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FOREWORD

For the first time since the end of the frustrating era of Covid-19, the Editorial Team of *The Scattered Pelican* proudly presents the 2022 Fall Issue.

It is with great excitement that after almost 15 months of hard work and unsparing collaboration of a fully devoted team, we can bring to you several outstanding academically praised articles in this issue.

The 2022 Fall Issue would not have been possible without the unconditional help and support that we have received from the department, in particular from Prof. James Miller and Sylvia Kontra who have always gone the extra mile in helping this project to conclude.

Our very special thanks would also go to our authors, who have done their significant part very professionally, patiently, and prudently, especially considering the hardships of a teamwork during the Covid period.

Our gratitude will not be fulfilled without mentioning the fantastic work carried out by our peer reviewers and our team members.

Marziyeh and Saba
Editors-in-Chief
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ARTICLES

Between Poetry and Prose:
Ali Smith's Ideas on Form and Viktor Shklovsky

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INTRODUCTION

Viktor Shklovsky, in his "Art as Device", states that the existence of art is to arouse people's

feeling of art, to "make stone stony" (*A Reader* 7). Poetry, for instance, is typically written by

poetic language, which follows certain rules to create imagery that visualizes the addressed

subject in order to intensify aesthetic impressions (Shklovsky, *A Reader* 1). Poetic language

does not only exist in poetry but in other forms of literature, such as novels, in order to form a

sense of literariness, based on which the text is identified as a certain work of art. However,

Shklovsky argues that the frequent use of poetic language causes people to be too familiar with

the existing imagery, leading to a decline in the feeling of art. Shklovsky names this process

"automatization" (*A Reader* 6), which saves audiences' the effort to perceive things yet

minimizes people's sensations toward life. Out of the concern that art "journey[s] from poetry

to prose" because of automatization (*A Reader* 4), Shklovsky emphasizes that the primary goal

of art is to intensify artistic feelings. He introduces the technique of "ostranenie" (*A Reader* 8),

which describes a thing from an alienated angle to make the subject less recognizable in order

to prolong the aesthetic impressions. Overall, Shklovsky's vision of literature focuses on poetic

language, which differentiates itself from the prosaic language of daily life. In Ali Smith's *Artful*, there is also a glimpse of Shklovsky's ideas about art forms. She explores how the form is consistent and develops Shklovsky's vision of art as well. This paper analyzes Smith's ideas on form in *Artful* and Shklovsky's vision of literature in "Art as Device" and "Resurrecting the Word" to prove that Smith supplements Shklovsky's vision of literature in terms of the concept of automatization and the technique of ostranenie based on her analysis of the structure of the form, looking to explore how the form is constructed.

This study firstly compares Shklovsky and Smith's mechanism of forms, showing that Smith's view on imagery not only contributes to Shklovsky's idea of imagery but also addresses the possibilities of changing forms. Secondly, this paper analyzes the concept of automatization developed by two authors. Unlike Shklovsky, who believes the frequent use of poetic devices leads to the decline of artistic sensations, Smith explains that the existing forms may also reinforce their existences and cause fossilization, which will be defined and explained in this paper. Thirdly, this study focuses on the device of ostranenie that refreshes the perceptions of art. While Shklovsky interprets ostranenie primarily as rearranging imagery, Smith discovers how to create new forms out of old forms.

MECHANISM OF FORMS

Both Shklovsky and Smith explore the definition of the form and how it is constructed. One of the fundamental differences between the two authors is that Shklovsky specifically focuses on the form of literature, while Smith examines the concept of the form in a slightly broader sense. Smith delineates the concept of form in general, rather than limiting it to the works of literature.

This probably causes Smith's idea of the form to be more inclusive than Shklovsky's. To further explain, this paper focuses on Shklovsky's idea on the form of literature and then analyzes Smith's understanding of general forms, which supplements what Shklovsky does not disclose in his articles.

Shklovsky's view of the literary form is based on imagery. He cites at the beginning of "Art as a Device" that all art forms, especially poetry, are "thinking in images" (*A Reader* 1): the language of poetry creates images, visualizing the addressed subjects to help readers "see" them. For instance, "the moon was but a chin of gold"[1] provides a more vivid image of the moon then the word "moon" itself. The use of language can arrange or rearrange images to create new pieces of literature. The purpose of imagery, or "thinking in images" (Shklovsky, *A Reader* 2), is not to bring readers' understanding closer to the described subject in the literary work—a concept that is often mistaken by symbolists[2]—but to create aesthetic experiences (Shklovsky, *A Reader* 1):

> The better you comprehend an epoch, the better can you see that the images you believed to be created by a particular poet are actually borrowed from others and almost unchanged. The work done by schools of poetry consists in accumulating verbal material and finding new ways of arranging and handling it; it's much more about rearranging images than about creating them. Images are a given, and poetry is not so much thinking in images as remembering them. (Shklovsky, *A Reader* 2-3)

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[1] From Emily Dickinson "The Moon was But a Chin of Gold."
[2] Shklovsky specifically talks about Alexander Potebnja, Andrey Bely, and Dmitry Merezhkovsky.

Images seldom change. For Shklovsky, the language of literature provides images that trigger artistic feelings. Based on this argument, Shklovsky differentiates poetic language and prosaic language—the former creates imagery in order to arouse artistic impressions, while the latter is like everyday speech that is treated as media of information without poetic feelings. According to Shklovsky, the literary form is established by the poetic language that composes imagery, which gives birth to literariness[3] that differentiates literature from non-literature. The notion of literariness, in this case, can be interpreted as the particular artistic taste of a piece of literary work—the configuration of poetic sentences and words that construct certain imagery. Poetic language, therefore, serves as bricks that comprise the literary form.

While Shklovsky reveals that the fundamental element of literary form is poetic language, Ali Smith examines the notion of form based on a more extensive view. She provides a comprehensive definition of form in *Artful*:

Form, from the *Latin forma*, meaning shape. Shape, a mold; something that holds or shapes; a species or kind; a pattern or type; a way of being; order, regularity, system. It once meant beauty but now that particular meaning's obsolete. It means style and arrangement, structural unity in music, literature, painting, etc.; ceremony; behavior; condition of fitness or efficiency. It means the inherent nature of an object, that in which the essence of a thing consists. (42)

According to this definition, a form represents an idea and comprises a series of materials with patterns ordered by particular rules. A form is a specific way of being that separates itself from

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[3] As Alexandra Berlina noted in "Shklovsky in the West: Reception and Heritage", *Victor Shklovsky: A Reader*, "literariness" is a Jakobson's concept that refers to "the quality of a text which makes it literary and is the object of literary studies" (27).

the formless. Smith's idea is similar to Shklovsky's vision of art forms, without which the works of art become prosaic: they are experienced without the sensation of beauty (*A Reader* 3). However, Shklovsky does not elaborate on the concept of pattern as Smith does. He discovers that poetic language is a primary element in creating literature, yet he does not explore further what kind of language—or, the pattern of wording—constructs the poetic language. Since Shklovsky states that literature is about "rearranging images than about creating them" (*A Reader* 3), his vision of form narrows to the pattern of imagery that fundamentally defines literature. This is because literature is a form with specific materiality— text or words arranged by certain rules to create images. Here, as Smith supposes, works of literature cannot be a jar[4] or an apple tree—which have different materiality from the text. Based on Smith's idea on form, the most significant precondition of creating literature is words and the way words are ordered, which may not necessarily define the genre of literature but provide seeds for literary works. Shklovsky's theory is grounded in literature, but Smith explores the zone between literature and non-literature, or to a larger extent, form and formless.

Since Smith's view on forms is more inclusive than Shklovsky's, her approach to the mechanism of forms is more thorough. Smith can present the blurredness between different forms by applying "visuality" to her text (Liebermann 136), while she does not dedicate herself to figuring out the exact "border" of a form (Evans 13). For instance, the following passage in the chapter "On Form" in *Artful* explains this blurredness:

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[4] The metaphor of "jar" refers to Wallace Stephen's poem "Anecdote of a Jar" (1919). In the poem, the "jar" can be viewed as a piece of "wilderness" surrounded by the hill; when the "wilderness" spreads and surrounds the hill, it is "no longer wild": the position of the hill and the jar reversed. Smith borrows this idea to indicate that the boundary between form and formless is ambivalent, and the change from one to another is reversible.

You were back on form yourself. You could speak again without having to stop and wonder what words meant, though you were a bit nasal-sounding now; you were sounding more and more alarmingly like your old self with each visit home, and you were staying longer with me each time, though your actual nose now was almost gone, was sort of hollow, and the smell you sent ahead of yourself was so much worse than the clean earthy smell you'd first had when you came back that when I came home from work and walked up our street now I'd always know several houses away if you were there or not… (35)

This is a description from the fictional narrator about the appearance of her dead partner, who comes back with a broken shape of her body. In this passage, the narrator observes that the dead lover had lost her nose and smelled strong, different from the form when the lover was alive. Although the form of the lover changed from alive to dead and the shape of the body is broken as well, there is still the "originality" of the dead lover that is still recognizable (Smith 34). The term "originality" is difficult to be defined since Smith does not explain it more in-depth, but it might be understood by an alternative logic: when a subject is changed, its original form becomes a vivid reminiscence. Likewise, a broken form is still a form but exists in a way that is different from the original one. An altered form is still a form, but it is the changed part that makes the form foreign to audiences. Smith shows the possibility of changing a form partially yet generally preserving the original form—the lover's form is in between living and death, being and not being. Since the border between forms is blurred, there might be many

ways of reconstructing a form: changing its materiality, altering its patterns, breaking the shape partially, and all the other ways of playing around with the form.

Therefore, Smith articulates a more complex and comprehensive mechanism of form than Shklovsky. While Shklovsky digs into the realm of literary form, Smith provides a horizontal understanding of forms in general. Shklovsky's idea of poetic language can be viewed as a pattern of imagery, yet due to the settled materiality—text—it seems that he fails to disclose the blurredness between the form of literature and non-literary text, that is, the blurred boundary between poetic language, and prosaic language. This gives space for Smith to develop ways of renewing forms and supplements Shklovsky's technique of ostranenie in order to fill the gap between form and formless.

AUTOMATIZATION

Shklovsky, in both of his articles "Art as Device" and "Resurrecting the Word," expresses the concern that people tend to automatize the subject they frequently encounter in daily life. The process of atomization is built on Shklovsky's observation that people are likely to view "routine actions" automatically in order to save the "perceptual effort" (*A Reader* 6-7). After several times seeing the same subject, people are likely to recognize it in a short period of time without spending too much energy remembering the detailed features. The perception of the subject then becomes an abstract concept in understanding. One example Shklovsky provides is algebra (7): when an individual sees a figure, he or she will immediately recognize the represented number instead of consciously perceiving the figure's shape.

This automatizing process also happens when people are too familiar with art. As Shklovsky argues, automatization can also explain why old works lose the poetic sense: images barely change over time—they are borrowed from one poetry to another (*A Reader* 3). The frequent use of poetic language makes it become "everyday speech" (Shklovsky, *A Reader* 1), and thus, the beauty is no longer perceived as it was: when imagery is used for the first time, the work of art is perceived with the sense of beauty; but if one of the element or metaphor of this form of art—be it a rose, moon, or Greek gods—repeatedly appears for several centuries, the original sense of its beauty declines. "This is how life becomes nothing and disappears. Automatization eats things, clothes, furniture, your wife, and the fear of war" (Shklovsky, *A Reader* 7). Shklovsky's idea on automatization can also be put in this way: the same frequent action brings perceiving a subject from consciousness to unconsciousness, and hence, the sense of art is no longer perceived as strong as when the first time this artwork is created.

There may be a question about whether it is the work of art itself or the sense of art gradually disappears during the automatizing process, and Shklovsky would probably answer: it is the sense of art declines. The aesthetic feeling is closely attached to the works of art, though; most forms of art have already existed long before people get tired of them. What causes automatization is the frequency of using the same art forms—the same images, genres, themes and motifs, and so on. The core reason for automatization is the frequent use of the same artistic representation.

While Shklovsky's idea of atomization takes the frequent use of imagery in literature as its foreground, Smith discloses another way of perceiving automatization based on her

understanding of forms' structure. Smith's definition of form exists in a certain way. Routinization, the tendency of processing things through creating typical patterns to save energy on recognizing, is also a form that is established in prosaic language. Routinization also happens without one's consciousness but reinforces the tendency of "doing the same thing". From Smith's perspective, on the one hand, routinization can lead to fossilization, which means one may stick to the pattern of doing and cause more problems in his or her life. The example she gives in her book is the character performed by Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*:

> *Smile, though your heart is breaking*. It was Charlie Chaplin who wrote that tune,[5] I remembered. Then the moment in *Modern Times* where he plays a workman who gets stuck in the mechanics of the machine he works on came into my head—not the moment of his being stuck in there, but the moment when, after he's freed himself from the machine, it's as if he's broken free from himself too; he does a dance with two spanners held up to his head like antlers, like he's gone lust-mad and being freed from the machine has changed him into a mad mythical creature, a faun, a Pan, like in classical paintings.[6]
>
> (Smith 48)

This example illustrates that humans create forms, and forms can also change human beings as well. In *Modern Times*, when Charlie Chaplin is too used to his work, he consciously gains the pattern of the machine's action and gradually transforms this pattern into unconsciousness. What is presented in his daily life is that his actions are routinized by machinery, and it is

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[5] Charlie Chaplin composed the song *Smile* for his movie *Modern Times* in 1936, and in 1954 John Turner and Geoffrey Parsons added the title and lyrics.
[6] In the movie, this scene appears at around the fifteenth minute in the beginning and lasts for three minutes and thirty seconds (for the link see Works Cited).

difficult for him to change the pattern that is already formed. This is how fossilization happens: the old form will be influenced by a frequently repeated pattern to transform into this continual repetitiveness. According to Smith, since a human being can also be viewed as a form, individuals are likely to get used to routinization and become a part of it without awareness. Smith's idea of automatization of forms, to this extent, is similar to Shklovsky's, except that Shklovsky analyzes it from a psychological aspect, while Smith explains it through phenomenological examples.

Another difference between routinization and automatization is that the routine action can be automatized, but automatization is one of its outcomes. Routinization can result in both automatization and fossilization. As said before, fossilization presents itself on the physical level (actions, phenomenon, etc.), and automatization is more on a psychological level. I could have argued that automatization may be a new kind of fossilization, but separating them for now might be better to see how Smith's idea on form supplements Shklovsky's theory. In one word, routinization explains how are people stuck in routinized actions or things, being accustomed to these and losing sensations of life, and art.

Facing the possibility of losing the sense of art, Smith is relatively more positive than Shklovsky. She reveals two essential qualities of forms: fixity and change (46). Fixity refers to the fact that once the form is formed, it will always be. A man is a man, and though the one is dead, he existed as a human being. However, forms may change gradually in correspond to the environment and cultural context.

Form never stops. And form is always environmental. Like a people's songs will tell you about the heart and the aspirations of that people, like their language and their use of it will tell you what their concerns are, material and metaphysical, their art forms will tell you everything about where they live and the shape they're in. (Smith 45)

Since distinct patterns can influence each other, just as machinery changes Charlie Chaplin's pattern of actions in comedy, forms have a tendency to change according to their context. "In its fixity, form is all about the relationship of change to continuance, even when the continuance is itself precarious" (Smith 46). Imagery barely changes, as Shklovsky believes, and it might be interpreted here as "fixity." While the socio-environment evolutes from one state to another, the context of art changes. Then, because the perception of forms gradually becomes automatic after experiencing them many times, the form changes according to people's expectations to a relatively stable form of culture and society. The continued changing of the form creates a positive spiral, constantly moving from one side to another. Transforming from fixity to another fragile fixity also creates a pattern that delineates art history. Shklovsky views automatization as an ultimate psychological consequence of the frequent representation of the old art, while Smith perceives automatization as a medium that facilitates the movement from fixity to change to the frail continence and to change again.

