Adam Tanne November 3, 2013
Professor Kozek Math 5: *Flatland* Response

Topics of Discussion:

- The idea of experienced truths and the concept of axiomatic knowledge. Flatland is a space that relies on people not being inquisitive. At first the main character won't entertain his grandson's question about numbers to the third degree.
    - Allegory of the cave, Example of King of the Lines (pg 118)

- The limits of transferring knowledge. The ability/ inability to articulate and facilitate someone else's understanding of a concept or experience.
    - The main character begins to lose his memory of Spaceland towards the end. Within high level mathematics mathematicians can waiver between understanding a subject and not understanding it.

- The relationship between satire and mathematical concepts. The way in which Abbott is able to strike a balance in order to create a deeply satirical work that is also highly mathematical. Mathematics, a concept usually considered divorced of emotion or hierarchy, is used to describe those very phenomena.
    - Numbers, shapes etc. can convey information about society and emotion, especially when used with metaphor. Everyone has number narratives. (Chabran)

- Divine revelation and transcendence.
    - Myth of Icarus, Prometheus, other tropes we have seen with mathematicians.
    - Interesting that Abbott was religious but wanted a type of Christianity, "that would ensure the permanence of traditional beliefs without requiring the acceptance of miracles."(pg. 5)

Questions For the Class

- In the introduction Lindgren and Banchoff mention that Victorian education had a focus on Greek antiquity. Furthermore they draw a comparison between *Flatland* and the Platonic allegory of "the cave." In what ways is this comparison apt? What is Abbot saying about how we perceive our human condition?

- What is Abbot saying about how language and perspective limit the transference of knowledge and experience? Is it possible to lose understanding of your own knowledge or experience?

Mathematical Concepts

- Euclidian Geometry
- Non Euclidian Geometry

- Fourth Dimension Space
- Perspective and light refraction
- Math as metaphor

Bibliography

- *Flatland*, film
- *János Bolyai, non-Euclidean geometry, and the nature of space.* Jeremy J. Gray
- *An introduction to non-Euclidean geometry.* David Gans
- *Gender, civic culture, and consumerism : middle-class identity in Britain, 1800-1940*. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls
- *Navigating between the Dimensions.* Julian F. Fleron and Volker Ecke.