

These qualms aside, Denis Dutton's volume is admirably suited for any scholar interested in issues of what makes art "art." The issues that forgery raises are significant precisely because they are potentially subversive of all art and artistic theories. Criminals sometimes make the best teachers—and the most troubling ones. We should never forget the words of Theodore Rousseau, Jr., Curator of Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York:

We should all realize that we can only talk about the bad forgeries, the ones that have been detected; the good ones are still hanging on the walls. [Goodrich 1973:224]

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Peter B. Hales. *Silver Cities: The Photography of American Urbanization, 1839–1915*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984. 315 pp., ill. \$47.95.

Reviewed by Miles Orvell
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Only in the last ten or fifteen years, picking up where Robert Taft left off in the thirties, have we begun to connect photography with the larger cultural and social history of which it is necessarily a part. One such connection—between photography and the city—seems now, in the light of Peter Hales's *Silver Cities*, to have been long overdue for detailed consideration. (It has been equally neglected by urban specialists: in his otherwise inclusive and multidisciplinary *Images of the American City* [1976], Anselm Strauss has remarkably little to say about photography.) Yet the connection is a natural one, for the noisy growth of the American city in the nineteenth century coincided with the advent of photography, and the camera was inevitably an adjunct to the process of urbanization,

directing the eye, and the mind's eye, according to the interests of the image-maker. Hales is interested in the whole spectrum of urban photography from its beginnings to World War I, encompassing the early daguerreotypists, commercial studios, amateurs, and reformers; and he articulates a range of types and purposes that gives order to the inchoate and boundless mass of city scenes. Though not without certain problems, *Silver Cities* is a brilliant synthesis of social, cultural, and technological history, a handsomely produced, lavishly illustrated survey—over two hundred images—of a previously neglected, richly fertile field of research.

Hales discerns several distinct phases in the history of urban photography, reflecting changes in the way people saw cities and in the nature of photographic technology. Chapter one, which covers the period from 1839 to 1870, outlines the development of a standardized style that pictured the city as a place of civic order, architectural monuments, and growing prosperity—whatever the reality of depressions and disorder might have been. When the wet-plate collodion process, with its easy multiple copies, replaced the more limited daguerreotype, the market for urban views increased dramatically, and both single plates and complete books became available, based on the precedent of the daguerreotype's quiet celebration of the city. The San Franciscan G. R. Fardon, for example, produced an album in 1856 that taught both "what to see [and] how to see it," featuring categories of "history, culture, fire protection, trade, business, and geography," and feeding the city's ambition to promote itself commercially, despite its economic depression, and feast the eyes of the armchair traveler. Fardon had invented, as Hales says, "the photographic booster book" (p. 50). These early scenes were devoid of human presence, but in 1859 Edward Anthony of New York significantly advanced the art in a set of stereo card views that took advantage of the instantaneous capabilities of the developing technology, showing a populous city that delighted Oliver Wendell Holmes with its "multitudinous complexity of movement" (p. 59).

The decades following the Civil War were marked by a continuation of the earlier booster tendencies, with photographers capitalizing on the increasing speed of film and on the growing reproductive technologies of the medium to reach an even wider audience of book and magazine readers. Hales calls this movement the "Grand Style," and in his second chapter, covering the years from 1870 to 1893, he surveys the depiction of the city as a "place of monumental scale and inexorable progress, where laissez-faire capitalism was successfully converting urban entropy into a new civilization—an environment of order, grandeur, and permanence" (p. 119). Hales demon-

strates his point through repeated instances (Boston, Chicago, New York, and San Francisco), showing how, by the 1880s, the "medium of fact" had "transformed itself into the medium of myth" (p. 130). Editing out the undesirable elements, the photographer presented images of urban health—government buildings, recreational spaces, parks, promenades, hotels, business buildings, and railroad stations. New types and genres evolved: during the late 1870s the panoramic photograph reached its apogee in the San Francisco work of Eadweard Muybridge especially; while during the 1880s and 1890s the subprofession of architectural photography took on great importance, with high-angle street views giving the photographer more control over the image than the less discriminating panorama.



Jacob Riis. "Minding Baby—Cherry Hill." Courtesy of Museum of the City of New York (Riis-187). From *Silver Cities*, p. 196.

The City Beautiful that the photographer was striving to capture in his images of the actual city was embodied to perfection in the fairgrounds of the 1893 Chicago Exposition; whereas in the real city he might have to eliminate undesirable human figures or move in close to his architectural subject in order to avoid surrounding unpleasantness, at the Fair the photographer could survey the entire scene, which had already been controlled by the team of architects and planners. In fact, the Fair administration went even farther in their effort to control the Chicago image, granting a temporary photographic monopoly to Charles Dudley Arnold. (It was protested by, among

others, Alfred Stieglitz, and the Fair eventually replaced Arnold with William Henry Jackson.) Concentrating on Arnold, Hales explores in depth the political and aesthetic issues at stake in creating scenes of urban harmony and splendor which the masses were to witness but not inhabit.

