WRITING WHICH WRITES IMAGES

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ABSTRACT: Traditionally, the picture[1] has been the archetype of all signs, even the word. Contemporary philosophy is beginning to doubt the traditional understanding of the sign as present existence which represents absent existence. The sign ceases to be limited to reference and retreats in favour of inference -that which surrounds the sign; that is to say, other signs. This trend is most apparent in the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida and is also implicit in Gombrich's *Art and Illusion*. The aim of the present study is to present a comparison of the views of Derrida and Gombrich

Keywords: model, picture, sign, representation, text, difference, simulacrum.

CONTENTS

1. The mirror of nature

In his celebrated book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1980) Richard Rorty presents a persuasive critique of the paradigm of perception based on the idea of the mirror of nature in which it is impossible to distinguish between the reflection and what it reflects. This idea implies that a concept or language is capable of faithfully representing an essence in such a way that no displacement occurs between the represented and the representing. For an example of a theory created in keeping with the mirror-of-nature paradigm we may look to Wittgenstein's concept of language, systematically expounded in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921). Here he claims that "2.12 A picture is a model of reality" and, subsequently

4.01 A proposition is a picture of reality.

A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it.

4.011 At first sight a proposition -one set out on the printed page, for example-does not seem to be a picture of the reality with which it is concerned. But neither do written notes seem at first sight to be a picture of a piece of music, nor our phonetic notation (the alphabet) to be a picture of our speech.

And yet these sign-languages prove to be pictures, even in the ordinary sense, of what they represent.

4.014 A gramophone record, the musical idea, the written notes, and the sound-waves, all stand to one another in the same internal relation of depicting that holds between language and the world.

They are all constructed according to a common logical pattern.

(Like the two youths in the fairy-tale, their two horses, and their lilies. They are all in a certain sense one) (Wittgenstein 1972, p. 1).

Wittgenstein claims, then, that language, similarly to musical notation, is a *model* of reality. Language *depicts* the world, it creates its *image* -with the individual elements of this image corresponding to the individual objects in the world. Language represents the world, and the relationship of representation makes it possible for us to interchange the represented and the representing in full. To employ Wittgenstein's metaphor, "Like the two youths in the fairy-tale, their two horses, and their lilies. They are all in a certain sense one."

Language corresponds with the thing, and Wittgenstein would have this relationship of correspondence or reference approximate to -or even identify completely with- the relationship of resemblance which marks the visual image, particularly the painting. In so doing, however, he has superordinated the image to the verbal sign, the visual representation to linguistic reference. Despite the enormous effort invested, this operation has not proved successful; the two youths, their two horses and their lilies have never become the longed-for unity. On the contrary, they have remained two; and, moreover, one is hierarchically superposed to the other, in the way required by the principle of resemblance as defined by Foucault. According to this principle, "Resemblance has a 'model,' an original element that orders and hierarchizes the increasingly less faithful copies that can be struck from it" (Foucault 1983). The original and the copy, the model and the image; and if we add to that the essence and the manifestation, then we easily discover that we are still in the snare that Platonism, founding the massive European metaphysical tradition, set for us. But let's leave metaphysics to its own devices and try to initiate a dialogue with those concepts which offer an alternative to the mirror paradigm dominating the fields of both science and art.

2. Ferdinand de Saussure on the sign

As partners in the dialogue, who better than Jacques Derrida and Ernst Hans Gombrich? The two have, after all, tried to shake the certainties of a mistless *mirror* in which the world is reflected, be that mirror philosophy, science or art. But it would be naive to think that their common goal -and, it must be said, one formulated implicitly rather than explicitly- automatically engenders identical or similar procedures. No, it is not quite that simple; in fact, this is the kind of situation aptly described by Mark Twain's adage to the effect that history does not repeat itself, but the events rhyme. To Derrida and Gombrich, then. Is it not too contrived to situate these two names into a single space? Anyone who expects that strictly symmetrical analogies will be created in this space will be profoundly disappointed. Anyone who reconciles himself to the fact that I shall try to situate Gombrich's theoretical gesture into the living weave of Derrida's texts in such a way that it disappear within it like a compatible implant and not like a foreign body producing an undesired inflammation -that person might take this reflection as a modest contribution to the textualisation of the image.

