

Perceiving Images and Styles

Nathaniel Goldberg

W&L University, Lexington, Virginia, USA

Chris Gvaler

W&L University, Lexington, Virginia, USA

Abstract Marks individually or in combination constitute images that represent objects. How do those images represent those objects? Marks vary in style, both between and within images. Images also vary in style. How do those styles relate to each other and to the objects that those images represent? Referencing a diverse range of images, we answer the first question with a response-dependence theory of image representation derived from Mark Johnston, differentiating Lockean primary qualities of marks from secondary qualities of images. We answer the second question with a perceptual theory of style derived from Paul Grice, differentiating physical style from image style, and representing conventionally from representing conversationally.

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Summary 1 Representation as Response. – 2 Representational Style as Conversation. – 3 Principles and Maxims.



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Slash a pencil across a sheet of paper and a graphite streak is left by the tip. The streak may represent a tire skid from a bicycle tire on a driveway or the water edge along a river bank or a distant desert horizon. Then it is both a specific, singular graphite streak and an image of something else – something represented by the streak that can be drawn repeatedly and be represented by other, different graphite streaks or marks altogether. The graphite streak *qua* physical mark is easy to understand: it is simply itself. The object that it represents – tire skid, water edge, horizon – presents a puzzle. How does a mark represent what it represents? Now vary the streak. Press down more lightly or heavily on the pencil, or make the streak choppy rather than straight or dotted rather than continuous. The mark may still represent a tire skid, and so would still be a specific, singular representation of something repeatedly representable by other marks. Yet now it represents the tire skid differently. How does the style of a mark relate to what the mark represents?

Referencing a diverse range of images – fine-art paintings to comics – we propose a unified response-dependence theory of image representation and implicature theory of its relation to image style.

1 Representation as Response

According to Charles Sanders Peirce ([1867] 1984, 56), the key to representation is resemblance. The graphite streak represents the bicycle tire skid because in some ways it looks like it. Peirce calls such resemblance-based images ‘likenesses’ or ‘icons’. According to Ernst Gombrich (1960), however, the graphite streak need not resemble a tire skid, because the artist and perceiver agree in a game of visual make-believe that it is a tire skid, and Kendall Walton (1990) maintains that all fictional representation, or mimesis, involves make-believe. Peirce calls such things as Gombrich’s and Walton’s sanctioned non-resemblance-based images ‘symbols’. Walton himself calls all marks, represented via resemblance or not, ‘props’. If the symbol game or prop make-believe expands to include other graphite streaks made by other artists and perceived as tire skids by other perceivers, then Nelson Goodman (1976) calls them ‘customs’ and argues that tire-skid customs explain the streak’s ability to represent a tire skid.

Whether likenesses or icons, symbols or props, or customs, images are often images of something.¹ They are representational. As rep-

1 Images representing nothing are sometimes called ‘abstract’. But ‘abstract’ denotes at least two different kinds. An ‘abstract painting’ often denotes a painting without a specific represented object, such as Jackson Pollock’s action paintings and Mark Rothko’s field paintings. ‘Abstract’ also often denotes representational style, where degrees of ‘abstraction’ refer to how images alter what they represent. Though all images, even pho-

representational, we maintain, images can be explained with the notion of response-dependence. Mark Johnston (1989) coined the term ‘response-dependence’ to generalize John Locke’s (1689/1979, II.8) analysis of secondary qualities, while ‘response-independence’ generalizes Locke’s analysis of primary qualities.² According to Locke, an object is solid if and only if its physical (Locke’s “corpuscular”) composition makes it solid. Being solid is a primary quality. Because it is instantiated by an object individually, or response-independently, being solid is a monadic property. Something is or is not solid *simpliciter*. Conversely, according to Locke, an object is red if and only if a suitable subject under suitable conditions would respond to the object as being red. Being red is a secondary quality. Because it is instantiated by an object relative to a subject, or response-dependently, being red is a dyadic property. Something is or is not red *relative to a responder*. Elsewhere one of us (Goldberg 2015, ch. 7) proposed a response-dependence analysis of meaning in a language. Both of us (Goldberg, Gavaler 2021, ch. 2) then proposed a response-dependence analysis of diegeses – stories communicated by marks arranged as words. We now extend this response-dependence analysis to images. Though words are also a kind of image, we focus on images without direct linguistic meaning. Indeed, elsewhere (Goldberg 2015, ch. 7; Goldberg, Gavaler 2021, ch. 2) we did apply this analysis to words, and offer the present analysis as complimentary with it.

