

# Suspended Conversations that Intersect in the Edwardian Postcard

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## Abstract

*In this article Becker and Malcolm investigate the visual sides of a corpus of over three hundred and fifty Edwardian postcards from Scotland addressed to a cook in an upper middle class home, having analyzed the verbal texts in previous papers (Becker & Malcolm forthcoming 2007 and forthcoming 2008). They compare how the message of the visual text reinforces, extends and/or challenges the message of the verbal text. In other words, how the suspended conversation captured on the more public, commercial, visual message on the 'front' of the postcard relates to the potentially more private, personal, verbal one on the 'back' (cf. Kress & Van Leeuwen 1997; Langford 2001). This comparison sheds light on the informal correspondence of the Edwardian community from the perspective of the seventy-seven female encoders included in the collection. It also, as Chalfen puts it, offers twenty-first century decoders "a site of cross-generational and cultural continuity, transformative and moderating" (in Langford 2001: 5) through which they can explore the communicative conventions and constraints of a community who, one hundred years ago, saw their culture, not unlike ours in some ways, as a 'culture of speed' (Keep 2001: 151).*

## 1. Introduction

Recently Becker came across the title of a book by Langford (2001: 5) that struck a chord with us in our current analysis of a collection of Edwardian Postcards. Although Langford's title *Suspended Conversations* alludes to her study of family photographic albums in a museum context where "the very act of preservation ... suspends its sustaining conversation, stripping the album of its social function and meaning", the words "suspended conversations" and the idea of different suspended conversations 'intersecting' in a particular time and place seemed particularly apt when describing the intertwining communicative strands in the visual and verbal texts, the fronts and the backs, of postcards.

Becker's postcard collection includes over three hundred postcards sent by over seventy encoders addressed to her maternal grandmother Miss. Christina Campbell of Edinburgh, who was a cook in the upper middle class household of a Mrs. Morrison between 1904 and 1908. Most middle class homes had a cook, parlour maid, housemaid, gardener and a governess. (Thompson 1992 [1975]: 125). A cook's wages were below an unskilled man; however, domestic service was one of the few jobs available to women who were not from wealthy families. (Thompson 1992 [1975]: 144). "They rose early, 6 o'clock in the summer and 6:30

in the winter.... Wages were paid quarterly or half-yearly. Domestic servants received board and lodging one afternoon per week off and one day off per month” (Livingston 1998: 46).

On their days or half-days off, staff would hop a train to a nearby destination, and purchase a few postcards to send to friends and family. Their adventures were a form of inexpensive entertainment. In 1904 Christina received one hundred and sixteen postcards from twenty-two locations, most from areas that are now suburbs of Edinburgh such as Haddington, Prestonpan and Portobello. Postcard collections were a fad amongst the working class in Scotland at the time. Langford (2001: 18) calls such collections “the cabinets of nineteenth century curiosity, the private repositories of material culture. Donnachie and Macleod (1979: 98) write:

The scale of enthusiasm for collecting amongst the Victorian and Edwardian middle class is difficult to grasp. All kinds of assorted ephemera, from music sheet covers, posters, Valentines, Christmas cards and cigarette cards to postcards were accumulated. Postcards were perhaps the most popular of all, at least between 1894 and 1914. Over 300 million cards were actually posted in Britain in 1895, over 400 million in 1900, and over 850 million in 1908. The number merely sold was much greater.

They called the Edwardian era “The Plague of Postcards.” (1979: 128).

## **2. The Verbal Texts**

In past papers Becker and Malcolm used the work of systemicists and communication linguists, among others, to analyze the *verbal* texts of the postcards as a means of understanding a community of women who, one hundred years ago, all shared the communicative purpose of contributing to a friend’s postcard collection, while fulfilling a variety of ‘embedded’ communicative purposes at the same time such as sharing travel experiences, confirming travel logistics, arranging meetings, apologizing, exchanging news, etc. (cf. Halliday 1994; Gregory & Malcolm 1995; Malcolm 2005). These varied purposes, coupled with the ideational representations that went with them, accounted for much of the diversity in the corpus, which was not considerable. The overall consistency of the corpus was not surprising given the limited range of social relationships between interlocutors and the limited scope of such a visible ‘public’ form of communication. The very size of the postcard constrained innovation and excess. In many texts, communication was limited to formulaic phatic phrases like “another postcard to add to your collection, arrived safely,

having a lovely time, send my regards to, see you soon” (Becker & Malcolm 2008a). The verbal texts of the postcards in the corpus were classified in less than half a dozen registers: the travel card, the invitation, the confirmation, the phatic postcard, the meeting arrangement and the letter (Becker & Malcolm 2008a).

