



PICTORIAL AESTHETICS AND TWO KINDS OF INFLECTED SEEING-IN

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Inflected seeing-in is a special experience of the vehicle and subject of a picture, which are experienced as related to each other. Bence Nanay recently defended the idea that inflected picture perception is central to the aesthetic appreciation of pictures. Here I critically discuss his characterization of inflection, and advance a new one, that better accounts for the structure and content of inflected experience in terms of properties of the pictures themselves and also clarifies the distinctive contribution of inflection to pictorial aesthetics. Two kinds of inflected seeing-in are distinguished in terms of two functions the design properties of a picture can realize. One kind of inflected seeing-in allows us to experience how the picture design sustains what is seen in the picture and is responsible for the representation of the picture subject. The second kind, which is only supported by some pictures, also captures how properties of the vehicle alter or enrich the picture content so as to elicit an experience of the depicted subject as having properties it could not be seen as having in face-to-face experience. This inflected experience is distinctively associated with our visual experience of the aesthetically valuable relations between vehicle and content which are unique to pictorial representation.

I. INTRODUCTION

We can intuitively describe our perception of pictorial representations as a *seeing-in* experience: we see the depicted object in the pictorial surface.¹ For instance, facing Cézanne's painting *The Bay of Marseille, Seen from L'Estaque*, we see the mountains, the sea, and a group of houses in the painting. We also see the painting's surface, covered in light, precise brushstrokes of delicate ochres and blues. Some philosophers argued that there is a further visible aspect of the painting: we see how Cézanne's brushstrokes give rise to the depicted landscape and transform it, so that what we see in the painting is different from the same landscape as it would look when seen face to face. This is an instance of inflected seeing-in.

I am grateful to Alberto Voltolini, my supervisor when I was writing this article: many of the ideas here were shaped in the course of our conversations. Moreover, my understanding of inflection benefited from discussions with Bence Nanay and Robert Hopkins. The detailed and thoughtful comments from two referees for *Estetika*, as well as from its Editor-in-Chief, Fabian Dorsch, were also very helpful. Even though I probably did not manage to satisfactorily answer all their questions, I hope that the article has become clearer thanks to their contributions.

¹ The notion of seeing-in is due to Richard Wollheim, 'Seeing-As, Seeing-In and Pictorial Representation', in *Art and Its Objects*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 205–26; 'On Pictorial Representation', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (1998): 217–26. Wollheim originally introduced the notion of seeing-in to explain the nature of pictorial representations through the experience they induce, but here our focus is the experience itself, rather than theories of depiction.



Importantly, our inflected experience of a painting of the Bay of Marseilles is not merely different from seeing the Bay of Marseilles face to face; it is also different from simple picture perception. Surely, when we look at a postcard of the bay we do not experience the depicted scene exactly as we would experience it if we were admiring the bay directly. But only in inflected seeing-in do we see the depicted object or scene as being transformed by the properties of the picture itself, such as the colour and texture of brushstrokes on the surface, so as to give rise to something we could not see in face-to-face encounters with that object or scene.² Even if different characterizations of inflection have been offered in the literature, they all entail that seeing-in is inflected only in some cases.³

This alleged extra-ordinary character of inflected experiences, coupled with the fact that the examples of inflection cited in the literature involve artistically valuable paintings, may suggest that there is something special in the pictorial representations that induce them – namely, pictorial representations that we appreciate aesthetically. In his 2010 article, Nanay aims at substantiating this suggestion that inflected seeing-in is important to our aesthetic appreciation of pictures. My first goal is to present and discuss Nanay's conception of inflected seeing-in; as I will argue, his conception is unsatisfactory because it cannot play the desired role in our aesthetic appreciation of pictures. Second, I offer an alternative conception of inflected seeing-in that has the resources to explain how this experience is related to pictorial aesthetics. Two kinds of inflected seeing-in are distinguished in terms of two functions that the visible properties of the picture itself can realize; only one kind of inflection is distinctively associated with our appreciation of pictures.

II. NANAY'S ACCOUNT OF INFLECTION: TWOFOLDNESS AND DESIGN-SEEING

A detailed conception of the difference between inflected and uninflected seeing-in, associated with the idea of its role in aesthetics, is offered by Nanay.⁴

² Definitions of inflected seeing-in have been proposed by Michael Podro, *Depiction* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 13, 26; Dominic McIver Lopes, *Sight and Sensibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 40, 128–29; Robert Hopkins, 'Inflected Pictorial Experience: Its Treatment and Significance', in *Philosophical Perspectives on Depiction*, ed. Catherine Abell and Katerina Bantinaki (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 151–80; Bence Nanay, 'Inflected and Uninflected Experience of Pictures', in Abell and Bantinaki, *Philosophical Perspectives*, 181–207.

³ To be sure, Voltolini argues that all pictorial experience is inflected – a claim that Wollheim himself would plausibly endorse. See Alberto Voltolini, 'Why, as Responsible for Figurativity, Seeing-In Can Only Be Inflected Seeing-In', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 14 (2015): 651–67. As we will see, however, my proposal distinguishes between two kinds of inflection, and is thus compatible with the necessity of one kind of inflection for all pictorial experience.