OSTRANENIE

Ostranenie, or defamiliarization, was an artistic technique that first came up by Shklovsky in his "Art as a Device". The purpose of ostranenie is achieved through perceiving the work of art from an alienated angle in order to prolong the aesthetic perception. Because of the existence

of automatization that "eats" life and beauty (Shklovsky, *A Reader* 7), Shklovsky addresses

that it is necessary to create new art forms to refresh people's feelings, which should be "the

goal of art":

> The goal of art is to create the sensation of seeing, and not merely recognizing, things;
>
> the device of art is the "*ostranenie*" of things and the complication of the form, which
>
> increases the duration and complexity of perception, as the process of perception is its
>
> own end in art and must be prolonged. Art is the means to live through the making of a
>
> thing; what has been made does not matter in art. (Shklovsky, *A Reader* 19)

Shklovsky believes that art is supposed to identify people's artistic feelings. He states that this

aesthetic sensation comes from perceiving art. According to the quote above, the device of

ostranenie is to make the subject less recognizable so that the perception of the works of art is

prolonged. Shklovsky's vision of ostranenie is based on imagery. He shows that the goal of

images is to help people "see" things instead of recognizing them without effort (*A Reader* 14).

While audiences process similar imagery more through unconsciousness, art should change the

angle of imagery to make the subject unfamiliar with the way it was presented in order to drive

people to appreciate imagery again. He takes Tolstoy's writing as an example: Tolstoy

frequently depicts a thing as if it is the first time seeing it (*A Reader* 8). For instance, in

Tolstoy's story "Kholstomer", human actions are described through the vision of a horse. In

this way, the routinized human life is observed and understood from an alienated angle, through

which daily human actions seem to be defamiliarized. Through the angle of a horse, readers

can appreciate the refreshed imagery by processing it in consciousness. Tolstoy's writing does

not throw an abstract concept but concrete images that visualize the subject. The technique of ostranenie on the textual level parallels new images to the addressed object to refresh readers' artistic experiences.

Smith would argue that Shklovsky's ostranenie represents the change in the aspect of patterns. Images are fixed forms. As Shklovsky illustrates, they should visualize the subject in a way that arouses artistic emotions. Shklovsky also put this literary technique into practice. In his *Zoo, or Letters Not about Love*, there are many imageries that represent the feeling of love, but he informs us: "I'm not going to write about love. I'm going to write only about the weather" (16). Then, the writer begins to describe Berlin's fine weather, the coldness in early spring, the sky, the sun, and his clothes—every single detail he wants to share with his beloved in the love letter: because the writer is in love, even trifles become meaningful. Shklovsky shows us that expressing love does not have to emphasize "I love you", but the feeling of love can be experienced from an alienated angle—the detailed descriptions of trifles in life.

While Shklovsky tries to explore the ways of refreshing artistic feelings through shifting the observing angle of a subject and reordering patterns of imagery, Smith comes up that the minor forms can comprise a more extensive form as well:

> I put all the cash I had and all the change in my pockets into this machine, because every time I put the penny in, no matter what I did, the ball went down the hole marked LOST. They were just holes, the holes, cut in the metal. They were exactly the same as each other. But one was called HOME and one was called LOST, so I kept on putting my

penny in and trying to get the ball into the one marked HOME. It was terrible, the fact

that it kept going down the one marked LOST. (39)

This quotation is an example of how different forms compose specific patterns that configured

a larger form. The two holes can be viewed as the smallest form with different meanings: units

that might accumulate and build up together. Every time the narrator puts a coin into the

machine, the coin drops into the hole labelled "LOST," because of which the repetitive results

create a pattern of losing. In other words, small forms can comprise a relatively larger form

with its repetitive pattern. In addition, the labelling of the unit is significant as well. Only when

the unit is named "LOST" is the pattern of losing triggered. If the label changed to "HOME,"

the narrator would probably not continue putting the coins, and hence there would not be a

typical pattern for winning. Without labelling, the mere form of holes might not drive anyone

to play the game.

Based on Smith's idea, literary imageries are representations of meanings. When readers

do not feel the beauty of imagery, they are probably tired of the repeated references instead of

meanings. Shklovsky's idea of ostranenie matters about how to change imagery to express the

same thing or meaning. While he proposes to refresh imagery to provide artistic feelings, he

separates poetic language from the meaning of works of art—a separation of holes and labels.

This leads to the fact that his vision of ostranenie is limited to keeping literariness by using

different imagery, which, for Shklovsky, matters the use of poetic language only.

However, literary imagery is formed by words. Compared to imagery, words are even

smaller forms that can reconstruct other forms in literature as well. Time and space, for

instance, belong to different categories from imagery in terms of their functions. Time and space may construct specific imagery, but they can be reordered and reconstructed to provide a sense of newness. The story of a woman with bright hair in Smith's text presents how time and space shape readers' perceptions. In this story, there are several shifts in the space: from "a village on an island" to "a poor part of the city" (40), from a "bus" to a "boat" (41). In every place, some events give readers a sense of time by describing the character's movements in the scenario, yet the story is not arranged around a specific meaning. The shifting chronotopes[7] are not connected logically, breaking the traditional linear sequence of a story. A new pattern of literature is hence created: this is a story without logic and chronology, without the emphasis on poetic language, but literariness is born in-between time and space, in the broken linear narrative sequences, and in between literature and non-literature.

Another way of creating alternative forms of literature that Smith discovered is encountering forms. Smith discloses forms are not independent but dialogical:

> There'll always be a dialogue, an argument, between aesthetic form and reality, between form and its content, between seminality, art, fruitfulness, and life.[8] There'll always be a seminal argument between forms—that's how forms produce themselves, out of a meeting of opposites, of different things; out of form encountering form. Put two poems together and they'll make a third… (44)

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[7] Bakhtin in "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* defines chronotope as "the inseparability of space and time" (p. 84).
[8] Smith compares the birth of a form to that of a tree: it must grow from "seed" to "fruit".

Between Poetry and Prose

That alternative forms are born out of encountering old forms is based on the dynamic quality of form: fixity and continuance are intertwined. The spiral of form to change to its fragile continuance involves recreating new forms. Smith testifies this idea in two ways: by taking the example that two poems can together give birth to a new form of the poem; and by creating two fictional characters—the narrator and her dead lover—in the work of non-fiction. In the first example, she analyzes Edwin Morgen's 1987 poem, which combines Wallace Stevens's "Anecdote of Jar" and Shakespeare's "Sonnet 55" together:

Not Marble: a Reconstruction

A Sqezy bottle in Tennessee,

If you want permanence, will press

a dozen jars into the wilderness.

It's bright, misspelt, unpronounceable

itself. No one loves you! I guess

there's amour propre in a detergent not to be

called sluttish. Vulgarity

dogs marble, gildings; monuments are a mess.

Exegi is, exegi that. Let's say

I am in love, crushed under the weight

of it or elated under the hush of it.

Let's not just say. I actually am.

Hordes, posterities, judges vainly cram

the space my love and I left yesterday. (qtd. in Smith, *Artful* 44)

The two original poems have different rhymes and metres. "Rhyme… connects air and everywhere to the word bare" (Smith 44). This means that forms are not perfect—a form creates something out of nothing, and there must also be "nothingness" in the form that invites other forms to fill in the gaps. The ambivalence within the form itself, as well as the blurriness between form and formless, are the reasons why forms are dialogical. The example of creating new poems by combining two poems together has demonstrated that there are spaces in each poem waiting to be filled, which results in the creation of a third. Such space, or "nothingness," cannot exist in the absence of formless, from which form is generated. Hence, form and formlessness are not diametrically opposed: they are manifested and intertwined.

Shklovsky's technique of ostranenie is, therefore, theoretically extended to the field between poetic and prosaic. He describes the tendency of sensations to shift from poetic to prosaic without specifically defining the line between the two. Smith answers to Shklovsky's theory by combining fiction and non-fiction in *Artful*, transforming the text into none of the genres but a new form of literature itself. As Smith believes, there may not be a clear distinction between literature and non-literature, but rather a free zone in which forms can intertwine and develop.

It is hard to disagree that Smith, aware of the limitations of Shklovsky's vision of literary form,[9] broadens the view from literature to the components of universal forms. Smith develops

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[9] My teacher Anna Ponomareva once had a conversation with Ali Smith about Victor Shklovsky, and Smith admitted that she is not familiar with this name. So, what I am saying here is that although Smith's ideas on form do not originally develop from Shklovsky's, she does contribute to this theoretical field.

Shklovsky's ideas in her writing: she uncovers the dynamic movements of the form, one that transformed itself from fixity to achieve perpetuity through an endless journey—from poetry to prose, and from prose to poetry. Smith's applications of Shklovsky's ideas on literature essentially address his concerns: form exists in formlessness, and poetry lives in prose.

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Chewing Over Consumer Culture in 19th and 20th Century Novels

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the novels *Ladies' Paradise*, *Sister Carrie*, *New Grub Street*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Mrs. Dalloway* are considered in the context of consumer culture, with a particular concentration on the consumption of food. The wealth and status markers that food confers are also a cornerstone of this study.

When we separate sustenance from food, we can consider how humans use commodities that are needed for survival (such as shelter, clothing, and even emotional connection) to distinguish our class differences and cultural characteristics. Our food consumption secures the continuation of our lives, but it also stabilizes our ways of life. This effect is seen in countries of excess as well as places of deprivation, and it is because of this universality that distinct features of disparate societies can be disclosed through their relationships with food. Our meals act as a cipher for us to understand unconscious aspects of ourselves. This code extends past personal tastes into the realm of sociological markers, like class status, wealth, age, gender, and ethnic or racial factors. To paraphrase Roland Barthes (24), when we interact with food, we transform it into a product that

can channel unique contextual clues about ourselves. It is for this reason that the consumption of food performs a pivotal role in most texts about consumerism. Everyone must eat, but *how* and *what* we eat changes depending on our circumstances.

The purpose of this study is to review the representation of food in novels about capitalism and consumer culture as an appraisal of the cultural and socio-economic structures that maintain them. I am caught by the literal consumption of culture through the eating of foods that are social signifiers and the intersection with the metaphorical consumption of material culture. There is nothing that our social and political systems do not shape, and I intend to probe the degree to which these structures permeate our day-to-day life through the essential act of eating. As texts are reflective of their respective periods of publication, I have limited this article to pieces spanning from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. This marks the large-scale manufacturing of the First and Second Industrial Revolutions that set up our modern era. Additionally, though I have restricted this article to the United Kingdom, France, and the United States, there is potential for this analysis outside the West from a postcolonial theoretical perspective.

In the French novel *The Ladies' Paradise*, serialized and then published in 1883, there is an emphasis on somatic signifiers of wealth and class status. The materialization of social and economic hierarchies further comes to the fore through the language of food, which author Émile Zola implements to impress onto the reader the extent of the extravagant paraphernalia that the luxurious department store sells. The eponymous Ladies' Paradise has "a wealth of goods openly displayed, where everyone could go and feast his eyes" (Zola 86), irrespective of social standing. This frames the department store as enticing shoppers to purchase its wares in a bodily, almost carnal fashion. Ladies' Paradise likewise manufactures desire for their items through stimulating

appetite. For example, when offered a free buffet, "the customers were […] hurling themselves at it in fits of greed" (Zola 266). It is so popular that "some people, losing all shame before the free refreshments, were making themselves ill" (Zola 246). This ploy is designed to play on the physical tastes of the department store's patrons, thus inducing them to indulge in other sensory pleasures that are available.

Furthermore, this scheme amalgamates physical taste with visual taste: the customers can satisfy their bodies with food while spoiling themselves with beautiful items that promise to make their bodies beautiful as well. In this vein, these scenes symbolize how the hunger for food can be superimposed onto the hunger to be seen as fashionable and desirable. This relates to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of taste, which he categorizes as "an incorporated principle of classification which governs all forms of incorporation, choosing and modifying everything that the body ingests and digests and assimilates, physiologically and psychologically" (34). In essence, what we define as acceptable and unacceptable is determined by the cultural standards and customs that sculpt our own lives. Our palates are affected by what we are cultivated to conceive as normal – the English aversion to the French delicacy frog legs is a famous example – and our material tastes are no different. The sociologist Deborah Lupton explains that "when food is consumed symbolically, its taste is often of relatively little importance: it is the image around the food product that is most important" (23). To Lupton, it is not the sensation of the product itself that provides pleasure but what the item signifies to those around us. Taste is a cultural convention. Whether in terms of food or fashion, our tastes are thus created by our class consciousness while at the same time determining the attributes of these social divisions.

Zola likewise uses the language of food to articulate protagonist Denise Baudu's ascent in her professional and social positions. At the onset of her employment at the Ladies' Paradise, "she felt

she was a grain of millet beneath a powerful millstone" (Zola 155) as she struggles to succeed as a shopgirl, bullied by her co-workers and ignored by the customers. However, later in the novel and in her career's progression, she still "had the sensation of being nothing, hardly a grain of millet under the millstones crushing everyone beneath them" (Zola 347), despite her rise to the more prominent post of the buyer. The repeated analogy of the millet and the millstone is an allusion to the insatiable machine of industry and its devouring presence in the lives of its workers. Denise cannot escape its crushing impact, even when she has reached a better professional station than before. This confirms the concept that two-way consumption is an intrinsic component of consumer culture. In other words, though the perpetrators of capitalism – the producers and the consumers – benefit from the product, the manufacturing, advertising, and selling of the product also subsume their time and energy. This cyclical consumption occurs because "the economic object does not have an absolute value as the result of the demand of it, but demand as the basis of a real or imagined exchange, endows the object with value" (Appadurai 4).

This effect is exemplified in the commodification of Denise's innocence, which is also communicated through the discourse of food. For instance, when she is invited to have dinner with Octave Mouret, the owner of Ladies' Paradise, it is intimated that "the dessert" (Zola 271) is sexual intercourse. Zola pushes the reader to infer the purpose of the meal, stating that "the Paradise was well aware of the true significance of these invitations, which had become legendary. Clara had dined with him, others too, all the girls who had caught their employer's eye" (271). The power that Mouret holds over his female workers, as well as the financial stability that he represents, ensures the continuation of the same cycle of consumption that Mouret perpetuates in Ladies' Paradise.[1] Mouret is the consumer of Denise's commodity, her body, but in a subversion of his

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[1] The irony of the department store's name, in this sexualised context, is evident.

scheme, she monopolizes his sense when she scorns his advances. This resistance results in marriage, as "by refusing, she had whetted his desire" (Zola 330) and has taken control over his thoughts. Their union raises Denise's social standing, but like her rise in the ranks at Ladies' Paradise, she remains caught in the cogs of consumer culture: rather than accoutrements, she sells intimacy to Mouret for status and stability.

The machine of industry is also illuminated through the lens of food in Theodore Dreiser's 1900 novel *Sister Carrie*. The oppressive conditions of the workers in *Sister Carrie* are emphasised in the factory's lunch-time break, wherein "not the slightest provision had been made for the comfort of the employees, the idea being that something was gained by giving them as little and making the work as hard and unremunerative as possible" (Dreiser 27). The environment is so disheartening that heroine Carrie Meeber prefers to sit at "her machine" (Dreiser 37) to eat. In contrast, the food hall of Ladies' Paradise is improved in the interest of increasing morale, and in turn, production among the workers, as prior to this update they were "badly fed in the shop" (Zola 142). At the same time, these developments are not an acknowledgement of labour rights, but rather a consequence of Mouret's capitalistic principles: "they were all nothing but cogs, caught up in the workings of the machine" (Zola 134) that produce more profit when properly maintained. Mouret reorders the kitchen into "an organized service like one of his departments, […] and if he spent more as a result, he got more work out of his better-fed staff" (Zola 288).

In addition, these distinctions between *Sister Carrie* and *The Ladies' Paradise* are also based on the disparate domains where Carrie and Denise work. Though "the department stores are organized like factories," there is "the transformation of industry into a shop window" (Bowlby 4) that separates it from the industrial unit. In other words, the department store is a shell of beauty that sells the opulent items that the factory produces. It replicates the capitalist system: Carrie is at

the start of the set-up with the production of the merchandise; Denise is in the middle selling the wares; and the consumers conclude the life cycles of the commodities with their purchases. Furthermore, the inequality that informs each stage of this socio-economic apparatus is discerned in their disproportionate approaches to food. In *The Ladies' Paradise*, for example, the customer is offered free refreshments while the staff are confined to a substandard setting – albeit their dining area is superior to the factory's conditions in *Sister Carrie* – thus demonstrating the disparity in the capitalist chain.

