to be as detailed and precise as possible even at the expense of being boring.

3. Their reediting of the story invokes a moral frame, whereby the plot rewards and punishes characters according to the moral or immoral motives that are attributed to them. Approval of a character entails attribution of an intrinsic moral motive to explain action. Our Moroccan viewers would surely disagree with Arlen's (1980) proposal that the fascination of Dallas is its moral improvisation and equivocation and its consequent unpredictability. Their reading is more lawful, their characters less ambiguous. That Sue Ellen discovers true love with Dusty (note 55) may not be in the text; it is in the reading. The story may be anomic; this reading is not.

4. It is likely, therefore, that the program serves as more of a "forum" (Newcomb and Hirsch 1984) for Israeli Moroccans than for Americans. The constant "negotiation" between their own values and those of the program leads the group to commute between discussion of the program and discussion of "life." The conversation is replete with references to issues of family, sex roles, justice, standards of living, and the like. On the basis of issues raised in the discussion of the program, reference is made to social relations within the immediate group itself, to personal relations in the community of group members, to problems of Israeli society, to American society (where Dallas is often treated as equivalent to America), and to philosophical issues more generally.

5. The reciprocal of "forum" is "critical distance," that is, discussion of the program as genre, as formula, as a story governed by "poetic" rules and not necessarily related to "life." There is not so much of this sort of distancing on display in the present discussion. Occasionally, however, there is a flash of poetic insight, as when the concept of "Mafia" is alluded to (note 71), echoing the critical analysis by Mander (1982), who argues that Dallas is a version of the newly prevalent Godfather myth in America. Strong emphasis is given by the group to the "escapist" functions of the program—in giving relief from the strictures of religious observance, the constriction of living quarters, and the terrible strain of the long Lebanese campaign. Interchanges of this kind, we surmise, are another of the keys to the process whereby American television programs penetrate linguistic and cultural frontiers. People help one another to decode them. The same interchanges, we believe, constitute the filters through which the story—as hero, metaphor, message—makes its way into the culture.

6. The group, of course, has dynamics of its own, and if certain roles emerge during the course of the conversation, and even if certain members are more dominant than others, this may well be an accurate simulation of everyday television talk. If Machluf prevails in his view, the group may well refuse entry of the values of the program into their lives as traditional Jews; if Yossi prevails, the program is altogether unworthy of serving as a "forum" for discussion of real problems. Among the roles engendered by the discussion, one can discern that of "commuter" (triggering transitions between the story and real life) and "resource person" (providing details from past programs).

George Gerbner may be right in asserting that the effects of television are best studied by asking people not about television but about life. We add only that in discussing television, people often find themselves discussing life.
Acknowledgment

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The title of this article is prompted by my desire to think about the painted cycle ricksha (or pedicab) of Bangladesh as a master symbol of theatrical culture display in the streets. I have therefore used "culture" instead of "cultural" theater to indicate the holistic scope of this symbol, as opposed to the particularity that the adjective "cultural" implies. To borrow a term from Szombati-Fabian and Fabian (1976), the Bangladesh ricksha is a "totalizing symbol," for the exegesis of its forms, functions, and decoration must incorporate a layering of central values and their contradictions within it. Conceivably, the painted decora-

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Figure 1 Synoptic view from front of ricksha.
The Ricksha

Synoptically, the cycle ricksha (Figure 1) is a conveyance for people (or things) which consists of a passenger seat with back- and armrests, a platform for the feet below the seat, the whole mounted upon a frame supported by three bicycle wheels: a driver's saddle and handlebars; and requisite cycle machinery to propel the vehicle by the force of the driver's pumping legs. An umbrellalike hood is attached near the armrests. It pulls up and over the passenger or, collapsing like an umbrella, pushes down behind the passenger seat.

Ricksha painters locate decorative elements on the following areas: the frame undercarriage; the upholstery of the passenger seat; the area behind the passenger's legs (above the footboard and below the seat); on the footboard; on the curved rear end of the vehicle; and on the separately prepared rectangular picture hanging below the rear between the two wheels. Abstract florals and/or geometrics cover the frame and often intersperse between figural areas, and figural (or figurative) matter fills the upholstered seat-back area and the rectangular picture behind. Figurals may also appear on the rear of the ricksha above the wheels. Little shieldlike doodads attached above the wheels at the rear may also be painted with figural, abstract, or combined designs as well as adverts, such as the name of the shop where the vehicle was decorated or made.

Designs on the hood are usually abstract/floral or geometrics, often rows of medallions combining, say, a full rose inside a star and crescent. The rear panels of the hood, less frequently, may also show a full-length human portrait of a culture hero such as a movie star or, to cite a rare one, the great Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore. Hood ornamentations, sewn appliquè made by men using foot-pedal sewing machines, are formed of colored and glittery plastic materials. Artwork on footboards consists usually of nailhead designs, geometric and/or curvilinear.

Decoration

As this article mainly addresses itself to the figurative paintings on the rickshas, some pertinent sociological aspects of their decoration should be considered. First, ricksha art is made by ordinary people, not elites, for ordinary audiences. As a Bangladesh writer put it,

They [the paintings] have no chance to be exhibited in a hall and they do not get any recognition, but for the common people they are Picasso, Dali, Zainul Abedin. [Chaudhuri 1979:43; translated from the Bengali]

The art is of the street and the bazaar. It is not produced for consumption as separate from the vehicles whose decoration it serves. (One does observe advertising on rickshas here and there, but minimally in relation to the whole.)

Second, the paintings are art. That is, they are made by people who consider themselves engaged in an aesthetic activity involving cycle rickshas. They usually sign their work, and they may be specialists in ricksha painting (Figures 2 and 3). They create expressive, figurative representations on the surfaces of the vehicle. Some of the decoration is abstractly ornamental, often repetitive, pattern which fills in certain marginal spaces; much of it is deliberately representational and deliberately selected as to thematic material.

Third, the motif vocabulary of ricksha art has been strongly affected by the technological modernization process occurring in the Third World in general, and in South Asia in particular, since the closing decades of the nineteenth century but especially in the early twentieth century. Motifs include specific technical fascinations such as airplanes, steamships, trains, motor cars, trucks, and buses—recently even vans. One finds, as well, commercial lettering of various styles giving the names of ricksha shop owners, and features of framing motifs and context juxtapositions which may stem from those of chromolith art. The latter became popular in South Asia by the turn of the century. (By the 1930s, for example, chromolithography had driven out the Kalighat school of folk art produced by artists at the Calcutta Kalighat temple; see W. C. Archer 1971.)

While ricksha artists responded to the impact of modernization, their work did not spring full blown from the head of the Muse of Science and Industry. Indeed, there is evidence to support the notion that this art is closely related to, if not directly descended from, nineteenth-century manifestations of ritual and popular arts in Bengal. To mention a major folk source first, scroll painting was practiced by various artisan castes among both Bengalis and tribals of Bengal, some of whom were known as patas, or makers of pat (painted scrolls). These were unrolled and displayed while the artist recited secular or sacred texts or songs (see Bhattacharjee 1980; Dutta 1932, 1933; Mitra 1953). It is known that in the past fifty years or so, the patas have been drifting out of their pat occupations because of political forces (Muslim-Hindu antipathies) as well as competition from the movies.

Besides a background in traditional pat art, ricksha art shows affinities in some subject matter to the "Company Art" of the British Indian period (18th–19th centuries; see M. Archer 1977; Welch 1978). Post-Mughul art in India was strongly affected by the broad circulation in the market of British picture books that
emphasized a “natural history” approach to elements in the daily life of India, such as caste occupations, modes of transport, dancing girls or courtesans alone or with patrons, glamorous architecture, flora and fauna. Another popular technique was glass painting, which tended to specialize in beautiful ladies or gods and goddesses. And finally, another form which genetically precedes the ricksha paintings is the Kalighat art of the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century in Bengal. In common with pat scrolls, Kalighat art featured gods and goddesses. In common with glass paintings (and the later ricksha pictures) it also depicted courtesans and contemporary secular concerns, such as the famous Tarakeshwar murder case (see W. C. Archer 1971; Morinis 1982).

Appreciated by the ordinari lok (as one artist put it in half-English, half-Bengali), the paintings are ignored or rarely noticed by the gentry (bhadralok). The gentry consider the paintings vulgar; for them “art” means “fine art,” such as the paintings of the late Zainul Abedin. Whereas the term for fine artist in Bengali is silpacharya, Sanskrit for “a master of Art,” ricksha artists are referred to or call themselves mistri (craftsman), or artist or pentar, Bengalizing the English terms.