⁴ Nanay, 'Inflected and Uninflected Experience'. See also Bence Nanay, 'Is Twofoldness Necessary for Representational Seeing?', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 45 (2005): 248–57.

His theory integrates the Wollheimian notion of twofoldness with that of *design-seeing* introduced by Lopes.

Wollheim argued that the seeing-in elicited by pictures is twofold: it comprises both a *recognitional* aspect, which is directed to what is seen in the representation – that is, what is depicted, at least if the pictorial experience is an appropriate one –, and a *configurational* aspect, which amounts to perceiving the pictorial vehicle.⁵ Nanay's claim is that, depending on whether we understand twofoldness as entailing conscious attention, we can use it to qualify two different kinds of experiences – inflected and uninflected seeing-in. On one reading, in twofold seeing-in (1) 'we perceptually represent both the depicted object and some properties of the picture surface', without necessarily being conscious of them or attending to them.⁶ On a stronger interpretation of twofoldness, in twofold seeing-in (2) 'we consciously attend both to the depicted object and to some properties of the surface', or (2*) we are 'visually aware of the represented object and the way it is represented simultaneously'.⁷

Now, when having a pictorial experience, we obviously perceive a three-dimensional, material object: we could not in any case see something in a picture, if we did not directly see the depictive vehicle – for example, the canvas, the wall, the sheet of paper, with its visible properties. However, not every visible feature of the surface is relevant for the purposes of depiction because not every feature is a constituent of the way the object is depicted cited in (2*).⁸ Think, for instance, of the visible cracks on a painting or fresco due to deterioration, or of the shape and dimensions of the material support of a painting. Following Lopes, the appropriate subset of the visible properties of a picture which play the depictive role includes 'marks, directions, boundaries, contours, shapes, colours,

⁵ See Wollheim, 'On Pictorial Representation'. Which of the various objects we can see in a representation corresponds to what the picture depicts, that is, which of the possible seeing-in experiences is the appropriate one must be determined by a 'standard of correctness', according to which theories of depiction diverge.

⁶ Nanay, 'Inflected and Uninflected Experience', 185–86. One could well object that denying conscious twofoldness to pictorial perception in general does not distinguish this experience from ordinary visual experience; see Catherine Abell and Katerina Bantinaki, 'Introduction', in Abell and Bantinaki, *Philosophical Perspectives*, 19. But the objection presupposes a phenomenological definition of pictorial perception, which Nanay may well give up.

⁷ Nanay, 'Inflected and Uninflected Experience', 185–86; 'Is Twofoldness Necessary', 251. Notice that for Nanay the crucial distinction is between perceptual representation without consciousness and perception that involves consciousness and attention. I here follow Nanay's terminology and take no stand on whether consciousness is necessary and/or sufficient for attention.

⁸ As Nanay himself observes: 'the way an object is represented in a painting obviously supervenes on the properties of the surface, but nevertheless, it is not itself a property of the surface.' Nanay, 'Is Twofoldness Necessary', 251.

hues, relative contrasts between light and dark, and also textures, such as smoothness of surface or invisibility of brushwork': in a word, the 'design'. *Design properties* are thus the properties by means of which a picture pictorially represents its subject, or the ones that 'sustain' and are responsible for seeing-in.⁹

Since it is in virtue of perceiving such properties that we attribute certain properties to the depicted object, one may think that seeing-in always requires visual perception of the design and that seeing-in is thus always twofold. However, Nanay argues, the necessary twofoldness may well be (1): visually representing both the depicted object and the picture design. There is no need for such visual perception to be conscious or attentive: simply, the visual system is able to access information about design to determine what we see in the picture.¹⁰ While only twofoldness (1) is necessary for seeing-in, Nanay thinks that twofoldness in the senses (2) or (2*) is necessary for inflection. What makes the difference between the weak and the strong notions of inflection is what Lopes calls *design-seeing* or 'seeing the design as a design'.¹¹ Seeing the design as a design means seeing design properties as responsible for seeing-in, or – which, at least according to Nanay, is just the same – being attentively aware of them. This is the kind of perception of design properties which is required by twofoldness (2) or, more accurately, (2*). According to Nanay, seeing-in is inflected if it implies design-seeing. The attentive awareness of the design explains the peculiar phenomenology of inflected experience: visually experiencing the object in the picture is really different from experiencing the same object 'in the flesh', if at the same time we also experience the picture design.

The question that Nanay finally considers is what such a phenomenology depends on. When we have an inflected pictorial experience of the Cézanne painting, design-seeing transforms the content of pictorial experience in virtue of the characteristic relation of determination that design entertains with the depicted object or scene. The result is that the properties attributed to the object are different from the ones perceived in ordinary experience and, it is supposed, in ordinary seeing-in. Nanay's definition of inflected seeing-in clarifies this relation between design and depicted subject by appealing to the peculiar properties we experience: if seeing-in is inflected, we consciously attend to *design-scene properties*. A design-scene property is a relational property whose full characterization needs to make reference to both design and depicted object, which, according to Hopkins, is the distinctive feature of inflected seeing-in.¹²

⁹ Dominic McIver Lopes, *Understanding Pictures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁰ Nanay, 'Inflected and Uninflected Experience', 185–88.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 28, 35. Nanay conceives of design-seeing as requiring attention, but Lopes only mentions experiential awareness.