In another parallel to *The Ladies' Paradise*, Dreiser utilizes discourse of consumption in his depiction of Carrie's romantic relationships as transactional. For instance, Charles Drouet's use of Carrie's body is compared to the act of nourishment, in that "he would need to delight himself with Carrie as surely as he would need to eat his heavy breakfast" (Dreiser 72). Comparably, Drouet describes Carrie as "his possession" (Dreiser 170), which frames her in material terms as a commodity that can be consumed. This theme is also exhibited in the rendering of Carrie's other lover George Hurstwood, but with more overt tones of objectification: "he wanted to win Carrie […]. He envied the drummer his conquest as he had never envied any man" (Dreiser 114). Furthermore, it is implied that Hurstwood is interested in owning Carrie for the superiority that ownership symbolizes, as she "represented a better order of woman than had ever attracted him before" (Dreiser 113). This is similar to the changing relationship between customers and consumerism in the nineteenth century, wherein it was "not so much the object in itself – what function it serves – which matters, as its novelty or attractiveness, how it stands out from other objects on sale" (Bowlby 1). However, Carrie commodifies her body as well: she utilizes her sexuality to advance her career as an actress, and she uses Drouet and Hurstwood as they use her,

in that "she followed whither her craving led. She was as yet more drawn than she drew" (Dreiser 71).

It is therefore fitting that Carrie finds fulfilment in the theatre, as in this period actresses were defined by the prostitute paradigm that Restoration performers emulated (Pullen 10). Carrie thus finds financial stability in her affairs with Drouet and Hurstwood, but she achieves social and monetary independence through the public presentation of her body for visual consumption. "Carrie is still, in some sense, a paid worker" (Bowlby 32), in that she sells the image of her body on the stage, if not the physicality of it. In this sense, Carrie can claim control over the social privileges of her patrons, and this is poignantly summarised at the conclusion of the novel when Hurstwood comes across one of her productions and insists that "she owes me something to eat" (Dreiser 452) as if he subsidised her success by investing in her body. As Lupton says,

> The act of incorporation of foodstuffs may be regarded as the apotheosis of the inscription of consumption choices upon the body, and one of the most permanent both externally and internally: skin tone, weight, strength of bones, condition of hair and nails, digestion are all commonly said to be directly affected by diet. (22)

In *Sister Carrie*, spaces that serve food or alcohol act as a prism for the broader societal structure in that these bars and restaurants are depicted as conduits for social climbing. For example, Hurstwood, the manager of the "gorgeous saloon" (Dreiser 40) Fitzgerald and Moy, started as a bartender at a cheaper establishment before rising in rank. He then uses his improved station to increase his social standing through his interactions with his customers. The saloon is "an augur of the better social order" (Dreiser 44) and thus attracts status seekers, such as Drouet, who has a proclivity for patronizing places of consumption in order to present himself to high society; for instance, Drouet prefers to sit by the windows of fine restaurants "to see and be seen

as he dined" (Dreiser 54). The bar and restaurant scenes in *Sister Carrie* indicate the intersection of business and pleasure that characterized consumer culture in this period, as the consumption that transpires in these spaces is an experience in terms of ambience as well as cuisine. They are places to prove wealth and station through physical appearance, but also in the sense of their access to *where* this prosperity is presented. As Dreiser mockingly opines, "the pleased eye with which our modern restaurants of fashion are looked upon is proof of this assertion" (44). They are sites contrived for both material and literal consumption.

This is evidenced when Carrie and Hurstwood arrive in New York, where there is an "exhibition of showy, wasteful, and unwholesome gastronomy as practised by wealthy Americans, which is the wonder and astonishment of true culture and dignity the world over" (Dreiser 294). In contrast, when Hurstwood descends into poverty, "there was no ceremony about dining" (Dreiser 378), for there is no one to impress. His social deterioration is depicted in his ingestion of "miserable food, ill-timed and greedily eaten, [which] had played havoc with bones and muscle" (Dreiser 446). Food has thus moved from a marker of status or a source of pleasure to a necessity, its basic function, and it is in this turn that the economic division between the social classes is emphasized.

As in *Sister Carrie*, the characters in George Gissing's *New Grub Street* make use of food as a means of establishing their access to propriety. For instance, when Alfred Yule mourns his lost position in society, he insists that "if I had been able to come in direct contact with Rackett and other men of that kind, to dine with them, and have them to dine with me" (Gissing 139), then he would be at a higher rung on the social ladder. Alfred's rival Fadge thus acts as a foil to him, in that when Fadge's rank improves, he is "able to give dinners" (Gissing 139). The importance of these dinners in determining status and power is therefore representative of the standards of the

ruling class, in the sense that when "food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed" (Douglas 61). It is not the food itself that matters, but rather what the performance of commensality represents. Mervyn Nicholson correspondingly renders "the scene of eating" as "units of social consciousness/interaction" (200), pasted over each other like a palimpsest. There is no simple repast when every aspect, from the food to the table linens to the drinks served, connotes the host's class. Similarly, when Yule connects with his working-class friends, "he tasted a sham kind of social and intellectual authority which he could not help relishing" (Gissing 136-137).

In providing for his friends, Yule thus signals his financial superiority and asserts that he is a station above them. In summation, the ability to arrange dinners is a signifier for the host, as it proves that they possess the required resources to provide their friends and family with the pleasures of excess. These shared meals indicate a disposable income, as well as the class-based knowledge of social cues and markers that their success necessitates. The echelons of the upper classes thus use these dinners to present their social value to society, in parallel to *Sister Carrie*'s Drouet consciously choosing to sit in the windows of restaurants. The converse is also witnessed when Jasper Milvain calls upon the Reardons' and participates in their meagre supper. It is this impromptu repast that represents the extent of their poverty, as it consists of a mere "bread and butter, cheese, sardines, cocoa" (Gissing 102). The Reardons' incapacity to host shared meals to the standards of their preferred station is a source of embarrassment and stress for well-born Amy Reardon. When her social isolation is discussed, it is emphasized that the few friends that remain attached to her are satisfied with her "teacup entertainment" (Gissing 173) since she is too poor to serve them a suitable spread. In these scenes, Gissing shows Amy's desire to return to the social stature of her maiden name and that foreshadows the disintegration of her marriage.

Shared meals are also utilized in *Pride and Prejudice* as a device to determine the status of characters in the dominant social structure. When pursuing Mr. Bingley, for example, the Bennet women consider "when they should ask him to dinner" (Austen 8), for this will confer "credit to her [Mrs Bennet] housekeeping" (Austen 9) and thus her eligible daughter Jane in turn. However, in contrast to the late Victorian novels *Sister Carrie* and *New Grub Street*, these shared meals have multiple purposes, in that they are organized with the intention of submitting the single guests for inspection as well as confirming class rank. As Mrs Bennet astutely observes when discussing Mr. Bingley and Jane's budding courtship, "had she merely *dined* with him, she might only have discovered whether he had a good appetite; but you must remember that four evenings have been also spent together" (Austen 22, emphasis in original).

Bourdieu similarly discerns that "the relation to food – the primary need and pleasure – is only one dimension of the bourgeois relation to the social world" (38). This concept can be seen in the societal constraints that the characters of *Pride and Prejudice* place on consumption. In addition, Bourdieu elucidates that it is because of "the forms and formalisms imposed on the immediate appetite" (38) that the social structure is unclothed through the bourgeois performance of shared meals. Therefore, it is the creation of "the meal [as] a social ceremony, an affirmation of ethical tone and aesthetic refinement" (Bourdieu 38) that separates the upper-crust from the common classes, who perceive their repast as a necessary act of nourishment or connection instead of a statement to society and its disciples. The polarity between food as a "material reality" for the poor and a "social form, formality" (Bourdieu 38) for the rich is a central tenet of consumer culture. We can detect an awareness of this distinction in the tone of *Pride and Prejudice*, such as when Mrs. Bennet boasts that "they were very well able to keep a good cook, and that her daughters had nothing to do in the kitchen" (Austen 66). The capability of the Bennets to retain servants, in

particular a cook, is a point of pride for them because it signals that they can afford to classify their meals as pleasure, as opposed to necessity.

The performance of a shared meal as a display of prosperity and propriety is the pivotal theme of Virginia Woolf's 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, as the plot centres on a dinner party that the protagonist Clarissa Dalloway conducts while also featuring a luncheon held by the distinguished Lady Millicent Bruton. Clarissa's husband is invited to attend the latter without her, and this induces in Clarissa an intense visceral reaction in which she is moved to "shiver, as a plant on the river-bed feels the shock of a passing oar and shivers" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 29). Clarissa fixates on Lady Bruton, echoing that her "lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 29) and that "Lady Bruton, whose lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing, had not asked her" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 30) to dine. The repetition shows the scope of her obsessive "suspicions, like this of Lady Bruton not asking her to lunch" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 37), encapsulating Clarissa's fear of social failure and thus directing the reader's attention to the significance of ritualistic shared meals within her social circle.

These communal repasts connote class position, and because Clarissa has not been summoned to aristocratic Lady Bruton's luncheon along with her husband, this signals to her that her social standing is on shakier ground than her husband's placement. It is revealed to the audience that this insecurity is spurious, as later at the event Lady Bruton asks about Clarissa, an act that "signified recognition of some feminine comradeship which went beneath masculine lunch parties" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 105). Therefore, for Lady Bruton these luncheons are not the social indicator that her class presumes them to be, but rather more purposeful and business-like – she hosts in service of "emigrating young people of both sexes born of respectable parents and setting them up with a fair prospect of doing well in Canada" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 107). This

does not mean that her luncheons are not preoccupied with issues of social hierarchy, however, as her devotion toward advancing emigration is predicated on the recipients being from "respectable" backgrounds. Her philanthropic posturing is therefore enacted for an upper-class audience alone, despite her feelings of zeal.

The staging of Lady Bruton's luncheon summarises the social cues and markers that demarcate the ceremonial shared meals of the upper crust in post-World War I Britain. Lady Bruton has "maids, handmaidens not of necessity, but adepts in a mystery or grand deception practised by hostesses in Mayfair" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 103). There is an aspect of automation that recalls the metaphors of machinery used in *The Ladies' Paradise* and *Sister Carrie*. For example, Lady Bruton's butler acts in a similar mechanized sense, in that "Lady Bruton had only to nod, and Perkins was instructed to quicken the coffee" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 106). This works to preserve the "profound illusion in the first place about the food – how it is not paid for; and then that the table spreads itself voluntarily" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 103).

The labour that contributes to the seamlessness of the shared meal is consciously concealed. This stands in contrast to *Pride and Prejudice*, which was published a century earlier in 1813. Mrs. Bennet flaunts her hired help as proof of her claims to her class station, whereas in Woolf's period, physical and financial capital is hidden. It is this lack of show that discloses the scale of the wealth and status that props up the performance of the dining party. Alex Zwerdling asserts that when "service is assumed to be part of the natural order by the governing class, dependable in its regular rhythms, [it is] creating an environment of basic security by maintaining a predictable daily routine" (73). Therefore, when their service is unseen, then it is normalized to the point where its perpetrators do not have to consider that "the entire system is based on the power and wealth of one class and the drudgery of another" (Zwerdling 73). In Woolf's own words, in *Mrs. Dalloway*

she "want[ed] to criticise the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense" (*A Writer's Diary* 57). In this vein, the inauthenticity of institutionalized shared meals is an acute analogy for the class problems at play in the novel.

Woolf is conscious to demonstrate the work that occurs behind-the-scenes of dining parties in *Mrs. Dalloway*, though this is done on a more superficial level than the extent that she delves into Clarissa's mindset. Nonetheless, the novel draws the stressful labour of the kitchen staff into the light. It concentrates on the cook, Mrs. Walker, who "always got nervous about the pudding" and was "bothered" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 163) about the quality of the salmon. When seen from the prism of Mrs. Walker's perspective, the kitchen becomes an oppressive and imposing domain: the dishes, "however hard they washed up in the scullery, seemed to be all on top of her" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 163). Mrs. Walker completes most of the menial work of the shared meal, and thus acts antithetic to Clarissa, whose principal contributions are to invite the appropriate people and to determine the scale of decorations. There is something at stake here for Clarissa and, as food historian Rachel Rich details, adherence to "spatial and decorative ideals was a key feature of how the bourgeoisie placed their stamp on the environments they inhabited" (51). However, Mrs. Walker toils for money, not for status. Clarissa is planning a party as sustenance for her social position; Mrs. Walker works so that she can meet her physical needs.

Furthermore, Clarissa's exertion is mental, whereas Mrs. Walker performs manual labour. This contrast showcases how their society marks their value, and thus Woolf highlights the dehumanization that the capitalist hierarchy conserves. This is also accented when Clarissa muses on the point of her parties, concluding that they are "an offering; to combine, to create" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 121) a sentiment of comradery. However noble Clarissa presents them, her intentions are inward-looking, as "Clarissa's party is strictly class-demarcated. […] the London

neighbourhoods she mentions are upper-middle-class preserves […]. Clarissa's integration is horizontal, not vertical" (Zwerdling, 73). In other words, Clarissa's role is focused on the function of shared meals as an indicator of status, as she is foremost concerned with the social aspects of the party, while Mrs. Walker's responsibilities are centred on the consumption of food as a source of pleasure as opposed to a socio-cultural convention. Therefore, food performs a secondary, ornamental purpose for Clarissa, whereas Mrs. Walker is restricted to its primary sensory objective.

At the same time, Clarissa also feels as if "her gift" (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 121) of hosting parties is her singular strength – she is thus imprisoned in her societal role, in a similar sense to how Mrs. Walker is caught under the weight of her domestic work, as represented by the crush of the dishes. In this form, the confinement of material culture is denoted through the construction of the dining party, in that class distinctions are consciously clarified in the attendants of the party as well as its attendees.

The routines of what we eat, when we eat, and how we eat are signifiers that convey which socio-economic and cultural contexts we classify as our own. The customs and conventions that surround specific food items, as well as the circumstances that ritualize communal meals, can change depending on religious, class, racial, and ethnic background, but regardless of incongruities, there is one commonality that remains steadfast: the fact that food symbolizes something to every collective. There is no such thing as meaningless or neutral consumption in a societal context. This concept of partisan fare is pervasive in novels about consumer culture, as the overlap between the philosophy and physicality of consumption is a prevalent theme. Often texts are a manifestation of the social and political mores of the period in which they were produced, and correspondingly in the works that I have appraised in this study, food has a starring

role in illuminating the social performance that consumption plays in the perpetuation of the hierarchal structure in the West. The scope of the practises and protocols that regulate food might vary, but in each of the novels discussed here, the political and cultural climate of their respective epochs is reproduced through representations of the consumption of food.

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"I'll set thee free for this": Agency and Performance in Graham Nelson's Interactive Fiction Adaptation of *The Tempest*

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Shakespeare's supposed final play, *The Tempest*, has often been read as a celebration of the artistic imagination and the pleasurable spectacle of theatre. Scholars have long drawn romantic parallels between Prospero, an aging magician who entertains himself and his daughter with attractive illusions, and Shakespeare himself, writing for the stage one last time and conjuring a fantastical world with well-drawn characters. Due to its indulgence in visual pageantry, *The Tempest* has been a playground for adaptive experimentation, both on the stage and especially in films. Two notable film adaptations include the experimental *Prospero's Books*, which explicitly explores the allegorical relationship between Prospero and Shakespeare, and Julie Taymor's visually extravagant production in 2010. Despite receiving mixed reviews, both films respectively highlight the metacommentary on artistic authority and the visual indulgences that remain central focuses in intermedial adaptations of the play.

Both *Prospero's Books* and Taymor's *The Tempest* are notable as adaptations for experimenting with the play's transmission into a new medium. Theatre and film are similar as artistic media in that they rely on communicating narrative through showing: one of the three

'modes of engagement,' along with telling and interacting, as theorized by Linda Hutcheon in her influential *A Theory of Adaptation* (24). However, film is not the only medium to inherit adaptations of *The Tempest*. In 1997, Graham Nelson anonymously released an interactive fiction (IF) version of the play composed almost entirely of text from the 1623 First Folio edition. Only a few years prior to the release, in 1993, Nelson revolutionized the text-based IF genre with his program, *Inform*: a system for writing and publishing IF that was almost single-handedly responsible for spurring the rise of independent writers in the genre, leading to a cult resurgence of interest in text-based games that has continued to this day (Montfort 200-201). Unlike Nelson's two ground-breaking classics, *Curses!* (1993) and *Jigsaw* (1995), his experimental adaptation of *The Tempest* has been largely forgotten by the IF community, with seemingly good reason.

