Inflected Pictorial Experience: Its Treatment and Significance

According to some, our experience of pictures is sometimes 'inflected' by our awareness of properties of the picture's surface [Podro 1991, 1998; Lopes 2006]. As a result, what we see in these pictures are things that could not be seen face-to-face. Moreover, our experience of these pictures exhibits a phenomenology that differs from that of any possible experience of the pictures' objects in the flesh. All this is supposed to be of central importance for pictorial aesthetics. It helps us understand why we value pictures (why we are interested in looking at them) when we would not value seeing their objects directly. Thanks to inflection, pictures offer us a world we could not encounter in any other way and forms of experience that cannot be enjoyed outside the pictorial realm.

Inflection thus promises to be of some significance. But what exactly is the phenomenon supposed to be, and does it really occur? Once clear on those matters, we can ask whether it is really as important as claimed.

§1 What is Pictorial Experience?

First a preliminary. The notion of inflection is dependent on that of pictorial experience. It is pictorial experience, or *seeing-in* as I shall also call it, that is, under the right circumstances, inflected. But what is seeing-in?

Seeing-in is a special experience that pictures offer us. It is in experiencing pictures in this way that we grasp what they depict. Consider, for instance, Rembrandt's pen and ink sketch of the pastor Jan Cornelius Sylvius (figure 1). If I go to the British Museum and look at this drawing, I see ink marks on a piece of yellowed paper. But I also (in some sense) see a man, holding his left hand outwards, as if engaged in conversation. My experience of the picture thus has two dimensions to its content. It represents what is before me, a marked surface; and it represents something else, a man with certain features. When I see one thing as a picture of something else, my experience has this double content. This is how I know that a picture is before me, and how I know what the picture's own content is, what it depicts. Unless my experience represented a surface as before me, I would take myself to be confronted, not with a picture, but with a gesturing man. And unless my experience in some way represented a man, I would take what is before me to be merely a marked surface, and not a picture of something else.

It is hard to say more about seeing-in without controversy. There are various detailed accounts of what the experience amounts to. However, we need to proceed for as long as possible without choosing between them. Later (§§4-6) it will emerge that disagreements over the nature of pictorial experience have consequences for the significance of inflection. Since our job is in part to establish what that significance might be, we cannot afford to beg any questions by rejecting accounts of seeing-in without argument. Still, we can usefully lay the ground for that later discussion by identifying the key issues on which accounts of pictorial experience disagree. As noted, seeing-in standardly has two dimensions to its content. The key disagreements concern how it comes to exhibit these

two dimensions, the kind of content each dimension involves, and whether both dimensions are necessary.

On the first issue, some hold that seeing-in is a combination of two experiences, one representing the surface, the other representing the depicted object. Seeing-in thus has a double content because it is made up of two component experiences, each of which has a single content. That combination might be sequential, each experience following the other [Gombrich 1961]; or simultaneous, both occurring at the same time [Wollheim 1968, Lopes 2005]. Others suggest that the two dimensions are embodied, not in distinct component experiences but distinct 'aspects' or 'folds' of a single experience [Wollheim 1987]. Still others reject the idea that seeing-in has any components corresponding to the two dimensions of content [Walton 1990, Hopkins 1998]. Those two dimensions are present in seeing-in, but it does not decompose into discrete elements to which the dimensions can be assigned. Rather, the two are abstractions from the complex, structured content of pictorial experience as a whole.

Turning to the second issue, all need to say something about the way in which the two dimensions of the experience's content represent their respective objects, the marked surface and the depicted scene. The marked surface is represented as actually before one. It is represented in seeing-in in the same way that vision in general represents its objects. Put another way, seeing-in really is a kind of *seeing*, and what is seen is the marked surface. But what of the scene-oriented dimension of content? We might say the same there—the depicted scene is represented in whatever way ordinary seeing represents its

objects, i.e. it is given as really before me. And we might say this even though the depicted scene is not in fact before me (so there is at most the *illusion* of seeing it), and, in the context of pictorial experience as a whole, I know that it is not (so there is not even illusion, if that involves being misled). However, this is not the only option. We might, to take just one alternative, say that the scene visible in the surface is represented in something like the way involved in visualizing an item.

These first two issues are the deepest on which accounts of seeing-in disagree, and we will have to return to them below (§§5-6). The third, in contrast, we can set aside. Must seeing-in exhibit both dimensions of content? What of *trompe-l'œil*, in which a picture is mistaken for what it depicts? In this case we seem to see, not a picture of that object, but the object itself. If so, our experience hardly involves the representation of a marked surface. If this counts as pictorial experience, that experience need not involve more than the scene-oriented dimension of content.

Opinions divide on whether experience of *trompe-l'œil* counts as seeing-in [Gombrich 1961, Wollheim 1987, Lopes 2005]. We can avoid that issue. Our topic is inflected pictorial experience, and nobody thinks that experience of *trompe-l'œil* is inflected. If one is not aware of the marked surface before one, features of that surface cannot 'inflect' one's experience of the picture. Of course, when we are fooled by such a picture, there is *a* sense in which we are aware of the marks that compose it: if those marks weren't in front of us, we wouldn't seem to see whatever it is the picture depicts. But this is not the sort of awareness we have of most pictures. In most cases, even as we see things in the

marked surface, we see the marks *as marks*. Our experience of the picture represents a marked surface as before us. This is what is missing in *trompe-l'œil*, and yet what inflection requires. In what follows, then, we can ignore *trompe-l'œil*.

Indeed, we can focus our attention further. Dominic Lopes [2005: 25] usefully distinguishes two sorts of pictorial feature. A picture's *design* comprises those features in virtue of which it supports seeing-in. If, for instance, we see a horse in a drawing in virtue of the way the pencil marks are shaped, then the shape of the marks is an aspect of the picture's design. Not every feature of a surface plays this role. The grain of the paper, for instance, may make no difference to what is seen in it. As Lopes notes, we may, while seeing things in surfaces, be aware of their design—we may see certain features of the surface as the features responsible for our seeing the scene in it. The central cases of inflection are those in which this awareness plays a key role in transforming other aspects of pictorial experience. In what follows, then, we need only consider seeing-in that includes awareness of design.

Given this restriction, we can cut through the various controversies surrounding seeing-in to the following common ground. In the cases that concern us, we can distinguish within pictorial experience the picture and its design, as that experience reveals them to us; and the depicted object or scene with its properties, again as revealed in the experience. More concisely, pictorial experience itself seems to distinguish the picture from what is seen in it. The natural expectation, given what we have said so far, is that these two items will need characterising in distinct terms. Of course, what is seen in the picture depends on

the design. No doubt sometimes the properties of the one will match those of the other—as when a scarlet robe is visible in a part of painted canvas that is itself scarlet. But such dependence and overlap do not undermine the key expectation, that in principle the experienced design and the thing seen in it can be characterised without reference to each other. It is precisely this expectation that inflection challenges.

§2 What is Inflection?

So to the first of the questions it is our goal to answer. Proponents of inflection offer various characterisations of the phenomenon. What follows is a series of statements that might capture what they have in mind. By examining them in the light of the role inflection is intended to play, we will be able to sift the central formulations from the more peripheral.

