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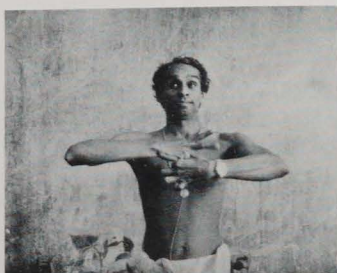
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The Nude as a Metaphor



Kathakali Dance-Drama

Returning Photographs to the Indians

Peter Gold

By the close of the nineteenth century, the forced settlement of the majority of American Indians onto less than desirable allotments of reservation land had been completed. Locked into territories and lifestyles with which they were unfamiliar, Indians were compelled to live under the control of an abstract and distant federal government and were treated as wards of the state, to be freely administered over and studied.

At the same time as they were subjected to this control, they had become, for many whites, romanticized symbols of "pure and primal man" unfettered by the restrictions of the state. Indians had become objects of an almost fanatical reverence to many of our forebears, otherwise rootless Euro-American wanderers whose ancestors, in turn, had "discovered the new world."

No doubt, it was the Indians' highly practical, spiritual, and egalitarian approach to living that made them symbols of our forefathers' fantasies. But that approach soon proved to be an obstruction in an age of land speculation and technological progress. As such, the "noble red man" simultaneously incurred, with equal passion, our forebears' wrath.

The conquest of the American Indian roughly coincided with the invention and development of the photographic camera. With the camera came aggressively individualistic and highly motivated early professional photographers. These photographic pioneers eagerly spread out over the land, recording the life and culture of what was then considered the "vanishing race." They also documented other aspects of an America which, as quickly as they were captured on the silver emulsion, were themselves changing and passing: the great Eastern forests, frontier towns, and Victorian society. Ironically, these and the aboriginal Indian ways of life were garnered for posterity by the technological process of photography, in itself an expression of the social and economical changes in the American scene.

Into this perplexing maelstrom of turn-of-the-century America were jettisoned the American Indians. And always, not far upon their trail, followed the busy cameras of early photographic pioneers such as Edward Curtis, Adam C. Vroman, and Joseph K. Dixon.

Dixon photographed and lectured extensively on the American Indian during the first third of this century. Like many sympathetic intellectuals of his time, he felt a responsibility to help the "last members of the vanishing race" make a harmonious transition into the new age.

The vanishing race concept¹ was widespread at the turn of the century as the gross abuses and neglect caused by the reservation system became markedly evident. Dixon and his patron, Rodman Wanamaker (son of the Philadelphia department store magnate John Wanamaker), resolved to help the Indians through the medium of the photograph and public lobby. Wanamaker supported Dixon's three major "expeditions" to the North American Indian, conducted during 1908, 1909, and 1913. The resulting photographic collection, consisting of several thousand images, came to be known as the Wanamaker Collection of Photographs of the North American Indian and is, in its majority, housed at the William Hammond Mathers Museum at Indiana University.²

As Curator of Collections at the Mathers Museum and an eager student of Native American life and philosophy, I would often browse through the thousands of images of the elderly and young, the traditionally costumed and Western-dressed, and those formally posed or actively engaged in scenes from bygone days and bygone ways. And I would ponder who those people were. What were their personal histories? Why did Dixon choose them or their activities as his subjects? What place did they now have in the memories of their living descendants and fellow tribal members? Rather than idle speculation, the answer to these and other questions posed by the Wanamaker photographs would provide more accurate and complete documentation of one of the most important existing collections of early photographs of the American Indian.

While Dixon's ability as a photographer placed his work aesthetically within the realm of art, the photographs were more than *objets d'art*. They were documentary evidence of cultures and lives which played important roles in the history and complexion of contemporary America. As such, they had to be fully documented for their total meaning to be appreciated.

For these reasons, I was motivated during the summer of 1982 to seek out descendants and living acquaintances of the Hopi Indians in Dixon's photographs taken during July 1913. In cases of photographs of village scenes, I sought information on the activities or locations depicted.

Peter Gold is Curator of Collections, William Hammond Mathers Museum, Indiana University (Bloomington). An anthropologist and ethnomusicologist, he has done research among Georgians in the Georgian S.S.R. in the Soviet Union and in Turkey; Mexican Indian and Puerto Rican communities; Tibetans; and the Hopi and Navajo. He is the author of Traditional Music of the World (1968) and the forthcoming Tibetan Reflections: Life in a Tibetan Refugee Community.

In addition to providing information on the content of the photographs, I hoped that the person responding would be moved to speak of his or her inner thoughts and values as the photograph stimulated a wealth of memories and associations. In the process would be gained not only the sought-after information but also a rare insight into the current values and motivations of these Native Americans.

Photographs are very special objects. Their having frozen a heightened moment of action onto the silver emulsion makes them ideal vehicles for stimulating the flow of feelings and ideas.

Dixon's work was among the last large body of photographs taken at the Hopi villages. During the early part of the century resentment arose over the aggressive and disrespectful manner in which early photographers lined the plazas during sacred *kachina* dances, rudely intruding upon the proceedings with their large cameras and coarse actions. Today, as a result, at the entrance to every village on each of the three awesome rocky mesas, large stenciled signs inform the visitor that the clan chiefs have ordered that no photographs (nor sound recording nor even sketching) are allowed. For Hopi, photographs, or more precisely the not taking of photographs, have become an important factor in their relationship with non-Indians. And this very attitude became an interesting element in the progress of my photo-documentation work there.

A second motivation for doing this project came from the personal conviction that we owe the Indians a long overdue repayment for their collaboration in making these photographs possible, since the photographs ultimately enrich our lives and those of future generations by their presence in museum collections. The American Indian is probably the best-studied, photographed, measured, discoursed-upon, and collected-from—but otherwise neglected—group of people in the world. Thus, it was clear that the photographs I sought to document with their help should be returned to their rightful heirs so they too could have the opportunity to derive their own enrichment from these remarkable images.

Accordingly, quality copies were given to the children and grandchildren of those photographed as well as to the Hopi Tribal Museum. Indeed, it turned out that the Hopi Museum had very few early photographs of its people, and acquiring these photographs instantly provided the core of a museum collection. In this way the photographs will serve the Hopi Indians in learning about their cultural heritage and reinforcing their cultural pride. Their value was best summed up in the words of one Hopi man on seeing the photographs returned: "Thank you; these photographs are something we can treasure always."

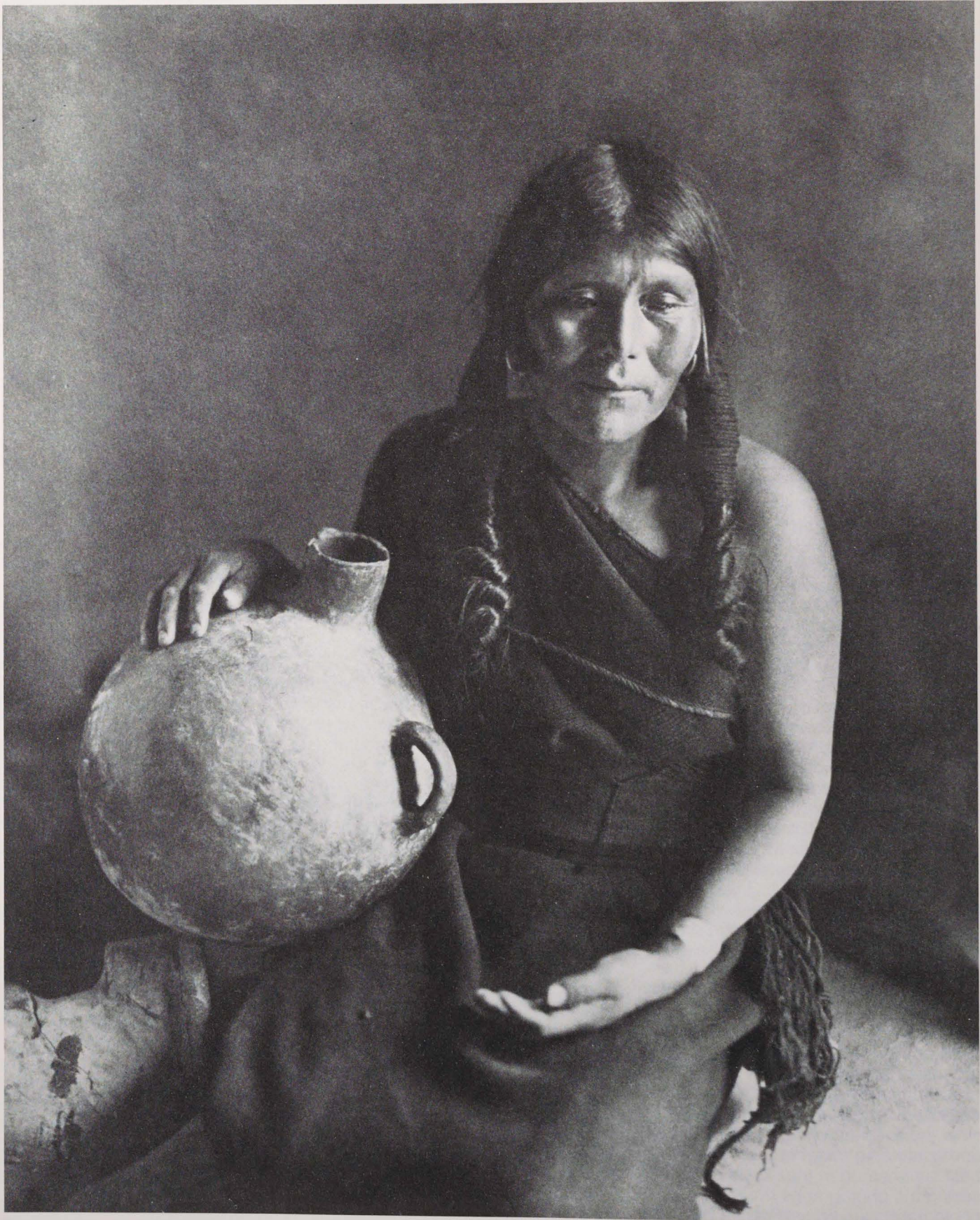
One cannot overemphasize the responsibility engendered by taking a photograph of another person, especially in a culture other than one's own, having differing values and attitudes toward such acts. Many people worldwide, as well as many Native Americans, conceive of giving one's inner being or spirit when photographed. Thus when one is photographed and, consistently, "the photograph is taken away somewhere" (in the words of one Hopi man), confusion and decreasingly cordial attitudes toward further photography result.

In my own experience with extensive photography of Tibetan life in the Himalayas, it was made patently clear to me by my more outspoken Tibetan friends that it was my obligation either to send back or to return in person with snapshot copies of the photographs I had taken. Would you expect any less if I had taken your photograph or that of your grandfather?

For people everywhere, photographs are prized mementos. Indeed, they are often icons imbued with a special kind of power when they depict a deceased family member, an object of religious veneration, or a momentous event, time, or place from the past.

In addition to the data and responsible feedback, much goodwill was generated by the project. The gift of photographs of individuals' parents and grandparents elicited satisfied smiles or heartfelt thanks from people who, understandably, are generally distrustful of the white man. Returning photographs to their source serves to open channels of communication and provide understanding between groups of people whom the long years and their events have kept apart. It seems ironic then that, according to one First Mesa man, this was the first time in his experience that anyone had photographs to give back to the Hopi rather than to take from them.

In sharing special photographs a constructive intercultural dialogue is set into motion. Whites learn to respect Indian ways and to throw off erroneous or romantic conceptions of Native Americans, while Indians come to realize that there are many whites out there who comprehend and cherish their ancient ways. In the process everyone gains: Indians, non-Indians, and the generations of both to come.



A Hopi Indian Photographic Album from the Wanamaker Collection of American Indian Photographs at the William Hammond Mathers Museum, Indiana University

The following photographs were taken by Dr. Joseph K. Dixon on July 8 and 9, 1913, at Hopi communities on First and Second Mesa in Arizona. The individuals pictured represent accessible tribal leaders, artists, and otherwise typical individuals. Other photographs were candid shots of village scenes. These photographs were identified at First and Second Mesa by village elders and by close family members of those whose portraits were taken.

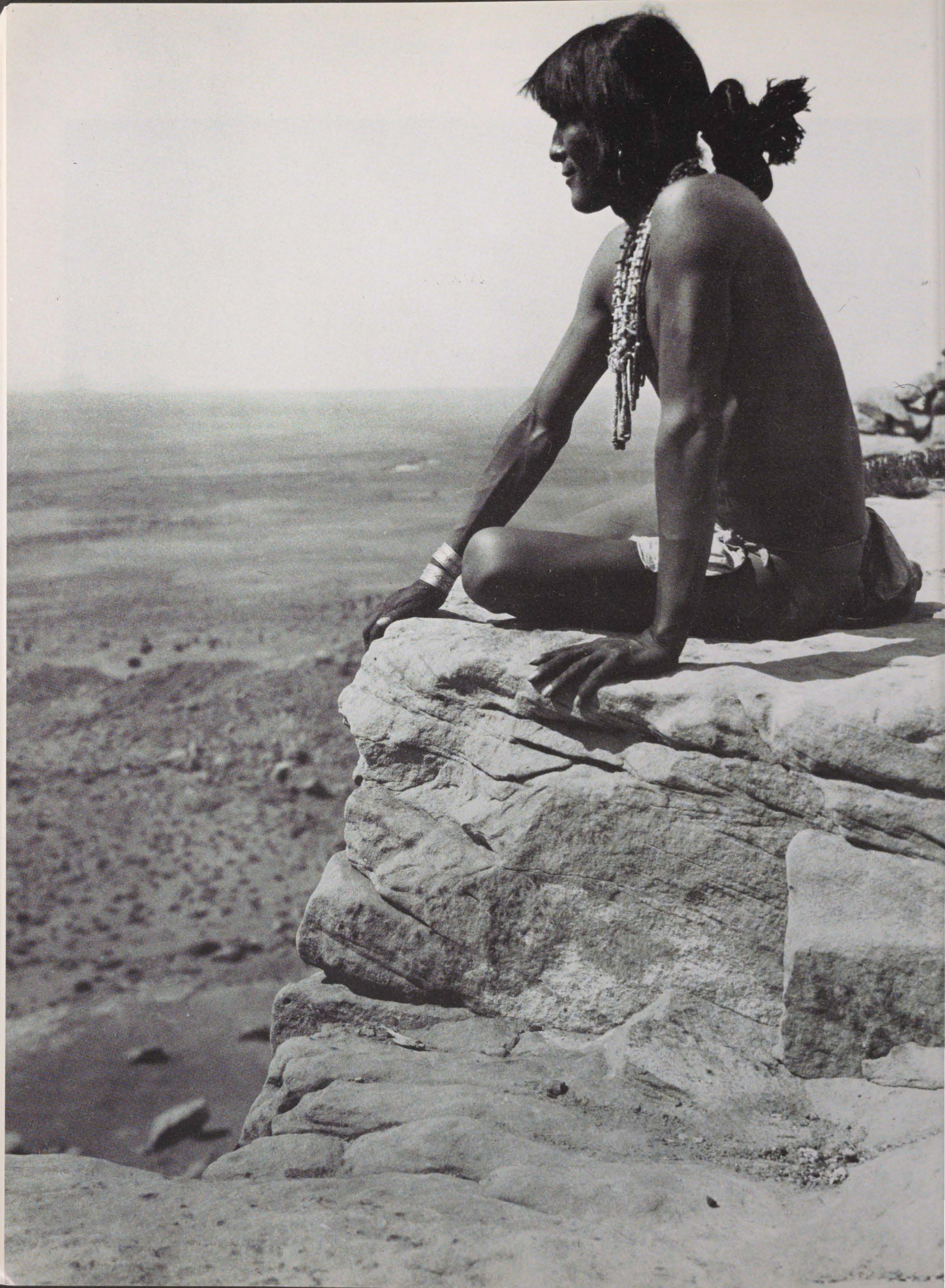


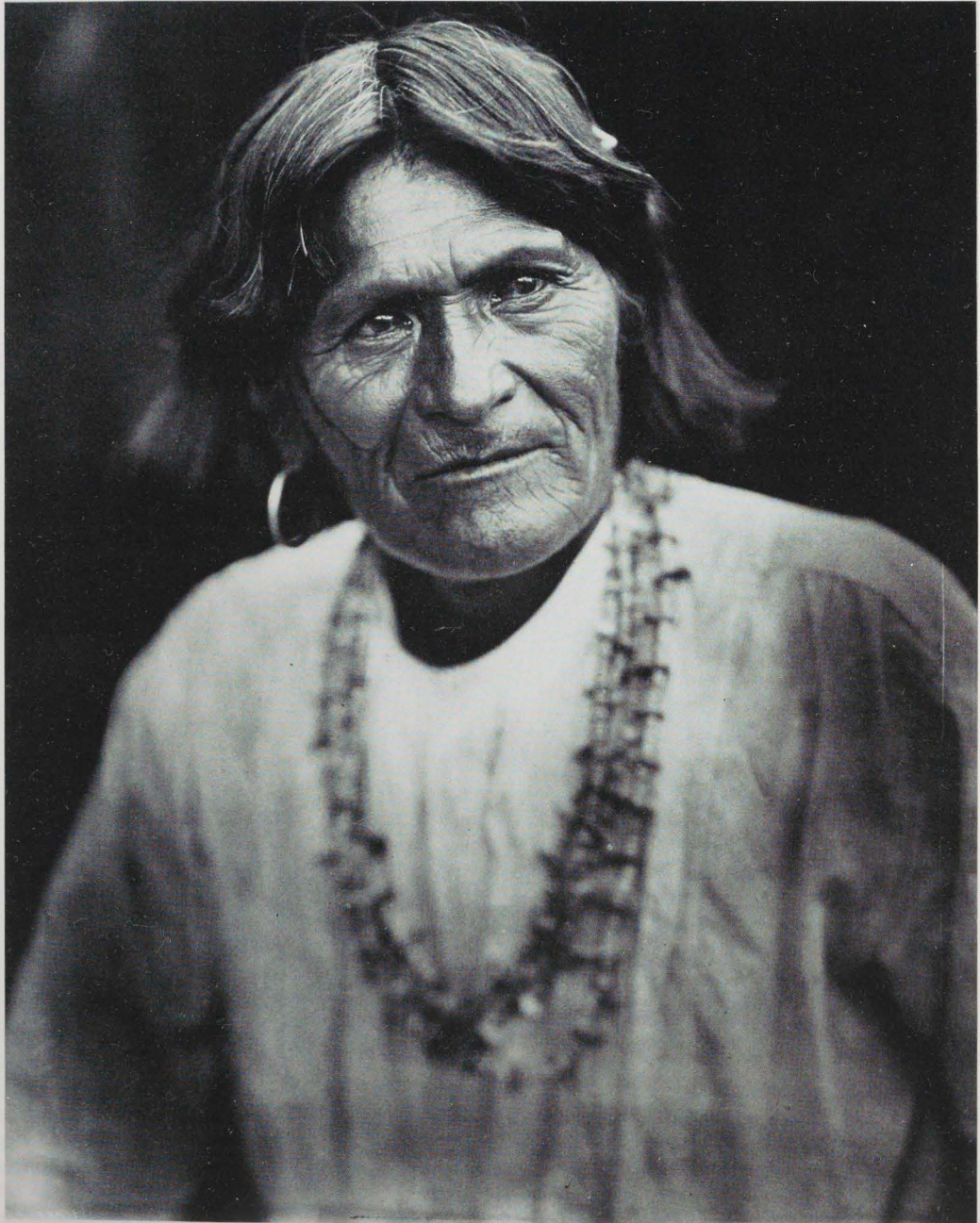
Taláwunqa

◀ Taláwunqa lived in the First Mesa village of Walpi. A member of the Flute and Antelope societies, she, like many Hopi and Hopi-Tewa women, was also a potter. The old-style ceramic water canteen pictured with her was probably of her own manufacture. One elder proudly informed us that a piece of hers was, in fact, in the collections at the Smithsonian Institution. She wears her hair in the style of a married woman and has on a handspun woven black wool dress. The photograph was identified by her daughter, Emogene Lomakema, of Polacca, First Mesa, who is also a potter. She received a photograph as did Perry Novasie, another First Mesa elder, who was Taláwunqa's godchild and was raised by her. Taláwunqa means "the stalk of the corn."

Shúpula

Shúpula was considered one of the progressive leaders at Walpi village. He was credited for helping lead his people in their move from the heights of the mesa down to Polacca village, where they interacted more openly with white society. His progressive philosophy did not, however, interfere with his traditional ceremonial duties in the Water clan. He was a *Soyal Mongwi*, a priest in *Soyal*, the great ceremony marking the midwinter return of the sun, as well as a priest in the awesome biennial snake dance held during late summer.





Goyáwayma

Goyáwayma was old Shúpula's son. This photograph was taken on a rocky ledge on the edge of the sheer face of First Mesa. The high desert floor lies far below him. Even today people live upon the mesa top without guard fences between them and the edge. Goyáwayma wears a necklace of white heishi shell and turquoise beads. His hair is arranged in the traditional men's style: bangs straight across, sidelocks perpendicular to the bangs, and long back hair tied into a "butterfly"-shaped whorl behind.

Gagápti

Gagápti's home was the mesa-top village of Walpi. He was a member of one of Walpi's major ceremonial groups, the Antelope Society. Part of his duties as an antelope priest was to take part in rituals associated with the biennial Snake Dance. These took place mainly in a semisubterranean rectangular enclosure called the *kiva*, where he is remembered as an excellent singer.



Honáni

Honáni, whose name means "badger," was considered one of the most outstanding progressive leaders of the Hopi. He lived in Shongopavi village high atop a spur of Second Mesa, and was a member of the Bear clan, which is thought of by Hopi as the leader in religious and civic affairs. Honáni believed in the benefits of sending children to schools and rapprochement with the whites. These two factors labeled him and others like him "progressives." Honáni and four other Hopi progressive leaders were sent to Washington, D.C., by the tribe during the last decade of the nineteenth century to find out what the policies of the U.S. government were toward their people. In a speech there he said: "My people told me to see everything, to find out how Americans live, whether there are many of them. . . . What Indians want most is green grass. The Americans must have plenty of water. We have lived for years on the mesa, away from water! With assistance we will move into the valley near springs and our fields, and then if we had sheep we could

sell wool and buy sugar and coffee and other good things to live like whites . . ."

Today at the Hopi reservation there is an ideological and physical split between the progressives and the traditionalists. The latter disagree with Honáni's desire to take on aspects of white life. They prefer to continue farming their corn without irrigation, to shun electricity, and to keep to the ancient teachings.

**Nampéyo**

Nampéyo is the great-grandmother of Hopi pottery making. She was actually a Tewa Indian whose ancestors came from the northern region of the Rio Grande river valley and settled among the Hopi at First Mesa. The so-called Hopi-Tewa became renowned for their pottery making. Nampéyo became the primary figure in the revival of Hopi-style pottery during the early part of this century. Her husband would bring her shards from the ruins of the ancient Hopi settlements of Sikyatki several miles away. These contained some of the most remarkable designs in Native American art. She incorporated them into her work and taught her daughters and others the craft. This is one of a series of photographs showing Nampéyo at work. They were identified and commented upon by her daughter, Fannie Nampéyo, matriarch of contemporary Hopi potters. Fannie now lives and works in the modern village of Polacca, situated below First Mesa. The town was named for her uncle, old Nampéyo's brother, Polacca, who accompanied Honáni and the other spokesmen as the Tewa representative on their fact-finding trip to Washington in the 1890s.



Grinding Corn

Taláwunqa was photographed by Dixon engaging in one of the most commonplace women's activities of the time, grinding corn. Every Hopi household had this three-part *mano* and *metate* (mortar and pestle) array. In the first trough (far left) the corn kernels are coarsely ground; in the second (center), after the coarsely ground corn is roasted, it is ground to a medium consistency; in the right trough the corn is finely ground. The finely ground corn is wetted and spread over hot rocks to make the paper-thin food staple *piki*. Fannie Nampéyo says that this hand grinding is very rare nowadays; only one woman in her family still roasts and grinds sweet corn herself.



Hopi-Tewa Potters

The Tewa residents at First Mesa are acknowledged to be the finest Hopi potters. This photograph shows three Tewa sisters making and probably selling their wares. They wear black woven woolen dresses, typical of the Hopi, Tewa, and Rio Grande pueblos, and Navajo-made squash-blossom silver necklaces. Trade among tribes is a very important source of materials and objects. The blanket at the right may also be of Navajo origin, while the other appears to be Hopi. The woman on the left was named Potchángwe; her name means "light blue like the water." Her sister at the center was named Nuva, meaning "snow," and the third sister was named Gweka, meaning "rainbow." The photograph was probably taken in front of their home (several rooms of adobe-covered stone in Tewa village atop First Mesa).



The Selling of the Empire;
 The Imperial Film Unit, 1926-1933
 The Author

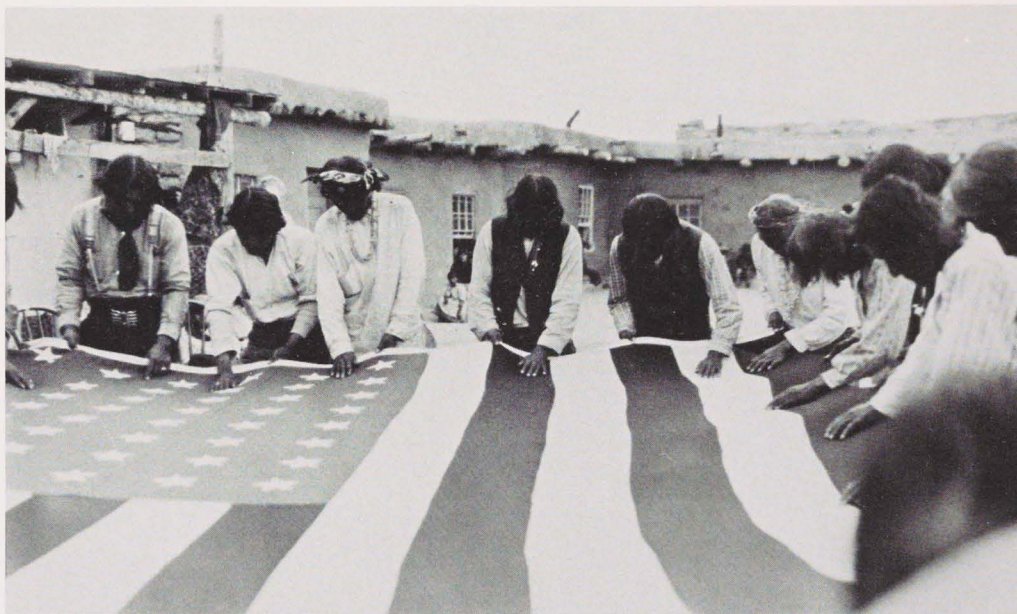


Walpi Village (close-up view)

The west end of Walpi in 1982 has changed very little since this photograph was taken in 1913. It shows Goyáwayma standing atop a house made of native sandstone which is the same now as it was then with the exception of the small addition and passageway to the right of the building. Traditionally, the levels of Hopi houses were reached by wooden ladders such as the one in the background. The ladder in the foreground, however, served as the exit from the ceremonial shrine chamber, the *kiva*. The *kiva* is a semi-subterranean rectangular room made of stone and earth in which the major ceremonies are conducted. Members of a particular clan are responsible for perpetuating a particular group of ceremonies, each held at a specific time of the year and mainly oriented toward maintaining natural harmony. This is one of the five *kivas* at Walpi. The black pipe behind the ladder is used to conduct smoke from the *kiva* fire out into the air.

Walpi Village

Perhaps no other village so typifies the Hopi Indians as Walpi, which hovers at the tip of First Mesa. Walpi is one of the early villages founded by Hopi who sought to escape frequent raids by marauding Navajos and Utes. The almost sheer sandstone cliffs were effective discouragement to attack. There were drawbacks, however, as water had to be carried up and farmers had to go down each day to tend their corn and bean fields as well as peach trees which were sometimes ten miles away. The Walpi of today is very well preserved and comes alive periodically with elaborate *kachina* dances and other ceremonies. Constructed of native stone, the village seems to have grown right out of the mesa itself.



Pledging Allegiance to the U.S. Flag

In addition to the desire to photograph the Indians before traditional life died away, Dixon was motivated to lobby on behalf of Indian citizenship. He and his patron, Rodman Wanamaker, believed that only by becoming first-class citizens could the Native Americans survive in a changing world. In 1913 Dixon set out with American flags, cylinder recordings of President Wilson, Secretary of the Interior Lane, and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Abbott greeting the Indians, and a plan to photograph them pledging allegiance to the American flag. With these photographs he hoped to convince the federal government of the Indians' desire to become citizens. While this approach proved to be of minimal benefit to Native Americans, the desire to grant Indians the rights of citizenship was one of the more constructive strategies taken by sympathetic whites during that period. In this photograph we see Hopi elders apparently blessing the outstretched American flag.

Notes

- 1 Dixon presented his ideas concerning the "vanishing Indian race," along with eighty photogravures (mostly of Plains Indians), in his 1913 book, *The Vanishing Race*. It contains Dixon's interpretation of Native American traditional values and patterns of living as well as narratives and reworked orations by important Indian leaders gathered together by Dixon for a "last great council of the chiefs." Despite its romantic overtones, the council apparently was well received by the participants among whom were Red Cloud of the Sioux, Two Moons of the Cheyenne, and Plenty Coups of the Crow nation. The council and its participants were well documented in the photogravures, and the content of *The Vanishing Race* was rounded out by the eyewitness accounts of several of the assembled chiefs as well as those of the Crow scouts to General Custer (of the Battle of the Little Big Horn). This was an event still active in the minds of white Americans thirty-seven years after the fact. If one reads around Dixon's baroque Victorian literary style, one gets a valuable picture of Native American life during this crucial period of adjustment to reservation life, as well as an insight into the attitude of sympathetic whites during the period.
- 2 In addition to the approximately 7,700 images at the Mathers Museum, Wanamaker photographs, negatives, or documentation are held in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History, in New York; the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C.; and the John Wanamaker store and the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia.
A general discussion of Dixon and his work, an index by tribe of materials held at Indiana University, and an inventory of Wanamaker materials at other institutions may be found in *Capturing the Vanishing Race: Photographs by Joseph K. Dixon*, by Susan Applegate Krouse, an unpublished master's thesis (1980) in the Department of Anthropology at Indiana University.

The Selling of the Empire: The Imperial Film Unit, 1926–1933

Paul Swann

The time has come when the British and the Dominion Governments should combine to produce a library of Imperial films to circulate round the Empire . . . which would educate and stir the imagination and healthy patriotism of the coming generations.¹

The massive economic recession which Great Britain experienced after the First World War transformed both film and the British Empire into subjects for public discussion. Industrial interests and the Conservative party tended to view the empire as a likely solution, if not the only one, to the decline of Britain's overseas markets and the malaise experienced by the staple industries. Stanley Baldwin spoke for most of his party when he declared in the midst of the 1924 General Election campaign that "the best hope for industrial revival (lay) in the development of the resources and trade of the British Empire" (Bigland 1926:14).