Advertised in its digital "frontispiece" as "a 'performance' more than a 'game,'" Nelson's *The Tempest* features some obtuse intertextual puzzles and severely limits player agency in favour of an adamant yet experimental fidelity to 'the text itself,' as the game world is represented almost entirely by displaced portions of the play's script (Nelson, "Welcome to the performance!"). Moreover, even though the game's text-based format allows Nelson to construct the experience through a direct engagement with Shakespeare's writing, it also means the game has no graphical component to take advantage of the play's crucial visual element. What the player is mainly left with, then, is a fragmented and taxing interactive version of Shakespeare's playtext. However, while many of Nelson's creative decisions lead the game to suffer as a game, it stands out as a singular and intriguing product of intermedial adaptation. Nelson's *The Tempest* sacrifices usability concerns by tying the game's rules to the fictional logic of the play's world and assuming the player will be able to apply their understanding of the latter towards their completion of the former. The game foregrounds a connection between the authoritative structure of performance

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and the authoritative structure of game design through the top-down Prospero-Ariel connection that the player must embody and mediate to instigate and thereby 'perform' the events of the play. Acknowledging the connection between these two separate modes may help us bridge an unnecessary theoretical gap that can expand our understanding of performing and gaming as two similar engagements across different media.

Through a comparative analysis of scholarship on theatrical adaptation and digital cybertext, this essay will explore how Nelson's self-proclaimed "interactive performance" configures the Prospero-Ariel bond as an allegory for the authorial connection between player and avatar. At the same time, this allegorical reading can be extended to the tension between game design itself and the player, foregrounding the always-conditional agency that the game affords the player. As an adaptation, Nelson's game repurposes a play that has long been read with metaphorical undertones about theatrical art and authorship in the context of a new storytelling medium: the digital game. In this context, the benevolent master Prospero can be seen as a game designer (such as Nelson) creating the bounds within which his magical extension, Ariel (the player), can navigate the game world and exercise his abilities. However, it is also important to address the game's curious generic ontology. As evidenced by Nelson's disclaimer, calling his *Tempest* "more a performance than a game," it was not created as a standard work of IF.

As an adaptation, the game seems problematic because many of its puzzles demand a prior familiarity with the 'original' text that inevitably privileges it as such. On the other hand, this demand seems appropriate for a game that presents itself as a 'performance,' since a performer must first acquaint themselves with the work that they are to realize through performance. I want to use these ontological complexities as a gateway to consider the connection between theatrical performance and gaming as a combination of active participation and immersed spectatorship,

which I think Nelson's adaptation reinforces through its alternation between interactive and passive gameplay elements. The purpose of this essay is not to address Nelson's game on its own merits independent of Shakespeare's play. Due to the intertextual logic around which the game is designed, it seems necessary to conduct an analysis of Nelson's adaptation of *The Tempest* as adaptation.

Nelson's *The Tempest* is not intended to operate autonomously from its source text. Like a performance, it depends on the performer (or player) to have an intimate familiarity with its source. Yet, the player's performance of the game does not correlate to the work of a single actor's performance. Even though the first line upon booting the game tells the player they are "invited to play Ariel," a note in the frontispiece reveals that the player's diegetic role is not that simple:

> You play as the magical will of Prospero, and the computer replies as Ariel, telling of events as Ariel witnesses or causes them. Ariel frequently speaks as if you're the same person as the physical Prospero he sees, and you should play along, in that you and the other Prospero should cooperate. You can also help by sending Ariel to spy on the other characters, for Ariel is Prospero's eyes and ears.

In other words, the player does not play *as* Ariel like an actor in a stage adaptation would don the role of the character. The player plays *as* Prospero's will, and the extradiegetic interaction between player and computer is configured diegetically as that between Prospero and Ariel, who has no choice but to follow his master's will – and whose agency is thus intrinsically tied to Prospero's. Even as the game is advertised as "An interactive performance," it operates in a fundamentally different manner from that of a theatrical performance. Nelson has cleverly configured the diegetic connection between Prospero and Ariel into a metaphor for how the player exercises their will in a game – even as they are situated within the game as a character. Ariel is conveniently a character

that does not act of his own will. In this sense, he is the perfect protagonist for a game that does not allow its player any agency to manipulate the course of the narrative. It is a cleverly subversive choice of game design.

Nostalgic readings of *The Tempest* have suggested an allegorical connection between the creative magic of Prospero and the imaginative magic of Shakespeare as a playwright. Perhaps in the digital age, we can reinvent this allegory as a model for the player-avatar relationship. Prospero is like the game designer(s), offering a magical world full of enticing illusions where he employs a magical spirit, Ariel, to exercise his will. The player, on the other hand, is always situated between these two subject positions of author and agent; ultimately, the player's purpose is to enact the plot which the game designer has situated in the game. Fortunately, the player has the pleasure of enacting the plot himself, under the shallow, yet thoroughly enjoyable guise of being the agent who controls the course of the narrative. In other words, the player can be more honestly conceived as a performer in the game world than as an autonomous agent. In this sense, Nelson's game functions as a thoughtful intermedial counterpart to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* even on the level of allegory: readings of Shakespeare's play, as unpacked in the final chapter of Emma Smith's recent *This is Shakespeare*, have long clung to a connection between Prospero and Shakespeare as a singular authorial voice that perpetuates a privileged humanist discourse on individual capability. Nelson's *The Tempest* is an adaptation that not only refuses to include the authorial label of its creator (Nelson's name is absent from the game) but does not even provide its player with the stability of 'playing' an individual subject. What does crucially remain across the adaptation is the playtext itself which, although presented in a fragmented nonlinear format, is fulfilled as a thematic repurposing of the text's narrative. Indeed, Nelson's *The Tempest* is fundamentally Shakespearean.

The game opens with Ariel's speech when he first enters the stage in the original text, in which he announces:

All hail, great master! Grave sir, hail! I come

To answer thy best pleasure. Be't to fly,

To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride

On the curled clouds, to thy strong bidding task

Ariel and all his quality. (1.2.224-228)

These lines are not said by the player, but rather provide a textual signal of the player's entrance into the game as Ariel, and immediately establish Ariel (and, by extension, the player) in dialogue with Prospero's will. In Nick Montfort's widely accepted IF terminology, this passage functions as the initial situation, in that it precedes the appearance of the game's title and "refers to the state of the IF world" (31). By placing these lines as the game's initial situation, Nelson does an effective job aligning the player's purpose with Ariel's own; that is, to obey the will of his master, Prospero. Even though the game puts the player in the position of Prospero's will, this positioning does not entail giving them Prospero's boundless command of sorcery; rather, the player, like Ariel, must follow a scripted set of actions to carry forward the playtext. According to Daniel Fischlin, *The Tempest* has already been infused with intermedial richness: "The play presciently addresses the very nature of intermediate realities via technologies (books, magic spells, and so forth) that come about as the result of unanticipated convergences and new forms of knowledge and interpretation" (25). By virtue of its digitized adaptation, Nelson's game thematizes this growing trend among other intermedial engagements with *The Tempest*. The game object itself plays into the text's

legacy by offering not only a new technology to experience it through, but a transformative lens for, interpreting its metatextual ambitions in a new context.

To help players grasp the unprecedented nature and demands of the game, Nelson includes a digital 'frontispiece' where he outlines his intention to adapt Shakespeare's play, offers tips for playing, and describes the process of porting the playtext into a functional game. The frontispiece therefore functions as an intriguing and necessary paratext without which a new player would likely be disoriented and confused. As a tip for playing Ariel, he writes: "As a general rule, physical actions are allowed, and you can make music, but you aren't permitted to speak your own dialogue – it's Shakespeare's play, after all" (Nelson, Frontispiece). Prospero's surveillance of the island through Ariel is made quite apparent throughout the play, but Nelson's game tasks the player with this role by making it central to the gameplay. Oftentimes, the player progresses simply by navigating the island and encountering and scrolling through scenes from the play. Otherwise, the player must solve puzzles that either function according to instructions the game makes clear (such as Prospero telling Ariel to look out the window, or to use his sorcerer's charm on Alonso and his group of noblemen) or that can be discerned from recalling the events of the play from a prior engagement with it, or by consulting the playtext. Ariel never truly exits from a scene. He is constantly hearing the interactions of all the play's characters and influencing their actions by manipulating elements in the background. In a sense, he is 'playing' everyone on the island, save for Prospero, who plays him.

Nelson's adaptive game, by privileging his source text over player agency and other inherent affordances of the medium, highlights the extent to which all digital games are the realization of a performance. Despite the relative linearity and limited interactivity of *The Tempest* game, it still plays like many other IF titles. Perhaps the exaggerated linearity of the game helps highlight a

crucial feature of all games: player agency is always, to a degree, constrained. A game script, much like a play script, is carefully and rigidly structured – and necessarily so. Without an appropriate degree of structure, the ability for a player to experience a coherent narrative through gameplay will inevitably suffer. There may be an allowance for improvisation at certain parts, but a performance must always operate within strictly limited bounds, or risk falling into incoherency.

If we are to conceive of Nelson's game as a 'performance,' then it must be as a relatively fixed performance, in that the player is not left room for much meaningful improvisation. Even more accurately, we can perhaps call it a rehearsal, in that the player is allowed ample opportunity for failure and the ability to correct their performance ad infinitum. After all, unlike most other IF titles, there is no way to fail and be forced to restart the game. Yet, crucially, there is also a 'correct' script to follow. The player's interactivity is limited to a spatial exploration of the game's more well-defined geography of the island and a riddle-like engagement with the original text. Unlike an actor who only must know his cues and his lines, the player of Nelson's *Tempest* must possess a knowledge of much of the playtext's plot and events so that they may realize the play's action through their participation. The game cannot afford to allow the player agency because the play *The Tempest* must be performed as such. The structure within which the game functions and in which the player is allowed to act, is defined precisely by Shakespeare's own writing.

The notion of improvisation can also be tied to the notion of player agency: one of the three aesthetics of digital narratives, as theorized by Janet Murray in her pioneering *Hamlet on the Holodeck*. Murray defines player agency as "the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices" (159). She says that digital narratives most often frame these choices as spatial and moral. While Nelson's adaptation does not pose any interesting moral decisions for the player, since all the morally charged narrative 'choices' in the game are already

decided by the content of the source text, it at least retains the spatial element of agency. In digital narratives, space is more than a simple setting: "The interactor's navigation of virtual space has been shaped into a dramatic enactment of the plot" (Murray 100). For what the game lacks in meaningful interactive variability, agency remains an important term for conceptualizing the individual player's efforts at rehearsal, including a pattern of experimentation, failure, rethinking, and ultimate success at performing correctly. Agency, reinterpreted in this sense, is embodied performance.

In order to tell a comprehensive story, a digital game must strike a balance between authoritative top-down regulation and bottom-up affordances for player interaction and imaginative engagement. Similarly, we can look at a theatrical adaptation as a negotiation of the tension between the interpretationally open but fixed materiality of the playtext, and the individual creative liberties taken by the adapters (including directors, actors, costume designers, etc.). A stage actor, much like the player of a digital game, can exercise their agency within the bounds delimited by their respective scripts to improvise and shape the course of a production. Hutcheon makes a notable appeal for giving performers authorial credit in both interactive and stage adaptations: "On the question of whether the actors can be considered as adapters, the case is no simpler. As in staged works, the performers are the ones who embody and give material existence to the adaptation" (81). Both theatrical actors and digital game players are responsible for determining the materialization of their respective performances.

Nelson's game, being an "interactive performance" of *The Tempest*, depends on its audience having an intimate familiarity with its source text. In Hutcheon's terms, the relationship between source and adaptation leaves the latter simultaneously autonomous and doubled: "Although adaptations are also aesthetic objects in their own right, it is only as inherently double or

multilaminated works that they can be theorized *as adaptations*" (6, italics in original). This doubling is reflected in the puzzles that make up the bulk of *The Tempest's* gameplay. In his ground-breaking theoretical and historical analysis of text-based interactive fiction, *Twisty Little Passages*, Montfort reveals that the heavy puzzle-solving component of IF shares the poetics of a literary riddle: IF's most prominent literary ancestor. For Montfort, IF and the riddle relate in four essential ways: "Both have a *systematic world*, are *something to be solved*, present *challenge and appropriate difficulty*, and *join the literary and the puzzling*" (43, italics in original). Beyond simply having a 'setting,' in the traditional literary sense, the riddle offers what can be understood as a self-contained 'world' in which all interactive elements ideally follow a consistent, internal logic. However, this often abstract logic should not always be overtly clear to avoid making the game too easy and therefore less compelling.

The function of a game world presides on how quickly a player can recognize and learn to operate within it, or else risk having their inputs rejected by the system: "The riddle lays down boundaries on interpretation because it has an answer, just as most IF works must be understood explicitly in certain ways so that the correct actions can be indicated by the interactor and completed within the IF world" (Montfort 47). Playing any computer game first demands that the player acquaints themselves with the affordances and constraints of the play experience that determine the bounds in which agency can be expressed and the terms by which the end of the game can be reached. The major difference in the puzzles, or riddling, of Nelson's *The Tempest* from other IF games is that the game world exists on a shared intertextual plane with its source text.

To demonstrate the intertextual logic of *The Tempest's* game world, let us examine one of the game's early puzzles. The first time the player, as Ariel, encounters Ferdinand, he is asleep south

of Prospero's cell – a detail that is added to the game. This and similar minor deviations emerge as a necessary consequence of the adaptive medium, since IF gameplay relies on puzzles the player is tested to solve, but the situation still plays out according to the internal logic of *The Tempest's* world. To rouse Ferdinand, the player must input the command 'sing' for Ariel to commence his song, beginning, "come unto these yellow sands…", which marks Ferdinand's entrance into the play (1.2.452). In this instance, as throughout the rest of the game, the interaction of the IF player activates another portion of the playtext and, by extension, progresses the game. Not only is 'sing' an obscure command that even an experienced player of IF would not readily think to input as a solution to a puzzle – especially with no apparent hint to do so – but the player must then follow the text's events strictly and "[begin] again," inputting a second 'sing' command to complete this intertextual riddle (1.2.473). The game is asking the player to draw on the knowledge that not only does Ariel sing often and his songs carry magical properties, but also that Ariel begins singing twice in this scene: once as he first encounters Ferdinand and again after Ferdinand says the cue, "it begins again" (1.2.473). A player already acquainted with or actively consulting *The Tempest's* playtext will thus be more equipped to solve the puzzle and be able to piece together how to essentially 'perform' it as it appears on the page. Not all of the game's puzzles follow the text's logic so accurately, but this particular example showcases Nelson's intertextual riddling at its most reasonable and satisfying. At the same time, the segment demonstrates how Nelson must strategically deviate from the play's details to create interesting gameplay situations.

To address the essential deviations between Nelson's *The Tempest* and the First Folio playtext, we must examine how the introduction of the interaction mode inevitably alters the way that a player engages with almost the exact same text that a reader of the First Folio would encounter. In his study of "Shakespeare, Intermedia, and the Limits of Adaptation," Fischlin engages in a

medium-centric analysis of Shakespearean adaptation: "Intermediality refigures in powerful ways that obscure, intentionally or not, these originary relations. It does so by foregrounding the medium as opposed to the source, with the medium more definitive of the narrative than the source text" (10). By overriding the traditional dramatic structure of a play in its conversion to an interactive medium, Nelson's adaptation can generate new means of reading *The Tempest* while imposing few creative liberties on the First Folio's playtext. The liberties he does take, such as incorporating text from other Shakespearean plays in scene descriptions, are applied less as attempts to alter the play's meaning and more out of practical necessity. Indeed, it functions as a perfect example of how a remediation, despite its attempts to be as loyal of an adaptation as possible, nonetheless opens up an entirely new space for interpretation – one derived from the very process of intermedial adaptation.

In her discourse on *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation*, Margaret Jane Kidnie explores a similarly holistic view of adaptation to Fischlin in her theoretical equalization of the Shakespearean' text itself' and any adaptations that are derived from its interpretive richness:

> Instead of 'the text itself' coming to stand in place of the work, with performance assuming a second-order, adaptive relation as a performance of the text, performance and text are both, in their different ways, instances of the work… locating them not *prior* to the work's instances of production, for example in the mind of an artist, but subsequent to production, in users' perceptions of sameness and difference among the many variants found in distinct production instances. (28-29)

Although game adaptations are not in the purview of Kidnie's book, her liberating discourse on Shakespearean adaptation nevertheless legitimates an ontologically complex adaptation like Nelson's game as a theoretically coherent performance. In this light, Nelson's game can be viewed

as a constructive development of the text's perpetual origin: a rhizomatic rather than rooted structure. However, her equalization of source and adaptation may prove problematic for an adaptation that does, in a sense, require a prior familiarity with its source text to even reach its conclusion. Kidnie's holistic vision of theatrical adaptation severs the performance's dependence (or secondness) on its source of inspiration and accommodates "a spectator who may or may not be a reader (and vice versa)" (29). From the standpoint of a reader or viewer, this is a fair and constructive point. But can the same be said about a performer – one who interacts with and thereby co-creates a performance?