The simplest place to start is with

> [1] Sometimes, our experience of pictures is inflected by awareness of properties of the picture's design.

This might be a useful slogan, but only as a gloss on other claims. For what does 'inflected' mean? All it clearly suggests is some causal influence, of awareness of design on pictorial experience as a whole. The claim that seeing-in involves such influence is a truism. For that is what distinguishes seeing-in from mere fantasy or hallucination. You

only see a man in Rembrandt's sketch because you see the dark lines composing the figure. Suppose you were aware of the lines and aware of the figure, but there was no causal connection between your awareness of the two. Then you would be seeing the design while merely visualizing the figure, or seeing the former while hallucinating the latter, or some such. What you could not be doing is _seeing_ the man _in_ the lines. Everyone should accept this basic truth about seeing-in, quite independently of the issue of inflection. Since all [1] clearly asserts is this uncontroversial thought, taken alone it does not clearly describe a phenomenon more specific than seeing-in itself.

Perhaps the intended meaning can be revealed by supplementing [1] with other claims. Consider

> [2] Sometimes, the phenomenology of seeing something in a surface differs from
> that of seeing that object face-to-face [Lopes 2006: 128].

If the Rembrandt is an instance of inflection, [2] claims that what it is like to see a gesturing man in it differs from what it is like to see such a man in the flesh. This is certainly not truistic. Below (§5) it will emerge that not everyone should accept [2], in the sense intended. However, we are not yet in a position to explain what is controversial about it. For the moment, we can continue our attempt to understand what inflection is supposed to be by turning to another claim, one supposed to explain why [2] is true:

[3] Sometimes, what is seen in a surface is an object with properties that it could not be seen to have face-to-face. [Podro 1991: 173; 1998: 28; Lopes 2006: 40, 128-9)

What exactly does [3] claim? One reading should be set aside. It is obvious that in some pictures we see objects with properties they do not in fact have (think of the smooth complexions visible in airbrushed portraits of ageing celebrities). It is also obvious that in some pictures we see objects with properties they could not have (think of Escher's impossible staircases). Since one can only see face-to-face what exists to be seen, the states of affairs visible in these pictures cannot (in the Esher case, could not) be seen in the flesh. Should [3] be read in such a way that these pictures count as examples of inflection? I think not. Despite their distinctive subject matter, our experience of these pictures is ordinary seeing-in. There is no interesting sense in which it is 'inflected'. Further, if inflection does reduce to seeing non-actual or impossible states of affairs in pictures, its aesthetic significance is no greater than that of the depiction of such things. Its proponents clearly have a more important phenomenon in mind.

How, then, should [3] be read? The previous reading turned on how the world is. If it doesn't contain objects like those depicted, then it is not possible to see such objects in the flesh. A better reading takes [3] instead to concern the ways that, in experience, things might seem to be. [3] concerns, not the accuracy, but the content of face-to-face seeing. What it should claim is that inflected seeing-in offers us objects with properties that face-to-face experience could not even *seem* to put before us:

[3*] Sometimes, what is seen in the surface is an object with properties that no experience purporting to be of that object seen face-to-face could represent.

This is progress. The celebrity portrait and Escher no longer count as cases of inflection. For, while as things are we could not have veridical face-to-face experiences of such things, we could certainly *seem* to see them.[1] Those cases thus no longer threaten to render inflection mundane: cases of inflection will be more exotic than these pictures. However, [3*] does raise a question. What are the properties it describes? What sort of property can be seen in a surface, but cannot even seem to be seen in any experience (that purports to be) of the relevant object face-to-face?

Here is the answer that fits best with the sorts of things proponents of inflection say, and the sorts of things they want to use the notion to do. It is that the relevant properties have to be described by reference to the picture's design. In inflected pictorial experience, we see in the surface properties that need characterising, in part, by reference to properties of the surface itself. In particular, they need characterising by reference to the very properties of the surface that sustain seeing-in, i.e. the surface's design.

It helps to crystalise the proposal in some definitions. Let's call the properties it postulates as seen in surfaces *inflected properties*. We define them as follows:

---

[1] Indeed, Escher's pictures of endless staircases were inspired by three-dimensional models presenting paradoxical appearances similar to those of the objects in those pictures [Penrose and Penrose 1958].

Inflected properties $=_{df}$ those properties visible in a surface, a full characterisation of which needs to make reference to that surface's design (conceived as such).

Then the phenomenon of inflection is that what is seen in a surface sometimes includes inflected properties. More explicitly:

[4] Sometimes, what is seen in a surface includes properties a full characterisation of which needs to make reference to that surface's design (conceived as such).

This proposal goes beyond the truistic. As I noted at the end of the last section, the natural expectation is that, while design might determine what is visible in a surface, the two can be described independently. The idea here is that this is not always so. When inflection occurs, features of the surface's design must be cited in characterising the properties visible in it. Thus awareness of the design not only causes one to see something in it; it is awareness of features that partly constitute the world seen in. That world ends up possessing features that in some way involve the design itself. To anticipate the example explored in the next section, what is seen in the Rembrandt's ink-marked surface is not just a hand, but a hand itself composed of ink-strokes. This way of giving substantial content to the idea of inflection also squares with other things its proponents say. They talk of features of design being 'recruited' to the scene visible in the picture [Podro 1998: 13, 26]. They say that the scene itself somehow straddles the boundary between the marked surface before the viewer and the other world conveyed by

those marks [Podro 1998: 17, 28]. Or they say that, as well as seeing the scene in the design, we see the design in the scene [Podro 1991: 172]. The proposal offers a way to cash out these metaphors.

The proposal also makes sense of [3*]. If the properties of which it speaks are inflected properties, it will indeed be impossible for them to be represented in experience face-to-face. Inflected properties need characterising, in part, by reference to a surface's design. Thus what is seen in the surface itself makes reference to the fact that a surface is before the viewer, bearing a certain design in virtue of which a scene is visible in it. Thus no experience could represent such properties while purporting to be a case of seeing the object face-to-face. The role of design in characterising the properties of the object guarantees that it is not the sort of thing that can seem to be seen in the flesh.[2]

A final advantage of the proposal is that, spelled out carefully, it enables us to distinguish inflection from two other phenomena. One is *overlap*. Sometimes the properties visible in a surface and the properties of its design match. To reuse our earlier example, a scarlet

---

[2] In Hopkins 1998 (134; cf. 28-30) I make the unqualified claim that only what can be represented in face-to-face visual experience can be seen in a surface. If inflection is defined as I am suggesting and if, as I go on to argue, it does occur, that claim is false. However, it is close to the truth. Nothing here casts doubt on my thought that properties only given to the other senses, or properties not given to the senses at all, cannot be seen in pictures. Moreover, the exceptions to the unqualified claim themselves essentially involve the apparatus of seeing-in, and in particular design. Thus inflection extends the range of what can be seen-in beyond that of what can (seem to) be seen face-to-face, but only by elaborating on a more basic phenomenon, uninflected seeing-in, which does fit my unqualified claim.

robe may be seen in a patch of paint that is itself scarlet. In such cases, the scene visible in the surface needs characterising by reference to properties that, in fact, are also properties of the design. The idea here is more demanding. Inflection occurs when properties visible in the surface need characterising by reference to properties of the design *conceived as such*. Mere overlap does not count.

