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Beyond Language: Intermediality and Multimodality in Literature and Literary Studies

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Introduction

Intermediality is a notion related to the tendency in academic studies to broaden the scope of the practiced disciplines and their topics. Already some twenty years ago, Hans Lund (2002) observed the transition from comparative art studies to intermedial studies, which goes hand in hand with blurring the boundaries between high and popular culture. Going beyond the meaning of the printed text in a book has become more relevant for the academic study of literature. Additionally, already from the manuscript stage onwards the visual aspects have been related to the verbal text. Hence, analyzing literature from an intermedial perspective implies more than the traditional structuralist and narratological approach.

Derived from the Latin word *littera* – "a letter of the alphabet", literature has been predominantly associated with the basic medium of the 'word' in the form of printed letters. Rarely has literature been considered as intermedial. "One of the realizations of our [intermedial] discourse was", as Claus Clüver (2020) suggested in his latest interview, that "there does not exist a 'pure' medium", and another realization was "that the last century created a number of new media that are mixed and fused by their very nature" (p. 328). In a similar vein, as underlined by Jørgen Bruhn and Beate Schirrmacher (2022), any form of communication involves all our senses, and so "[t]here are no purely visual, textual, or auditory media" (p. 3). Meanwhile, by claiming that "[t]o understand things means to interrelate them", Lars Elleström (2020, p. 35) foregrounds that investigating literature frequently includes the analysis and interpretation of basic media other than the predominant

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word. Inspired by Montaigne and Gadamer, the following issue of *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature* follows Tim Jarvis' (2016) premise that "[t]o really seek to understand is to seek contradiction and provocation" (p. 4). Thus, the dossier has been built upon the idea of broadening the premises of analyzing literature under the light of intermedial studies.

The first article, written by Dominika Bugno-Narecka, starts from the premise that language is neither the main nor the only domain of literature when producing meaning. Thus, she explores the potentialities of the material and spatio-temporal aspects of the selected literary works by Orhan Pamuk and Patrick Gale. In the second article, Erika Vieira draws attention to the physical materiality of the outside by questioning the inside. Starting from the paratext, the argumentation regarding space presented in the article enlivens the Kantian ergon-parergon discourse and steps beyond the Cartesian subject-object divide. In the third paper, besides relying on the referential mode of language and indexicality working for the benefit of verisimilitude, Grzegorz Maziarczyk emphasizes the multimodal context by foregrounding the assemblage character of the text that challenges the expected sequentiality of a verbovisual storyline.

For Aurélie Zurbrügg, the intertwined aspects of materiality and the semiotic structure are important for considering the wall as a qualified medium in the sense proposed by Lars Elleström (2010, 2021). When she claims that "the widespread presence of the wall in fiction is an important, yet neglected actor", she highlights it as a media representation within her investigated literature. Gabriel Franklin, in turn, questions spatio-temporality. He sheds light on the way how José Saramago draws attention to and makes us look inside. As a sort of remedy to Baudrillard's simulacrum, readers are supposed to fill in the gaps themselves. The multiplicity of enfolding the inner, the outer, and the virtual reality is the topic of Philip Steiner's paper concerning the novel *The Three-Body Problem*. Exploring the media representation of the video game, he strives to link modern physics with the immersive effects on a protagonist who is more interested in the namesake video game than the outside world represented in the fictional world of the novel. These three papers set the novels' words in friction with the world by means of mise-en-jey and immediacy (Bolter & Grusin, 1999).

In a comparative approach, Elaine Carolina Pinto discusses how Artemisia Gentileschi´s self-portrait fashions her as a female artist. The painter and her *oeuvre* are intertwined in an intermedial network of literary reinterpretations. Last, but not least, Thais Diniz panoramically explores Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" by giving an overview of how one single source may extend the notion of intertextuality into a transmedial network. She looks at different media products – drawings, concrete poems, films, novels, paintings, editorial cartoon, comic books, graphic novels, and pieces of music – taking into account different intermedial processes: adaptation, interlingual translation, transmediation, and representation.

In thinking books in multiple intermedial modes, the articles in the present dossier step beyond traditional narratological and structural preconditions of analyzing literature.

Lublin, Lund, São João del-Rei, September 2022

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Beyond Language: On Intermediality (and Multimodality) in Literature

ABSTRACT
The article questions the traditional application of intermedial categories to literature. It aims to show that the thinking in modes and clear-cut categories suggested by Lars Elleström, though systematic and presumably universal, when taken plainly, is likely to narrow down the intermedial potential of literature. The literary examples discussed – Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence* and Patrick Gale's *Notes from an Exhibition,* as well as other examples provided in the article – illustrate how the primacy of language in literature can be questioned and how the presumptions we have concerning literature and books can be challenged. Thus, the model proposed by Lars Elleström needs to be expanded.
Keywords: literature, intermediality, multimodality, museum collection, cabinet of curiosities

To define literature accurately is an arduous task. Following the definition provided by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Baldick, 2001)*,* literature can be understood as "a body of written works related by subject-matter (e.g. the literature of computing), by language or place of origin (e.g. Russian literature), or by prevailing cultural standards of merit" (p. 141). Etymologically, the term "literature" is derived from the Latin word "littera" for letter, that is, "the smallest element of alphabetical writing" (Klarer, 2004, p. 1). Hence, literature has always been strongly associated with language and writing: it "has been nearly synonymous with written texts and books, but not with every text in every book" (Atã & Schirrmacher, 2022, p. 42). What distinguishes literature as a qualified medium from other written texts are particular "criteria of imaginative, creative, or artistic value, usually related to a work's absence of factual or practical reference" (Baldick, 2001, p. 141). The predominant focus on the linguistic aspect which conveys the theme, concepts and discourse facilitated by the literary

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work often neglects its oral and visual dimension (Gibbons, 2012; Klarer, 2004)[1]. Formalism and structuralism have a strong position among the dominant trends in literary studies, despite the fact that although thinking in modes and fixed categories helps to grasp and explain phenomena in a systematized/systematic way, as suggested for instance by Lars Elleström (2010, 2014, 2018, 2021), it may seem limited and somehow hamper the intermedial potential of literature, if not expanded. The following paper demonstrates how literature as it is traditionally understood, described by means of Elleström's modalities, can go beyond his established categories and become a complex intermedial phenomenon.

The two novels discussed here, namely, Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence* and Patrick Gale's *Notes from an Exhibition,* share several features with a peculiar form of museum collection known as the cabinet of curiosities or the Wunderkammer. The novels' use of this seemingly chaotic form of collecting challenges literature from the intermedial perspective as the predominantly temporal medium of literary narrative acquires features of a spatial one, that of a museum collection already indicated in the titles of both novels. Through the strong presence of things (material objects) in the virtual space (spatiotemporal modality) of both novels, and by the nature of the Wunderkammer collection, i.e. how exhibits are selected and the connections between items on display are made, the traditional causality of events is challenged in different ways described below. The selection of items and the process of compilation in particular are undervalued in semiotics, as the cabinet of curiosities denies the distinction between form and content. But before the two novels and the related ideas are discussed, some general observations concerning the expansion of the material and the sensorial modality of literature will be made.

1. Expanding material and sensorial modalities of literature and its technical medium of display

As far as material and sensorial modalities are concerned, while reading a book readers typically interact with the flat surface of a page (or a screen) by means of the eyes that follow the text and the fingers that turn the pages (even if that means tapping or swiping the screen). Among the aspects which are frequently marginalised while discussing literature as a medium, however, there are the acoustic element and the effect of the spoken word, which can be traced back to the oral tradition and which point to the performative aspect of literature. Audio-literature (voice recordings of primarily printed works), radio-drama and podcasts conveying original stories (the broad category of audio-drama) challenge the prevailing

[1] Except for drama, in which „the union between the spoken word and visual expression survives in a traditional literary genre" (Klarer 2004, p. 2), and which „combines the acoustic and the visual elements, which are usually classified as non-literary" (p. 2).

understanding of literature as works written down and printed on paper. They usually contain all the elements typical of a narrative– characters, plot, setting, ideas – constructed by means of numerous both literary and non-literary devices. The latter include music, silence and background sounds or noises. However, the story is delivered by auditory means and not visual ones. The narrative is to be listened to, and not perceived visually.

Another example of broadening the traditional material and sensorial modalities of a book are "locative narratives" (Hayles, 2008; Hight, 2006), such as Janet Cardiff's *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* and *Her Long Black Hair,* or Jeremy Hight, Jeff Knowlton and Naomi Spellman's *34 North 118 West.* Locative narratives allow a person to listen to an audio narrative and/or look at images on their mobile phone or other PDA while walking a specific route within London, New York's Central Park or Los Angeles, to name a few places from the examples above. One experiences not only going beyond looking at the flat surface of the book, but frequently also going outside the confines of a traditional museum as the narratives tend to present the history of a particular location (Hight, 2006). Locative narratives are a particular case of intermediality that combines and integrates "real-world locations with virtual narratives" (Hayles, 2008, p. 12), and hence they also involve senses other than sight as well as strongly affecting spatiotemporal modality.

What is more, as indicated by "locative narratives" and observed by Pedro Atã and Beate Schirrmacher (2022), literature's technical medium of display (the printed book) has also been challenged by electronic devices that display text, i.e. all kinds of screens: computers, phones and e-readers. The concept of analog literature has been supplemented by the notion of e-books (Atã & Schirrmacher, 2022), electronic literature and hypertext or interactive fictions (Hayles, 2008). All these types of digital media "enable new ways of interaction with the text" (p. 43): easier navigation and search of the text, and hence enhanced possibilities of making connections in the process of interpretation in the case of e-books, and "a multi-sensory reading experience that involves visually perceived text, auditory text, sounds, and moving images" (p. 46; see Hayles, 2008) in the case of electronic literature. New technical media of display engage the reader in more interaction with the literary work, drawing attention to the performative aspect of literature (Atã & Schirrmacher, 2022).

To make a smooth transition to the discussion of Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence,* it ought to be observed that literature successfully makes its way to the public sphere outside the space of the book. Parts of Pamuk's novel, especially its epigraphs (quotations from *Celál Salik* and *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*), fragments of chapter 68 ("4,213 Cigarette Stubs") and excerpts from other chapters describing Fusün smoking can be found on the walls of the museum in Istanbul and in particular in the cabinet no. 68 displaying 4,213 cigarette stubs (Pamuk,

2012). Such encounters of literary quotations in public spaces challenge paper or screen as the primary technical medium of display associated with the private space of reading. Other examples include fragments of poetry painted on walls of a building and steps of a public stairway, or short story stations: cubes and dispensers that print fragments of literary texts on eco-friendly scrolls resembling bus tickets or shopping receipts and that adjust the length of the story to the length of one's journey by public transport[2].

All the arguments above point to the fact that the seemingly fixed and stable material modality of literature should be extended and should no longer be limited to the flat surface of a paper page in a book. Consequently, the change in material modality may lead to changes in sensorial modality, for instance, to the dominant role of hearing in the process of podcast or audiobook reception, as well as to other changes in the spatiotemporal modality, which will be discussed in the next part of this paper.

2. Broadening the spatiotemporal modality of literature – Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence*

In the intermedial discourse (Elleström, 2010, 2014, 2021), time and space relations of literature can be generally discussed on three planes: as time and space manifested in the material interface; as notions related to the reader's cognition and perception of the literary work (cognitive space and perceptual time); and as part of the world presented, i.e. virtual time and space. While the spatial facet of a book and the reading time may vary depending on the version of the book and the reader's reading skill, the cognitive space and the virtual time-space are of particular interest for the study of intermediality in literature.

The general impression of *The Museum of Innocence* is that the story is told by a museum guide in the eponymous institution who happens to be the collector, the curator of the exhibition and the protagonist of the story himself (but it turns out in the final chapter that throughout the novel Pamuk – the fictional writer whose name coincides with the real writer's – is speaking in Kemal's voice), and that the story is very much determined by the objects gathered in the museum. It is the objects from Kemal's and Füsun's lives that navigate the story. Their accumulation – Kemal compiles thousands of random items related to his life and his love for Füsun – reflects the nostalgia for the Istanbul of the 1970s and 1980s, as illustrated, for example, by the quotation:

> Here I display an exact replica of the loaf I bought from the grocery store across the street. Its function is sentimental, but also documentary, a reminder that millions of people in Istanbul

[2] More information about the project can be found on the website: https//short-edition.com/en/p/a-new-kind-literary-pulse (retrieved on 31.7.2022).

> ate no other bread for half a century (though its weight did vary) and also that life is a series of repeated instances that we later assign – without mercy – to oblivion (Pamuk, 2009, para. 39).

The past is evoked in the present and stored as cultural memory in the object. What is more, exhibited items point to the material details of everyday situations and common activities, such as smoking a cigarette, having dinner, watching TV or going on a picnic:

> […]the picnic basket displayed here – the thermos filled with tea, stuffed grape leaves in a plastic box, boiled eggs, some Meltem bottles, and this elegant tablecloth passed down to Zaim from his grandmother – evokes our Sunday excursion that may offer the visitor some relief from the oppressive succession of interior settings, as well as my own agony (Pamuk, 2009, para. 27).

At the same time, the narrative emphasises that time is linked with emotions and what the characters feel in particular moments and throughout the course of action – a dimension not indicated or discussed by Elleström. What is more, in their materiality physical objects capture and represent memories, linking cognition or thought to immaterial feelings and emotional states related to particular events or circumstances, for instance:

> Here I display the damp and broken stones of the back garden and the shells of snails that crawled over them, along with our solitary friend, the panicky lizard (now petrified), who disappeared during the rains – all represent the abandonment of *yali* life by the nouveaux riches with the approach of winter, and the attendant melancholy of the season (Pamuk, 2009, para. 42).

It is from the very common, ordinary things and natural processes that the story is derived. The fictional world is built on the basis of these objects, and not the other way round: that is, the objects are not placed in the story for the sake of the reality effect (Barthes, 1969, as cited in Wahl, 1989, pp. 141–148), merely to ornament it and fill up the presented world with meaningless trivial objects. With special emphasis on cigarettes and ashtrays, items of clothing and accessories, cosmetics, stationery and letters, figures of dogs, saltshakers, quince grater, canary cage, car wreck, photographs and postcards, film posters and magazine clippings, items of furniture, clocks and watches, restaurant menus, maps and the like, Pamuk transforms the linear and temporal narrative (the story of love) into the space of a contemporary cabinet of curiosities, realizing on the grounds of literature his own claim that "[r]eal museums are places where Time is transformed into Space" (Pamuk, 2009, para. 82). In Aristotelian terms, instead of focusing on Time, i.e. "the line that links these indivisible moments" (para. 54), the story prefers relating single moments captured by the objects. This, in turn, is part of the logic of cabinet collection: to retrieve knowledge from the objects gathered, and make connections among those objects which capture and express the complexity and wonder of the universe (Bredekamp, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). In *The Museum of*

Innocence, the narrator does that for the reader and the visitor to the eponymous museum, but visitors to the actual museum in Istanbul have to make those connections for themselves.

For the major part of the novel the reader is constantly reminded that the story told in chronological order is in fact (re)constructed and (re)told from the material objects gathered, i.e. it arises from material culture, which is more focused on the practical use of things than on their meaning. This point is demonstrated by metafictional intrusions, expressed for instance by means of the following and similar phrases: "this long, slender glass (see exhibit)" (Pamuk, 2009, para. 24), "I use it [the depiction of the internal organs of the human body] here to illustrate to the museum visitor…" (para. 26), "the picnic basket displayed here..." (para. 27) or "Here I display an exact replica of…" (para. 39). Pamuk (2012) himself explained that "focusing on objects and telling a story through them would make my protagonists different from those in Western novels – more real, more quintessentially of Istanbul" (p. 15).

The apparent "rubbish" gathered for the exhibition, the examples of which include the aforementioned cigarette stubs, old saltshakers, hairpins and empty perfume bottles, not only stands for vanity, transience and fragmentation, but also has value and meaning to the first-person narrator in the novel. Memories concerning his beloved are attached to and reconstructed from different material objects – silent participants in the events described, which are gathered, put on display in the eponymous museum and turned into a story told in the subsequent chapters of the novel. For the narrator, the mundane things become valuable as they store and evoke memories, like the sugar bowl in the following fragment:

> The sugar bowl in this exhibit is from the day when a cloud of melancholy darkened our happiness, plunging us into one of our occasional silences, when Füsun, suddenly picking up this same bowl, asked, "Would you be happier if we had met before you met Sibel Hanım?" (Pamuk, 2009, para. 28).

The cabinet of curiosities hence becomes a memory palace: memories are ascribed to the objects within an organised space with the purpose of passing on the story (Yates, 1999). The term memory palace, like cabinet, suggests a more spatial rather than temporal approach to the story told.

The Museum of Innocence is a novel which at the same time is a single-admission ticket that grants entry to the physical museum located in Istanbul. The ticket is included in the last chapter of the novel and consists of a specially framed space to be stamped by the guard at the museum entrance. This feature points to literature's exceeding its basic structure of a fictional narrative and its function of entertaining the reader. This brings us to the final modality distinguished by Lars Elleström (2010, 2014), namely the semiotic modality, which always cooperates with other modalities, and to the question of multimodality.

3. Widening the semiotic modality of literature – Patrick Gale's *Notes from an Exhibition*

While explaining semiotic modality, Lars Elleström (2010, 2014) relies heavily on the creation of meaning by three types of signs (modes of semiotic modality) distinguished by Charles Sanders Peirce: symbolic (based on convention), iconic (based on resemblance) and indexical (based on contiguity). In this model, literature is discussed predominantly in terms of symbolic signs that the verbal language is mostly made of, with some tendency towards iconicity in poetry and graphic novels (Atã & Schirrmacher, 2022).

