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1	<i>The Problem with Pictures</i>	Brief history of competing theories of depiction, their application in art history and aesthetics, from Gombrich to the late nineties.	E.H. Gombrich, Nelson Goodman, Richard Wollheim, Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Norman Bryson, W.J.T. Mitchell, Erwin Panofsky, Rosalind Krauss, James Elkins, Julian Bell.
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The Problem with Pictures

The problem with pictures is in how we make sense of them, how we recognise them and the kinds of meanings found there. There are a number of conflicting explanations and disagreements are longstanding, widespread and deep-seated. Explanations quickly appeal to fundamental ideas about our understanding of the world, its organisation and customs. In particular, pictures are bound up with the concept of art, its history and criticism, and to pursue an understanding of these, we must take a position on pictures. In art history the explanation of pictures is sought in terms of their tradition and influence. Tradition is variously described in terms of a context, as the history of a culture, or in terms of a concept, as the history of depiction or pictorial properties. Neither extreme is tenable. To explain everything in terms of context, is to drain the concept of a picture of all meaning, to result in all history and no art, while to explain everything in terms of the concept of a picture, is to drain its context of meaning, and result in all art and no history. So the problem lies in deciding how much is internal to a picture, usually termed its formal or technical properties, and how much is external, the influence of time and place.

In recent times discussion generally takes as its starting point the work of E. H. Gombrich. By tracing a number of influential reactions to his work, we can appreciate firstly how the problem is compounded, how disagreements over the nature of pictures add to disagreements over art and its history, and secondly how the problem persists, how even as recent efforts enlist other disciplines to explain pictures and art, these versions no longer describe the same objects of earlier study. In truth, they are no longer versions that resolve the problem with pictures, but rather new problems that urge their substitution. Gombrich's contribution extends from the very popular introductory history, *The Story of Art*, to detailed studies in the psychology of visual perception and the development of pictorial style, advanced

initially in *Art and Illusion*, and later in *The Image And the Eye*.¹ Taken together, they present a view of art as the advance of pictorial sophistication, through experiments with novel applications and techniques, towards a mode that more fully matches the experience of visual perception. This emphasis upon matching a picture to the experience of looking at an object, led many readers to assume that Gombrich took pictures to be in essence illusions; that delude the viewer in some way into believing in the presence of the object, rather than just a picture of the object. Indeed the very title of *Art and Illusion* hints at such a stance. It is an over-simplification to be sure, but points to a real and unwelcome consequence in appealing to principles of visual perception. It also obscures the view of art that accompanies this view of pictures.

The Story of Art famously opens with the axiom ‘There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists.’ From this, Gombrich argues that the concept or definition of art covers all objects so classified only retrospectively, that the concept properly can only be understood as an historical sequence or chain, each link continually revising the concept. It is, above all, a powerful argument for the history of art. But if art is simply the history of artists, it begs the question how the activity of artists is to be described? For Gombrich the activity is simply the advance of representation. Representation need not be narrowly understood as pictorial representation of course, but the focus of Gombrich’s history is upon the plastic arts, and gives pride of place to depiction and painting. This commitment to an advance in depiction introduces a second feature of his view of the history of art. It is the idea that developments in pictures are progressive and absolute, have a history beyond any one culture or version of art. The development of the western pictorial tradition is seen as discoveries concerning the nature of visual perception, confirmed by optics and geometry. Pictures using systems of perspective for example, are seen as coming closer to showing an object the way we ‘naturally’, or ‘really’ see it.

For the moment it is enough to see how Gombrich’s view of depiction relates to his view of art history. But it is with *Art and Illusion* and its more substantive arguments for the development of pictures that a critical dialogue arises. Reactions to his view

¹ Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, (16th ed) Oxford/London, 1995, Gombrich, *Art And Illusion*, Oxford, 1960, Gombrich, *The Image and the Eye*, Oxford/New York, 1982.

of pictures, did not initially pursue its relation to art, but concerned themselves rather with the explanation of pictures as illusions. Two of the most searching critiques arose in the work of the philosophers Nelson Goodman and Richard Wollheim.² Both rejected the behaviouristic view of perception, and the naturalism it derives from principles of optics, both rejected the idea of an illusion, fostered by marks upon a surface, as a picture. But they did so for different reasons.

Wollheim pointed to the inconsistency in Gombrich's view of perception. On the one hand Gombrich asserts that seeing is bound up with knowing, that all perception is interpretation, but on the other, that it is nevertheless possible to depict according to what we 'really see'.³ Yet to claim that there is some particular thing that we really see is precisely to distinguish between what is really there, and how it is interpreted. Wollheim also took issue with the view that perception operates according to a process of schema and correction. Initial schemas in perception cannot be corrected as a pictorial schema is corrected, by comparing it with an equivalent perception in real life. An initial perception can only be refuted or verified by subsequent perceptions. This crucial difference between plain perception and pictures weakens the argument for an underlying process of schema and correction. Wollheim's objections to the idea of pictures as illusions centre on Gombrich's discussion of the famous rabbit/duck ambiguous drawing.⁴ He argued that the drawing presented two distinct interpretations, a surface and an image, which Gombrich mistakes for being mutually exclusive. For Wollheim, the interpretations are compatible yet distinct, to see the rabbit or the duck, is not to deny that they are a certain configuration of ink on paper, or a surface. The matter of an illusion arises only in the exceptional circumstances of a trompe l'oeil picture, usually a mural integrated within an architectural setting, which cannot be detected from certain angles.

Goodman's response was more sweeping, and came as part of his own theory in *Languages of Art*. He began by rejecting not only the idea of illusion in pictures, but

² Goodman, *Languages of Art* (2nd ed) Indianapolis, 1976. The second edition is used throughout, here. Richard Wollheim, *On Art and the Mind*, London, 1973, pp. 261-284.

³ Gombrich, 1960, p. 278.

⁴ Ibid.4. Versions of this drawing have a long history in discussions on visual perception, both in the experiments of perceptual psychologists, such as Norma V. Scheidemann, *Experiments in General Psychology*, Chicago, 1939, p. 67, fig 21, and in the work of philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford, 1953, p.194.

of any likeness or resemblance as the means by which a picture represents an object. He advanced two powerful arguments to this end. Firstly not all resemblances are representations: two apples may resemble one another but do not therefore represent one another. Resemblance is a two-way or symmetrical relation: each apple equally resembles the other. Representation, on the other hand, is a one-way or asymmetrical relation, a picture represents an apple, but an apple does not represent a picture of one. Secondly, not all pictures are resemblances. A picture of a fictional beast such as a unicorn does not resemble anything, literally. At best it complies with preceding descriptions or pictures. Moreover, pictures resemble other pictures as much if not more than they resemble any of their objects, yet usually represent objects not other pictures. Goodman declared that pictures represent or refer, not because they resemble but because they denote, are properly a mode of notation. But while he rejected resemblance as necessary or sufficient condition for depiction he allowed that it arises between picture and object as a result of custom or familiarity. He thus allowed for realism and illusion, but insisted they are relative to notation, context and custom. While Goodman also found much to commend in the relativism of Gombrich's account of schema and correction, he pointedly rejected the idea that the rules of perspective are faithfully derived from the laws of optics, and provided a set of damaging counter-examples, succinctly concluding: 'Briefly, the behaviour of light sanctions neither our usual nor any other way of rendering space; and perspective provides no absolute or independent standard of fidelity'.⁵

A measure of the impact of Goodman's arguments is found in Gombrich's subsequent book, *The Image and the Eye*. Here Gombrich abandoned arguments for perspective derived from the geometry of light, and proposed more modestly, an 'eyewitness principle'.⁶ But Goodman also pointed to a more disturbing relativism in schema and correction or making and matching. Gombrich's position was that what we match or use pictures for, depends on what we make, but the process is in the long run an accumulative one, so that by matching one thing and then another, bit by bit we make the picture perfect match, an illusion. The prospect to which Goodman pointed is that while different matches depend on different makes,

⁵ Goodman, *Languages of Art*, Indianapolis, 1976, pp. 16-19.

⁶ Gombrich, 1982, p. 281.

different pictures of an object then have a way of turning into pictures of different objects.⁷ The matches never quite add up, the makes are never just re-makes.

In the essay *Image and Code: Scope and Limits of Conventionalism in Pictorial Representation* Gombrich sought to defend the view of naturalism in pictures and to reconcile it with the need for conventions.⁸ It takes pictorial rules or conventions as versions of perception, hence versions of illusion, versions of an object. It was notable also for inclusion of a response from Goodman, who managed to seek common ground while insisting that the distinction between nature and convention was also relative. Gombrich appealed to a behaviouristic view of image recognition amongst animals and insects, and to its instinctual basis. ‘We are programmed to be more easily triggered by some configurations than by others.’⁹ The argument can establish resemblance as a necessary and ‘natural’ relation for substitution, but not representation. Birds and fish may be deceived by a representation, but it does not therefore function as a representation or reference. Distinction between resemblance, substitution and reference may be elastic, or graded, as Gombrich argued in ‘Pygmalion’s Power’ in *Art and Illusion*, but if the distinction between nature and convention is relative, as Goodman declared and Gombrich conceded, then reference still remains less natural, or more conventional. The lack of birds and fish enrolling in art classes might cinch this point. So there was no comfort there for Gombrich, no strict accuracy in labelling of Goodman as a conventionalist.

But while the case for pictures as an illusion cannot co-opt representation to resemblance, cannot draw support from the geometry of light, nor a biological disposition to perspective, and finally cannot resist conventions, the case for pictures as denotation, also has problems. Goodman’s ideas for a depictive notation stretch the concepts of syntax and semantics into dense analogues, in order to explain why pictures can acquire resemblance, while notations such as writing cannot. In fact the combined dense analogues do little more than dissolve the concept of notation.¹⁰ A further requirement for relative repleteness of syntax

⁷ See treatment of invention, fiction and representation-as in Goodman, 1976, pp. 21-34

⁸ Gombrich, 1982, pp. 279 - 297

⁹ Ibid. pp. 285-6

¹⁰ There is acknowledgement that such density is the antithesis of notation. See Goodman, 1976, p.160. Goodman divides reference into denotation and exemplification with denotation then divided into description and depiction. Descriptive notation includes writing, mathematical and

assumes elements of one scheme of depiction may be always included within another, so that for example what is depicted in a simple line diagram, such as a floor plan, may be more fully depicted with the inclusion of tone or shading, colour and perspective.¹¹ But aspects of line cannot always be accommodated with aspects of tone without altering their constituent character, in fact shifting emphasis where line coincides with shade or contrasts with light, just as tone cannot be accommodated with all colours without losing key integrities of grey, and the same holds for volume, scale, projection and perspective. Thus the concept of repleteness of depictive syntax and of pictures as a mode of denotation - but without a notation - also proves something of a stumbling block.

