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What Makes Satire Effective?
Metaphors about Victorian Culture and Explorations of Dimensionality in *Flatland*

The goal of satire is to critique particular elements of an institution, corporation, or society, in the hope of shaming the object of the satire into improvement. Often, the author of the satire weaves elaborate metaphorical and allegorical systems, and uses these systems to present a parody of society. However, it is not immediately clear what makes certain satires more effective, or even how to judge the effectiveness of a satire. In this paper, I will investigate the metaphor systems that Edwin Abbott uses in *Flatland* to satirize Victorian culture. Although *Flatland* did not produce substantial effects when it was first published in 1884, the book has enjoyed lasting contributions over the years to society, philosophy, and mathematics.

Flatland is full of fascinating, layered metaphor systems. “Layer 1” is the system of internal mappings within the universe of Flatland. “Layer 2” is the structural relationship between the frame of Flatland and the frame of Victorian culture. “Layer 3” contains an analysis about our understanding of abstract concepts. Abbott uses metaphor and a two-dimensional world to satirize Victorian social hierarchies, religious and moral ideology, and gender dichotomies. In the process of satirizing social stratification and the oppression of knowledge, he explores complex concepts like dimensionality, and unknowingly contributes to the notions of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Embodied Cognition.

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I. About Flatland

Flatland, the fictional universe after which the book is named, is entirely two-dimensional. Its inhabitants are all geometric figures, and the narrator is A. Square (a square). A “constant attraction to the South” (1, pg. 6) serves as a compass for the inhabitants, and is also the first explicit metaphor we encounter. Flatland is conceptualized as a compressed version of a three-dimensional universe; because there is no “up” or “down”, this “constant attraction to the South” is a substitute, or metaphor, for gravity. The lack of a conceptual understanding for “up” and “down” becomes important in the formation of Flatland’s conventional metaphors.

The social structure of Flatland, like Victorian culture, is very hierarchical. In Victorian culture, women had the “lowest” status (being perceived as fundamentally inferior to men), followed by soldiers, workmen, the middle class, professional men and gentlemen, nobility, and religious figures. Flatland has the same social structure. However, the class of a particular inhabitant is determined solely by the number of his sides:

“Our Women are Straight Lines...Our Soldiers and Lowest classes of Workmen are Triangles with two equal sides...Our Middle Class consists of Equilateral Triangles...Gentlemen are Squares or Pentagons...Next above these come the Nobility, beginning at Six-Sided Figures, and from thence rising in the number of their sides...when the number of the sides becomes so numerous that the figure cannot be distinguished from a circle, he is included in the Circular or Priestly order.” (1, pg. 8-9)

It appears as though class is inferred from the number of sides, but it also seems as though Abbott is positing a more causal role of the number of sides, which strikes at the heart of deterministic notions regarding social stratification in Victorian culture. More importantly,

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the *language* and metaphors that the inhabitants use to discuss status is inherently two-dimensional. In English, we use the metaphor:

STATUS is VERTICALITY

HIGHER SOCIAL STATUS is UP

LOWER SOCIAL STATUS is DOWN

IMPROVING SOCIAL STATUS is RISING UP

WORSENING SOCIAL STATUS is SINKING OR FALLING DOWN

In Flatland, however, the inhabitants use the metaphor:

STATUS is NUMBER OF SIDES

HIGHER SOCIAL STATUS is MORE SIDES

LOWER SOCIAL STATUS is LESS SIDES

IMPROVING SOCIAL STATUS is INCREASING THE NUMBER OF SIDES

WORSENING SOCIAL STATUS is DECREASING THE NUMBER OF SIDES

Social status is improved by a “Law of Nature”, which dictates that a son will have one more side than his father. The social hierarchy is thus perpetuated every generation. Similarly, The elite classes of Victorian culture believed that they were *born* with intrinsic superiority and the right to “rule”. This “Law of Nature” represents the fact that often, members of the middle class could purchase a place among the elite if the elite class was experiencing some financial class. In Flatland, many of the “Polygonals” are unable to produce children, so the hierarchy must be maintained with the Law of Nature.

Interestingly, Abbott uses the verticality metaphor to explain this point: “So that each generation shall *rise* one step in the scale of development and nobility” (1, pg. 9). This sort of meta-analysis of the text reinforces the idea that these metaphors are engrained in

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our conceptual understanding of status. Although Abbott has devised an alternate metaphor system, he cannot refrain from using conventional metaphors.

