Q Code, Text, and Images: A Study of the Social Semiotic Significance of QSL Cards

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Findlay's
College of Liberal Arts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

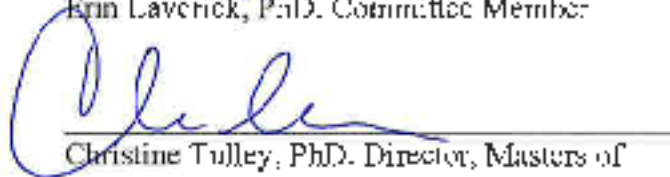MASTERS OF RHETORIC AND WRITING

June 2016

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Q Code, Text, and Signs: A Study of the Social Semiotic Significance of QSL Cards

(To view the original thesis via its website, please visit
http://cochranp.wixsite.com/cochran-qsl-study)

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Submitted to the faculty of The University of Findlay
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Writing
in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

June 2016

Abstract:

Applying rhetorical theories to non-traditional forms of text is important and necessary in the world of composition to further understand and research the many different types of rhetoric. QSL postcards from the 1920s and '30s are a perfect example of a sub-genre of composition worthy of study because of the semiotics, discourse, and community that are represented on them in text and in image. This research, consisting of written text and a web project, will focus on a set of QSL cards collected by one ham radio operator during the 1920s and '30s and will demonstrate the importance of rhetorical and semiotic study of multi-modal text.

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Introduction

In May 2015, I was helping my parents clean out their attic. Among the detritus – old luggage, Christmas ornaments, and dust – my mother had me look through a plastic bin of papers, photographs, letters, and forms that she had received from her brother's partner upon her brother's death. In it, we found postcard-sized pieces of card stock that had dates on them from the 1920's and 1930's. Unsure as to what they were, we searched them on Google and discovered they were postcards which my grandfather had received from different amateur (ham) radio operators around the world.[1] The postcards all had station numbers on them with dates, locations, band widths, receiver names, plus handwritten text, and oftentimes, decorative images representing their place of origin. These cards we found were entitled QSL cards.[2]

I discovered the custom in the ham radio world is to exchange postcards when contact is made with a ham radio operator with whom there had not been contact before. My grandfather's collection contained cards from all 50 states plus 90 other countries and areas in the world. At first, we were interested in the cards for their monetary value. But then, I became interested in them as a scholar; I wanted to learn more about these ham operators who sent postcards to each other when it seems that

1. According to the ARRL (American Radio Relay League), the term "ham" was a slang term coined by commercial operators who, frustrated with the crowded radio waves, would refer to the amateur radio operators who created interference "hams." Amateurs picked it up and applied it to themselves. However, according to Charles Hirschy, a ham radio operator, the term "ham" was used to describe the way the hand looked as an operator was tapping out Morse Code on a transmitter: a closed fist with the forefinger extended to tap on the paddle. Kristen Haring wrote that in addition to these definitions, amateur radio was shortened to "am. radio" which then shifted to "ham radio" for ease of pronunciation (xvii).

2. QSL is part of the Q code that was invented for radiotelegraph transmissions and is interpreted to mean, "I am acknowledging receipt [of the message]" (Lewis).

the radio contact was the main goal. In addition, I was curious as to whether the tradition of exchanging the QSL cards was still in practice today.

The text on the cards alone could share the technical information; the date/time, the frequency, and the transmitter used could all be exchanged between hams who had connected. Yet, the cards revealed that the hams often used two or more colors and added images, quotes, and in at least one instance from the collection, musical notes. My academic interest in this combination of text and design forms the basis for my research: What is the rhetorical meaning of these cards, and how do they assist in forming a community? Also, what is the significance and meaning of how the cards are designed with their text and image? This study will examine the history of the cards, the language used on the cards, and the visual design of the cards through a lens of social semiotics.

Asking these questions while applying the lens of social semiotics provides us with some possible answers: the meaning behind the cards "works" because of the combination of the three modes of communication of text, image, and color. The cards work, individually, to transmit technical information and they work collectively to become "wallpaper."[3] In addition, the cards ultimately work to strengthen the ham community.

Preliminary inquiry revealed that although some scholarly research exists on the rhetorical significance of "normal" postcard discourse, not much has been written conversations" held between hams (30). While Haring focuses on the importance of

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3. "Wallpaper" is the term used by ham operators to describe how many display their collected cards: hanging them on the wall to cover it like wallpaper (Dunnehoo 22).

outside of the ham radio community about ham radio communication and the resulting QSL postcards. Traditionally, the trend has been to look at QSL cards as strictly a communicative tool. However, Kristen Haring, in her book *Ham Radio's Technical Culture*, refers to QSL cards as the "visual reality" of the "ethereal, fleeting, auditory conversations" held between hams (30). While Haring focuses on the importance of QSL cards as a confirmation of discourse for the ham community, my own work focuses on the rhetorical methods and value of that visual discourse. This essay provides a background of the ham radio and QSL card culture and shows, through academic research of postcards and social semiotics, a rhetorical interpretation behind the QSL cards.

The application of rhetorical and semiotic theories about community, communication, and language show that QSL cards merit study in the world of rhetoric in addition to that of typical postcard discourse. The information that is presented on my grandfather's cards, the community of ham radio and the communication that exists: visual, verbal, coded, and alpha-numeric, expresses a more precise and particular meaning than traditional postcards and their exchange.

Although I used different scholars' research to apply their theories to QSL cards, not all of fits perfectly. Jan-Ola Östman argues that postcards are a type of media discourse and are neither fully private nor fully public, and Bjarne Rogan claims that postcards are souvenirs and collectibles that exhibit a ritualistic communication style. Although their theories help to illuminate the rhetorical value of the QSL cards, the cards have their own scholarly value, and these and other scholars have long overlooked the significance of the QSL postcard and where it fits into the study of postcards in general. In addition to viewing the QSLs through the lens of media discourse and communication

style, this study also applies social semiotic, discourse, and community theories to prove the value of QSLs in the realm of academic research.

<div align="center">The History of Ham Radio</div>

A brief history of amateur radio use, code, and DXing is necessary to understand fully the place from which QSL cards were born. This history supports and upholds the importance of QSL cards to the ham radio community and to the overall academic community, as well. One cannot understand much of the text and images on the QSL cards without knowing the history, purpose, and language used on the cards. In addition, knowing the dates helps to situate the cards in this collection with the events occurring during the early years of QSL card exchange.

Ham Radio

Jim Maxwell's "The History of Ham Radio" suggests that much discovery and research was conducted in the late 1800's by private individuals that led to the creation of wireless communication in 1896 (1). Because of this, all radio was considered "amateur" until businesses became involved to increase commerce (2). Maxwell wrote that there was no regulation of who could use the wireless and in the beginning of amateur radio, operators assigned themselves their own call letters, usually their own initials (2). This lack of regulation caused rampant use and radio waves become crowded which caused interference with commercial radio interest (Maxwell 2).

In 1912, the United States Congress passed a bill which required all amateur users to become licensed (Maxwell 2). At this time, ham radio license numbers were assigned to start with a "W" followed by two or three additional letters (Haring 22). These letters represented in which of the nine Federal Communications Commission (FCC) geographical districts the operator lived (Haring 22). After the number of "W"

letters were exhausted, the FCC introduced call letters beginning with a "K" (Haring 22). It was therefore possible to tell from an operator's call letters how long they had been active in ham radio (Haring 22). This bill also limited amateur's radio length to 200 meters in the hopes that hams use of the radio waves would decline and disappear (Maxwell 2). However, several events occurred which actually prompted an increase in usage by the hams, namely new inventions in transmission, radio relay stations, and World War I (Maxwell 2). These early changes to the ham world are evident in the QSL cards from that time period; the call letters are prominent on the cards as well as the transmission information and Q code language.

Amateur operations ceased during WWI, 1914-1918, but the operators themselves were still tuning in; they were now working for the war effort under direction of the Navy, and the Navy was in charge of all radio operations in the United States (Maxwell 2). This was the first major event that coalesced the operators for their first service to the nation, but not the last. Of note, service is one of the "fundamental functions of Amateur Radio—to be of service to the public and to the nation," as described by the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) (Maxwell 2), and service strengthens the bonds of a community, both those who are served and those who do the serving. In November 1919, the hams were back in action with their own hobby and no longer under service to the Navy (Maxwell 2).

Communication between operators started to take a new form as hams tried to reach stations that were farther and farther away simply for the challenge of reaching a far-off station. In 1926, a ham operator was the first person to reach all continents from a field in California, and searching for long-distance stations, a practice known as DXing, was born (Maxwell 3). This love of DXing was quite popular until the advent of

World War II in 1939, and all ham operations across the world, except for the United

States, ceased during this time, so DXing amongst the nations also ceased (Maxwell 4).

The US operators were forbidden in 1940 from contacting foreign countries, and in 1941

when the US was plunged into the war, all ham operations ceased once again (Maxwell

4). At this time, there were over 60,000 people registered as hams in America (Maxwell

4). This directly affected the exchange of QSL cards because without the preceding

radio contact, the QSLs would not need to be sent.

       Until the early 1950s, most ham operators used Morse code to communicate via

the radio waves due to the high expense of phone transmitters therefore, the QSL cards

in this collection are likely all the result of post-Morse code conversation. After WWII,

the transmitters "fell within the financial reach of the average hobbyist" (Haring 25). As

quickly as 1957, only 5% of hams worked only in code (Haring 25). Despite this, the

hams continue to use the Q code, based off Morse code, to communicate verbally and

textually (See Figure 1).

       In the early 1990's, ham operators were no longer required to know Morse Code

to obtain their license and ham licenses were assigned to over 700,000 US users

(Maxwell 6). According to Haring, prior to this time, operators were required to pass a

written exam of electronics theory and radio regulations and a hands-on Morse code

translation test (ix). With the arrival of the personal computer and the internet, many

were worried about the demise of ham radio operations. However, hams have

embraced these new electronic digital means of communication along with their love of

amateur radio; the PC and the radio go hand-in-hand for the hams as they've learned to

integrate the radio and the digital (Maxwell 7). The continuation of hams obtaining

licenses and the integration of PC usage demonstrates the bonds amongst the hams

and their protégés and their ability to adapt to a changing discourse community.

CODE	DEFINITION
QRH	Does my frequency vary? Your frequency varies.
QRI	How is the tone of my transmission? The tone of your transmission is ___ (1-Good, 2-Variable, 3-Bad.)
QRK	What is the intelligibility of my signals? The intelligibility of your signals is ___ (1-Bad, 2-Poor, 3-Fair, 4-Good, 5-Excellent.)
QRM	Is my transmission being interfered with? Your transmission is being interfered with ___ (1-Nil, 2-Slightly, 3-Moderately, 4-Severly, 5-Extremely.)
QRN	Are you troubled by static? I am troubled by static ___ (1-5 as under QRM.)
QRV	Are you ready? I am ready.
QSA	What is the strength of my signals? The strength of your signals is ___ (1-Scarcely perceptible, 2-Weak, 3-Fairly Good, 4-Good, 5-Very Good.)
QSB	Are my signals fading? Your signals are fading.
QSL	Can you acknowledge receipt? I am acknowledging receipt.
QSO	Can you communicate with ___ direct or by relay? I can communicate with ___ direct (or by relay through ___.)
QSR*	Shall I or will you repeat the frequency?
QSS*	What frequency are you using? I will be using this frequency.
OM*	"Old Man;" slang term for another operator
73**	Best regards (to end conversation)

Figure 1 (adapted from Lewis)
The Q Code, used by Morse code operators, became a part of the normal lexicon used by amateur radio operators. If a question mark is after the code, a ham is asking a question. This chart shows an example of the Q codes most often found on the cards which were studied.
Lines 11-14: * Information obtained from Charles Hirschy, ** Information obtained from "Ham Radio's Technical Culture" by Kristen Haring p. xi.

The effect to the QSL card exchange has been integrated into the computer era,

as well. While hams can and still do exchange the physical QSL cards, some operators

use electronic transmission of contact to sites such as The Logbook of the World

(LoTW) (ARRL "Introducing Logbook of the World). LoTW allows users to exchange and

confirm contact information without the use and expense of QSL cards but also without

the community building and personalization that comes with the cards. This is not to say

that community building is absent between modern hams. With the advent of multitudes

of electronic social sites, hams may stay connected via other means. However, the

historical and rhetorical value, which is shown on the cards in this collection, is lost when hams only use electronic contact transmission. For example, the technical information need only be shared on the LoTW for purposes of logging. The added remarks, images of place, and the way the words work in discourse on the QSL cards would be missing.

The history of ham radio, DXing, and Morse code establishes the setting for the use of QSL cards, and it was only 20 years after the first wireless communication was successfully transmitted that the first mention of sending QSL postcards occurred. According to Chris Codella, author of the website Ham Radio History: A Century of Amateur Radio – Hams, Organizations, Events, Inventions, in 1916, an operator wrote a letter to *QST*, an amateur radio magazine, asking why the magazine never wrote about the value of "reception report by postcard" ("Call and Card"). The editor agreed with the operator that sending the postcards was a "great way to keep amateurs in touch with each other and better understand the range of their signals" (Codella, "Call and Card"). The editor's published viewpoint proved prophetic to the ham community; the amateur operators could exchange written information that detailed more than could be exchanged via radio wave. The radio waves could be fleeting, the Morse code hard to understand, and written dialogue and images could establish more of a sender's personality. In addition, if the radio wave was hard to establish again, the operators now had the mailing address with which to communicate with the other.