In his final two chapters Hales examines the groundswell of reform photography that began with Jacob Riis in the late 1880s and flourished into the twentieth century. Contemporaneous with the continuing grand style photographers, the reformers presented an aspect of the city that has been excluded from most earlier photography—a view of "the other half." Where the purpose of the grand style photographers was to celebrate a vision of urban order, the reformers sought to expose the misery, disease, poverty, ill-housing, crime, and degradation that lay just around the corner. Yet, as Hales rightly observes, the reformer's assumption and that of the City Beautiful booster were not unlike at bottom: both believed in progress and the American way, and both believed in the importance of the environment.

Riis was the great revolutionary, for Hales, and a whole chapter is devoted to defining his opposition to both social and aesthetic conventions, his breaking of the "cordon sanitaire," as Hales calls it, of permissible urban subjects. Hales's final chapter examines the mutations that followed Riis's work, in which photographers capitalized on the interest in lowlife to present amusingly picturesque—and often condescending and racist—images of urban street scenes. Hales is most acute in dealing with Sigmund Krausz's, *Street Types of Chicago*; but other transformations also receive attention, such as Helen Campbell's *Darkness and Daylight*, a mixture of the urban pathos and urban horror genres, as well as the more appealing studies of the gifted E. Alice Austen. It is a fascinating chapter, in which the ideological assumptions behind the conventions of "reform" photography are expertly unraveled and placed within the context of the developing reform and settlement house movements.

By 1910, Hales argues, with the bureaucratization of reform, photography had been converted into a "fund-raising tool for professional social work organizations" (p. 255) and its persuasive power had been undermined by the repetition of types and codes; meanwhile, picture agencies were marketing images to the magazines and newspapers in such familiar categories as "personalities, performing artists, sports events, . . . lower-class urban life, . . . strikes, riots, or celebrated murders" (p. 271).

Hales's argument is as a whole coherent and convincing and provides a most useful framework for studying urban photography. If there is a weak point, from my own perspective, it is the chapter on Riis,

where we hold fundamentally different views of the great reformer. Where, for example, Hales sees Riis as a revolutionary moral humanist, I see him more as a great activist who did not escape many of the ethical confusions of his time. Hales celebrates Riis's vision, but nowhere does he refer to the conspicuous instances of racism, of outrageous ethnic stereotypes and caricaturing, that fill *How the Other Half Lives*. And many of the accusations Hales levels against Riis's followers—that they paid their subjects, used horror stories, appealed to voyeuristic, xenophobic, and nativist sentiment—could as well, I think, be leveled against Riis.

We also disagree on how artfully conscious a craftsman Riis was. Where Hales sees Riis as merely affecting the persona of the bumbling photographer, the better to gain credibility for his images, I see him as a relatively unselfconscious journalist with a camera, who succeeded in his photographic mission by the rude strength of his determination, and I mean rude. Hales is right in seeing the use of the flash as a revolutionary device that shaped the image in Riis—giving his indoor subjects a blank or startled expression; but I read these images more as records of the photographer's careless intrusion on his subjects' privacy rather than as a humanistic rendering of their plight. And much of what Hales sees as intentional artistry I see as happenstance.

Take, for example, Hales's reading of "Minding Baby—Cherry Hill," a picture of two children, one holding the other, with a dresser and a washtub on each side of them; it is a photograph Hales calls one of Riis's "most successful, most energetic, and most artful" (pp. 195–196). And the key element in the photographer's artistry, Hales says, is the tilted frame, which he sees as an effort to "emphasize the casualness of the photographer's eye and thereby denigrate his ability to manipulate his subject for his own purposes" (p. 195), thus dissociating himself from earlier, more controlled technique. The frame is indeed tilted in this image, but what Hales hasn't apparently noticed is that the photo was taken on a sloping sidewalk, and that the tilt results inevitably from Riis's standing slightly downhill from his subjects; what Hales sees as cracks in a wall, I see as cracks in a fence, and that fence, if you look closely, would meet the sidewalk paving stones on an angle, thus indicating the sloping hill. Hales implies that the scene is indoors, and that the dresser with a folded mattress on it, and the covered washtub, are signs of "poverty, ill-housing, menial work, and overcrowding." But given the outdoor setting (the kids are wearing overcoats), it looks more like moving day than the more typical squalor shot Riis favored. In fact, this particular image

has always seemed to me one of Riis's more cheerful shots, what with the one child hugging the other. In general, Hales has an acutely observant eye and supplies ingenious readings of the images under discussion, but every now and then his interpretive genius reads into the image rather more than seems warranted.