In Patrick Gale's *Notes from an Exhibition*, the story of an artist's (Rachel Kelly's) life is organised around a collection of exhibit labels which originally have informative and documentary functions. Each chapter begins with a note, i.e. an information card containing the name of the object or the title of the work of art on display, information about the material it is made of, its short description, its historical context and its relation to other exhibits. Semiotically, each note in the novel is an indexical sign, as it points to the object it describes. Being an object itself, it is also an iconic sign; and because it evokes a linguistic thought and uses the conventional sign system to pass on information, it is a symbolic sign as well. The multiplicity of being simultaneously indexical, iconic and symbolic foregrounds the materiality of the note and the iconicity of the page in the book where it is placed. Each note is framed – isolated and distinguished from the narrative that follows it – in order to intensify its visual quality. The narrative that follows the note encourages the reader to make the connection between the item described by the note and the artist whom the exhibition concerns. The notes and the fragmented narrative interact to tell the story of Rachel Kelly and her family. In the words of Alison Gibbons (2012)[3], "the different modes of expression are located on the page not in an autonomous or separate fashion, but in such a way that, while these modes have distinct means of communicating, they constantly interact in the production of narrative meaning" (p. 2). The world presented in Gale's novel is exhibited as a set of objects (referred to by means of information cards) and the corresponding scraps of the story (containing individual characters' memories) told from an array of perspectives, i.e. various protagonists related to the artist. The motivation for all protagonists' actions and the factors determining their behaviour are gradually revealed and reconstructed from the collected items and fragments of the story. Iconic signs (depictions, notes) and symbolic signs (descriptions, story fragments) mingle in the process of communicating the

[3] While Lars Elleström (2010, 2014, 2018) tends to generalise and provides a generic model that ignores "exceptions", Alison Gibbons (2012) concentrates on experimental novels (multimodal printed literature) which escape that generalisation and stand out for their inclusion of graphic elements (multimodality).

story. On the one hand, each note (itself an iconic sign using symbolic signs of the verbal language) draws attention to the material object it describes (indexical sign associated by contiguity with the artist), but on the other hand it points to the fragment of the story (in symbolic signs) that follows it. The fragment of the narrative contained in a given chapter, in turn, alludes to the note which opens it. In addition, addition, what is particularly visible in the structure of the novel is the multimodality manifested in mixing text genres (Gibbons, 2012), i.e. combining curatorial notes with literary narrative. The two genres are identified by different textual layouts (Gibbons, 2012) for the framed note and the rest of the chapter, and by varied typography (Gibbons, 2012) manifested in different fonts within the notes themselves and then between the notes and the subsequent chapters. All these features draw attention to the form of the novel and emphasise the material aspect of the book and the written text. While *The Museum of Innocence* emphasises the formal side through elements of metafictive writing, including directly addressing the readers and museum visitors and drawing their attention to the objects, *Notes from an Exhibition* adopts a consistent strategy of providing a note at the opening of each chapter. This framed space gives objects a representative character and opens into a virtual narrative.

As far as virtual materiality is concerned, the eponymous exhibition, apart from Rachel Kelly's works of art – produced on various surfaces and by means of different materials, e.g. oil on tea tray (Gale, 2008, p. 14), red chalk on paper (p. 42) – also includes other random items, like her dress, nightdress and fisherman's smock, her swimming costume, hair clasp, photographs and postcards, exhibition catalogues and an essay concerning her art, newspaper clippings and digital images of her works. These items demonstrate the richness of the artist's world and help readers/visitors understand Rachel Kelly's background and the course of her life. Such an accumulation of various heterogeneous objects, including data on computer terminals, can be regarded as a modern literary cabinet of curiosities (Bugno-Narecka, 2019).

If a cabinet of curiosities is treated as a chamber in the present that contains evidence of the past (Leyton, 1992), which is one of the basic functions of any museum collection nowadays, then even memories of individual characters may acquire the material form of the past's trace: "memory is always some physical object, in the present – a physical object that some observer interprets as holding information about the past" (Leyton, 1992, p. 1).

> The consequence of such an approach for the reading of *Notes from an Exhibition* is that the characters' accounts of the late relative [Rachel Kelly], i.e. the stories or memories which follow each exhibition card and the objects described by these notes, become yet another set of objects within the cabinet of curiosities created by Gale: physical objects that contain information concerning the characters' past. These memories are stored and exhibited to the reader in the literary Wunderkammer along with other material items […]. As a result, visual objects are [...] put

> together on the same level with the verbal narrative. They are then simultaneously stored and displayed in the single space: the space of the book (Bugno-Narecka, 2019, p. 191).

Consequently, the story that becomes an item on display and part of an exhibition acquires a new semiotic mode – it is not only symbolic, but also indexical due to contiguity with the artist. The fragmentary, multiperspectival and shuffled structure of the narrative also reflects the structure of a cabinet of curiosities by presenting the reader with the deliberate disorder of the scattered pieces of information. Even the characteristics of the book as a material object, the linear progress of a typical narrative and that of the process of reading cannot bring all the introduced chaos under control before the process of reading is finished. First there are only glimpses into various stages of the artist's and her family's life, indicated by the notes and conveyed by the fragments of the narrative. Only later can the events be put in chronological order and a coherent story be reconstructed by the reader from all the items gathered and displayed on the pages of the book. While in *The Museum of Innocence* the narrator reconstructs the story and provides the reader with the events in chronological order, with *Notes from an Exhibition* it is the reader who must put the elements of the puzzle together in a sequential order: from the earliest to the latest.

4. Conclusion

This short study shows that literature, as a qualified medium, has the potential to be a significant part of intermedial discourse, which deserves more academic attention from literary scholars. The ideas presented here are to be considered as merely a starting point for a more thorough discussion on the intermedial status of contemporary literature that hopefully will follow. Elleström's four modalities used to describe and categorise media, though universal because applicable to all media products, introduce boarders and promote generalisations that need to be expanded. As the notion of literature is constantly negotiated and redefined to match changing realities, it frequently escapes the fixed modes and modalities ascribed to it. This is particularly visible with novels which explore the idea of a museum collection, cabinet of curiosities or art exhibition, as illustrated here by Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence* and Patrick Gale's *Notes from an Exhibition*.

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Embroidered Illustrations: Paratextuality and Book Design with Textile Arts

ABSTRACT
Handcrafted compositions make some editorial projects unique. One example considered here is that of embroidered illustrations on book covers. Book covers configure the threshold that inhabits the intermedial space between the physical materiality of the book and its content. The theoretical framework supporting this study is found in the concept of intermedial reference by Irina Rajewsky (2005). Likewise, the ideas of materiality and of the embroidered illustrations as a sensory media modality are based on the studies of Lars Elleström (2020). The notion of paratext, in turn, is supported by Gérard Genette (1997). In a few words, we seek to deepen the studies of intermediality by addressing textile materiality and its haptic capacity in editorial projects.
Keywords: intermediality, textile arts, paratext, embroidery-illustration.

1. Introduction

The visual poetics of embroidery reopens an aesthetics of revaluation of manual skills. This article aims to elaborate on issues of intermediality that underlie the use of textile materiality in embroidered illustrations that compose graphic editorial projects for books as an experimental alternative to more traditionally-printed texts. To that end, we use the *Penguin Threads* collection, published in 2011 in North America, in six volumes of classical youth literature, and the recent 2019 edition of *Grande Sertão: Veredas* by João Guimarães Rosa, published by Companhia das Letras, in Brazil. As the theoretical basis for our analysis, the concepts of media, intermediality, and intermedial reference by Irina Rajewsky (2005) will be of prime importance. Issues of materiality and sensoriality in embroidered illustrations are also present and articulated through the studies of Lars Elleström (2020), whereas subject matter concerning the idea of the paratext relies primarily on Gérard Genette (1997).

Illustrations composed of embroidery are a form of handicraft that has increasingly found more space in the interposition between written texts and pictural-

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ity regarding book editing. As ambivalent practices, according to Rozsika Parker (1984), embroidery and sewing have traditionally been a part of domestic activities; they freed women from financial dependence and became a technique applied to suffragette banners that questioned patriarchal values. Re-evaluated through the lens of 1960s feminism, textiles began to occupy artistic spaces of greater visibility.

Earlier in the century, textiles had also been an object of re-consideration through the experiments of Constructivism and the German school of Bauhaus. Through Anni Albers (1974), a disciple and teacher of the school, we have access to studies on the characterization of textiles. Her studies in *On Weaving* (1974, p. 65), have defined embroidery as a decorative, surface element, which makes the technique an alternative to illustration. Indeed, embroidery in the works of Tracey Emin, Judy Chicago, and Louise Bourgeois, among other textile artists, extrapolates the horizontal surface to which Albers refers, establishing itself as a medium characterized by a feminine *ethos*, all while transcending any gender-specific limitations, questioning them and emerging from them into its own aesthetic identity.

2. Embroidery or illustration?

Illustration is the result of an interpretation of signs, strategies, and techniques that enables a reader to decode a text in pictorial terms. In the cover arts that constitute the object of this study, we examine the case of textile art specifically, a form that can be understood as an artistic production that uses yarn or fabric or that uses techniques associated with weaving, including knitting, crochet, and embroidery. According to Clüver (2011), the textile dimension constitutes itself as a medium, as it supports the production and reception of artistic signs. For Elleström (2020), medium is a channel that depends on technical aspects, on qualifiers, and on the way it is performed.

Embroidery is conceived here as a medium of technical, material, and sensorial modalities, to borrow the terms of Lars Elleström (2020). It is a medium that physically manifests an object of sensory configurations and that requires practical skills. It employs tactile materialities, evoking senses that go beyond visual experiences. Furthermore, its material and sensorial modalities, again according to Elleström (2020, p. 46), configure important categories that qualify embroidery as a medium.

Book cover art is examined under intermedial concepts and categorizations because this field of study embraces not only literary research, but also its relationship with other arts and material culture (Rajewsky, 2005). However, it appears that a considerable number of studies contemplate the integration of literature with the fine arts, such as oil paintings, engravings, etching, and drawing, among other various academic techniques. Textile arts, on the other hand, are part of the general field that belongs to the "visual arts", but they inhabit this field of "minor"

status in interart studies, in the Deleuzian sense of the term (Deleuze & Guattari, 1995, 2002). They have always been associated with interior design and crafts, especially if we consider the status of "annex" and "adjacency" given to the Louvre Museum for Decorative Arts and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, dedicated to the exhibition of tapestries, fabrics, linens, and everyday objects. Therefore, this work departs from the premise that textiles constitute an object of study of intermediality, because not all cultural products can be considered art, though they can be recognized as media (Diniz, 2018).

When evoked by photography, the reproduction of embroidery constitutes an intermedial reference, according to Irina Rajewsky (2005). In that category, a work can evoke or imitate the elements of a medium through specific means of another medium, which is the case of the photographs of embroidery that compose the cover designs of these volumes. Although the embroideries were made with fabric and thread, the books were reproduced on paper in such a way as to imitate, through photographic reproduction, the texture of thread on fabric. Embossing and texture thereby become a simulacrum of an embroidered illustration because one does not have effective access to an embroidered fabric, including the tactile qualities intrinsic to that medium. Therefore, mediation through photography becomes an important communication channel, as it allows people to access the textile's volume and texture and its sensations through the haptic aspect it evokes. The concept of the haptic is used as equivalent to optics and acoustics, i.e., the quality of reaching the sensations and effects of touch that are triggered in the brain through the picture.

Book covers constitute privileged places of meaning in the sense that they are the element in closest contact with the reader. The current structure of the book is a result of a material evolution, with front and back cover, end sheet, flyleaf, spine, text block, dust jacket, flap, among other elements. The cover thus acts as a threshold between the text and the reader, and as a wrapping that involves and protects the content from the external world.

The constitutive elements of the book are often referred to as paratexts. The term paratext contains the Greek prefix *"para",* which semantically designates a modification of the word "text". That prefix suggests something that is placed *near, next to something else,* and it can be used to express the idea of something that happens in parallel to something else. The paratext, for Genette (1997, pp. 9–10), comes alongside the text, and is a way of making an introduction, or of "making it present, to guarantee its [the text] presence in the world, its reception, and its consumption, in the form, at least today, of a book" (p. 9). Therefore, the paratext is a border that becomes a permeable membrane between the inside and the outside, which lets the outside in, and the inside, out.

The professional in charge of a book project in its material dimension is typically the graphic designer. This modern figure serves as a sort of architect of the publication,

one whose function is to act in planning and decision-making for the editorial project, especially regarding the paratextual elements (Corrêa, Pinheiro, & Souza, 2019). He or she conceives of the book in its intrinsic materiality, considering not only the verbal text, but also the mental images it evokes. Its graphic design plays an important role in the constitution of the book-object. Its function is to insert the book in the market as a cultural product in such a way that it will be noticed and purchased.

Among the elements of design that visually capture the reader-consumer's attention is the cover. This part of the book intermedially combines written text and images, containing title, author's name, publisher, and cover art, characterizing it as a consumer good. Above all, the decision to adopt an embroidery as illustration for cover art is consciously and intentionally made. Consciously, because it applies an artisanal and ancestral practice usually carried out by women, invested with cultural heritage and affection. Intentionally, because the use of embroidery seeks to seduce a particular readership that values what is handcrafted. Therefore, handmade book covers are prestigious as they are analogous to the trendy *slow food* and *slow fashion* movements. The embroidered illustration, albeit a photographic simulacrum, provides what Walter Benjamin (1935)[1] calls an aural sensation of uniqueness, fetishizing the book-object.

A graphic design that uses embroidery as cover art implicates extra steps that would be unnecessary in digital illustration. First, it is crucial to hire a visual artist who masters the technique and who will also do the drawing, which will then be reproduced onto the fabric. The embroidery is executed with thread and needle over fabric, using diversified techniques and stitch styles – an enterprise that requires time and mastery. Subsequently, the visual work must be photographed in a suitable place with stage lighting, so that the photo can be used as an illustration. The image also receives appropriate graphic treatment through computer programs, so that the resolution image conveys the handmade aspect reliably. During printing, embossing effects are added in such a way that the texture of the embroidered image stands out.

3. A secret garden and a sertão: cover art with embroidery

Two publications, from the United States and Brazil, and published in 2011 and 2019, respectively, deserve an in-depth analysis of the aesthetic choices of their book designs. Both have received embroidered illustrations as cover art. One of them is *The Secret Garden*, by Frances Hodgson Burnett, a volume of the American collection *Penguin Threads* by Penguin Publishing; the other is the new edition of *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (2019), by Companhia das Letras.

[1] We refer here to Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935), and more specifically to Benjamin's contention that mechanical reproduction erodes the aura of the work of art as the plurality of copies substitutes its unique existence.

Commissioned by Penguin art director Paul Buckley, Jillian Tamaki[2] and Rachell Sumpter[3] developed the base designs and embroidered the covers for *Black Beauty, Emma, The Secret Garden, The Wizard of Oz, The Wind in the Willows,* and *Little Women*. The first three volumes were under the responsibility of the visual artist Jillian Tamaki, while the last three were done by Rachell Sumpter.

The volumes, known as classics of youth literature, tell affective stories, cherished by readers. Because they are classics, works that have not finished saying what they had to say and that persist through the ages (see Calvino, 2009, p. 11), these volumes were planned to be a collector's special edition. The graphic design transformed these publications into consumer goods, fetishized books, more intended as gifts than as actual books to be read. The covers appear to have been carved, and the tactile aspect of the embroidery is somehow maintained through the embossed printing. The illustrations emphasize their texturized aspect, and the embroidery is quite evident. The choice of embroidery as a medium to illustrate demonstrates warmth and affection in such a way that the books become luxury editions.

It bears mentioning that each embroidered illustration in the collection showcases a different embroidery style. On the cover of *Black Beauty*, for example, there is an oriental influence in the use of black and red colours over a light background, and the use of *stumpwork*[4] in the horse's mane conveys a sense of dynamism and vitality. In *Little Women*, on the other hand, the style is more reminiscent of a *sampler*[5], a stitch display used to organize and memorize learned embroidery techniques, by practicing the sewing of letters, numbers, and pictures from everyday life and the landscape that surrounds the embroiderer. In *The Wind in the Willows*, the emphasis on movement is attributed to the technique called *needle painting*[6].

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[2] Canadian artist Jillian Tamaki (1980–), visual artist, illustrator, cartoonist, and comic author. View the artist's website and portfolio at: https://www.jilliantamaki.com/ (retrieved on 29.3.2022).

[3] Rachell Sumpter (1982–). View the artist's website and portfolio at: http://rachellsumpter.com/ (retrieved on 29.3.2022).

[4] Embroidery technique that provides three-dimensional effects and textures, such as embossing, to the worked design. Dating from the 17th century, the artist can use coloured beads and linen, felt, or satin for the embossing, as well as pointed needles of varying sizes.

[5] Sampler, or stitch sample. The terms derive from the Old French "essample" and "essai", and denote any work to be copied or imitated. The name is given to a fabric fragment wherein the main embroidery stitches, letters, numbers, and figures from the embroiderer's daily life are stitched as an exercise to learn the technique. It can be a practice of experienced embroiderers to test a fabric before embroidering the main piece. The name underwent evolution over time and the sampler, as an object, changed its shape and function: from a practical tool of the embroiderer to learn and memorize the stitches, it changed into a decorative canvas. See https://www.dargentleiloes.net.br/peca.asp?ID=4857227 (retrieved on 10.4.2022).

[6] Needle painting consists of simulating the act of painting by using thread. Realistically, it is possible to simulate drawings and textures, as the color gradation tends to be smoother. Such embroideries can sometimes be mistaken for paintings.

Because the series is a six-volume collection, my analysis will attempt to limit its scope by focusing mainly on the volume *The Secret Garden*, by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Regarding Jillian Tamaki's colour palette, it is balanced and mild, tending towards the harmonization of opposite hues, such as green and pink. The embroidery is performed with mastery, using the technique of needle painting in some elements of the composition with great refinement and stitch diversity. It is possible to identify the French knot in the illustration, in addition to the chain, satin, and stem stitch. The design is so meticulous in its reproduction of a handcrafted object that even the spine, with the author's name and publisher, are represented through texturized threads. The illustration covers the entire page to the edge of the flap. The intermedial reference to embroidery remains consistent throughout, such that the reverse side of the embroidery is reproduced on the *verso*, imitating an embroidered fabric with both sides, "right" and "reverse". The portrayal of the *verso* (endpaper) reveals the illustrative paths run by the embroiderer when colouring the images with her threads. It is interesting to note that the visual artist leaves room for the insertion of bureaucratic data, such as the registration number, bar code, and publication price.

To achieve her goal, Jillian Tamaki mentions, in an interview about her creative process for the collection[7], that it took her two months to embroider the piece. The editor of the series, in turn, speaks proudly of the editorial project. According to him, the unique character of the publication is intended to attract and captivate readers, in addition to publicizing the publisher's work as a high-quality editorial house, with artful design targeting a niche of discriminating readers.

The colourful stitched garden evokes a fragment of a childlike and specifically a girl-like dream, and the lack of proportion in the elements of the visual layout suggests a surreal experience. The narrative of the novel is centred on an orphan child, Mary Lennox, who moves from India to the English countryside, where she will live with her widowed uncle in a house full of secrets. There, she discovers a locked garden surrounded by walls, where she befriends two other children, with whom she brings the garden back to life. The floral representation invades the space of the book cover and is integrated into the pre-textual elements. The typography of the title is organic and camouflaged amid the representation of the garden, as the organicity conferred to the composition assimilates the plants. The back cover features a quote that reads: "Where you tend a rose, a thistle cannot grow". The excerpt suggests the part of the book that inspired the artist. If good feelings are nurtured, good things will be harvested in the future.