This “status is number of sides” metaphor also demonstrates an important point about the need for an experiential framework with which to conceptualize abstract knowledge. We often use metaphors to understand abstract concepts in terms of concrete ones. Thus, “status” is conceptualized in terms of “up” or “down”. However, the inhabitants of Flatland have no experiential understanding of “up” or “down”, so they must conceptualize “status” as something they do understand. Implicitly tied to notions of status are ideas about intelligence and reasoning power. Thus, we also have the metaphor: “INTELLIGENCE IS NUMBER OF SIDES”, which has similar mappings. More intelligent shapes have more sides, and less intelligent shapes have fewer sides. The elite class in Victorian culture considered themselves more intelligent than lower classes.

This lack of conceptual knowledge of a third-dimension affects other domains besides status, as well. Many of our conventional metaphors are tied to notions of verticality: “More is up”, “Good is up”, “Moral is up”, “Legal is up”, and so on. If status in Flatland is conceptualized in terms of number of sides, one might expect these other domains to have similar or related metaphors. The system for conceptualizing “morality” in Flatland is indeed related, but it is understood more in terms of the *regularity* of a shape’s sides and angles:

“Irregularity of Figure mean with us the same as, or more than, a combination of moral obliquity and criminality with [dwellers of a three-dimensional realm], and is treated accordingly...he is destroyed, if he is found to exceed the fixed margin of deviation...what wonder that human nature, even its best and purest, is embittered and perverted by such surroundings!” (1, pg. 30).

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In our society, we have many metaphors for morality. We conceptualize morality in terms of cleanliness, verticality, healthiness, straightness, and even accounting. In Flatland, the metaphor is:

MORALITY is REGULARITY OF SIDES AND ANGLES

A MORAL PERSON has EQUAL SIDES AND EQUAL ANGLES

AN IMMORAL PERSON has INEQUAL SIDES AND INEQUAL ANGLES

By relating morality to some intrinsic physical quality, Abbott accomplishes two very important things. First of all, he demonstrates that morality in Victorian culture was often viewed as predetermined. Certain individuals, such as those with mental illness and physical handicaps or deformities, were deemed to be harmful to society, and they were cast out or even killed. Second, he shows how much Victorian culture emphasized conformity with central, religious notions of morality. Those who failed to conform to the rigid codes of behavior and submissiveness to the Church – “Irregulars” in Flatland – were shunned and castigated.

There was also an understanding that, past a certain point, an individual’s soul and morality was irredeemable, though redemption was considerably easier for the elite classes. The Square explains this in terms of the “art of healing”: “some of our highest and ablest men...have during their earliest days labored under deviations as great as, or even greater than, forty-five minutes” (1, pg. 31). The physicians of Flatland are sometimes able to surgically fix irregular angles and sides, but only in two cases: 1) the sons of elite polygons; 2) the leaders of rebellions of Isosceles triangles, to quell the rebellion. This brings us to the next section – an analysis of how these Flatland metaphors are derived.

II. The Derivation of Metaphors in Flatland

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When we analyze metaphors in linguistics, we attempt to determine *why* a certain metaphor was formed. For example, the concepts of quantity and verticality are associated at an early age, due to experiences like watching the amount of water in a glass *rise* as more is poured in. Often, this analysis reveals more basic metaphors underlying the mappings between these frames. Such is the case with Flatland's metaphors.

There are several possible answers to the question: "why does the number of sides on a polygon affect its status and intelligence?" First of all, the number of sides is a simple measurement to distinguish between shapes. The fact that *more* sides is associated with a better status could be dependent on the more basic metaphor: "POWER is SIZE". This metaphor is carried over from our own language – "Some day an American president, "the world's most powerful man", is going to have to figure out that modern electronic media is *bigger* than he is" (2). Here, power is conceptualized in terms of size. It is possible that this understanding of "more is better" drives the status metaphor. However, I believe there is a deeper explanation for Flatland's status and intelligence metaphor, and it has a stronger structural resemblance to Victorian culture. It seems likely that the notion is related to the level of harm that each shape presents to society. Shapes with sharper angles (such as Isosceles triangles, or Lines) are more difficult to see on a two-dimensional plane, so they have a higher probability of puncturing the side of another shape, which results in the immediate destruction of that shape. This is the reason that Isosceles triangles are mostly soldiers. Nobility and Priests are effectively circles, and present little to no physical threat to other shapes. There seems to be an inverse relationship between the number of sides and the level of threat they pose to society:

LEVEL OF THREAT is inversely proportional to NUMBER OF SIDES, such that:

A DANGEROUS INDIVIDUAL has LESS SIDES AND MORE OBTUSE ANGLES

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A REFINED INDIVIDUAL has MORE SIDES AND MORE OBTUSE ANGLES

This explanation provides a much stronger mapping to Victorian culture, so it is preferable to the “power is size” explanation. Recall that “number of sides” is also associated with intelligence, so less intelligent individuals are seen as more dangerous than the reasonable and intelligent upper class (even the terminology for social stratification uses the “status is verticality” metaphor). Similarly, the elite classes in Victorian culture viewed the working classes, and those living in poverty, as possessing below average intelligence and posing a threat to the higher classes. Thus, they perpetuated a system that made it very difficult for lower classes to improve their status, except when the elite explicitly condoned it. This explanation is also internally consistent with the system Abbott outlines in Flatland. According to a Law of Nature, as the intelligence of a member of the working-class increases, their “acute angle shall increase...to the comparatively harmless angle of the Equilateral Triangle” (pg. 11). The “threat” metaphor appears to provide a good explanation both at the level of “Layer 1” (metaphors within Flatland) and “Layer 2” (structural relationships between metaphors in Flatland and Victorian culture).

We must also ask the question: “Why is irregularity viewed as bad or immoral in Flatland?” The mapping at “Layer 2” is obvious – irregularity in Flatland represents mental illness, physical handicaps, or a lack of conformity to religious doctrine in Victorian culture. However, Abbott also constructs an internally consistent explanation within the world of Flatland, which is related to the system by which inhabitants recognize one another. Higher classes recognize other shapes using a technique called “Sight Recognition”, which involves recognizing a shape by the level that the angle it presents is obscured by the fog. The technique assumes that all of the angles are regular; if a shape has irregular angles, it could hide these behind the fog and present its largest angle, to deceive other shapes. This is a

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literal manifestation of the metaphor: DISHONESTY is CONCEALMENT (lying about something is “covering it up”). Irregular shapes, of course, would be prone to this kind of deception, due to their immoral nature (MORALITY is REGULARITY OF ANGLES). If irregular shapes were allowed to exist in society, higher classes would have to resort to “feeling” each of the angles of an approaching shape, which is deemed a “barbaric” practice. The narrator compares the relation between “sight recognition” and “feeling” to “speech” and “hand-alphabet”. In Victorian culture, physical handicaps like deafness were viewed extremely negatively, and as a sign of low class. Thus, Abbott’s “Layer 1” explanation provides further mappings at the higher-level relationship between Flatland and Victorian culture. The reasoning for the “morality” metaphor involves a circular chain of logic, using its supposed validity as a *claim* in an argument for its validity.

III. Women in Flatland

One of the most disturbing and enlightening critiques in the book comes from its satire of the view of women in Victorian culture. Women in Flatland are described as “wholly devoid of brainpower, and [having] neither reflection, judgment nor forethought, and hardly any memory” (1, pg. 15). They are prone to “fits of fury”, for “the passion of the moment predominates, in the Frail Sex” (1, pg. 15). All women are straight Lines, which relegates them to the lowest status in society, because of the metaphor “status is the number of sides”. Due to their one-dimensional nature, women in Flatland can make themselves effectively invisible. Consequently, they are much more dangerous than even the sharpest triangles. This fits neatly into the metaphorical paradigms of: “level of threat to society is inversely proportional to number of sides”. The language used by inhabitants is also internally consistent; words like “invisible” and “unseen” are used to describe dangerous objects and people. It also introduces a new idea:

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LEVEL OF THREAT is inversely proportional to LEVEL OF VISIBILITY

MORE DANGEROUS SHAPES are LESS VISIBLE

LESS DANGEROUS SHAPES are MORE VISIBLE

Ultimately, the reason for this is that something which can be easily perceived can be more easily “known”, which provides us with one of the most important metaphors Abbott uses: “PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE is KNOWLEDGE”. In Flatland, and in our society, we generally accept that if something is perceivable, it is “knowable”. Logically, it does not follow that if something is not perceivable, it is not “knowable”. However, this is the mistake that the inhabitants of Flatland (and, Abbott implies, the inhabitants of Victorian culture) make time and time again. In Flatland, the existence of a third dimension is said to be nonexistent and unknowable, because it cannot be perceived.