### **3. The Visual Texts**

Aside from the communicative event involved in writing the postcard, there are two or three other communicative events relevant to, and embedded in, the *visual* text. The one most immediately relevant to the interpretation of the postcard as a whole, aside from the encoding and decoding of the *verbal* text, is where one of Christina’s friends or family chose and purchased the postcard which she intended to send to Christina. She would likely have made this selection based on the visual text manifested on the ‘front’ of the card, possibly because it encoded the geographical provenance of her travel experience or something of interest to either herself, the future encoder of the verbal text, or to Christina, the intended decoder. It is, of course, also possible that the purchaser/encoder may have simply grabbed the first card she saw with little regard to the visual text. Of course, her selection would also depend on what was available in the situation involving the exchange of goods, and ultimately, on what the producers of the card deemed culturally acceptable and marketable.

Either way, the picture on the postcard also encodes more communicative events than the one involving the exchange of goods in which the photographer/producer and/or publisher of the *visual* text is the encoder, and the intended decoder of the *visual* text is the eventual encoder of the *verbal* text. And within the communicative event in which publishers chose which photographs to print as postcards, is embedded an earlier event in which the photographer selected what of his referential realm s/he wished to convey/represent/manifest in his/her shot.

### **4. The History of the Postcard**

In Edwardian times, many of the publishers of postcards were either photographers themselves, born all over England, Scotland, even East Prussia, who had begun their professional life in other careers, but then fallen in love with photography, specializing in taking family portraits and then publishing postcards from their photographs. Art historians,

Schwartz and Galassi (in Langford 2001: 4) believe it was the nineteenth century's fixation on progress coupled with a demand for illusion that contributed to the success of photography.

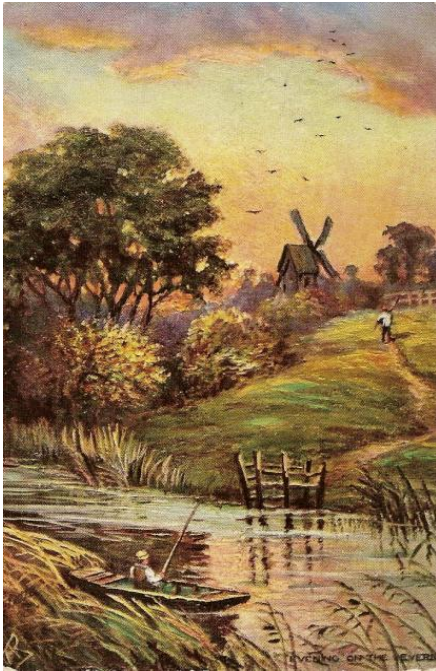
Postcards were first introduced in Britain by the Post Office in 1870. Originally, they were plain cards with a pre-printed stamp and address written on one side of the card and a brief message written on the other. There was no picture. These were known as Court cards. Early publishers of postcards may have been inspired by the French *cartes de visite*, small photographs mounted as visiting cards which emerged in 1854. (Langford 2001: 23). Later, *cabinet cards* were used by business men to arrange meetings. The address was written on one side and on the reverse side was a small picture and sufficient space to write a short message. This changed in 1902 when postcard manufacturers issued cards with a line drawn down the middle to show the address should be written on the right, the message on the left. Postcards sold for a penny and stamps, a half penny. By the advent of the twentieth century, some publishers had fifteen thousand views of England and Scotland for sale ([www.edinphoto.org.uk](http://www.edinphoto.org.uk)).

Over half of Christina's postcards were published by National, Reliable and Valentine. Valentine was one of Britain's leading photographic manufacturers and suppliers. The other two names of the publishers are interesting for the social values they encode (Donnachie & MacLeod 1979: 129). As Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 120) write "If they [the producers] want to see their work disseminated, they must work within more or less rigidly defined conventions, and adhere to more or less rigidly defined values and beliefs of the social institution within which their work is produced and circulated."

