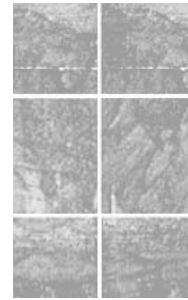




visual  
communication

## Interacting with the multimodal text: reflections on image and verbiage in *ArtExpress*



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### ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of the multimodal or composite text is a challenge for discourse analysts, particularly those working with linguistic tools fashioned to account for verbal texts. Drawing on systemic functional semiotics, this article focuses on the interactive meanings of two student artworks presented in a Sydney exhibition called *ArtExpress*. It analyses the complementary contribution of image (artwork) and verbiage (text panel) to the meaning-making process. Drawing principally on APPRAISAL analysis as practised within Sydney School linguistics, the article proposes a richer account of evaluation in both image and verbiage than is currently available in analyses of separate modes. The article aims to contribute to the development of semiotic grammars adequate for an integrated account of multimodal texts at different institutional 'moments' in their (re)production.

### KEY WORDS

discourse analysis • integrated analyses • multiliteracies • multimodality • systemic functional grammar • visual and verbal texts

### INTRODUCTION

Attending to the multimodal poses particular challenges for discourse analysts who have worked primarily with verbal texts. In attempting to produce a comprehensive account of the different meanings carried by different modalities, the limits of linguistic grammars are soon reached; consequently, one is forced to look for new semiotic grammars that are sensitive to the character and contours of specific modalities, and responsive to their interplay in texts and with readers.

One such semiotic grammar has been developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen in *Reading Images* (1996). Drawing on systemic functional linguistics, they provide a theoretically consistent framework for analysis of visual texts and transform the linguistic paradigm in which they

work. This article builds on their research, providing a detailed commentary on the creation of interactive meaning in verbal and visual texts. It takes seriously the challenge issued by Kress and Van Leeuwen (p. 183) to analyse multimodal (or composite) texts in an integrated way using compatible terminology for speaking about both. This is an important task for both social and educational reasons. First, we deal in multimodal texts on a daily basis – every time we read a newspaper, watch television, play a video or computer game, or even read a book. Our semiotic frameworks of analysis should enable us to understand more about the contribution of different modes to our changing semiotic practices. Second, multimodality is increasingly a feature of the school curriculum and we need to take account of this in our work in education. Most young learners are already more adept than their parents at using computer-based technologies in leisure and school contexts. Beyond a practical expertise, however, they need access to analytical tools which make the potentials and limits of these modalities more apparent and more open to challenge and redesign where necessary. Our literacy programs need to facilitate our students' metasemiotic work.

This article addresses three questions in the context of a student art exhibition in Sydney called *ArtExpress*:

- (i) How do viewers engage with artworks in exhibitions?
- (ii) What kinds of interactions are facilitated by different modalities in each artwork?
- (iii) What does our analysis of image and verbiage reveal about the uses and limitations of our semiotic grammars?

The pursuit of a common framework for analysing multimodal texts produces two kinds of awareness in the analyst (or in this one at least): (a) awareness of a 'lack of fit' between categories of one mode applied to another; and (b) awareness of the deconstructive power of this kind of analysis, which reveals gaps, silences and, surprisingly, providential riches in transmodal analysis. My analysis focuses on two images and their accompanying text panels (referred to here as 'verbiage') from *ArtExpress*. The category of text is taken to encompass both image and verbiage. I assume that 'the reader' of the composite text has access to different but complementary meaning potentials in each mode and that it is the task of the analyst to account for both.

This article comprises five sections. Section 1 discusses the impact of the institutional context of *ArtExpress* on viewing practices. Section 2 presents two texts from this exhibition and the factors influencing their current form. Section 3 presents the resources used to analyse interactional meanings, focusing on three major systems: *contact*, *social distance* and *attitude*. Section 4 presents an analysis of image and verbiage in the two works. Where possible, I draw on analytical resources as outlined by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 119–58) to reflect on both modes. However, I

propose a richer account of attitudinal meaning than they provide, an account based on recent work within systemic functional linguistics on appraisal systems in discourse.

## 1. THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

In order to reflect on the contribution of verbiage and image to interpretive practices, we need first to consider the institutional context in which these occur. The *ArtExpress* exhibition is hosted every year from January to March by the New South Wales Art Gallery and displays the best students' artworks produced for the Year 12 Higher School Certificate examination in the Visual Arts. *ArtExpress* is the gallery's most popular exhibition and attracts thousands of visitors who might otherwise never set foot inside a gallery. Since its inception 10 years ago, this exhibition has proved such a 'crowd puller' that student artworks are now displayed in places around Sydney, including David Jones department store, the State Library, the College of Fine Arts and the Art Gallery of New South Wales. However, the Art Gallery hosts the largest display.

There is an exuberance as well as a technical and artistic sophistication, indeed adventurousness, in the gallery showing of these artworks, which is unmatched in any other exhibition. There are several factors at work here. First, there is the sheer variety of art forms displayed, including drawings, paintings, photography, computer-based images, sculptures, 'wearables', installation works and art videos. Second, there is the use of space. The works are displayed in four large rooms, with some of the larger works spilling over into the foyer outside. Once they move into the *ArtExpress* space, visitors' movements are constrained only by the need to enter and exit through the same room. Of course, you cannot move into later rooms except through earlier ones but, other than this, the rooms and the space – and hence the 'viewing path' – are as open as possible. Third, viewing practices in this exhibition are very extrovert. There are none of the hushed and respectful decorums accorded other more formal exhibitions elsewhere in the gallery. Visitors often exclaim, laugh, respond quite openly to the works and, perhaps more important, interact with others occupying the exhibition space – even strangers whose only connection is to be standing close by. It is also a space used freely by art apprentices. It is common to see students taking notes from text panels or making drawings of the artworks. It is a very informal and inviting exhibition space.

Viewers typically move between image and verbiage as they respond to each artwork. Many of those I observed at the exhibition would look at the image for a while, read the text panel, then return to the image. Like them, I too used the writing as a meta-commentary on the image, an opportunity to see the work from the point of view of the student artist. I would respond in the first instance, often in a diffuse way, to the image and then reframe this in the light of the text panel, which directed my gaze to certain qualities in the artwork. When I returned to the image, there was more meaning than before

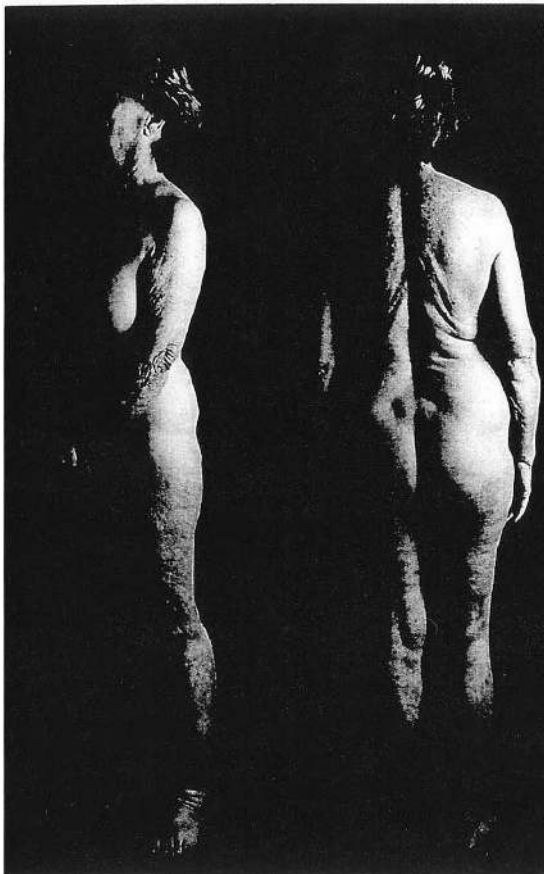
– a third semantic domain which was more than the sum of the parts. It is this domain that is in focus here and which I attempt to account for in my analysis of interactive meaning in the artworks. If the verbal text carries meanings not available in the visual, and vice versa, this complementarity should be reflected in our analysis of both.

Certainly, if image and verbiage are central to viewers' interpretive practices in this exhibition, then so is talk, which flows in abundance around the artworks. The multimodality of the presentation seems to license similar behaviour in visitors. As an 'art and talk-fest', *ArtExpress* breaks down the boundaries between 'high culture' and 'popular art', presenting works of a very high quality in the context of popular appeal, and the public responds by coming in droves.

## 2. THE TEXTS

**Figure 1** Sarah Adamek's *Gloria*.

I now consider the two texts from *ArtExpress* and the shaping context of their current form as catalogue artworks. These include a photographic work by



Sarah Adamek

KILLARA HIGH SCHOOL

### **Gloria**

Photography 1830 x 550 (2), 530 x 420 (4) (6/15)

My artwork celebrates the beauty and strength of the older body. Through photography, I feel I have captured the true essence and feeling of the body in its purest forms. With the use of such techniques as light and shadow, I was able to enhance the subject's natural beauty, yet conceal her identity. While we are culturally conditioned to see the aged flesh as decrepit and wasting, through my respectful visions I feel I have invested it instead with grandeur and solidity.

Sarah Adamek called *Gloria*, and a painting by Derek Allan called *Elaboration*.

*Gloria* is a monumental photographic image of an older female nude presented in two views: an oblique (side-on) view in the left-hand image and a back view (though front-posed) in the right-hand image. This black and white photograph has a documentary quality. The artist uses high-contrast lighting to model the shapes, curves, lines and folds of 'the older body'. This figure stands in a contrastive relationship with other nudes more familiar in the artist's contemporary 'youth culture' (an issue explored in her text panel). She conceals her subject's identity while revealing something of the solid and imposing grandeur of the older woman.

*Elaboration* is a painting of human hands opening to the viewer and suggesting prayer, joy, or supplication. These hands have a particular salience as a result of the diagonal vectors they create through a centric hold-release movement and the warm light which bathes them from above. This image combines a sensory orientation in the treatment of the setting (with its intense red flowers, green foliage and deep blue background) with a naturalistic coding orientation (verging on the hyper-real) in the artist's treatment of the hands.

**Figure 2** Derek Allan's *Elaboration*.

Derek Allan  
ST ALOYSIUS COLLEGE, MILSONS POINT  
**Elaboration**  
Painting 510 x 405 (3/4)

I hope in beauty. For this work I do not offer set meaning; rather, I explore the interplay between the gesture, its symbolism and its environment. Certain cultural overtones are implicit within the work. However, the main thrust comes from its sheer aesthetic diversity; a universal beauty. The viewer is encouraged to contemplate the juxtaposition of the hyper-real subject and its opulent surroundings, considering their own spirituality.



Before moving on to analyse the interpersonal structures immanent in both image and verbiage, it is important to stress that what is presented here is not what the gallery visitors saw, nor is it what the artists submitted. As the notation under the title of each image shows, the number of works displayed was a fraction of those actually submitted for the Higher School Certificate. Of the four artworks submitted by Derek Allan, only three were displayed in *ArtExpress* and, of the fifteen submitted by Sarah Adamek, only six were displayed.

But the culling and shaping process is even more trenchant when it comes to the catalogue. In the exhibition, *Gloria* consisted of two large photographic images – 1,830 mm high (just over 6') and 550 mm wide (just under 2') plus four smaller images – 530 mm high and 420 mm wide. The four smaller photographs were placed to the right of the large ones and the whole series was displayed on a screen facing visitors as they entered the final room of the exhibition. In the catalogue, the two large but separate images have been spliced together and treated as one whole. The smaller photographs showing details of the woman's body, such as her nipple or the inside folds of her elbow, have not been included in the catalogue at all. A similar transformation process has occurred for the second of the images in focus here. *Elaboration* is a single painting 510 mm (1.7') high and 405 mm (approximately 1.3') wide. Although three works were displayed in the exhibition, we see only one in the catalogue.

In this selection and shaping of the artworks, we see the imprint of the institution on both exhibition and viewing practices. It is important that we take account of such processes both in our contextualization of the works and in our analysis of their structuring principles. This is especially significant when it comes to their compositional details, such as information value, salience and framing. Like other curated exhibitions, *ArtExpress* shapes texts for public consumption and this affects the art making, art assessing and art displaying business. Neither *Gloria* nor *Elaboration* are presented as their student producers would have intended but rather as the educators, curators and catalogue publishers decided. Of course, without the artworks themselves, there would have been nothing to 'massage'.

Given this institutional context mediating our response to the artworks, which tools do we use to analyse their 'interactivity'?

### **3. THE TOOLS**

In order to develop a semiotic grammar adequate for multimodal discourse analysis, we have to start somewhere. Halliday's systemic functional grammar (SFG) has proved useful on several counts.

First, SFG attempts to relate linguistic structures to the social context in which they are produced. Halliday and his colleagues start with the assumption that 'language is as it is because of the functions it has evolved to serve in people's lives, ... [and] we have to proceed from the outside inwards,

interpreting language by reference to its place in the social process' (Halliday, 1978: 4). Relating linguistic structures to social processes is a central preoccupation within social semiotics and this makes SFG a useful resource for wider study of different semiotic modes. A focus on the relationship between linguistic and social structures has also given it a powerful 'applied' edge over other grammars, leading to some influential research in education amongst other institutional sites.

Second, as a grammar, SFG enables us to map not just words but arrangements of words, what Halliday (1978: 21, 1994: xxi) calls 'wordings', and to interpret these linguistic syntagms in functional terms. To date, there has been very little systematic analysis of analogous structures in visual communication. As Kress et al. (1997: 260) point out, analysis of images has focused on items of content, or 'lexis', rather than on the internal structure of images, or 'syntax'. This is an important task if we are to develop 'grammars' which enable us to relate linguistic to non-linguistic structures.

Third, SFG is a grammar oriented to choice rather than to rules. Linguistic choices are modelled in terms of system networks – bundles of options related to different meanings which are realized by particular lexico-grammatical 'outputs' (types of clauses and phrases). Although not suited to all types of meaning structures (prosodic, gradient and culminative), the system network is a useful representational resource for displaying discrete options for meaning in different semiotic environments (speech, writing, and now, image). They are the chief representational formalism in the current study, as Table 2 shows (see section 4.3).

Fourth, SFG incorporates three general types of meaning in its analysis of human communication. These 'metafunctions' include: interpersonal meaning (social and identity relations enacted and played out in texts); ideational (the representation of experiential reality (or, better, realities) in texts; and textual meaning (the ways in which texts are made coherent and related to their context). The metafunctional principle has provided semioticians with abstract and general categories for analysis of different semiotic systems.

Research that draws on these organizing principles includes analysis of images (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996; O'Toole, 1994); layout (Kress et al., 1997; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1998), and sound, music and voice (Van Leeuwen, 1999). This research is now making significant inroads into literacy education (Callow, 1999; Goodman, 1996; Van Leeuwen and Humphrey, 1996). I apply these same principles here in order to understand the power of the multimodal text in *ArtExpress*.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) draw on three principal systems for analysing *interactive meaning* in images. These include: the system of *contact*, through which an image acts on the viewer in some way (demanding a response or offering visual 'information'); the system of *social distance*, through which the viewer is invited close to the represented participants (intimate social distance), kept at arm's length (social distance) or put at a



remove (impersonal distance); and two sets of systems within *attitude*: a horizontal dimension, which creates viewer involvement (through frontality) or detachment (through obliqueness), and a vertical dimension, which creates a relation of power between viewer and represented participants (hierarchical or solidary).

These visual resources correspond loosely to linguistic systems such as speech acts, mood, and person, and to resources such as evaluation. In the following section, I move between image and verbiage in relation to features of *contact*, *social distance* and *attitude*, drawing on resources outlined by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) where possible and moving beyond these where necessary.

#### **4. THE ANALYSIS**

When we analyse interactional meanings within social semiotics, we are concerned with virtual rather than real relations between texts and readers or viewers. Real readers and viewers are free to engage with a text in any way they choose, although this engagement is never free of social constraints. But it is the task of a social semiotics to theorize the text's contribution to this relation – to account for the structuring principles which open up certain kinds of meanings for readers or viewers and limit others. For simplicity, I refer to 'the reader' or 'the viewer', while recognizing that this is a necessary fiction – one that idealizes the complex relationship between texts, interpretive practices and interactants themselves.

##### **4.1 Contact**

In analysing images, *contact* has to do with the imaginary relation established between represented and interactive participants (viewers). At a primary level of distinction, there are two choices here: the represented participants either demand attention of the viewer, or they offer information. The 'demand' picture typically features a human or quasi-human participant who gazes directly at the viewer. This gaze creates a vector between the eyeline of the represented and interactive participants, demanding a response of some kind. In the 'offer' picture, on the other hand, the represented participants (if human) do not look directly at the viewer but gaze away. Here, the represented participants make indirect contact only, being offered as objects for the viewer's contemplation. 'Offer' pictures are more common than 'demand' pictures amongst artworks of this kind, as they include all non-human participants.

*Gloria* and *Elaboration* establish different kinds of connection with the viewer. With *Gloria*, there is no direct contact at all. The woman represented on the left has her face in shadow with her gaze averted. The woman on the right (the same woman presumably) has her back turned and thus disengages altogether from the viewer. *Gloria* is an extreme example of the 'offer' picture – a figure for dispassionate study rather than active

engagement. This is not so with *Elaboration*. Although there is no gaze to speak of in this picture (we have only a metonym of the human body to engage with), I think that the gesture does make demands of the viewer. The hands open out directly to the viewer's gaze, creating immediate contact. If hands could be said to have gaze, then these 'face' the viewer, drawing us in to the centre of the image. They are very 'addressive' hands. In terms of *contact* then, these two images interact with the viewer in quite different ways.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) relate what they call the 'image act' to the system of 'speech act' and 'person' in language and we can use these to explore the text panels. Halliday relates speech acts to two basic speech roles ('giving' and 'demanding') and two commodities ('information', and 'goods and services'). These yield four basic elementary speech acts: 'statements' (giving information); 'questions' (demanding information); 'commands' (demanding goods and services) and 'offers' (offering goods and services). In English, these semantic choices are typically realized through corresponding 'mood' choices, with statements realized as 'declaratives', questions as 'interrogatives', commands as 'imperatives' and offers through different moods, as in the modulated interrogative 'would you like ...?' While choices within the 'image act' are essentially limited to two (demanding/goods and services or offering/information), speech acts offer speakers a greater range, especially if we consider untypical (non-congruent) realizations of these (see Halliday, 1994: 68–105 for an extended discussion of the mood system).

Mood does not take us very far in understanding the 'interactivity' of the text panels, however. Compared with everyday interaction, with its often rapid shifts of speech acts and moods, the verbiage is monologic. Every sentence works the same way – offering information through declarative mood. We need to look elsewhere if we are to appreciate the contribution of the text panels to interpersonal meaning.

The system of 'person' is more promising in this respect. There are three basic options here: 'first person' (I or we), 'second person' (you) or 'third person' (he, she, it, they). There are definite connections to be made here in relation to the image. If the 'demand' quality of *Elaboration* is a kind of visual 'you', then the 'offer' quality of *Gloria* is a visual 'she'. Within visual representation, there are only two options available: the option of second- or third-person address. There is no equivalent of the first person (I) because interaction is carried out by represented participants and cannot be expressed directly. This is not so in verbal texts, and is manifested in the use of the first person in a prominent position in both text panels. Derek's panel begins with the sentence "I hope in beauty", and goes on to present a personal view of his art aesthetic. Sarah's panel also emphasizes the personal viewpoint through first person or genitive constructions ('I feel' or 'My artwork').

In this way, the verbiage supplies what the image does not (and cannot). We have access to two kinds of address here: (a) where the images open up (the visual 'you' of the hands or the 'she' of the nude); and (b)

through the verbiage (the 'I' of the text panels). The verbal and visual texts thus create complementary kinds of *contact* with their addressee.

#### 4.2 Social distance

Simultaneous with the decision to make the represented participants look at the viewer or not is the decision to depict them as close to or far away from the viewer. *Social distance* is the distance from which people, places and things are shown, and creates a visual correlate of physical proximity in everyday interactions. *Social distance* is realized through 'frame size' and there are three basic options available here: 'close-up', 'medium' or 'long' shot. The close-up suggests 'personal' closeness between viewer and image; the medium shot suggests 'social' distance – the distance of public business interactions. And the long shot correlates with 'impersonal' distance, 'the distance between people who are and are to remain strangers' (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 131).

*Gloria* presents us with a figure in medium long shot – the full figure with a small amount of space around it. This distance of at least 3 metres (10') corresponds with the 'close social distance' of a formal relationship. It is the kind of relationship open to a doctor, an artist, or a medical imaging person. This distance is mitigated somewhat by the woman's nakedness, which suggests a more intimate relationship, especially in the more vulnerable back view. *Elaboration* establishes a different relation with the viewer. Here we adopt the close personal distance which the close-up makes available to the viewer. Although closeness does not always mean intimacy, the proximity of these open hands calls for a corresponding response in the viewer. Where the nude is objectified through analytical social distance from the viewer, the hands are 'subjectified', presented as 'up close and personal'.

What about the written text in relation to *social distance*? Does the relation with the reader established in the verbiage correspond to that of each image? Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) see formality of 'style' as the linguistic realization of *social distance*. They outline three styles based on work by Joos (1967), though similar accounts have also been developed in relation to tenor by Eggins (1994). The 'personal style' is the language of intimates. This style tends to implicitness, context-dependence and local frames of reference; it is the language of social solidarity in a world where much can be taken for granted; it has affinities with what Bernstein (1990) calls 'restricted code'. The 'social style' is the language in which the outside business of the day is conducted. There are fewer colloquialisms and abbreviated forms here and greater use of standard syntax and lexis in this style. Greater explicitness is required because of the greater social distance between interactants. Finally, the 'public style' is the language of formal occasions, where people 'talk like books'. This is far more self-conscious than other styles, more explicit, more articulated in its use of full forms. In the public domain, interactants are maximally distant from one another and adopt what Bernstein (1990) calls the 'elaborated code'.

It is this code which dominates in the verbiage, which is monologic,

crafted and explicit. Both text panels feature formal vocabulary, generic reference (e.g. 'the viewer' and 'the older body') and, most telling, high levels of abstraction, especially in their nominal (noun) groups. In *Gloria*, for example, Sarah focuses on abstract essentials such as 'the beauty and strength' or 'the true essence and feeling' of the body. And in *Elaboration*, the same tendency to abstraction is boosted by high levels of nominalization – a style of writing in which dynamic processes are linguistically encoded as qualities (through adjectives) or things (through nouns) rather than as verbs. For example, in nominal groups such as, 'the *interplay* between the *gesture* and its symbolism and its environment' or 'the *juxtaposition* of the hyper-real subject and its opulent surroundings', processes like '(inter)playing', 'gesturing' and 'juxtaposing' come to function as abstract things. Working in concert, abstraction and nominalization enable students to objectify the art-making process – putting it (and therefore the viewer) at an aesthetic remove. Both verbal texts display control of 'elaborated code' and this is crucial to their success as verbal performances. Making art is only part of the challenge facing students in the Higher School Certificate exam. Philosophizing about it in the 'public style' is another.

In *Elaboration*, there are two kinds of *social distance* established by the artwork: the closeness of the image and the relative semiotic distance of the verbiage. Even though Derek personalizes his message somewhat through first-person pronouns or mental process verbs like 'hope' or 'contemplate', for the most part it is couched in the public style. In *Gloria*, Sarah uses a simpler (less convoluted) variant of the same style with a similar effect on the reader. In this artwork, there is greater convergence of meanings along the *social distance* parameter. But it is also true that, given the distancing quality of the frame size, Sarah's focus on the 'beauty' of her subject invites us to 'look again', to move away from the objectifying viewpoint on the nude encouraged by choices within the image for *contact* and *social distance*. There appears to be a compensatory principle at work here in the interplay between image and verbiage, as if the artist wanted to exploit the potential of the multimodal text for multiple meanings. Through her text panel, Sarah re-frames the analytical viewpoint offered by the image, foregrounding the aesthetic appeal rather than the verisimilitude of 'the older body'.

Again, as with the system of *contact*, we have complementary meanings established through each mode in relation to *social distance*. There are two kinds of social relations possible here: one made available through the 'public' style of the artist's commentary and the other through the more 'private' vision of the artist whether distancing, as in *Gloria*, or close and intimate, as in *Elaboration*.

#### 4.3 *Attitude: involvement and power*

Producing an image involves not only the choice between offer and demand and the selection of a certain size of frame, but also a

selection of angles, a point of view and this implies the possibility of expressing subjective attitudes towards the participants, human or otherwise. (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 135)

There are two dimensions to consider in relation to images: the 'horizontal' dimension, through which participants are presented frontally or obliquely; and the 'vertical' dimension, through which participants are presented from above (a high-angle shot), at eye level or from below (a low-angle shot). Horizontal choices represent either 'involvement' (a frontal angle) or 'detachment' (an oblique angle). Vertical dimension choices represent power differentials between viewer and what is viewed: a relation of 'viewer power' over represented participant (high-angle shot); a relationship of relative 'equality' (eye-level shot); and a relation of 'represented participant (or 'text') power' over the viewer (low-angle shot). We see things from the point of view of the powerful, the solidary or the powerless.

*Gloria* presents us with two points of view on the female nude: an oblique angle shot reinforcing a detached perspective in the viewer and a back view, which suggests disengagement – certainly by the female nude from her audience. Of course, point of view can be a complex phenomenon. The woman's nakedness makes her more vulnerable to the viewer's appraisal and this reduces detachment. Though this woman is certainly not part of 'our world', her nakedness makes her disengagement less alienating. This is reinforced by the eye-level angle along the vertical dimension, an angle which creates relative equality between viewer and viewed.

Of course, the eye-level view of the catalogue image does not (and cannot) recreate the impact of the physical position of the work in the exhibition context. *Gloria* was mounted relatively high on the gallery wall so that the figure was above eye level physically and seemed to tower over me as I contemplated it. Thus, the power of the image in the exhibition itself was greater than can be imagined using the vertical-angle cue in the catalogue image. In the catalogue image, we view *Gloria* in a detached but respectful way, coming not too close, but observing that she is, after all, on a par with the rest of us. We have neither more nor less power than this woman – although we are invited to see her from two viewpoints and hence to engage in different kinds of scrutiny.

Different choices have been made in *Elaboration* when it comes to point of view. The hands are presented frontally and at a relatively high angle. This frontality suggests high involvement and the high-angle relative viewer-power over the implicit demand of the open hands. We are asked, as it were, to respond and are given the discretionary power to imagine what our response might be. It is as if the image says 'It's up to you', a point echoed in the text panel where the writer invites the viewer to consider 'their own spirituality'. There is far more intersubjectivity created through the resources of point of view in *Elaboration* than in *Gloria*.

What kinds of *attitudes* are manifested in the text panels? Once again,

we are concerned with two dimensions: relations of involvement, of greater or lesser solidarity with those around us (the horizontal dimension), and relations of greater or lesser power over those above or below us (the vertical dimension).