Similarly, analysis of pictures in terms borrowed from structural linguistics, or as semiotics, struggle to detect the requisite syntax. The initial studies of Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco for example, although hardly responding to Gombrich, ultimately rely upon an 'iconic' or resemblance relation; cannot reconcile it anymore effectively with reference nor adequately distinguish or explain 'plastic' qualities to depictive meaning.¹² Strictly, semiotics extends only iconographic and iconological analysis here. Following controversies between schools argue for various ranges of depiction as the proper domain of study and against the narrowness of mere linguistic transcription of depictive meaning, but do not otherwise advance the problem.¹³ Later developments, grouped as post-structuralism, tend to reject a unitary code to semiotics and a fixed ideology supporting objects. Such approaches gradually disengage from the problem with pictures and its application to art history; in fact prefer to straddle disciplines, generally in the cause of social or cultural analysis. However, in the late seventies and early eighties a number of

musical systems, slides toward depiction with analogue scales and dance notation for instance. Analogue density of syntax and semantics no more than collapses notation, may perhaps organise notations usefully, as in James Elkins, *The Domain of Images*, Ithaca/London, 1999, but can only say in ways depiction is not notation (and therefore denotation).

¹¹ The example of a floor plan is not used by Goodman, but is consistent with the argument for repleteness. See Goodman, 1976, p.230.

¹² See Barthes, 'Rhétorique de l'image', in *Communications*, 4, 1964, pp. 40-51, Barthes, *Elements of semiology*, (1967) London, 1969, and Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, (1976) Bloomington, 1980.

¹³ For a detailed history of semiotic studies in the period see Göran Sonesson, *Pictorial concepts: Inquiries into the semiotic heritage and its relevance for the analysis of the visual world*. Lund, Sweden, 1989 and introductory essay, 'Pictorial semiotics' online at www.arthist.lu.se/kultsem/encyclo/pictorial_semiotics.html (2002-3). Also, controversy surrounding the paraphrasing of depictive meaning, here, interestingly parallels arguments for the 'heresy of paraphrase' in poetry. See for example, Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, Chapel Hill, N.C. 1967.

writers in the English-speaking world began to reflect these concerns while addressing art history more exclusively. The work of W.J.T. Mitchell, Norman Bryson and Rosalind E. Krauss, to name only three of the more prominent exponents, variously revisited the distinction between depiction and denotation.¹⁴

Mitchell's work is the more general, surveys a history of writing about pictures as a way of noting the difference between writing and depiction, considers concepts of depiction and underlying ideologies from this. However, given the attention paid to the contributions of Goodman and Gombrich, the work is of more interest to aesthetics and art history, and given the equivocation in matters of ideology, of less interest to the roving commission of 'critical theory'.¹⁵ Goodman's theory is scrutinised for historical and ideological tendencies (recklessly aligning a metaphorical iconoclasm in Goodman's frequent reversals of orthodoxy with the literal iconoclasm of the Reformation and Puritanism) and curiously takes Goodman's reference schemes as canonical to Modernism.¹⁶ Gombrich's position is taken as drawing a line between nature and convention or artifice in depiction. Yet the historical and ideological dimension to Gombrich's position, its implicit definition of art, goes unexamined. Mitchell's own position comes to little more than an affirmation of the value of writing about depiction, a predictable preference for writing (even in matters of pornography) and later treatments favour either the combination of text and depiction in works, as in Blake's illuminated manuscripts or the works of Robert Morris, or no more than glosses critics such as Clement Greenberg, Michael Fried and Rosalind E. Krauss on the nature of abstraction in depiction.¹⁷

Bryson's work also commences with a critique of Gombrich and concludes that resemblance and illusion are incompatible with the ambiguities and interpretation available to a sign or denotation. But this is assumed rather than argued. At the

¹⁴ Key publications for each are: W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image Text Ideology*, Chicago/London, 1986, Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, New Haven/London, 1983, Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge/Mass./London, 1986. Krauss's influence also extends through her co-editorship of the journal *October*, featuring an array of prominent critics including Annette Michelson, Douglas Crimp, Yves-Alain Bois, Benjamin Buchloh and Hal Foster.

¹⁵ Critical theory here used in the sense given by The Frankfurt School of Marxist analysis.

¹⁶ Mitchell, 1986, p.71 footnote 27.

¹⁷ Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, Chicago/London, 1994, 111-180, pp. 213-280.

same time he rejects any simple structuralist analysis of iconography as too static and lacking the continual interaction with the world. The system or structure is thus understood as in a constant state of flux. Just what state of incompleteness may be taken as acceptable or useful to the dynamic sign system is unclear.¹⁸ Rejecting a resemblance relation for depiction, Bryson persists with the application of syntax and proposes a detail of parsing and tense, in ‘deixis’ as the basis of depiction. But since the rest of syntax and semantics has proven ineffective in earlier semiotic studies, not surprisingly, this term taken in isolation hardly fares any better.

‘Deixis’ is taken as the rhetoric of a narrator, of terms indicating presence of a speaker in a discourse, and so a bodily or physical aspect as well as an explicit temporal dimension. In depiction this translates as a distinction between ‘The Gaze’ where deixis is absent, together with bodily and sequential reference, and ‘The Glance’, where deixis is present, through details of material indicating how long and in what way the depiction was made. The distinction thus attempts to account for the ‘plastic’ qualities that troubled early semioticians, and roughly parallels the ‘indexic’ aspect to signs proposed by C. S. Peirce, but without Peirce’s overlapping and ancillary categories, relinquishes much in the way of traditional iconography and stylistics.¹⁹ The necessary distinctions to materials and techniques are far from convincing in the array of examples provided because they assume a given identity to object depicted, and distinctions by which bodily signs are assigned materials or techniques equally beg greater scrutiny, (bodily signs surely admit subtle, minute and time-consuming gestures as well as bold, brief and grand ones, just as ‘Gazes’ grade into ‘Glances’) There is then the question of just how these distinctions are preserved any easier than preceding semiotics in the aforementioned constant flux? Finally, if most painting operates according to ‘The Gaze’ rather than ‘The Glance’ as would seem to be the argument, the distinction is rendered somewhat trivial, while if ‘The Gaze’ only indicates ideological issues of sexuality and power, as Bryson seems to suggest, then depictive meaning simply collapses into ideology. But surely neither ideology nor depiction is served by such crude reduction.

¹⁸ Bryson, 1983, pp. xiii-xiv.

¹⁹ For Peirce on semiotics see ‘Speculative Grammar’ ‘Letters to Lady Welby’ and ‘Existential Graphs’ in C.S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, Boston, 1931.

Drastic reduction of depictive meaning to ideological ends is also a feature of the work of Krauss at this time. Famously, she argued for grids as the basis of abstraction in depiction and painting, for their rigour and constraint as the ultimate test of originality or invention, and for such originality as the basis of Modernism and a capitalist ideology.²⁰ The post structuralist influence here is in the rejection of pure or neutral ‘formal’ means to depiction, in their relentless assimilation by iconography, and the ultimate disclosure of a stark ideological function. The promotion of grids is also seen as fundamental to depiction in resisting commentary or language. For Krauss it represents Modernism’s ‘will to silence’ and the isolation of the visual arts in ‘a realm of exclusive visuality’.²¹ This is not to say that less is written or said about abstract works, or that less abstract works encourage commentary any more, but rather how fundamental the gulf between the verbal and visual is for an understanding of depiction, and how much more obvious this becomes with abstract work and its commentary.

However this sweeping thesis is unconvincing on a number of counts. There is firstly the laxity with which the term ‘grid’ is applied to various examples in order to place them at the centre of abstraction. Contrary to her claim, the ‘grid’ does not appear in Cubism for example – this is one myth Krauss actually encourages.²² Nor is it constituted by the mere intersection of transoms and mullions in the windows depicted within the examples by Friedrich and Redon, as claimed, and what metaphors they may provoke there are hardly inherited by any subsequent use of windows, glass, quadrilaterals, parallel or intersecting lines or in fact grids in depiction. Moreover, actual grids when present in paintings are neither dominant nor essential in abstraction. More importantly, abstraction does not directly inherit the content of more concrete depiction. Each formulation of the grid, or other

²⁰ Krauss, ‘The Originality of the Avant-Garde’ in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge/Mass./London, 1986, p.161.

²¹ Krauss, ‘Grids’ in *Ibid.* p.9.

²² A grid surely requires a consistency to parallel lines and intersecting angles that Cubist works simply do not possess. Lines, while mostly straight in Cubist works are neither always co-extensive with the picture area, of uniform intervals, thickness or indeed parallel. They do not therefore constitute a ‘grid’ as it is commonly understood. The same holds for cited works by Malevich, Late Mondrian, Reinhardt and Albers. The grid more accurately arises in Modernism around 1918, through the influence of experimental psychology and in particular the study of colour. See for example John Gage, *Colour and Culture*, London/New York, 1993, p. 258. Mondrian introduces the grid in a series of works titled *Composition with Grid* between 1918 and 1919, in a style usually described as De Stijl or Neo-Plasticism, quite distinct from Cubism, while Klee notably uses it in various works throughout the twenties and early thirties.

arrangements of only straight lines, revises content by its formal terms. No claim for sheer or absolute originality in materials or techniques arises in abstraction for this reason; materials are no more than revised by various abstraction. Therefore Modernism places no higher premium upon originality than preceding periods, and originality in and of itself offers no distinctive character to the ideology of a period.

Nevertheless this view has been influential in shaping a history of abstraction and Modernism, and is important here as an example of how the problem persists, even for an approach that hurries to ideology. It shows that the concerns of a broader social history cannot quite ignore the problem with pictures – even very abstract pictures – in advancing interpretations, without fatally compromising explanation. Iconography must recognise formal features to a picture if it is to exploit its content, and formal features depend upon a theory of depiction. There can be no ‘all history and no art’ if the objective is still to address art.

Mitchell, Bryson and Krauss all look to denotation to explain depiction, if not as a distantly related system then as an opposing one, feeding off or complementing depiction. Against this scrutiny of reference, the problem of depiction is also pursued in support of resemblance. The philosopher and art critic David Carrier considered at length Gombrich’s position in relation to the art history that accompanies it. Carrier surveyed a history of art history method in *Artwriting* and concluded that differences lay in conceptions of a picture and confusions arising from its ‘conventional’ basis.²³ He defended Gombrich’s naturalism, rejected semiotic theories, lumping together Bryson and Goodman for example, but could offer no compelling account of realism upon which to base such a defence, and curiously interpreted *The Story of Art* as announcing an end to depiction and art with Cubism.²⁴

Resemblance was also at the heart of Wollheim’s *Painting as an Art*, which included criticisms of Gombrich and Goodman, as well as social and cultural approaches, and offered new views on pictures and art.²⁵ His approach emphasised a psychological context, and the importance of intention in determining depictive

²³ David Carrier, *Artwriting*, Amhurst, Mass., 1987.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 88.

²⁵ Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, London/New York, 1987.

meaning. It deftly avoided the notorious intentional fallacy by insisting upon a standard of correctness for pictorial representation, the details of which are reviewed in Chapter Four. It is enough here to indicate the emphasis upon psychology. Intention runs counter to Goodman's theory, under which the rules of notation determine meaning, but is accommodated within Gombrich's theory, as the means of distinguishing between skill and will, between what the maker achieved and what was attempted.²⁶ It might be thought that a theory grounded in illusion would have no need of such 'conventions', but as seen, conventions have a way of seeping into the matter.