The same line of reasoning is used with women in Flatland – because they cannot be perceived, they cannot be known. A Line can easily puncture the side of a Polygon, and the Polygon would not perceive the Line. Consequently, there is a strict “Code” governing their behavior. This “Code” is entirely metaphorical at the explanatory level of “Layer 2”, and represents the analogous codes of etiquette governing female sexuality in Victorian culture. The Flatland Code of female behavior is paraphrased and quoted below:

- (1) Females must enter the houses in a “becoming and respectful manner”, in a separate door from the Men’s door.
- (2) “No female shall walk in any public place without continually keeping up her ‘peace-cry’, under penalty of death” (1, pg. 13)
- (3) Females suffering from a cold or fits are instantly destroyed.

To understand the significance of this Code, we must determine what real-world correlate in Victorian culture maps onto the danger posed by Women. Women in Victorian culture

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were viewed as over-emotional (“fits of fury”), unintelligent, and most importantly, objects of temptation. This was influenced largely by the religious doctrine at the time, which depicted women as leading virtuous men into sin. To avoid this, strict laws were put in place to oppress female sexuality, and women were encouraged to appear chaste and asexual, especially in public, while men were allowed multiple sexual partners. Here, Abbott constructs one of the first major “cross-world” metaphors of the book, in which Victorian culture is the target frame, and Flatland is the source frame. I chose Flatland as the source frame because elements from Victorian culture are conceptualized *in terms of* elements from Flatland. The world of Flatland is a rhetorical and satirical tool to portray the absurdity of the target frame:

FEMALE TEMPTATION is DANGER POSED BY FLATLAND WOMEN

SUCCUMBING TO FEMALE TEMPTATION is DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY FLATLAND LINES

VICTORIAN CULTURE’S CODE OF ETIQUETTE is FLATLAND’S CODE OF BEHAVIOR

The individual rules of Flatland’s Code can also be mapped onto specific rules of etiquette and laws restricting the behavior of women:

SEGREGATION IN VICTORIAN SOCIETY is ENTERING THROUGH A DIFFERENT DOOR (1)

MODEST CLOTHING is THE “PEACE-CRY” (2)

SEXUAL DOUBLE STANDARD is DESTRUCTION OF FEMALES WITH COLDS (3)

Women in Victorian society were not allowed to do many of the activities that men were, especially those that were supposedly sexualized. For example, they were not allowed to swim, rode horses “side-saddle”, and had to wear special suits to ride bicycles. This is conceptualized in terms of the rule that women must enter houses through a different door, to avoid collisions with the men. The “Peace-cry” represents the taboo around the female body; women had to wear modest clothing, and were discouraged from

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even discussing matters of a sexual nature. Those who failed to comply with this were severely punished. Finally, the mandatory destruction of females suffering colds or coughing fits represents the severe double standard concerning sexuality. Recall that the “degree of danger” posed by a female Line is a metaphor for the danger of female temptation. A Line with a cold might violently sneeze and accidentally puncture the side of a Polygon. Similarly, a woman who is perceived to have a predilection towards sex is seen as more “dangerous”, in the sense that she could tempt men to “sinful ways”. Abbott uses these absurd metaphors, as well as a dispassionate, callous way of discussing women, to illustrate how ridiculous he finds the oppression of female sexuality. This is a key element of satire – exaggeration of elements from the target frame, or object of satire.

IV. “Perceptual Experience is Knowledge”

A major theme of *Flatland* is the idea that there exist concepts and forces beyond our immediate perceptual understanding and experience. Abbott takes issue with the strict religious doctrine of the 19th century Church, which refused to accept certain advancements in science and mathematics. In the book, this is conceptualized in terms of the refusal to accept the existence of a third dimension. As noted before, many of our own conventional “verticality” metaphors are replaced with metaphors about two-dimensional planes. This is because the inhabitants of Flatland have no experiential basis to understand the third dimension. Abbott addresses this explicitly in terms of mathematics. When the narrator explains the relationship between a geometric square and an arithmetic square to his grandson, the grandson asks if arithmetic cubes have any geometric significance. The narrator dismisses the question as nonsense, saying, “Geometry has only Two Dimensions” (pg. 66). However, the narrator is later visited by a Sphere from the third dimension. Still, the narrator cannot understand the notion of a third dimension until he experiences it for

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himself. After experiencing “Spaceland”, the narrator attempts to explain dimensionality to his fellow citizens, but he is deemed insane, and locked away. It is revealed that the Circles are aware of the third dimension, but suppress all knowledge of it.

