

PROLOGUE

Although it was researched and written in the 1960's, *The Unattached Society* is far more than a mere period piece. Readers of this report will readily be able to discern phenomena that are remarkably similar to those reported here. Certainly, any reader who has access to virtually any major Western city will immediately recognise the visual order of 'Skid Row': indeed, amongst other things, this study did much to initiate the consideration of social order in terms of its visual availability. Further exploration of the narratives recounted by contemporary homeless people would, without doubt, yield many commonalities with those of Rose's subjects in Larimer Street, so faithfully preserved here.

However, the contemporary relevance of and continuities in this study extend beyond these specific substantive and analytic matters. Edward Rose, the prime mover in the Larimer Street project, has been both witness to and participant in many of the major developments in the social and psychological sciences for almost three-quarters of this century. He is still working and his studies *The Werald* and *The Worulde*¹ and his 1992 paper at the University of Amsterdam Conference on Ethnomethodological and Conversation Analytic Research may be counted as the most recent summation of those experiences. However, although it is of an earlier decade, *The Unattached Society* holds a similar status. It comprises a particularly clear and representative example of the analytic position, the *working* position, that Rose, in his independent fashion, had created in the light of these developments. Along with his foundational paper 'The English Record of a Natural Sociology'², this study stands as an empirical study of the discursive availability the world, the standing transparency of human arrangements. In this respect, his work prefigures some contemporary postmodernist and post-structuralist perspectives, though is also elides many of their pitfalls³. This transparency of the world is matched by the sheer clarity of expression in *The Unattached Society*. Rose's choice of an unpretentious, non-mystificatory, publicly-accessible vocabulary in this report is not just happenstance and breaks with almost all the major traditions in social science, including those mentioned above. Rose does not pull the ladder up behind him: his own study remains firmly in and of the world.

¹ E. Rose: *The Werald*. Greeley, Colorado, U.S.A: The Waiting Room Press, (P.O. Box 83, Greeley, Colorado 80630) and *The Worulde* Greeley, Colorado: The Waiting Room Press, 1993 (address as in previous reference).

² E. Rose: 'The English Record of a Natural Sociology', *American Sociological Review*, 25:2, 1960 (April).

³ For a systematic consideration of the affinities and distinctions between Rose's work and postmodernist and post-structuralist studies, see Roger S. Slack, *Varieties of Sociological Reflexivity*, Unpublished PhD. Thesis in Sociology, Faculty of Economics and Social Studies, University of Manchester, 1996, Chapter 3, pp. 160-224.

Rose has, undeniably, invented his own approach but it is nonetheless worthwhile sketching some of the influences on his intellectual development, if only for the practical purposes of 'placing this approach: certainly, his work is by no means reducible to these antecedents, which anyway are diverse and varied.

Edward L. Rose is Emeritus Professor in the Sociology Department, University of Colorado at Boulder. He spent his post-World War II career in that department and in the Institute of Behavioral Science in that university - an institute of which he was a founder. There he developed the distinctive, radically-naturalistic approach that he termed 'The Ethno-Inquiries', and, more specifically, 'Ethnonomy' - this designation being, for ethnography, the etymological equivalent of astronomy, (the study of arrangements pertaining between members of a culture rather than those of the stellar variety). *The Unattached Society* is a notable example of this approach.

During his time at the University of Colorado, Rose not only developed his own free-standing approach but also actively participated in the formation of a related, and also methodologically radical, development in Sociology, namely that which gave rise to Ethnomethodology and its eventual twin approach, Conversation(al) Analysis. Indeed, it is a little-known fact that one of the major figures of an early generation of ethnomethodologists, Egon Bittner, worked on Rose's Larimer Street research team having been sponsored by Rose himself. Bittner published some well-known work on police activities in that setting⁴. Rose's Ethno-Inquiries and Ethnonomy share several elective affinities with those approaches. Each of these approaches, in its own way, espoused a non-mentalistic, non-ironic stance and espoused the claim that the mastery of natural language was at the heart of social life, that social order was, in myriad ways, linguistically constituted in and through members' ordinary, conjoint activities.

Rose, however, pursues these claims in a distinctive way and - largely through his graduate students - developed a school of thought that was largely based in the mountain states of the USA. Some of the Larimer Street research team were, indeed, to become members of that school of thought, pursuing a radically-naturalistic sociology.