The other phenomenon is *nested seeing-in*. Sometimes what we see in a picture is itself a picture in which things are seen. For instance, in the picture before us we see a room, with a picture on the wall; and in that inner picture we see a country dance. In this case too, what is seen in the design needs characterising by reference to a design, conceived as such. For a design, with something visible in it, is precisely what we see in this picture. The phenomenon of nested pictorial experience is both interesting in itself and in some respects similar to inflection. Nonetheless the two are distinct. We can keep them apart provided we get the current proposal just right. In inflection, but not nested seeing-in, what is seen in the design before us needs characterising, in part, by reference to *that very design*, conceived as such. (In nested seeing-in, what is seen in the design before us needs characterising by reference, not to that design, but to a design visible in that design.)

Thus, I suggest, [4] offers the definitive formulation of the notion of inflection. From it [3*] follows, since inflected properties are indeed properties that no experience purporting to be of the relevant object face-to-face could represent. If [2] (in the sense the

proponent of inflection intends) is true at all, it is so because [3*] is, and so because [4] is. And [4] offers the non-truistic content of [1].[3]

---

[3] In his contribution to this volume, Bence Nanay offers a different account of inflection. For him, inflected pictorial experience is in essence awareness of emergence, of how the design enables us to see the depicted object in it. As Nanay notes (p.12), the experience he describes fits a key element in my definition of inflection: in being aware of how scene emerges from design, we are indeed aware of features of the picture that require characterising, in part, by reference to design. (Nanay calls these features 'design-scene properties'.) However, these are not inflected properties in my sense. For inflected properties are properties *seen in* the surface. It is very odd to think that what I see in a surface includes how the surface enables me to see that thing in it. That is indeed something of which seeing-in can make me aware—and so emergence is something we can appreciate. But my awareness of emergence is given by seeing-in as a whole, not the scene-oriented dimension of its content. Emergence, while important to the aesthetics of pictures (as acknowledged below), is not to be confused with inflection.

Nanay does consider this difference between our accounts. Here is his response: 'But remember that the properties we attribute to the design are relational properties: they cannot be fully characterised without reference to the picture's design and to the depicted object. Thus, attending to a 'design-scene property' is attending to a property of the depicted object (it is, of course, *also* attending to a property of the surface). Thus, in the case of inflected, but not in uninflected, seeing-in, we consciously attribute a property to the depicted object, a property that can't be fully characterised without reference to the picture's design – just as Hopkins says.' (p.12) The response is framed in terms of what the surface depicts, rather than what is seen in it, but it is clear that the point is intended to carry over. It is thus tempting to read Nanay as claiming that his design-scene properties are seen in surfaces.

However, if this is his conclusion, the argument is weak. In effect, it reasons from the principle that any property of what is seen in the surface is itself seen in it. It is easy to see that that principle is false. Consider the property *being seen in this surface by me right now*. Whenever I see anything in a surface, whatever I see in it has this property. It hardly follows, however, that I see that property in the surface.

§3 Is Any Pictorial Experience Inflected?

A proper understanding of inflection in hand, we can ask whether the phenomenon ever

obtains. However, to address this question we need a criterion for what is seen in a

surface. After all, on our understanding inflection precisely involves intermingling of

properties of the surface's design with properties seen in it. To test whether inflection

occurs it is thus not enough to be able to identify which experiences count as seeing-in,

and to identify which properties those experiences represent. We also need a way to sort

the properties represented as belonging to the surface from those seen in it. Moreover,

since inflected properties straddle that divide, we need the criterion for what is seen in to

be open to the possibility that some features might figure on both sides.

Unfortunately, despite all the argument about how to characterise seeing-in, there has

been very little discussion of how to identify what is seen in a given surface (though see

Wollheim 2001: 23-4, Hopkins mss.). Nonetheless, given our restriction to cases in which

the subject is aware of design, there are two obvious candidates. Since one criterion only

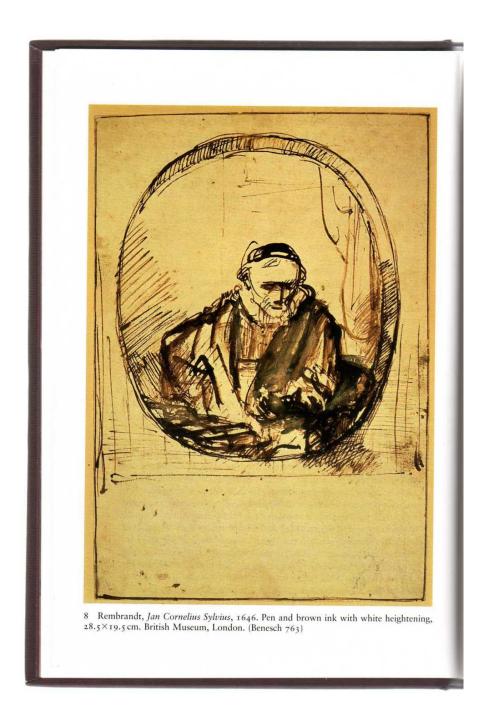functions to supplement the other, we can legitimately exploit both.

The first criterion appeals to elements in the content of one's pictorial experience that do

not appear as properties of what is before one. Suppose my experience presents me with a

trapezoidal block of colour, and yet also in some way represents what lies in that

direction as square [Walton 1990: 54-5]. If it represents what is before me as a trapezium,

but does not represent a square as before me, then the trapezium is seen, and the square is

seen in it. (I see in the trapezium a square tilted away from me.) The second criterion steps in when the first fails to deliver a result. It appeals to the way experience groups the properties and objects it represents. Suppose that considered in isolation squareness has as much claim to be represented as before me as the property of being a trapezium. (So the first criterion lets us down.) It may nonetheless be that one of the two is represented as belonging with some further property clearly not given as before me. (Perhaps squareness goes with being tilted, but nothing before me looks tilted.) Provided only one of the pair is so represented, we can sort them by first identifying what they are grouped with, and then applying the first criterion to the properties so grouped.

Consider, then, one of Podro's most convincing examples of inflection, the now familiar Rembrandt sketch.[4] (I reproduce the finished engraving too, since it helps one to appreciate what is going on in the sketch.)

---

[4] Podro discusses the example in his 1998: 16-17, although he does not make any of the points I go on to.

8 Rembrandt, *Jan Cornelius Sylvius*, 1646. Pen and brown ink with white heightening, 28.5×19.5 cm. British Museum, London. (Benesch 763)

As Podro notes, Rembrandt captures Sylvius's hand gesture particularly well. The upward thrust of the hand is clearly visible. But to see it one must see the ink strokes which depict the hand as themselves driving upwards. Indeed, the hand itself seems to be both body part and rising splash of ink. The movement of the ink is grouped with the

movement of the hand (our second criterion) and the movement of the hand is not seen as before one (our first).[5] Thus what is seen in this picture is a hand composed of rising ink. Since what is seen in needs characterising in part by reference to properties of the picture's design, *prima facie* what is seen in the sketch is an inflected property.