In this semantic domain, we consider the kinds of *attitude* expressed in verbal texts and made available to the reader. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 147) propose a linguistic analogy between ‘involvement’ and the use of ‘possessive pronouns’. There are instances of these in the verbiage. In *Elaboration*, Derek refers to the viewer’s spirituality using the relatively distancing third-person pronoun ‘their spirituality’ and in *Gloria*, Sarah uses the genitive construction, ‘my artwork’, which suggests involvement with her work and, by implication, with the reader. A further parallel is suggested by Kress and Van Leeuwen between power and the use of evaluative adjectives. Once again, there are examples of these in the verbiage, as in ‘the subject’s natural beauty’ in *Gloria* and ‘a universal beauty’ in *Elaboration*. However, a focus on evaluative adjectives per se does not take us very far in understanding the kinds of *attitude* expressed or the cumulative effect of attitudinally loaded choices in the text as a whole. In relation to verbal texts, we need to ask: What kinds of evaluations does the text foreground? What linguistic resources are drawn on? How does the text ‘dynamicize’ *attitude* – making particular evaluative positions available to the reader?

Some interesting work on evaluative meaning has emerged within the Sydney School of SFG in the domain of *appraisal*. This research outlines some of the salient lexical choices ‘in play’ in evaluation and, most promising from my point of view, focuses on syndromes of attitudinal meaning in text (see Coffin, 1997; Iedema et al., 1994; Macken-Horarik, 1996, 2003; Martin, 1997, 2000; White, 1998, 2003 for accounts of this work).

Within *appraisal*, the systems relevant to analysis of the text panels are covered under *attitude*. Within *attitude* there are three major subsystems: *affect* (to do with emotional responses and desires); *judgement* (to do with ethical evaluations of behaviour); and *appreciation* (to do with the aesthetic dimensions of experience). These subsystems can be further subclassified, as in Martin (1997), but this would create more complexity than is necessary in the current context.

Predictably enough, given that this is a public display of the artist’s personal aesthetic, there are several examples of *appreciation* in both text panels – either focusing on features of the work’s composition or the valuation ascribed by the artist to the work (see Table 1). Examples of *appreciation* [App] are shown in bold. In *Gloria*, Sarah states that her artwork ‘celebrates the **beauty** and **strength** of the older body’ [App: valuation] and that she has captured ‘the **true essence** and **feeling** of the body [App: valuation] in its **purest** forms [App: composition]. Similar choices for *appreciation* are made in the *Elaboration* text panel.

Although *appreciation* is the primary choice, we also find examples of *affect* and *judgement* in each text. The verb in Derek’s proclamation, ‘I hope in

**Table 1** Patterns of attitude in the text panels

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Focus (new)</i>
<i>Gloria</i>	
1. My artwork	1. the <b>beauty</b> and <b>strength</b> of the older body. [App: +ve valuation of the older body]
2. Through photography,	2a. the <b>true essence</b> and <b>feeling</b> of the body, [App: +ve valuation of her representation of the body] 2b. in its <b>purest</b> forms. [App: +ve view of her composition]
3. With the use of such techniques as light and shadow,	3. the subject's <b>natural beauty</b> . [App: +ve valuation of the subject's beauty]
4a. While we	4a. as <b>decrepit</b> and <b>wasting</b> [App/Judg: -ve view of aged flesh in our culture]
4b. through my <b>respectful visions</b> , [App/Judg: +ve representation of her artistic vision of ageing flesh]	4b. with <b>grandeur</b> and <b>solidity</b> . [App: +ve valuation of ageing flesh]
<i>Elaboration</i>	
1. I	1. in <b>beauty</b> . [+ve valuation of artist's own aesthetic]
2. For this work,	2. set meaning.
3. rather I,	3. the interplay between the gesture, its symbolism and its environment.
4. Certain cultural overtones	4. within the work.
5. However, the <b>main thrust</b>	5. its <b>sheer aesthetic diversity</b> ; [App: +ve valuation of the artwork's 'diversity'; a <b>universal beauty</b> [App: +ve valuation of his aesthetic vision].
6. The viewer	6. the juxtaposition of the <b>hyper-real</b> subject [App/Judg: +ve valuation of the veracity of the subject] and its <b>opulent</b> surroundings, [App: +ve valuation of the rich background of the painting] 7. their own spirituality. [Judg: +ve edification of viewers]

beauty', is explicitly affectual and focuses our attention on his emotional connection with his work. Then, in *Gloria*, we come across the injunctive conditional clause, 'While we are *culturally conditioned* to see *the aged flesh* as *decrepit* and *wasting*'. This clause fuses *appreciation* with *judgement* and indexes Sarah's awareness of the prevalence of negative cultural views of ageing and its contrast with her own views.

Attitudes typically carry a positive or a negative *loading*. While lexical choices such as 'decrepit' and 'wasting' carry a negative loading, 'grandeur' and 'solidity' are positive. Many verbal texts create evaluative oppositions similar to those in Sarah's text. The system of *loading* is essential to the creation of 'syndromes' of *attitude* in text.

However, equally important in this regard are covert markers of *attitude*: lexical choices which work by connotation rather than denotation. The system of *attitude type* indicates whether values are 'inscribed' (made explicit, usually through evaluative adjectives, adverbs or nouns), or are 'evoked' (left implicit, usually through 'colouring' of verb choices or use of figurative language). Both text panels tend to inscribe appraisal through evaluative nouns, as in, 'the *beauty* and *strength* of the older body' or adjectives, as in, 'the subject's *natural* beauty' or 'a *universal* beauty'. But there are also examples of evoked *attitude* in each text panel. Both writers open with sentences containing emotive verbs. Derek proclaims that he '*hopes* in beauty' and Sarah that her artwork '*celebrates* the beauty and strength of the older body'. These verbs infuse *attitude* into the text and flag the guiding preoccupations of each writer.

When we move away from spatially organized texts such as images (in which all elements relevant to interpretation are co-present) to linear texts such as verbiage, we need to consider how they create certain evaluative positions for us as we read. We need to 'dynamicize' our account of textual meaning, much as Van Leeuwen (1996) has done for filmic texts. Through combinations of choices for *attitude*, a text opens up evaluative positions for its reader. These positions accumulate significance as the text unfolds, entering into relations of synonymy, contrast or change (see Macken-Horarik, 1996, 2003, on the relationship between *appraisal* choices and reader positioning).

How does a verbal text dynamicize *attitude*? In order to analyse the rhetorical force of evaluation, we need to look at resources within the textual metafunction, which enables us to create text. There are two complementary systems that enable us to give different kinds of prominence to information in the unfolding text. The first system is *theme*, which highlights the speaker's or writer's point of departure on the message. In declarative clauses (the only ones used here), theme typically corresponds to the subject and is realized in English by first position in the clause. Non-subject (marked) themes create special kinds of prominence in texts. In Sarah's verbiage, marked themes predominate and centre on the technical aspects of her art-making. A consistent pattern of themes contributes to the rhetorical 'method of development' in a text.



The other system relevant to dynamic unfolding of *attitude* in text is *focus*. Focus is a phonological system for assigning prominence through intonation. The units of information in a message which carry the most stress (technically, 'the tonic') also carry salience for the listener. The part of the message which carries salience is called 'new', and in the unmarked case, 'new' is mapped onto the end of the clause. The part of the message that is presented by the speaker as already known to the listener is called 'given' and typically occurs at the beginning of the clause.

The systems of *theme* and *focus* create complementary patterns of prominence in each clause. The theme represents speaker-oriented prominence. It is what 'I am starting out from'. The 'new', on the other hand, represents listener-oriented prominence: it is 'what I am asking you to attend to'. The clause moves away from the first peak of prominence in theme toward the second in 'new', and this gives a sort of periodic or wave-like movement to the discourse (see Halliday, 1994: 336–8 for a fuller discussion of this very interesting phenomenon within textual meaning).

If *theme* presents the writer's angle on the message, the 'new' is the reader's point of rest. It is not surprising, then that *appraisal* tends to be weighted toward the back half of the clause, which is where the *focus* typically occurs. As Fries (1985) has pointed out in relation to narrative, 'Many of the evaluative items of the text occur in the unmarked focus of new information in their respective clauses. The end of the story, likely end of the clause, is a place of prominence' (pp. 315–16).

Table 1 presents the evaluative meanings of each text panel as they occur within *theme* and 'new'. The processes of each clause are displayed in the middle column. Inscribed *appraisal* is in bold and intensifiers which amplify the force or focus of each evaluation are underlined. The type of *attitude* is shown in abbreviated form in square brackets – either *appreciation* [App] or *judgement* [Judg]. *Loading* is identified as positive [+ve] or negative [-ve]. As Table 1 makes clear, most of the inscribed evaluation occurs within the 'new' while evoked evaluation is carried by the verbs. *Themes* have to do with either the artist or with technical details of the artwork. 'New's have to do with the abstract aesthetic significance of the artwork.

In the *Gloria* text panel, two attitudinal positions are set up for the reader: a cultural stereotype which sees the aged flesh as decrepit and wasting and the artist's alternative vision, which presents it as grand, solid and beautiful. The writer inscribes her aesthetic attitude through specific and positively loaded values for *appreciation* (valuation or composition) as well as evoking an emotional attitude through continual selection of positively loaded verbs which are dispersed throughout the text. This artist doesn't just use photographic art forms to represent older nudes; she 'celebrates', 'captures', 'enhances' and 'invests' the older nude with particular feelings and aesthetic values. In this respect, the attitude evoked by the verbs opens up a complementary evaluative position on the artwork, encouraging a more involved, even reverential attitude in the reader and moving us away from

both distancing abstractions of the ‘new’s in the verbiage and the documentary style of the image.

Two viewing positions are also set up in the *Elaboration* text panel. One has to do with the artist’s aesthetic and the other with spirituality, which ‘book-end’ the verbiage. Both are positively loaded. *Affect* is dispersed in its realization here too. An emotional response to the image is invited, through the use of evoking verbs like ‘hope’, ‘explore’, ‘encouraged’ and ‘contemplate’. The text panel inscribes the aesthetic value of the work through attitudinal nouns and adjectives and evokes feeling and awe through attitudinal verbs.

Again, as with *contact* and *social distance*, the two modes set up complementary attitudes in the viewer. Table 2 highlights these differences and presents the trends for *contact*, *social distance* and *attitude* for the two texts.

There are clear parallels between *evoked appraisal* and *involvement* and inscribed *appraisal* and *power* in the verbal texts. While expressions of feeling about one’s work invite solidarity with the reader, abstract pronouncements of one’s aesthetic create hierarchies, as if control of abstraction is crucial to a place at the ‘art theory table’.

Work on *attitude* within linguistic texts can also have pay-offs for our thinking about ‘visual text’. Of course, we are dealing with different semiotic codes here: in verbal texts with a linear code and in visual texts with a spatial code. In the linear code, there is a temporal unfolding of meaning and in the spatial code everything that is needed for interpretation is immediately co-present. These different codes influence the subjectivities available to the viewer/reader. Where the image is implicit and embodied, the verbiage (certainly in the interpretive genre as here) is explicit and attenuated. As a consequence of this, different systems need to be developed to account for *attitude* in each modality. Nevertheless, the potential for transmodal work is there.

If we consider the very emotive image from *Elaboration*, how do we account for the affectual meaning of the opening hands, the strong hold–release pattern in the gesture which demands a response? For me, the gesture is an expression of desire in which the emotional theme of the opening hands is overlaid on the representational meaning of the image. In *Gloria*, affect is cooler and more dispassionate than that of *Elaboration* but nevertheless a factor to take account of in interactional analysis. Of course, analysing the semiotic systems underlying the emotional ‘content’ of an image is no simple matter. But the accumulation of attitudinal meanings in the verbal texts, the dispersed character of their realization, particularly within evocative appraisal, is suggestive for work in the visual realm. It orients us to the image as a whole (text rather than syntax) and to the overlay of affectual meaning over representational meaning.

**Table 2** Summary of choices for contact, social distance and attitude in the two texts

<i>Image</i>	<i>Verbiage</i>
<p><b>Contact</b></p> <p>'IMAGE ACT'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OFFER (Info) → Absence of gaze at viewer</li> <li>DEMAND (Goods &amp; Services) → Direct gaze</li> </ul> <p>• 'Gloria': Absence of gaze at viewer ('she').            • 'Elaboration': Direct gaze at viewer ('you')</p>	<p><b>Contact</b></p> <p>SPEECH ACT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OFFER</li> <li>DEMAND</li> <li>INFORMATION</li> <li>GOODS &amp; SERVICES</li> </ul> <p>PERSON</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>THIRD</li> <li>SECOND</li> <li>FIRST</li> </ul> <p>• 'Gloria' and 'Elaboration': Use of first person ('I') to express personal viewpoint. Occasional use of third person (e.g. 'her') in relation to artworks.</p>
<p><b>Social distance</b></p> <p>DISTANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PERSONAL → Close-up</li> <li>SOCIAL → Medium shot</li> <li>IMPERSONAL → Long shot</li> </ul> <p>• 'Gloria': Medium long shot; <b>the social distance of artistic or medical scrutiny.</b>            • 'Elaboration': close-up; <b>the personal distance of intimate communication.</b></p>	<p><b>Social distance</b></p> <p>STYLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PERSONAL</li> <li>SOCIAL</li> <li>PUBLIC</li> </ul> <p>• 'Gloria' and 'Elaboration': <b>public language</b> of the professional artist; use of <b>elaborated code</b> in the meta-commentary on the artwork.</p>
<p><b>Attitude</b></p> <p>INVOLVEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>INVOLVED → Frontal angle</li> <li>DETACHED → Oblique angle</li> </ul>	<p><b>Attitude</b></p> <p>ATTITUDE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VALUE               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AFFECT</li> <li>JUDGEMENT</li> <li>APPRECIATION</li> </ul> </li> <li>LOADING               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>POSITIVE</li> <li>NEGATIVE</li> </ul> </li> <li>TYPE               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EVOKED</li> <li>INSCRIBED</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Table 2** continued

<i>Image</i>	<i>Verbiage</i>
<p><b>Attitude</b></p> <p>POWER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VIEWER POWER → High angle</li> <li>EQUALITY → Eye level</li> <li>REPRESENTED PARTICIPANTS POWER → Low angle</li> </ul> <p>• ‘Gloria’: horizontal: oblique angle suggesting <b>detachment</b> and back shot, suggesting <b>disengagement</b> from viewer; vertical: eye-level shot, creating <b>equality</b>.</p> <p>• ‘Elaboration’: horizontal: frontal angle, suggesting <b>involvement</b>; vertical: high angle shot, suggesting <b>viewer power</b>.</p>	<p><b>Attitude</b></p> <p>GRADUATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FORCE           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RAISE</li> <li>LOWER</li> </ul> </li> <li>FOCUS           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SHARPEN</li> <li>SOFTEN</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>• Note: Realizations of Attitude are dispersed throughout text rather than discrete.</p> <p>• ‘Gloria and Elaboration’: primarily <b>Appreciation</b> within Attitude; <b>positive</b> Loading and <b>inscribed</b> Attitude type; Graduation: <b>highly amplified expressions of Attitude</b>.</p>

### Conclusion

In summary, what effect do these complementary meaning potentials, these different ways of relating text to viewer or reader, have on our takes of students’ work? If the image is primary, and it certainly is in an art exhibition, the verbiage offers a commentary on the image, creating a third semantic domain – greater than the sum of the parts. This recalls the words of Roland Barthes (1977) in his exposition on the Rhetoric of the Image:

Here, text and image stand in a complementary relationship; the words, in the same way as the images, are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realised at a higher level, that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis. (p. 41)

Our apprehension of both aspects of the multimodal text needs to be sensitive to points of overlap, points of difference, and points of direct juxtapositions in each mode. In the *ArtExpress* texts, we observe two kinds of *contact* which are embodied in the system of ‘person’ in each mode: the visual ‘you’ or ‘she’ of the images and the verbal ‘I’ of the text panels. There are two kinds of vision corresponding to two kinds of *social distance* in each mode: the private vision of the artist (whether distancing, as in *Gloria* or intimate, as in *Elaboration*) and the public vision expressed in the formal statements of the text panels. Finally, there are two kinds of *attitude* in each mode. Along the horizontal dimension, there is the involved relation suggested by the hands in *Elaboration* and the detached relation suggested by the nude in *Gloria*. A complementary relation is proposed by the text panels, suggesting

that the nude is not a subject for ‘medical-style’ analysis but for aesthetic appreciation and that *Elaboration* is not a ‘goods and services’ type encounter but an opportunity for contemplation and spiritual edification. Along the vertical dimension, the equality suggested in *Gloria* is reframed by the artist’s powerful public display of her formal aesthetic. In addition, while the viewer has the power to accede to or deny the demand of hands through the high-angle viewpoint, the verbiage has an injunctive quality which reframes the image as a spiritual challenge. Thus the analysis highlights the power of the multimodal text in the creation of a third semantic space and the importance of fashioning tools of analysis adequate to this.

If the semiotic world in which we live and communicate is a multimodal one, then we need access to an analytical apparatus which is adequate to this. But this is a tall order. This analytical apparatus – including its grammar – must itself be a highly differentiated and multipurpose tool. Any grammar we develop for multimodal discourse analysis will need to facilitate specialized (or, perhaps ‘specializable’) investigations of different semiotic modes (such as language, or image, or music) in their own terms. And it will need to be inclusive enough to explore the interaction of different modes, both with one another and with viewers/readers themselves in different contexts. Any grammar we use should enable us to understand the ways in which semiotic systems structure and constrain particular meaning-making practices and the ways in which these work together and regulate viewing/reading practices.

Furthermore, the development of a grammar for multimodal text analysis is a pressing task – not least within literacy education – the field in which I work. Analysis and production of integrated texts has now become a routine part of school learning – whether in visual arts, science, geography or even English. Whatever the subject, students now have to interpret and produce texts which integrate visual and verbal modalities, not to mention even more complex interweavings of sound, image and verbiage in filmic media and other performative modalities. Control not just of the practical application of different technologies but of their structuring principles is crucial to students’ literacy practices in school education. Therefore educators need access to analytical apparatuses (including grammars) which enable them to relate one modality to another in explicit and mutually informing ways – and to problematize their relationships in the process. Before students can do this, they need access to metasemiotic tools for analysing these texts – tools that enable them to move in a mutually comprehensible way between one modality and another.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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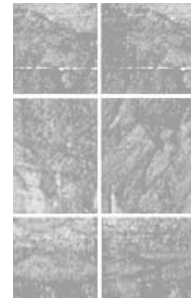
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***Cruel and Tender: The Real in the  
Twentieth-Century Photograph* (London:  
Tate Modern until 7 September;  
Museum Ludwig, Cologne from  
29 November 2003–18 February 2004**

DAVID BRITAIN

Manchester Metropolitan University

*Cruel and Tender: The Real in the Twentieth-Century Photograph* is most notable because it is the Tate's first major photography exhibition.

In the late 1970s, while several major art institutions in Britain became preoccupied with the problems presented by the sudden presence of art photography (the Hayward Gallery with its 1979 exhibition, *Three Perspectives on Photography*, and The Mappin and the Stoke City Gallery, among others, with *Artist and Camera*), the Tate was noncommittal. A hint that the great institution was having its own problems with photography was revealed in a 1982 interview given by its then director Alan Bowness to the editor of a relatively obscure photography magazine, *Creative Camera*. The publication championed select photographic practices as an art. As the Tate was the most important validating institution of modern art in the country, readers naturally wanted to know where it stood in relation to photography. Colin Osman focused on their complex policy of purchasing photographs by artists (but not by photographers). He was told that the gallery collected work by Hamish Fulton, Richard Long, Gilbert and George, etc. as examples of their art – not because they were good photographs. Osman suggested that by refusing to endorse 'straight' photography – the sort of work that comprises *Cruel and Tender* – the Tate was sending the message that 'art' photography wasn't art. When this was repeatedly denied, Osman snorted, 'Can I suggest that you do collect photography, but you don't call it photography?'

The difference between one photography and the other had been addressed in the 1980 Arts Council exhibition, *Artist and Camera*, selected by Miranda Strickland-Constable. It featured work by 'artists' not photographers (but included, confusingly, people such as Victor Burgin who straddled both art and photography). Unlike Bowness, Strickland-Constable was prepared



to admit that fine art's trouble with art photography was that it contained a whiff of low culture. Even the best 'professional' photography is no more than a sophisticated version of 'a common social activity' (e.g. wedding photography and photojournalism).

For at least a decade now art galleries have not felt so compelled to fence off 'photography as art' from 'art as photography'. Nowadays a lot of artists are photographers and photographers are as well known and regarded as artists. Along with Fulton and Long, the Tate now acquires 'straight' photography by the likes of Paul Graham and Martin Parr. This dismantling of barriers is part of the context for *Cruel and Tender*. It is reflected in the Tate's themed permanent collections where photographs are encountered 'as art'.

That the Tate has left it so long to endorse the art of photographers is an issue: and that's another part of the context for the current survey. *Cruel and Tender* (the title is a description of the documentary style of Walker Evans) has the sanitized feel of something pre-packaged (in fact, it was assembled in collaboration with Museum Ludwig). The exhibition occupies two sets of interconnecting galleries, and everything – from its subtitle (describing it as '20th century photography') to its solemn presentation (dominated by earnest explanatory texts) – has a distancing effect. The organizers plundered the suppressed texts of art photography (suppressed by the Tate) for reputations and an aesthetic discourse. A history is supplied in a catalogue essay by Thomas Weski, stalwart of the German photography scene. He describes the migration of 'straight photography' (a style that is, paradoxically, engaged yet detached) from its 'origins' in fin-de-siècle Paris, via August Sander and Walker Evans, to European and US photographers of different generations. The roll call which, besides Evans and Sander, encompasses Bernd and Hilla Becher, Lee Friedlander and Fazal Sheikh, implies the endurance of the straight aesthetic. Some works refuse to make sense within this framework – Robert Frank's far-from-disinterested road pictures don't belong here and the narrow contextualization of Martin Parr and Lewis Baltz does them no justice.

By selecting one photographic 'tradition' (which problematically excludes others – notably reportage) the organizers reopen the fraught 'why-this-photography-is-art-not-that' discourse that once pitted photographic institutions against the gallery system and the mass media. The Tate's chief curator, Emma Dexter, anoints these 24 practitioners because each avoids 'romanticism, sentimentality or nostalgia ...'. Observing that these are precise characteristics of both artsy photography and photojournalism, Dexter disinters the anxieties of those early modernists who were reviled for distancing themselves from camera club 'pictorialists' and commercial 'hacks'.

The essayists acknowledge that such matters as authorship and 'the real' are complex and have a history of contention. Dexter discusses attacks on the 'straight' aesthetic from the likes of Walter Benjamin. Her defence is

found in statements that reflect the ‘common sense’ attitude of the contemporary viewer – such as the observation about conceptual art, whose

introduction of rhetorical ... devices to interrogate photography’s ... meanings and lack of inherent truthfulness has not, however, cured us of our fascination with photography as something that we believe to have a powerful indexical relationship to the real.

In different ways *Cruel and Tender* conspires to reverse the question that Benjamin asked in the 1930s (how has photography changed art?) to make it: how has art (or the art market) changed photography? David Company’s interesting essay in the catalogue offers some ideas about this – for instance, recent artistic acceptability has transformed what was essentially an art born in print into a salon art of single pictures on walls. (One of the highlights of the show is a display of authored books by featured photographers.) Obviously another indication of the effect of art on photography is the presence – albeit delayed – of so many canonical art photographers at Britain’s most important venue for modern art.

In its return (or in this case its arrival) from the museum vault, art photography seems to have become unburdened by the things that made the Tate uncomfortable all along – its low cultural connotations, mass production and the social stigma of the photographer. Part of the enjoyment of Wolfgang Tillmans’ one-man show at neighbouring Tate Britain is that it addresses some of these issues. Tillmans personifies the new artist/photographer – young, well known, the recipient of the Turner Prize – and uses photography as ‘only one of several modes’ (to quote Strickland-Constable’s, 1980, essay). Evidence of Tillmans’ artistic identity is inscribed in various objects and traces (photographs, photocopies, magazine layouts, a video, wall designs), complicating efforts to define his practice, while simultaneously affirming his authorship. There are no portentous wall panels at Millbank – instead there’s every sign of an institution at peace with its artist.

Plainly, the Tate now endorses both ‘photographies’ and their respective validating discourses – but the institutional treatment of ‘Wolfgang Tillmans’ in relation to *Cruel and Tender* suggests that the Tate is still more at ease with the photography of ‘artists’.

Another indication of how the embrace of the art world is changing photography is the behaviour of long-standing photography institutions. The Photographers’ Gallery – flagship of photography galleries – has recently shown pictures by Enrique Metinides, a Mexican photojournalist of especially grisly pictures. This programming seems to confirm what its director meant recently when he spoke of a need for the 30-year-old gallery to return to what photography does best (i.e. its ‘social’ functions).

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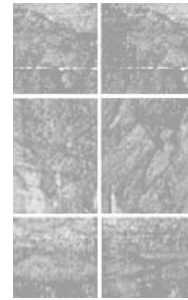
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# Picturing irony: the subversive power of photography<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This article addresses the phenomenon of visual irony as exemplified by ironic photographs. It shows how visual irony works, where it is located, and what it is used for. To this end, Sperber and Wilson's 'echoic mention' theory of irony is applied and shown to provide a more comprehensive and economic approach to visual irony than the much-disputed checklists of necessary and sufficient features traditionally associated with studies of irony. In addition to providing a unified account of both verbal and visual irony, echoic mention theory is shown to offer a principled explanation of the following types of visual irony: word-based versus wordless, and celebratory versus condemnatory.

## KEY WORDS

cognition • irony • photography • rhetoric • visual irony • visual language

Can a picture be ironic? If to be ironic is to mean the opposite of what one says, how might an image convey the opposite of what it shows? How, in particular, does a photograph manage to do so? These are some of the key questions addressed here but, first, I would like to establish why it is worth bothering with irony at all in our appreciation of photography.

There are two good reasons why we should regard irony as more than merely an interesting aside. The first has to do with the increasing salience of irony not just in contemporary photography but in the arts more generally. The postmodernist distrust of meta-narratives and dominant representations has given rise to an increasingly self-questioning and self-referring style of art. During the last two decades in particular there has been a tendency among artists to use photography not as a definitive record of reality but as a conspicuous artifice, one possible representation among many equally plausible representations of how the world appears. Since one of the main functions of irony is to subvert dominant representations,<sup>2</sup> it is not surprising to find that irony figures prominently in photography today. The challenge is to understand how it works.

