

Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs

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Definitions

While "story" is a major component in narrative, the terms are not synonymous. Story evokes content. Narrative, however, demands that one address oneself at the same time to both content and structure—what Culler (1975:244) would call the means by which "the end is made present throughout the work"; and what Chatman (1979:176) has called discourse: "the expressional means of presenting content." Narrative, then, is structured content, ordered by the "telling" which is a necessary condition of the form.

The genre seems inextricably tied to words: oral or written, fiction or nonfiction. Even when narrative is pursued into the visual realm, the notions of word and story remain, as does the frequent assumption of a text *behind* the images (Weitzmann 1957, 1970; Schapiro 1973:9). Stimulated by analyses of contemporary visual media and their impact, however, I should like to re-examine an ancient situation in which, although "event" may be interchangeable with "story," similar principles of sequence and flow appropriate to narrative (i.e., content plus telling) pertain; yet the text exists parallel to rather than behind the image, and the totality of images itself creates a "narrative space."

I speak of a particular segment of the ancient Mesopotamian world: the Neo-Assyrian period, for which monuments have been preserved roughly from the ninth through the seventh century B.C., and during which time there was an extraordinary flowering of "historical narrative" in the representational art associated with royal palaces. To better understand this phenomenon, it is essential to deal not only with the givens of the narratives themselves but also with the "storyteller" behind (in this case, the king) and with the intended audience ahead—not only *what* story was being told, but *how* it was told and *why*.

Several scholars have dealt with the particular nature of the art of this period (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951; Frankfort 1954; Moortgat 1969; Akurgal 1968; Reade 1965, 1979a, b, c), and a symposium held at the University of Chicago in 1956 attempted to explore narration in ancient art specifically. Although studies on the nature of literary narrative have become far more precise and sophisticated in the past 20 years, the papers from the Chicago symposium have stood more or less alone in attempting to grapple with the issues of visual narration in the ancient world. The general definition was provided by Kraeling (1957:43): "Narrative art is identified as representations of a specific event, involving specific persons, where the action and persons *might* be historical, but not

necessarily." Within that framework, Perkins (1957:55, 61) emphasized both the use of "episodes"—or a very abbreviated segment or segments to stand for the whole sequence—as typical of early Mesopotamian art; and the frequent selection of the "culminating scene," or moment of climax, where the completion of the story was to take place in the viewer's mind. In this, as with most art, the primacy of a text is assumed, as well as the individual's familiarity with the text that would allow recognition of the pertinent episodes. Güterbock (1957:62) came closer to the particular situation to be discussed here when he insisted that, in order to qualify as narrative, not only must a specific rather than a generic event be pictured, but it must also incorporate some coherent progression of events: the story must be "told," not "implied."

Beyond this, it is essential to recognize that there are many types of narrative. The term may be applied equally to representations of myth, lore, and ritual, or, as in the present case, to the representation of a specific historical event—not generic emblem or hieroglyph, but individuals and elements presumed to have been associated with the actual spatio-temporal experience. Moscati, therefore (1963:14-15), defined historical art in the ancient Near East as "related to a concrete, momentary fact that cannot be repeated," distinct thereby from the ritual or mythic depiction which goes beyond location in time and space, or the cyclical, where it is precisely the recurrent and not the specific that is stressed. In this commitment to deal in "real" events, historical narrative in art functions exactly as historical narrative in text (see White 1980), where there is further evidenced a strong inclination to support the historicity of the event precisely through the display of its formal coherence-as-story.

Our "historical narratives," then, occur as representations on architectural reliefs of alabaster and limestone which lined the walls of selected rooms in Neo-Assyrian palaces. The genre may be further defined—in the beginning of our period, at least—as depicting a quite limited universe of historical events: specifically, scenes of battle and tribute, with the king as both author (his palace) and subject (principal actor).

Even without recourse to the actual representations, some of the visual implications of such scenes should be evident: they demand action, and thereby the likelihood of profile views and directionality (the profile being most effective when heightened interest in action is required—that is, engagement in a space which does not necessarily include the viewer as participant; Schapiro 1973:29). In addition, the disposition of figures is likely to be in sequence, such that the narrative may be "read," and specific elements—in this case, topographical features and signature elements of dress, headgear, or associated goods—carefully selected to provide the "particularity" of the place and the moment. These elements, especially, become verifiers of the "truth" of the scene, the spatial immediacy that modifies the temporal anteriority of the action—what Barthes has called the illogi-

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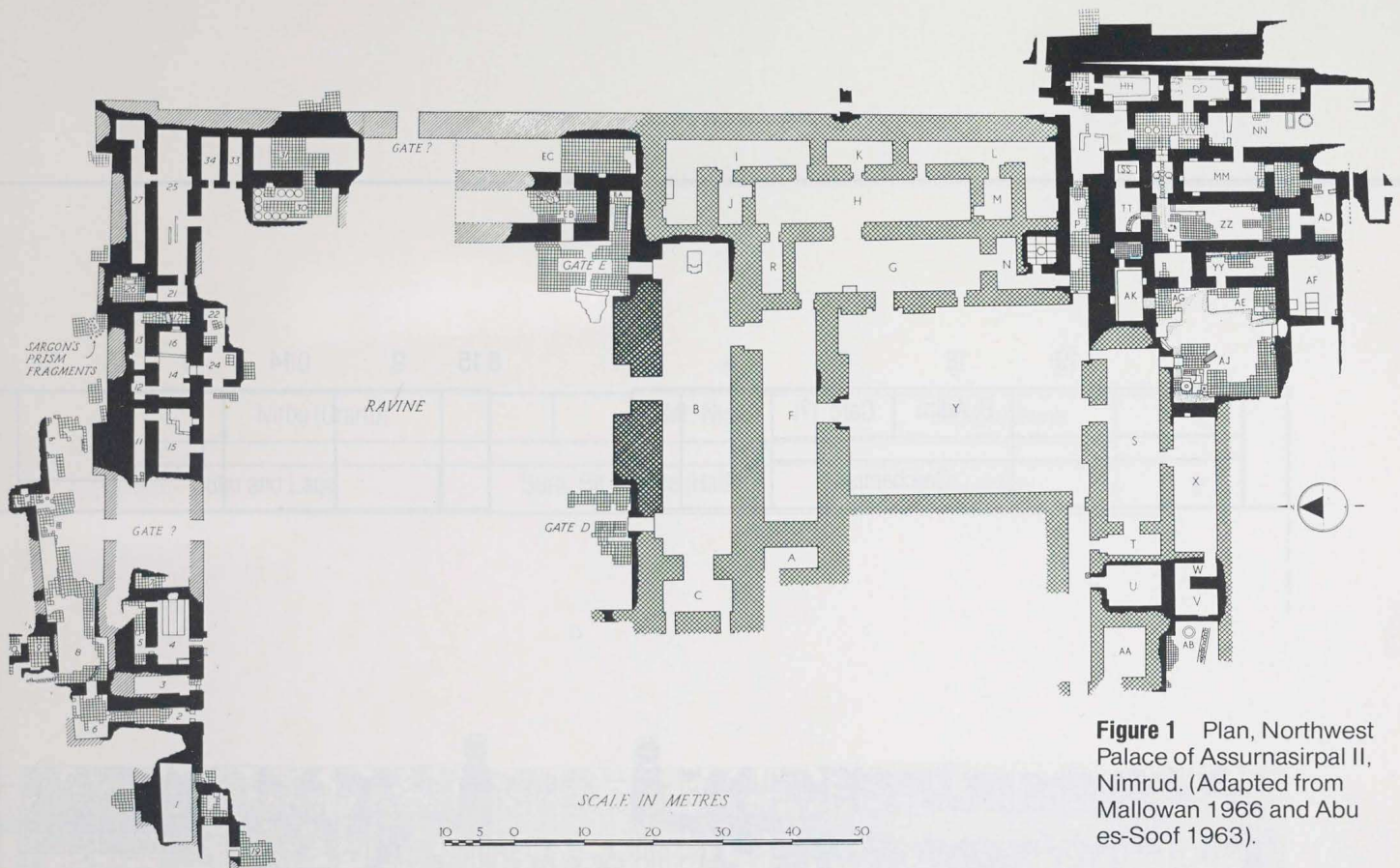


Figure 1 Plan, Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II, Nimrud. (Adapted from Mallowan 1966 and Abu es-Soof 1963).

cal conjunction in certain highly manipulated but purportedly "real" images between here-now and there-then (1977b:44).

The historical narratives do not constitute the only decoration of the palaces; the buildings are embellished in addition with monumental gateway sculptures, and with apotropaic and cultic themes in relief that have a long history in the art of ancient Mesopotamia. But the display on large-scale architectural reliefs is new, as is the incorporation of the historical scenes. Like the modern news photograph, the narratives attempt to provide a "pure spectatorial consciousness of 'historical reality,' as distinct from the more projective 'magical' consciousness" of the other reliefs (Barthes 1977b:45). They are aimed at "a kind of zero-degree of reality" as opposed to the fictive elements of myth or legend (White 1979:215), but the operational word here is "aimed," for in the art of the period, as with the written texts as well (Liverani 1979), there is an ideological "end" to the apparent historicity of the representations. In fact, content is carefully manipulated, and the spectator is enjoined to participate in a foregone conclusion: only the enemy fall; the Assyrians never lose and, given the strength of the king and the benevolence of the gods, are never even wounded.

The historical record is thereby selected and arranged; reality is invoked, but the artifact of construction is also apparent (White 1973). The tension is thus immediately created between the supposedly denotative (*what* is being told) and the obviously connotative (*how* the story is being told)—further enhanced by the very fact of the

presence of these (hi)stories in the palace in the first place (suggesting meaningful context, the *why* told). And embedded even more deeply, in the very presence of the historical narratives, is the "extent to which social authority and narrativization are mutually implicated in one another" (White, forthcoming).

Trends evident during the course of the Neo-Assyrian period include a development toward greater use of the pictorial field and spatial dimensions, the inclusion of more pervasive identifiers such as topographic details, and the addition of parallel information in the form of inscribed epigraphs or labels directly on the reliefs. But these developments do not substantially change the genre; they merely serve to increase the particularity and the historicity of the scenes. That this evolution is tied to political developments within the Neo-Assyrian Empire I shall endeavor to demonstrate below; however, the desired effect of the narrative seems to remain constant, the mode itself once established changing only in degree.

Therefore, it is perhaps most interesting to emphasize the beginning of the sequence: the initiation of the genre and the reasons underlying the use of historical narrative as decoration. To do so, we must look at the extraordinary achievement of Assurnasirpal II of Assyria (885–856 B.C.), who established his capital at Nimrud (Kalhu) in about the fifth year of his reign and completed his primary residence, the Northwest Palace, as it has been called by its excavators, sometime probably between 865 and 859 (see plan, Figure 1; Postgate and Reade 1977:304–307 for discussion and complete bibliography of excavation; also Reade 1965:119 and de Filippi 1977:168 re date; and Layard 1849b, Budge 1914, and Meuszczyński 1975 for

Royal Palace and the Development of Historical Archaeological Research

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		B. Adini	Carc. (?)	
		Carchemish		

15	14	13

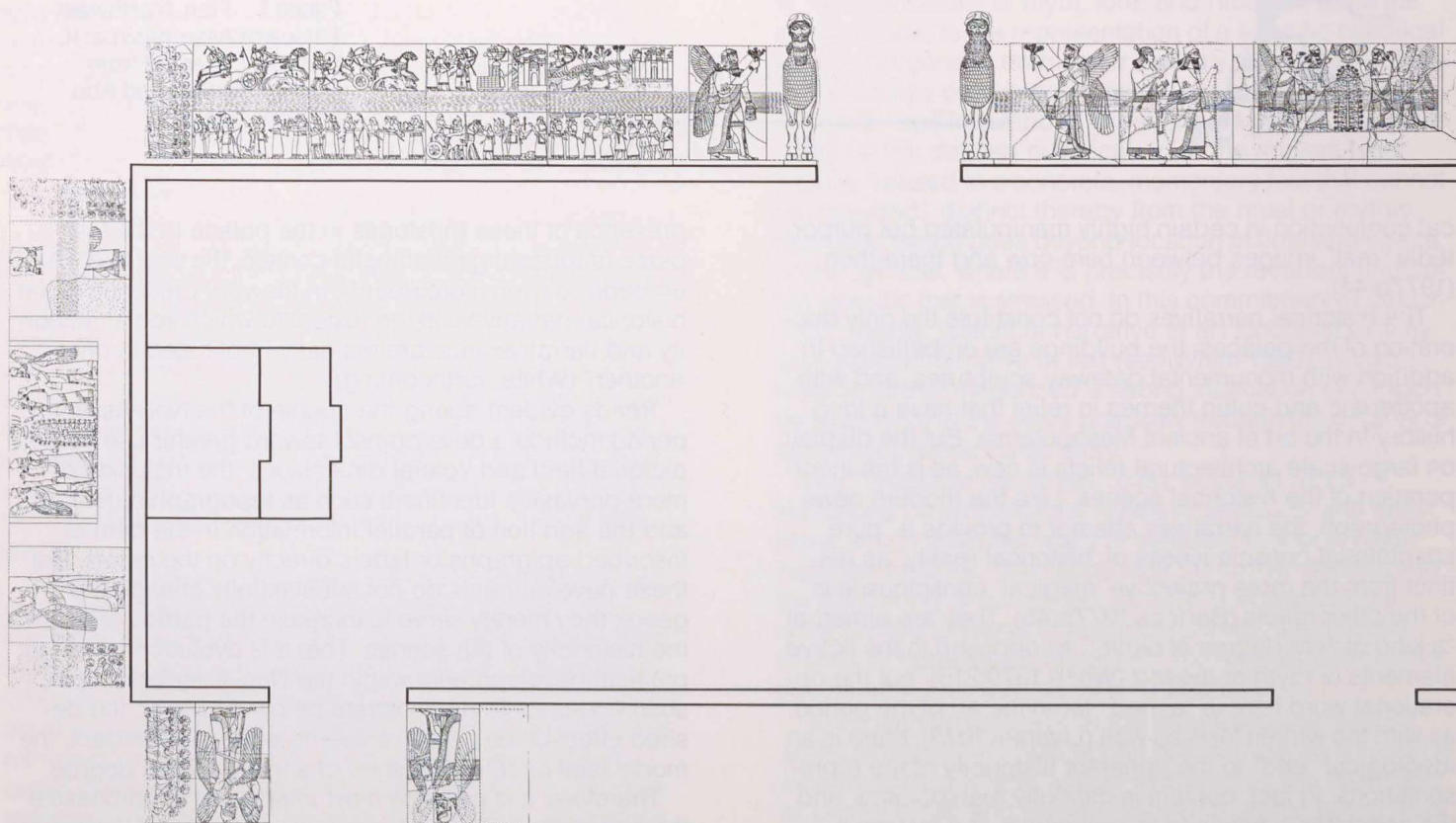
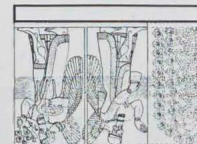
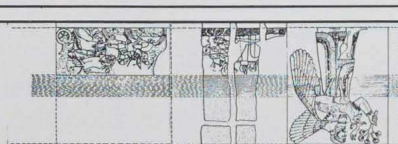
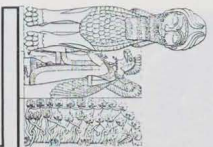
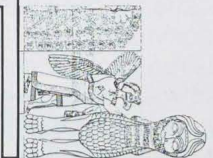


Figure 2 Detailed plan of Throneroom (Room B), Northwest Palace.