As noted, Wollheim was critical of illusion, and sought to reconcile the perception of a picture as surface and image. He referred to this as 'two-foldness' and argued that we see the picture as an image, on a surface.²⁷ But what is meant by the surface apart from the image is uncertain. If only the markings of the image comprise this surface, then we cannot see these at the same time as the image, since they *are* the image under one description, the markings under another. In truth Wollheim's is a resemblance theory, adopting a psychological disposition to 'see-in' and find such images in a surface, as a necessary condition to depiction, and where in accordance with the intention, sufficient. It avoids the implausibility of illusion but begs the question in what way the surface is seen as resembling an object. Goodman, by contrast, consolidated his position with subsequent books, *Ways of Worldmaking*, stressing firstly the pluralism of his approach, and its application to stylistics, *Of Mind and Other Matters* refining notation and realism and *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences* with Catherine Z. Elgin, expanding on multiplicity of reference and exemplification, but all three books argued against intention in determining depictive meaning.²⁸

Two further contributions are of note, *The Domain of Images* by James Elkins and *What Is Painting?* by Julian Bell.²⁹ Elkins, while essentially hostile to *Languages of Art*,

²⁶ Gombrich, 1960, p. 56, pp. 65-67.

²⁷ Wollheim, 1987, pp. 46-47, 72-75.

²⁸ Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, Indianapolis, 1978, Goodman, *Of Mind and Other Matters*, Cambridge/Mass./London, 1984 and Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences*, London, 1988. Catherine Z. Elgin, *With Reference to Reference*, Indianapolis, 1983, offers an extensional rather than nominalist theory of meaning.

²⁹ James Elkins, *The Domain of Images*, Ithaca/London, 1999, Julian Bell, *What is Painting?* London/New York, 1999.

applied Goodman's ideas of pictorial notation to examples that combine writing and decorative or abstract elements with depiction in various ways.³⁰ He assumed this to be a misuse of the theory, (when the theory accounts for the full spectrum of notation, of which depiction occupies one end) and assumed that even though the theory is incoherent as an account of depiction, this presented no impediment to its application to the rest of the notational spectrum. But this is rather like using a compass, knowing it cannot find true north, but expecting to navigate by the other directions. Elkins supplemented Goodman's views with a more traditional view of pictures as resemblances - although curiously the view is drawn from Wittgenstein rather than Gombrich, and proposed a two-level model of depiction, one for resemblance to objects and relations, the other for rules of interpretation. But this no more than registers the difference between nature and artifice again.

However Elkins also usefully pointed to flaws in Goodman's argument for repleteness in the cited but unillustrated example of matching curves for a finance graph and a drawing of a wave by Hokusai.³¹ Not only is it hard to find examples from these sources that suitably match curves, (although a complete match is not vital to Goodman's point) but Goodman's argument that all of the (hypothetical) Hokusai drawing's properties contribute to its meaning, while only the two dimensional co-ordinates of the graph count as its meaning, rather confuses the issue. Crucially, matters of the thickness of line or texture of paper, may express, or exemplify, but do not depict the wave. The wave is not depicted as having a widening black line riding on its crest, for example. Expression and exemplification are taken as modes of reference distinct from depiction under Goodman's theory, although all three may be present and combined under various schemes. The mistake is in confusing repleteness of reference, which combines depiction, expression and exemplification, with mere repleteness of depiction, which perhaps might amount to the conformity or acceptance of an object under a given scheme, to its realism in effect. What is otherwise notable in Elkins' efforts is the determination to find an integration of writing with pictures and decoration, if not

³⁰ For hostility to *Languages of Art* see Elkins, 1999, p.66. While not a history of art, *The Domain of Images* does include examples of twentieth century abstraction and so is of interest here. Elkins engages more directly with 20th century art in *What Happened to Art Criticism?* London & Chicago, 2003 (a prelude to a longer study, planned as *Success and Failure in Twentieth Century Painting*).

³¹ *Ibid.* p.70.

as notation, then in some way to say how resemblance relates to these forms of reference, to the beauty and effectiveness of decoration and design.

Julian Bell's book on the other hand came with the assistance and endorsement of Gombrich but a similar hostility to *Languages of Art*.³² It ostensibly dealt with pictorial representation and Modernism, but rapidly sketched along themes of psychology, philosophy, history and economics, leaped back and forth from ancient to contemporary art, obscure to familiar works. His grave suspicions about the nature of expression have much in common with both *The Story of Art* and *Art and Illusion*. Discussion of the Gombrich - Goodman exchange commenced by considering a realist seascape by William Wylie.³³ Not only did Bell come firmly down on the side of Gombrich in finding the illusion of the sea compelling ('we gaze at the picture and sniff the imaginary brine') but immediately linked this to the case against iconography, (and by implication, semiotics) and an appeal once more to a native substitution or illusion as the basis of depiction. Yet the distinction between substitution and depiction goes unacknowledged, and the use of such a concept in a brief account of Goodman's notational approach, all but renders it incoherent. What is conspicuous in the book is the slender basis provided by Gombrich's views for an adequate account of the art of the twentieth century. Tellingly, Bell had nothing to say about the closing chapters to *The Story of Art*, with their extended criticism of contemporary art and society, and while Bell can at least accommodate artists such as Stella, Guston and Richter, his story echoed Gombrich's as one of dissipation and failure.

What is clear from this review of the problem with pictures is the continuing stalemate presented by the Gombrich – Goodman exchange, of resemblance versus reference. Discussion is still brought back to the claims of illusion fostered through substitution and inherited by depiction and amounting to a conventional or rule bound 'illusion'. But is such a claim coherent, much less plausible? Against this, there are Goodman's arguments that resemblance is symmetrical, and therefore an

³² Gombrich's endorsement appears on the front cover, Bell credits Gombrich's assistance in the acknowledgements. Bell's hostility toward *Languages of Art* registers in the description of its 'suave insensitivity'. See Bell, 1999, p. 239. His later publication *Mirror of the World*, London, New York 2007 looks to a more global history, significantly traces broad humanist themes rather than stylistic issues.

³³ *Ibid.* pp. 225-230.

object ought to represent a picture as much as a picture represents an object, or that pictures resemble other pictures more than their objects, yet they refer to their objects more than other pictures. Or, that there are pictures for which there are strictly no objects for them to resemble, such as pictures of unicorns. Yet for all this, if pictures denote in order to refer, they apparently do so without a notation. The following chapter therefore returns to the issue of resemblance versus reference, to see if something has not been overlooked or unexplored. Since Bell has performed this service for Gombrich, this study does as much for Goodman.

Depiction Revised

The problem for a theory of depiction has been shown to be the reconciliation of illusion and notation. Neither is adequate, since illusion commits us to a perceptual mistake, or delusion, which does not square with the facts of everyday experience with pictures, while notation commits us to a familiar principle of reference, but cannot explain how such a notation might operate. It can explain in what ways it must differ from writing, or descriptive notation, but amounts to no more than saying it is no longer notation. On one hand the proposal is for a resemblance relation between picture and object, and on the other for a reference relation. Both agree that sooner or later they need the other, but in acquiring them they also lose some of their explanation. The illusion theory takes depiction to be tamed or conventionalised illusions, while the notation theory takes depiction to be a scheme that cultivates resemblance. But is an illusion still an illusion if it is rule bound? Is a notation still a notation if it resembles its object? Seemingly, stubbornly, the relations of resemblance and reference refuse to merge, resemblance is a symmetrical or two-way relation, reference is asymmetrical or a one-way relation.

The task now is to look a little closer at Goodman's theory of reference to see if there is a way around this. Goodman proceeds from arguments about the nature of reference, based upon denotation, but denotation is not the only mode or route of reference to his theory. He admits exemplification as the relation between a sample and referent, or the way in which it points to only some of its properties.³⁴ For example a swatch of cloth exemplifies colour, weave, texture and pattern of a certain type or bolt of cloth, but not its size or shape, age or smell. The swatch has these other properties, but they are not referred to, or exemplified. Equally the bolt of cloth has properties that are not possessed or sampled by the swatch, such as its

³⁴ Goodman, 1976, pp.52-57.

place and manner of storage. Exemplification is reference to only selected properties possessed by a sample.

Such reference might also be taken as a way of allowing resemblance. The sample and its referent share a symmetrical relation in selected respects, they share certain properties, and yet the sample refers to the type of cloth, while the cloth resembles in some respects, but does not refer to the sample. The fact that an exemplification refers only to some of those properties that it possesses, also suggest that it is reflexive or self-reference. One of Goodman's objections to taking pictures as resemblances is that representation, or reference cannot be reflexive, while resemblance can – 'An object resembles itself to the maximum degree but rarely represents itself' – yet in the case of exemplification it evidently can represent itself in selected respects.³⁵ This seems much closer to the requirements for depiction and suggests that depiction might more profitably be taken as a mode of exemplification rather than denotation.

The question then arises what is it that a picture exemplifies? What property does it share with its object and then sample or correctly display?³⁶ The property is simply two dimensions, or two-dimensionality. Two dimensions are of course contained within three dimensions in fact any number of two-dimensional planes may be constructed as slices within a three-dimensional volume. So we have a shared property between picture and object, if as yet a very general one. Does it hold for all depiction? Let us begin with the most basic pictures, for example, a single familiar object that might be produced by a pre-school, pre-historic or primitive artist, which is to say, they have basic skills in depiction, and in which is typically offered an outline or silhouette. Something like two dimensions is detected in the observation of distinct sides or single aspects of an object or in rudimentary relations between parts, in an overall profile or shape reliably identified or resembling an object. Such observations are useful because they are quick to make and easy to remember. They also make depiction easy to learn.

³⁵ Goodman, 1976, p.4.

³⁶ Although a quirk of language, makes a picture's object, its *subject*, following Goodman, the term 'object' is maintained here for any 'subject' of a picture.

A basic picture also requires the picture surface exemplify, or find the means to display its two-dimensionality. For the surface is not only a two-dimensional plane of course, even in the case of a pristine sheet of the smoothest white paper – it is still a three dimensional object, with a thickness and texture of some kind, whereas a two-dimensional plane has no thickness, no surface or texture, merely space extended along two axes. The surface can however exemplify its two-dimensional plane through the use of distinctive markings or features that not only set it apart from other kinds of surface, but then also serve to distinguish other kinds of surfaces or objects, so that properties thus distinguished then also sample materially, or much as a swatch does, and crucially, may also be taken in combination with depiction. Equally, such markings may also form distinctive patterns or designs that need not be taken as a resemblance to an object, or strictly as depiction, yet nevertheless exemplify two-dimensional elements and relations, and are also accompanied by the sampling of three-dimensionality, in the kinds of markings and material used.

Line is the simplest and easiest means of translating perceived planes or shapes of objects into depiction because the two-sided nature of a line gives the inside and outside of a shape the same value – as space – in an outline of the shape. The articulation of the shape depends upon the width of the line, its extent or length, and its direction, up and down, left or right. This is two-dimensionality proper, even where the maker or user is unaware of the fact. Similarly, relations between more than one shape in a depiction share these same fundamental articulations. Once lines create shapes as outlines, we have two dimensions, and these are shared with, or truly resemble shapes detected in the sides or single aspects of an object. So we have resemblance, but do we have reference? The outline refers to an object's shape, while an object's shape does not refer to the outline, because the line is around the shape, rather than part of it, and is, like the exemplifying practices of a swatch, a means of displaying two dimensions upon a surface. Hence we have a one-way reference and a two-way resemblance, in certain selected respects. Line is obviously not the only means for displaying two dimensions upon a surface, but its simplicity and efficiency in these basic stages, make it the crucial example. Nor do outlines necessarily depict the shapes of an observed or three-dimensional object. Their formal or intrinsic properties as pattern or design may equally develop an

appreciation of two-dimensional ordering; suggest fictive versions of extant objects. While such activities are commonly overlooked in an account of depiction, at the expense of pursuing parallels with writing and description, an important part of the revision of depiction lies in re-aligning pictures with patterns.³⁷ This aspect also becomes important in the appreciation of abstract painting. But before explaining this, we need to look briefly at why this attention to two-dimensional judgements is important.