The second reason for coming to grips with irony has to do with the language of photography criticism, where 'ironical', 'ambiguous' and other related concepts have become terms of positive evaluation for photographs. The following extract from Graham Clarke's book *Photography*, one of the popular Oxford History of Art series, is representative of current criticism. Clarke (1997: 207–8) is discussing *Madrid, Spain, 1933* by Henri Cartier-Bresson:

This image is awash with a visual irony characteristic of his style ... Here the relationship between the enigmatic wall and windows in the background and the children playing in the foreground is compounded by their awareness of the camera, and, overwhelmingly, by the presence of the large incongruous figure who moves across the scene in the middle area. We have, in that sense, a geometry so complex as to displace the normal codes and terms of representation.

The term 'visual irony' remains unexplained here, yet if we are interested in photography we need to understand what is said about it and how it is valued.

Dr Johnson's definition of irony as 'a mode of speech in which the meaning is contrary to the words' remains the most familiar and influential. Frequently cited examples of literary irony include Mark Antony's funeral oration in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in which he repeatedly refers to Brutus as 'an honourable man' (Act 3, Scene II) and Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* in which it is suggested that Ireland's economic problems could be solved if Protestant landlords were to buy and eat the babies of impoverished Catholics. Everyday examples of irony often consist of a variant on someone saying 'Nice weather, isn't it!' in response to a particularly rainy day. The common denominator in each of these cases resides in the contrast between what is said and what is meant, and in the seeming incongruity in the choice of expression.

How does this definition of irony as an explicitly verbal phenomenon apply to the visual medium? How can a photograph, which is an imprint of light as it existed at a particular time and place, show one thing yet mean another? This article aims to show that a principled account of visual irony can be achieved by applying the 'echoic mention' theory of irony to photography (Sperber, 1984; Sperber and Wilson, 1981, 1990). In applying the theory, I look at two types of visual irony: word-based and wordless; and at two moods or functions: condemnatory and celebratory. I also show how echoic mention theory provides succinct and convincing criteria by which to evaluate irony and assess borderline cases. Having established *how* visual irony works, the article ends with a discussion of *where* irony is located.

## **1. WORD-BASED VISUAL IRONY**

The most obvious examples of irony in photography are word based. These include instances in which a billboard, or some other form of text, is

incorporated into a larger image and where, significantly, a conflict comes into play between what the text says and what the surrounding picture shows.

Canonical examples of this kind of word-based irony are to be found in the widely disseminated Farm Security Administration photographs of the Great American Depression. Margaret Bourke-White and Dorothea Lange in particular capitalized on the ironic potential of billboards. In a series of photographs of the 'American Way of Life' ad campaign run during the 1930s, Bourke-White has one photograph where the billboard depicts a white American family of four, well dressed and smiling happily as they drive along in a new car (Figure 1). The strap-line at the top of the poster reads: 'World's Highest Standard of Living', and the text on the ad reads: 'There's no way like the American way'. Beneath the billboard stands a breadline of cold and ragged-looking black Americans, queuing for handouts. The contrast between the way of life projected by the billboard, and the actual conditions endured by the poor people standing in its very shadow could not be more literal: whereas the idealized Americans are healthy, wealthy and white, the actual Americans in this photograph are underfed, impoverished and black. Bourke-White's photograph offers a clear illustration of a contradiction between what is said and what is shown, of the discrepancy between the expectations set up by the advertisement and the reality that surrounds it.

**Figure 1**  
Margaret Bourke-White, 'Flood victims, Louisville, Kentucky', 1937. © Getty Images.





**Figure 2**  
Dorothea  
Lange, 'On the  
road towards  
Los Angeles',  
1937.  
© Getty Images.

A similar conflict is captured by a photograph of Dorothea Lange's in which the billboard shows a man reclining comfortably in the plush seat of a train, and which sports the caption: 'Next time, try the train. Relax' (Figure 2). Beneath it, two dispossessed men walk along a dusty road carrying their bags in their hands. Once again the 'meaning is contrary to the words' but, more significantly, two very different and essentially incompatible orders of existence have been juxtaposed, inviting us to question the world view espoused by the dominant order – the one which asserts the expectations of the system rather than the reality which actually characterizes society.

Are contrast and incongruity the only defining attributes of irony? A central component of the irony in these two photographs is the seeming obliviousness of the people within the picture (whether on the ground, in the ads or even 'behind' the ads) to the alternative reality they stand next to. Thus part of the irony of Bourke-White's photograph is that the caption 'There's no way like the American way' can be reinterpreted by the viewer to extend beyond the pink-tinted reality of the ad, and encompass the bedraggled breadline. According to this reading, the incongruous juxtaposition of whites and blacks, of haves and have-nots, is what characterizes the uniqueness of the American way of life. This interpretation is diametrically opposed to what the copywriter would have had in mind, and it is probably far from what the people queuing have in mind since they all seem oblivious to the ad, but it is very much the favoured reading for the viewer of the picture, and of course that intended by the photographer. Reinterpretation of the evidence from a perspective of greater knowledge is an important component of irony.

Similarly, in Lange's photograph, part of the irony resides in the sheer impossibility for some people to afford the train: for them there just won't be a 'next time' since the choice implied by this term does not exist in their order of reality. The ad men who conceived of a world full of choice, and the man in the ad who is enjoying the benefits of having made the right choice, clearly inhabit one reality. The two men in the photograph, who are covering the distance on foot, inhabit another. As viewers, we have no way of knowing whether these two migrants are sensitive to the ironic contrast between their world and the one projected by the billboard, but there is no doubt that we ourselves are aware of it, and that Lange, through her framing of the subject, intended the photograph to be ironic.

This element of obliviousness on the part of one or more of the participants in an ironic situation, and of awareness on the part of the ironist and his or her audience, is a further defining property of irony. It is a component that is in fact present in the etymology of the term 'irony', which comes from the Greek word meaning 'pretence': *eirôn* is 'a dissembler'; *eirôneia* means 'assumed ignorance'. To some scholars of irony (Rodway, 1962: 113), 'the sense of a dissembling that is meant to be seen through must remain fundamental if the word is to have any consistent function'. To others a 'serene unawareness' is the principal ingredient of irony: 'The victim of irony is serenely unaware that his words or actions convey a quite different meaning or assumption; the ironist "innocently" pretends to have this serene unawareness' (Muecke, 1973: 29). The observer is of course aware of both levels of representation.<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of this discussion, Dr Johnson's original definition of irony thus needs to be revised. First, the discrepancy between what is said and what is meant (or shown) needs to be understood as involving two possible but conflicting realities. Ironic contrast operates at an ideological level in that it addresses world views and associated belief systems. Other types of contrast, such as may be found in mendacity, non-sequiturs or ambiguity, do not necessarily involve ideology. Second, the definition needs to be supplemented with an element of pretence, or at least with a differential awareness between the 'victim' and the ironist-cum-audience. In the photographs discussed here, for instance, the victim is anybody who believes in the world projected by the billboards for, as the surrounding visual evidence testifies, it represents a false reality.

Some of the defining properties of irony, as identified in the preceding discussion, may be itemized as follows:

- An ideological component, which sets two orders of reality and associated belief systems into conflict with each other.
- A dissembling component, or at least an element of differential awareness, between the ironist-cum-audience and the unwitting victim of irony.
- An incongruity, which alerts the viewer to either the intention or the potential for irony.<sup>4</sup>



The items listed here are not definitive since irony seems to defy any simple definition.<sup>5</sup> Although there is much debate on the various components which make up irony,<sup>6</sup> and on the diverse functions irony may serve,<sup>7</sup> there is no consensus over what these should be. Perhaps the quest for a set of necessary and sufficient features is itself misguided, and a more heuristic approach is in order. Just such an approach is introduced in the next section.

## 2. THE ECHOIC MENTION THEORY OF IRONY

The echoic mention theory of irony (Sperber, 1984; Sperber and Wilson, 1981, 1990) offers us clear criteria by which to evaluate the presence of irony across verbal and visual modalities and even across cultures: 'A general theory of rhetoric should be concerned with basic psychological and interpretative mechanisms which remain invariant from culture to culture' (Sperber and Wilson, 1981: 297).

According to Sperber and Wilson (1981), the key distinction which needs to be made regarding irony is not so much between what is said and what is meant but rather between the *use* and *mention* of a proposition. This is illustrated by the following minimal pair:

- (a) Natasha is a beautiful child
- (b) 'Natasha' is a beautiful name

(a) involves the *use* of the term Natasha, and refers to a child, whereas (b) involves the *mention* of the term, and refers to a word.

Irony involves the mention rather than the use of a proposition. An ironic utterance expresses a belief *about* one's utterance, rather than *by means of* it. Thus in the familiar ironical response to a rainy day 'Lovely weather isn't it', the speaker is not so much drawing attention to the weather as he is to his attitude towards the weather. Where mention rather than use is involved, the original proposition which is being reported on is inserted in quotes.

In addition to the mention component, irony entails a critical attitude towards the proposition being expressed. This critical edge, along with a possible warping through attitude, is what is alluded to by the term *echoic* in echoic mention theory. Echoic mention may be explicit, as in this extract from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, where the targeted phrase is repeated:

'You take an eager interest in that gentleman's concerns', said Darcy in a less tranquil tone, and with a heightened colour.  
'Who that knows what his misfortunes have been, can help feeling an interest in him?'  
'His misfortunes!' repeated Darcy contemptuously, 'yes, his misfortunes have been great indeed.'

(quoted in Sperber and Wilson, 1981: 307)

Or echoic mention may be implicit, as when a quote is used out of the blue.

Stuck in a traffic jam in London on a cold, wet windy English spring, an ironist may say: 'Oh to be in England now that April's there' (Robert Browning). Finally, echoic mention may be even less well signalled, and may refer to a tacit attitude or assumption.<sup>8</sup> This is the case in Mark Antony's funeral oration, and in Swift's *Modest Proposal*, which subvert our assumptions concerning, respectively, the moral integrity of murderers and our duty to feed (rather than eat) children. No matter whether the echoic mention is explicit or implicit, what is central to our understanding of an utterance as ironic is a double recognition: 'a realisation that it is echoic, and a recognition of the type of attitude expressed' (Sperber and Wilson, 1981: 308).

How does echoic mention theory compare with the defining components of irony listed in the previous section? The *dual perspective* identified as the first component of irony is contained in the use–mention distinction, with 'use' referring to the dominant representation, and 'mention' to the subversive alternative. The *ideological component*, although not explicitly included in the echoic mention theory, may readily be contained within 'the recognition of the type of attitude expressed'. As we shall see in the discussion of celebratory versus condemnatory irony, the type of attitude expressed can be ludic, humorous and philosophical as well as ideological. The *dissembling component* is contained in the echoic element of the theory since an echoic mention 'doubles up' as the real thing. Finally, with regard to triggers, the recognition of echoic mention is what alerts us to the presence of irony. The types of incongruity which might trigger this recognition are not enumerated since these are case specific but, as shown later, are likely to include contrast, reversal, literalization, hyperbole, register shifts and corruption.

Echoic mention theory can therefore be seen to address the key components of irony as identified earlier, but it does so more economically (in two words) and more extensively (in that it applies across modalities and cultures). The main strength of the echoic mention theory of irony resides in its identification of a common dynamic which underlies different types of irony.<sup>9</sup> Rather than a proliferating checklist of characteristics it offers a single formula, and thus provides us with a handy diagnostic for a trope which has so often defied analysis. In particular, it allows us to understand visual irony in the same terms as verbal irony.

### 3. ECHOIC MENTION AND VISUAL IRONY

Sperber and Wilson's theory may be applied to visual irony in the following way: incongruous juxtapositions alert us to our preconceptions about how things should be – either how we are used to seeing them or how we expect to see them (*use*) – by introducing an element into the image which flouts our expectations. This dislocation between expectation and actual representation introduces the quote marks of *mention*, and finally the ironist's value judgement introduces the *echoic* distancing.

With regard to photography, the echoic mention theory of irony explains why word-based irony is so easily identified: the text generally provides the proposition which is to be echoed, and its contrast with the remainder of the image signals the photographer's attitude to it. Thus in the case of billboards the caption is *used* by the ad agency (that is to say the message is being communicated at face value), but is *mentioned* in the photograph (that is to say the message has been put into quotes), and finally questioned or condemned (the *echoic* element) by the photographer's use of context.

As we have seen, Bourke-White and Lange both ridiculed the world projected by the billboards by means of the incongruities present in the larger context they photographed, a context in fact which invites us to utter the words on the billboards with an ironic tone of voice. The very existence of a distinct tone of voice associated with irony is the intonational equivalent of the quote marks which may signal echoic mention in the written language. In a photograph, where neither punctuation nor intonation can come to our aid, we rely primarily on incongruity in order to recognize ironic intent. Incongruity, in turn, depends on a knowledge of larger context and background assumptions.<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, incongruity is not limited to two conflicting elements within an image, but may occur between the world as depicted in an image and the disruption it causes our own prior world view and preconceptions.

In the two pictures discussed so far it is the surrounding world that challenges the billboard world. The relationship between text and image can also work the other way round, however, so that it is the text that challenges the dominant reality projected by the image. In Robert Doisneau's photograph of the *Rue Jacques Prevert, Paris, 1955*, an arrogant-looking man in hat, tie and pinstripe suit, cigarette in mouth, dog at his heels, stands in front of a shop. Judging from the awning, the shop is called 'Merode', but because the man's head obscures the letter 'o' from the name on the shop front, the remaining letters spell out *merde* (French for 'shit'). Doisneau uses this coincidence in order to pass an ironical judgment on the man: he may think he's hot, but we see him in another light, and unbeknown to him, he has been labelled as such. In the terms of echoic mention theory, the man's body language is a genuine statement about himself (use). This same body language is signalled as a pose (mention) by the photographer, whose critical (echoic) attitude is reflected in the text of the shop name. In other words, whereas the subject expresses his attitudes *by means of* his pose, Doisneau expresses his attitudes *about* the man's pose, or more colloquially, about the man as poseur.

Billboards and shop signs, in offering a likely source of echoic mention, have frequently been used by street photographers for ironic effect. The drawback here of course is the difficulty of chancing upon the prerequisite elements in the right combination. It is for this reason that many photographers have created an ironic contrast through the use of the more controlled media of montage, collage and captions.

John Heartfield, one of the best-known political satirists, provides a good illustration of the echoic mention theory at work. In his photomontages, Heartfield typically illustrated a slogan from the Nazi rhetoric of the time with images which were in some way incongruous. Thus, in one of his cover images for *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* (AIZ, 31 January 1935), the title reads 'Hitler's Dove of Peace' and provides the caption which is to be mentioned, or put in scare quotes. The image shows a hawk perched on a gloved hand. In its beak, instead of an olive branch, it holds a feather to denote its predatory nature, on its wing is an armband with the swastika. The message here is clear: Hitler's dove is a hawk, his peace is in fact war. The echoic element involves simple inversion, an effect that invites the viewer to see the reality behind the disguise or pretence of Nazi rhetoric.

In another montage, Heartfield uses literalization rather than reversal in order to achieve ironic effect. The main caption 'Hurrah! The butter is finished' is inspired by Goering's Hamburg speech where he said: 'Iron always makes a country strong, butter and lard only make the people fat.' Heartfield shows a family sitting round the dining table chewing on a dismantled bicycle. In the foreground a baby tucks into (or literally 'cuts its teeth on') an axe while, in the background, photographs of Hitler make up the wallpaper.

Photomontage has a long history as a tool for political criticism. Much of its power comes from the potential it offers to put text and image, or image and image in conflict. In so doing it is able to combine two conflicting orders of reality, and thus to expose the hypocrisy and illusions so often associated with the political arena.

It is important to recognize that there are many different ways to create a conflict in representation. In the examples of the two billboards and the *Dove of Peace*, the images show the opposite of what the text says. Sometimes, however, the image renders the text literally as in Heartfield's 'Hurrah, the butter is finished' or Doisneau's *Rue Jacques Prevert*. In other cases the image acts as a hyperbole, exaggerating the text, as in Peter Kennard's *Defended to Death, 1982*, which shows planet earth with a gas mask on it, the Russian and American flags behind each lens of the goggles, and missiles sprouting out of the mouthpiece. In yet other ironic montages, a shift in register signals the echoic mention involved in irony, as in Alex Ayuli and Jeff Sutton's montage. Here, cartoon character eyes and whiskers are superimposed onto a composite portrait of Reagan and Stalin. And in yet other cases a rogue insertion or corruption of the text is the trigger for irony, as in Barbara Kruger's *I shop therefore I am, 1987*.

Reversal, literalization, hyperbole, register shifts and corruption are just some of the various devices that can be used either verbally or visually in order to signal ironic intent (see Hutcheon, 1995, for their application to the verbal medium). What they all have in common is that they provide a means of incorporating, or at least alluding to, the original proposition which is to be questioned by means of one of these distorting devices. This dual

perspective, one genuine but misleading, the other critical and revealing, is central to what we understand by irony.

#### 4. CONTEMPORARY USES OF WORD-BASED IRONY

Carrie Mae Weems is a contemporary black American photographer who seeks to expose the clichés which determine our view of coloured people (see Kirsh and Stirling, 1994). In a picture which bears the prominent caption *Black Woman with Chicken*, instead of showing a black servant plucking a chicken in the back yard, which is the stereotype most likely to come to mind, Weems portrays a young black girl sitting at a table holding a Kentucky-fry drumstick. The reality of the image challenges the stereotype associated with the caption. In another series entitled 'Colored People' she shows triptychs of young people with titles such as *Magenta Colored Girl*, *Golden Yella Girl*, *Chocolate Colored Man*, *Blue Black Boy*. Each triptych consists of three identical portraits, and each portrait has incorporated in the frame beneath it one of the three words of the title, as if it were branded by it. Significantly, it is the prints that are tinted magenta or blue or yellow or brown. Since the photographs themselves are monochrome the titles, contrary to expectation, do not reflect the different skin hues of the sitters. In both these examples, the captions are used to summon a default interpretation which is then questioned by the incongruity of the image. In other words, Weems uses the image to put quotation marks around the caption and thereby forces us to recognize the preconceptions which we unwittingly harbour.

In another work by Weems, it is the text that contains both echoic mention and critical attitude, and the image serves as illustration or additional articulation of what is meant. This is the case in her 1990 photograph where the caption reads: '*Jim, if you choose to accept, the mission is to land on your own two feet*'. The echoic mention is drawn from the film *Mission Impossible*, and the image, in showing a man listening to the tape recording of these words, echoes the scenes of Mr Phelps doing the same. But, whereas the movie protagonist listens to the well-nigh impossible mission assigned to him in dramatic outdoor contexts, the Jim in the photograph is at a kitchen table, a glass of whisky in hand and a cloud of cigarette smoke around him. 'To land on your own two feet' is a ludicrously easy task in this context compared to that in the film version. The photograph signals that it is nicotine and alcohol dependence, as well as the implied loss of a lover, which is what he has to recover from. Weems's attitude towards her subject is revealed in this incongruous contrast between the two missions in question.<sup>11</sup>

Barbara Kruger is another contemporary photographer who works with word-based irony. Her work consists of photographs she has found in the press and which she combines with familiar idioms, often creating an odd juxtaposition. This forces a reinterpretation of both image and idiom

and a corresponding questioning of the assumptions inherent in them. Kruger's *I shop therefore I am*, 1987, which shows a grasping hand, has already been mentioned. Although it is easy to recognize this as a corrupted allusion to Descartes' adage 'I think therefore I am', it is perhaps less easy to identify the photographer's attitude from the image alone. As it turns out, we know from Kruger's larger body of work that this was an ironical comment on consumerism and on the message that the advertising world has disseminated to consumers that 'we are what we buy'. For those who first came across this motto on T-shirts, shopping bags, mugs and sundry other consumer items, however, the motto may as happily have been used literally as mentioned ironically.

Kruger, in her own words, is 'interested in how identities are constructed, how stereotypes are formed, how narratives sort of congeal and become history' (in Tillman, 1999: 189). Many of her collages accordingly address questions of identity, subjugation and morality. Characteristic of Kruger's work is a 1992 collage in which a man is cutting a spool of film with a pair of scissors, and the text, written in bold white Futura font on a red background, is pasted onto a large portion of the photograph and reads 'A picture is worth more than a thousand words'. But 'is it?', the collage makes us ask. If indeed we believe in the idiom, it is probably because pictures are often thought of as a more direct representation of the world than words, which are readily manipulated and misinterpreted. Yet the picture in question shows a film in the process of being edited: the slice of life it represents is about to be cut, spliced and reconstructed. Pictures, the visual evidence suggests, are not beyond human manipulation.

At one level of irony, the truth of the adage, that is to say the set of beliefs upon which the idiom is based, is overturned by the evidence in the picture. But even as we begin to recognize the possible 'treachery' of pictures, we have to admit that it is a picture which provided the evidence in the first place. So a picture *is* perhaps worth a thousand words after all, even if what this particular picture has achieved is to make us question the authenticity of pictures!

At another level of irony, it takes a mere handful of words to alert us to the significance of this particular picture, which is that they are as prone to manipulation as are words. Finally, insofar as we believe in both words and picture, we the viewers are the ultimate victims of manipulation. Even ironic distancing, Kruger suggests, does not release us from the prevalence of visual and linguistic determinism.

Irony permeates Kruger's work from her choice of graphic design ('the look is *io ipso* "ironic", because we're all several decades beyond the look', Gary Indiana, 1999: 11), to her use of ambiguous deixis (we are never too sure who the pronouns refer to in straplines such as: *Use only as directed; Your assignment is to divide and conquer; I am your reservoir of poses; You are not yourself*). As the deixis changes, so does the message, creating the potential for ironic contrast. Finally, at the level of text and image

interplay, reversal, hyperbole and literalization figure prominently as ironic triggers.

Some of Kruger's work puts the very notion of representation under fire. A number of her images question preconceptions of identity as being coherent and seamless and present it instead as fragmented and multi-faceted. These include: *You are not yourself*, 1982; *You thrive on mistaken identity*, 1981; and *We are your circumstantial evidence*, 1983. In these images, women are presented either as fragmented reflections or refractions. In *Your fictions become history*, 1983, a photograph of a classical statue is torn into confetti and roughly reconstructed. These demonstrate a further level of complexity in Kruger's work, that of reflexivity. Kruger uses reflection, refraction and fragmentation of the image to mirror her own attitude towards representation, which is that representation is dangerously deterministic. Thus in addition to the irony contained in the 'look', and the ambiguity and potential for ironic conflict both in the text and in the dynamic between text and image, we see here a final level of irony in which Kruger presents the object of irony as the act of representation itself. In Carol Squiers's (1999) words, Kruger 'constructs her own traps and then springs them, using the seduction of photography as both subject and bait' (p. 148).

## 5. WORDLESS VISUAL IRONY

Since all the instances of irony discussed so far have involved language, the question arises as to whether a photograph must contain words in order to be ironic, or can irony be communicated through image alone? A photograph of a cycle path showing the icon of a bicycle and next to it a crashed and twisted bicycle is ironic because our expectation of a cycle path is that it is safe for bicycles. The icon provides mention of this, whereas the visual evidence suggests otherwise (see Erich Leonhard's photograph entitled *Dead Bicycle*, 1988, postcard). One could argue however that the icon of a bicycle is a semiotic sign and therefore quasi-linguistic.

There are wordless equivalents to many of the photographs discussed here which provide examples of purely visual irony. Thus Kruger's *A picture is worth more than a thousand words* brings to mind Elliott Erwitt's *Versailles*, 1975 (1988), which shows part of a gallery with gilt frames on the wall. In one frame we see a classical portrait of a nobleman, next to it the large frame contains what appears to be a small slip of paper. Three people stand in front of this frame gazing intently at the paper. Nobody is looking at the pictures. The image is ironical because it flouts our expectations that people go to art galleries in order to look at the pictures which are there (rather than to read the notices informing them as to why a picture is no longer there). It may even be that the adage 'a picture is worth a thousand words' comes to mind, providing the target of echoic mention which the visual evidence then undermines. The most striking difference between these two renderings of a similar topic is that Kruger uses words and uses them 'in your face' whereas

Erwitt eschews words and depends on implication exclusively. Kruger's irony is earnest, possibly even aggressive;<sup>12</sup> Erwitt's is irreverent and amusing.

There are also billboard photographs which do not rely on text for their ironic effect. In a photograph by Philip Jones Griffiths, a man crouches under the weight of a disproportionately large billboard panel that he carries on his shoulder (cinema display, Thailand, 1977, in Jones Griffiths, 1996). On the panel is the picture of a smiling woman with a tennis racket propped lightly on her shoulder. The contrast in size is certainly amusing, in the way that differences of human scale so often are, but the irony resides in the contrast in lifestyles symbolized by the two figures in the photograph. Once again, the conflict is between the haves and the have-nots, the leisured and the labouring classes, with the image on the panel providing the mention which the smaller figure echoes. The irony in this particular case is accentuated by the similarity in pose – both figures carry something on their shoulders – but whereas the billboard girl carries a tennis racket, which here symbolizes a life of ease, the worker carries a huge weight on his shoulder, the weight of the leisured classes, one is tempted to say metaphorically.

In another photograph by Philip Jones Griffiths, shot in Northern Ireland, a soldier crouches behind a garden wall, partly obscured by a bush (*Mowing the Lawn, Northern Ireland, 1973*, in Jones Griffiths, 1996). His eyes are alert, his body is poised for action, his gun points out of the frame. Behind him a woman in an apron mows the lawn. The irony of this photograph resides in the incongruity of two incompatible orders of experience inhabiting the same frame: a uniformed gun-toting soldier whom we associate with violence, damage and death on the one hand, and a housewife at her daily chores, symbol of peaceful domesticity on the other. There is no text here to help us distinguish between what is said and what is meant, or what is being cited ironically as opposed to what is being said earnestly. Instead, in order to appreciate the irony involved, we appeal to our knowledge of the world, to the symbolic value of the two components in the picture, and to their incompatibility in the usual scheme of things.

It would seem then that if a system of beliefs is readily enough available (the very notion of 'the usual scheme of things' entails a system of belief), and that if an image can bring to mind this belief system by means of an easily identifiable symbol, then we do not need words in order to access a dominant representation. Once a world view has been summoned, the remainder of the picture must in some way question it in order to achieve ironic effect. The most obvious way of questioning it is by introducing an element of incongruity. As noted above, the ironic effect will be enhanced by (and indeed may even depend on) a further element of obliviousness or a discrepancy in awareness. Neither the housewife nor the soldier seems aware of the other's presence, let alone of the significance of their combined presence.

In a similarly ironic photograph, Jones Griffiths shows mothers and children going about their daily business alongside the diminutive figure of a



soldier peering over some sandbags, gun in hand (*Life in Northern Ireland, 1973*, in Jones Griffiths, 1996). He seems as unconcerned by the traffic of civilian life as do the civilians by his presence. Although they both occupy the same space, they seem to inhabit different realities. Further irony is to be found in the relative scale of soldier and shoppers. The army's image is 'big' or at least self-aggrandizing, but it has been significantly diminished here. In echoic mention terms, our prior conception of the army as important and imposing is the proposition being mentioned in both these images, and its depiction as insignificant and possibly ineffectual expresses the ironist's attitude.