12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	
Nirbu (Urtu)				Mt. Nisir?			Damdammusa			a
Suhu and Lage				Sura, Bit Halupe (Habur)			Mt. Kashiari			b



(Iran)?	Zamua	a
		b



Figure 3 Room B, Slab 23: King and sacred tree (British Museum 124531).

publication of the reliefs). In his Banquet Stele inscription, commemorating festivities for the inauguration, Assurnasirpal himself announces the decoration of the palace walls with scenes representing his heroic deeds (Grayson 1976: ¶ 677); and indeed excavations have confirmed that the palace was lavishly decorated with wall paintings, colossal portal sculpture, and architectural reliefs, concentrating on those which we would call "historical narrative" in the most important Throneroom, Room B, and on its external north facade.¹

The Throneroom of Assurnasirpal II

Convention and Innovation

Room B constitutes the core of the public reception area of the palace, approached from two sides: either directly from the large Court D, to the north, or from the smaller Court Y and anteroom F, to the south (plan, Figure 1, and detailed plan with reliefs, Figure 2). The room is long in proportion to its width, measuring some 45.5 by 10.5 meters, and, judging from the thickness of the walls, likely to have stood at least 6 to 8 meters high (Meuszczyński 1975; the height based upon reconstruction by Reade, cited in Mallowan 1966:454). At the short, eastern end, before a niche in the wall, stood a low socle clearly intended to have served as a throne base. Colossal human-headed bulls and lions flanked the major doorways "c" and "d," and butted up against these were the orthostats on which the reliefs were carved. These slabs averaged 2.7 meters in total height and were sunk into the ground for support, such that from 2.2 to 2.3 meters stood above ground. Each slab was inscribed across the middle with a complete version of what is known as Assurnasirpal's Standard Inscription, a text of from 18 to 26 lines presenting his titulary and major achievements (Grayson 1976: ¶s 650–653); and when carved figures extended the entire height of the slab, the text was simply incised across the representation.

Flanking all doors were reliefs of apotropaic mythological winged genii of various types, who stood the full height of the orthostat. Frequently these genii were also associated with representations of the many-branched "tree of life." Directly behind the throne, and opposite doorway e, were identical scenes set in shallow niches and occupying only the upper two-thirds of the slab,

which show the king duplicated on either side of such a "sacred tree," with winged male genii to his left and right and the emblem of the god Assur within a winged disc above (see detailed plan, Figure 2: slabs 23 and 13; Figure 3: slab 23). The scenes we would call narrative were disposed in two registers divided by the Standard Inscription, and were installed down the long (north and south) sides of the room. The reliefs of the north wall are largely missing; on the south, one begins with bull and lion hunts in the eastern end (Figures 4 and 5) and moves toward the west with a series of battle and tribute scenes interrupted only by door genii and the complex surrounding slab 13 (Figures 6–10).² The room terminated in a very

Figure 4 B19a: Lion hunt (British Museum 124534).

Figure 5 B19b: Libation over lion (British Museum 124535).



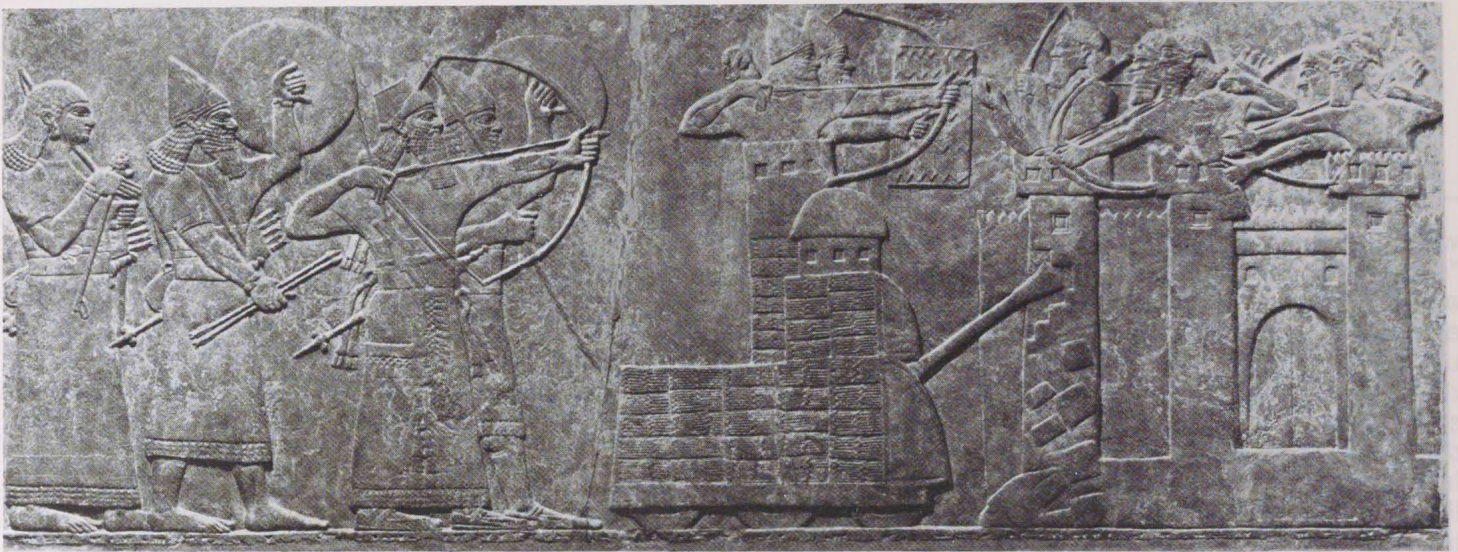


Figure 6 B18a: Siege of citadel (British Museum 124536).



Figure 8 B18b: Submissive king (British Museum 124537).



Figure 7 B17a: Citadel in river (British Museum 124538).



Figure 9 B17b: Prisoners and booty (British Museum 124539, detail).



Figure 10 B4a: Chariot siege (British Museum 124553).

broad door at the center of the far west end (plan, Figure 1) that issues into the shallow Room C. On the back wall of that room, opposite the doorway, were set three relief slabs that combine to show a scene most likely of a seated king with cup in hand flanked by attendants and winged male genii (Reade 1965).³ Because of its placement, this relief, too, effectively participates in the decorative scheme of Room B—situated, in fact, directly opposite the seated king himself, installed on his throne at the eastern end.

In its totality, the throneroom represents a complex play between convention and innovation in the sequence of ancient Mesopotamian art up to that point. One long-standing convention is the architectural form of the throneroom itself. A long, narrow room entered from a long side and necessitating therefore a 90-degree turn toward the focal area of the east wall, it is based upon a 2,000-year tradition of bent-axis approaches in Mesopotamian cult rooms, while the particular arrangement of throneroom, anteroom, and large courtyard had been seen as a formal reception suite at Mari in the early second millennium (Moortgat 1969:Figures 4, 21, and 57).

Another feature with a long tradition in Mesopotamia is the heraldic composition of slabs 13 and 23: the doubled king and genii flanking a tree (Figure 3). Antecedents may be found in the cylinder seal repertoire, going all the way back to the Uruk period, ca. 3200 B.C., in particular, with a representation of a bearded male (king?) tendering branches to flanking rams (Moortgat 1969:Figure 1a). The role of the sacred tree as emblem of the provisioning of the land, and the role of the king in relation to it, has been dealt with extensively (Frankfort 1948; Oppenheim 1964). Interesting for our purposes is its mirror, or axial, symmetry. The semantic centrality of the tree is emphasized by its position and should probably be considered comparable to the frontality with which the Virgin or Christ are represented in symmetrical compositions of Christian art (Gombrich 1966; Schapiro 1973; Summers 1979). The king is clearly represented twice, at left and at right; and while the duplication of figures within a single representational unit also has a history in Mesopotamia (see the altar of Tukulti Ninurta I [1244–1208], Figure 11), it is the scale and placement of the motif in relation to its symmetry that is significant here.

Slab 23, set directly behind and above the throne and king, functions essentially as does the tympanum on the facade of a Gothic cathedral, with scenes of the Day of Judgment set above the figure of Christ on the trumeau (Schapiro 1969). As for slab 13, after restoration activities by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities in the Northwest Palace, it was determined that the original plan showing only two entrances at the far ends of the north facade was incorrect and that there had been in addition a monumental central portal in that wall, the opening of which was



Figure 11 Altar of Tukulti Ninurta I, Middle Assyrian period, ca. 1225 B.C., Assur (Staatliche Museen, Berlin, VA 8146, 8227; ht. 57.5 cm.).

exactly opposite the placement of the slab on the south wall (Abu es-Sooif 1963; Reade 1965; and see plan, Figures 1 and 2). Thus, as one entered by the main entrance from the public Court D, as the general audience would presumably have done, one faced immediately this representation, then turned ninety degrees to face the king, and above him the repetition of the same scene. These two slabs thus become the organizing pivot-points of the Throneroom. That this was clearly intended is apparent not only from the placement of slab 13, interrupting the narrative sequence from slabs 18–17 to 11–3, but also by the fact that these reliefs neither occupy the full height of the slab, as do the apotropaic doorway genii, nor are they divided into two distracting registers, as are the narrative scenes, but rather are set one-third of the way up the orthostat in their own unique disposition of space, visually apart from the others (Schapiro 1969:229: "The picture field has local properties which affect our sense of the signs").

The fact that the reliefs are executed symmetrically contributes greatly to their organizing capacity. As Moortgat has noted, they "rendered a political and religious idea as a heraldic abstraction, divorced from time and space" (1969:134)—what Akurgal would call a purely conceptual representation (1968:16ff). More than that, the symmetry and particularly the un-"realistic" repetition of the royal figure and genii serve to lift this most important function of the king—the metaphoric maintenance and sustenance of life through the care of the tree—up to the realm of the "ideal" world that implies the divine (Schapiro 1973:33; Winter 1974:505). And I would submit that this occurs not only on the intellectual, conceptual level of the contents of the representation but also at the physiological/psychological level at which symmetry functions in general, producing an effect of anchoring through the central axis and balance through the flanking figures, which for the ancient Near East pertains to the stability (balance) of the eternal order reflected through the proper exercise of kingship.⁴ Precisely what one does not want in this case is directionality and the movement of the eye across (and beyond) the image but, rather, the

absorption of the whole at once, as the perceived order of the universe.

Certain elements in the narrative scenes also reflect conventional Mesopotamian usage, in both theme and detail. The hunting of animals goes back to the lion hunt stele from Warka, ca. 3200 B.C. (Moortgat 1969:Figure 14), and that it was not merely an anecdotal or casual theme will be argued below. It is difficult to call these representations (here, the bull and lion hunts of slabs 20 and 19) "historical" narratives, despite the fact that such hunts are mentioned in the king's royal annals (Grayson 1976: ¶ 598). They seem rather to participate in the generic of king-as-vigorous-and-victorious-hunter, the "master-of-animals." Battle scenes, too, had been represented before—for example on the Standard from the Royal Cemetery of Ur, dated to the Early Dynastic Period, ca. 2600 B.C. (see Figure 12). While this may be read as a narrative of sorts, leading from the siege wagons in the lower register to the capture of prisoners in the second, and the presentation of them to a central figure at the top, still it does not provide us with sufficient information to suggest the specificity of time or place required for the truly historical narrative. But, conversely, we cannot insist that every action and gesture in a historical narrative be observed from life; and certainly the stock formulas of bound prisoners or of a fallen enemy beneath the belly of the chariot draft animals that we see on the Assurnasirpal reliefs are quite literal repetitions of the Standard of Ur. The innovative aspects of the Nimrud reliefs lie, therefore, in their intended specificity despite the incorporation of stock images, and in the articulation of the parts, includ-

ing those conventional units, into a unified sequential composition as opposed to the earlier "serial episodes."⁵

Battle scenes may be broken down into two categories: field campaigns and sieges. The field sequences simply show Assyrian chariotry or cavalry against enemy chariots (slabs 5a–4a, Figure 10), horsemen (slab 27b, Figure 13), or footsoldiers (slabs 11a–8a).⁶ The direction of movement is down the wall from the throne end, and it is here that fallen opponents are depicted beneath the chariot horses. In the siege scenes, the simplest components may be seen in slab 18a (Figure 6), where the king with drawn bow, his shield bearer and attendants, and a siege-tower-cum-battering-ram attack the walls of an enemy citadel being defended by armed bowmen on the ramparts. These basic components can be further elaborated upon, as in slabs 4a–3a (e.g., Figure 10), where Assyrian chariotry pursue enemy chariots, infantry battle in the upper part of the field, and soldiers destroy trees directly outside a citadel also being defended from its walls. In a final case, slabs 5b–3b, the siege itself is depicted in greater detail, with scaling ladders, rams and siege towers, while the king and crown prince flank the city and an empty (presumably royal) chariot waits at the side. In addition, several slabs show mere approaches (e.g., slab 17a, Figure 7, and slabs 11b–8b), particularly across bodies of water, where boats and goatskin floats are used; others deal with aftermaths: the return of king and chariotry to camp, preceded by prisoners and soldiers carrying enemy heads (7a–6a), and the presentation of bound individuals and goods to the king (slabs 18b–17b, Figures 8 and 9, and slabs 8b–5b).⁷

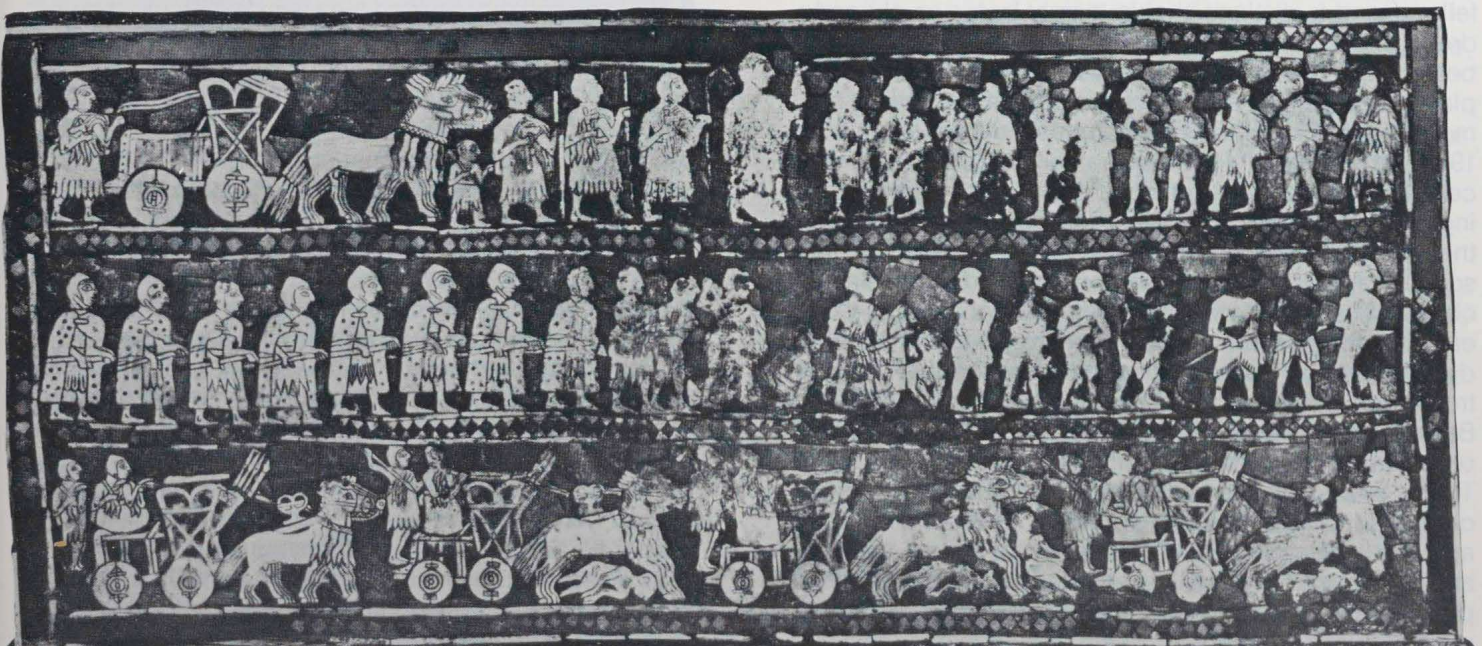


Figure 12 Standard of Ur, Early Dynastic period, ca. 2500 B.C. (British Museum 121201; 20.3 x 48.3 cm.).