The artist’s work is constructed according to certain stylistic conventions of form and subject matter, models of which are found in mass-produced media—film magazines or posters, children’s books, and calendars both Bengali and Western. The paintings have also displayed significant responsiveness to current events that stimulate public consciousness.

Figure 2 Abdul Latif, painter, holds a painted panel for a seat back, showing animal fable-type matter popular at this period. Dhaka, February 1978.

The artists do not simply copy the various sources of their subject matter; the material they adapt is reorganized to suit their medium. There are two main locations of pictures on the vehicle: on the upholstered seat-back and on the rectangular-shaped piece of thin metal sheeting which is attached to the rear bottom edge of the back of the vehicle, between the two rear wheels. This picture is the main ornament on the rear; the seat-back painting, the main attraction from the frontal view. Artists work with brushes and oil or enamel paints. (There are several other decorative crafts involved in the makeup of a ricksha, but they are not considered here.)

It is important to note that not all the rickshas in any large town are decorated. I estimate that about thirty percent remain quite plain. Indeed, whether or not to decorate is an issue caught up in the crossfires of tension between political factions of secularists and Islamites, a point I shall return to.

The question of thematic material must now be addressed. The themes are usually selected by the ricksha owners, not the drivers who are young, strong, but poor men from the villages. They barely earn enough to feed themselves, much less a family. Ricksha owners, or maliks (Figure 4), discuss their decoration program for a new ricksha, or the redecoration of an old one, with the artists. Occasionally a malik will simply suggest that the artist choose the images; or he will hand him a movie poster and ask that it be used as a model. He may ask for a jungle scene, a city scene, a village scene, a Taj Mahal, a people picture, and so on. These themes are categories for which the artists I interviewed used descriptive terms in Bengali. Themes of seeming perennial interest, whose deployment may vary over time, include country animals in a village setting; village houses near pond or river; country boats; beautiful women; various kinds of traditional and modern transport; fantastic cityscapes with contrasting storied buildings and more traditional architecture. Cityscapes may include shining elevated roadways backed by towering waterfalls in the distance.

Topical interests are especially visible in relation to political swings within the country. The horrendous impact of the liberation war with Pakistan (1971–1972) and the establishment of the independent country of Bangladesh was first evident in the warfare and atrocity paintings (Figure 5). These depicted Pakistani soldiers bayoneting men and women and ripping off the clothes of women before the eyes of their fallen male relatives. Juxtaposed within some atrocity paintings of the crime was also the punishment, the revenge on the Paki soldiers by the Bengali freedom fighters. (Artists referred to this thematic material as mukti jodha or mukti bahini, "freedom fighter images.") After the access to national leadership (1972) of the hero of liberation, Mujibur Rahman, the municipality of Dhaka city, the capital, banned the painting of atrocity scenes. By 1975 few of them could be found Except in Old Dhaka. Moreover, interest in the theme had died out, to be replaced by the perennial themes noted above, including beautiful women portrayed as temptresses or victims (Figures 6 and 7). Artists were also beginning to favor the jungle scene (jungal sin), or animals leering and snarling at each other across a body of water (Figure 8), an image that forms a perfect metaphor for the state of human relations in an economy of extreme scarcity, where people must suffer the harshness of routine conflict over the most basic resources for survival. I call it the "waterhole scene"
(see Bertocci 1977 on envy and the image of limited good in Bangladesh).

In the Pakistan period (pre-1971), so some of my informants report, beautiful women images were taboo on rickshas, a situation which was reversed during the civil secularism in force after the accession of Mujib in 1972.\footnote{After his assassination in 1975, official policies began to favor friendship with Pakistan and more Islamic postures in the body politic.} By 1976, therefore, images of beautiful women had begun to be more rare, while those remaining were subject to attack from iconophobes bent on scratching out the faces (Figure 9). By 1978 human images had disappeared from the ricksha paintings in Dhaka, prohibited by the municipal authorities. This period marked the peak of a swing toward public Islamic Pieties and political Islamicization\footnote{The return to popularity of movie material showing manuser citra, or people pictures, some time after 1978, which seems to have been the peak of Islamicization after the death of Mujib, was the result of the basically secularistic policies of the next national leader, General (then President) Zia ur Rahman (in power 1975–1981). Despite great political pressure from the Islamite factions, for example, Zia resisted the renaming of Bangladesh as "The Islamic Republic of Bangladesh." As was the case under his predecessor, Mujib, artists did not stint in representing sexy women and men in scenes from currently popular Bangladeshi or Indian films (Figures 15, 16, and 17).} (Figures 10, 11, 12, and 13).

In response, artists painted more varied "animal fable" (Figures 12 and 14) images—animals dressed and behaving like people in both comical or sinister action. There was also a surge of Islamic themes: images of Taj Mahals or mosques, Al Burak (see Figure 10), or scenes from Aladdin-type movies (see Figure 11). The craze of this time, however, was exotic bird images—fantastically feathered creatures flapping and bowing in multiples or executing pas de deux in the moonlight (Figure 13). Indeed, the painters had succeeded, by the proliferation of lovebirds all over town, in suggesting one of their heartfelt preoccupations, erotic love, without transgressing the taboo on human figures. Their other favorite obsession, violence, was expressed in many of the animal fable images (see, e.g., Figure 12).

This last interest, somewhat on the wane in the 1970s, emerged again in the cinema-inspired images of the 1980s. One could see about town the heads of pet movie stars like Razazzak and Bobita in the same frame, he with bandaged brow dripping blood, she insouciant under the English picture hat.
Figure 7  Woman as victim; rural scene below it. Rajshahi, Winter 1976.

Figure 8  “Waterhole scene” (langaior sin) is more realistic in style in 1976; in 1982, it is less realistic, more stereotypic and fantastic—but still somewhat popular.

Figure 9  During the Islamicization period, human faces in painting were often scratched out. Below is a scene of air transport, very popular at this time. Rajshahi, Winter 1976.

Figure 10  Al Burak. Dhaka, February 1978. This motif was popular at the time, whereas it was not seen in photographs taken in 1972, 1976, or 1982.

Figure 11  Photographed during height of political Islamicization, February 1978. Women, normally banned as subject matter, are seen here as paris (angels) with Genie. From a movie.

Figure 12  Animal fable by Abdul Latif. Dhaka, February 1978.
Figure 13  Overdetermination of bird motifs at a time when pictures of people (manusher sin) were banned—the most popular figurative material in Dhaka in this period. Dhaka, February 1978.
Signification in the Ricksha Paintings

Semiotic interpretation of this vernacular art enables the ethnologist to take account of the duality implicit in ethnographic and ethnomethodological discourse. The distinction between emics and etics can be located in the discourses about signifiers and signifieds; that is, it was possible to elicit a short list of native terms for subject matter in the paintings, just as it was also possible to record the views of artists and owners about the imagery. It is when one attempts the more general and also more abstract task of writing about the significations in the art that, following Barthes, one moves away from the emics/etics dichotomy. Inferences about signification place one in the realm of privileged interpretation available to the analyst who has access to a large fund of information about the culture and its history which is not available to native informants, yet which is also not recognized as universal discourse. Moreover, this material is embodied in "experience-distant" language, to quote Geertz (1977:481–482) quoting Kohut. Such discourse is alien to both producers and consumers of the art, for the most part. Yet, since there is no universally accepted methodology of the interpretive task, it cannot be placed under the rubric of etics. It is something else. Having paid this homage to ethnoscience, and suggesting that Geertz's "thick description" is analogous to the concept in semiotics of signification (at least as Barthes used it), I will produce some examples of the signification-generating process in respect to ricksha art.

Let me turn first to some remarks made by an insightful Bengali writer who interviewed artists and others about their works. In reviewing the multivarious imagery and its colorfulness, Chaudhuri says in the Robbar article: Ja jibone chai, tai party chai (1979:45). That is, "whatever the owner or the artist might want in life, he wants a party!" Chaudhuri (ibid., p. 44) summed up the broadest inference from the paintings similarly to the way I did, independently, after a field visit in 1978 that the images are expressions of the common man's icche puran, literally "old desires," or what I called his "heart's desires" (Kirkpatrick 1980, 1981, 1982a and b).