We could resist this conclusion only by dividing the elements seen, placing the upward turned hand with the scene visible in the marks, the inky splash with the picture's design. The claim would then be that, while we see the hand in the inky splash, the two are not more closely related than that. But a further feature of the picture blocks this move. To grasp the full effect of the gesture's upward thrust, one needs also to see it as contrasting with the adjacent downward cascade of Sylvius's robe. Again, the fall of the cloth seems shot through with the movement of the ink that represents it. Now try seeing the two sets of ink marks, the downward driving ones that represent the robe and the rising ones representing the hand, as merely features of the design. To do so dampens the upward thrust of the hand. The strokes composing it now rise in the same plane as that in which the strokes composing the robe descend. The movements of the two are in tension, and work to cancel each other out. A proper visual appreciation of the upward thrust of the hand requires us to avoid this tension. That can only be achieved by seeing the hand-strokes in a very particular way. They pick up on the downward thrust of the robe-strokes, as if they were the same fluid rebounding off a resistant surface. But they do not

---

[5] One might think that the movement of the ink fits the first criterion too, since I do not see moving ink as before me. However, this depends on how we understand that property. Should we take it literally, in which case it is a property the ink is only imagined to have [Podro 1998: 8]? Or should we take it as a metaphorical description of some property the ink really possesses, and which is seen as before me?

fight against the motion of the robe, by flowing back in the direction from which that motion came. Rather, they continue its force by flowing not only upwards but outwards, towards the viewer. Thus fully to see the upward turned hand in the picture, one must see the movement of the ink strokes as occurring not on the marked surface, but in the space visible therein. The properties of the hand cannot be fully characterised without reference to this movement seen in the surface. But since it is movement of ink strokes, the hand cannot be fully characterised without reference to design. At least one of the properties visible in this picture is inflected.

There is thus at least one example of inflection. If the reader is persuaded of this, she will probably be ready to accept that there are others. The proponents of inflection sometimes make much bolder claims. Lopes says that whenever pictorial experience includes awareness of design, the latter inflects the former [2006: 128-9]. I won't attempt to settle whether that stronger claim is true.

§4 Does Inflection Matter?

We know what inflection is, and we know it occurs at least sometimes. It is time to ask what its significance might be. It is supposed to be important to the aesthetics of pictures. I consider three accounts of how it might be.

At the heart of our account of inflection lies [3*], the idea that we sometimes see in pictures things of a kind that could not be seen face-to-face; and [4], the idea that the

difference lies in inflected properties: properties that, although seen in pictures, require characterising by reference to the design in which they are seen. The first account of inflection's significance locates it in these same claims. The contents of seeing-in outstrip those of seeing face-to-face, since only seeing-in represents inflected properties. Seeing-in is central to our appreciation of representational pictures, it is the experience through which we engage with whatever they have to offer aesthetically. There is more to seeing-in than what is seen in the surface—it also involves awareness of the surface itself, thus allowing us to appreciate such features as the way the brush has been handled, the delicate colours that have been used, the vigour with which the whole has been organised, and so on. But a key part of our experience of pictures is nonetheless a matter of what objects and properties are visible in them. Any expansion in what can be seen in thus bears directly on what there is to appreciate in looking at pictures. Since the phenomenon of inflection constitutes just such an expansion, it is of significance for pictorial aesthetics.

While plausible, this only establishes so much. It does not obviously give inflection the central importance its proponents take it to have. Yes, what we see in pictures is an important element in what there is to appreciate in them. Why, though, is it so important that what can be seen in them differs from what we can (seem to) see face-to-face? And why does it matter that inflected properties in particular can fill the former role, but not the latter? Absent answers to these questions, the first account threatens to leave inflection not so much holding the key to pictorial aesthetics, as an interesting curiosity.

In search of some more substantial significance for inflection, we might turn to the idea of emergence, of *how* what is seen in a surface is sustained by that surface's design. The challenge in making representational pictures is precisely to tap and to develop this phenomenon. A skilled artist is in part one who can elicit a rich world visible in the surface from a relatively limited design—someone able to convey a great deal with scant resources. Appreciating pictures is in part appreciating how this has been achieved [Wollheim 1987]. Indeed, this is central to appreciating them *as pictures*, since it is only in pictures that those resources (design) are used to produce that effect (seeing-in). The second account of inflection's importance takes it to lie in the way it allows us to appreciate emergence. After all, inflection precisely straddles the divide between design and the world visible in it. The idea is that in doing so, it offers us the opportunity better to appreciate how the one emerges from the other.[6]

The problem with this proposal is that, with or without inflection, the subject already has all she needs to appreciate emergence. Remember we are restricting our attention to cases in which seeing-in involves awareness of design. So the subject already both sees something in the surface and sees some of the surface's properties as responsible for that thing being seen therein. What more does she need to appreciate how the one sustains the other? Of course, it is possible to see design and to see something in it without seeing how the design enables one to see that in it. But it is not clear that inflection fills this gap.

[6] Above (note 3) I discussed Nanay's idea that inflected experience simply is experience of emergence. Here the suggestion is rather that, though the two experiences are distinct, the former opens the way to the latter.

When pictorial experience is inflected, in the surface one sees properties that in some way involve the picture's design. Why should that phenomenon not co-exist with failure to appreciate how the design supports seeing the scene in it? Indeed, why think that inflection even increases one's chances of gaining that appreciation, let alone guarantees it? On this proposal, then, inflection is at best one possible route to a benefit that might equally be gained by other means.

If inflection is to be clearly more than a curiosity (as on the first account) or an optional means to a worthwhile end (as on the second), a certain assumption has to be made. This is that the task of an aesthetics of pictures is in key part to explain why we value looking at them in ways we do not value seeing objects—perhaps the very same objects as those depicted—in the flesh. That immediately gives central importance to any contrasts between seeing-in and ordinary seeing. Dominic Lopes uses this assumption to frame what he calls the 'puzzle of mimesis', a puzzle he then uses the notion of inflection to solve. This provides the third account of inflection's importance that I consider. Since it is easily the best developed, it merits longer discussion than the other two. Indeed, in one way or another, the rest of the paper will be devoted to assessing Lopes's claims.

Lopes's puzzle stems from two claims:

> Pictorial Evaluation Thesis: *in part*, to evaluate a picture as a picture is to evaluate it as eliciting experiences of the picture itself and as of the scene it depicts. [2005: 4]

Mimesis Thesis: pictures typically elicit experiences as of the scenes they depict, which experiences resemble, in important respects, face-to-face experiences of the same scenes. [2005: 12]

The puzzle is to reconcile these claims with the fact that we do indeed often evaluate pictures in ways in which we would not evaluate seeing their objects face-to-face [Lopes 2005: 20-1]. For instance, we value van Gogh's painting of a pair of old boots, even though we would not value seeing such a pair of boots in the flesh [Schier 1993]. But how can that be, if, as the pictorial evaluation thesis claims, we evaluate pictures in part for offering us experiences as of what they depict, and, as the mimesis thesis claims, those experiences are significantly like the experiences of seeing those scenes in the flesh? Of course, the evaluation thesis leaves open that we value pictures for other reasons too—for presenting us with marvellously coloured and skilfully marked surfaces, for instance. We might hope to locate their value over and above that of their objects in features such as this. But, as Lopes notes [2005: 22-3] this won't do. The value of the van Gogh does not reduce to that of looking at old boots plus that of looking at a canvas that is skilfully marked, marvellously coloured, and so forth. Even *qua presenting us with boots*, it seems valuable as the boots themselves would not be.