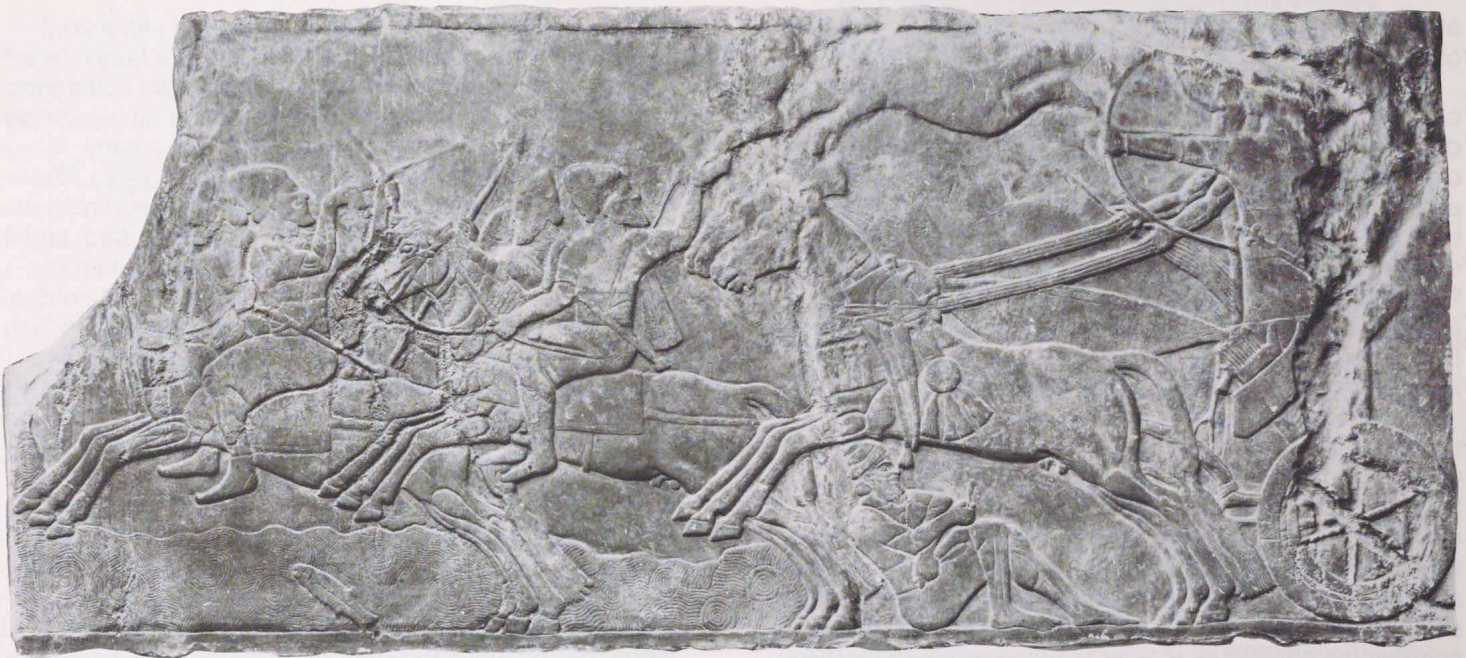


Figure 13 B27b: Pursuit of horsemen (British Museum 124559).

Bodies are shown in various positions, from almost frontal to complete side view, but all heads are rendered in profile. As noted above, the profile view conveys action and involvement of the actors in a space of their own, and is hence most appropriate for the representation of the historic event in its actuality. Furthermore, the king is shown at the same size or only marginally larger than his fellows, and is distinguishable mainly by his royal head-dress, fringed and wrapped garment, and palanquin-bearer behind, and occasionally also by his pride of place in battle.⁸ As a result of this equality in scale—a major signifier in the scenes (Barthes 1977b:46; Schapiro 1969)—the historicity of the action is not diluted by conceptual distortions, and emphasis is on the action unfolding in each sequence. Levels of description move from the total battle sequence to individual components of the scenes to details of action and the surrounding inanimate objects. The king, however, is the principal actor, and the essential formulation is in the transitive: “Assurnasirpal did X.” Everything surrounding the basic formula—rivers, trees, side actions, additional actors—constitutes what Barthes would call the “catalyzers” in the narrative as opposed to the primary “cardinal functions” (1977c:93). That is to say, they are functional, insofar as they are correlated with the nuclear elements of the action and add to the discourse, but functionally they are parasitic, and their absence would not alter the story. What they provide is a furthering of the identifiable particularity of each sequence.

This combination of sequence, action, and particularity is precisely what distinguishes the Assurnasirpal reliefs from their predecessors in the ancient Near East. Despite certain gaps in the archaeological record, the earlier monuments we do have are consistent in their differences from the Neo-Assyrian. The Standard of Ur, as we discussed above, consists of a series of episodes following in sequence from the lower register to the upper, but without particularity or syntax. The victory stele of Eannatum of Lagash (ca. 2450 B.C.), sometimes referred to as the Stele of the Vultures (Moortgat 1969:Pls. 118–121), does indeed refer to a specific historic event, the successful military settlement of a border dispute with the neighboring city-state of Umma. This we know from the extensive inscription on both obverse and reverse. The visual component, however, is again either generic or episodic. On the obverse, the god Ningirsu, to whom the victory is attributed, is shown holding a mace and his emblem, the lion-headed eagle, while alongside him is a net full of captured enemy, a representation which could be transferred to any victory monument. On the reverse of the stele is a series of at least four registers, including the king on foot leading a phalanx of spear-bearing warriors who walk upon supine enemies; the king in his chariot, himself armed with a spear; and what seem to be a pile of enemy bodies and an accompanying ritual. Again, although the reverse is extremely fragmentary, it seems that it cannot be read continuously as what we would call “historical narrative,” despite the fact that it was clearly meant to be a historical referent.



Figure 14 Stele of Naram Sin, Akkad period, ca. 2230 B.C., found at Susa (Musée du Louvre Sb 4; ht. 2 m.).

The same appears to be true of the stele of Naram Sin (2254–2218 B.C.) of the succeeding Akkad period (Figure 14). Here, the king celebrates his victory over an Iranian border tribe identified by inscription. He is shown standing triumphantly before a mountain and the bodies of fallen enemy, while his soldiers are aligned below him on ascending diagonals toward the mountain (for the best description of this monument, see Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951:163–165). The inclusion of two trees and real contour lines in the landscape add considerably to the sense that a real place/space is being represented, such that some scholars would see this as a fully developed historical monument (e.g., Moscati 1963:30). Yet here again, it is not to be read as a linear progression of action, but rather as a whole, as a frozen celebration. In fact, as the king does not draw his bow but merely stands triumphant, there is less “action” than in the preceding stele of Eannatum, despite the extraordinary advance in

freedom from registers through the use of the total field. What one would have to say in both of these cases is that while they clearly refer to specific battles and are therefore “historical,” the imagery is still emblematic and episodic; they are *commemorative* rather than narrative.

In a sense, the use of a stele determines to some extent the selection of a “culminating scene.” The wall is a surface far more conducive to a continuous narrative. Yet, on the one hand, many of the individual slabs of the Throneroom reliefs have self-contained scenes which nevertheless can be read as narrative (see the hunts, slabs 20 and 19, and the battles, 18a and 17a); and on the other hand, not all cultures that employed stone reliefs as wall decoration ever used them narratively.

The use of architectural reliefs seems to have been assimilated into Assyria from the West during the reign of Assurnasirpal (see discussion in Winter, forthcoming), and the use to which the wall is put can best be compared with the more or less contemporary or slightly earlier reliefs of Carchemish, an independent city-state of Hittite/Luwian origins situated on an important crossing of the Euphrates in northern Syria. On the earliest Herald's Wall at Carchemish, series of mythological themes are displayed, one to a slab, all comprised of culminating scenes or simple emblems and with no apparent relation to each other (Orthmann 1971:Pls. 26–28d). On the subsequent Long Wall, soldiers and chariots were clearly arranged in order along adjacent slabs and were possibly meant to convey the idea of a procession behind a row of deities (ibid.: Pls. 24 and 25); but as some of the gods were frontal, and the wife of the donor/ruler is shown seated immediately behind the gods (Figure 15a), it seems rather as if the divine figures were “in array” as opposed to motion, and there are no compelling signs to suggest that the chariots and soldiers were anything other than emblematic either.

The chariot slabs from Carchemish (Figure 15b) provide a good contrast to the Assyrian representations, for they have many elements in common, including the shape of the yoke-pole and chariot cab, the shield and spear at the back of the chariot and crossed quivers at the side, and the fallen enemy below the draft horses. However, the archer in the chariot has no object for his knocked arrow, as the enemy is already fallen and there is no continuation beyond the edge of the slab. There is, in short, no syntax; nor are there any signifying elements to provide specificity of time or place. And, as we have been trying to establish, one of the requirements for narrative representation is that the units of the narrative find integration, such that ultimately the narrative itself “transcends its contents” (Barthes 1977c:115). This the reliefs of Assurnasirpal achieve even in sequences that are confined to a single slab. On those in which the action extends over three or more slabs, it is even more dramatic: one literally reads the register as one would a line of text.

On some occasions, there is also a play from top to bottom of the divided registers on the same slab, as, for example, with the hunt scenes (e.g., Figures 4 and 5, slabs 19a and 19b), where the action of the story—the sequence of the slaying of the animal—takes place in the upper register, and the consequence—the ceremonial libation poured over the dead animal—is depicted below. Such a reading could also be applied to the adjacent slabs 18 and 17 (Figures 6–9), where 18a shows the simple attack on a citadel and 18b an individual embracing the feet of the king, and 17a shows swimmers crossing to a citadel in a river and 17b a line of prisoners and goods. While this may be the case, 18b plus 17b can also be read as a continuous sequence of prisoners headed by individuals who are subservient to the king. I personally think this latter reading is the more likely, given the sequence of slabs 8b–5b; however, it is also clear that action is at the top and subsequent response below.

This relationship applies only to those slabs east of doorway “b” in the south wall, however. For the rest, sequences of approach, conflict, and consequence seem to be distributed over both top and bottom registers. Nevertheless, the general direction of the reading lines is consistent: action generally proceeds down the wall, away from the throne; and in every case the king is shown facing down (i.e., west), as he would be facing when seated on the throne, while the individuals who approach him on the reliefs come from the western end, as would any actual audience. The only exception to this is the camp scene, where the king is shown entering the camp from the west, and here, I would submit, it is because the king is “returning” to the camp after a battle and therefore shifts direction to conform to the narrative.⁹

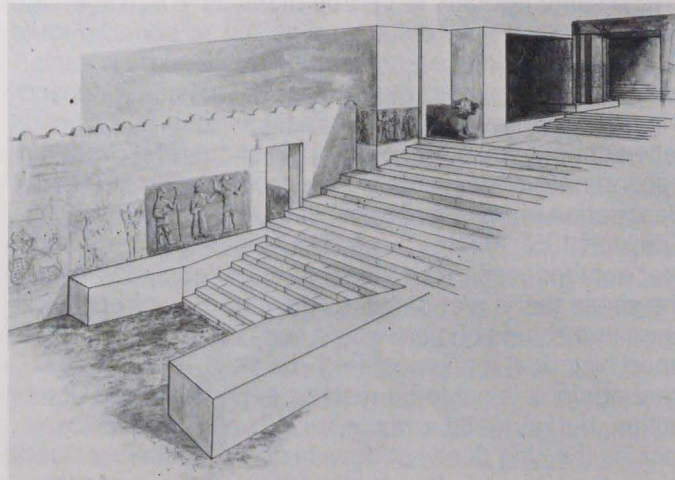
In each of the individual sequences,¹⁰ action proceeds along a basic horizontal ground line. There is little spatial depth, and no real “background” to the field (as there is with the reliefs of Sargon and Sennacherib later), the only exceptions being the water scenes with swimmers, slabs 17a and 11b–9b, and a scene of Assyrians cutting trees between which is visible a pattern of scales indicating mountains, that was re-used in the Southwest Palace at Nimrud and may have come from the Throneroom (Barnett and Falkner 1962:Pl. CXIV). Occasionally, action also takes place in the upper part of the register, as headless bodies are indicated or hand-to-hand combat is depicted (slab 4a, Figure 10); but the figures seem to float in the air—there is no unified field of action. It is rather the overlapping of figures on the ground line that becomes a substitute for spatial depth.

The details which distinguish one scene from another were carefully added: trees, river, and so on, such that one citadel sits in the midst of a river (17a); another has four walls (5b–3b); a third is surrounded by fruit trees (4a–3a). We have mentioned before that these details grant particularity to each sequence. While they are not sufficient to convey what we from our post-Renaissance perspective would call realism, the question is really

whether one can get closer to how they might have been perceived in their own time. Roman Jakobsen, in writing about realism in art, has noted that there are two conditions which must be fulfilled: (1) that the author be concerned with displaying verisimilitude and (2) that the audience or individual judging it perceived it as true to life (1971:38). In other words, one needs to know the conventions in order to “see” an image as an ideologue for the object(s) portrayed, and at that point, recognition becomes instantaneous: one no longer sees a “picture” (ibid.:39). Our details would then become the devices employed to heighten the perception of realism through the recognition of particularity.

It was with these thoughts in mind that I began to wonder to what degree the individual sequences as they have been isolated might have been recognized and identifiable in antiquity, not only as generally designated regions but as specific places and campaigns.¹¹ Although the Standard Inscription that is written across the face of each slab includes references to major military campaigns and territorial control assumed during the reign of Assurnasirpal (Grayson 1976: ¶s 650–653), it is a very abbreviated text. The most complete inscription preserved is that from the Ninurta Temple at Nimrud (ibid.: ¶s 536–591), which includes annalistic accounts of campaigns from the king's first through eighteenth year of reign. It has been assumed that these building inscriptions have been taken from state records or annals, recounting major undertakings by regnal year such as those preserved for later Assyrian kings. In each account recorded in the Ninurta Temple text, the process of a campaign is presented in three stages: the (geographical) approach, the actual conflict or interaction, and the consequences (booty, tribute, imposition of corvée, etc.); that is, just exactly as the sequences are depicted on the reliefs. Furthermore, very precise wording was used to describe each campaign.