Chaudhuri's process of exegesis was privileged from his position as a native speaker and an intellectual in Bangladesh; mine is privileged or biased somewhat differently through amplified access to the data from such areas as history, political economy, sociology, and anthropology, discourses unavailable to common people (chhoto lok) or Bengali intellectuals alike in the ways that they are available to me. My working with significations went something like this: "Why are birds so popular these days?" I asked some artists in 1978. "Well, they seem inoffensive enough," was the reply. Or "They are the newest trend," said another. What these two statements are
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Figure 16  Such intimate scenes rarely appear except on seat backs. Material from movies. Note transistor radio inserted below the seat. This is a "disco ricksha." The woman is portrayed as temptress, the man as victim. Dhaka, February 1982.

also saying is, "They are safe" and "We like new things." Where does one go from this? One can search the history of the animal fable and realize that it is implicitly political: it embodies cultural criticism or the officially unsayable. And in South Asia the history of erotic significations of the bird-pair as image in the arts is long, as is the history of the river image, which represents flawed life, samsara, the struggle to appease our desires (e.g., the waterhole scenes).

So, one thinks about birds billing and cooing on rickshas at a time when human images are forbidden; one thinks about animals-dressed-as-people about to whip a prisoner animal in a courtroom where the lion is judge. Or one muses about animals, depicted as animals not people, snarling at each other across a river-body of water or attacking each other in it, and the significations come into focus.

Indeed, the images which figure most ambivalently in the society, depending on political conditions—that is, images representing eroticism and sadistic violence—are summoned from the male cultural nexus: in Barthes' term (1967), the doxa of males. In this value set, virtuous women are not supposed to be seen in public unveiled or uncovered, not supposed to be either erotic or violent (although they must be sexual, and therefore taboo, in order to fulfill their principal social functions of rearing children and serving men). As already noted, when Islamicization dominated public policy in Dhaka, the erotic and violent images of human beings were suppressed, only to surface in disguise, masked as lovebirds or animal fables.

As Yeats wrote, "Virtue is theatrical . . . the wearing of a mask." Thus, the imagery of "officially safe" fantasies, like golden Bengal (Figures 18 and 19), waterhole scenes (see Figure 8), and scenic cityscapes, persists over time as content in the paintings. The noticeable shifts in themes occur around the suppression, or expression, of "officially taboo" imagery of sex and human violence, apparent or disguised.
The Ricksha as Totalizing Sign/Symbol and Theatricality

The previous discussion serves to introduce the question of theatricality in relation to the decoration of the Bangladesh ricksha. As the black-and-white illustrations intimate (only color reproductions could fully bear out the point), the ricksha can be a gorgeous wonder to behold. It is Eco’s overcoding (1976) with a vengeance. The painted ricksha collates within and upon its form a myriad of culturally significant signs and symbols that sum up major values within the popular culture, while perversely, perhaps, summoning up some basic contradictions as well. In a sense, the decorated ricksha is a materialized myth, for like myth it not only embodies some fundamental contradictions but appears to resolve them as well. Yet the contradictions remain, causing shifts in some of the ricksha’s shining apparel from time to time.

What are these fundamental values conglomerated on the ricksha? One might say, at bottom they are the values of desire—of love of the land or sonar Bangladesh (golden Bangladesh): rural landscapes; love of one’s village origins and the homestead: cows and thatched houses; love of river life: country boats; love of modern excitement: fast trains, cars, buses, trucks, planes, elaborate modernistic city structures with elevated highways; love of the male struggle over resources: waterhole scenes; love of violence: atrocity scenes, animal fable torture scenes, dinosaur battles; love of Islam: Al Burak, Taj Mahal scenes, crescents and stars, and the absence of decoration... the blank ricksha (roughly, thirty percent of any flock of rickshas seen on any busy street).

If there is a difference in content between the rear chobi (picture) and the picture on the seat back, it is most likely to bear out a distinction important in the culture, that between outside and inside. In this case, the distinction translates into that between outer world and inner feelings. Thus, at least in 1982, sexy movie star images were more often found inside the rick on the seat backs (see Figure 16) and less so on the main rear picture, where, instead, one finds such images as bird scenes, village scenes, waterhole scenes, Taj Mahals. Some rickshas show the same picture on both seat back and the rear chobi, but then both tend not to involve the risqué.

Finally, additional decorations of the doodad sort, such as brightly colored plastic flowers in little brass vases between the handlebars and plastic streamers, plus touches of gold and silver here and there and tinsely, lacy effects on the hood, make of the gorgeous rickshas something of a traveling boudoir (see Figure 4), a little nest for bazaar cruisers in the twilight hours, just going around enjoying the sights and sounds of the city. (When two ride in a ricksha, they are tightly squeezed together in the smallish seats.)

While not all the painted rickshas are marvels of rococo splendor, about seventy percent are theatrical in the ensemble of visual displays. Such overcoding of their decorative elements could not be accounted for better than by Barthes, who wrote once that “Theatricality is theater-minus-text...” (1972b:26). It is ironic

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Figure 18 Country boats, airplane. This subject virtually vanished by 1982, except on the city-village-city motor taxis. Rajshahi, Winter 1976.

Figure 19 Nineteen-eighties version of scenic countryside, usually found on 3-wheel elongated motor taxis which ply between villages and city. Above the picture, a checked garment of a rider is visible. Dhaka, February 1982.
that his concept of theatricality as a "density of signs," as "informational polyphony," and of theater as a "cybernetic machine" (1972b:261–262) is possibly more applicable to these rickshas than to the dramatic texts Barthes was writing about (see, e.g., Krysinski 1982:4). In short, the visual effects of painted rickshas on the streets of large towns such as Dhaka or Chittagong blatantly stand out from the drabness of their settings, creating an analogous distinction between themselves and spectators or audience. As in Michael Fried's thesis (1980) on absorption and theatricality in art, the ricksha as its decorations and in its functions theatrically installs a gap between spectator and object. In a culture where the public expression of the desire in men's hearts is normatively taboo, the painted ricksha theatrically violates the taboo without implicating the spectator who, because of the extremism of imagery, can either ignore or be amused by it. Nor is the rider in one implicated either. Snugly set into the seat, with the hood pulled forward so that one's form is recessed into dimness, one cannot see one's own ricksha, only the back of the toiling driver. Meanwhile, the rider enjoys an excellent view of the other rickshas, if inclined to look at them. Theatricality, as it were, here proposes the opposite to the process Barthes referred to as naturalization in his Mythologies—mystification—and that is precisely what overcoding of extremist imagery performs as a flaunting of certain deeply felt values which oppose official values. Theatricality implies innocence in enjoyment.

To conclude, in a setting like Bangladesh, where public display of appetitive temptations and sensuality are strongly discouraged by cultural beliefs and social values, and in towns where the streetscapes present a drabness, a dusty asceticism of eyes and skin (those interfaces between outside and inside), and a grinding poverty of means, the gaily colored, image-laden ricksha "fiares forth" (like Kenneth Burke's nova: 1966:242), a theatrical spectacle of values both public and private, outside and inside. In a culture where the official ideology is antitheater, the painted ricksha is a set of moving pictures in the streets which, unlike the movies, people need not pay to see.

Notes

1 Fieldwork was conducted in Bangladesh, in September 1975–August 1976, winter 1978, and winter 1982. My grateful acknowledgment of assistance with translating from the Bengali to my friend and colleague in culture criticism, Mrs. Jahanara Begum.

2 By "vernacular" I mean artifacts whose technologies are not entirely embedded in the industrial manufacturing nexus, and which require significant inputs of handicraft techniques and materials. Like other common terms, "folk" and "popular," it is somewhat imprecise. Our typologies do not necessarily fit the cross-cultural data, nor are there always emic terms to employ usefully.

3 The late Zainul Abedin was Bangladesh's most famous fine artist, many of whose paintings have passed into international collections.

4 In 1982 I noticed that seat upholtreys were being sold separately, already painted, all pieces assembled into one roll. Dhaka shops that specialized in the fabric used for seat covers, awnings, etc., stocked a few such "kits" and also sold the painted seat-back pieces as single items.

5 Occupational specialization in ricksha painting had increased in frequency between 1975 and 1982 in upcountry Rajshahi, and it had already been well established in the capital, Dhaka, by the mid-1970s.