Firstly, the concept of three dimensions or depth can only be understood in contrast with two dimensions. So the reason two dimensions are so basic, is because the concept of three-dimensional space or depth is so basic. A ready objection may run that we understand three dimensions intuitively – in our ability to navigate to them, much as Gombrich urges a functional or behavioural definition for such understanding in a squirrel’s jumping abilities in ‘The Analysis Of Vision’ in *Art and Illusion*.³⁸ The difference is in definitions of understanding. The squirrel’s understanding of space and light is measured by the behaviourist as its ability to ‘navigate’ them, but to perform more elaborate functions, such as remember, compare, analyse, measure, construct and communicate, requires a more elaborate view of understanding, and in this case, a more elaborate understanding of space.

Discerning separate sides to an object, and the shapes associated with them, may seem an innocent task, but need hardly remain one. Such shapes not only simplify the tasks of remembering and recognising the object, by breaking it down into smaller tasks, but it also make more of the object – literally. It discerns more qualities or properties of the object and so furthers knowledge. Equally, appreciation of pattern, of measurement and proportion, axes of symmetry,

³⁷ Pattern obviously deserves a far more extensive analysis than space permits. Gombrich carefully surveyed the history and literature of pattern in the underrated, *The Sense of Order*, London, Phaidon, 1979. Notable preceding publications include Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, London, 1856, Charles Blanc, *Art in Ornament and Dress*, Paris, 1886, Wilhelm Ostwald, *Die Welt der Form, Entwicklung und Ordnung der gesetzlichschönen Gebilde, gezeichnet und beschreiben von Wilhem Ostwald*, (4 Vols) Leipzig, 1922-25. Understandably mathematicians are drawn to questions of two-dimensional geometry, such as Andreas Speiser, *Theorie der Gruppen von endlicher Ordnung*, Berlin, 1923, and Herman Weyl in *Symmetry*, Princeton, N.J. 1952. Related mathematical insights, are explored in Martin Gardner, *The Ambidextrous Universe*, New York, 1964, Michael Holt, *Mathematics in Art*, London/New York, 1971, and more recently various *tiling* problems – complex patterns - are considered in Roger Penrose, *The Emperor’s New Mind*, Oxford/New York, 1990, pp. 168-181 and Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind*, Oxford/New York, 1994, pp. 29-33.

³⁸ Gombrich, 1960, p. 276.

variations and orientations of a motif, serve to further principles of organisation in perception and cognition. It is not so much that depiction permits opportunities unavailable to observers of an object directly, but rather that we make more opportunities, and more of the opportunities, with depiction. Contrary to Gombrich's model of the artist matching a picture to nature, in the manner of Constable or Cezanne, the appeal more typically is to the picture more removed. We do not have or need the opportunity to look over the artist's shoulder and compare picture with object to appreciate depiction. Rather we test the picture against our knowledge of such objects and pictures. Hence the crucial role of memory in basic depiction for the primitive, pre-historic or pre-school artist, the task is clearly not one of illusion, or even of matching a present object, but of organising and testing what is known and remembered of an object. In the simplest of examples, let us take a line drawing of a cat, (Figure A) in the manner favoured by children and created by conjoining the letters M O Q in ascending scale and descending sequence, thus:

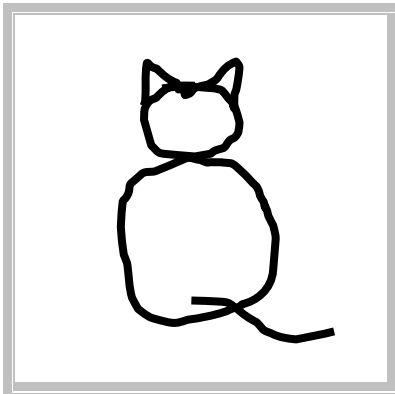


Figure A

Even in such a basic depiction, we can observe a surprising number of things about this cat, such as which way does its tail point? (Left or right?) Is the cat facing us, or does it sit with its back to us? How much wider is the cat's body than its head? Are its ears raised or lowered? Is it sitting or standing? Is it looking to the side or ahead? How tall are the ears compared with the head? In other words, any number of questions concerning measurements, placements, or plottings, across the two dimensional plane, or certain questions concerning the object's position or attitude toward the two dimensional plane, may be answered even in a basic line drawing. Clearly this is not so much a question of realism as of resemblance struck on stark linear or two-dimensional terms. There can be no confusing of the drawing with the actual presence of a cat.

Rather the drawing supplies answers to these questions on just the terms on which this resemblance is made. Indeed the power and pleasure of such basic pictures lies entirely in their appeal to memory and the understanding that guides resemblance.

Neither the primitive, pre-historic or pre-school picture-maker concern themselves with the presence of a model for this reason; two dimensions are easier to keep in the head than the eye. A basic picture is a way of testing this memory and prompting closer understanding. The understanding is of both the depicted object and the scheme or style of depiction. The thick and wobbling line used here samples a given tool upon a surface in contrast with surrounding text and scale of font, and an uncertain level of expertise. The sample sorts the depiction against the materials used, understands materials as well as depiction.

So a basic picture essentially maps or outlines a shape of an object. Indeed maps offer another good example of why two dimensions prove so useful. One is free to chart up and down, left and right, in any order, any direction or combination of directions. A map offers any number of routes, and allows one to comprehend the terrain across and between as well as along given routes. Depiction is thus bracketed with maps, diagrams, patterns and other two-dimensional schemas, because this multi-directional mapping stands in stark contrast with denotative or descriptive modes of reference. The difference arises because language and language-based references are committed to a temporal and one-directional ordering. Time may cease to be one-way in sub-atomic or macrocosmic physics, but for the sizeable stretch in between that is our main concern, it remains reliably one-way. Two dimensions of course exclude not only depth but also time, and depictions allow us to look at objects and scenes in more than one way or indeed more than one direction because of this. They may lack movement - without time - but a freeze frame, as is now so familiar, allows scrutiny of qualities unavailable in the flow of motion. A prompt objection may be that surely comic strips, film and television demonstrate that depiction and two-dimensionality need not exclude time. But the succession of images available in these examples remain fixed in a single sequence and even where they may be viewed in reverse, the sequence remains the same, we may reverse direction of a route in some circumstances, but we cannot re-route any given image in the sequence. Each image remains a given moment, and the value of the freeze frame lies precisely in what its route or motion has concealed. The point of two-dimensional perception and depiction is really to supplement a temporally ordered perception, with a spatial one, as a way to see out of time or around time, and something more of the world.

The distinction between time and space is by no means new to discussion of depiction. It is most notably identified with Lessing's famous essay on *The Laocoon*, and more recently has been the subject of an extended analysis by W. J. T. Mitchell.³⁹ Here the arrangement shares none of Lessing's critical or prescriptive principles concerning art, indeed, as will become clearer in later chapters, the position is quite the opposite, recognising a complementary function to the two modes. Mitchell is largely concerned with detecting ideological tendencies beneath Lessing's view, which need not concern us here, however it is worth noting that his attempt to demolish the time/space distinction, by claiming the difference between pictures and language as one of degree rather than kind, is one based upon a conception of pictures as a mode of denotation – after Goodman – and obviously rejected here.⁴⁰

A new theory of depiction as a mode of exemplification, sampling two-dimensionality has now been outlined. The theory adheres to Goodman's framework of reference, and maintains the functions of exemplification and denotation. It accepts the syntactic and semantic analysis of notation, but finds analogue densities finally at odds with these terms, and of limited use in understanding depiction.⁴¹ The revision is not that drastic in the larger scheme of things, as shall be shown. The new theory reconciles the requirements of a resemblance and a reference relation and avoids the commitment to an illusion in the recognition of two-dimensionality on a surface, and to a notation in its structure. An illusion may occur in as much as two-dimensions may be mistaken for three dimensions, but in general this is not the experience of looking at a picture, and part of the reason we have dwelt upon the simplest of line drawings is to emphasise this. A picture remains a reference or a representation, in as much as the

³⁹ Mitchell, 'Space and Time: Lessing's Laocoon and the Politics of Genre' in *Iconology, Image, Text, Ideology*, Chicago/London, 1994, pp 95-115. G. E. Lessing, 'Laocoon' in *Laocoon, Nathan the Wise, Minna von Barnhelm*, London/New York, 1930.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, 1994, p.102. In passing, Mitchell's subsequent attempt to lump all artefacts together as 'spatio/temporal structures' seems less than useful, distinguishing neither between forms of art, objects or reference.

⁴¹ Since depiction is so closely tied to two-dimensionality here, depiction used in discussion elsewhere, in sculpture, drama and literature for example, is consigned to loose talk. While sculpture is mainly concerned with three-dimensionality or material sampling, and so shares resemblance with depiction, in drama and literature depiction at best refers to a density or circumspection of reference, especially linked with depiction, and dealt with in Chapter Five.

surface is altered or marked in such a way as to exemplify its two-dimensional properties, but this system is not a notation, because of its multi-directional character.

But while this formulation allows for a distinction between patterns and pictures, the demarcation begs further attention. For example, simple symmetrical shapes such as a circle or a square are not generally understood as *a picture* of a circle or a square, but just as an instance or presentation rather than a representation. This is not to say that pictures cannot include a circle or square, or be *of* a circle or square in some further three-dimensional scene, or indeed use a circle or square to depict some three-dimensional object, only that a circle or square are often used for either purpose. The same outline may serve as either or both, a lesson in geometry or linear depiction. Just when a circle depicts a sphere or disc as opposed to merely instantiating a circle, is by no means clear-cut, but is largely a matter of scheme and style, even when schemes and styles allow ambiguity. But rather than pursue stylistic features directly, the next chapter tests this theory of depiction against more elaborate kinds of picture and issues raised by other theories. Implications to the reshuffle of reference within Goodman's theory are also to be traced along this path.

Depiction Pursued

Five Issues

This chapter looks at how the proposed theory of depiction handles more elaborate kinds of pictures and at the issues raised by other theories. First and foremost there is the issue of depth, and the controversy surrounding systems of projection and perspective. A second and related kind of picture is the distortion derived from an unusual lens, such as an anamorphic lens, which perhaps raises the question whether a surface's two-dimensional markings can adequately explain our recognition of such pictures. The third issue concerns caricature, which resembles its object paradoxically, by exaggerating features and relations. A fourth and surprisingly similar issue is that of fiction, and whether a depiction of a fictional entity such as a unicorn or Homer Simpson, can truly be said to resemble their objects? (When there truly are no objects for them to resemble). Finally there are those depictions found in an idle gaze at stains on a wall or in the shapes of foliage or clouds, and whether these are truly surfaces, adequately exemplified as two-dimensionality?