Despite this initial 1916 contact, *QST* later credited another operator in 1919 with inventing the QSL postcard exchange idea because of his background in image and cartoon design and because he suggested the information of which each card should comprise (Codella, "Call and Card"). In September 1924, standards were published by a

ham operator, Howard S. Pyle, titled "Amateur DX Report Cards" (Codella, "Call and Card"). Pyle called the exchange of QSL cards an "international fad" and claimed that only basic information should appear on the cards: call sign and address, date and time, and the wavelength (Codella, "Call and Card"). Pyle further argued that the use of "lots of colors and flourishes was best left to those with some actual artistic talent, lest 'you make yourself and your station ridiculous to the fraternity'…and 'avoid cheapening your card by a display of vaudeville humor'" (Codella, "Call and Card"). As can be seen by the cards in this study, the earliest of which is January 28, 1924 from New Hampshire, this "international fad" turned into a decades-long tradition with operators creativity proudly displayed and exchanged.

DXing

It's necessary to include in this study a section on DXing because of its importance to ham radio and QSL card exchange. Despite the over 100 year history of amateur radio, not much has been written by way of scholarship with regards to DXing or QSL cards. Many radio hobbyists have web sites and blogs but these are all mainly focused on the "what?" of ham radio, not so much the "why?" However, Michael Nevradakis wrote "Disembodied Voices and Dislocated Signals: The World of Modern-Day DXing" which focuses on one aspect of ham radio hobby – that of DXing. DXing, searching for long-distance radio waves, isn't always done with two operators but can be done with one operator searching for a long-distance radio wave in space. Because of this, not all operators who participate in DXing exchange QSL cards. Many do however, and their participation in long-distance radio wave searching is directly related to the ham radio community, contesting, and exchange of information from different countries.

Modern-day ham radio enthusiasts practice their hobby for a variety of reasons and the same could be assumed for historical users. Users exhibit an interest in radio and its equipment, communication and community, collecting and competition, and a select few have a sole interest in "capturing" a radio wave from space. These users are referred to as DXers or "distance fiends" and their aim is "to tune in to as many distant radio signals as possible" (Nevradakis 69). DX is a term, like other radio abbreviations borrowed from the radiotelegraph language, which means "distance" (Nevradakis 69).

DXing first appeared in the summer of 1924 when the government designated new wavelength bands to amateur users (Codella, "DX Records"). In December of that year, Pennsylvania's Haverford College's chess team played a match via amateur radio with a team from Oxford, England. The teams played for 5 ½ hours and eleven moves for each side but decided to finish the game in January (Codella, "DX Records"). This type of interaction is indicative of the social nature of DXing, of the newness of the hobby, and of the wonder of international contact. In fact, on January 24, 1925, my grandfather contacted a ham operator in England as indicated by the QSL card, his earliest international card of the collection.

Not all DXers participate in this hobby for the purpose of contacting other hams and some are not registered hams operators themselves. Some are solitary users and use radio equipment to find radio signals on broadcast, citizens and utility bands. These DXers practice capturing distant radio waves and signals from space, distant radio stations for music, satellites, and TV broadcast stations, and their purpose is not to collect QSL cards but to achieve, literally, far-reaching goals (Nevradakis 70-71). However, as Nevradakis found in his study, many DXers want to know about different countries and their cultures and want to expand their community through the

exchange of QSL cards. In fact, as of 2000, there were 500,000 hams who were members of the International Amateur Radio Union and registered to exchange QSL cards (Nevradakis 71). Nevradakis established that those who participated in DXing had a strong sense of community with their own jargon and social networking (68).

Postcards

Pet Rocks, rubber band bracelets, and baseball cards have nothing on the postcard craze of the early 20th century that is the next piece of the historical puzzle behind QSL cards. Without a brief look into the history of postcards, an understanding of the importance of QSLs to the ham community and to scholarship would be superficial. In fact, it is no coincidence that the time period of the introduction of the QSL card was at the end of The Golden Age of the picture postcard. This Golden Age lasted for two decades and approximately "200 and 300 billion postcards were produced and sold" during the years 1895 and 1920 (Rogan 1), and these decades could also be labeled a "national obsession" when it came to collecting postcards (Lear 78).

In "An Entangled Object: The Picture Postcard as Souvenir and Collectible, Exchange and Ritual Communication," Bjarne Rogan studies the postcard's Golden Age and its popularity and meaning for the social classes of the time. He writes that the popularity of the collecting and trading of postcards was based upon a "desire for things" and the easy access of the postcard to most population groups (3). Rogan writes of the four factors that helped the postcard to gain such popularity: the aesthetics of the cards, the cards as souvenirs, the cards as collectibles, and the cards as means of communication (4-5). Of these factors, this study focuses on the aesthetics, the collectability, and the communication means as they relate to QSL cards.

In her article titled "Wishing They Were There: Old Postcards and Library History," Bernadette Lear argues that despite the popularity of postcards as collectibles, postcards can also be viewed as "artifacts of several national phenomena, including changes in printing technology, postal regulations, forms of communication, popular culture, and travel" (77). These postcard changes can be seen on the QSL cards as well. The earlier cards were rather plain in their pre-printed design but as the years passed, they become more colorful and more complex in their design despite the complaints of the operator written about in Codella's history who felt the cards were an "international fad" ("Call and Card"). It is evident from the cards in the collection that operators designed their cards to display their interests and ethos despite not having any "'actual artistic talent'" (Codella, "Call and Card").

Historically and in the peak of The Golden Age of postcards, women were the main collectors and often kept their cards in albums for uses similar to modern-day coffee table books (Rogan 4). The collections were often separated into groups based on "views, landscapes, portraits, and works of art". However, as men became involved in collecting around 1905, it was seen to take a more "serious" turn. Male collectors were seen to be more organized with their albums and more selective with their cards and in 1906, men outnumbered women collectors by approximately five to one (Rogan 5). Similarly, men in the United States ham radio scene make up approximately 2/3 of the users (F1JXQ "Demographics of americain [sic] amateur radio: Who is US ham radio?"), but statistics aren't available about the number of people who collect QSL cards. I can assume, from the QSL collection of my grandfather, that most of the collectors were men. The cards indicated that 57 operators had male names, one had a

female name, and the other 82 were of unknown gender due to using only a first initial for their first name.

Donna Dunnehoo wrote "Amateur Radio QSL Cards: Their Design and Exchange" and found in her interviews of ham operators who collected QSL cards that the collection of cards was similar to the collection of pictures for a family photo album in that the cards "are a permanent record that recalls memories of the past" (22). They are also like family photos in that hams not only collect the cards in albums but can display them in frames, files, and on the walls around their radio equipment. Unlike photos, when hams post the cards on their walls, the walls can become so crowded with QSL's that it resembles wallpaper, and that is exactly what hams call it when the walls become covered with QSL cards – wallpaper (22).

In addition to the albums as collection space, postcard collectors participated in contests that were sponsored by postcard companies. One of the largest card producers was a British company, Raphael Tuck and Sons, and they sponsored three major contests. The first and second contests were for people who collected the largest number of Tuck cards from different postmarks in the span of two years. The third was a contest to see who was the most creative in using their postcards for home decorating. It was not unheard of for collectors to decorate their walls, tables, cupboards, etc. to display their postcards (Rogan 7). These contests seem directly related to QSL contests although the radio competitions were about "collecting" radio stations contacts and the QSLs were the proof, not the goal.

Some scholars have drawn parallels between postcard uses in the Golden Age to social media practices today. In his article titled "The Edwardian Social Network," Guy

Atkins relates the photo and text on a card from 1906. The photo is of Ruth Vincent, an actor from England. The text on the reverse is as follows:

> Dear M.
>
> H & I are going to see "Girl on the Stage' tonight. Would you care to join
>
> us, if so meet us outside P. of W. theatre about 7 o/c. Love to both.
>
> Yours Meg. (39).

Atkins notes that the card was not intended for use as a collectible or as a souvenir but as an immediate message similar to a text or phone call today (39). What is interesting to note is that someone, presumably the receiver, did save the postcard as a collectible, however. Atkins also noted the creases on the card where it was stored in an album, and he also purchased the card in 2003, 97 years after the card was sent (42). In addition, he wrote about the abbreviations and informality of the language that was used (39). The abbreviations could be compared to the code and abbreviations used on QSL cards; however, immediacy, such as that with a text or phone call, would not have been a main goal of QSL exchange. Collecting QSL cards and contests were the main reasons behind exchanging QSLs. The codes used on QSL cards where indicative of the language used by the hams; it was their technical jargon and helped establish the operators firmly within the discourse community.

Now that an understanding of the history of ham radio, QSL cards, and postcards has been established, this essay will delve into the meaning of the QSL cards based upon their images and text, and how they create a discourse community amongst the ham operators. In addition, the QSL cards in this study have been firmly situated into the time period of early ham radio.

Literature Review

Meaning: Semiotics, Text, and Image

Despite the varied lenses through which someone could study the rich rhetorical meanings of the QSL cards, I have chosen to rely on the studies of semiotics, discourse, and communities. This allows my research to focus on the synthesis of the language and images which are used on the cards. The semiotics of the texts and images form and support the meanings of these cards used to communicate between members of a community who span throughout the ether, across countries, and states. Those who participate in amateur radio and those who exchange QSL cards are a perfect match for all the definitions of a discourse community whether viewing them as a hobby group, which they are, or whether viewing them through the lens of academia and its definition of a discourse community.

Semiotics, simply put, is the science of signs and a technique for analyzing sign systems (Manning and Cullum-Swan 239). Signs are something that represents something else and are composed of expression and content (Manning and Cullum-Swan 239). Signs are not the same for all people and cultures and are socially based and arbitrary (Manning and Cullum-Swan 239). For instance, wearing black clothing to an American funeral represents mourning while wearing white to a funeral in parts of India is the standard color for mourning. The sign of black or white clothing represents mourning in different social contexts.

I. A. Richards' definition of signs is a bit different from the definition used by Manning and Cullum-Swan. He refers to signs as symbols and the symbols are the words used for the referent (See Figure 2). However, for purposes of analysis of the QSL cards, one can see that both definitions of signs and meaning are fluid and

overlapping. Both Richards' and the social semiotic philosophers' viewpoints set the stage for the support of viewing the cards through their semiotics. This platform is necessary to establish before focusing on the text and images and the resultant meaning of the cards. In addition, rhetoric, word choice, and word relationships are a main point in Richards study whereas the social semiotic scholars focus more on the integration of the words and images to establish meaning. When studying the QSL cards, both lenses of the study of the words and the study of the words and images together are necessary to establish full meaning.

Richards wrote in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* that the study of rhetoric is a "philosophic enquiry into how words work in discourse" (4) and also viewed "persuasion as only one of the many aims of rhetoric" (16). In addition, he advocated "that the study of rhetoric begin with an analysis of words, the smallest units for conveying meaning" (9-10). Richards, according to Foss et al. in their book *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric*, believed that if "individuals first understand how words function, they will be able to put together larger messages for whatever end they desire – whether to persuade, to explain, to create a particular relationship with an audience, or to write poetry" (23). In the case of QSL cards, the exchangers are continuing the relationship that was formed through the radio contact; they have now "discovered" each other as part of the same community and through the exchange of the cards, are contributing to their social norm and to each other's collections.

These basic beliefs about rhetoric form the platform for Richards' Theory of Meaning, and according to Foss et al., "human beings are responsive to incoming sensory data from the perceived environment, and every stimulus that is received through the sense leaves an imprint, a trace,…an engram on the mind that is capable of

being revived later" (Foss et al. 25). Sensory perceptions are then established into

meaning by way of context, a "cluster of events that recur together" (Richards 34).

Because of this perception and context awareness, when one remembers, this context

or part of a context appears and serves as a sign, or as Richards calls them, symbols

(Ogden and Richards 10-12). Symbols are words that we assign to what we are

referencing. Richards illustrates his Theory of Meaning with the Semantic Triangle

(Ogden and Richards 30).

Thought/Reference (Communication, Collection, Community)

symbolizes

refers to

Symbol (QSL cards)

Referent (W247 *)*

stands for
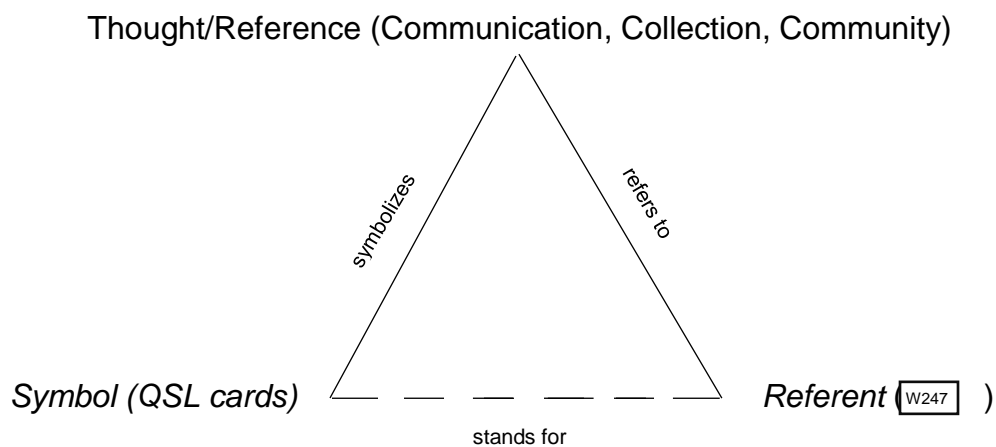
Figure 2: The Semantic Triangle (Ogden and Richards 30).