6 The earliest sign of this sort of popular painting that I have been able to locate in the literature is found in Hsu (1948). While doing fieldwork in Kumling, in southern China, in the early 1940s, Hsu found that local craftsmen engaged to decorate the new mansions of the rich had painted "modern buildings similar to those . . . seen in Shanghai or Hongkong during the 19th century, or modern means of transportation—the train, the steamer, and the aeroplane" (p. 36). He goes on to mention one particular painting which juxtaposed different modes of transport within one plane in the same crazy way one can observe in some ricksha paintings, where one sees trains about to collide, and so on (p. 38). The house owners' motives also appear to be similar to those of the ricksha owners, as "attempts to enhance the owner's prestige" (p. 39). It may be worth noting also that the location of such pictures was as part of the large entryways and gates into the family compound, an area that represents the margins between outside and inside, in this case, between the Chinese family and the ambiguous European influences symbolized by modern technology.

7 Both extravagant framing effects, found in many ricksha paintings (and which will figure in another paper I am working on), and a style of juxtaposing images within the same frame may be inspired by procedures which became conventions in chromolithography. Such framing effects are not used in movie posters, but the juxtapositions and cramming of material within one frame are still de rigueur in India and Bangladesh movie posters and cinema hoardings, as they also are in Thailand. See Warren 1983; Marzio 1979.

8 In 1976, the year of my first fieldwork in Bangladesh, a ricksha driver earned the equivalent of about $1.25 per day, with $1.00 going to the owner. Most drivers are young; one sees very few old men among them, for the work is very hard. In 1976 a ricksha fully equipped cost about $200; today the cost would be more than double that amount (see Borders 1976).

9 E.g., jungaler sin, shaharer sin, garamer sin, Taj Mahal, manusher sin.

10 It has been difficult to ascertain precisely when people started decorating rickshas in Bangladesh. O. H. K. Spate (1954:290) says that in India in 1950 cycle production included "an unusually high proportion of tricycles, mainly for the 'trishaw,' or pedal-bike-cum-sidecar, which is replacing the man-pulled rickshaw in some towns."
It may be worth noting that vital data reported recently by Chowdhury and Langsten (1983) lend support to a thesis asserting the relation between social stress and Islamicization, because infant and adult mortality, and infant and outmigration in a rural area (Com­paniganj) peaked during both 1975–1976 and 1978. The former was a year of famine; the latter, of serious drought. Moreover, in times of serious stress on mortality, male rates are higher than fe­male. Such a finding puzzles demographers, and anthropologists have some theories about it. In any case, as the religion of Islam is maintained and promoted largely within the custody, social circles, and social practice of men in Bangladesh, one is tempted to infer a significant association between a surge in social stress and Islamicization and vital threats to males within the sociocultural ecosystem.

Many English words have found a home in Bengali, including the word “party,” which has also been adopted by Hindi. In the streets of Third World countries one finds the craze for the new and gimmicky. In 1982 the password was “disco” (pronounced “dishco”). Anything new, such as the Mickey Mouse watch one shopman showed me, was “disco.” A “disco ricksha” was one which had in­serted into the board below the seat a transistor radio. One ricksha had the word, in roman letters. “DISCO” written within the design over that same area, although it did not sport a radio. An informant said that radio­rickshas had been popular before the war with Pakistan but that they had not staged a comeback until recently (in the 1980s, most probably). Videotapes smuggled from India with American disco programs on them were passed around in the city, and it seems that “all the bazaar knew” about the latest foreign (phoren) thrills.

Rickshas are decorated not only to attract fares but to enhance the social status of their owners. Moreover, what I consistently saw in the streets was that people wanting to hire a ricksha would signal the one closest to them on the street, bargain with the driver over the fare, and either take it or bargain with the next man who drove up. The appearance of the ricksha does serve to attract tourist riders, however. A few well-off people own their own ricksha. It may have been such a private vehicle that I saw painted with two full-length pictures of Tagore on the rear of the hood (the part that hangs down behind the seat) and a scene of baby Krishna robbing the butter pots on the chobi. Indeed, 1982 was the first time I saw Hindu imagery on ricksha paintings in Dhaka.

Following Barthes further, it is tempting to say that the cycle ricksha at times resembles his view of Brecht’s theater, whose role is to “show that the world is an object to be deciphered (this is a theater of the signifier).” At other politically safer times for the artist, art sets into a more conventional theatricality, which transmits “a positi­ve message,” i.e., a theater of the signified (Barthes 1972b:263). In the latter instance, the ricksha art more blatantly emphasizes the cinematic affiliations.

Theater as such has a long history in India, from classical Sanskrit drama to contemporary jatra (and other similar forms), of outdoor theater, and also in Bengal as Western-influenced indoor plays since the nineteenth century. In Bangladesh, there are theater groups which put on amateur plays, in private and indoors for the most part. Meanwhile, village jatras have declined since the incep­tion of East Pakistan (1947) and then Bangladesh (1971). The offi­cial culture, the doxa, does not foster folk and popular theater and actively discourages it in the rural areas where it used to flourish. See Alamgir Kabir (1979) for influence of jatra on early Dhaka films and audiences.

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Reviews and Discussion


Reviewed by Peter Gold
The Native Way Project
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It is ironic that Native Americans are among the least understood of the world’s peoples by Euro-Americans. Centuries of strife and divergent values have erected barriers to understanding which both groups are only now beginning to surmount. One pervasive misconception held by Whites is the romantic reverie of the Noble and Eternal Red Man, the Child of Nature. We view the Native American as locked into an unyielding embrace with nature, in that same promised land to which we yearn to return some day but which only seems to recede from our view. Despite our projections of Indians as bastions of traditionism (which to a great degree they are), Native American societies are also clearly dynamic systems. While holding on to old and profound traditions, Native Americans are at the same time constantly making conscious, evolutionary decisions that affect one another’s lives and those of their descendants.

In this regard Victor Masayesva, Jr., and Erin Younger’s Hopi Photographers/Hopi Images makes a significant contribution to our understanding of contemporary Hopi Indian values and modes of visual perception and expression. It stands as the first forum, in volume form, by which Hopi photographers are enabled to reach a national audience. In the process we gain valuable insight into the ways by which seven Hopi view reality.

Hopi Photographers/Hopi Images consists of two main sections. The first contains essays by Masayesva, whose photographs are also featured in this volume, and a second, longer essay by his collaborator, Younger. Section Two consists of brief statements of purpose by each of the seven featured photographers and biographical sketches of each, followed by a selection of their photographs from the exhibition upon which this volume is based.

That this is a collaborative effort between an articulate member of the Hopi Tribe and a Euro-American scholar is both right and timely, for their efforts contribute substantively to a balanced view of the Hopi Way by invoking a bicultural model of presentation. Such an approach is valuable because it combines two cultural methods of social documentation. The first is the Euro-American view of cultural reality, which we call anthropology. It is predicated upon having an observer standing slightly apart from a culture in order to acquire insights into facts and patterns which equally perceptive individuals from within it may miss by their very proximity to it. In the second approach we see that the corollary is also true, that the observer from another society may be handicapped by his or her own cultural projections and brief and serendipitous exposure to the complexities of the culture under scrutiny. Thus, in bicultural documentation, anthropological inquiry and personalized observations by insightful members of the society combine to form a full and balanced picture of the culture as may be possible.

Masayesva’s introductory essay, “Kwikwilyaqqa: Hopi Photography,” likens the doing of photography to the manifesting of the qualities of the personality of the katcina Kwikwilyaqqa, a comical spiritual entity (katcina literally means “respected spirit”) who occasionally makes an appearance at katcina dances in the role of a mimic. Masayesva weaves a case for the photographer being just that: “Kwikwilyaqqa is a living commentary on what photographers are and what photography is; implicating us in turn, revealing what people do to people” (p. 12). In the process he utilizes language which is candid, replete with affective and subjective allusions, and with a perspective that is certainly not formalized or objectified (in the Euro-American sense of the terms), but distinctively Masayesva and, very likely, typically Hopi.