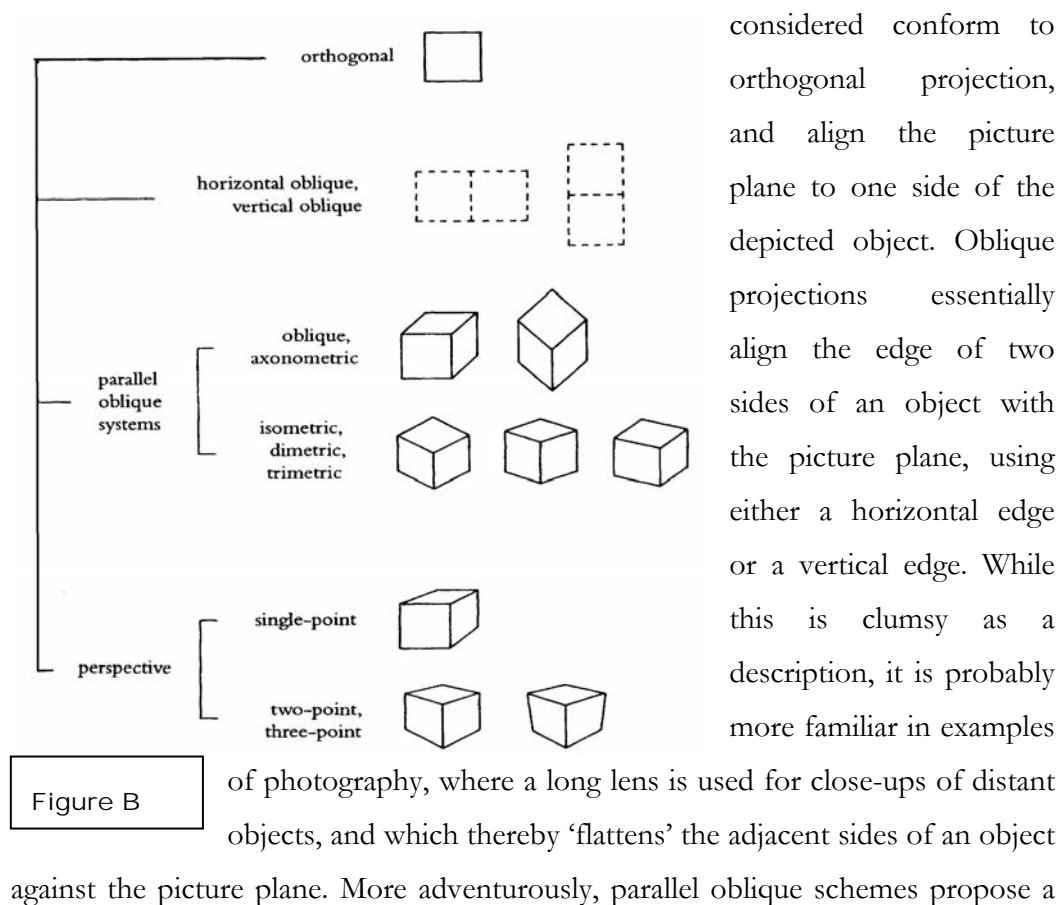
1. Depth

So far we have looked at how two dimensions can be exemplified and depict one side or aspect of an object, and build a basic picture plane. Having established this basic two-dimensionality or picture plane, further developments are essentially concerned with how to accommodate more than one side of an object upon this plane, or conversely, construct two-dimensionality at more remote and sophisticated angles to the object. The move is ultimately to accommodate depth, or three-dimensionality; to map features not only in terms of up and down, left and right but back and forward. But where two dimensions are contained in three and

may be detected and displayed accordingly, three dimensions obviously do not 'go into' two. Depth must be treated differently.

John Willats has demonstrated how much of this development, both in children's pictures, and in the history of art, echoes the aims and methods of various schemes of descriptive geometry, and its elementary projections of orthogonal, oblique, and parallel oblique schemes, and various perspectives.⁴² Willats rightly stresses the folly of seeing a 'recapitulation' or an evolutionary agenda in the comparison between children's pictorial competence and various stages of art history, and instead points to the distinct uses for various projections and perspectives, and the shifting requirements made of pictures throughout art history.

But before discussing kinds of depth, some elementary distinctions between projections and perspectives should be noted (Figure B). The basic pictures so far



⁴² John Willats, *Art and Representation: New Principles in the Analysis of Pictures*, Princeton, N.J. 1997. *Figure B* is owed to this publication.

diagonal, or oblique angle to one or more adjoining sides, as distinct from simply a diagonal shape to a side, and now serves as basically a third axis, in between the vertical and horizontal axes of the picture plane. Again, this is a view available to long lens photography and something easily found in non-pictorial or plain perception. Parallel oblique projections thus register depth at an ascending angle for objects, while vertical or horizontal planes contained, remain constant in size or length to the picture plane.

Perspective supplies one or more vanishing points, according to a notional or not necessarily included, horizon. The difference between parallel oblique projections and perspectives is rather like the difference in photography between using long and wide lenses, for close and distant objects. In fact the wider the lens, the more vanishing points a scheme introduces, a very wide lens gives a ‘fisheye’ depiction, with vanishing points at every point on the perimeter of the necessarily circular picture plane. Yet we can still make sense of the picture, we can still ‘see’ in this way, even if it seems uncomfortable or unnatural. The issue of artifice and nature is returned to shortly. Here a little more of Willat’s position needs to be appreciated.

While Willats is anxious to emphasise the varying uses for these schemes of depth and to some extent their co-existence, nevertheless his view of the development of pictorial depth, still places perspectives as the goal to which a picture ‘faithful’ to the principles of visual perception aspires. In this he adheres to the tradition that draws upon the work of the psychology of visual perception, particularly the work of J. J. Gibson, R. L. Gregory, Gregory’s collaborations with Gombrich, and the fieldwork of John M. Kennedy.⁴³ It is a view of perception that rests upon an optical stimulus, or information transmitted by the rays of light, reflected from an object to the viewer, which then allows the viewer to perceive the object. In the case of depiction, the rays of light are called upon to carry two lots of information, firstly about the picture surface, and secondly about the object depicted. Gibson characterises this information as ‘invariants’ that separate out the distance, surfaces and contours of an object, from accidental effects of time or motion, for example. Yet Gibson’s behavioural or evolutionist bias leads him to look for invariants on

⁴³James J Gibson, *The Perception Of The Visual World*, Boston, 1950, R. L. Gregory, *The Intelligent Eye*, London, 1970, E.H Gombrich and R.L. Gregory, *Illusion in Art and Nature*, London, 1973, John M. Kennedy, *The Psychology Of Picture Perception*, San Francisco, 1974.

only the crudest of 'environmental' bases, so that two-dimensionality for example, eludes him. Willats thus inherits a view of depiction as exchanging rules or conventions for depth with a more vivid experience or illusion, in keeping with a plain or natural perception.

Yet as shown, we see depth in any number ways and for any number of reasons. Not only are such ways familiar to the conventions of photography as well as drawing, but to our plain or non-pictorial experience. The eye's lens, like a camera's lenses, is variable, and if it has an invariant it is variation. The appeal to a native perception guided only by principles of surfaces, contours, occluding lines, planes and so forth, is no more than a behaviourist's makeover for the innocent eye, and in denial of a more than visual mind. To quote Goodman (ironically, in support of Gombrich):

The eye comes always ancient to its work, obsessed by its own past, and by old and new insinuations of the ear, nose, tongue, fingers heart and brain. It functions not as an instrument self-empowered and alone, but as a dutiful member of a complex and capricious organism. Not only how but what it sees is regulated by need and prejudice. It selects, rejects, organizes, discriminates, associates, classifies, analyses, constructs.⁴⁴

Goodman's firm rejection of Gibson and Gombrich's view of perspective and the perception of depth fuelled a long-standing controversy between theorists deriving their views from principles of optics, and those deriving their views from symbol systems such as Erwin Panofsky or Meyer Schapiro, and opposing schools of psychology such as Arnheim, and Goodman, who combines both.⁴⁵ The argument is essentially over whether perception is natural or conventional, inherent or learned. In the earlier exchange noted between Gombrich and Goodman they find common ground in the acceptance that some conventions allow for others, or that conventions are built upon conventions, and therefore some seem comparatively natural, others artificial. But Goodman then asked where do we draw the line? And is it important?⁴⁶ Pursuing the most natural is a path of infinite regress.

⁴⁴ Goodman, 1976, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁵ See for example the exchange in articles by Goodman, Gibson and Gombrich in *Leonardo*, 1971, No 4. See also Panofsky, 'Die Perspektive als symbolische Form' in *Aufsätze*, 1927, pp. 99-167. Schapiro, *Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries*, New York, 1978, pp. 185-211, Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception* Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1954.

⁴⁶ Gombrich, 1982, p. 284.

Clearly Willats was unimpressed by such relativism. Yet the problem cannot be ignored, and ultimately undermines much of his findings. For example, concerning the chapter on optical denotations where he claims ‘very few artists have, in fact, attempted to replicate the appearance of the optic array directly’ - there is a disturbing lack of awareness of the sheer futility of the suggestion.⁴⁷ Not only is there no way to replicate light with paint ‘directly’, but ‘the appearance’ of the optic array surely depends upon what is being looked for, and how, in Gombrich’s terms, what can be matched depends upon what can be made. The extensive studies by Gombrich concerning just this question, and concluding with just this answer, seem to have been lost on Willats, all the more curious since Gombrich is a much cited source as well as something of a mentor.⁴⁸ Similarly, summary of Seurat’s approach to painting as ‘an *artificial* pictorial effect that refers to the effects of light but does not *replicate them directly*’ (my italics) commits him to the twin follies of a belief in pictorial effects that are not ‘artificial’, and a belief that light might somehow be substituted with paint.⁴⁹

Turning to the matter of depicting several related objects and to options available to projections and perspectives, the picture plane may firstly accommodate more than one object by extending laterally or vertically. In the case of the ancient Egyptians, lateral extension also introduces a reduced directionality to the picture, and a tentative step toward writing. Two-dimensional mapping or ‘topological’ relations as Willats terms them, also result in the ‘fold-out’ picture, identified by A. L. Nicholls and J. M. Kennedy in the work of young children, and by Willats in icons of the Byzantine and Orthodox churches.⁵⁰ Here, adjacent objects in a scene may be depicted from conflicting aspects – a house seen from in front, a field seen from above, but sharing an edge as an of axis upon which one might ‘fold’ the picture to create a three dimensional model.

⁴⁷ Willats, 1997, p. 133.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. xii. See also Gombrich, 1960, pp. 313-314, ‘For if we have learned anything in the course of these chapters it is that representation is never a replica. The forms of art, ancient and modern, are not duplications of what the artist has in mind any more than they are duplications of what he sees in the outer world’.

⁴⁹ Willats, 1997, p. 145.

⁵⁰ Nicholls and Kennedy, ‘Drawing development from similarity of features to direction’ in *Child Development*: 63, 1992, pp. 227-241. Willats, 1997, pp. 194-199.