¹² Hopkins, 'Inflected Pictorial Experience'.

Since a design-scene property can also be described as ‘the property of how features of the picture’s design give rise to or undergird the experience of the depicted object, or of how the depicted object emerges from the design’, Nanay’s account seems able to make sense of the various characterizations of inflection that have been offered in the literature.¹³

III. SEEING A PICTURE AS A PICTURE: A WORRY FOR NANAY’S ACCOUNT

One worry for Nanay’s account is that it is controversial to claim that conscious attention to design-scene properties is sufficient for inflected seeing-in. This becomes clear when we consider the complexity of inflected pictorial experience, as it emerges from Hopkins’s illuminating example: our experience of Rembrandt’s pen and ink sketch *Jan Cornelisz. Sylvius* (fig. 1).¹⁴

We appreciate the evocative way in which Rembrandt successfully rendered Sylvius’s resolute gesture, because what we see in the surface with its design, realized through configurations of ink, is not just a hand. According to Hopkins, we attribute to the hand itself the ‘inflected property’ of being composed of ink marks, because we describe the hand seen in the picture, with its property of vigorously leaning forward, making reference to the design properties that trigger one such peculiar experience of the depicted hand. To account for



Figure 1: Rembrandt, *Jan Cornelisz. Sylvius*, c. 1646. Sketch for the posthumous etching, pen and brown ink, with white hightening. © Trustees of the British Museum

¹³ Nanay, ‘Inflected and Uninflected Experience’, 193–94.

¹⁴ Hopkins, ‘Inflected Pictorial Experience’.

the phenomenon, Hopkins offers the following definition: when pictorial experience is inflected, what is seen in a picture includes properties whose complete characterization necessarily makes reference to the surface design conceived as such.¹⁵

Let us suppose that Nanay's notion of a design-scene property plays the same role as Hopkins's notion of an inflected property, as Nanay wants. Both are properties that we ascribe to what is seen in the picture and both necessarily make reference to the picture design. If so, then Nanay would describe our experience of the hand depicted by Rembrandt as one where we consciously attend to the design-scene property of being composed of ink marks. Is this a satisfactory account of our experience?

First of all, Hopkins's definition is not a merely metaphorical description of our visual experience. Moreover, describing what is seen in the picture along those lines is not something the philosopher of depiction alone is supposed to do: in order to fully experience the complexity of the object she is facing, each observer *must* conceive of what she is seeing in the way Hopkins suggests. As Hopkins argues, one cannot see the hand's upward thrust, if one does not see the ink strokes that depict the hand as themselves driving upwards and as contrasting with the adjacent downward cascade of ink that represents Sylvius's robe. If one tries to see the rising ink marks and the downward-driving ones as merely features of the surface, one can no more enjoy the visual effect.¹⁶ The property of being an upwardly turned hand seen in the portrait cannot be fully characterized without reference to the movement of the ink strokes. But, crucially, in order to experience this property, we need to see the ink strokes as such, that is, we need to conceive of them as design properties that pictorially represent the hand.

If this is true, then inflected seeing-in seems to require further cognitive capacities on the observer's part, over and above the attention Nanay mentions. Not only do we need to recognize the depicted object as a hand, but we also need to recognize the ink strokes as properties of the pictorial vehicle – as opposed to depicted properties. Arguably, this requires conceptually representing both the subject and the vehicle of depiction as objects of a certain kind.¹⁷ Visual recognition, as opposed to mere attention, allows us to appreciate a picture as the peculiar kind of object it is, that is, as Lopes emphasizes, insofar as it sustains

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁶ Robert Hopkins, 'Sculpting in Time? On the Possibility of Temporally Inflected Experience of Cinema' (unpublished manuscript, 2013).

¹⁷ For a defence of the claim that twofold seeing-in, and a fortiori inflected seeing-in in Nanay's sense, requires the deployment of conceptual recognition capacities on the observer's part, see Alberto Voltolini, 'How Picture Perception Defies Cognitive Impenetrability', in *Mind, Values, and Metaphysics: Philosophical Essays in Honor of Kevin Mulligan*, vol. 2, ed. by Anne Reboul (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 221–34.

seeing-in and elicits a perceptual experience different from the one we would have when seeing the depicted subject face to face or, by contrast, when facing a marked, flat surface in which nothing at all can be seen.¹⁸ And these seem to be crucial aspects of inflected pictorial experience. Consider again the Rembrandt ink sketch and our experience of Sylvius's hand. If we did not recognize that the peculiar appearance of the hand is due to certain design properties of the picture – certain ink marks – we would not be able to experience the special relation the design has with the picture content. As a result, we would ascribe to the hand the property of being made of ink just as we ascribe to it the property of being forwardly inclined: we would not distinguish between visible properties that the hand is depicted as having and the special effects Rembrandt was able to convey thanks to his mastery of the pictorial technique.