Figure 15a



When we compare that wording with the reliefs before us, we find surprising correspondences. In relation to slab 17a (Figure 7), for example, only three times are places mentioned not “at” rivers but “in” waters: Anat, an island in the Euphrates near Suhu (i.e., south; Grayson 1976: ¶ 577); Arwad, on the Phoenician coast of the Mediterranean, described as being an island in the sea (ibid.: ¶ 586); and Carchemish, when the Euphrates was in flood, at which time the Assyrians crossed on floats (ibid.: ¶ 584). Or, for example, with regard to slabs 18b–17b (Figures 8 and 9), although a number of booty and tribute lists are given, including ivory and metal vessels (visible in the upper part of the register), only Carchemish (¶ 584) is listed as giving tribute in ivory tusks, as represented, and the account also includes hostages and kings of the region who seize the feet of Assurnasirpal—all carefully noted in the relief. With regard to slabs 11b–9b, while many river crossings are noted, the only other time in addition to the mention at Carchemish cited above that refers to floats is at the Middle Euphrates area of the lands of Suhu and Laqe (ibid.: ¶ 579), where boats are also mentioned as having been built to transport the troops. For the siege of slab 5b–3b, only twice are towns described as many-walled: the three walls of Nirbu (Urartu,

in the north; ibid.: ¶ 549) and the four walls of Nairi (also in the north; ibid.: ¶ 569); while both are equally likely candidates, we have a further reference to a later campaign around Nirbu, at Mount Kashiari, in which siege towers and battering rams were used, as in the representations here (ibid.: ¶ 587). This would leave the only other reference to siege towers, visible also in slab 18a (Figure 6), to Bit Adini near the Euphrates (ibid.: ¶ 582); and as the territory of Bit Adini is just before Carchemish on the line of Assyrian march to the west, this would make the sequence from slabs 18a and 17a most appropriate, as well as the tribute below, 18b–17b, if associated also with Carchemish. As for slabs 4a–3a (Figure 10), of the many sieges listed, the attack against Damdammusa on the northern Tigris in year 18 (ibid.: ¶ 587) is the only instance in which specific mention is made of cutting down orchards, as well noting the piles of heads made following the massacre, and both the trees and decapitated bodies are carefully represented in the reliefs. Finally, for the two historical narrative slabs preserved on the north wall (28 and 27, Figure 13), Barnett (1967) has suggested that these figures are Iranian, on the basis of the mounted archers, which may be corroborated by the helmet types and equestrian ornaments related to objects actually found in northwest Iran (Winter 1980). In addition, it is in the east (at Mount Nisir, at the Babitu Pass in the Zagros; ibid.: ¶ 556) that Assurnasirpal describes encounters with warriors on horseback along side mountain torrents, here depicted as a running river.

It would seem, therefore, that we are indeed dealing with very specific references in the reliefs, once they are read in conjunction with descriptions in the Annals. The designations given as part of Figure 2 present the various optimum choices for location, based upon verbal descriptions for each sequence. These equations are made with great caution, since a situation occurs later, in the reign of Sennacherib, in which one of the major visual representations of his Syrian campaign of 701—the well-known siege of Lachish in Judah—is clearly identified by label on the relief, but in the annalistic account of the campaign the site is not even mentioned (Luckenbill 1927: ¶s 311–312).

This does not preclude the possibility of exact parallels in the reign of Assurnasirpal, however, and I am further encouraged to make these equations by accounts of the as-yet-unpublished embossed bronze door-bands of Assurnasirpal from the Temple of Mamu at Imgur Enlil (modern Balawat), which are reported to show scenes specifically labeled as Suhu, Bit Adini, Carchemish, Urartu (i.e., Nirbu), and the cities of the Phoenician coast (Barnett 1973:21). It will be interesting to compare these scenes with the Throneroom reliefs when they are finally published.¹² Until that time, I would suggest that there seems to be a close correlation between the wording of the Annals and depictions on the reliefs—a high degree of parallelism therefore between text and image, if not the likelihood of exact correspondences.

Figure 15b



Figures 15 a & b Carchemish, Long Wall (a) reconstructed drawing; (b) chariot relief (Archaeological Museum, Ankara, Inv. 94; ht. 2m.).

Figure 16 Court D, North-west Palace: Tributary figures (British Museum 124562).



The Program

Having established the content of the wall scenes, it is possible to proceed to an investigation of their integration into the Throneroom as a whole and to explore the intention behind the decorative scheme. That the Neo-Assyrian palaces were clearly intended to impress is stated most explicitly: by Assurnasirpal, who decorated his "in splendid fashion" (Grayson 1976: ¶ 653); and by Sennacherib, who intended his to be the "astonishment of all nations" (Luckenbill 1927: ¶ 413). And that there would also have been a program in mind seems likely, given the nature of the building and the public function of the room in question, just as palaces, reception suites, and thronerooms have been important vehicles for decorative schemes relating to notions of the state and the ruler in a variety of subsequent cultures and periods (see Root 1979; Nylander 1979; Davis-Weyer 1971:84–88; Schlosser 1891:58–64; Walter 1970; Rosenberg 1979; MacDougall, forthcoming; Biddle 1963; Partridge 1978; Gorse, 1980).

Before proceeding, however, it is important to look at the impressive north facade of the Throneroom that gives onto the large outer Court D/E. The importance of this facade is linked to the significance of the courtyard into which it faces, and the other sides off of which were most

likely distributed the public offices associated with the functioning of the palace administration. Oppenheim (1964:328) recognized this court to be virtually as important as the Throneroom itself, with the monumental towered facade similar to those which stood at the entrances to temple cult rooms.

The reliefs and colossi associated with this facade have been enumerated by Reade (1965:131) and are the subject of a recent article by Meuszyński (1979). Along with the standard genii that mark the doorways, a number of fragments were preserved which represent figures in procession. They stand the full height of the slabs, with the Standard Inscription carved across their bodies. Some of the figures are clearly foreigners—wearing turbanlike caps and wrapped garments, and carrying goods such as a tray of bracelets, earrings, and pectorals (Mallowan 1966: Figure 47; Meuszyński 1979: Figures 1–3), or accompanied by exotic creatures such as a pair of long-tailed monkeys (Barnett 1975:7; here, Figure 16). Other figures on reliefs found in the Southwest Palace but almost surely re-used from this context, for which only drawings now exist, wear pointed caps and open overgarments with scalloped borders and carry small vases or buckets (Barnett and Falkner 1962: Pl. CXXIV).

There seem originally to have been anywhere from two to four figures to a slab; fragments of at least eight individuals are preserved. In addition, several Assyrians are also depicted—both bearded and clean-shaven, wearing pectoral ornaments, carrying staffs of office, and shown with hands clasped rather than with the subservient clenched and raised fists of the foreigners (Mallowan 1966: Figures 45, 46, and 49; Meuszyński 1979: Figures 4 and 5). Apparently also in Layard's original drawings of Court D, a figure of the king receiving the procession had been preserved (Mallowan 1953:28).

The garments worn by the foreigners all correspond to standard dress for individuals from the West when compared with later, labeled figures—in particular, from Bit Adini, Carchemish, and Phoenicia (Wäfler 1975). This is especially noteworthy, because it is precisely these areas which provide the most elaborate tribute to Assurnasirpal, including gold bracelets and necklaces from Bit Adini and Carchemish (Grayson 1976: ¶ 584), bronze pails from Carchemish (*ibid.*), and two female apes, large and small, from the Phoenician coast (*ibid.*: ¶ 586).

Once again, then, we seem to have a literal representation of what is also preserved in the Annals. Assurnasirpal further tells us in the Standard Inscription (Grayson 1976: ¶ 653) that he filled the palace with gold, silver, and other valuables from the lands over which he had gained dominion—the same goods he seems to be representing. Like the battle scenes in which the Assyrians always win, there is no intimation of exchange or that the king gives anything in return. All wealth comes to him (see Mauss 1967 ed., in regard to less hierarchical societies in which articulated patterns of exchange are what maintain social relations and the state); thus the king's unique position is underscored, his ability to elicit tribute serving as a validation of power. The outer facade of the Throneroom, therefore, sets the stage most appropriately for the actual reception and presence within.

How then was the desired effect achieved inside? First of all, through scale: the scale of the physical space itself—Court and Throneroom; and the scale of the decoration—reliefs standing well over the average height of a man, doorway colossi towering over these, and paintings up to the ceiling. Second, in the emphasis on doorways in general: that is, the significantly marked “passages” into and out of the space, passing the mythological beings of the genii and the composite creatures of the colossi who fully confronted an approaching individual, both announcing and controlling the liminality of the threshold (Turner 1974:237). Further, as Rio has pointed out (1976:507), images such as monsters and genii, which belong only to an invented universe, predispose the viewer much more strongly to highly charged space. The frequent repetition of the sacred tree further enhances this “specialness”—belonging to an abstract realm of ideal intentions. The repetition of the tree at each corner is particularly significant, as the central axis of the

tree is the corner and the image bends around the corner to right and left (see Figure 2). By this simple device, we are not presented with four separate-though-adjacent wall surfaces, but rather with a unified and continuous space.

The role played by slabs 13 and 23 (which feature the tree in context, as central to the desired universal order) was discussed above. They orient the viewer to the main focus of the room. From there, the disposition of the other slabs also becomes important. At least on the preserved south wall, the narrative reliefs proceed down from the king, who would have faced west on his throne, as indeed he does in the reliefs. All events thereby emanate from him and his reign, as, conversely, the individual approaching the throne goes counter to the direction of the reliefs, confronting the events as he passes.

In the narratives, as we have seen, a high degree of selection is operative. It is surely no accident that although numerous animals are hunted by the king according to his Annals (lions, bulls, ostrich, elephants; see Grayson 1976: ¶ 681), only lions and bulls are represented as appropriate opponents here. The significance of this selection is underscored by the fact that the royal seal of the ninth-century Assyrian kings showed them also in combat with a lion (Sachs 1953). Details in the historical narratives are also carefully selected and clearly represented to allow for easy recognition, with certain distortions and simplifications occurring to focus attention and thereby facilitate recognition.¹³ In this context, the work of Barthes on the advertising image is not a casual referent, for there, as here, certain “signifieds” must be put across, and so long as transmission of the “message” is paramount, these signifieds have to be communicated as clearly as possible and thus are framed with a view to optimum reading (Barthes 1977b:33).

Hence, despite the changes in scene or specific action in the individual sequences, all the historical narratives have the identical grammatical structure. All are articulated in simple declarative sentences, with the firm implication of objectivity (never is an emotional component introduced to heighten the drama by qualifying the triumph of victory with the tragedy of defeat, as, for example, in the mosaic of the battle between Alexander and Darius from the House of the Faun at Pompeii; see Gombrich 1960:136–137). The “subject” is always clearly defined, and it is always the same: the king.

Variation therefore occurs in the predicate. But while the visual emphasis may be on the actions, together they illustrate the character of the subject, and so, in effect, the topic never shifts from the king (Todorov 1977:66–67). The order of events as represented may even be said to follow the word order of unmarked Semitic Akkadian: subject-object-verb (Givon 1976). The king, with or without attendants, appears at one side, usually the left (hence the subject). The object of his attentions and/or actions follows. And only at the end of the sequence is

the verb perceivable: in battles, for example, he *conquers*; this is clear after the array of casualties, falling men, and so on, because what you see (king shooting bow) may be the immediate action, but the *governing* action is apparent only in the totality.

The "person" of the subject is more complex than it might seem. We have discussed above the tendency to read profile views in narrative in the third person: "He (Assurnasirpal) did X." However, the king as principal actor whose presence is invoked in his very Throneroom, where he sits upon the throne, and would be present by association even with the empty throne, also adds a dimension of "I (Assurnasirpal) did X." The play is ambiguous, therefore, between the third person and the first person singular, between the fact of the thing/event and his assertion of it.

It is in this context that we understand better the function of the historical narratives of the Throneroom. In combination with the other reliefs, they give substance to the structural tension between the "ideal" cultic and mythological world and the purportedly "real" world. Yet, it is precisely, as we have shown above, in the selection of scenes that constantly show the invincibility of the Assyrians that the "real" world has been much manipulated. The reliefs, therefore, further mediate between history and the king's "assertion-of-history." Because the scenes appear so real—even to appropriate landscape elements and dress—the denoted images function to naturalize the underlying rhetoric; the very realness "innocents the semantic artifice of connotation," allowing the message to be bought without defensive armor, since the message is seemingly founded in nature (Barthes 1977b:45–46). The traditional structuralist dichotomy between nature and culture (Lévi-Strauss 1973, 1975) seems both recognized and artfully exploited in the cultural use of nature; for the cultural message—the royal rhetoric—is the power of the king and of the state, as demonstrated in the historical event.

Power is clearly what is conveyed in the inscriptions as well, and it must be remembered that the carving of the Standard Inscription over each slab cannot be seen as accidental or arbitrary. The Standard Inscription is a highly condensed formulation of the titles and activities of the king, including the king's name and ancestry, royal epithets expressing piety, valor, and military strength, enumeration of early campaigns, a summary of territorial expansion in general terms, and reference to the establishment of the capital at Nimrud and the building of the palace (de Filippi 1977:127).

The same ambiguities in grammatical subject discussed just above also occur in the text, where attributes in the titulary are presented in the third person, actions in the first. The activities mentioned in the Standard Inscription are clearly abstracted from the Annals, as is the far more extensive account preserved in the Ninurta Temple inscription which has been used above to identify the individual historical narratives in the Throneroom. But I

would suggest that, rather than seeing the text—Annals or Standard Inscription—*behind* the images, they should be seen as separate but parallel systems, particularly as we are here concerned with an essentially nonliterate population.

As the Throneroom reliefs may thus be seen as a very explicit and extensive rendering of the same concepts and events recorded in the Annals and expressed in the Standard Inscription, so the greatly abbreviated decorative scheme of the rest of the palace—repeated human- and eagle-headed genii flanking the sacred tree as well as occasional representations of the standing or seated king (Stearns 1961; Reade 1965; Brandes 1969)—should be seen as the résumé of the essence of the Standard Inscription: the articulation of the right order of the universe. That this is so is supported by the pride of place given to slabs 13 and 23, the full statement of the maintenance of the divine order by genii with lustral cone and bucket and through the person of the king. Thus when Reade says that the documents and the sculptures are inseparable (1979a:329), I would agree; but when he further adds, "like print and picture in an illustrated book," I must diverge, for this is more like a book in which there are only pictures, telling the same story as a book in which there are only words.

One may question the standardization, both in the inscription and in the repetitive decoration of most of the palace (see Paley 1976); however, this can perhaps best be understood in terms of modern communication theory, and the fact that the more standardized the message, the more reduced the cost per message event in emission and energy expended in decoding (Wobst 1977:323). This is further understood as necessary when we remember that we are here at the beginning of the incorporation of historical narrative into architectural decoration, and redundancy, necessary at all times to ensure reception, is particularly important as new modes of expression take time to be processed and become familiar to an audience. As the genre develops within the course of the Neo-Assyrian period, we shall see that it increases in acceptable variation; before proceeding to an investigation of later representations, however, it might be well to draw in the threads spun out thus far.