## **5. The History of Photography**

All but one per cent of the images on the postcards in the collection were taken from photographs rather than paintings. By the mid nineteenth century, the daguerreotype, calotype and photographic drawing were replaced by the wet collodion glass negative technique of photography and the albumen print which used the albumen in egg whites to bind photographic chemicals to the paper. These techniques became the dominant form of photographic positives until the turn of the century, when a process called autochrome, using images on glass plates, took over. Autochrome was not replaced by actual film until the 1930's ([www.edinphoto.org.uk](http://www.edinphoto.org.uk)).

Many of the photographers of this period were highly innovative. Some experimented with wide angle lens, others a short exposure that gave them an ‘instantaneous view’ ([www.edinphoto.org.uk](http://www.edinphoto.org.uk)). One photographer remodelled a vehicle to include a developing studio in the back, so he could develop as he went. A few postcards record visual experiments, such as an oilette series where an embossed surface was used to imitate the brush strokes of an oil painting, and a colour crayon process incorporating original drawings on postcards.



**Paintings as Postcards**

## **6. Postcards and the Grammar of Visual Design**

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 46) write that photographs represent what is naked to the eye, a moment frozen in time. They depict the represented participant in concrete, naturalistic and unmediated detail, creating an imaginary relation between the represented participant and the interactive one (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996: 122). Such naturalistic representations, they suggest, lead to a prescribed, closed and authoritarian way of reading the image - a different type of social control than more abstracted images that are open and interactive (1996: 26). This idea of photographs and social control is an interesting one, when considering the types of experiences photographers and publishers chose to recreate as postcards in Edwardian times.

Kress and van Leeuwen’s reworking of Halliday’s systemic model in a visual context, particularly his idea of the simultaneous encoding of ideational, interpersonal and textual

systems of language which reflect the primary functions of language in situation, informs our investigation of the *visual* messages manifested on the reverse sides of the *verbal* messages. A comparison of the visual message with the verbal reveals how the message of the visual text reinforces, extends, and/or challenges the message of the *verbal* text.

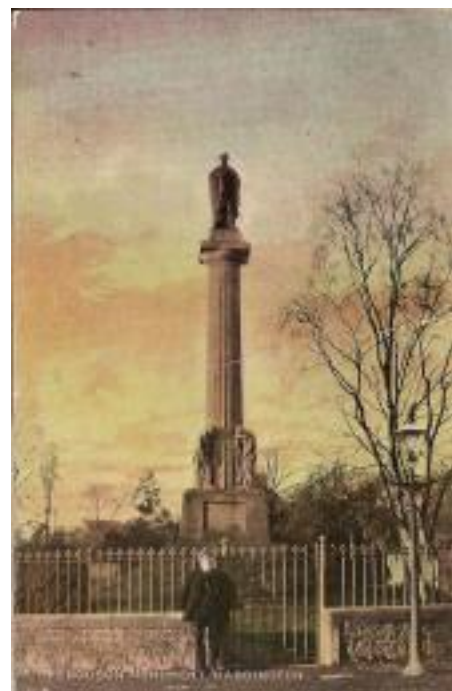
Most of the photographs published as postcards were quite consistent ideationally in terms of represented participant, process and setting; interpersonally in terms of social distance, field of vision and modality, and textually, in terms of composition, salience and information value. Ideationally, the images in the corpus were classified in five major categories: cityscapes, buildings, landscapes, people and miscellaneous, each with sub-categories. While *cityscapes* accounted for sixteen per cent of all the postcards; *buildings* accounted for twenty-five percent. *Landscapes* other than cityscapes accounted for forty-two percent of the images in the corpus, *people* almost eight per cent, and *miscellaneous* the final nine percent. Of all these postcards sixty-two percent were in colour and the rest were in black and white, with a few of the latter in sepia.

## 7. Cityscapes

Of the **Cityscapes**, eleven percent included cathedrals in the cityscape, twenty nine percent focused on businesses, sixteen percent were of residential areas of cities and twenty percent included monuments.