To be sure, not only design properties, but also properties of the pictorial vehicle that are not endowed with depictive value can create inflection effects with respect to the depicted object or scene. For example, the sepia colour and the grain of a photograph may affect the overall atmosphere we see as surrounding the depicted scene involving a family portrait, even though we do not see the human beings depicted in the photograph as having sepia-coloured faces. Yet this possibility merely reinforces the claim that conceptual recognitional capacities must be brought to bear in inflected experience. For the subject needs to distinguish properties of the vehicle (for example, being sepia-coloured or having a prominent grain) from depicted properties (the seen-in scene), in order to appreciate the inflection effect. Otherwise, she would mistakenly attribute bizarre properties to what is seen in the picture and fail to grasp the peculiar relations between vehicle and content displayed by inflection-inducing pictures.

On Nanay's behalf, one may argue that this conceptual understanding of the complex objects we perceive is something over and above inflected seeing-in. The latter can well be construed, the claim goes, as attentive awareness of design-scene properties; all further recognition of the picture as such belongs to post-perceptual judgements that competent observers form. The problem with this reply is that the conceptual recognition involved in our experience of the Rembrandt is not disjoint from the perceptual dimension of the experience. Rather, the recognition enriches our perceptual experience with a sensory modality-specific character. Inflection is a properly visual effect: when we experience such an effect, that is, when we undergo inflected seeing-in, our recognition of the complex object we are facing with its different kinds of properties affects the twofold visual phenomenology of our experience as well

¹⁸ See Lopes, *Sight and Sensibility*, 28, 33, 40.

as its content.¹⁹ Such content and phenomenal character have, nonetheless, a properly perceptual – and modality-specific, for example, visual – nature.

IV. DESIGN-SCENE PROPERTIES?

Let us suppose that Nanay is willing to accept that recognitional capacities are required in order to explain the complexity of inflected pictorial experience. In order to incorporate the conceptual requirement, Nanay could say that the attention involved in inflected seeing-in is endogenous or cognitively driven attention: our conceptual recognitional capacities guide our attention, so that we focus on the design-scene properties of the picture we are perceiving. In fact, Nanay's own remarks suggest that voluntary attention is the kind of attention he has in mind:

When I am looking at Cézanne's *The Bay of Marseilles Seen from L'Estaque*, I can attend to smoke coming out of the chimney on the right – without paying any attention to the design properties at all. Or I can attend to the ways in which just a couple of brushstrokes give rise to the depiction of swirls of smoke. The latter experience is inflected, the former is not. And *it is up to us* which kind of experience we have while seeing the smoke in the picture.²⁰

While appropriate experience of the picture, which in turn would allow one to appreciate it aesthetically, may *require* that the observer attend to the design-scene properties, whether she in fact does so depends on her voluntary attention. Since voluntary attention is endogenous, that is, guided by the cognitive abilities of the subject and influenced by her conceptual states, as opposed to stimulus-driven, Nanay may be willing to accept my amendment.²¹

Even if Nanay's account is amended along these lines, a second concern can arise. Nanay's project is to offer a clarification of the characterizations of inflection in the literature, which often employ metaphorical expressions,²² by means of the new notion of a design-scene property. However, until we know more about the nature of design-scene properties, and about what it takes to experience them attentively, not much progress will have been made. All we know about

¹⁹ Voltolini, 'How Picture Perception Defies Cognitive Impenetrability'.

²⁰ Bence Nanay, 'Anti-pornography: André Kertész's *Distortions*', in *Art and Pornography*, ed. Jerrold Levinson and Hans Maes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 200–201. My emphasis.

²¹ My goal here is to show the possibility of incorporating the conceptual requirement within Nanay's view, so that his view has a chance to respond to my first worry. I am not sure whether having an inflected experience is a matter of voluntary attention, even if cognitively driven.

²² Nanay argues that his account is substantially compatible with Podro's, Lopes's, and Hopkins's accounts, and, more controversially, with Wollheim's.

design-scene properties is that they are relational properties because they cannot be characterized without making reference to both the depicted object and the picture design. We do not know, for instance, what conditions have to be satisfied in order for a picture to instantiate a design-scene property; and we do not know whether only certain pictures instantiate those properties – a point that would comport with the idea that we tend to have inflected seeing-in only with pictures that are somewhat special, and so perhaps aesthetically interesting. Nor do we know whether we could have an inflected experience with any picture – be it a postcard or a Picasso painting – or whether inflected seeing-in would be the appropriate experience only with some pictures, while we might at most experience illusory or imaginative effects with pictures that do not allow for inflection, because they lack the relevant design-scene properties. The answers to these questions, it seems, would have important consequences for the project of arguing that inflected seeing-in is important for the aesthetic appreciation of pictures. This is true at least if we want to do justice to the initial intuition that seeing-in is inflected only in some cases because only some pictures elicit or require inflected seeing-in as an appropriate experience; this intuition would in turn accord with the intuition that the pictures that elicit inflected experience are somewhat special in virtue of properties that we may appreciate aesthetically.