The haptic aspect of the cover illustration stands out due to the visual quality of the photograph that accurately reproduces each element of the illustration,

[7] Information obtained from a promotional video of the Penguin Threads series: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ygf52DXKZg (retrieved on 14.4.2022).

emphasizing the expressive potential of artisanal representations. This aspect is enhanced with embossing, providing texture and volume to the cover art. The enchantment provided by the intermedial reference is exactly this: to feel the textures and to participate in visual and sensory stimuli, even though we are aware of its representational status. Therefore, Tamaki's secret garden is full of sensations and her illustration affectively involves the work of Frances Hodgson Burnett.

The 2019 edition of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, by Companhia das Letras, features cover art by Alceu Chiesorin Nunes[8], who was inspired in the embroidery of the back of "the Presentation Mantle" by Arthur Bispo do Rosário. The embroidery was coordinated by Elisa Braga[9] in a navy-blue thread on white fabric, in stem stitch, which took over 130 hours to complete. They reproduce the names of all the characters of the novel, and the author's name is represented by his initials, highlighted in red on the back cover. It also features a belly band in red fabric and silkscreen printing in white, featuring the title of the book, the author, and the publisher in emphasis. The flaps pay a simple tribute to Poty Lazzarotto[10], the artist who conceived the cover of the first edition in 1956, by representing the maps of the places where the narrative takes place, as they appear in the second edition.

The design project, quite reliant on textiles, is articulated through at least two aspects: the influences Alceu Nunes received from previous editions, as well as from Arthur Bispo do Rosário. Among the covers that may have inspired Alceu Nunes[11], it is possible to mention the cover of the first edition by the publishing house José Olympio, from 1956, by Poty Lazzarotto, from Curitiba, Paraná. For this cover, the artist produces a collage with illustrations of the characters' faces, visually narrating part of the story, camouflaged by the leaves of a *buriti* – a plant

[8] He is an art director and cover artist for Companhia das Letras.

[9] Elisa Braga made the matrix embroidery that served as a model for the photograph that composes the printed cover and for the artisans of the Artisans Collective of the North Line [Coletivo de Artesãs da Linha Norte], who made the first twenty covers. She went to Rio de Janeiro, to the Museum Arthur Bispo do Rosário, to research how the artist embroidered the letters on the back of his mantle. She noticed that he did not use a specific stitch, and the letters were quite large, larger than the photos suggested. To produce the artisanal covers, each embroiderer from the Artisans Collective in the North Line was responsible for two pieces. In the end, the public was delighted with the project, and the number of embroideries increased. In order to complete the 63 pieces, it became necessary to employ a greater number of embroiderers, leading Alceu Nunes to call the Spider Web group that suggested the embroiderers from Cordisburgo, the birthplace of Guimarães Rosa, and the groups of embroiderers from Morro da Garça, a nearby town, as well as from Andrequicé, also in Minas Gerais (retrieved on 14.4.2022 from https://www.blogdacompanhia.com.br/conteudos/visualizar/Editar-Grande-sertao-veredas-a-capa.

[10] Napoleon Potyguara Lazzarotto (1924–1998), engraver, designer, illustrator, muralist, and professor from Curitiba. See: http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/pessoa1567/poty-lazzarotto (retrieved on 14.4.2022).

[11] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqZgKCvJZqQ&feature=emb_rel_end (retrieved on 14.4.2022)

native to the Brazilian *cerrado*, the grasslands of Minas Gerais. On the flaps, there are maps indicating the setting. This feature only appears in the second edition, but Lazzarotto's aesthetics would prevail in later editions also. Another edition was produced by Bia Lessa, in 2006, with an installation followed by performance held at the Portuguese Language Museum[12] in that same year, on its opening. This exhibition stirred much commentary regarding its use of textiles, including threads and fabrics that stimulated the senses. It was possible to interact with the work through the hanging panels, ribbons, and wires that hung from above, while listening to excerpts of Rosa's narrative, read aloud by the singer Maria Bethânia. On Bia Lessa's cover, the title appears embroidered in red, with lines hanging from the bottom of the letters, referring to the blood of the battles and the lines of strength from the narrative. A third work that figures among Nunes's influences is the graphic novel adaptation by Fernanda Ficher, whose cover features a red acrylic wrapper, serving as a dust jacket for the volume. The dust jacket creates an ambivalent message through its subtitle, as it covers or uncovers the volume. This cover art becomes, so to speak, a covering and a wrapping of signs. Therefore, in order to maintain a high standard result in 2019, the cover of *Grande Sertão* underwent an important trajectory of aesthetic influences, as Alceu Nunes describes describes on Companhia das Letras's[13] blog his research path and his options to develop the cover of the new edition. He was enchanted by Rosa's research material, his notebooks with drawings and notes on the fauna and flora of the *cerrado*, his typed notes including corrections and observations. The option for literal illustrations, especially those representing fauna and flora, with scientific illustrations and drawings, were discarded as they have been largely explored before. Acting on a suggestion by Lilia Schwarcz, Nunes reports that he made an association with Bispo do Rosário's work[14], more precisely his *Presentation Mantle*[15]. The choice

[12] See https://cultura.estadao.com.br/noticias/teatro-e-danca,bia-lessa-estimula-os-sentidos-com-a-instalacaopeca-grande-sertao-veredas,70001975973 (retrieved on 14.4.2022).

[13] See https://www.blogdacompanhia.com.br/conteudos/visualizar/Editar-Grande-sertao-veredas-a-capa (retrieved on 14.4.2022).

[14] Arthur Bispo do Rosário was born in the countryside of Sergipe in 1909. He joined the navy in his youth, was a boxer, and laborer and, finally, a domestic worker in Rio de Janeiro. After waking up with hallucinations in 1938, he began his pilgrimage through several churches, seeing himself as an enlightened soul, sent from God. He was arrested by the police for loitering and taken to an asylum. During his hospitalization, he began to use discarded materials to record his daily life, transforming them into artistic objects with aesthetic sense and avant-garde concepts. The word was one of its most used elements, both as a linguistic sign and as an imagetic and aesthetic element. His best-known work is the Presentation Mantle. See https://museubispodorosario.com/arthur-bispo-do-rosario/ (retrieved on 14.4.2022).

[15] The best-known work of Bispo do Rosário that was stitched with threads from shredded uniforms and fragments of fabric of the intern uniforms from the shelters he inhabited. Elaborated throughout life for his arrival in heaven, he represented his references: on the outside, images,

for embroidery was due to its rustic simplicity and to its being a common craft among women from the Brazilian countryside. Alceu Nunes thus made the base drawing and forwarded it to Elisa Braga, who executed the embroidery.

This interrelation with Bispo do Rosário's production proves to be quite significant because it is not a reference to handmade work performed by women's hands. His work represents both the exclusion of a man of colour and of a person with a fragile mental health. According to Ana Maria Machado (2016, p. 120), his situation of exclusion is so absolute that it becomes eloquent, mainly due to his media choice to express himself in a way that it is more often associated with women. Thus, his instinctive sense of aesthetics attests his immense power over the word and over visual arts.

This 2019 edition has two versions: the first, more commercial, features a paperback cover with the photographic reproduction of the embroidery, with the red fabric as belly band[16]. The second version is a deluxe edition, a collector's item, the print run of which was limited to 63: a reference to the anniversary of the first edition. This special edition displays an actual embroidered hardcover[17] which was assembled by a network of local artisans, in a *buriti*-fibre box. It also included a red belly band with button clasp[18] and front endpaper made of handmade sugar cane paper. Such a degree of exclusivity raised the price of the special issue, causing a lot of buzz in the Brazilian publishing market, but it indelibly marked the place of that work in the history of Brazilian literary editions.

4. Final considerations

Cover arts that employ handmade textile materials and techniques such as embroidery are explored in an elaborate and creative way in the publications analysed here. The works provide two examples of recent editorial productions containing acts of resistance to digital resources, in a form of *slow publishing*. The visual poetics of artisanal media provides conversations with memories, cultures, and ancestral techniques, turning the published object into a poetic act, which fosters the construction of affective bonds with the issue. They articulate several artistic languages, such as a work's editorial history or the sensitive theme of the text that is about to be read. They captivate the reader by involving the text in a delicate way. Furthermore, they transform the book into a consumer good, an object of desire, as they are limited, special, and valued editions, but they also have an impact

and text from his private universe. Inside, the names of loved ones. See http://www.bienal.org.br/post/351 (retrieved on 14.4.2022).

[16] After this edition with the red fabric belly band sold out, it was replaced with new printings containing a red belly band made of paper.

[17] This cover is in fact embroidered and "dresses" the book as an overcoat: https://gsv.mystrikingly.com (retrieved on 14.4.2022).

[18] From Moinho Brasil.

on the dissemination of these works, expanding their readership.

The artisanal character in the form of an intermedial reference stimulates readers to raise new reading hypotheses and to handle the object by observing and touching its constituent parts, such as the front cover, flaps, dust cover, spine, and free endpaper, among others. The haptic and kinaesthetic aspects are doubly mobilized because, in addition to the visual sense promoted by the reading of verbal and visual texts, this type of publication also awakens touch, putting the reader in direct and material contact with the text.

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Auction Catalogue Narrativised: Leanne Shapton's *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion and Jewelry*

ABSTRACT
This article aims to tease out multimodal and narrative affordances of an auction catalogue, adapted by Leanne Shapton for novelistic purposes in *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion and Jewelry*. In doing so, Shapton develops a new form of realism, in which the presumed physicality of photographically represented objects appears to anchor the fictional storyworld in empirical reality. Hers is thus a truly hybrid project: combining verbalisation and visualisation, enumeration and narration, functionality and literariness, her book continually oscillates between the real and the fictional.
Keywords: Leanne Shapton, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion and Jewelry*, auction catalogue, multimodality, narrativity

A book-length fictional inventory of "lots", Leanne Shapton's genre-defying *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion and Jewelry* exploits the semiotic potential of a form that has by and large remained outside the purview of narrative fiction – an auction catalogue. Far from mere enumeration, the format allows Shapton to represent the vicissitudes of a four-year relationship between the two eponymous figures in an innovative way, inspired by her encounter with the catalogue for an auction of Truman Capote's personal effects: "It was in reading that catalog that it struck me that it was like reading a kind of autobiography of Capote's later years" (Shapton, 2009, as cited in Kennedy, 2009). Not only does she appropriate and fictionalise a supposedly purely functional form, but she also turns it into a multimodal, verbovisual vehicle for a story whose mimetic power lies in the presumed authenticity of the objects listed in an auction catalogue.

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On the level of textual materiality Shapton's book displays all the trappings of an auction catalogue: as signalled by the title, it lists 332 lots, which belonged to the eponymous couple and which range from photographs and postcards through books and letters to pieces of clothing and miscellaneous accessories. With a few exceptions, the nature of which will be discussed below, each lot is represented by a photographic image and a supposedly factual verbal description, as befits the generic conventions of an auction catalogue.

Given that verbal sections refer directly to visual representations of particular items, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* appears amenable to interpretation in terms of ekphrasis. In her analysis of Shapton's work Danuta Fjellestad reads it is an instance of ekphrastic assemblage, relying on a fairly broad understanding of these two categories. She refrains from subscribing to a single theoretical conceptualization of assemblage and uses this notion "to signal the process of verbal aggregation of visual objects, and the way they are brought together into a constellation without any single organizing principle" (Fjellestad, 2018, p. 341). By the same token, Fjellestad mentions selected definitions of ekphrasis highlighting its being verbal representation or imitation of a work of art and contends that Shapton's work can be construed in such terms even though the photographs do not depict works of art and the ekphrastic status of captions and titles remains debatable. Admittedly, at first sight the selection of items listed in the catalogue appears to follow the random logic of garage sale; however, a closer scrutiny reveals a much more nuanced composition, resting on visual rather than verbal accumulation of images on the level of a page and the whole book. The sequence in which lots are presented is anything but random, as it is determined by requirements of narrativity, which in *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* is produced as much by images as by words.

To account for the presence of images in the ekphrastic assemblage that *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* constitutes, Fjellestad proposes the category of pictured ekphrasis, which she defines as "ekphrasis that is accompanied by an image, that is, the image-plus-word variety of ekphrasis" (p. 339) and argues that Shapton's novel tests the limits of ekphrasis by taking "to its extreme the ancient premise of ekphrasis as verbally ennobling the visual" (p. 344). Much as her analysis throws light on important aspects of the interplay between word and image in *Important Artifacts and Personal Property*, it also inadvertently reveals limits of ekphrasis as a critical tool. While the category of pictured ekphrasis pinpoints a peculiar type of word-image interactions, the very phrase suggests that Fjellestad's category should rather be applied to works in which "notional ekphrasis – that is, description of imagined art" (Brosch, 2018, p. 235) – is accompanied by a visual representation of this imagined art based on the ekphrastic description. More importantly, central to Fjellestad interpretation, seeking to transcend the classical notion of ekphrastic pause, is the assumption that in *Important*

Artifacts and Personal Property "narrative flow is punctuated twice: by ekphrasis and by a visually reproduced image" (Fjellestad, 2018, p. 340). However, the verbal strand in Shapton's book consists of nothing but "factual" descriptions, transcriptions and notes, which Fjellestad classifies as ekphrasis, just as the visual one contains only photographs. Consequently, there is no verbal narration that would be punctuated by descriptions of art, as happens in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, or by images, as is the case with W. G. Sebald's novels. The only narrative flow attributable to *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* is paradoxically constituted by the photographic images and the verbal descriptions, which are inextricably interwoven in a manner that invites the reader to endow with narrativity what appears to be a mere inventory of items for sale.

Given Shapton's co-deployment of words and images to evoke the story of Doolan and Morris, the concept of multimodality, in its canonical sense of "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of semiotic product or event" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 20), appears better suited to an analysis of *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* than an inherently hierarchical notion of ekphrasis, which even in its broad understanding of "a literary response to a visual image or visual images" (Brosch, 2018, p. 227) presumes logical priority of the visual, underlying Fjellestad's conceptualisation of ekphrastic assemblage as "verbal aggregation of visual objects" quoted above. In *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* the verbal and the visual complement rather than describe or illustrate each other. Consider, for instance, the verbovisual strategy whereby the protagonists are introduced in the opening pages of the novel. The multimodal composition allows Shapton to dispense with the description of their looks: the very first two lots (1001 and 1002) are photographs of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, which visually represent their appearance, while verbal captions provide such "factual" data as the name or the age. By the same token, one of the turning points in their relationship – the decision to move in together is represented by a photograph of a silver-plated cup (lot 1190), holding two toothbrushes in "the bathroom at 11A Sherman Street" (Shapton, 2009, p. 73), that is, in Morris's apartment, as the reader learns from the verbal section.

It is through sequential organisation of their personal effects that Shapton presents the story of Lenore and Harold's relationship. Having introduced the two of them in the first two lots, she uses the subsequent three items to represent the Halloween party at which they met. The growing intimacy between the two of them is presented through such objects as a photograph at a Thanksgiving party (lot 1014), handwritten letters (lot 1031), a copy of a novel entitled *Kinds of Love* with handwritten *I* at the beginning, *s* crossed out and *You* added at the end (lot 1049) and, finally, the above-mentioned silver-plated cup (lot 1190) holding two toothbrushes. The growing tension and problems in their relationship are, in turn, signalled by such items as handwritten notes (e.g., lot 1247 – "A double-sided

handwritten note from Morris to Doolan. Reads in part: '*I want this to work, but there are sides to you I just can't handle sometimes. When you raise your voice and throw things, I shut down and go cold*'" [Shapton, 2009, p. 96]) or a set of "self-help and relationship books" (Shapton, 2009, p. 99) included in lot 1258 and juxtaposed on the very same page of the novel with a group of business cards, on one of which a phone number of a couples therapist is noted, and a photo of Doolan sitting alone on the stairs of 11A Sherman Street. The breaking point is, in turn, represented by lot 1036 – an irreparably damaged white noise machine. Visually striking as it is in itself, its meaning becomes apparent only when it is juxtaposed with the preceding lot – Pamela Moore's novel *Chocolates for Breakfast*, with a laid-in note from Doolan to Morris, in which she asks him to call her, as she thinks she might be pregnant. His response is written on the other side of the note and its beginning reads: "*Darling one, sorry to leave just a note in reply, but please understand I need some time to think too. Was not even going to stop home but forgot hard drive*" (Shapton, 2009, p. 120). As Fjellestad elucidates, apart from a verbal message itself, this item mobilises intertextuality as yet another signifying mechanism. *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* bears striking similarity to *Chocolates for Breakfast*: "Moore's depiction of a love affair between a young woman and a much older man echoes Shapton's, as do the themes of alcoholism, isolation, depression, suicidal thoughts, loneliness, secrets, and the difficulty of being a woman" (Fjellestad, 2018, p. 346). The novel ends with objects signifying Doolan's and Morris' separation, including letters on their becoming friends and respecting the other person's need to keep the distance. The poignant two lots closing *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* include dried flower petals, kept by Morris, and pressed four-leaf clovers, kept by Doolan.

By imitating an auction catalogue in all its verbovisual multimodality, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* reconfigures such basic elements of novelistic discourse as plot, narration, character construction or description of setting by renouncing narrative authority that would guarantee their coherence. The only narratorial agent attributable to Shapton's novel is the figure labelled by Wolfgang Hallet in his discussion of the multimodal novel "a narrator-presenter", that is, an agent who – instead of telling a story in words – is responsible for "the selection of texts and visual images" (Hallet, 2009, p. 150). In the note opening *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* this arranging function is explicitly assumed by the anonymous representatives of the fictious auction house Strachan & Quinn, though it is naturally Shapton who has designed the overall composition of the book, including even its paratextual paraphernalia. The absence of traditionally understood narrator ties in with a much more active role of the reader, who "in the case of the multimodal novel […] is engaged in constructing a holistic mental model of the textual world in which she/he incorporates data from different semiotic sources and modes" (Hallet, 2009, p. 150). He or she is as much guided

in this process by a consecutive arrangement of lots on the macro-level of their overall organisation, indicated by their numbers and inevitable sequentiality of book pages, as by the relational juxtapositions operating on the micro-level of a single page, bringing together items that reinforce, contrast with or oppose each other.