Having strategically delimited the line of thought, I shall embark *in media res* upon defining the term sign, because in this instance the term is crucial. In general, and in accord with traditional thinking, we may state that the sign is a present reality which substitutes an absent reality. To borrow from Eco, the sign is everything that can be understood as a denoting substitute of something else. It follows from this that

> According to this classical semiology, the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both *secondary* and *provisional*: secondary due to an original and lost presence *from* which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final and missing presence toward which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation (Derrida 1986, p. 402).

Specifically, the word always *denotes* a thing, the image always *resembles* a model, the word and the image are always dependent on that which they substitute, and allowing ourselves some licence, we may say that the relationship between the word and the denoted thing can be reduced to that between the image and the resembled model. The relationship of *depicting*, the relationship of *resembling*, is thus governed by the classical definition of the sign, and its history can be traced in a line stretching from Plato's dialogue *Cratylos* to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. This relationship, then, has commanded the history of thought on the sign

for more than 2,500 years and during this time has secured for itself such a position of power that its undermining is almost impossible. This tradition functions as a prejudication which it is very difficult to get rid of, though Ferdinand de Saussure attempted it despite all the risks. In his posthumously published lectures he tried to come to terms with this tradition. According to Derrida, his semiology

> 1. (...) has marked, against the tradition, that the signified is inseparable from the signifier, that the signified and signifier are the two sides of one and the same production. Saussure even purposely refused to have this opposition or this "two-sided" unity conform to the relationship between soul and body, as had always been done. 'This two-sided unity has often been compared to the unity of the human person, composed of a body and a soul. The comparison is hardly satisfactory' (*Cours de linguistique générale*, p. 145).
> 2. By emphasizing the *differential* and *formal* characteristics of semiological functioning, by showing that it 'is impossible for sound, the material element, itself to belong to language' and that 'in its essence it [the linguistic signifier] is not at all phonic' (p. 164); by desubstantializing both the signified content and the 'Expressive substance' -which therefore is no longer in a privileged or exclusive way phonic- by making linguistics a division of general semiology (p. 33), Saussure powerfully contributed to turning against the metaphysical tradition the concept of the sign that he borrowed from it (Derrida 1981, p. 18).

Although these three principles presuppose each other, it is above all to the *differential* character of the manner of the semiotic mechanism that I shall attend. In *Course in General Linguistics* we read:

> in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it (Saussure 1974, p. 120)

What does this mean? Quite simply, that language is a system of differences. Every element of language -the word, for example- is not defined *positively*, but *differentially*. The word does not, then, "draw" its meaning from the thing denoted, but from other words that surround it. We can then generalise and suggest that it is precisely that difference by which it unmistakably differs from other signs which actually defines it. As long as that difference is not deformed to such a degree as to make it unidentifiable, everything is in order and we cannot mistake this sign and identify it with another sign. Saussure often compared language to a chess game, and I think that at this point the example of chess might indeed illustrate bril-

liantly the function of differences. The value of the essential elements of this game -the chess pieces- does not depend on substance, but on the differences between them; on the fact that we are able inerrably to distinguish the king from the queen, the pawn or the knight from the rook. As long as we are able to do that, it is immaterial whether these pieces are made of gold, ivory, precious ebony or prison bread.