Physical marks *qua* physical rather than representational, we maintain, are response-independent like Lockean primary qualities. Conversely, images, and so physical marks *qua* representational, are response-dependent like Lockean secondary qualities. An object is a physical mark *qua* physical if and only if its physical (molecular, atomic, sub-atomic, etc.) composition makes it a physical mark. Because it is instantiated by an object individually, or response-independently, being a physical mark is a monadic property. Something is or is not a physical mark *simpliciter*. Conversely, a physical mark is an image of something if and only if a suitable subject under suitable conditions would respond to the mark as representing that thing. Because it is instantiated by a physical mark relative to a subject, or response-dependently, being an image is a dyadic property. Something is or is not an image *relative to a responder*.³

tographic ones, alter, ‘abstraction’ in this sense refers to variations on apparently unmediated optic experience. We reserve ‘abstract’ as describing representational style.

2 Other response-dependence theorists include David Wiggins (1998), Crispin Wright (1999), Philip Pettit (2002), Nathaniel Goldberg (2015), and Nathaniel Goldberg and Chris Gavaler (2021).

3 Because we have understood images as representational, our analysis might seem circular or trivial. There are three reasons that this is neither. First, we follow Locke and Johnston in identifying a property of an object with a response of a subject to it.

Our analysis nevertheless differs from Locke's and Johnston's. For them, a suitable subject under suitable conditions is a normal human being under normal conditions. A color-blind responder, a non-color-blind responder in the presence of a black light, and any other non-standard subject or condition are not reliable determiners of something's being red. What an object's color is is anthropocentric - centered on paradigmatic human perceivers and conditions. Though there are outliers, there is often near-unanimity that a certain object is a certain color. For ours, the subject is whoever perceives the mark and the conditions are under whatever conditions that they perceive it. (Nor is this circular or trivial, for the same three reasons as above.) Thus suitability is satisfied by any specific perceiver under specific conditions rather than any normal human being under normal conditions, and so is particularized. What an image represents is idioentric - centered on individual perceivers and conditions. Though there often is agreement, disagreement is common too. The same graphite streak can represent a tire skid, water edge, and horizon to different perceivers. It can even represent all three to the same perceiver at different times, as Gombrich's example of the rabbit/duck optical illusion discussed below demonstrates.⁴

Idiocentrism does not imply anarchy. Perceivers often perceive the same mark similarly. They may even perceive the mark as its creator does, though this is not guaranteed. There is reason to privilege how the creator perceives it, and our response-dependence analysis can accommodate that by regarding the creator not as a creator *per se* but as an important responder. The bodily index or action residue of the creator, while likely resulting from creative intentions, accounts for the marks and not necessarily any image that the creator perceives while creating them. The creator's responses to the physical marks rather than their intent itself makes it an image representing something.

Recall our example of the graphite streak and tire skid. On our analysis:

Locke's, Johnston's, and our claims are informative. Second, response-dependence claims hold of only some properties. Locke's analysis of being a color and ours of being an image contrasts with his analysis of being solid and ours of being a physical mark, respectively. Each of the former, therefore, as distinct from each of the latter, respectively, is a substantive claim. And third, we follow Johnston (1989, 174; 1993, 105-6) particularly in understanding all response-dependence biconditionals as aiming at conceptual elucidation rather than reduction or elimination. Rather than a vice, it is a virtue of such analyses that being red is identified with being responded to as red and that being an image, or representation, is identified with being responded to as an image, or representation, respectively.

⁴ See Goldberg (2015, ch. 3) on anthropocentrism and idiocentrism.

- (1) The graphite streak, though *representing* a tire skid, is a physical mark.
- (2) The tire skid, *as represented by* the graphite streak, is an image.

(1) and (2) involve the same physical mark. In (1), the mark is instantiating a response-independent property. It is only a mark. In (2), the mark is instantiating a response-dependent property. It represents a tire skid relative to a responder - i.e., a perceiver. Other examples illustrate this further.