If we look at other work by Jones Griffiths, we find that symbols of war are often juxtaposed incongruously with symbols of peaceful everyday life.<sup>13</sup> But other symbols also figure, such as religious icons. In *Earthquake victims, Sicily, 1968*, a statue of a saint with the holy child in his arms turns his back to the rescue teams and damaged buildings in the background. In *Human remains, Cambodia, 1980* (Figure 3), a reclining Buddha smiles beatifically over a mass of human bones and skulls in the foreground. Both these images represent supposedly omniscient, omnipotent and magnanimous religious figures in contexts which show them at best unaware, and at worst indifferent, to human suffering. These representations of them, in reversing our expectations, force us to question our beliefs and in so doing alert us to the possibility that we were hitherto duped by these beliefs, that we were the victims of our own fallible world views.

**Figure 3**  
'Human remains, Cambodia, 1980'.  
© Philip Jones Griffiths/  
Magnum Photos.



## 6. CONDEMNATORY VERSUS CELEBRATORY IRONY

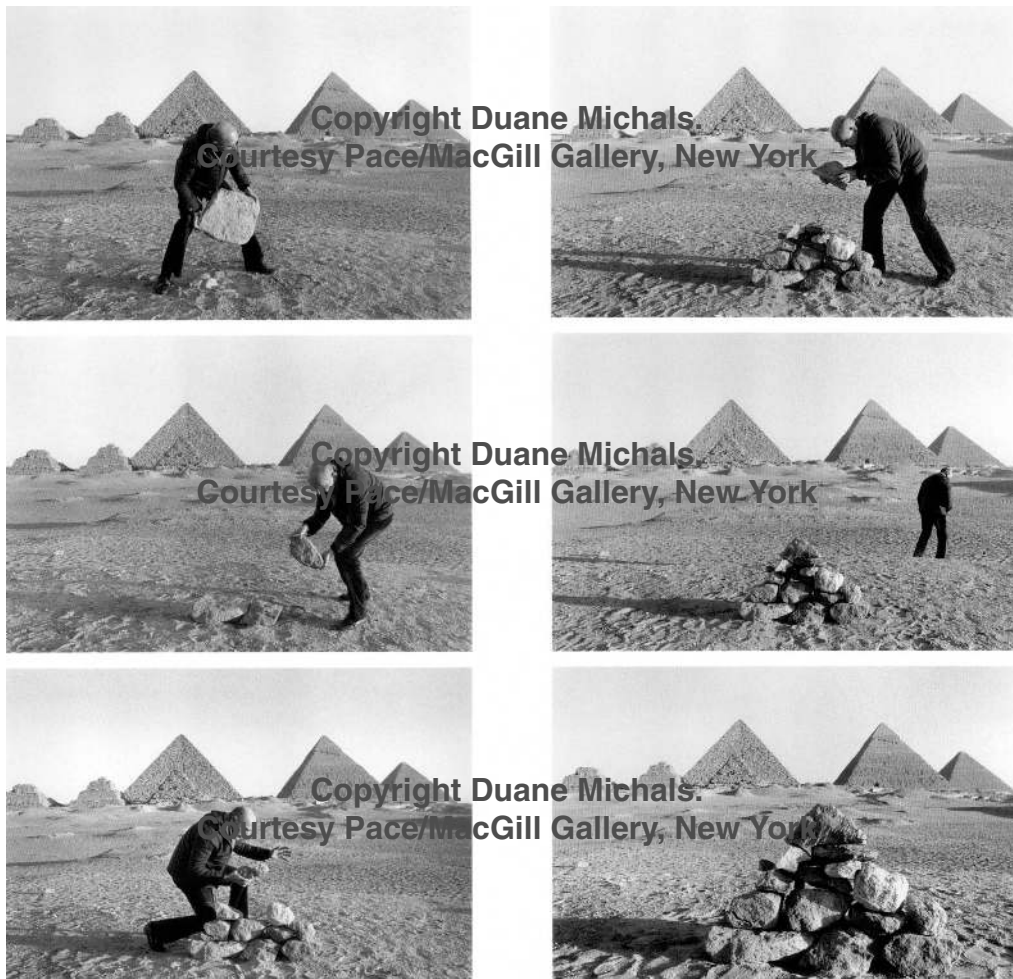
Not all reversals of expectations force an earnest revision of our belief systems however. The war photography of Philip Jones Griffiths discussed so far is condemnatory in its intent, and fits into the long tradition of photography as a medium for social judgement. Practitioners of condemnatory irony assume the responsibility of exposing those aspects of human affairs which are morally reprehensible. In particular they see incongruity as a symptom of a flawed world.

What I call 'celebratory' irony in contrast lacks the critical edge so often associated with irony. Or rather, instead of condemning incongruity as an inherent flaw in the rational order of things, its practitioners celebrate it as an inevitable aspect of the human condition. They emphasize a ludic as opposed to corrective response to the vagaries of life. 'People's recognition of the inchoateness of the human condition requires that we suspend belief in ourselves and celebrate incongruities' (Gibbs, 1994: 371).

As we saw in Erwit's *Versailles, 1975*, humour displaces earnestness. In another of his photographs, *Coney Island, New York, 1975*, a vast expanse of sky is punctuated by a seagull perched on a streetlight, of which only the top is visible in the upper right corner of the image. Far below it, in the bottom left corner, is a flying aeroplane. We all know of course that planes fly higher than birds, and Erwit's photograph does not challenge our beliefs on this subject. The irony resides in the reversal of expectation caused by this incongruous juxtaposition. The reversal acts as echoic mention of the 'natural' order of things. It is moreover a playful form of irony which, in making us suspend our usual perspective, foregrounds the elements of pretence and dissimilitude classically associated with irony.

Another even more blatant example of pretence can be found in the work of Duane Michals. In a set of six images entitled *I Build a Pyramid* (Figure 4), he shows himself building a small pyramid out of one or two dozen stones. The actual pyramids of Giza stand in the background providing the frame of reference. The penultimate photograph shows Michals walking away from his completed task, and the final shot zooms in to his pyramid which, given the effects of perspective, appears to be the same size as the actual pyramids. Obviously nobody would fall for this trick, but we all recognize and smile at the ironic pretence involved.

Dissimilitude often involves a differential awareness between subject and viewer. In a photograph by Elliot Erwit, *Nice, 1968*, a man strides along a seaside promenade, looking at the view, his hands clasped behind his back. Where his foot comes in contact with the ground a dark puddle snakes out: is his seeming insouciance a disguise for the fact that he has just wet himself, or is he the unwitting object of the photographer's trap? If the subject in the photograph is indeed oblivious of his predicament as apprehended by the viewer, then he evinces what Muecke refers to as 'serenely confident unawareness' (1969: 29–34, 1973: 29). Such confident lack of awareness was



**Figure 4** Duane Michals, 'I Build a Pyramid'. Copyright Duane Michals. Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

traditionally a central component of irony and derived from the dynamic between the ironical player and the truthful if more gullible one in traditional Greek plays.

Henri Cartier-Bresson is another photographer in whose work serene unawareness figures prominently. In one of his best-known photographs, *At the coronation parade of George VI's, London, 1937*, a crowd waits earnestly for the procession, while beneath them a man lies fast asleep on the newspaper-littered ground, oblivious both to the procession and to the contrast that he strikes with the rest of the crowd. The crowd is behaving as crowds no doubt 'should', but by means of this juxtaposition Cartier-Bresson laughs both at the sleeper for his indifference and at the crowd for their keenness.

This discrepancy in awareness between subject and viewer is evident in other photographs such as *Ski lift, Switzerland, 1991*, where a man stands beneath the huge cement counterweight of a ski lift apparently unaware of the danger he is in should the weight fall; and *Newcastle upon Tyne, 1978*,

which shows a young couple caught in a passionate embrace oblivious to the many headstones which surround them or of the incongruous juxtaposition of procreation and death contained in the scene.<sup>14</sup> In *Bathers, Zurich, 1953*, a couple float on lilos on the lake, blissfully unaware of the two ducks swimming past them and, more significantly, of the resemblance between the two pairs: we do not usually equate people with ducks, but seen from this perspective, they are amusingly similar. Our amusement is moreover enhanced by the couple's obliviousness to the similarity. In yet another photograph, *Pleasure boat, Paris, 1966*, the relationship between the leisured and the labouring classes is captured in an image of a tourist boat on the Seine in which the passengers are all white and above deck, and the window washers are black and on a lower rung, both literally and metaphorically. The irony resides partly in the juxtaposition of these two mutually exclusive levels of existence, but also in the obliviousness of all but one of the wealthy whites to the workers who support their leisure.

The works of all these photographers are ironical insofar as they set up a frame of reference, and then subvert it by means of an incongruity. In so doing, they reveal the dominant representation not to be definitive. In all cases, the recognition of a differential awareness between ironist and victim enhances the sense of incongruity. But whereas Jones Griffiths uses irony in order to question dominant representations of war, religion and human nature with a view to exposing and condemning the fallacies of our belief systems, Erwitte and Cartier-Bresson tend to use irony in order to single out amusing incongruities as they chance upon them, and Michals blatantly creates the incongruity under our eyes.

The essential difference between condemnatory and celebratory irony is that the former is political and the latter philosophical. Whereas the ideological content of condemnatory irony is familiar to us, the philosophical content of celebratory irony may benefit from elucidation. It refers in part to the notion of 'being philosophical about life', that is to say, to the understated humour which some assume in the face of adversity:

Humour – the divine flash that reveals the world in its moral ambiguity and man in his profound incompetence to judge others.  
Humour; the intoxicating relativity of human things; the strange pleasure that comes from the certainty that there is no certainty.  
(Kundera, 1993: 32–3)

Just as 'the certainty that there is no certainty' is central to Kundera's definition of humour, this concept is also present in the philosopher Richard Rorty's definition of irony. To him an ironist is 'the sort of person who faces up to the contingencies of his or her most central beliefs and desires', and who is free of the delusion that such beliefs and desires 'refer back to something beyond the reach of time and chance' (1989: xv). Rorty's claim is that there is no final vocabulary with which to describe a person, an event, or

a truth. He advises us therefore to be ironic enough about our own putative final vocabularies, and curious enough about everyone else's, in order to engage in a constructive dialogue with each other. Our aim should be an expanding repertoire of alternative descriptions rather than 'the One Right Description'.<sup>15</sup>

## 7. CONTEMPORARY USES OF WORDLESS IRONY

Several contemporary photographers have risen to the challenge of defying 'the one right description' and have appealed to irony in order to do so. Barbara Kruger and Carrie Mae Weems have already been mentioned as practitioners of word-based irony. Among those who have worked with wordless irony is Cindy Sherman, known for her use of self-portrayal to explore issues of female identity and representation. Her work is particularly concerned with the 'elision of image with identity', the way in which women's identity has in large part been *created*, rather than *re-presented*, by representations of women. In addition to popular culture and its consumerist credo, Sherman undermines many other established genres: film, fashion, men's magazines, religious paintings, classical portraits and fairy tales among them. As Elizabeth Smith (1997) has said:

Sherman's undermining of established genres ... points to a satirical vein that underpins her work's late 20th century ironic sensibility. Through her use of trenchantly absurd juxtapositions and transformations and her embrace of melodrama, she succeeds in parodying the construction and presentation of myth and archetype in all these genres. (p. 24)

Sherman undermines dominant representations primarily by means of two devices that we have already encountered: reversal and literalization. In a series of fashion shots done in the mid-1980s for instance (Cruz, 1997), she projects her models as victims or criminals rather than the mannequins we are familiar with. Their facial skin is badly burnt (presumably by beautifying creams), their hair dried out and unmanageable (through the effects of dye and shampoos), their look is either manic or depressed. In one case the model has blood dripping off her hands, as if fresh from a murder.

There is a double irony underlying this work. The first level has to do with the use of contrast and even exaggeration in order to expose the false promises of fashion advertising.<sup>16</sup> The second comes into play when we realize that Sherman's fashion work was actually commissioned in 1983 by a fashion house (Dorothee Bis), and used for publicity. Why, we might ask, would a fashion house wish to project an image of itself which is an ironic parody of what it stands for? And why would an artist whose life's aim is to expose the brainwashing inherent in advertising and in the representation of women more generally agree to work for the 'enemy'? The answer must be that where the fashion house is concerned, it adds to their kudos and

credibility to be able to assimilate criticism and even turn it into a virtue, since it is a powerful force indeed that can turn enmity into complicity. It also shows them to have their finger on the pulse of cutting-edge culture: in this case the work of a photographer with a cult following.

Where Cindy Sherman is concerned, her motives are as ever more open to speculation, but a plausible interpretation is that by getting a fashion house to appropriate images which are explicitly designed to expose and undermine the world it stands for, she reveals first the total indifference of that world to ethical considerations of how it uses and abuses its models and consumers. Second, she reveals the near impossibility of making a stand against that world.

The danger with this kind of double think is that its subtleties may easily be lost on the viewer, with the consequent loss not just of the critical edge of her irony, but of the public's recognition that irony is at all involved. In fact this is exactly what happened with her series 'Horizontal', which was designed to parody the supine, passive and vulnerable sex objects teenage girls are so often depicted as being. In each image, Sherman portrays herself in a clichéd pose, 'asking for it', fearing an assault, recovering from one or just waiting forlornly for the phone to ring. The horizontal format forces a prostrate pose, and emulates men's magazine centrefolds. According to Smith (1997: 24), Sherman is inverting representations in order to redress them. In other words, she is using irony to criticize society, and the trigger in this particular case is literalization. Although literalization, as we have already seen, is a typical trigger of ironic intent, Sherman's irony is probably too insidious in this case. The response to these photographs was highly critical and revealed that a good proportion of the public had understood them literally, rather than ironically, as a case of use rather than mention:

When this series was shown, Sherman was criticised by some as having created images that reaffirm sexist stereotypes, and *Artforum* [which had commissioned the work] eventually rejected the pictures. (Cruz, 1997: 6)

Sherman's mimicry of the stereotype she sought to expose was too authentic and lacked the element of incongruity which signals the presence of irony. The most obviously ironic collections in Sherman's extensive body of work are those in which the echoic mention is readily identifiable, whether in the film or fashion world, religious and historical portraits, or fairy tales.

Photographers often present their work in series in order to avoid misinterpretation. Much as Mark Antony's oft repeated 'for he is an honourable man' alerts us to the significance of this seemingly innocuous term,<sup>17</sup> Karen Knorr's irony depends on the larger body of work she presents for its effect:

When working with humour and irony, one needs to frame or contextualise the 'statements'. A tension has to be set up by repetition

in the pose or angle of view. It is the series as context that produces the irony. The image texts on their own become literal, losing their humour. (Knorr, 1996: 404)

Knorr's series *Connoisseurs* is 'an attempt to parody received ideas of beauty and taste in British High Culture', and in *Belgravia* and *Gentlemen* she aims to reject the cult of the personality linked to society portraiture. The portraits are not named; rather, the poses of the sitters are interpreted as a 'social gesture', that is to say a set of gestures that reflect a whole social class, prejudices and all. Her work, she explains, is about attitudes that are 'classed' as much as gendered, not about particular individuals. Seen in isolation, her images might be interpreted as cases of 'use' rather than 'mention', and run the risk, as she says, of being read literally.<sup>18</sup>

Chuck Samuel and Yasumasa Morimura have similarly presented their work in series. Both draw on the photographic canon for echoic mention and, having reproduced the original poses and lighting faithfully, substitute a male in the place of the female models found in the original. Chuck Samuel reproduces black and white masterpieces from the 1930s such as Weston's *Nude 1936* and Man Ray's *Violon d'Ingres*, whereas Yasumasa Morimura in his series entitled *Self-portrait as a movie actress* recreates famous colour shots from the 1950s and 1960s of Marlene Dietrich and Marilyn Monroe among others, conspicuously sporting false breasts where necessary.

In what way are these images ironical? If we run through some of the defining properties of irony discussed so far, we find that they make mention of existing representations which have common currency in our culture and introduce a distortion which invites viewers to reconsider their preconceptions. There is also an element of pretence and dissimilitude. In addition, the images are well crafted and the effect is witty.<sup>19</sup> But is this a case of irony or of parody? Sperber and Wilson (1981) claim that whereas both irony and parody are types of mention, 'irony involves change of meaning, whereas parody involves imitation' (p. 311).<sup>20</sup> Hutcheon (1989), for one, argues that a change of meaning is definitely involved in the reversal of dominant gendered representations: 'Morimura [and others] ... also recall the history of art in their work and, through ironic alterations, recode its gendered representations in gay male terms' (p. 14).

It could be argued that a simple gender reversal is not a sufficiently finely honed tool to question our world view, though one could also claim that the degree of subtlety one demands of irony is ultimately a subjective matter. This issue is an important one since our understanding of irony depends in large part on a shared definition of the concept. Although I return later to the role of subjectivity in irony, I would like here to use the echoic mention theory as a diagnostic for evaluating borderline cases of irony.

## 8. IS IT IRONY?

The following two examples, which I myself would consider marginal examples of ironic photographs, have been claimed by critics to epitomize the genre. How well do they pass the echoic mention diagnostic?

The work of Sherrie Levine consists of a set of photographs of famous photographs. That is to say, she has made photographic copies of a number of famous photographs by renowned male photographers, and exhibited them with titles such as *'After Weston'*, *'After Ansel'*. According to Naomi Rosenblum (1997), the works of Levine: 'express ironic attitudes towards cultural stereotypes in general and toward the particular claims of the photograph as a highly valued aesthetic object' (p. 577).

How do Levine's images conform to the working definition provided by the echoic mention theory of irony? The mention component is clearly present since the pictures not only allude to existing images but actually reproduce them. In contrast, the echoic element, which involves a distortion or incongruity, is not evident at all. As a result, no conflicting representations of reality are involved since these are exact replicas, nor is there any element of pretence since Levine openly presents them as replicas. In order to be interpreted as ironical these works need to be understood, I surmise, as follows: the echoic mention refers not to the photographs being reproduced but to their status as works of art. The lack of any distorting trigger is paradoxically a central part of the irony: it literalizes the untouchable status of masterpieces. The target of her irony is the value of photographic reproductions and the hypocrisy involved in attributing all the credit for pictures to photographers when, depending on their practices, they may not have touched the print which is on display.

Levine's work may indeed be reflexive and critical, but I am not convinced that it is ironical. Its shortcoming is not, as in Sherman's *'Horizontal'*, the absence of a sufficiently well-signalled mention, but rather the absence of a visible attitude or critical distancing. It is only once we have been instructed as to how her images should be read that the target of Levine's irony becomes accessible. However, since irony depends on the frames of reference which one brings to bear in interpreting it, a picture is arguably no less ironic for coming with an explanatory text, its irony is just less obviously accessible.<sup>21</sup>

What of Clarke's appraisal of Cartier-Bresson's *Madrid, Spain, 1933* as an image 'awash with a visual irony'? It is true that differential awareness is involved since the children are aware of the camera, but the central figure of the man is not, and it is also true that the man strikes a somehow incongruous figure as he walks past. However, I would argue that awareness and incongruity by themselves do not add up to irony. There is no echoic mention here, no system of beliefs is being questioned, no critical attitude is being expressed, nor is there any reinterpretation of the world in the light of available evidence. If there is any one criterion of irony, it is the simultaneous



presentation of a world view and critical distancing from it. Does this mean the image is not ironic, or that I personally fail to see the irony in it? This depends on where we believe irony to reside and is the subject of the concluding section.

To summarize, we have seen that the central pitfall of wordless visual irony resides in the difficulty of establishing clearly enough the dominant representation and associated system of beliefs which photographers seek to subvert by means of their images. Where words are involved, ironic intent is clearer because text and image can be played off against each other more precisely, with the words generally providing the mention which the remainder of the image undermines in some way. Without the help of words, an ironic picture must both allude to a world view and knock it down at one and the same time. The challenge is to allude unambiguously to the world view being mentioned, which is why widely recognizable symbols work so well. Jones Griffiths uses icons of war and religion, and questions what they stand for by means of incongruous juxtaposition. Sherman parodies consumer images as well as female representations from the art canon. Samuel and Morimura similarly subvert images from the photographic canon.

In other cases, echoic mention appeals to our common knowledge of the relative size, power and importance of things in the world. Size and its associated metaphorical import is present in Jones Griffiths's ironic rendering of the leisured and the labouring classes in the Thai film poster, as it is in the Northern Ireland shopping scene with a backgrounded diminutive soldier. Size also figures in Erwit's plane and bird, where it signals power and lift, and in Michal's pyramid, where it signals grandeur and permanence. Echoic mention can also refer to the unawareness of the victim of irony, as we saw in the work of Cartier-Bresson. The final trigger of wordless ironic intention surveyed here was work in series, which helps to provide the necessary framework for ironic contrast.

Once echoic mention has been successfully identified, evidence of the photographer's attitude needs to be established. An echoic mention without attendant attitude qualifies as simple allusion, homage or inter-textuality rather than irony. The difficulty encountered with Samuel, Morimura's and Levine's work is that their attitude towards the photographs they are echoing is, for many of us, either too obvious (gender reversal alone does not guarantee irony) or not explicit enough (what exactly is Levine objecting to by means of her reproductions?).

Finally, the pitfall of failing to signal echoic mention was illustrated by Sherman's 'Horizontal' series, where the public seems not to have recognized the images as cases of mention, and therefore interpreted them as genuine instances of sexually stereotyped and exploited teenagers. It has also occurred in the case of Barbara Kruger's work, prompting the following observations from Rosalyn Deutsche (1999): 'Some critics mistake Kruger's exploration of violence for violence itself' (p. 77). The failure to distinguish between use and mention is already a risk in the verbal medium, and even more so in the

written medium where ironic intention cannot be signalled by intonation. Since there is no equivalent to an ironic tone of voice in the visual medium, it is not surprising that visual irony is so much more at risk of being overlooked.

## 9. LOCATING IRONY

The challenge identified at the start of this article was to understand how visual irony works; how a photograph can possibly show one thing and mean another. In concluding, I would like to briefly address the question of *where* irony resides. Is it possible or indeed useful to distinguish between ironic situations, ironic pictures and ironic viewers?<sup>22</sup>

An ironic situation or event is one in which there is no ironist but only a victim and an observer (Muecke, 1973: 28). This type of irony is called 'situational irony' and tends to be seen as accidental, the product of fate. Situational irony contrasts with verbal irony (also known as 'behavioural irony' in order to transcend medium-specific connotations, but referred to here as 'ironic pictures'), which *does* involve an ironist, one whose explicit purpose is to express his or her attitude towards a state of affairs.

We have to ask whether situational irony can exist in photography. Is it possible for photographers to be mere observers recording an 'objectively' ironic situation or are they always ironists purposefully combining components in order to achieve ironic effect?

It is generally accepted that ironic situations are those which appeal to shared beliefs and expectations (see Hutcheon, 1995; 'Irony's Edge', ch. 4 in Muecke, 1973; also Muecke, 1969: ch. 5). In the famous picture of Elian Gonzales that was broadcast around the world in April 2000, a diminutive and helpless figure is shown face to face with a fierce looking and massively armed US soldier. The situation is ironical in that no right-thinking person can possibly believe that so much might is needed in order to cage such a lightweight prey, and yet the US government clearly must have thought so or this situation would not have arisen. But even though the situation is obviously ironical, the photograph itself is essential in recording that particular dimension of it. Another might have focused on the child's fear and made an emotional rather than ironical statement. In other words, ironic situations are often only evidently ironical once they have been processed by the ironic sensibility of a particular photographer. It therefore takes an acute observer to recognize an incongruous juxtaposition and seize both the moment and the angle in order to record it. As Louis Pasteur said, 'chance favours the informed mind', and the work of Philip Jones Griffiths and Henri Cartier-Bresson illustrates the way in which these two photographers trained their minds to see the potential for ironic situations. It is worth noticing also how their work reflects the distinct ironic bent of each man's mind.

In the case of ironic pictures, we are of course dealing as much with the mind that framed the image as with the image itself. Where *found* images

are concerned, the situation depicted might have been less obviously ironical to the casual viewer and is therefore more dependent on the ironic sensibilities of a particular photographer. The potential for irony depends on the photographer's originality of perception, and maybe even on his eccentric (cum dissembling) representation, all of which require skill in the craft of photography: use of perspective, framing, foreshortening, etc. Where *made* images are concerned, the imprint of the photographer's ironic sensibility has even more potential to assert itself, and the photographer has no scruples about misleading the viewer or making a victim of the subject.

Muecke (1973) makes the interesting claim that the traditionally central feature of irony, namely that of a contrast between appearance and reality, is being diluted because 'most people see irony as inherent in the paradox or dilemma and not in the contrast of a true and a false picture of reality' (p. 32). To the extent that a difference can be drawn between ironic situations and ironic pictures, it would be fair to say that the ideological component is best exemplified by what we call ironic situations because they appeal so essentially to shared frames of reference. In contrast, the pretence component of irony is perhaps best exemplified by ironic pictures, which are more subject to the originality of the individual's perception. Both ironic situations and ironic pictures however are irreverent, undermining and subversive of the status quo.

Finally, to what extent is an ironic viewer important in the working of irony? It has been said that irony without an audience is like one hand clapping. Irony can easily be missed but it can equally well be read into images where none was intended.<sup>23</sup> There is scope both for individual differences in the perception of irony, and for changes in ironical potential over time and across context, depending in both cases on the frames of reference which one brings to bear in the interpretation of an image – or of the world.<sup>24</sup> If these frames of reference are shared between photographer and viewer, the ironical intent of the photographer is more likely to be recognized and appreciated. It is possible for photographers to suggest the frames of reference within which they want their photographs to be viewed, and this is often done by presenting work in series or by providing an accompanying text. But ultimately irony is subject to the ironic bent of the individual, whether the photographer or the viewer:

A sense of irony involves not only the ability to see ironic contrasts but also the power to shape them in one's mind. It includes the ability, when confronted with anything at all, to imagine or recall or notice something which would form an ironic contrast. (Muecke, 1973: 47)

The challenge is perhaps not so much to see irony but to have others see it where we do. Where photography is concerned, this involves making images that invite others to share the irony that the photographer perceives. Where photography criticism is concerned, this involves explaining what critics

mean by irony, so that not only the irony in an image, but the critical evaluation of that image, can be understood and appreciated by all.