During the 1920s, there was a blurring of the distinctions between empire morale and empire trade. Both were felt to have been undermined by the American film industry, which made films promoting American mores and products that had flooded the international market in the wake of the First World War. As a consequence of the widespread awareness of the persuasive power of films, film publicity was regularly discussed at successive Imperial Conferences,² and also within the ranks of the Conservative party. Significantly, the nontheatrical displays of propaganda films which the Conservatives employed from the mid-1920s often included films promoting the empire too (Hollins 1981:363). The comments of the 1926 Imperial Conference set the tone for the discussion of film publicity when it concluded that "it is of the greatest importance that a larger and increasing proportion of the films exhibited throughout the Empire should be of Empire production."³

The 1926 Imperial Conference decided that each member must determine the legislative action it would adopt against the invasion of the American film. Apart from the high-sounding resolutions given out by this and later conferences, the only measures amounting to a common film policy for the empire were those taken by the Empire Marketing Board. The brief but eventful life of this offshoot of the Department of Overseas Trade has been examined in some detail previously (Lee 1972:49–57). In particular, its relation-

ship with the British documentary movement has received a considerable amount of attention, not least in the work of the documentarists themselves (The Arts Enquiry 1947; Rotha 1973; Watt 1974; Wright 1974). Typically, however, the movement is shown as developing directly in opposition to the intentions of its political masters. This ignores both the dramatic amount of interest in film publicity and the increasing sophistication of the discourse about film publicity on the part of many politicians and civil servants during the 1920s. It would be profitable to explore the early work of the documentary movement afresh in the light of this context.

Empire Marketing Board

The Empire Marketing Board was created as a consequence of Baldwin's ambivalent election victory in 1924. He did not believe that he received a mandate upon which the system of empire free trade, which he favored, could be based. Yet his policies committed him to aiding the development of imperial trade (Huxley 1970:125). The Empire Marketing Board came about as a compromise measure, intended to encourage trade without any assistance from tariff restrictions. The board's primary function was initially the promotion of scientific research and the development of a body of intelligence about markets within the empire. At the outset, publicity on behalf of empire products received only 15 percent of the board's budget, marketing 20 percent, and research 65 percent. The board's intended bias in favor of research was belied by the "conspicuous success" of its publicity efforts, especially in the area of posters, press advertisement, and film (Amery 1953:348).

From its birth in 1926 until 1930, the board publicized empire produce in Great Britain. From 1931, after the Imperial Economic Conference widened its brief, the board began publicizing British goods in the rest of the empire. This decision to expand the board's functions was almost simultaneous with action on the part of the Colonial and Dominions Secretary, J. H. Thomas, to bring about the abolition of the board.⁴ The entry of a government department into the field of commercial publicity on the scale envisaged by the Empire Marketing Board would have been quite impossible prior to the First World War. The war set a precedent for large-scale publicity within Britain, when many government departments found it necessary to communicate extensively with the general public. The war's disruption of the international economy also made this new venture in official commercial publicity necessary. Sir Stephen Tallents, secretary of the E.M.B. throughout its existence, was largely responsible for its creative approach to publicity and public relations. Under his guidance the board

Paul Swann has a Ph.D. from the University of Leeds (England). He worked as a film researcher for the BBC and is currently an Assistant Professor in the School of Communications and Theater, Temple University. Works in progress include an article on documentary film and the 1939 New York World's Fair.

became an enthusiastic sponsor of all types of publicity, especially in the area of posters and films.

One of the board's first actions was to set up a film subcommittee. In the first instance, this committee was intended to oversee the production of a feature film to be made in association with Rudyard Kipling. It soon found itself discussing general film policy for the E.M.B.⁵ It was inevitable that the board would become involved in film publicity and attempt to exploit what was generally thought of as a most potent means of persuasion. Serious attention to films as publicity had been largely generated in Britain in the 1920s by concern about the overwhelming predominance of the American film industry all over the world, but especially in Britain and the empire. In 1925, the year that at one time Britain did not have a single major feature film being made in its studios,⁶ the United States supplied over 90 percent of the films exhibited in Britain. By 1927, the United Kingdom had become "the largest American market in Europe and by far the largest revenue market in the world, outside of the United States"⁷ for the American film industry. The arrival of the sound film the same year, which seemed likely to affect the sale of American films in non-English-speaking countries, threatened to make the British film market even more important for the Americans.

Trade Follows the Film

In the course of the heated discussions about protection for the film industry in the trade press and in the House of Commons, which resulted ultimately in the 1927 Cinematographic Films Act, the decline of Britain's economic status was attributed to the international success of the American feature film almost as a matter of course. Hollywood was acknowledged to have a profound effect upon consumer tastes and behavior wherever its films were exhibited. In the United States, publicists and the first generation of public relations experts were equally convinced of the value of film publicity. They believed, in the words of Edward L. Bernays (1928:156), that:

the American motion picture is the greatest unconscious carrier of propaganda in the world today. It is a great distributor for ideas and opinions.

British politicians and businessmen shared the views of Bernays, Lasswell, Lippmann, and the other American theorists. They provided many initiatives to challenge the supremacy of the American film and to build up British film production. In 1923, for example, a British Film League was established for the purpose of encouraging the production and distribution of British films.⁸ In 1924 there began the "gigantic pub-

licity campaign," as L'Estrange Fawcett termed it, directed against the "American film invasion." He regarded this as little more than a "press stunt" which took the form of

newspaper leaders, special articles, and questions in Parliament; full-dress debates in both houses; visits to America and Germany to study conditions; attacks on the morals of foreign films, and efforts to prove that film was leading to an increase in juvenile crime. [Fawcett 1927:21]

One outcome of this considerable agitation was the creation of the Empire Film Institute, commissioned to promote the production of films within and about the empire.⁹

It soon became apparent in the lobbying that took place prior to the passing of the Cinematograph Films Act that British film producers and film renters did not have the same interests. Renters and exhibitors relied on American feature films for their profits. They maintained that their audiences wanted American films in preference to the British product. Politicians and film producers believed, however, that there was a real demand for British films by British audiences. In the absence of any real evidence about film audience preferences, opinion on this point remained strongly divided. The film industry found it impossible to develop a unified policy with regard to the regulation of American films in Britain until one was imposed on them by the government, and the different parts of the industry became the "bitterest enemies imaginable" (ibid.:14). The exhibitors were widely believed to be responsible for this schism, for, as Sir Oswald Stoll, producer and distributor commented:

Exhibitors apparently prefer to please themselves rather than to please the public, and they utterly disregard public sentiment. British exhibitors are obsessed by American pictures, but the general public are not . . . the British people in ordinary circumstances are sufficiently catholic in taste to wish to see films of every nationality, but they never at any time have desired to see them instead of pictures of their own, wherein they can see British atmosphere and revel in the feeling that there is no place like home.¹⁰

"Trade follows the film" became a widely heard slogan in the campaign against the American film invasion. It was coined by the editor of *Kine Weekly* in an article calling for increased production of films about Britain and the empire. He, like Stoll, believed that the cinema-going public in this country and in the rest of the empire wanted British films:

It is horrible to think that the British Empire is receiving its education from a place called Hollywood. The Dominions would rather have a picture with a wholesome, honest British background, something that gives British senti-

ment, something that is honest to our traditions, than the abortions we get from Hollywood . . . the American film is everywhere and is the best advertisement of American trade and commerce.¹¹

In the United States, the leaders of the film industry were equally prompt in relating their feature film exports to the sale of American goods abroad. Joseph P. Kennedy, speaking to the students at the Graduate School of Business at Harvard in 1927, soon after he had taken over RKO Studios, maintained that “one of the most formidable trade obstacles” faced by foreign traders with the United States was that “American films were serving as silent salesmen for other products of American industry” (1927:6).

The E.M.B.’s first move against the publicity generated by American feature film predated any connection with John Grierson and the documentary movement. Rudyard Kipling expressed a desire to work with the board on the production of a film publicizing the empire. Kipling had recently begun to involve himself in a number of efforts to stir public interest in the empire in addition to his novels and poetry. In 1924, Kipling had played a major part in organizing a “Pageant of Empire” at the massive Empire Exhibition held at Wimbledon. Subsequently, he wrote a scenario for a film for the E.M.B. which strongly resembled the manner in which the pageant had been organized. Kipling’s film treatment used a story about the gathering of the ingredients for the royal Christmas pudding as a vehicle for parading the diverse parts of the empire before the cinema audience.¹²

The E.M.B. Film Committee believed that Kipling’s name, since he was one of the major popular novelists of the day, was a “great commercial asset” for the film, so one of the conditions he stipulated for his cooperation was willingly accepted: that the board should employ Major Walter Creighton, with whom Kipling had worked organizing military tattoos at Aldershot, as the director for the proposed film. The committee, anxious to enlist Kipling’s support, found itself being persuaded that Creighton was “particularly well qualified to assist the Board in the production of a suitable film, though he was admittedly unacquainted with film technique.”¹³ The board soon had cause to regret the decision to employ Creighton. The production of his film, which was intended to be a major budget feature film capable of competing in the cinemas against American films, soon became a long and drawn-out affair. Virtually nothing was done in the first year Creighton worked at the board, during which he toured the empire looking for suitable locations and traveled to foreign film studios to learn film techniques. It soon became evident that this expensive production was not going to be the dynamic rebuttal to Hollywood that the board had intended to produce.

John Grierson

John Grierson arrived at the E.M.B. soon after Creighton’s appointment in April 1927. He had just spent two years in the United States, where he had become thoroughly cognizant with modern publicity methods and had investigated the film industry. He had also been introduced to Russian film technique when he lived in New York, where he had helped to prepare the English subtitles for the American version of Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* (Hardy 1979: 40–41).¹⁴ Grierson was drawn to the board, which appeared to be one of the few institutions in Britain interested in both public relations and films, with which he had been so concerned in the United States. Tallents commissioned him to produce a series of reports on the international film industry and the potential use of films for empire propaganda. These memoranda were strongly influenced by his visit to America and recent visits to France and Germany. He stated immediately that it would be quite impossible for either the British film industry or a government department to effectively challenge Hollywood on its own terms. He believed that Britain should establish a reputation in the field of the “authentic” film, exploiting the “visually dramatic material in which the Empire is so rich,” and should not try to compete directly with the American feature film. He maintained:

while American producers cannot be expected to welcome English pictures which merely imitate in an inferior way the American model, there would be a great box-office reception for English films which struck out on new lines and added to variety of production.¹⁵

Grierson proposed the production of a series of short actuality films based on “the ships, the docks, the factories, the furnaces, the streets, the canals, the plains, the caravans, the dams (and) the bridges” of the empire. This production program would be able to draw upon Britain’s well-developed tradition in the actuality film.¹⁶ The necessity of heavy investment in feature films made it very difficult to rehabilitate that side of the industry, so as an alternative he advocated the creation of a central government film production unit. He praised the efforts of the official filmmakers working in Soviet Russia and cited them as the model for filmmaking at the E.M.B.¹⁷

Grierson was indebted to the Russians for his ideas for film subjects and treatments. He had been converted to their ideas about the use of montage, and he now argued that the real world could be energized and transformed through film editing, which could dramatize even the most mundane material. He believed that “even where there is no story, the visual aspects of a seemingly prosaic subject can be orchestrated into a cinematic sequence of enormous vitality” (see Figures 1 and 2).¹⁸

Grierson commented that there were few films upon which the E.M.B. could rely for its publicity efforts. He believed that the board would have to produce this series of carefully edited actuality films itself. The greater part of the board's film budget was devoted to the production of Creighton's film. Grierson therefore employed a stratagem to win financial backing for a further film which was later recounted by Tallents. Arthur Samuel, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, was also the country's leading authority on the home herring industry. Consequently, as Tallents later put it:

We baited our hook with the project of a film to illustrate the North Sea herring fisheries. The Treasury swallowed it, and Grierson set out to make his first film.¹⁹

The critical and financial success of Grierson's film, *Drifters* (1929), greatly assisted his reputation. He became known to both the film society circuit and to politicians. He was even introduced to the Cabinet, for whom he arranged a special screening of a group of relevant films (Hardy 1979:48).

By 1930, Grierson's comments were reaching a number of influential politicians and civil servants. He had begun to popularize the statements of Will Hays, president of the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors of America (the Hays Office), on the value of films as "incidental publicity" for industry and commerce. Hays, a former Cabinet member and a leading spokesman for the American film industry, was very aware of the way in which films advertised his country's "clothes, office equipment, machinery, automobiles, furniture (and) architecture to all parts of the world" (Hays 1929:27). Taking for his title a statement by Hays that "one foot of film equals one dollar of trade," Grierson (1931) argued that:

the relationship of film values to trade returns is possibly better understood in the States than it is here. The film business has not yet taken itself seriously enough as a national asset.

His authoritative statements on the importance of films as trade propaganda in the trade press and in his official reports led to Grierson's appointment as film adviser to a special Inter-Departmental Committee on Trade Advertisement and Propaganda set up under the auspices of the Department of Overseas Trade in February 1930.²⁰

Grierson produced a special report on the use of films for empire trade propaganda and film publicity in general, which led to the creation of a separate Films Sub-Committee. In his report, Grierson criticized the idea of using "incidental publicity" in feature films to promote British and empire products. The principal objections he raised were the very limited distribution of British feature films and their traditionally "shabby"



Figure 1 John Grierson, *Drifters*, 1929. Photo courtesy of National Film Archive, London.

Figure 2 John Grierson, *Drifters*, 1929. Photo courtesy of National Film Archive, London. ►

production values, which severely limited the extent to which British commodities could be shown in a good light to cinema audiences.²¹ As an alternative, he again called for the production of more films like his own *Drifters*, aimed at the second-feature market. He also maintained that the government ought to persuade the newsreel companies to include more material on the empire in their films, something which the Joint Films Committee of the British Council and the Travel Association attempted to do with considerable success later in the decade.²² Finally, Grierson called for the production of a great number of simple "poster" films directly advertising products on the lines of those being produced by the young men and women he had begun to recruit at the E.M.B.

After his comments about the directions in which official film production should go, Grierson also anticipated the manner in which documentary films would be exhibited in later years. He maintained in his report for the Inter-Departmental Committee that publicity films of the type he advocated should be directed at the nontheatrical audiences outside the commercial cinema. His belief that there were large nontheatrical audiences of this type had been largely inspired by the success of the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau. Since its inception, this organization had been run by Frank Badgeley, who had built up its



activities in the production and distribution of non-theatrical films publicizing Canada, particularly in the United States. The Canadian example was very exciting for Grierson. No country was more vulnerable to the intrusion of American films and their inherent propaganda than Canada, yet the bureau appeared to be meeting this challenge with the distribution of its films on a nontheatrical basis in the United States. In 1928, Badgeley claimed his organization was reaching 20 million Americans each year with the 3,000 short films it had being distributed nontheatrically in the United States.²³

In his reports for both the E.M.B. and the Inter-Departmental Committee, Grierson called for the production of a series of quality short documentary films. Initially, by way of beginning production, he suggested that six films dealing with empire publicity should be made each year.²⁴ He believed that the empire offered a plethora of film material just as stirring as the American West or Russia's steppes. He waxed lyrical about the films that could be made about "the arrival of a ship from the East in the Port of London in the evening (with Lascars chanting) or the squabble of the lamb sales at Lanark."²⁵ Grierson believed not only that documentary films could publicize the empire, but also that the empire deserved to be publicized. The empire was potentially an agent for

social and political change on a massive scale. The Knoxist notion of "stewardship" and its application to the rise of modern communications was a central part of Grierson's philosophy throughout his life. In the 1920s, this was manifested in the image of an efficient and benevolent British Empire.

The E.M.B. Films

"Selling the Empire" was for Grierson an application of the publicity and public relations devices he had seen employed by big business in the United States for a much more important and worthwhile cause. On a practical level, the E.M.B.'s film publicity initially had to take the form of advertising specific commodities. However, the overall end in view was the promotion of the empire as a whole. The majority of the films made by the group of young filmmakers Grierson gathered together at the E.M.B. comprised the simple "poster" films which he had advocated in reports for the board and the Inter-Departmental Committee.²⁶ Generally these films were created out of found film footage, usually garnered from Canada and the other Dominions. The films were silent and derived their ef-

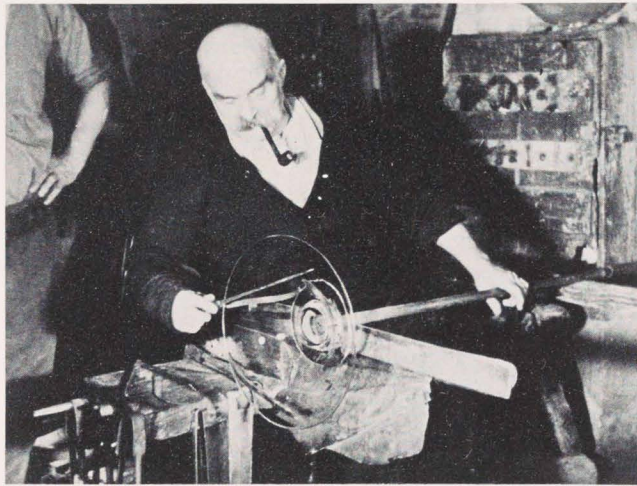


Figure 3 Robert Flaherty, *Industrial Britain*, 1932. Photo courtesy of National Film Archive, London.

fect from editing. Poster films advertising Australian white wine and New Zealand lamb, for example, were displayed in public locations on daylight projectors. These films were generally thought to be very effective, and on one occasion, Grierson was pleased to report the news that he had been asked to remove a projector which had been running in Victoria Station. The projector, perhaps more than the film it had been showing, had aroused so much attention that it had stopped pedestrian traffic in the station (Hardy 1979:48).

The poster films were a good training ground for Basil Wright and the other early recruits to the E.M.B. Film Unit, which Grierson began to establish after the success of his own first film. They were especially useful for the development of editing skills and led to a strong emphasis on montage effects in the early work of the documentary movement. Obviously, these films were severely limited in scope and potential impact, although it is interesting to remember that many of the Russian filmmakers of the 1920s, including Eisenstein, had also made their first films out of existing footage after supplies of new film stock had been disrupted during the war (Leyda 1964:23–27).²⁷ Grierson was anxious for his unit to make the same transition, from using existing film footage to making films out of wholly new material, that the Russians had already accomplished with such spectacular success.

The 1930 Imperial Conference, which, like its predecessor, acknowledged the value of film “for propaganda purposes, whether direct or indirect, in connection with inter-Imperial trade,” widened the brief of the E.M.B. to include the promotion of British products in the rest of the empire in addition to its ex-

isting functions.²⁸ As a consequence of this decision, Grierson was able to expand the film unit, now given official recognition for the first time, and to commence production of the series of quality short films made out of freshly shot material, which he had been demanding for the previous three years. In 1931, the members of the unit began work on six films including one major production, *Industrial Britain*, which was made with the assistance of the great American filmmaker Robert Flaherty (see Figure 3). All six films, significantly, dealt with various aspects of life in Britain. They were made as silent films, intended for commercial distribution. Grierson discovered that it was impossible to get distribution of silent films in the movie houses, which by 1932 had been almost completely converted to sound. This disappointment came at exactly the same time that the board began to curtail its publicity work, as a consequence of which there was no money to add sound to the films to make them more attractive to the distributors. The films, packaged together as the “Imperial Six,” were later sold outright to Gaumont British, which added its own sound track to the films.²⁹

It is ironic that interest in commercial publicity for the empire began to wane at precisely the moment that Grierson won access to major production facilities for the E.M.B. Film Unit. From 1931, as the economic depression continued unabated and the activities of the board seemed to be ineffectual, it began to lose the esteem of both politicians and the public—so much so, that when the abolition of the board was finally announced, it was widely acclaimed as a “piece of national economy long overdue.”³⁰ Tallents was largely responsible for sustaining the board for two more years in the face of mounting opposition (Lee 1972). He believed that the publicity work of the board, especially its efforts in film, were too important to be allowed to slip away. The remaining life-span of the E.M.B. Film Unit was too brief for it to produce any major productions about the empire after the Imperial Six. The definitive statement about the British Empire from the early documentary movement was therefore made after the demise of the unit, when Tallents and Grierson had transferred their activities to the Post Office. This was Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon* (1935), made for the Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board.

Basil Wright

The production of Basil Wright's film came about after Gervas Huxley, Tallents' chief assistant on publicity matters at the E.M.B., was appointed head of the Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board. Huxley arranged for the sponsorship of a major film production along the lines of those recently made by the board.³¹ This brilliant and still charming film can be seen as an exposition of the views of the young documentary movement on the British Empire. It was one of the first sound films in which a member of the movement exercised complete control over sound and images. Typically, Wright took the opportunity to experiment with the use of sound, and images and sound track were neatly counterpointed. Perhaps the clearest instance of this is the contrast between the European voices which dominate the sound track, although not in the form of a conventional voice-over narration, and the Asiatic images—the dancers, the plantation workers, the scenery, and of course, the Buddha—which cover the screen. The Buddha becomes a metaphor for the whole of Ceylon. When there is an Asiatic presence on the sound track, it usually takes the form of music or sound effects.

The film carried all the implications of the sponsorship system which supported the British documentary film. It is in no sense an indictment of British colonial rule. The production and transportation of tea, the quintessential British drink, made possible by a complex mixture of commerce and colonial rule, could have been the occasion for a critique of the empire. This was not Wright's intention, since neither he nor his colleagues felt at this point that the empire should be criticized while they were making films promoting its products. The empire and colonial rule in general did not have the negative connotations they came to have in later years. Only the Left, which had only a peripheral involvement with the documentary movement, was committed to a wholesale condemnation of the British Empire.

In later years, the documentarists maintained that their relationship with the E.M.B. had been a necessary evil. They had been forced into a compromise in order to develop a national school of purposive filmmaking, which subsequently proved very valuable. They emphasized those of their films that publicized social issues, such as unemployment, health, and housing, and their role as propagandists during the war, downplaying their early involvement with empire publicity. In effect, they claimed that the most important aspect of their work at the E.M.B. was that it was a beginning. For example, Paul Rotha, who worked for Grierson very briefly at the board, maintained that the early interests of the documentary movement during the life of the E.M.B. had been purely aesthetic. As he said recently, "we couldn't care less about

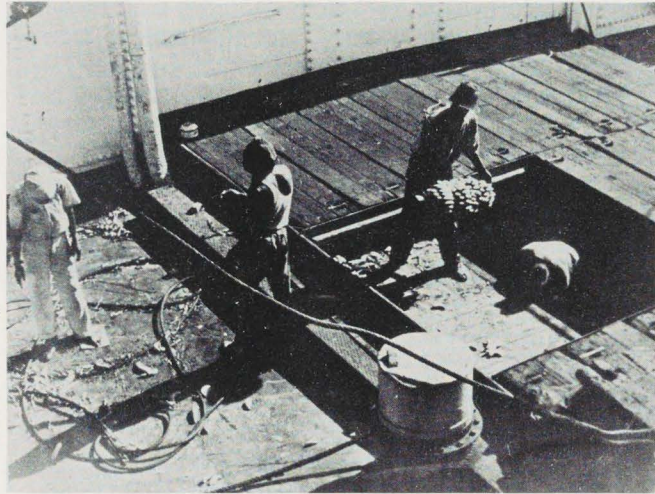


Figure 4 Basil Wright, *Cargo from Jamaica*, 1933. Photo courtesy of National Film Archive, London.

Empire butter or Empire timber or whatever it was" (quoted in Sussex 1975:15). In this view of events, politicians and civil servants are characterized as "proud of the fact" that they knew nothing about films and their utility as a means of information (Watt 1974). Grierson is credited with having "sold" the idea of the documentary film to a group of unreceptive officials. Such a view does not take into account the high level of interest in using film publicity, especially in connection with the empire and its products, which had been evidenced long before the creation of the Empire Marketing Board.

There were very occasional instances when filmmakers included a criticism of some aspect of the empire in their films. Basil Wright, for example, took the opportunity in *Cargo from Jamaica* (1932; see Figure 4) to implicitly comment upon the laborious, back-breaking methods used to load goods in Kingston (Wildenhahn 1977:21). The film is the rare exception which proves the rule, and it seems on the whole that the documentary group were comfortable promoting the image and commodities of the British Empire. In the late twenties, it was still very possible to be idealistic about the empire. It could be understood as a challenging and worthwhile cause, deserving the best efforts of the documentarists. This was in stark contrast to the documentarists' views about Hollywood and the American feature film, and, implicitly, the British feature film industry.

Grierson and his followers believed that American feature films were comprised of great skill and a great deal of money, wedded to shoddy and superficial intentions. As far as Paul Rotha (1931:52) was con-

cerned, "Many films from Hollywood are staged with the chaotic sentiments which characterise that amazing city which possesses no ideology." Grierson believed that the feature film industry did not act responsibly. He felt it ought to be doing much more than selling escapism:

In an age when the faiths, the loyalties and the purposes have been more than usually undermined, mental fatigue . . . represents a large factor in everyday experience. Our cinema magnate does no more than exploit the occasion. He also, more or less frankly, is a dope peddler. [cited in Hardy 1966:171]

The techniques and style of the feature film industry were largely rejected by the documentary group, and Russia's "purposive" school of filmmakers became the model for their work, not Hollywood. One consequence of this use of the Russian example was that British documentary films were usually characterized by a strong didactic element. These filmmakers believed that the nontheatrical documentary film was destined to be an important tool for international education. Paul Rotha (1931:42) wrote:

It is probable that within ten years time the cinema will be the principal means of education for both adults and children, and that the comprehensive ideas which the Soviets have already put in hand for cinematic teaching will have spread to every country.

Distribution and Impact of the E.M.B. Films

The reception which the documentarists' films received did not correspond to the enthusiasm with which they were made and publicized. The technical difficulties surrounding the distribution of their silent films has already been noted. Much more insurmountable a problem was the attitude of the film distributors and exhibitors, who, except for their initially warm reaction to *Drifters*, were almost invariably hostile toward the work of Grierson's followers. Exhibitors were certain, in the words of their association's president, Theo Fligelstone, that "the public will not be educated."³² They believed there was no place for the documentary film, whether it promoted the products of the empire or the gas industry, in their theaters. The tendency to drive documentaries out of the motion picture theater was reinforced by the growth of the double-feature program, which, as Grierson noted, left no room for his films.³³ The difficulties encountered in obtaining rentals for their films encouraged the documentarists to look to the nontheatrical film markets for their major outlet. It was perhaps here, rather than in the few films which received some distribution in the theaters, or the poster films the unit

made, that the documentarists made real progress in selling the empire to people in Britain and abroad.

The Imperial Institute, which was originally the only screening facility for the E.M.B.'s films on a nontheatrical basis grew into a large-scale distributor for documentary films. In October 1931, the E.M.B. Film Library was formally brought into existence. Its films were seen mainly by schoolchildren watching 16-mm prints. In its first year, 517,000 people saw the library's films, three-quarters of them children. By 1936, operated in conjunction with the Post Office Film Library, the Empire Film Library, as the board's collection was now called, was estimated to be reaching five million people each year.³⁵ Again, the greater part of these nontheatrical audiences were schoolchildren. Grierson remained constantly optimistic about the prospects for this type of film distribution, although he tended to play down the youthful audiences that his films were reaching.

Many children must have received their first glimpses of the British Empire in the E.M.B. films borrowed by their teachers. In the early thirties the empire did not figure prominently in films made in either Britain or the United States. In effect, the documentarists' films took up the theme of the British Empire before it was taken up in many films made by the industry after the middle of the decade. Young film audiences may have been impressed by those parts of the empire they saw in E.M.B. films and been prepared by them for those fiction films made by the industry which used the empire as a backdrop a few years later. Films distributed in this manner, however, could have had little effect upon the sale of empire products in Britain, which had been the original end in view.

It is very difficult to define the impact of the rest of the E.M.B.'s film publicity. One reason for this is that Grierson usually supplied the figures for attendance at performances, numbers of films booked, numbers of films screened, and so on, and he was invariably generous and optimistic in his interpretation of these figures. Grierson's own *Drifters* and Wright's *Song of Ceylon* were virtually the only major documentary films made during this period that were given substantial commercial bookings. Generally, Grierson's films were unable to break into large-scale distribution. This was a very disappointing failure for Grierson's political masters. They had already witnessed the dismal performance of their attempted production of a major feature film. The film made for the board by Walter Creighton was eventually released as *One Family* (1930). After eating up the greater part of the board's film budget each year, the film had gone on to become a complete disaster at the box office.³⁶ Grierson's rhetoric about the use of a totally different type of film, the inexpensive short actuality film, intended to publicize the empire through

the second-feature market, had therefore reached a very receptive audience. Grierson was unable to deliver empire publicity through the movie houses, and the development of the nontheatrical audiences must have taken much longer than he had expected.

The Decline of the E.M.B.

The notion of exploiting the empire connections for the sake of industrial revival in Britain was falling from favor at the same time that Grierson and his followers began to look for a source of inspiration for their work other than the empire. In the late 1920s, the whole question of Britain, the empire, and the cultural domination of American films had been a major public debate. For somebody returning to England after becoming familiar with American publicity techniques, as Grierson was, it was a natural field for making a reputation. Gradually, however, the domestic industry was able to take up the challenge of the American film industry. This was a consequence of the quotas established by the Cinematograph Films Act and the return of British investment capital to underwrite the film industry.³⁷ The recovery of the British industry, especially when guided by patriots like Alexander Korda and Michael Balcon, offered the prospect of forcing the American feature film out of British and Empire theaters without heavy official involvement. This eroded the amount of official support upon which Grierson could expect to draw. In addition, as the international economic depression continued, the empire ceased to be viewed as the panacea for Britain's ills which it had once been. As the last years in the life of the E.M.B. passed, Grierson perceived that there was only a limited amount of prestige to be gained from making films promoting the empire. By September 1933, as Tallents and Grierson moved over to the Post Office, the latter had already begun to look to industry and to social issues, rather than government departments and the empire, for the future funding and themes for the school of filmmaking he had created.

In 1926, the year the E.M.B. was established, the discussion about Britain, the empire, and films had been at its most intense. The editor of *The Times* complained:

It is probable that more has been said and written during the last year about the connection between British films and the British Empire than ever before. It is certain that less has been done. Everybody realises what wonderful propaganda the film may provide. Countless people write and talk about it, but no one does anything.³⁸

Grierson had been very fortunate to return to Britain at this key moment; it gave his pronouncements much more weight than they would otherwise have had. This is not to imply that Grierson's involvement with empire publicity was purely opportunistic. He was genuinely committed to his work at the board, and he found inspiration in the far reaches of the empire; he thought its defense against the incursion of the American feature film well worthwhile. Only a short while after Grierson's group had begun to congregate at the E.M.B., he decided that domestic social issues were more pressing than empire publicity.

Grierson's real ambition was to create a national school of filmmaking, and, writing a defense of his prodigy in 1932, he maintained it was

the only hopeful possibility of which we are presently aware of freeing British films from slavish competition with American methods and of establishing for them a character of their own.³⁹

He thought that, once established, such a school could serve a multiplicity of functions, working for all branches of the government. This vision of an omniscient and impartial group of information experts mediating between the public and government came directly from Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (Lippmann 1922). The documentary movement grew in the wake of widespread concern about the empire and a widespread awareness of the efficacy of film publicity. When this source of patronage dried up, Grierson looked elsewhere for support. In the interim, in the small number of documentary films that won theatrical distribution, in the poster films which dotted railway stations and exhibitions up and down the country, and in the potentially important system of nontheatrical distribution, the documentary movement did what it could to provide the British public with film images of the empire and its products.