As regards what it takes to attentively experience a design-scene property, I envisage two possible readings of Nanay's theory. One option is to claim that consciously attending to relational design-scene properties amounts only to consciously attending both to the depicted object or scene and to the design properties of the picture. On this reading, inflected seeing-in would coincide with strong twofoldness (especially in the 2* formulation cited in the second section), where the idea would be that attending both to depicted object and to design allows us to attend to the relation between them, and how the latter gives rise to the former. However, this cannot be the right reading of Nanay's account. To see this, we need to make reference to the view of perceptual attention that Nanay independently defends. What does it mean to attend to the design properties of a picture – perhaps, recognizing them as such –, as opposed to unconsciously representing them or to consciously but inattentively perceiving them? The function of attention, according to Nanay, is to increase the determinacy of perceptual content: attending to a determinable property one perceives makes the property more determinate.²³ Attention does have effects on the phenomenology and the content of perceptual experience, but the only effect it can determine is the perception of a more determinate property: for

²³ Bence Nanay, 'Attention and Perceptual Content', *Analysis* 70 (2010): 263–70.

instance, attending to the colour of a green apple can result in an experience of a more determinate shade of green. If this is all attention can do, then attention by itself – not even if accompanied by recognition – can account for the phenomenology and content of inflected seeing-in. On the current reading, inflected seeing-in is different from uninflected seeing-in because only the former involves attending to the design properties of a picture; but, given Nanay's view of attention, this means visually experiencing more determinate design properties – for example, more determinate colours and shapes –, which is obviously not enough to explain how we come to appreciate the way in which the design modifies the depicted object as described in the examples of inflection above.

Now, Nanay may reject this reading of our experience of design-scene properties. Attending to design-scene properties cannot be reduced to attending to both the depicted object or scene and the design. The second option I can think of is to claim that attending to design-scene properties amounts to attending to the *relation* between depicted object and design. The problem is that if design-scene properties are simply defined as the relation that the picture design entertains with the depicted object, then design-scene properties turn out to be not so special after all.²⁴ Design properties are by definition related to what is depicted: they are those properties of the surface that are responsible for pictorial representation. So the relation between design and depicted object is something we could perceive in every picture, regardless of whether the picture elicits the special effects sustained by our Rembrandt portrait or Cézanne landscape.

Attending to the relation that the design bears to the depicted object or scene may be sufficient for inflection if inflected seeing-in is understood as the experience of how the design gives rise to, or pictorially represents, the seen-in object. But experiencing the effect Rembrandt obtained with his masterful use of the ink in rendering Sylvius's hand gesture is quite a different experience. Moreover, if attending to the relation between design and depicted object exhausted inflected seeing-in, it is difficult to understand why this kind of picture perception would be so important for our aesthetic appreciation of pictures. For we would not be able to respect the intuition that inflected seeing-in is elicited or required by pictures that are endowed with extraordinary properties; pictures that we can thus find aesthetically valuable. However, the relations to which we would attend in inflected experience construed according to the second reading

²⁴ Nanay himself acknowledges that not all relational properties that necessarily make reference to both the depicted object and the design are design-scene properties. The obvious examples he has in mind, however – including the property of 'being seen in this surface by me right now' – are not of the kind I am addressing here.

are properties we can find in pictures that do no more than simply represent their subjects, as all pictures do.

To be sure, Nanay's claim about the role inflected seeing-in plays in the aesthetic appreciation of pictures might just be a necessity claim. If this is what he has in mind, then, as we will see below, I agree that the kind of inflection his account can capture – that is, attending to relational properties that could be instantiated by every picture – is necessary for the aesthetic appreciation of pictures. The claim would amount to a specification of a general, plausible claim about appropriate aesthetic experience: in order to appreciate an object aesthetically, one needs to experience the object as the kind of object it is. This would mean, for example, experiencing pictures as pictures, that is, experiencing the way in which the properties of the picture represent, in a specific pictorial way, the depicted object or scene. This would ensure that, if they are likely to be appreciated aesthetically, they would be appreciated as pictures. A mere necessity claim, however, is not very informative, because, as we have seen, the kind of experience that is so related to aesthetic appreciation is not specific to a picture that we appreciate (or perhaps should appreciate) aesthetically. This second concern about Nanay's account and its design-scene properties allows us to understand what was missing from an approach to inflection such as his: we have in fact been discussing, under the label of inflection, phenomena that require further distinctions. In what follows, I will advance a different characterization of inflected seeing-in that, over and above satisfying all the requirements for a convincing theory of the inflected experience that we have mentioned so far, distinguishes between two kinds of inflection. This move will prove crucial to substantiating the idea that inflection is important for the aesthetic experience of pictures in a stronger sense than the one Nanay's view supports.