Let us pass to the realm of language. Within any particular linguistic system the designation "green" does not depend on, for example, the green colour of grass, but on other designations of the colour scale in the language in question. The designation "green", as we understand it here, does not "drag" its referent with it, but on the contrary denotes it. This thesis is simply illustrated by comparing Welsh with English. "In Welsh 'green' is *gwyrdd* or *glas*, 'gray' is *glas* or *llwyd*, 'brown' is *llwyd*. That is to say, the part of the spectrum that is covered by our word *green* is intersected in Welsh by a line that assigns a part of it to the same area as our word *blue* while the English boundary between *green* and *blue* is not found in Welsh. Moreover, Welsh lacks the English boundary between *blue* and *gray*, and likewise the English boundary between *gray* and *brown*. On the other hand, the area that is covered by English *gray* is intersected in Welsh so that half of it is referred to the same area as our *blue* and half to the same areas as our *brown*. A schematic confrontation shows the lack of coincidence between the boundaries.

	gwrdd
green	
blue	glas
gray	
	llwyrd
brown	
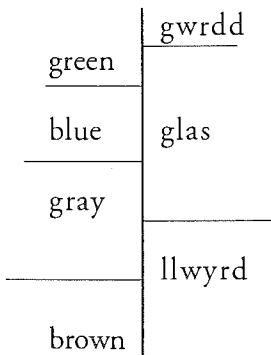
Similarly, Latin and Greek show incongruence with the chief modern European languages in this sphere. The progression from 'light' to 'dark', which is divided into three areas in English and many languages (*white*, *gray*, *black*) is divided in other languages into a different number of areas,

through abolition or, on the other hand, elaboration of the middle area" (Hjelmslev 1961, p. 53).

It is evident that through emphasising the principle of difference -which, incidentally, presupposes the respecting of the principle of the arbitrariness of the sign- one can dispose of the idea of language as mirror. It is also incontrovertible that in doing this Saussure was taking a stance against the metaphysical tradition. However, despite this endeavour he also confirms the tradition -notably where he writes about writing. For here Saussure implicitly withholds from writing the principle of difference. For him, "Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first" (Saussure 1974, p. 23). At other places in the *Course* he even writes of the perversity and tyranny of writing.

3. Jacques Derrida and Grammatology

The subordinacy of writing to the living tongue, the representative character of writing, has a serious consequence not only for linguistics, but also for the whole area of semiology. Linguistics, reduced merely to the investigation of language, becomes -to use Foucault's term- a *model* which orders, hierarchizes and classifies all forms of writing, beginning with ideographic and ending with phonetic writing. However, semiology, born of linguistics, goes even further. In the introduction to his *Elements of Semiology* Barthes claims that linguistics is not a mere part of semiology, but on the contrary "semiological knowledge at present can be only a *copy* [italics mine] of linguistic knowledge" (Barthes 1984, p. 79).

It would seem that the principle of resemblance, the principle of representation, cannot be dispensed with so easily. One bundles it out the door and back it comes through the window. It seems to be indestructible; whatever we do it returns to the field of thought in a new guise. In what does this capability of eternal return consist? Well, above all, in the fact that it is part of the language of Western European metaphysics, which -as Jacques Derrida has persuaded us- it is meaningless to criticise using its own language, and we have no other language available. What, then, remains? According to Derrida, a deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence whose task, expressed schematically, is to show that traditional oppositions -for example, language/writing- are not oppositions of two equal terms; rather, there is always a hierarchy and subordination operating between them, subordinating one to the other. However,

> Deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to a neutralization: it
> must, by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practice an
> *overturning* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It
> is only on this condition that deconstruction will provide itself the means with
> which to *intervene* in the field of oppositions that it criticizes, which is also a
> field of nondiscursive forces (Derrida 1982, p. 329).

The sense of deconstructive work is, then, to *overturn* classical oppositions
and *displace* the system as such. For example, the opposition of lan-
guage/writing, and this is in effect what Derrida's celebrated *Of Gramma-
tology* is about.

In this book Derrida attempted to create a new term in writing
-*grammé*. This was to be the most general term in semiology. This being
the case, however, could that science still be termed semiology? No,
claimed Derrida and proposed the term *grammatology*.

> Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a
> right to existence, a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of [that]
> general science...; the laws discovered by [grammatology] will be applicable to
> linguistics (Derrida 1976, p. 51).