Notes

- 1 Sir James Marchant, quoting a speech by the Prince of Wales, *The Times*, June 11, 1924, p. 8.
- 2 1926 Imperial Conference, CMD 2768, p. 53; 1930 Imperial Conference, CMD 3718, pp. 238–240; 1932 Imperial Economic Conference, CMD 4175; pp. 50–53.
- 3 Appendices to the Summary of the Proceedings of the 1926 Imperial Conference, CMD 2769, p. 406.
- 4 Report of the Committee on National Expenditure, July 1931, CMD 3920, pp. 131–132.
- 5 S. Tallents, "Proposal for the Preparation of a Film under the Auspices of the E.M.B.," January 27, 1927, P.R.O. C.O. 760/37, EMB/C/1.
- 6 Memorandum presented to the Moyne Committee by the Association of Cinematograph Technicians, May 13, 1936, P.R.O. B.T. 55/3, CCF 1. George Pearson had taken *Satan's Sister* (1926) to the West Indies for location work.
- 7 1928 *Film Daily Yearbook* (New York, 1928), p. 1006.

- 8 *The Times*, January 2, 1924, p. 18.
- 9 Sir Alfred Mond proposed a toast to "Films and Empire" at the inaugural dinner of the British Empire Film Institute, April 22, 1926.
- 10 *The Times*, January 2, 1924, p. 18.
- 11 *Kine Weekly*, June 12, 1930, p. 3.
- 12 Tallents, op.cit.
- 13 E.M.B. Film Committee Minutes, February 1, 1927, P.R.O. C.O. 760/37.
- 14 Grierson assisted in preparing the subtitles for *Potemkin*; he did not reedit it for its American premiere, as is often suggested.
- 15 John Grierson, "Notes for English Producers," April 29, 1927, P.R.O. C.O. 760/37 EMB/C/2.
- 16 Percy Smith was making the *World Before Your Eyes* series for Charles Urban before the First World War. Using time lapse and micro-photography, he introduced many cinema audiences to the secrets of nature, as his next series was called. In addition, Harry Bruce Woolfe and Andrew Buchanan both produced many actuality films after the war.
- 17 Grierson, "Further Notes on Cinema Production," July 28, 1927, P.R.O. C.O. 760/37 EMB/C/2.
- 18 Grierson, note 15, op. cit.
- 19 S. Tallents, cited in F. Hardy (1966:17).
- 20 Inter-Departmental Committee on Trade Advertisement and Propaganda Minutes, P.R.O. B.T. 61/40/1 E 12251.
- 21 Grierson, "Film Propaganda," July 1930, P.R.O. B.T. 61/40/1 E 12251 B Paper No. 14.
- 22 The Joint Films Committee decided that "the judicious exploitation of the newsreel . . . is far more convincing than any fabricated propaganda product." Joint Film Committee Minutes, November 1938, P.R.O. B.W./2/214 GB/30/1.
- 23 1928 *Film Daily Yearbook*, p. 927.
- 24 Grierson, note 21, op. cit.
- 25 Grierson, note 21, op. cit.
- 26 Paul Rotha believes the poster films were the forerunners of modern television commercials, without "luscious high budgets and expensive technical devices" (1973:49).
- 27 Dziga Vertov's *History of the Civil War* (1922) and the series of films Esther Schub made about Tsarist Russia, beginning with *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927) pioneered the revolutionary use of "recycled" film in Soviet Russia.
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The Nude as a Metaphor

Becky Young

One must believe that private dilemmas are, if deeply examined, universal, and so if expressed, have a human value beyond the private and one must also believe in the vehicle for expressing them in the talent.

— Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*

We are all more or less alone. The extent to which we are paralyzed by this depends upon familial, societal, and cultural experiences. Our ability to integrate these experiences — to view them from an appropriate perspective — defines our identity, our ability to become autonomous.

In the society I grew up in, men were dominant and women subordinate; women were expected to avoid aggressive behavior, to shy away from autonomy, and to feel incomplete without a man.

I grew up in an extended family in a small town in Massachusetts; my widowed maternal grandmother lived with us. My mother was discouraged from developing her own identity. She was raised to believe that her husband and children completed her life, and all her energies and hopes were experienced through us. She blamed outside circumstances for her situation, and indeed it was a time when choices were few for women. Her mother encouraged this, as she herself had been taught to do. My mother had no opportunity to question; she carried her paucity of experiences with her into her own marriage and thus passed them on to us.

My mother was a "good mother." There was a great deal of love and care from both my parents, a great deal done for us. My mother was talented in her domestic endeavors, making a comfortable home for our family. She was a fine cook and a fine seamstress, talents I learned from her and enjoy now. But the anxiety, anger, and fear that controlled my mother was as infectious as her love. They became mine. I believed I was unlike her because I had a career and no children, but despite my facade I was trapped as she. I too blamed circumstances for keeping me in bondage.

Becky Young is a 44-year-old photographer who teaches at the University of Pennsylvania. She graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design, where she was Harry Callahan's assistant. She is currently working on a book of her photographs.

Photographs by Becky Young.



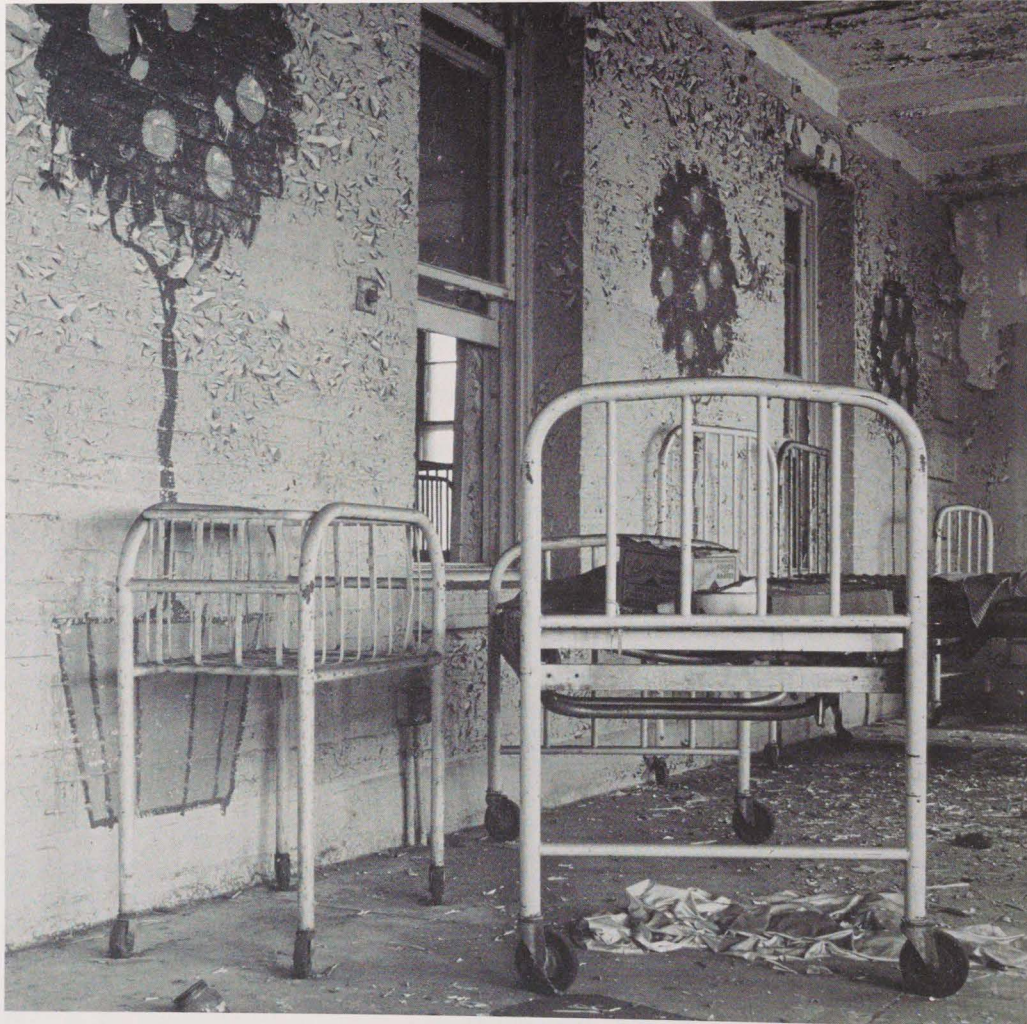
Figure 1 Becky (left) and Nan, 1982.

My father was a talented and successful businessman who loved his work and provided well for his family. He showed little emotion, so as a child I saw him as strong, stoic, and invincible. I identified with him, and to win his love and attention I performed for him. Whatever he taught me I learned, and in later years I demonstrated my worthiness and impressed him through my art. He was a challenge to me and I felt competitive with him. The relationship I set up with my father was later transferred to other men.

My fraternal twin sister, Nan, was an excellent athlete, and although artistically talented, she was less motivated than I was. She performed well in front of audiences, something I shied away from. I both adored and envied her (Figure 1). I thought she was prettier; she seemed to do everything right and managed ordinary tasks far better than I. I often wondered if some of my drive resulted from my envying her more "applauded" talents. I competed with her, made myself special by staying alone, painting, and being a rebel. Recently I have learned that she envied my ability to be alone and work, and my freedom from conventional "mother-directed" behavior. We often said between us we made a total woman. My older sister, Marilyn, had no hold on me.

I found that personal history is repeated if ignored. I felt powerless and insecure, creating illusions and fantasies of what my life would be. These illusions would be broken and re-created countless times until

Figure 2 Welfare Island,
1967.



physical illness, frustration, and despair forced me to examine my life pattern. Until then, without having a clear perception of what was happening, I ignored the child in me, the part of me that was repressed, denied, and transferred. The anxiety, anger, and fear from my childhood paralyzed me as an adult.

I think it is possible to understand behavioral patterns learned at a young age and to be aware of how they are transferred to someone else. Destructive patterns need not recur generation after generation. My mother became her mother; I would not become my mother. My father was my challenge; I would not become a competitor to other men. This determination does not negate the many positive experiences I shared with my parents. In fact, the healthy experiences provide a viewpoint from which I can see the neurotic experiences in their true perspective.

Self-realization can be derived from deep introspection. But there is a self-perspective that can be more clearly defined by communication — in significant friendships, intimate relationships, and therapeutic relationships. Through introspection, psychoanalysis, and my photographic study of other women, I started actualizing my own power. I started becoming myself.

My introduction to photography occurred almost by chance when I took a photography course in my junior year at the Rhode Island School of Design. I started using the camera simply as a tool to record things, and my black-and-white images looked just like every one else's. Despite these clichés, I knew the first time I picked up a camera that this would give me a new way of seeing. Within a year I took a few lessons in color photography. Color printing was tedious then, taking nearly an hour to make one print.

Figure 3 Doll, Providence, R.I., 1962.



But it was exciting for me as it was more unusual, and I knew that this was the way I would ultimately be able to express myself.

Earning a living for several years as a commercial photographer and now as a teacher, I have concentrated my personal work on color photography. In the beginning, I focused on the "evidence of people" such as decaying rooms, isolated chairs and beds, and broken dolls (Figures 2, 3). There was a feeling of desolation and a sense of loneliness that I could relate to in these abandoned objects, and I wondered who had occupied the empty beds and chairs, who had played with the battered dolls, and what significance the dolls held for me. During this period, my commercial work in black-and-white dealt exclusively with people and activity; my personal work in color never did.

As I became less preoccupied with the evidence of people, my attention was scattered and for three years I struggled with ideas that didn't work. My first nude photograph was made rather casually when a young woman asked me to do her portrait (Figure 4). During the shooting session we included a series of nude poses. This was in 1967; during the next ten years I returned to nudes a few other times, always in black-and-white. They were traditional, formal, and abstract. They too looked just like everybody else's, and I needed something more strongly defined and more personal. Where previously I looked at the female form as a classical "nude," I began confronting and photographing individuals rather than a concept. I started by photographing a friend, and since then many women have posed for me. Some I asked, others volunteered. Their reasons for posing varied.



Figure 4 Jill, Boston, 1967.

Some wanted to live out a fantasy, some thought it would give them a sense of freedom, and others simply had no qualms about having their picture taken without clothes on. They are pictures of real women who don't have stereotypical "ideal" bodies. They were taken in color, in natural light, informally in the women's homes, and during the sessions we talked freely about our lives, our interests, and our experiences.

I first made single images, then serial images, as I carried my interests to the full complexities of women in familial relationships — women as daughters, sisters, lovers, wives, and mothers, showing how they changed depending on which member of their family they were with.

In reevaluating where the work had started from and what stage it was going into, I became interested in what Carolyn G. Heilbrun (1979) refers to as three

phases of suffering in her book *Reinventing Womanhood*. The first phase is mute, speechless suffering — the sufferer sees her actions as submissiveness and powerlessness. Phase two is the state of articulation; in this stage the sufferer becomes aware and is able to speak and express despair. The third phase is that in which actual change is accomplished. The pictures I have made of women since 1967 parallel the phases of womanhood Heilbrun describes.



Figure 5 Judy, 1977.



Figure 6 Judy and John, 1979.



Figure 7 Judy and her mother, 1982.

The first picture of Judy, as an object, standing with only a torso showing was symbolic of my own lack of identity (Figure 5). My photographs of woman up to this point were all without a self — they could be anyone or no one. The next two photographs were taken at different times; both address identity and separation, stages that took me several years to understand and actualize. One shows Judy emerging. She appears as an individual — a woman with an identity (Figure 6) — and the other shows her with her mother (Figure 7). At that time I was confronting real separation from my own mother, empowering myself as a woman, not as my mother's daughter.

As I continue this work, I am changing the perspective from which I approach these extended portraits. Earlier the visual images reflected to a great extent my own perceptions of relationships, but I thought I was seeing them clearly. I am now allowing the women to define their perception of themselves. Whereas I picked the photographs in the past, now we go over the contact sheets together, discussing and selecting which pictures I will use. I am also synthesizing my concerns by complementing the visual images with biography to complete the portrait.

Through tape-recorded interviews, and in some cases journals in which the women have recorded their feelings about posing nude, I explore the experiences that have affected, shaped, and manipulated these women as individuals. After the interviews are taped, I transcribe and then edit them using the information that is most pertinent to the issues discussed. From the facts of their early lives, I can see myths and illusions that were perpetuated from generation to generation, and I follow them as they search for their own identities.

This work is a metaphor for the continuing exploration of my own life. I can relate my subjects' experiences to my own and find there is tremendous empathy between us. By sharing their fears, joys, and defeats, their hopes and aspirations, and understanding their methods of survival on emotional, intellectual, and psychological levels, I can better understand my behavior patterns and clarify my own place in the world. In a sense, I am purging myself of the nonessentials of my own identity by comparing my experiences with those of others. A change is occurring.

Liz

Excerpts from a Journal

6/80

Everybody should feel comfortable with themselves. People have enough to worry about without dumping on themselves for the way they look. I think back on all the positive and negative influences on my self-image — parents, peer pressure, and the media have been the most prominent negative forces.

I began to be overweight when I was around ten years old and that has continued up to now. It changed the way I dealt with people. The way I made myself popular was to be a comedian — to perform and be quick-witted. Also, I never did anything wrong — never deviated or questioned authority. I was making up for my fear that I would be unpopular, unloved because I wasn't beautiful.

My mother was always critical of my being overweight because I was a reflection on her. My father was the same, seeing my weight problem as a by-product of my parents' divorce. Being overweight and having family problems in high school made me build up a lot of defenses. I went to a very small public school, and the social life was very cut and dried. The best-looking girls went out with the best-looking guys — all-American style. Being overweight and always performing to make up for it, I must have been always unapproachable. Though I was popular and well-liked I was never "asked out."

I resent the media for setting up illusions and denying the power and beauty of strong, genuine, life-laden women.

By the time I was in my twenties I had come across a few people — very few — who were encouraging and positive in accepting and even admiring (how unheard of for me) my body. I think of them as replacements for the negative influences that my parents bestowed on me. I did have a few friends who I thought were so beautiful and capable that at times I was pained to be with them. That hits closer to home than the media models. Those are a delusion that one can eventually intellectually confront. Though I certainly don't deny their impact on me as well. It's odd that these people I thought were so beautiful had negative self-images themselves.

My self-image only recently has been developing into a positive one. I'm sure many of the factors affecting the way I feel about myself are virtually universal. Nearly everyone in this country who has attended school or heard a radio broadcast has been given no small amount of calculated biased information about their daily lives and thereby compared it to themselves. I can think of times when my own identity wavered under threatening illusions of what I would have to do and be in order to be happy.

8/10/80

I'm still in varying states of confusion, coming and going over my motivation and attitude changes. I identify with your shifts between confidence and confusion. Your "awareness-attitude change-behavior change" is the perfect slogan for my psychological goals. It's taken twenty-six years to arrive at a reasonable level of awareness (of myself), and now trying to accomplish the attitude and behavior changes in six months (I started therapy in March) is like dealing with two more decks of cards.

On Posing Nude**5/28/80**

Posing nude is a statement of growth for me. I can approach my problems differently. I know my self-image is lower than it could be because of my mother's criticisms and anxieties induced by media barages. Now I know I can be perceived as a strong real person through Becky's interpretation of me. At the same time I can talk with her about my defenses and vulnerabilities because I trust her photographing me. I know it's genuine inquiry and not an exploitation. Now I can't hide behind the excuse of my looks when I have problems relating to people. I'll have to approach the way I act now. Granted the way I act is sometimes affected by the self-image-related defenses, but I can recognize those now and learn to relax with myself.

What the contact sheets in front of me do right now is replace that negative feeling that was left by the media images. You're precluding that corporate manipulative image-making with a frank, sincere record of appearances — of someone the way she appears and is — not hopes to be or is ashamed of.

The closeups are a little eerie to me at first because my expression is so similar to that strange look I see recurring in a lot of my Connecticut childhood pictures. (I'm drawing strength from that early part of my life.)

The photographs reflect what you saw, what you were looking for — in the photo and in the person — strength, confidence, security; just what you're heading yourself into. Now I feel incredibly valid. There I am just "being" in the photograph. Now I have to learn to just "be." I'm still a little self-conscious about approaching people, but I do it anyway and it gets easier. I do have something to offer so I can hold my own; no more comparing myself to others. The multiples of myself that I present to people or have presented to people in the past are wearing off or building up in accordance with my growing sense of strengthened identity.

9/82

In May 1980 when I posed for Becky I was beginning to confront my identity. It was a challenge to examine my self-image, and dealing with my body was the first step in confronting all the factors that affected the way I led my life.

Having a negative self-image had been my style for so long that my attitude and behavior in relating to people was full of fear, doubt, mistrust. In two years I was able to accept the challenge of looking for the sources of my attitudes, to realize that negativity *surrounded* me, but did not emanate from me. I was not producing negativity; rather I was responding to negative forces around me.

As I became clearer about my *identity* as an artist, a strong surviving person, and finally as a lesbian, I learned I could make choices. I narrowed down and then expanded into circles of people that I *chose* to be with. It was no longer important to perform and be accepted by everyone in general. Putting myself in supportive circles reinforced a positive self-image.

I managed to be honest with my family and develop a good relationship with my mother. I can now accept my mother's hardships and the mistakes she made with me, since many of my needs are now being met in the supportive atmosphere I've cultivated.

In the journals of 1980 I see bitterness, but honesty in that bitterness. I was very angry at my life at the time, but still somehow ready to confront my feelings. Therapy was the most consistent factor in helping me to confront. In 1980, that summer, I also lost twenty-five pounds; shedding the excuse and protection that allowed me to be bitter and distant. That was a key to my conditioning my sexuality also, since my overweight image kept me from being intimate or sexual with people (or that's what I allowed to happen). I actually discovered I was an attractive person once I started being confident and taking care of myself.

I still have doubts and anxieties about my relationships with people — but the issues I'm confronting now are on deep intimate levels that I've never experienced before.

So my new self-image is supported by loving relationships that I've cultivated with friends, lovers, housemates, and professional contacts. Now I am responding to positive energy and choosing to leave behind the negativity that I used to feel safe with.



Liz, 1980.



Liz (right), her sister (left), and her mother, 1981.



Liz, 1982.

Sitting for Becky, 1982

I feel a certain heightened awareness as I sit in the chair — the same feeling as when I go in to therapy. I trust what's happening but also know that I'm about to present genuine parts of myself. So I feel that I must situate myself and be ready for Becky and the camera, like I'm getting ready for confronting truths with my therapist.

Terry and Linda (Twins)

Terry:

Twins have a symbiosis problem, just as a mother might expect as much of her daughter as she does of herself. Linda was extremely critical of every move I made because I was her to her. It was like having two mothers.

Linda:

I wanted her to be more like me as our mother did. Our mother was a perfectionist and wanted us to be the perfect image that she desired to be. It wasn't my place to appraise Terry, but I did it constantly. I thought she dressed unattractively and didn't care about her appearance. She acknowledges that now, but that should have been her right. I was doing what my mother did. On the other hand, Terry wanted me to be just like her, criticizing the boyfriends I chose. They weren't right in one way or another. She didn't respect my right to choose.

Things got worse when we got involved in show business. I taught her how to mime, how to put on makeup. She refused to do certain things correctly. I had to beat her over the head, but that made her retreat even more.

Terry:

It turned out I never did anything right on purpose. I was rebelling against being told how to do everything. In a family of perfectionists, criticism flowed freely, and I had it all my life. Linda and I were in counseling together for six months, which helped us get acquainted with the patterns of our behavior. We were arguing so much that our careers were in danger. Now we are close. We help each other instead of just blaming, accusing, criticizing. That had been the only way to communicate before.

Linda:

Our friends have always had problems dealing with us as twins. Twins create a particular and powerful force in their unity. It is a closeness of energy that people become envious of, even intimidated by. I've found it to be true with all of my twin friends as well. Twins get special attention, become celebrities just being and looking alike.

Terry:

It creates a very unique set of problems. For me, it created more trauma than for Linda, because I confused our identities and had to break away, after sixteen years of dressing alike every day (which we did for fun and because it was easier). I had to find out that I was not her. It was harder than a divorce, and it took years to sort out.

Envy

Terry:

I always envied Linda's ease with people. I don't extend myself with friends so much. I envied her flair for clothes and fashion, and used to imitate her style. In doing so I tended to repress my own style. We were terribly competitive. We had to have equally good grades, praise, etc. Both of us were on equal footing when it came to art ability. Linda has greater technical skill. My true talent came out in art school when I started painting seriously. I have worked hard to develop confidence in my own abilities, and I believe in myself as a painter now. I believe painting is what I do best.

Linda:

I had a kind of ability that developed at an early age—draftsmanship. It was applauded. Terry's was a different kind of style, which I envied. I had flair; Terry was more primitive, sophisticated. I envied Terry's understanding of why she was doing it. It came from her gut; she painted for hours. It wasn't until I later cultivated a love for costume design and mime-performance that I no longer felt the need to be a painter as Terry is. I also do surrealist collage.

Parents

Terry:

Our father was always a talented painter. Our mother was very gifted but became overshadowed by dad's success in his career when she had three children.

Linda:

Our mother is a natural comedienne. She could have been excellent, but she lacked the drive. Women of her era were encouraged toward families and not careers.

Terry:

In our family, feelings were dramatically and temperamentally presented. Affection was not easily expressed. It was a family of artistic egos struggling with one another. The love was strong but it was obscured.

Linda is much more accepting of parents. I won't let them get away with treating me like a child at twenty-seven. Linda rolls with it. She's the good girl, always. They called us lovable Linda and terrible Terry. Occasionally we switch off.



Terry (left) and Linda, 1979.



Terry (left) and Linda, 1982.



Terry (left) and Linda. Hair advertisement. Courtesy of Daniel Lee Studio, New York.



Jane (the twins' mother), 1982.

Linda:

For an artistic family ours was a conservative one. Very little emphasis was put on change or risk. Terry and I have always pushed ourselves to great limits because we believe fear leads to very sheltered lives. Religion was viewed skeptically in our family, but we overcame those feelings.

One reason we were so driven toward show business was that personality was highly praised in our family. If you didn't have personality you might as well hang it up. If you were witty and could take center stage you could take first prize. We spent energy on that area to compensate for our insecurity about our appearance. We were not made to feel attractive. We were always compared to our pretty cousins.

Terry:

Confidence in one's own beauty lends to confidence in life. I love costumes because they give me that confidence. I love being tall and statuesque—like an odd piece of sculpture.

Linda:

As a performer I can make myself into a beautiful Goddess of the Madison Avenue variety, but in the same respect we are mocking the need to maintain this false image. In our performance, we impersonate high-fashion mannequins come to life as robots.

Terry:

We love the entertaining part. Theater gives so much to people. It can be seen in a spiritual way. You can heal people through performance if you are coming from a spiritual place. We improvise dance, comedy, mime, and singing. They've never seen this—they love it.

Linda:

We've been through a miraculous healing experience that has led to extensive spiritual growth over the past year. Until then we had had serious health problems since our teens. We performed in spite of severe pain for several years. Finally a friend suggested a woman healer who worked physically, and we have improved under her guidance. It is an ongoing process, but we are like new people.

Terry:

We believe that people get illnesses because of their emotional and spiritual orientation. This is a difficult concept to grasp unless one has been through a spiritual healing. We are studying now to develop our own power to heal others.

Jane (the Twins' Mother)

The twins were quite conservative when they were young. They wouldn't wear makeup and I wanted them to. They wouldn't even wear lipstick. I'd say things like "Why don't you straighten your hair—it's too curly!" I wasn't proud of the fact that they wouldn't fix themselves up. I always thought they were attractive. I wasn't talking about their features. They have beautiful features; they just didn't seem to care. I compared them too much to my cousin's daughter, who was very pretty. I think I leaned on that. It was compare, compare, compare about their looks and even trying to get them to participate in sports which they didn't like. When I was young, I too didn't like my looks, but I got past it through wit and other things. Before they got into show business they never tried to fix themselves up—it wasn't until they were twenty-one. It was a real flipover.

About the Nude Photograph

We were at a dinner with several people, and one of them had the *Philadelphia Magazine* and showed me the photograph of the twins in it. At first I let out a gasp and thought "But the twins don't have any clothes on," but I thought "What a beautiful photograph" at the same time. I passed it on to Jamie [her husband], and he was immediately thrilled—*my* twins! I got pleased with it too. I have it in my wallet.

About the Other Photograph

I was very upset about that photograph. I opened up a newspaper and it was so big and that hurt a lot because that was my basic thing. After telling them so often that they should fix themselves up—the picture was a reminder of that. I couldn't look at it. I didn't like it.

Myra

Excerpts from "Waiting for Becky" (Chanin 1980)

"You want to pose with me next time?" Phyllis asked bluntly. I tried to think of a clever way of saying no. "I don't think so." I demurred. "I'm not really very comfortable with my body. I couldn't pose without clothes." All the negative programming I had always received about my body was assaulted by the narcissistic impulse to hang in the "altogether" in a gallery. Why did I consider my body inferior? Unworthy to be displayed? What was a good body? One that worked, I answered my own question. Well, mine worked pretty well. It had tremendous energy and it hardly ever got sick.

I suddenly found myself accepting the invitation. "Okay, I'll do it. It may not be gorgeous but it's me." The idea intrigued me.

That night when I got undressed I took a good look at myself in the mirror. Lumpy hips. A girdle of fat where more fortunate women showed a waistline. A bulging belly bisected by a hysterectomy scar. I looked like what I was: a middle-aged lady whose body had nurtured several pregnancies. I looked at myself again and found myself smiling. What the hell! It would be one less exposure to fear.

About the Photographs

When I first saw the contacts I was surprised that I was as attractive as I appeared. Alvin had always taken pictures of me that seemed to specialize in making me look enormous, but on Becky's photos, even nude, I was a reasonable size. There were two photographs that resulted from that first session. The one of me and my husband, Alvin, shows the point in the relationship when I realized that he had feet of clay. I was physically timid, but he was an emotional "chicken shit." He could race down mountains, but he was afraid to bare his penis. In this photograph, he is wearing a robe and I am sitting naked, looking at him with a slightly mocking smile on my face. The next one in the series is me looking very vulnerable on a stool. This is the one photograph that shows all my insecurities and all my fears.

The third photograph in the series was done with my mother, and we were able to re-create the relationship that had always existed between us. She is in the foreground, fully made-up and in a pink satin dress, looking like Madame Iron Balls, and I sit in the rear in a dark dress, obviously not able to cope with or challenge her authority. I look very plain and wear no makeup. We both sit with our hands held in the same position, and there is tremendous tension in her face, while mine looks distorted, as though I had a small stroke.

The last photograph was taken for the jacket of my first book. I am now wearing the pink dress and the makeup, but where my mother is tense, I am free. I have obviously become her, but without the guilt and the tension.

I think the series shows me as a woman in transition. I sometimes don't believe that I had the courage to take off my clothes and expose a body I thought was so imperfect. Posing for Becky gave me an entirely new image of myself—not totally positive, I'm no beauty—but I look like mostly everyone else . . . maybe even better than some that wear clothes with more grace. I don't have any rolls and my flesh is very solid.



Myra, 1978.



Myra and her husband, Alvin, 1978.



Myra and her mother, 1979.



Myra, 1980.

Mary

We had so many people in the family—so much going on. Most of the entertaining done in our home was family-oriented: grandmother, cousins, seven children—huge meals.

I spent most of my time alone. When I was with people I needed to be with them, but with all that stuff going on, I needed to be different from my siblings. I needed desperately to be different from my sister. I adored her, absolutely worshipped her, but I couldn't be like her. It was foreign to me to be what she was. She was the first daughter, the quiet, good girl. You always knew where I stood because you asked me and I told you and she was not like that. She hid everything. There is still a great deal about her that I don't, and may never, know.

Both my grandmothers were very strong-willed people. My mother's mother was an incredibly able and somewhat dominant woman, and she had a strong influence over my mother. But if my mother becomes too demanding, I can't allow it. To arrive at a point when I could tell her this—to state my case without arguing was a fight for my adulthood, a fight for me. I could not allow myself to consider myself a child who could be told to do this or that anymore. I had to tell myself and my mother, "I adore you, but don't butt in—it's not fair."

Lots of people feel like outsiders. When I told my dad that I felt like the black sheep in the family, he said All you guys feel that way. Every one of you feels that you're the one who is different. You all think your brothers and sisters don't think much of you, that they don't care. You should hear what they say when you aren't here. They're very respectful. They think you're great. They won't tell you to your face but they tell me.

I have confidence about some things. That's why I did art so much. When I was a kid, it was a defense mechanism. Something I could do that other kids would respect me for, and they did. I had it all over them in that department. Even my siblings thought that was nice.

I think you could find out most of what is important about me without ever mentioning my family. I think the most important things about me have little to do with them. For a long time I felt that I was not part of my family. This family existed and I was a separate entity and they all had these effects on me and I lived this life with them. You know I adore my family. But if I were with my family for an extended period of time I would get sick; up until several years ago this was so, but it doesn't happen anymore. But that is where I came from. What I am now, what my life is and how I live it, is important to me. Aside from my loving them, they are beside the point.