In his highly influential conception of *Cybertext*, Espen Aarseth frequently expresses his preference for dramaturgical terms (such as intrigue) in relation to gaming over more imposing narratological ones (such as narrative). In both drama and gaming, the intrigue is not simply told to an audience; in the former, it must be discerned from dialogue, and in the latter, it emerges out of interaction with the game world, along with any telling or showing means it employs. However, Aarseth does note that the interactive nature of gaming makes its intrigue quite different: "The difference between dramatic intrigue and ergodic intrigue is that the dramatic intrigue takes place on a diegetic, intrafictional level as a plot within the plot and, usually, with the audience's full knowledge, while ergodic intrigue is directed against the user, who must figure out for herself what is going on" (112-113). Yet, unlike a passive audience member, an actor must carefully interact with the text they are to perform.

Adapting a text into a performance does not just benefit from knowledge of 'the text itself,' but in many ways, relies on it. Just like an actor preparing for a performance, a player must engage intuitively with the game world, that is, the text they have been thrown into, and learn how their

role operates within the world's logic. In a further engagement with the similarities and differences between performance and cybertext, Aarseth states:

> In drama, the relationship between a play and its (varying) performance is a hierarchical and explicit one; it makes trivial sense to distinguish between the two. In a cybertext, however, the distinction is crucial—and rather different; when you read from a cybertext, you are constantly reminded of inaccessible strategies and paths not taken, voices not heard. (3)

Aarseth assumes a hierarchical relationship exists between play and performance: one that inevitably privileges the source text. Developments in the discourse of theatrical adaptation in the last fifteen years, however, suggest otherwise. If one considers all the directorial decisions made in an adaptation of a play, one too will see how "[e]ach decision will make some parts of the text more, and others less, accessible" by drawing and accentuating specific meanings from the interpretational openness of the source text (Aarseth 3). And, yet, in Nelson's *The Tempest* there is very little to miss. Like a stage actor, the player of a digital game can exercise their agency to improvise and shape the course of their own production. But for the most part of Nelson's game, the player is charged with figuring out how to initiate another major chunk of the playtext either through spatial navigation or puzzle-solving.

Here emerges a curious tension between the content of Shakespeare's writing as it is faithfully transposed into the game and the material shift it is subjected to by being assumed under the structural form of a work of IF. In "The Death of the Author," Barthes dismantles the idea that a writer has authority and ownership over their writing, stressing that "it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality… to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs 'and not' me '(84). Nelson's statement that his game is an interactive performance of Shakespeare's play can be seen as an attempt to put Barthes' claim into practice.

Agency and Performance

By maintaining the linguistic unity of the source text and mitigating player agency, the act of playing the game will supposedly allow the language of the play to speak itself. However, language is not the only source of meaning here, as its transposition into the medium of IF has shaped this language into a fundamentally different experience of itself. The performance of language as it gets performed through the player in Nelson's *The Tempest* has reshaped the original body of writing and opened up new meaning potentials. Playing and performing, in this sense, become synonyms for defining the restrained agency of the player/performer as they work towards actualizing the game/play as such. *The Tempest's* gameplay thus fulfills its intent of operating as an 'interactive performance,' a unique instantiation of Shakespeare's original text in a new context.

My purpose in this essay is not to comment on the successes and failures of Nelson's game as a functional work of IF, but to attempt to account for the ways that the game's unique design informs its adaptive purpose: to function as 'an interactive performance.' Nelson's interactive fiction adaptation of *The Tempest* challenges the dichotomy between text-centred and performance-centred theatrical studies by incorporating elements of both textuality (with its oppressive linearity and fixed material form) and performance (with its medial transition and the creative liberties taken with its source), ultimately conforming fully to neither. On the one hand, the game is materially composed almost entirely of its source text, lacking any visual element or external creative input other than that of the decidedly restrained player. On the other hand, it fits no other generic category than that of the adaptive performance it claims to be. It is in this sense that Nelson's *The Tempest* can generate new readings as an adaptation while imposing as few creative liberties as possible on the First Folio's playtext. Deviations such as the Ferdinand scene and the occasional use of text from other Shakespearean plays for spatial description are not just aesthetic decisions, they are functional necessities. The game exemplifies how a remediation,

despite any desired attempt at fidelity, will offer new and even unexpected interpretive possibilities based on the interaction between source and adaptive medium.

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Representations of Violence in
Ricardo Piglia's *The Absent City* and
Rodrigo Rey Rosa's *The Pelcari Project*

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ABSTRACT

Violence is the central topic in Ricardo Piglia's *The Absent City* (1992) and Rodrigo Rey Rosa's *The Pelcari Project* (1991). In his novel, Argentine author Piglia recounts a tale about looking for untold truths connected to the horrors committed by the State. Guatemalan novelist Rey Rosa describes a violent medical experiment in his novella. The violence depicted in the two writings is associated with repression conducted by the Argentine military junta and the Guatemalan military government. This essay explores the literary representation of violence in *The Absent City* and *The Pelcari Project* against the violent histories of the two South American countries. Two theoretical concepts, "societies of discipline" and "societies of control," are applied to discuss violent methods, especially the complex surveillance systems described in the two texts. Through a comparative analysis of Piglia's novel and Rey Rosa's novella, the paper concludes that overwhelming violence reinforces the rulers' control over the ruled.

Keywords: violence; surveillance; narrative; control; Argentina; Guatemala.

Representations of Violence

INTRODUCTION

Violence makes up the core of the two texts. *The Absent City* (1992) recounts that a journalist called Junior explores the city's mysteries correlated to the State's violence. A narrative machine invented based on the memories of a deceased woman, Elena, constantly produces many stories against the authorities' oppression. *The Pelcari Project* (1991) depicts a violent medical experiment carried out by Dr. Pelcari, supported by an anonymous official who represents the government. Prisoners sentenced to death are selected as the subjects of this project. This novella pays special attention to two prisoners' (Yu1's and Yu2's) writings on their suffering. The two books contain references to the violent histories of Argentina and Guatemala. *The Absent City* is a post-dictatorship novel with many allusions to the "dirty war" led by the Argentine military authoritarian regime from 1976 to 1983. Another novella involves descriptions of violence associated with the military oligarchy's counterinsurgency in Guatemala in the 1980s. This essay discusses how violence is represented in these two texts against the backdrop of relevant violent histories. By conducting a comparative analysis of physical violence, strict surveillance, narrative violence, and resistance to violence, the essay claims that the aim of diverse acts of violence is for rulers to achieve complete control over the ruled.

The article applies Michel Foucault's "disciplinary societies" and Gilles Deleuze's "societies of control" for the analysis of violence. The society of discipline operates with strict confinements, which are represented through the distribution of space, time, and activities. According to Foucault, discipline requires enclosure, which refers to "the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself" (141). Schools, factories, hospitals, barracks, and prisons are typically enclosed spaces. A timetable and chronological arrangements of activities control people's movements and behaviours. Training, regarded as an activity in the timetable, "can make

each individual useful" (162). These disciplinary techniques produce "docile bodies," in another way, "subjected and practiced bodies" (138). Many scholars, including Deleuze, agree that the society of control is the "immediate future," succeeding the society of discipline (Deleuze 4). Different from the society of discipline with rigorous restraints, the society of control stresses "free-floating control," which shows that power in this new social mechanism is exerted more flexibly. In a society of control, people are not restricted in specific spaces, and they do not have to follow strict temporal plans of activities. This social form operates by "abstracting human bodies into data" with the aid of information technology (Shaviro 3). Computers, the core of information technology, are also the most important machines in the society of control. Since computers can "track each person's position" and record and analyze people's life information as data, they work well for surveillance, and thus for "free-floating control" (Deleuze 7).

The society of control "accelerates after World War II," but these two social forms continually coexist in subsequent several decades (3). Until today, the disciplinary power has not totally disappeared. From the 1970s to the 1980s, Argentine and Guatemala also witnessed the coexistence of the two mechanisms. It is also noteworthy that "discipline" and "control" are well characterized in *The Absent City* and *The Pelcari Project*. Therefore, these two theoretical concepts can be appropriately used for the analysis of violence, specifically the analysis of surveillance in the two texts.

REPRESENTATIONS OF VIOLENCE IN THE ABSENT CITY

Physical violence in *The Absent City* refers to massacre and exile. The State makes thousands of people disappear. In this novel, a story titled "The Recording" entails detailed descriptions of massacres of political dissidents. Anyone believed to be opposing the military government becomes a target and disappears. For instance, a gaucho who preaches the idea of anarchism is

murdered. Police officers in this novel are the agents of the military State. According to the description of witnesses, corpses are thrown into pits that are dug as mass graves. The wide plains with countless pits are depicted as "Dante's Inferno," which shows the great number of victims and the atrocities of the military government. It is more shocking that killers still play music when they shoot, which further underscores their brutality. Such violence in the book alludes to the "state terrorism" ("the Dirty War") in Argentina from 1974 to 1983. It is estimated that nearly 30,000 people disappeared, and their bodies are "buried in unidentified graves or pushed out of military aircraft into the Atlantic Ocean" (Marchak 156). These victims are called "subversives" to the military junta, including guerilla members, journalists, social workers, lawyers, and students (Marchak 4).

Besides massacres, many political exiles "pursued by the authorities" hide themselves on an island (Piglia 82). Even if they are physically alive, they have socially disappeared. The military's violence places citizens in danger of losing their lives or leaving their homes. The State violently makes people disappear in order to guarantee the stability of the regime. Citizens live under a strict surveillance system. Discipline and control both contribute to the State's surveillance, which significantly restricts people's freedom. In *The Absent City*, the psychiatric clinic with "divided zones and pavilions" (52) can be compared to a jail, a typical enclosed area discussed by Foucault. The division and distribution of the enclosed place "with control unit and surveillance system" makes it easier for surgeons to keep a watch on them (52). Besides, the clinic in the novel is often used for punishment, thus, it can be interpreted as a prison. People who tell the truth will be treated as the ones with delirium and sent to prison for horrible treatment. Surveillance is not limited to the clinic but can be found everywhere because everyone except those who are "in jail works for

the police" spies on others (19). Citizens are subjected to perpetual surveillance, which "provide[s] a guarantee of docility" (Foucault 148).

Computers make greater contributions to enhance surveillance. In Félix Guattari's imaginary city, an individual can embrace the freedom of exploring anywhere with the help of an "electronic card that raises a barrier" (Deleuze 6). Deleuze directs people's attention to the computer system linked with the electronic card, which "tracks each person's position" (Deleuze 6). Although computers are not explicitly mentioned in the entire book, the use of countless cameras for monitoring alludes to the existence of computers. Based on Elena's imagination of an American intelligence centre where all the cameras' recordings are transited to a "TV screen" for police officers to observe, it can be speculated that computers operate in the transition process and the formidable surveillance system made up by cameras, computers, TV screens and people, also works in Argentina. Overwhelming control in the clinic can be achieved through many cameras stalled on the ceilings and the control system in every zone. Cameras outside the clinic are more clandestine, but they still exist.

Another surveillance tool, a telepath, can even "read minds from a distance" (Piglia 48). The telepathic machine, involving the use of special cameras and computers, is extensively applied to collect and transmit information on what people think and feel. In the novel, telepath is compared with television because it can make thoughts visible by converting abstract ideas into images. "[T]o read the thoughts of a million people" is similar to watching TV (48). This machine is so sensitive that it can even observe and analyze citizens' unconscious mental states. Computers play an essential role in collecting and analyzing people's minds. With the help of telepath, the State can learn what the ruled are thinking, and quickly single out subversives. Cameras and telepaths make up a system of "free-floating control," (Deleuze 4) keeping a constant eye on people's location,

behaviours, and thoughts. The State has the ambition to control information flow. It leads to "the excess of the facts" and causes the jamming of the machine (48), described as a drawback of computers by Deleuze (6). Compared with the disciplinary methods, the control mechanism plays a more important role in keeping watch on people. Extremely strict surveillance ruins citizens' movement and free thinking, and effectively curbs the underlying threats towards the government, so that the State can tighten its grip on the citizens. It is more difficult for people to take subversive actions against the regime under rigorous surveillance.

The military government ruins the collective narrative. The government silences the public and conceals atrocities through a variety of violent means, including massacre, exile, and surveillance. Silence is another way of disappearing. The disruption of collective narrative in the novel can be linked with the silence of Argentines during "the Dirty War." It is noteworthy that the Argentine government attacks the press specifically and kills over 80 journalists (CONADEP, 372-374). The onslaught against the press effectively represses the public's voice, destroys information transmission, and covers violent truths.

In *The Absent City*, the State even creates a false history to conceal its acts of violence. For example, a Perónist reported dying from suicide is indeed assassinated by the police, which shows the unreliability of the official narrative. Perónists are regarded as the primary targets of the dictatorship because they are the supporters of Juan Perón, who was overthrown by the military junta. In the novel, the State even attempts to construct a false history for citizens. Those who insist on telling the truth would be sent to the clinic, where doctors replace their original memories with politically correct ones by operating on "white nodes" which handle memory storage (Piglia 60). "White nodes" refer to traces or marks left on creatures, a blind language through which one's experiences can be read. Memory is the symbol of individuality. If a person suffers the replacement

of memories, he is converted to another one. Because of the abuse of collective narrative and injection of an official history, the public holds the same belief of the false history construction, which sets them in a world with fictional reality along with abused truths. Therefore, Junior concludes that "everyone is dreaming the same dream but living in separate realities" (64). This narrative works to oppress people. On account of the political repression, people are deprived of their rights to access and speak the truth. Their identities are likely to be ruined if they are coerced to take memory operations. Narrative violence further tightens the screws on citizens' minds. All these acts of violence lead to citizens' physical disappearance and social silence, which can reduce the possibilities of resistance and then reinforce the control of the State.

The State's overwhelming violence can be combated. In *The Absent City*, the narrative is described as the most significant subversive agent to the government's repression. The narrative machine plays a central role in resistance because it unearths the abused truths. Elena is converted into a storytelling machine after her death by her husband Macedonio, who seeks help from the Engineer, the inventor of the machine. It is designed based on the "white nodes," which are also the foundation for psychiatrists' memory operations in contributing to creating an official false history. It is a way of resistance to the State by applying the State's technological nucleus to produce a disruptive force. The mechanism of the machine's narrative practice is to "take what is available and transform what appears to be lost into something else" (35). The plots have been altered while the central elements are restored. All the stories produced by the machine are the echoes of Elena's private experiences involving political repression. For instance, in the novel, a story titled "Stephen Stevenson," which recounts a man who wants to create a replica of the world, bears similarities with Macedonio and the Engineer; another story "The Recording" reveals the

genocide and atrocities of the State. Only if the truths are transformed into unrecognizable ones can they successfully pass the censorship and become accessible to the public.

The narrative machine creates an alternative narrative, which challenges the absolute domination of the official one. Reproduced stories from the narrative machine can help retrieve people's traumatic memories, which are "split off and hidden away" in the "most inaccessible corners of consciousness" (Loftus and Ketchman 49). Loftus and Ketchman explore the myth of memories and argue that traumatic memories hide deep in the unconscious. That is why many residents in the city forget the truths of violence, and the narrative machine works to recover these repressed memories of people. This machine also imitates the State's infiltration of false memories. The State successfully convinces the public of the false historical facts because "the repetition of events by a variety of sources is likely to be reported as personal memory or as historical fact" (Morello 222). Through mass production and extensive circulation of stories, people would wake up from the dark dreams of false memories. The machine's core function lies in undermining official false narrative, revealing the truths, and reconstructing a collective narrative.

The narrative in *The Absent City* becomes a significant battlefield where oppression and resistance combat each other. Although this machine brings new hope to challenge the government's power, it bears limited disruptive ability because it works mildly and indirectly. Recovery of the public's narrative and exposure of all the truths require an enduring process. The narrative machine just takes the first step. At the end of the novel, the machine is distanced into a remote museum, which imposes a restraint on the circulation of the stories. The relocation of the machine further shows the overwhelming violence and control.