There are many important concepts contained in this series of events. First of all, the suppression of knowledge directly parallels the Church’s suppression of scientific advancement. It is quite possible that this could be a reference to Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, which was published only 15 years before *Flatland*. Second, the description of the appearance of the Sphere in Flatland directly foreshadows the language used almost forty years later to describe theories of dimensionality. In a letter written to *Nature*, William Garnett gives a succinct description of the event:

“Their experience will be that of a circular obstacle gradually expanding or growing, and then contracting, and they will attribute to *growth in time* what the external observer in three dimensions assigns to motion in the third dimension.” (3)

Garnett continues, saying that our experience of “time” could simply be due to motion in the fourth dimension. Incredibly, Abbott seems to have predicted these theories of dimensionality well before their formation. Curiously enough, the same could be said for our metaphors about time. One of the most common conceptual metaphors is: “Time is motion”. Time is an abstract concept that cannot be directly experienced, and so we conceptualize it in terms of motion through space. However, Abbott is showing here that what we understand to be time *really is* motion. Because we lack the perceptual apparatus to experience motion in the fourth dimension, we experience it as “time” – just as the Square perceives motion in the third dimension to be growth over time on a plane. It seems, then, that our metaphoric construal of time is an apt one.

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This is related, of course, to Abbott's main point, which is that just because we cannot perceive something, does not mean it does not exist. The inhabitants of Flatland are unwilling to accept the narrator's testimony because they cannot perceive the third dimension. Metaphor theory aims to dissect the process by which we understand abstract concepts in terms of embodied experiences. Metaphors are useful in cognition and learning because they allow us to grasp complex ideas. The narrator does not give the inhabitants of Flatland a suitable or comprehensible metaphor by which to understand the third dimension, and so they reject the concept altogether. Here, Abbott confronts the following misguided metaphor system:

PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE is KNOWLEDGE

THINGS WHICH ARE PERCEIVED are KNOWABLE

THINGS WHICH ARE UNABLE TO BE PERCEIVED are NOT KNOWABLE

Abbott takes issue with strict religious doctrine that inhibits discovery. His message is not specifically anti-religion (in fact, Abbott was a theologian); rather, he opposes "closed systems" of thought in general. There should always be room in a system – be it political, religious, or scientific – to allow for new discoveries and progress to be made. Towards the end, the narrator writes: "I exist in the hope that these memoirs...may stir up a race of rebels who shall refuse to be *confined* to limited Dimensionality" (pg. 102). "Limited Dimensionality" here refers to much more than just mathematical theories – it refers to any set of theories or beliefs that oppress the formation of new ideas. The use of the word "confined" conjures up strong images of imprisonment and lack of freedom. Thus, Abbott constructs the metaphor:

SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT are CONTAINERS / ROOMS

"CLOSED" SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT are PRISONS OR CAGES

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“OPEN” SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT are EXPANDABLE CONTAINERS OR ROOMS

STRICT DOCTRINES OR DOGMAS are PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS

In this metaphor system, both the proponents of a “closed” system of thought and the victims (those who oppose it, and are punished for doing so) are its prisoners, for different reasons. By endorsing strict and oppressive dogma, proponents limit the potential of their own thoughts and beliefs. In turn, opponents are deemed mentally ill or “menaces” to society. Both are prevented from seeking a Truth “outside” the “prison” of their system of thought. This harkens back to the notion of “Irregular” figures being punished for their nonconformity to the mainstream system of “regularity”. Although that is specifically representative of the treatment of mentally ill or handicapped people in Victorian culture, the same idea can also be mapped onto individuals who don’t “fit neatly” into the system. Women who defied the dichotomized gender roles were severely punished, and many people who opposed the dogma of the Church were imprisoned.

V. Is *Flatland* an effective satire?

When *Flatland* was first released in 1884, it did not have a profound impact on society. It was not ignored completely, but it seems as though much of the satire was lost, or at least ineffective, on the general public. Now, however, *Flatland* is widely recognized, both for its satire and its explorations of dimensionality. Ultimately, I claim that as a piece of writing, *Flatland*'s satire is brilliantly layered, and very effective.