V. PICTORIAL HOWS

The new account of inflected seeing-in which I propose here is meant to be a development of the idea that such an experience is important for the aesthetic appreciation of pictures. My account, however, distances itself from Nanay's on two points. First, I argue that there is room for a distinction between two kinds of inflected seeing-in, and that only one of them is distinctive of our aesthetic experiences of pictures. Second, the account implies that only some pictures elicit or sustain inflected seeing-in in the second sense; this allows me to make sense of the extraordinary character of inflected experience and of the initial intuition that this experiential character is to be explained with regard to the extraordinary pictures that are the objects of our experiences. To achieve both goals, I develop a suggestion of Wollheim's to the effect that properties of the picture design can

contribute to different 'hows' of pictorial representation, that is, different ways of determining what is seen in the picture and thus the content of inflected experiences.

In a later article, Wollheim put forward a refined description of the structure and content of pictorial experience, which deserves our attention. In addition to the What, he considered (1) the Material How, that is, the surface with its design properties, through which the other Hows are realized; (2) the Representational How, which determines the properties of the What; and (3) the Presentational How, which does not qualify the What at all, but reflects features such as the artist's expressive vision, her style, her technical limitations.²⁵ The useful suggestion that can be derived from Wollheim's sketchy distinction is that the very same design properties of a picture can perform two different functions: a representational and a presentational function. By so doing, they contribute to what is seen in the picture in different ways, which the observer must distinguish in her experience if she wants to fully grasp the content and, possibly, the aesthetically interesting qualities of a picture. I believe that the properties and functions Wollheim singled out can be fruitfully employed to clarify the structure and content of inflected seeing-in, especially in the debate on its alleged aesthetic significance.

Nanay has rightly emphasized that twofold inflected seeing-in makes us aware of the way the picture subject is depicted. Yet, once Wollheim's distinctions are in place, two ways in which the subject is depicted can be identified, which correspond to the contents of two kinds of inflected seeing-in. The first is twofold inflected seeing-in as an experience in which we attentively grasp the picture design properties, or the Material How, and see them and conceptualize them as constituting the Representational How – as the properties responsible for our seeing the subject in the picture. In having this experience, we become aware of how the depicted subject emerges from the design and how the design properties are responsible for our seeing the depicted subject as having certain properties. However, a further dimension of inflection may enrich our experience: we can see the picture design properties as constituting the Presentational How. In this case, we see them as realizing peculiar pictorial effects that induce us to see the depicted subject as having inflected properties like the ones mentioned by Hopkins, or relational properties that need to be characterized with reference to the Material How.

Wollheim's Pictorial Hows are objective properties of pictures, albeit functionally individuated properties. Therefore, a characterization of inflected seeing-in in

²⁵ Wollheim, 'What Makes Representational Painting', 143.



terms of such Hows allows us to characterize the phenomenology and content of inflected experiences with reference to the objects of such experiences. If the Material How corresponds to the visible properties of the surface, which include mere surface properties and design properties not seen as such, it materially realizes the way the subject is depicted. This way comprises two aspects. The Representational How is realized by the design properties that pictorially represent ordinary visible properties of the seen-in subject, that is, properties that the subject seen in the picture could also be seen as having in face-to-face visual experience. Some occurrences of inflected seeing-in simply involve consciously attending to the design conceptualized as determining the Representational How. In these cases, inflected picture perception amounts to seeing the design as responsible for the emergence of a certain object seen in the picture, but does not involve seeing the depicted object as having non-ordinary properties such as those involved in Rembrandt's sketch. An inflected experience of such a kind may be elicited by naturalistic pictures too, insofar as they do not have illusionistic effects. Since the observer is consciously attending to the picture design and recognizing how it lets an object or scene with certain visible properties emerge, this kind of seeing-in does not collapse on ordinary, uninflected seeing-in.

As I mentioned at the end of the fourth section, I agree with Nanay that there is a kind of seeing-in that we can have with any picture and that it is a necessary condition for the aesthetic appreciation of pictures. Attentively experiencing and recognizing the picture design as realizing the Representational How is precisely the kind of inflected seeing-in that I had in mind. Yet this is compatible with the idea, cited at the beginning of this article, that inflected seeing-in can be an extraordinary kind of pictorial experience triggering a special appreciation of the picture involved. This is because there is another kind of inflected experience, which necessarily requires the experience of the Representational How, but also involves the experience of another aspect of pictures, the Presentational How.

The Presentational How is realized by the properties of the Material How that do not pictorially represent ordinary properties of the seen-in subject, but rather contribute to the way in which we see the depicted subject. In other words, the Presentational How is responsible for Hopkins's inflected properties seen in the picture (such as the property of being made of ink as characterizing a hand), those which do not qualify the depicted ordinary object in a strict sense, since they are properties that we could not see as belonging to the object in face-to-face experience. This is why Wollheim insists that the Presentational How really qualifies not the pictorially represented subject, but the way in which the observer



is invited to see the object or scene in the picture. Along these lines, we are not forced to posit extraordinary or even impossible entities in order to identify the represented subject of the picture. To be sure, at least if we take Hopkins's description of Rembrandt's sketch seriously, we do visually experience in the picture entities with properties that they do not ordinarily possess – inflected properties. As competent users of depictions, however, we should still be able to recognize the represented objects and scenes (for example, the hand of a human being), and make a distinction between properties that are meant to be ascribed to the depicted subjects and properties that are, rather, meant to present a familiar kind of object in a novel and properly pictorial way.