Yet his commentary is fully universal. Highly self-aware individuals such as Masayesva are capable of effectively stepping outside their cultural conditioning to see what the katcina Kwikwilyaqqa cannot—their own place in the dynamic flow of ideas and actions comprising their own culture. In his commentary on the social impact of photography, for instance, Masayesva recognizes that photography can become a weapon, not only in the hands of outsiders but also in the hands of Hopi photographers when used to “violate the silences and secrets so essential to our group survival” (p. 10). He goes on to observe that this dangerous time of interface between positive and negative change in which Hopi photographers find themselves may result in the possibility of the camera’s being used as a missionary: “one which intrudes itself within group-oriented values so central to the Hopi way, by reinforcing in the photographer his individuality” (p. 11). Likewise, the camera can become equally as obtrusive in the hands of a Hopi as in those of a White tourist, prompting Masayesva’s observation that an equal desire to photograph non-katcina religious events, such as the Snake and Flute dances, is expressed by many Hopi. But for the Hopi the injunctions against doing so are not embodied in the warning signs enforcing the ban on photography,
posted at the entrance to each village, but in the reinforcement of the awareness of its possible contribution to the advent of "the dangerous time prophesized by the old people. Refraining from photographing certain subjects has become a kind of worship" (p. 10).

Complementing Masayesva's insightful and expressive essay is Younger's study, "Changing Images: A Century of Photography on the Hopi Indian Reservation." This essay could not differ more organically from that of Masayesva in terms of orientation and style. Yet it is excellent in its own right, reflecting as it does the historical/cultural posture of the Western scholar concerning a subject whose continuum can be profitably traced across several generations of human time.

In this respect the reader is presented with a Euro-American complement to the Hopi viewpoint, and together the two provide the groundwork for what at this point in the reading promises to be a well-rounded, bicultural exposition on Hopi life and thought. But for one glaring incongruity (discussed below) Younger's essay provides a useful background compendium on the history of White photographic activity among the Hopi and the eventual advent of the Hopi photographing themselves.

Younger observes that early Anglo photographers were motivated to document the alien cultural ways of Native peoples whose homelands lay in the path of the railroad rights of way and of White settlement, to enable the government to achieve "better administration of Indian affairs" (p. 16). The resultant photographs and documentation were produced within the context of scientific field research by such individuals as the photographer John K. Hillers and the ethnologist/archaeologist Jesse Walter Fewkes.

Later, during the latter years of the nineteenth century, photographers such as Adam C. Vroman and Edward S. Curtis set out to record (as did bona fide ethnologists) the remaining tatters of the "vanishing race." That their work would help stimulate the tourist trade (not to mention the Noble Red Man reverie) is also significant. In the process they derived varying degrees of personal acclaim and financial reward from their endeavors as "art-documentary" photographers.

Younger goes on to discuss the work of subsequent photographers who frequently placed Hopi people in formulaic poses or in unauthentic settings in order to suit their own personal aesthetics or their White public's tastes. And we learn of sordid intrusions into the kiva, the sacrosanct Hopi ceremonial chamber, by photographers such as George Wharton James and the Reverend Heinrich Voth.

All this would ultimately lead to the banning of public photography at the Hopi mesas by the year 1915. Younger then introduces us to the White response to the restriction on photography, leading to scenes depicting arts and crafts production, subsistence activities and manifestations of "modernization" (read "Americanization"). We are brought up to the present era with a discussion of contemporary treatments of Hopi life through the work of such photographers as Jerry Jacka and John Running and the dissemination of these through a parade of periodicals led by Arizona Highways.

Finally, Younger provides us with an introduction to the work of Hopi photographers. We are informed of the evolution from family snapshot photography to the active use of conventional visual genres: "Beginning in the late 1960's, Hopi photography expanded to encompass portraiture, documentary sequences, photojournalism and interpretive or 'art' photography" (p. 35). She ends her exposition with a brief general introduction to the types of images and genres which each of the represented Hopi photographers utilizes in his or her work.

Marring an otherwise unblemished introductory essay is Younger's treatment of the controversy surrounding the issue of whether Curtis had "lied" with his camera. This is the proverbial can of worms of Native American documentary photography, made doubly difficult by our contemporary misgivings over what was a total acceptance of the "art-documentary" genre during Curtis's time. Thus, was it lying or was it artistic license?

On page 18 Younger refers to the overzealous muckraking of Curtis's work by Christopher Lyman: "In taking pictures of the Snake Dance, for example, he [Curtis] used a wide-angle lens that not only froze the action of the dance but blurred the [predominantly White] audience in the background" (Lyman 1982). There appear to be two serious flaws in the reasoning. First, as any photographer will explain, using extremely insensitive film such as was available during Curtis's time (anywhere from 100 to 1000 times less sensitive than film in use today) will create the difficult problem of an inherent lack of depth of field. Depth of field refers to that area within the image which will be in focus in any given shot. The lack of depth of field is particularly aggravated when one wishes to shoot the picture with a fast shutter speed, such as 1/100 of a second or shorter in duration, in order to freeze rapid movement, such as dancing, without blurring. In this context, the aperture of the lens, even in brightest sunlight, must be opened very wide in order to admit sufficient light and compensate for the fast shutter speed. The larger the aperture, the more limited the depth of field. Accordingly, while the dancers are in focus, most of the background and foreground are necessarily blurred. To assume that by this means Curtis purposely planned to eliminate the White onlookers situated on the rooftops well beyond the dancers (which nevertheless could be the case) is simply circumstantial.
Second, to assert that Curtis used a wide-angle lens to freeze the dance action and blur the audience in the background is equally inaccurate. Indeed, a wide-angle lens would necessarily bring more of the background (and foreground as well) into focus. Telephoto lenses reduce the depth of field.

However, these are minor points in comparison with the lamentable conceptual omission characterizing the second part of the work, the section presenting the photographers and their photographs. Before commenting on this subject, however, let me observe the more notable qualities of this portion of the book.

The black-and-white photographs are well reproduced, while the color photographs retain a wide range of polychromatic tonalities. The printers have avoided the problems in contrast and registration which can occur in color reproduction. The images are economically sized yet large enough to allow for efficient discernment of detail and effective internalization of the images.

The biographical sketches of the individual photographers are adequate, as are the personal statements by the photographers. Adequate, that is, had the following pages of photographs been consistent with the gestalt laid down by the preceding essays, that of a bicultural exploration of the work of contemporary Hopi photographers.

I had received the impression from the preceding essays that the photographs themselves would be dealt with through collaborative in-depth annotation. This is supplied, alas, only too briefly by means of the photographers’ statements and biographies. Indeed, the very meat of the book, the material toward which both essays were leading, is presented to the reader unannotated, undocumented.

At this point in the reading a critical question arose: for whom were this exhibition and book produced? The essays suggested a broad audience of both Euro-Americans and Native Americans having an interest in the cultural dynamics and artistic perceptions of the Hopi. Yet the almost total lack of documentation of the images suggested vacillation by the compilers between presenting the images in the cultural-documentary mode or in the fine arts mode. The latter seems to have been the major operant here given the lack of documentation. Yet had the “art for art’s sake” orientation been orthodoxy followed, there would still have been some documentation given for each image. This might have included title; year taken; format of negative; and lens, film, and camera used. If the intent of the book was indeed cultural (actually bicultural), as the essays strongly suggested, then the almost total absence of documentation is even less understandable. This absence is uniform throughout with the exception of several of Masayesva’s photographs. These are associated with poetry and poetically reworked traditional narratives (associated with the images by, one would assume, the photographer himself).

The texts and images work together well, much as they did in the exhibition upon which the book is based. Poetry and narrative passages, in conjunction with conventional descriptive labeling, enhance and elucidate the focal objects (photographs and artifacts) in the exhibition (Gold 1978). This careful attention to the selective perception and varied predilections of a varied population of exhibitgoers—and of book readers as well—is critical for successful communication, especially of cross-cultural values and perceptions. If the visual integrity of the images were, as they seem to have been, paramount in the compilers’ minds, then the annotations could have been discreetly placed at the back of the book along with the notes and bibliographic references.

Had these annotations been made, one would have liked to have seen them reflect a unification of the perspectives of the two essays. A bicultural annotation of the images might have taken the form of a historical/cultural inventory of the contents of each of these extremely varied images from the Euro-American perspective, in partnership with an orally delivered or self-written contribution by the appropriate photographer or by Masayesva. The Hopi contribution might have included the artist’s commentary on the meaning and content of the image, his or her motivations for taking it, and, where possible, commentary by subjects of the photographs. In my experience at the Hopi mesas, documenting seventy-year-old photographs from the Wanamaker Collection (Gold 1983), I found that the Hopi people had a great deal of valuable information to share concerning the images. And here, in this book (and exhibition) was a golden opportunity to provide an entirely new dimension of information on Hopi thought and creativity through bicultural documentation of a collection of otherwise lovely images.