Significantly, it is not only the sequence of the lots but also their nature that have been determined by the needs of narrativity in *Important Artifacts and Personal Property*. Compared to a catalogue that inspired Shapton, *The Private World of Truman Capote*, her book contains many more photographs of the protagonists and many more handwritten notes, postcards and such like, frequently introduced for the sake of generic verisimilitude as materials left in books, clothes and other theoretically sellable items. The photographs not only visually introduce Lenore and Harold in the very first two lots, but also represent various activities they engaged in, either together or separately, as well as relations they had with other people. Page 53, for instance, contains two parallel sets of men's and women's sunglasses, which are accompanied by a photo of Morris "sitting next to an unidentified woman" (Shapton, 2009, p. 53) and a photo of Doolan posing on her own. The latter lot includes a Post-it note in Morris's script, reading: "*I'm sorry it upset you. I totally forgot! But they look better on you! Call me when you've calmed down!*" (p. 53). This note exemplifies, in turn, the primary function of handwritten materials included in *Important Artifacts and Personal Property*. Shapton uses them to convey the protagonists' mental states and experiences, feelings in particular, by means of a narrative technique of self-report, that is protagonists' own direct or indirect verbalisation. Again, these discursive manifestations of the inner life encompass a wide array of emotions, from initial infatuation (e.g., lot 1011: Doolan's note reading "*Thanksgiving / Croton Falls / Friday/* […] / *Wine? / HIM / HIM / HIM / HIM / HAL*" [Shapton, 2009, p. 7]) through longing (lot 1020 including postcards sent by Morris to Doolan, with one of them reading, for instance, "[p]*issing rain here, work boring, missing you and thinking of your face all the time / all the time / all the time ...*" [Shapton, 2009, p. 10] and contrition ("*Lenore, I'm sorry we fought last night. I will give you a call from my hotel. H x*" [Shapton, 2009, p. 24]) to anger and frustration (lot 1248 – a note in Doolan's script reading

> *JUST PLEASE Return my e-mails / Call when late / Show interest in food / Show interest in my friends / Acknowledge efforts I make to make you happy / Don't smirk at my stuff in your apt / Stop being so bossy / Don't take your stress out on me / GoDDAmit!*" (Shapton, 2009, p. 97).

This is not to say that images are never used or able to convey the protagonists' emotions. A number of photographs depict Doolan and Morris as a happy couple enjoying each other's company on different occasions (e.g., lots 1014 and 1263) or indicate their loneliness by presenting them separately (e.g., lots 1303 and 1319).

By the same token, it is the interplay between the verbal and the visual that allows the reader to reconstruct the central characters and their traits. Books, newspaper clippings and assorted paraphernalia represent not only their interests but also personalities with all their peculiarities. One striking aspect of this multimodal construction of characters is Shapton's attention to detail, which instigates the reader's forensic desire to distill as much information as possible from the apparently insignificant mundane objects. Fjellestad notices, for instance, that lot 1079 – the contents of Lenore's cosmetic case – includes a small bottle of Heinz ketchup, reflecting Doolan's almost obsessive taste for eating cashews with ketchup. Harold's corresponding travel bag is dominated by medications for such conditions as stomach problems, motion sickness, insomnia or anxiety. Coupled with his handwritten note included in lot 1090 – "*Valium (blue) / Xanax (white) / Cylexa (small white) / Kath* (Shapton, 2009, p. 35), it signifies a depressive and perhaps hypochondriac streak in his personality.

In a similar vein, Shapton employs objects and photographs, to evoke rather than thoroughly represent various aspects of the setting: lot 1081 including three postcards of Venice with notes written by both Doolan and Morris indicates the location of their 2003 summer holiday; a theater playbill for *Dinner at Eight* locates their teasing exchange, handwritten in margins – "*Are you crying? / No, allergies / Crying!"* (Shapton, 2009, p. 9) – at Vivian Beaumont Theatre, while photographs of Morris and Doolan taken at Celadon House give the reader an idea of a place where the couple spent the summers of 2004 and 2005. As can be seen, despite the amenability of such components as apartments, rooms or even streets to photographic representation, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* offers but glimpses into the spatial aspect of the storyworld and on certain occasions appears to be teasing the reader with images that preclude reconstruction of spatial particulars. This is, for instance, the case with lot 1018, which consists of two parallel photos of Doolan and Morris waiting outside each other's apartments. While the description gives the address of each apartment, in other words, precise geographical locations; the photographs themselves are a far cry from chorographic representation of their memorable peculiarities that would allow the reader to see rather than imagine where the protagonists live[1].

Despite the dominance of images over text in the visual composition of the novel, Fjellestad (2009, p. 347) claims that in *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* "ultimately the verbal upstages the visual", for it provides much more information and ennobles the mundane:

[1] For an overview of geography and chorography as two major traditions in representation of the world going back to Ptolemy's *Geography*, see, e.g., Cosgrove (2001, pp. 102–105).

> That banal everyday objects are worthy of attention at all, that they are important artifacts, that they have value is mediated by ekphrasis. Ekphrasis reanimates everyday detritus and turns it into something desirable and meaningful. More than that: to be narrativized, the images need words (Fjellestad, 2018, p. 349).

While indeed in *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* images do need words, words need images as well, for it is only their co-deployment that allows Shapton to tell a love story by way of an auction catalogue. Shapton's reliance on words to convey important aspects of the relationship between Doolan and Morris reveals the limits of the story-telling potential of things, not images. A sequential organization of the latter may well be sufficient for narrativity, especially if it contains figures to whom agency can be attributed, as attested by silent movies, comic strips and photo-novels. However, a mere succession of admittedly mundane things would probably be too polysemous to constitute a story or reveal the inner life of protagonists. Verbal captions reduce this polysemy by enacting a semiotic mechanism that Roland Barthes (1977) has felicitously dubbed anchorage: "the text *directs* the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others" (p. 40). They imbed Doolan's and Morris's important artifacts and personal property in the context of their relationship, just as the photos of the protagonists interspersed throughout the book remind the reader of their central role. Shapton's novel appears to take a rather ironic stance towards their "actual" (i.e., attributable on the level of fictional universe) desirability. By providing value estimation for each lot ($ 15-20, for instance, for a print-out of an e-mail from Doolan's ex-boyfriend; $ 10-12 for a set of nine champagne and wine corks from different occasions) Shapton follows the law of the genre of an auction catalogue only to subvert it, as the value of all these mundane objects cannot possibly reside in the price they might fetch at a proper auction. The monetary estimations should rather be read as an ironic commentary on commodification of private lives in contemporary mass and social media. At the same time, the ordinariness and apparent randromness of all these objects make the whole set-up much closer to garage sale, in which the items that have lost their meaning or become unwanted reminders of the failed relationship are disposed of.[2] Ultimately, it would appear that Doolan's and Morris's personal effects have no other value than the one they derive from the function they peform in the story the novel tells through them.

Seen from the vantage of new materialism, the interplay between images and words in *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* enacts the tension between

[2] I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for suggesting that *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* could be read as a quasi-catalogue for garage sale of the unwanted items connected with the past.

"the very semantic reducibility of things to objects [and] the semantic irreducibility of things to objects" (Brown, 2001, p. 3) Bill Brown explores in his thing theory:

> You could imagine things […] as what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects – their force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems (Brown, 2001, p. 5).

Without words, the photographs of mundane items foreground their thingness, as they arrest the reader's attention by their sole visual presence outside the utilitarian context. Descriptions coupled with sequential organization reduce them to objects within a narrative, not only related to Doolan and Morris but often endowed with the function of a bearer of a verbally rendered expression of their inner life, as happens in the case of all the items containing their handwritten notes. The reduction of some items to a mere pretext for a verbal passage is thrown into sharp relief by recurring verbal references to lots that are not illustrated, such as "an email exchange between Morris in Peru and Doolan in New York" (Shapton, 2009, p. 25) or "a card table covered in visitor's pass stickers" (p. 81) routinely attached by Morris after returning from business meetings.

By embedding Doolan's and Morris's relationship in a larger network of relations between people and things as/and objects, Shapton reveals the inevitable dependence of the human on the inhuman. As Zuzanna Jakubowski argues, she thus paves the way for "the relational realism of things in literature" (Jakubowski, 2013, p. 132). The critic conceptualises it in terms derived from Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, in which reality, neither purely empirical nor exclusively discursive, is articulated through multiple relations between human and non-human actants, things and concepts, signs and referents.

Furthermore, photographic images representing both characters and their objects produce the form of realism that goes beyond the Barthesian reality effect of referential illusion: their physicality appears to anchor the world depicted in the novel directly in the empirical reality. Construed in terms of Peircean semiotics, photographs are iconic and indexical two-dimensional signs standing for actual physical items. Their iconicity stems from their similarity to the objects they represent; indexicality results, in turn, from contiguity: without the objects the photographs would not have come into being. It is on account of its being a result of photochemical process that analogue photography is often construed as a physical impression of the real world and described as "a trace, something directly stenciled off the real, like a footprint of a death mask" (Sontag, 1977, p. 154) in Susan Sontag's canonical *On Photography*. Even though the amenability of digital media to image manipulation is often evoked to denounce this "myth of photographic truth" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 17), the functional nature of

an auction catalogue guarantees referentiality of photographic image it contains: barring the cases of fraud, their existence can be confirmed at the auction proper. Consequently, both Barthes' concept of anchorage, mentioned above and Sontag's tropes can be extended and applied to the objects in photographs. In *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* they acquire mimetic power, which rests on the rule of contiguity. Having supposedly belonged once to the protagonists and bearing in many cases their handwritten marks, they become their traces in Shapton's book and thus confirm their existence. As Sonja Neef and José van Dijck note, "handwriting is traditionally regarded as an autography, as an un-exchangeable, unique and authentic 'signature' that claims to guarantee the presence of an individual writer during a historically unique moment of writing" (p. 9). Furthermore, the apparently unmediated way in which these personal belongings are presented to the reader in their raw ordinariness, as it were, endows them – and by extension Doolan and Morris – with authenticity. It is only thanks to intratextual and extratextual markers of fictionality, such as non-existence of the auction house Strachan & Quinn, the presence of epigraphs opening the text proper or simply the location of the book in the fiction section at a bookstore/library that the reader realises that characters must be impersonated by actors or some other people, who are not Doolan or Morris, and that all the lots are but props in *Important Artifacts and Personal Property*.

In its blurring of the borderline between reality and fiction by incorporating what seems to be fragments of the former in the latter Shapton's fictional auction catalogue simultaneously enacts, exploits and transcends what David Shields has identified as the desire for the real in contemporary culture. Published a year before his famous manifesto *Reality Hunger*, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* appropriates the supposedly non-fictional form of an auction catalogue for novelistic purposes and apparently dispenses with such conventional, verbally rendered components as narration, plot, characters and setting. Instead, it offers its readers qualities that Shields champions as the markers of new authenticity – "a deliberate unartiness: 'raw' material, seemingly unprocessed, unfiltered, uncensored, and unprofessional" (Shields, 2010, p. 3). Its assemblagistic composition is not unlike Shields' preferred form, collage, though its content avoids the narcissistic pitfalls of autobiographical self-reflexivity he advocates. A seemingly silent and invisible author-designer, Shapton refrains from direct representation of her own experiences, predilections or reflections in *Important Artifacts and Personal Property* and offers the reader a catalogue of mundane objects, whose visual materiality appeals to the contemporary nostalgia for authenticity attributable to physical objects, whose tactility is often cherished over the elusive and deceptive characteristics of the virtual. At the same time, through the interplay between words and images, sequentiality and contiguity she endows her own work with

narrativity and fictionality, two key components of the novelistic discourse, and thus re-asserts the capability of the novel as genre to exploit non-literary multimodal forms for mimetic purposes.

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Writing on Walls: Intermedial Qualities of the Wall in Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words*

ABSTRACT
This article considers the position of the wall in media and literary studies. It posits that the wall encompasses qualities that justify its examination as a medium. The widespread presence of the wall in fiction suggests this structure is an important, yet neglected actor in the transmission of material communication in literary studies. When the wall functions as a medium, its endurance, visibility, and materiality actively influence the messages it channels. As demonstrated through a close reading of Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words*, the study of the wall represents a unique opportunity to engage in a novel approach to the study of media in fiction.
Keywords: medium, wall, fiction, intermediality, *Famous Last Words*

1. Introduction

"The medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 13). If one believes Marshall McLuhan's impactful axiom, the role of the medium is a pivotal element in the understanding of the message it bears. The medium is more than the mere material embodiment of a communication; it plays a decisive role in various stages of the creation and the reception of the text or image it delivers. The choice of a certain medium for one's message is thus a claim in itself, and the present article approaches the role of one medium in particular: the wall. Whether it channels political messages or base insults; whether it is painted with gangs' territorial markings or with poetic lines, the wall is a particularly eclectic medium, whose scrutiny can complement the field of media studies.

In this article, I examine the role of the wall as a medium in fiction. I posit that the study of the wall in literature allows us to have a more complete understanding of the uniqueness of the relationship between the wall as a medium and the messages it can channel. The materiality, solidity, and visibility of the wall condition how characters use it as a medium to communicate. The corporeal presence of a message inscribed on a material wall is intrinsically more enduring than a message on a delicate piece of paper or an evanescent screen, but it is also vulnerable to threats that are specific to this medium. Following McLuhan's assertion that "the medium is the message," I argue that the wall, when it is understood as

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a material means of communication within literature, creates a unique relationship among the message, its author, and its medium. Together, the medium and the message become a complex, deeply rooted, signifier, whose materiality and endurance I study in this paper[1].

The structure of the present study is twofold. First, I introduce the theory of intermediality, the study of media, by reviewing some of the major works that have shaped this field in recent decades. I suggest that the application of intermedial methods to the study of the wall as a physical means of communication leads to a more complete understanding of the concept of the material medium as a fundamental participant in the transmission of a message. Second, I suggest that the study of the mediating nature of the wall is particularly relevant in literature. I offer a close-reading analysis of Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words* (2001) to demonstrate that the examination of the wall as a medium can complement literary studies, too. Findley's novel engages with the wall's materiality, its endurance, and its publicity in a manner that supports the assertion that the scrutiny of the wall as a medium can result in rejuvenating approaches to both media and literary studies. Throughout the essay, an emphasis on the visibility and sturdiness of the wall will allow me to show how the use of this medium can result in exceptionally enduring messages.

2. The Wall as an Intermedial Intersection

"Walls turned sideways are bridges" (Davis, 1974, p. 347)

Intermediality is the branch of media studies that is dedicated to the relationships that exist among different media. Traditionally, scholars of intermediality agree that a strict definition of the concept of the medium would result in rigid categories, which would not reflect the dynamism of the field of media study. To avoid

[1] I invite readers to think of the term *signifier* in a somewhat non-Saussurian way. The Swiss semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) describes the sign as a combination of the *signifier*, which he defines as an acoustic image, and the *signified*, the concept. He argues that the *signifier* and the *signified* are the two parts of the sign that allow the sign to achieve meaning. In this paper, I posit that the medium plays a crucial role in the creation of meaning, which justifies a broadening of the term *signifier,* so it includes the material medium. The *signifier* becomes more than an acoustic image; it becomes a material image. In fact, in a notable metaphor, Saussure describes the *signifier* and the *signified* as two sides of a sheet of paper: "A language might also be compared to a sheet of paper. Thought is one side of the sheet and sound the reverse side. Just as it is impossible to take a pair of scissors and cut one side of paper without at the same time cutting the other, so it is impossible in a language to isolate sound from thought, or thought from sound. To separate the two for theoretical purposes takes us into either pure psychology or pure phonetics, not linguistics" (de Saussure, 1916/1986, p. 111). The double-sidedness of the wall, which is comparable to that of a "sheet of paper" validates a slightly adapted use of the term *signifier* for the purpose of the present study.

restricting the concept of the medium by enclosing it in an exclusive definition, the majority of scholars of intermediality have focused their attention on media's similarities and dissimilarities in order to examine how they can be compared with one another rather than strictly defined. In "The Modalities of Media: A Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations", for example, Lars Elleström argues that "media definitions that deal only with the physical aspects of mediality are too narrow, as are media definitions that strongly emphasize the social construction of media conceptions. Instead, [Elleström offers to] emphasize the critical *meeting* of the material, the perceptual and the social" (Elleström, 2010, p. 13). When Elleström presents the concept of the medium as a space of "critical *meeting*" (p. 13), he supports the idea of the medium as an in-between object, a bridge between the producer and the receptor of a communication. In her introduction to the *Handbook of Intermediality*, Gabriele Rippl reminds her readers that etymologically, the term *medium* refers to little more than that which is in the middle (Rippl, 2015, p. 6). One can assume that every object, person, structure, surface, or even symbolic concept can be perceived as a medium, as long as it acts as an intermediary. The wall, then, because of its physical in-betweenness, and because it can be the surface on which communication is materialized when it is perceived, can serve as the starting point of a medium-specific investigation of media studies.

Rippl admits that "there is not one definition of 'medium' which scholars working in the field of literary, cultural and media studies would agree on" (p. 6). Thus, rather than producing a potentially polemic definition of media, most scholars of intermediality have focused on the relationships among different media rather than on the nature of the medium. But lack of definition can result in a heterogenous field of study. Some scholars follow a tradition that started in the Italian Renaissance and think of art forms, such as literature, painting, and sculpture, as media. Others, notably scholars of book studies, focus on the material embodiments of media, such as the book, and scrutinize watermarks and marginalia in order to better understand a text (Depledge, 2018). The result of these dissimilar approaches to the concept of the medium is that some studies are based on the premise that the art form and the medium are synonymous, while others differentiate the medium (e.g., the book) from the art form (e.g., literature). I suggest that a definition of the medium does not result in exclusive typologies. Rather, the description of individual media is a decisive part of the study of their respective qualities, and it is an essential first step of intermedia comparisons.

Katerina Krtilova (2012) shows how most objects can act as media, but how listing them does not permit scholars to define the concept of the medium: "A street lamp, film, a mirror, a drawing, paper, money, art, or a laboratory can be described as a medium. However, it is unlikely that anyone would understand what a medium is looking at this list: it is not at all clear what these 'things' have in common" [parenthetis original] (p. 39). Krtilova focuses on the *mediating power* of

media. She argues that "[m]edia provide tools to handle, perceive, and reflect the world and at the same time, act as mediations" (pp. 37–38). Media make art apprehensible. They give the artistic message the body it needs to be perceived and interpreted. Media ought to be studied according to the effect they have on the messages they channel in addition to their relationships with one another. "Media are not mere (passive) objects – they are rather reflective structures" that actively influence the art they mediate (p. 38). Krtilova's observation validates a focus on the relationship between the medium and the message along with the connections among media.

In this article, I loosely follow the example set by Krtilova (2012) and focus on the relationship between the medium and the message. Rather than looking for intersectional points among different media, I propose that the wall itself is a pivotal medium which ought to be seen as a critical point of intersection among the material medium, the message that it bears, and the audience who perceives the meaning that is created by the message and the medium. The wall encompasses a substantial number of narratological, hermeneutical, and semiotic characteristics of scholarly interest that can allow the field of intermediality to move into a novel direction by adding a more material dimension to the study of media.