Indeed, Wollheim argued that the appropriate experience of a representational painting requires a peculiar knowledge and sensibility, which have to be attuned to the artist's intentions. Such capacities make the observer able to select from among the properties that the What is seen as having in the picture both those which result from the Representational How and those for which the Presentational How is responsible. The first set of properties are the depicted properties that the observer is meant to attribute to the What – for example, the property of leaning forward is attributed to the portrayed hand of the preacher. At the same time, the observer is also able to let the Presentational How have an influence only on the way the What is perceived. For instance, the vigorous marks of ink are not properties of the depicted hand, but are relevant to the way it is depicted and hence seen: they let us experience the world through the distorting or enriching 'filter' that the artist chose to apply to the subject of her picture.²⁶ Our experience of the Presentational How allows us to see, in Lopes's words, 'the depicting design undergirding the depicted scene', thus seeing the creative process of depiction and not merely its product.²⁷

A further advantage of this characterization of inflection in terms of Pictorial Hows concerns the intuition that made Nanay's proposal seem plausible. The idea was that inflected experiences are special in virtue of their being experiences of special objects, that is, we may think, experiences of pictorial representations that have properties relevant to aesthetic appreciation. Some pictures are so capable of triggering, drawing, or even forcing our attention towards their design and its functions, that we could not have an appropriate experience of them if our seeing-in were uninflected.²⁸ The account I propose, based on Wollheim's Hows, explains particularly well the initial intuition. Pictures themselves are responsible for inflected experiences in virtue of their possessing peculiar properties. Only in

²⁶ Ibid., 144.

²⁷ Nanay, 'Inflected and Uninflected Experience', 195.

²⁸ Nanay, 'Anti-pornography'.



some cases is the Pictorial How rich, distinctively designed, and ultimately significant enough to trigger our attentive experience of the Presentational How. According to Lopes, experiences of pictorial representations gradually distribute themselves along a spectrum, whose poles are twofoldness, typical of 'painterly pictures', and illusionism, typical of *trompe l'oeil*, when experience of the surface properties is precluded.²⁹ To the Presentational How, in particular, we may ascribe the peculiar effects, distortions, visual references and suggestions which are distinctive of painterly pictures, that is, pictures whose design, so to speak, makes itself noticed.

VI. PICTORIAL HOWS AND AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

How are the various aspects of inflected seeing-in, singled out in this way, related to our aesthetic appreciation of pictures? Aesthetic experiences of pictures have many dimensions. To begin with, the conscious experience of qualities of the representational medium, such as drawing lines, colours, and brush strokes, intuitively seems to be part of what we appreciate aesthetically.³⁰ This is even more evident when such qualities are considered in their relation to what is depicted: one can grasp the way lines and colours have been organized to let objects and scenes emerge, and how they enrich the content with special effects. Indeed, many authors think that our awareness of the way the picture design is intentionally connected to what is depicted is central to aesthetic appreciation.

As Hopkins highlights, inflection enables us to notice and appreciate the way the depicted object emerges from design as well as the abilities of the artist, 'one who can elicit a rich world visible in the surface from a relatively limited design'.³¹ What we experience not only motivates our admiration for the technical abilities of the creator of such pictures, but also has a critical role in our attribution of predicates at first sight classifiable as aesthetic – for example, delicacy and vigour – and even in our attribution of an aesthetic value to pictures, on the grounds of our experience. A passage from Wollheim himself may be interpreted as claiming the necessity of an experience similar to inflected seeing-in for the aesthetic appreciation of artistic pictures: 'in Titian, in Vermeer, in Manet we are led to marvel endlessly at the way in which line or brushstroke or expanse of colour is

²⁹ Lopes, *Understanding Pictures*, 176. Whether positing different kinds of seeing-in is the best way of accounting for the variety of pictorial experience, and how many kinds of seeing-in should be distinguished, are matters of debate. See Dan Cavedon-Taylor, 'The Space of Seeing-In', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 51 (2011): 271–78, and Helen Bradley, 'Reducing the Space of Seeing-In', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 54 (2014): 409–24.

³⁰ Hopkins, 'Inflected Pictorial Experience', 164.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 164–65.



exploited to render effects or establish analogies that can only be identified representationally.³²

These brief remarks suggest that the Representational and the Presentational How, although both are plausibly involved in our aesthetic experience of pictures, play different roles in it. As I mentioned above, I think that experiencing the Representational How is a necessary condition for appropriate aesthetic appreciation of pictures.³³ Rembrandt's sketch, for instance, is expressive, vigorous and dynamic as a portrait, that is, considered as a pictorial representation of Sylvius the preacher. By contrast, when considered as a mere abstract configuration of splotches of ink on a bi-dimensional surface, the sketch may not possess those properties at all. Hence our aesthetic interest in the sketch depends on our awareness of the way Sylvius is depicted.³⁴ The Representational How is connected to seeing a picture as such because it entails design-seeing, that is, conceiving design as responsible for seeing-in. Hopkins's notion of the emergence of the subject from the picture design – an experience he seems to consider aesthetically meaningful – is also to be brought back to the experience of the Representational How.