This triangle symbolizes the three major components of meaning: the thought or

reference is where past experiences and contexts occur, the referent symbolizes the

objects that are perceived, and the symbol is the word that one associates with the

referent (Ogden and Richards 30-31). In the figure above, I've applied this triangle to

the QSL cards. The thought or reference is what a ham operator experiences with the

trading process of the QSL cards, the referent is the card itself, and the symbol is the

word used, "QSL postcard." These three points on the triangle are connected by three

sides or relationships. A causal relationship occurs between the referent and the

symbol.

Expanding upon the theories of rhetoric and meaning, Gunther Kress describes in his book *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*, his contemplation of a grocery store sign that he sees from his bus seat which, through a mixture of image, words, and color, indicates to customers where to park. He wondered, "If writing alone had been used, would this sign work" (1)? His ultimate answer was no; the sign "works" for its customers by combining a mixture of modes: words, images, and color. Kress further theorizes that this sign is a successful medium of communication because of its style; the modes work together to clearly indicate to the customer where to park. Ultimately then, Kress introduces his book by explaining that the "theory that deals with meaning in all its appearances, in all social occasions and in all cultural sites" is social semiotics (2). This theory, building upon Richards' theory, has also been applied to my study of QSL cards and the hams who share them. Again, although Richards is more concerned with the meaning behind words and their relationship to one another, Kress builds upon this to establish meaning from the interaction of words and images.

Kress asks the question of his readers, "What has produced the explosive interest in the issue of multimodality over the last decade or so" with the "shorthand" response to this question as "globalization" (5). He describes this interest as not just an explosion of use of electronic means but of a somewhat destabilized social world of mobility (6). Despite this seemingly "recent" notice of multimodality is really a question of how modes are used and for what purpose, not why people are just using different modes. As can be seen from the QSL cards and their purpose, the use of multimodality has been around a long time (and even longer than that: cave drawings can be considered multimodal.) The hams using the cards didn't consciously question the "why

am I using color and image along with text?" They just knew that it got their message across; it was a message that shared technical, personal, and community-building terms all with text, image, and color. It was also a mark of globalization but not one built on a "destabilized social world of mobility" (6). It was built on a global scale of a common interest in communication via radio waves.

The global community or society of the ham operators, based upon their Morse code background, technical information needed, and limited postcard space have developed their own system of resources. It is somewhat stable based upon their communicational needs and could be referred to as grammar. Kress views grammar as "a stable system of rules" but since society has constantly changing needs and "communicational practices are constantly altered," Kress prefers to use the term "resources for representation" (7-8). He views resources as "not fixed and socially made" (8). This is evident in the textual language used on the QSL cards. However, with the changing technology and advent of the computer and internet, the grammar needs of the ham operators may be changing. Perhaps the Q code, which has been so commonly used, will fade in use because Morse code is no longer necessary for communication. Since there is no longer space restrictions on the QSL cards, language use may change, too. The prolific use of SMS language in non-ham radio culture may seep into the ham world. What is important to note is that the society or community of the ham radio operators is the one who creates the change based upon their needs.

Similar to Richards, one of the major semiotic principles which Kress adheres to "is that humans make signs in which form and meaning stand in a 'motivated relation" (9-10). The signs are an "expression of the interest of socially formed individuals who, with these signs, realize - give outward expression to - their meanings, using culturally

available semiotic resources which have been shaped by the practices of members of social groups and their cultures" (10). QSL cards are such signs in the ham community, giving outward expression of the operators and their interests, home countries, and social groups to which they belong. Further, these signs work to enhance and strengthen the ham community by allowing operators to learn about others within their community. Had the QSLs maintained a minimalist style as was directed by the writer of *Amateur DX Report Cards* in the early years of QSL exchange, the interest and depth of study of QSLs would be somewhat shallow (Codella, "Call and Card"). The images and written text exhibited on the cards would not express the ethos of the senders and would not assist in strengthening the ham community.

Dunnahoo's research included interviewing some hams about the design of their QSL cards and her results indicated that the designs on the cards were outward expressions of the operators. The contact information of the operator was often preprinted, and several operators who were interviewed by Dunnehoo included the ARRL emblem, their station number, and their name in the preprinted design (27). Some added the Marine Corps eagle, globe, and anchor design, also (27). Most of these cards were stock designed but Dunnehoo did interview one operator who had a hand-drawn fire truck on his card to indicate his past as a firefighter (27-28). Many of the operators chose a commercially designed card for ease of use and because they were less expensive, but some operators designed their own cards with crayons or markers (38). Regardless of the amount of design or cost, however, each QSL card can "express the personalities of ham radio operators" (38, 40).

In "Media Discourse – Extensions, Mixes, and Hybrids: Some Comments on Pressing Issues," Kress specifically addresses Östman's article about postcards as a

type of media discourse. Kress writes that when he himself selects a postcard to send, it will say something about himself because of the synthesis of the image on one side and the text on the other (444). He further argues that "the postcards are not signs, rather they are signifier-material which I can use to fashion my sign through my selection" (444). Ultimately, Kress summarizes the analysis of postcards by writing that linguistics and image analysis is brought together in a semiotic theory (445). When applying this to QSL cards, the card is simply a medium of exchanging information and is a signifier. However, when the operator chooses a particular design and chooses particular text, the QSL card becomes a sign.

A society, however, cannot form meaning just by signs. Context and framing need to be applied for meaning-making. Kress notes that "there is no meaning without framing" and "for meaning-making to be possible, cultures provide means for framing aspects of the world…A culture will therefore provide its distinct semiotic resources for framing…signs" (10). Simply put, societies, based upon their experiences and beliefs, create meaning by assigning situations and signs into a framework or context so that the situation or sign can be understand; it can have meaning.

For purposes of this study, I use the words framing and context interchangeably. Their definitions, and how they apply to QSL cards, are so similar as to be transferrable in meaning for this study; both definitions apply identifying information to form meaning. P.K. Manning and Betsy Cullum-Swan borrow Erving Goffman's definition of framing for their article titled "Semiotics and Framing: Examples." In this, they write that framing is "a sort of natural boundary for the field of meaning and helps individuals to code the sense data presented. The frame, as perceived by the interpretant, shapes, typifies, informs, and even confirms the nature of the choice" (243). In the textbook written by

Lester Faigley, Diana George, Anna Palchik, and Cynthia Selfe titled *Picturing Texts*,

the authors explain that when an individual begins to identify information, the person

refers immediately to context (14). Faigley et al. define context in three ways. The

context can be immediate such as looking at the size of a piece of mail and realizing it is

a postcard. The context can also have broader implications such as the date of a

postcard, the image on the postcard, or the country from which it originated. In addition,

context can be intertextual (14-15). This could be if the postcard referred to other texts

such as a card featuring a picture of the sun with the inscription "Welcome to Sunny

Antarctica." This intertextuality is a play on the weather and requires both sets of text –

the image of the sun and the text.

Meaning, context, framing, signs, and signifiers have set the stage to support

the study of meaning which exists from the interplay of the text and images which are

on the QSL cards. Faigley et al. list eleven concepts that create meaning from text and

image. They are, listed alphabetically: balance, classification, comparison and contrast,

description, emphasis, metaphor, narration, pattern, point of view, proportion, and unity

(25).

For example, balance refers to the symmetry of the cards (Faigley et al. 26).

Every card in the collection has the radio station letters in the middle of the card. This is

because the letters are of upmost importance to the operators. The other information,

including images, is secondary to the station letters, although still necessary. The

operator can take this secondary information and balance it on the rest of the card.

Another example is the classification of the QSL cards in text, shape, and place.

Classification is a means of organizing and analyzing a topic (Faigley et al. 28). The

cards are recognized by their shape and the text on them. Many can be organized by place and/or date. Added images on the cards are not necessary to classify them.

Discourse

The meaning of the QSL cards from the text and images help to form the discourse and resulting community. This study presents research that has been completed about postcard discourse in addition to situating QSL cards in their historical context. As noted Östman in his article, "The Postcard as Media," the "writing on an old postcard, the particular picture chosen to go with the text, and the information we can acquire from the stamp and the cancellation mark by the postal offices [which] together function as a discourse expression" (436). All of these indicators of discourse are present not just on postcards but on QSL cards, as well. The discourse on a QSL card, consisting of text and images, conveys something about the sender. The QSL's conveys the locale and often an aspect of the sender's relationship to the hobby (Haring 30).

Östman's essay indicates that postcards are a form of media discourse despite the societal assumption that the cards are strictly between two communicators (423). Because Östman doesn't define media discourse, I turned to Anne O'Keeffe and her article "Media and Discourse Analysis." She defines media discourse as

> interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer…Crucially, the written or spoken discourse itself is oriented to the readership or listening/viewing audience, respectively. In other words, *media discourse is a public,* manufactured, on-record, form

of interaction…*it is neither private nor off the record* (O'Keeffe

441emphasis added).

As can be seen on the QSL cards, the reader is non-present, the discourse is oriented

to a specific audience, and despite this, the information contained on the QSL card is

not strictly private.

The connections between media discourse, whether spoken or written, and the

"non-present reader, listener or viewer," QSL postcards, and ham radio discourse is

important to note. The connections start with the conversation, whether spoken or by

use of Morse code, between the ham operators. Often, this discourse is followed by a

handwritten postcard that, although addressed between two people, can and will be

seen by a broader audience, whether or not that is the intent of the operators. Östman

realizes that postcards are not designated for broadcast purposes but does indicate that

they are "available for an indefinitely large group of people" (423). This is what makes

postcards in general, semi-public and semi-private. The QSL cards have a unique twist

to this because some of the discourse on the cards is in code; many who may see the

cards won't understand what the text means. This does indicate more room for privacy

but not that much.

Concerns about the privacy of messages on postcards have always existed.

Atkins reported that in 1870, the Lord Mayor of London "warned of the dangers from

'obscene' messages begin sent into people's home" (40). Some people started

engaging in the use of code but others were completely comfortable with sending

intimate messages regardless of who could read the postcards (Atkins 40). It wasn't just

the text that was used as code, however. During this time, "an angled stamp was widely

known to suggest affection towards the recipient" (Atkins 40). This use of code and

positioning of images and stamps not only indicated private messages but also indicated the discourse of the community of postcard users and the sense of meaning behind that discourse.

In contrast, to delve briefly into the meaning and definition of public, Michael Warner's 2002 essay titled "Publics and Counterpublics (abbreviated version)" defines 'public' in three ways: "the public is a kind of social totality. Its most common sense is that of the people in general. A public can be…a concrete audience, a crowd witnessing itself in visible space..." (413). The third sense of public is "the kind of public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation" (413). For my purpose as it relates to postcard discourse, this last sense of public is the definition that applies to postcard discourse. In particular, as part of this definition, "a public is constituted through mere attention" (419). In other words, whoever pays attention to the card is part of its public whether or not that was the intent of the writer of the card.

Continuing then to study media discourse as defined by O'Keefe and as studied by Östman with postcards, how can postcards be considered "public?" Typically, postcards seem to be written and read between just two communicators, the writer and the addressed reader and therefore, private. One must consider perhaps, someone else in the receiver's house read the card when he or she took it out of the mailbox or perhaps saw the QSL card on the wall. Perhaps the mail deliverer read it because the picture on the reverse was so beautiful. Perhaps the sender sent the card through his/her work mailroom, and the mailroom worker or the bundler at the ARRL bureau read the "secret" words to brighten his/her day. And maybe, just maybe, the receiver's granddaughter finds the card 90 years later and reads it. Suddenly, the "private" communication no longer seems so private.

Östman, in a slight deviation from Warner's definition of public, considers postcards to be semi-public, although the messages written on them may not be intended to be so. Historically, societies have also never viewed the postcard as fully private and Östman supports this assertion by writing that

> the word for postcard in Russian is otkrytka, meaning 'open' or 'revealed'… [and what] used to be printed on Russian postcards was *otkrytoje pismo*, meaning more or less 'revealed writing'...in Austria-Hungary there was a law that postcards had to have a statement on the picture-side to the effect that the post office is [sic] not responsible for what was written as message on it… [and] in Italy in the 1930's…the government explicitly saw as one of its main purposes to enhance morality…[and] thus saw as its task to check what is (sic) written on postcards (429-430).

Östman's research indicates that some language use and government rules were created based upon the idea that postcard messages were not fully private. In fact, naming a postcard as "open or revealed" seems to be a much better name than the English compound word we currently use to describe a card that is posted: postcard. Communication on a postcard is always written knowing that someone besides the receiver could read it, and the language is adapted to that. Unless the card is written in code, such as Q code, everyone is aware of the semi-public nature to of the postcard.

To summarize, Östman believes that although postcards are a form of media, they are not strictly public as defined by O'Keefe. Östman contends that postcards are semi-public despite Warner's definition that "public comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation" (413). The QSL cards are also semi-public; they can be seen

and viewed by others besides the sender and receiver. However, there is one more aspect of the QSL cards that can make them seem more private: the Q code.

One feature of ham radio operations, which does exhibit stronger characteristics of privacy, is the physical use of Morse code. Haring writes that "communicating by Morse code created privacy in public" and "the challenge of applying Morse code kept it somewhat at the level of a cipher" (23). She relates the story of a ham radio operator who traded "secret exchanges…with his brother while double-dating as teenagers, Morse code giving them the freedom to discuss 'the characteristics of our dates in their presence without their knowing it!'" (23). This story indicates that although the hams were participating in Morse code in a public situation, their discourse was private because those around them didn't understand the code or even know the men were participating in a private discourse. The Q code, based upon Morse code, is the code used for writing on QSL cards and it can be considered private to those who don't understand it. The Q code assists in making the QSLs semi-public.