On Appearance

I was convinced I was ugly—absolutely hideous—from my peers and siblings. My mother would tell me my time would come. That it really wasn't that bad, and that not everyone can be pretty, that I too could be attractive. Until a certain age I was the most important thing there was. Everything was seen through these very hurt eyes—I was feeling like a victim. I felt all these things were done to me. Why couldn't I be pretty, why couldn't I be smart, why couldn't I be nice, why couldn't people like me? Somewhere along the line I got very tired of listening to myself think like that.

One of my understandings about seeing things in a more objective way—not me, me, me—came when I realized that I judged people by the way they dressed. I also cut off an openness to a whole group of people because of the way they dressed. They dressed conventionally and I thought they had conventional minds and that doesn't always follow. Sometimes you can meet very fascinating people who simply fall into a mold because it's easiest or that was what they grew up with. Facing the fact that someone who wears lots of makeup can be just as interesting as a woman who would never put it on in a million years was important to me.

I don't conform to any kind of normal understanding of what beautiful is. I know I don't. But the question with me was not am I beautiful—the question with me is, is it all right that I'm not.

I come off like a well-adjusted person who knows what I'm talking about and thinks well of herself—tells people exactly what she thinks—so why the hell was I so sick for twenty years?

"You are not what you think you are and not who other people think you are. You are what you think other people think you are." I think how much I project that on my life. How much I insist on that. Insist on projecting an image because it's what I get back. It's like looking at myself in a mirror. How much power can we have to change that? How much responsibility can we accept for our own lives? So much that we can change it—completely. You can just change it!



Mary and her father, 1982.

A Microanalysis of Performance Structure and Time in Kathak Dance-Drama
Polly Lavin



Mary and her mother, 1982.

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A Microanalysis of Performance Structure and Time in *Kathakali* Dance-Drama

Phillip Zarrilli

Kathakali, the dance-drama of Kerala, a state on the southwest coast of India, in its natural setting goes on for many hours, traditionally lasting from dusk until dawn the following day. This article attempts to define the specific elements that constitute the performance score which guides the complete performance, to isolate the individual performance units that make up the complete score, to subject a single example of a performance unit to microanalysis, and to suggest reasons for the duration of such performances.

Performance Score and Text

Kathakali, like all forms of performance, has a score. A performance score consists of all the created and/or received conventions which collectively constitute the complete composition performed. Various theatrical forms range widely in the degree to which the specific score guiding a particular performance is "set." Classical Asian theatrical forms such as *Kathakali*, *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, or the Japanese *Kabuki* or *Noh* have relatively set scores; that is, the performance conventions change only slightly from performance to performance through elaboration, refinement, and a relatively slow process of innovation in nuance of technique. While much contemporary Western theater is built by constructing a new and unique performance score for each new production of a play, Western ballet often attempts to re-create as precisely as possible the previously choreographed performance score of a "Swan Lake." Any performance, then, possesses its own score. The specific internal construction of scores differs from genre to genre. Within a genre the score may also vary from performance to performance.

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One part of many performance scores is a received text. In classical Asian theater forms, the text is usually a highly regarded literary composition guided by specific poetic and literary conventions governing the particular genre of dramatic literature. The performance score, however, should not be confused with such conventionalized, received texts. Not all forms of performance have such received texts. Some improvised performance forms, such as *commedia dell'arte*, or improvised sections of a performance literally create their own texts through the operative conventions which are a part of the performance score. Contemporary art performances may have no text or create a text in performance; nevertheless, each art performance follows a specific set of acts/actions that constitute its score.

Even in some classical Asian forms such as *Kathakali* dance-drama, the received text does not coincide on a one-to-one basis with the performance score. The text is only one of the major constraints governing the performance. Simply reading the received literary version of a *Kathakali* dramatic text (or that of a Peking Opera, *Kabuki*, or *Noh*) gives the reader little idea of what a performance of that dramatic text is actually like.

In *Kathakali* the written, received literary text is sacrosanct; that is, nothing should be added to or taken away from the originally authored text-as-text. The text is perceived as discrete, individually authored, and capable of being judged as a literary work according to the criteria applied to other works of the same literary class/genre. However, in terms of the performance of the text, the received text is only the beginning point in the construction of the performance score by the performers. The received literary text in *Kathakali* historically has served as the initial inspiration for further developments in the performance score.

Over the years, originally authored *Kathakali* plays have spawned the development of a performance score for a particular play which may diverge radically from the received literary text. Different scores may even exist for a single play owing to subtle variation in treatment given that text by different *Kathakali* schools.

The development of divergent performance scores is not at all surprising. There has always existed a dynamic tension between an original text and the performance of that text through time. With the exception of a few historical periods where closet dramas were written and never intended for performance, the dramatic text has always been authored for performance. By their very nature theatrical performances are concrete, one-time events. A performance score must be constructed for any text—that is the immediate concern of the performers. In the original production of a text, the playwright is often directly involved in the

production so that alterations in the text can be made to suit the performers. The result is often a close initial congruence of text and performance score. Such was the case with Shakespeare at the Globe, Aeschylus in Athens with his chorus, and at least some *Kathakali* authors working with troupes in the first staging of their dramatic texts. Alterations of the text made in an original production are most often based on the immediate needs of the production being staged by this particular group of actors for the specific occasion of this particular production.

When the original text serves as the basis for more than the one original production, that same text will always be subject to possible change or alteration. Indeed, historically we find that the original congruence of playwright, script, and performance score often lapses or alters as time passes. Naturally, with time there are changes in historical and personal circumstances: authors/performers die; the distance between the originally authored text and aesthetic principles guiding the original production grows wider; new generations of performers come to the stage; performance techniques change. The likelihood is that there will be changes and alterations and that the conventions governing the performance of a received text and constituting the performance score will change. Examples from world theater history are many and varied. In the Hellenistic theater the emphasis of performance shifted from a total unified festival context and meaning to an emphasis upon individual star performers for whose benefit the earlier Greek tragedies were modified. A similar phenomenon occurred when Shakespeare's plays became vehicles for star performers during the Restoration and eighteenth-century theaters of England. The result was that Shakespeare's plays were not played in their entirety again until the nineteenth century.

Just as there is a received, originally authored text in *Kathakali*, so is there a received performance score associated with a text. The received performance score may be defined as the specific set of conventions which collectively constitute the complete composition performed, established by tradition, and handed on from teacher to student and/or performer to performer. In performance genres like *Kathakali* which base their scores on received texts, there have grown up over the years traditions for enacting that specific text, or portions of that text. As noted earlier, different schools may have slightly different traditional scores for the enactment of a particular part of a text.

Internal Construction of a *Kathakali* Score

The internal construction of a performance consists of all the discrete items and/or markers that may be utilized to set the performance apart, or frame it, from daily life.¹

Such usually public frames or markers delimit and define the theatrical genre or styles of performance, setting the outside boundaries for what is considered a part of the performance event. Inside these outer markers there often exists an inherited, or "traditional," structure and/or style of performance. Finally, the performance score includes all the subunits which fill out the inherited structure (see Diagram 1). In classical Asian theater forms, these subunits may often be isolated as discrete and definable systems of actions which ultimately constitute the performance event, and therefore the score.

The total score, then, is a skeletal structure whose flesh is provided by the specific performance techniques which an individual performer in an ensemble (or individual if a solo form) must know in order to be able to perform. Such techniques and specific skills constitute the performer's performance knowledge. In classical Asian forms performance knowledge is a highly specialized branch of traditional training which takes years for transmittal and absorption. The performer uses his techniques to realize the score in performance.

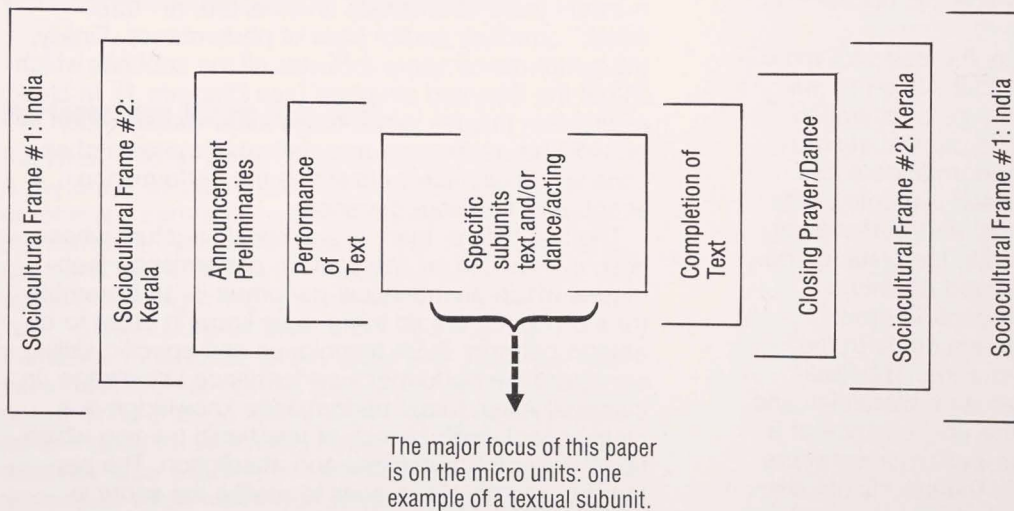
Kathakali's performance score is made up of a series of interlocking units, each of which is governed by its own set of specific performance conventions. At the most general level the largest units of a complete performance can be divided into four major groups: (1) announcement of performance (*kēlikottu*), (2) preliminaries, (3) performance of the text and (4) closing prayer/dance (*Dhanāsi*). (Diagram 2 outlines this traditional structure of a full *Kathakali* performance including a description of each unit and the subunits which make up the lengthy preliminaries.) While an exhaustive study of the *Kathakali* performance structure would necessitate analysis of all four of these large units, this analysis will concentrate on performance of the text.

To focus more tightly on the performance of the text, there are two sets of subunits that constitute the major constraints of the text's performance score: (1) subunits based on the text itself and (2) subunits based on dance-acting interpolations added over time to the original text. To understand all the basic subunits of the text's performance score, first the textual subunits and then the dance-acting subunits will be briefly outlined below.

While the following structural analysis is being read, it should be kept in mind that the entire performance is shaped by the general conventions that govern *Kathakali* performance. The actor-dancers do not

Diagram 1: The Frames of a *Kathakali* Performance

Any performance consists of a series of frames. In this study one of the smallest frames is subjected to a microanalysis. (In performance analysis simply noting and describing the frames is the first step. The juxtaposition of the frames, the interstices between the frames, and the relationship of the smallest textual subunits on the micro level to the largest sociocultural context on the macro level must all be studied.)



speak or sing the text; rather, the onstage vocalists sing the entire text. The actor/dancer presents his role in a threefold manner by (1) acting the character, (2) "speaking" the dialogue through the use of a highly codified system of hand gestures (*mudrās*), and (3) dancing both pure and interpretive choreography set for each role. The musicians who play the various percussion instruments provide the basic rhythmic framework accompanying each unit and subunit of performance. Taken together, then, the vocalists, percussionists, and actor/dancers create a truly collaborative art in which the skills and energies of all artists must be joined as one to create an outstanding performance.

Textual Subunits

The first subunit of the text is the *śloka*. *Ślokas* are metrical verses composed in stanzas, are usually written in the third person, and narrate or tell what is going to happen in the dialogue portions of the play. The *ślokas* usually provide the context for the "action" of the dialogue scenes. Occasionally a *dandaka* replaces a *śloka*. *Dandakas* are also narrative passages usually written in the third person, and they serve the same function as *ślokas*. However, *ślokas* are set in certain specific metrical patterns while *dandakas* have a different metrical structure. (Since *dandakas* serve a similar function to that of *ślokas*, they will not enter into the body of this more limited discussion of performance structure.)

The second major subunit of the text is the *padam*. *Padas* are songs composed specifically as dance-music for interpretation in performance. In general, the *padas* are the dialogue or soliloquy portions of the texts and therefore are usually written in the first person. Even though the vocalists sing the entire text (including both *ślokas* and *padas*), the *padas* are written as if the actor/dancer were actually speaking the lines.²

Both of these major types of text units are sung according to accepted musical conventions and style,³

Diagram 2: Outline Structure of Kathakali Performance (Traditional Pattern)

Clock Time (Approximate Times)	Description
6:30–7:00 p.m. (Dusk)	Announcement of Performance (<i>kējikottu</i>). The cue to the village/environs that a Kathakali performance will take place that evening; a percussion announcement with two drums (<i>maddalam</i> and <i>ceṅṭa</i>).
8:00 p.m.	Preliminaries <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Lighting of bronze oil lamp (<i>kali vilakku</i>). 2 Percussion interludes (on lighting of the oil lamp the <i>maddalam</i>, accompanied by the cymbals, plays the <i>śuddha maddalam</i>, which in turn is followed by drumming on the <i>ceṅṭa</i> called the <i>araṇu keli</i>). 3 Dancing of pure dance segment (<i>tōṭayam</i>) behind the hand-held curtain. 4 Singing of prayers (<i>vandana ślokas</i>). 5 Dancing of <i>puṛappaṭu</i> ("going forth"), or pure dance segment. 6 Vocalists and percussionists in a long composition (<i>Mēlappadam</i>). (Vocal portion lasts about 45 minutes to one hour with the singing of <i>aṣṭapadis</i> from Jayadeva's <i>Gita Govinda</i>. The last part of this preliminary is a chance for the drummers to display their skills.)
10:00 p.m.	Performance (of Text)
5:00–6:30 a.m. (Dawn)	Closing Prayer Dance (<i>Dhanāśi</i>). Short solo dance offering thanks to god for completion of the performance and seeking blessings for the audience.

which are a part of Kathakali's total aesthetic style. As mentioned earlier, the vocalists sing the entire text while the orchestra provides accompaniment on a variety of drums, cymbals, and gongs. Both *ślokas* and *padas* are sung in specific *ragas* selected by the author/composer for their appropriateness to the emotions or sentiments expressed in the particular context of the play in which a *śloka* or *padam* appears. Although the term *raga* is difficult to briefly translate, it might best be defined as a series of melodic modes built on a specific set of notes in the scale and elaborated on so as to bring together the musician(s) and audience in the mood represented by the *raga*.

Two other important musical constraints shape a Kathakali performance—*tāla* and *kāla*. *Tālas* are the rhythmical patterns with set formulas of timemarking used to guide the orchestra and, through the orchestra, the actor/dancers in their performances. In performance the gong held by the lead vocalist "keeps the *tāla*," hitting the gong on each accented unit of time. All *tālas* are cyclical arrangements of the specific number of accented and unaccented time units (*mātras*) which constitute a specific *tāla*. There are six Kathakali *tālas*, including *campaṭa* (eight time units or *mātras*), *campa* (ten units), *aṅṭa* (fourteen units), *pancāri* (six units), *tripuṭa* (seven units), and *muriya-tanta* (half *aṅṭa* or seven). *Campaṭa tāla*, for exam-

ple, has three accented and five unaccented time units (*mātras*) arranged 12345678 (x = accented).










Variation in the tempo of each of the six basic *tālas* is governed by the speed (*kāla*) in which the *tāla* is performed. There are three basic *kālas*: slow (*vilamba* or *onnam kāla*), medium (*madhya* or *randam kāla*), and fast (*druta* or *nunnam kāla*). Medium speed is a doubling of slow speed, and fast, a doubling of medium. Like a *raga*, the specific rhythmic pattern (*tāla*) and its speed (*kāla*) are selected for their appropriateness to the context of the action. Generally speaking, a sudden change in the basic speed of a rhythmic pattern or a change from one pattern to another signals to both onstage characters and audience a change in mood or sentiment (*rasa*). For example, the slow speed is generally associated with the erotic mood (*śṛṅgāra*), medium speed with the heroic sentiment (*vīra*), and fast speed with the furious (*raudra*).

Returning to the two basic textual subunits, *ślokas* and *padas*, I have noted that both are set in specific *ragas* according to the dramatic context. However, there is an extremely important difference in the way that these basic text units are performed musically. *Ślokas* are sung by the vocalists without percussion background and therefore with no strict adherence to

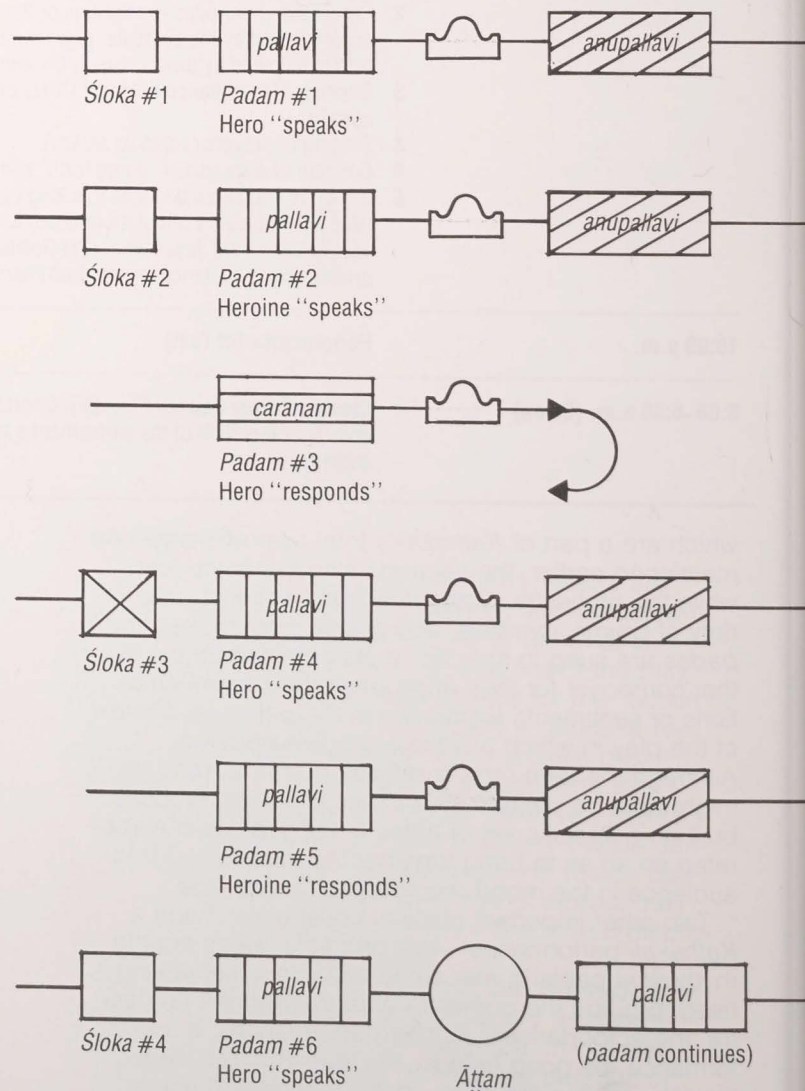
Diagram 3: Schematic Diagram of Typical Kathakali Structure

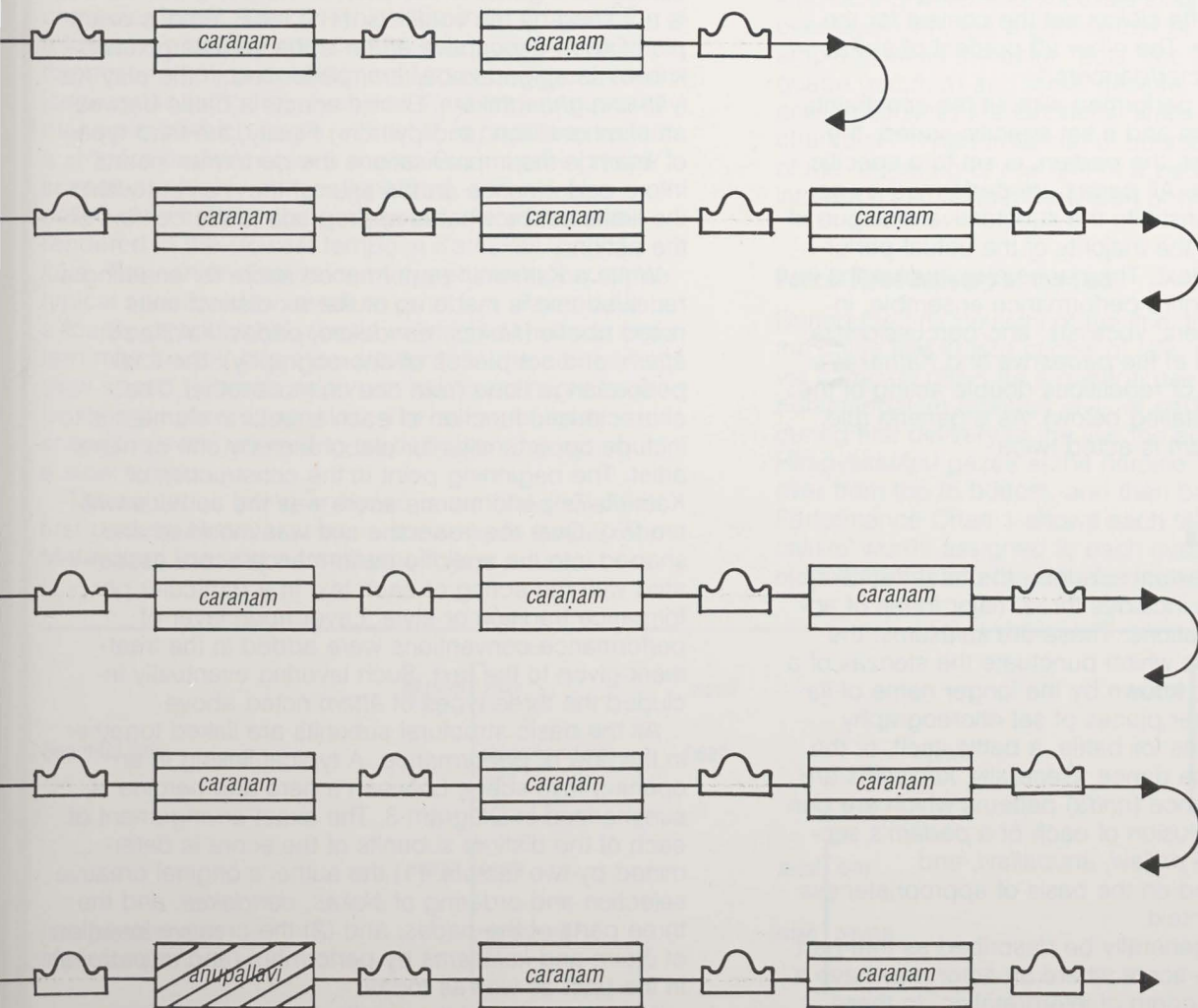
Note: This diagram merely illustrates the typical linkage among textual and acting/dance subunits which comprise the performance score. It does not attempt to illustrate the dynamic structure or interrelationship of the units. *Dandakas* are not included in the key and scene layout since they serve the same structural function as *ślokas*.

Key:

-  regular unacted *śloka* (narrative)
-  acted *śloka* (narrative)
-  *padam* (dialogue)
-  *pallavi* (refrain)
-  *anupallavi* (subrefrain)
-  *caranam* (foot)
-  *kalāśam* (punctuating dance)
-  *āṭṭam* (interpolation)
-  set choreography (like a battle, sāri dance, etc.)

A Typical Two-Character Scene





a particular rhythmic time structure. *Ślokas*, then, allow the vocalists great freedom of interpretation outside the constraints of rhythmic pattern (*tāla*) and speed (*kāla*). For the vocalists the singing of *ślokas* is an opportunity for displaying their vocal capabilities. Unfettered by restrictions of rhythmic patterns, they have freedom to interpret by elaborating on the long syllables of any word in the *śloka*. But this freedom is always within the bounds of the mood they are attempting to capture in their singing.

As a rough approximation, nearly 80 percent of the time *ślokas* are sung without actors onstage. In the majority of cases, the *ślokas* set the context for the *padas* which follow. The other 20 percent of *ślokas* are acted by the actor/dancers.⁴

While *ślokas* are performed without the constraints of rhythmical pattern and a set specific speed, the other textual subunit, the *padam*, is set to a specific *raga*, *tāla*, and *kāla*. All *padas* are performed by actor/dancers and constitute the substantive dialogue of the play, providing the majority of the actual performance time of the text. The *padas* also involve the integration of the entire performance ensemble, including actor/dancers, vocalists, and percussionists. In the performance of the *padas* we find *Kathakali's* characteristic form of repetitious double acting of the lines of the text (detailed below). As a general rule, each line of a *padam* is acted twice.

Dance-Acting Subunits

In addition to the textual subunits, the total *Kathakali* performance score includes three major forms of actor/dancer's elaborations. These are *kalāśams*, the dance compositions which punctuate the stanzas of a *padam*; *āṭṭam* (also known by the longer name of *ilākiyāṭṭam*); and longer pieces of set choreography such as preparations for battle, a battle itself, or the female *sāri* entrance dance. Generally, *kalāśams* are *Kathakali's* pure dance (*nṛitta*) patterns which are performed at the conclusion of each of a *padam's* sections (including the *pallavi*, *anupallavi*, and *caraṇams*), selected on the basis of appropriateness to the dramatic context.

The *āṭṭam* may generally be described as that part of the performance score where an actor may have a great degree of freedom of interpretation. In these passages the actor speaks in hand gestures (*mu-drās*), either to himself or to another character, but without the support of the vocalists. These passages are outside of the main written text, although they are elaborations on the specific text.

There are three distinct types of *āṭṭam*. One is a form of set soliloquy (*tantētāṭṭam*) acted by certain character types (*katti* and *tāṭi*) after their entrance. These *āṭṭam* allow the character to elaborate on his basic nature, for example, illustrating self-confidence, arrogance, or an assessment of the situation facing him. A second type of *āṭṭam*, best called a descriptive *āṭṭam*, is a set interpolation which expands on a particular portion of the story of the received text. Descriptive *āṭṭam* have their own texts handed down from generation to generation of actors; however, it serves as a guide to the actor in his performance and is not sung by the vocalists. (The most famous example of such descriptive *āṭṭam* is the set interpolation known as *ajagarakabalitam*, performed in the play *Kalyānaśaughandhikam*. Bhīma enacts a battle between an elephant, lion, and python.) Finally, the third type of *āṭṭam* is the improvisations the performer inserts into a performance on the spur of the moment within the limits set by what is appropriate to the context of the action.

While a *Kathakali* performance score for enacting a received text is made up of the six distinct units noted above (*ślokas*, *dandakas*, *padas*, *kalāśams*, *āṭṭam*, and set pieces of choreography), the total performance flows from one unit to another. The characteristic function of each structural element is to include opportunities for elaboration by one or more artist. The beginning point in the construction of *Kathakali's* performance score was the author's written text. Over the years the text was modified and shaped into the specific performance score associated with the acting of each text in a particular performance tradition or style. Layer upon layer of performance conventions were added in the treatment given to the text. Such layering eventually included the three types of *āṭṭam* noted above.

All the basic structural subunits are linked together in the flow of performance. A typical linking in an opening love scene between a hero and heroine is summarized in Diagram 3. The exact arrangement of each of the distinct subunits of the score is determined by two factors: (1) the author's original creative selection and ordering of *ślokas*, *dandakas*, and the three parts of the *padas*; and (2) the creative insertion of *āṭṭam* and *kalāśams* by performers (and/or patrons) in the past as well as today.

Now that each of the smallest subunits of the score has been isolated, it will be important to expose them to microanalysis. In microanalysis, the infrastructure of the subunit is examined in detail by isolating the techniques used to produce the subunit of the score. Since the *padas* of the text constitute the major portion of the *Kathakali* text-in-performance, and therefore one of the substantive portions of the total score (and total clock duration), the following microanalysis focuses specifically on the performance of one line of dialogue.

Microanalysis of One Line of Dialogue

The line of dialogue selected for analysis is taken from the play *Prahlāda Caritam*, based on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. I have purposely selected a line from the opening scene because it takes a relatively long time to perform. *Prahlāda Caritam*'s opening scene is a typical one, involving a *katti*, or "knife" type of character (one who possesses both a streak of nobility and yet is arrogant and evil). In this case the main *katti* character is Hiraṇyakasipu, who first appears with his wife, Kayati (a *minukku*, or "radiant" character type). Plays in which the main character is a knife type usually open with a love scene in which the major emotion or sentiment (*rasa*) being unfolded is the erotic (*śṛṅgāra*). *Prahlāda Caritam* is but one of many plays which begin with what is popularly called a *śṛṅgāra padam*, or love scene. Such opening love scenes are highly conventionalized, and are also called slow sets by the performers, since they are rendered in the slowest tempo in *Kathakali*: *patiṇa kāla*. The earlier discussion of speed mentioned three typical speeds: slow, medium, and fast. *Patiṇa kāla* is a fourth, or additional, speed in which a rhythmic pattern may be set. It is even slower than the normal slow speed (*vilamba* or *onnam kāla*) and might best be thought of as super slow. The acting of such scenes is even referred to as *patiṇāṭṭam*, or acting in a slow tempo.

The sentence being analyzed is the first line of the first *padam*. Hiraṇyakasipu is speaking to Kayati. The Malayalam line and a translation follow:

In order to unpack the performance of this one line of dialogue, we can assume that, in the case of the *padam*, the text itself is the baseline for interpretation and elaboration by the performers: the vocalists, who sing the text as well as keep the basic *tāla* on the gong and cymbals, and the actor/dancers.

The performance of this one line of text, like all regular *padam* lines, may be divided into two major sequences: (I) first delivery of the line by the vocalists, during which the actor enacts the traditionally set subtext of the line; and (II) the second delivery of the line, during which the vocalists sing the line over and over again through a set number of *tāla* cycles (in example 2) while the actor "acts" the line in gesture language (*mudrās*) and facial gesture, thus projecting and embodying the emotional state (*bhāva*) of the character. In performance, of course, these two parts of the rendering of one line of a *padam* flow from one into the other without a division or break.

Part I: First Delivery of the Line

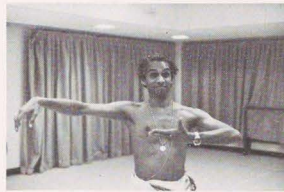
During the first delivery of the line, the vocalists sing the entire line in four cycles of *tāla*, as in the slow *patiṇa campāṭa tāla*.⁵ As a general rule in the Kerala Kalamandalam (central) style of performance, during first delivery of the line the actor playing Hiraṇyakasipu gazes at the heroine, looking her over from top to bottom, and then back up again. Performance Chart 1 shows each *tāla* cycle, the vocalists' words assigned to each cycle, approximate elapsed time, and the actor's movements interpreting

Beautiful lady	Manini	mar (plural ending) -ies	mauli head	jewel	ratna	me vocative case ending showing direct address
(one possessing implied) noble	mania	seela mannered	ketal	lum listen	please	
	"Oh jewel among beautiful ladies; oh, noble mannered one, please listen."					