The fold-out picture may also be seen as a kind of collage or made up of a series of smaller pictures, each of a single object, and related to one other so that each shares a common axis and dimension, while their second, conflicting axis – it need not run at 90 degrees, need not be readily ‘foldable’ - constructs divergent versions of the picture plane. Depth or a third dimension here is understood in just these terms: as simply a realignment of each object/picture plane’s axes. Various kinds of multiple pictures arise, combining various projections and even perspectives, and some of these are dealt with as anomalies and some as plain ineptitude by Willats. The tradition of Persian and Indian miniatures offers many examples of depth and scale jumps that are often reminiscent of modern photo-collages, and while the use to which such a technique may be put is clear, predictably Willats concludes:

Thus, although individual parts of the scene look strongly three-dimensional, the eye cannot make sense of the space of the scene as a whole, and this destroys the illusion of a real three-dimensional scene and flattens the picture.⁵¹

Tactfully, one might reply that it depends on which mind the eye serves. More constructively, one might suggest that more than one look, or more than one perspective are also properties of vision, that we do not necessarily look only in one direction, or on one focal length, or from one position, in viewing a scene, let alone a picture.

Beyond the foldout or multiple pictures, there is the development of more integrated approaches to depth. The picture plane, while initially aligned with a single side of an object, introduces additional and unaligned sides (or parallel oblique projections) These are the elementary projections that emphasise one corner of an object – and promptly confound Gombrich’s famous axiom for the development of perspective, namely that it ‘rests on a simple and incontrovertible fact of experience, the fact that we cannot look around a corner’.⁵² Projections progress to the alignment of axis or connecting edge of two adjacent sides, leaving both or more unaligned, and hence understood as receding in depth from the aligned edge. These are the isometric, diametric and trimetric oblique projections illustrated in Figure B. In each case the picture plane is gradually separated or

⁵¹ Willats, 1997, p. 228.

⁵² Gombrich, 1960, p. 250.

distanced from a direct alignment with the object and becomes instead a ‘slice’ across a three-dimensional space or the traditionally understood ‘window’ frame before the object. In this there is general agreement with the findings of David Marr and associates, of a development from object-centred descriptions to view or scene-centred descriptions.⁵³

The achievement of perspective, in this view, is precisely the realisation that a two-dimensional plane may be constructed anywhere within a three dimensional space, and that it need not align itself wholly or solely with solid objects, but instead locate itself in relation to an horizon and one or more vanishing points. It is this flexibility, rather than its illusionary properties, that play an important role in the dominance of perspective as a pictorial tradition. Vanishing points allow depth to be understood, not in terms of any one oblique plane or angle, but as all planes or edges aligned to a vanishing point and the picture plane. It allows for a greater integration of objects, in a number of interesting ways, but the point here is simply that horizon and vanishing points provide further means of constructing three dimensions from two.

2. Distortion

An argument made against a two-dimensional view of the picture surface, and in favour of an optical view of perception, concerns the recognition of distorted images, such as an anamorphic image, that can only be viewed correctly when the viewer stands to the side of the picture surface rather than in front of it. Kennedy claims that such depictions support the view that it is the optical information supplied by the surface, or the light rays reflected from it, that enable the perception of a depiction, rather than the surface ‘itself’, or the surface unviewed, or perhaps the surface understood as various markings viewed only from in front of the picture surface, and presumably in a ‘light-free’ environment.⁵⁴

Taking the example of a photographic plate, he argues that it is the chemical’s structure rather than the chemical’s distribution on the picture surface that directs

⁵³ Marr, ‘Representing visual information: a computational approach,’ in *Computer Vision*, A. R. Hanson and E. M. Riseman (eds.) New York, 1978, pp. 61-80 and Marr, *Vision: A Computational Investigation into the Human Representation and Processing of Visual Information*, San Francisco, 1982.

⁵⁴ Kennedy, 1974, p.36.

the light. But since the chemical's distribution is surely part of its structure, this distinction too fails to isolate the picture surface from the light reflected from it. 'Any theory that relies on descriptions of elements and their distribution on a surface is inconvenienced by anamorphics' he concludes, but no more inconvenienced than the viewer, of either the surface or its light isolated from each other.⁵⁵ The argument fails because it assumes the surface is to be described from only one angle - in front - while its light allows another option. But the description of the surface *is* the description of its reflected light. We view an anamorphic picture with light, whether we stand in front or to the side of a picture, only one view easily supplies us with a picture, but this viewing condition supplies us with the 'informative light' only because it issues from an 'informative' surface, or the surface rightly taken, or so sampled.

3. Caricature

The issue of caricature poses problems for a theory of depiction in as much it allows deliberate exaggeration or distortion of an object for comic effect, while still preserving the object's resemblance and identity. On the one hand we readily recognise the object, while on the other we are aware that it does not 'really' look this way. Apart from the surprise and humour that results, the issue draws forth several deeper questions concerning the resemblance we hold for an object, the expressive, and accidental qualities we allow it, the means by which these are brought about in depiction.

Gombrich and Wollheim make important contributions to the issue and Willats has also made some interesting suggestions concerning topological functions for caricature.⁵⁶ But here attention remains on certain converging interests of Gombrich and Wollheim.⁵⁷ Gombrich's treatment covers a broader range of caricature, dealing with both the caricature of certain persons as well as the whimsical creations of Walt Disney or James Thurber. He points firstly to the wholistic and complex nature of perceived likenesses in portraits, and faces in general, and to the difficulty of settling on a characteristic expression for an

⁵⁵ Kennedy, 1974, p.36.

⁵⁶ Willats, 1997, p. 72.

⁵⁷ Gombrich, 1960, pp. 279-303. Wollheim, 1987, pp. 69-70.

individual, as well as a characteristic expression for general states of mind, such as happiness or despair (which can often look alike). For Gombrich this process amplifies his view of pictorial development, as one of schema and correction. A schema is a traditional means or format that is tested with some new aim or task, and if successful, is 'corrected' to include this aim, or is recognised as a new, in this case, funnier version of the tradition. With caricature the correction occurs not by trying to observe some new or different part of an object, but rather by deconstructing or toying with the means, and then testing to see if it still matches or resembles the object. For Gombrich the humorous side of this is bound up with dark psychological taboos concerning unconscious hostilities toward the object. But humour apart, this model also suggests the uneasy relation between expression and representation, between shifting properties attributed to an object, and their impact upon its identity.

For the moment it is enough to indicate how this issue leads directly to that of expression. Expression is addressed in the following essay. Wollheim's contribution finds its clearest account in *Painting as an Art*.⁵⁸ His view is bound up in a discussion of the kinds of things that can be painted and depicted generally. His categories for depictive content take the form of a cross-classification that runs along one axis from objects to events, and along the other from particulars to kinds. A particular object such as the portrait of *Madame Moitessier* by J. A. D. Ingres, is made up of kinds of particulars, so to speak, such as a portrait of a woman, a young person, a French citizen, born in the early nineteenth century, middle class, self-assured, and so on. One constructs the individual according to which kinds one knows and sees them belonging to - except in the case of caricatures - where a person may be depicted as belonging to an impossible kind, such as an animal or, in the example used by both Wollheim and Gombrich, the French emperor Louis Phillippe turning into a pear in *Les Poires* by Phillipon.

The idea of caricature as a misclassing has parallels with Gombrich's model of schema and correction and the experimental or testing nature of depiction, although Wollheim does not pursue its application outside of persons, to a dog in a Thurber or Disney cartoon, for example. What is important about Wollheim's formulation is

⁵⁸ Wollheim, 1987, pp. 69-71.

its location within the categories outlined. Caricatures play with the misuse of kinds, but more earnest depiction relies upon the same ladders of kinds, rendering an object in degree of particularity. The difference between seeing a picture of a young woman and just seeing a young woman for example, is taken to lie in the greater particularity of the direct perception.⁵⁹ Yet the danger lies in offering an example purely by description, or without illustration, for the young woman hypothetically pictured, is surely located after a fashion, perhaps even to a time of day, and even when we do not learn the name and history of the young woman from the picture (a situation that may equally apply to direct perception), pictures of young women come in many kinds, from the formal portraits by Ingres, to the Madonnas of Raphael, the ballet students of Degas, the sun bathers of Renoir, and the housewives of Vermeer, for example. The particular proliferates in pictures as vigorously as in direct perception. Then again, while kinds are as common to pictures as to direct perception, yet they differ as much between direct perceptions as between pictures. So again, direct perception offers no clear model for depictive meaning. These issues are given a very different treatment by Goodman, but his discussion of caricature centres mainly on *representing-as*, as when a person is depicted *as* a pear, or vice versa, and will be considered under the following issue of fiction.

However, the philosopher Stephanie Ross has provided a useful discussion of caricature, in terms strikingly consonant with Goodman's theory.⁶⁰ She pointed firstly to the problem of establishing caricature as an exaggeration of distinctive, standard or truthful features of the object. No such features may be reliably identified. They depend upon too many conflicting interests, and kinds of pictures. Yet caricature remains a reliable category, we rarely revise what is and is not a caricature, even if acknowledging a grey area. Indeed, we can often judge a picture to be a caricature without fully identifying the object. She further argued that the practice of caricature does not require necessary and sufficient conditions, that not only can we recognise caricature on the basis of experience with pictures, take and treat them differently from other pictures, but also that our experience in these matters extends to direct perception and - crucially for Goodman's theory - to the

⁵⁹ Wollheim, 1987, p. 71.

⁶⁰ Ross, 'Caricature' in *The Monist*, 58, 1974, pp. 284-293.

projection of predicates.⁶¹ Predicates and projection will also be explained under the issue of fiction. In stressing the interdependence of pictures and direct perception in complex projection, Ross effectively denies Wollheim's distinction as well.

Yet Ross's account still leaves the problem of caricatures as pictures that are 'less realistic and which demand we see reality (which includes people *and* pictures) in terms of them'.⁶² In other words, there is still the paradox of the unrealistic somehow accepted as realistic. To remedy this we can firstly distinguish caricature from other less realistic pictures, for example note that caricature typically does not just build a novel perspective, such as that of a fisheye lens, nor does it achieve the complexity of a portrait by Picasso or Goya, to use Ross's examples. So caricature is neither in the business of a comprehensive system of depth nor an especially complex version of the object. Rather, *how* it pictures is a matter of mere pastiche and parody, recognisable in itself, as noted. The ridicule is directed as much to the basics of drawing and portraiture as it is to its object, and because it is bound much more closely to norms of depiction it is both more superficial and amusing as well as more dependent upon a standard and familiar object. Thus we have pictures *about* realism, rather than realistic pictures, and objects that easily survive such minor versions. Finally, Ross rightly pointed to the parallels between metaphor and caricature. Not all caricature strictly functions as metaphor, but both 'inhabit a continuum with literal ways of depicting reality' and 'are vehicles for conciseness, novelty and economy of expression'. Differences between strict depictive metaphor, or allegory, and caricature come under greater scrutiny when the study looks to the history of painting in the closing decades of the twentieth century.

4. Fiction

Like caricature, fiction involves the ability to deal in particulars and kinds, individuals and classes. Yet fiction asks a more pointed question of theories of depiction based upon resemblance, since there are no actual or existential objects for pictures of unicorns or Homer Simpson to resemble. Intuitively, one might suppose a resemblance to a kind of horse, with a horn on its forehead, or to a kind of middle-aged man, bald, sallow complexion, five o'clock shadow, pronounced

⁶¹ Ross, 1974, pp. 284-293.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 291.

exophthalmia, will suffice. But where reference is understood as strictly to actual individual objects, they will not. For Goodman, pictures, like names, obtain predicates, and a nominalist ontology requires fictive pictures be taken firstly to depict or denote no actual or individual object, or as null-denotation.⁶³ A null-denotation is understood to reverse the direction of its reference, to point to (or place its predicate in) only a sort of picture. A *unicorn-picture* or a *Homer Simpson-picture*, are here the preferred nomenclature, taken as a more accurate indication of reference direction, rather than implying there is an actual object, or a predicate extended beyond the fictive picture.