Chuck Close's 1985 *Fanny/Fingerpainting* is composed of Close's fingerprints applied to in gray oil paint to canvas. Most perceive the 8.5-by-7 work as a photorealistic image representing the artist's grandmother-in-law, Fanny Lieber. Overlapping clusters of fingerprints are perceived as representing darker areas of her face. Marks themselves - whether Close's fingerprints or, to use other examples, Vincent Van Gogh's impasto brush strokes, George Seurat's pointillistic dabs, or Kara Walker's black paper cut-outs - instantiate response-independent properties. The image of Fanny Lieber, as well as of the field in Van Gogh's 1888 *View of Arles with Irises*, the public park scene in Seurat's 1886 *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, and the sequence of silhouettes in Walker's 1994 *Gone: An Historical Romance of a Civil War as it Occurred b'tween the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart*, respectively - instantiate response-dependent properties. This is so even though perceivers may perceive Close's fingerprints - as well as Van Gogh's strokes, Seurat's dabs, and Walker's cut-outs - differently.

The mark/image distinction is not uncommon. Some have analyzed it similarly to how we have, though no one has offered a response-independence/response-dependence analysis in full or in conjunction with our implicature analysis of style, which follows. Thierry Groensteen acknowledges that drawings in comics "obey criteria that are just as much visual as narrative", or, as we would put it, just as much physical (or response-independent) as representational (or response-dependent). Groensteen also claims that these "two orders of pre-occupation sometimes superimpose themselves to the point of indistinction" (2007, 4), though we disagree. An object's physical and representational properties, while simultaneously comprised of and produced by the same marks (in the latter case, relative to a perceiver), are always distinct. Neil Cohn poses a question distinguishing mark from image: "what aspects of the *visual surface* allow for inferences to be generated in the *situation model*?" (2019, 4). Cohn however avoids answering by later claiming that "the *graphic structure* depicts the surface form of the visual utterance (lines, shapes). This representation links to the meanings of the unfolding actions and events of" a comic strip (2019, 7). By calling "lines, shapes" a "rep-

resentation”, Cohn does not address how those lines and shapes can represent anything. Switching the order of their members, John Willats comes closer to our analysis when distinguishing representational primitives, “the smallest units of meaning available in a representation”, which would be response-dependent, from physical marks, “the actual physical features on the picture surface used to represent the primitives” (2006, 8), which would be response-independent. Similarly, Richard Wollheim describes the seeing-in experience of images, which is constituted both by the configurational fold, in which the image’s marks are grasped, and by the recognitional fold, in which the image’s subject is grasped: “the two aspects are indistinguishable but also inseparable” (1987, 46). Yet a perceiver may attend to marks – noting the length and thickness of individual lines, for instance – without perceiving those properties representationally, and so marks are always distinguishable and separable. The graphite streak and the tire skid are not identical. One instantiates a response-independent and the other a response-dependent property.

2 Representational Style as Conversation

An image represents what it does by a perceiver’s perceiving its physical marks as in some way related to the represented object. The nature of the relation may be understood from a range of theoretical angles. Though resemblance may be the most common, we do not privilege it. Wollheim’s seeing-in, for example, is equally applicable.⁵

Unless an image is a perfect replica, it must, according to Gombrich, “involve some degree of ‘abstraction’” (1963, 1). For a physical mark to

⁵ The term and its meaning, however, vary. Stuart Medley contrasts ‘abstraction’ with ‘realism’ (2010, 67), noting how “most comics artists tend to draw and ink their worlds” (56) with “some degree of abstraction away from realism, clear outlines, flat colours, reliance on closure, a tendency towards caricature” (68). Medley also observes ‘distillation’, meaning “*some removal of realistic detail*” (2010, 53). Itamar Berger’s study concludes that the styles of artists who demonstrated higher degrees of “abstraction” drew “fewer, longer, and more complex-shape strokes ... instead of many short simple ones” (2013, 9). Similarly, Pascal Lefèvre describes a drawing’s degree not of ‘abstraction’ but of ‘deformation’ as measured against “normal proportions”. Referring to a line as a ‘factor’ of graphic style, he asks: “What kind of lines dominate the image (rectangular or rather rounded lines; clear, crisp lines or rather vague, ‘hesitant’ lines)?” (2016, 75). Even an image that represents an object as a set of highly realistic lines involves abstraction. As Bilge Sayim and Patrick Cavanagh explain, “In the real world, there are no lines around objects”, but “lines trigger a neural response that ... lets lines stand in for solid edges” (2011, 1). Douglas Wolk calls an artist’s line not an ‘abstraction’ or ‘deformation’ but “an interpolation, something the cartoonist adds to his or her idea of the shape of bodies in space” (2007, 123). Nonetheless, similar to Lefèvre’s ‘deformation’, Wolk continues: “every object’s form is subject to interpretive distortion.... A consistent, aestheticized distortion, combined with the line that establishes that distortion, adds up to an artist’s visual style”.