**Cityscapes**



In most cases the interpersonal relationship in the cityscape photographs, between the encoder/photographer of the actual scene and the viewer/decoder of the postcard, was quite distant, seen from very long panoramic shots. Interpersonally, the social distance was usually public, with a long or very long shot. Of these, the monument and cathedral cityscapes were almost entirely coloured, the business cityscapes were predominately so. In both, though, the colours were neither saturated nor highly differentiated from one another. In some cases, it looked as if black and white photographs had been hand painted. Over half of the residential cityscapes were black and white.

One of the premises behind Kress and van Leeuwen's *Grammar of Visual Design* (1996: 12 and 39) is that images convey ideological positions and attitudes that serve the interests of certain groups and not others. They write, "Pictorial structures do not simply reproduce the structures of 'reality', they produce images of reality which are bound up with the interests of the social institutions within which the pictures are produced, circulated and read." (1996: 45). The similarity between the visual choices of Edwardian photographers and contemporary postcard photographers suggest, then, that the values of Edwardian interlocutors bear a striking resemblance to our own.

## 8. Buildings

Postcards where a single building predominated with minimal background were classified as the **Building** category. Like the cityscapes, the building images encode the authoritarian institutions of church and state: cathedrals and town halls, as well as lesser institutions such as the post office, train station and sanatoriums.



**Cathedral**

Even art is institutionalized by being photographed in the same way as the other institutions of power and authority in terms of a historically and architecturally solid, prestigious and spacious edifice that dominates the landscape and the people who live there.

### Art Gallery



The building category was subcategorized in terms of the type of building featured in the postcard. There was one postcard of a train station, and another of a fire house. There were two examples each of art galleries and post offices, and three postcards of educational edifices (libraries or universities), town halls, hotels and other specific businesses, in this case a kiosk, a milk store and a distillery. There were four examples of sanatoriums (mostly from one interlocutor), and five of monasteries. There were nine examples of churches, another nine of cathedrals. And there were seventeen cards of castles. In addition, there were fourteen houses of the rich or the famous (e.g. Knox, Shakespeare) and two of cottages of the famous (Burns). The majority of the seventy-eight building cards were created from photographs. Almost half of the buildings were by the same three major publishers of the cityscapes.

The square and rectangular shapes of the represented images in the building postcards seemed to represent and reinforce the values of mechanical, technological order, honesty, straightness, denoting order as Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 51) have suggested. They add that visual angularity creates the illusion of a three dimensional perspective on a two dimensional surface representing the man-made world of technology, rational and artificial (1996: 53). Because there was only one represented participant in these images, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 61-64) would classify the images as non-transactional. Colour, or lack of it, added an interesting dimension to the buildings: the educational and health facilities were generally in black and white, almost half of the churches, as well as houses of the rich and famous, and one third of the castles were also in black and white. The colour saturation, differentiation, and variation even in the colour photographs did not contribute to a high



modality. Colour photography had been invented by Edwardian times; however, black and white images would have been less expensive. Several black and white images appear to have been hand painted during this period; perhaps, to ‘update’ older images.

Some aspects of the design and layout of the visual images represented in the postcards seemed to be well described and explained by Kress and van Leeuwen’s visual grammar. The buildings were taken as long shots for the most part, but with less social distance between the represented participant and interactive participant than in the cityscapes.



### **Rectangles and angles as technology**



However, the specific focus of the buildings was often more subjective than the cityscapes, with its single overall perspective. There were a few instances where the horizontal frame of the image was frontal where the photographer was in front of the represented participant, communicating involvement ‘what you see is part of our world’; however, most encoded an oblique angle where the photographer viewed the participant from one side suggesting ‘what you see is not part of our world’ (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996: 143).

Some aspects of their framework, however, such as vertical angle, did not seem as applicable to this corpus. Although Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 149) suggest that a high vertical angle gives the illusion of power to the viewer standing above, while a low angle the power to the building, this did not seem the case in some shots where a high angle seemed to grant a building greater institutional status and power that distanced the viewer, while a lower

and eye level of the more modest buildings encoded the message that s/he was admitted access to and welcomed in these buildings as equals.



**High angle**

**Eye level**



In a conversation with van Leeuwen (July 2007) he said that in the history of postcards, like the history of photos in newspapers, at first photographers captured images in their entirety; they did not express attitudes through their photography until all the technologies were available in the thirties. His theoretical framework becomes increasingly relevant and illuminating at this point.