Our new science has entered the world, so let us attend to that most
general term. *Grammé* or *différance* is not a term in the classic sense, but
rather a sheaf of various lines,

> a weaving, an interlacing which permits the different threads and different lines
> of meaning -or of force- to go off again in different directions just as it is always
> ready to tie itself up with others (Derrida 1986, p. 397).

Given the aim pursued by the present paper one line of meaning will be of
interest, namely that which takes up Saussure's theoretical legacy. We recall
that Saussure understood language as a system of differences. This means
that

> The elements of signification function due not to the compact force of other nu-
> clei but rather to the network of oppositions that distinguishes them, and then re-
> lates them one to another (Derrida 1986, p. 403).

The emphasising of the difference principle made it possible to liberate
language from the grasp representation. However, Saussure withheld this
principle from writing, and so representation -in the guise of writing-
made a reappearance. And it is this flaw that *grammé* as *différance* is in-
tended to remove. *Grammé* is not writing in the normal understanding, but
an arche-writing which precedes not only writing, but also language. For

gramme is the principle of differentiation, the play of differences, of the traces of differences thanks to which a weaving of individual elements is created in such a way that

> each so-called 'present' element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what is not: what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified present (Derrida 1986, pp. 405-406).

This interweaving of elements is *text*. Could we say, then, that *gramme* as *différance* is something similar to the principle of difference to which Saussure also adhered? Yes and no. Yes, because *gramme* is indeed a principle of difference which, unlike that of Saussure, "inscribes" itself not only into the privileged phonic substance, but into all possible substances. No, because Derrida's *gramme* is not a static network of differences creating the system of language. For Derrida these differences have not fallen from the sky fully formed, they do not represent a structure governed from a fixed and immutable centre. On the contrary, *différance* must be understood as a movement of designation which cannot be enclosed in the classic frame of *arche/telos*. To put it another way, *gramme* as *différance* is not form, but the formation of form which inscribes itself into all possible substances and creates the necessary condition of textuality.

It may seem that we have lingered too long with the language/writing opposition and that the original opposition of language/image has somehow been forgotten. Not so: it remains always present, even if it has had to recede into the shadow for a while. Now, however, has come the apt moment for us to cast a new light upon it, revealing that the image, similarly to language, is slowly beginning to shed the burden of the referent which has accompanied it like a double. To put it another way, the principle of resemblance begins to lose its validity and this loss is the fault of the textualisation of the image, that Derridian *gramme* which applies also to the area of visual or, as Derrida would say, spatial art. I shall try to make this clearer by calling on that classic of contemporary art history, Gombrich.

4. Ernst Hans Gombrich and visual language

Ferdinand de Saussure often compared the language system to the game of chess, in which importance inheres in the values of the individual pieces constituted by mutual differences. The chess game as an analogy of lan-

guage -though here the language of visual art- is one also adduced by Gombrich. In his *Art and Illusion* he writes:

> It does not matter whether the fields of the checkerboard are white and black or red and green so long as they remain distinct. And so with the colours of the opponent's pieces. How far the pieces themselves will be articulated by distinctive features will depend on the rules of the game. In checkers, where each player needs only two categories of pieces, we make our own queens simply by putting one checker on top of the other. In chess we must distinguish more categories; no designer of chessmen, however, will be concerned with the real appearance of castles or bishops, knights or kings, but only with the creation of clear, distinctive features which set off one piece from the other. Provided these distinctions are respected, he is free to indulge his fancy in any way he likes. I have chosen this rather far-fetched example of games because it allows us to study articulation, the creation of *distinctions* [italics mine], without the intrusion of the problem of likeness or representation (Gombrich 1960, p. 102).