I contend that the material nature of the wall and its versatility make it a unique medium that can display various forms of art.[2] For the purpose of the present study, I propose to think of the concept of the medium as a combination of the message itself and the material substance that supports the message. Considered together, the medium and the message make communication tangible. Whether the communication be of graphic, textual, or visual nature, the medium is the intersection between the material embodiment of the message and its interpreter. The physical wall, for instance, only becomes a medium when it provides a message with the material body that will sustain the message. The medium is the physical surface on which the sign is materialized when it meets its interpreter. It is the intersection between the sign and its interpretation. When it channels communication, the wall, like the paper of a book, the stone of a sculpture, or the canvas of a painting, provides the message with its physical form and becomes more than mere support for the message; it takes on communicational properties and becomes a medium. The wall actively influences the messages it bears. It transfers some of its inherent qualities, such as its endurance and visibility to the art it mediates. The durability and perceptibility of a message that is mediated by the wall are different from messages that are mediated by a book.

[2] I use the term *versatility* to refer both to the fact that the wall can bear a variety of forms of art (from short textual messages to extensive murals) and to the fact that, at all times, the wall both fulfils its purpose of separating two spaces while also creating connection by bearing instances of communication.

Beyond the wall's exceptional materiality and durability, the uniqueness of this medium also lies in the fact that its primary purpose is not to be a medium. Unlike a sheet of paper or a canvas, the primary role of a wall is not to bear a textual message or an image but to mark separation. Consequently, the wall has been left out of traditional media studies. Walls are built to separate different spheres, achieve protection, and support architectural creations. Their original role results in their utterly physical nature; the wall is a concrete structure that creates a division between two different spaces. Unlike other material media, such as the book or the canvas, which are specifically designed to be the material channel for one specific art form, the wall constantly performs its main purposes of separation and structural support. Even when it is used to channel communication, the wall still divides.[3] The wall is an active, multipurpose structure, which is not limited to the performance of one single function. Its study as a medium shows how media can be of various natures and how they do not have to be limited to the mediation of one singular form of art or one singular purpose. Accepting the wall as a medium is a unique opportunity to further develop the field of media studies by showing how versatile media can be.

3. Walls in Fiction

In literary studies, too, the wall plays a significant, yet neglected, role. The number of works of fiction that involve instances of wall writing is substantial and justifies why scholars of both intermedial and literary studies should investigate this topic. Linda Hogan's *Solar Storm* (1995) shows how cliff walls can mediate narrative frescoes. The wall can also be used by characters to write their life story on an enduring medium, as in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* (2008), Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words* (2001), and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000). Maria Dahvana Headley's *The Mere Wife* (2018) is an example of how a child's writing on the wall can be both innocent and ominous. The wall can bear gangs' territorial marks that challenge the feeling of protection from the wall, as in Jeanine Cummins' *American Dirt* (2019) and T. C. Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain* (1995). In Ivan Vladislavic's *Portrait with Keys* (2006), Johannesburg's walls are covered in mural art in an attempt to soften the marks of separation that still plague post-apartheid South Africa. In *The Virgin of Flames* (2007), Chris Abani portrays the tension between anonymity and absolute exposure to the public, as experienced

[3] It may be argued that the Berlin Wall is a counterexample that invalidates this observation. Upon its fall in 1990, the primary purpose of this wall became obsolete; it stopped physically separating East Berlin from West Berlin. Today, some parts of the wall are still standing and function as a long canvas for street art. Although what is left of the wall no longer achieves political division, it nonetheless prevents free physical passage from one of its sides to the other for stretches of several hundred meters (notably in the Ostbahnhof area). Even if the Berlin Wall has become more of a symbol than an actual barrier, it still fulfils its purpose of physical division.

by a street artist who uses the wall to express himself. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892) shows the psychotic effects of a decorated wall with no intended communicative purpose. And finally, Herman Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" (1853) also illustrates how pernicious the wall can be when its mediating potential is not fulfilled by engaging with the paralyzing effect of the blank wall. Though far from being exhaustive, this list of literary examples suggests that the wall, even if it does not always occupy a center-stage position in the narrative, is a common narratological element whose study can result in fascinating analyses. Often, the scrutiny of the wall in fiction reveals intermedial dynamics that go beyond literature. The intermedial quality of the abovementioned novels lies in their representation of another medium within the medium of the book and using the *language* of the book. The act of reading about the wall as a medium in fiction requires the use of the medium of the book. Some of the wall's qualities need to be *translated* in order to be conveyed by a book. Such features of the wall as its solidity, its immobility, and its specific texture, among others of its inherent characteristics, can only be textually described on the fragile, mobile, and smooth page of a book[4]. According to Jens Schröter (2011), this type of intermedial relation would qualify as "transformational intermediality," which he describes as an "intermedial relationship [which] consists in the representation of one medium by another" (p. 6). Irina Rajewsky (2005) calls this form of intermedial relationship "intermedial references" (p. 52). She defines it by explaining that "[r]ather than combining different medial forms of articulation, the given media-product [i.e. the book] thematizes, evokes, or imitates elements or structures of another, conventionally distinct medium [i.e. the wall] through the use of its own media-specific means" (p. 53). Such representations of a medium through another medium somewhat show the limitations of the representing medium. The book is limited to textual tools to represent the wall. Readers must accept the transformations that are required by the medium they hold in their hands in order to immerse themselves in the fiction through the representation of another medium. As the following analysis of Findley's *Famous Last Words* suggests, the study of the representation of the wall in literature can pave the way to a novel approach to intermedial qualities.

[4] Today, the book has several shapes, including, but not limited to the audiobook and the e-book, neither made of paper. But since the purpose of this article is to study the wall rather than book forms, I limit the concept of the book to its classic, paper form. For more information about the relationship between media and their digital remediations, I encourage readers to read Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's *Remediation* (Bolter & Grusin, 1999).

3.1. Famous Last Words: "My mark that I was here"

> "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand,
> and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall
> of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote"
> (*The Bible,* KJV), 1611, Daniel 5:5).

In our western, Christian culture, the tradition of using the wall to leave an impactful message is deeply connected with a sense of doom. The Bible's "Writing on the Wall" represents how the sturdy wall can be used as a medium to remind us of the inescapable fragility of human nature. In a perhaps paradoxical manner, the wall was one of the first media that preliterate populations used to leave messages tens of thousands of years ago, and whose traces are present to this day. Prehistoric cave walls have been bearing human marks for millennia, suggesting that the wall is among the most time-resistant media one can choose for one's message. As Timothy Findley's historical fiction *Famous Last Words* illustrates, the wall is a medium that has been allowing human messages to go down in history for thousands of years.

The protagonist of *Famous Last Words*, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, is a fictional American author whose proximity to fascist figures during World War II has allowed him to fill his notebooks with sensitive notes that incriminate historical figures including Ezra Pound, former British King Edward VIII, and Benito Mussolini[5]. The narrative opens *in medias res* as Mauberley escapes an assassin sent by Axis forces to kill him and destroy his notebooks. The author takes refuge in a deserted hotel in the Austrian Alps and, conscious that his notebooks, containing incriminating details for Axis leaders, are the main target of the person sent after him, Mauberley starts writing his testimony on the walls of four unused rooms in the isolated hotel. Shortly after Mauberley has completed his famous last words, the assassin finds him and eliminates both the author and his compromising journals but does not notice the writing on the wall. The utter visibility which the wall offers the text, added to the fact that the wall is not conventionally recognized as a medium, allows Mauberley's words to hide in plain sight. When World War II comes to an end, American soldiers find Mauberley's dead body lying close to the ashes of his destroyed notebooks. The soldiers are more attentive than the killer.

[5] The name of the protagonist, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, is an obvious reference to Ezra Pound's poem of the same name, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley (1920). It is widely agreed among critics that Pound's poem has autobiographical undertones, which creates an obvious connection between the poet and his lyric protagonist. However, it is my opinion that in Famous Last Words, Findley seeks to free his fictional Mauberley from Pound. I interpret this novel as Mauberley's chance to be more than Pound's autobiographical speaker and to write his own story, his own Famous Last Words.

They discover the message on the walls, and the narrative follows Lieutenant Quinn as he reads the message left by the author.

Mauberley was inspired to use this unconventional medium to bear his mark during his visit of the Spanish caves of Altamira, where he found prehistoric marks that have survived long after the demise of their author:

> And out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of something irresistible above my head, seen in the ebb and flow of the swinging light: the imprint of a human hand.
>
> God only knew how long ago it had been put there. Maybe ten – and maybe twenty thousand years before. *This is my mark*; it said. *My mark that I was here. All I can tell you of my self and of my time and of the world in which I lived is in this signature: this hand print; mine* [emphasis original] (Findley, 2001, p. 172).

Findley's fictional account of the real cave paintings, which can be found on the coast of Cantabria, suggests that the primary motivator for someone to paint or write on a wall is the human fear of disappearing. The prehistoric man who left his handprint was driven by his need to secure his place in history and make sure he would not be forgotten. The wall, unlike any other media that may have been accessible to him at the time, has born the mark of his existence for millennia after his passing. Later in the narrative, when Mauberley realizes that members of the Axis have sent the assassin, he also understands that his fragile paper notebooks are not a durable medium for his words and, inspired by the prehistoric man, he decides to use the wall to bear his message.

The transfer from paper to plaster proves to have been efficient when the soldiers find the wall writing intact while the notebooks have been reduced to ashes. Not only is the wall more solid than the notebooks, but its overtness and its immobility prevented the assassin from even considering it as a potential medium. The obviousness of the writing on the wall saved it from destruction and allowed Mauberley's words to live on. The ubiquitous usualness of walls as weight-bearing structures, rather than media, saved the writing on the wall from being seen and destroyed. The walls allow Mauberley's testimony to survive its own author, and they cancel the silencing effect of their author's death. Just like the prehistoric handprint, Mauberley's words are carried by the wall in a manner that neither his body nor his paper notebooks have achieved. The wall prevents the artist's existence from falling into oblivion.

The intermedial quality of Findley's novel goes beyond the relationship between the notebooks and the wall within the novel. The use of Lieutenant Quinn as a reading figure adds an intermedial dimension to the novel that goes beyond the book. Readers of the novel depend on the officer's act of reading to access the text that appears on the wall, and which constitutes the plot of the novel. When Quinn starts reading the writing on the wall, he translates the wall writing into the language of the book. Quinn's in-between position turns him into a form of

medium himself. After having been transformed from the notebooks to the walls, Mauberley's words are transformed by Lieutenant Quinn into the book that the reader is holding. But unlike the wall, Quinn is a scient medium, who can actively influence the transmission of the message:

> Quinn had thought to begin his reading of the walls where Mauberley himself had obviously intended – over to the right of the epigraph from the Book of Daniel. But his eye was caught be a second epigraph, inscribed on the ceiling; a sentence scrawled outside the disciplined alignment of the others and set there like a bear trap to catch the reader unaware.
>
> "All I have written here," Quinn read, "is true; except the lies" (Findley, 2001, p. 59).

As an actively mediating entity, Quinn can influence the order in which the message is presented to the reader, but his choice is strongly influenced by the wall. Rather than being linear as the book, the wall offers a dynamic quality to the message it bears. When Quinn enters the room whose walls are covered in Mauberley's words, he is surrounded by the narrative and needs to figure out where to begin. Unlike a traditional book that has a clear beginning and end and that only shows two pages at a time, the walls allow Quinn to see the whole narrative at a glance. The author's words take on a unique, enveloping quality which challenges the notions of beginning and end; Quinn gets to decide where to start reading.

The officer chooses to begin with a sentence that stands out: "'All I have written here,' Quinn read, 'is true; except the lies'" (Findley, 2001, p. 59). On a narratological level, this statement challenges the dichotomy of fiction and reality, and on a medial level, it shows how the wall does not present text in the same way a book might. The author was able to write beyond the wall. Through his use of the ceiling, Mauberley pushed with the flexible limits of his chosen medium and rendered this line particularly remarkable. To the readers of the novel, this line does not stand out in the linear text of the book. We rely on the description of Quinn's immersive experience to understand how the sentence goes beyond the limits of its medium[6].

The comparison between the wall and the book is thus not limited to the depiction of the fictional notebooks and walls. Mauberley's words are transformed a first time when the author translates them from his notebooks to the walls. As a result of this first transformation, the Mauberley's testimony takes on qualities of the wall as a medium: its endurance, its deceiving obviousness, and its immersive quality. The second transformation goes beyond the fictional world that was cre-

[6] The adjective *immersive* is to be understood in its literal sense. Quinn finds himself in a room covered with the words he is reading. He is thus physically immersed in Mauberley's story. While a good book can also be described as immersive, this immersion is figurative rather than literal: a reader does not physically find themselves in the book they are reading.

ated by Findley and takes place when the account of what Quinn discovers on the wall is transformed into the medium of the book that real-life readers are holding.

4. Conclusion

I hope that the present study of the intermedial qualities of the wall in fiction has demonstrated how the scrutiny of this material medium can reveal complex intermedial dynamics in and beyond literature. Defining the medium as the material embodiment of the message need not result in sterile lists of media. Rather, it is an opportunity to focus on the qualities of one medium to show how each medium plays an active role in the production and in the apprehension of meaning. As Schröter suggests, media are defined by their differences: "the definition of the 'specific character' of a medium requires the differential demarcation from other media" (Schröter, 2011, p. 5). The wall's unique qualities demarcate it from the book, and the study of these differences can speak to both media and literary fields of studies. When one accepts the wall as a medium, it becomes an intersectional surface on which intermedial and literary studies can meet. The study of the wall as a medium also allows novel approaches to a variety of fields of study that are not limited to literature and intermediality. The social and political aspects of writing on a wall, for instance, could further contribute to the understanding of the impact of wall writing in cultural and political studies. When it is understood as a medium rather than an obstruction, the wall no longer solely separates; it unifies.

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Blinding Lights: the Angst of Present Time in José Saramago

ABSTRACT
This critical essay aims to develop a reflection about present time and the type of art that it bequeaths to those who inhabit it. Questioning about its depth and its engagement to the relevant issues to the contemporary individual, it is suggested that an aesthetic activity concerned not only to its own time and place, but also to otherness and to the future, could be an alternative to art expressions that are mere escapes from reality. At last, José Saramago's literature is used as a thematic study case of the propositions presented throughout the paper.
Keywords: aesthetics, literature, state of urgency poetics, present time, José Saramago

Se podes olhar, vê. Se podes ver, repara (*Livro dos Conselhos*)

If, as Byung-Chul Han (2015a) indicates in his book *The burnout society*, "Every age has its signature afflictions" (p. 9), then present time's affliction seems to be *anxiety*. Fear was always a companion to humankind, since it started to (want to) understand the world surrounding it. But the angst that oppresses, paralyzes and spreads through all spheres of everyday life, shows itself as the reality of this new millennium, which is now entering its second decade.

Contradictorily, present time is also one of *maximum alienation*. Perhaps as a defense mechanism, one escapes from the world, trying to forget it. There is preference in consuming only what reminds of the positive, the smooth, simple and superficial; the negative, which is wrinkled, complex and deep, is put away (Han, 2018).

About what was referred above as maximum alienation, a detailed explanation is needed, which can be found in words that are worth quoting in length:

> We live in dark times, in which great forms of extermination are taking place before our eyes, whether local, national or international; however, we are indifferent to these facts, as we are al-

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> ways looking at events with the distance that television and the internet produce and impose on us. We don't get involved; we live the unreality that the profusion of images gives us. We change the subject with great simplicity of gestures and ease of directing and redirecting our attention, we go from the news of a tragic event to a media frivolity, without the slightest ceremony. We are able to be moved by familiar clichés about British royalty, but we are not led to reflect on the violence produced by terror, or on the despair of thousands of refugees around the world, produced by the geopolitical horror generated within the governance of developed nations of the West (Lima, 2019, p. 7).

In order to highlight the situation presented thus far, the words of the Lithuanian philosopher Leonidas Donskis can also be used, when in a conversation with Zygmunt Bauman he comments on the confused and troubled world we live in today, realizing that this "is a world that has long ceased controlling itself (although it obsessively seeks to control individual people), a world that cannot respond to its own dilemmas and lessen the tensions it has sowed" (Bauman & Donskis, 2013, p. 5)

Present time, therefore, is based on a state of constant angst and anxiety, a profound fear of everything and everyone. A state of urgency that blinds humanity with its profusion of images. And, afraid as they are (and have always been), in face of danger people try to escape. Art is thus found as an escape route; but a kind of art that, like those who produce and consume it, also seems to be in crisis.

1. Present time and Art

With a quick search at the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, one can learn that an *emergency* is "a time or state of affairs requiring prompt or decisive action". In other words, it could be said that it is an exceptional situation that demands exceptional measures, so normality may be restored. And these measures must be performed fast in order to minimize the damage caused; they have a sense of *urgency*.

That being said, it is interesting to think about how emergency and urgency are related; in fact, most people might think that they are perfect synonyms. However, while every emergency comes with an urgency, not every urgency comes with an emergency.

In what might be called *The Society Trilogy* (*Burnout*, *Transparency* and *Palliative*), the South-Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han highlights the processes by which present time is experienced on several levels of complexity: from everyday mundane activities, to the global consumption system of neoliberal capitalism, going through the way Art is produced and perceived.

On the one hand, he argues, neoliberal world is the realm of *fear*. Mostly one fears the unknown; but today almost everything that surrounds an adult individual may be included in that category: other people, diseases, taxes, terrorism. In this way, people live in constant fear, not necessarily of the advent of an extraordinary event, an emergency, but in constant readiness to the happening of anything that could bring them pain, i.e., an urgency. So, tormented by the angst that the

platitudes of life itself bring, one lives in something that might be called *a state of urgency*.

On the other hand, Han says that the neoliberal world is also the realm of *like*. This, I believe, can be understood in two ways, both related to the need for *transparency* that present time imposes. The first one mostly concerns how one acts on social networks. The mere act of *liking* a Facebook post, an Instagram picture or a TikTok video is everything that is expected from an individual of today: it is fast, economic, positive and transparent. It is a possibility of showing oneself, of sharing one's deepest thoughts (if they are deep at all) with everyone; all this with minimum effort, which makes one more apt to develop other activities, i.e., to go to work.

The other way to think about the neoliberal realm of like is, in fact, a direct consequence of addiction to social networks. Capitalism urges people to be efficient and productive, so relations must be efficient too. As it was pointed out, social networks include in its dynamics all that is required from people on this scenario of efficiency and productivity, so they are constantly engaging in acts of comparing themselves with others, in order to reach the success that they have not yet achieved. In other words, the *Other* is just a case of success, a model: people want to be *like* the successful ones that they see on their screens, so they too may be *liked*.

In this positive state, there is a tendency to avoid everything that might look negative: there is an urge to be transparent, without secrets; there is an alienation from the real problems, in a way that there is no escape from the positive, not even inside one's own mind. Even the art that is used to escape from reality's negativity is taken by the need of transparency.