The solution, says Lopes, lies in inflection [2005: 192]. (For discussion of the other elements Lopes invokes, and defence of the claim that inflection must play the key role, see Hopkins 2008.) Although the experiences elicited by pictures, as of what they depict,

do indeed significantly resemble experiences of those objects in the flesh, nonetheless the two also differ significantly. For our experience of pictures can be inflected. When it is, it involves experience as of objects that has a different phenomenology from any experience of those objects face-to-face. This is what [2] claims. And this holds because we see in those pictures those objects with properties they could not be seen to have in the flesh. This is [3*], which, I argued, is best understood in terms of [4]. We can see inflected properties in pictures, and those properties cannot be represented in (what purports to be) experience face-to-face. No surprise, then, that we value the two sorts of visual experience differently. They have different natures, and the worlds they offer us do not match more than in part. Inflection thus allows us to pinpoint the key differences between the two experiences, and to make sense in those terms of their differing value.

If the puzzle of mimesis is genuine, it presents a serious challenge for pictorial aesthetics. Inflection solves the puzzle, at least for inflected seeing-in (and remember Lopes thinks that almost all relevant seeing-in is inflected). Thus, if the puzzle is genuine, inflection is of considerable significance aesthetically. The problem with this defence of the phenomenon's interest is that it is contingent on Lopes's views about pictorial experience itself. It is hard to make sense of either the puzzle or inflection's solution to it unless one characterises seeing-in as Lopes does. The next section explains why.

§5 Unitary vs. Divisive Accounts of Pictorial Experience

Lopes's way of framing the puzzle reflects his account of seeing-in. He takes pictorial experience, at least in the cases that interest us, to involve two experiences that occur simultaneously. One is experience of the picture's design, the other experience of the scene visible in that design [2005: ch.1]. Above I suggested that any account of pictorial experience should accept that, in the cases that concern us, there are two dimensions to its content. One dimension captures the design, the other the scene visible in it. What Lopes adds to this commonplace is the idea that each dimension can be identified with the content of a distinct experience. Pictorial experience has those two dimensions because it is composed of two experiences, one representing the design, the other the scene.

This view of pictorial experience underpins the puzzle, and its solution by appeal to inflection, in several ways. It is exploited by the two claims which frame the puzzle. When the Pictorial Evaluation Thesis speaks of pictures' eliciting 'experiences of the picture itself and as of the scene it depicts', the experiences in question are the two just described. It is the second, scene-oriented experience that the Mimesis Thesis claims resembles in significant respects seeing the scene face-to-face. It is only that scene-oriented experience, experience 'as of' the depicted object, that Lopes calls 'seeing-in'. (I, in contrast, throughout use the term to refer to pictorial experience *per se*, and thus to the whole of which, according to Lopes, that scene-oriented experience is merely a part.) This terminology, and the account of pictorial experience it presupposes, also dictates how we should interpret Lopes's solution to the puzzle. When he asserts [2], that inflected seeing-in has a phenomenology different from that of seeing the relevant object face-to-face [2005: 128], he really means the following:

[2*] Sometimes, the phenomenology of one of the two experiences composing pictorial experience, that 'as of' the picture's object, differs from the phenomenology of seeing that object face-to-face.

Given how the puzzle and its solution are shot through with Lopes's views about pictorial experience, we need to consider whether they make sense from the perspective of other accounts of seeing-in.

Here's one alternative. Seeing-in is experienced resemblance, in some respect. (Let's not worry here about what that respect might be. Answers can be found in Peacocke 1987, Budd 1992, or Hopkins 1998.) To see something in a design is to experience the design as resembling that thing in that respect. On this account, seeing-in is a single experience with a complex content. That content is complex in that it has a particular structure: this resembles that in such-and-such respect. The two dimensions of the content of pictorial experience emerge from this structure. The design-oriented dimension reflects what is seen as resembling something else. The scene-oriented dimension reflects what the design is experienced as resembling. But there is no sense in which these two dimensions reside in distinct experiences, or anything like them. It is not, for instance, as if experiencing resemblance involves seeing one thing while visualising another. One might, I suppose, try to understand it as having that structure, but those who offer experienced resemblance accounts of seeing-in have not.

From the perspective of this view, neither the puzzle of mimesis nor the solution to it in terms of inflection makes sense. A key element in the puzzle, the Mimesis Thesis, goes missing. That talks of experience 'as of' the depicted scene, one of the two experiences supposed to constitute seeing-in. Since the resemblance view rejects the idea of such components, it is forced to revise the Thesis. The simplest revision would be this:

> Revised Mimesis Thesis: pictures typically elicit experiences of seeing in them the scenes they depict, which experiences resemble, in important respects, face-to-face experiences of the same scenes.

But the truth of this is far from obvious. The resemblance view claims that seeing-in is an experience of likeness. It in no way follows that seeing-in is itself like any other experience. Moreover, given the complex structure the resemblance view ascribes to seeing-in, there are at least some prominent differences between it and seeing face-to-face. So the view is unlikely to accept the Mimesis Thesis, even in the Revised form. But without the Mimesis Thesis, the puzzle does not arise. And the solution fares worse. At least, it does insofar as it appeals to [2] or [2*]. For while [2] is true, on the experienced resemblance view, it is so in every case of seeing-in, and not merely those cases that involve inflection. Every instance of seeing-in differs phenomenologically from seeing the relevant object in the flesh, for only the former is an experience of something else as resembling that object. Of course, the proponent of inflection meant [2] to capture a truth that holds for only some pictorial experience. Hence what Lopes really meant by [2] was [2*]. But [2*] is certainly not true from the perspective of experienced resemblance.

Since it concerns a non-existent experience, i.e. one of the two experiences that together are supposed to supply the components of seeing-in, its truth value is that of other statements involving empty referring terms.

Thus Lopes's claims for the significance of inflection depend on his wider view of seeing-in. Certainly, if he held the experienced resemblance view, he could not make the claims for inflection that he does. Does this point hold more generally? The experienced resemblance view is not the only account of seeing-in to eschew anything like the structure Lopes sees it as having. Kendall Walton's view [Walton 1990] is, I think, best read as similarly antipathetic to that idea.[7] But equally, it is not clear Lopes needs precisely the view above if the puzzle and his solution are to fly. Suppose, for instance, he adopted something like Wollheim's later view [Wollheim 1987], on which pictorial experience involves, not two component experiences, but two 'folds' or 'aspects' of a single experience. Wollheim takes each of those folds to be analogous, albeit in unspecifiable ways, to other experiences. The fold in which the design is given is analogous to seeing the picture without seeing anything in it. That in which the scene is given is analogous to seeing that scene face-to-face [1987: ch.2 sec.B]. *Prima facie*, we could rephrase the Mimesis and Pictorial Evaluation Theses in these terms. We could say that the scene-directed fold of pictorial experience is significantly like seeing the scene in the flesh, and an important element in what is valuable about seeing pictures. That looks enough for the puzzle to run. So ascribing to inflection the significance Lopes claims for it does not depend on the details of his account. What, then, is required of an account of

---

[7] For a summary of Walton's view see Nanay, this volume, pp.XX.

seeing-in, if there is to be a puzzle of mimesis for inflection to solve, and a satisfying solution in terms of it?