Most satire is inherently metaphorical, which distinguishes it from outright criticism. A good satire takes elements from the target frame – the object of the satire – and portrays them in an absurd, metaphorical light, using elements from a source frame. It is easy to confuse the two frames and assume that the object of the satire is the source frame.

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However, it is important to remember that metaphor involves conceptualizing elements of the TARGET *in terms of* elements and roles from the SOURCE. Similarly, a satire conceptualizes elements of society *in terms of* elements from some society in a “possible world”. Here, elements from the frame of Victorian culture are explained in terms of elements from the frame of Flatland. Additionally, each of the mappings that exist at “Layer 2”, the relation between Flatland and Victorian culture, can be explained at “Layer 1”, which is the set of metaphor systems existing within Flatland.

The world of Flatland is obviously and immediately absurd. It exists on a two-dimensional plane, and is inhabited by geometric shapes of varying sides and sizes. Effective satire introduces the audience to a possible world that seems *impossibly* absurd, so the audience’s first reaction is to distance themselves from this world. However, Abbott then introduces concepts that are familiar and recognizable, and which produce a sense of uneasiness in the audience: a clearly defined hierarchy of social classes, a striking dichotomy between men and women, reliance on religious doctrine, punishments for those who fail to conform, and strict oppression of women’s behavior. All of these elements conspire together to show the audience that perhaps this world, absurd as it may seem, is not as different as they may like to think. These mappings occur at what I call “Layer 2” – conceptualizations of Victorian culture in terms of Flatland’s culture.

What makes the satire even more effective is the system of internally consistent mappings that Abbott constructs at “Layer 1”. These reflections of Victorian culture have explanations of their own, which are equally absurd. Status is metaphorically and literally construed in terms of the number of sides on a polygon. This is because the number of sides is inversely proportional to the danger that polygon poses to the rest of society. Irregular figures are punished or destroyed because they render the system of “sight

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recognition” unfeasible, an argument which uses as a *premise* the idea that irregular figures are immoral and deceptive. There are strict laws and codes of etiquette in place to control the behavior of women, because the fact that they are straight Lines makes them very dangerous to other shapes.

The point here is that the world of Flatland exists independently, with all of its own metaphor systems, and justifications for those metaphor systems to arise. These justifications, however, also mirror the justifications for similar systems in place in Victorian culture. The most striking example is the code of etiquette regulating female behavior. Once we recognize that Abbott is mapping “danger posed by female Lines” to “danger posed by female sexuality”, the purpose of the “Code” becomes clear. The audience also recognizes the corresponding absurdity in the world being satirized.

Flatland is an effective satire because of its elaborate network of metaphors. If Abbott only offered us “Layer 2”, the book would simply be a caricature of Victorian culture, and the message of the satire would not be as immediately clear. The reader might reflect that, though humorous, the world of Flatland is not necessarily very much like his or her own. However, Abbott also explains the emergence of these metaphor systems. These explanations follow the same absurd lines of reasoning, but they also provoke questions and further reflection in the reader. Upon recognizing the relations between Flatland and Victorian culture, the reader is forced to question *why* certain elements of his or her own society exist. This process often illuminates the absurdity of these elements of society. Towards the end of the book, Abbott essentially poses the question: “What ‘closed’ systems of thought do you subscribe to?” This ensures the timelessness of the satire – the Victorian era has come and gone, but unfortunately, closed-mindedness and dogma has not. *Flatland’s* message is still relevant.

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Having established that *Flatland* is an effective satire, we can finally answer the question: “What determines the effectiveness of a satire?” First of all, an effective satire maps elements from the “satire” frame to the object of satire. Most effective satire portrays these elements in an absurd or exaggerated light. Still, the metaphorical relation must be clear, so that the audience does not get lost in the satire’s absurdity and ignore its message. Second, an effective satire constructs internal metaphor systems *within* the world of the satire. These metaphor systems mirror their analogs in the object of satire. Importantly, the satire should explain or contain information on the derivation of these metaphor systems. By demonstrating the absurd lines of reasoning leading to a certain metaphoric paradigm, the satire forces readers to examine how they derived their own metaphor systems. Finally, truly great satires often transcend the boundaries of time and historical eras by asking questions that are relevant to every audience. The central issues in *Flatland*, which concern perception and conceptual understanding, will likely remain important issues for many years.

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