## NOTES

1. Accompanying photographs may be accessed on <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~biscott/imlang/irony/irony1.htm>
2. The ironist was a stock character in Greek drama whose function it was to question accepted reality by introducing an element of pretence or false reality.
3. For a debate on the centrality of pretence to irony, see the four articles in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* (1984), 113(1).
4. The question of where irony is located, whether in the picture itself, in the mind of the photographer or that of the viewer, is discussed at the end of this article.
5. The following ironic jibe on the problems of defining irony gives some insight into the absence of a consensual definition:

It might perhaps be prudent not to attempt any formal definitions. Since, however, Erich Heller, in his *Ironic German*, has already quite adequately not defined irony, there would be little point in not defining it all over again. (Muecke, 1969: 14)
6. D.C. Muecke (1973: 48) for instance lists the following 'basic features': a confident unawareness, a contrast of appearance and reality, a comic element, an element of detachment and an aesthetic element.
7. Linda Hutcheon (1995) identifies some of these functions as: counterdiscursive, reinforcing, complicating, ludic, distancing, self-protective, provisional, oppositional, assailing and aggregative (p. 47).
8. Sperber and Wilson (1981) give the following range of echoic mentions:

... some are immediate echoes, and others delayed; some have their source in actual utterances, others in thoughts or opinions; some have a real source, others an imagined one; some are traceable back to a particular individual, whereas others have a vaguer origin. When the echoic character of the utterance is not immediately obvious, it is nevertheless suggested. (pp. 309–10)
9. Echoic mention could for instance be applied to musical irony, as found in Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture where the Marseillaise is caricatured (a signal for echoic mention). This 'directs us to adopt a certain attitude towards Napoleonic gloire' (Muecke, 1973: 6).
10. When there is no distinctive intonation, it is clear that the choice between literal and ironic interpretation must be based on information external to the utterance – contextual knowledge and other background assumptions – rather than the form or content of the utterance itself. (Sperber and Wilson, 1981: 301)

11. There may be a further echoic mention involved here as a standard reaction to giving up one's pleasure might well be 'impossible, that's too much to ask of anyone!'
12. Craig Owens (1999) suggests that Kruger's work 'doesn't impose a threat but signifies a threat'. In echoic mention terms, 'it *mentions* but doesn't *use* violence' (p. 194).
13. Further examples include: *Invaded sportsfield, Grenada, 1983* in which a solitary young man plays with a football under the nose of a tank full of American soldiers; *Marines landing on beach, Danang, 1970*, in which three local girls sunbathe in the foreground while a dozen or more American soldiers disembark on the beach.
14. Should Marvell's couplet 'To His Coy Mistress': 'The grave's a fine and private place, but none, I think, do there embrace' come to mind, it would provide a further echoic mention and enhance our reading of the image as ironic.
15. Hynes (1961) similarly describes irony as 'a view of life which recognizes that experience is open to multiple interpretations, of which no one is simply right, and that the co-existence of incongruities is a part of the structure of existence', cited in Muecke (1973: 22)
16. An alternative analysis would be that Sherman uses literalization: her models literally look like the victims fashion metaphorically turns us into.
17. Mark Antony carries his audience with him, through a series of successively more hostile attitudes to a proposition which itself remains unchanged from start to finish. At every stage the proposition is mentioned, and not used. (Sperber and Wilson, 1981: 315)
18. John Berger and Olivier Richon (1989) suggest that Knorr's irony, like repetition and reinterpretation, is a form of 'paralanguage'. 'It celebrates a form of intertextuality' (p. 3).
19. Muecke (1969) argues strongly in favour of an aesthetic element as a basic feature of irony:
 

An ironical remark or work, an ironic event or situation, must have, beyond its formal requirements, certain minimum aesthetic qualities, lacking which, it fails to affect us as irony. An ironist, therefore, is not just like an artist, but is an artist. (p. 15)

See also Muecke (1973: 45).
20. Dan Sperber (1984) elaborates on the distinction as follows:
 

The parodist is reproducing (usually with dramatic exaggeration) the very words, tone of voice, facial expressions, and so on, that he or she is attributing to his or her victim. The ironist is reproducing in his or her own words and tone of voice (by means of which he or she can express directly a derogatory attitude) the content of the words or thoughts that he or she is

attributing to the victim ... Parody, then, stands to irony as mentions of words and utterances stand to mentions of meaning and propositions, or, as direct quotations stand to indirect ones. (p. 135)

21. One of the functions of irony is indeed to create an exclusive club for those select few who are capable of understanding the in-joke.
22. 'Is the Mona Lisa a picture of a woman smiling ironically or an ironic portrait of someone smiling with foolish self-satisfaction?' (Muecke, 1973: 30).
23. For instance, when the scandal erupted in Spring 2001 over the impounding of Tierney Gearon's photographs in the Saatchi gallery in which her children were depicted naked, *The Guardian* published a picture taken by Denis Healey of a Chinese boy wearing the split trousers typical of Chinese children's attire. This picture happened to be hanging in the House of Commons members' exhibition, and although it also showed the genitalia of a child, it was not impounded by the police. Neither Gearon's nor Healey's photographs were themselves ironic, but the situation in which they found themselves had the potential for ironic contrast.
24. See, for instance, Linda Hutcheon's (1995) discussion of context and communities.

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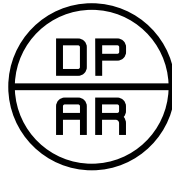
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**DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS  
NEWYORK = LONDON = TORONTO**

**Introduction**

DP/AR explores a continuum from departure to arrival through two narratives: one verbal and one visual. The DP/AR subway ride represents the continuum of natural to artificial, book to screen, still to moving image.

Written as information narratives, DP/AR modifies the traditional narrative, and allows information to infiltrate the story. This is similar to what happens in our daily lives; increasingly, our experiences are more data and less object. Relationships and interactions are mediated by technology – the most intimate moments are often transformed into data, as when you instant message a lover. Both essays repurpose preexisting forms from train timetables; the narratives are structured as information.

Through an everyday subway ride, DP/AR is also about global homogenization and patterns of experience – how ubiquity can be a result of technology.

**DP:00:00:00**

Five tokens, please. That'll be seven fifty. There ya go.

**01:00:00**

Next stop Union Square. Stand clear of the closing doors please.

**02:00:00**

Everything is on a continuum somewhere between departure and arrival, exotic and everyday.

**03:00:00**

DEPARTURE: a going away; a deviation; a fresh course of action. DEPART: to go away; to set off or out; to deviate. [*Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* (1988). New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc., p. 257.]

**04:00:00**

ARRIVAL: the act of arriving; a person or thing that has arrived. ARRIVE: to come to a place, reach a destination, end a journey; to appear, come on the scene. [*Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* (1988). New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc., p. 52.]

**05:00:00**

We understand the word departure to mean a fresh course of action.  
We understand the word arrival to mean the act of arriving on the scene.

**AR:06:00:00**

In New York, you depart and arrive. The ride is a continuum from buying your Metro Card at Union Square to stepping out at Grand Central.

**07:00:00**

CONTINUUM: something capable of being divided infinitely, as is assumed of space and of time; a continuous series of identical components. [*Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* (1988). New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc., p. 211.]

**08:00:00**

We understand continuum to be something infinitely divisible, such as space/time. A journey from one point to another on the continuum is a narrative composed of all possible points in between.

**09:00:00**

On the subway, you depart and arrive through a series of stops. You experience sequence, motion through space/time, movement from here to there. The narrative is motion, is sequence.

**10:00:00**

Got the time? It's 10:00. Thanks.

**11:00:00**

Then the guy who sings for money is singing at me and telling me there's too much love in New York.

**DP:12:00:00**

Next stop Bond Street.

**13:00:00**

Next stop Oxford Circus. This train calls at all stations to Stratford.

**14:00:00**

Next stop Bank. This train calls at all stations to Stratford. Please keep your belongings with you at all times. Stop after stop, an equivalent experience. New York equals London equals Toronto.

**AR:15:00:00**

In London, you depart and arrive.

**16:00:00**

We understand a continuum to be a series of equivalent components.

**17:00:00**

Identical components form a pattern of equivalence. Here, experience is a repetitive pattern from one place to another. Patterns of information, behavior, language, routine. Every day we take the same subway, see the same people, hear the same announcements.

**DP:18:00:00**

Yonge and Bloor next. Connections to the Yonge/University Line.

**AR:19:00:00**

In Toronto, you depart and arrive.

**20:00:00**

DEPARTURE: going away; a deviation; a fresh course of action. [*Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* (1988). New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc., p. 257.]

**21:00:00**

Through the car's windows you see the car opposite. It's traveling at a slightly different speed. You make eye contact with a stranger.

**22:00:00**

The small event that is random, that is a departure from the pattern of everyday, has the potential to emerge, evolve and arrive as a new pattern. Once a random event has surfaced, there is a continuum from its first appearance, through replication, to its recognition as a pattern, as equivalence, as everyday.

**23:00:00**

...is another dimension not also another destination that the word reserves for both the object of thought and thought itself? Destination unknown until it is reached, at which point yet another destination is assigned, bestowing yet another new dimension? [Jabes, E. (1993), *The Book of Margins*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 58.]

**24:00:00**

ARRIVAL: the act of arriving; a person or thing that has arrived. ARRIVE: to come to a place, reach a destination, end a journey; to appear, come on the scene. [*Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* (1988). New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc., p. 52.]

**00:00:00**

Then the guy who sings for money is singing at me and telling me there's too much love in New York.







## CORRIDOR TO TIMES

CONNECTIONS/  
CORRESPONDANCES

UNION STN/  
GARE UNION

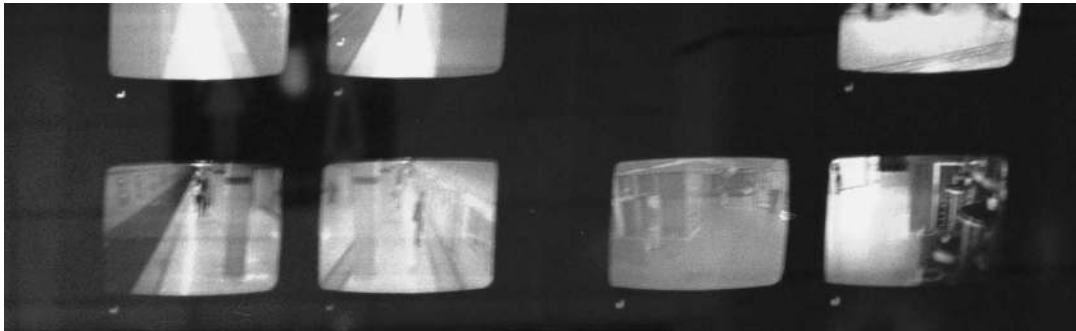
TAKE	TRACK 1
THE	TRACK 2
02:20:00	TRACK 3
TO	TRACK 4
ALPHABET	TRACK 5
CITY	TRACK 6
SHE	TRACK 7
SAID	TRACK 8
GO	TRACK 9
LINEAR	TRACK 10
TO	TRACK 11
THE	TRACK 12
LETTER	TRACK 13
Z	TRACK 14
AND	TRACK 15
THEN	TRACK 16
RADIAL	TRACK 17

## CIRCLE TO 14TH

CONNECTIONS/  
CORRESPONDANCES

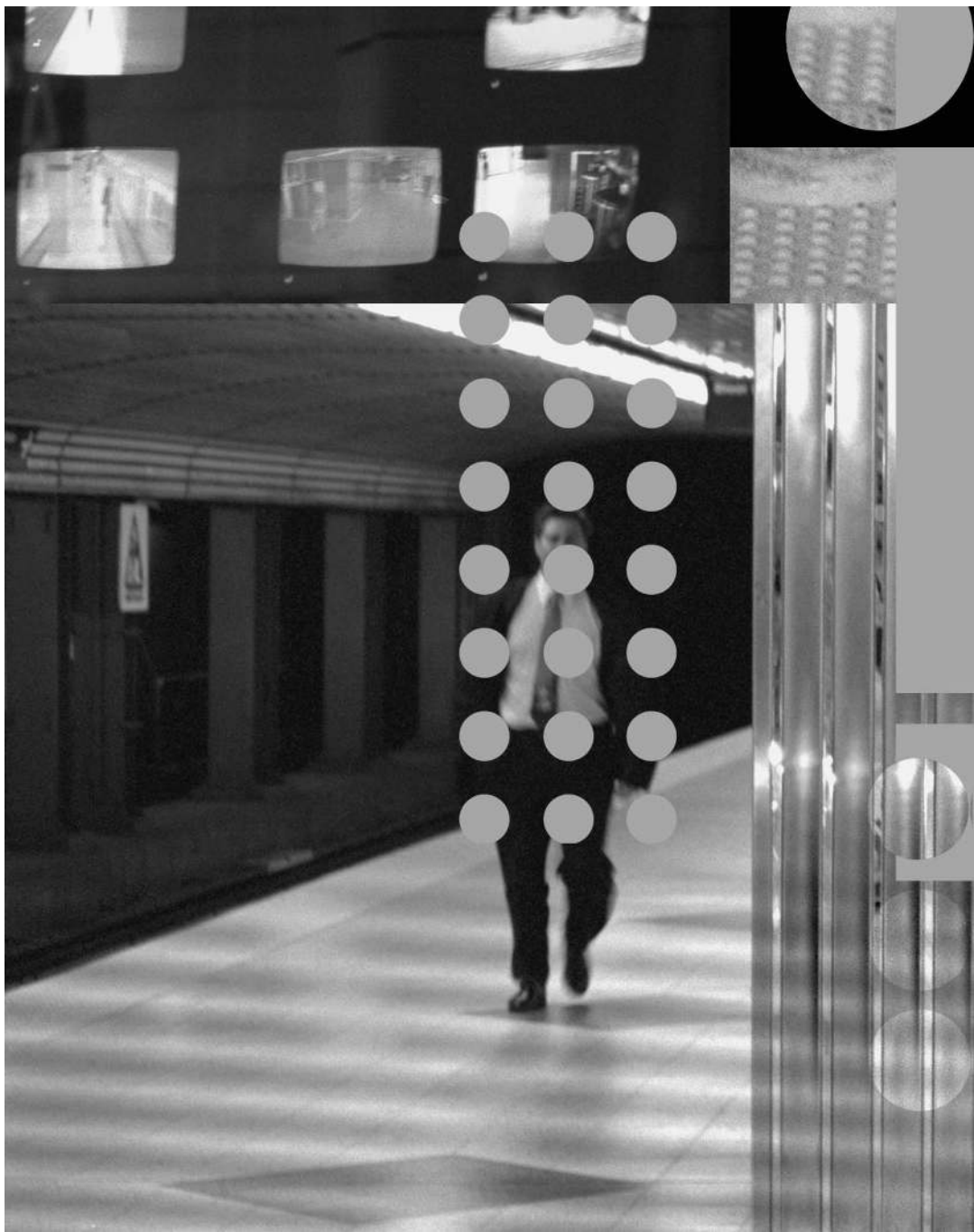
RUNS  
EVERY

OFF	_____
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TILL	_____
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02:20:00	_____
AT	_____
BATTERY	_____
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AT	_____
14TH	_____



## 2:00 TO ALPHABET CITY



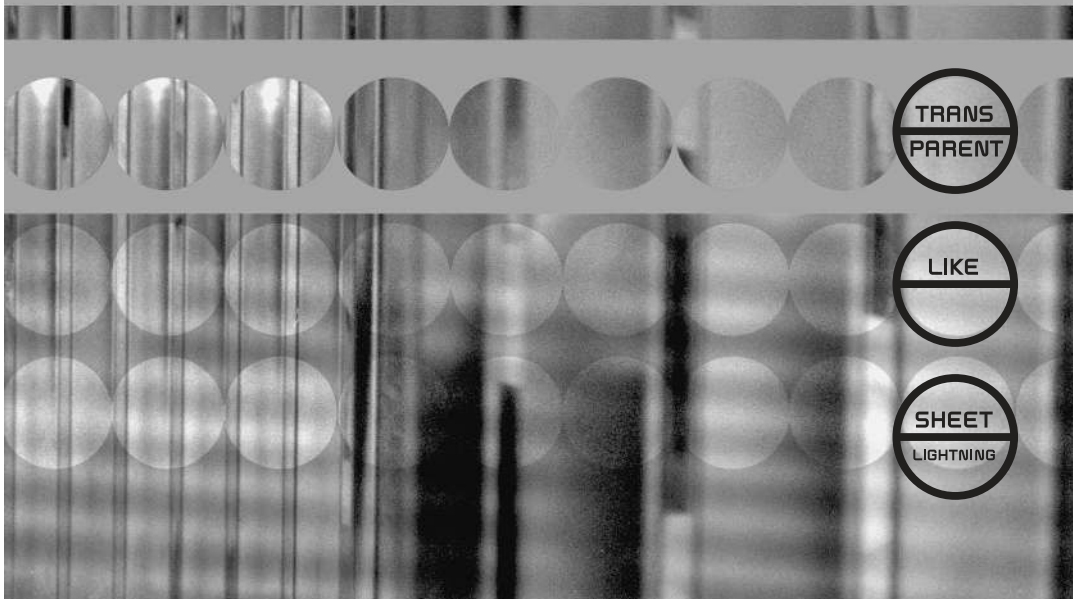


## CIRCUS TO YONGE

CONNECTIONS/  
CORRESPONDANCES

TIME/  
TRANSFER

MEET	00:00:01
ME	00:00:02
AT	00:00:03
UNION	00:00:04
SHE	00:00:05
SAID	00:00:06
I	00:00:07
GOT	00:00:08
OFF	00:00:09
AT	00:00:10
DISTRICT	00:00:11
IT	00:00:12
WAS	00:00:13
TRANSPARENT	00:00:14
LIKE	00:00:15
SHEET	00:00:16
LIGHTNING	00:00:17





## **ELEVATOR**

Elevator is a multi-disciplinary design firm based in New York and Detroit. Elevator designs in a range of applications from print to new media to product, and has directed projects for entertainment, culture, teen, architecture, technology, pharmaceutical and sport markets. Their work examines contemporary phenomena, such as: the continuum of hand to screen, the merging of personal and corporate identity, and the connection between human and technology. Recent projects include: launch of [www.elevatoraccess.com](http://www.elevatoraccess.com), the VH1 2002-3 Media Kit, an extranet for SmithKline Beecham, and TNN logo development.

## **SUMMER POWELL LIISA SALONEN**

Summer Powell and Liisa Salonen, co-founders of Elevator, began their collaboration during graduate studies at Cranbrook Academy of Art, and have worked on projects virtually between New York and Detroit for the last five years. Personally initiated projects merge graphic, product, and technology in Techtoos, Temporary Technological Tattoos, and in a personal electronic device which is in development and patent pending. Prior to founding Elevator, Powell art directed on Nike projects at Wieden & Kennedy Europe, on an e-commerce site for Droog.com (clothing for hip teen males), and on major Motorola online branding projects at Icon Medialab. Salonen is concurrently adjunct professor of design at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit; she co-curated *Exhibit A: Evidence of Pleasure*, an international design exhibition that explored the impact of new technologies on design communication for digital and real environments.

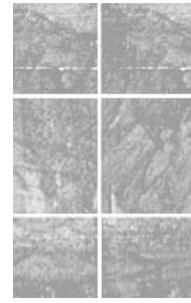
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## The politics of space: the spatial manifestations of representing Middle Eastern politics in American and Egyptian cinemas

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyses the different ways contemporary American and Egyptian films construct and understand space in the context of Middle Eastern politics. The article contrasts Hollywood's relationship with space as one about mastery, mirroring America's 'from-above' approach to Middle Eastern politics, with the Egyptian films' more intimate portrayal of space, where conflicts are more localized and closer to home. Space is explored as both a physical and a mental/imagined/lived entity. In its analysis of issues like the representation of Islamic fundamentalism in the films and its spatial manifestations, the article demonstrates that political space is not a matter of core versus periphery, where 'we' reside within a space and 'they' outside it, but rather that old boundaries have been erased while new ones have been (re)drawn.

### KEY WORDS

cinema • Egypt • Hollywood • Middle East • politics • space

### WHY SPACE MATTERS?

Much of the political debate in the Middle East revolves around space. Space, both physical and imagined, is not only part of the identity of people, but also a dynamic tool often utilized to define the identity of nations. As Lefebvre argues, 'space is produced by social relations which it also reproduces, mediates, and transforms' (Natter and Jones, 1997: 148). Space thus is constantly in flux and carries multiple meanings. It is not a given, a neutral stage upon which history is played out. It is part of history and culture, constantly being defined and redefined. In other words, space is a cultural process through which 'pasts erupt into the present' (Gregory, 1997: 228).

This article aims at problematizing the representation of space in

contemporary American and Egyptian films about Middle Eastern politics. Space often passes unnoticed in cinema, becoming naturalized and/or fixed in our imagination as a given. The article will thus 'denaturalize' space through contrasting the two cinemas' use of space and the ways in which this is related to the films' political nature. The article argues that the use of space by the two sides, while not necessarily oppositional, reflects different approaches to common political issues. The spatial manifestations of representing Middle Eastern politics thus underscore both countries' divergent political agendas.

In what follows, I first analyse the various spaces represented in Hollywood, then move to a discussion of the uses of space in the Egyptian films. In doing so, the article links theory on space and its association with various socio-political positions with visual analysis of the films. The basis for selecting the films is that they take Middle Eastern politics as a central issue. As a result of this criterion it transpires that most of the American films analysed in this article belong to the action genre, a genre characterized by a masculine, open space. Hollywood's relationship with space here is one about mastery, relying heavily on open, wide and aerial shots of action occurring outdoors. The Egyptian films, on the other hand, happened to be mainly melodramas and, therefore, are largely confined to feminine, indoor spaces, with space looked at from the inside. It is a much more intimate portrayal of space. This use of space is reflected in the ways the two sides deal with the various political issues involved. Thus, America's approach to Middle Eastern politics as portrayed in the films is from 'above', suggesting mastery over the politics and over the Other regions where the conflicts are played out. It parallels America's constantly expanding political frontiers. Egypt's approach, by contrast, is one from 'below', where the conflicts are more localized and physically closer to home.

### **HOLLYWOOD'S SPATIAL POLITICAL STAGE**

In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) introduces the term 'imagined geographies' (p. 55) to denote (to borrow a phrase from Driver and Rose, 1992: 4) the 'maps of meaning' that colonizers created to make sense of Other land(s). In this sense, countries become subjective creations (Freeman, 1999). Yet the colonizers' view was that their imagined geographies were scientific and objective (as in the writings of Mary Kingsley, see Blunt, 1994a and 1994b). Hollywood's representation of Other spaces does not diverge greatly from this path. The Other spaces represented in Hollywood are political and ideological, yet are viewed from a distance that invokes a sense of objectivity. This is established through the use of various camera shots that in turn constitute space in this particular way: aerial shots, wide-angle shots, radar views, 'targeting' views, penetration views, and panning shots. The different camera shots, in turn, construct the Other space in various forms: as an object, as a target, as wilderness, as an urban jungle, and as a barrier/

border to be crossed. In what follows, I examine each of those forms with reference to particular films depicting various aspects of Middle Eastern politics.

### Objectifying the Other space

Our first experience of San'a in Friedkin's film *Rules of Engagement* (2000) is a feeling of floating over the city. Masses of solemn houses, yellowish in the twilight, appear suddenly on the screen and jerk us from Wake Island in the Indian Ocean to Yemen. We soon realize that the view we are seeing is that of the American marines arriving in helicopters after a Yemeni terrorist attack on the American embassy in San'a. The helicopters' descent upon the city recalls the opening of Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, where the first things we see are aerial views from Hitler's plane as it flies over and comes down on Germany. Just as Hitler is positioned as God, so the American marines' spatial representation bestows upon them an element of glory. At the same time, this representation invokes a sense of mastery over the Other landscape. The Other landscape is thus objectified by the American gaze. This scientific gaze denies a representation of the intricacies of the Other space, and hence its 'lived' aspects.

As Keiller (1982) comments:

... the higher we ascend ... the more we can see, but the less we know about events beneath ... it seems that it is the things that we don't see that are most important to the depiction of spatial experience in the films. (p. 48)

The invocation of American mastery is also established through the use of the radar view as seen in *The Siege*, a film depicting Islamic fundamentalist terrorism in the heart of the USA. The opening sequence of the film contains images of radar screens monitoring the movement of an Islamic fundamentalist Sheikh's car in the Saudi desert. The radar view shots do not depict the car in its actual form, but rather as a point in motion on the radar screen. As if to validate the radar's view, shots of the sophisticated radar screen are inter-cut with shots of the Mercedes as it glides through the sand dunes of the expansive Saudi desert. High-angle shots of the car moving in the arid land from the right- to the left-hand side of our screen further establish the car and the Sheikh, who is meant to represent Osama bin Laden, as objects of American scientific scrutiny. Blunt (1994a) sees this surveillance as an act of authority. *The Siege's* spatial depiction of this mastery is then twofold. First is the previously mentioned surveillance; second is the enabling of a physical penetration of the desert, with American spies having gone through the desert to set up a trap to capture the Sheikh. In this sense, the unknown Other space is defined in terms of lack (of power) (Massey, 1993), which legitimates control over the landscape (Rose, 1992).

### Targeting the Other space

Sometimes the Other space is represented as a target. This is particularly seen in situations where American soldiers go into Other countries/landscapes. *Navy Seals*, a film where American marine troops are summoned to Lebanon to rescue a load of American missiles from the hands of militants, is an illustration of this. The film emphasizes the superiority of the American Seals over the Lebanese militias in the various fight sequences. The fighting takes place in Beirut, depicted as not much more than a shambles and mass of rubble. Beirut is meant to function as a generally passive background in the film, where the Americans victoriously encounter the Lebanese militias. The Seals penetrate the unknown landscape, hiding behind crumbling walls as they shoot their enemy. In their search for the missiles, they break into warehouses, slamming the doors open, and examining the space from every angle. The camera follows the soldiers as they go in, pans their angered faces, and lingers on the damage caused by their urgent search. When the soldiers shoot, the camera takes their side and portrays their targeting point of view. The Seals' bullets hit their targets, but also penetrate the urban landscape, adding to its existing symptoms of war: bomb and bullet holes penetrating everything, the walls, the buildings, even the roads. The space may be a background in the story, but it does carry with it the horrific aspects of war. The film does not explain how or why the missiles got to Lebanon. The focus remains on the pleasure derived from action sequences and on glorifying America (with the Seals finally succeeding in their mission). The conflict could have been anywhere, and the narrative is a classic one about the fight between good and evil.

### The ideology of wilderness

One of the most commonly used images of Arabia is that of the desert. The desert is a classic example of the opposition between nature and science (Rose, 1992), between wilderness and civilization. Sometimes this distinction is depicted literally, with juxtaposing images of progressive, (sub)urban space and desolate wilderness (Short, 1991). *Rules of Engagement* heavily relies on this, with sharp editing that moves between the jungles of Vietnam, leafy American suburbs and the Yemeni desert.