A most singular feature of Rose's approach to the 'wording of the world' involves, *inter alia*, an etymological approach, (see, e.g., Rose 1960, *op cit.*), so it would not, perhaps, be amiss were I to point out some of the 'etymological' features of his own approach. Rose gained a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology and a Master's degree in Social Institutions at the

⁴ E. Bittner: 'Police Discretion in the Emergency Apprehension of Mentally Ill Persons'. *Social Problems* vol. 14, (1967), pp. 278-92 and E. Bittner: 'The Police on Skid Row'. *American Sociological Review*, vol. 32, (1967), pp. 699-715.

University of California, Berkeley and his PhD. in Economics at Stanford University: many social sciences were at that time conducted under the *aegis* of Economics. During the course of these studies, Rose was intellectually involved with such major anthropologists as Kroeber, Lowie and Radin, such methodologically-conscious historians as F. J. Teggart,⁵ learning theorists in psychology such as Tolman and many other foundational figures who set the terms in which their respective disciplines were pursued in the twentieth century.

In the University of Frankfurt - am - Main, Rose worked on animal behaviour with Max Wertheimer: Wertheimer's son Michael was eventually to become a colleague of Rose's at the University of Colorado, Boulder. In *The Unattached Society*, these diverse associations find their expression in, for instance, Rose's concern for what, in this study, he terms the 'psycho-social-economic problems' of the men on Skid Row.

Rose himself has frequently invoked the affinities of his own analytic work with that of scholars with whom he was, in one way or another, associated. His links with W. I. Thomas, one of the founders of American Sociology (especially in its naturalistic forms) in this century, clearly established one set of affinities, - particularly with regard to Thomas' arguments concerning the consequentially of the 'definition of the situation' by the parties to that situation. This initiated a move toward the taking seriously of 'the member's/native's point of view', an attitude that Rose's work greatly advances.

In his fortnight-long visit to the Sociology Department of the University of Manchester in Autumn 1994 and in his talk to the Manchester Ethnography Group during that time, Rose also emphasized the influence of Florian Znaniecki, Thomas' collaborator in the classic, multi-volume *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. Znaniecki's conception of the subject matter of sociology as essentially comprising 'cultural' data was expressed in his notion of the 'humanistic coefficient': for Znaniecki, in this phase of his work, the Sociologist's data (social actions) were already part of ordinary peoples' cultural experience and were shaped by that experience.⁶ This led Rose in his Amsterdam paper to refer to his sociological concerns as 'hermeneutic' in character in at least the sense that his analytic statements are essentially interpretations of interpretations.

In this context, Rose also recalls an incident which brought about a sudden realization. He was with his tutor, the anthropologist Paul Radin, who was at the time studying the kinship system of the Porno tribe of Native Americans, north of San Francisco. Observing Radin

⁵ To be sure, Teggart's studies have been notable for his willingness to discuss theory and method, a trait not always found amongst historians. Consequently, discussions of Teggart's work are themselves frequently theoretical and methodological in tenor: see, for instance, the comments on Teggart's book *Rome and China* made by A. R. Louch in *Explanation and Human Action*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, p. 8.

⁶ See F. Znaniecki's book *The Method of Sociology*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934.

sitting on a fence talking with his 'informant', Rose realized that when all the technicized idealizations of 'research method' were stripped away, fieldwork consisted, in the final analysis, of mundane conversation occasioned in utterly casual and contingent ways.

Rose drew several lessons from this experience. Firstly, it convinced him of the need to focus upon ordinary activities rather than upon the exotic, the bizarre or esoteric - matters that come to the fore (often artifactually) when 'difference' and 'distinction' become subject to hyperbole and come to be accorded privilege as over against other aspects of social organization as intersubjectively given. Rose was later to refer to his work as the study of 'mundanity'. This study of worldly (or 'ordinary - worldly') phenomena was also, and essentially, the study of natural communication and of the 'natural sociology' that was made available in and through that communication, of how people routinely 'defined' their world in ordinary-language terms. People did this as part of their everyday transactions, transactions they carried through as knowledgeable participants.