It is an art that no longer worries about a deep impact, a *punctum*, to use Roland Barthes' terminology on photography (Barthes, 2010). If there is a *punctum* on the art that is produced under the state of urgency it is a superficial one, one that does not have enough power to really penetrate the defenses built by fear and linger within the human soul. There is no time for that. As is done on social networks, where people are always switching from one ideal model of success to the next one, today's art perception occurs in a blink of an eye, with the difference that the switch now is from one distraction to the next one.

The preference for the easy and pleasurable that the ephemeral art provides, influenced by a *pornographic* mass culture – in a sense that everything must be shown and that the mere fact of seeing it is enough to give pleasure –, at the same time deprives people of living their own time *erotically* – in a sense that desire comes with discovery, and discovery comes with inquiry, and inquiry comes with mystery –: either they are trying to return to a past that no longer suits them, or they are thinking of a future that never seems to arrive.

But how can one still live within these two realms drowned in perennial states, one of urgency and one of transparency? Because "clearly the human soul requires

realms where it can be at home without the gaze of the Other", in a sense that the world needs "a certain impermeability". In fact, a "total illumination would scorch" everyone, "and cause a particular kind of *spiritual burnout*." After all, people are still human, and "only machines are transparent" (Han, 2015b, p. 3).

However, and fortunately, what can rescue humankind from these doldrums of indifference and transparency is also Art. But a different kind of art. An art that goes beyond mere palliative. An art that truly helps humankind to heal. An art committed to present time. An art that does not just try to escape from the state of urgency, but instead uses it as a creative fuel and as an aesthetic thrust.

2. The state of urgency as an aesthetic thrust

As all times are obscure for those who inhabit them, a burden of the human condition, but also a consequence of being part of the substrate of analysis, to Giorgio Agamben the contemporary individual "is precisely the person who knows how to see this obscurity" and the one "who neither perfectly coincide with [his/her own time] nor adjust [himself/herself] to its demands". Precisely because of this "disconnection and this anachronism", the contemporary is "capable, more than others, of perceiving and grasping [his/her] own time" and thus "is able to write by dipping [his/her] pen in the obscurity of the present" (Agamben, 2009, pp. 40–44).

In this matter, it is also interesting to note that "creative individuals", and artists in particular, "alternate between imagination and fantasy at one end, and a rooted sense of reality at the other", and both "are needed to break away from the present without losing touch with the past" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, p. 81).

This break away from the present, this attempt to be momentarily apart from reality, is due to what Agamben defines as the need for the contemporary to broadly see his/her own time. However, artists also have the same need to return and share their vision with those who did not (or could not) have the same glimpse:

> The type of creation that we have called art since the modern age depends, to a large extent, on the possibility of taking a critical stand in their own society and culture. Only when creative individuals can view their own world from above for a moment, "stay by the river" in Sloterdijk's (2011) metaphor, can they truly make a difference in their cultures (Gielen, 2015, p. 77).

Contradictorily (once again), an art committed to present time requires a momentary distance between artists and their time. But, to the same extent, it also demands their return, which promotes their connection with the Other. In this sense, in his literary autobiography, Cristovão Tezza (2012) asserts that it is "inescapable: we write because we want to reach the others" (p. 204).

Taking the liberty of expanding Tezza's concept, it can be said that Art, in general, may be understood as an attempt to express oneself in (and about) the world, reaching the Other in this process. Certain experiences can only be lived through the silent approach to the Other that Art provides, like the banal and brief encounter

that the polish poet Czesław Miłosz had with a woman in a train wagon. After she leaves, he expresses his sorrow: "I was left behind with the immensity of existing things. A sponge, suffering because it cannot saturate itself; a river, suffering because reflections of clouds and trees are not clouds and trees" (Miłosz, 1988).

In a sense, Miłosz's sorrow is everyone's sorrow; and even if it is not yet, someday it might be. Having this in mind, it also can be said that there is no Art without the Other, because "a culture is only viable when it is based on shared meanings" (Gielen, 2015, p. 89). On the other hand, there is the Other without Art; only this is a sadder one, since Art is also a way of living better (Todorov, 2009, p. 94).

Art, therefore, is one of the ways that the individuals find to try to change a reality that no longer satisfies them. In order to point out the flaws and angst, or to make their corrections and modifications, reality itself is used by them as a starting point for the journey on which the author and the Other will embark, because reality is all they both have. In this way, artists "used and are still using the 'common culture' that surrounds them. (...) [They] mix this common culture with their own more or less idiosyncratic ideas and then feed back into the same culture" (Gielen, 2015, p. 67).

"My art, if I may say so, was born as a construction of objects that directly imitated the real world, which, in this *simulacrum*, could be controlled". These words, again by Cristovão Tezza (2012, p. 33), describe the goal for artistic activity: to have control over an emptiness that leaves a hole which cannot be filled with mere reality.

Instead of simply escaping from the state of urgency and falling into the maximum alienation of the shallow and the ephemeral that was pointed out by Byung-Chul Han, artists truly committed to their time use their fears and angst as an impulse to produce their art:

> Imagination as an escape or compensation, as a prize of pleasure, is exercised by every single one of the human beings. Some, however, externalize their imagination, inscribe themselves in objects exposed to the perception of other people. This is the artistic way of exercising imagination and making up for what is lacking in the world. (...) Inventing another, fuller world or highlighting the gaps in the one we live in are two ways of complaining about the lack (Perrone-Moisés, 1990, pp. 104–105).

As, "regularly, the path of fiction is chosen to point out problematic deviations in reality" (Gielen, 2015, p. 94), artists, through narrative products that, at times, "show us a world even more terrible than the one already so unsatisfactory that surrounds us", provide an experience where "the dissatisfaction caused by the lack can be read even more clearly". In the end, to make clear "what is wrong, to make it perceptible and generalized to the point of becoming unbearable, is still to suggest, indirectly, what should be and it is not" (Perrone-Moisés, 1990, p. 104).

Whether to show how it really is, or to imagine how it should be, the world is always used as a basis for comparison in Art. In it, one resists or escapes from the state of urgency in which present time is built upon. But, also in Art, the world is found, reflected in the Other and echoing in the self.

3. Saramago and the blinding lights

In this context, it might be argued that few 20th century artists were more involved with their own times than the Portuguese writer José Saramago. Born in 1922, he witnessed the most important events of the century, and used them to compose his almost 40 books.

Knowing that to write is to travel to the *future*, and that to read is a travel to the *past*, in his writing, Saramago seems to comprehend two different instances of the illusion called *present*: his own and the reader's. In this way, in a mix of history and fantasy, of reality and lyrism, he builds stories that are timeless. At the same sense that they speak of events that happened in a not-so-distant past, they also speak about things that might happen in a not-so-distant future.

When 2020 Saramago published *A jangada de pedra* [The stone raft], in 1986, three of his previous novels (all written during the 1980's) had already made his name known in Portugal. If in *Levantado do chão* [Raised from the ground], *Memorial do convento* [Baltasar and Blimunda] and *O ano da morte de Ricardo Reis* [The year of the death of Ricardo Reis] Saramago used the history of Portugal to talk about, for example, the struggles that the Portuguese people faced during the dictatorship that lasted more than 40 years, in *A jangada de pedra* he used an extraordinary event (but not an impossible one, at least to an open mind) to talk about the struggles that every human being of the planet was facing at the end of the Cold War.

During the second half of the 20th century, uncertainties about the future (if there ever was a future at all) made people live in a constant state of urgency. And, although the neoliberal characteristics were still rising, Saramago could capture the fear and angst that emanated from his time and was able to predict that they were not ephemeral, that they would linger for future generations.

Almost 10 years later, Samarago writes what must be his most known novel: *Ensaio sobre a cegueira* [Blindness] (2021b). In 1995, uncertainties about a nuclear war were starting to fade, but were being replaced by uncertainties about where the ways of the future were going to lead humankind. Another shift was taking place: from the analogical world to the digital one. Technology was growing at a vertiginous pace, so fast that there was no time to think about it clearly. Some would say that the new millennium would be, finally, Heaven on Earth; while others could not sleep at night worrying about the loneliness in the world.

In the middle of all this, Saramago writes a story about a disease, a silent but striking one, that very soon is spreading through a whole city, maybe even the whole country or, why not, the whole world. The white blindness that takes place

in his book allows Saramago to once more talk about how frail and lost humanity is, no matter where or when it is.

The new millennium arrived, and in 2004, now a Nobel laureate, Saramago returned to the work that made him known to the whole world. *Ensaio sobre a lucidez* [Seeing] (2021c) takes place a couple of years after the events of the white blindness. Again, another improbable (but not impossible) situation is the starter to a series of existential questionings that maybe were within people the whole time and they did not realize. Fear, now, was not about *where* one was going, but *how* one would be when got there. The angst was not about a war, nor about the speed of change, but about the institutions that were being created along the way.

Only one year later, Saramago published one of his last and most powerful books. In *As intermitências da morte* [Death at intervals] (2021a), he comes with another state of emergency, maybe the most bizarre one: Death decides to take a vacation. Again, an extraordinary event seems to happen in an unnamed city, with unnamed people, which makes the story something universal.

Saramago may not have lived the age of Instagram and TikTok, since he died in 2010, but he certainly had a wider view of what kind of future was being prepared for humankind, based mostly on what he saw and heard along the 20th century. He witnessed a process that Czesław Miłosz calls *disintegration*, and that can be defined as the "sudden crumbling of all current notions and criteria", when the order in which people are used to live might cease to exist. This, Miłosz adds, "is a rare occurrence and is characteristic only of the most stormy periods in history" (Miłosz, 1983, p. 81).

In these particular states of emergency that lead a human collectivity towards disintegration, "whether that be war, the rule of terror, or natural catastrophe", Miłosz says that a "hierarchy of needs is built into the very fabric of reality". In such a way that "to satisfy hunger is more important than finding food that suits one's taste; the simplest act of human kindness toward a fellow being acquires more importance than any refinement of the mind" (Miłosz, 1983, pp. 79–80). I believe that this process of human disintegration described by Miłosz is exactly what is found in Saramago's books, especially in those mentioned above. What if the Iberian Peninsula drifted across the Atlantic Ocean? What if everyone went blind? What if no one went to vote? What if Death decided to take a vacation? Perhaps these and other absurdities have been thought of before; the difference between those who thought them and José Saramago is that the latter not only thought them, but materialized his absurdities.

These exceptional and fantastic situations, exercises of imagination taken to the ultimate consequences, are clear manifestations of states of emergency (but which bring, between the lines, the state of urgency that we are experiencing today), and reflect the world that Saramago saw in the past, was seeing in the present, and imagined that could be seen in the future.

In these four stories people gradually are losing something that makes them human: identity, perception, autonomy, finitude. However, during the process, through reflection and self-knowledge they start to discover and understand what really means to be human.

Therefore, the *quadrivium* of loss presented by Saramago is an attempt by the Portuguese author to make people learn how to live with their angst and fears, warning them to not be blinded by the excess of light, to not be imprisoned by the excess of freedom, to not be dehumanized by the excess of humanization.

4. Final remarks

Art, and also Literature, are silent but eloquent witnesses of History and Life. Through them, if one is truly committed, one is capable of expressing the inexpressible, of seeing what cannot be seen, of feeling what one did even know that was possible to be felt. Through Art, one may really live and not just survive.

With both feet planted on uncertain ground (one in the present of his time, the other in the imagined future), through relative situations, José Saramago gives voice to absolute truths. Through the juxtaposition of words, abstractions are thus concretized: Life, Beauty, Love and Art seem to be as simple as Nature itself.

Saramago's intention never seems to have been just to tell a story, but to transform human beings (those he portrays and those who read him). Many of his characters do not have names, but predicates, in such a way that any names might be put on them.

In a world where the "greedy consumption of images makes it impossible to close the eyes" (Han, 2018, p. 39), Saramago's writing seems to have the same effect as Franz Kafka intended with his own: to create stories that are ways of closing the eyes, or at least to make them "turned inwards, more, more, more, until they could reach and observe inside her own brain, there where the difference between seeing and not seeing is invisible to the naked eye" (Saramago, 2021a, p. 158).

As the words that open this essay advise, as well as when they open Saramago's *Ensaio sobre a cegueira*, if one has eyes to see, one must look; and if one has the possibility to look, then one has to pay attention, to observe. Thus, to escape the blinding lights of present time, one must escape from the obvious, from the transparent; one must think and reflect about what is seen.

When reading Saramago's books, one does not look just outside, towards the lights that blind, but also inside, turning inwards, discovering oneself as a human being. In each written word, in each comma replaced by a short breath, in each unsaid name, in each plot of mysterious origin, through his state of urgency poetics, Saramago seems to still live and continue his magical attempt to remember what it is to be human.

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Modern hard SF: Simulating Physics in Virtual Reality in Cixin Liu's *The Three-Body Problem*

ABSTRACT
In Cixin Liu's *The Three-Body Problem,* the reader follows the protagonist Wang Miao into the digital depths of the virtual reality of *Three Body*. As I will demonstrate in this paper, the virtual reality *Three Body* constitutes a purposeful combination of literary simulation of modern physics and intermedial virtual reality (VR) game representation. I will show that this combination is utilized for several interesting narrative purposes, for example, as a powerful foreshadowing instrument and as an almost didactic explanatory device for the theoretical physics problem upon which the novel is based.
Keywords: virtual reality, Chinese SF, hard SF, Cixin Liu, intermediality

In recent years Cixin Liu has become the posterboy of the new wave of Chinese science fiction as his *Remembrance of Earth's Past* trilogy was a major success, both in his home country and all over the world. According to Wu (2013, p. 4), Chinese SF currently enjoys a high level of popularity due to bestsellers written by Cixin Liu and Han Song and the works of other leading sci-fi authors like Wang Jinkang and He Xi. This current popularity of Chinese science fiction is also commented upon by Chau (2018, p. 112), who argues that it is especially due to the considerable international impact of Cixin Liu's *The Three-Body Problem* and the two Hugo awards that Cixin Liu and Hao Jingfang were awarded in 2015 and 2016.

The narrative of *The Three-Body Problem* (2008/2016) begins during China's Cultural Revolution. In the wake of these political events, the imprisoned young astrophysicist Ye Wenije decides to forego punishment as a political prisoner by aiding the Red Coast Base's search for extraterrestrial signals. Yet, over the years a terrible hatred for humanity remains in her heart, fostered by the unspeakable crimes she witnessed during the Cultural Revolution. When finally she receives a message from the planet of Trisolaris, she responds, asking the extraterrestrial beings to conquer earth. Decades later, the nanomaterials researcher Wang Miao

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(the protagonist) is hired by a secret international organization of political, military, and scientific members to investigate a current series of scientist deaths. The traces lead him to the online game *Three Body*, a simulation of the harsh environment of Trisolaris dominated by its three suns. As Wang plays, he quickly finds out that an organization led by Ye Wenije is behind the game. He reports his findings, and the global organization decides to put an end to Wenije's group. As they do so, Wang and the Battle Command find out that the Trisolarans will arrive on earth in four centuries. Time is ticking for humanity.

Cixin Liu is very much a writer of hard SF in the tradition of authors like Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clark, and so his approach to the medium of VR is significantly more factual and science-centered[1]. However, one should not make the mistake of inferring from this fact that hence his vision would be less artistic. Instead, the virtual reality of *Three Body* constitutes a rich hybrid of intermedial video game representation and physics simulation serving as a multifaceted narrative tool. Consequently, this paper will focus on the virtual reality *Three Body* as a purposefully employed combination of literary simulation of modern physics and as an intermedial representation of VR video games. I will demonstrate in this paper that this combination is utilized for several interesting narrative purposes, for example, as a powerful foreshadowing instrument and as an almost didactic explanatory tool for the theoretical physics problem upon which the novel is based.

1. The Origin of *Three Body*

One of the central concepts within Cixin Liu's novel *The Three-Body Problem* is the virtual reality video game *Three Body*. It is a bizarre game filled with quirky characters, diverse cultural references, anachronistic instances of Chinese history, and a focus on the three-body problem in physics, all instilled with a dash of intermediality. Essential intermedial elements, that are featured in the novel are: explicit intermedial reference[2], implicit intermedial reference[3], and transposition[4].

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[1] This is a fact that is also frequently addressed by the author himself. For example in his essay "Beyond Narcissism: What Science Fiction Can Offer Literature". Here (Cixin, 2013, p. 29) he argues: "science fiction world-building must follow the way of science". He also adds that Asimov's work showcases that science fiction is a genre that is primarily focused on content and not on form and that his own novels clearly abide by this credo, especially concerning their world-building.

[2] Explicit intermedial reference (also termed intermedial thematization) is according to Wolf (2002, p. 24) an overt representation of a different medium.

[3] In contrast to its explicit counterpart, implicit intermedial reference (also referred to as intermedial imitation) is described by Wolf (2002, p. 25) as an imitative embedding of another medium in an iconic manner.

[4] Transposition is defined by Wolf (2002, p. 19) as a discernible transfer of content or formal elements from one medium to another.

Throughout most of the novel, the world of *Three Body* is a rather mysterious place. The protagonist Wang Miao is shown to be initially simply enticed by the game's obscure appeal and hidden secrets (e.g. p. 120). It is only later in the novel that the real reasoning behind the VR game is revealed (pp. 346–348). Here it is explained that Ye Wenije's Earth-Trisolaris Movement (also called ETO) has created it. This organization consists of three factions. The Adventists, who hope that Trisolaris will eradicate the human race (p. 345), the Redemptionists, a religious group fueled by the belief that a higher developed intelligent species could enlighten humanity (p. 346), and the Survivors, who simply want to secure the future of their descendants by taking part in the movement (p. 349). *Three Body* is essentially a project created by the Redemptionists to find new members of all social strata, to spread their religion, and, most importantly, to find a solution to the three-body problem in order to save the Trisolarans (p. 347–348).

2. The Virtual Lay of the Land

Now that the origin of the video game *Three Body* has been explained, the next important aspect are its key features. Already in terms of the visual construction of the world, there are several essential points. The game world at first consists primarily of a grand desolate plain (p. 101), stone buildings, tunnels, large Pendulums, and a gigantic pyramid (p. 110). However, every time Wang Miao is depicted to log in, this world changes significantly. The world always appears to be a lifeless plain, however, the pyramid changes from an Egyptian to an Aztec pyramid (p. 150), to a Gothic-style cathedral (p. 193), and eventually into a representation of the UN Headquarters (p. 251), and with it the buildings are also altered several times, incorporating Gothic architecture (p. 193), and ancient Greek monuments (p. 193). The diverse cultural appeal is also upheld regarding the players' identities, who are shown to impersonate historical figures like Mozi (p. 150), Confucius (p. 151), Copernicus (p. 192), Aristotle (p. 194), Newton (p. 224), Von Neumann (p. 225), and Einstein (p. 251) and ancient rulers, such as the Chinese Kings Wen of Zhou (p. 102) and King Zhou of Shang (p. 111), Chinese emperor Quin Shi Huang (p. 233), and Pope Gregory (p. 193).This mixture of Western architecture and Eastern and Western thinkers and rulers is a highly significant aspect of the virtual world of *Three Body*.