Null denotation thus directs reference to the way we use or sort pictures, even at the expense of having a further or actual object. Expanding on sorts of pictures is not an idle exercise, as pictures of actual objects must all belong to sorts of pictures, must be an *x*-picture of a *y*-object, and sometimes a *y*-as-*x*-picture. A unicorn-picture or a Homer Simpson-picture go to organising the workings of pictures in the same way as class terms sort pictures of young women as young women-pictures, not that all pictures containing young women need be classed as young women-pictures, or that young women-pictures need contain only young women. Importantly, the sorting of pictures and objects does not in Goodman's view require prior definitions or acquaintance with rules. It proceeds by trial and error, practice and precedent, can learn sort of picture from object or vice versa, and complies with consensus. This urges the parallel with language acquisition, and the commitment to depiction taken as denotation. Yet Goodman's view also aligns fiction with fundamental processes of classification and construal, and fiction duly emerges a more dignified and vital activity.

How is this nominalist view of fiction reconciled within a view of depiction as exemplification?⁶⁴ If anything the view of depiction as exemplification makes it clearer that fictive or *null depiction* functions as a form of self-reference, requiring a two-way or resemblance relation. In exchanging null denotation for null depiction, the study exchanges the notion of a null yet converse denotation, for the two-way

⁶³ Goodman, 1976, pp. 21-26.

⁶⁴ Although Goodman explicitly denies that exemplification may be fictive (Goodman, 1984, p. 60) this is taken here to apply to *material* exemplification, or exemplification of three-dimensional properties, rather than *depictive* exemplification.

reference of exemplification. The proposed theory therefore allows resemblance for fictive pictures, but only to sorts of pictures, through effective sample. Depiction may still be allied to predication. Nominalism is available even in the absence of denotation. However for ease of exposition the study remains Platonist and talk henceforth remains of properties rather than predicates.

5. Found Depiction

Natural objects may also exhibit depiction, such as the faces and figures found in stains on a wall, the moon, clouds or foliage. Their occurrence is generally taken as a contributing factor, to a greater or lesser extent, in the discovery or invention of depiction. Wollheim in particular places great emphasis upon them, and upon our natural ability to ‘see-in’ and find such depictions.⁶⁵ Gombrich devotes a chapter to their ability to provide suggestive ‘schemas’, which our projections can ‘correct’, and in this way serve as a source of inspiration for artists.⁶⁶ Neither view is disputed here; rather the opportunity is taken to point to something more these objects share with the perception of two dimensions.

It is an obvious but overlooked quality, and it is not always associated with a surface. It may arise amongst disparate objects seen in silhouette, or in a space between the shapes of clouds. What occurs is the perception of a certain irregularity and complexity of structure that taxes expectations or familiarity with certain objects or spaces. We are caught up in unexpected detail, and look for a simpler way of organising it. We see faces and figures because we have the most elaborate and elastic constructs for these objects, and they are equally mobile or organic objects as a result. They are wilfully misapplied in such depiction, as an experiment in obtaining a simpler or more familiar configuration. They need not be illusions. That depends how wilfully they are misapplied. It is unlikely, or extremely difficult to find a depiction of a microwave or a lawnmower for example, in stains or clouds, because our perceptions of these objects lack the elasticity to accommodate enough variation, and equally difficult to find such depictions in the plain perception of complex but regular objects such as an air conditioning grill or bookshelf.

⁶⁵ Wollheim, 1987, pp. 48-51.

⁶⁶ Gombrich, 1960, pp. 154-169.

In explaining how a surface must exemplify two dimensions in order to function as depiction, the need to ensure that the markings on the surface stand out, or alert us to their special quality as a surface, has been noted. In fact they function in much the same way as the examples drawn from nature, in foiling perception of the picture surface, as other than exemplifying two dimensions. In nature we find depictions when we cannot find enough that is predictable and simple in our perceptions, and in culture we find depictions when we learn how to reorganise surfaces, in special ways.

Conclusion

The proposed theory of depiction now stands consolidated by engagement with five key issues. The theory takes depth as variously constructed by schemes of projection and perspective, in projection by angle contrasted with axes of picture plane, in perspective by angles determined by nominated horizon and vanishing points. It ranges schemes according to integration of object with picture plane, to behind or beyond it. Expanding on schemes amounts to expanding on sorts of objects depicted and presents opportunities for caricature and fiction. Caricature is taken as in Gombrich and Wollheim, to be a testing of objects and pictures, and as in Ross, to be a practice that requires neither ready recognition nor resemblance for the object, nor fixed features to a scheme or style. Caricature is also interesting because it prompts the issue of expression, and with it draws depiction toward a theory of art. Similarly, fiction is taken as a further means of construction for schemes of picture and object, and available to Goodman's nominalist ontology, by null-depiction, rather than null-denotation. The issues of distortion and found depiction here allow us to distinguish between optic conditions and favoured or available schemes for depiction, their accidental occurrence and frail conformity. Having established this broader foundation for the proposed theory, it now turns to five further issues, in expression and style (together), art and its history (together) interpretation, realism and painting.

Expression and Style

The issue of expression arose in considering caricature and the issue of style arose in Chapter Two concerning classification and practice of exemplification. This chapter traces important links between the two, looks firstly at their treatment under Goodman's theory and shows how depiction taken as exemplification now requires some further distinction to accommodate expression, but remains consistent with Goodman's views on reference and stylistics. The position is then contrasted with those of Gombrich and Wollheim.

What is expressive and usually amusing in caricature is the latitude or variation granted the object and its sort of picture. But even caricatures vary in degree of expressiveness as well as in what is expressed, and expression is not only or even mostly by caricature. Expression in reference is commonly understood as a matter of how as opposed to what is stated. Obviously not all reference or statements are counted equally or especially expressive, rather expression registers only where means or ends offer surprising or novel variation. What is expressed *in* a statement sometimes amounts to the ways it departs from standard accounts, identifies a novel aspect or point of view to an issue or object. But expression more typically is a matter of how rather than what is stated, depends upon tone of voice, rhetoric and other performance in utterance, upon vocabulary and syntax in writing and especially figures of speech, sometimes upon typeface, layout and design, and in depiction upon especially materials and technique.

In *Languages of Art* analysis of expression begins with descriptive notation or writing, and focuses upon figures of speech, their range of elements or 'schemata', their realm of application and importantly their occasional re-application or transfer of

range and or realm.⁶⁷ Irony for example is understood as reversed schemata, whereby range of elements is applied to the same realm in reverse order, so that a misfortune becomes 'a fine thing' or a windfall 'tough luck'. A similar revision of range might explain caricature, whereby proportion, modelling, and facial expression for example, still obtain the same realm but revise ordering of elements. But Goodman does not suggest this. Where transference is of both range and realm, figures essentially function as metaphor, but Goodman also demonstrates that the model of transfer holds for simile, euphemism, personification, synecdoche, antonomasia, litotes, hyperbole and meiosis, under and over use thereof. Expression is now seen as relative to familiarity or usage of range or realm for schemata. Talk of schemata recalls Gombrich's schema and correction, and Goodman's discussion of 'ping and pong' in synaesthetic transfers readily acknowledges the precedent.⁶⁸ However, Goodman also departs from Gombrich in allowing an intimate relation between expression and exemplification in depiction.

This now calls for some adjustment to the proposed theory, where depiction is already taken as a mode of exemplification. It requires a further distinction between the exemplification of two-dimensionality and three, or what shall now be termed *material* exemplification. In Chapter Two it was noted that in exemplifying two-dimensionality a surface was distinctively reconfigured or marked so as to effectively display the sample, and that the material or three-dimensional aspects to this reconfiguration in turn may offer additional or attendant sample. Sampling becomes two-faced or double-edged in this way. It is this distinction between material exemplification and depiction that now corresponds to Goodman's discussion of expression for exemplification and depiction. Material exemplification may offer literal or metaphorical sample to accompany depiction, which in turn may offer literal or metaphorical realms, in allegory or realism and blends. However, Goodman's emphasis is upon transfer of material samples in expression, such as the literally grey picture that is metaphorically - expressively - bleak or lonely, (in as much as it claims a novel but effective realm).

⁶⁷ Goodman, 1976, pp. 68-84.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p.76.

But the point is also that depiction is often accompanied by the sampling of literal material properties for themselves, not just of colour or line but also of facture or technique, size, scale or detail, expense or rarity of materials, framing and even location (for murals) amongst others, and that any or some contribute to the meaning of a picture, to how and what a picture samples. Yet to say that a picture *expresses* say, a roughness or whiteness, is also to suggest perhaps that it is not itself, or literally, rough or white. For this reason expression is reserved for transfers of material samples. Transfers however are not necessarily to emotional realms, to sadness or joy, say, but as often and also to synaesthetic realms indicated above, to sounds or tastes, to qualities like slipperiness or bulkiness, even for the literally small, dry and solid picture. Finally, Goodman has less to say about metaphor *within* depiction, of allegorical or personified pictures for example, and whether these necessarily count as expressive. Although it is clear from the conditions for effective transfer that where the realm is obvious or familiar, such as in an illustration to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, or of a woman as justice or liberty, that expression and transfer are less prominent than mere statement. So expression requires prominence or exemplification of novel transfer, rather than just instantiation, and this holds for transfer in material exemplification as well, although perhaps less rigorously.

Expression thus expands upon depictive meaning through metaphor and the proposed distinction here between depictive and material exemplification explains how meaning is variously combined and subtly interacts. In Chapter One criticism of Goodman's example of a picture of a wave by Hokusai corresponding to a finance graph drew attention to the difference between literal depiction and expressive qualities attributed to the outline. The relation between them is now clear and preserves Goodman's distinctions between meanings, for taking a stricter view of depiction.

Meaning arises along roughly three routes, through structure, of literal materials, through sentiment, of metaphor or expressive transfer, and through statement, of depiction. All and only such reference is taken to constitute stylistic features for a picture, to locate it according to typical occurrence of such features for a source, as artist, time, place, school, trend, region, nation or period. Source need not be supplied by every category for a style and every category need not share a scale for

time or place. A source may be as broad as the pre-historic period or as narrow as the artist's blue period, as sweeping as western; or European style, through to national, regional and more local styles.

Furthermore the style or combination of reference features for one source is rarely the same as those for another, so that for example, school or regional style may favour structure over statement; or the artist's individual style favour sentiment over statement, or various weighting and combinations. Goodman's views on style are expanded in *Ways of Worldmaking*, where style and stylistics are seen as an indispensable tool to understanding depiction.⁶⁹ Art history and criticism are seen as exchanging ends for means in regard to style. The historian attributes a picture to a style through document and research while the critic appraises what the picture's inclusion means to the style, and the style to the picture, drawing on broader considerations of biography, politics, geography, economics, psychology, and other disciplines. Beyond this, interesting and unexpected features are frequently discovered through mixing styles, even jumbling pictures with other objects and reference, but this is only to contrast with established styles. Again Goodman urges that no definitive list of features need be drawn up for a style to be effective; that is something simply to be worked at and usually grasped without fully analysing its elements. As with the issue of fiction, the test is rather in our sureness and understanding of pictures, in our ability to maintain subtle distinctions between them. We profit from the challenge and find the complex and elusive style rewarding, the quick and simple mere mannerism. Appreciation of style is an integral aspect of our sensitivity and understanding of depiction and anticipates the issue of art.