REPRESENTATIONS OF VIOLENCE IN THE PELCARI PROJECT

The violent experiment destroys prisoners' health. All the prisoners sent to the jungle passively receive Dr. Pelcari's operations on their larynxes and in their brains. The medical interference deprives them of long-term memories, destroys short-term memories, and leads to their loss of speech, which impairs their thinking capacity. What an experimental subject can utter is restricted to a specific monosyllable. The prisoner "Yu" can only say "Yu." Akin to victims who suffer the removal of memories in *The Absent City*, prisoners forget what they have experienced before and then lose their original identities. They cannot think as normal people do. Even though these subjects have been sentenced to death, they still bear some basic human rights, which are abused by this violent experiment.

The medical project eventually causes the death of prisoners. The story ends with a massacre caused by Dr. Pelcari with the support of a counsellor, a representative of the government. Prisoners first socially disappear because of their imprisonment in a secret forest and then physically disappear in the wholesale slaughter. Similar to *The Absent City*, massacre and memory operations are two violent means to silence the victims and hide the truths. *The Pelcari Project* is also historically correlated. The State of Guatemala commits atrocities for several decades in the second half of the 20th century, but the 1980s sees the worst genocide by the government, which should be responsible for most murders, disappearances, and other violent acts on subversives (CEH 25). These acts of violence, explained as a way of 'counterinsurgency,' assist the government in achieving comprehensive militarized control of the country. Prisoners who violate the laws of the State can be seen as subversives. The scientist (and the government behind her) in the novella and the Guatemalan military State share a similar aim of massacre: to maximize the benefits of the rulers. In this novella, massacre is not only a punishment for these prisoners, but a

way to cover the atrocities. To exert tight control over the prisoners, the scientist resorts to physical abuse.

Prisoners live and work under a multi-level surveillance system. Disciplinary power is used to monitor them. The medical experiment is conducted in a jungle that functions as a natural jail. Each experiment subject is chained to a specific trunk on which the monosyllable he may pronounce is inscribed, demonstrating the special spatial distribution of prisoners. Trees and small areas around, together with strings of bells and chains to confine prisoners' moves, make up crude prison cells. Besides, it is noticeable that all the prisoners follow a relatively fixed daily routine. They are ordered to get up "when a drum is beaten" at dawn, driven to "chant," and then forced to "clean the earth" to seek what the official needs (Rey Rosa 28, 31). Foucault claims that "a strict timetable … held the prisoners in its grip from day to day" (121). The distribution of space and time restricts their freedom and promotes the surveillance of prisoners effectively.

Prisoners are also subjected to the control of computers. The central computer plays a dominant role in the experiment, evidenced by its great power in guaranteeing regular chant and work. These are essential parts of their daily lives, with the support of discipline as a subsidiary tool. Dr. Pelcari even uses the central computer to manipulate the death of these subjects. Prisoners carry out computer instructions to kill the guards and then themselves. Similar to *The Absent City*, surveillance is achieved with the combined use of discipline and control.

This complex surveillance structure integrates guards monitoring. They follow the scientist's orders to keep watch on prisoners. In the jungle, prisoners are the least superior ones in the power structure made up of them, the guards, and Dr. Pelcari. Guards, endowed with extremely limited power, are both the subjects and objects of surveillance. Their death shows their insignificance to Dr. Pelcari but also her brutality. Guards in the novella bear a resemblance to the civil patrol in the

violent history of Guatemala. To extend the militarization, "through the civil-patrol work, the army insert[s] itself into the fabric of every village life" (Thomas and Neil 364). The existence of guards further proves the novella's relevance to the Guatemalan history of oligarchy directly administered by the military. The jungle is the epitome of Guatemalan society, and the experiment can be seen as a microcosm of social violence. Although strict restraints on freedom are common punishments for people who are sentenced to death, surveillance in this novella is not used as a penalty, but as a violent tool to make profits for the scientist and the official. Surveillance, which facilitates the control of both prisoners and guards, and even the control of their life and death, implies the violence of the experiment.

The chant is another representation of a violent narrative. It refers to a special chorus formed by prisoners, each of whom utters their assigned monosyllable following a certain sequence. It can be associated with "training," which plays an important part in disciplinary societies. Medical interference and rigorous surveillance which have forced prisoners to comply with orders pave the way for this drill. Foucault holds that training "seeks to bind them together in such a way as to multiply and use them" (170). The chant, with the help of computers, further turns experimental subjects into a docile and unified productive force. After this training, prisoners fall into a stupor and submissively "clean the earth" to seek useful objects (Rey Rosa 31). The scientist and official can make great profits from their collective hard work. Toil further ruins their physical health, and so two prisoners die shortly after they flee away from the jungle.

The chant violently changes the original meanings of poems. It can be speculated that monosyllables uttered by prisoners can make up lines with special meanings. Before conducting her experiment on people, Dr. Pelcari uses the computer to order many parrots to sing "ma-sa-pe-sar-del-tiem-po-ter-co, mi-se-dea-mor-no-tie-ne-fin" collectively (14). Like the prisoners, each

parrot is allowed to sing only one or two monosyllables, and they utter the syllable one after another. What these birds chant are lines from "Canción de otoño en primavera," a poem written by Rubén Darío, an influential literary figure in Latin America. The scientist also plans to continue her experiment by instructing prisoners to chant verses by another renowned writer Jorge Luis Borges. In her future research, experimental subjects are expected to chant "co-ne-llos-fue-te-ji-da-la-ma-de-ja, de-se-res-plan-de-cien-te-la-be-rin-to" (72), from Borges' poem "Ariosto y los árabes." Lucy Bollington compares the "mechanical reproduction" of verses in the horrifying experiment with cultures and arts embraced by perpetrators in Auschwitz (9-10). The brutality of the experiment has changed the original meanings of these poems and transformed them into the expression of violence. There are differences in the representation of narrative violence in the two texts. In Piglia's novel, violence in narrative lies in repressing the collective narrative and producing a false history. The chant in another work imposes a terrible impact on prisoners' health and destroys the beauty of verses. However, in the two writings, narrative violence works well to strengthen control and benefit the people who apply this method. The three acts of violence carried out by Dr. Pelcari produce submissive slaves who can satisfy the experimental and economic needs of the scientist and the official.

Violence in the novella is fought back mainly by narrative. Different from the narrative machine, which "reconstructs the voice of memory" (Piglia 127), the narrative in *The Pelcari Project* is mainly embodied by two prisoners' written recordings of the violent project. Writing as a means of narrative "awakens" prisoners. As Ludwig Wittgenstein states that writing and speaking are two agents through which people "operate with signs for thinking" (Wittgenstein 6), when each prisoner is medically permitted to utter a specific monosyllable, writing thus becomes the only way for him to recover his thinking ability. Yu1 purposefully observes the surroundings

and ponders over how the project is conducted. In addition, with the help of writing, Yu1 recovers short-term memories. His long-term memories are inaccessible because they are obliterated by violent operations. Writing offers an alternative way of communication to speaking. It helps Yu1 and his substitute Yu2 "hold more complex conversations and understand one another with greater clarity" (Rey Rosa 45). These two prisoners collaboratively explore the mysteries of the experiment by sharing information and discussing their views through their communication. With each other's help, these two prisoners separately escape from rigorous surveillance, toil and violence.

Prisoners' writings provide important evidence of the scientist's violence, which directly put an end to the jungle experiment. Yu1 offers a detailed description of his experiences as a participant and his observation of the overall layout of his surroundings as an onlooker. Yu2's writing fills the gap in Yu1's recording as a supplement to make the testimony more complete. Their written recordings are further confirmed and supplemented by Dr. Adie's medical report. This doctor conducts an autopsy on Yu2's head and reveals what operations this prisoner has been given. His analysis of Yu2's deceased body and the two prisoners' writings make up a convincing testimony, the publication of which successfully ceases Dr. Pelcari's project. Since the writings of Yu1 and Yu2 unearth the secrets of chants and suspend the project, it subverts this violent narrative. In these two texts, the narrative is ambivalently represented as both a repressive tool and a resistant weapon. It is noteworthy that the violent experiment is not completely terminated, because the scientist has planned to conduct a new project in a more enclosed area. The escape of Yu1 and Yu2 is accidental, and most prisoners and guards are completely controlled by Dr. Pelcari. Although these lucky prisoners successfully flee the horrifying jungle, they cannot escape their deaths, which shows the violence's enduring influence on the victims.

CONCLUSION

The Absent City and *The Pelcari Project* share many similarities in the representation of violence. Violence in these two texts can be categorized into three types: physical violence, rigorous surveillance, and violence in the narrative. Thousands of subversives in Piglia's novel are executed by the police, meanwhile, prisoners and guards in Rey Rosa's novella face their deaths in a massacre. These wholesale slaughters, portrayed in the two writings, show their relevance to genocide carried out by the military governments in Argentina and Guatemala. In addition, both citizens and prisoners live under strict surveillance systems, which comprise disciplinary tools, computer control, and humans. In the two books, computer monitoring plays a central part, with disciplinary techniques and men's surveillance working as subsidiary tools. Discipline is more present in *The Pelcari Project*. Narrative violence is another way to strengthen control. In Piglia's novel, the state destroys the collective narrative and creates a false history. The chant, a form of violent narrative described in Rey Rosa's novella, aims to satisfy Dr. Pelcari's horrifying aesthetic needs, thereby further empowering the official. Diverse acts of violence are exerted to repress the ruled, reinforce the control and maximize the rewards of rulers.

Violence is fought back mainly by the narrative in both books. The narrative machine in *The Absent City* reveals truths and produces an alternative history, whereas the writings of two prisoners help them recover the ability to think, benefitting the convincing testimony. However, narrative resistance in the two texts is very limited, and that cannot completely disrupt the violence and control. It concludes that overwhelming violence serves to strengthen rulers' control of the ruled.

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The Border of Image: Marlene Dumas' Modern Abstraction and Feminist Theology in "The Last Supper" (1985–91)

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ABSTRACT

Marlene Dumas is a post-modern artist currently living in Holland and famous for her research on female sexuality, religious imagination, and political identity. In her works, the treatment of figures and objects is frequently inspired by the iconographic tradition and contains the potential power of negation and deconstruction. This essay investigates Dumas' ambivalent attitude towards religion, her thoughts about the relations between feminism and theology, and the rigid method of visual art interpretation she opposes in a detailed investigation of her work "The Last Supper" (1985–91). Selections of her portraits, essays, and poems regarding feminism and religion also support my argument. My comparison between Dumas' work and Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" (1495–98) suggests that Dumas replaces disciples with chaotic fetuses as a paean to motherhood and maternity to reconcile different gendered forces. Putting Dumas' artistic thoughts and practice in dialogue with iconographical interpretation, the article states that she refuses to offer ethical directions but shifts to the physicality of action painting and the non-verbal approach of visual art appreciation. The ambiguity in the image makes identification difficult and keeps the pictorial meanings in a state of dramatic emergence.

Keywords: Last Supper, Marlene Dumas, Feminist theology, Improvisation, Religion

The Border of Image

INTRODUCTION

Artists since the twentieth century have frequently mocked the heterosexual hegemony and white male privilege in the contemporary world by recreating medieval masterpieces. Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," composed for Santa Maria delle Grazie in 1495–98, is a quintessential symbol of Western Christianity. According to researchers such as E.H. Gombrich and Martin Kemp, who emphasize Jesus' announcement of the betrayal as a special moment seized by Leonardo, "Last Supper" marks the beginning of the Italian High Renaissance with its vivid narrative and distinctive characterization. Naturally, many post-modern artists parody da Vinci's work to criticize class, gender, and race relations in the modern world. Some of the examples are Susan Dorothea White's "The First Supper" (1988), Renée Cox's "Yo Mama's Last Supper" (1996), and Bronwyn Lundberg's "Lesbian Last Supper" (2017). In Annie Gérin's (161) summarisation of twentieth-century examples of "appropriation" for Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," Renée Cox replaced Christ with the photo of a naked black woman, while Susan Dorothea White substituted Da Vinci's thirteen white men with women of different ethnic backgrounds and presents Christ as an Australian aboriginal woman. Therefore, such a brief examination of these works indicates that a common practice is to replace the figures around the dining table with the marginals to delegitimatize and reframe the Bible story. It is against this backdrop, that is, the prevalence of substitution as an important strategy of reproduction, that Marlene Dumas' "The Last Supper" (1985–91)–characterised by an absence–stands out for its deliberate ambiguity.

Marlene Dumas, an artist born in a white Christian family in South Africa in 1953 who grew up in the Dutch Reformed Church when the apartheid still existed, is famous for her haunting portraiture and ambiguous political position internationally in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Compared with approaches such as photography, collage, and figurative painting,

Dumas' abstract style differs considerably from da Vinci's and some twentieth-century artists such as Susan Dorothea White, Renée Cox, and Bronwyn Lundberg. Rather than meticulously following the composition of the original (as Cox and Lundberg did), she skips most details and is particularly cautious with the medium she uses and believes in the energy of materials, thereby almost abandoning the narrative. More importantly, this painting has two versions, which can be seen as evidence of a shift in her religious attitude. The 1985 version was exhibited in the Jacobijnerkerk in Leeuwarden, and she "kept quite faithfully to the Christian iconographic tradition by depicting Christ with his disciples" (Bull et al. 316). In 1991, she obliterated all the Apostles, leaving Jesus alone. According to Dumas (qtd in Bull et al. 316), "a work has to be completely painted over in order to be set free for you." Critics have divided opinions regarding this deletion. For example, Marlene van Niekerk regards it as "a form of ironic propaganda" ("Seven M-blems") for it resists institutional religious painting, while Lieke Wijnia insists that Dumas denied any direct activist position, although there is also a satire. In her dialogue with Chris Dercon in 2011, Dumas explained that when interpreting her own paintings, she often sees herself as a third person, and is open to any critique held against her. What is ascertained is that it "[alludes] to the unease that exists around issues of stereotyping and discrimination" (55) and creates a space for debate and renegotiation.

Dumas often adds Christianity in the titles as the bigger context of her works and claims to paint as a religious woman in many of her writings and interviews. However, her religious belief remains unknown, and she refuses to elaborate. The only certainty is that Dumas' attitude towards religion is unconventional, as she states that "I am an artist who uses second-hand images and first-hand experiences" (80). She uses Muslim, Christian, and pre-Christian figures in works such as "Jesus is Boos" (1983), "Jesus Serene" (1994), "Jesus (sketch for the perfect lover)" (1994),

Magdalena series (1995), "Willendorf" (1997), and "Solo" (2011). For example, her Magdalena series depicts the gesture of Mary Magdalene, who cleans Christ's feet with her long hair and has become an archetype of sexual temptation. However, Dumas does not paint Mary Magdalene as a sensual, beautiful sinner but as a dark-skinned, at times short-haired, woman who stands up straight and returns the gaze of the onlooker. This is a relevant example of Dumas' way of introducing religious icons into her works, that is, consciously deviating her depiction of the figures from historical accounts or the Church's traditional representations and making them not easily recognizable. The same goes for her "The Last Supper." Christ's crucifixion is a starting point for her to explore what painting can do to iconic religious images, and this goal is distinctively different from that of the Church and outside of orthodox doctrine. Therefore, this article argues that Dumas' reproduction of da Vinci's work appreciates female deities and intimacy within the biblical territory but indicates new possibilities of how religious characters can be perceived, updated and re-enacted. Dumas is not specifically responding to da Vinci, but treats da Vinci as a springboard for her response to the historical institution of Christianity in the modern world. Dumas' 1992 article "Miss Interpreted" also suggests that her handling of the iconographic tradition is highly cautious. For her, the evaluation system of art should be independent of political and religious goals: "what I find questionable is the appropriation of terms from outside art which are primarily intended to elevate the status of art: war and religious terminologies, for example. We want to make use of the exotic in religion (of real religion) without being willing to pay the price" (61). By the act of painting, she goes beyond the preconceptions of religion, gender, and images.

Fig. 1. *Last Supper*, Leonardo Da Vinci, fresco, 1495–98.

Fig. 2. *The Last Supper*, Marlene Dumas, oil on canvas, 1985–91.