According to Wu (2013, p. 4), three essential aspects render Chinese SF unique. Firstly, its frequent thematic exploration of liberty and the abandonment of old cultural, political, and institutional systems. Secondly, discourse revolving around Western science and culture embedded in the themes of liberation. Thirdly, concern for the future of China. I would argue that the concept of *Three Body* in Cixin's novel aligns itself quite well with these key features. As has been explained, there are three goals behind the simulation. Namely, saving the Trisolarans, recruiting new members, and spreading their religion. All of these aspects

are inherently infused with themes of liberation. The first goal is about liberating Trisolaria from the oppression of the three suns. Goals two and three are essentially about leaving behind established cultural and political systems. Furthermore, *Three Body* contains multiple scenes in which historical thinkers from different cultures work together and explore different theories to solve the three-body problem. The foundation of this scientific collaboration is one of merging Western and Eastern attitudes towards science to reach a shared goal. Lastly, the implied worldview raises at least in an allegorical manner concerns for the future of China. The shared intercultural efforts in the virtual world of *Three Body* to solve the three-body problem and the novel's focus on international organizations are both indications that the implied worldview is in favor of the idea that the future of China lies in international cooperation rather than nationalism. This international core of the novel is also highlighted by Kile (2017, p.112) who states that: "*The Three-Body Problem* conceives of the world as united by modern technology, international physics research, and a shared planet under intergalactic threat".

Another essential visual aspect of *Three Body* is that the number of suns in the sky alternates continuously between zero and three suns. Sometimes there is no sun at all (p. 117) and the game world freezes to death (p. 118), other times there is one (p. 156) or two suns (p. 107), and in the worst case there are three suns in the sky (p. 200) and the world goes down in flames (p. 201). These constellations of the three suns decide if the virtual world is currently in a chaotic or stable era, or if it is annihilated (p. 103–104). A final essential element of the world of *Three Body* is the concept of dehydration and rehydration. Throughout the virtual episodes, it is shown that during the chaotic eras the population is dehydrated (e.g. pp. 106, 108, 110), transforming the people into strange, leathery things which are later rehydrated during a stable era (e.g. pp. 107, 114). This strange process and the obscure image of these dehydrated bodies stored as rolls on top of each other in storehouses (p. 114) are an integral part of the game.

3. The Immersive Portrayal of the Three-Body Problem

This also brings us to the foundational issue within *Three Body*, the three-body problem[5]. Already during the protagonist's first round of VR gaming, the main premise of the game is highlighted, namely to be able to understand and calculate the pattern of the three suns to be able to predict the occurrence of chaotic and stable eras. Wang Miao is shown to travel five times into the virtual realm of "Three-Body", and each time there are players who try to solve the problem. For example, there is King Wen, who is depicted as trying to calculate the movements of the

[5] The three-body problem, in astronomy, is defined as: "The problem of determining the motion of three celestial bodies moving under no influence other than that of their mutual gravitation" (quoted from *Encyclopedia Britannica)*. It is till date an unsolved problem.

three suns by hand (p. 112). Then, there is Mozi, who establishes an intricate model of the universe in which it is a sphere with holes in its outer layer surrounded by a sea of flames, the holes being the spots where the fire can shine through and take the form of the suns or stars (p. 153). Mozi's model also proves to be completely insufficient to calculate the patterns of the three suns. Lastly, the most elaborate in-game attempt to solve the three-body problem is conducted by Von Neumann and Newton who create a massive human-computer by instrumentalizing millions of soldiers of King (pp. 227–228). These soldiers take the role of signal input and signal output and are instructed to perform different logical circuits, like an AND gate and an OR gate (pp. 229–230)[6]. Eventually, a massive army of 30 million soldiers is shown to perform these logical circuits, acting like a computer formed out of human beings (pp. 234–235). In terms of the visual representation of a solution to the three-body problem in physics, this section is especially significant as the vocabulary suddenly shifts towards typical computer jargon. Now there is a "central CPU", a "motherboard" with "flashing components" (p. 235), a "differential calculus module" and a long "computation". Therefore, the image of a gigantic army is suddenly mixed with typical computer imagery and so it becomes an in-between for the reader. This can be described as an ekphrasis[7] of computer hardware that is placed above the actual narrative image of the gigantic army and combines them. In terms of the literary simulation of physics, this calculatory experiment is then brought to its end in a truly terrifying manner as suddenly the three suns appear in one straight line and their gravitational force is displayed to destroy the atmosphere, leaving the people with boiling blood and disintegrating organs in the vacuum of space (p. 242).

Aside from being an ekphrasis this example of Neumann and Newton's human-computer can be categorized as partly both explicit and implicit intermedial reference. On the one hand, it constitutes an explicit simulation of a computer filled with vocabulary that belongs to the domain of computers and video games. On the other hand, there is also an implicit intermedial aspect to it as the workings of the calculatory processes of a computer are imitated.

The *Three Body* chapters are filled with several such intermedial elements, most of which are explicit references, that serve various purposes. Firstly, multiple times the technology needed to access the virtual reality is mentioned. These

[6] The interactive representation of *Three Body* aligns itself well with typical characteristic of massive multiplayer online games. As Downey (2014) outlines, since the late 90s extremely large sums are being invested by gaming companies "to produce vibrant visual worlds that draw users into the game and feed their desire to explore and play" (p. 59). Downey argues that games such as World of Warcraft and Second Life are offering virtual environments that players can truly interact with in a great number of ways (pp. 59–60).

[7] In the sense of Heffernan's definition of ekphrasis as "the verbal representation of visual representation" (Heffernan, 1993, p. 3).

technological tools are a VR suit, which is also described as a haptic feedback suit, and a panoramic viewing helmet (p. 85).[8] As this gear is introduced, it is also stated in the same breath that the suit allows players to experience both physical sensations, such as a punch, and temperature changes (ibid.). That this gear is mentioned is especially important as it contextualizes the VR experience of the protagonist in an intermedial manner by serving as a reminder for when he logs in (e.g. pp. 101, 149, 192), logs out (pp. 119, 160), or for certain virtual sensations that it allows him to feel (e.g. p. 104). Interestingly, these examples of VR gear are only present during the first three virtual adventures. In the last two runs, these mentions of Wang putting on the VR-Suit when he logs in or out, or of the VR-Suit allowing him to experience physical and temperamental sensations in the game world, are omitted. I would argue that Cixin accentuates these technological matters during the first half of the VR chapters, to create a distinct image of the process within the reader's minds, by clearly separating the virtual and the non-virtual world in their imagination.

There are further such elements utilized to the effect of creating a clear transition from the real world to the virtual reality of *Three Body* and back. For instance, terms like "log in/logged into" (e.g. pp. 101, 149), "logged on/ log on" (e.g. pp. 192, 201, 243, 251), "exit" (e.g. pp. 117, 118), and "logged out" (e.g. pp. 202, 243) are repeatedly employed throughout the novel as linguistic signaling devices showing when the protagonist leaves and enters the virtual world of *Three Body*. Naturally, it can be claimed that these terms have simply become commonplace by now when we talk about VR and online gaming. Nonetheless, I would argue that as they cannot be separated from the medial field they belong to, they establish per se an explicit intermedial connection, especially if they are combined with other such terms.

One significantly different intermedial element that draws attention to the videogame-esque nature of *Three Body* is its online address www.3body.net (p. 86). This web address is actually of specific interest to us because Cixin Liu and his team have established a website with exactly this address that was filled with information and extra content on the novel to foster an intermedial connection between the book and the internet, – a connection that sadly does not exist anymore as the website was deactivated a few years ago. Nonetheless, intermedial transposition of content from one medium to another is again an aspect that purposefully links this fictional video game to the actual realm of VR technology and the internet.

There are several other moments during which the game nature of *Three Body* is explicitly drawn attention to. For example, the process of launching the game is described in detail (p. 101). During this sequence there is an explosion, mountains

[8] The VR gear in Cixin's novel seems akin to the technology produced by companies like teslasuit, HTC und Oculus VR.

come crashing down in the far distance and everything is bathed in the dust. Then, as the dust settles down Wang Miao is confronted with the registration screen and has to create an ID. Furthermore, there is the continuous highlighting of the game's option to speed up or slow down time (e.g. pp. 105, 113, 156, 231, 236), an aspect that is essential as game time always passes much faster than the play-time (discourse time). Thus, the presentation of the game world is considerably transformed as the reader is made to envision the changes which are described in these scenes as happening at an extremely fast pace and then suddenly being slowed down. Further, slightly more minor examples of the novel's foregrounding of the videogame nature of *Three Body* are comments on the game designers (p. 157), the game interface (pp. 120, 156), the game being over (p. 156), and the epilogue that appears at the end of each of Wang Miao's plays and re-narrates the story of the virtual civilizations that have just vanished (pp. 118, 160, 201, 242, pp. 262–263).

Via these explicit intermedial references, the fact that *Three Body* is a virtual reality game is emphasized repeatedly. I would argue that there is something quite essential to this overemphasis. In a way, all these intermedial aspects can be viewed as instances of self-reference drawing attention to the virtuality of the world. Hence, one could claim that *The Three-Body Problem* presents the reader with a VR game that constantly draws attention to its being a game. Now, what is interesting about this is that after all such a repeated act of self-reference tends to have the potential to break the aesthetic illusion of a text, a movie, or a game, and, indeed, the characters are shown to be somewhat unimmersed in the sense that they are shown to be aware of *Three Body* being a game. However, and here comes the catch, the effect on the reader can also be decisively different. Since the virtual reality chapters include so many overt mentions of VR and video gaming, the reader is likely immersed to a greater degree as the virtual world is rendered more distinct and believable[9]. After all, by repeatedly drawing attention to the idea that *Three Body* is a video game with typical video game visuals, features, and rules, the novel fosters a distinct intermedial vision of the narrative world within the reader's mind. Consequently, the effect on the reader can be quite opposite of what such instances of self-reference commonly provoke. This effect is also strengthened by the repeated emphasis of the text on the immersive qualities of *Three Body*. For instance, the main character is shown to be exceedingly intrigued

[9] Møller-Olsen (2020, p. 135) also comments on the duality of *Three Body's* self-referentiality in terms of both being an immersive tool and being potentially illusion breaking: "The computer game becomes a chronotope that blurs the boundary between reality and imagination, as well as a metafictional gesture pointing out that the two realities (virtual and physical) are both fictional, existing side-by-side on the pages of Liu's book".

by the experiences he has in the virtual world to the point where it becomes almost more fascinating to him than the real world (p. 160):

> After his mind had calmed down a bit, he again had the thought that *Three Body* was deliberately pretending to be merely illusory, while in fact possessing some deep reality. The real world in front of him, on the other hand, had begun to feel like the superficially complex, but in truth rather simple, *Along The River During the Qingming Festival* (Cixin L., 2016, p. 160).

This passage sums up two central aspects of the virtual reality. Firstly, here the self-referential illusion breaking of *Three Body* and its effect on the recipient are directly addressed, as it is commented that the world appears to be unreal yet also seems to contain a hidden reality. This foregrounding of the game world's fictionality whilst also implying that it hides something important renders the intermedial effect of these passages much more tangible. Furthermore, together with other such instances that affirm the immersive quality and captivating nature of *Three Body* (e.g. pp. 119, 246) it also foreshadows what is shown to be the real nature of the game. As has been mentioned before, it is revealed later on in the novel (pp. 346–348) that *Three Body* is a sort of recruiting software disguised as a game to find new members for the ETO as well as to find a solution to the three-body problem to save the people of Trisolaris. However, even earlier it is put forth that, indeed, *Three Body* is a game-like simulation of Trisolaris and that its primary features (three suns, chaotic and stable eras, dehydration/rehydration, and the Trisolaran-formation computer) exist on the planet of the Trisolarans. This foreshadowing of the existence of Trisolaris and its obscure features is one of the primary narrative functions of the *Three Body* chapters. Secondly, this passage exhibits the immersive qualities of *Three Body* in an intermedial manner as it is stated here that for the protagonist Wang Miao playing *Three Body* has become an experience that suddenly feels more exciting and deeper than reality. This is also exemplified via the explicit intermedial reference to a famous Chinese painting, – a reference point that is already established earlier (p. 120). By thus comparing reality to a painting and placing the virtual reality of *Three Body* in a sense above both as something more immersive and intriguing, an interesting assessment is created that once again strengthens the intermedial vision of the virtual reality whilst also creating a mysterious flair around the topic. In general, I would argue that one of the most outstanding aspects of the concept behind the virtual reality *Three Body* is its high narrative functionality regarding the novel's key aspects. As has been exhibited in this paper, *Three Body* is firstly, a virtual representation of the planet Trisolaris, its unique planetary situation, its people, and its culture (pp. 246–247). Secondly, it is shown to serve three practical purposes for the ETO (p. 347). Regarding these purposes, it is also underlined that *Three Body* was designed to present the Trisolaran culture by utilizing well-known elements of human culture in order

not to alienate new players (p. 347). Now, one other essential aspect of these clear-cut functions of *Three Body* within the context of the novel's story is that it can be argued that the virtual reality serves the very same purposes regarding the reader's reception of the text.

Firstly, the reader slowly but steadily gets to know the world of Trisolaris in a simulation environment and acquires knowledge about the planet and its people in a game-like world. Secondly, the alien inhabitants of Trisolaris are represented in a bizarre, humorous yet also exceedingly familiar manner that renders the whole world and its specific issues, like the three suns, the dehydration and rehydration of the people, and chaotic and stable eras more tangible and interesting. This is important because thus the extraterrestrial world and its civilization are in a sense built up from the ground in a logical and comprehensible manner. Thirdly, and probably most importantly, the same applies to the three-body problem in physics. If the novel started with theoretical expositions on the problem, then it could have been perceived as dry by many readers and might have had an alienating effect. Yet its playful presentation via *Three Body* and the whole backstory of intelligent beings on a distant planet who have been facing this problem for millennia renders the solving of this theoretical problem a highly sensible and intriguing task and creates a sense of investment within the reader, similar to the effect it is shown to have on characters who play *Three Body*. Subsequently, the more expositional passages in the middle of the novel (pp. 208–216), in which the three-body problem is explained, are framed in a way that makes them appear much more necessary and purposeful. As Bould and Vint (2011, p. 76) outline, the genre of hard SF that marked the so-called golden age of science fiction was primarily defined by its focus on extrapolations founded upon scientific plausibility and narratives that followed a concise logic. I would argue that Cixin's focus on physics and his implementation of a scientifically sound explanation and discussion of the three-body problem renders it a modern example of this kind of SF.

4. Conclusion

As I have demonstrated in this paper, Cixin Liu's portrayal of VR in *The Three-Body Problem* renders it a prime example of modern hard-SF. This is because the concept of *Three-Body* is utilized in a straightforward and functional manner. Every aspect from its intermedial presentation as virtual reality game to its intratextual functions as both a political tool and a sandbox simulation allowing players to attempt one of the most complex problems in modern physics serves distinct narrative purposes. In almost every case, these aims concern both the plot and the text's effect on the reader. Given its more traditional hard-SF approach, I would argue that the combination of simulating and rendering accessible a complicated theoretical problem whilst also firmly embedding it into its narrative can be viewed as one of the most stunning achievements of the novel.

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A Cluster of Mirrors: Constructing Artemisia Gentileschi across the Media

ABSTRACT
With the objective of understanding the historical figure of Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1653), this article analyses and compares the construction of some works by the artist and the character Artemisia in *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002) Susan Vreeland's novel. Inspired by the life and work of the Italian painter, the narrative uses pictorial markers to tell the story of the character.
Keywords: Artemisia Gentileschi, self-portrait, intermediality, pictorial marker

1. Introduction

Artemisia Gentileschi is an early 17th century historical figure. Born in Rome on July 8, 1593, she was the daughter of the famous painter Orazio Gentileschi. With the death of her mother, Prudenzia Montone, she grew up in the artistic milieu, attending her father's studio and having the opportunity to develop art knowledge and technique from a very young age.

Her presence in a space frequented only by men drew attention, and her tutor, who taught her perspective technique, rapes her. Her father denounces him and the abuser is brought to public trial. However, the complaint was questioned, and Gentileschi subjected to physical and psychological torture as a way to make her admit she was no longer a virgin at the time of the abuse, which would have been accepted as a justification for it then. Due to all these events, her father arranges for her to marry another artist of her acquaintance and she moves to Florence.

And so, the artist begins the most important phase of her career, in Florence, where Gentileschi had her talent recognized, being the first woman to enter the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. "As far as we are aware, she was the first woman to have been accepted at the Academy of Fine Arts of Florence", historian Cristine Tedesco (2018b, p. 94) states.

As she had her work recognized in this way in her time, being the first woman in history to be accepted in a group of artists created and accessible exclusively for men, it is important to understand the technical characteristics that are repeated in

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different works of the painter, building a professional figure of the artist Artemísia Gentileschi. The novel *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002) creates the character Artemisia, narrating the elaboration of her canvases, her articulations in her social environment and especially the significant way in which she portrayed herself, in the work Self-portrait as Allegory of Painting (1638–1639), which according to Tedesco (2018a), is the artist's masterpiece, in which she demonstrates her technique and theoretical knowledge.

The construction of the character Artemisia in the novel *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002) is based on fragments of the life and work of Artemisia Gentileschi. The author Susan Vreeland creates the protagonist of the narrative: an artist who takes her profession as the most important aspect of her life and who moves in her social environment for the benefit of her work. Vreeland writes an "artist's narrative" about Gentileschi, a term proposed and adopted by Izabela do Lago (2017, p. 45)[1] to "designate the narratives that revolve around artists".

In the elaboration of the narrative, the pictorial markers that, according to Liliane Louvel (2006), allow the perception of the image in the text, are part of the plot. Considering the nuances of pictorial markers, it can be said that on certain scenes, some of them occur in *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002).

Pictorial markers, for Louvel (2006), are references to the visual arts in a literary text, at different levels of perception, which Louvel calls nuances, which are divided into some levels, according to the effect on the reader's perception. The "frame effect" (p. 177), produces suggestions in painting even without direct reference to the work. The "picturesque view" (p. 180) reproduces a scene as if it were a painting. The next level of perception is the "living frame" (p. 182), which arranges the characters in a scene as if reproducing a painting or a historical scene. On the other hand, the "aesthetic arrangement" (p. 184), happens when a character acts or narrates with the intention of producing an artistic effect.

Among all the pictorial markers, the "pictorial description" (Louvel, 2006, p. 185) and the "ekphrasis" (p. 187), are the most noticeable in the novel *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002), they are the most saturated nuances of image in a text. While pictorial description has some operators such as framing, spelling, title, pictorial lexicon, etc. (Louvel, 2006). Ekphrasis has the "highest degree of pictorialization of the text" (p. 187), describes in detail the work indicating what it refers to and makes "the passage between the visible and the legible" (p. 187).