be an abstraction, it must abstract from the object it is perceived to represent. No physical mark (excluding perfect replicas) when perceived as an image ever completely corresponds with what it represents. Nonetheless physical marks can be rendered in different ways from one another and still be perceived as representing the same object. Those different ways amount to different styles. And style conveys information. Will Eisner argues that “art style tells the story” through its “emotional charge”, producing a “psychic transmission” that expresses “mood”, “ambience”, and “language value” (2008, 149, 153). John Henry Pratt claims that artistic styles “create a mood, give the emotional context of a scene or story, increase or decrease the drama of a moment, and so on” (2009, 110).

But Eisner and Pratt describe the effects of style, not the marks possessing the styles that produce those effects. Focusing on marks, does style apply to (1) or (2), above? Were style only physical properties of marks, then it would divide into the kind of optical illusion Gombrich applies to the mark/image relation:

is it possible to ‘see’ both the plane surface and [represented object] at the same time? If we have been right so far, the demand is for the impossible. To understand the [represented object] is for a moment to disregard the plane surface. We cannot have it both ways. (1961, 279)

Gombrich offers the analogy of a rabbit/duck optical illusion: “instead of playing ‘rabbit or duck’”, perceivers of an image play “the game of ‘canvas or nature’” (1961, 29).

The example is imperfect because rabbit and duck are each “nature”, while marks comprising both are “canvas”. Imagine instead Picasso’s 1945 eleven-lithograph series *The Bull*.

Each image varies in style, requiring a perceiver to differentiate between response-independent properties of the marks and response-dependent properties of the image representing the bull. “Style”, Barbara Postema argues, “in effect ceases to be style, since it is no longer a superficial surface matter” (2013, 122). Though an apparent property of the physical marks on the surface of the canvas, style ceases being response-independent.

Style then comes in two kinds. There are *physical* styles, or physical properties of physical marks. In the case of our graphite streak, one physical style is shape. Like their marks, physical styles are response-independent. A physical style is a physical property if and only if its composition makes it that property. Something is or is not a physical style *simpliciter*. Conversely, there are *representational* styles, or representational properties of images. In the case of our graphite streak, the physical style of shape may resemble the representational style of shape. The shape of how the marks are drawn may look like the

shape of the perceived tire skid. Like their images, representational styles are response-dependent. A representational style is a representational property if and only if a suitable subject under suitable conditions would respond to physical style as representing that property. Something is or is not a representational style *relative to a responder* – again, a perceiver.

Thus on our analysis:

- (1) The shape of the graphite streak, though *representing* the shape of the tire skid, is a physical style.
- (2) The shape of the tire skid, *as represented by* the shape of the graphite streak, is a representational style.

(1) and (2) involve the same physical style. In (1), the style is instantiating a response-independent property. It is only physical. In (2), the style is instantiating a response-dependent property. It represents the shape of the tire skid relative to a responder.

How does a perceiver perceive a physical style as a particular representational style, especially insofar as it abstracts from the represented object? Physical properties cannot be entirely separated from the physical marks instantiating them. Graphite streaks are either more or less straight and cannot be neither. Nonetheless, insofar as we can speak of what graphite streaks of different shape – or other physical styles – share, we can speak of a physical mark independent of its physical style. That allows us to anticipate an answer to our second opening question: How does a (representational) style of an image relate to what it represents? A representational style of physical marks, we maintain, relates to the resulting image either conventionally or conversationally. Hence, while an *image* represents what it does response-dependently, the representational *style* of the response-dependent image can be either conventional or conversational.