The appearance of historical narrative in works of art of the ancient Near East is correlated with the establishment by Assurnasirpal of a new capital at Nimrud/Kalhu, after 1,000 years of residence by Assyrian kings at Assur.¹⁴ It is further correlated with the expansionist activities that made Assyria a territorial empire. The decorative scheme of Assurnasirpal's Northwest Palace as we have laid it out may therefore be seen as a response to the imperial situation and to imperial needs.

A similar moment of floruit of the historical narrative occurs later, in the Roman Empire, coinciding precisely with the mounting of extensive foreign campaigns (Hamborg 1945; Hannestad 1979), and had occurred earlier, in Egypt during the New Kingdom. In particular, the battle



Figure 17 Sargon II
Throne-base, Room VII,
Khorsabad (top: northeast
side, Iraq Museum; bottom:
southwest side, Oriental In-
stitute, Chicago, A 11257).



scenes of Ramses II (1279–1212 B.C.) of Dynasty XIX at Qadesh have led some scholars to see Egypt as the likely source for Assurnasirpal's innovations (Breasted 1932; Moscati 1963:99). I would say rather that the similar desires to represent events as reality all spring from very similar imperialistic concerns, as Ramses II was as much involved with validating his Empire in Syria as was Assurnasirpal. In Egypt, this marked a significant change from the more traditional means of representing victory in battle by the icon of a king smiting an enemy, an emblem of supremacy sometimes complemented by inscription or specificity of garb and hairstyle but never incorporating real time and space. The appearance of true historical narrative in Egypt was a short-lived phenomenon which, on the basis of what we know of the realpolitik of the period, seems to have been largely rhetorical and for purposes of display. In Assyria some 400 years later, the historical narratives appear to reflect the actual political situation, as Assyrian expansion is attested from many corroborating sources and continues on through the next two centuries.

We have suggested that the historical narratives reflect actual campaigns, as recorded in the royal Annals. In addition, if one looks at the disposition of the identified campaigns on the south wall, one notes that they are all situated in the southwest, west, or north (Suhu and Laqe, Carchemish, Bit Adini and the Habur River, Nirbu/Urartu and Damdammusa), while the only certain sequence from the north wall seems to represent an event in the east. This is especially striking, for, in both the Ninurta Temple inscription and the Standard Inscription, in the phrases in which Assurnasirpal expounds upon his territorial control, he groups the southwest, west, and north into one sequence, and the east, southeast, and south in the next. While we do not have enough evidence from the north wall to sustain a strong argument, it is tempting to

see this same division as part of the conscious program of the Throneroom, much on the same lines as the exterior of a Gothic cathedral often allocated Old Testament scenes to the north (cold) side and New Testament to the south, and as interior fresco cycles from Byzantium to the Renaissance were also frequently organized around similar polarities (Davis-Weyer 1971:84–85; Ettlinger 1965).

This division of elements bound together by their opposition into a whole that comprises and integrates extremes is thus a not uncommon device, used to imply the whole that lies within the extremities at the same time as the multiplicity of individual examples suggests the totality of places conquered. The opposition between east and west can be found clearly expressed in Neo-Assyrian texts of the period as a chosen metaphor for the extent of the Empire—for example, in an inscription of Shamshi-Adad V (823–811 B.C.), which announces the extent of Assyrian power from Nairi in the east to opposite Carchemish in the west (Luckenbill 1926: ¶ 716), and in Assurnasirpal's own words, that he has "brought under one authority ferocious (and) merciless kings *from east to west*" (Grayson 1976: ¶ 652; emphasis mine). Such textual references serve to strengthen the likelihood that this opposition would be articulated visually as well, and there is evidence from subsequent reigns to support such a reading. In text, mountain and water zones are invoked as border areas *par excellence*, in order to evoke both the spatial diversity of the land governed by Assyria and the frontiers which thus stood in contrast to the "center" (Liverani 1979:306–307).¹⁵ Pictorially, the very throne base of Sargon II shows a campaign taking place in mountain country on one side (east?), riverine territory on the other (the Euphrates, west? Figure 17); while in the palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh, we see the unusual incorporation of two separate campaigns in a single room, jux-

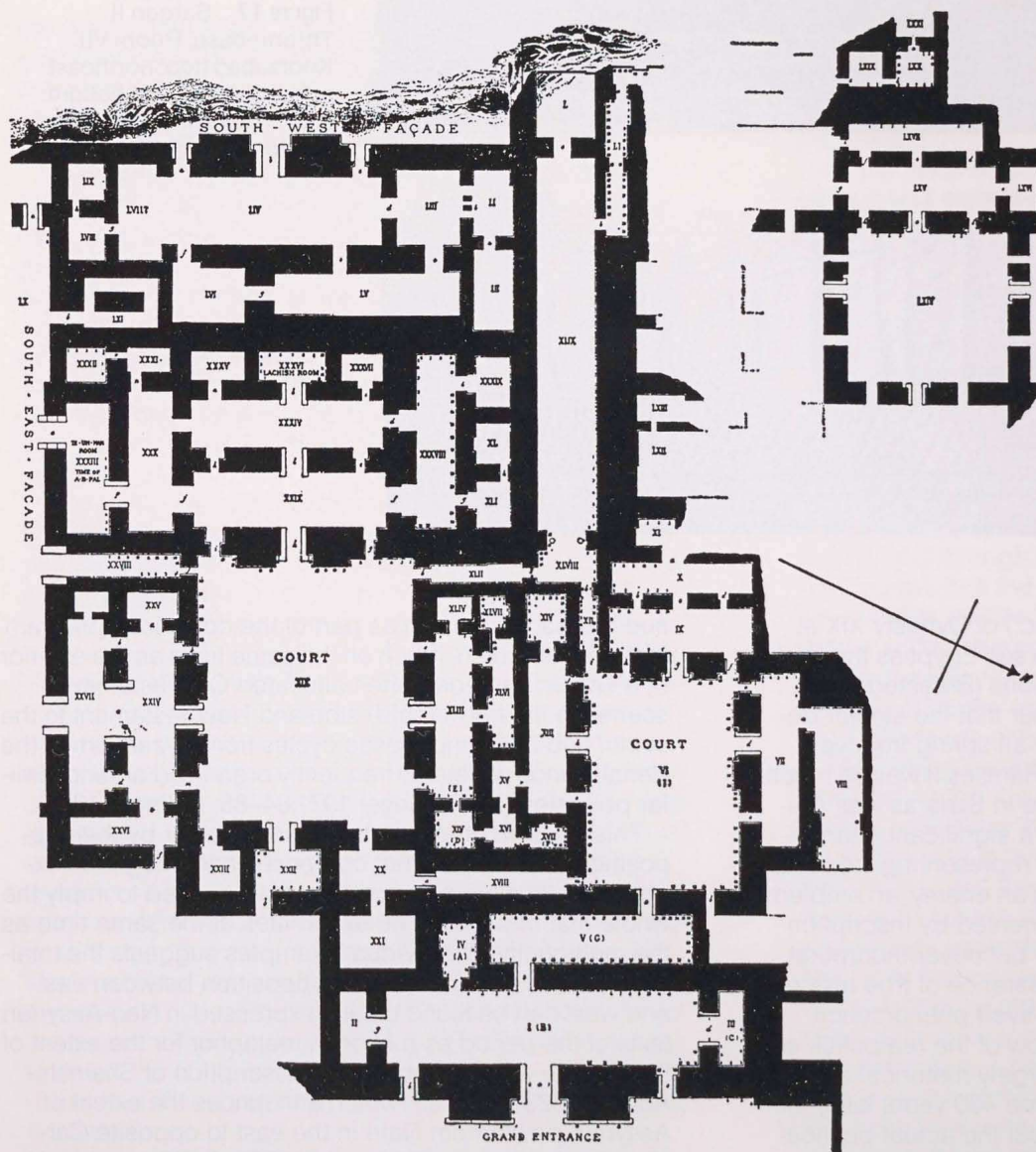


Figure 18 Plan, South-west Palace of Sennacherib, Nineveh. (After Paterson 1915.)

taping Phoenicians of the seacoast and opponents from a mountainous region (Loud 1936:65 and Figs. 79–80; Paterson 1915:Pls 7–11). In all other cases of the palace of Sennacherib, there is but a single campaign depicted in each room, and it would seem that the standard organization is not followed here precisely because the room in question, designated Room I, was originally the main Throneroom of Sennacherib, its monumental facade facing Court H virtually identical to that of Assurnasirpal's Court D (see plan, Figure 18; also Turner 1970:183; Reade 1980b:76). Here, too, the individual entering would be presented with a visual parenthesis of the extent of the Empire, just as has been suggested for the Throneroom of Assurnasirpal.

In a sense, then, the parenthesis serves not only to delineate the borders, but also to mark the center (see Geertz 1977; Liverani 1979). Throne base or Throneroom, therefore, becomes the symbolic "true center," encapsulating the Empire itself, a microcosm of the state.

It should be emphasized that no stress on the secular in the art of either Assurnasirpal or succeeding kings is intended (*contra* Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951:171; and with Speiser 1955:66–67). The representation of the god Assur in the winged disc may occupy less space on the reliefs than did the god Ningirsu on the stele of Eannatum, but the texts put victory into the hands of the god, just as they had done in the Early Dynastic period (Grayson 1976: ¶s 543 and 651), and this is expressed visually by the presence of the god, not only above the sacred tree of slabs 13 and 23 but also above the chariot

of the king in battle, shooting bow and arrow as the king shoots, standing when he stands, gesturing as he gestures (see slabs 3a, 9b, 5a, 11a). Although we in the West have been acculturated since the Renaissance to give precedence to foreground and scale, in the vertical organization of priorities of Mesopotamian art, the position of the god Assur identifies him as the governing principle of the action—as he is so represented in the Standard Inscription. Whether this is to be viewed as an expression of belief or as the metaphor by which the king expresses his legitimacy and which enables him to exercise his franchise to rule (Liverani 1979:301), the god is clearly a central feature of the system, and it is under his aegis that the king functions.

The whole Throneroom can then be read as a statement of the establishment and maintenance of the exterior state through military conquest and tribute, and the maintenance of the internal state through cultic observances, achieved through the person of the all-powerful king.

These attitudes are also found in the texts, where the titles employed by Assurnasirpal show similar concerns. I would even go further and suggest that, just as we have posited exact correspondences between verbally and visually described events in the historical narratives, there is an equal correspondence between the epithets assumed by the king and his various categories of representation. Thus, the titulary that closes the annalistic recounting of the king's activities in the Standard Inscription (as well as in the Ninurta Temple inscription) begins:

(I.) Assurnasirpal, attentive prince, worshipper of the great gods, ferocious predator, conqueror of cities and the entire highlands . . . [Grayson 1976: ¶s 652 and 539]

I would see in this sequence the same four roles in which we see Assurnasirpal in the Throneroom: A. himself seated on the throne (and most likely depicted as such on the far west wall of Room C, exactly opposite); A. as the maintainer of divine order through the care of the sacred tree; A. as vanquisher of wild bulls and lions; and A. as warrior.¹⁶

This multidimensional definition of kingship, which straddles the secular and the divine, is again well known in the ideology and artistic representations of subsequent periods (e.g., Root 1979; Corrigan 1978; Mango 1972:108–110; A. Grabar 1936). More important, however, the articulation of divine favor and the role of the king, including civic, priestly, and military functions, can be traced back in time to the Old Assyrian period in the early second millennium B.C. (Larsen 1974:296). There is thus a clearly established tradition in Mesopotamia upon which the Neo-Assyrian king stands. What is distinctive here is the manner in which these aspects were displayed visually (and verbally) in the palace.

In fact, I would even suggest that both words and pictures adhere to the identical structural principles. In the extended titulary at the beginning of the Standard Inscription, immediately after the king's genealogy (Grayson 1976: ¶ 650), a series of characteristics are ascribed to the king that, I submit, follow closely the organization of the Throneroom reliefs.

The governing principle is that the king's achievements are granted through divine sanction, brought about through his piety. From there, a string of epithets follows, all equally weighted; but it is striking that the first, "fearless in battle," is given in an active, attributive mode, while those epithets that follow are rather consequences: the subjugation of the unsubmissive, enemies being trampled, and so on. Inserted in the middle is a recapitulation of divine sanction, then a second active image is evoked: the king who "captured lands," from which again the consequences are enumerated—receipt of tribute, taking of hostages. In the first series, the quality of "fearless" governs the consequences that follow, and the fact of having captured lands governs the second. In the total string of descriptive phrases enumerating the king's attributes and achievements, one can virtually see corresponding relief scenes: organization around the piety of slabs 13 and 23, then individual historical narratives such as subject kings kissing Assurnasirpal's feet, enemy trampled beneath the chariot horses, cities conquered, tribute exacted, prisoners received. Perhaps even more significant, however, we are also presented with the same expression of resolution from action to consequence as is seen in the reliefs: for example, in the hunt slabs, where action is above and the consequent ritual below, and in the sequence from battles to aftermath.¹⁷

Correspondences in both content and structure are therefore to be found in the texts and the imagery: first, the similar organization around a governing principle of divine sanction once the king himself is introduced; second, a similar syntax of action and explicit articulation of action to consequence; third, the same grammatical and compositional play on the ambiguity between the subject of the action/the king in the first and third persons; fourth, a correlation of campaigns enumerated to campaigns depicted; and fifth, the same four major facets of royal identity, which in the reliefs take the form of four different types of scenes in the Throneroom.¹⁸

In this parallelism, which I feel is demonstrable between text and image, we are clearly in the presence of compelling royal rhetoric: two powerful and reinforcing statements, linguistic and visual, that both carry the same message. That it was a program consciously applied is strongly indicated, not only by the coherence of the scheme, but also by evidence that in the *temples* built by Assurnasirpal at Nimrud a very different sort of decoration was executed in relief—heraldic and mythological representations of divine combats as opposed to images of the king and historical narratives (Meuszczyński 1976).

This is not, however, the "biography" of an individual or his personal propaganda (Reade 1979a:331) but rather the ideology of the state. If, with Culler, we see ideology as "a theory which justifies particular economic, political and intellectual practices by concealing their historical origins and making them the *natural* components of an interpreted world" (1973:471; emphasis mine), then we see immediately the logical investment of Assurnasirpal not only in the specific use of what appear to be purely denotative "historical narratives" but also in the overriding program of the Throneroom as a whole.

The impact of the Throneroom was charged with the tension established between apparently opposing elements. In slab 23, the tree is central and the king serves it on each side, yet it is placed directly behind the throne in a position such that the king himself, when present, would also be central. The symmetrical reliefs are played against the asymmetrical historical representations. The text of the Standard Inscription is posed against the images. And the subject of both, while always the king, alternates between the first and third person singular. It is the power of the Throneroom that, withall, these oppositions are bound into a tight whole, strengthened through the binary play (Lévi-Strauss 1974:196) into a definition of the cultural function of the presiding individual and the space.

The production of art on this scale and in this sort of context has definite advantages. Once the initial expenditure in time, money, and conception has been made, the message contained in the program continues to be beamed with great longevity and little or no further maintenance cost (Wobst 1977:322). That this message was deemed important by Assurnasirpal himself is reflected in his concern about the care of the palace after his own lifetime (Grayson 1976: ¶ 620), as well as by his obvious pride in its initial achievement.