The crux, I suggest, lies in whether the distinction between the two dimensions of content in pictorial experience is taken to correspond to any further divide in its nature. Lopes and Wollheim think it does. To the distinction between dimensions, there corresponds a further distinction with psychological reality—be it between component experiences, or component 'folds' of a single experience. The experienced resemblance theorists and Walton think that it does not. For them, the two dimensions are abstractions from an experience that, however else it divides, does not divide further along those lines. Call these two sorts of account of seeing-in 'divisive' and 'unitary' respectively. The thought is that if unitary accounts are correct, inflection cannot have the significance Lopes claims. That significance requires one's account to be divisive—though it is a further question whether every divisive account will allow for it.[8] Unitary accounts are perfectly able to acknowledge the phenomenon of inflection, and to ascribe some significance to it.

---

[8] While the later Wollheim [1987] could make sense of the puzzle of mimesis, he could not exploit Lopes's solution. His account of seeing-in prevents him making sense of inflection. The problem lies with the 'fold' of seeing-in which presents us with the depicted object. The only thing Wollheim thinks can informatively be said about that fold is that it is 'somewhat analogous' to the experience of seeing that object face-to-face. Inflection, I have argued, amounts to our seeing in pictures objects with inflected properties, and inflected properties cannot figure in (the content of) face-to-face seeing. Thus inflected seeing-in would, for Wollheim, involve a 'fold' for which there is no analogous experience, and thus about which nothing could informatively be said. Wollheim was in general pessimistic about how much can be said about seeing-in, but even he would presumably balk at the idea that about the key element in some seeing-in we can in effect say nothing at all.

However, they will not be able to give it the significance Lopes does. They are stuck attributing to it the limited significance described in the first and second accounts explored in section 4—at least until they find something better to say.

But *are* unitary accounts correct? The proponent of inflection needs to defend a divisive theory of seeing-in if inflection is really to matter. Provided that can be done, inflection's place in aesthetics is secure. So far I've said nothing in favour of either sort of account. Nor do I intend to settle the issue here. My goal is more limited. All I want to argue is that the phenomenon of inflection itself exerts some pressure to adopt a unitary account.

§6 Accommodating Inflection

I offer two arguments to show that divisive accounts of seeing-in struggle to accommodate inflection. Thus, while divisive accounts may be able to offer inflection a significance it otherwise lacks, the phenomenon itself suggests those accounts are false.

First, if seeing-in is understood on the divisive model, the design of the surface should figure twice over in inflected seeing-in. Divisive accounts hold that to each dimension of the content of seeing-in, there corresponds some psychologically real component of seeing-in itself. Those components might be experiences combining to form a complex whole, or merely 'folds' in a single experience. Either way, one component should capture the design-oriented dimension of content, the other the dimension oriented towards the scene visible in that design. Inflection just is the phenomenon of our seeing

in the surface properties that need characterising in part by reference to design. Thus certain aspects of the design must, in inflected experience, be represented both by the component that captures the design itself and by the component that captures what is seen in it. Those aspects of design should thus figure twice in the experience as a whole. But this is not borne out by the phenomenology of inflected seeing-in. When I see the inky hand in Rembrandt's sketch of Sylvius, the upward flowing ink strokes do not figure twice over. Of course, I can concentrate on them as marks, or concentrate on them as somehow forming the hand. So there is a duality here. But that duality is in the object experienced as before me, the picture. As far as my experience itself goes, the only division is between the two dimensions of content that can be abstracted from it, one representing the design, the other the scene. And the only doubling is that the ink strokes figure in both those dimensions of content. No further division within that experience is marked, and in particular not one between components of the whole, such that the ink strokes appear once in one and again in another.

Second, it is hard to see how divisive accounts of seeing-in can allow for inflection without losing their grip on one of the two components they postulate, that embodying the scene-oriented dimension of the experience.

Any divisive account treats seeing-in that is not inflected, in the cases to which we are restricting attention (§1), as having the following structure:

(i) A component that represents the picture, including its design

(ii) A component that represents the scene

The result of these two occurring together is pictorial experience:

(iii) An experience that represents the picture, including its design, and represents the scene as visible in that picture

In section 1 I raised two issues that any account of seeing-in should address. One is the issue that separates divisive from unitary accounts, that of how seeing-in comes to have two dimensions to its content. But there is also the other issue to consider, what form of representation each dimension of content involves. There are various candidates: representation as found in vision generally, that found in the beliefs to which experience gives rise, that found in visualizing, and so on. To which of these will divisive accounts appeal? What forms of representation are in play in the components of seeing-in, (i) and (ii), that such accounts postulate? In (i), the representation is the same as that involved in ordinary face-to-face experience. The picture, with its design, is given as before one. But what about (ii)? Divisive accounts must answer, if they are to offer a theoretical understanding of seeing-in as a whole, (iii). After all, pictorial experience as a whole in some sense presents us, not just with a surface bearing a design, but with the scene visible in that surface. In what sense does it make that scene available to us? That is surely the central question facing any account of seeing-in. Since divisive accounts treat (iii) as simply the combination of (i) and (ii), the answer they give will turn on what they say about the representation in (ii).

Inflection aside, divisive accounts can try to handle (ii) in the same way as (i). The second component represents the scene in the way that ordinary, face-to-face visual experience represents its objects. (Call this *Standard Visual Representation.*) Of course, we know not to take that component at face value—the scene visible in a picture is not before us and, *trompe-l'œil* aside, we don't take it to be.[9] But that's compatible with reading (ii) as proposed. For the component is merely part of a larger whole, (iii), and it is the nature of the whole, not just that of the component, that guides belief. Since that whole includes the representation of a design, (i), as well as a scene, (ii), somehow sense is made of the whole in such a way that we don't take the represented scene to be before us. Gombrich's divisive account [1961] apparently took this line on (ii).[10] Lopes's terminology suggests he is also attracted by it. He describes (ii) by talking of the component—for him a distinct experience—being 'as of' the scene. It's common to use

---

[9] In fact, *trompe-l'œil* provides another reason for adopting the current line. As I noted in §1, a third issue concerning seeing-is whether our experience of *trompe-l'œil* counts. Anyone who thinks it does has some reason to adopt a divisive account of seeing-in, along with the claim that (ii) involves Standard Visual Representation. Since in *trompe-l'œil* we do take the depicted object to be before us, it is natural to suppose that our experience of those pictures involves the same form of representation as seeing face-to-face. The simplest way to make sense of the idea that *trompe-l'œil* experience is seeing-in is to suppose that it is normal seeing-in with component (i) missing. But if (ii) constitutes all of *trompe-l'œil*, and the latter involves Standard Visual Representation, so must (ii).