Physical marks, recall, may represent an object according to or not according to resemblance. The same is so of their physical style. Consider two cases of perceiving a graphite streak as a tire skid. First, the shape of the graphite streak, part of its physical style, is more curved than straight. Since the shape of a tire skid can also be more curved than straight, relative to the perceiver the physical style can *conventionally* represent the shape of the tire skid. The representational style can be inferred more or less from the physical style directly. Second, the shape of the graphite streak is instead composed of small overlapping circles. Since the shape of an actual tire skid would not be composed of small overlapping circles, relative to the perceiver the physical style does not conventionally represent the tire skid. It either represents nothing – it is a kind of artistic flourish with no representational content – or represents something non-conventionally. In the context of the “conversation” that the image

is part of, the perceiver perceives the physical style as representing the tire skid produced perhaps by the tire's quivering halts. Relative to the perceiver, the physical style *conversationally* represents the shape of the tire skid as such even though no actual physical property of a tire skid resembles small overlapping circles. The representational style can only be inferred in conversational context and not from the physical style directly.

The distinction between conventional and conversational representation roughly mirrors Paul Grice's (1975) distinction between conventional and conversational implicature. According to Grice, language users convey the meaning of words in two ways: conventionally when communicated by the words themselves, and conversationally when communicated by those words in conversational context. According to us, perceivers perceive the representational style of a physical style in one of two ways: as representing conventionally and as representing conversationally.⁶ Though he speaks of 'conventional' and 'conversational', we suspect that Grice's distinction is degraded. We intend ours to be, since inferring more or less directly or indirectly is degraded.

Discerning whether a physical style represents conventionally or conversationally is not always straightforward. The same physical style may be perceived as different representational styles by different perceivers.

Childe Hassam's 1917 *Flags in the Rain* includes U.S. flags displayed on New York streets. Though physically the stripes are gray and orange, a viewer may perceive their color properties conversationally - within the conversation of images of flags generally and the U.S. flag specifically - as representing white and red. Perceivers may instead perceive those properties conventionally: because of the rain, distance, or movement of the fabric, the red and white stripes looked orange and gray to Hassam and so he produced that effect.

Viewers of *Flags in the Rain* likely perceive it as a representation of reality - our reality. Images can also represent other realities - fictional ones. A visual work of fiction (such as many comics, but also the oil paintings of Lynette Yiadom-Boakye) leaves unclear whether physical styles represent conventionally or represent conversationally via context through an inferred break from appearances in the fictional reality. With caricatures of real-world people, physical styles represent exaggerated details conventionally when outside the range of anatomical possibility and conver-

⁶ Elsewhere (Gvaler, Goldberg 2019, ch. 7) we speak not of 'perceiving a representational style' conventionally or conversationally but of a 'depiction' as being conventional or conversational. Catharine Abell (2005, 2009) speaks of conventional or conversational 'implicatures of depictions'.

sationally when inside that range. To identify plausible exaggerations, perceivers need to reference the subject's actual face, which is impossible if the subject is fictional. If the fictional world allows anatomical possibilities impossible in the actual world, then representational style is ambiguous - it could be conventional or conversational - since it could depict details that may or may not be instantiated by the objects represented.

Roy T. Cook's "panel transparency principle" apparently entails that fictional comics images represent only conventionally: "Characters, events, and locations within a fictional world described by a comic appear, within the fictional world, as they are depicted in typical panels within that comic" (2012, 134). This assumes that the images have the "special causal and structural relationship with the reality that they represent" that W.J.T. Mitchell dismisses for photographs. Though cartoon objects are impossible in our reality, their transparently drawn properties may represent properties conventionally in their cartoon reality. A drawing of Charlie Brown may have a round head roughly half his height because in his cartoon world Charlie Brown has a round head roughly half his height.

Cook's conclusion follows only if the image represents a world with different natural laws from ours. Fictional worlds with greater similarity to ours pose a different problem. Consider Julie Maroh's use of color in her 2010 *Blue is the Warmest Color*.

While Maroh paints a full range of realistic watercolors for events in the graphic novel's current time period, past events are gray except for isolated blue objects of emotional interest to the main character. Grays and blue then should be perceived as representing conversationally.

In fine arts, Matisse's 1905 *Woman with a Hat* marked the start of Fauvism, which featured what would likely be perceived as a non-transparent and so conversational representation of color following what Joseph Witek terms a cartoon ethos of representing reality through "an associative or emotive logic" rather than realistic observation (2012, 30). Associative and emotive logic depend on conversational context.