It is instructive at this point to compare Goodman's views with those of Gombrich and Wollheim. Goodman pointedly contrasts his rejection of intention and synonymy for example, with Gombrich's views while Wollheim's later formulations are equally explicit in their rejection of Goodman.⁷⁰ Gombrich takes expression to be depictive reference to the non-visual senses, or the invisible, to ideas and

⁶⁹ Goodman, 1978, pp. 23-40.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 23. The footnote to this page identifies a Gombrich entry in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 15, p. 353, but the account offered in Gombrich, 1960, pp. 304-329, serves as the source for discussion here. See also Wollheim, 1987, pp. 25-40.

sentiments. It extends his position on depiction in tracing a smooth progression of ‘equivalences’ or a synonymous translation between pictorial features and such non-visible objects. But there can be no appeal to an illusion, or a natural perception with such expression. Instead Gombrich turns to elementary polarities, to Roman Jakobson’s game of ‘ping’ and ‘pong’ as well as Charles E. Osgood’s semantic experiments to propose a structure through which to establish synonymy.⁷¹ Such schema - or schemata - allow a tradition of the plain Doric column contrasted with the ornate Corinthian column, for example, to express modesty opposed to extravagance, and later variations to build expression through related motifs, so that they may then express say, rustic purity versus worldly compromise.

Hence expression in Gombrich’s theory, while similarly suggesting metaphor, is essentially concerned with allegory and versions of schema, and largely ignores material exemplification. Expression is again linked to style, in the schema preserving these traditional polarities and by synonymy of styles. Synonymy takes styles as versions of a shared object or theme, or draws a hard line between how and what, manner and matter. Synonymy allows expression to deal with metaphoric variation to such shared objects or themes, but the formulation is not so much misguided as stunted. Gombrich’s example of the individual style of John Constable is telling in this respect. Constable is seen as achieving stylistic distinction in the pastoral genre, of introducing a certain atmosphere – ‘lights, dews, breezes’ – previously unavailable, but inserted through a shrewd mixture of rebellion and compromise.⁷² On the one hand it discovers a new perceptual truth, on the other it no more than refines colour schema for tradition. But the account then struggles with the success enjoyed by Constable’s sketches, and an argument is made for the superiority of the finished works, on the basis of their greater adherence to tradition. Preference for the sketches is dismissed as a superficial indulgence of ‘the beholder’s share’ or of pandering to mere suggestiveness in perception and pictures.⁷³ Yet Gombrich’s whole theory of depiction as illusion rests on just such suggestiveness. The real issue here is the inability to accept facture or the handling of materials as expressive features. In fact preference for the sketches rests mainly

⁷¹ Osgood et al., *The Measurement of Meaning*, Urbana, 1957.

⁷² Gombrich, 1960, pp. 325-326.

⁷³ Earlier, in the chapter ‘The Image in the Clouds’, Gombrich similarly parades his prejudice against the ‘manieroso’ in painting, finding such suggestiveness only for the informed – “It is always flattering to feel ‘in the know’”, Gombrich, 1960, pp. 166-167.

on the perceived expressiveness of the looser handling. Matters as general and transitory as a breezy atmosphere are not to be caught in a close attention to foliage or texture, or the careful polish of tonalities, but in a more global impression, and not just in terms of objects depicted, but also of formal properties of facture and viscosity of paint, of literal or material sampling. Breeziness in Constable's manner of painting helps him sketch breeziness in nature.

The example underlines the problem of style taken as synonymy. Gombrich is reluctant to accept the sketch because it abandons detail and finish in the interest of wholistic features, and more generally allows that the objects might have properties or appearances particular to a style. This weakens the synonymy of pictures to objects, styles to pictures, expression to styles. The same holds for the view that Constable's landscapes restate the pastoral tradition, which in turn restates classical sentiments of modesty and rustic truth. It is to take a somewhat static view of the matter. Accepting Constable as part of the pastoral tradition means revising some of the things that style identifies, so a plea for Constable's conformity in matters of finish rather pre-empts the issue, if accommodation is to be a two-way affair. Gombrich similarly berates Romanticism for its concentration upon novelty and invention at the expense of tradition, but his stern historian's focus upon the constancy of tradition is just as much a mistake.⁷⁴ Tradition is traditionally open to negotiation. The fact is, manner affects matter, how a picture is made affects what a picture makes, and vice versa. Strict synonymy sells style and expression short. Expression is not simply what a metaphor transfers from the depicted object, or to where, nor the right schema for a remote realm, but also in the material sampled along with depiction, transfers to and from it.

In *Painting as an Art*, Wollheim proposed not only a theory of pictorial meaning, but also its development within painting and its status as art. He offered a model of pictorial meaning developed through a process of 'thematization'.⁷⁵ This concerns the agent's awareness of accidental, unintended, overlooked or ignored aspects within a pictorial tradition or style and of their referential possibilities.⁷⁶ The agent's

⁷⁴ Gombrich, 1960, p. 322.

⁷⁵ Wollheim, 1987, pp. 19-25.

⁷⁶ The term agent rather than artist is maintained here as in Wollheim, in deference to his distinction between artists and other makers of pictures.

efforts to harness or incorporate them are termed the thematisation of pictorial features. This is also taken as a model for the development of individual or personal style. A personal style is taken as a necessary condition of art. Wollheim's focus upon the individual is of a piece with his psychological approach and the role of intention in establishing pictorial meaning. It is also of a piece with idealism, as shall be demonstrated.

The familiar objections to intention are met here firstly where the intention is not taken narrowly, as an explicit statement, but rather as all the thoughts, memories and feelings that occur during production of a picture, and that 'cause' the agent to depict in a certain way.⁷⁷ Secondly, intention is only fulfilled if the spectator is able to derive this from the experience of looking at the picture – it is not enough, in other words, to know about the intentions and just to associate them with the picture. It must be visible in the picture, in a way acceptable to the spectator. The question is, having met these requirements, are we still talking about intention? An intention that is so attenuated as to embrace all thoughts, memories and feelings that influence or cause the agent to depict in a certain way looks uncomfortably like mere consciousness. Attempting to demarcate which mental events actually made and did not make a difference to the picture only begs the question what sort of difference counts? Different when? How? If the picture looks different as the agent anticipates dinner, has this advanced the picture? The only way to tell is from the finished picture, and all that can be told from the finished picture is all that led to its being finished. There is no separating some moments from the rest in the causal chain.

Then there is the question of the fulfilment of the intentions, and whether it can, strictly speaking, still be considered an intention after fulfilment; at which time we have a deed. Wollheim refers to the fulfilled intention of the agent in a picture as the description under which the picture is so taken, much as a deed might be taken as the description under which the agent acted, or the agent's own description of the deed. The assumption is that each deed or object may be described in a variety

⁷⁷ For the 'formalist' argument against mere intention see Monroe Beardsley and W.K. Wimsatt, 'The Intentional Fallacy', *Sewanee Review*, 54, 1946, pp. 3-23. See also Monroe Beardsley and Hubert M. Schueller (eds.) *Aesthetic Inquiry: Essays in Art criticism and the Philosophy of Art*, Belmont/California, 1967.

of ways, and in fact must be further described in some way, to be intelligible, and that the agent has in mind just the one comprehensive description. In other words the deed or object in-itself is vague, ineffable or meaningless. Yet the deed or object under a particular description has a way of extending that description all the way to the describer, in the quest for further particularity. Ultimately matter is exchanged for mind. This is the idealist basis to Wollheim's views, and it underwrites his commitment to psychology and personal style. Wollheim sees the fulfilled intentions being modified, and tested by the agent through playing the role of the spectator, imagining how the picture will be taken and whether the desired description of the picture can be seen. But if there are roles for what can and cannot be seen in the picture, then there are rules, and if there are rules then intention is overruled. When what the agent means only matters when they play by the rules or roles, then it is the rules we look to for meaning. Wollheim's formulation is at best a Pyrrhic victory for intention.

Wollheim's view of expression, like his view of depiction, draws on the natural inclinations of the spectator to project onto a suitable surface. His view of expression is exclusively in terms of emotion, rejecting Gombrich's examples of synesthesia, and Goodman's transfers of literal properties by metaphor.⁷⁸ Indeed he considers at length an interesting objection to the view of expression as metaphor in relation to emotion.⁷⁹ It concerns the transfer of an emotion such as sadness, through metaphor, to a picture of a landscape, to take the simplest of examples. The landscape expresses sadness, or is metaphorically a sad landscape. The objection is that a landscape cannot be sad in the same way a person is sad, unless the metaphor is of the landscape as a sad person, which is then a different matter. The sadness must therefore be of an abstracted or idealized kind, in order to 'double-up' as Wollheim terms it, for both literal and metaphorical applications. What is literally sad is a feeling, and what is metaphorically sad is a landscape, but how is a landscape to be taken as sad, unless as a person? And if both feeling and landscape are sad in the same sense, are they both then literal or metaphorical?

⁷⁸ Wollheim, 1987, p. 80.

⁷⁹ Ibid. pp. 84-85.

In reply one might start by citing Goodman's description of a metaphor as 'an affair between a predicate with a past and an object that yields while protesting'.⁸⁰ A metaphor does not always apply smoothly and easily to its object. The idea is to find or make a way in which they match or make new sense. To apply sadness to a landscape is to take sadness as a place, for a person, or within a person. The disjuncture is obvious, yet intriguing. To fret about its disembodied or idealistic nature is to confuse its literal and metaphorical applications, or to look for one application that holds for both literal and metaphorical instances. What is shared by literal sadness and metaphorical sadness is not the ultimate in sadness, but a label and a practice, in one instance applied literally, and in the other literally misapplied. What rough and ready success this misapplication may have, no more establishes a transcendent sadness than the strict compliance of further literal applications. A metaphor makes up sadness, as much as it makes out sadness. It should also be added that much of Wollheim's attention to this issue is directed toward defending the concept of expressive projection, by which a subject projects onto a suitable scene certain uncomfortable feelings, and in so doing is rid of them. The subject experiences the scene as sad, for example, although this does not make the subject feel sad. Just what the subject's response is to this sudden transformation in surroundings or picture, coinciding as it does with an abrupt swing in mood, is unclear, as is the nature of the place or picture prior to projection, and indeed of the subject's grasp of such matters.

Yet expressive projection also extends to literal or material properties for a depiction in *Painting as an Art*, and may find bodily metaphors, as for example in the abstract paintings of de Kooning and with at least a nod to the work of Rothko.⁸¹ The theory thus offers a broader range to expression than that of Gombrich, while at the same time narrowing the realm for metaphor. Apart from this however, abstraction in Wollheim's version is dismissed as decorative, and the literal materials of the picture are denied a stylistic function shorn of psychological metaphor. He can therefore offer neither a strictly musical metaphor to a painting by Piet Mondrian for example, as Gombrich does; nor admit to the literal or formal properties of a print by Josef Albers or Patrick Heron, as Goodman does.⁸² Like

⁸⁰ Goodman, 1976, p. 69.

⁸¹ Wollheim, 1987, pp. 348-352.

⁸² Gombrich, 1960, pp. 311-312, Goodman, 1978, p. 33.