This neat package of views may be one thing drawing folk to divisive accounts. It certainly seems to motivate Gombrich and Lopes. But one moral of the argument to follow is that exploiting this package is not consistent with advocating inflection.

[10] At least, that is the normal way to read his talk of 'illusion'. For an alternative, see Bantinaki 2007.

such talk when one wants to cancel any implication of veridicality in the phrase 'experience of…'. Normally, that is all such talk does. It does not suggest that the experience so characterised differs from veridical perception in more fundamental ways, and in particular there is no suggestion that they differ in the form of representation involved.[11]

However, acknowledging inflection puts pressure on this account of the scene-directed component. Inflection amounts to our seeing inflected properties in the surfaces before us. Thus the three elements for <u>inflected</u> pictorial experience look like this:

(i) A component that represents the picture, including its design

(iv) A component that represents the scene, along with certain inflected properties

And the combined inflected experience:

(v) An experience that represents the picture, including its design, and represents the scene, including certain inflected properties, as visible in that picture.

---

[11] What of the later Wollheim? Did he too hold that the representation in (ii) is Standard Visual Representation? The issue is delicate. In refusing to explain in what ways the relevant 'fold' of seeing-in is analogous to seeing the scene face-to-face, Wollheim in effect ducked the question. His longstanding opposition to Gombrich's account might tempt one nonetheless to read him as taking the opposite line here, and answering 'no'. However, in his last work [2003] Wollheim claimed that seeing-in involves 'experience of' the scene visible in the picture, and took this to be something that experienced resemblance views cannot accommodate. A natural reading of this combination of claims is as endorsing 'yes'.

Now, as argued above (§2), inflected properties cannot be represented in experience that purports to be ordinary visual experience of objects. Ordinary experience presents objects as before one, i.e. as seen face-to-face. Inflected properties are properties that, without reducing to design properties (consider, eg, the property of being an upturned hand), nonetheless need characterising, in part, by reference to features of design, conceived as such (eg by reference to inky strokes). The experiences, or folds,[12] (iv) in which we are presented with inflected properties thus cannot even seem to be cases of seeing face-to-face. And that at least raises the question whether the representation in (iv) can be Standard Visual Representation. Of course, we must not assume that Standard Visual Representation is limited to face-to-face experience. That would be question-begging, since the divisive accounts under consideration precisely suggest that it also figures in seeing-in, in (ii) and in (iv). But once we acknowledge that any experience of inflected properties could not even *purport* to be a case of face-to-face seeing, the question does arise whether the two can possibly involve the same form of representation. Anything bearing inflected properties is not just an unusual sort of entity, but one that somehow combines aspects drawn from very different orders of reality: the world of design and the world of scenes visible in design. Can Standard Visual Representation offer us *that*? Until we have a satisfactory answer, the divisive account is threatened either with treating (iv) as involving a different form of representation from (ii), or with retreating from the idea that (ii) involves Standard Visual Representation. Acknowledging inflection thus puts

---

[12] From now on I omit this qualification.

pressure on the understanding divisive accounts can offer of the second component in seeing-in.

Why be sceptical about Standard Visual Representation's ability to represent inflected properties? The problem is that those properties draw on different levels of reality, design and scene, as the objects vision puts before us do not. But a divisive account might reply that Standard Visual Representation does sometimes cross levels in just this way.[13] Think, for instance, of seeing an object through a distorting lens, such as a very uneven piece of glass. Here one's experience represents something that combines different orders: that of the world seen through the lens, and that of the lens through which it is seen. Doesn't this suggest that different levels are something Standard Visual Representation is perfectly capable of capturing? If it can do so here, why not in (iv)?

In a nutshell, the answer is that there are two ways to understand cases such as that of the distorting lens, and that neither serves the divisive theorist's needs. Taken one way, the analogy leaves him unable to distinguish inflection from nested seeing-in. Taken the other, it leaves him unable to distinguish it from overlap. In presenting this dilemma, let's begin with the two ways.

When I see something through a distorting lens, my experience might take one of two forms. It might factor out the contribution of the lens and the object behind it, so that I see the thing for what it is, and see it as distorted by the intervening pane. Or it might not

---

[13] I am grateful to Berys Gaut and the editors for suggesting this reply.

factor out the two, so that all I see is a strange sort of thing—the fact that it is an ordinary item seen through a distorting pane explaining why I see what I do, but not being part of how I see things to be. These two ways the case might go are common to any experience involving two levels: either the two levels are distinguished in that experience, or they are not. The question, then, is which way of taking the case offers the best model for (iv).

Suppose we treat (iv) the 'factored' way. It involves the Standard Visual Representation of two levels, distinguished as such. In effect, this is to treat (iv) as very similar to (iii), the combined experience that is ordinary seeing-in. There too, the levels of design and scene are present, with experience presenting them as distinct. Of course, there is a difference: (iv) is just one component of pictorial experience as a whole, whereas (iii) *is* such a whole. The whole involving (iv), i.e. (v), will thus be very different from ordinary seeing-in, (iii). There's no danger that inflected seeing-in will collapse into the ordinary kind. What is under threat, however, is our ability to distinguish inflected seeing-in from the nested variety.

Nested seeing-in, remember, involves seeing in a picture something that is itself a design in which things are seen. So in such cases we have the following elements, according to a divisive account:

> (i) A component that represents the picture, including its design
>
> (vi) A component that represents the scene, including a design, with some further scene visible in it.

And the combined pictorial experience:

> (vii) An experience that represents the picture, including its design, and represents the scene as visible in that picture, which scene itself includes a design with some further scene visible in it.

How will (vi) differ from (iv)? Our current assumption is that (iv) factors out the level of design from that of scene. (vi) does just that, in representing a design (the one visible in the picture) in which a scene is visible. If (iv) factors design and scene this way, it simply *is* (vi), and inflection is indistinguishable from nesting. (After all, the first component, (i), is common to the two cases, and the experience as a whole is just the combination of that component with the second.) But if (iv) does not factor design and scene as (vi) does, how does it do so? Unless the divisive theorist can answer, the factored reading of (iv) must be abandoned.[14]

---

[14] Above we kept nesting and inflection apart by appeal to the idea that only in the latter is it necessary to characterise what is seen in the design before us by reference to *that very design*. Will that help here? The representation of a design before us is the job of the first component of seeing-in, (i). Since (i) is a component in (v) and (vii), appeal to how the scene relates to the design before us might allow the divisive theorist to distinguish the latter pair after all. That would be to find *some* difference between inflected and nested pictorial experience. But surely he won't consider himself to have identified the core difference until he can distinguish the scenes they show us, i.e. (iv) from (vi). It is the search for that difference that is our present concern. Appeal to the design before us, and so to (i), could only help with that if the second components of inflected and nested seeing-in, respectively, can themselves differ in ways depending on the wider context in which they occur. That is to suppose that pictorial experience as a whole can transform its

That might anyway seem the best thing to do. After all, inflection as a whole, and thus the element in seeing-in which is, supposedly, the core of the phenomenon, (iv), does indeed involving a mingling of design and scene as ordinary seeing-in does not. While the latter distinguishes sharply between the design and what is seen in it, the whole point of inflection was to challenge that sharp divide. So it may seem obvious that divisive accounts should treat (iv) the unfactored way. Just like the experience of seeing the object through the distorting pane without seeing it as such, (iv) involves Standard Visual Representation of things at different levels, but does not represent those levels *as* distinct. However, if we construe inflected seeing-in this way we then struggle to distinguish it from another familiar phenomenon, overlap.