A more general problem I have with *Silver Cities* is Hales's rhetoric, which suffers at times from a propensity for talismanic words that serve the purposes of decoration, invocation, and magnification, but not exactly of clarification; these are words like "Romantic" (used in a variety of ways), "dynamic," "entropy," "encode," etc. At times even the word "photography" itself will escape the careful social context Hales usually provides and take wing as a self-empowered abstraction: speaking in his epilogue of the "new myths" that were needed in the agrarian United States of the early nineteenth century, if "America was to accept and control the realities of urban growth" (who is "America"?), Hales writes, epically, "Photography took up the challenge; after the early years of experimentation had revealed its ability to define and control its subject, the medium became the most powerful spokesman for the possibility of urban health, urban civilization in America" (p. 280). This sort of thing belies the complexity of the book's argument. Or again, Hales has let things stand that he should have caught, as in a paragraph toward the end of the Riis chapter in which he speaks of the photos as "unmediated reality" and then, a few lines later, as embodying a "clear and recognizable symbolic language" (p. 215). You might make a case that they are in some sense both unmediated and coded, but you've got to first acknowledge that there is a difference.

In closing out his narrative, Hales brings us briefly into the early twentieth century, when, he says, photography's central role as mediator between the masses and the city had been replaced by cinema and radio, while urban photography—under the influence of modernists like Stieglitz and Strand—was catering to a visually cultivated minority who favored a personalized approach to the image. (Winogrand and Friedlander become the heirs of this line.) This may be true as far as it goes, but it surely oversimplifies the complexity of twentieth-century urban photography, and indeed its connections with the nineteenth century, by leaving unmentioned the work of Berenice Abbott and the WPA city guidebooks (listed in the note on sources but never discussed), as well as quasi-documentary urban photographers like Bruce Davidson, Danny Lyon, Nicholas Nixon, etc. *Silver Cities* may have been polished a little too roundly at the end.

But let me restate, in concluding, the very real strengths of the book: Hales has identified a subject that has long needed systematic study, and he has given it the coherent and sweeping treatment it deserves, organizing a bewildering mass of images into a useful framework; along the way, he has provided a wealth of ingenious observations about specific photographs that are most convincing when most anchored in the social and artistic contexts of the time. In short, Hales has broken new ground and drawn some basic and indispensable maps that other scholars will want to examine (and perhaps argue with) in more detail.

Anita J. Glaze. *Art and Death in a Senufo Village.* Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1981. xvi + 267 pp.; map, plates, appendix, notes, bibliography, glossary, index. \$25.00.

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This review will attempt to go beyond appraisal of the book's content into questions posed by the author's choice of that material and the ways of explaining it. The intensive study of African art has gone into its fourth decade; we should begin to assess its means and ends in terms of its explanation of the long-standing questions it has posed. Investigators have resorted to diverse disciplines, often in combination, and numerous styles in studying the art of traditional African societies. Their findings sometimes lead us to reflect on the definition of art and the extent to which they would agree with one another on the limits of the phenomenon.

The book under review brings these questions to mind; indeed, its high quality brings them into sharper perspective. Beyond its substantive contribution, it strikes a note of "where are we going" that should resound into Africanists' consideration of disciplinary outlooks and stratagems in the study of traditional art.

A brief introduction to the society under consideration may be helpful to less specialized readers. The Senufo people form a large ethnic block that has been long settled in a wide belt of West African parkland extending through contiguous parts of Mali, Ivory Coast, and Upper Volta. They live in large, cohesive villages that have tended to be autonomous and democratic in their political life. As the farthest western outlier of the Voltaic(Gur)-speaking peoples, the

Senufo entity, relatively peaceful and altogether open to the armies and nonbelligerent migrations from the more sophisticated Manding-speaking societies, has acquired—in at least its material culture—a substantial Manding veneer.

In the hope of gaining some control over the unseen forces governing their lives, the Senufo organized cults distinguished by ritual of considerable complexity and by imagery famous for its withdrawn-seeming elegance. The best-known cult has been Poro, a paramount association that encompasses most village men. Poro teaches knowledge of the world and deals with the supernatural power thought necessary to harness its forces. It initiates its members and marks its hierarchical structure largely by means of images and costumes.

The cult images include both statues and masks. These objects make up the universe of Senufo art as we have become accustomed to think of it. They can commemorate group and lineage founders, while others represent spirits of the wild.

We are most familiar with Senufo images made of wood and brass. Senufo style in wooden images has been known widely in the West ever since the beginning of its interest in African sculpture. Its gracile refinement, striking schematization, and dark luster always seemed quintessentially African. We have believed such images to be fashioned exclusively by groups of foreign origin who became integrated into Senufo society over varying lengths of time. These artisans have remained socially distinct from their farmer-patrons. We were inclined to think that only they were involved in the production of Senufo art, since we were also inclined to believe that all imagery was made for secret use in the Poro cult.

For the better part of our acquaintance with Senufo art we have not gone much beyond admiration and mystification. Before the appearance of this book our access to Senufo society—and especially its Poro—had been minimal. Dr. Glaze's wide scope and special insights greatly extend our comprehension of this people and their art. As is inevitable in studies of traditional African art, simplicity gives way to complexity, and mystery must retreat.

Although trained as an art historian, the author here shows a major interest in the contemporary social contexts of imagery. Long familiar with the Senufo at first hand, she was in a position to exploit both advantages: Senufo traditional art seems to be flourishing in the sector that she studied.