The presence of documentation cannot be overemphasized where cross-cultural communication through photography is concerned. The images are pregnant with meaning for both the photographers and the Hopi in general. But for those who have little or no understanding of Hopi culture—comprising most Euro-Americans—the photographs cannot begin to convey the meaning they contain (regardless of how compelling they may be aesthetically) without the assistance of documentation. The partnership of the image’s frozen moment and bicultural documentation constitutes the mediation so critical to bridging the gap between the two cultures.

Yet the problem may be in good part the result of the reduction of the exhibition into the medium of the book. In the exhibition, the lack of documentation was not nearly so apparent. The photographic prints were much larger than those in this publication, making
them more effective in involving the viewer. One be­came immersed in them; one became carried away. Also, given the lack of time available in which one could ponder the images' meaning (as the result of pressure from the flow of others viewing the exhibit), the unannotated photographs worked acceptably within the context of the exhibit. Within the context of the book and all its trappings, however, the photographs command less of one's total available attention. Combine this with expectations laid for bicultural documentation, and I suspect that the circumstance of translation into a new medium lies at the root of the problem.

We nevertheless must commend the authors for an otherwise valuable publication and exhibition. They have provided us with our first glimpse into how contemporary Hopi Indians visualize themselves and their place within the scheme of things, through the me­dium of the photograph. They also deserve our rec­ognition for the less overt message this book brings. We are reminded once again that Native Americans are not fossilized artifacts on a museum shelf. Like their Euro-American sisters and brothers, Hopi are ex­pressive people living dynamic lives. And their visual­izations and motivations sensitively captured on the photographic emulsion reflect their many ways of liv­ing in the face of the winds of time and change, which blow incessantly over their austerely beautiful homeland.

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Reviewed by Richard Chalfen
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Webster has written an introductory textbook on the relationship of culture and photographic communica­tion. The purposes of the book are to describe the theory, objectives, and practice of the "new photography" and to redirect photographic education away from perspectives grounded in technology, aesthetics, and artistic creativity toward an appreciation of sociological, political, cultural, and ideological dimen­sions of pictorial representation. The applied context is introduced as follows: "My intent . . . [is] to con­vince the visual communicator to reflect upon his cul­ture, to question meanings frequently taken for granted and to research assiduously into the com­plexity of his society's ways of seeing. This should be a prerequisite to intellectual and effective communica­tion" (p. 67). As such, the book could be used in undergraduate courses on photographic education, visual communication, sociological photography, or visual anthropology.

Webster initially criticizes the weaknesses of certain "technicist" approaches used by educators who tend to ignore the social, political, and cultural components of visual communication. Criticizing the technicist ethos as a myopic, self-indulgent view of photog­raphic practice, the author argues for a genuinely accepted realization that "all photography is an at­tempt at capturing, recording and projecting mean­ing . . . . Photography as an attempt at communi­cating, as a practice centrally involved with meaning, was ignored in favour of a science which aimed for a grasp of chemical and optical skills and little else" (p. 12). "We should avoid working with notions of a set of techniques which supply a vocabulary for photogra­phy" (p. 16).

These objectives set the stage for Webster's de­scription of the "new photography." Described as a way of thinking that emerged in the late sixties and early seventies, Webster says, "The 'old' photography was and is an unreflective view . . . . [T]he new photog­raphy believes its predecessors overlooked a whole series of questions which nowadays can be seen as axiomatic to the visual communicator (p. 4). . . . [T]he new photography insists that we recognize image creation as an attempt at communication . . . . Necessarily this requires coming to terms with the so­cial in photography. In turn it insists that the photog­rapher recognizes his role in society . . . . What is
important is the intention of using photography to project meaning. There is consequently a question of interpretation, communications and social analysis (p. 6). In short the activity of photography is a communicative process which necessarily implies a social location" (p. 6). In a later chapter Webster adds: "The new photographers ... reject any notion that pictures should be produced merely for one's self-satisfaction or be devoid of social comment. Instead, they analyze for ideological affiliation" (p. 148).

Webster continues by applying the semantic and pragmatic emphases of a semiotic approach to cultural contexts: "Communication regarded as a process, cannot be separated from a cultural context (p. 22). ... [C]ulture is an inseparable constituent of communication" (p. 19). Readers are given an introductory exposure to several key concepts in cultural anthropology. The author describes and illustrates relationships between socialization, culture, and "ways of seeing." Emphasis is placed on standard phenomenological tenets such as tacit ways of knowing, out-of-awareness learning, taken-for-granted assumptions, background expectations—notions very familiar to readers of this journal. Webster's version of anthropology is quite straightforward, but at times it borders on being too simplistic (see "The Contribution of Cultural Anthropology," pp. 45–67). The author cites the value of cross-cultural studies to counteract ethnocentric statements that relate notions of "naturalness" to "ways of seeing." Attempts should be made to enlighten both photographers and viewers that cultures create and use alternative ways of looking at situations, have different understandings of "what's there," and can contribute dissimilar interpretations to similar images. Students are asked to avoid stereotypic, culture-bound reductions of information, and instead treat images and image making as problematic. However, Webster neglects the work of American scholars who have worked on these questions as part of an anthropology of visual communication.

Webster's attention to the relationship of meaning and photographic imagery is also found in Chapters 4 ("The Politicization of Photography") and 6 ("Sociology: Principles and Practices"). The author has included a discussion of semiotics because of his conviction that "every communication system can be analyzed as a series of codes. ... Codes are ... systems of meaning, interpretive devices, which make possible the communication of individual signs. ... Semiotics seeks to determine the codes which underlie communications of signs" (p. 188). Webster adds: "Especially significant is semiology's stress on the process of signification, the artificiality of signs, and the need for analysis of coding procedures" (p. 204).

Readers are given an integrated overview of contributions by Ferdinand de Saussure, Umberto Eco, Charles Peirce, and Roland Barthes. Webster attempts to keep his explanations as simple as possible, but at times individual author's concepts become inappropriately related to one another, e.g., his discussion of how de Saussure and Barthes conceptualize the sign.

The author also justifies the inclusion of what he calls an "uncritical review" of semiotic principles because semiotics provides "a number of concepts and insights which are useful critical weapons against former orthodox practices in the field" (p. 165). However, Webster also offers the following concession: "I feel that a more fertile tradition for establishing photographic analysis can be found in the field of sociology and certain literary criticism" than in semiotics.

At times I found Webster reluctant to follow his own good advice, and I questioned if he had genuinely internalized his own theoretical orientation. Perhaps I am being too suspicious because lip service to the social orientation is so common. For instance, throughout the book Webster endeavors to make his readers more sensitive to image interpretation. His "photographic paradox" stems from a problem of interpretation: The photograph "is both natural" (an exact record of that which was/is there) and hence does not need to be translated and simultaneously it is symbolic and thus dependent for its meaning upon the capacity of viewers to interpret, using their knowledge of an array of culturally specific conventions. The photographic paradox lies in the need for translation alongside translation's redundancy" (p. 157). Clearly Webster has been strongly influenced by Barthes' controversial dictum regarding the "analagor" and treating the photographic image as a message without a code. To me this seems to conflict with the importance that Webster places on cultural context, social grounding, and situational circumstance.

Other hints of contradiction and confusion appear in the author's treatment of photographic images as "exact records" and claims that photography "captures a scene literally, precisely; it tells us 'this is exactly how it is'" (p. 154). It would be more instructive to discuss how members of society have been led to think this way about certain examples of photographic representation (certainly not all forms), and how we invest a sense of credibility in camera-generated pictures. An approach grounded in cultural anthropology should have a lot to contribute to a clarification of these questions.

Further confusion is introduced when the author presents an image for some form of analytic discussion. For instance, in Chapter 5, Webster describes a photograph using the following language: "Picture an injured child, perhaps five years old, heavily bandaged around the head. The child clutches a teddy-bear and stares ahead with wideopen eyes" (p. 158). But this is all the information we are given regarding
points to stimulate more intensive investigation of contributions by John Berger, Ernst Gombrich, Sol Worth, Nancy Munn, Roland Barthes, Howard Becker, and Nelson Goodman, among others. Webster's text may also be used to introduce problems in the sociology of media production as well as hermeneutic and phenomenalistic constructions of pictorial realities.