As seen, the postcard is conversely semi-private and semi-public. What else about the postcard ties it to media discourse and establishes its rhetorical meaning? Östman writes about the relationship between postcards and SMS (short message service) messages, also known as text messaging, with the biggest similarity being "brevity of expression" (426). In the case of regular and QSL postcards, there is a space limitation while in most cases of text messaging, it is usually a time limitation. This is not the case with Twitter, an SMS application that only allows 140 characters to be used per message, or tweet.

The relationship between QSL cards, postcards, and SMS is further connected by their use of code and shorthand. Because of the lack of space on a card, many

people will write in abbreviations, not pay attention to "proper" letter-writing mechanics, and write in a non-linear fashion. For instance, it is common for postcard and SMS writers to use "luv" instead of "love," "r" for "are," and "4" instead of "for." It is also common in present use of postcards to use "computer-mediated discourse (CMD), in particular "smileys" or other such emoticons (Östman 433). These abbreviations are also used in SMS due to the speed in which people text and for them to save time. These shorthand versions of words were not first "discovered" by text messengers or by Tweeters but existed many decades prior to the modern use of the code as can be seen by the QSL cards.

As seen in Figure 3, two common examples of code between ham radio operators are the letters "OM" and "hi-hi." These stand for "Old Man" (Hirschy), another term for a ham radio operator, and the Morse code equivalent of "ha-ha" (DLS Reports), respectively. Of course, use of "ha-ha" is to indicate laughter, which is what the "hi-hi" meant, as well.
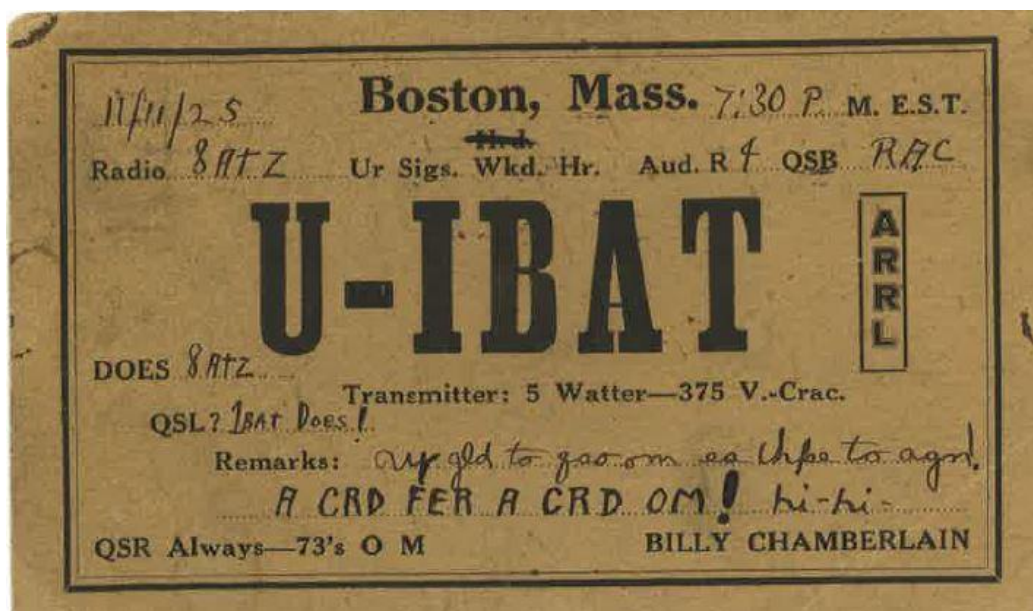
Figure 3 – Remarks: Very glad to communicate with you old man hope to again! A card for a card old man! Ha-ha

On a postcard, the author may use abbreviations not just to save space but to "avoid explicitness" (Östman 432). This and other "idiolectal abbreviations" which are only understood by the sender and receiver are meant to evade understanding by others for whom the card is not intended (Östman 432). Authors may also use song lyrics, choose particular stamps and position them differently, use a particular color of ink, or send the card from a specific place for a certain postmark to communicate meaning (Östman 432). All of these gestures, which are understood only by the sender and intended receiver, can be considered a type of code.

In addition to the semi-public nature of the postcard and the connection with SMS, the postcard also relates to media discourse because of its "disembodied language, language that is not produced by the actual speaker at the time it is being interpreted" (Östman 428). In fact, it's not just the language that is disembodied; the photo or picture and the process of mailing plus the loss of control of the sender are disembodied. Östman writes that the writer loses command of the postcard to "eavesdroppers" or "overhearers" when it leaves their hands, and the writer loses command of what is written (429). If anyone can read the card, they can certainly write on it or erase something, as well.

The author of a postcard, because of his/her awareness of who may read what is on the card, will amend his/her language to adjust to the semi-public nature of the card. To fully understand this, one must first appreciate the discourse structures of a postcard: the picture or artwork (and what could be added to it), the name and address, the textual message, the stamp and postmark, the people who may see the card during the sending process, the receiver, and the possible display of the postcard (Östman 431-432). Östman's list of such characteristics on a postcard help me to understand that

although these characteristics may be studied individually, they cannot stand alone when studying the whole rhetorical aspect of the postcard; the structures are held together by space and in most instances by one author/sender and one corporate intermediary, the post office. Therefore, the author must be at least peripherally aware of all of these structures in addition to the semi-public nature of the card prior to adding his/her text and images.

Likewise, hams must have an awareness of the semi-public nature of the QSL's; however, their awareness of what is written on the cards might not be as significant as with regular postcard users. The language that is used by the hams, either via the radio or via the QSL's, distinguishes their community apart from other groups and is often not understand by a non-radio individual. Amateur radio operators use Q code, derived from Morse code, and this code is used to represent longer terms and phrases. The hams are part of a discourse community because of their "language-using practices," as defined by Patricia Bizzell in her book Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness (222). Although Bizzell's book focuses upon the definition of a discourse community and centers around the field of composition, many parallels can be made to the ham radio community.

One parallel Bizzell discusses is the use of language to "regulate social interactions both within the group and in its dealing with outsiders (Bizzell 222). The Q code language used by hams in their spoken discourse and on their QSL cards is particular to their group. Although outsiders could potentially guess what the cards are, they would have trouble understanding their purpose without a bit of research. Much of the language would also be foreign. One would need an understanding of how radio works and why the postcards are traded to start to understand the ham radio discourse

community. From within the ham community, experienced operators assist the new operators with the language, evidence of the "Elmer tradition," where more experienced hams routinely assist the less experienced hams (Nevradakis 80). For the past 100 years, the language has been directly related to the tradition and use of Morse code. Perhaps in the future, because of the demise of the use of Morse code, operators will start to change and deregulate the use of Q code.

Another parallel that is analyzed by Bizzell is that "canonical knowledge regulates the world views of group members" (222). The canonical knowledge of ham operators is not that they are consciously aware of the five rhetorical canons, although some may be. It is their awareness in how their cards look to others, how clearly the language is communicated, and how accurate their information is. Their experience in exchanging the cards depends upon the knowledge of the other operators. One might argue that the knowledge the hams have could affect their worldview but when focusing strictly upon the exchange of QSL cards, a focus upon a worldview does not seem particularly pertinent.

The language used by hams is a form of social behavior that continues and extends their knowledge to others within their community and to newcomers. Bizzell borrows Bruce Herzberg's 1986 ideas about a discourse community, and notes that he believes "language use in a group is a form of social behavior, that discourse is a means of maintaining and extending the group's knowledge and of initiating newcomers, and that discourse is epistemic or constitutive of the group's knowledge" (223). Bizzell expands on this definition to note that not all agree on every aspect of Herzberg's definition, but with regards to ham operators, his observation fits perfectly. The hams language is part of their social behavior, their discourse helps to define their

group and is a passage of learning for newcomers, and their language represents their knowledge.

Bizzell continues her study by writing about John Swales, an applied linguist, and his six criteria that must be met to form a discourse community. She writes that Swales believes that a discourse community "is a social group using language to accomplish work in the world – the context of appropriate social behavior provides cues for how best to employ the discourse conventions to accomplish this work" (225).

Swales 1987 presentation at the CCCC titled "Approaching the Concept of Discourse Community," lists the six criteria for a discourse community and these criteria are necessary when assessing the rhetorical and community values of those who collect QSL cards. A discourse community has:

1. a communality of interest

2. participatory mechanisms

3. information exchange

4. genre-specific discoursal expectations

5. a dynamic towards specialized language

6. a critical mass of expertize (13).

The key to Swales definition, according to Bizzell, is how the social group works together to perform work or a specific task, specifically a task or project which couldn't be completed by an individual (226). All of these criteria can be applied to the community of ham radio operators and specifically to those who exchange QSL cards and the six criteria will be applied to the QSL cards in this study in the analysis section. They participate in the common goal of collecting QSL cards, and the exchange is open to all who can "catch" the correct radio signal and who then use the QSL cards to

communicate further. The hams provide information and feedback to one another, and they develop guidelines for how information will be exchanged. The terminology is specialized and as the science progresses with radio, so will the terminology, and experts abound within this community. QSL cards can be used to analyze the level of involvement by individual operators based upon the number of cards they have, the years of collecting, and the number of different stations that have been collected.

Swales wrote that the year before he gave his presentation, he was asked by Faigley "whether a hobby-group could constitute a discourse community" (9). Swales answered that based on his criteria and on the basis of his own personal experience, "that the answer is firmly in the affirmative" (9). Swales reported that he participated in two hobby groups; one was a worldwide philatelic group of about 300 people who specialized in the postal history of Hong Kong. He explained that the specialized auction catalogue, which was published by the group, illustrated a key genre from that discourse community: it was fully explicit to him but not for his audience at the CCCC. In addition, the hobby group had a "common goal, forum, information exchange, genre development, specialized terminology and expertize" (9). Those in the ham radio community and who exchange QSLs also have specialized websites and magazines specifically created for them and their discourse community. Likewise, the hams and QSL collectors have common goals, forums, information exchanges, genre development and specialized terminology and expertize just as the philatelists do in Swales hobby group.

Swales involvement with the other hobby group was with the Audubon Society. He explained that the technical rhetoric displayed by the members specifically forms this discourse community, and that non-members would not feel a connection based upon

the language. Swales explains further that involvement with both groups was "essentially detached from personal involvement" (9). He didn't know personal facts about the other members and they didn't know facts about him. However, he added that being in a group that does have inter-personal involvement is common and doesn't negate being a discourse community (10). Ham operators who collect QSLs display a high level of technical rhetoric and non-members of this community would feel like an outsider without knowing the language. Members of the ham radio community, like both the philatelists and Audubon members, do not have to have inter-personal involvement however, it has been shown that ham operators do form life-long friendships based upon their mutual interest of the ham radio (Haring xi).

Kristen Haring delves deeper into what makes up a "hobby" and describes a hobby as something that "refers only to pursuits distinguished by their association with values such as productivity, educational enrichment, thrift, and the structured use of time" (1). She contrasts this with "idle recreation" and writes that "hobbies were thought to keep participants busy with activities that led to personal betterment" (1). Haring believes that "ham radio fits the strict definition of a hobby" and further classifies ham radio as a "technical hobby" (2). She defines a technical hobby as one with requires "some technical understanding or skill beyond simply how to operate a technology" (2). This refinement of the definition of the word "hobby" helps to place the ham radio operators into the definition of a discourse community as well as into the definition of a technical hobby. In addition, those who collect the QSL cards further develop their hobby of communicating via radio by also communicating with the cards. The collection of the cards then strengthens and enhances the discourse within that community, as well.

Community

       DXers often feel a sense of collaboration and kinship within their community of fellow hobbyists and that feeling is based simply on their mutual interests in DXing. Haring reports that "ham radio thrived on social interaction…and random meetings 'on the air' occasionally grew into friendships that continued by letters and further discussion via radio" (xi). The world of ham radio and DXing is "'inherently democratic,' with factors such as one's occupation, income, age, or appearance being irrelevant" (Nevradakis 80). To maintain this egalitarian nature, the community requires its participants to be "considerate, loyal, progressive, friendly, balanced and patriotic," and it is also the norm to not discuss politics and religion (Nevradakis 80). Haring reported that the community of hams discourages "all internal divisions except geographic ones, denouncing religions and ethnic radio clubs as 'political' and therefore a potential hindrance to smooth relations…" (xii). In addition, ham operators are proud of their technical abilities and "sometimes describe themselves as a 'technical fraternity'" (Haring xii). This level of technical expertise often caused those outside the ham community to tease the hams for choosing a geeky hobby but to also count on the hams to help solve electrical problems (Haring xv). Haring also described the hams as the "precursors to computer hackers" (xv). Although describing ham operators from the 1920s and '30s as "precursors to computer hackers" is a stretch, the operators of that time did have a high level of electrical and technical expertise. In addition, this expertise exhibited itself on the QSL cards with the language and images showing such.

       Further defining community and applying it to those who collect QSL cards, Kress maintains that the definition of a group or community is "a commitment to values regarded as central for maintaining social cohesion. That in turn requires full access to

semiotic, cultural, social and economic resources. Central among these is the potential

full for participation in the design and production of representations as messages and

access to the means of their dissemination" (Multimodality 18). As previously reported

with the ham operators who practice DXing, their community is built upon the common

denominator of searching for radio signals and then exchanging QSL cards. Within that

community, they have a standard language and certain social norms that they follow.