## **9. Landscape**

The forty-two per cent **Landscape** postcards represented photographs for the most part. The images were categorized experientially into fourteen types of represented participant. Although all were photographs of rural landscapes or seascapes, the category also included a few buildings, but ones without the institutional power of those classified as buildings, more specifically a windmill, lighthouse or modest rural home. Ten cards featured wharves or piers, and twenty-three cards, almost twenty percent of the landscapes, featured bridges. Six cards

included boats in the landscape. In the other landscapes there were no buildings: sixteen cards were of farmland, fifteen cards were of parks, four of waterfalls, three of beaches, two of golf courses; however, the highest percentage of this category, including thirty-nine cards, were photographs of harbors.

Surprisingly, there were more lines and diagonals in the landscape postcards, than the more 'natural' and predictable organic shapes. However, closer inspection indicated that most of the lines and diagonals encoded man-made technological elements of the landscape: roads, bridges, piers, fences, and sometimes distant buildings. The elements of the natural landscape, curving river valleys and waterfalls revealed the expected organic and irregular shaped curves.



**Lines, diagonals  
and technology**

**Natural, organic  
curves**



The very long panoramic shots of the beautiful scenery were predictable; however, the lack of modality of the shots was not, from contemporary standards. Although seventy per cent of the landscapes were in colour, the colour was not as salient, as differentiated, as brightly illumined, as contemporary postcards.



It was often the postcards focusing on man-made bridges, golf courses, harbors and piers that were black and white, accentuating the lines and diagonals by the absence of colour.



In terms of composition, in some of the cards there was a boat, a bridge, a fence, or a tree in the foreground to draw the viewer's attention, but in many, these were not salient enough to do so. Rather, lines, shapes and colours added a perspective. Distant hills and villages suggested a mystery that lay just beyond the reach of the viewer. The few examples of artwork among the landscapes strengthened this impression with a blurring haziness in the background.



Four of the landscape postcards were painted to give them the appearance of night.



## 10. People

Only eight per cent of the postcards were photographs of **People**. However, these eight percent were revealing in terms of cultural values. Almost a quarter of them featured famous actresses of the time such as: Gabrielle Ray, Ethel Negretti, Lily Brayton, Pauline Chase. A few cards captured historical notables, primarily King Edward and his family. But a few cards represented more modest figures: a family, miners, fishermen and the village smithy were represented.



As in the other categories, the people postcards encoded images of beauty and fame that were considered culturally significant, as well as images which reinforced the values of

work. Some were quite gendered: men were the protectors of the weak, institutionally sanctioned, as firefighters, the military, the King himself.



Women were objectified as ideals of beauty or domesticity.



A few cards represented cultural events like Maypole dancing and World exhibitions.

The remaining eight percent of the cards, twenty-six in number, encoded a variety of experiences. There were some that revealed the Edwardians' national pride in their military (camps). Several postcards were taken from paintings of different towns' Coat of Arms. There were also several colour postcards, from photographs and paintings, of animals. And the final cards in this miscellaneous category were interesting in their geographical and temporal specificity: stamps and special occasion Christmas cards. Donnachie and MacLeod (1979: 129) write "Postcards provide a vivid record of contemporary life and attitudes, not least of all because travelling photographers so indiscriminately recorded street scenes, people and occasions ... almost every subject was tackled at one time or another."

## 11. Relationship between the Visual and Verbal Text

Once the visual images in the corpus had been classified, the relationship between the visual text and verbal one was investigated. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 34) write both language and visual communication “are shaped by the intrinsic characteristics and potentialities of the medium and by the requirements, histories, and values of societies and their culture”. Both realize the same fundamental and far reaching systems of meaning that constitute our cultures, but each does so by means of its own specific forms and independently (1996: 17). Did the message of the *visual* text reinforce, extend and/or challenge the message of the *verbal* text? And how did the suspended conversation captured on the more public, commercial, visual message on the ‘front’ of the postcard relate to the potentially more private (although still visually accessible), personal, verbal one on the ‘back’?