In a more personal context, my research interests have also focused on how "the social" is useful to understanding relationships of meaning and context to pictorial communication. In some instances, our objectives have been similar: to explore components and principles of verbal communication (both written and spoken forms) that facilitate the explication of how visual/pictorial modes "work" in a variety of contexts. Webster's text parallels my own efforts to displace certain inappropriate linguistic applications in favor of exploring how certain sociolinguistic axioms relate better to pictorial communication. This forms the base of what I have elsewhere called "sociovidistics" (Chalfen 1981). For instance, Webster calls attention to relating a generalized notion of language to visual communication, the relevance of socialization processes, and specifically Basil Bernstein's theories of sociolinguistic codes to culturally structured processes of pictorial interpretation (see Chapter 7). Webster gives his readers hints of relevance and implications for additional investigation.

I would have preferred that Webster took some of his axioms a few steps further. He makes a plea for us to enlarge our critical treatment of photography, implying that maybe different types of photographic practice involve different kinds of communication. While he focuses on advertisements and photjournalistic practice, he also mentions fine art and fashion photography—but only in passing. His world of discussion and comment is limited to professional domains; the ubiquity of nonprofessional forms and the structure of amateur photographic practice are overlooked. Do scholars exert an ethnocentric or even a "media-centric" reduction when initially asked to consider "snaps" (Webster's term) as a legitimate form, embedded in a home made of pictorial communication? From Webster's descriptions, I would not expect the catholic interests of the new photography to eliminate such questions. Perhaps the next book—The Latest Photography—will incorporate some of these ideas.

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- Chalfen, Richard

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It comes as something of a shock to realize that the basic outlines of Beaumont Newhall's pioneering history of photography were first sketched nearly half a century ago. Since then, of course, Newhall has revised and expanded the text of his famous Museum of Modern Art exhibition catalog several times. The recently released fifth edition of The History of Photography is certainly the most comprehensive as well as the most handsome version he has produced to date. For the moment, at least, it has no significant competition in English as an introduction to the medium's development from the era of the camera obscura to the Polaroid Land camera, from Daguerre to William Eggleston. Despite its many obvious virtues, however, Newhall's history cannot today be considered ideal or definitive. During the last decade or so, several scholars and critics—Alan Sekula, Sally Stein, Victor Burgin, and Tod Papageorge, to name only a few—have begun to question many of the assumptions underlying Newhall's historiography, and their investigations have brought into view some of the weaknesses and limitations of his approach. They have posed provocative questions about the medium's aesthetics and its social uses and effects that Newhall does not answer but that will have to be addressed in future histories.

The strengths of The History of Photography have always been apparent. Newhall's narrative is highly detailed but engagingly written. He offers succinct and often vivid accounts of the careers of nearly every major photographer. The often arcane technical processes are described with unfailing lucidity, but Newhall is also attentive to the aesthetic views and theoretical concerns that have inflected the production of many diverse bodies of work. The illustrations are abundant and well chosen.

In nearly every respect, the new version is even stronger than earlier editions. In its 300 pages—about 100 pages longer than the fourth edition published in 1964—Newhall has added interesting new material (though, curiously, he drops some important sections covering light metering and the scientific uses of photography that he included in the fourth edition). He describes the development of photomechanical techniques more completely, and he has added a paragraph or two about the cliché-verre process used by Corot and other artists in the nineteenth century. His account of both technical and artistic developments now also extends through the decade of the 1970s, and this means that the work of major contemporaries such as Diane Arbus and Garry Winogrand is discussed, albeit briefly.

Even when little new information has been added, moreover, a number of small changes in the book's organization clarify Newhall's presentation at several points. For example, he is certainly right to discuss the photographs of Adam-Salomon, primarily distinguished by their rather ostentatious "Rembrandt lighting," in the context of work by other nineteenth-century portraitists rather than in the company of images by more serious artists such as Rejlander or Julia Cameron as he did in the last edition. More arguable, perhaps, is his decision to shift his summary account of Atget from the chapter on documentary to one devoted to early exponents of "straight" art photography such as Stieglitz. Certainly, Atget's own conception of his enterprise remained tied to the notion of documentary, but Newhall's brief comparison of Atget's oeuvre with that of the far less well known Heinrich Zille, who photographed many of the same sorts of subjects Atget did, persuasively supports his new reading of the great French photographer's achievement.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the new edition is the dramatic improvement in the scope and quality of its photographic illustrations. Several major figures—most notably Hine, Kertész, and Man Ray—are now better represented by images covering the major phases of their careers. In addition, examples by important but less celebrated moderns such as Paul Outerbridge, Imogen Cunningham, and Brett Weston have been included for the first time. The black-and-white images are sharper and more tonally detailed, and no less than a dozen new color reproductions chart the emergence of color photography as a significant creative medium.

Most of these changes augment the book's value for scholars and beginning students of photography alike, and it is likely that for the foreseeable future, The History of Photography will be the standard textbook in college-level courses. For this reason alone, some of the problematic aspects of Newhall's basic approach to his topic must be underscored. Very generally speaking, one might call his approach "technologistic" because he tends to explain the ways in which photography has developed and been used, as a medium for both art and communication, as a function of changes in the technical capabilities of photographic apparatus: cameras, developing procedures, and the like. He therefore attributes the ex-
plosive growth of the portrait industry in the mid-nineteenth century, for example, to the discovery and diffusion of more light-sensitive emulsions and faster lenses that allowed exposure times to be cut to a fraction of their former duration. Similarly, he explains the rise of photojournalism in terms of the development of faster shutters, more portable cameras, and, somewhat later, flash devices. Even the self-consciously artistic photographs made by Robert Demachy and other Pictorialists are discussed in terms of the possibilities opened up by the gum-bichromate and other similar processes.

The problem with such accounts is that they provide at best some of the necessary, but hardly the sufficient conditions for the phenomena in question. It is certainly unlikely that the news photographers gathered in Lakehurst, New Jersey, one night in 1937 to cover the arrival of the dirigible "Hindenburg" would have taken the many famous images of the fiery explosion that destroyed it in seconds without the lightweight news cameras they carried. It is no less true, however, that these photojournalists would not have been there at all if a particular photographic institution—the picture press—did not exist. One might also, for example, attribute the burgeoning demand for portraits in the 1840s and 1850s at least in part to vaguely perceived anxieties about the future of the nuclear family, or explain the portrait studies of Africans or Asians as an oblique reflection of Western Imperialist ambitions. Newhall, of course, does not entirely ignore this nexus of financial, psychological, and ideological factors, but he gives them far less weight than they deserve.

The scope of The History of Photography also remains too narrow. Aside from some brief comments, Newhall focuses almost exclusively on Western Europe and the United States. Admittedly, most of the important photographic processes as well as the medium's best-known artistic achievements were created in these countries. Nevertheless, recent research has demonstrated that lively photographic cultures also flourished in Eastern and Southern Europe, and in Asia as well as in parts of South America, most notably Brazil. Future photographic histories will have to take developments in these countries into account or they will risk falling—as Newhall ultimately does—into an unfortunate occidentocentric provincialism.

Finally, Newhall's history is in large measure shaped by his interest in photography primarily as a vehicle for artistic expression, that is, to the way in which photographers "express inner significance through outward form." As Christopher Phillips has recently observed, this bias has been present since the book's first edition and the consequences have been varied and far-reaching. Such a perspective has undoubtedly contributed to photography's stature as a medium worthy of serious critical attention as well as support for museum photograph collections. New and often illuminating standards of connoisseurship have been built on this premise; without it, a market for art photographs would certainly never have developed. If the benefits of a commitment to photography as an art have been considerable, however, a history of the medium dominated by such a perspective poses at least two different sorts of problems. First, some uses of photography—for scientific research, land surveying, social control, or family ritual, to choose only a few at random—are largely excluded from consideration, while fashion and advertising photography, though not entirely ignored, are accorded far too little attention, even though their impact on the culture of the past 150 years has arguably been greater than all the art photographs ever made. One returns once again to a criticism made earlier: Newhall's vantage is too limited, certainly more limited than that which future historians of photography will adopt.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, Newhall's bias risks distorting our understanding of the achievement of many photographers, especially those who photographed in the nineteenth century. Consideration of the photographs taken by Brady and his team during the Civil War as art ultimately runs aground on an important fact that Newhall is well aware of: these images were made with no aesthetic intentions in mind. To a lesser extent, this is true of many who photographed in the American West and in the streets of Paris prior to Haussmann's renewal project. In the absence of conclusive documentary evidence, the attribution of expressive intentions to these men misrepresents the way in which they conceived of their work, and it diverts attention from the manifold purposes their images served. In short, imposing a concern with art on photographers of the past can falsify the historical record. This critical mistake must be avoided if the history of photography is ever to become a vital discipline.
The essays and research reports collected in Film/Culture attest to the growing influence of communications research on film studies. It is a useful collection for several reasons. As Thomas explains in her introduction, the contributors are linked by their concern with cinema as social and cultural product. This concern leads them to treat film as mass communication rather than art, applying the perspectives of sociology, anthropology, and economics rather than those of aesthetics, art history, or literary analysis. Careful examination of the social contexts of media production, patterns of media influence, and social functions of media use has been largely missing from film studies in the post-World War II era. This undoubtedly has something to do with what Ian Jarvie describes in the final chapter of the book as the movement of cinema away from a position of “social centrality.”