DA VINCI AND DUMAS: A BIBLICAL STORY REVISITED

To know Dumas' way and attitude regarding art-making, it is necessary to consult the original work of Leonardo da Vinci and how she refuses and goes beyond the iconographical way of interpreting paintings. Da Vinci's "Last Supper" is highly figurative. The specific theme is the disciples' betrayal and the institution of the Eucharist, with a group of thirteen men around a dinner table symbolizing the Holy Supper. Each person can be easily identified as people who believe in Christianity. It is a scenario where treachery and death can be foreseen. Christ's announcement stirs up various emotional responses among the disciples and calls for a psychological study of humankind's mannerisms and emotions. Because of da Vinci's arrangement of the gestures, the work is littered with portents of death. Jesus spreads his hands and turns his head sideways, calm and isolated, waiting for the impending doom. Kemp testimonies that da Vinci tried to include a broader temporal range: "Peter holds a knife which prefigures his severing of a soldier's ear, and which is also pointed towards Bartholomew at the end of the table, perhaps in anticipation of the latter's martyrdom by flaying" (179). All these details give the painting a prophetic nature that transcends time and space. Therefore, the contrast between Jesus' calmness and the panic of the crowd cultivates a strong sense of awe.

By contrast, Dumas' work is characterized by a technically effected ambiguity and a multitude of meanings created by them. She mainly uses light, bright colours, soft, rounded lines and shapes, instead of straight lines, verticals, or horizontals to suggest strength. The brushstrokes are rough, almost devoid of detail. For Dumas, providing diverse interpretations is more important than simulating the scenario. The images in this abstract painting can be read in multiple ways. One interpretation provided by The Rijksmuseum Bulletin is that it depicts an outdoor scene in which there are no disciples, only a yellow and orange table, the transparent body of Christ, and

some "foetus-like shapes, which looks like a cloud passing over" (316). Another path of interpretation I would offer here is that the table, whose upper part also serves as the horizon, can be recognized as The Earth, and Jesus looks like a volcano about to erupt. A few strokes below the "foetuses" can be recognized as a tree trunk and clouds as clusters of leaves. No matter in which way the images on the painting are read, there are no disciples, and "Christ has already been thrown on his own resources because he is betrayed" (316). Similar to that of da Vinci, the Christ image in Dumas' work looks serene and melancholy, connoting salvation.

The two works are the same in theme (the Last Supper story), but the difference is that Dumas introduces motherhood in the scenario. The originally painted apostles were erased by Dumas herself and she painted a chaotic mass of foetuses, a reproductive metaphor of motherhood, heralding the renewal of life in the upper part of the painting. If the image of Jesus is recognized as a volcano, it is then easy to associate it with the volcanic eruption and the vitality of nature. With Jesus and foetuses signifying death and the newborn respectively, it provides "[a] contrast between nearing death and emerging life embodied in the figure of Christ" (Wijnia 49). However, there are no detailed Christian drawings showing the development of the embryos in the womb, though medieval theologians did discuss the issue of embryos and some even "saw the early embryo as an already living creature whom God was preparing to receive a spiritual soul" (Jones 712). Putting foetuses in the Christian context weakens the religious signification of the painting and makes open interpretations possible. As Dumas described her painting process in the Dutch magazine *Liter*,

I did not know how to compose the table setting. The composition of the apostles was too careful and too contrived. It did not represent any existential struggle […] Afterwards I left the painting alone, for an unspecified period. It was because of my motherhood. Jesus was

born from a woman […] What is the future of those yet to be born? Of him who was born to

die? To die one needs to be born first […] Could his mom have done anything to change his

fate? (qtd in Wijnia 50)

Jesus' mother, who is irrelevant and absent in the Last Supper story, lies at the core of Dumas'

thought. Motherhood plays an important role in the switching of her religious idea, and more

importantly, when Dumas asks "What is the future of those yet to be born?" (qtd in Wijnia 50),

she does not stop at the level of her intimate connection with her mother but touches on the

universal reflection on the birth of human beings. If da Vinci's fresco depicts the institution of the

Eucharist to show how Jesus offers up his blood and flesh for the redemption of sin, Dumas uses

foetuses to indicate corporeal resurrection, and from a broader perspective, a Christian faith–Jesus'

flesh is spiritually given to his people, and only those who believe in Christ are living souls. The

Gospels support this belief: "Jesus said to them, 'Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of

the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you'" (*New International Version*, John

6.53). The embryo is the externalization of Jesus' life-resurrecting power and the prophecy of his

own resurrection. Dumas' painting indicates the fate of Christ, as does Leonardo da Vinci's

arrangement of the disciples' gestures.

I also argue that Dumas' depiction of the foetuses indicates an ideal origin of the world and

life beyond any gender binary. Virginia Woolf's "psychological androgyny" is helpful in this

discussion. In her 1929 essay "A Room of One's Own," she referred to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's

1832 statement "a great mind must be androgynous," suggesting that writers should write without

consciousness of their sex. The experience of being ascribed to a particular gender begins as one

of the first categories of experience that men/women receive as newborns and continues to shape

social expectations of them throughout their lives. However, Dumas' Jesus is not typically

masculine. Audiences without religious knowledge may even interpret Jesus as a pregnant woman with long hair and a round abdomen. Therefore, the work reconciles the two gendered forces. Woolf's androgyny theory is criticized by Elaine Showalter in that androgyny "represents an escape from the confrontation with femaleness or maleness" (1). It is interesting to see that Dumas uses sexual connotations and maintains the visibility of the body: images such as the uterus, long hair, and embryos do not disappear, but are strengthened. As Dominic Boogerd says, "the late 1980s and early 1990s saw an extensive group of [her] works whose subject matter is babies and pregnancy" ("Hang-ups and Hangovers"). Embryos and young children are regular but controversial motifs in Dumas' works. The problem of sexuality and female subjectivity is always associated with pregnancy, in other words, the biological function of the female body. Motherhood is emphasized by its juxtaposition with the sacrifice of Christ, both of which are related to the power of giving life. Dumas embraces maternity and does not regard it as the loss of individual agency or what Simone de Beauvoir calls "monstrous swelling," "tearing," "hemorrhage" and the alienating effect (336). In the harmonious and muted palette, female experience and female sexuality are thereby unveiled grounded in the Christian ethics of love.

MISS INTERPRETED: A DIALOGUE WITH ICONOLOGY AND ICONOGRAPHY

Dumas' "The Last Supper" was displayed in her solo exhibition in Van Abbemuseum in The Netherlands from 15 March to 3 May in 1992, and then toured Europe and the US. The title of the exhibition, "Miss Interpreted," is aimed at questioning the politics of interpretation, especially iconology and iconography. In "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art" (1939), Erwin Panofsky illustrates his distinction between primary or natural subject matter, secondary or conventional subject matter, and intrinsic meaning or content with reference to da Vinci's "Last Supper":

As long as we limit ourselves to stating that Leonardo da Vinci's famous fresco shows a group of thirteen men around a dinner table, and that this group of men represents the Last Supper, we deal with the work of art as such, and we interpret its compositional and iconographical features as its own properties or qualifications. But when we try to understand it as a document of Leonardo's personality, or of the civilization of the Italian Renaissance, or of a peculiar religious attitude, we deal with the work of art as a symptom of something else which expresses itself in a countless variety of other symptoms, and we interpret its compositional and iconographical features as more particularized evidence of this "something else." (31)

The problem is that iconologists encode images into languages and knowledge without paying attention to the visual aspect of painting. An iconographic analysis always begins with identifying the subject matter, and finally explains "how meanings are expressed in a specific visual order" (Holly 15) and the larger historical context the work is in. Horace's *Ut pictura poesis* (As is painting, so is poetry) in *Ars poetica*, the guiding principle for iconography, mainly works on Renaissance art but cannot be applied to art history as a whole. For the avant-garde, iconographical analysis is not always feasible. In Dumas' article "Miss Interpreted," she argues that "the privileging of reading over 'imagining' was of central significance for conceptual art" (60), which she finds problematic. Her "The Artwork as Misunderstanding" (1991) puts the interpretation of visual art in a patriarchal analogy: "There is a crisis with regard to Representation. / They are looking for Meaning as if it was a thing. /As if it was a girl, required to take her panties off, as if she would want to do so, as soon as the true interpreter comes along. /As if there was something to take off" (60). She also refers to General Idea's statement in "The World is Flat" (1990), that art interpretation is like a beauty pageant: "Glamorous objects open themselves like whores to meaning, answering need with vacancy, wanting to be penetrated by the act of recognition" (58).

By reading pictures as texts, many iconologists result in a process of decoding and the visual art is reduced to layers of meaning. "[The interpreter] is left with no alternative but to treat the image not as an image, but as a sign or symbol that must be decoded. He automatically clings to whatever can be named, the subject or theme, the scene or context, in short, anything that can be articulated in the discursive context of language." (Vos 107). For Dumas, it is how meanings are constructed by artists rather than what invisible meanings are hidden behind each visible sign that counts. It is the time to "read *in*" than "read *out*," to decipher the mental world of signs shown on the canvas in a non-verbal way.

Michel Foucault also discussed René Magritte's visual critique of language in "This Is Not a Pipe" (1926). His discussion on the interplay between paintings, words, texts, and titles can be modified as a comment on Dumas. In Magritte's work, the linguistic symbol, as the only exception, is not subject to the stylistic representation of the image and the principle of resemblance, but wanders on the periphery of the image and disrupts it unexpectedly. Dumas is painting in awareness of the spirit, and for her, the title or the "word" in the painting can prevent the work from being placed where the audience's intention is familiar. The title "The Last Supper" guides its audience to focus on the process of identification and disturbs the tranquil surface of the discourse that identifying images correctly is necessary and possible. Such a notion has a long tradition since the Renaissance. Scholars should, as Panofsky elaborated, exploit *practical experience*, *knowledge of literary sources*, and *synthetic intuition* (8–39) to work towards this goal. However, even Panofsky confessed an iconographic approach does not always guarantee its correctness. It is also important to refer to Gombrich (1978), who contends that different groups of viewers could seek second- or third-degree meanings in one artwork, and definitive identification of an image may be unattainable. I am also referring to what Lawrence Alloway

defines as the "iconography of suspended references which can neither be converted into one-to-one references nor dispensed with" (9-10) when he was discussing the paintings of Philip Guston, an action painter in America in the 1960s. By reducing the *recognisability* of the images and refusing to read paintings via literal identification, Dumas "[keeps] verbal and pictorial meaning in a state of dramatic emergence" (van Niekerk, "Seven M-blems"). She achieves the effect that "[a]lthough nothing specific ever does get defined, they so strongly convey an atmosphere of expectancy that I found myself waiting in front on one of them" (Melville 289). The identifications go in multiple directions, engage the viewers, and question the very first step of interpretation.

Whereas da Vinci was praised for his meditatively slow working procedure, Dumas prefers improvisation. In da Vinci's time, narrating holy stories was difficult because painting Christ involves dealing with both the human and divine parts of him. Painters in the fifteenth century had to seek a balance between the interior visualizations of the pious public and their exterior visualisations (Baxandall 45). His work is "most praiseworthy which by its action best expresses the passion of the soul" and this feature helped him reach "a supremely rational depiction of natural phenomena" (Kemp 182). Contrastingly, Dumas shifts iconography to the action of painting. While Da Vinci's version is more figurative and institutional, Dumas left evidence of improvisation. Watercolour is most frequently used. "Dumas starts her drawings by throwing a blob of watery ink on the paper ('it's like a creature from a big swamp,' she says, laughing) instead of drawing an outline. She then manipulates the blob until it turns into something approximating a face." ("Just People" 36) "Jesus (sketch for the perfect lover)" is a case in point. To emphasise the trace of improvisation, she leaves the irregular spread of watercolour on the paper as the outline of the figure. Dumas always plays with the medium (the colours, textures, the brush strokes and so on) and finds the most liberating way to use them. In "The perfect Lover, the Absent Lover and

the Daughter" (1996), each medium has its own thought: "it can run into its own paths of chance and surprise. I take pure joy in the making and the material qualities of the work" (Dumas 106). By making the painterly materials active in the art-making process, Dumas removes the literary element in the work and suggests that painting is a tool of expression, not a collection of concepts. Sylvia Grevel (46–48) argues that the representation of the *act* of painting makes Dumas a religious artist because religion takes place in the mind, and so does abstract art. There is always evidence of improvisation in her work, such as "traces of the physicality of action painting, of the rhythmic making of marks" (van Niekerk, "Seven M-blems"). Improvisation displays the psychological. The disquieting effect in her works leads us to explore whether images, texts, and our perceptions of them truly have borders. Her painting makes the mental state of the painter rather than the sacred visible and tangible, and this character can be understood as both a deviant from and a convert to the religion. Harold Rosenberg's famous statement on Abstract Expressionism in his essay "American Action Painters" from 1952 can be appropriated here, that "[w]hat was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event" (25). Just like the lines and shapes can have depictive functions, painting, as a physical motion, is inherently expressive. Though Dumas is not confined to a limited number of materials, media, and styles in her painting practice, the reason why she chose modern abstract deserves our attraction. Dumas' discussion (107) about the "voyeuristic gaze" of the painter can be a suitable reference to consult: "With photographic activities it is possible that they who take the picture leave no traces of their presence, and are absent from the pictures. Paintings exist as the traces of their makers and by the grace of these traces. You can't TAKE a painting–you MAKE a painting." Her painting visualizes the biblical story but the art itself is not subordinated to express the theological truth and to complete the religious commission. This may explain why the animated gestures of Christ and his disciples in Leonardo da Vinci's

painting are replaced by stillness in Dumas' one. She prioritizes the artist's action and personal excursion rather than theological correctness; it is the action of the painter, rather than that of the painted figures, that stands in the foreground of the stage.

FEMINIST AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Dumas is influenced by feminism and is famous among feminist theological communities in The Netherlands (Dröes 389). However, the feminist art movement against the Christian imagination of women does not speak with a single voice. My argument is that Dumas questions the rigid, stereotypical thinking about gender and religion but is willing to return to religious traditions and restore the power of women, which I call a "feminist theology."

In art history, Jesus/Christ is a central figure in the Christian tradition and has been portrayed in different forms. Globally speaking, due to differences in denominations, theological backgrounds, and cultural, ethnic, and colour differences, even in the Church, each artist has their own unique visual or literary interpretation. As each artist paints their own portrait, Jesus, the saviour of all humanity, becomes "a bearded lady fit only for exposition in the world of the circus and carnival sideshow" (Catich 381). Besides, there has also long been discussion on Christ's sex/gender. Some scholars argue that maleness is merely a human attribute and Jesus' divinity is not dependent on his maleness. Nevertheless, such division between divinity and humanity has been critiqued by some feminist theologians. For Rosemary Radford Ruether, in the works of medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, the maleness of Christ is ontologically necessary. And as Elizabeth Johnson puts it, there is still "a certain leakage of Jesus's human maleness into the divine nature, so that maleness appears to be of the essence of the God made known in Christ" (152).

In Dumas' depiction, Jesus is not necessarily a white male; instead, we cannot identify the class, race or gender of Jesus. As I mentioned in the introduction, some artists have replaced Jesus/disciples with black women, popular stars or ordinary people as a direct rejection of Christian ideology, but Dumas refused to slip into any ethical direction and retained the sacredness by preserving the contrast between life and death. Although she removed the twelve male disciples, she retained the core figure, Jesus, and shows a preference for female-identified metaphors. Here, Jesus has double roles, the guardian of life and one who predicts his own death (Wijinia 2014). She allows the religious icon to present a gesture of active rejection, rather than negatively erasing it outright in the painting. Nevertheless, Dumas does remove the hierarchy between Christ and his disciples. Looking into da Vinci's treatment of colours, the reddish garment of Christ is intensified against the dark brown furnishings. Ross King once discussed the qualities of colours (155), that warm and bright colours create a protruding effect, while dark ones shrink. The warm-coloured Jesus advances while the gloomy background recedes. Meanwhile, in Dumas' work, Jesus is sketched in a few strokes, not differentiated from the background by colour, and not outstanding like da Vinci's counterpart.

I also argue that the artist reminds us that Christianity has a vast tradition and links back to an existing tradition that sees Jesus as a mother. It is worth mentioning that whether the image of Jesus is or should be more masculine or feminine is a matter of debate in the academic circle. Some scholars contend that the masculinity of Christ has predominated in the history of his representation. For example, feminist theologians in the twentieth century, such as Ruether and Johnson, argue that though "There is no longer male and female […] in Christ" (*New Revised Standard Version*, Gal. 3.28), the "universal" humanity encompassed by Christ was gendered and within a male-stream position. At the same time, scholars like Caroline Walker Bynum refuse to

acknowledge the dominance of masculinity in the representation of Jesus, and even in the gospel narrative, the image of Christ is non-fixed. In *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (1982), Bynum studies how the words like "mother," "nurse," "womb," and "breast" were metaphorically used to describe God and Jesus among the Cistercians' writings of the twelfth and thirteenth century. According to Bynum, seeing God or Christ as a female is "part of a later medieval devotional tradition" (129). Also, E.M. Catich, who summarises and critiques the "defective images" of Christ throughout the history of art, considers the effeminate and hermaphroditic portrait type in medieval and modern times, such as "the up-gazing eyes; soft, downy beard; long, slender, ladylike hands and fingers" (381) of Christ, to be harmful. Despite his advocacy for artists to "restore to Christ His manhood" (385), he does acknowledge that feminine images of Jesus are heavily weighted in traditional Christian visual art.