In overlap, a divisive account will say, we have the following elements:

> (viii) A component that represents the picture, including its design, and represents some part of the design as having some property F.
>
> (ix) A component that represents the scene, and represents something in that scene as F.

And the combined pictorial experience:

---

parts. But that is to abandon a major attraction of divisive views: the promise to account for features of seeing-in as a whole in terms of features of its putative parts.

(x) An experience that represents the picture, including that part of the design that is F, and represents the F-object in the scene as visible in that F-part of the picture.

How do (v) and its component (iv) differ from (x) and its component (ix)? Both pairs involve awareness of design. Both involve awareness of scene properties that can be characterised by reference to properties of design. Earlier (§2) we distinguished inflection from overlap by framing our definition of inflected properties carefully. They are properties seen in surfaces that *need* characterising by reference to features of that surface's design, conceived as such. The properties in (ix) and (x) don't fit this bill. They *can* be characterised that way—e.g. such-and-such a property of the scene can be captured by saying it's the same property as is exhibited by a given bit of the design. But they *need* not be so captured: we could instead simply talk of F-ness (or whatever). So all will be well provided the properties in (iv) and (v) *have* to be characterised by reference to design—provided, that is, they really are inflected properties, as we defined them. The problem is that treating (iv) the unfactored way makes it hard to see how this can be.

Ex hypothesi, (iv) does not represent the two levels that are somehow bound up in the relevant properties, design and scene, in such a way as to distinguish them. Why, then, should the properties it represents need characterising by reference to design? Consider the analogy with the distorting lens. If my experience fails to distinguish the distortion of the lens from the contribution made by the object seen through it, why think we can only characterise how that experience represents things as being by reference to a distorting

lens? We *can* so characterise it: my experience represents things as being the way they look when seen through such a lens. But we need not. We could say instead that it represents an object with strangely shaped limbs, perhaps ones the boundaries of which are not all equally definite, and so forth. The situation is the same with (iv), treated the unfactored way. Perhaps the properties it mentions can be characterised by reference to design; but there is no necessity for this. Since the experience itself doesn't mark out design as distinct from scene, it's quite unclear why anything about the properties as it represents them needs describing by reference to design. We may struggle, of course, to describe those properties. But that problem confronts everyone: the sorts of properties we see in pictures such as the Rembrandt are hard to describe. It's also true that we may find that our best attempts to describe those properties mingles talk of very different kinds of things: hands and ink, for instance. But none of this shows that, in describing those properties, we have to appeal to properties of design *conceived as such*. To talk of ink is not yet to talk of ink composing a design, something in which things might be seen. Thus, the divisive account takes the unfactored route only to be left with a reading of (iv) on which that no longer clearly differs from (ix) and, as a result, (v) does not differ from (x). Inflection has collapsed into overlap.

Thus divisive accounts face an unappealing choice. They must say something about the representation in (iv), on pain of taking inflected seeing-in to fall outside their account of seeing-in in general. If inflected seeing-in is not to be a radically different state of mind from ordinary seeing-in, they had better say that the representation involved is the same as that involved (according to them) in (ii), Standard Visual Representation. Given that

what is represented in (ii) crosses levels in a distinctive way, it's hard, but not perhaps impossible, to see how that could be. What is not possible, it seems, is to make sense of that idea in such a way as to avoid collapsing inflection either into nesting or into overlap. This naturally leaves one wondering why we should accept that the representation in (iv) is Standard Visual Representation. Apart from the fact that this is all divisive accounts seem able to offer us as an account of (iv), there seems little reason to adopt this view.[15]

At the least, then, I would like to be shown how a divisive account of seeing-in can continue to answer the questions it cannot duck while acknowledging inflection. This, along with the earlier argument from doubling up, makes me wonder whether it is wise for any divisive theorist to endorse the idea of inflected seeing-in. Of course, there may also be problems with unitary accounts of pictorial experience. I don't deny that. What I have yet to see is that inflection provides any arguments against them.

My more general conclusion is rather cautious. Inflection only clearly makes sense against the background of unitary accounts of seeing-in. But, given such accounts, the only significance for aesthetics that can clearly be made out for it is rather limited.

---

[15] I've presented the difficulty here as confronting the idea that the second component in the various forms of seeing-in involves Standard Visual Representation. In fact, it is more general. It faces any account that both analyses seeing-in into components and a whole formed from them, as divisive accounts do; and then takes just one form of representation to be involved in every component of every kind of seeing-in. There are, as it were, only so many relations between design and scene to go round, and not enough, it would seem, to cover the varieties of pictorial experience before us.

Inflection does occur, and I'm grateful for its proponents for bringing that to our attention. But in seeking to give it a central role in our appreciation of pictures, they are in danger of combining views that do not sit comfortably together.[16]

References

Bantinaki, Katerina 2007. Pictorial Perception as Illusion *British Journal of Aesthetics* 47/2: 268-79.

Budd, Malcolm 1992. On Looking at a Picture, in *Psychoanalysis, Mind and Art*, ed. J.Hopkins & A.Savile, Oxford: Blackwell: 259-80.

Gombrich, Ernst 1961. *Art and Illusion*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hopkins, Robert 1998. *Picture, Image and Experience*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hopkins, Robert 2008. Reasons for Looking: Lopes on the Value of Pictures, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 77/2: 563-73.

Hopkins, Robert mss. Sculpture and Visual Perspective.

Lopes, Dominic McIver 2005. *Sight and Sensibility*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Nanay, Bence [Contribution to this volume].

Peacocke, Christopher 1987. Depiction, *Philosophical Review* 96/1 :383-410.

Penrose, RS & Penrose, L 1958. Impossible Objects: A Special Type of Visual Illusion. *British Journal of Psychology* 49: 31

Podro, Michael 1991. Depiction and the Golden Calf in *Visual Theory* ed. N.Bryson, M.Ann Holly and K.Moxey, Polity: Cambridge: 163-189.

Podro, Michael 2001. The Artistry of Depiction, in *Richard Wollheim on the Art of Painting*, ed. R. van Gerwen, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 112-120.

Podro, Michael 1998 *Depiction* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Schier, Flint 1993. Van Gogh's Boots: The Claims of Representation, in *Virtue and Taste*, ed. D.Knowles and J.Skorupski, Oxford: Blackwell.

Walton, Kendall 1990. *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Wollheim, Richard 1968. *Art and its Objects*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wollheim, Richard 1987. *Painting as an Art*, London: Thames & Hudson.

Wollheim, Richard 1993. On Pictorial Representation, in *Richard Wollheim on the Art of Painting: Art as Representation and Expression*, ed. R.van Gerwen, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 13-27.

Wollheim, Richard 2003. What Makes Representational Painting Truly Visual?, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume LXXVII*: 131-148.