'Fieldwork' had essentially the same status and character as these transactions. This claim is not to devalue fieldwork, it is to revalue it and to strip it of vacuous sociological pretension. Secondly, and derivatively, this created in Rose's work a tendency to disaffiliate with the mystifications that were part of 'professional sociology's stock-in-trade'. Correlatively, it led Rose to insist upon the essentially worldly status of his won work.⁷ In a strong sense, his observation on Radin's fieldwork led him to a similar position to that of Louch - decades before Louch formulated it in his own way, namely:

The results of this preoccupation with methodology, i.e. what is taken to be the scientific form of any investigation, have been, in my view, disastrous in the disciplines investigating human behaviour. It has led to a formulation of methodological codes for investigation, in which everyone adds to or subtracts something from the code but no-one applies it. It has led some sociologists and psychologists to design their studies in accordance with some conception of proper form and almost wholly without reference to the subject matter: in consequence the putative laws are often thinly disguised tautologies... To put it in a form acceptable to sociologists: methodological soundness is inversely proportional to factual significance'⁸

One can, perhaps, discern echoes of Znaniecki in those comments but one can certainly hear echoes of Rose's position. Indeed, *The Unattached Society* itself comprises an example of Rose's position on adequacy to the subject matter. The result is an antidote to analytic

⁷ In this regard, I suspect that I am, at least in part, operating in bad faith. Whilst acknowledging the primacy of Rose's concern, I still seek to address the (perhaps secondary) necessity of 'placing' Rose's work *vis-à-vis* professional sociology and related disciplines.

⁸ Louch, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

The way in which Rose (in 'How to Read This Document') accords both priority to the first-person accounts of the parties to Larimer Street ('The Strip') - the men themselves and other persons whose jobs or other responsibilities bring them to an involvement with the men - is indicative of Rose's methodological position. For Rose, it is these parties' intersubjective experience of this 'Skid Row' that counts, for (of course) the social settings of Larimer Street, as with all social settings, are intersubjectively constituted: such settings are realizations of a linguistically-organized 'natural sociology' in action.

Indeed, Larimer Street and beyond comprise what Rose has elsewhere described as a 'well-formulated world, which is to say a well thought-out world'. 'Expert knowledge' is accorded to parties to the street including, focally, the men themselves. So often in sociology and anthropology do we see parties to a given social setting defined as somehow naïve, uncomprehending, somehow labouring under a misconception or even an illusion about the setting. This assumption is often the prolegomenon to the academic 'expert's' provision of correctives to lay conceptions - correctives that furnish a more 'literal', 'adequate' or 'objective' characterization of that setting.

To this ironic project Rose opposes his own, which, as I have observed, necessarily involves interpretations. The presentation of the men on Larimer Street and those with occupational or other involvements on that Street, is that they are knowledgeable about their world, that they have sophisticated 'inside knowledge' about it, and that this knowledge, as enunciated, furnishes *the* datum for sociology. Their first-person accounts (and Rose is perhaps the first to record the plurivocal nature of the various accounts) are treated as manifesting such knowledge and this knowledge is not to be 'second-guessed' by the professional social-scientific analyst. Rose's ethnographic statements are thus grounded in and are the precipitate of the oral accounts of parties to 'The Strip'.

We have some presaging of Rose's treatment of people as knowledgeable in Nels Anderson's well-known early 'Chicago School' ethnography of hobos or tramps.¹¹ Anderson notes that one major feature of the everyday life-experience of the hobo is boredom and the consequent seeking out of distractions both large and small in public areas - distractions that 'get him through the day'. Given some of the images of the homeless that are still to be found (both in the mass media and in academia) as we approach the twenty-first century, many might still approach such an observation with a certain amount of surprise and scepticism. The conventional image of incompetence that is conveyed is not conducive to seeing the homeless as the 'kind of people' who *could* conceivably be bored, who *could* possibly

be motivated to seek out matters that engage their interest, and, indeed, as taking - and able to take - a competent interest in passing events.

It seems unlikely that Anderson could have arrived at such an observation from the models of society-membership that predominated in post World War I sociology, still less most of our fancy *fin de siècle* equivalents. Instead, the observation came from Anderson's own time as a hobo, from the 'inside knowledge' yielded by this first-person experience. For a number of years, Anderson had not been a participant observer and *bona fide* sociologist: instead, he had been an observing participant and *bona fide* hobo.

One might conceive of Rose's work as methodologically radicalizing the 'insider's *aperçu*'. Though his focus on language as a vehicle for intersubjectivity, he shows how 'inside knowledge' is anything but private: it is there to be noted, to be described if only sociologists adopt the appropriate attitude to it. This is the significance of Rose's having taken the 'linguistic turn' - something that Anderson had not taken.

Quite early in his academic career, Rose had begun to conceive of society-members' mastery of ordinary language as at the core of their shared everyday knowledge and experience. Rose also focalizes the actions that arise from that knowledge and experience and the objects that are constituted through it - as he puts it, "people and the things they have to do with": there is an almost deceptive simplicity to his formulations.