The desert is also used as a signpost that serves both the narrative and the American political agenda. It acts as an icon (Nietschmann, 1993) that is reduced to a set of transferable 'imaginative associations' (Freeman, 1999: 58). The narrative is served because the desert is an example of a classic binary system (barbarism versus civilization); the political agenda is served because the desert is invested with ideology. It is not only – being 'foreign' – a 'condition of excitement' (Freeman, 1999: 58), but also a condition of fear. Fear is transposed to the people who inhabit the desert. They are seen as 'native' to the desert, i.e. they are naturalized as part of the landscape (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992), or as a reflection of what wilderness represents (Short,

1991). In the film *In the Army Now*, American soldiers, Bones and co., find themselves on a mission in the Libyan desert, trying to evict invading Libyans from Chad. The desert is inhabited by soldiers who are as savage as the land they occupy. Speaking roughly, dressed roughly and treating the Americans roughly, they seem to display the qualities of what is seen as the opposite of civilization, even though they possess such technological advances as weapons and television (which they use to get news from CNN). Here, as Baudrillard (1983) explains, the desert can be associated with the figure of the non-human or anti-human who is outside the social order (see also Short, 1991). Bones and co. get lost in the desert and see their situation as being 'nowhere' (Schaffer, 1994). Arabia, as desert, is thus denied its privilege as place. It becomes mute (Freeman, 1999), only spoken for by the (cognitive) mapping of the United States.

### The ideology of the urban

Perhaps the most interesting shift that can be seen in the American films is the displacement of the condition of wilderness from actual natural settings to urban ones. In other words, the (Other) city now is portrayed as a negative space, a modern wilderness or a 'concrete jungle' (Short, 1991: 26). In many of the films, like *Rules of Engagement*, *Navy Seals* and *Programmed to Kill*, there is a stark contrast between the depiction of scarcely inhabited American landscape and crowded Arabian landscape (Budley and Safran, 1983). The American landscape is usually green (*Rules of Engagement*) yet urban (*The Siege*). Arabia, on the other hand, is a condensed hustle and bustle of seemingly overlapping houses (*Rules of Engagement*), narrow alleys (*The Insider*), and graffiti-covered walls (*The Delta Force*). Arab cities, in general, are structured differently from American ones. However, this difference is not represented positively; instead of the cities being portrayed as 'buzzing', they are depicted as cramped. This suggests a sense of claustrophobia and chaos (Naficy, 1996) which can be projected upon the Arab political scene.

The most significant example of the concrete jungle in the films is the depiction of Beirut. Beirut is an example of city as crisis (O'Healy, 1999). Freeman (1999) speaks of the internal consistency that occurs throughout films that utilize the same symbolic locations; in the case of Beirut, these have created and consolidated myths about the city and the people who inhabit it or are linked to it. Beirut is a city that is 'fossilized' (O'Healy, 1999: 241), its overrepresentation fixing it as a site of ruin, terror and chaos. Beirut thus belongs to a system of fossilized icons often depicted in cinema, like Cairo and the pyramids or the Arabian desert, icons which have become more real than the physical places they represent. This recalls Baudrillard's notion of simulacrum, where 'codes have superseded signs and ... the difference between the real and the reproduction is erased' (quoted in Freeman, 1999: 61–2). Beirut (like Other Arab places) in the films is a bearer

of anti-American sentiment, physically displayed through graffiti. Slogans like 'Death to America' are splashed all over the Arab cities (San'a in *Rules of Engagement*, Beirut in *Navy Seals* and *The Delta Force*), their foreign ambiguity (as they are written in Arabic) providing a further sense of threat to a non-Arabic-speaking audience. The walls of the Beirut space are thus reflectors of the political sentiment in the city as portrayed in the films. Beirut is also characterized as a place where 'normal' life does not seem to exist; the people living in that space are the fighters and the militias. It almost seems empty of civilians. (The same can be said about San'a in *Rules of Engagement*, where the apparent civilians, including women and children, turn out to be anti-American 'terrorists'). In this sense, the films deny Beirut its 'lived' existence.

Beirut is an ambivalent space. It is 'different' and this difference provides an element of anticipation which, when fulfilled, may or may not bring pleasure (Urry, 1990). Often described as the 'Switzerland of the Orient', Lebanon had been a tourist site before the Civil War. The Lebanese landscape, which combines snowy mountains and sandy beaches, had been a sign of interconnectedness – of seasons and topography and of cultures. This is evoked in *The Delta Force*, where a male Israeli Hizbullah captive is taken to an unknown place in the southern suburb of Beirut after the flight he was on is hijacked. As he is being dragged across the city's streets, the man nostalgically (and rather ironically) reminisces about the pleasure that the pre-war Lebanese landscape had provided him. Lebanon is thus mentally represented as a place that used to welcome Israelis until it was 'taken over' by Hizbullah and other Islamist groups (though we do not see that place). The result of this takeover is a radical change of the Lebanese landscape. Now, the country is characterized as a chaotic mass of rubble. The metaphor 'Switzerland of the Orient' thus becomes more than just about landscape. It carries with it an ideological meaning that renders Lebanon a Westernized oasis in the middle of a tumultuous Middle East. The Lebanese landscape thus is politically charged, with the film displacing the 'blame' for the changing face of Lebanon onto Islamic fundamentalists. The conflict is internalized, surgically removing the Israeli (foreign) contribution to the effacing of Beirut in specific and Lebanon in general.

### **The Other space as a barrier/border to be crossed**

The Other landscape in the films is subjected to different acts of authority by America. Mapping and surveillance are two examples, but perhaps the most important case is that the Other landscape is often physically penetrated by the Americans. We see the Americans travelling to Lebanon in *The Delta Force*, *Programmed to Kill*, and *Navy Seals*, to Iraq in *Courage Under Fire*, *Three Kings*, and (figuratively) *In the Army Now*. Keiller (1982) argues that the penetration of landscape reduces it from space to object. Penetration by the masculine American nation can be seen as raping the feminized, weak

landscape. But the Other landscape here is also a barrier to political mastery. It has to be crossed, overcome, to ensure American victory; in other words, it has to be (re)territorialized. This implies three things. First, border/barrier crossing involves a physical penetration of land and its impregnation with another culture. Young (1995) explains that this is a seizure of cultural space. Second, this territorialization by Self over Other can be seen as enlightenment, as the start of civilization and the end of primitivism. Finally, as Young (1995) puts it, 'colonization begins and perpetuates itself through acts of violence, and calls forth an answering violence from the colonized' (p. 173).

Those three implications can be clearly seen in *Three Kings*. At the conclusion of the Gulf War, American soldiers in the film find themselves rescuing Iraqi civilians even though that means defying American army orders. The American scientific mastery over the Other nature is seen in the film's main character, Archie, and his mates passing through the mountainous landscape of the Iraq/Iran border in order to deliver the Iraqi civilians to safety. Mountains are traditionally viewed as the most inaccessible parts of landscape (Short, 1991), and so conquering them infuses the American soldiers with power over the Other landscape and consequently over the people who inhabit it. The film is full of images of American military vehicles and soldiers roaming the desert. When it ends with crossing the Iraqi border and with the Americans reincarnated as saviors of the oppressed Iraqi civilians, America's political frontiers are further expanded. The American identity is thus viewed as one projected externally, an all-embracing identity that seeks to better the Other landscapes and their people. This is reflected in American foreign policy (Williams, 1972), from Vietnam to the Gulf War to the Arab–Israeli conflict.

The American presence in Iraq is portrayed as bringing with it a new hope that is carried forward the further the soldiers move into and appropriate the Iraqi land. They bring with them physical prowess as well as humanity, and give the Iraqi people a chance of survival away from their primitive caves. Needless to say, the American presence involves a degree of violence, but the violence here is depicted as being directed at the Iraqi oppressors rather than at the oppressed Iraqi civilians. Cultural violence is glossed over through the depiction of a member of the American squad praying with the Iraqis in one of the caves. But the film cannot hide its self-aggrandizement. The camera works with the American soldiers as they cross the Iraqi barrier, with cameras placed on army vehicles travelling through the desert, allowing us to see the landscape unfold in front of our eyes and giving us a taste of the American sense of mastery. The camera also travels at ground level with the soldiers. This is not to give a sense of empathy with the land (by not objectifying it from above, for example), but to give that empathy to the soldiers as they explore an unknown landscape.



### **Penetrating the American landscape**

The threat of the Other is not confined to foreign lands. Sometimes the threat happens at home, as seen in *Executive Decision*, *Hostage* and *The Delta Force*, where home is transported onto airplanes carrying American passengers, and *The Siege* and *True Lies*, where terrorist activities are carried out in New York and Florida.

#### **'This is a hijack!'**

The depiction of terrorism on board airplanes is obviously inspired by actual hijacking events in the 1980s (like the case of the TWA flight in 1985). But the cinematic portrayal is interesting because it invokes a sense of urgency and claustrophobia that is more clearly represented here than in any other kind of space. This can be seen in *Executive Decision*, *Hostage* and *The Delta Force* – three films depicting almost identical hijacking situations by Arab terrorists.

On board an airplane, there is no escape. This heightens the drama of hijacking/rescuing situations and, when resolved, also heightens the heroism of the saviours. The camera is more confined on planes, and so the variety of shots used is limited. But this also functions to portray the feeling of limitedness experienced by the hijack victims. In all three films mentioned, there is a heavy emphasis on low-angle shots when portraying the hijackers, thus making them appear larger and more menacing compared with their confined environment. There are also plenty of close-ups, both on the hijackers' and the victims' faces. This serves to increase the degree of horror illustrated. Mid-shots are also used to give a more collective feel of the terror inflicted, where we see the hijacker(s) in the aisle bordered by seat rows of frightened passengers. The sense of chaos in this situation is also often depicted through hand-held camera work and quick editing that sharply moves from the hijackers to the victims and vice versa, and from one side of the plane to another or from above to below.

#### **Inside the American landscape**

Yoshimoto (1996) points out that the representation of America is not confined to an inert set of images; on the contrary, representing America constitutes a set of conflicting images that are partially responsible for the emergence of the identities of other nations. This is the case in the identity of Beirut in the films, for example. At the same time we cannot analyse America's portrayal of itself as a nation as an isolated matter. As O'Healy (1999) puts it: 'in order to constitute itself, the subject needs to recognize, expel and disown what it is not. It needs, specifically, to demarcate its boundaries' (p. 250). Boundaries are not confined to borders with other nations; they can exist within the nation as well, as seen in the case of the Arab terrorists living in the United States in *True Lies* and *The Siege*, but more specifically the case of the Arab-Americans in the latter.

Foucault (1970) contends that the apparent 'natural' spatial oppositions such as inside (familiar)/outside (strange) are invested with ideology (see also Lewis, 1991), and hence are 'still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred' (quoted in Dumm, 1996: 38). In this way, the sacredness of a space implies the existence of boundaries that deny that space to Others. Hence, the Other's presence in a homeland (physically or culturally) is deemed profane. Morley (1999) explains that members of society produce imaginary geographies which locate them at the core, representing those outside as different and threatening. Sibley terms this the 'geography of exclusion' (p. 161), inhabited by 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983). Natter and Jones (1997) explain that any

(social) process of centering entails a structuring [that]... implies the assignation of a periphery. Assignment to the periphery 'provides a home' – one of terror – for the 'other', the mere existence of which was both a provocation to, and the raw material for, the center. (p. 150)

In *The Siege*, Arab-Americans living in New York are summoned by the American army in order to capture those behind a series of terrorist attacks. The army herds all Arab-American New Yorkers, old and young, male and female, into massive cages on the streets of the city. Even Frank Haddad's (an FBI agent of Lebanese origin) son is taken to the camp. Aerial views of thousands of screaming Arabs in the cages are followed by panning shots of the seemingly identical faces and attire of the Arabs. While, on the one hand, the film's use of cages and its criticism of military action are part of an anti-totalitarianism message, cages also act as a vehicle of containment which constructs an internal barrier between self and disease. The political conflict between the US and the Arab terrorists in the film acts as a transforming factor on the American landscape. It moves from being a land of inclusion (America as a cultural melting pot) to becoming a land of exclusion (the 'authentic' American imagined community rejecting outsiders) (Soja and Hooper, 1993). Thus, the Americanness of Arab-Americans in America is 'unnatural' and unsettled, subject to being revoked at any time. The usual myths of mastery over the Other apply here, with the idea of the 'terrorist within' causing a great deal of distress to an American landscape that is (cinematically) traditionally 'non-penetrable'. The process of differentiation in the film is an attempt to reclaim this landscape. Of course, this differentiation is an attempt at denying the power embedded in the periphery, and which can 'deconstruct any center of which it is part' (Natter and Jones, 1997: 151).

## **EGYPT'S SPATIAL CONTRADICTIONS**

Hollywood's depiction of space can be seen as an example of 'hegemonic cultural practices' (Natter and Jones, 1997: 150), where the social space

depicted is essentialized. The films 'attempt to fix the meaning of space, arranging any number of particularities, disjunctures, and juxtapositions into a seamless unity: the one place, the one identity' (Natter and Jones, 1997: 150) (here Arab as monolithic Other). But Natter and Jones emphasize that

hegemony, as the process that naturalizes both space and social relations, is like any form of power: never fixed or inevitable but always open to exposure, confrontation, reversal, and refusal through counterhegemonic or disidentifying practices. (p. 150)

This counterhegemony will be explored through the spatial representations of the other side, that of Egyptian cinema. Unlike the American films, the focus in the Egyptian films is mainly on the Egyptian space itself and its contradictions, on the one hand being an all-encompassing, mother-like space, on the other hand being a space that encloses itself in the face of Others. Yet the films go beyond the Egyptian landscape in their representation of Palestinians in refugee camps, where the landscape becomes a resistant Third Space.

### **The moderate national space**

I start by analysing how the films imagine the Egyptian national space. The dominant national view of Egypt is as the 'mother of the world'. Indeed, the national space depicted in the films can be seen as an idealized, feminine one. This can be linked to the generic aspects of the films, as they are mostly melodramas, traditionally a feminine genre with emphasis on interior spaces, which makes the characters in the films comparatively less mobile than their American counterparts in Hollywood (Naficy, 1996). Such interior spaces can be seen in depictions of the home. The home is the centre of action for many films, forming a centre of gravity for the actions of the people inhabiting it. For example, in *The Terrorist*, we see a portrayal of a 'typical' middle-class family that is centred on the home. Home is where the family's only son expresses his political beliefs through placing Che Guevara posters on his bedroom walls. Home is where the elder daughter expresses her love for family guest, Ali, to her sister. Home is where the younger sister manages her daily affairs, from meeting her friends to exercising in the living room. Home is also where the whole family watches a football game on television and cheers for the Egyptian national team. Home thus acts like a mini-Egypt, and seems almost to form the universe of the characters' lives.

Beyond the home, the feminine space takes the shape of the physical space of Cairo, which is largely portrayed as enclosed and womb-like, with seemingly interwoven streets. Cairo's streets are also domesticated as people take their household chores there. In *The Terrorist* you see women washing their laundry on the side of one of Cairo's narrow and winding streets. However, this does not deny that 'the symbolic agency that controls this

space is clearly masculine' (O'Healy, 1999: 254). This is perhaps most visible in *Nasser*, a biographical film about the late Egyptian president. Nasser's wife in the film, Tahiyah, takes care of her husband's welfare and is in charge of domestic affairs (from cooking to looking after the children). However, it is Nasser who sets the rules of the house and the marriage, and obviously the Egyptian nation. This patriarchal yet moderate space, whether inside or outside the home, has no room for religious or political extremism. It is a space where allegiance to Egypt the nation is everyone's primary loyalty.

### **The outsiders inside: Islamic fundamentalists in the Egyptian landscape**

Naficy argues that 'the inside and outside spaces express not only gendered subjectivity but also often national or ethnic imaginings and longings' (1996: 128). Considered a threat to national space, Islamic fundamentalists in the Egyptian films are ascribed a position outside the Egyptian national imagination, so it is not surprising that they are also outside spatially. By this I mean not only physically but also mentally.

Islamic fundamentalists in *The Terrorist*, *Birds of Darkness* and *The Other* are shown to live on the 'edge of society'. Even though they physically exist within the Egyptian landscape, they operate outside the society surrounding them. I say surrounding because they are not seen as part of that society, but as a threat to it. The physical representation of the fundamentalists' existence is always indoors. Closed space can be looked at as a way of symbolizing the Islamic fundamentalists' closed mind. Naficy's (1996) argument about films invoking 'confining but comforting claustrophobic spaces' (p. 131) can be applied to the way Islamic fundamentalists in the films are shown to regard their confined spaces as shelters from what they perceive as a hostile foreign culture. The fundamentalists live in minimalist, even barren, enclosed spaces. Ali's room in *The Terrorist* is perhaps the best illustration. A dark room with a grenade chest as a seat, a small bed, a rug, a faint light bulb hanging from the ceiling, and a plaque engraved with the word 'Patience' on the wall, the room is a reflection of Ali's dark existence. It serves to isolate him from the outside world. Denied the shelter of the womb of the city (Cairo), Ali turns to his own shelter.

At the same time, Ali's shelter creates a cocoon for him to retreat into from the pleasures of society. This contrast is best portrayed by Ali's walk down the Cairo street leading to his rigid room. The street buzzes spontaneously (Pidduck, 1998) with movement, colours and human interaction, with street vendors, people in colourful attire and neighbours chatting, all crossing Ali's path (or rather, Ali crossing their path, as he is an intruder). The street also provides sexual pleasure, with a voluptuous woman walking straight in front of Ali and unknowingly offering an experience denied to Ali in his confined space. The walk down the street thus is a metaphor for a passage through (outer) life. Ali quickly hides from life's

temptations in his room, a room linked to the outside world only by sounds coming in through the shaded window. The space between the blades of the window blinds becomes Ali's only physical access to the pleasures of the outside world. Ali uses it to peep on his female neighbour whom he fantasizes about – a metaphor for all the pleasures he desires but is denied. Ali's experience is best summarized by Adrian Searle (2000):

Going to the window ... becomes a figuration of disconnectedness from one's surroundings, but it is also the first step, (get up and go to the window) of finding, or re-finding one's place in the world. (p. 3, catalogue essay in Still, Site Gallery, Sheffield, quoted in Betterton, 2001)

Thus, Ali's window experience becomes an attempt at entering the denied Egyptian space. At the same time, it emphasizes to him his exclusion from it. The window becomes a 'transparent filter' (Pidduck, 1998: 382) between Ali's life and the outside world, and marks his physical and sexual constraint. The camera in the scenes uses a lot of point-of-view shots, panning and tilting around the room, zooming in and out at the length of the street, and looking down on Ali's neighbour. Therefore, the transformations of everyday space for Ali, that we see, are almost entirely subjective (Keiller, 1982). This subjectivity highlights the various juxtapositions of Ali's life and the outside world: his is colourless, the world's is colourful; his is silent, the world's bustling with sound; his is closed, the world's comparatively open and full of possibilities. These juxtapositions are constructed through camera work that pans the walls of Ali's room as they are closing in upon him, allowing us to see what Ali is seeing when he peeps on his neighbour.

The Egyptian landscape thus is open yet enclosed, drawing boundaries between self and Other. However the film offers the fundamentalist a chance to become absorbed in the Egyptian social space: Ali is slowly drawn back into non-extremist society through the compassion of a family that ends up hosting him and showing him an appealing, alternative way of living that respects religion but is not extremist. In this way, enclosed spaces of the mind are opened up, at the same time emphasizing Egypt's national identity as open, and idealizing Egypt as enlightened.

### **Cyberspace, marginality and globalization**

*The Other* is the only film in the sample that moves beyond physical space and into cyberspace as a site where political struggles are fought. Cyberspace is also represented as a site for the realization of fantasy, whether personal or political. In particular, the film represents a constant connection between Islamic fundamentalists and the United States, conducted through email and internet chat. Cyberspace thus allows an otherwise undetected convergence between the terrorism of the first and the imperialism of the second, with disastrous results.

The film revolves around a young Egyptian journalist, Hanan, who falls in love with a half-Egyptian, half-American man, Adam. Adam's mother, Margaret, is an American businesswoman who detests Egypt yet is engaged in fraudulent business plans that would allow her economic control over the country. She is also obsessed with her son, to whom she turns to provide her with the love and attention she lacks in her marriage. She opposes his marriage to Hanan, and forms an unholy alliance with Hanan's brother, the Islamic fundamentalist Fat'hallah, who also opposes the relationship and promises Margaret that he will force the couple to divorce. Fat'hallah also aims at controlling Egypt through the establishment of an Islamic fundamentalist regime. Fat'hallah and Margaret are revealed to be partners, using the internet to communicate and conduct their personal deals, as well as illegal arms and immigration deals. Cyberspace is thus represented as a site for the realization of fantasy, not only politically but also personally.

For both, cyberspace is a space where they can exercise power. It gives Margaret the chance to control her son's life by keeping a computer file on his life (including a database of all his ex-girlfriends). Adam in the film is an Egyptian nationalist. Hence, cyberspace becomes a tool that allows symbolic control by American imperialism over Egypt. For Fat'hallah, power is exercised through his use of cyberspace as a space of sexual fantasy. In an online conversation with Margaret, Fat'hallah chooses Paris as the virtual location of their 'meeting'. Images of Montmartre prostitutes as well as the Eiffel Tower are here reproduced as national symbols of France and specifically of Paris. Paris acts as a metaphor for Fat'hallah's repressed sexual fantasies, invoked through the city's mythical association with sexuality and permissiveness (Phillips, 1999). It also acts as a metaphor for Fat'hallah's view of the West as promiscuous. As Baltazar (2001) argues, cyberspace allows the subject to manipulate space to fit their needs, rather than 'fragmenting the identity' (p. 28) to fit the space. Cyberspace is an ideal, imagined space that allows Fat'hallah to transgress the constraints he has imposed on himself as an Islamic fundamentalist and thus guarantees him a virtual victory in his struggle with himself. In this sense, cyberspace can be seen as an example of what Soja (1989) terms mental space or Second Space: a space that is generated by and conceived in the minds of those who consequently 'inhabit' it.

The internet is an agent of anonymity, where anyone can be whoever they want to be, an enabling medium that allows the individual to go beyond their social self (Turkle, 1996; Hjarvard, 2002). It also confuses or blurs the boundaries between the spaces in which those in 'dialogue' exist (Freeman, 1999). Cyberspace has created communities that are not necessarily physically or nationally bound, but which transcend the sacred boundaries of home and nation (like the subgroup of fundamentalists and Americans), forming their own private spaces (Morley, 1999). Yet we have to remember here that, even though cyberspace communities are not national, they are not detached from the nation (Bhabha, 1999). Indeed, the political arguments

conducted between Margaret and Fat'hallah are inherently about Egypt as a nation (as they both ultimately aim at controlling it, economically for Margaret, and politically for Fat'hallah), and, at the same time, a reaction to the 'nature' of this exclusive nation that denies the fundamentalists' political representation (as Islamic fundamentalist groups are denied parliamentary participation in Egypt). Cyberspace thus is a way for both sides to (re)claim the nation.

However, closer inspection reveals the artificiality of the 'dialogue' between Margaret and Fat'hallah. Although the two sides are communicating, they are both setting traps for and deceiving each other. Margaret informs the police about the physical location of Fat'hallah, while he lies to her about helping divorce his sister from her son. The internet here acts as a theatre for the operation of those global actors, allowing them to escape the bounds of the nation-state and form a subculture (Sassen, 1999). However, in this particular context, the outcome of this is that the internet is not operating as a site of freedom and resistance. On the contrary, it is a site of oppression where two villains meet.

The internet can also be looked at as allowing individuals in different physical spaces to interact 'privately' in exclusive chat rooms. The discussion between Fat'hallah and Margaret is a 'private' one, making their politics an exclusive spatial activity denied to any outsiders. The internet in the film is not seen as being open to the non-villains, the Egyptians; it is vilified. So Adam, Hanan and their friends are depicted as not using the internet, although they have the means to. Technology is thus 'theirs', and not 'ours', giving it a sinister meaning. Yoshimoto (1996) explains that, with no more physical space to conquer, virtual space is colonized. The film depicts cyberspace as a new frontier which the United States is attempting to colonize.

So, even though cyberspace has constructed what Morley labels virtual geographies, where, in the words of Wark, 'we no longer have roots, we have aeriels' and 'we no longer have origins, we have terminals' (quoted in Morley, 1999: 158), it has not erased the affiliation to the nation. Shohat (1999) says that cyberspace provides an imaginary home; she does not say whether cyberspace provides an imaginary homeland. This can be applied to the case of the Islamic fundamentalists in *The Other*. Despite limiting their interaction with the outside world to the internet, they do not use cyberspace as a substitute homeland. Yes, it is an imagined home, conceived in the absence of a physical one (as the film portrays the fundamentalists as living outside society), but it is mainly used as a tool to reclaim the homeland from which they are exiled (Egypt). Cyberspace, then, is not detached from physical space (the Egyptian landscape). This is in line with Shohat's (1999) argument that cyberspace is another zone in which conflicts are carried out, and which is connected with the corporality of its users. She also stresses that by being another space, and not a substitute space, existing local and global power relations are merely extended to this new space, rather than being

displaced from the physical one. Therefore, rather than being an interactive global space that connects people, the film views cyberspace as a global network of villains, and globalization as a threat and as corruption.

### **Beyond the Egyptian landscape: Palestine as a resistant homeland**

The most intricate illustration of the complex role that space plays in represented political conflicts is the case of Palestine as imagined in the films. The Palestine problem itself is one largely about space, where the same landscape is fought over by conflicting parties. However, the importance of space here is not just because of the physical space of Palestine; more important are the ideological connections that that space carries. Specifically, Palestine is a bearer of history, religion and myth (for example, Arabism). Yet its most important face is as a homeland. The Egyptian films closely focus on imagining Palestine as a lost homeland, playing this out against broader issues such as diaspora and exile, and also the myth of Arab unity. The Arab world emerges as a solid unit in the face of the Israeli aggressor (as seen in *Nasser, Nasser 56, Naji al-Ali* and *Road to Eilat*).

The importance of Palestine as a place lies in its position as one of the major carriers of meaning for the Palestinians and Arabs in general. Nietschmann (1993) explains that it is this position that emphasizes the importance of place for invaders. Place is infused with the identity of people and their inherent power. Therefore, 'people, institutions, and resources may be captured, but if place can't be erased, then the occupation will never be victorious' (p. 8). An example of this is the renaming of Palestine as Israel. Nash (1994) sees naming (like mapping, Blunt, 1994a; McEwan, 1994) as an act of authority that reflects the fluid, unstable and open nature of space, rendering it open to the strategic/manipulative use by marginal/dominant groups. It is precisely this idea that we see in the Egyptian films in their stance towards Israel, and, hence, in their attempts at reclaiming Palestine.

By keeping the history of Palestine alive, *Naji al-Ali* can be seen as an attempt to reclaim the lost land. The film uses a mixture of point-of-view and wide-angle shots in this context. Point-of-view shots are used to represent the Palestinian people's individual view of their history (the Der Yassin massacre and their existence in refugee camps). The film establishes that the current marginalization of Palestinians in refugee camps in Lebanon is due to their ejection from Palestine in 1948. To emphasize this, the film goes back and forth in time, representing the point of view of the young Naji both in the refugee camp in the south of Lebanon, as he tries to make sense of his barren surroundings, and in his flight from Palestine, as he observes the suffering of people around him. This may serve to generate audience empathy with Naji and the Palestinian people, and makes their suffering more intimate. Wide-angle shots are used in the depiction of Palestinian resistance through the film's fighting sequences. The camera moves back and



upwards as we see men shooting at Israeli tanks that are invading the camp, and women throwing hot water from balconies on the Israeli soldiers' heads. While the use of high-angle, distant shots may be seen as creating emotional distance between the characters and the audience, such shots have been effectively utilized by film makers like Eisenstein in *October*, for example, to generate audience empathy (Keiller, 1982). High-angle shots do not allow us to see the characters' point of view here, but this camera use may enable us to understand their broader experiences of space.