When movies were a more “central” cultural phenomenon in American society—a period Jarvie estimates to have run from 1915 to 1950—a series of important film studies focused on the place of movies and moviegoing in social life. Garth Jowett’s contribution, “They Taught It at the Movies,” reviews some of this literature, from Healy’s early writings on motion pictures and juvenile delinquency (1915, 1926), Perry’s The Attitude of High School Students Toward Motion Pictures (1923), and Alice Mitchell’s Children and Movies (1929) to the Lynds’ analyses of media behavior in their Middletown studies (1929, 1937), studies by Thurstone (1930, 1931) and Williams (1933), and the series of Payne Fund Studies published after 1933. These film studies helped to establish mass media research as a legitimate subfield of the social sciences. Mayer’s Sociology of Film (1946) and British Cinemas and Their Audiences (1948) contributed in the same way in Britain. By the end of this era Leo Handel was engaged in research on the Hollywood audience and on the social influences associated with moviegoing, Carl Hovland had completed several studies in the social psychology of film viewing, and Wolfenstein and Leites had written their famous book Movies: A Psychological Study.

As Jowett has noted elsewhere (Jowett 1976), by 1949 methods of empirical research developed for motion picture studies helped provide a base for the development of mass communications research more generally. Lazarsfeld’s arguments at this time in support of communications research as a field of social science rest heavily on previous studies concerned with movies and socialization, education and attitude change (Lazarsfeld and Stanton 1949).

The first chapter in Film/Culture, “Writing Film History: The Struggle for Synthesis,” by Daniel Manny Lund, and the last, “The Social Experience of Movies,” by Jarvie, discuss the decline of the Hollywood industry in the 1950s. Antitrust litigation, the Cold War division of foreign markets, blacklisting, and the rise of television combined to move film from its “central” position to a more peripheral role in the growing media complex. At the same time that Hollywood movies were losing their social centrality and film audiences were becoming more segmented and specialized, scholarly attention to film moved away from a predominant concern with production codes and audiences. As television assumed many of the popular functions once performed by movies and “films” increasingly catered to particular subcultures and/or elites, the focus of scholarly writing came to be dominated more and more by text-centered analyses. A concern with film as an artistic text encouraged a literary perspective. The French film journal Cahiers du Cinéma had a great effect in this regard, promoting auteur theory, focusing on texts and oeuvres, and contributing a generation of critics-turned-filmmakers. Structuralist movements in literary theory were soon paralleled by the application of the structuralist perspective to film analysis. The concern for context became a concern for ideological implication, for film-text as sociocultural analogue. For two decades a semiological explosion of specific film-text analysis followed, along with an emphasis on broad structural theory and model building.

Film/Culture reflects a growing community of scholars whose work contrasts with the structuralist trend of previous decades. In some cases the contrast represents a conscious movement beyond structuralism, an attempt to build upon the structuralist tradition, recognizing the need to situate formal analysis within an exploration of cultural convention, the socio-economics of production, and the sociology and psychology of audience reception and behavior. Worth, whose article “Pictures Can’t Say Ain’t” is included here, articulated a field of study in which the tools of semiotics are applied to the study of the way actual social groups, rather than an analyst, create, interpret, and make use of visual images and events. He called this poststructuralist approach “ethnographic semiotics” (Worth 1981). Many of the articles in Film/Culture can be related to this movement, Carey’s
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Chalfen's, Custen's, and Messaris's most explicitly. Others, like those of Linton, Jowett, Austin, and Kindem and Teddies, seem to spring from the dominant functionalist paradigm of American mass communications research. Still others appear to be atheoretical in their explication of film production practices, or impressionistic in their description of film form.

This suggests what I see as a weakness in the collection, namely, a lack of theoretical cohesion (or theoretical contention). At times when I was reading through the book it had the feel of a sampler, exposing the range of film study topics addressed by sociological concerns but failing to give a sense of the theoretical paradigms and methodologies that should inform film study. At other times, after encountering three or four kindred articles in succession, this objection would fade.

Clearly, too many of the contributions present us with descriptions of film organizations, film audiences, and film rhetoric which remain, consciously or unconsciously, "unencumbered" with traditional film theories—structuralist, Marxist, or functionalist. Too often the ideological implications of particular patterns of film production (or film study) are ignored. There is no sense of why one method of "sociological" film study may have different implications from another. There is little recognition given to the theoretical stances from which descriptions of data (or collections of data) arise. Instead, theoretically "unattached" descriptions are offered as samples of what can be taken into account in explorations of social context. A grasp of traditional theory would seem to be a prerequisite for understanding the ways in which film form and content can be related to social relations of production and use. But those articles which seem uninformed by theories of the past provoke little thought about theory building for the future.

Yet, on balance it is refreshing to sample these explorations of cinema and culture. After wading through numerous semiological attempts to formulate comprehensive theories of cinematic perception and signification one welcomes the less ambitious and more empirically based work of those who would rather explore one piece of the social context of cinematic meaning. The scholars in Film/Culture remind one of Merton's advice to pursue sociology "of the middle ground." By biting off less they are able to examine and describe the social organization of filmmaking more closely. Semioists like Metz and Heath end ambitious film theses with a call for a new method grounded in the analysis of social productions and relations, largely because such analysis is never realized in their own approaches. More modest attempts to carve out segments of the film/culture complex, on the other hand, lay a substantial foundation for precisely this kind of research.

Jarvie concludes his chapter, and the book, by holding up these sociological approaches as "a standing challenge to the scholar who thinks that only semiological analysis of movies as texts is fruitful." This growing movement away from studying film as artistic text is reinstating cinema research as a branch of communications study. At the same time, it reflects a new kind of emphasis in mass media research, an emphasis on the examination of cultural process. It is to be hoped that this shift in focus will result in a new era of theory building as well.

References

Briefly Noted


An unkind reader might think this work represented an obsession. After all, it classifies and briefly characterizes the sexual content of 13,000 film shorts and features released between 1896 and 1982. Beginning with a glossary of 1,200 sexual terms (and of media terms, some of which might be confused by a careless reader with the former list: e.g., "butt splice," "clapboard," or "angel hair"), we proceed to a set of 26 "subject categories" with appropriate films listed under cutesy titles (e.g., "Enough Is Enough, or, The Heartbreak of Satyriasis"), and finally arrive at the alphabetically listed annotations (from ABC OF LOVE to ZOZOS, LES). Got the idea?


This is not only a collection of lovely and striking color photographs, it is also a worthy effort at illustrating and conveying the meanings associated with colors in Japanese culture. The introductory and concluding essays are informative and subtle, stressing semiotic codes of association and combination. "Japanese, in contrast with Westerners, grasp colors on an intuitively horizontal plane, and pay little heed to the influences of light. Colors, whether intense or soft, are identified not so much on the basis of reflected light or shadow, but in terms of the meaning or feeling associated with them." The book concludes with detailed notes and comments on each of the photographs.

Barbara Abrash and Janet Sternburg, eds. Historians and Filmmakers: Toward Collaboration. The Institute for Research in History, 432 Park Ave So., New York, NY 10016. 50 pp. $4.00 (postpaid).

This small booklet contains an edited transcript of a day-long meeting of 33 filmmakers and historians discussing issues that are involved in rendering history on film. The text includes general comments about the differing as well as the shared concerns of filmmakers and historians. The longest and most interesting sections of the booklet contain a discussion by Natalie Zemon Davis on her experiences and reflections on the making of The Return of Martin Guerre, and Davis's response to questions from other participants. The booklet concludes with suggestions for new ways to educate filmmakers and historians as collaborators.
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