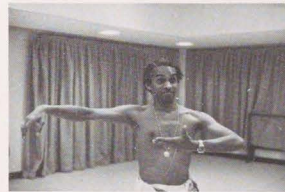
Performance Chart 1: First Delivery of *Prahlāda Caritam* Line

Tāla
**Vocalist sings
 (# = photograph placement)**

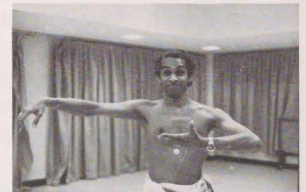
Cycle #1

 1 2 3
 Manimar


Frame 1



Frame 2



Frame 3

Cycle #2

 4 5 6
 mauratname


Frame 4

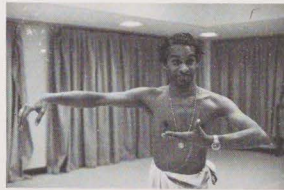


Frame 5

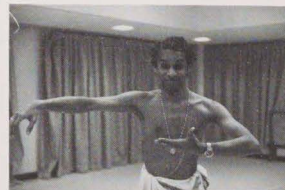


Frame 6

Cycle #3

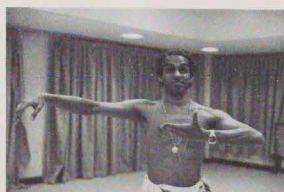
 7 8
 maniseela


Frame 7

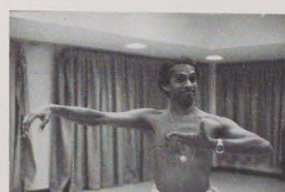


Frame 8

Cycle #4

 9 10 11
 ketallum


Frame 9



Frame 10



Frame 11

Elapsed time

Description of actor's performance

30–45
seconds

Looks at the face of the heroine through the use of facial gestures which elaborate on erotic (*srīṅgāra*) *rasa*. Here the actor can free-associate in terms of what he imagines, mainly through the movement of the neck and eyes. Although technically looking at the heroine, the actor is actually seeing an imaginary Kayati since the actor playing Kayati is within his peripheral vision only.

30–45
seconds

He now sees his wife's breasts and shows how this arouses his passion. He sees her breasts with his eyes, and then shows his appreciation of the wealth of her beautiful breasts by flickering his eyelids and moving the eyes in a figure eight pattern. Her breasts are so full that there is no visible cleavage between them.

30–45
seconds

Up to the middle of this cycle the actor keeps the same basic *bhāva* of passion, but then in the second half (last 16 *mātras*), his eyes begin to move down toward his wife's feet.

[12]
30–45
seconds



Frame 12

At the end of this cycle his eyes reach her feet, and he does a take with his head and eyes. Having looked her fully down, his eyes, during the first half of this cycle (first 16 *mātras*), slowly come up along her body. Then, in the second half of the cycle, the actor moves his face/head as he attempts to draw his wife's attention to the fact that he is about to speak.

[12] This frame illustrates the transition stage or a "neutral" position between the first and second delivery of the line.

the line. The accompanying photographs illustrate the approximate place in the vocalists' delivery of the sung words where the action described occurs. The exact coordination of a particular eye movement, for example, will vary slightly from performance to performance.

The first delivery and performance of a *padam* line might best be thought of as a "pre-acting" of the line which follows. It establishes an emotional context. Normally, in this first delivery, the actor shows the *bhāva* which lies behind the meaning of the line, that is, what we would often call the subtext in Western acting terms. In the case of this particular line from *Prahlāda Caritam* we have a somewhat interesting variation on the straight subtext of the line sung. The line itself is rather straightforward: "Oh jewel among beautiful ladies; oh, noble mannered one, please listen." However, in the line's first delivery the actor projects and embodies the *bhāva* of passion. Obviously the literal line does not explicitly or implicitly imply passion, rather, the actor embodies Hiraṇyakaśipu's passion on seeing his wife's breasts. The acting is governed by the general convention of presenting Hiraṇyakaśipu's passion since, at the Kerala Kalamandalam, this *bhāva* has become associated with the acting of this particular scene. This is part of the received performance score connected with the acting of this particular *padam* in the text. The generally set subtext of the line is Hiraṇyakaśipu's passion on seeing his wife.

While the first delivery of this line of *Prahlāda Caritam* is not a straightforward acting of the meaning of the line, it illustrates vividly how important the subtext is to the delivery. Usually such pre-acting is more directly connected and associated with the obvious meaning of the line delivered.

Part II: Second Delivery of the Line

A general performance principle of *Kathakali* is that the vocalists repeat as often as necessary each *tāla* cycle, and the accompanying segment of a line set to each *tāla* cycle, to allow the actor/dancer sufficient time to complete his performance of each segment of the line. The vocalists' repetition of the line segment gives the actor/dancer sufficient time to complete his performance of the entire set of hand gestures (*mudrās*) required to interpret and convey the meaning of this portion of the line. In this second delivery of the line, the actor literally mimes each individual word of the text, "speaking with his hands," while the vocalists "speak" the dialogue through song. The performance of any particular *mudrā* varies in the amount of time required to perform the complete system of gestures. Some *mudrās* can be, and usually are, performed in a relatively limited amount of space

and time; other larger, more complex *mudrās* take longer to perform because of the larger use of space covered in performing the gestures and/or because of the speed at which the *mudrā* is performed. The same *mudrā*, in a different dramatic context, can take longer or shorter to perform, depending on the mood of the action. In the case of the lines from *Prahlāda Caritam*, set in a very slow tempo, the actor takes the maximum amount of time to perform each *mudrā*. The slow action accentuates the mood of the erotic, the absorption of the images, and the creation of an erotic ambiance for the amorous exchange between husband and wife.

We have seen that in the first delivery of the line it takes only one complete *tāla* cycle to perform "maninimar," another for "mauli ratname," and so forth. In second delivery of the line the text temporarily does not move forward but is simply repeated while the actor physically mimes/expresses the *mudrās* which directly duplicate the words being sung. In this example, a second repetition of each *tāla* cycle, and the accompanying word/phrase, provides enough time to allow the actor's mime to catch up to the singing. In performance there is a constant, dynamic, creative tension between the musicians and actor/dancers as they move toward each moment of final congruence marked by the completion of each segment of the line being performed.

In Performance Chart 2, the *tāla* cycle, vocalists' words, approximate elapsed time, and a description of the actor's performance of the lines are listed, along with notation of the accompanying photographs, which show the actor's physicalization of the gesture language "telling" the line of the text.

The *bhāva* of performance of the above line is the erotic, not passion, as shown in the first delivery of the line. Here the actor playing Hiraṇyakaśipu should embody an appreciation of Kayati's character and beauty. This part of the acting of the line is a description and appreciation of her character. In the second delivery of the line, the actor speaks through gesture language every word of the dialogue. While the first delivery sets the context and allows for the pre-acting, the second delivery provides the actor with the opportunity to directly deliver his lines in gesture language with the appropriate *bhāva*.

The total time for performance of this one line is approximately six minutes. In this six minutes, the musicians, vocalists, and actors have collectively created a series of elaborations on the baseline score, in this case the *padam*. The score itself, if we were to look at the larger events in the story of *Prahlāda*, follows a linear chronology, as one event unfolds into another, then another, and so on. The conventionalized opening *katti* love scene is certainly peripheral to the main events in *Prahlāda*'s story, but it serves the purpose

of allowing time for the opening elaboration of the erotic sentiment. The other scenes of the play are more directly related to the story proper. The text, although filled with poetic conceits and written in highly Sanskritized Malayalam language, nevertheless follows a linear chronology. As adaptations of segments of the major epics and *purāṇas*, *Kathakali* plays, as the very name *Kathakali* (story-play) implies, tell these stories.

The baseline of the performance score consists of the string of performance subunits as outlined in Diagram 3. Performance of the subunit *padas* demonstrates the most complex of the many forms of elaboration which create *Kathakali*'s highly convoluted score and internal structure. Other forms of elaboration noted earlier include the vocalist's vocal elaboration in singing *ślokas* and the insertion of *āṭṭam* as elaborations on the original received text. But it is in the infrastructure of the *padas* of the text that the most complex form of technical elaboration occurs. It may be described as a triple helix of cyclical, repetitive elaborations on the baseline of the *padam* being performed (Diagram 4). (Note: the baseline of the total score changes with each subunit on the string. The baseline is the received text for *ślokas*, *dandakas*, and *padas*).

As we have seen, the *padas* provide an opportunity for musicians, vocalists, and actor/dancers to collectively create a series of elaborations around the baseline *padam*. During these elaborations the story moves haltingly, idling, as it were, for stretches of time when the text is repeated. Ultimately, of course, the full story is unfolded but the process of the unfolding in the elaborations is as important as, or even more important than, the content of what is unfolded.

Specifically, the *padam* elaborations follow the lead of the *ponnani*, or lead singer, who keeps the basic *tāla* controlling the rhythm and pace of the *padam* performance. Within the basic *tāla* set by the *ponnani* on the gong, drummers may elaborate within that rhythmic structure. We have seen how the dialogue of the *padam* is set to corresponding *tāla* cycles according to the duration of vocalization. The elaboration here consists of a double form of repetition around the baseline *padam*: (1) the *tāla* cycles themselves are repetitions of set patterns; and (2) the repetitions of the specific *tāla* cycles with the accompanying text in Part II of the delivery. The third spiral forming the triple helix around the text consists of the actor/dancer's mode of delivery and elaboration on the baseline *padam*.

The quality of the *padam* in performance emphasized the repetitive/cyclical structure. This is especially true of the quality of vocalization found in today's modified *sopana* style, where the voices of the lead singer and his assistant constantly overlap; the effect of these overlapping waves of repetition,

connecting the lead singer's first cycle to his assistant's second cycle, produces something like a series of sound waves, similar to filmic lap dissolves.⁶

While the musicians and singers are circumambulating around the baseline of this *padam* guided by the cycles of *tāla*, the actor provides his own form of elaboration for this line of text: (1) his pre-acting of the subtext of the line during its first performance; (2) the signing, or literal speaking with the hands, through *mudrās* of the text while the vocalists are performing repetitions in Part II of the line's performance; and (3) the actor's acting of the text through facial and other gestures by projecting the correct *bhāva* for the context. In the case of the actor, his acting and speaking of the text are linear and chronological in that he follows usual Malayalam grammar. The actor, then, closely follows the *padam* in its linear unfolding but interprets each line of a *padam* in several ways.

While each *padam* is acted twice, and may be sung as many as sixteen times through a number of cycles by the vocalists, this repetitive cyclical pattern is characteristic only of the *padas* of a *Kathakali* performance. When the other main text subunit, the *śloka*, is acted, it follows a one-to-one relationship between the text and the way that the actor performs or interprets these metrical verses. There is no "double acting" of *ślokas* as of *padas*; therefore there is not the same inherent cyclical repetitive pattern. The words of a *śloka* are only repeated once by the vocalists. The dance/acting units are direct interpretations and elaborations of the text. The *kalāśams* are straightforward punctuating, decorative dance patterns, while the *āṭṭams*, though extremely complex interpolations in the received text, are direct interpretations of either dramatic context and/or their own texts without the repetitive cycles found in acting *padas*.

In summary, the *padam* performance structure is the most complex and densely packed form of elaboration in *Kathakali*. In the performance of a *padam* each segment of dialogue is presented to the audience in a series of cyclical waves of sound/vocal and acted/emoted impressions which are repeated at least twice. The threads of the performance of phrases of a *padam* are woven around and around one another; the audience experiences the combined efforts of the percussionists keeping *tāla* and drumming, the vocalists singing cycles of the text, and the actor/dancers conveying the text literally, while simultaneously embodying the meaning of the text as a character. As we have seen, the *tāla* cycles are matched with phrases of the vocal text and are delivered at the same time. On the other hand, the duration of the visual images of the actor/dancer and the "through line" of the character overlap and continue from one *tāla* cycle to another. The moments of final

Performance Chart 2: Second Delivery of *Prahlāda Caritam* Line

Tāla**Vocalist sings**

Cycle #1

 13 14 15 16 17
 m a n i n i m a r


Frame 13



Frame 14



Frame 15



Frame 16

Cycle #2

 18 19 20
 m a n i n i m a r


Frame 18



Frame 19



Frame 20

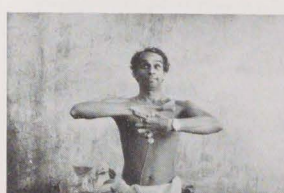
Cycle #1

 21 22 23
 m a u l i r a t n a m e


Frame 21



Frame 22



Frame 23

Cycle #2

 24 (a,b) 25
 m a u l i


Frame 24a



Frame 24b



Frame 25



Frame 26

Elapsed time	Description of actor's performance
30–45 seconds	The actor shows the <i>mudrā</i> for beautiful lady. The single <i>mudrā</i> , "beautiful lady," actually consists of a series of gestures. It takes one full cycle of <i>tāla</i> for the actor to perform this <i>mudrā</i> sequence.
30–45 seconds	Now the actor shows the plural ending, i.e., ". . . ies" and thus catches up with his gestural telling of the full meaning of the word, "maninimar." This plural ending also takes the full cycle to perform.
30–45 seconds	<p>In the course of the performance of "mauli ratname," the actor takes three <i>mudrās</i> to perform the text. The three <i>mudrās</i> are spread over the two cycles allotted to the singing of "mauli ratname," as noted in the accompanying photographic plates. The first <i>mudrā</i> performed is "head," which the actor shows literally (frames 21–22). The <i>mudrā</i> for head takes a relatively short time to perform. The actor performs the <i>mudrā</i> for head during only the first half of the first cycle, or 16 <i>mātras</i>.</p> <p>The second <i>mudrā</i> the actor performs is "ratna" (jewel). This <i>mudrā</i> takes a relatively long time to perform so the performance of jewel begins (frame 23) during the second half of the first cycle of the singing of "mauli ratname" and continues through the first half of the second cycle (another 16 <i>mātras</i>) (frames 24 a and b).</p>
26 ratname	The last half of this second cycle is given over to the performance of the third <i>mudrā</i> required to say, "mauli ratname" (frames 25–26). The vocative ending is shown in these last 16 <i>mātras</i> , or second half of this cycle. Once again the actor catches up by the end of this second cycle with the singers in the performance of all three <i>mudrās</i> for "mauli ratname."

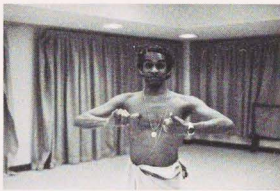


Frame 17

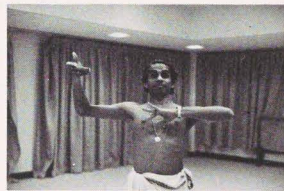
Performance Chart 2, continued

Cycle #1

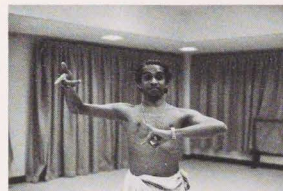
27 28 29
m a n i a s e e l a



Frame 27



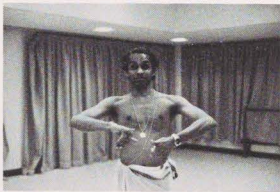
Frame 28



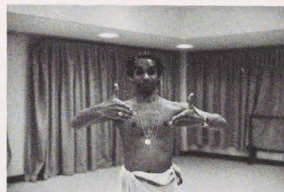
Frame 29

Cycle #2

30 31 32 33 34 35
m a n i a s e e l a



Frame 30



Frame 31



Frame 32



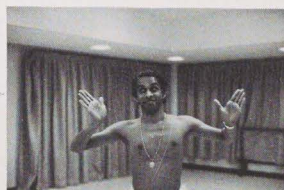
Frame 33

Cycle #1

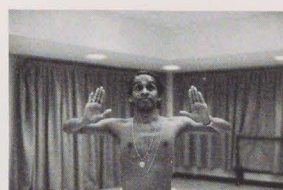
36 37 38
k e t a l l u m



Frame 36



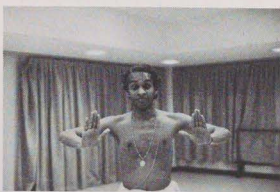
Frame 37



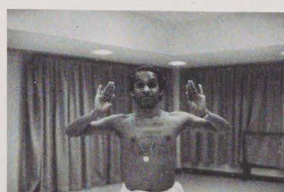
Frame 38

Cycle #2

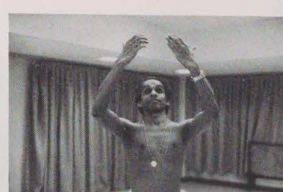
39 40 41 42 43 44
k e t a l l u m



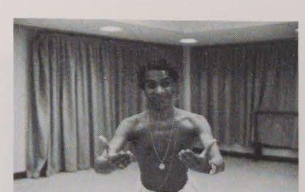
Frame 39



Frame 40



Frame 41



Frame 42

“Maniaseela” requires four *mudrās* to perform. The first *mudrā*, “mania” (noble), takes this entire first cycle to perform (frames 27–29).



Frame 34



Frame 35

The second cycle includes the performance of three *mudrās*. “Seela” (mannered) takes the first half, or 16 *mātras*, of the cycle (frames 30–32). The second half of the cycle is again divided into halves. The first 8 *mātras* are given to performance of “one who possesses” (frame 33), while the last 8 *mātras* are taken to perform, “Oh, you” (frames 34–35).

30–45
seconds

“Ketallum” has two *mudrās*. The first *mudrā*, “keta” (listen), takes this entire first cycle of 32 *mātras* plus the first quarter or 8 *mātras*, of the second cycle below. This is the longest of any of the *mudrās* for this line, running through a total of 40 *mātras*, or 1¼ cycles (frames 36–40).

30–45
seconds

The last three quarters of this cycle are taken to perform “lum” (please listen) (frames 41–44).

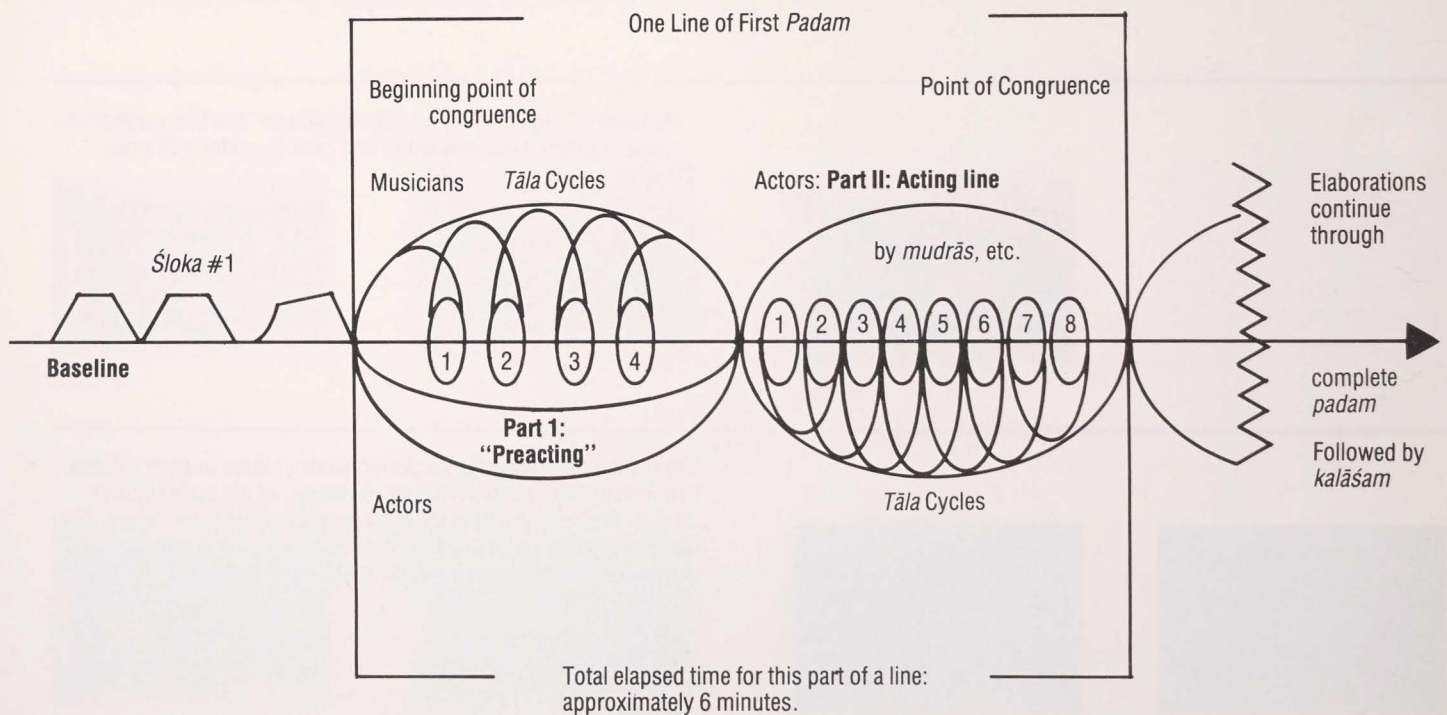


Frame 43



Frame 44

Diagram 4: Performance of One Line of a Kathakali Padam
 Example: First line from *Prahlāda Caritam*



congruence of the actor's elaborate embodiment and visual telling of each phrase of a *padam* occur on completion of both the pre-acting of Part I and the acting in Part II. Other forms of elaboration or embellishment may then occur through *kalāśams*, *āṭṭam*, set dances, and so on.

The complex, repetitive performance structure of *Kathakali padas* to a large degree accounts for the long time required for performance of a *Kathakali* text. (The six-minute length of the *Prahlāda* line should be ample evidence). The other most important factors, but beyond the scope of this paper, are the additions to the text which form the baseline of the performance score, especially the often lengthy descriptive *āṭṭams* which may last longer than one hour.

Conclusions

Kathakali's complex performance score is a series of elaborations, elaborations on and within elaborations, and embellishments. The elaborations characteristic of performance of the *padas*, as well as of *Kathakali's* other forms of elaboration and embellishment (poetic conceits giving scope to the actor for mimetic display; the vocalist's vocal elaboration in singing *ślokas*, etc.), have all been designed and refined over the years as self-conscious challenges to the artist's skill. It is precisely these elaborations that are savored by the cultural elite and that offer the connoisseur and traditional patron the opportunity to fully relish the simultaneous, varied manifestations of the rich performance offered through the technical and emotive skills of the team of artists.

Kathakali's performance score, and in particular the cyclical, elaborative performance structure of the *padas*, is first and foremost a direct reflection of the classical aesthetic tradition of India. The savoring of each moment of performance is the classical audience goal. There are no sudden and unexpected flashes of emotion but rather the slow unfolding of each moment in the dramatic enactment, which allows the spectator to attain the tasting of the various sentiments (*rasas*). In our example from *Prahlāda Caritam*, Part I of the performance of the line allows the spectator time to savor the actor's projected passion (his subtext); and Part II allows him to enjoy the erotic (*śṛṅgāra*), presented in this context as a description and appreciation of feminine beauty. *Kathakali's* traditional all-night duration, from dusk until dawn, provides both performers and audience the time necessary to accomplish and realize the aesthetic goal of the performance.

In addition to serving the function of aesthetic elaboration and realization, the *Kathakali* performance score, and its all-night duration, mirrors in both its general and its specific internal structure the cyclical nature of Indian time. It is natural that the Indian notion of cyclical time should be reflected even in the content and structure of Indian performances. Mircea Eliade writes of Indian time:

Time is cyclic, the world is periodically created and destroyed, and the lunar symbolism of "birth-death-rebirth" is manifested in a great number of myths and rites. It was on the basis of such an immemorial heritage that the pan-Indian doctrine of the ages of the world and of the cosmic cycles developed.⁷

So deeply imbedded is the notion of cyclical time in Indian life that it is not surprising to find it reflected in a number of ways in *Kathakali* performance.

The Indian notion of time can be located in several of the performance frames in Diagram 1. First, the outermost frame of the pan-Indian cultural context is imbued with the idea of cyclical time. It is a cultural assumption which extends to the second frame as well, the Kerala cultural frame. The outer markers of the performance itself, demarcating the performance event through the announcement and closing prayer/dance, house the traditional all-night structure of *Kathakali* (Diagram 2). The dusk-dawn duration is the most obvious direct reflection of the cyclical movement of time and cosmos. But other than this surface similarity, there is a qualitative aspect of traditional *Kathakali* all-night performances which is difficult to convey in an article. There does seem to exist—at all-night performances under the stars, especially in more isolated villages—a special atmosphere and feeling when the performance reaches its culmination at dawn, when the vicissitudes that face *Kathakali's*

epic, heroic figures have been resolved. As archetypal figures on one of many levels of significance embedded in the form, *Kathakali* characters are representative of broad categories of good and evil. The coming of dawn, the winning of the typical early morning battle by the forces of good over evil, returns the cosmic world of the stage to its rightful condition in this replaying of cosmic, mythic events.

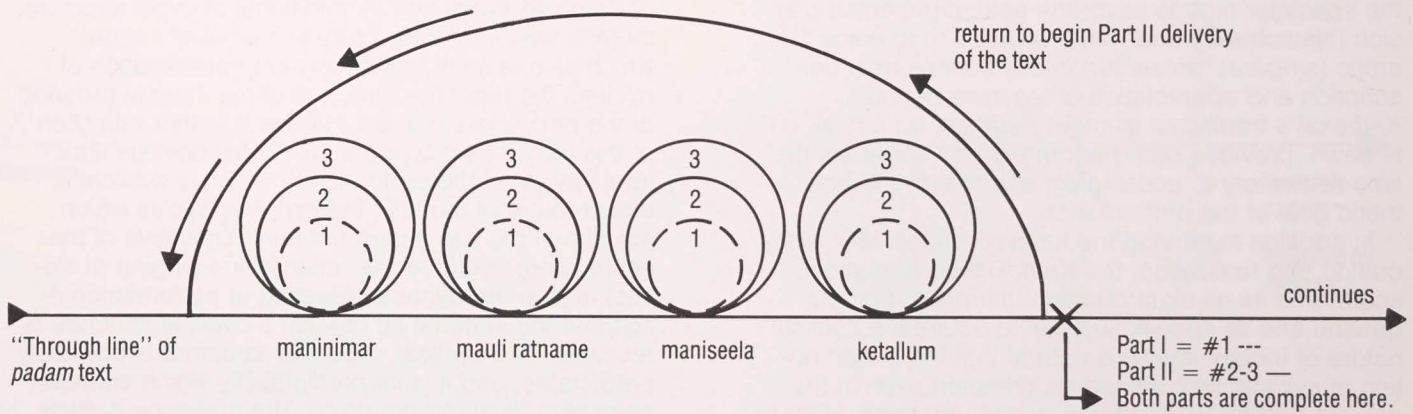
Lest these arguments seem tendentious, let us look more closely at the internal structure of the performance. Beyond the more general level of the content of *Kathakali* plays and its traditional all-night structure, there is the internal structure of *Kathakali's* score, which also reflects this deeply imbedded notion of cycles. The repetitive structure of the internal ordering of the performance score may be a further reflection of this Indian time concept. The most obvious structural feature of the performance which is cyclical is the structure of the *tāla*, the rhythmic cycles which are one of the basic performance constraints of the entire score (with the exception of the singing of *ślokas*). It is in the dynamic situation of performance itself that the importance of such a cyclical structure is revealed. The cyclical, repetitive structure is obviously predictable, and it is its predictability which connoisseurs and music lovers enjoy. The audience is musically drawn into the performance by this predictability of cyclical patterns. It is the moment of return to the beginning of the pattern at which there is the closest congruence and joining of performer and audience. While a qualitative observation, it appears that these moments of congruence serve as high points of audience-performer interaction.

The performance score of the actor/dancers is, as we have seen, also highly repetitive, reflecting this cyclical notion of Indian time. The internal structure of the *padam* momentarily suspends the forward, advancing action of the story/text while cycles are marked. Even in the performance of sections of *padas*, the moments of close congruence between audience, actor/dancers, and musicians are those at the junctures between *tāla* cycles. There is an artistic as well as an experiential sense of completion, consummation, return, and then continuance as the performance score progresses to its next phase. The performance of *padas*, then, is simultaneously repetitive/elaborative and cyclical—they are a part of one another at the deep structural level at the core of the performance.

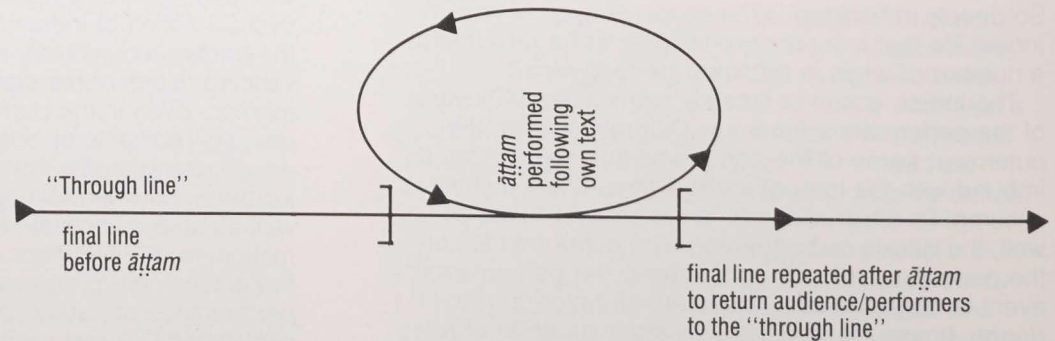
Although beyond the scope of this paper, there are other examples within the performance structure itself of how *Kathakali's* score reflects the Indian notion of cyclical time and movement. When interpolations such as long descriptive *āṭṭam* are added, they are often demarcated from the "through line" of the story by the repetition of the final text line before the *āṭṭam*—a repetition which marks a return to the

Diagram 5: Cycles of Repetition and Elaboration in *Kathakali*

Example #1: The first example below is a segment of a *padam*. This diagram is simply another way of illustrating the relationship of the performance score to the "through line" of the text. Using "maninimar mauli ratname maniaseela ketallum" as our example again, and keeping in mind the two-part performance of the line, it may be seen that in terms of the "through line" of the story, Part I is a delivery of the entire line in four cycles; Part II returns us (arrow) to the beginning of this phrase of the *padam* for a second and third cyclical repetition of each word/phrase in the line: "maninimar," "mauli ratname," "maniaseela," and finally "ketallum."



Example #2: The second example is the simpler cyclical return to the "through line" when a loop is formed for the performance of a descriptive *attam*. The *attam* is an elaboration on the text, but there is a return to the same place in the text from which the elaboration began.



"through line" of the story. Such descriptive *āṭṭam* always bring us back to where we began. Diagram 5 graphically illustrates the cyclical nature of the elaborations of the *padam* performance structure and of the *āṭṭam* interpolations on the "through line" of the story.

The leisurely unfolding, the savoring, the long process of elaboration, and the cyclical, repetitive score are all characteristic of *Kathakali* performance. At the heart of a *Kathakali* performance is the *padam*, which at a deep structural level reveals as clearly as the more obvious level of actual performance time (dusk-dawn) its culturally assumed notion of time. The playing out of that time through artistic and aesthetic elaborations is the characteristic mode of appreciating performance. As forms like *Kathakali* undergo various transformations, adjustments, and changes to accommodate nontraditional, and often urban or Western audiences, changes in the performance structure subtly alter the received traditional structure of a performance. Elaborations, embellishments, and opportunities for artistic display may be, and often are, edited out of performance scores. A more linear concept of story and "through line" of action has already drastically altered many *Kathakali* performances which cater to nontraditional audiences. The significance of such changes will be the object of future studies.

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A first version of this article was presented as a paper at the Ninth Annual Wisconsin Conference on South Asia, 1980. Its present form is a condensation of one section of the forthcoming book *The Kathakali Complex: Actor, Performance, Structure* (New Delhi: Abhinav, 1983). M. P. Sankaran Namboodiri offered invaluable assistance with translation and performance in preparation of this article. Thanks are also due Joan Erdman, Farley Richmond, and especially James Brandon for comments which improved it.