The concept of homeland as a remembered place constructs it as an imagined, idealized space; but homeland is also used by displaced people as a unifying, 'symbolic anchor' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 11). In other words, it is empowering (Bisharat, 1997). The place of displacement, or the margin (in the case of Palestinians, the refugee camp in *Naji al-Ali*), thus becomes a site of resistance. Bhabha (1990) and hooks (1990) agree that, when space becomes a space of resistance, it no longer is merely imagined, but becomes a Third Space. This means that, according to hooks, being at the margin becomes a matter of choice because it is empowering; people are not marginalized, they *choose* the margin as a space of resistance. This space is the lived space of the people, and carries their present and their history. So unlike Palestine as an imagined utopia, the refugee camp is what Foucault terms 'heterotopia', a space invested with the complexities of power and knowledge, but also with the lived experiences and histories of the people connected with it. Soja (1996) explains that, in this context, spatial knowledge is transformed into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power (margin/centre). This is how we may look at this space as Third Space. It is not just a medium through which the marginalized attempt to exercise power, it is also the outcome of their actions. (Third) Space is both an instrument and an outcome of resistance. It reflects the struggle over the right to a space, and also the right to be different, to be on the margin. That is why Lefebvre (1991) has stressed the importance of what he calls the 'trialectics of spatiality', that spatiality, historicity and sociality are overlapping and interactive. So, when people choose marginality, both margin and centre are deconstructed and disordered. Third Space is thus essential for the survival of the oppressed; the concept allows us to comprehend how they look at the centre and the margin at the same time and understand both (hooks, 1990). The notion of Third Space is thus useful here because it undoes the binaries of inside/outside, centre/margin, real/imagined.

The refugee camp as a Third Space is also an illustration of how space in this context is a foreground. In contrast with Selwyn's (1995) argument that the Palestinian landscape is a space where the increasing Arab population is perceived as a threat by Israelis, Palestine in the films is no longer a stage upon which political conflicts are fought; it is itself part of conflicts, through the lived experiences of its people. This recalls Shohat's (1989) observation of an image of a Palestinian fighter in a film who seems

to be emerging from the land. In this sense, the land and the people merge into one entity where you cannot separate one from the other.

## IMPLICATIONS

Through an analysis of the various roles space plays in the films, one can draw some important distinctions between the American and the Egyptian films' relationship with space. One of the most distinctive comparisons is the gender/generic aspect. While Hollywood's films take place in a masculine, open space, the Egyptian ones limit themselves to feminine, closed spaces. This is partly because the former are generally action films, while the latter are melodramas. Yet, in Hollywood, action usually occurs within the space of the Other, namely Arab countries. Those countries are characterized by their wilderness, whether natural or urban. This establishes two things. First, the Other space is objectified/feminized through penetration by the Americans. The role of American soldiers and intelligence officers in the films is depicted as to discover and conquer the Other landscape. Second, the Other space is feminized as nature versus the American culture or science. The Other space is objectified by the American gaze through practices like mapping and surveillance. This is established through heavy usage of wide and aerial shots that imply mastery over the landscape. The Egyptian films, in contrast, use a lot of mid-shots, close-ups and point-of-view shots of landscape, which is a more individual, intimate view of space. Using Keiller's (1982) argument, the contrast between external views of space (wide shots) and individual perspectives of space (characters' point of view) means that, while the Hollywood films depict space, the Egyptian films depict the *experience* of space. This can be transposed onto people, denied their individuality in the Hollywood case, and depicted as people with individual experiences in the Egyptian one. This is also seen through the focus on history, personal and national, in the Egyptian films, which depict spatiality as a producer (not just as a product) of history. This is in contrast to the general absence of history in the Hollywood films. In this sense, cinema acts as a 'national institution which is merely symptomatic of broader political and economic relations' (McQuire, 1998: 203).

With boundaries still existing between cultures, we can see that territorialization has not disappeared; it has been redefined. Space has been reterritorialized (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). This means that identities are also re-(rather than de-)territorialized (e.g. Naficy, 1991). The existence of displaced people (the Palestinian diaspora, for instance) is a case here. Diaspora in general has challenged the idea of fixed homeland. Questions of belonging have been complicated, the line between colonizer and colonized has been blurred, and concepts of local politics are seemingly no longer valid. This creates a sense of anomie, portrayed in the films through the Islamic fundamentalists who are 'here' but also 'there', the Arab-Americans who are ascribed a marginal loyalty to the American whole, and the Palestinian

refugees in Lebanon who are not accepted as part of the Lebanese nation despite the many years they have spent there (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). Diaspora thus 'is an invocation of communal space which is simultaneously both inside and outside the West' (Keith and Pile, 1993: 18) (I add the national space). Hence, boundaries are not disappearing with diaspora. Freeman (1999) argues that such group formations strive to homogenize and maintain social order within their own socially constructed and practised boundaries.

Thus, the state of displacement does not just apply to those who are physically or culturally displaced (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). Displacement also applies to those who remain in the same physical or cultural place, who find that their illusion of home has been shattered, thus breaking their perception of a natural link between place and culture (the nationalist imagining of the United States and Egypt).

Anderson's concept of imagined communities can be applied here, whereby

imagined communities ... come to be attached to imagined places, as displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places, or communities in a world that seems increasingly to deny such firm territorialized anchors in their actuality. (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 10–11)

Space thus is a question of power (Foucault, 1970). It is a cultural construction; its meanings are based on the social power structure of the culture representing those meanings (Rose, 1992). Space can be seen as a question of difference; it is differently configured by different players in order to affirm different identities (Soja and Hooper, 1993). However, instead of viewing boundaries between Us and the Other as places of communicated difference, of negotiating difference, as places of dialogue, both the American and Egyptian films lack any dialogue surrounding issues of national frontiers, resorting to authentication to imagine and legitimate their political agendas.

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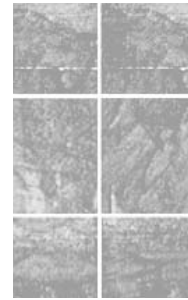
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#### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

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## The anatomy of a photojournalistic icon: marginalization of dissent in the selection and framing of 'a death in Genoa'

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the case of a recent news 'icon', a celebrated product of photojournalism, Dylan Martinez's so-called 'death in Genoa'. The picture shows a scene moments before the death by police gunfire of a protester during the Group of Eight (G8) summit in Genoa in July 2001. The image was chosen by news and political elites as a metonym for the antiglobalization movement. Fitting into the typical characteristics and assumptions of the news icon, it served less to show what happened than to direct public gaze and interpretations to framed 'meanings' that, in this instance, marginalized a strike against authority by establishing 'protestor violence' as the news lead. The study highlights news photography's interpretive role of historical events and their context and complexity.

### KEY WORDS

effects • framing • icon • metonym • news • photojournalism • protest • schema • signage • spectacle

On the afternoon of 20 July 2001, during the Group of Eight (G8) summit in Genoa, Italy, Dylan Martinez of the Reuters agency photographed the events before, during and after the death of a man named Carlo Giuliani. As one of the several thousand individuals who gathered to contest the three-day economic conference attended by delegates from eight Western nations, Giuliani, a 23-year-old antiglobalization protester, was shot in the head by a member of the *carabinieri*, the Italian military police force, on a narrow path in the ancient city's downtown area. The armed officer's vehicle had entered one of the larger streets where both riot police and protesters had gathered when a group of young men, including Giuliani, clad in makeshift riot gear assembled from moped safety helmets, homemade shields and gas masks,





**Figure 1** Giuliani (in black balaclava helmet) pictured behind a police jeep during the anti-G8 protest, 20 July 2001, Genoa. Photo: Dylan Martinez, Reuters.

approached the officers' jeep from behind and the side, throwing objects at it and breaking its windows. Obstructed by a cement barricade and, consequently, unable to drive forward to distance their vehicle from the aggressive protesters, the officers began to maneuver their vehicle. During these moments, a gun emerged from the jeep's smashed rear window, a shot rang out, a protester – Giuliani – was fatally wounded by the fired bullet, a journalist took photographs, and a controversy was born: both a legal battle to determine responsibility for a man's death and a struggle to define the symbolic and political meaning of the images documenting the event as well as its antecedents and aftermath.

Of the many pictures taken by Martinez and hundreds taken by other photographers during the three days in July, only one was eventually accorded international notoriety: in this photo, Giuliani, wearing a black balaclava on his head, stands at the rear of the jeep with his back to the viewer and holds what has been reported to be a fire extinguisher.<sup>1</sup> As he lifts the object in the air, another protester prods the jeep with a wooden plank. In the shattered rear window of the vehicle, a pistol held by an obscured passenger seems to be aimed at Giuliani. As a backdrop to this action, the buildings behind show signs of the vandalism that had occurred throughout the city in previous days as a result of the anti-G8 protests. Most noteworthy – serving for many news viewers as the internal lexical framing, or *signage*, of the picture – the words 'NO MORE COPS' (in English) are spray-painted on a wall in the background. In addition, all the storefronts included in the photograph have been secured with metal grills or panels and the portion of the street pictured in the image appears to be littered with broken objects and trash.

The fatal encounter was not a coincidental meeting of the agents of authority, protest and press. Martinez, along with an army of other international journalists and photojournalists, gathered in Genoa to cover the much-anticipated assembly of heads of state from the world's leading industrialized nations. Initiated in the 1970s by George Shultz, the US Treasury Secretary at the time, the G8 summit was initially intended to provide an informal platform for economic strategists from various Western nations to come together and discuss international finance. In recent years, these meetings have grown both in scale and scope, and now include leaders from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States, who come together to brainstorm political as well as economic matters. Since the early 1990s, the G8, plus many other summits with the same objectives (including the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland and the World Trade Organization meeting held in Seattle in 1999), have become settings for confrontation – physically between protesters and local law-enforcement authorities and symbolically between myriad antiglobalization groups and the leaders of the global economy.

The protests are obviously attractive to media professionals in an age of visually driven news and have been ritually featured on the front page of

newspapers and news magazines, and been used as lead items on broadcast news. The effects of their sensational displays, however, are problematic for both G8 leaders and protesters. Certainly the national leaders have been forced to respond, at least rhetorically, to the protesters' allegations of causal links between the sprawl of global capitalism and the resulting environmental degradation and developing world poverty. For example, at the Genoa meeting, the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair boasted to reporters at the summit's close: 'For the first time we've got a positive, definitive process and plan for dealing with the problems of Africa' (Blair, 2001). Collectively, indeed, the participating delegates issued a final statement verbalizing their commitment to global topics, such as the spread of AIDS, debt relief for poor countries, international trade agreements, and environmental protection (*Summit Summary*, 2001). Also, for the first time in G8 history, heads of state from less-affluent nations, such as countries in Africa and Central America, were included in selected discussions during the three-day meeting (Sanger, 2001: 7; Tagliabue, 2001b; see also Tagliabue, 2001a).

At the same time, the G8 protesters have been criticized by many in the punditocracy – the op-ed and editorial commentators of mainstream political persuasions. Indeed, liberal commentators regularly cast doubt on the globalization protesters as a group too loosely organized, too prone to theatricality and violence, too radical in their aims, and too split in opinion to be effective. The day following the death of Giuliani, the *New York Times* added to this reputation by quoting several non-violent protesters on the streets of Genoa who had taken it upon themselves to verbally scold and even chase away their fellow marchers caught damaging property. The article closes by pointing out that 'issues of third world debt and unfettered capitalism were not foremost on many protesters' minds', as self-defense and avoidance of violence had taken center stage (Sanger, 2001: 7). The violence associated with the protests – not to mention the physical appearance and radical rhetoric of the more flamboyant protesters – is often cited as the root of current mainstream skepticism for a movement seemingly undermining itself.

The shooting in Genoa and the resulting imagery, then, provide an opportunity to investigate how and why news images are chosen and how they, alone, come to represent the events with which they are connected. They function as both a metonym (a picture that is taken to stand for a wider event) and a 'site of struggle' for the interpretation of the antiglobalization cause. Moreover, the process by which one of the thousands of images in the global news stream is favored over the others is partly an aesthetic one but also, to a large extent, a politically motivated process of manufacture and spin, *not* a natural selection (Perlmutter, 1997, 1998, 2003). This study seeks to illuminate how these elevated journalistic photographs, news icons, or 'big pictures' (Perlmutter, 2003) can be appreciated not just as striking compositions but also as rhetorical tools wielded by numerous, and often diverse, appropriating parties to support their respective arguments.

The case of the 'death in Genoa' image, thus, highlights that visual news icons are not natural 'windows' onto the world, as the most standard analogue proposed by news professionals describes them. Rather, photojournalism's output is as manufactured and framed for consumption as any other news product. Once created, captioned and imposed on audiences, however, the actual effect of pictures in the press is not simplistically predictable, and their interpretation is subject to change and debate.

## **BACKGROUND: MASS-MEDIATED PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS**

One crucial context of the Genoa shooting icon is the phenomenon of the mass-mediated demonstration. Obviously, large and often violent protests against existing power structures or social orders have taken place throughout history, including such famous cases as the plebes and proles of Rome, the Blue and Green factions of Byzantium, the Jacquerie of the Middle Ages, the rowdy patriots of the Boston Tea Party, and the various movements of the 1960s and 1970s, right up to the protests against the Iraq war in 2003. Such actions – even when they precipitated outright revolt – have always included a component of theatricality. However, in a modern age of instant, global mass communication, groups opposing the existing political, social, cultural or economic order are faced with the practical, political, psychological and existential quandary that might be summed up by the Hamletian paraphrase, 'To be a media spectacle or not to be a media spectacle?'

On the one hand, outsiders and fringe-dwellers – that is, coalitions or single groups of people holding opinions that deviate from mainstream popular and official thought – need attention for their causes to attract financial and material support as well as recruits. Most groups, from middle-class citizens protesting cuts in their local school's budget to a terrorist group seeking global power, recognize the need to attract the spotlight of mass media. Airtime and newsprint space, thus, are the sine qua non of anyone seeking societal change of any kind.

On the other hand, those very publicity-seeking tactics may ultimately distort, radicalize, trivialize and even undermine a group's cause, especially in the view of their more moderate proponents or non-agenda-sharing allies. Worse, the acquisition of space in the newshole, the governmental, press and public agenda, may constitute for the protest groups a lost victory of public relations. They become famous for 15 minutes simply for what they do (or look like), not the principles, policies or programs they advocate or oppose.

In response to this challenge, protesters often evolve their own voice, that is, their private sets of symbols, sounds, bodily stances and articulations that express their own sets of beliefs, however 'discordant' to the eyes and

ears of mainstream press elites and the general public (DeLuca, 1999: 9–21; Sanger, 1997: 179–95; Simonson, 2001: 399–420; Stewart, 1999: 91–105). Indeed, in many cases, widely publicized protest movements might not be interested in public communication but may be more focused on reaching a specific (self-referenced) community or may be disdainful of wider public acceptance (Lake, 1983: 127–42; Low, 1996: 101–9; Terrill, 2001: 25–53).

In contrast, movements seeking mainstream connections and acceptance try to create narrative structures and visual symbols that may connect to (in research terms, they try to activate the *schemas* of) mainstream audiences. Martin Luther King's religious framing of the black struggle for civil rights and equality was an example of one such tactic in that he appealed to Judeo-Christian and American traditions for moral suasion (Selby, 2001: 68–93). In other cases, spectacle-oriented protests may have multiple and diverse internal and external target audiences (Watkins, 2001: 83–101). Finally, different groups with similar goals may choose tactics that are moderate or militant, compromising or confrontational, working within a system or in opposition to it (Kowal, 2000: 240–55).

Examples of the complexities of the protester image abound, but all reinforce a certifiable observation: most people's view of protest movements is filtered by mass media (Stamou, 2001: 653–80). News coverage of political issues and protest movements thus affects public perceptions and may even be said to spur 'opinion' about the protesters and their perceptually defined causes (McLeod, 1995: 4–19; McLeod and Detenber, 1999: 3–23; Shoemaker, 1984: 66–75; Wittebols, 1996: 345–61). For example, during the 1960s and early 1970s a large majority of the public, when surveyed, reacted negatively to anti-Vietnam War protesters (Gustainis and Hahn, 1988: 203–16; Kernell, 1978: 506–22; Milstein, 1974; Mueller, 1971, 1973; Robinson, 1970: 1–9). It is unclear, however, whether such feelings were engendered by antipathy to the goals of the more moderate wing of the movements or by the theatrical (and media-attracting protest) tactics of some anti-war protesters (Fiske, 1987: 284; see also Domke et al., 2003: 193–221). As Todd Gitlin described in his classic study, *The Whole World is Watching* (1981), media attention is a two-edged sword in that it can make and unmake a protest movement because mass media tend to focus on the most sensational rhetoric or actions of the more radical elements. Other crucial definitions are those of 'legitimacy' and 'worthiness' – that some protesters are worthy victims and to be accorded sympathy, e.g. the anti-government Tiananmen Square students, and others are unworthy (and almost execrable), e.g. anti-government Korean student demonstrators (Kim, 2000: 22–36; Larson and Chen, 1992: 78–104; Perlmutter, 1998). Finally, news media can choose to strip protesters of any political voice by focusing on their events and displays only as entertainment, not as meaningful expressions of opinion (Dow, 1999: 143–57; Ewen, 1988: 265).

Contemporary antiglobalization protests and movements are caught in these same struggles for attention, definition, legitimacy and worthiness.

Since the late 1990s, civil rights groups, environmental organizations and students from around the world campaigning for a variety of humanitarian causes have criticized global economic summits. To show their disapproval of the exclusive, hierarchical and (perceived) anti-poor, anti-environmental agenda of these meetings and the general failure to disclose decision-making processes to the public, demonstrators have gathered in ever-increasing numbers at the sites of meetings, such as that of the G8 and of the World Trade Organization. Advocating a diversity of causes and aligning themselves under the umbrella term 'antiglobalization', these activists claim to resist expanding, non-democratic corporate power. However, different subgroups choose to fight against manifestations of what they perceive to be Western economic privilege (see Klein, 1999). The antiglobalization protest movement at the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle, Washington, and the ensuing violence surrounding it, triggered a rush of international consciousness and protest events at subsequent economic summits. These included acts of civil disobedience in Prague in September 2000, in Quebec City in April 2001, and in Göteborg, Sweden shortly before the 'death in Genoa' (Fleischhauer et al., 2001: 24–5).

To complicate matters further, the antiglobalization movement is split internally among factions that disagree about the proper tactics for protest as well as the ultimate aims of the struggle. The most pronounced differences exist between the groups who advocate non-violent disobedience, those individuals who wish to answer (what they perceive to be) police violence with more of the same, and even those who consider property destruction as a necessary form of protest. In internal nomenclature there are the 'greens' versus the 'blacks'. Anarchist (or 'black') groups have received most of the blame for the defacement of property and attempts to injure police at the various summits. Ya Basta! (Enough Already!) is one of the more prominent anarchist, or 'direct action' groups, which came into being during the mid-1990s, inspired by Mexico's Zapatista rebels. Sympathizers with this group are easily recognized by their white overalls, which are meant to symbolize the invisibility of the marginalized populations. At the G8 in Genoa, Tutte Bianche (White Overalls), a group that emerged in 1998 out of the Ya Basta! movement, was joined by fellow anarchists, the Black Bloc, as the prominent perpetrators of violence. Instead of sporting white, the Black Bloc were known for their black attire and head coverings. Notably, this was the type of clothing often pictured in photographs of the destruction in Genoa and particularly the stocking cap worn by Carlo Giuliani (cf. Ratnesar, 2001: 34).

Unsurprisingly, at the same time, massive security became a feature of all global economic meetings. Genoa was no exception. As a precaution to deter what its federal police called 'potential suspects' from entering the country, Italy suspended the Schengen Treaty covering intra-European travel. The authorities' abrogation of this policy, which guarantees unrestricted travel throughout the European Union, caused hundreds of travelers to be turned away at the Italian border. The targeted individuals included those

already on police watch lists and those carrying banners, accessories and black clothing thought to be indicators of their participation in the Black Bloc (see Dickey and Nordland, 2001: 23). All railways, highways, airports and seaports servicing Genoa were closed for the duration of the summit, making entry even more difficult. Those lucky enough to arrive in Genoa were faced with further traffic restrictions, particularly the barricaded 'red zone' that was erected around the section of the city hosting the talks. This constructed fortress angered many of the protesters already agitated by the exclusive nature of the summit meetings. As a result, it became the goal of many of the demonstrators to surmount this physical (and, to their perception, ideological) barrier and defeat police measures to stop them. In sum, the stage of Genoa was set for violence and mass media attention. The more incendiary-minded protesters saw authorities stifling dissent and declaring a form of war on them; the police were primed to expect the worst sort of hooliganism; and the world press corps eagerly prepared to cover what promised to be colorful and spectacular protests and confrontations.

### THE MAKING OF AN ICON

Many images of police and protesters combating each other in the streets of Genoa were produced during the July weekend. However, the Dylan Martinez picture was a prominent icon in journalistic portrayals about the summit events (see Table 1).

Moreover, the photograph has come to demonstrate characteristics common to pictures that have achieved an elevated level of fame and recognition in our media-saturated world – that is, the standard elements of a photojournalistic icon. Following Perlmutter's (1998) typology, these include: (1) importance of the event depicted, (2) metonymy, (3) celebrity, (4) prominence of display, (5) frequency of use, and (6) primordality. What is most revealing overall is that Martinez's photograph is a *generic icon*, providing a scenario of conflict that came to represent incidents of violence in general within the antiglobalization movement and not just one moment in Genoa (Perlmutter, 1998: 11). By examining each item in this list, we can excavate the characteristics that allow this image to be used as an encapsulation and exemplification of the complex issues of the antiglobalization conflict.

The first characteristic, the importance of the pictured event, is a key component contributing to the iconic status of this photograph. Martinez's series of photographs document the first death to take place at an international economic summit. Since the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle, the number of demonstrations staged in cities hosting these conferences has been growing along with the frequency of violence. Earlier in the summer of 2001, three protesters had been shot, although not fatally, in Göteborg, Sweden, where leaders of the European Union were gathering. This incident shocked many involved in the antiglobalization

**Table 1** Press reports of the ‘death in Genoa’

<i>Periodical, date</i>	<i>Headline</i>	<i>Byline</i>	<i>Caption</i>
<i>Time</i> 30 July 2001	Death in Genoa	Michael Elliott	Lethal Force: Giuliani joins an attack on police, a pistol is aimed at him from the van, medics attend to him after he is shot and run over.
<i>Newsweek</i> 30 July 2001	First Blood: Death and violence in Genoa may mark a permanent split in the antiglobalization ranks. Radical hooligans, one moderate says sadly, ‘have hijacked the whole thing.’	Christopher Dickey and Rod Nordland	The 23-year-old Giuliani prepares to heave a fire extinguisher at the rear window, where a carabinieri is aiming a pistol.
<i>New York Times</i> 21 July 2001	Italian protester is killed by police at Genoa meeting	David E. Sanger and Alessandra Stanley	Just before he was shot, a protester, Carlo Giuliani, tried to hurl a fire extinguisher at a police vehicle in Genoa as an officer aimed a pistol.
<i>Chicago Tribune</i> 23 July 2001	Riots turn Genoa into a war zone, 1 killed, hundreds injured	Tom Hundley and Bob Kemper	A paramilitary police officer points his gun at a protestor who is about to hurl an object into the rear of his besieged vehicle during Friday’s riots in connection to the G8 summit.
<i>Los Angeles Times</i> 21 July 2001	Summit opens amid deadly street protests	James Gerstenzang	A policeman points a gun at a protestor lifting a fire extinguisher in the air. The demonstrator is killed shortly afterward.
<i>Der Spiegel</i> 30 July 2001	‘Murderer, Murderer’. The dead demonstrator in Genoa shocks the world	Hans-Juergen Schlamp and Sven Röbel	Attack on the police jeep, guerrilla-like invasion of Genoa’s old city; Carabinieri with a pistol, ‘Extreme violence on both sides’

movement who were accustomed to martial use of tear gas and rubber bullets for crowd control, but never live ammunition (Ratnesar, 2001: 33). The left-leaning web magazine, *The Monitor*, likened the Genoa events to the infamous student killings at Kent State University during a Vietnam War protest (themselves subject of a ‘death of ...’ photojournalistic icon):



Genoa is reminiscent of nothing so much as Kent State, where, after hundreds of thousands of deaths in Southeast Asia, it took the death of four young, privileged American students on a Midwest campus in May 1970 to galvanize opposition and transform the US anti-war movement into a force that shut down campuses across the country for a full season. (Parrish, 2001: 5)

Yet, notably, this statement reveals more hope than prophecy: manifestly the death of a protester in Genoa in 2001 did not incite any sort of mass reaction. There was no great ‘galvanization’ nor ‘transformation’ of the antiglobalization movements.

In considering the metonymy of the image – how it was used to stand for or represent the greater event (the Genoa summit) or the general issue (globalization and its discontents) – the choice, description and use of the photo-icon most associated with the modern event explains why the perceived effects of the event may have been so muted or diffuse. For, unlike the famous ‘woman screaming over body of dead student’ image associated with Kent State, the Genoa picture that received a majority of the press space does not actually depict the moment in which Giuliani was shot or the moments after the bullet’s impact when Giuliani had been knocked to the pavement, pinned under a jeep tire, or lying in a pool of his own blood. These later images existed: Martinez and other photographers took them. But, crucially, the mainstream Western newspapers and magazines chose not to print them. Indeed, they are available primarily on pro-protester websites that, of course, most ordinary news consumers would not visit. Instead, the icon displays the frame photographed directly before the incident and, as a result, the image functions metonymically, representing the entire story of the man’s death without actually showing it. We, thus, were not shown the victim and the aftermath of the shooting, but the alleged provocation of the shooter. The visual metonym of Genoa was then protester violence, not police violence.