For instance, as noted previously, hams don't normally "discuss" politics. In addition, the

more experienced hams assist the less experienced with learning the language and

social norms expected: the Elmer tradition. Economic resources are also a

consideration, hence the establishment of the stations which collect and disseminate

the QSLs. There is a standard design to the cards themselves but also a freedom for

individuals to add images and text that make the cards more personal.

Contests, magazines such as *QSL*, and organizations such as the ARRL assist

in establishing a self-reflexive process of a community and its discourse. Kress defines

"the aims of a social-semiotic theory of communication [for a community] might be:

- that members…have access to the semiotic and other cultural resources
  essential to act in their social world…
- that as members…they are able to contribute to common purposes…with
  constantly new cultural, semiotic and   social problems and by…communicating
  their suggested solutions…
- that in their social-semiotic actions, members…have a clear sense of the effects
  of their (semiotic) actions on others…" (18).

The DX/QSL community fulfills these aims, and as a community, have access to act

within said community. They are able to contribute to the solutions to problems that may

arise, and are aware of their actions upon others. Awareness of participating in semiotic actions is not necessary to be a part of the community. Simply communicating via the QSL cards is enough to participate in a social-semiotic action.

As briefly mentioned in the history and DXing sections, contests occurred and continue to happen for those in the ham radio world, and these contests are social semiotics in action. As described by the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), "the goal of Amateur Radio contesting is to contact as many stations as possible during the contest period" (ARRL Contest Basics). Most of the radio contests are focused on obtaining certain signals during certain periods of time and keeping a log to prove the stations contacted. As previously mentioned in the History chapter, these logs are mostly maintained on the Logbook of The World, and the physical exchange of the QSL postcards is not required for proof of contact (ARRL contest). However, prior to the advent of the internet, QSL postcards were the proof required to win contests. The practice of participating in the contests further reinforces the community in which many of the ham operators exist by extending their knowledge, opening up their circle of friends, and continuing the discourse within the community.

Similar to the QSL contests, due to the extreme popularity and number of picture postcards exchanged, postcard exchange clubs were formed in the late 1800s and early 1900s at the regional, national, and international levels. These clubs served to promote trade and also served as contact centers for collectors who used a third party to send them postcards from around the world (Rogan 12). Despite the differences in the number of people who collected and traded postcards, the advent of the postcard clubs is comparable to the reason behind QSL bureaus. These bureaus collect and sort QSL cards for ham radio operators as they are sent or received by the hams. This saves

postage and time for the individual operators. The operators provide self-addressed, stamped envelopes to the bureau and when a certain number of cards are received, the bureau sends the set to the operator. In the United States, the ARRL, founded in 1914 and still active today, operates the bureaus by divisions to support its members. There are 15 divisions and 77 geographic sections of the ARRL in the United States (ARRL About; Dunnehoo 22). Of my grandfather's cards, 59 seem to have been sent via the ARRL. Some of them are stamped such and some of them do not have his home address or postage on them. Most of these sent through the ARRL were international.

With regards to postcards and their community of participants, Östman describes minorities in society as a sub-group of people who regularly use postcards. He claims that this is so they may "maintain a feeling of togetherness and belonging" (435). He specifically mentions ethnic minorities using postcards as a means of protest. Despite maintaining this, Östman fails to mention why the postcards are used as such, and one might surmise it is the relative low cost of postcards, their purchase and their postal cost. In addition, there is an ease of use for postcards; there are no envelopes to grab or lick, and if the card itself is the form of protest, text other than the address may not even be needed. Furthermore, it could be assumed that regular postcard use is utilized not just by ethnic minorities but also by groups which are minorities based upon their population makeup. For instance, ham radio operators who "acknowledge receipt" of a coded or verbal message received via radio wave use postcards. These cards are somewhat different from the standard postcard but in many ways, can and should be included in the study of postcards and their use and meaning. The men and women who are involved in exchanging QSL cards could be considered a minority based simply

upon the numbers of people who participate. However, they do not fit the definition of an ethnic minority or of a group participating in protest.

Concerning the postcards of the Golden Age, textual communication did not seem to be the main reason for sending cards. As described earlier, the cards were important for the collection value. Many cards would simply be inscribed with just a signature or a short inscription (Rogan 14-15). People were less interested in communicating via alpha-numeric text; they were only interested in the addition to their collections. However, despite their textual brevity, the cards still maintained a "strong expressive value" similar to a handshake or other greeting ritual (Rogan 15). As Rogan further explains, "The aim is not to provide new information, but to refer to what is already shared; the most successful communication is the one that is least redundant" (16). These cards acted as confirmation between the communicants of what was already known: the person traveled somewhere, they arrived, and they've not forgotten the receiver (Rogan 16).

Similarly, the content of QSLs confirm what is already known: two operators have communicated via radio wave, the date, time, and electronic details; the card can now be added to a collection. A difference that exists between the exchange of postcards and QSLs is that the context of sending and receiving a QSL is always known. Rogan explains that short messages may be counter-productive when sending a regular postcard because the receiver may not know or understand why the card is coming from a certain place or person (21).

Rogan distinguishes between types of messages sent via postcard. He breaks the messages into two groups using folkloristic theory: messages either were meant to carry information (linear) or were activities in themselves for purposes of continued

relationship building or collection (circular or reciprocal) (15-16). QSL cards serve both

purposes; technical information is sent but an expectation of exchange for collection

purposes exists, and in some instances, because of the community boundaries,

relationship building occurs (see Figure 3). This card demonstrates linear messages for

information exchange but also shows relationship building in the form of humor and
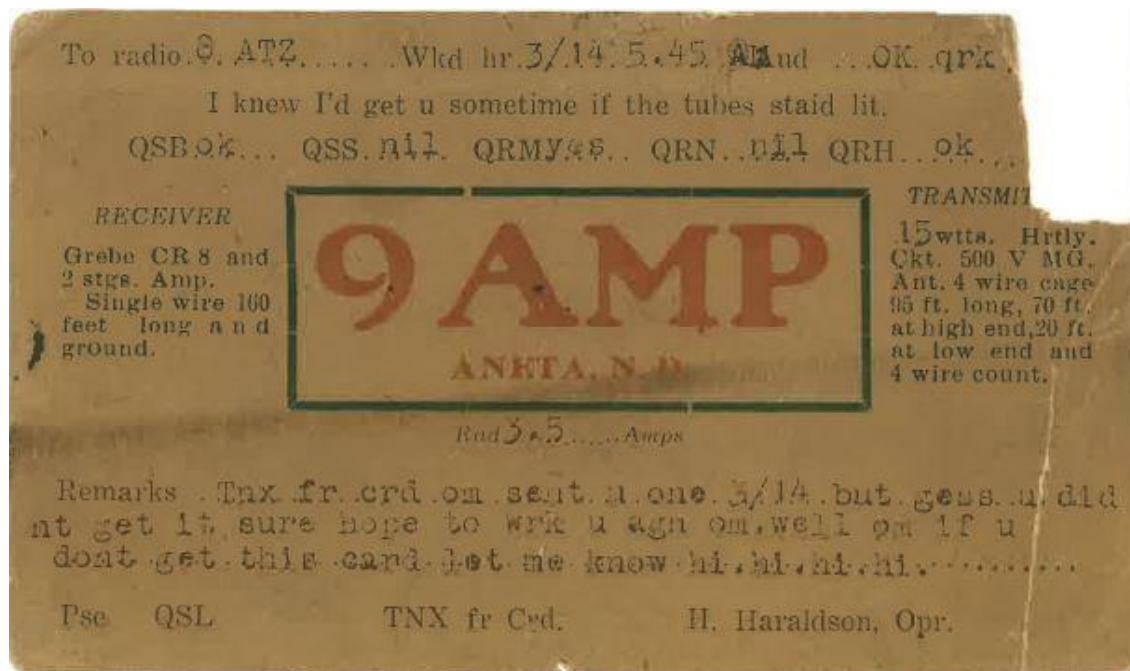
hopes to reconnect again.

Figure 4 – Remarks: Thanks for card old man sent one 3/14 but guess you didn't get it sure hope

to talk with you again old man. Well old man if you don't get this card let me know ha.ha.ha.ha.

The postcard, because of its social aim, is also the vehicle of ritual

communication. Oxford anthropologist and head of the UK Economic and Social

Research Council (ESRC) Harvey Whitehouse explained in 2013 that "rituals are a

human universal —the glue that holds social groups together… rituals are always about

building community" (Jones 470). Rogan characterizes a ritual as containing three

characteristics: "repetition, institutionalization (the act must be familiar and predictable),

and expressivity" (16). Expressivity is the key to separating rituals from habits or routines, and the postcard has a high expressive value. The ritual act of sending a postcard "may be seen as a signifier of some symbolic content: the signified (in [this] context, a sign of life or a confirmation of friendship) (Rogan 18). The signified, or the expressive value, becomes the main point. Because of the expressive value and the intention of the sender and the interpretation by the receiver, all these create the criteria for distinguishing a ritual from a routine (18). With regards to the QSL cards, the ritual is congruous with the routine. An expectation, in fact, an unwritten social rule suggests that QSL cards be exchanged regardless of the expressive value of the card or the intention of the sender and receiver. Lifelong friendships are not necessarily the main goal of exchanging QSL cards; if friendships happen, they are a nice byproduct of the exchange and the collection. The exchange of the card is more to build community and follow the social rules that hold the community together.

Although a study could exist on just one aspect of these cards, the semiotics, discourse, and community theories are all tied together to establish the meaning of the cards and how the cards are a product of the ham radio community. In addition, the theories examined in this Literature Review not only show that the cards are a product of the community but integral to the community's discourse and identity.

Methodology

A mixed methods approach was used for the organization and analysis of this

collection and study. For the most part, the study of the cards is qualitative in nature. I

coded the literature review for rhetorical meaning from the text and images, the

discourse community including the use of Q code and technical language, and the

broader community that exhibits continued relationships. This type of coding was

necessary to answer the research questions:

- What is the rhetorical meaning of these cards?

- How do the cards assist in forming a discourse community and community-at-

  large?

- What is the significance and meaning of how the cards are designed with their

  text and image?

Additionally, some quantitative elements where applied in the analysis of the cards.

Because I only analyzed eight of the 140 QSL cards in the collection, quantitative

analysis was needed to compare these chosen cards to the rest of the collection. This

quantitative comparison of the entire collection was necessary to show that the

analyzed cards were indicative of the collection as a whole. For instance, when

analyzing the balance of the Tokyo, Japan card, I counted how many of the 140 cards

included frames on them. Comparing and contrasting the analyzed cards to the

collection as a whole assists the reader in making judgments about the balance of the

interaction of text and image in this example.

To perform the qualitative analysis, I relied on the scholarship of C.K. Ogden

and I.A. Richards for their studies on rhetoric; Gunther Kress, Charlotte Gunawardena

et al, and Michael Nevradakis for their papers on community; Lester Faigley and P.K.

Manning and Betsy Cullum-Swan for their research into social semiotics; and Anne

O'Keefe, Jan-Ola Östman, and John Swales for their research on discourse. In addition,

I used Östman's and O'Keefe's ideas about private and non-private audiences. These

scholars laid the foundation upon which I built my analysis. So, although the research I

used from others is not unprecedented, applying them to a collection of QSL cards from

the 1920s and '30s is a new approach and a new avenue off study. Of note, because of

the broad number of lenses that I chose to study, each card in the analysis was not

analyzed for each theory. Instead, I focused upon one or two theories for each card to

eliminate redundancy.

I focused upon the rhetorical implications, community formation, and discourse to

define the aspects of the QSL cards. These three points are used in my qualitative

analysis. When first glancing at the collection, one can tell many similarities. Most of the

cards exhibit large call numbers in the center of the card with some type of design,

whether a photo, a drawing, or stylized font of the pre-printed text. Furthermore, the

QSL cards exhibited mainly English text mixed in with Q Code. (Two of the cards were

written in French with Q Codes and one is written in Norwegian with Q

Code.) Examining the cards for their rhetorical meaning and looking for signs of

community within the QSL cards based upon the use of a common language and upon

the text, images and the relationship between the two is the definitive basis for this

study.

In addition, the ham operators ultimately, based upon their design choice and

use of language, create a rhetorical meaning that is exhibited on the cards. The

sections of the QSL cards in which I describe community and discourse are descriptive

coding, and the rhetorical meaning is more applied in nature. I use what is written and

the images on the cards to describe what the ham operator, or the sender, may mean. I also based my analysis of the rhetoric of the cards on Richards' definition that describes rhetoric as a "philosophic enquiry into how words work in discourse" (4). Richards also viewed "persuasion as only one of the many aims of rhetoric," and I view the cards as having a sense of persuasion in the manner of the operators' ethos (16). The operators' word choice of the pre-printed and written text and the images displays the character and beliefs of the sender. This ethos helps to inform the recipient as to the sender's values.

Because of the synthesis of image and text in addition to the community that is formed by those who exchange the QSL cards, social semiotics is the broad umbrella under which I analyzed the cards. As written previously, social semiotics, per Kress, is the "theory that deals with meaning in all its appearances, in all social occasions, and in all cultural sites" (Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication 2). Therefore, I approached the cards noticing the interaction among the images, colors, fonts, borders, symbols, and text to analyze the meaning exhibited. I also applied the concepts of working with text and images of Faigley et al. The concepts I used for analyzing the QSLs, of the eleven concepts originally introduced, are balance, classification, description, emphasis, and proportion (Faigley et al. 26, 28, 32, 34, 44).