Let us suppose that there exist two kinds of painters. The first will be Wim Wenders' angels from the angelic dialogue *Wings of Desire* (1986) and *Faraway, So Close!* (1993), who are able to paint their pictures only in black and white. They could, in fact, use other colours, but as Wenders' angels see the "world" only in black and white, they only see the remaining colours of the palette as shades of black and white. The second will be humans, who will paint their pictures in, let us say, six colours. And to make things simpler, let us further suppose that all will paint one and the same object, for example some natural formation. When the painting is finished an acerbic debate is unleashed between the two sides. The people accuse the angels of painting a picture of the world that is black and white and so does not correspond to the real world. As the angels can only see in black and white, they defend the rightness of their pictures with the argument that their black-and-white pictures are similar to those painted by the humans and that -if we discount individual differences of style- there is no great difference between the pictures by the humans and those by the angels. This argument cannot be disentangled, for the angels quite simply see differently from the people and what they paint does not depend on the object, model or referent, but on the language of visual art -a language that is now more than just metaphor. Gombrich was indirectly alerted to this fact by Benjamin Lee Whorf when he emphasised that "language does not give names to pre-existing things or concepts so much as it articulates the world of our experience. The images of art, we suspect, do the same" (Gombrich 1960, p. 78). In a way analogous to language, in visual art, too, what comes to the fore -instead of the relationship of reference- is the relationship of inference, in consequence of which "All paintings, as Wölfflin said, owe

more to other paintings than they owe to direct observation" (Gombrich 1960, p. 268). It would appear that we have spoken for too long about pictures without summoning at least one. Aware of this shortcoming, I shall produce not one, but two pictures from Gombrich's *Art and Illusion.*
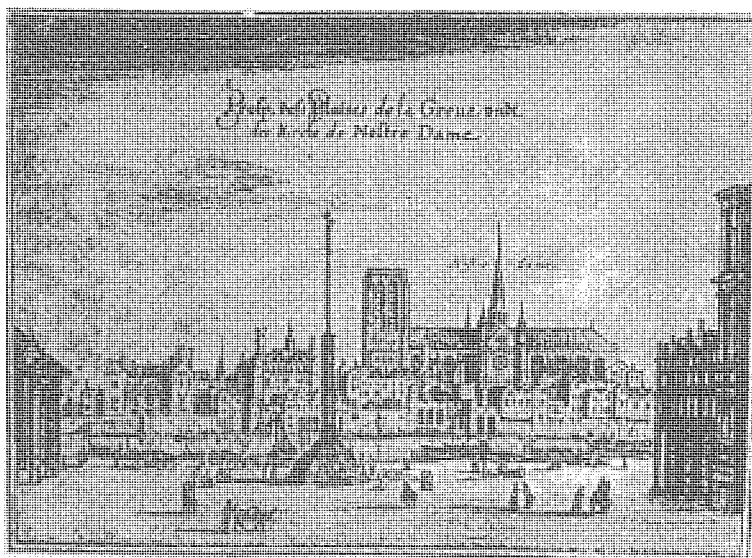
Merian: *Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris.* Detail. About 1635. Engraving
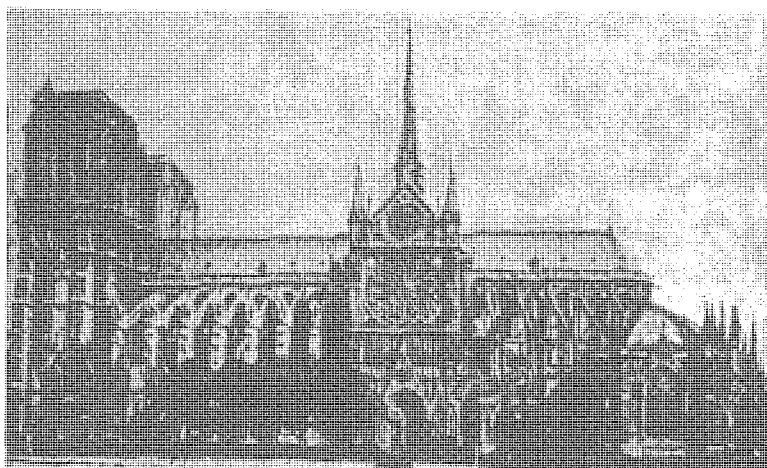
Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris. Modern photograph

And now a double commentary, beginning with Merian.