Notes

- 1 Some contemporary performances may intentionally attempt to blur such distinctions or to enact an event without indicating to unsuspecting audience/observers that this is a performance operating as a specially framed and marked-off event. In such cases the internal construction of the score is still as specific as it is in those performances in which the expected frames or markers do occur. The only difference is that the markers and frames are not consciously shown or are consciously hidden.
- 2 A *padam* usually has three parts: the *pallavi* (refrain), *anupallavi* (subrefrain), and *caranams* (literally "foot"). While the *anupallavi* may be omitted, there are usually multiple *caranams*. However, except for determining its total length, these compositional variations do not affect the performance of a *padam*.
- 3 The *Kathakali* vocal style is known as *sopana*. One of the few studies of the *sopana* style is by Leela Omchery, "The Music of Kerala—A Study," *Sangeet Natak* 14, (1969), pp. 12–24.
- 4 For a full explanation of "acted" *ślokas*, including specific examples from *Kathakali* repertory, see the author's forthcoming book, *The Kathakali Complex: Actor, Performance, Structure* (New Delhi: Abhinav, 1983).
- 5 *Patiṇa campāṭa tāla* consists of thirty-two measured units (*mātras*), which is a joining of four sets of the eight-unit *campāṭa tāla*. The linking of four regular *campāṭa* to the long, slow thirty-two unit *tāla* changes the specific accented units.
- 6 The number of times the vocalists repeat a line of a *padam* varies from a minimum of two to as many as sixteen repetitions. When sixteen repetitions are being sung in a slow speed, the elapsed time for enacting a single line of a *padam* may be as long as twenty minutes.
- 7 "Time and Eternity in Indian Thought," *Papers from the Eranos Year Books*, Bollingen Series XXX (3) 1957, pp. 172–200, p. 185.

Reviews and Discussion

Exploiting the Vernacular: Studies of Snapshot Photography

Jonathan Green, ed. *The Snapshot*. Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture, 1974. 126 pp. \$8.50 (paper).

Ken Graves and Mitchell Payne, eds. *American Snapshots*. Oakland, Calif.: The Scrimshaw Press, 1977. 119 pp. (No price.)

Brian Coe and Paul Gates. *The Snapshot Photograph — The Rise of Popular Photography 1888–1939*. London: Ash and Grant, Ltd., 1977. 144 pp. \$6.95 (paper).

Michael Lesy. *Time Frames — The Meaning of Family Pictures*. New York: Pantheon, 1980. 144 pp. + xxvii. \$8.95 (paper).

Julia Hirsch. *Family Photographs — Content, Meaning and Effect*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. 139 pp. \$14.95 (cloth).

Review Essay by Richard Chalfen Temple University

Interest in snapshot photography continues to grow as many diverse forms of photographic imagery attract critical attention. Photography is now commonly discussed in contexts of fine art, folk art, and a variety of forms of nonart; a list of fifty snapshot-related articles is easily compiled. As expected, considerable diversity exists in conceptual perspective, in ways of defining a snapshot, and in the intended audience for different publications. Discussions of snapshots can usually be placed in one of the following categories: (1) the place of amateur photography in the historical development of photography; (2) instructions and advice for improving snapshots and family albums commonly found in newspapers and popular magazines; (3) the relationship of snapshots to folk art and/or fine art; (4) the significance and "strength" of snapshot imagery related to "the snapshot aesthetic"; (5) the psychological interpretation of snapshot imagery and/or uses in psychotherapy; (6) collections of "interesting" snapshots packaged in album format; and (7) social and/or cultural analyses of snapshot collections.¹

While our frame of reference is amateur photography, we must recognize that as specialization in photography has increased, the designation "amateur" has also become very diverse and sometimes quite confusing. For instance, we recognize that historically many amateur photographers have made valuable contributions to public photographic records. The

term amateur could mean "nonprofessional" to create a separation from people who earn the major portion of their incomes from photographic "practice." But still we encounter varying degrees of serious amateur work alongside examples of snapshot photography produced by ordinary people who are indeed serious and certainly persistent but in very different ways. Early travel and tourist photographers, members of camera clubs, or regulars on photo-safaris represent one extreme; family photographers making pictures on weekends, vacations, and other off-times fall at the other extreme. The reference point for the following comments will be the latter end of this amateur designation.

The five books selected for review offer different perspectives on the relevance of snapshot content and style — specifically art (Green), art history (Hirsch), folklore (Graves and Payne), social history (Coe and Gates), and psychoanalysis (Lesy). It will become clear how each book defines, values, and utilizes snapshot imagery. Discussion will lead to one context that continues to be overlooked: namely, snapshot photography as a mode of visual/pictorial communication.

Green

Perhaps the most indirect approach to snapshot photography appears in Green's *The Snapshot*. Essays by Lisette Model, Tod Papageorge, Paul Strand, Steven Halpern, Walker Evans, John A. Kouwenhoven, and Judith Wechsler all make reference to snapshots in different ways. The book includes photographs made by Emmet Gowin, Henry Wessel, Jr., Tod Papageorge, Joel Meyerowitz, Gus Kayafas, Nancy Rexroth, Wendy Snyder MacNeil, Richard Albertine, Garry Winogrand, Bill Zulpo-Dane, Lee Friedlaender, and Robert Frank.

Green's intention is to examine "the vitality and ambiguity of the naive home snapshot and its bearing upon a variety of approaches used by contemporary photographers" and "to articulate the snapshot's nature or its relationship to sophisticated photography . . . and the mainstream of photographic production in the twentieth century" (p. 3). It becomes clear that readers (and viewers) are expected to gain a better understanding of the "naive home snapshot" by better appreciating the included work; Green acknowledges that the "photographers represented here . . . are not snapshotters but sophisticated photographers" (p. 3). Authentic snapshots appear infrequently in several of the short essays.

Green has organized this Aperture edition as an indirect explication of what some have called "the snapshot aesthetic" or "snapshot chic."² For instance, Green sees a unity in the "intentional pursuit of the plastic controls and visual richness hinted at in the



Figure 1 Emmet Gowin. From J. Green, *The Snapshot* (1974), p. 12.

work of the casual amateur, and their explorations of familiar subject matter" (p. 3). In an attempt to distinguish "snapshots" and "photographs," Joel Meyerowitz notes: "While they [his images] were made in the swift and artless manner of the snapshot, it is their cumulative formality and their insistent vision that makes them photographs" (p. 36).

Further clarification of this distinction requires a survey of what is meant by "snapshot." Green's book is particularly interesting with respect to the definition problem mentioned elsewhere in this review. One striking characteristic of his collection of essays is the obvious lack of agreement on what is meant by snapshot photography. At one extreme, we find that Garry Winogrand and Lee Friedlaender refuse to make meaningful differentiations. Winogrand summarizes this attitude by asking, "What photograph is not a snapshot . . . ? . . . There is only still photography with its own unique aesthetic. *Still photography* is the distinctive term" (p. 84; emphasis in original).

Other solutions to the definition problem tend to follow specific mechanical attributes of camera technology. This type of thinking reverts to dictionary references such as Hawker's 1808 use of "snapshot" as a hunting term—a hurried shot taken without deliberate aim—and Sir John Herschel's subsequent application to making photographic images as fast as one-tenth of a second (Kouwenhoven, pp. 106–107). Influence of this technological base appears in Paul Strand's essay: "I have always taken the position that the word 'snapshot' doesn't really mean anything. To talk about it you almost have to begin by asking: When is a snapshot not a snapshot? When is a photograph not a snapshot?" (p. 46.) Strand later answers his own question as follows: "The snapshot . . . is also more or less synonymous with the hand camera . . . you might say it is a snapshot when it becomes necessary to stop movement . . . having really enough film or plate speed and shutter speed to make it possible. . . . Any photograph that stops movement can become a snapshot" (p. 49). This line of reasoning allows Strand and Papageorge to discuss the work of Cartier-Bresson, Edward Weston, Walker Evans, and Andre Kertesz. Needless to say, grounding a definition of snapshot in technical terms is not very helpful in reaching a better understanding of photography as a social form of visual communication.

Kouwenhoven takes us several steps further when he refers to characteristic behaviors of people making photographs and people being in photographs: "Snapshots are predominantly photographs taken quickly with a minimum of deliberate posing on the part of the people represented and with a minimum of deliberate selectivity on the part of the photographer as far as vantage point and the framing or cropping of the image are concerned" (p. 106). Here the definition emphasizes behind-camera and on-camera styles of behavior.

A fourth approach stresses the snapshot as a ubiquitous and common form of photographic expression. For instance, Tod Papageorge states: "For me, the word 'snapshot' is tied in meaning to the family album, a book which brought to photography a new vernacular form" (p. 24). And finally, attention to style is suggested by Steven Halpern: "From its beginning the snapshot has had two basic characteristics: a constant focus on family life and an informal, casual style that was consistent with the new freedom within the family and derived from the mobility of the hand held camera" (p. 66). We have come full circle to a reliance on the technical base.

At still another extreme, Lisette Model suggests a psychological perspective as an orienting framework. She states: "Snapshots can be made with any camera—old cameras, new cameras, box cameras, Instamatics, and Nikons. But what really makes them occur is a specific state of mind" (p. 6).

In summary, Green seems content to foster a sense of "ambiguity of the naive home snapshot" mentioned in the book's introduction. For purposes of additional scholarly consideration, further clarity is needed.

The photographs in *Snapshot* can be used in instructive ways. These images provide us with negative examples (in an ethnomethodological sense) of taken-for-granted characteristics of snapshot style, form, and content. Stated differently, the snapshot aesthetic represents a series of structural transformations; artists have purposefully rearranged and manipulated familiar code characteristics of the vernacular snapshot image. One useful exercise is to "unpack" the work of Emmet Gowin to learn more about such conventions as (1) smiling for the camera; (2) the tendency to segment body parts (most noticeable when the frame cuts off people's heads); (3) the centrality of family pets; (4) the juxtaposition of family members, favored relatives, neighbors or friends with valued material culture; and (5) making snapshots during happy occasions, moments of collective pride, and the like.

Finally, we can benefit from recognizing specific examples of artcentric descriptions of snapshot style. Model claims the snapshot "isn't straight. It isn't done well. It isn't composed. It isn't thought out" (p. 6); Kouwenhoven adds characteristics as a minimum of deliberate posing and minimal image composition. Comparisons are obviously being made to "artistically approved" conventions of camera use, which, in turn, strengthen segregation of elite and vernacular forms of expression. Readers are reminded that snapshots are frequently ridiculed because of too much posing (or "hamming for the camera") and because the cameraperson waited too long to get the "best shot." What may be considered a "decisive moment" in one genre may be an irrelevant moment in another.

Graves and Payne

In sharp contrast to Green's sparse use of authentic snapshot imagery, *American Snapshot*, edited by Ken Graves and Mitchell Payne, consists of 112 authentic snapshot photographs. Jean Shepherd's three-page introduction, followed by a 347-word "Authors' Foreword," provides readers with some contextual information by explaining that Graves and Payne spent two years "armed with a National Endowment for the Arts grant [going] from door to door . . . asking to see people's home snapshots" (p. 5). They confess to having no idea of what they would find—which I find somewhat strange. Their final selection of images was based on the following notion: "We were on a search for those pictures which were complete visual statements, needing neither explanation nor rationalization. We picked images which were extraordinary for us, relying on our own photographic intuition and sensitivity" (p. 9).

This book offers no definition of snapshots. Instead, Shepherd classifies the pictures as a "definitive collection of twentieth-century American folk art" and as "a touching, true, Common Man history of all of us who grew and lived in America in this century" (p. 5). It remains unclear, however, how this material relates to other forms of folk art such as weaving, decorative sculpture, bark paintings, body scarification, and the like. The common thread seems to be "folk-made," but why call it art? A gratuitous label perhaps, but not much more.

Several kinds of questions can be asked about *American Snapshots*: (1) How well do the images selected by Graves and Payne represent the "real" world? (2) How well do these images represent the accepted and shared conventions used by snapshot photographers to represent the real world? Or, stating the second question in a different way, (3) How does this collection of 112 photographs illustrate the symbolic world of snapshot representation? For purposes of better understanding snapshot accounts as structured forms of visual communication, the second and third questions need further attention. As in all snapshot collections, we see how the world was looked at through cameras used by untrained photographers and how (in the case of an album) a particular visual report was structured. In a sense, questions regarding what the world looked like through "evidence" produced in snapshot form are very misleading. More to the point, perhaps, is a realization of how people wanted "the world to look" and how they wanted to remember it in a subjective collusion between memory and pictorial forms.

In a very real sense, Graves and Payne have "re-albumized" the snapshot look at life. It is instructive at this point to review the symbolic rendition of life created by these authors and held between the Kodak-yellow covers of their book. The majority of the

Figure 2 "I had the negative retouched because we thought this girl's parents wouldn't like it—knowing she had been with all those men" (Berkeley, California, about 1916). From Graves and Payne, *American Snapshots* (1977), p. 97.



images were produced in two general types of settings—around the house (more outside than inside) and in what appear to be vacation places. All but two pictures include people; younger children are commonly featured. Half of the collection shows two or more people; snapshots frequently document affinal and consanguinal ties. With no direct knowledge, we are meant to assume such relationships as husband-wife, father-child, mother-child, grandparent-grandchild, siblings, boyfriend-girlfriend. The couple seen in bed (p. 70) is very unusual.³ Of course the issue of identification is generally not problematic for "real life" album makers and viewers. Characteristically, animals are also common in these pictures (dogs, cats, rabbits, horses, birds, squirrels, and dead fish), and in two cases stuffed animals (dog, rabbit) are also included. Holidays, celebrations, and parties are given attention; a birthday, a wedding anniversary, a first communion, Easter Sunday, Christmas, New Year's Eve, Thanksgiving dinner, and a family dinner are all represented. In short, if we agree that snapshots illustrate highlights of the life process, this sampling comprises highlights of highlights.

One striking characteristic of this collection is how people "show off" some significant part of their lives. In some cases we see adults presenting their children to the camera, male adults flexing muscles, and females striking a flattering cheesecake pose; cars, animals, and the rewards of fishing are presented as prized possessions; neatly arranged house exteriors and interiors are shown; athletic abilities (somersaults, ice skating) are demonstrated. In this context we also see people dressed in a variety of uniforms: cheer-

leaders, majorettes, and the armed forces are included. We are tempted to speculate on how snapshot images function as valid projections of human values—but values that involve the positive and public views of life only. Readers should be reminded that life is full of private moments, also valued in positive ways, but moments that are explicitly inappropriate for snapshot representation.

Graves and Payne also do a good job of including several stereotypic stylistic features of snapshot photography. For instance, eight photographs include the photographer's shadow. Snapshot aesthetic photographers use this feature as the artist's "signature."⁴

Only eight images have captioned information beyond place and date. This technique conforms to the authors' choice of images that could stand alone. Herein lies a great confusion. Graves and Payne have asked their readers to appreciate and "read" the snapshots without contextual information beyond the knowledge that we are looking at someone's snapshot. However, in eight cases we are asked to think about the imagery in a different way, since additional information has been included—information that relates the imagery to the lives of the people involved. Under one photograph of eight men and one woman we read: "I had the negative retouched because we thought this girl's parents wouldn't like it—knowing she had been with all these men. Berkeley, California, about 1916" (p. 31). Under another picture of a man drinking from a bottle, we read: "This is the typical picture of a nervous bridegroom . . . calming down with a Pepsi. 'Junior' was 31 before he decided to take the big step. Reno, Nevada, 1967" (p. 74). In an-



Figure 3 "I was representing my sorority wearing a swim suit and bag of my choice" (University of Oklahoma, Norman, 1966). From Graves and Payne, *American Snapshots* (1977), p. 97.

other example, under a picture of a woman in a bikini with a paperbag over her head, we read: "I was representing my sorority wearing a swim suit and bag of my choice. University of Oklahoma, Norman, 1966" (p. 97). In these cases, the interpretive task is of a different order since metacommunicative information has been attached. We are no longer appreciating the photographs only as imagery; the construction of meaning must follow different routes. We are asked to consider the relationship of the photograph to knowledge shared by the snapshot photographer and the people appearing in the image as well as the people who were originally intended to see it. In this sense, it is not entirely clear how Graves and Payne wanted us to think about this collection. At one extreme the authors could be accused of exploiting two situations: one, the cult popularity of collecting coffee-table photography books; two, the contemporary interest in learning about oneself through personal latent meaning held in snapshot imagery.

In this light, there are several confounding contradictions between Shepherd's introduction, the authors' statement of intentions, and the 112 photographs that have been reproduced for this book. Shepherd emphasizes notions of "the Common Man," the simple householder, the nameless picture taker "*Humanus Americanus* (Common)," and folk art—stressing an appreciation of the ordinary snap-

shots. Yet most of the photographs we see are called "extraordinary" by Graves and Payne. The authors admittedly sought photographs that were complete visual statements. This criterion separates and isolates their final collection of pictures from the vast majority of snapshots that rely, more than other photographic forms, on shared knowledge of caption and context.⁵

There is indeed something "special" about every image that appears in *American Snapshots*, but special in a frame of reference that treats images in and of themselves. Here Graves and Payne are suggesting a frame of reference or significance more commonly associated with art criticism and art appreciation. That is, the requested construction of appreciation is unlike what happens when ordinary people go about admiring and treasuring their ordinary snapshots. This may, in fact, just be a more subtle version of what Green is doing in *The Snapshot*.

There remains a reluctance in this book, and several others mentioned in this review, to show the nonspecial examples and to explicate the logic of appreciating the vernacular form in contexts of everyday life. For instance, in spite of a determined effort to "honor" the commonplace, Shepherd's ambivalence and regrettable elitist stance are revealed as follows: "Of all the world's photographers, the lowliest and least honored is the simple householder who desires only to 'have a camera around the house' and 'to get a picture of Delores in her graduation gown.' He lugs his primitive equipment with him on vacation trips, picnics, and family outings of all sorts. His knowledge of photography is *about that of your average chipmunk*" (p. 6; emphasis added). Again we witness the inevitable impossibility of appreciating (or honoring) snapshots in the context of their original creation and use. The point is that the "simple householder" does have an adequate knowledge of photography to produce pictures that family members value over all other genres of photographic imagery. George Eastman and Edwin Land have already seen to this. Viewers may be justified in accusing the authors of assuming a condescending air, mocking the trivialities of snapshot content and style as a vulgar form of photographic expression. The main question is how they wanted snapshots to be treated as meaningful. Obviously, imagery can be meaningful for different reasons and in different ways. Readers of *American Snapshots* can never reconstruct the extended set of signs and symbols recognized as meaningful for their original custodians. Snapshots are personal views embedded in contexts of private information. When these same snapshots "go public," stripped of intimate webs and networks of meaningful relationships, they become something else and are exposed to a variety of interpretive schemes. This would appear to be true even when 112 individual snapshots from

over 100 collections are repackaged in book form—regardless of whether or not the back covers are Kodak-yellow.

Coe and Gates

The integrity of snapshot making and the value of snapshots as a pictorial form are better addressed in *The Snapshot Photograph* by Brian Coe and Paul Gates. They deal less with the artistic edges and extraordinary qualities of snapshot imagery and more with characterizing the emergence of snapshot photography and its potential contribution to scholars of social history. They present a much more tempered and restrained evaluation of snapshot photography and, in doing so, contribute more directly to a study of the sociocultural dimensions of visual/pictorial communication.

Coe and Gates initially consult the *Oxford English Dictionary* for a definition of snapshot: a "shot taken with little or no delay in aiming; instantaneous photograph taken with a hand camera" (p. 6). The authors then add:

We shall not consider the advanced photography of the expert using complex and expensive apparatus, nor, for that matter, the deliberate use of simple cameras by sophisticated photographers in order to achieve a "naive" effect.⁶ We are concerned only with the kind of photography within the scope of the humble box camera, or of the simple folding camera used by the amateur. Since such cameras were usually capable of making time exposures, our definition of snapshot can be expanded to include such photographs. Indeed, it is not the length of the exposure but the intention behind the picture which distinguishes the snapshot: a photograph taken simply as a record of a person, a place or an event, one made with no artistic pretensions or commercial considerations. (pp. 6-7)

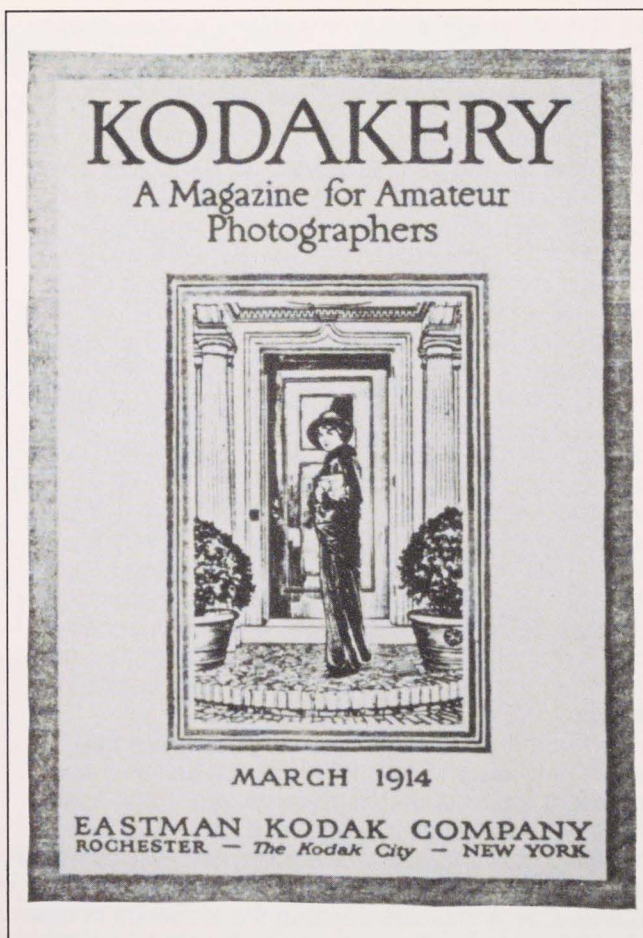
This stance creates several interesting relationships with points made in other books in this review. First, Coe and Gates attempt to reduce a reliance on technological determinacy while elevating views of intention and pragmatic concerns. However, here there is a tendency to oversimplify certain manifest needs to record and document. A communications perspective would call attention to investigating latent and implicitly realized functions of snapshot imagery, many of which inevitably include communication. Second, the authors offer no sustained attention to how people use their snapshot collections. They prefer to focus their discussion on picture making and on relationships between nonprofessional photographers and simple, mass-produced cameras. And third, we see how Coe and Gates eliminate most of the visual examples contained in Green's book, *The Snapshot*. These authors remind us on several occasions that

we should be sensitive to why different kinds of photographers make pictures and to understand that different communications intentions have produced different views of life.

In their most significant chapter, entitled "The Social Background," the authors attempt to reverse an accepted elitist position regarding the "cultural" value of snapshot images: "Superiority, scorn and humor notwithstanding, many millions of snapshots made with the simplest of cameras have brought pleasure and satisfaction to their creators" (p. 9). They make repeated reference to the significance of how ordinary people behave with cameras and how their intentions, "uncomplicated approach," and "naive" photographic results deserve equal time in historical and cultural significance. This is a very refreshing stance in light of much photographic literature, which seemingly implies that snapshots do not exist or that such leisure, nonserious activity is not acceptable material for study. Coe and Gates's narrative maintains a sincere and unaffected tone, which stands in marked contrast to the distracting and unfounded claims that characterize Shepherd's introduction to *American Snapshots* and, as we will see, Lesy's introduction to *Time Frames*.

Part of their argument regarding cultural significance involves understanding how snapshot images represent a part of the historical record: "Just how much we owe to the snapshot and its unique view of the world of our forefathers is apparent if we compare it with other contemporary forms of the photograph" (p. 10). Coe and Gates bemoan the tendency of ordinary people, as enthusiastic amateurs, to copy artistically structured forms. They feel too many amateur photographers "chose to apply their skills and equipment to the production of a seemingly endless series of 'picturesque' subjects inspired by contemporary academic painting" (p. 10). I will return to this point when discussing Hirsch's book, *Family Photographs*, later in this review.

The authors continue by developing their point that different kinds of photographic forms contribute to the historical record. They suggest that both studio photographers and professional photojournalists worked toward particular choices and arrangements of reality. Different kinds of historical evidence are produced by different kinds of photography. For instance, snapshot photographers have produced detailed records of the commonplace that were not available before 1888, not possible for the studio photographer to capture, and not considered newsworthy by other professional photographers. Background details of these images take on added significance in the sense of material culture inventory, styles of dress, fashions of interior decoration and house plan, architectural detail, and the like.



Kodak in Camp

From reveille to taps, each hour will bring something new into the life of every young soldier. New surroundings, new habits, new faces, and new friendships will make for him a new world—a world full of interest to him *to-day* and a world upon which he will often dwell in memory when peace has come again.

And this new world of his offers Kodak opportunities that will relieve the tedium of camp routine at the time and will afterward provide what will be to him and his friends the most interesting of all books—his Kodak album.

Figure 4 (left) The first issue of the magazine *Kodakery* appeared in the United States in March 1914. (right) In 1917 soldiers were encouraged to use photography to record their new experiences. From Coe and Gates, *The Snapshot Photograph* (1977), p. 34.

Perhaps the authors place too much importance on what snapshots can show with regard to "truth" value and to showing how people "were" versus how people "looked" when they wanted to impress others, as in studio portrait examples. Consider the following statement: ". . . the fact remains, that by reason of circumstances of their taking, snapshots started out with a far better chance of truthfully depicting the character of their subjects than the professional studio production could achieve" (p. 11). Surely we have different constructions of "truth" in each case, and we have (or should have) learned to value each construction in different ways. Our job is to understand better the social circumstances surrounding each construction as a relationship between several factors—technological possibilities, image production and use, and concepts of social reality.

The authors seem to contradict themselves when discussing the random or deliberate construction of the snapshot view. In one instance, Coe and Gates claim: "The snapshot, taken on impulse, perhaps almost at random, with no attempt to manipulate the subject or to wait for ideal conditions, may come closer to supplying the historian's needs" (p. 11). And yet, just a few paragraphs later, they say: "A brief glance through any snapshot album will reveal many pictures where painstaking efforts have obviously been made to set things up 'nicely,' to make sure everyone concerned looked their best" (p. 11). Though each of these judgments may be relative to other genres of photographic recording, my experience tells me to side with the latter evaluation—that deliberation and "setup" are somehow involved. But, again, the model of how appropriate views are organized differs across genres of imagery and possibly across different sociocultural circumstances.

In another instance, Coe and Gates offer us a clarification of what Shepherd and Graves and Payne meant by describing snapshots as a modern folk art. A sensible posture is stated as follows: "If by that [folk art] we mean an enduring value unselfconsciously achieved, then perhaps some snapshots may fall into this category" (p. 14). In fact, the authors speak directly to the task assumed by Graves and Payne as follows: "Any examination of a large sampling of snapshots will reveal a surprising number of pictures which transcend the straight-forward and mundane purpose for which they were taken" (p. 14). But might not a cultural evaluation of the "mundane purpose[s]" reveal more than initially expected? The authors continue: "It is difficult to define the degree to which these pictures, their production motivated by the usual reasons of sentiment, record or souvenir, attain to something more" (p. 14). Regardless of overt expression of intent, an analysis of latent functions, unacknowledged motivations, and even social pressures call for revisions of such reductive conclusions as "mundane purposes."

The remaining chapters, 2 through 6, trace the emergence and development of mass-produced cameras and the field of amateur photography. This interesting account includes marketing strategies and advertising campaigns as they appeared in England. Coe and Gates begin in 1888, when Eastman Kodak marketed their first cameras, and end in 1939, when "most of the technical advances we enjoy in present-day snapshot photography had either been introduced or foreshadowed" (p. 8).⁷ A social-historical perspective is given to such topics as early public exhibitions of snapshot photography ("The Eastman Exhibit of 1897"), the emergence of camera clubs and photography contests, the popularity of tourist photography, the amateur use of cameras during wartime (see Chapter 4, "The Soldier's Camera"), and



Figure 5 Contrast the snapshotter and the "serious" amateur photographer in this exotic location, 1905. From Coe and Gates, *The Snapshot Photograph* (1977), p. 74.

strategies to promote the use of cameras by women. Mention is also made of relatively unknown British publications, such as *The Kodak News* (1895) and *The Kodak Recorder* (1905), as well as certain American editions, such as *Kodakery* (1914) and *The Kodak Magazine* (1923).

The album sections of *The Snapshot Photograph* (pp. 47–135) are devoted to pictorially illustrating "perennial themes . . . a few obvious categories . . . broadly classified as people, leisure activities, seaside and holidays, the urban scene, transport, people at work, interiors, and events" (p. 15). Interestingly, the authors have included photographs of people using cameras as well as the results of camera use—and in one case, a comparison of the snapshotter and the serious amateur (pp. 74–75).

In summary, by stressing the unexplored value of snapshot photography to social historians, Coe and Gates offer many important starting points for scholars of visual/pictorial communication. They emphasize the study of what ordinary people did with photographic equipment as an expressive medium—expression in the broad context of communication more than the restricted context of art. In doing so, the authors recommend more balanced attention to how manufacturers of amateur cameras promoted the production of a snapshot view of the world—a view that stands alongside other conventionalized views produced by professional studio photographers, photojournalists, and fine-art photographers.

Lesy

Another historian, Michael Lesy, has published a book on snapshots that could not be more unlike the contribution of Coe and Gates. *Time Frames—The Meaning of Family Pictures* (1980) is comprised of a seventeen-page introduction followed by eleven sections that approximate case studies of what couples and individuals told the author about their lives in relation to their snapshot collections. Lesy's initial theoretical position draws upon examples from these sections. For purposes of this review I will concentrate on evaluating how the author relates snapshot imagery to individuals, to a notion of society, and to culture.

In the introduction, Lesy discusses how he began to collect and study snapshots from dumpsters behind photo-processing plants; he recounts his personal frustrations in trying to persuade his academic colleagues that "the use of photographs as data was of the most remarkable importance for the humanities and social sciences. . . . I began to imagine that all my intellectual colleagues were Calvinists, and all my photographic friends were deaf mutes" (xii).⁸ Lesy studies pictures as symbols—symbols which are best interpreted within contexts of comparative methodology and psychoanalytic theory.

For scholars of culture and pictorial communication, Lesy has a flair for saying the right thing: ". . . a photograph (is) a cultural artifact . . . tangled within a whole culture that (is) itself pinned within a social structure" (xii). He even sensed the importance of doing fieldwork on and with snapshot photographs. Lesy sat in the kitchen of old hometown friends, going over their albums and snapshots, asking to be told about their many pictures—"Wave after wave: recapitulation, conjunction, revelation. Again and again . . . the people told me stories; they spoke parables; they made confessions. They told me tales; they recounted epics; they recited myths: They told me the way things *really* are . . . they told me the Truth" (xiii–xiv). Lesy makes it clear that this is not sociological truth: "It has nothing to do with the quantitatively verifiable data that professional social scientists hope and image are the only things of which the social world is composed" (xiv). We should be grateful, perhaps, that he spares comparable notions of "anthropological truth."