Works of visual nonfiction pose a further problem for transparency because images can never be understood absent representational style. That is because, to recur to Gombrich, they "involve some degree of 'abstraction'" (1963, 1). Drawings, especially highly abstract and cartoonish ones, do not represent their subjects through exact similarity. Rather than being transparent in Cook's sense, images in nonfiction images are unambiguous representations of reality rendered in particular physical styles perceived as particular representational ones. And no representational style duplicates reality transparently or perfectly. When Alison Bechdel draws her and her family's mouths as single dots in her 2006 *Fun Home*, a viewer like-

ly does not perceive the actual individuals conventionally as having such impossibly proportioned mouths. Bechdel's physical style likely is perceived as a representational style in the conversational context of the images that those and other marks are perceived as being. Nor do perceivers conversationally perceive Art Spiegelman and his family as having the heads of mice as they appear to in *Maus* even if conventionally they would perceive them as such.

Sometimes an object can make use of one physical style perceived as a representational style conventionally and another physical style perceived as a representational style conversationally.

In Kehinde Wiley's 2018 portrait of Barack Obama, most perceive the central object as a seated figure, whose style is perceived conventionally as representing Barack Obama. Yet most also perceive the wallpaper-like array of partially overlapping objects surrounding it not conventionally but instead conversationally as foliage – since conventionally the representational style defies norms of realism.

Cook later revised his views on comics transparency: “our access to the physical appearance of drawn characters in general is indirect, partial, inferential, and imperfect” (2015, 25). While his earlier view seemed to be that fictional comics images represent only conventionally, now it seemed to be that they do so only conversationally – since indirectness, partiality, inference, and imperfection are perceived correctly only within conversational context of images. We think that Cook should accept the disjunction of his views. A physical style can be perceived as a representational style conventionally or conversationally.

3 Principles and Maxims

Since some physical styles are perceived as representing conventionally and others conversationally, under what conditions does each occur? We alluded to the answer above, though recurring to Grice makes it explicit. Grice claims that communication by means of words requires that speakers generally follow the Cooperative Principle: “Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged”. When speakers apparently violate (“flout”) the principle by not using words conventionally (such as asking someone what time it is by asking whether they *know* what time it is), they often are using them conversationally. We claim that communication by means of images requires that perceivers follow an analogous perceptual principle based on the assumption that the images are meant to communicate representational content: “Make your contribution such as is required to perceive marks as representing something, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction

of the image exchange in which you are engaged". When perceivers apparently flout the principle by not perceiving physical properties conventionally (such as tire skids being represented as small overlapping circles), they often instead perceive them conversationally. Grice provides four subsidiary maxims for his principle. Each suggests an analogous perceptual maxim. While a perceiver often flouts more than one simultaneously, we introduce each individually.

Grice's Quantity maxim states: "Make your contributions as, but only as, informative as possible".

Marisa Acocella Marchetto's 2006 graphic memoir *CancerVixen* represents the author with loosely hand-drawn outlines and blocks of solid color. A viewer of the actual Marchetto would perceive a range of additional details regarding her anatomy and clothing, including depth, shadows, and fabric folds. Perceiving the physical style of the shapes and colors as representational style conventionally flouts Quantity's perceptual analogue: the perception of Marchetto is not as "informative as possible". The paucity of detail is perceived instead as representing Marchetto conversationally. Images can also be perceived as overspecified when an artist employs a physical style conventionally perceived as interpolating or inventing details.

When drawing "Stepfatherly Counsel" from her 2001 graphic memoir collection *A Child's Life* (53), Phoebe Gloeckner draws her stepfather's sweater with meticulous precision, apparently creating individual threads of fabric. The patterned weave of the couch is similarly precise. Is such precision depicting Gloeckner's photographic memory or a conglomerate pattern of events? If the second, then not only is the sweater and couch fabric overspecified, but the figures are too. Gloeckner must draw them in postures of some kind, but not necessarily as they were ever actually seated in the autobiographical moment represented. Flouting Quantity when perceiving the image conventionally, perceivers likely perceive Gloeckner's representational style conversationally.

Grice's second maxim, Quality, states: "Try to make your contribution true".

Regarding her 2002 graphic memoir *One! Hundred! Demons!*, Lynda Barry asks: "Is it autobiography if parts of it are not true?" (2017, 7). The parts that apparently "are not true" include Barry's cartoons of her mother rendered in a physical style that if perceived as a representational style conventionally would have anatomically impossible traits (2017, 95). Perceiving the physical style as a representational style conventionally flouts Quality's perceptual analogue: "Try to make your perception true". Henri Matisse's 1905 *Woman with a Hat* includes bright unblended swaths of green, yellow, and purple representing the colors of the figure's face and clothes despite also contradicting them. Since Matisse was painting from a model (his wife, who by one account was dressed in black), perceiving his

physical style involving color conventionally as a representational style contradicts the model's actual appearance. Only perceiving it conversationally avoids flouting the perceptual analogue of Quality.