While da Vinci precisely calculated the height of the table and other architectural perspectives in the background of the painting to make the fresco look like a real three-dimensional space in the refectory, Dumas has eliminated any architectural element. The result of this change is that the rationalist quality achieved by the distinct horizontal and vertical lines of the original work is replaced by gentle, vaguely curved lines. This is because Dumas was painting in awareness of sexual stereotypes in the high Middle Ages that treated females as "nurturing," "generative," and "tender," and males as rational and disciplinarian (Bynum 131, Ruether 325). In my opinion, Dumas has depicted Jesus to endorse ideas of her own: she is aware of the role of identity politics in feminism and anti-racism but avoids turning to identity politics. "I only use that word when forced to. This is where that horrible apartheid concept 'identity' got us. Now everyone is using and abusing it. And how the art world of the 90's loved that term! After discovering the body (as if it was ever gone) then they immediately started to look for its ID card" (Dumas 132). Similar

ideas can also be found in her short articles such as "The beginning of Love Stories and the End of Cultural Privacy" (1998), "A Nice Girl Like You" (1997), and "Alice doesn't Live Here Anymore" (2010). In her poem "Women and Painting" (1993), Dumas explained her motivations for painting and one verse refers to her religiosity:

I paint because I am a religious woman.

(I believe in eternity.)

Painting doesn't freeze time. It circulates and recycles time

like a wheel that turns.

Those who were first might well be

last. Painting is a very slow art. It doesn't travel with the

speed of light. That's why dead painters shine so bright.

It's okay to be the second sex.

It's okay to be the second best.

Painting is not a progressive activity. (76)

This verse demonstrates her complex position. "Those who were first might well be last" references the Bible, but "I am a religious woman" is a confusing expression, as "[she] does not say she is a Christian, nor does she say she is a feminist" (Dröes 391). Dröes considers that this poem steps backward into the tradition by her content with being the second sex and the second-best drawer. However, I think Dumas does not regard herself as inferior to men and God. The whole poem is ironic and believes that the historical transmutations will readjust the value of each work of art. Ranking the second surprisingly becomes radical, for it invalidates all orders and demonstrates her aplomb. However, the affirmation, resistance, and re-affirmation of the religious and patriarchal discourses, together with the cognition of cyclical time, brings uncertainty.

In fact, it is not the first time that Dumas depicts Jesus. Her works like "Jesus is Boos" (1983), "Jesus Serene" (1994), and "Jesus (sketch for the perfect lover)" (1994) depict Jesus more figuratively. One of the titles of the painting treats Jesus as the lover, and Dumas' discourse of the Lover always involves the issue of gaze and eroticism. The Jesus image is not typically pornographic but has an erotic aura. Jesus is staring at us, but the physicality and nudity presented make him ironic and horrified. These works are influenced by Expressionism, but compared to those of Edvard Munch and Francis Bacon, she is more like a sensualist rather than a stylist: "The aim is to 're-veal', not to 'display'" (Dumas 63). Secondly, it contradicts the refined and benevolent iconography of Christ to see him wearing an angry or bewildered face, painted with eyes that are green, round, and wide-set. The upper limbs are reminiscent of a langur monkey for being lifted with the neck stretched forward. The face of Jesus is black, whereas the body is light grey and green, creating a sharp contrast between the face and the body. These images of Christ break the boundary between human and beast–Jesus is no longer the Son of God, a dark-haired, white European man. In this sense, Dumas invokes the anxiety of resembling in physical features its human ancestor, the langur monkey, and the decivilization process that accompanies this.

Considering the above discussion, we can conclude that Dumas' reworking of the Last Supper is a manifestation of her feminist theology. Instead of challenging the canonical representation of Christ, Dumas thinks religion and feminism are not adversaries; theology can be a powerful source of contemporary feminism. We can see her applying the maternal imagination of the regenerative motherhood constructed in the Middle Ages, and her practice of abstract painting in opposition to the assumption that the image of Jesus should have a specific race and gender. "The Last Supper" introduces motherhood into the Last Supper story to add a gendered dimension, but I suggest not

to view it as overtly subversive because Dumas tries to remind her audience of the existing feminine feature of Jesus in the rhetoric and visual presentation of his redemption story.
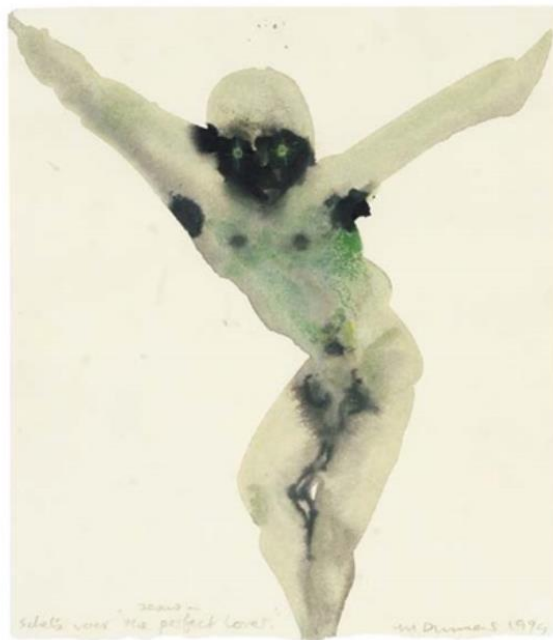

Fig. 3. *Jesus (sketch for the perfect lover)*, Marlene Dumas, watercolour, ink wash and pencil, 1994.

Fig. 4. *Jesus is Boos*, Marlene Dumas, oil and chalk on paper, 1983.

Fig. 5. *Jesus Serene*, Marlene Dumas, watercolour, ink wash and pencil, 1994.

CONCLUSION

Examining Dumas' work is important because a re-representation of Jesus and the Last Supper story also guides us to re-imagine people's (especially women's) relationship with art-making and the Christian religion. After comparing da Vinci's "Last Supper" with Dumas' reproduction, it can be argued that Dumas' abstractive contemporary art abandons any depiction of detail to deconstruct the androcentric bias within Christianity. She suggests that Christ's humanity processes both femaleness and maleness, and reminds us of "mother Jesus" as an existing tradition. In expressing the biblical story in contemporary terms, her position that the image of Christ should not be confined to a certain gender, race, or culture, is relatively ambivalent compared with other twentieth-century reproductions. Putting Dumas' artistic thoughts and practice in dialogue with traditional iconographical interpretation, I argue that she stays away from recognizable images and refuses to offer any ethical directions but shifts to the physicality of action painting. By removing the literary element in the work and displaying the psychological and physical aspects of the painting process, she leaves her religious statement undecided.

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BOOK
REVIEW

AMIR HUSSAIN

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In *Poetry in a Global Age*, Jahan Ramazani brings together two seemingly opposite approaches—the close and textual attention that often comes with the study of small-scale works of poetry with the broader and more distant examination of cross-national and cross-cultural movements that typically governs the study of globalization. As Ramazani notes, "originating largely in the social sciences, global studies can't be smoothly assimilated to the qualitative reflections of the humanities" (177). Yet even as he recognizes the challenges that go along with an interdisciplinary approach like his, Ramazani nevertheless insists that a careful method can "enhance[]…attention to the poetry *as poetry*" (177, italics mine). Moreover, according to Ramazani, the humanities' approach to global studies has typically focused on the novel and other narrative forms, overlooking the relevance of poetry in the positioning and understanding of globalization. Intentionally eschewing this divide between poetry and globality as well as between close reading and distant reading, Ramazani turns to a range of twentieth-century modernist and postcolonial poets across national boundaries precisely to consider what these poets have to say on the topic of globality in, and through, their poems. As he argues, modernist and postcolonial writers are "deeply intertwined" and both "work from the shared historical ground of a worldwide modernity" (101).

Ramazani is guided predominantly by a series of questions at the start of each chapter of *Poetry in a Global Age,* as he attempts to develop connections between poetry and globality while still attending to careful textual approaches to poetry. The book is divided into ten multifaceted chapters. Several chapters are dedicated to studies of three twentieth-century modernist poets: W.B. Yeats, Wallace Stevens, and Seamus Heaney. Other chapters make a broader examination of a larger group of poets, including Agha Shahid Ali, W.H. Auden, Elizabeth Bishop, Mary Borden, Kamau Brathwaite, Cathy Park Hong, Wilfred Owen, and Ezra Pound. He turns to these poets as their own kind of authorities, suggesting that in their poems they speak to different ways of understanding globality that have not been raised by literary critics who have focused on narrative genres such as the novel in their approach to global studies. Discussing Franco Moretti and his "distant reading," which has popularized a way to map and compute broader trajectories of world literature, Ramazani argues that Moretti's paradigm is difficult to square with poetry's formal demands (124). As Ramazani observes, "poetry has been associated more than any other genre with close reading partly because of the small-scale intricacies and textures that help constitute poems and that risk disappearing when works are viewed at a remove" (124). For Ramazani, a close approach remains essential if we are to study and understand poetry, given that "*[h]ow* a poem says what it says is no less essential to its identity as a poem than *what* it says" (124). Or, as he metaphorically puts it when speaking of the content and form in Heaney's poem, "Alphabets," "the poem is both about the globe and itself a globe" (181).

Throughout his analysis of modernist and postcolonial poetry, Ramazani is invested in highlighting both big and small ways that twentieth-century poets, who one may initially conceive as national poets, have been imbricated in cross-national and cross-cultural literary production. Indeed, Ramazani insists that these poets have also used poetry to challenge nationalism explicitly.

As an example, Ramazani discusses how Isaac Rosenberg's "Break of Day in the Trenches" uses the figure of a roaming rat to directly mention "'cosmopolitan sympathies'" and to question nationalism in the context of World War I (27-28). Ramazani says that poets like Rosenberg have used poetry to participate in "literary spaces for enacting, and reflecting on, transnational imaginative solidarities" (28).

One can further see the stakes of Ramazani's investment in collapsing nation-based approaches to the study of poetry, in probing the viability of national identity, and in advancing transnational connections in his chapter, "Yeats's Asias: Modernism, Orientalism, Anti-orientalism." Here Ramazani delves into Yeats's engagement with Asia in the continental sense—rather than in the national sense, such as the studies discussing Japan and India that, he points out, figure in the existing scholarship on Yeats—to show both orientalism and anti-orientalism in Yeats's poems (133). In exploring Yeats's "multifaceted interest in East, South, and West Asian cultures," Ramazani exemplifies how the foundationally modernist poet Yeats had drawn on a broad range of creative and intellectual influences and interests that were not limited to Europe alone, but that were, in fact, strongly interconnected with Asia (133). Thus, Ramazani attempts to reconfigure a Eurocentric and nationalist understanding of Yeats's modernism, saying, for example, that it is "Yeats's encounter with Asia, long before he became a deep reader of Nietzsche, that helps instill his perspectivism" (147).

Ramazani also engages in innovative ways with poetry's relationship to the plurality of languages and cultures "especially in the wake of the intensified globalization of the past century or so"—that is, in a world wherein these languages are seen to increasingly and more frequently cross and intersect with one another (193). The final chapters deal with the presence of "code-switching" between languages as well as the debate surrounding whether language is translatable

or untranslatable; here again, Ramazani is interested in what poets have had to say on these intensified intersections of language in their own poems. For Ramazani, poetry's intimate connection with language makes it vital for such debates: "alert to the origins of words and the routes they've travelled, poets often make visible the permeability of languages" (194). In Ramazani's analysis, a study of these poets' language—such as the example he provides of Ezra Pound incorporating several languages within one of his poems—once again highlights the limitations of containing and defining their works on a national basis (200). In discussing examples from contemporary poetry like Hong's *Dance Dance Revolution*, Ramazani discusses how she mixes several languages together, manifesting, however, the playfulness, and not the collapse, of language: "[A]ll these poets [like Hong] revel in the linguistic vitality made available by intercultural contact" (202). This material on "code-switching" and the translatability of language raises particularly fascinating insights into how poets participate in globality at the level of language, or literally through their own words.

Poetry in a Global Age can be situated at the crossroads of poetry studies, globalization studies, modernist studies, and postcolonial studies. Professor of English at the University of Virginia, two of Ramazani's other recent works—*A Transnational Poetics* (2009) and *Poetry and Its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres* (2013)—reveal his long-standing interests in the way in which poetry moves across dimensions of space, time, and genre. In particular, the emphasis on thinking about twentieth-century poetry across national, cultural and hemispheric borders in his *A Transnational Poetics* speaks most directly to the project of his newest book, *Poetry in a Global Age*. As he puts it, "but whereas singular modernity and diffusionism stress standardization and homogenization in history and culture, pluralist concepts

help to bring out heterogenization" (111). His largely pluralistic critical approach also takes after his conceptualization of poetry:

> As we turn a poem over and over, it is likely to reveal a kaleidoscopic range of local-foreign configurations, no matter how firmly situated within the local or how foreign its form or content may at first appear. […] Instead of abstracting world literary evolution as a one-dimensional and one-directional model or scientific law, our form-content analysis should—taking its cues from poems—aspire to be polyphonic and multilayered, moving nimbly back and forth between micro and macro, local and global. (130-131)

Ramazani's study creates a rich tapestry of many different poets and critics conversing with globalization, even as he almost always defers to the poets and to poems for their insights on globality and globalizing processes.

In the end, *Poetry in a Global Age* invites readers to continue exploring, in the manner of Ramazani's own open-ended inquiry, connections between the domains of poetry and globality. But the deeper stake of what is undoubtedly a vital project for our contemporary globalized situation remains somewhat indistinct within such a pluralistic approach that welcomes and invites yet more pluralism. Ramazani's style, as well as his hope, appears to rest with the openness and connection-making of poetry more than with certainty or definability. While such a style undoubtedly has its own value as a counterforce to divisiveness, it also has its own limitations. When reading the book with scholarly or personal interest, one may find oneself wishing not necessarily for a certain, or a final, critical answer from the author but at least for a greater sense of the critical significance of these poets' works at the level of the political or of the historical. While Ramazani brings considerations of postcolonialism into conversation with his analysis of

modernist and postcolonial poetry, his pluralist approach nevertheless distances him from the political and power-based critique that often, but not always, features in postcolonial criticism.

An invitation to pluralism, on its own, does not sufficiently address social dynamics of power, such as imperialism, class, gender, or sexuality. For example, how might the examples of working-class or queer poets be relevant for thinking about cross-national solidarities? Or how might poets with historically marginalized identities, such as those of class or sexuality, use "code-switching" in a way that subverts the meaning of words in order to reclaim them for their own political purposes? Put in other words, understanding and appreciating the pluralism of perspectives of poets on an interconnected globality does not necessarily provide adequate consideration to the multiple identities, groups, and nations that may not merely be in play in global modernity, but that may indeed be in a conflictual and power-based relationship with one another. Delving into this book's rich examples and readings of poetry, one may find oneself searching for an engagement with sociopolitical dynamics of such a nature.

Ramazani's conception of poetry's multiplicity points to the need to consider such questions and dynamics. According to Ramazani, poetry is vital for thinking about globality precisely for the way in which poetry's complexity and connection-building open up to the multiplicity of considering others' viewpoints. As he writes, citing Richard Rorty's take on the novel and applying it to poetry, "poetry's facility at double- and even multisided thinking makes it suited to the 'imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers' (Rorty)" (35). While Ramazani sees poetry as vital for "'see[ing] strange people as fellow sufferers,'" he does not sufficiently consider the role of power in determining who suffers most. Understandably so, the ideal audience for *Poetry in a Global Age* may very well be scholars and readers whose concern and interests are primarily in the poetry, rather than in the history or politics, of modernist and postcolonial

literature. Surely all scholars and readers will find in Ramazani's expansive and thoughtful exploration of both canonically and marginally studied poets a deeper understanding of the significant position that poetry holds for thinking about global modernity.

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