As for the nature of the message, it is a very fine line between the statement of an ideology as a monument to an existing or wished-for status quo and the beaming of that ideology as propaganda, designed to manipulate social forces. I doubt very much if the two can be effectively separated, for in the very statement lies the implication of reinforcement—with exactly the same duality of the term, having connotations both military and social, as in modern usage. I feel we must therefore assume that the representations were aimed not only at the education by example and the manipulation of foreign visitors but also at the shaping and maintenance of the local population—those individuals who must buy the royal message if the state is to remain stable and the king securely in power (see Liverani 1979:298–299).¹⁹ In the end, what is before us in the Throneroom is therefore an integrated architectural, pictorial, and textual representation of the institution of kingship and the ideal of the Neo-Assyrian state.





Figures 19 a & b (a) Shalmaneser III, Black Obelisk, Nimrud (British Museum 18885; ht. 2.02 m.); (b) detail.

Historical Development and Cultural Perspective

The Monuments

Many of the issues raised with regard to the Throneroom of Assurnasirpal become clearer when we see the form they took and how they developed over the course of the Neo-Assyrian period. In this, much is owed to the recent work of Julian Reade, who has charted the development of narrative composition in Assyrian sculpture (1979c). But it might be well to put this material together briefly from the particular perspective of the present discussion.

The art produced in the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.) seems heavily dependent upon that of his father, Assurnasirpal. Small fragments of wall paintings from the Throneroom of Fort Shalmaneser at Nimrud (as yet unpublished, but described in Oates 1963:28) indicate that the room was decorated with a procession of figures from the royal bodyguard and probably therefore included also the king himself, possibly receiving tribute. Other unpublished fragments from the building include standing genii and traces of a sacred tree (*ibid.*:30). The glazed brick panel, also from the Fort, shows the king duplicated right and left, with Assur in a winged disc directly above him, and above that, divided by a cuneiform inscription giving the name of the king, his father, and grandfather, stand two rampant opposed bulls and a sacred tree (Reade 1963). All of these, despite minor variations, have strong parallels in the Northwest Palace. In addition, the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser, with its carved registers on four sides (Figure 19 a & b), owes a great deal to the sequences of the Throneroom reliefs of Assurnasirpal showing booty and tribute, as does the carved throne base of Shalmaneser from the Fort (Layard 1849a:Pls. 53–56; Oates 1963; Hulin 1963). Both monuments may also be compared to the tributary figures of Assurnasirpal's Court D, where, in particular, figures with trays of bracelets and earrings and others with apes seem virtually copied from the sculptured facade (Figure 16). One group of tributaries from the throne base is actually labeled as coming from Bit Adini, further strengthening the identification for Assurnasirpal's procession suggested above. And finally, once it was discovered that two sets of bronze door bands belonging to Assurnasirpal had been preserved from Balawat/Imgur Enlil (Barnett 1973), the bronze bands of Shalmaneser III could no longer be discussed in terms of innovation in design (King 1915). Nevertheless, some trends observable in the Shalmaneser Gates from Balawat are worth remarking upon. The order in which the bands should be read has been discussed by various scholars (most recently, Reade 1979c). The eight pairs of double-register bands seem to show a definite expansion in the amount of space and information given in the earlier bands. The bull and lion hunts of the Assurnasirpal bands, closely related to those depicted on his Throneroom reliefs, are entirely omitted in the bands of his son, and only military



Figure 20 Shalmaneser III, Bronze door band, Balawat (British Museum, ht. 27 cm.).

and campaign activities are included—what we have called the “historical narratives.” The Shalmaneser gates also go further in including landscape elements to mark the terrain and site of each campaign (King 1915: Pls. III, XIII, XXX, etc.; here, e.g., Figure 20). Therefore, just on the basis of this one king, successor to Assurnasirpal, we may tentatively predict a general trend of elaboration in the genre of historical narrative at the expense of other themes.

The next king for whom there is any relevant information is Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 B.C.). Although he apparently built a palace at Nimrud, identified as the Central Palace, the structure is now largely eroded (Reade 1968; 1977:314–315), and the reliefs are therefore very poorly preserved. In addition, some of the sculptural decoration from this palace was apparently removed and re-used in the Southwest Palace of Esarhaddon (Barnett and Falkner 1962). Of those Central Palace reliefs still *in situ*, it has been possible to reconstruct representations of two campaigns, one against Babylon in 745 B.C. and the other possibly against Media, in 737 B.C. (Reade 1968:72). Each room apparently also contained a complete version of the Annals of the king, as was also the case with the later Sargon II but not with Assurnasirpal, who condensed the Annals into his Standard Inscription. In the siege scenes of Tiglath-pileser, we see many connections with the Throneroom reliefs of Assurnasirpal—in captured cities and goods and falling enemy—but there is also a general increase in overlapping figures and animals (Barnett and Falkner 1962:Pls. XXVI, XXVIII); more complex spatial renderings of citadels in their landscape (Ibid.:Pl. XL); and perhaps even a purposeful use of the total field of the register, including diagonal rows of animals to suggest the recession of space beyond the picture plane (as suggested by Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951:175).

In general, in the expansion of historical narrations throughout the palace, in the allotment of individual campaigns to individual rooms, and in the greater use of the pictorial field, Sargon's reliefs look ahead to those of his son, Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.), as well as to those of Assurbanipal (668–627 B.C.), both of whose palaces were discovered at Nineveh (Paterson 1915; Meissner and Opitz 1939). The reliefs of Sennacherib in particular show not only seascapes but also campaigns against a patterned background of terrain that implies the three-dimensional space in which the action took place (Paterson 1915: Pls. 68–76, 83–84; here, Figure 21). In addition, Sennacherib expands the subjects of his narrative concerns to include building and quarrying activities related to domestic, internal events (Paterson 1915: Pls. 23–28, 31–35), and the diagonal lines along which he distributes men throughout the field are clear attempts to represent pictorial space (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951; Akurgal 1968)—the closest we come, in fact, to a consistent perspective; and the suppression of formerly more prominent figures in favor of the overall composition (Reade 1980a:73) further reduces the conceptual component, thus strengthening the “perceptual.” We must assume, I feel, that behind this interest in illusory space is the notion that the “truer” the space, the greater the degree of historicity, as if visual progress across the field of the relief were comparable to the actual progress of the army through its field (Bersani and Dutoit 1979:21). At the same time, we have no preserved heraldic or ceremonial reliefs of Sennacherib, nor any genii, and this, too, would tend to suggest an interest in the historically verifiable universe.

That interest notwithstanding, however, the representations of Sennacherib are no less “manipulated” than those of Assurnasirpal, but whereas the earlier reliefs were clearly divided into separate sequences of action and consequence, in the later scenes, time is telescoped into a single unit so that the flow from approach to siege to prisoners and booty becomes continuous and we are presented with simultaneous action within a single space.



Figure 21 Sennacherib, Siege of Lachish, Room XXXVI, Southwest Palace, Nineveh (British Museum).

It would seem that Sennacherib also arranged campaigns in specific rooms according to some conscious program. I have already mentioned the particular case of the Throneroom, Room I, with its grand facade, which I feel purposely includes sea and mountain battles to encompass the Empire. In addition, a group of reliefs of activities amid marshes and palm trees decorated the north end of the northwest facade, which seems on the basis of comparison with reliefs of Court XIX in the same palace to be situated in Babylon (Paterson 1915: p. 3; Pls. 40–41, 43; plan, our Figure 18). Since the Babylonian campaigns of Sennacherib were the most important of his reign (Luckenbill 1927: ¶s 234, 241–243), it seems not accidental to have depicted them on the great facade, just as the eastern and western campaigns were inside, in Room I.²¹

It is really Sennacherib who begins to fully exploit the epigraph—a written label, inscribed directly on the face of the relief, identifying the scene and the action taking place, not only by content, but also by careful placement. For example, above the figure of the king seated on a carved throne in the hills before Lachish, we read: “Sennacherib, king of the universe, king of Assyria, sat upon a chair (while) the booty of Lachish passed before him” (Luckenbill 1927: ¶ 489). For a literate audience, such epigraphs would tend, like captions to a photograph, to “quicken” the image (Barthes 1977a:25), thus avoiding

possible misinterpretation—the caption being one of the major sources of information governing correct reading of a picture, along with knowledge of the visual code and an understanding of the context (Gombrich 1974:247). Such captions are different from texts which accompany an image, in that the text may be exactly parallel or it may be amplifying, providing more information, whereas the caption tends rather to focus, getting one closer to the intended meaning—that is, it “anchors” the image (Barthes 1977a:27; 1977b:38). For a nonliterate or semiliterate audience, as would be the case here, the relationship of word to image exists more on an ideal than a real level, but the increasing explicitness of the visual information is paralleled by the increasing explicitness of the accompanying epigraphs.

For Sargon II (721–705 B.C.), we have a great deal of information. In his inscriptions, we are told that the king restored and resided for a long part of his reign in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud before building his own new capital city and palace at Khorsabad, 15 kilometers northeast of Nineveh (Loud 1936).²⁰ That the palace of Assurnasirpal was an important model for the new building is clear in a comparison of the reliefs from the facade before the Throneroom of Sargon, designated Court VIII at Khorsabad, with those from the facade of Court D at Nimrud (ibid.: Figures 33–35); it is also clear in the apparent revival by Sargon of the use of griffin-demons or genii (Smith 1938: Pl. XXVII). Nevertheless, there is also a new mind at work, in the great expansion of the use of the

register as a spatial field for both land- and seascapes (Loud 1936: Figures 83, 84, 87–89). Also, as el-Amin (1953) and Reade (1976) have demonstrated, the expansion of the concept of historical narrative may be charted, not only in the amount of wall space it occupies, as the sieges become the major decorative theme in many of the rooms, but also in that campaigns of specific years, as known from the Annals, are organized visually as units within individual rooms. In fact, once one accepts this purposeful organization in the reliefs of Sargon, it becomes even more likely that there was a similar intention to refer directly to specific campaigns in the Throneroom of Assurnasirpal; and we have also suggested that the mountain-sea duality in campaigns chosen to be illustrated on the throne base of Sargon (Figure 17) was a conscious reference to the extent of the Empire from the Zagros to the Mediterranean at the time, as was also his use of two registers of tributaries from east (lower) and west (upper) along both sides of the passage of Corridor 10 in the palace. What is more, Reade has noted the purposeful composition of scenes, such that the figure of the king and the culmination of the action is likely to be placed opposite the doorway, to be immediately apparent (1979c:83); this is comparable to the placement of slabs 23 and 13 in the Throneroom of Assurnasirpal.

The epigraphs of Assurbanipal are even more extensive than those of Sennacherib (Luckenbill 1927: ¶s 1040–1117), as are his narrative sequences. Where Sennacherib had more or less done away with the double register on a slab in order to enlarge scale and focus attention on the all-encompassing action, Assurbanipal plays with both register and field, combining figures in great density (Figures 22, 23, 24). Visual rhythms that aid the reading of the narrative are established not only across a single register, but from register to register, as in the case of his battle against the Arabs, where camels racing from right to left are shown at the far right in the upper register, progressively toward the middle in the second, and finally at the bottom left, so that one takes in the movement of all three registers at once (Figure 22). This added complexity is apparent in the hunt scenes as well (Bersani and Dutoit 1979; but their generalizations on Neo-Assyrian art on the basis of Assurbanipal should be read with caution). The original sources in Assurnasirpal for these hunt scenes are readily apparent, even to the king's pouring a libation over the dead animals (Figure 23); yet the additional episodes and the addition of a third register allow for considerably expanded treatment of the theme (Barnett 1976: Pls. A, E). Accompanying this profusion of narrative information are a number of stylistic changes: gone are the bulky figures of Assurnasirpal, executed in broad, flat planes and surrounded by a great deal of negative space; instead, human and animal figures decrease in proportion and scale to permit greater

peopling of the pictorial field, and at the same time, greater attention is paid to surface patterning and detail that complements the busyness of the scene. These stylistic changes, then, have adaptive advantages (Wobst 1977:321) for the narrative intentions of Assurbanipal's artists, the results of which are that far more information is packed into a single sequence, just as far greater detail is now included in royal texts (e.g., Luckenbill 1927: ¶s 807, 823). But the price paid is so much distraction that sometimes the focus of the action is almost missed, as in the case where Assyrian soldiers decapitate an officer of the king of Elam in the midst of battle (Reade 1979b; here, Figure 24).

At their most successful, the registers proceed in fugue, related to each other as well as along their own lines, and attaining heights of drama never seen in the works of Assurnasirpal. Occasionally, however, the nonessential amplifiers of these scenes get in the way of the clear reading of the narrative. Although Bersani and Dutoit (1979) have argued that this distraction is conscious, obviating emphasis on any single focal point and putting all elements into the service of the whole episode, the expansion of the total number of sub-episodes, nevertheless, can sometimes work against the narrative, or at least require much more accomplished reading.

In content, one may say that the narratives of Assurbanipal continue in the direction we have seen after Assurnasirpal, away from the cultic and mythological, toward greater historical specificity, and the proliferation of historical scenes throughout the entire palace. Yet there is also some continuity with the prototype. From Reade's reconstruction (1979c:104) of Room M, the Throneroom of Assurbanipal in the North Palace at Nineveh, we see that, whereas adjacent Rooms I, J, and L contain individual campaigns, the Throneroom combines several: Babylon, Elam, Egypt, and some unspecified mountain country. Since Babylon is south, Elam is east, Egypt considered to the far west, it may be well that the mountain country would have been in the north, which was indeed mountainous, thus elaborating on the earlier notion of boundaries of the realm depicted in the central room. In any event, in the multiplicity of campaigns alone, guiding principles similar to those of Assurnasirpal must still have been operative, providing the conceptual basis upon which the Throneroom decoration was chosen.



Figure 22 Assurbanipal, Arab campaign, Room L, North Palace, Nineveh (British Museum 124926).



Figure 23 Assurbanipal, Lion hunt/libation, Room S', North Palace, Nineveh (British Museum 124886-7).



Figure 24 Assurbanipal,
Uai river campaign,
Room XXXIII, Southwest
Palace of Sennacherib,
Nineveh (British Museum
128802).

Governing Principles

How then do we account for the loss of the mythological and cultic scenes within the continuity and development of the historical narrative over time? I believe these phenomena can be accounted for if we take into consideration the context of the reliefs and their intended audience in conjunction with the historical process Assyria went through in the establishment and development of the Empire from the ninth through the seventh century B.C.

Despite the archaeological accident that the complete decorative programs of intermediary Thronerooms have not been preserved (see Reade 1980b, however, for thoughts on this), the fact that the two reception rooms bracketing the sequence represent a similar range of historical narratives strongly argues for cultural intention rather than idiosyncrasy in the decorative schemes. That intentionality, manifest in a public context (the primary reception suite of the palace), further implies the desire that the concepts underlying the intentions be perceivable (received) by those individuals physically received into the royal presence. Now, the ability to receive the message contained in the program, as many have noted, is a direct function of the effectiveness and clarity of the presentation of the message, the "packaging" (Chafe 1976), and of the cognitive competence of the audience: the stored knowledge brought to the situation, ability to understand signs and signals, and skill in decoding (Greimas and Courtès 1976; O. Grabar 1972:563; Gross 1974:60; Gombrich 1974:250; Barthes 1977c:116; Chatman 1979).

In the reliefs of Assurnasirpal, we saw a much greater use of cultic and mythological representations which had had a long history in Mesopotamia, in addition to the introduction of the truly historical narrative. The cultic and mythological scenes require a considerably greater degree of symbolic representation—images for which one must have prior knowledge of the story or custom *behind* what is represented. This constitutes, in other words, what Schapiro (1973:9) has called "reductive imagery": the text, oral or written, must be known in advance.

