



Summary

A review of the controversy surrounding depiction was followed by a revision to the theory of reference advanced by Nelson Goodman. Steady revisions then followed for expression and style, art, its history, interpretation, realism and painting, gradually drawing theory into matters of criticism and history.

Less summarily, Chapter One reviewed recent theories of depiction, their implications and applications for art. It disclosed the controversy between depiction taken as resemblance and reference. Discussion of resemblance centred on the position taken by Gombrich as an illusion or a psychological disposition, discussion of reference on the position taken by Goodman as a version of denotation. The study rejected both views. However, in Chapter Two the general framework of reference proposed by Goodman was adopted and a theory of depiction as exemplification of two-dimensionality proposed. In Chapter Three the proposed theory was shown to hold for five basic issues shared between prominent competing theories. Issues of depth or three-dimensionality, caricature, fiction, distortion and found or accidental depiction consolidated the proposed theory. Chapter Four showed how reference is organised according to styles, and again following Goodman, rejected synonymy and intention as the basis of style and expression. It showed how meaning by two-dimensionality together with literal and metaphorical sampling of materials, or more commonly, as statement, sentiment and structure, are all variously taken into an account of how a picture means or refers, and is classified according to source, to basically who, when and where.

Discussion of style and expression lead to discussion of art. Chapter Five replaced Goodman's symptoms of art, of density, repleteness and complexity, with 'circumspection' of depiction, as multidirectional reference. It maintained Goodman's view of beauty and excellence as cognitive effectiveness, and cognitive understood as broader than standard notions and contrasted with knowledge and

science. Science progresses or improves, allows reverse derivation of earlier theories, in so far as correct, art does not. Art is less strict in its organisation and does not so much progress as digress. Emphasis upon its collection accordingly places greater weight upon history. In Chapter Six Gombrich's famous history, *The Story of Art* was reviewed as a model of how a theory of depiction and art structure a history or tell a story. Gombrich claimed that art is simply the sum of its history, its works and artists, and that the concept of art is non-essential. Gombrich's story is of art's gradual convergence upon the principles of illusion, through piecemeal correction to a style's formula or schema. The story is thus committed to realism, but struggles to make sense of art of the later twentieth century, cannot comfortably identify the schema and correction at work or illusions there. Either, the twentieth century fails in art or the theory of schema and correction fails as history. The view taken is that schema and correction confuse history with art and amount in fact to a historicist myth, for the simplicity and singularity of traditional depiction and realism.

The problem of interpretation was taken up in the Chapter Seven, of distinguishing between facts and comment, matter and manner. The danger lies in confusing the two and allowing history its own laws or logic. Several notable solutions are considered, advocating radical relativism. The existential approach that originates with Heidegger, takes all method to be historical, the distinction between matter and manner then depends on the state of history. The hermeneutics of Gadamer, Habermas and others takes the past as basically a convenient fiction for the present and draws the line rather between conflicting current concerns. In contrast, structuralism insulates itself from history, advocates fixed structures and reduces changes to just these terms. Post-structural theorists (sometimes called post-modernists) readmit history or relax structures, extend the hermeneuticist's relativism to the point where interpretation shares only language with other texts; amounts to only a variety of texts, all arguing only for attention and influence.

Goodman's irrealism shares much with this radical relativism and pluralism. But irrealism distinguishes between right and wrong versions, constrains pluralism with nihilism. Rightness rather than truth measures versions, but makes for too many or none for just one world. Interpretation is rightly multiple, but multiple right

interpretations require a rightly identified object. The difference between an interpretation and identification lies in the plurality of one and the singularity of the other. Art historical interpretation for the irrealist here starts from a stylistics based upon a theory of depiction and balances a better version of the same history shared in rival versions, against simply a different but right version.