Nonetheless, the Presentational How seems connected to aesthetically relevant properties in the most interesting way. Crucially, it grounds the only kind of inflection that is distinctively associated with the experience of aesthetically relevant properties, that is, the kind of inflected seeing-in which is necessary in order to appreciate those aesthetic properties that are unique to pictures, as opposed to other objects. This does not mean that a picture has aesthetic value if it depicts a subject as having anomalous and bizarre properties that it cannot

³² Wollheim, 'Seeing-As, Seeing-In', 126.

³³ One may object that there are pictures that involve a Presentational How, but not a Representational How – perhaps Pollock's drip paintings. If so, then the inflected seeing-in which involves the experience of the Presentational How may not necessarily require the experience of the Representational How. A fortiori, experiencing the Representational How would not be required for an aesthetic appreciation of pictures. To this objection, I would reply that I am not sure whether Pollock's drip paintings are pictorial representations, precisely because they do not represent, that is, because they do not have a Representational How. While I do not want to exclude the possibility that the notion of a Presentational How could be used to characterize non-representational painting – that is, painting that does not pictorially represent, even though it may do so, for example, symbolically –, at least when talking of pictorial representations the Presentational How is understood in terms of a contrast with the Representational How and the relation that this bears to the What. My claims about our appreciation of pictures are restricted to (pictorial) representations.

³⁴ As far as properties are concerned, one may note how design properties, which are simply perceivable ones, are relevant: 'sensory properties are a necessary constituent of that on which aesthetic properties depend because the beauty lies in the precise aesthetically appropriate sensory realisation of those representational properties.' Nick Zangwill, 'Aesthetic/Sensory Dependence', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 38 (1998): 71.

be seen as having in ordinary visual experience. True, our experience of the Presentational How can account for the idea that inflection offers us the chance to encounter a world otherwise inaccessible to us and forms of experience we could not have out of the pictorial universe.³⁵ This also accords with Podro's observation that our interest in representational paintings lies in the difference between pictorial and ordinary experience, a difference imputable to the way things appear in pictures 'in a way that is distinctive of painting'.³⁶ The point is, however, that such extraordinary effects for which the Presentational How is responsible have to be appropriately understood as being determined by this presentational function of the picture design, as opposed to its representational function. The properties constituting the Presentational How enrich or anyway modify our visual experience of the depicted subject in a way unique to pictorial experience, so as to reflect, as Wollheim writes, the intentional contribution of the author, her style and technique.

Certainly not every picture can support the notion of twofoldness or inflection at the root of what Wollheim calls 'the delights of representation': 'if the spectator does honour the [twofoldness] requirement, the artist can now reciprocate by undertaking to establish increasingly complex correspondences and analogies between features of the thing present and features of that which is seen in the thing present'.³⁷ Rembrandt's portrait, however, may be a good example of a picture that does support inflected seeing-in of the kind just described, while also being a picture endowed with aesthetically valuable properties. Looking at Rembrandt's portrait, we consciously perceive ink marks, light or thick hatching, denser in some areas of the sheet of paper, apparently spread with a rapid, steady hand. Yet they are not merely seen as properties of a surface, constituting the Material How, but as depicting properties we attribute to the depicted subject. For example, we see the portrayed subject's hand stretched forward in an eloquent gesture typical of an orator, so as to induce the imagining of a strong personality. The gesture of the hand is depicted through wide and soft traces of ink to represent the tunic, thin, curved lines to render the pleats of the cloth, very dark traits for the hand, which blend with the patch depicting the portion of forearm in the shade. We are aware of the way the gesture is depicted insofar as we visually experience the design properties to which we attend as responsible for seeing-in and for the emergence of an object with certain seen-in properties from the picture. This is our inflected experience of the Representational How.

³⁵ Hopkins, 'Inflected Pictorial Experience', 151.

³⁶ Podro, *Depiction*, 28.

³⁷ Wollheim, 'Seeing-As, Seeing-In', 219.

Moreover, we can experience these very same marks on paper with regard to how they make the fascinating experience of a hand composed of ink possible. We see the hand has having properties we cannot see it as having in face-to-face experience, that is, properties inflected by the pictorial vehicle conceived as such. Our inflected experience of the Presentational How allows us to see the subject in a way distinctive of pictures. We can thus appreciate, for instance, the analogy between the impulsive movement of the hand and an impulsive force we would attribute to the ink marks themselves, and, in general, Rembrandt's style and expression.³⁸ Thanks to the experience of the different Pictorial Hows, we are able to experience those peculiar properties of the portrait we would capture by means of the aesthetic concepts of expressiveness, dynamism, vigour, and beauty. What is more, the experience of the Presentational How allows us to appreciate the aesthetic properties that only pictorial representations can possess. Through the Presentational How, the artist can express her creative intentionality in a way that exploits the relations between vehicle and content which are unique to this art form.

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³⁸ Podro, *Depiction*, 9.



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