Precisely what the historical narratives offer is the parallelism between text and image, as opposed to dependence. They require a knowledge of context, but not necessarily of the text itself, for that can be read from the image. The historical narrative therefore simply does not require a code in the same way as a cultic or mythological scene would; it demands less previous knowledge and/or decoding skill (less competence: Culler 1975) from the viewer.

While the historical narrative may thus make fewer demands upon an audience, this can be deceptively manipulated by the "encoder," however. Particularizing elements place the narrative in time and space, attempting to make an equation between pure denotation and truth. As these elements "record," so they serve to verify the natural order (or so the Assyrians would have us per-

ceive). The narratives are then significantly different from other types of representation, because while they are so easily readable on the surface, that very readability in fact "masks the constructed meaning under the appearance of the given" (Barthes 1977b:47).

It is therefore not surprising that the historical narratives of Assurnasirpal began quite simply, both in style and in compositional articulation. The reliefs of the later Neo-Assyrian period clearly move in the direction of greater narrative complexity. Reade has documented this expansion, without, however, putting it into developmental perspective (1979c). To the extent that the reliefs of Assurnasirpal mark the initiation of the genre, one must see them as the early stages of both conception and reading, when images will be simplified and what does not contribute to the immediate core of the message will be eliminated as potentially distracting (Richards 1974:118); and one is even tempted to wonder if there is not a consciousness behind the placement of the simpler sieges 18a and 17a closest to the throne in the Northwest Palace, moving toward the more complex sieges further down as the wall progresses (e.g., slabs 4a–3a, 5b–3b).

Implications are that, as the audience learns to discern what is significant, the genre can become more complexly organized. This is not an absolute, evolutionary statement for all cases; but here, where, by virtue of presentation in public suites of the royal palace, the clear intention is to communicate a message relating to the idea of the state and the institution of kingship, the sender of the message must be certain that it will be understood. Continued exposure and familiarity with the conventions would then pave the way for greater complexity and variation, once the main themes were known.

Such a process would give meaning to the internal development of the genre. But this must then be put into conjunction with the principles that governed the gradual elimination of heraldic and cultic schemes as well; and here, I feel, the external history of Assyria and the expansion of the Empire must be brought into the picture.

While Assurnasirpal and his father, Tukulti Ninurta II, had begun to extend the political boundaries of Assyria beyond the immediate region of northern Mesopotamia, real territorial expansion and the absorption of provinces into an administrated empire began with Shalmaneser III and was further consolidated under Tiglath-pileser III, such that Garelli (1979:319) would actually see this later period as the beginning of true "Empire."²³ Expansion continued with Sargon and subsequent kings, reaching ultimately to Egypt, Anatolia, the Iranian plateau, and Babylon (Smith 1960). All during this time, the current capital—whether Nimrud, Khorsabad, or Nineveh—served as the official center of the Empire, and must have included a complexly heterogeneous population. Not

only did Assurnasirpal write of inviting delegations from surrounding territories to his inauguration ceremonies at Nimrud, but he also settled conquered peoples from Suhu and Laqe, Zamua, Bit Adini, Carchemish, and Patina in the new capital (Grayson 1976: ¶ 653). Those invited to the inauguration banquet included representatives from more far-reaching regions, from north-west Iran to the Phoenician coast and the Anatolian highlands, and it was explicitly stated that they were invited to the consecration of the palace itself (*ibid.*: ¶ 682). Thus, right from the beginning there was a heterogeneous ethnic and cultural audience for the palace reliefs. Sargon further incorporated units of conquered soldiers into his army and increased the complexity of the diplomatic and political constituency of the capital; in the complaint of Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.) that an envoy from the Sealand was *not* sent is implied the fact that foreign envoys were expected to be at the capital (Saggs 1963:145–146).

Hence, as the Empire grew, so did the heterogeneity of the general population and of the prospective audience for the ideological messages incorporated into the art of the public reception suites. We therefore come back to the importance of the receivability of signals, since we have already established the intention to transmit such signals. And we have also suggested that the historical narrative may be read with less prior knowledge than other sorts of imagery. Whether this is due to the fact that a determinate sequence of events is easier to follow because it recapitulates linear human experience (and linguistic utterances; Holloway 1979:482), or whether it is because these particular historical narratives, with their specificity of time and place, were so immediate, it is clear that they demanded less degree of shared cultural experience than motifs such as the king and the sacred tree, for example. That the motif is not lost entirely is evident in its use in miniature as decoration on garments worn by Assurbanipal. However, while Reade has made the appealing suggestion that it could have been present in later Thronerooms as wall-hangings, thereby accounting for otherwise inexplicable blank slabs behind the throne base of Sargon and opposite the central doorway of Assurbanipal (Reade 1980b:81), it was certainly not perpetuated throughout the palace, as had been the case with Assurnasirpal. I would suggest that, the growth in complexity of the historical narrative during the period notwithstanding, their proliferation at the expense of cultic and mythological images represents a lowering of the common denominator of what would be intelligible to a heterogeneous audience, and that these developments were a direct response to the increased heterogeneity of the Empire as it developed.²⁴

Sociologists have dealt at length with the processes by which a dominant culture absorbs diverse ethnic groups into a unified population, concentrating, however, on the social issues of power and control and adaptation rather than on the resultant symbol systems developed around the process.²⁵ Nevertheless, it is clearly articulated that social order is dependent upon a feeling of shared group identity (Weber 1978 ed.:395–398). Marx (1978 ed.: 612–613) deals further with the importance of military defense and exterior threats (hence, military *symbols*) in effectively forging social unity, and Simmel (1964 ed.) with *why* and *how* military symbols serve to create a common political consciousness and thus a common history for a group. This raises an aspect of the Neo-Assyrian historical narratives not previously considered: the need for military symbols. The battle scenes are thus not only historical records; by giving voice to potential threats, they also reinforce the need for maintaining the king/ruling elite in power and at the same time serve to create a common history for the Empire which reinforces past shared experience. This view is further reinforced by turning to Durkheim (1972 ed.:145), who noted that as social complexity increases, the “collective consciousness” of a group declines and affiliation is forged instead through shared needs—hence the need to *emphasize* shared needs if one aims at social cohesion.

Hymes has posed the issue in terms of situations in which there exist a diversity of languages within the community and the necessity of arriving at social codes and communication systems that are mutually intelligible, if not a shared language (1967); and it is interesting that precisely within the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the eighth century—during the reign of Tiglath-pileser, apparently—there is a shift to the use of Aramaic rather than the native Akkadian as a *lingua franca*, certainly at least partially in response to the incorporation of much western Semitic territory into the Empire at that time.²⁶ Another of the ways in which cohesion is established is through the generation of shared cultural materials (Kroeber 1948:68). Among these last, the importance of symbol systems as prime carriers of cultural values should not be underestimated. Thus Needham (1979:5), following Durkheim, notes that “the function of social symbols . . . is not merely to mark or enhance the importance of what is symbolized, but also to evoke and sustain an emotional commitment to what is decreed to be important in the social group in question. . . .” Symbolism therefore is “doubly necessary: to mark what is socially important and to induce men to conform in recognizing the values by which they should live.”

That the diversity of the existing audience should have been taken into account in the encoding process of Neo-Assyrian reliefs is logical if social cohesion was part of the aims of the state, and we know from contemporary Assyrian texts that such was indeed the case: stress was placed on resettling conquered groups and “counting them as Assyrians” (Liverani 1979:312); and in the second

titulary of the Standard Inscription itself, Assurnasirpal announces that through his military activities he has "brought under one authority. . . . kings from east to west" (Grayson 1976: ¶ 652.) Furthermore, as Wobst has argued (1977:324), the ideal target group for public communications is precisely the group at some intermediary social distance from the emitter of the message. Those very close will already know, and (re-)affirmation will be taking place on many levels (not the least of which being that those who are part of the power elite will have a stake in keeping that elite in power). Those very far away, by contrast, would not be able to decode or use the message. The group that is socially distant but potentially able to receive should therefore be the intended object of the communicative act. As the range of the "target groups" widened with the expansion of the Assyrian Empire, the need to lower the common denominator without substantially changing the message became evident. And precisely because the target group is at a certain social distance, one may assume that the majority of the messages will be related to the process of social cohesion and integration (Wobst 1977:327)—in our terms, the various battles and conquests all adding up to the centrality of Assyria and the subsuming of all surrounding regions into the Assyrian political entity, through the action of the king and the patronage of the gods.²⁷

It should further be acknowledged that, while we have been immediately concerned with the *affect* of generated symbol systems, such systems are articulated and propounded by individuals in power, to proclaim and to achieve certain ends. Thus Geertz (1977:152–153) observes that "at the political center of any complex organized society, . . . (is) both a governing elite and a set of symbolic forms expressing the fact that it [the elite] is in truth governing." The selection of the palace for the major messages of the state reinforces this view; and the choice of the highly visible outer facades, the inner public court facades, the thronerooms and throne bases as the most publicly accessible places within the palaces for the most explicit messages supports the foregoing thesis of the intended target group—just as outer layers of clothing, visible from a distance and publicly accessible, become major personal communication acts (Sahlins 1976:179–191; Wobst 1977:300–335).

Conclusions

On these terms, it would seem that the development of the historical narrative in art is closely bound to the historical development of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. The palace relief-decoration becomes a "message produced in the artifact mode" (Wobst 1977:322), and the representations become carriers of the prevailing ideology on a public scale.

To understand the "communicative" intent of the Neo-Assyrian reliefs and their use in a decorative program is not to negate the experiential aspect of the work(s) of art, but to strengthen it by embedding the work in its historical context (Ettlinger 1971; Deinhard 1975; Mukarovsky 1978). I have tried to deal elsewhere with the way in which the periphery processed stimuli from the center in the Neo-Assyrian period (Winter 1977), and the way in which the center borrowed from the periphery for its own ends (Winter, forthcoming). We are here concerned with the way in which the center *draws in* the periphery, once it has established a coherent system of communications.

The introduction of the historical narrative is then tied to a situation in which the king is both strong and engaged in "events" as opposed to mere maintenance (Moscati 1963:105); and these narratives in turn become essential to the Empire, not just "representing," but actually playing a role in the shaping of thought. The same message could have taken a number of forms, as, for example, the more ideographic "king smiting" became the expression of royal and national power in ancient Egyptian art. As the code of connotation is neither universal nor entirely invented, but rather is "historical" (Barthes 1977a:27), the question must arise: Why did the formulation of the Assyrian message take the particular shape it did? To say that there was a long tradition in Mesopotamian art and culture of recording the event is merely to push the question back in time; but to do more at present would be outside the limits of the present discussion. The quantum leap taken in the reign of Assurnasirpal was the representation not of an episode or commemorative scene to stand for the whole, but rather of a fully developed narrative; and perhaps we may venture to generalize that, just as in the physical world of elementary particles, where "at each new level of complexity, entirely new properties appear" (Anderson 1972:393), so perhaps also with the development of the imperial state in Assyria, new cultural/art forms emerged that addressed the structure of the new social and political order.

The evolution of the historical narrative within the Neo-Assyrian period also becomes understandable on historical grounds: both the shifts toward exclusively narrative representations based upon the lowering of a common denominator of decoding and the necessity of maintaining a common denominator in the decorative program in the first place. Parallelism between text and

image is also sustained, and the two similar yet independent structures can only be understood as essential isomorphisms generated by the identical culture (Beeman 1976; Vance 1973). To the extent that rhetoric may be defined as the "signifying aspect of ideology" (Barthes 1977b:49), both text and image represent the royal rhetoric of the Neo-Assyrian period.

In the articulation of this rhetoric, the king and the state are represented to a selected yet diverse audience. As the representative of a cultural institution, the king is not only the subject but also the composer of the message. The work is the message; the audience, the decoding receiver. The value of beaming a message on the scale of the Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs is that the message, once the original cost is expended, is relatively permanent; it continues to be emitted without further maintenance for the lifetime of the building, and in effect, the message and the messenger become one.

The role the king must play in relation to society is not new in Mesopotamian tradition; but the extent of his constituency and the complexity of the political system has changed significantly. If his message is efficiently (successfully) encoded, its transmission will constitute an institutional activity, the result of which will be the strengthening of the social system—for to the degree that the viewer accepts the message, he is also reassured as to his integration in society (Gross 1974:76; Barthes 1977a:31; Needham 1979:5). At that point, the display has become part of the message; the maintenance of the state and the power elite is embedded in the program; and the historical narratives in Neo-Assyrian palaces function as prime vehicles for royal rhetoric.

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Notes

- 1 According to the notes taken by Rassam, narrative reliefs were not confined to the Throneroom but were also to be found in parts of the west wing of the palace (Reade 1965:120). Some Assurnasirpal reliefs were also carried off by Esarhaddon for his "Southwest" palace (Barnett and Falkner 1962), including two lion hunt scenes and several battles. Since the entire north wall of the Throneroom is missing except for slabs 27 and 28, it is not impossible that some of the Southwest Palace battle scenes came from that wall; they may also, however, have been taken from other rooms in the highly eroded west wing.
- 2 It should be noted that fallen painted plaster fragments have been observed in the center of the Throneroom (Abu es-Suof 1963:66–68; Mallowan 1966:105; Reade 1979b:19). Some of the decoration is geometric, and since the fragments had impressions of roof beams on the reverse, they therefore came from the ceiling. Other bits, however, include what was identified as parts of human figures and a chariot wheel, and are assumed to have continued the decorative scheme of the reliefs on the wall surfaces above the tops of the reliefs. A color reconstruction of the interior of the Throneroom is presented in Layard (1849a:Pl. II), and while the reliefs depicted are not accurate for the particular corner given, the western end of the Throneroom, their division into two bands and general placement is correct, affording a good view of how they would have been set in place, with painted border and frieze above, reaching to the equally decorated ceiling. Unfortunately, given the poor state of preservation of the actual fragments of painting, it is impossible to reconstruct what role they might have played in the total scheme of the Throneroom. Nevertheless, it may be noted that since the reliefs stood some 2.3 meters high, clearly they were intended to provide the principal visual impact in the room, and so I have proceeded as if they constitute a complete program. (There is also evidence—Gadd 1934:22—that the reliefs themselves may have been selectively painted, as bits of black pigment still adhere occasionally to eyes, shoes, and bits of foliage.)
- 3 Although this is a hypothetical reconstruction, there is some evidence for the suggestion. Reade has cited the relief given in Stearns 1961:A-II-a-ii-12, Pl. 36, as the likely male genie at the far right, and the head of the king as possibly A-I-m-3 (see also Stearns 1961:24). Unfortunately, Layard (1849a:Pl. 100, plan III) noted three reliefs on his plan as Room C, slabs 6–8, but illustrated only a single detail of a garment pattern from slab 7 (ibid.:Pl. 39A). Nevertheless, the dimensions of the three slabs given across the wall (± 20 feet across, each slab therefore just under 7 feet) correspond exactly to the three slabs decorating the short, north end of Room G (Brandes 1969; Layard 1849a: Pl. 5). The three slabs from Room G (each 6'7" across) display a scene of the seated king flanked by fan bearers and genii with cone and bucket—figures exactly parallel also to those which flank the king as he stands opposite the "sacred tree" of slab 23 in the Throneroom.
- 4 This has been the subject of a long series of conversations with Jonathan Silver of Montclair College, New Jersey, and I hope that he will publish his studies on symmetry in the near future. I also had the privilege of discussing symmetry as a physical and physiological phenomenon with Dorothea and Leo Hurwich, of the Department of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, following a lecture on symmetry in physics by Robert Schrieffer in the autumn of 1976. I am convinced that it is no accident cultic and mythico-religious scenes are selected for a symmetrical format, precisely because this disposition of figures, by virtue of its constructedness, does take the subjects out of the "real" world. I will not anticipate Jonathan Silver's conclusions about why this is so; but Dorothea Hurwich has noted that, physiologically, the eye seems to scan and process symmetrical images more quickly than asymmetrical ones. The transformation from strict bilateral symmetry to compositional balance achieved through opposed but not identical forms has been discussed by Gombrich (1966:95) and more recently by Summers (1979).