One cannot ignore the discourse that is occurring between the operators that exhibits itself and further defines the community with its use of code. To analyze the discourse, I used Östman's essay defining postcards as media discourse and Anne O'Keefe's definition of media discourse. I also applied the six criteria that Swales established for a discourse community which are: a community of interest, participatory

mechanisms, information exchange, genre-specific discoursal expectations, specialized language, and a critical mass of expertize (13).

Finally, I analyzed the community that is exhibited from the QSL cards. I used Kress' aims of a social-semiotic theory of communication for a community, Rogan's linear and circular information routes of messages, and his characterization of a ritual. Rogan claims that a ritual has repetition, institutionalization, and expressivity (16).

Web Design

From the start, I wanted to present my findings via an electronic medium. I feel that the electronic connection between the radio realm and of a digital process is the most appropriate; it is a nod to the technical ability of the ham operators and an extension of the digital process that radio introduced. Additionally, a website is more interactive between the user and the creator. I aimed to create a similar type of discourse between me and the reader as the QSL exchangers had: delivering information with space, color, text, and font choices along with the ability to read and wander about the website as desired. I also want my readers to experience the full color and design at the size they need. Unlike on the historical QSL cards in this study, I've included my email in the Links and FYI section so that readers can send me comments about the site. The web medium that I chose, although not ideal, is also a great way to share the information with those in the ham community.

The first card in the analysis section is a blank sample card explaining the sections of a QSL card so that the reader can easily distinguish the sections on the other cards. All the cards in the collection exhibit evidence of rhetorical meaning, discourse, and community by the text, the images, and the relationship between both and except for the Reno, NV and Shanghai, China cards, the eight cards chosen show

the clear evidence of rhetorical meaning, discourse, and community. The Reno and Shanghai cards, numbers 5 and 8, have more obscure images and/or text and additional research as to what their images and text meant needed to be completed. Inclusion of these eight cards doesn't indicate, however, that the other cards in the collection are less decorated or have less obvious discourse or that others weren't as puzzling. Many of them are colorful and have intricate borders and additional written discourse and some of them are just as obscure in meaning as the China card. There was no specific purpose for choosing four American cards and four international cards.

Limitations

Obvious limitations occur when studying material that is almost 100 years old. My grandfather is not alive to assist me with any interpretations I've made about the community or discourse or to confirm guesses I've made about dates and places. I also do not participate with the Q code language or the ham radio community to the extent that I could consider myself a part of that community; I'm not a part of their community discourse of then or now. I have relied on literature published by those in the ham community to assist in mitigating this limitation. I made sure the material I used by Cordella, the ARRL, F1JXQ, Dunnehoo, DLS Reports, Haring, Hirschy, Lewis, Maxwell, and Nevradakis were all verified with one another.

Similarly, I am making assertions based upon a limited set of cards. Despite having 140 of them from over a ten-year period, the assertions I am making are based upon these cards and may not represent the whole of QSL cards and ham radio. I do believe, however, that this collection could be used to make conjectures about other cards from that time period and that this collection could inspire additional research.

In addition, there is always a chance of misinterpretation when applying modern theories to historic documents. One has to question whether people in the past, if aware of semiotics, would choose the images and text they did. This is especially important to note when the technical information that is conveyed by the QSLs could simply be relayed via text. The images, colors, and designs along with the quotes about the place from which the ham operators originate are all additional information relayed that has nothing to do with the radio exchange. However, it has been shown throughout time that humans have used images and text to establish their ethos, and in the examples in this collection, the operators have simply followed the history of others: they use text and image to form an idea of who they are and where they're from. They do this to form relationships and establish discourse whether or not it was meant for discourse at the time or discourse 100 years in the future.

Analysis

1. W8SI - This blank card is from my grandfather's station. The stylized font of his station name, W8SI, is centered with a different type font of his city and state clearly marked across the top. These two pieces of information add up to what a ham who collected QSLs would want to know: from where did this card come?

   This card also indicates that my grandfather had another station, 8ATZ licensed since 1919. This tells his reader that he is an experienced ham who had a station prior to the requirements of the government in 1912 that required ham operators to have a "W" to start their station name (Maxwell 2). What is unclear is how he was able to have a station without the "W" in 1919, seven years after the government required it. Copies of his 8ATZ card do not indicate the date that they were made or the date the station

was created. It would be unlikely that my grandfather had a radio station prior to 1912 as he would have only been seven years old at the time.

The pre-printed text allowed my grandfather to complete the radio he contacted, the date, time, confirmation of contact, and radio station particulars such as the wavelength. The other pre-printed text on the right side of the card indicated the information of his station and a request for QRK - what is the strength of my signal? All of the cards in the collection exhibit this technical and specialized language that helps to establish the discourse community (Swales 13). In addition, the ubiquitous use of this specialized language shows a "critical mass of expertise" in this community (Swales 13). To the left on the card he created a cross of five letters, QSLPE. This was a request to please (PSE) acknowledge receipt (QSL). This request is repeated by the line "QSL to Others as You Would Have Them QSL to You" which is pre-printed towards the bottom of the card. This double-request indicates his strong desire to collect QSLs. Unfortunately, I don't have a copy of a card he filled out. It would have been interesting to see what he would write in the remarks section.

The creation of a cross from the PSE and QSL in addition to the QSL "Golden Rule" could indicate a nod to religion. However, in this case, my grandfather was not religious, and it is not socially acceptable in the ham radio world to discuss religion (Nevradakis 80). Discussing or indicating religious preference would break the rule of a discourse community by exceeding the bounds of "participatory mechanisms" (Swales 13). Applying the Golden Rule to QSL exchange would be appropriate because the Golden Rule indicates reciprocity in social situations regardless of religion. However, this doesn't mean that religious or political discourse didn't happen in conversation or on the cards in images. The discourse may occur but in a more covert manner.
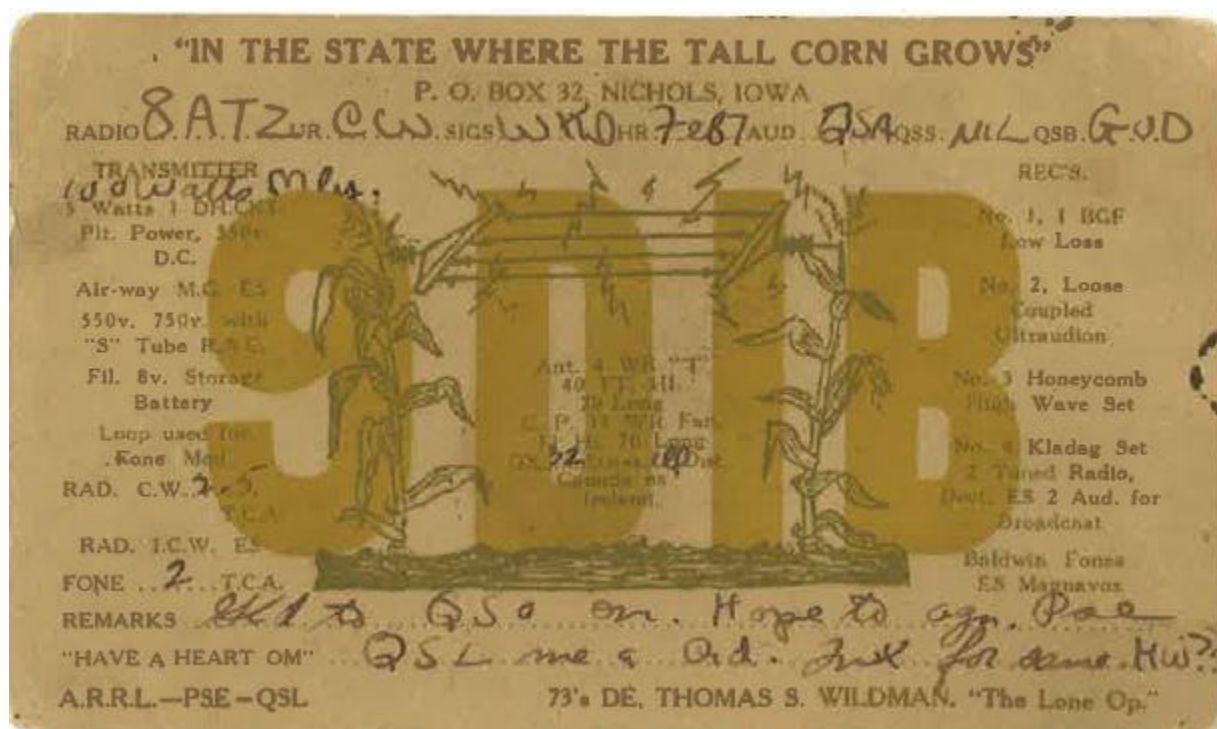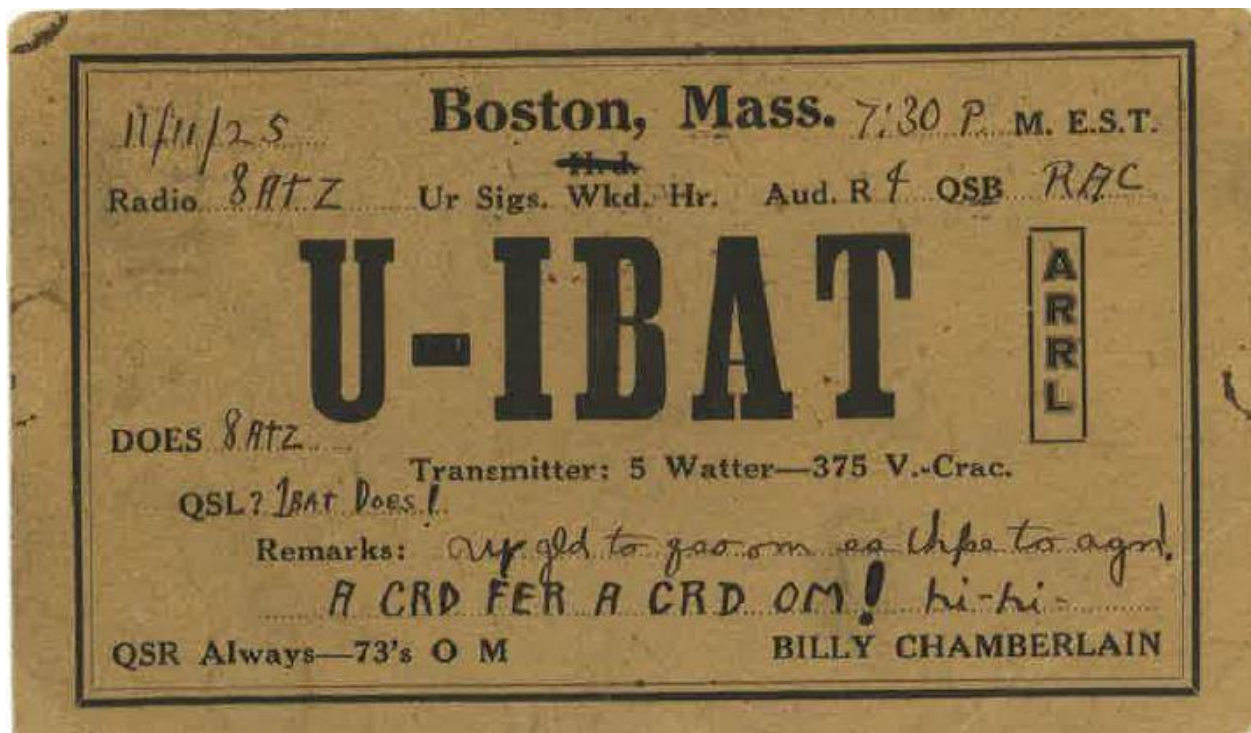
Card 2 - Remarks: "Glad to communicate with you, Old Man. Hope to again, Please acknowledge receipt with me a card. Thanks for same. How, Copy?

2. 9DIB - There is a playful interaction between the corn stalks and radio wires on this card from Nichols, Iowa which could indicate the pride the sender has in not only his hobby, but in his home state. There is a relationship present amongst the color yellow and the images of corn and the slogan printed at the top, all reminding the reader through color, image, and text that corn is central to the state of Iowa. In addition to this, the corn stalks are acting as poles that are holding the radio wires from which the radio waves are emitting. The call letters are centrally placed and although large, are well balanced to the size of the card; the letters are in good proportion to the rest of the card. The eye is drawn to these letters because of their size and color. All of these aspects of the card exhibit balance, classification, description, and proportion (Faigley et.al).

Despite the clarity of the images of corn and the yellow color, the description of what the image means isn't fully defined until the slogan is added. Therefore, although

the image is quite descriptive, it doesn't completely describe Iowa as a state with tall corn; this only happens with the added text of "In the state where the tall corn grows." One could suppose that the corn must be tall to support the height needed for radio wires. However, the corn image is metaphorical in nature; the corn couldn't be tall enough or strong enough to support radio wires. This is a perfect example of social semiotics; the interaction of words and images establishes meaning (Kress 2).

Although only this card and the China card (#8), below, in this analysis exhibit this play of images between an image and a part of the radio, six of the 140 cards in the collection show an interaction of images to include the radio and the place of origin. Four more of the cards show both radio and place of origin images, but they do not interact in the same way as the corn and radio wires. Twenty-seven of the cards exhibit images of the place of origin, and six of the cards show just radio images. These described cards do not include several of the cards from the collection that show images of their membership in the ARRL or other radio club. The comparison of the Iowa card to the rest of the collection helps to place the Iowa card into a classification of other cards that have interactive images on them.