One might, indeed, see Rose's entire subsequent career as exploring in depth various methodological options exploring the subtle ways in which language figured so pivotally in issues of cultural knowledge and experience. These options were highly innovative, including i) the diachronic analysis of an evolved English-language 'natural sociology' (Rose, *op.cit.*, 1960), ii) exercises in the creation of small languages and therefore - inevitably but telling - associated microcultures that refract on our own Anglophone culture, and iii) ethnographic analyses of a range of phenomena from the linguistically-accountable worlds of drugs users to the work done by users of telephone directories.¹²

As I have said above, a *leitmotif* that emerges from this study is that of the linguistically-accomplished reflexive availability of society. One of Rose's reports, *A Looking-Glass Conversation in the Rare Languages of Sez and Pique*¹³ express very well that generic issue, and places the 'small languages' exercise itself in the reflexive mode. *The Unattached*

¹¹ N. Anderson: *The Hobo*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923.

¹² Andrew P. Carlin (Department of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling, Scotland) has produced an impressively comprehensive bibliography and professional profile of Rose's work, to be published in a forthcoming issue of *Human Studies: A Journal for Philosophy and the Human Sciences* edited by R. Watson. The textual outcomes, both published and unpublished, of these and other of Rose's projects, are set out in Carlin's bibliography. I should like to thank Andrew Carlin for his patient and extensive assistance and advice on very many aspects of this Prologue.

¹³ Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1967. This is only one of a series of 'small languages' reports. Slack (*op.cit.*) Ch. 3, offers an excellent description and discussion of the significance of Rose's 'Small Languages' studies.

Society is part of Rose's broader examination of the way in which the parties to a social setting render transparent that selfsame setting, and do so 'from within'.

The notion of the various parties to Larimer Street commenting on the setting from within it yields a considerable bounty for professional ethnographic work. Not least amongst the benefits is the treatment of Larimer Street not as a bounded entity *per se* but as being very much a part of the broader city and society at large. Whether as a pragmatic device or as an empirical claim, many conventional ethnographies have posited a closure or boundedness to the field under scrutiny, focusing upon 'boundary maintenance' and the like, more or less irrespective of research subjects' own conceptions. Rose finds that any such boundaries in Larimer Street are at the very least semi-permeable: the links with the wider city and broader society are discursively-available in the accounts of the men themselves regarding "how they ended up on Larimer Street", the health services and various city officials and workers who figure in their lives, and the like. The closer the analyst stays to these accounts, the less can s/he analytically reify social boundaries.

Whilst Rose does not spend much time on other methodologies, he does show a concern for the issues surrounding the basic counting operations concerning the phenomena on the street, particularly of the kind that is required both of local and national government agencies and by social scientists such as urbanists. He emphasizes that although linguistic categorizations are crucial organizing devices on Skid Row, there is a considerable amount of 'confusion' and 'slippage' in the categorial identities that Larimer Street men assign to each other. There is a central issue of multiple categorization, of transfers of category-incumbency and so on, with the result that public identities may shift even within the course of a single day and anyway are subject to plurivocal variations in definition. This renders even the most elementary operations of survey work particularly problematic and, derivatively, throws a great deal of indeterminacy into survey data. A survey of Larimer Street had been carried out by urbanists just a year before Rose and his team arrived there. Again, the issue is that survey analysts count on lay categorizations as a tacit resource.

The issue of the discursive availability of social arrangements also bears on a matter that is increasingly embraced by, (or, alternatively, has been forced upon), 'the disciplines of social science in Britain', namely the warranting of practical recommendations. Of course, for many sociologists, this raises no special concern: they are content to stipulate recommendations *ex cathedra* in their capacity as 'experts' holding technical knowledge. But, for Rose, it is the Larimer Street residents themselves (and other parties to 'the Strip') who are the experts on the nature and amelioration of their world. Rose grounds his

recommendations in their orientations, and in consequence achieves an epistemological and methodological continuity as between the way he conducts his analysis and the way he adduces his recommendations.

Too often in sociological studies do we find a rupture of approach as between the formulation of the research and that of the recommendation, especially where issues of intersubjectivity are addressed in the former. For Rose, however, the recommendations are intersubjectively given, too.

This report, then, is the precipitate of a huge number of verbal transactions and is an account which is grounded in the ways in which the subjects of the research made their world available. The attachments to the report give transcribed examples of that phenomenon. It is a report that - unlike many ethnographies - exhibits an acknowledgement that social organization itself is an oral phenomenon, comprising ways of talking. It is a study that acknowledges rather than merely assumes language as the medium of social life. In this and many other senses, *The Unattached Society* stands as a perspicuous exemplification of the approach of which Edward Rose is both the originator and pioneer.

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