To answer these questions, we narrow the focus to the postcards of five of the most prolific encoders in the corpus who were particularly close to Christina. Although the images on the ‘fronts’ of the postcards are somewhat generic in the sense that they encode collective cultural values of the public, by designating a specific decoder in the verbal text the encoder has transformed the public image into a private one.

Jessie, one of the most prolific encoders in the corpus, who was likely a parlor maid in the same house in which Christina worked, was quite consistent in the images she sent to Christina. Although she chose cards from many of the categories mentioned (a quarter of her twenty-four postcards were cityscapes, another quarter buildings, a third quarter landscapes and the final quarter an assortment of people and miscellaneous), she was often quite consistent in the type of card she selected from each category. For instance, almost all her building cards encoded mansions. Over half of Jessie’s postcards were scenes from a nearby town called Haddington where she went on her days and half days off to visit her mother.



**Jessie’s Mansions**

The analysts wondered about possible connections between the visual images of drably coloured, impersonal business streets and solid, stately houses that Jessie chose and the register she used in her verbal texts. These were so generic and consistent, using the same formulaic openers and closers “Another for your collection. I arrived here all safe, We had a nice drive out. Hope you are well. Excuse this hurried postcard. Love Jessie”, and saying little else, that this sub-register was called **phatic** (Becker & Malcolm 2008a). Jessie’s postcards would have served to support the women’s friendship and Christina’s postcard collecting without being required to fulfill the additional requirement of exchanging information, since the women could communicate face-to-face at their place of work.

Another encoder, a JM Piper, also lived in Edinburgh, but seemed to live a more independent and privileged existence than Jessie and Christina in that she traveled more, and her postcards showed this visually and verbally. Over half of her twelve postcards were photographs of landscapes, and of these over half were seascapes. Her verbal texts exemplified the traditional **travel** postcard in that they documented details from her travels that she deemed would interest Christina (Becker & Malcolm 2008a). Encoder and decoder exchanged information as a means of sustaining a somewhat more distant friendship than the one Christina shared with Jessie, possibly involving interlocutors of different ages and/or social class. Over half of Piper’s postcards embodied another register entirely: the **invitation**, which were shorter, full of action processes, time and place circumstances. Piper’s green, leafy, inviting, romantic scenes contrasted quite dramatically with Jessie’s solid and imposing, but visually drab, images.



**Romantic Scenes from Piper’s Travels**





Another friend, Joe, sent postcards that were so varied visually, that her personality was not revealed by her preferences. However, her cards were similar in geographical provenance: almost all were from Haddington. Joe's verbal texts, were as varied as her visual ones, involving the stylistic characteristics of several registers. They were also the richest in cultural dialect "Ain't this lovely, Takes the year! It might do for your collection, if not give it the fire, How are you blocks getting along (blokes?), I am glad you are all to the fore. Got landed here." (Becker & Malcolm 2008a). Visually and verbally, then, Joe was consistent in her diversity.

Alexander, Christina's brother, who wrote thirty-two cards to his sister, wrote primarily invitation/ meeting cards somewhat like Piper's but revealing an even more intimate sibling relationship in his verbal texts. During Edwardian times, phones were still rare (Young 1983: 7); however, mail was delivered three times a day, making it possible to send a postcard arranging a meeting later the same day and have complete confidence that the intended decoder would receive it. Alexander's verbal texts were so short, despite the specificity of the time and place lexis, and so gnostologically tied to shared knowledge, they sounded quite cryptic to the analysts. One verbal message included but three words "Yes. No. No." His visual choices were bright, multi-coloured and quite consistent experientially, half landscapes (half of which were seascapes), with several animal postcards. That many of the postcards he selected were taken from paintings rather than photographs is not surprising given that Alexander was a painter himself, and may well have used certain postcards as inspirations for his own creations.



**Alexander's postcard to his sister**



**Alexander's watercolour**

Christina's sister, Bella, sent images representing her geographical provenance: the remote and isolated Shetland Islands. Of her eighteen postcards, ten were seascapes and harbors (landscapes); five were people, and three were buildings. Almost all of these represented local scenes, buildings and people. Bella's verbal texts were classified as letter-like in their length, over a hundred words. They relied on shared knowledge pertaining to certain people, events and even items of clothing, and they focussed on exchanging information relevant to the family: visits to the mother in Lybster on the Northern Scottish coast, other fishing communities nearby, and the difficulties of living in such a remote location. Verbally, Christina's sister, brother and mother revealed a family-specific cultural dialect. Bella, like the others, usually ended her missives with the admonishment "to please write soon soon."