Card 3 - Remarks: Very glad to communicate with you, Old Man and hope to again! A card for a card, Old Man! Ha-ha!

3. U-IBAT - This card from Boston, MA is a clear example of the typical textual discourse and "genre-specific discoursal expectations" between ham operators (Swales 13). The sender, Billy Chamberlain, handwrites in shorthand not only due to the space limitations but because this shorthand is the normal discourse in the amateur radio world. Use of this language indicates that Chamberlain is a part of the discourse community, and this use of shorthand and Q Code plus the date of the card, 11/11/25, shows that he was active in the early years of Q card exchange.

Chamberlain used three exclamation points so one could assume he was excited or happy to be writing and sending the card. Many of the cards indicate this sense of excitement by the use of exclamation points or the use of hi-hi, the Morse code equivalent of the SMS word of ha-ha, indicating laughter or a joke. Chamberlain doesn't seem to agree with the *Amateur DX Report Cards* guidelines published in 1924 that the

cards should not exhibit humor (Codella "Card and Call"). One could surmise by the lightheartedness of this card and by many of the others that strict technical exchange was not the sole purpose of a QSL as the writer of *Amateur DX Report Cards* would have liked.

This card has an ARRL (American Radio Relay League) sign on the right side of the card. Of the 140 cards, 74 cards indicated they were members of the ARRL or another national radio organization through the use of an image or through text. The other 66 either did not indicate a membership or had membership initials I did not recognize as such. The typical emblem used for the ARRL on the cards looks like the image to the right. The other national symbols or emblems were similar with the diamond- shaped design but with their country's initials.

Chamberlain has pre-printed on the card, on the lower left hand side, "QSL?" He then writes next to that "1BAT Does!" In addition, he writes "A Card for a Card, Old Man!" Chamberlain has thus indicated twice the request for a QSL card. This is similar to the W8SI card that requested a QSL in preprinted form twice. Of all the cards, 77 request a QSL one time and 14 request a QSL two or more times. Therefore, 91 of the 140 cards request a QSL card which indicates not only a request for "information exchange" (Swales 13) but also ritual (Rogan 16). The ritual is exhibited by the large number of operators who request QSLs and can be classified as repetitive, institutional, and expressive (Rogan 16). Because a majority of the cards requests a QSL, it seems to be standard in the community to do so. Perhaps requesting a QSL more than once could seem "pushy" or too repetitive since only 14 of the 140 exhibit this double request.

Card 4 - Thanks for fine business and communicating with me, Old Man. Many thanks for communicating, I hope to meet you again in the future.Trade photos? Would appreciate your card, Old Man!

4. J1GA - The musical score on this card from Tokyo, Japan makes it unique in the collection. The notes, when played, form a pentatonic scale, a scale of 5 tones, and sounds like a traditional Japanese folk song (Gibson). It is in fact, the Japanese National Anthem "Kimi ga yo" (Kawamura). Double-click the mp3 icon to open the file to hear the tune.

Japanese National Anthem.mp3

(To hear this tune when reading the .pdf of this thesis, please visit the webpage http://cochranp.wixsite.com/cochran-qsl-study)

The addition of musical notes to this QSL card exhibits adds a third type of language on the card to form a trio of kinds of discourse: musical notes, Q code, and English. This addition of the Japanese National Anthem could indicate pride in the

country of Japan by the Japanese operator or could indicate that the operator likes music. It can't be assumed that anyone who received this card would know what the musical notes sounded like unless they could play an instrument to decipher it. The sender's purpose probably wasn't for a receiver to play; it was to establish the sender's ethos so that the receiver would know something about the sender.

The inclusion of the song, the Japanese flags, and the operator's name, K. Sato, indicate the operator is probably native to Japan. Several of the cards sent from foreign countries seemed to have European names attached to them, unlike this card. Of the 140 cards with legible names, 16 seemed to be names that did not match the country from which the QSL originated. For instance, the China card at the bottom of this page was sent by Thompson, and this person signed off with a "Cheerio." This indicates the operator may have been of European descent.

Card 5 - Remarks: Here's your card, Old Man. Hope it takes its place of honor among the other (?). Am not on very often, sorry.

5. W6CRF - One of the problems with attempting to establish ethos with image and text is that the sender needs to be clear about what they are "saying." This card from Reno, Nevada, "The Biggest Little City in the World," shows a quartet of tuxedoed men singing. At the bottom of the card is text that reads "Our Pride and Joy." What isn't clear about this meaning to modern readers is, what or who is Reno's pride and joy? The answer to that may have been common knowledge in 1931 to American recipients, but it wouldn't have been well known by non-American operators. Although I spent some time searching, I was unable to find out who the singers are or what they represent. Therefore, although the sender's "words work in discourse," his meaning isn't clear (Richards 4).

A potential upside to having an unclear message is that it may help to make the card more private. If there was a hidden meaning to this image of the singing men that only this sender and his recipients knew, the public audience, those who may have seen the card but were not the intended recipient, would be unaware of that message. This helps to create a type of media discourse that is neither fully private nor fully public (Östman 423). Of course, much of this card, to the untrained eye, creates a sense of privacy between the sender and receiver. One would have to be aware of and know the technical jargon of the ham radio community and Q Code to be fully privy to any of the cards' meaning.

This card does have good balance with the image and radio letters centrally located. In addition, it has a frame around the whole card. This is very common in the whole collection with 80 of the 140 card detailing some type of frame.

Card 6 - Remarks: Aerial then 15' long 2' from roof and no earth! Hi! I've not heard you since, Old Man, but will acknowledge receipt when I do. Please (??) delay, Old Man. I am swamped with cards.

6. BCL - This early card from Bedford, England doesn't have any images to assist with meaning, but the preprinted message indicates the verbose sense of humor and rhyming technique of the sender, F. Charman. The text reads:

O - 8ATZ - Amateur, whose CQ's I have heard, I beg of U to QSL; Oh! pse send me a crd, For if U do not answer, it will be for Ur worse: I'll call the wrath of Jupiter upon U in my curse. As Nelson said at Waterloo in 1962, "Up then Guards and Atom" - so shall I say of U - "Up Sturbs and Electrons" - and by the seven spheres May the heavens belch forth QRN, fit for Thor's own ears; May the sky be rent with lightnings, and the earth be rent with quakes, And Ur Mast be stricken, so that every Guy Wire breaks; May Ur Radiation wither, and Ur Amps refuse to amp; May

> Ur Bottles all Disintegrate, and Ur Lo-Cross Coils git cramp, May Ur Generator sizzle, and Ur Meters all go fut; Ur Condensers stop condensing, and Ur Tuning ne'er sta-put. And so because you didn't write things all turn out so bad, When this Malediction comes to pass, perhaps U'll wish U had. However, if U QSL, or send a word or two, I wish U VY 73's and I raise my hat to U!

In addition to the typical technical discourse that is listed at the bottom right of the card, Charman also uses the specialized language of ham operators in his poem. In addition to this specialized language, the sender is clearly showing his humorous personality by using the technical language of radio mixed with historical and mythological language. This blend helps to establish his ethos and membership in the community. His poem also exhibits a blend of Standard English and code, both Q Code and SMS language. This combination proves his membership in the ham community and also shows his comfort level in using this special blend of discourse.

Once again, there is a small indicator that despite religion being a topic not discussed amongst hams, the sign of an ancient religion has worked its way into the vernacular. Just as the modified Golden Rule was used above, this operator makes mention of the "wrath of Jupiter" and in the form of a "curse." This does not indicate that Charman worships the early Roman deity but that despite the taboo of not speaking or writing about religion or politics, religious symbols and sayings have worked their way into this discourse community.
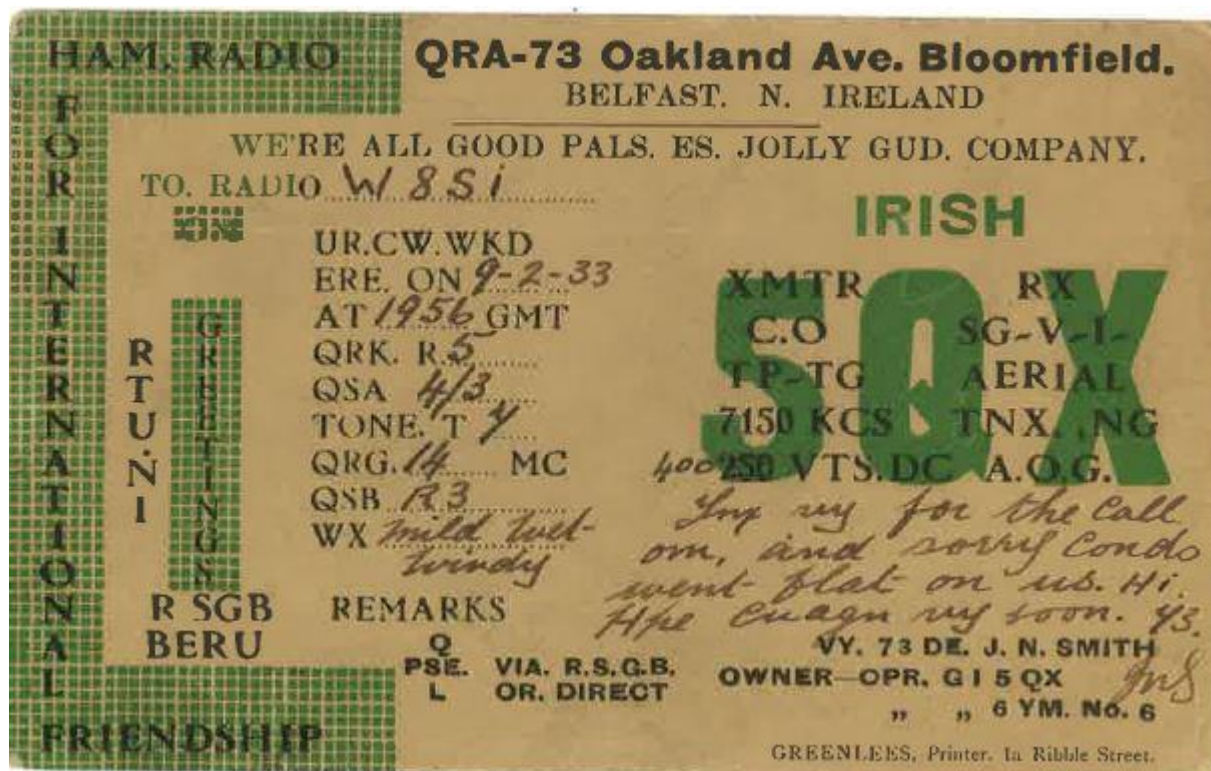
Card 7 - Thanks very much for the call, Old Man, and sorry conditions went flat on us. Ha. Hope to see you again very soon. 43 (could be related to conditions of transmission).

7. 5QX - Two distinctions mark this card from Belfast, Northern Ireland. First, the balance of this card doesn't use the standard centrally balanced technique of most of the cards. In fact, of the 140 cards, only five are not centrally balanced. This card uses color, blocked texture, and space to achieve balance (Faigley et al 26). I believe the sender uses this technique to draw the recipient's attention to the green-plaid area. And this is what leads to the second way the card is special: its "emphasis to certain material" (Faigley et al 34): friendship.

Establishing friendships, although not a necessary part of this discourse community, does occur because of the common interests shared by the ham operators (Haring xi). J.N. Smith, the sender of this card, is quite forthright about his desire for international friendship; he has "Ham, Radio For International Friendship" and "We're All

Good Pals. Es. Jolly Gud. Company." pre-printed on his cards. The text about friendship and the design of the card all belie the standards set forth that QSLs should only be about the exchange of technical information (Codella, "Card and Call).