> As a child of the seventeenth century, his notion of a church is that of a lofty sym-
> metrical building with large, rounded windows, and that is how he designs Notre
> Dame. He places the transept in the centre with four large, rounded windows on
> either side, while the actual view shows seven narrow, pointed Gothic windows to
> the west and six in the choir. Once more portrayal means for Merian the adapta-
> tion or adjustment of his formula or scheme for churches to a particular building
> through the addition of a number of distinctive features -enough to make it recog-
> nizable and even acceptable to those who are not in search of architectural infor-
> mation. If this happened to be the only document extant to tell us about the Cathe-
> dral of Paris, we would be very much misled (Gombrich 1960, pp. 61-62).

Of course, a comparison with the photograph that follows makes this clear.
Merian's concern was not with trying to depict Notre Dame as faithfully as
possible, but -perhaps unconsciously- to make it conform to other pictures
of his time.

5. Picture as text

Gombrich, echoing Wölfflin, claims that the picture is more dependent on
other pictures; Derrida, for his part, that the *text* is created exclusively
through the transformation of another text. If we regarded the picture as
text, we could say that both in effect affirm something very similar. Let us
try now to answer the question of whether we can indeed regard the picture
as text. To preserve at least some semblance of impartiality I shall let
Jurij Lotman -who regards the picture as a text *sui generis*- answer for me.
He speaks explicitly of this within his typology of texts in his study
Rhetoric. His claim is that there are two basic types of text. The first
comprises those

> which are created as linear chains of linked segments. In this case the basic carrier
> of meaning is the segment (=sign), while the chain of segments (=text) is secondary
> and its meaning is derived from the meaning of the signs (Lotman 1994, p. 68).

This type of text roughly corresponds to the definition of text within tra-
ditional textology and so I shall move on without further ado. In compari-
son, the second type is much more interesting, because in this

> case the text is primal. It is the carrier of basic meaning. By its nature it is contin-
> ual, not discrete. Its meaning is organised neither by linear nor by temporal se-
> quenriality, but is 'smudged' in the n-th-dimensional semantic space of a given text
> (the picture canvas, the stage, the screen, ritual activity, social behaviour or dream).

> In texts of this type it is the text that is the bearer of meaning. The removal of signs
> which create it is difficult and is occasionally artificial in nature (Lotman 1994,
> pp. 68-69).

In contradistinction to the first type of texts, which are credited by the structure of relations between discrete elements, in the case of the second it would be more apt to use instead of the term structure the word tangle -or another model of structure. Lotman's second type of texts implies one further question of fundamental importance. It can be formulated thus: Is there still any sense in using the term sign? Given that we are unable to distinguish one sign from another, are we able in this case to speak of a sign which represents a thing? Probably not, because the sign is always constituted as the sign of a *thing*, with the *thing* actually being the origin and truth of the sign. Some other solution must be sought, and one is offered by Derrida, who suggests that we substitute the term trace for the term sign.

> The trace is not only the disappearance of origin -within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin (Derrida 1976, p. 61).

And further on he writes:

> *The trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general. Which amounts to saying once again that there is no absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the differance* which open appearance [l'apparaître] and signification. Articulating the living upon the nonliving in general, origin of all repetition, origin of ideality, the trace is not more ideal than real, not more intelligible than sensible, not more a transparent signification than an opaque energy and *no concept of metaphysics can describe it.* And as it is *a fortiori* anterior to the distinction between regions of sensibility, anterior to sound as much as to light, is there a sense in establishing a 'natural' hierarchy between the sound-imprint, for example, and the visual (graphic) imprint? The graphic image is not seen; and the acoustic image is not heard. The difference between the full unities of the voice remains unheard. And, the difference in the body of the inscription is also invisible (Derrida 1976, p. 65).