### Shetland Islands



### “Write soon soon”

Although the relationships between these five decoders varied to a certain extent depending on degree of intimacy and frequency of contact, all had a relationship with Christina that was close enough to include humorous exchange and show a fascination with the exotic. Jessie sent the “kitchen cartoon” and “Asian children”, Piper “the lover’s quarrel”, AGC drew the postcard “the hand that rocks cradle” and sent the postcard of “the Hungarian fat boy”, and Bella sent “minding baby”. Representations of the humorous and exotic in Edwardian times reveal rather different attitudes to nationality, race and weight than what contemporary encoders would deem politically correct.



**Kitchen cartoon**



**Asian children**



**Hungarian Fat Boy**

The other encoders in the corpus also showed visual preferences that gave some indication of their personalities even though there were not sufficient examples in the corpus to show relationships between the front and back of the postcard. Some preferred postcards of boats; others, gardens. Although these interests were not necessarily echoed in the interlocutor's accompanying verbal text, the postcards did, in many ways, include telling comments about the encoders' personality as revealed in their visual preferences which correlated to the registerial selections they made in their verbal texts. Visual and verbal texts, both suspended in a far off time and a distant space, intersect in the communicative events this corpus documents.

## 12. Conclusions

One of the aspects of this research that interests us is how the intended decoder of the image from the producer's perspective, the general public, changes once the visual decoder has selected the image on which to manifest her verbal message. She buys an image that will carry a specific message to a designated decoder. And by doing so, the meaning of the image has increased its message potential by the act of her selection based on personal preferences or the anticipated ones of the decoder. In other words, the decoder turned encoder transforms the public image into a private image through her selection, assuming it is a conscious choice. This interpersonal transformation, echoed in a functional change from a commercial purpose to an intimate sharing of information, is reinforced and extended by the verbal message itself which encodes a message involving a close interpersonal relationship and gnostologically relevant experience.

The comparison of visual and verbal texts on the fronts and back of the postcards in this corpus sheds light on the informal correspondence of the Edwardian community. Unlike Langford (2001: 5) who feels that the act of preserving, in her case family photo albums, 'suspended it sustaining conversation' and 'stripped the album of its social function and meaning', we feel that the transferal of the postcards from Christine Campbell's private collection to a public sphere through electronic publication does not deprive it of its context, but merely substitutes one set of viewing conditions for another.

In a way, as analysts, we reverse the earlier journey from public sphere in a shop to private sphere by designating a specific decoder when we return the postcards to a public sphere. By doing so, we do not, as Langford fears, strip the postcards of their social function and meaning, but merely embed them within another layer of communicative event and relationships a hundred years later. We reactivate the communicative event of long ago, the represented and interactive participants, their relationships, their purposes and their messages by reawakening Christine Campbell, her family and friends and the producers of those early images, so they are no longer suspended in Edwardian times and Scottish locations, but so their voices may echo throughout the intervening century that seems, at once, so distant, but in another way, so familiar. They, too, saw their life and times change drastically as a consequence of technological advances in transportation and communication with the introduction of the train, phone, typewriter, adding machine, photography and more. They, too, lived in a "culture of speed" (Virilio in Keep 2001: 151), not that different from the way

we see ours with the advent of the airplane, rocket, computer, email, blackberry, cell/ mobile phone and text messaging.

Chalfers (in Langford 2001: 5) writes that collections such as Becker's grandmother's postcards offer twentieth century decoders "a site of cross-generational and cultural continuity, transformative and moderating". They introduce us to a communicative microcosm that offers us a bridge of insight into today's communicative macrocosm. The pictorial structures represented in the Edwardian postcards reveal an ideology where cities, monuments, cathedrals, businesses, universities, libraries, post offices, the homes of the rich and famous, and actresses of the time are immortalized, and success is measured in wealth, fame, power, education and institutional prestige. Sound familiar? Only now, television, computers, digital cameras and mobile phones share the semantic responsibility of fostering and maintaining such values.

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