The third iconic characteristic of the image is its celebrity, promoted by editors of press content who blatantly declare this picture to be particularly noteworthy. Such statements lead the viewer to believe that one should pay close attention to the image because of its claimed worth and, as a result, should burn the image into one’s mental data bank (Perlmutter, 1998: 11–12). One such claim to the picture’s celebrity status appeared in *Time* on 30 July 2001, when journalist Michael Elliot opened his article, ‘Death in Genoa’, with:

It has already become one of those iconic images, like the picture of a naked, napalmed girl running down a Vietnamese road, or a bloodied American being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. Last Friday afternoon in the Piazza Alimonda in Genoa, Italy, a photographer caught a young man getting ready to hurl a fire extinguisher at a police Land Rover trapped against a wall. (Elliot, 2001: 22)

Elliot asserts that Martinez's image is one that has entered the pantheon of famous journalistic photographs depicting violence and conflict. With this maneuver, the commentator equates the current image with familiar icons, thereby assigning value to the G8 picture new on the scene. Furthermore, when news or political elites state that a picture will be famous, it is often a self-fulfilling prophecy since they are the arbiters of which pictures become famous (Perlmutter, 1997). Only the decades to come will show whether the prophecy comes true, but at the moment of its iteration it further served not only to accord celebrity status – literally and visually 15 minutes of fame in one frame – for the image, but to point a rhetorical lens at it for an audience and ascertain that it is the most important picture for us to consider. (And, of course, this article participates in the process of celebrity-making. Academics are part of the machine of imposing status on any text, from an oil painting to a news photo.)

In addition to heralding the significance of this image, reporters and editors granted the picture a prominent position and frequent appearances in their publications. Both the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* placed Martinez's photograph on the front page of the Saturday, 21 July edition, the day after Giuliani was shot. Also on Saturday, the *New York Times* used the image in their Section A article reporting the disquiet in Genoa.<sup>2</sup> Within the following week, both *Newsweek* and *Time* presented a series of images from the Martinez sequence to illustrate their coverage of the violence, placing the image of Giuliani with the fire extinguisher as the central and prominent photograph in their spreads. In addition to such popular news media, smaller, mostly web-based, independent news sources uploaded Martinez's photographs on their web sites. *Indymedia* (2001) served as one of the most comprehensive suppliers of information regarding the G8 summit among the alternative press centers. As demonstrated by these examples, many different types of media sources repeatedly used Giuliani's confrontation with the police jeep to visually represent the events that occurred in Genoa.

Finally, this image, like many photojournalistic icons, can be read as a representation of a primordial theme – a theme embedded in a specific visual and literary culture – of conflict, that of the 'underdog' who decides to take on the powers that be. This is not to say that any image contains a natural idea or theme; rather we recognize an idea by previous mnemonic association, or by being reminded of such connection by captions or suggestive allusions. So a pro-protester might suggest a theme in line with the story of David versus Goliath, where the less-equipped individual challenges a stronger and more authoritative opponent. However, with the image of Giuliani lifting a fire extinguisher, it is difficult to detect which opponent, the police or the protester, is the actual underdog. The protesters are less martially equipped; however, they still do a fine job of destroying police property. Read either way, it is a story of victims – either the protesters oppressed by the 'system' or the police being unjustly assaulted. Such

ambiguity is resolved for the viewer when the respective mainstream media sources frame the image for reader consumption through captions.

### **FRAMING THE IMAGE**

As the visual anthropologist Sol Worth noted, most audiences receive an edemic (edited, published) rather than cademic (as photographed, unedited, unprinted) version of photographic narratives (Worth, 1981). What we are allowed to see has socio-political importance because mental schemas can be established and activated by the frames through which media represent issues, events and persons in the news and even by the mere choice of determining a topic newsworthy (Berkowitz and Rogers, 1986; Domke et al., 1998; Fiske and Linville, 1980; Graber, 1988). For most stories, most news viewers and readers cannot be on site while the events occurred. We rely on others, typically mainstream news gatherers and disseminators, to report to us what they allege they saw, show us what they claim to have ‘captured’ on video, film or digital media and, often, tell us what we should think about what we are being told and shown. In many cases, the audience has little access to (and little tendency to seek out) alternative views and narrations of news events. Therefore it is important, first, to identify the frame that mainstream media choose in terms of any image selected for popularization in the place of other possible or available images. Then we can further appreciate the associated narratives, descriptions and commentary; that is, how we were told to see a picture by those who present it to us. One still photographic image or a video shot and its accompanying captioning, voices or narration, thus, constitute a single frame of interpretation.

In this case, the image of Giuliani approaching the back of a police jeep is, as noted, the dominantly selected icon by mainstream media. Notably, it is the fourth in a series of 11 images taken in sequence by Dylan Martinez before, during and after Giuliani’s shooting. Rather than feature the scene where Giuliani lies contorted on the ground in a pool of his blood or even an image where the police jeep has backed over his body, the mainstream popular press selected the suggestive image of Giuliani lifting the fire extinguisher and the police officer pointing the gun out of the back of the vehicle. Again, the content of this image, while subsuming some ambiguity and complexity of plot, still was selected by mainstream media to assert a simple narrative of protester violence, not police violence.

Yet, even a picture whose meaning or ‘plot’ is self-evident to one person or faction may hold other possible ascriptions of meaning for another person or group.

The quotes used to explicate the image in different news sources of varying political leanings demonstrate the different interpretations of the photograph. The descriptions vilifying Giuliani in major media sources are as follows (emphases added):

The 23-year-old *Giuliani prepares to heave a fire extinguisher* at the rear window, where a carabinieri is aiming a pistol. (*Newsweek*) (Dickey and Nordland, 2001: 23)

Just before he was shot, a protester, *Carlo Giuliani, tried to hurl a fire extinguisher* at a police vehicle in Genoa as an officer aimed his pistol. (*New York Times*) (Sanger and Stanley, 2001: 7)

A policeman points a gun at a *protestor lifting a fire extinguisher in the air*. The demonstrator was killed shortly afterward. (*Los Angeles Times*) (Gerstenzang, 2001: 1)

In contrast, the independent, left-leaning *Monitor* suggests:

The protesters with the lumber appear to be ready to flee – they have taken the lumber out of the window and have turned away. Carlo Giuliani now has the fire extinguisher in his hands right in front of his face. *He is not poised to hurl it*. Looking up, he may just have noticed the carabinieri with the gun. (*The Monitor*) (Parrish, 2001)

Each of these four captions highlights the same visual information; the picture itself remains the same. Each statement, however, offers a different reading of the event, thereby creating a ‘site of struggle’ in this image: but only if the voices of struggle are allowed to be heard and their emblematic images are allowed to be seen.

More revealingly, as a cue to a process of purposive framing at work, many mainstream media sources *discontinued* their coverage of the G8 by the Monday following Giuliani’s death. It was almost as if once the metonym of ‘anarchist violence provokes police response’ had been shown and written up, the work of these press agencies was complete. However, an event that was framed by protesters and sympathizers as even more of an outrage occurred the night after the shooting. The police, searching for contraband and members of the Black Bloc, raided the Diaz School, which served as the headquarters for the Genoa Social Forum – a primary organizer of the weekend’s protests. Despite their denial of involvement in violent protest, members of the Genoa Social Forum were physically and verbally assaulted that evening by the police, their computers and files were confiscated, and many individuals were arrested. These events earned little if any airtime and surface area in the media and, most important, photographs of the incident remained largely unprinted, except for amateur snapshots posted on independent websites. In addition, photographs allegedly documenting the tactical collaboration between the police and the Black Bloc and their supposed cooperative instigation of violence were also ignored (see Yuen, 2001; see also Tomchick, 2001). Therefore, an alternative ‘frame’ presenting the argument that the police had acted harshly and unjustly and that the protesters were justified in their counterattack never materialized in the more prominent news venues.

## CONCLUSIONS

Over all, the case of 'a death in Genoa' suggests that the study of modern news imagery must not only be part reception analysis and part general content analysis but also part icon analysis. It is vital to look at the 'big pictures' that gain overriding fame and that garner greater argumentation than all or any others. While discourse elites who choose the images to print – including, we are aware, the authors of this article – and the public who turn to them for information are typically exposed to a range of imagery on most public affairs issues, certain images may be retained as exemplars of a picture of what happened where, when, to whom and why.

These mnemonic and metonymic functions are crucial to the shorthand of journalism; a picture must stand for a thousand words, but also must replace a thousand other pictures. Which events are witnessed by photojournalists, which pictures they decide to take of which sections of a greater reality, which ones they send to news organizations, which of those are printed with what captioning and contextual framing and, finally, which become icons are political as well as aesthetic and industrial choices. Rather than summing up any reality of event, persons, place and time, they offer cut-out frames of a fraction of a second and a narrow view. Whatever the technology that produces both still and moving images, these images are only time-, setting- and frame-specific 'anecdotes' that can never be all of reality (Perlmutter, 1992; Worth, 1981: 162). As such they become examples of *genres* and *types* of news events, serving as tools for purposive 'exemplification' by news elites and facilitating the public's mental storage of the event (see Zillman and Brosius, 2001). This provides all the more reason for researchers and critics of today's image-driven journalism to excavate the icons that falsely and superficially seem so sensational in appearance, definitive in meaning, and transparent in effect.

## NOTES

1. The origin of this 'fire extinguisher' designation is uncertain. Internet discussions have deemed the object to be everything from a paper box to a Genoa salami to a tear gas canister such as those carried by riot police. In a frame previous to this photograph, the object is seen in the back window of the jeep. It is unclear whether it was originally inside the jeep and fell out in the disorder or if it had, moments before, been thrown into the jeep by the protesters.
2. Although the image does not appear on the front page of this paper, it is printed on page 7 of the front section.

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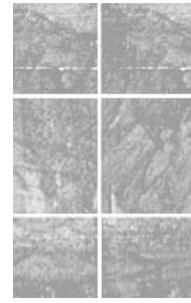
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## Book reviews

TERRY BARRETT, *Interpreting Art: Reflection, Wondering, Responding*. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2003. xxiii + 262 pp. ISBN 0 7674 1648 1 (pbk)

This book draws upon the comments and responses of school and college students, the audience for which it is intended. It not only encourages confidence in interpreting art, but also offers vernacular role models.

'Interpretive viewers take artists' marks seriously.' This statement summarizes Terry Barrett's commitment both to art as a medium of communication and to the premise that anyone can engage in reflecting upon and discussing art. Barrett's work with schoolchildren and their teachers offers lively evidence of this. His assertion that art matters rests on his conviction that art conveys knowledge, experience, ideas and feelings. But how, and in what contexts? In what ways has the social function of art changed and how might the social role of art be characterized at the beginning of the 21st century? Such questions fall beyond the parameters of this project which takes the territory occupied by 'art' for granted. This is regrettable as such discussions would contextualize his objective of persuading us that anyone can become expert at interpreting art.

The project is teacherly in encouraging students to have confidence both in their own responses to art, and in their ability to research biographical, art historical and other contextual information that might further enhance interpretative understandings of particular pictures or bodies of work. The eight chapters encompass questions of interpretation, judgement, appreciation and medium, and culminate in a statement of principles for interpreting art, a sort of blueprint which, if followed, should lead to reasonably comprehensive critical discussions within established terms.

Pedagogically the book aims to inculcate critical skills through example. Barrett's own analyses, comments by specific critics, and responses from students and schoolchildren to particular works of art are integrated in

an interesting manner. Criticism not only engages art objects; as Barrett acknowledges, all art is in part about other art in that no artwork emerges or exists in an aesthetic vacuum. Hence the art historical becomes informative. But this is traditional visual analytic method. Discussion does stray onto the territory of new art history, but we have the sense that he is not perfectly at home here (Griselda Pollock is firmly categorized as a feminist art historian!). Furthermore he avoids philosophical or sociological engagement. For instance, there is no explicit address to Kantian notions of the direct engagement of the artist with the world of experience, and of the viewer with the work of art, although this implicitly underpins much of what is suggested. Somewhat like the Catholic Church of my childhood, we are encouraged to respond with intelligence to that which we experience, to question it within a certain moral framework, but not to question the terms of this framework.

Of course Barrett is making judgements: about educational efficacy; about the significance of particular images, and of their art historical contexts. He acknowledges his Western perspective. Other particularities of viewpoint are not specifically addressed (male, Irish/American, and so on). This is not nit-picking! If we want to argue both that anyone can experience meaningful engagement with art, and, simultaneously, that the viewer as interpreter brings preconceptions to bear, then acknowledging our own positions seems crucial.

Specific artists, and works of art, are taken as examples for detailed discussion. Each discussion is illuminating, and no doubt will be used beneficially in the classroom. But the examples are conservative; on the whole it is artists from within the established canon whose work is addressed. Yes, perhaps they were radical in their time, but subsequent acclaim has rendered them safe. Take, for instance, his starting point: Magritte, a male, European, Surrealist, radical, influenced by then relatively new notions of psychoanalysis. Or to make the point another way: had Barrett started with art by a woman artist, from a different era, or from somewhere other than Paris, perhaps a sculptor of international status (such as Barbara Hepworth), or a contemporary photographer, the trajectory of the book would have shifted dramatically. As it stands, painting and the pictorial, along with the male canon, are reaffirmed as dominant modes of art. The chapter on the effects of the specific medium, in which the test case is photography, comes as something of a relief both because it is about the more everyday medium of photography and because he case studies Sally Mann's photographs of children in her *Immediate Family*.

The penultimate chapter offers some comment upon broader visual culture (for instance, advertising), but the overall focus is within the world of the museum and art gallery. Yet, Barrett misses the opportunity to discuss the social function, commercialism, and politics of the gallery and museum within contemporary capitalism. This could have been addressed in conjunction with his account of the response to the exhibition *Sensation*,

shown at the Brooklyn Museum in 1999, especially the furore at Chris Offili's use of elephant dung as pedestals for his madonna and child painting. In focusing on the work of the individual artist Barrett avoids what might be a very interesting (skeptical) set of questions about the gallery and the art market. In effect, this exhibition promoted artists associated with the London-based Saatchi collection. Outcry in the media acted as publicity both when it was shown in London at the Royal Academy of Art, as well as in New York, but different artworks attracted focus; in London it was a portrait of Myra Hindley (imprisoned for life as an accomplice to the moors murders of two children in Yorkshire); in New York a black British artist was singled out for attention. Cynical response might suggest that tactics involved in promoting the show exhibited sophisticated understanding of local audiences. PR is founded on understanding that the one thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about. Oscar Wilde would have much admired the fuss!

Barrett is Professor of Art Education at the Ohio State University, and author of a number of other textbooks including *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary*, and *Criticizing Photographs: An Introduction to Understanding Images*. His commitment as an educationalist is clear, but some challenge to the established parameters of art education would have been welcome. In summary, *Interpreting Art* is a useful and eminently readable, if somewhat conservative, contribution within the field of art education; it is both enhanced and constrained by its commitment to the established modern art curriculum.

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ROLLAND G. PAULSTON (ed.), *Social Cartography: Mapping Ways of Seeing Social and Educational Change*. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000 456 pp. ISBN 0 8153 1994 0 (pbk)

The growing interest of scholarly inquiry into visual experiences and the multiplication of studies of seeing and the seen respond to unmistakable social and cultural realities: images have become an omnipresent means of circulating signs, symbols and information. Many of the everyday iconic events, such as watching movies, window-shopping, and television consumption, are core cultural experiences of urban modernity and globalized capitalism. These are, undoubtedly, visual times but also times of increased economic and cultural globalization and simultaneous fragmentations.

In this context – where the fixed borders of traditional communities and agencies such as families, schools and nation-states are in almost constant reconfiguration – it seems not only logical but indeed necessary that social scientists will spend considerable efforts developing conceptual and

methodological tools that more fully expose the complexities of these transformations. According to Rolland Paulston and his colleagues, one possible approach to better understanding this fragmentation of social contexts and their implications for educational systems is to explore new forms of scholarship, and particularly 'social cartography', which they define as 'the art and science of mapping ways of seeing' (p. xv).

Rolland Paulston has edited an outstanding collection of articles, with a truly transdisciplinary orientation, marking perhaps not the beginning of a fully developed new model of understanding but certainly the need to have one, and particularly in educational studies. Although most of the contributors are well-known scholars in the fields of comparative education and educational policy studies (Paulston, Gottlieb, Fox, Lather, Nicholson-Goodman, Rust, Stromquist and Torres), there are also chapters written by social geographers (Buttimer, Seppi and Turnbull), literary studies researchers (Bartolovich, Beverley and Tally) and social administration professionals (Huff and Mausolff).

The first section, 'Mapping Imagination', explores modernist and postmodernist perspectives used in these cartographic experimentations. Paulston and Liebman's opening chapter offers a conceptually challenging discussion of mapping and the challenging tasks of combining modern and postmodern approaches in social research. In this chapter the authors, declaring that for social mappers 'space becomes more important than time' (p. 9), attempt to make explicit the advantages of visually mapping social relationships and interactions. They do so by privileging multiple and heterogeneous 'mininarratives' over the traditional metanarratives. Next in this section is a critical response and expansion of Paulston and Liebman's groundbreaking mapping efforts by Val D. Rust. By pointing out the need to incorporate the concepts of power and context, Rust develops an alternative map that includes the nature of the relationships between 16 theoretical orientations in the field of comparative education. David Turnbull's article is also an exploration of alternative ways of mapping. Noting that maps have a distinctive presence in contemporary Western life, and following Hartley's assertion that 'cartography is seldom what cartographers say it is ... rather it is primarily a form of political discourse concerned with the acquisition and maintenance of power' (p. 72), Turnbull explores 'indigenous' ways of mapping as forms of resistance. Thomas Mouat contributes the final chapter of this section in an ambitious and provocative effort that maps the processes of Eurocentric influences on notions of cognitive development. These four studies stimulate the spatial imagination of the reader and are a good introduction to the considerable theoretical and methodological challenges involved in adopting social mapping into the analysis of social, educational, political and cultural dynamics.

The following section, 'Mapping Perspectives', examines the application of spatial ideas and practices to demonstrate how social mapping may expand this type of research into different academic traditions. This

section begins with the contribution of Joseph R. Seppi, who, even though expressing his initial skepticism with social scientists appropriating the tools of geographers, sustains the idea of incorporating new cartographic metaphors as useful tools for comparative educational analysis. Ann Buttimer maps her perspective on the cyclical character of Western humanism by incorporating the mythopoetic images of the Phoenix, Faust and Narcissus. This chapter includes figures and diagrams on these three myths' attempts to present alternative forms of communication between Western humanists and scholars coming from different spaces but affected by similar global problems. The third contribution is an exercise in cognitive mapping written by Anne Sigismund Huff. This chapter presents five modes of mapping and concludes that mapping is a useful, rigorous, reliable and replicable tool because it offers distinctive methods for extracting subtle clues about cognitive and educational processes. This section is completed by Martin Liebman's 'Envisioning Spatial Metaphors from Wherever We Stand'. Liebman's assumption is that social maps are the face of metaphors, and that even the research of comparative educators is an extended form of a metaphor. This author develops his arguments by analyzing contemporary works of fiction in which writers mapped situations, space, time, personalities and characters that created metaphorical maps and produced new knowledge. According to Paulston, the goal of this section is to illustrate how theory and practice are in constant interaction and enrichment through their semantic commitment and spatial origins.

The third section, 'Mapping Pragmatics', presents six case studies in which the authors developed social maps of gendered spaces (Nelly Stromquist), the utopia of professionalism (Esther Gottlieb), postmodernism and participation (Christopher Mausolff), intercultural communication (Christine Fox), environmental discourse (Jo Victoria Nicholson-Goodman) and intellectual perception (Martin Liebman).

The final section, 'Mapping Debates', critically engages with the previous three sections. John Beverley discusses mapping from the subalternist perspective and points out the limits of social cartography as a form of representation of the subaltern and alterity. Patty Lather, using a feminist and postcolonial framework, highlights the implications of post-modern approaches to emancipatory politics. Crystal Bartolovich explores Frederic Jameson's cognitive mapping strategies and Gramscian analyses of situations in her efforts to find links among mapping pedagogy and social change. Robert Tally Jr offers a thought-provoking discussion of Jameson's cognitive mapping, Foucault's spatial analysis, and Deleuze's notions on power, before concluding that mapping can constitute a useful tool for social scientists. The final chapter, by Carlos A. Torres, raises the tests of positivism and constructivism as the two critical challenges mappers need to undertake in order to prove their effectiveness as a relevant tool for comparative educators. In all, these five chapters contribute a significant reflexive discussion that interrogates social cartography as a body of knowledge,

raises many questions, and debates 'its own authority as a new discourse of power'.

In short, this is a book best characterized by the challenging tensions of any scholarly enterprise that risks crossing disciplinary boundaries with theoretical traditions (including postmodernism, critical modernism, subaltern studies, feminisms and others). Foucault (1986) indicated that analyzing social event-spaces requires seeing them as a set of heterogeneous relations saturated with characteristics, qualities and temporalities. Such a conception implies that attempting to represent social and educational change through 'mapping or social cartography' will also make use of power relations, setting explicit (or visible) and implicit (or invisible) boundaries. Rolland Paulston acknowledges that his perspective about social cartography is not located outside power relations, arguing that it is another strategic movement in the field of comparative education. Therefore, whether these mapping strategies are going to be incorporated into the repertory of our scholarly production or not will depend more on the conflictive epistemological struggles of the field, rather than on the internal capacity of social cartographers to produce the perfect method of mapping educational change.

To conclude, it is helpful to recall that Jorge Luis Borges (1975) once wrote a story about the perfect map. This map included not only the streets and main routes, but also each alley, bridge, detour, trees, and even birds nesting in the trees. What is ironically paradoxical (irony and paradox being the distinctive marks in Borges's fiction) is that the map is both perfect and – useless. This map, as big and complex as the space diagrammed, betrays and defeats the purpose of a map, becoming in essence an anti-map. A good map needs to simplify the intricacy of the territory so the traveler can understand the information. Thus, a good cartographer selects what is for him/her relevant and excludes the rest. In a way, a very concrete way, to create maps is to disrespect the territory mapped. It is our good luck that Paulston and his colleagues have written an extremely disrespectful, insightful and thought-provoking book.

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N. KATHERINE HAYLES, *Writing Machines*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002. 144 pp. ISBN 0 262 58215 5

This is a fun book to handle and a good book to read if you are interested in the ways that digital media both reflect and adapt the conventions of print. As part of the Mediawork Pamphlet series at the MIT Press, *Writing Machines* offers what series editor Paul Lunenfeld calls a 'theoretical fetish object' for thinking about books and reading in the digital age. It pairs a short work by author N. Katherine Hayles with a design by Anne Burdick – Hayles because she is one of today's most influential critics of literature in its relation to technology, and Burdick because she is an accomplished designer of texts on- and off-line. The result is a book that exemplifies the point it argues: content and material context are indivisible. Put another way, creative work and physical text exist in dialogue. The work created by Hayles is locked forever in conversation with the text created by MIT Press a la Burdick.

The Hayles work in question is itself a dialogue. In some sections one encounters the story of a semi-autobiographical persona named Kaye. In others one gets the dispassionate voice of scholarship, familiar to readers of such critical works as Hayles's own classic *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999). The interplay between narrative and non-narrative sections helps to evolve a complicated sense of going forward while arriving where one started. The life of Kaye, meted out in alternate chapters, renders her more and more able to perform the criticism within which her story is embedded. Kaye is no Kafkaesque K. She is blessed, she learns, she enjoys, she succeeds, until she and the critic are all but indistinguishable. Her fortunes – an early career in science, a doctorate in English, formative encounters with computing, a stint in the Ivy League – become part of the critic's resources.

If the Kaye plot is a little bit hokey, the critical chapters of *Writing Machines* are anything but. Hayles makes a compelling case for what she calls 'media-specific analysis', a form of literary criticism that takes into account the work's medium of delivery. As part of her argument, she offers three examples of what media-specific analysis might look like. Each is an elegant little reading of what she calls a 'technotext', a literary work that thematizes or appears self-conscious about its own status as a material text. The technotexts in question consist of an electronic fiction, an artist's book, and a print novel, respectively Talan Memmott's *Lexia to Perplexia*, Tom Phillips's *A Humament*, and Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. Because readers cannot be expected to have encountered these three works before, a lot of Hayles's analysis takes the form of description, and that suits her project perfectly: as technotexts, the three works she reads already embody the argument that she makes in reading them.

Media-specific analysis will hardly be news to students of visual communication or visual culture. Whole disciplines – cinema studies and art history, for instance – take medium specificity as a given, part of the price of



admission. (Who would interpret an artwork without considering its medium?) Where media-specific analysis should come as a healthy shock, however, is in traditional English departments, where literature is still commonly taught as something of an ethereal communion between the creative work of an author and the minds of her readers. Never mind that there's usually a bookstore involved, not to mention an editor, a publisher, a printing house, and a paper mill. Literary works always have material forms. They have bodies, Hayles would say, and the characteristics of those bodies – whether print or digital – help to determine the uses to which they are put, namely, the meanings they are said to possess.

Connecting literary works and their bodies used to happen in English departments, when bibliography and textual editing were valued as subspecializations. But more recently it has been regarded as the drudgework of librarianship. Librarians have to care about books as things, this assumption holds, since they have to catalogue, store, preserve, and circulate them. That these disciplinary biases might now be on the verge of change must without question be considered a result of digital technology. Not only have on-line information systems made librarians and librarianship sexier, digital tools are today helping everyone – even English professors – see and understand new things about textuality in general. As the semi-fictional Kaye comes to understand in *Writing Machines*, any lived 'comparison of electronic textuality and print' works to 'clarify the specificities of each' (p. 106). Electronic texts are helping to reveal things about printed texts that were difficult to see before.

Anne Burdick's contribution to *Writing Machines* underscores Hayles's point. To begin with, Burdick's assignment must have seemed either inherently self-defeating or hopelessly banal. She needed to design a book that announced itself as designed. She needed to amplify 'the book's status as a book' ('Designer's Notes', p. 140). The result is a baroque assembly of bells and whistles, everything from multiple typefaces in changing sizes to a take-off on the 17th-century, bibliomaniacal practice of fore-edge painting. The fore-edge (the unbound edge, opposite of the spine) has been printed to read 'Writing' in one direction and 'Machines' in the other, but the words only appear as one handles and bends the book forward and back, fanning the leaves slightly. Fore-edge painting aside, Burdick's total package has an appropriately digital look, with Window-like pages, barcode-like margins, and a varied menu of display options opted. Occasional passages of text appear to bulge or fish-eye off the page. Other passages are blocked as if selected for cutting and pasting. And important terms appear in capital letters and underlined, like hyperlinks begging the reader to point and click. Only to point and click them readers will have to put the book down and visit the appropriate web page [<http://mitpress.mit.edu>].

One result of Burdick's over the top design is to suggest that *Writing Machines* is itself a 'technotext,' although Hayles is quite clear that she means the term to apply specifically to literary works, not critical or vernacular ones

(p. 25). Indeed, this is a very literary-minded work. *Writing Machines* will make a great teaching tool, a way to get literature classes to talk self-consciously about what they are doing when they read a literary work but overlook the physical book that it comes in/as. Not that Hayles is after anything like a sociology of literature or a political economy of print. Far from it. Media-specific analysis is a hotrod version of reader-response criticism, in which the question of interface gets road-tested at a pretty formalist level. 'Interface' may mean the pages of a tangible book or it may mean a dynamic, electronic display, but either way, interface helps implicitly to construct or to interpellate the readers of any text.

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