It would seem to be clear from Derrida's words that the picture is indeed text. It follows that its meaning is legible only thanks to the systematic play of traces and differences which constitute its weave. The character of the text or, if you like, the imagery of the image inevitably displaces of even completely neutralises representation. The picture does not depend on the model which it resembles, but on the language of visual art, which in turn is preceded by *différance*. Let us draw on two instances as illustration. The first will be this picture of a limestone relief.
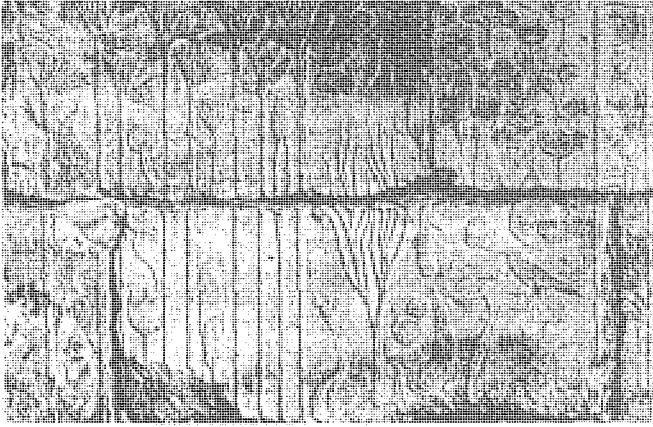
Plants brought by Thutmose III from Syria. About 1450 B.C. Limestone relief

The second picture shows an engraving by Hogarth.
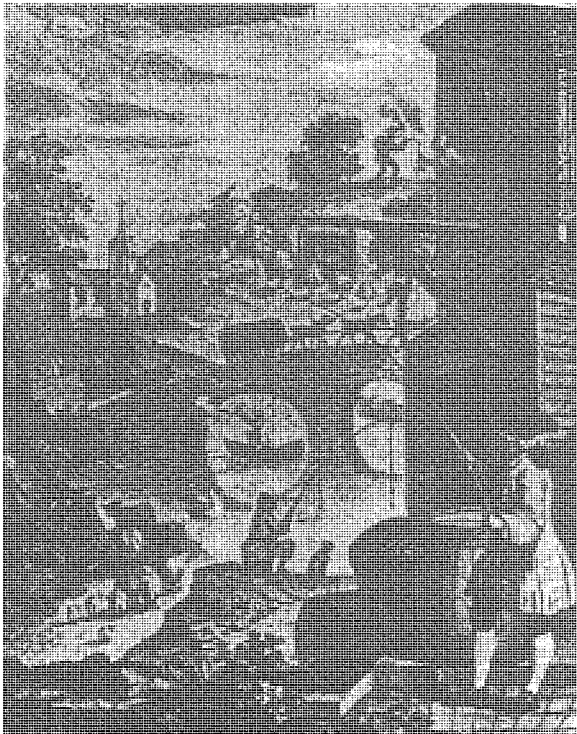
Hogarth: False perspective. 1745. Engraving

The first picture shows plants brought by Pharaoh Thutmose to Egypt from his military campaign into Syria. This limestone relief is accompanied by a commentary which

> tells us that Pharaoh pronounces these pictures to be 'the truth'. Yet botanists have found it hard to agree on what plants may have been meant by these renderings. The schematic shapes are not sufficiently differentiated to allow secure identification (Gombrich 1960, p. 67).

Gombrich claims that the schematic shapes are not sufficiently differentiated and therefore do not permit precise identification. However, in terms of what are they insufficiently differentiated? In terms of real plants? I would assume not, for probably a contemporary of the Pharaoh's would have been able without difficulty to match the sign to the real plant. Rather, the schematic forms are insufficiently differentiated in terms of today's language of technical drawing and painting. This possibility is implicitly allowed by Gombrich when he underscores the fact that styles (analogously to languages) are distinguished by a sequence of articulation. Each style differently differentiates the area of the visual, and this is made possible by the severing of the bond between the iconic sign and the object. Naturally, it does not follow from this that our language of technical drawing and painting is nearer to reality and therefore closer to absolute Truth. This impression is evoked by the tendency to naturalise our verbal and iconic languages and is from the outset illusive; we cannot therefore claim for our languages the status of the norm, the "median value" from which something diverges.