Grice's Manner maxim states: "Be perspicuous by avoiding obscurity and ambiguity and striving for brevity and order". At a midpoint between Close and Matisse's portraits, Miriam Libicki captions a cartoonish illustration of herself: "You are unlikely to recognize Miriam Libicki on the street, with these drawings to go on" (2016, 48), though her realistic watercolor self-portraits elsewhere in the same collection represent her primarily through similarities (2016, 6, 32, 64, 65, 71, 76, 89). Still, her simplified line-drawing appears as if it could be roughly accurate in terms of line shape, though reduced in detail and so flouting Quantity as discussed above. If so, might not the image still be adequate to recognize her? Perceiving the physical style of various sets of marks all as Libicki's contradictory self-portraits flouts the perceptual analogue of Manner by not "avoiding obscurity and ambiguity". Which of the contradictory details are most accurate and which least? The perceiver cannot know. Libicki later explains that she varies physical styles to vary their perceived representational styles depending on her desired degree of subjectivity:

I found that [naturalistic watercolors] communicated verisimilitude, and was suited to more journalistic pieces (and to more lyrical open-endedness as opposed to rhetoric). Cartooniness, on the other hand, is more immersive (if it's done well), because the reader has to collaborate by translating the "shorthand" of simplified designs back into their real-life referents. Photo-real paintings don't "put pictures in your head" because the picture is already there on paper. I think working in nonfiction means I get to decide whether something is better depicted "subjectively" or "objectively" or a point in between. (2020)

A perceiver having to "collaborate by translating ... back into their real-life referent" involves response-dependence. Conversely, "the 'shorthand' of simplified designs" is a kind representational style, and subjectively/objectively parallels conversationally/conventionally.

Though Grice's maxims provide insight into why responders perceive styles as they do, there is no uniform response to physical styles across different works resulting in a consistent set of representational styles, conventionally or conversationally. Scott McCloud asserts that "all lines carry with them an expressive potential" (1993, 124), but what is expressed is perceived not only individually, but also case by case, by each individual. Simon Grennan is impressively precise when measuring physical styles, observing that the line Mike Mignola uses in *The Right Hand of Doom* "is invariably 5 pixels wide, including the line that outlines panels, speech balloons,

thought bubbles and narration” (2017, 185), but the representational style that one likely perceives is not correlated with any clear or consistent property. Thin straight lines may suggest a range of representations, even within a single image. Concerning Barry’s “Red Comb”, Hillary Chute observes: “The frame is shaded with thin black horizontal lines behind the leaves; this darkening effect appears to indicate evening, or night – or, an alternate temporality, a recollected event” (2011, 284).

Catherine Khordoc observes that in Albert Uderzo’s *Asterix* “the line of certain [speech] balloons is jagged, suggesting a tone of voice which is not steady and calm, but rather, shocked or angry” (2001, 163). But perceivers do not always perceive the jaggedness of lines as shock or anger. Identically jagged lines in another image might cause different perceivers or even the same perceiver to perceive alertness or playfulness. Reviewing David Beauchard’s graphic memoir *Epileptic*, Andrew Wilson describes the artist’s “quivering, quivering world”, claiming that “the tension between David’s self and reality charges his sinuous, nervy line” (2005), but the causality is reversed: the physical style creates that representational style. Stephen Tabachnick cites Wilson’s description of *Epileptic*’s world, attributing the adjectives to the artist’s style: “Beauchard’s ‘quivering, quivering’ drawing line ... captures his shaky psychological world” (2011, 105). The interchangeability reveals how represented objects influence interpretations of representational styles, and vice versa, suggesting that no generalized theory of style can emerge.

Thus, while an image represents what it does because a perceiver responds to its physical marks by perceiving them representational-ly as such, the perceiver perceives a mark’s physical style as a representational style conventionally if the representational style can be inferred more or less from the physical style directly, and conversationally if it cannot be. Because images typically consist of multiple marks each with its own physical style, a multi-mark image then may represent both conventionally and conversationally as a whole.⁷

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