Chapter Eight compared an irrealist approach to art history with Gombrich's realist approach. The realist corrects a given schema and finds more realism; the irrealist connects various schemas or styles, makes another realism. But realisms here are only stylistic, the pluralism does not necessarily carry through to a metaphysical pluralism of worlds. Realisms measure derivation of scheme and information between styles. Ranges of styles and realisms depend upon scope of art history, really amount to just such history. Stylistics for the irrealist here allows realism of material, or formal or structural values for depiction, as well as realism of spirit or transcendental values for a movement or period, culture or group, but insists that both depend on rightness of scope.

Chapter Nine extended irrealism to painting, recognised many practices and relativity of materials to depictive scheme and object. Yet while painting admits to various practices, collectively painting is identified by its prominence as a work of sole instance, in contrast with printing and the work of multiple instances. A work of sole instance has an important advantage in versatility where circumspection of meaning is concerned. Duplication on the other hand has an advantage where derivation and realism are concerned. Conformity of scheme for duplication reinforces rigour of shared information, often exemplifies an 'aura' in prints. Painting is the dominant version of a work of sole instance firstly because of feedback or momentum in schemes used and promoted. This consolidates the preference for painting. Secondly, it is dominant because conversely, painting just claims what is most versatile (or replete) in any work of sole instance. 'Painting' - in terms of a strict definition of materials and technique - just is what most works of sole instance do.

Versions of painting provide the means to revise styles and detect new ones. The example of some prominent formalist criticism in support of abstract painting is

considered in this light. Greenberg's criticism proposes an expansive period of Modernism leading up to abstraction, and to some extent sustained by further abstraction, but whether this is greater abstraction, or merely versions of the same degree of abstraction remains moot. Indeed such criticism lapses with later proliferation of versions of abstraction. As a consequence, Modernism as a period is questioned. If abstraction is not absolute, offers no single course or progression for painting, how might one redefine Modernism? These are matters on which part one of the study concludes, and prepares the way for a history of painting in the second half of the twentieth century.

Since Goodman's theory has been both adopted and adapted, some measure of the contribution made here should also be taken. Goodman offers no historical method or explicit view of painting, so these additions are obvious enough, other contributions may be summarised in three points. The study has firstly proposed depiction as a mode of exemplification, accepting Goodman's account of exemplification as reference, but now distinguishing between exemplification of two-dimensionality and three, between depiction and material sampling. In terms of the weight given to denotation in Goodman's theory, this is a radical revision. In terms of Goodman's views on expression and stylistics, it is comfortably accommodated. The study accepts Goodman's three-way scheme for stylistics, as reference by statement, structure and sentiment, as well as the crucial rejection of synonymy and intention. In this the study adheres to Goodman's broader aesthetic, or offers a version of irrealism. The phrases 'irrealism here' or 'the irrealist here' has signalled this distinction throughout.

The study secondly departs from Goodman in distinguishing depiction from notation in terms of multi versus single directionality, and from this proposes a 'circumspective' function to depiction and its refinement in art. This may seem some distance from Goodman's symptoms of density and repleteness for syntax and semantics and of complex strings, although similarities are nonetheless noted. 'Circumspection' is comfortably accommodated under Goodman's view of beauty or excellence as cognitive efficiency. A related adjustment inverts traditional assumptions, claiming that canons and evaluation actually precede further identification; that we say how good a work is, on the way to saying in what ways,

and that revision of judgements is built into the process. Again, the study adheres to the broader principles of Goodman's aesthetic, revising only matters of depiction. Whether the views advanced deserve the name of irrealism depends on how closely the theories are compared.

The study thirdly augments Goodman's terms for realism. He nominates novelty, entrenchment and factual against fictional. The study adds derivation for scheme and information. Since claims for novelty or revelation, ease or preference are shown to be insufficient and since relativism and pluralism are maintained by multiple derivations in stylistic practice, revision of realisms here no more than strengthens irrealism. The study is thus able to meet objections to Goodman's theory considered in Chapter One while preserving crucial features of reference, stylistics, understanding, interpretation and pluralism. It demonstrates that even where emphasis on denotation is jettisoned, Goodman's aesthetic remains not just viable but valuable, especially for reconstruction of recent art history.