The second figure is of an engraving entitled *False perspective*. The very title urges us not to compare it to reality, and when we start to look at it carefully we find that, for example, the farthest tree is much taller than the first. Equally, the flock of sheep is painted in such a way that the animal at the back is far larger than the one at the front. The picture affords numerous such illogicalities, and we can therefore state that the engraving as a picture, as the resemblance of a model, is actually impossible. Notwithstanding this conclusion we can still maintain that these illogicalities do not prevent us from understanding it. We are even able to understand its subtle irony, which resides in the question it poses to other pictures, and it is in referring to other pictures that its meaninglessness changes into meaningfulness, because it is an example of false perspective and as such performs its task with the utmost reliability.

We have two pictures. One summons up a reality which it apparently depicts with fidelity and yet we are unable to identify which reality it faithfully depicts. The other, for its part, claims that what it depicts is a deception or at least an error, and yet we are able to "read" it. So where is the problem? Probably it is in the fact that neither in one case nor in the other do we need reality to uncover the truth or the lie of the picture. And perhaps we do not need this reality at all, merely their *textual structure.* Let us stay for a moment with Hogarth's *False perspective.* This engraving is an example of trompe-l'oeil.

> Nature is not represented in the trompe-l'oeil. There are no landscapes, no skies, no lines of flight or natural light; no faces either; neither psychology nor historicity. Everything here is artefact. A vertical backdrop creates, out of pure signs, objects isolated from their referential context (Baudrillard 1988, p. 68).

Trompe l'oeil is a simulation, a mock-up which questions the very principle of reality by covering it over simulatively. The questioning of the principle of reality is also in fact a questioning of the principle of resemblance, for which similitude has been discreetly -by clever simulation-substituted.

> The similar develops in series that have neither beginning nor end, that can be followed in one direction as easily as in another, that obey no hierarchy, but propagate themselves from small differences among small differences. Resemblance serves representation, which rules over it; similitude serves repetition, which ranges across it. Resemblance predicates itself upon a model it must return to and reveal; similitude circulates the simulacrum as an indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to the similar (Foucault 1983, p. 44).

After all of this it might seem that the principle of resemblance is a requisite of the past. Such optimism is misplaced; there are still areas where its effect is identifiable -we need look no further than photography and film theory.

> It is as if the Photographic always carries its referent with itself (...) they are glued together, limb by limb, like the condemned man and the corpse in certain tortures; or even like those pairs of fish (sharks, I think, according to Michelet) which navigate in convoy, as though united by an eternal coitus (Barthes 1993).

After Wittgenstein's two youths, two horses and two lilies along come two sharks to defend with their sharp teeth the principle of resemblance which is endeavouring to maintain its mastery in the region of film, traditionally defined as a photo-phonetic recording of reality, a pre-camera reality. But is film really a recording of this reality? Is it, too, not a text written by *grammé/différance*? In their *Screen/Play: Derrida and Film Theory* Peter Brunette and David Wills claim that film is a deconstruction of the mimetic operation, and following the example of their teacher Derrida introduce the term *cinema-grafia* into film theory. This term enables us to regard film as a text whose textuality is created by differences and traces. And what is also important, they point out that film is actually an imitation which imitates itself, thereby confirming the fact that the simulacrum has surreptitiously also taken over the region of film but, wishing to remain in the shadows as an eminence grise, gives the outward impression that the principle of resemblance has everything under control. If you don't believe me, ask David Lynch. He knows better than anybody.

Notes

1 For the purposes of the present text the words "image" and "picture" may be taken to be synonymous. It may be noted that both words translate the Slovak word "obraz" and that Gombrich and Wittgenstein use respectively "picture" and "image" to mean the same thing.

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