- 5 The incorporation of conventional units into extended sequences is not unique in the Neo-Assyrian reliefs. It is a significant component of narrative in the visual arts of the Roman period, for example (Hamberg 1945:63, on the column of Trajan), and has been discussed as a device in literature as well (most recently, by White 1979:229). The governing factor must thus be the *intended* realism, whereby the stock motifs are embedded in contexts which also included "real," observed phenomena: here, terrain, foliage, dress, and behavior. It may also be that stock motifs included in such a context function in the narrative by being known and recognizable, thus allowing the viewer/reader to pass over them quickly in order to get to the more important points of narrative focus, an observation I owe to Mark Hall, student in Oriental Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.
- 6 A relief showing enemy in chariots, the chariots distinguishable by their 8- as opposed to 6-spoked wheels, that has been found in the Southwest Palace of Esarhaddon (Barnett and Falkner 1962: Pl. CXVII), may also come from the Throneroom.
- 7 The obeisance of one ruler to another depicted on slab 18b is not only repeated in later Neo-Assyrian representations (see below), but in fact has a long history in the iconography of the victorious king (Walter 1970:115) as a special vehicle for the expression of political dominance. It is at present impossible to tell whether the Assyrian officials who lead the procession of prisoners represent individuals within the royal entourage and court structure, or Assyrian regional appointees (a point raised by Michelle Marcus, Department of Art History, Columbia University, in a recent paper, and to be pursued further by her).
- 8 There is no attempt at individuation of features here (what one would call "portraiture") to represent the king. Moscati (1963:69) has noted that physiognomic identifiability is not unlikely to accompany interest in the historical act, as it provides an added dimension of historicity in the depiction of specific individuals; but the Assyrians never seem to have pursued this.
- 9 See discussion below on whether the organization of simpler narratives (slab 18a), closer to the throne, and more complex scenes (5b–3b), further down the western end of the south wall, was the result of conscious planning to increase the intensity of the scenic development or was simply a question of space and/or differing craftsmen. It is unfortunate in this regard that the north wall is not intact so that the two might be compared.
- 10 I was pleased to see, after I had cut up photocopies of the slabs and divided them according to what I thought to be related sequences, that Reade's divisions corresponded with mine (see Reade 1979c).
- 11 Olmstead (1918) tried to equate representations on the reliefs with accounts in the texts (see especially p. 247). Perhaps because he tried too hard to squeeze literal readings from the images, his attempt was apparently ignored and never made a place for itself in the scholarly literature.
- 12 This is especially necessary as, in a recent lecture on the unpublished Assurnasirpal gates found by Mallowan and David Oates (Joan Oates, "Balawat: Recent Excavations and a New Gate," presented at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Feb. 23, 1981), bands were illustrated that seem to be identifiable as Suhi on the Middle Euphrates and included booty of ivory tusks—thus increasing the likely candidates for the sequence on slabs 18b–17b, for example. An intermediate step in verifying the present correlations might be to compare those scenes with labels from the bronze bands of Assurnasirpal's son, Shalmaneser III, also from Balawat (on which, see below). In a cursory survey, it would certainly seem that there is a good deal of correspondence: e.g., the strip indicating tribute from Sangara, king of Carchemish (King 1915: Pl. XXXIV), shows the king with simple hair-fillet, garment with fringe at bottom, and one arm raised, indeed identical to the leading figure in the procession of slabs 18b–17b, which I have tentatively suggested to be Carchemish, the unpublished Assurnasirpal gates notwithstanding. In addition, the campaign set in Urartu on the Shalmaneser gates (King 1915: Pls. VII–IX), with chariotry pitted against fleeing and fallen enemy in a plain, is likewise parallel to scenes independently called Urartu here (slabs 11a–8a). Of course, this verification is not possible in all cases, as the two kings did not always campaign in the same place, but where there is correspondence, the comparisons might prove extremely useful. As for the accuracy and reliability of the details, much has been written on the presence of artists in the field with the army on military campaigns and exploratory expeditions, and the way in which Neo-Assyrian artists were able to render particular details about foreign regions, presumably through actual observation and the keeping of field sketches (see, most recently, Reade 1979b:23–26). It is to be assumed, therefore, that topographical features recorded in the reliefs did actually reflect the specific terrain, just as verbal descriptions did.
- 13 See Jakobsen 1971:44 with regard to Dostoevsky, and how, in order to really show an object, it must be "tinted"—i.e., it is necessary to deform the shape it generally has, to call attention, so that the object may be picked up with appropriate focus.
- 14 The establishment of a "new capital" is an important phenomenon in the Neo-Assyrian period, from Assurnasirpal at Nimrud to Sargon's installation at Khorsabad, to Sennacherib at Nineveh. The phenomenon in general terms has been discussed by Blanton (1976:esp. 257–258) with regard to the maintenance of neutral political capitals in complex high-order commercial systems. In the particular case before us, Liverani (1979:309) speaks of the foundation of a new capital as the ultimate creative act of the king as founder/hero, whose work thus becomes like the basic creative act of the gods. The two perspectives are not mutually exclusive; the complexity of the system in the first instance may be what can allow the statement of the king to take this particular form in the second. In any event, it is the initial act of Assurnasirpal that is the most significant, because previously the capital city, Assur, had been precisely the name-city and center of the chief god Assur, the people of the state the people "of Assur," a nomenclature significantly different from Mesopotamia in the south. The shift to Nimrud therefore broke the old focus around the god of the city-state and reflects a new imperial movement. Subsequent kings simply continued the pattern.
- 15 Gorse (1980) cited a similar usage in the sixteenth-century Villa Doria in Genoa, where the heroic deeds of Andrea Doria are alluded to through opposed frescoes showing mythological battles on land and sea as metaphors for dynastic victory. It is also likely that Doria himself served as the model for both Neptune and Zeus in the two battles.
- 16 The Akkadian word *ušumgallu*, which I translate as "predator," is a complicated term. It is a Sumerian loan word, often rendered as "dragon" (e.g., Grayson op. cit., Paley 1976), but I feel this equation must be questioned. In my pursuit of this word, I am grateful to Professor Åke Sjöberg, Babylonian Section of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, for his aid in going through the Sumerian dictionary files; and to Professor Thorkild Jacobsen of Harvard University for his comments. This is not the place to cite all specific references. However, there are a few instances in which Sumerian *ušum.gal* is preceded by the determinative for snake, hence "dragon"; but in the vast majority of citations it is given merely as a creature or being searching for prey, or as an epithet for a god (e.g., Enki, god of the earth/sweet waters, who is *never* a dragon). Jacobsen would therefore prefer to translate the term literally as the "great (gal) unique one," having several applications. It is especially significant that the noun *ušumgallu* in the Standard Inscription is followed by the adjective *ekdu*, "ferocious." This word, according to the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, 1958:62–63, occurs basically in Neo-Assyrian texts and, outside of the Assurnasirpal usage, is applied only to wild bulls and lions. This fact greatly strengthens, I feel, the suggestion that the epithet for Assurnasirpal is to be directly equated with his appearance on the reliefs as the vanquisher of bulls and lions, a predator equal to the combat with his ferocious opponents. That the correlation of precisely four attributes and types of reliefs may reflect a structurally significant number in the Neo-Assyrian universe, parallel to the title "King of the Four Quarters" and to quadripartite divisions of the army and the administrative hierarchy of the royal palace (see Garelli 1974:140), must be pursued in another context.

17 The only thing that is missing in the verbal account is the "approach" scene. It may be accounted for in the annalistic portion of the Standard Inscription; however, in terms of references to the "difficult road," the king was able to successfully lead his troops over (see Liverani 1979, and his analysis of these references as metaphors for the king's ability to lead in general).

18 That such a relationship between the structure of verbal and visual compositions of a single culture should be demonstrable is not surprising, although it has been little explored in ancient art. Roman Jakobsen (1970) has done a study of the special isomorphic relationship between poetry and painting in three cases—England, France, and Germany—which would suggest the need for similar analyses of Sumerian and Akkadian literary compositions. Another aspect of the relationship between literary compositions and visual arts of our period was suggested some 20 years ago by Oppenheim (1960), when he discussed Sargon II's "Letter to the god Assur," that described the details of his eighth campaign against the territory of Musasir in the northwest. In that text, as in the reliefs, very specific details of the traversed landscape, battles, booty, etc., were described; all ultimately aimed at "illustrating the central figure of the king" (ibid.:134). What is most compelling in this text is that the "letter" (and presumably the whole category of Assyrian "letters to the gods") was clearly intended not to be quietly deposited in the temple, but rather to be *read in public* (ibid.:143); thus, narrative text and relief both also share aspects of public audience reception.

Finally, although I suggest this with great hesitancy, I wonder if not only individual epithets and basic principles, but also intrinsic structure and organization of the whole may not be identical in the Standard Inscription and decorative program of the Throneroom. I would draw the diagram as follows:

19 I am indebted in this discussion to conversations with Elizabeth Meyers, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Pennsylvania, who by pressing for a distinction between "rhetoric" and "propaganda," helped me to clarify the fuzzy area of overlap between the two, best understood if governed by "ideology," and the multiple levels of intention that can be simultaneously operative in the statements of that ideology. John Russell, also a student at the University of Pennsylvania, will pursue the relationship of meaning to audience in his dissertation on the reliefs of Assurbanipal, and has initially distinguished much more concisely than I the several components of that audience. In the present case, it is impossible to establish further the extent to which the gods may have been considered an "audience" for the reliefs, however, as the parallelism of text and image would clearly not have been expected to be perceptible to a predominantly nonliterate populace or foreign visitors.

20 As articulated by Liverani (1979:308), the restoration of the older palace becomes an expression of the dual function of the king: to maintain balance between past and future, not just by founding the new but also by maintaining the old order (i.e., *re-new*).

21 I think the placement of the Babylonian reliefs in Court XIX, with the Elamite campaigns in rooms to the right, Phoenician campaigns to the left, and Judea at the top, is again likely to be nonrandom. A programmatic study of the decorative scheme of the Palace of Sennacherib is badly needed; and now that Reade has accomplished the herculean task of correlating the published plates of reliefs with individual rooms (1979c:86–90), this task may be undertaken.

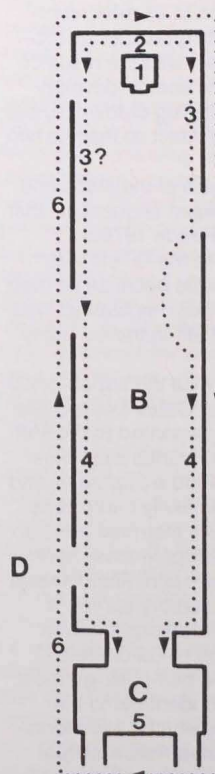
22 The relationship between label and image in ancient Mesopotamian and Assyrian art is a subject which should be pursued. Not only were the bronze bands of the Balawat Gates of both Assurnasirpal and Shalmaneser III frequently accompanied by identifying inscription in

Throneroom

Text

1—King himself on throne	(I am) Assurnasirpal
2—Slab 23: King flanking tree and Assur in winged disc	Vice-regent of Assur, beloved of the gods
3—Hunts and Battles (generic attributes; action: consequence)	Titulary I: attributes (action:consequences)
4—Individual battle sequences	Annalistic account of specific campaigns
5—King seated on throne (Room C reliefs visible)	Titulary II: more attributes (including "praiseworthy king")
6—Throneroom as a whole, plus Court D facade of tribute, as center of the palace (and of the Empire)	Description of building of palace, plus tribute, as center of the Empire

NOTE: I do not include the anteroom, Room F, to the south of the Throneroom in this scheme; however, with its repetitive representations of genii, king, and sacred tree, one might say that it functioned, as did the rest of the palace, as a résumé of the essence of order made explicit in the Throneroom.



the upper field (see Barnett 1975; King 1915), but so also were earlier monuments, such as the Akkadian stele of Naram-Sin cited above. In addition, there is a series of Old Babylonian period (ca. 1800 B.C.) texts from Nippur that were apparently copies of the labels from other Akkadian monuments, now lost, that had been standing visible in the courtyard of the Enlil Temple in Nippur (some examples of which are preserved in the Babylonian Collection, University Museum; they will be published by P. Michalowski, to whom I am grateful for this communication). The incorporation of epigraphic labels on architectural reliefs, however, does not seem to have been employed until Sennacherib.

- 23 Garelli goes on to note, however, that from a modern perspective, despite territorial expansion, the state remains in effect a "realm" or "kingdom" more than an Empire—just as the rulers remain kings, never Emperors, their titles merely expanding to include dominion over "the totality." The term Empire has nonetheless continued to be used as a convenience for expressing the accretion of territory; but I think the distinction is an important one. It would make of Achaemenid Persia a substantially different degree of "Empire" in that while in Assyria there is still an attempt to see the expanded country as a single state effectively creating a homogeneous population from diverse peoples, the Achaemenids of the sixth to fifth century B.C. were the first to acknowledge the impossibility of this and emphasized rather variety in *subjects*, not just in external places conquered. Such a distinction would account further for many of the significant differences from Neo-Assyrian to Achaemenid art, many of which have been ably demonstrated by Root (1979).
- 24 Both explicit and implicit corroboration for this may be found in the work of several scholars. Chafe (1976:54–55) notes how, in order to get the message across, the sender must pay "due consideration to the current state of the listener's mind." Hannestad (1979:365) records the shift in Rome from Republic to Empire and the consequent changes from a rather esoteric iconography beamed at an educated elite to a "lower level of communication" aimed at a middle class and across a widespread geographical area. Finally, Liverani (1979:300) discusses how the central ideology of a conquering culture functions to suppress the culture and ideology of conquered/absorbed places, creating a "leveling out of culture throughout the Empire."
- 25 Anthropologists, on the other hand, have discussed symbol systems at length (Cohen 1969; Munn 1973; Firth 1973; Lévi-Strauss 1974:178–198); however, for the most part they have concentrated on far less complex societies. The questions are at least posed (see Cohen 1969:218, 232) regarding the role of symbols in relations of power, and the degree to which art is affected by and in turn affects political relationships.
- 26 Papers by P. Garelli, Université de Paris, and H. Tadmor, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, will eventually be published on this subject in Nissen and Renger, eds., *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn*, Proceedings of the XXV Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, in Berlin, 1978.
- 27 As Reade has observed (1979a:332), once a region shifts status from an enemy or tributary state to a province within the Assyrian imperial bureaucracy, it is no longer depicted in reliefs, and this is relevant in the present context precisely because once the province has become part of greater Assyria, the emphasis must be on reinforcing membership and invoking common cause against the farther periphery, thus strengthening dependency on the center (see note 23).

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