      This card also exhibits the two types of messages described by Rogan using folkloristic theory; the card is meant to carry information (linear) and is an activity for purposes of continued relationship building or collection (circular or reciprocal) (15-16). In this instance, the operator wishes to, within the community boundaries, build relationship or friendship. In addition, the sender imagines the card as part of the receiver's collection, with collectability as one of Rogan's four factors which helped the postcard to gain such popularity (4-5).
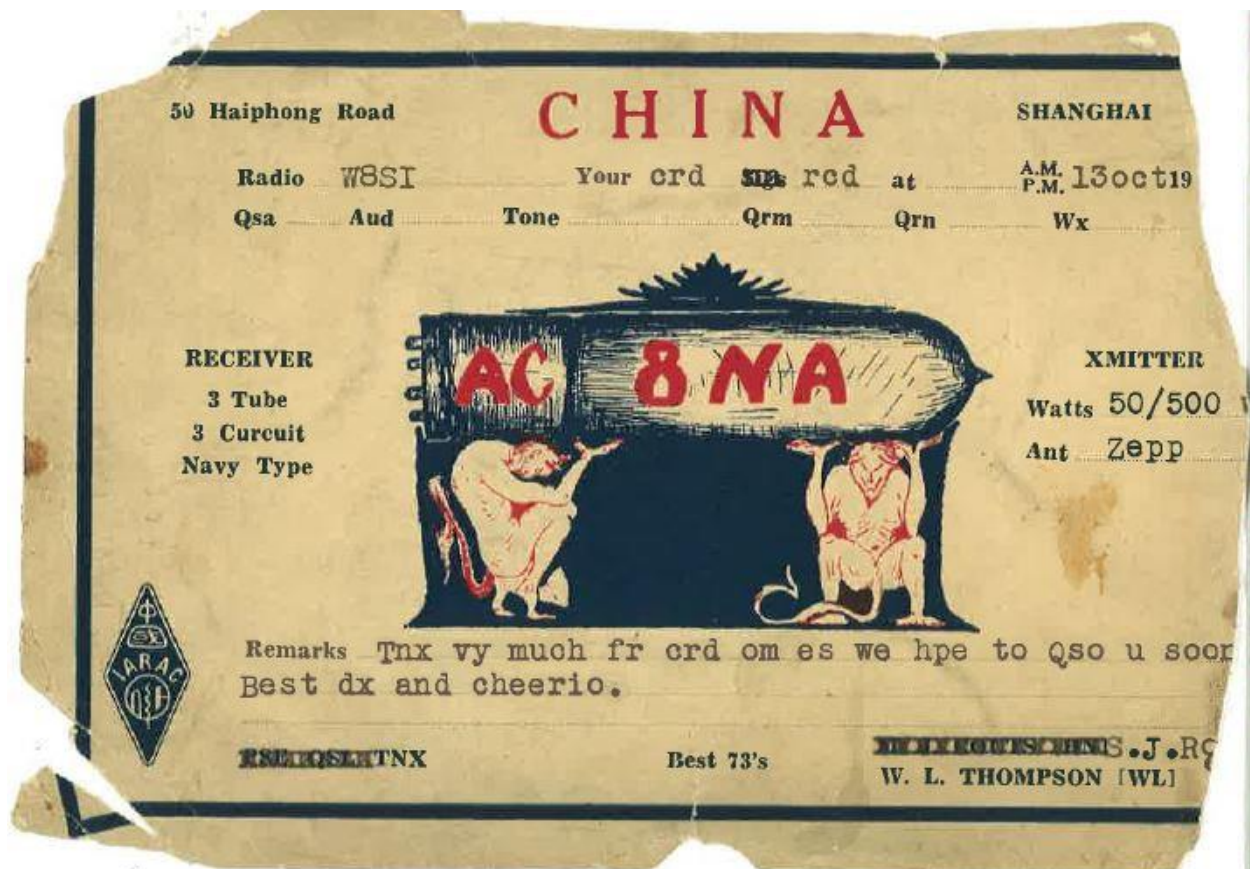
Card 8 - Remarks: Thanks very much for card Old Man and we hope to communicate with you soon. Best distance and cheerio.

8. AC8NA - One hardly has to mention what distinguishes this card from Shanghai, China; it has probably one of the most eye-catching images on it. The centered image and radio letters are standard for a QSL card, but in addition to that, there are hand-drawn images of two red demons holding up a ham radio tube featuring the radio letters AC8NA. After researching, I've come to the conclusion that perhaps the demons holding up the tubes aren't supposed to represent evil at all but something referred to as "Maxwell's Demon" (Bennett and Schumacher 3).

James Clerk Maxwell, a Scottish physicist, developed theories about the electromagnetic field in 1873 that led to the development of radio usage (Maxwell 1). Maxwell, the physicist, also created the idea of "demons," or "imaginary supernatural

creatures" which could participate in theories about physics (Bennett and Schumacher 3). These demons were outside of physical properties for purposes of theory. Although Maxwell invented these demons for work on thermodynamics, perhaps the sender of this card used this image on his QSL card as a way to honor Maxwell and his contribution to radio.

If my conclusion is accurate, then perhaps radio operators in the 1920s and '30s understood the reference but to observers from the present, the image is confusing and a bit disconcerting. The relationship between the image and text doesn't "work" because the text is rather cheerful and the image is rather chilling. If the radio operators of the time didn't understand the reference to Maxwell's Demon, the sender's ethos hasn't been well established.

Another possibility about the meaning of the image is that the operator, seemingly not of Chinese descent because of his language use and surname, is making a political reference to the Chinese government. He could be saying that the government is controlling the usage of amateur radio waves. During the 1920s and '30s, the government was not considered communist in nature but did not allow for general freedoms for the citizens. The operator may have viewed the interference of the government as devilish or demonic.

If the possibility of politics has entered the discourse on this card, then the card exhibits two types of discourse that are against the standards of ham radio. The devils or demons are indicative of religious and political vernacular entering the conversation, and the operator is resisting the standards set for the ham radio discourse community.

This card, although cannot be seen via an electronic image, is larger than the standard QSL cards used. The normal size of a QSL card is 5 1/2 x 3 1/2. This card is 6 1/2 x 4 1/2. Of all the cards in the collection, only eight are larger than normal.

Discussion

Using the description of rhetoric as posed by I.A. Richards, that rhetoric is a "philosophic enquiry into how words work in discourse," was a deliberate choice on my part because of my interest in how the text on the cards worked to establish discourse, community, and ethos (4). Opening up the definition of rhetoric to expand beyond "truth" or "persuasion" allows for a broader view of things that are rhetorical. If one where to only view rhetoric as persuasion or truth, then the rhetorical meaning, or how words work in discourse, of QSL cards would be lost. Expanding what is rhetorical allows for this study to be performed and for it to be academic in nature. For instance, when examining the cards to evaluate the sender's ethos, one could look for humor in the text and/or images or notice pride in the sender's place of origin. The varying nature of operators' ethos is typical within this community despite the standards that they all follow.

Despite the varying ethos' presented by the operators, this does not mean that rhetoric, in the form of "truth" or persuasion is not present on the cards. It just means that the focus of this study wasn't on that aspect of the study of rhetoric. According to Richards, persuasion is "only one of the many aims of rhetoric," and I found that the persuasion present on these cards came in the form of the senders' ethos: the operators' word choice of the pre-printed and written text and the images displayed the character and beliefs of the sender (16). This ethos helps to inform the recipient as to the sender's values and interests. Therefore, to answer the first of my research questions, "What is the rhetorical meaning of these cards?," I would describe the cards as showing the senders' ethos in the form of images and text and that further, the interplay of the images and text forms a discourse with the sender and the receiver. In

addition, the reason behind the discourse is to assist in forming a community. There is also a common rhetoric in the text pre-printed on the cards. This pre-printed text is usually in the form of technical discourse and one can assume is pre-printed to save time and effort since the technical information is a standard by which all the hams use. The hand-written text took varying forms, from both personal and humorous to strictly technical. The cards also indicate both reciprocal and linear types of messaging which assist in establishing meaning (Rogan 15-16). Discourse occurs to exchange technical information and to establish relationships (see Figure 3 in Literature Review.)

The operators may have printed and written the QSLs in this way, the technical information pre-printed and the more personal or funny text handwritten, because they were aware of their audience. Based upon the radio communication, an operator could discern whether a recipient would be open to humor. If so, the sender could allow his ethos to be humorous, if that was his nature. If the sender couldn't tell, opening up with humor may or may not have been well received and this could result in a judgement of his ethos within the community. Despite this, it seems as if humor, despite the published standard that humor or artistic flourishes were discouraged, resisted said standard (Codella, "Call and Card"). Humor is often used to form relationships and to establish place in a community so it is no wonder that the operators quickly ignored the standards set by Pyle in his 1924 tract, "Amateur DX Report Cards" (Codella, "Call and Card"). In addition, despite many of the cards showing signs of humor, the cards still served the same purpose of their exchange. This community was and is able to share the same ritual of exchanging QSLs that are different in the way they are presented.

The community of ham radio operators is a well-defined community with set parameters; one must have a ham radio and know how to use it. Within this community, there are different subgroups of people. Some enjoy capturing far-off radio waves, DXers, and some enjoy communicating with others via the radio (Nevradakis 69). Some DXers also enjoy communicating with others from far-off areas and those people enjoy being a part of both subgroups. The focus of this study was on the hams who enjoy catching far-off radio waves operated by others and who also enjoy sending and receiving QSL cards. The community-at-large is defined by such; one must be a ham operator who sends and collects QSL cards. Specifically, the study was focused on a collection of cards by one operator from approximately 90 years ago. These cards exhibit the signs of a discourse community according to the definitions set forth by Patricia Bizzell and John Swales.

Using these definitions, I was able to answer my second research question, "How do the cards assist in forming a discourse community and community-at-large?" The cards themselves are a vehicle for the discourse and according to Bizzell, the language used by the operators is used to "regulate social interactions both within the group and in its dealing with outsiders (Bizzell 222). The Q code language and technical jargon used by hams in their spoken discourse and on their QSL cards is particular to their group; therefore, a discourse community is established by their shared language. In addition, the hams' language is part of their social behavior, their discourse helps to define their group and is a passage of learning for newcomers, and their language represents their knowledge. Therefore, not only are the cards themselves a sign of being a part of the community, the text and images on the cards assist in defining the

discourse community. Participating in the sending, receiving, and collecting also assist in forming the community.

John Swales is more specific in his definition of a discourse community, and the definition also fits the QSL community. Swales writes that a discourse community has

1. a communality of interest

2. participatory mechanisms

3. information exchange

4. genre-specific discoursal expectations

5. a dynamic towards specialized language

6. a critical mass of expertize (13).

All of these criteria can be applied to the community of ham radio operators and specifically to those who exchange QSL cards, therefore, the cards in this study represent the formation of a discourse community and also represent the original collector's membership into the community-at-large. I stress the original collector's membership because at the time of this writing, I am the owner of the cards. I don't have membership into the community-at-large or the discourse community even though I may understand how the community works.

Further proof of the cards representation of a community is additionally answered in the third research question, "What is the significance and meaning of how the cards are designed with their text and image?" The theories of Gunther Kress and Lester Faigley et al were used to analyze the cards' images, text, and use of common language. The cards were examined for their rhetorical meaning and for signs of community within the QSL cards based upon the use of a common language and upon the text, images and the relationship between the two. The meaning on the cards

helped to establish the sender's ethos and openness to further participation in relationship or friendship. The Japanese QSL card for instance, establishes a pride in country by printing out the musical notes for the Japanese National Anthem, and the Belfast card indicates a strong desire for establishing friendship. Meaning can be established on the cards but sometimes, the meaning is different.

As written previously, social semiotics, per Kress, is the "theory that deals with meaning in all its appearances, in all social occasions, and in all cultural sites" (Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication 2). Therefore, I approached the cards noticing the interaction among the images, colors, fonts, borders, symbols, and text to analyze the meaning exhibited. I also applied the concepts of working with text and images of Faigley et al. The concepts I used for analyzing the QSLs, of the eleven concepts originally introduced, are balance, classification, description, emphasis, and proportion (Faigley et al. 26, 28, 32, 34, 44).

Research into the aspects of the privacy of postcards did leave me with a question regarding some of the "taboo" discourse on QSL cards. While both Nevradakis and Haring both claim that religion and politics are discouraged topics of conversation amongst hams, religious references seem to be present in some of the cards (Nevradakis 80, Haring xii). Cards number 1 and 7 both have the PSE and QSL in the form of a cross in addition to card number 1 referencing the Golden Rule. Card number 6 mentions the Roman God Jupiter in curse form and card number 8 shows images of two demons. Therefore, sometimes the hams do discuss religion just not in a pious manner. Could some members of the QSL and ham community use secret codes or images to show their religious or political preferences? Perhaps crossing the PSE and QSL as seen on the first card in the Analysis chapter was a code to other Christians?

This would open up additional avenues of discourse amongst like-minded individuals. It may be a stretch of the imagination, but the question of secret codes or discourse about discouraged topics could be further studied.

Conclusion

When first deciding to research and analyze the collection, it was difficult to narrow in on just a few of the areas that could be studied. However, the relationships between the images, the text, and the code, or different use of language was readily apparent; for it is not just what a person writes that establishes meaning, but how they write it. To find a collection such as these 140 QSL cards is unusual and to study them has been a joy as a scholar and as a relative of the collection's owner. Overall, the subject of this study proved to be one full of possibilities for further study in the field of rhetoric and social semiotics, in the study of community, and in the study of the relationship between the uses of different languages. Despite seeming to focus on just a few areas of study, this analysis was still a bit broad. Narrowing the topic to perhaps just social semiotics would have provided more depth to the research.

My understanding of rhetoric has deepened due to this research. Although persuasion is present in forms of discourse, noticing how the words and images work together is what can enhance ones understanding of meaning and see the persuasion. Persuasion does not have to be overt; it can simply be allowing ones ethos to show for purposes of discourse and understanding. The QSL cards in this collection exhibit this type of rhetoric: the rhetoric of how the words and images work together to form meaning. In addition, applying the academic definitions of a discourse community to this collection of QSLs was eye-opening to the research potential and importance of this type of discourse. The challenge of applying modern-day definitions to historical documents is well worth the time and effort and only strengthens and hones the academic definitions we use.

This project opens up a new avenue of research for all in the study of rhetoric. Not only are there further items to study with these historical documents, but comparing them with modern usage of QSLs would be appropriate. This type of comparison would not only strengthen what we know about discourse communities and rhetoric but could possibly open up new avenues of research. Also, studying the verbal discourse or the Morse code usage of hams in addition to their use of written text is a wide area to study. Is there a difference between what is spoken and what is written? What is the significance, outside of collecting QSL cards, of receiving written confirmation of a spoken conversation? These and other research questions are rich with untapped knowledge.

On a personal note, I have established a connection with the grandfather I never met. This collection adds a depth to his character that was missing from the stories I've heard from my mother and grandmother. My grandfather's passion for the ham radio community and the collection of QSL cards was different from what was lacking in him as a husband and parent. Learning to see different aspects of a person is always a humbling experience, and this is a lesson that I continue to learn.

- 73 (Best Regards)

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