With axes ground and lofty ideals proclaimed, Lesy introduces readers to his theory of pictures "as psychic tableaux . . . like frozen dreams . . . whose latent content is enmeshed in unconscious association, cultural norms, art historical cliches, and transcendental motifs" (xiv). Lesy searches his snapshots for visual evidence of such motifs as (1) love, intimacy, and family life; (2) war; and (3) work. He calls our attention to the frequent juxtaposition of men with

telephone poles, towers, heavy machinery, and weaponry; women with trees, water fountains, swimming pools, and rivers, in settings such as oceans, parks, and gardens—"as such they [representations] exist neither as objects of material culture nor as social artifacts, but as symbols that express states of mind, engendered by love" (xvi). Lesy's interpretation of the meaning of such frequent symbolic representations is through a psychoanalytic framework structured by the writings of Freud and Jung.

Lesy then proceeds to give five examples of his analysis taken from snapshots and collected narratives about the images. As might be expected, we are pointed toward uterine and phallic symbology, unconscious tendencies of "acting out," images of the origin of the universe, cosmic artifacts, transcendental visions, and gestures of immortality, to name a few. At times, Lesy's search for hidden meanings approximates the search for subliminal sex in studies of advertising.⁹

In all honesty I remain unconvinced about the validity of Lesy's analysis and must question the value of his contribution. Where does this mode of explication take us? Lesy never seems to bring us back to the realm of the social and to the roles that snapshots play in cultural identity and maintenance. While Lesy offers us clever and amusing passages, my admittedly conservative spirit in such matters begs for a more convincing argument. Readers of *Time Frames* are likely to feel they can produce another selection of material—specific snapshots that demonstrate another pattern of frequencies and alleged significations along psychoanalytic principles. But would a different collection of evidence make any more of a contribution? I doubt it.

Lesy convinces readers to overlook the social and cultural implications of his material in favor of describing a Family-of-Man set of universals. One possible result of this strategy is that it will close off, cancel, or negate the value of examining cross-cultural variations in snapshot communication. It would be a shame to eliminate this meaningful line of inquiry for scholars of pictorial communication. While Lesy feels comfortable criticizing sociological theory and method for asking only questions that can be spelled out in quantitative forms, one might argue that Lesy either asks questions that have already been answered or provides answers through unassailable arguments.

Readers should also be aware of one important incongruence with regard to theory and method. Lesy pleads for a humanistic approach; he states the im-

portance of actually talking to people with and about their snapshots in patient and inquiring ways. However, these field methods seem to be unrelated to his chosen mode of explication. Lesy has produced what could have been "a study of culture at a distance" in spite of the fact that he had established intimate working relationships with family members. The same kind of analysis could have been done without spending so many hours in his friends' kitchens.

Contradictorally, Lesy's interview material that comprises the majority of *Time Frames* demonstrates an important relationship between snapshot photography and the collecting of life histories. The following 142 pages are devoted to eleven examples of couples (Peggy and Jack, Manny and Marilyn, Herb and Lin) and individuals (Jimmy, Annette, Jacob) speaking about their lives. Lesy uses people he had known or had known of for thirty years. They were first and second generation Jewish immigrants who lived in Buffalo, New York, at the time of these interviews. From many hours of storytelling, Lesy has included their statements of the problems of growing up, getting married, personal victories and defeats, and their expectations and associated disappointments.¹⁰ The implication here is that the information we get in spoken/written forms does not have to match what people select for visual/pictorial rendition. Throughout these eleven chapters, we hear repeated versions of psychological and interpersonal problems, troubles, heartaches, and disasters—stories stimulated by looking at the snapshot collection. The lesson is that culturally structured conventions of making snapshots prevent visual/pictorial counterparts of troubled and problematic times of life. When we examine Lesy's transcriptions, we find that in 142 pages of transcribed dialogue, only two references are made to pictures chosen for the book (pp. 117, 130) and only a few other references are made to pictures not shown (pp. 60, 134). It would appear that while positive and negative moments in life are suitable for verbal rendition, only the positive ones are appropriate for recognition in the pictorial-snapshot version of life.¹¹ For another treatment of "structured absences," readers might enjoy David Galloway's novelistic descriptions of five family photographs in *A Family Album* (1978).

In summary, for a 160-page book, Lesy tells us surprisingly little about snapshots and family pictures. Readers are treated to a lively and speculative introduction to a psychoanalytically based theory of meaning and then left to themselves to fall into a series of somewhat depressing family stories. There are important lessons to be learned, but readers must discover certain interesting points on their own and in rather indirect ways.

Hirsch

The most recent of the books considered in this review is *Family Photographs—Content, Meaning and Effect* (1981) by Julia Hirsch, an English professor at Brooklyn College in New York. Several starting points are shared by Lesy and Hirsch. They both work from a personally motivated curiosity about personal relationships between family photography and the lives of their custodians. They also share a concern for an understanding of "meaning" in pictorial imagery, a word that appears in the subtitles of their respective books. And, third, both authors seem comfortable with psychological explanations for describing why people include what they do in their personal photograph collections. At one point Hirsch notes: "If, as Marshall McLuhan once said, the age of photography is the age of psychoanalysis, then formal photography belongs to Jung and candid to Freud" (p. 105). We have seen Lesy try to get the best of these two worlds; Hirsch takes us in another direction. Beyond these few correspondences, Hirsch and Lesy offer many more differences than similarities.

Hirsch initially takes drastic measures to limit her study of family photographs, a strategy which diminishes her contribution to our understanding of snapshot photography. A family photograph is defined as an image that "contains at least two people, though it may contain a score" (p. 3), and it must "show a blood tie" between people in the picture.¹² Later the author adds: "Family photography is an aesthetic, social, and moral product of which the family is at once seller and consumer. . . . Family photography is not only an accessory to our deepest longings and regrets; it is also a set of visual rules that shape our experience and our memory" (pp. 12–13). This approach helps Hirsch align modern photographic representations of "family" with painted renditions of family ties produced in previous centuries and other pictorial modes. We cannot ignore, however, how this definition eliminates so much of what is commonly referred to as family photography—that is, photographs that have been made by or include family members. Pictures of individuals are *de facto* excluded, as are many kinds of tourist photographs and pictures of family friends, pets, special places, memorable scenes, celebrated events, and the like, all of which may necessarily include more than one person and/or a "blood tie." Readers may notice that the term "snapshot" appears less than a dozen times throughout the book. Thus while Hirsch's initial definition allows for snapshots, it does not welcome certain variations in context which stray from the diachronic parameters the author wishes to use.



Figure 6 Henry Wessel, Jr. From J. Green, *The Snapshot* (1974), p. 74.

After introducing her perspective, Hirsch devotes one chapter to a diachronic, cross-medium review of previous pictorial (painterly) genres that focused on family ties, groupings, and affiliations. Hirsch asks readers to understand and contextualize family photography as a modern version of how families have been pictorially recorded through time in a variety of media. The author describes the significance of models and conventions established during the Renaissance, a time that “took the family out of the margins of manuscripts and gave it visual independence” (p. 21). Readers are given several lessons in art history to illustrate Hirsch’s thesis that “the Renaissance family portrait is the precursor of the family photograph because it shows the family as self-contained (p. 35). . . . The metaphors that have shaped family portraiture have also shaped family photography and recognizing them enables us to control the allusions our photographs make” (pp. 41–42).

For Hirsch, three key metaphors unite this pictorial history of the family: “The family as a state whose ties are rooted in property; the family as a spiritual assembly which is based on moral values; and the family as a bond of feeling which stems from instinct and passion” (p. 15; see also pp. 46–47). Knowing that these metaphors have been maintained through five centuries of pictorial forms, Hirsch attempts to persuade readers that the Renaissance set the agenda for nineteenth- and twentieth-century family photographs. Her claim is that conventions were established for struc-

ture, form, composition, format, settings, topics, poses, and expressions. Chapters 3 and 4 illustrate a continuity in how Hirsch’s key metaphors have been expressed through selected examples of paintings, drawings, early studio photography, and a few examples of contemporary snapshot photographs. The author’s argument regarding the painting-photograph dialectic appears simplistic and does not account for contributions by Scharf (1968), Coke (1972), and Galassi (1981). As with the Lesy book, the selective use of pictorial evidence damages the cogency of her argument.

Hirsch introduces examples of “informal” photography—such as informal portraits (not made in studios) and candid snapshots—when the form and content conform to her basic premises regarding metaphor and continuity. Otherwise, one easily feels that the vast majority of family pictures (mostly snapshots) produced in contemporary times find little place in her argument. The author almost bemoans the advent of snapshot photography and how it has seemingly replaced an adherence to formal models of portraiture:

Figure 7 Lee Friedlaender. From J. Green, *The Snapshot* (1974), p. 112.



Candid photography . . . makes few demands of time and place; it embraces all human possibilities of pose and expression. Because it generally requires so little discipline both from the cameraman and from the subject, it is the medium of the amateur. . . .¹³ In candid photography anything can happen: the term itself makes no exclusions and no particular promises . . . [But] whatever the content of the candid shot, it is always about bodies in transit, almost gestures that we know can have been held for only a few moments. While formal photography is about condition and being, candid photography is about process and circumstance. (pp. 101–102)

Another statement of disdain, bordering on a sense of disgust with the unordered and hopeless confusion of snapshot content, appears later in the book:

The disorderly conduct which the candid camera immortalizes, even when it shows us fathers and mothers, cousins and siblings, increasingly obscures who's who, and what's where. Place, time, and role have yielded, in family photography, to more neutral and general studies of "relationships" which may or may not be those of blood, of household, and of property. (p. 111)

Readers can treat these statements in several ways. Some might feel that since the author staked and defined her territory early in the book, she is justified in her negative approach to what is happening now in ordinary, everyday snapshot photography. If one initially disagrees with the author's restrictive definition of family photography, however, one feels justi-

fied in concluding that her collection net has not been cast far enough or that the meshing is woven too finely. In the latter case, the author's explanation does not seem to keep pace with current snapshot photography.

Several additional points need clarification. The author cites a frequently heard claim that small, lightweight, portable cameras can be used anywhere to take pictures of anything. Fast shutter speeds, sensitive film stocks, and the low f-stop lenses can stop motion and record an image under any light conditions; the technological possibilities are ready to be exploited. However, the nonprofessional snapshot photographer (Hirsch's "candid" photographer) is more restricted by social and cultural "demands" than by technological ones. All human poses and expressions are not found in a family's snapshot collection; snapshots do not demonstrate an "anything" or "everything" perspective.¹⁴ Hypothetical freedom of choice with regard to content and technique are seemingly controlled by socially maintained notions of appropriate behavior. Examples of candid photography as described by Hirsch can be subjected to a sociological analysis regarding participants, settings, topics, and features of code that are not too unlike what she suggests for "formal" photographs.¹⁵ However, the author concludes: "We can deduce very little sociological evidence from the groupings we find in family photography" (p. 95).¹⁶

Hirsch chooses a common direction, one not favoring the social but rather the psychological and psychoanalytic. She states:

Our reading of candid photographs leads us easily into a vocabulary of psychoanalysis. We have no alternative, since candid pictures show us personalities and behavior. . . . Candid photographs take us into the realm of abstraction, of subconscious . . . like inkblots or obscure poems. . . . But if we look at this photograph (a candid snapshot) as a sociological document, we shall not have seen enough of it. We shall not have seen enough of the faces and bodies, the muscles and nerves that make candid photography so intimate, so compelling, and, often, so disturbing. (pp. 109–110)

The author raises the same set of dilemmas that leads photo therapists like Robert Akeret to walk around the social characteristics of a photographic interaction and rely instead on psychoanalytic directives and interpretations (Akeret 1973; Chalfen 1974).

One additional point is relevant to any discussion of snapshot communication. Hirsch's analytic comments demonstrate a problem for all scholars of personal documents. Consider the following examples. When Hirsch is describing the people in certain family photographs, she says: "We do not know how they are related to each other; we do not know their precise claim to this location. But the harmony of people to setting satisfies us that they all belong here" (p. 51); "In the snapshot of the couple next to a Christmas tree, place also matters little. What the photograph does tell us is that they observed an annual rite" (pp. 62–64). The problem that I must confront when working with these statements is the relationship between the observer(s) and the people represented in the photographs. What are the exact reference points for these uses of "we," "they," and "us"? And when we read "place also matters little," we must ask to whom? Do these personal pronouns refer to an analytic observer of an unfamiliar collection of family photographs, or are the references to someone who is intimately familiar with his or her own family picture? This difference in observational stance is very important to making sound or merely speculative inferences from these pictorial genres. The background knowledge of specific participants (picture custodians) can never be duplicated totally by an outside observer. The closest we get to an acknowledgment of this problem appears on the next to last page of Hirsch's book: "But finally we bring to family photographs far more than our eyes. We bring all that we know of what lies beyond the edge of the picture. We bring our knowledge of childhood and adulthood, and all that goes on between and beyond" (p. 131). With regard to other people's pictures, Hirsch adds: "We can understand the photograph even of strangers because we know that pictures of families are made and

stored in the same ways that families themselves endure" (p. 131). However, this does not offer any substantial guidance for interpretation or cultural analysis. Scholars of visual communication can and should be working toward an articulation of the social and cultural dimensions that structure personal imagery. This situation will be helped when scholars begin to do systematic fieldwork on this corner of our symbolic environment.

Summary

By combining the five books reviewed in this essay, students of pictorial communication are introduced to alternative ways of studying the significance of snapshots and family albums. It is especially instructive to see how different critical perspectives and disciplines interpret the snapshot's interpretation of life. Different definitions of the snapshot, the choice of different examples, and the use of different theoretical stances lead to alternative explications of what's there and what's worthy of critical attention. Clearly I have interpreted the significance of each book through a particular perspective; I have tried to evaluate each contribution in terms of understanding better how snapshots work as "image events" embedded in processes of interpersonal and small group pictorial communication.

Several generalizations about these books are possible. It appears that psychological directions are preferred to social ones. Stay-at-home conjecture and speculation appear to be more common than explanations grounded in some form of "fieldwork." Authors prefer to work from either their own picture collections and personal experiences or from collections belonging to a few relatives or friends. This strategy may, in fact, preclude a curiosity for the significance of relating meaning and context. Sampling a variety of snapshot collections from a spectrum of social groups is uncommon. Perhaps the unexplored assumption that all snapshot collections and family albums are the same justifies this restricted view. Ethnic, regional, social class, or subcultural variations are apparently not worthy of consideration. On the other hand, when some form of sampling is accomplished, as in *American Snapshots* and *Time Frames*, the authors direct their observations toward aesthetic or psychoanalytic notions, treating the visual materials as folk art of psychic tableaux. Parallels to art and literary criticism seem to outweigh the relevance of applying social or cultural analysis to pictures. It may be that social and cultural characteristics are easily stated since, according to some critics, snapshots are too easily made. In summary, these five books,

plus a few case studies such as Catherine Hanf Noren's *The Camera of My Family* (1976) and Dorothy Gallagher's *Hannah's Daughters* (1976), provide an excellent overview of approaches with one exception—the treatment of snapshots as social and symbolic communicative forms. Clearly, the social communication perspective is underrepresented in this collection of writings.

We might briefly return to two questions cited earlier: "When is a photograph not a snapshot?" (Strand in Green 1974:84) and "What photograph is not a snapshot?" (Winogrand in Green 1974:84). My point is that these questions can be addressed when snapshots are conceptualized as symbolic forms that operate in patterns of social communication, in what has been referred to elsewhere as the home mode of visual/pictorial communication (Chalfen 1975, 1981). Snapshots and related home mode artifacts provide scholars with important lessons and examples of relationships between society, culture, and communication. Snapshots "work" (that is, they are understood and treated as meaningful) as visual communication because, as symbolic forms, they are embedded within contexts of shared codes of social behavior, understandings, and expectations. Conventions of shooting snapshots, appearing in snapshots, and creating appropriate inferences from snapshots are informally learned, shared, and used alongside other kinds of human participation in visual modes of communication.

The presentational format called "photo album" or "family album" continues to be popular in contexts of both amateur and professional displays. New editions of album like books are published regularly. Recent examples of the diversity include *Family Album: A Personal Selection from Four Generations of Churchills* by Mary Soames (1982), *The Auschwitz Album* (1981),¹⁷ and *The Dallas Family Album* by Robert Masello (1980), to mention just a few. One theme of this review has been to see how codes of authentic snapshot communication get put into other presentational formats and contexts. Given certain differences in authors' intentions, styles of exhibit, and projected audiences, there is always the chance of applying inappropriate schemes of evaluation and criticism. Most of these books fall somewhere between scholarly and popular publications, between the library shelf and the coffee table. Regardless of this potential flaw, the interpretation and appreciation of these books is reliant on implicit understandings we commonly hold about authentic snapshot imagery. I have suggested that each book has something to teach us about the relationships of everyday life and pictorial communication. It remains the case, however, that scholars of visual communication have much work to do on vernacular forms of interpersonal communication.

Notes

- 1 See Chalfen (1981) for examples of specific references to publications that fall into each category.
- 2 See Coleman (1979) for several critical reviews of professional photographers who comprise the snapshot aesthetic school.
- 3 Lesy also chooses to include bed scenes in the snapshots reproduced in *Time Frames* (see p. 31).
- 4 Examples include Gowin (p. 12), Wessel (pp. 17, 21), and Friedlaender (pp. 112, 113), all in Green's *The Snapshot*.
- 5 For a relevant approach to this view, see Gombrich (1972).
- 6 For instance, several professional photographers have used the all-plastic Diana \$1.50 camera. See examples by Ronn Gladis and Nancy Rexroth (Green 1974:54–63).
- 7 For an account leading up to 1888, see Jenkins (1975).
- 8 Lesy has acted as a spokesman for the academic consideration of snapshots as symbolic forms (1976, 1978).
- 9 For instance, see Key (1973).
- 10 We learn that several of the couples know each other (e.g., Manny/Marilyn and Bernie/Irene [see p. 83]) and two of the men are brothers (Bernie [of Irene and Bernie] and Jerry [of Jerry and Faye]). In fact, the same photograph of Jerry is used for two different families (pp. 81 and 93). Lesy has cleverly organized his transcriptions to let readers compare how two brothers describe the same incidents.
- 11 This same point is made by Kotkin (1978).
- 12 Sociologists Boerdam and Martinius suggest two approaches: "Family photographs can be defined in two ways: according to subject and according to the social environment in which they are used. In the former definition family photographs are all those photographs depicting relations or families. In the latter definition family photographs are all those photographs kept and looked at within a family. Both definitions include photographs taken by a professional photographer at the request of the family" (1980:96). Hirsch has selected a restricted version of the former.
- 13 I am reminded of a statement made by Alfred Stieglitz in 1897: "Every Tom, Dick, and Harry could, without trouble, learn how to get something or other on a sensitive plate, and this is what the public wanted—no work and lots of fun. Thanks to the efforts of these persons hand camera and bad work became synonymous" (Lyons 1966:108).
- 14 Social psychologist Stanley Milgram notes: "In principle, the camera could be used to record any visual event: stars, lakes, garbage, loaves of bread. But overwhelmingly, what people wanted to record were images of themselves and their loved ones" (1977:50).
- 15 An analysis along these lines is suggested by the "sociovisidistic" approach to the snapshot-related genre of home movies (Chalfen 1975).
- 16 Of course a lot depends on what kinds of sociological questions are being asked, but for one example of treating group portraits of wedding parties as sociograms, see Segalen (1974).
- 17 The subtitle of this book reads: "A Book Based Upon an Album Discovered by a Concentration Camp Survivor, Lili Meier."

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Norman Bryson. Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. 281 pp. £27.50.

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While literary criticism is now one of the most lively and innovative academic disciplines, art history remains by contrast very staid and traditional. As a group, art historians remain bound to relatively conservative ways of thinking and writing about art. Bryson's book must be understood against this background. It is perhaps the first serious presentation in English of an approach to visual art modeled on the French-style poststructuralism found now in much literary criticism. Bryson's book falls into two parts: a brief theoretical introduction and an application of that account to eighteenth-century French art. Because the interest of that historical study depends, ultimately, on the security of his novel and complex theory of paintings, I begin by considering that theory.

What is meant by calling paintings "signs"? A verbal or pictorial sign signifies something, and so we can focus alternately on the sign itself and on what it stands for. We see the typeface here used in printing the word "art" and can then think of the meaning of that word; analogously, we can focus first on the figural aspect of a picture and then on what it depicts. Images can be placed on a linear scale according to their ratio of figure to meaning. Thus, hieroglyphs are 1:1 illustrations of words, every feature of the sign contributing to its meaning. In realistic pictures the signified:sign ratio is many:1, for only some features of the picture are essential to picking out what is depicted. Finally, in abstract art that ratio is in effect infinity:1, since now the sign signifies nothing but is merely the pigment whose figural qualities we see.

Thus, realism in painting cannot be defined, as traditional art historians assume and as Gombrich argues, by the closeness of the painting to being an objective copy of what it depicts. Rather, a Masaccio fresco is more realistic than a window in Canterbury Cathedral because the Italian master supplies us with excessive or irrelevant information. The Bible requires that Christ be depicted without specifying His position in the picture space. Thus realism is established "by an instituted difference between figure and discourse . . . an excess of the image over discourse" (p. 12). Because realistic pictures look natural, we attach meanings to the image which really belong to the text signified by that image. Realism involves deception because we see the picture's meanings as *in* the picture itself.

This theory requires some way of independently specifying what the sign is and what it signifies. Bryson gives different accounts in the course of his account of how to do that. What is signified can be a text existing prior to and independently of the image, as when Masaccio tells a Bible story. Also, texts may be a product of our viewing of a picture, as when we see a couple to be married in *L'accordée de village* and produce a text for Greuze's painting. The text may include a label placed beneath the painting. To take an example Bryson borrows from John Berger, putting the words "This is the last picture that Van Gogh painted before he killed himself" (p. 6) beside his last painting changes how we see that picture. The text might even encompass the words viewers produce in response to a picture. Le Brun matches text to picture, leaving nothing more to be said; by contrast, "Watteau's strategy is to release enough discourse for the viewer to begin to verbalize the image" (p. 74), so we respond to his pictures with biographical writing about the artist.

What counts as the qualities of the sign itself, the figural aspect of the picture, is similarly variable. Still life works are figural if the flowers or fruit in them have no meaning beyond just being flowers and fruit; they lack the meaning of an image of a man who stands for some biblical personage. A Vermeer is more figural because it makes us aware that the images are the product of brushwork. Finally, a Pollock showing only "the painterly trace" (p. 27) is entirely figural, since the paint signifies nothing.

As given, this theory fails, apparently, to make some important distinctions. A Vermeer does in one sense signify something, namely what it depicts. We can attend both to the sign and to what the sign stands for. But this has nothing to do with whether the picture refers to a text. In viewing a Rubens biblical scene, we focus on the pigment more easily than when before a similar Poussin; Rubens, we conventionally say, is a more painterly artist. Similarly, still life images can be more or less figural. Manet focuses more attention on pigment than Fantin-Latour, though both artists' works stand for and so signify their still life objects. Bryson does make a distinction between denotation and connotation, between what we simply see in a picture and what those visual elements mean. A painting depicts a human skull, and that skull may mean "mortality." But once he allows that distinction, saying what the picture signifies cannot, I think, be done unambiguously. We cannot place art from a Canterbury Cathedral window and the Pollock on one scale measured by the signified:signifier ratio. Rather, we need first to distinguish art that depicts from abstract art; and then to contrast art depicting just what, in one sense, we see in the picture—the simple still life—with the allegorical work whose visual elements carry additional meanings.

Admittedly, a complaint that a novel theory fails to make familiar distinctions is unhelpful. The goal of the new approach could be precisely to elide those distinctions. But Bryson seeks both to undermine and to rely on familiar distinctions. His interesting discussion of the figural qualities of Vermeer, for example, requires distinguishing seeing the pigment and what the pigment depicts. Treating pictures as signs seems here a positive hindrance; perhaps the derivation of his approach from linguistics is responsible for some of its limitations. A printed word is an arbitrary signifier, as commentators on Saussure tirelessly remind us; words, unlike pictures, according to most theories, do not resemble what they stand for. I write "most theories" because, of course, Nelson Goodman has argued that pictures are arbitrary in just this sense; but he, unlike Bryson, who does not mention his work, has gone on to explain in detail the differences between visual and verbal signs. Bryson, by contrast, seemingly both asserts that pictures are arbitrary signs and speaks in the ordinary way about what we see in pictures. To note this problem is not, I think, just to point to a difficulty of theory. Consider one of Bryson's analyses, his discussion of David's didacticism. David avoids presenting a clear and unambiguous message by simultaneously using two opposing texts "which in effect cancel each other out . . . so that we attend instead to [the picture's] materiality, its figurality, its being-as-image." Here "figural" refers to the image; we see what David depicts, not the texts signified by his pictures. But since what is depicted is also, in Bryson's general theory, what these pictorial signs signify, we need a contrast between David's figurality and Pollock's, between images not tied to texts and paintings which are image-free. And that natural distinction seems hard to make within Bryson's theory.

The problems raised by this failure to work out a clear theory of visual signs appear, ironically, in the most brilliant and sustained part of the book, the discussion of Diderot's criticism. Diderot, Bryson suggests, thought of linguistic signs in two opposed ways: as ideally transparent, so that they would correspond exactly to the inner states that they express, and as opaque, reminding us of their qualities as words. The young Diderot treated signs as transparent, as establishing a perfect presence to us of what they signify. But he came to recognize the repressive political implications of such a model. We, like the prisoners in Plato's cave, are ruled by those who would have us thus be deceived by signs. Here we need not pursue this political point, which is elegantly borrowed, I think, from Derrida's now famous attack on writing in *Of Grammatology*. What is relevant is seeing how easily Bryson moves from pictorial images to Diderot's writing about such images. Diderot's ideal was to create a "form of sign that is

'all signified' " (p. 185); to create in words such a vivid mental image for himself and his readers that the actual physical painting would seem insignificant by comparison. Such a written account seems transparent if we fail to attend to the rhetoric of writing, to the ways Diderot creates that picture in words. In unmasking that prose, we become aware of how naturalistic narratives have ideological implications. The equivalent task in painting, learning to see that what pictures signify is not in fact a property of the images themselves, is a quite different task. If Diderot for Bryson is an Enlightenment unmasker of a belief in presence, so now Bryson mimics that role in his attack on visual realism. Spelling out his analysis of that problem brings out some of the differences between words and pictures.

Masaccio's naturalism persuades us to transfer to the picture itself, to the sign, qualities belonging to the text that picture signifies. An advertisement works in a similar if simpler way; we see designer jeans as sexy, as if the description given in the advertising copy, the text under the picture, were thus transferred to being a quality of what is depicted in the picture. Perspective is an especially powerful way of doing this, since we see the apparently lifelike image as if it were an image of some real scene, a faithful copy of that scene existing outside the picture.

This account might usefully be contrasted to Gombrich's. He both claims that perspective is objectively valid and allows that what we see in a picture when we project to interpret it is culturally determined. Imagining the attitude of Quattrocento spectators before an Annunciation is complex, and Gombrich's appeal to the Pygmalion fantasy, to the sculptor's wish that his statue of the woman might come alive, may be misleading. But to treat such early Renaissance art as if spectators then regarded pictures as literally true copies of scenes outside the picture may import into that period an attitude more appropriate to photography. Venetian paintings characteristically show sacred scenes in Venetian settings, and Veronese got into trouble with the Inquisition because he too casually placed Christ in such a scene; but surely the Venetians did not believe that the biblical scenes were actually copied by their painters. *Wivenhoe Park* is a copy of an original, and so we can compare and contrast Constable's painting with that landscape. But the realism of Christian religious art cannot be described in those terms only.

Some interesting problems with Bryson's account of realism appear in his discussion of Piero's *Flagellation*. Marilyn Lavin's well-known study of this famous painting argues that the three men filling the right foreground, which Bryson calls minor figures, are essential to the picture. If she is correct, the small figure of Christ is not, as he says, the "central textural

component" (p. 19); rather, the "text" is defined by the relation between Christ and those figures, for the point of the picture is to point out a link between those men and Christ. Bryson could, of course, reply that it is just because art historians believe in the objectivity of perspective that they read pictures in this way. To develop such a debate we would need to follow Lavin in speculating about Piero's intentions. Are those three men on the right "gigantic and extra-neous" (p. 21), or could the picture be about them? Bryson in effect assumes that the relevant text is the Bible. But perhaps, as in much Renaissance art, the text was created as source for this painting; in that text, those three men might play an important part.

This example raises a general problem with Bryson's account. Just as it is difficult for him to say unambiguously what counts as a sign, so it is similarly unclear what the text is to which that sign refers. If the text can be a biblical passage, a story we produce in response to the painting, or just what people customarily say about the painting, where should we stop? Why cannot a Pollock signify the kind of art critical account typically produced before such an abstract artwork?

Here some reflection on the motives of art historians like Bryson who seek a new theoretical approach may be relevant. The methodology for Renaissance art is established, and now modernism also is treated by academic art history. But the status of eighteenth-century art, the link between the old masters and modernists, is perhaps less clear. A satisfying account of that period might, then, lead also to change in the approach to Renaissance and modernist art. For what is interesting about Watteau, Chardin, Greuze, and even David is how their work shows a transition from the Renaissance tradition, in which the texts exist prior to the painting, to an art in which the story told can be inferred only by looking at the picture. Going further, to the impressionist landscape, which is only about what we see, with no text needed, or even to the abstraction only "about" its own pigment, seems, perhaps, natural.

The difficulty, then, with the very general way in which Bryson speaks of the text is that he cannot really describe eighteenth-century art in such commonsense terms. Maybe we should welcome that result; perhaps the account I have given of this period is misleading. But here, as in the analysis of pictures as signs, Bryson's difficulty is that he must find a way of telling his new story about art without falling back into the very vocabulary he rejects.

Bryson claims that his new approach has greater explanatory power than the traditional account. Familiar questions about historical relativism, and about the relevance of the artist's intentions in interpretation, can be rephrased. If "the only component of the painterly sign guaranteed to survive is figural"

(p. 109), then we may have difficulty determining the text. We fail to recognize, for example, that Chardin aims at "liberating figurality from the controlling grasp of the signified" (p. 121); we tend to see his works as merely depicting everyday objects and not as presenting emblematic texts. And Greuze is hard to appreciate because his art is so closely tied to controversial texts, to "an ideology of family life that we are still hotly debating" (p. 122). His dying grandfather brings out our confused responses to the aged; his nubile young ladies puzzle because they combine "two mutually exclusive attitudes towards the female body—unavailable child, available adult" (p. 138).

These examples differ in complex ways. In viewing Chardins we have to learn that what he depicts has symbolic meaning; we must recognize that there are texts of that sort behind his pictures. We know Greuze's texts; only, these texts had different meanings for his contemporaries than they do now. Just as modern readers need to be told that the seventeenth-century poet speaking of "the plastic arm of God" doesn't use "plastic" in our sense, so we need to be aware of changing views of old age and sexuality. But why is reference to a semiotic theory helpful here? One group of revisionist art historians, feminists, have trained us to see female nudes in new ways. Titian's *Venus of Urbino* expresses, we come to recognize, an ideology of patriarchy. Seeing it in this new way doesn't require reference to a text in Bryson's sense of that word.

A portion of *Word and Image* is written in language unfamiliar to English-speaking art historians. When Bryson tells us how in Le Brun's art "because the signifier has been so degraded, as the Word fades it leaves only ash behind" (p. 43), we can recognize a tone and style of argument borrowed from French literary criticism—noting that is not, clearly, an objection to this approach. Given the meager interest of our art historians in theory, and the stimulating influence of French work on literary criticism, perhaps the best thing that could happen to English-language art history is to be influenced by another tradition. And just as T. J. Clark's reading in Lacan and Michael Fried's in Merleau-Ponty have been valued sources for their pioneering work, so perhaps semiotics might provide a new basis for eighteenth-century studies. But what is unclear here is whether Bryson is saying something new or just stating familiar points in a new vocabulary. "Once the Word was finally deposed, with the double exile of David and of Napoleon . . . Delacroix became necessary" (p. 253); is that a novel claim or just a familiar point about David translated into an exotic language?

Bryson faces this question most openly in his closing chapter. Treating paintings as signs, he claims, is more revealing than stylistics, which fails in the analysis of artists whose work "does not easily fit into the saga of successive visual styles" (p. 239). Now Chardin and Greuze can be placed within their age; they cease to be unrococo figures. Chardin, like Fragonard and Boucher, is interested in figuration. But, where they make the signifier erotic, for Chardin that concern involves interest in work, with images showing work, and with an attempt to work all the canvas surface equally. He, like them, is "part of a whole trend . . . of liberating figurality from the controlling grasp of the signified" (p. 121). Boucher's rococo space presents the female nude not in a real-seeming setting but in a space "that is as close as possible to that inhabited by the viewer" (p. 92); so, as Gombrich has argued in his account of erotic images, it is necessary to emphasize figurality in order to keep the overt sexuality of the image at a distance. But granting this analysis, why should noting that Chardin, too, focuses attention on the painted surface be reason to believe he is similar to these erotic artists? That a similar "formal" result, focus on the surface, is achieved by such different means—by painterly erotic imagery, by absorbing images of labor—is, I would have thought, to acknowledge our intuition that these really are, as they seem to be, very different kinds of paintings.

Given Bryson's interest in French criticism, and his opening statement that the crisis of French painting around 1650 was "at once institutional, political, and semiotic" (p. 29), we might expect a study of the link between paintings and power. But though he has many interesting things to say about the social history of art, what general picture he is sketching of the relation between art and society is unclear. An art of figuration is an art independent of texts. Consequently, if the larger historical movement is toward an emphasis on figuration, then perhaps for Bryson, as for the formalist, as painting evolves it ceases to be bound to any didactic text, and so escapes being controlled by political institutions. That, at least, is one suggestion of his account of David.

Word and Image is a brilliant performance, one drawing suggestively on a number of interesting sources. It offers a vision of a fascinating period, one somewhat neglected by orthodox art historians. Since, furthermore, Bryson is one of the few art historians now interested in the theory of art, his book deserves serious attention. Perhaps he, along with Michael Fried and Ronald Paulson (who is not, strangely, mentioned by Bryson), will guide us to see eighteenth-century art in new ways. But Bryson has not yet demonstrated, I think, that treating painting as signs is the best approach to that period. In focusing on the problems with his account, I have attempted to

respond to this ambitious work in an appropriate way. Perhaps it is premature to demand clarification of the questions I have raised; maybe once Bryson develops his approach these problems will cease to seem important. But such a development will succeed, I believe, only when the basic questions about what is involved in describing paintings as signs have been resolved.

Claudine de France. *Cinéma et anthropologie*. Paris: Editions de La Maison des Sciences de L'Homme, 1982. 400 pp., ill. (n.p.)

Reviewed by Steven Feld
University of Pennsylvania

This revised version of Claudine de France's *Doctorat d'Etat* thesis is essentially a methodological discussion, concerned with *l'anthropologie filmique*, namely, constraints and options in the praxis of filmic observation of material, ritual, and bodily action. The emphasis is not on prescriptions for how to make or define an ethnographic film (à la Heider, to whom she sets herself in opposition); rather, the concern is with types of human activity and the relations between modes of observation and filmic ordering. De France is particularly clear in the Introduction on the differences between filmic observation as mediation and verbal description as a representational process. Her aim is to specify the nature of the former from a processual angle.

The first part of the book consists of discussion of material techniques, ritual actions, and bodily motions. In each case de France focuses on the relation between the period of actual time elapsed in action and observation, and the time condensation and ellipsis process in filmic observations. A similar discussion holds for spatial procedures; here she analyzes physical relations in space between co-actors and other observers and discusses the spatial framing employed to depict each variety of structure described. The fine points of the discussion display a concern with ways in which participants' points of view are referenced to those of observers and ways spatial orderings suggest roles and hierarchies of protagonists. All of these discussions are well illustrated with line-drawn frames from de France's films and from other well-known French ethnographic films (well known, that is, within the French anthropological and film communities; too few of these films have much circulation outside France).

The second part of the book moves the discussion of spatial and temporal articulation onto a more specific level, concerning the demarcation of behavioral units like action chains and sequential orderings, and detailing ways in which these are handled in edited film transitions in relation to composition, repetition, and simultaneity or co-occurrence of events.

The third part of the book then takes all the previous topics into a discussion of methodological options and instrumental constraints, characterizing differences between their use in *film d'exposition* and *film d'exploration*. This part is somewhat anecdotal (short examples of different filming experiences, issues that arose, ways in which they were resolved technically and methodologically). The attempt to fit films into various categories is the least theoretical exercise in the book.

On the whole this book is full of common sense. Indeed, much of it is reasonable, straightforward, and uncluttered by flighty theoretics. A great deal of material in the early parts of the book constitutes a worthwhile addition to the tiny literature that raises questions about the adequacy of ethnographic cinema as an observational method. At the same time there are critical epistemological failings here that raise doubts about the theoretical utility of de France's overall approach.

If we take seriously the notion that ethnographic films (like other films and other ethnographic texts) are motivated events, fashioned out of rhetorical and figurative tools that spring both from the medium and from the larger pool of social tropes for condensing and multiplying meanings, then the kind of analysis de France offers is little more than smorgasbord that cannot be made into a coherent supper. Her preferred segmentations seem to freeze cinematic and observational choices in the same way they freeze the possibilities for understanding how filmic symbols are multivalent and why multiplicities of readings demand socially situated analyses. What is lacking is a sense that the whole filmic enterprise *and* the whole ethnographic one are social constructions of reality that at once comment upon the observed *while* commenting upon the observation. Although occasionally presenting good descriptions, de France's research does not pursue the implications of why the observer has more faces than the camera has lenses.

Judith Wechsler. *A Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris.* London: Thames and Hudson; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. 208 pp. 161 black-and-white ill. £18.50.

Reviewed by David Kunzle
University of California, Los Angeles

This book is composed of five essays concerned with rather more than the subtitle conveys. It deals with disparate topics around the leit-motif caricature:¹ the graphic, theatrical, and literary representation of gesture, bearing (*démarche*), and facial expression as basics of the graphic rhetoric and grammar of social description.

The first chapter, "Parisian Panorama: Codes and Classifications" deals with the tradition of physiognomic and to a lesser extent phrenological investigation, with its connections to Balzac and the popular mode for *Physiologies*, which climaxed in 1840–1842. A chapter on the mime Deburau and the Théâtre des Funambules connects theater and caricature in a link which is always problematical, because the terms of comparison are so different. An actor or mime depends on a complex *sequence* of motions which, before cinematography, were impossible to preserve; whereas the caricature singles out and "holds" a characteristic or climactic pose. The idea of a coherent mimetic sequence of poses obviously derived from the theater is not developed in caricature until Willette's Pierrot in the *Chat Noir* of the 1880s (after Wechsler's cutoff point, which appears to lie around 1870).

"Caricature: Newspapers and Politics" shows how graphics entered journalism in France, for the first time, in 1830 and in a polemical form (news illustration developed later). Here we have, neatly laid out, much familiar material: Daumier, the *Poire* (Louis-Philippe as pear/fathead), censorship, and Grandville, who, illogically, is represented in Wechsler's text and illustrations by his album and book illustrations only, rather than his numerous and powerful political journal cartoons. It is also odd that Gavarni, the great lithographer, is represented only by reproductions of wood engravings after his designs. Justice is done to the lesser known Traviès, the supercession of whose primary creation, the Mayeux type, by Daumier's Robert Macaire marks the transition from "romantic" naiveté to "realist" cynicism. Wechsler correctly identifies Mayeux, Macaire, (Daumier's) Ratapoil, and (Monnier-Daumier's) Joseph Prudhomme as the chief caricature types to become part of French folklore,

like Dickens's characters did in England. One might add to the list Gavarni's ragged philosopher Thomas Vireloque.

Prudhomme, created on stage by Monnier, transposed to graphics initially by Monnier himself and then perfected and popularized by Daumier, gets a chapter to himself. He is perhaps the primary typification of the medium or grand bourgeoisie as a generality, and became so popular that he engulfed his creator, Monnier.

The final chapter, "Daumier: Strategy and Style," is perhaps the best of all, an excellent summary introduction to many important aspects of his work, which is characterized in some elegant turns of phrase. The text here does not, however, establish the familiar argument in favor of Daumier's uniqueness in terms of his relationship to the foregoing material in the theater, physiognomics, and contemporary caricature.

Much of the art treated in this book is about and for a variegated, jostling, crowded world. The book itself jostles with information, much of it familiar, some of it new. A lot of it, while not exactly out of place, is not quite in place either. It moves in and out of focus, from sequitur to nonsequitur, from the general to the particular and back, pushed along by its own weight and impetus. Wechsler is the spectator-participant in the crowd, rather than its director. For all its many correct insights and felicitous turns of expression, the book lacks coherent or sustained argument, a real sense of direction and purpose. The reader becomes a *flâneur* among some fascinating highways and byways of material; in these conditions, one is pleased to reencounter one's old friend Baudelaire, who is always bobbing up with a trenchant comment on this or that. There is a certain logic to writing a book in this way, laying it out haphazardly like the streets we roam, with little mazes and the odd dead end inside the celebrated *quartiers* and off the familiar broad boulevards.

Its primary weakness is the lack of integration into social and political history beyond the grand externals of this or that revolutionary landmark. The passage from *peinture de moeurs* to the practice of those *moeurs* is left in abeyance. There is a lot of microscopic cultural taxonomy going on, but the bigger sociological categories are missing. What is the role of caricature and popular theater and literature in the shifting sands of class? How does the artist place himself and his audience in terms of social relations and hierarchies, which is ultimately what nineteenth-century caricature (not to say all art) is about? To call the book, as Richard Sennett does in his Introduction, a "companion work to T. J. Clark's *Absolute Bourgeois*" is simply absurd; I suspect the author her-

self would disavow a comparison with this pioneer of the new Marxist art history, with its rigorous, often polemical, complex, tightly woven argument and highly self-conscious methodology.

Wechsler is not unaware of the concept of social alienation, but it remains at the level of traditional, idealizing art-historical psychology: the artist personally alienated from society. "Except for Daumier, all the caricaturists discussed here lived their lives in increasingly tense and abrasive relations with society and ended in isolation and despair" (p. 109). So far, so good, but not far enough: the next and necessary step is to figure out how this alienated relationship is transposed into the art and how the audience is made its accomplice, and/or how far the audience is allowed to distance itself from characters and situations made to appear ridiculous while standing as representative, often enough, of its own class; how far extreme and marginal behavior becomes just another amusing spectacle for people basically satisfied with the present scheme of things, or fearful that any change will be for the worse. Above all, one must try to determine who this audience is: I take it to be basically a petty bourgeoisie in a state of flux, shifting its alliances as it struggles for survival and advantage.

It is misleading to say that this "popular" art, theater, and literature was designed for a "mass of dislocated urbanites" (Sennett), without distinguishing "a mass" from "the masses." The *Charivari* under Louis-Philippe sold only around 2000 copies; it was relatively expensive (it had to be, publishing a hand-pulled lithograph on good paper every day) and obviously reached far fewer people than the new cheap press with its truly mass-appealing *feuilletons*. Daumier's audience was a relative elite of radical intelligentsia, essentially petty bourgeois in outlook, with little attachment to the working class, and by no means always progressive. Idealizing Daumier and his mentor Philippon as art historians generally do, Wechsler praises their primary vehicle, the *Charivari*, as "for thirty years the leader of the journalistic and caricatural campaigns on behalf of betrayed Republican principles." It could be shown, however, that this journal was among the traitors: as other radical or republican organs went out of business under Napoleon III, the *Charivari* was there on the sidelines cheering the imperial and imperialist military endeavors in Russia and Italy. At such times the *Charivari* appears as an ideological prop of the regime; but for a complete picture we await the much-needed biography of the journal. In the 1840s it had campaigned against socialism and feminism (the latter a favorite target of Daumier); and *Charivari's* representation of the working class, as in European caricature magazines generally, tends to be unfavorable, if not outright hostile.

The spectrum of social identification among caricaturists and journals remains to be discerned. It is not always evident, although broad colorations are: Gavarni, avowedly contemptuous of the lower classes with moments of compassion for their poverty; Grandville, often supportive of working-class militancy and revolutionary ideals; Daumier-Philippon, oscillating in the middle.

The physiognomic tradition, despite its scientific, formalist-aesthetic, and humorous concerns, was imbued with a class and racist bias of its own. The physiognomic ideal and ultimate reference point for all variations was always the classical, Greco-Roman type with the long straight nose and vertical facial angle; the further this angle receded, the more negroid, simian, and bestial the associations. Theories of evolution played their part here. In nineteenth-century caricature the lower classes are generally depicted as brutish and subject to extreme physiognomic variations; the bourgeoisie are assimilated to such variations and degradations in order to show individual moral debasement. Compare facing pages of Daumier lithographs (146–147): the bourgeoisie are merely weird and a bit silly looking; the lower-class types are rendered as downright stupid and even menacing.

A new avenue of research opens up with respect to the application in practice of physiognomic theory. Is it really true that published theories of correspondence between the proportions of the human head and face, and the fundamentals of individual human character, were used as a guide in social practice—in choosing a spouse, friend, associate, or employee?² We are warned today that interviewers may judge candidates not only by their verbal language but also by their body-language, which includes of course appearance generally. We do not need to be reminded today that "good looks" (i.e., conformity to a norm reinforced, via art and the physiognomic tradition, by advertising) helps. But we do not consciously apply old physiognomic rules, by which certain facial characteristics were associated with certain moral traits; instead we go by intuition, which does not exclude inherited baggage like the association, say, of lack of chin with lack of willpower; and the "racist" preference for straight, and thin or slightly aquiline noses in the classical-Wasp tradition, over noses of different shape associated with nonwhite races, persists.

In days when job qualifications were generally less palpably documented than today, one had to judge more by appearances, and physiognomic and phrenological "science" purported to offer some ground rules. If it is evident that these rules tended to a kind of broad racist bias, it remains to determine how such rules functioned to support class bias. When the nineteenth-century novel, which is chock-a-block with

physiognomic theory in its crudest and most sophisticated guise, singles out for praise virtuous working-class characters, he or she will generally have a clear, honest, frank, etc., face—the association of course is with regularity of proportion, “refined looks” that upper-class people were supposed to inherit and possess by right. Irregularities were associated with vice, folly, oddity, and the lower classes generally. Dickens’s moral aristocrats are all “good looking” and lacking in physiognomic peculiarities.

But fiction and caricature are one thing; social reality is another. In one famous instance we can judge how nearly a particular physiognomic prejudice changed the course of history: the upper-class Charles Darwin himself tells us how close he was to being rejected by the captain of the HMS *Beagle*, who judged his nose to be wanting in energy and determination.

A few words on the word “physiognomy.” By the nineteenth century this had come to refer to the human face and how to read it, and to exclude appearance, posture, and the figure as a whole, a broader reference which survives in Lavater. “Physiognomy” in reference to a particular face or kind of face was often shortened, in English, to “phisog.” or “phis” (or “phiz”). But in reference to the “science” of reading the face, the term “physiognomics” would be preferable, failing the archaic “physiognomy,” which did not establish itself, perhaps because it is a bit of a mouthful to pronounce. But one expert in aesthetic matters, and himself a noted caricaturist, Rodolphe Töpffer, tried to make it stick in French by using it in his *Essai de physiognomonie* (1845). This seminal work, which E. H. Gombrich rescued from relative obscurity, is nowhere mentioned by Wechsler; this is a pity, because Gombrich has shown how Töpffer was the first to emphasize the conventional, arbitrary nature of physiognomic indicators, which hitherto had been regarded as fixed and constant. Töpffer established a kind of systematic antimethod of physiognomic variation designed to subvert the accepted methods and assumptions. He subjected faces and figures to modes of playful, even “unconscious” simplifications and permutations which leapfrog Daumier into contemporary cartoon and graphics. He is the witty demystifier of all the pseudo-scientific nonsense hanging around physiognomics, phrenology, and craniology.

And now a note on notes. It is symptomatic of the loose rein that Wechsler holds on her material that text and notes to the text are not too well differentiated. There are whole paragraphs, like one listing the various editions of Lavater’s famous treatise, which should obviously be relegated to the notes; and there are in the notes section several mini-essays or subappendices running into whole columns, containing ancillary and (perhaps) inessential matter of a

technical nature. Is this a tactic to reduce the physical size of the book? Authors enjoined by the publisher to cut back a text (our name is legion, for we are many) will sympathize. But one must have faith, despite Reagan, that life will continue on this planet and that opportunity will present itself to decant these hypertrophical parentheses elsewhere.

On the subject of notes, I am impelled to enter an injunction to and against any editors and publishers within eyeshot of this review to spare us bodies of notes numbered by chapter with no page superscription (e.g., “notes to pp. 1–37” at the head of the corresponding page) to help us find our way. This common negligence amounts to malpractice. In conjunction with the even more annoying and unnecessary failure to provide references from text to illustrations (which are very copious here), it shows a damnable contempt for the convenience of readers, and a false sense of economy. Authors must henceforward insist on special clauses in their contracts, and then be prepared to sue.

Caricature, which came truly of age in the nineteenth century, is a complex phenomenon, and requires one to observe certain lexicographic niceties. With an author so concerned with and adept in taxonomy, one is surprised to encounter lapses in classification such as that of Hogarth and Gavarni as caricaturists. Hogarth himself protested against the application of this, for him, derogatory label for his genius in comic characterization, and even produced a print called *Characters and Caricaturas* to demonstrate the difference. Gavarni was praised by contemporaries for *not* indulging in caricature, for being (in the words of Jules Janin) superior to Daumier insofar as he offered the undistorted, unexaggerated “truthful portrait” and “spiritual daguerreotype” of the age. It is well to remind ourselves that the absolute preeminence accorded today to Daumier over all other caricaturists or graphic satirists of his time was not necessarily the consensus of the nineteenth century. This book offers material for other judgments.

Notes

- 1 Another important new addition to our knowledge of nineteenth-century French caricature is Beatrice Farwell’s *French Popular Lithographic Imagery 1815–1870*, University of Chicago Press, with microfiche illustrations. The work is planned in twelve volumes, two of which have appeared.
- 2 My colleague Irene Bierman tells me that traditionally in the Ottoman empire all important civil service appointments, especially in the army and among the Janissaries, were made on a physiognomic basis.

Alan Rosenthal. *The Documentary Conscience: A Casebook in Film Making.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. 436 pp., ill. \$19.50 (cloth). \$8.95 (paper).

Reviewed by John Stuart Katz
York University, Toronto

Over the last few years hardly a week has passed in which newspapers of North America did not carry at least one story dealing with the issue of image ethics. Consider the following:

Item: On December 3, 1978, the *New York Times Magazine* featured a cover story entitled "The Black Middle Class: Making It." The tone of the piece was less than laudatory, but the real controversy arose because of the cover photo, which depicted a dapper black man in a three-piece suit, carrying an attaché case. The subject of the photo, Clarence Arrington, had no idea that his picture had been taken, let alone that it would be used on the cover of the *Times Magazine* section. Needless to say, when the photo appeared he was upset, and sued the *Times*, the free-lance photographer, the photographic agency, and the agency's president.

Item: In October 1982, actress Elizabeth Taylor filed suit against the American Broadcasting Company to stop the airing of an unauthorized docudrama portraying her life. Said Taylor: "I am my own commodity. I am my own industry. . . . This docudrama technique has gotten out of hand. It is simply a fancy new name for old-fashioned invasion of privacy, defamation and violation of an actor's right. My livelihood depends—and don't laugh—on my acting—the way I look, the way I sound."

Item: In March 1983 WHMA-TV, the only television station in Anniston, Alabama, received the following telephone call: "If you want to see somebody set himself on fire, be at the square in Jacksonville in ten minutes." The caller was an unemployed and troubled laborer hoping to use the media to draw attention to his plight. The TV camera crew (a cameraman and a soundman) met the caller, momentarily stalled him, then filmed as he set himself ablaze for the camera. The sound technician eventually rushed in to save him, but the caller had already suffered second- and third-degree burns over half of his body. WHMA showed the conflagration in edited form the following evening. Subsequently, excerpts have been seen by tens of millions around the globe.

Behind each of these cases lie conceptions of image ethics which proscribe and prescribe the rights of the press or of artists to take and use a picture (motion or still) of another human being. Ethical dis-

putes arise from the conflict between the public's right to know (freedom of the press as protected by the First Amendment) and the individual's right to privacy (as protected by the Fifth Amendment). With few exceptions (Ruby 1981, Pryluck 1976, Linton 1976) academics or filmmakers have rarely addressed the issue of image ethics. More often than not, filmmakers, particularly documentarians, have assumed that the ends justify the means and that they, the filmmakers, "know what is best" for both the audience and the subjects of their films.

Although Alan Rosenthal's newest collection of interviews, *The Documentary Conscience*, does not restrict itself to the issue of image ethics, the problem is central to many of Rosenthal's discussions with the thirty-two filmmakers whom he has interviewed for the book. In his introduction, Rosenthal calls attention to the "unfashionable" aspects of questioning the ethics of documentarists, but says he will nonetheless do so:

How far can a film maker exploit a subject in the name of the general truth or the general good? . . . How far does the subject realize what is going on? Does the subject realize the implications and possible consequences of his or her life being portrayed on the screen, or of being interviewed? What consent was given, what was really meant by the film maker and what was understood by the subject? When does one have to shut off the camera or destroy footage? (p. 5)

Rosenthal has selected for his interviews filmmakers to whom such questions are more than just mental exercises; he has chosen to focus on filmmakers with social concerns, those whom he calls "committed." Among the ranks of these conscientious filmmakers are Albert Wasserman of "60 Minutes," members of the team from the British Thames Television production "The World at War," American political filmmakers Emile de Antonio, Cinda Firestone, Barbara Kopple, Julia Reichert, and James Klein, and Canadians Beryl Fox, Michael Rubbo, Robin Spry, and Doug Leiterman.

But even among these "committed" filmmakers, the ethical ramifications of what they are doing do not always constrain their activities. For example, in one of the earliest interviews in the book, researcher Susan McConachy of "The World at War" tackles the dilemma of getting the subject of an interview (in this case a former SS officer) to talk about his wartime experiences:

In all the times I had met him before that incident, I was not playing totally honest. For example, there he was telling me about how he had tried to protect Langbehn [a Resistance member]. Now in a normal situation I would have said, "Oh, come off it, that story is absolutely rubbish. How stupid do you think I am," but because I eventually wanted to get that man up in front of the camera there is no point in contradicting him in the research stage." (p. 74)

Or, in his interview with Director Jill Godmilow, Rosenthal raises the issue of provoking, on camera, Antonia Brico, the subject of the film Godmilow codirected with Judy Collins. Rosenthal is asking about a scene in the film in which Brico talks about her problems as a woman conductor, blows up, and gets very angry:

Q. How did you provoke that?

A. I had Judy ask a very stupid question to which she already knew the answer, and to which I knew Antonia knew she knew the answer. Antonia refused to bite for the first few times and Judy kept on asking her. . . . I considered the issue very seriously before I provoked her like that. I knew it was going to take her "out there" and it did. She was very shook up when she finished and she was angry at us for having done it. We had to live with that for a while. She said, "It's all very fine for you to bring these feelings out and then leave with it on your film, but I have to live with them." And that's why I leave in that line where she says, "I don't discuss my heartbreak every day." (pp. 366-367)

With George Stoney, founder of the Canadian National Film Board's "Challenge for Change" program, Rosenthal discusses how the family in the film *The Things I Cannot Change* (a predecessor to "Challenge for Change") was vilified by their neighbors as a result of its telecast on the CBC. Stoney says:

Now my own hunch is that this came about, not because the film was made as it was, but because the film was not introduced properly. The way I would have handled that film (and the way I do handle my films) would have been to show the film to the family in rough cut, and get their reactions and talk to them about it. Help them learn to deal with it. Then I would have set up screenings where they brought in their neighbors and friends and we could have talked about why the film was made. This way they might have begun to see the film in context so that by the time the film was actually seen by the general public they would know what's there, and would have been proud of what they had done, rather than ashamed or betrayed. Because it's usually two sides of the coin. (p. 354)

This past year I used *The Documentary Conscience* as a textbook in two different courses. One was a seminar dealing with image ethics, and for this the book was invaluable. In the other course, a survey of documentary film, Rosenthal's book became a prime resource for student research into recent nonfiction films. Because most of the films he discusses are readily available in North America, there is little problem (as with many documentary film books) with reading about films you have only heard about but never seen. What intrigued the students most, however, is Rosenthal's comprehensiveness in interviewing. Because he is both insightful and persistent as an interviewer, Rosenthal sheds new light on the con-

ceptualization, financing, production, distribution, exhibition, and exploitation of documentary films. His subtitle—"A Casebook in Film Making"—reveals the essence of his approach, which is to view each film as an artifact, worthy of complete and thorough investigation. Moreover, Rosenthal's enthusiasm and appreciation of these films becomes infectious. As do his other critical works on documentary, *The Documentary Conscience* displays an engaging zeal for a genre which has too long been misunderstood or ignored.

By reviewing the book in the context of image ethics and of university film teaching, I do not imply that it is only of marginal use otherwise. *The Documentary Conscience: A Casebook in Film Making* is an irreplaceable addition to the library of anyone interested in film, communications, or social change.

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Briefly Noted

Jill Posener. *Spray It Loud*. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982. 96 pp. \$5.95 (paper).

Not just another graffiti book (a genre that is proliferating as fast as its subject matter), *Spray It Loud* illustrates the creative use of the spray-paint can by feminists, anarchists, antinuke and antismoking campaigners, and others who want to subvert the status quo. The most striking examples in this collection show how commercial billboards have been "re-faced" in order to alter or to respond to their sexist, racist, or otherwise offensive messages. As the author/photographer states, the most memorable of these graffiti completely change the nature of an ad, or make a sharp point, within a humorous framework. In a world flooded with mass-mediated advertisement, these graffiti provide a refreshing glimpse of the possibility of fighting back.



"This ad was opposite my place of work. I had to stare at it out of the window. A colleague and I went out and added the graffiti. You can see there are two handwritings! It was a way of taking over the poster. You have to have a lot of money to afford billboards like that. We wanted to reclaim the open spaces that have been colonised by advertisers. By writing angry but humorous graffiti, we were also making the point that ad agencies don't have the monopoly on wit. It feels great to see it reproduced everywhere. It's made the point that women can do something instead of just seethe." From *Spray It Loud*, p. 13.

Adam Garbicz and Jacek Klinowski. *Cinema, The Magic Vehicle: A Guide to Its Achievement*. New York: Schocken Books, 1983. 2 vols., each 551 pp. \$12.50 (paper).

A massive, two-volume paperback reprint of a chronologically listed, annotated filmography of films "which anyone seriously interested in the cinema would consider worth seeing, wherever they come from." Apparently, anyone seriously interested in the cinema would consider 750 films worth seeing, divided equally between the years 1913–1949 (vol. 1) and 1950–1959 (vol. 2). The entries provide the names of the major players both behind and in front of the camera (as well as footage counts and running times). Vol. 2 includes 59 unremarkable illustrations. On the whole, this is a valuable reference resource for film libraries and buffs, particularly so because of its inclusion of films produced outside the United States and Western European boundaries of most such compilations.

James L. Enyeart, Robert Monroe, and Philip Stokes. *Three Classic American Photographs: Texts and Contexts*. Exeter, England: University of Exeter American Arts Pamphlet Series, 1982. 43 pp. £1.50 (paper).

This short pamphlet is one in an interesting series published by the American and Commonwealth Arts Section of the University of Exeter. It contains three brief essays dealing with very diverse photographs and an introduction by photo-historian Aaron Scharf. Robert Monroe discusses the "earliest Pacific Northwest Indian Photograph" taken by an anonymous Royal engineer of three Spokane Indians. James Enyeart focuses on a 1924 platinum print of a cloud by Edward Weston, discussing Weston's approach to the photographic subject in the context of the contemporary debates within photography. Philip Stokes analyzes Walker Evans's "plain style" in relation to the 1969 photo "Interior, Heliker House," which he interprets as revealing the similarity of Evans's realism to Flaubert's descriptive technique.

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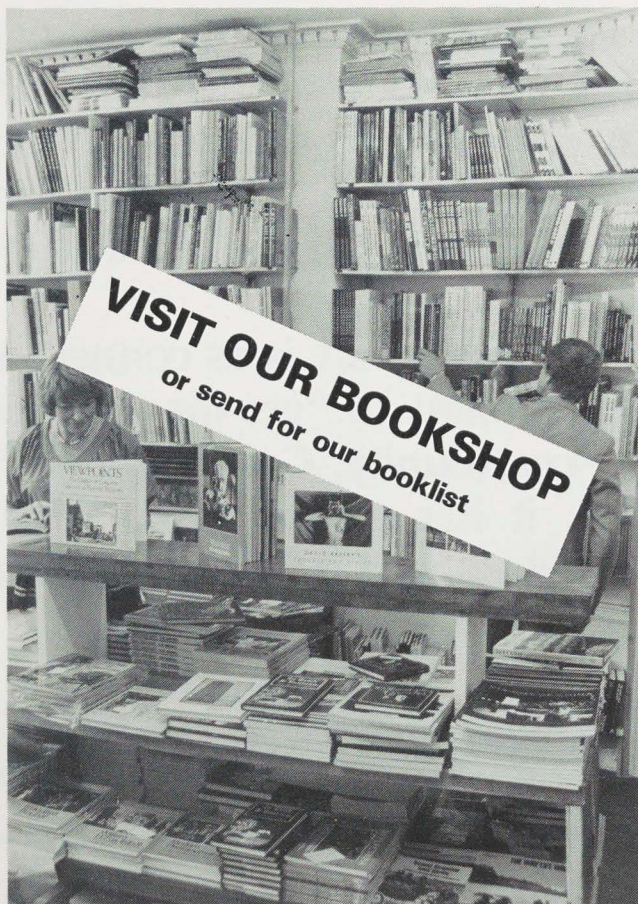
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Loring M. Danforth. The Death Rituals of Rural Greece. Photographs by Alexander Tsiaras. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982. 170 pp., 31 plates. \$30.00(HB); \$12.50(SB).

The book consists of an analysis of Greek funerary rituals by an anthropologist and, as the author states, "an independently conceived visual commentary on death rituals of rural Greece" by a Greek-American photographer, Alexander Tsiaras. Both the written study and the photographs are interesting and well done. However, one wishes that they had been conceived together as complementary so that text and image woven together would have created an understanding greater than their separate illuminations.

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