Therefore, during this work we will reflect on some of the pictorial descriptions that appear in the literary narrative, which now have citation value of the

[1] Lago (2017, pp. 45–46), bases the term "artist's narrative" in "accordance to Roland Barthes' understanding in *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* (1966)", claiming that using "a broader term" is "more suited to contemporary literary productions" and also breaks with "the idea that these narratives constitute a subgenre of the novel".

work in the text, thus connecting them to the original works that will be brought for comparison and reflection on the authors Artemisias, the real and fiction.

Starting with the title of the novel, Vreeland uses the pictorial marker of pictorial description, using the first name of the painter Artemisia Gentileschi, evoking to the reader all the references he may have of the name Artemisia, bringing interest in reading and preparing him to perceive the nuances that she will draw on to construct the character's journey.

As in the narrative sequence, the next chapters bring the artistic trajectory of the character Artemisia from the novel The passion of Artemisia (2002), the way she perceived the history of the women she painted and how this reflected in her work, culminating in the chapter that deals with the way that she perceives her own story and portrays herself. Bringing comparisons with the life and work of the artist in which the character was inspired, Artemisia Gentileschi.

2. Constructions of myths

Biblical motives are a common feature in the Baroque period, to which Gentileschi belongs. Financed by the church and wealthy families of the time, artists presented biblical narratives through pictorial works in order to teach and reinforce Catholic morals to a predominantly illiterate society. Gentileschi followed this movement, in a dialogue with the artists of her time. There are, however, some differences, as she represents the myths from an idiosyncratic perspective.

The painter's best-known works are inspired by historical figures of women and their stories, such as Susanna, Judith, Magdalene and Cleopatra, to which she gave a unique interpretation and which are described in *The Passion of Artemisia*. In the novel, the paintings are represented through various literary devices and functions in the narrative, following Artemisia's professional and personal maturation and the development of the plot. Pictorial markers process the images of Artemisia Gentileschi's works and introduce them into the narrative as part of the protagonist's experience.

Artemisia, painter and character, privileged female protagonists in her representations. According to Miriam Vieira (2016), the myth of Judith (which narrates the story of a woman who, with divine help, beheads the general of an enemy army) is a symbol of the Jewish woman and is repeated in several of Gentileschi's paintings, always conveying the image of a strong woman, in contrast to other works with the same theme. Other artists represented her in the background and without emotion; Gentileschi gave her Judiths prominence on canvas and strength in both image and action.

In the novel *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002), the paintings on the theme of Judith are represented through different literary devices and have different functions in the narrative, following the character's maturation and the plot development. Vreeland achieves this by the use of pictorial markers, which textually process

the images of the artist's works and introduce them into the story as part of the character's experience.

Pictorial description, according to Louvel (2006), is the narrative text "that summons the image" (p. 181). Subsequently, the author refers to the "passage from one mediation to another" (p. 187), with textual criteria that will allow the transition from the textual to the pictorial, "observing the mixing effects between the two media, in order to be possible to say that we are in the presence of a description of a 'pictorial' characteristic" (p. 187). The pictorial description "'resists linearity' by adding a space, that of the mental image, whose extension will have as limits only imagination, artistic culture and… the reader's capacity for memorization" (p. 200).

During the narrative, pictorial description is used to describe works by famous artists who inspire the character in her creations and to narrate the elaboration and painting of the canvases. Ekphrasis describes the work of art and "effects the passage between the visible and the legible" (Louvel, 2001, p. 183). The reader refers to the already known works and also adds details of the narrative, updating his artistic reference while advancing in the plot of the text.

From the reading of Vieira's thesis (2016), one can consider that the first pictorial marker in the novel takes place in a Judith painting, which represents the experience of Artemisia's torture, recent in the time of the narrative. From the works entitled Judith de Gentileschi, there are several pictorial descriptions that refer to the painter's original canvas. In her study process, Artemisia mentions and describes works by various artists, such as Michelangelo's *Moses*, located in St. Peter's Basilica, or Caravaggio's *Judith* and *Conversion of St. Paul* (Vreeland, 2002, pp. 26–27). The novel narrates her process of pain and creation along with the ekphrasis of Gentileschi's *Judith Decapitating Holofernes* (1613) (p. 27), and the reader constructs it along with the character, assimilating the parts known to him and adding details inscribed in the narrative:

> The next morning, I started *Judith Slaying Holofernes*. I could barely bend my fingers to grasp the egg-shaped muller to pulverize the pigments on my marble slab. Pain is not important. I have to ignore it, I told myself. Only painting is important. Paint out the pain, Graziela had said. I couldn't keep my thumb in the hole of the palette so I put a stool on top of a chair to have the palette up high and close by. The smears of color made me breathe faster. Steeling myself against the pull of my skin when I held a brush, I swirled the shiny wetness of pure ultramarine onto my palette and added a touch of soot black to darken it for Judith's sleeves. Then, awkwardly, I took a stroke to rough it in, sketching with paint. My heart quaked. I felt alive again (Vreeland, 2002, p. 27).

On the other hand, the second painting based on Judith's story to appear in the novel reflects Artemisia's professional side, its ekphrasis being an account of the elaboration of a work intended to delight her client and the public (Vreeland, 2002,

p. 112). Finally, the third and fourth ones address her technique and maturity, referring to Michelangelo's *David* (p. 117) and her own experience (p. 242), respectively:

> That violent act seemed retrograde. It held no interest for me now. I let my mind imagine as I sketched. This Judith ought to be a heavier, middle-aged woman, made wiser by experience - not a mere temptress and killer, but a more reasoning individual (p. 242).

Another female figure that Artemisia introduces in her work is Susanna, referring to a myth that begins with a woman during her bath being watched by old men, a theme of voluptuousness also often portrayed in the arts. The elaboration of Susanna's painting was not described in the novel because it belongs to a time outside that of the narrative. However, it gains importance in the plot as it is her first known work. In a dialogue with Artemisia, Sister Graziela gives an ekphrastic description of the painting and compares Artemisia to Susanna, talking about her talent and reflecting on her innocence:

> Think of your *Susanna and the Elders*. When that painting becomes famous, the whole world will know your innocence. […] That's the brilliance of your skill, to have a masterpiece reflect your own feelings and experience. […] Never forget that the world needs to know what you have to show them (Vreeland, 2002, pp. 20-21)

Susanna and the Elders (1610) is important for Vreeland's novel and for the construction of Artemisia's character. It already reveals her peculiar way of creation, as it gives the female figure an expression of repulsion that was not attributed to her by other artists of the time. With your face and gestures that express your feelings, "Susanna is not representing a passive woman, […] but a Susanna terrified of the men who observe her" (Loponte, 2002, as cited in Tedesco, 2018b, p. 46).

The Susanna painting also shows that since an early age the artist had knowledge of artistic references, as it reveals "nuances that dialogue with the artists of her time, at the same time that the painter's biblical figure can be considered innovative due to the attitude of repulsion it displays" (Tedesco, 2018b, p. 217). Mary Garrard, one of the leading specialists in Gentileschi's work, has noted that part of Susanna's figure might have been inspired by earlier works, such as the relief of a Roman sarcophagus which, in turn, was an inspiration for Michelangelo's painting of Adam in the Sistine Chapel. This demonstrates that her creation was based on studies since her youth; she developed into "a painter and student of the human figure, exalting her performance in the world of creation" (Tedesco, 2018b, p. 202).

The Passion of Artemisia mentions Michelangelo's *Adam and Eve Expelled from Paradise*. The character Artemisia interacts with the image of Eve, which causes emotion and identification in her: "Between Eve and me, I felt no gulf of centuries" (Vreeland, 2002, p. 64). As in Vreeland's novel, there is an interaction between time and space in Gentileschi's works. Characters in her paintings belong

to a time before that of the artist, yet they dress in the fashion of the painter's time, the 17th century. This results in an image that interacts with those who look at it from another time, which also resignifies it.

These temporal interactions can be considered superposition pictorial descriptions, evoking to the reader several references, such as the artist's canvas, the historical character portrayed, the expression of clothing, which, depending on the reader's cultural background, causes several reflections to take place on the meaning of the work in the narrative and also resignifies the original work, which receives more details from the reading.

Vreeland uses characteristics of Gentileschi's works to elaborate her own text. The novelist employs displacements in time and space and visualisations of the painter's works through pictorial descriptions for the construction of allegory, which confirms Vieira's (2012) idea of contemporary allegory[2]. The author elaborates the term "contemporary allegory" considering the resignification of the Benjaminian allegory by Craig Owens (2004). Vieira (2012) proposes that "the allegorist takes possession of the images, interprets them culturally, adds new meanings in the form of a supplement, thus turning them into something else" (p. 124).

3. Constructions of Artemisias

From the very title of the novel, the pictorial marker *Artemisia* produces a citation effect, as it informs the reader that the text is related to the historical figure of Artemisia Gentileschi, who has remnants of her life and work as the basis for the construction of the narrative and of the protagonist Artemisia.

Amid the many female figures, religious symbols, queens and sinners which appear in Gentileschi's *oeuvre*, she herself appears in self-portraits. In some works, Gentileschi depicts herself as the allegorical figure of painting, as taken from Cesare Ripa's Iconology (1593).

From these self-reflections, her "masterpiece" (Tedesco, 2018, p. 71) emerges: the *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (1638-39). According to Pedro Süssekind (2016), "a portrait is about the model, but it is also an expression of the artist's thinking, sensitivity and technical ability" (p. 138). Therefore, when it comes to self-portraits, these expressions are doubled, as the artist reveals both his reflection and his technical capacity.

It is believed that Gentileschi used mirrors to project her image during the production of *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*. "Mirrors", in the plural, as

[2] Vieira (2012), is based on the reading of the essay "The allegorical impulse: on a theory of postmodernism" (1980), in which "Craig Owens resignifies the Benjaminian allegory today" and "examines how allegory, present in the structure of contemporary works of art, offers a new meaning to the form of presentation by confiscating images and appropriating the allegorical imagery". She also considers that "For Owens, allegory re-emerges in contemporary art, since it is conceived both as 'an attitude and a technique, a perception and a procedure'" (p. 124).

the artist probably used a second mirror to capture her profile image while painting, thus "looking at the image of her image reflected in the mirror" (Tedesco, 2018b, p. 275). The allegory of painting was inspired by her studies of the standard emblematic manual of the period, Cesare Ripa's *Iconology* (1593), in which the drawing is described in an ekphrasis:

> with the ingenious innovation of giving himself the attributes of the personification of painting. Although the painter renounces the disturbing symbol of the bandage in the mouth, the chain with the mask she wears around her neck, the iridescent dress, the dishevelled hair, the brush and the palette lead unmistakably to Ripa's voice (Maffei & Procaccioli, 2012, p. 152).

And the novel, citing Ripa's *Iconology*, also describes the allegory of the Painting, "he showed me the allegorical figure of Painting- a beautiful woman with a brush in one hand, a palette in the other, and around her neck a gold chain with a medallion of a stage mask" (Vreeland, 2002, p. 314).

In regard to Gentileschi's technique, recent radiographic studies of her self-portrait reveal a perfect elaboration of the image and movements of the brush, recognizing the playful use of light and shadow of the art of her time. The painting also presents movements that appear in other of her works, indicating study and elaboration of the image. This demonstrates that Gentileschi studied discussions on art from the Baroque period and was also concerned with demonstrating his professional side by portraying himself in the act of creation.

In this self-portrait, Gentileschi associates herself with the personification of painting, merging two traditions into a single image and creating a pioneering work of art. Introducing herself into a painting as an allegorical representation demonstrates that Gentileschi was aware of current discussions about art and was still concerned about demonstrating her professional side by portraying herself in the act of creation and with the technique of pictorial production. "In addition to inspiration, […] we can say that the artist is constantly constructed from visual metaphor" (Garrard, 2001, as cited in Tedesco, 2018b, p. 265).

The elaboration of her masterpiece, *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*, appears as the symbol of her life and work in *The Passion of Artemisia*. In the last pages, the protagonist Artemisia finally reunites with her father. She shows him the brush she had been given by Buonarroti, great-nephew of Michelangelo, at the beginning of the narrative, a brush which was Michelangelo's own work tool. Referring to the works of one of the greatest artists in history, Orazio exclaims that "with this [brush] he painted souls, Artemisia" (Vreeland, 2002, p. 310).

The narrative reaches its climax at the end, with the character's personal and artistic maturity. On his deathbed, her father tells her: "Use his brush. Do a self-portrait. An Allegory of Painting. For all time" (Vreeland, 2002, p. 315). The father's recommendation to use the brush that had been the work tool of

Michelangelo himself is like an indication for Artemisia to produce a masterpiece, as if the talent of its former owner would contribute to her paintinSophie Bertho's (2015) description of the functions of art work references within narratives are relevant for the analysis of Vreeland's novel. Using Bertho's terms, one can say that *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* has an ontological function in *The Passion of Artemisia*. The final dialogue that describes the artist's self-portrait and introduces it into the novel, immobilises the image of the work, which passes from a narrative function and becomes a symbol of the meaning of the work itself, the climax of the story of the character Artemisia and the masterpiece of the painter Artemisia Gentileschi.

Gentileschi's *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* reflects "how she wanted to be seen" (Tedesco, 2018b, p. 276), representing herself as an allegory of painting with such a technique that she "converted her self-portrait and the figure of the allegory of painting into a unique and original image" (Tedesco, 2018b, p. 278). It is an image that symbolises many simultaneous perceptions of Artemisia.

Vreeland's novel uses pictorial markers to perform the multiplication of reflections, constructing the character in a way that, in the end, we understand the importance of her self-portrait that everything that had action and reflection on hers, her image as a result of all personal experience and professional. With the multiplication of mirrors, she began the multiplication of Artemisias.

4. Final considerations

In gentileschi's works and how she created them, we reflect continuing her connection with so many historical women who made their trajectories and who were an inspiration for Gentileschi in her canvas. In the mirror effect the *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* creates, one can see many different Artemisias: painter, model and allegory for painting, the major symbol of her art in the iconology of her time, causing a superposition of references in the image.

The novel *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002) narrates the entire trajectory of the character Artemisia, inspired by the life and work of the painter Artemisia Gentileschi. In Susan Vreeland's narrative (2002), the elaboration of the self-portrait as an allegory of the painting becomes the symbol of the character's life and work, influencing the perception of the historical figure in which she was inspired. To fully understand it, it is necessary to capture in each pictorial nuance a reflection of the mirrors she uses to construct her final image. The entire trajectory of the novel happens so that the reader understands the climax-canvas in its entirety, The Self-Portrait as Allegory of Painting, symbolises all of Artemisia's work and the meaning of the entire novel, which makes her self-portrait an icon of all Artemisia's construct around his historical figure.

Louvel's (2006) concepts of pictorial markers are at the same time the basis for interpreting the phenomena of Gentileschi's work and Artemisia's journey through the novel *The Passion of Artemisia* (2002); as well as the connection between these two worlds, real and imaginary. For it is these data that help us to evoke the real to interpret fiction, and capture the invention to complete the image of the historical figure of Artemisia Gentileschi.

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"The Raven" and its Afterlives

ABSTRACT
This paper is an attempt to describe some ways of seeing Edgar Allan Poe's work through some of its afterlives, many of them literary but also intermedial ones – drawings, paintings, films, plays and musical pieces. Products inspired by the poem "The Raven" will be characterized as adaptation, translation, ekphrasis, transmediation, representation or else – in their new configurations: drawings , concrete poems, films, novels, paintings, charges, comic books, graphic novels, pieces of music and so on. Because Poe's work is so extensive and appreciated – and therefore imitated – a variety of processes can be exemplified.
Keywords: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven", adaptation, translation, intermediality

1. Edgar Allan Poe

In the latter half of the 19th century not even the harshest critics could deny the brilliance and genius of Edgar Allan Poe. Author, poet, editor, literary critic and a member of the Romantic Movement, he is known for his stories involving mystery and the macabre, besides being considered the creator of the detective story and for his inputs to the sciencefiction genre.

An orphan of travelling artist parents, Edgar Allan Poe was taken in by a couple who never formally adopted him. In spite of a stint in the Army, he always led an unruly life. Poe was one of the first poets who tried to make a living as a writer. His work, also present in popular culture nowadays, influenced both American and world literature. His subjects are victimization, power and its absence, dehumanization and the relationship between body and soul, memory and mourning for the dead, the yearning for transcendence and spiritual affirmation. His writing, presented in plays and critical articles, reflected his theory, which instituted brevity and concentration as criteria for textual quality.

2. "The Raven"

Edgar Allan Poe's career began with a collection of poems, of which "The Raven"[1] is the most widely known and one of the most famous poems ever written. It was

[1] https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48860/the-raven (retrieved on 29.9.2022).

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composed with logic and method, as the author explains in his article "The Philosophy of Composition", that intends to be a report of how he has written "The Raven", and to describe the deliberate choices he has made on writing the poem. Poe's essay points to three central theories to write literature: brevity (the work must be read in a single seating); method (writing is analytic and not spontaneous) and unity of effect (first decide how will be the end and the intended emotional reaction and then the other aspects – one theme, effect, setting, conflict, plot – will come afterwards). The poem was partly inspired by a novel by Charles Dickens and, although Poe added some inner rhymes to each of its stanzas, he recognized his debt to Elizabeth Barrett Browning for its metric.

The piece, a ballad made up of eighteen six-line stanzas, is narrated in the first person and its subjects are loss and self-analysis. It personifies the feeling of grief and loss, exploring the world of emotions that individuals face during their lives. In a dark and cold December night, the speaker sits at his writing desk mourning the death of his beloved Lenore when a raven appears which makes a single sound, "Nevermore", a word uttered at the end of each stanza, each time with a new meaning. Our narrator sees the bird as a prophet, as he thinks of the meaning of its words and of its answers to his questions. Although he treats the bird amicably, the man believes the raven will depart from him soon, just as his friends have done.

The word "Nevermore" rhymes with Lenore, his beloved's name, and implies finitude, something that will never be recovered just like time, youth and lost love. With this refrain, the poem pays homage to love and to the finality of death, implying that madness looms and that one can do nothing against it. Thus, the bird embodies grief and loss, and explores the world of emotional conflicts endured by human beings, battles that leave scars even if they are not physical.

First issued in 1845, the piece was re-printed several times and seen as a challenge by translators from several languages, a test that consisted mainly in trying to preserve to the fullest the rhythmic and sonorous framework of the piece and, at the same time, be faithful to the story it tells. There are Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Czech, Swedish, Portuguese, and Yiddish translations. Although unhappy and strange, Poe's life allowed that he was the first American poet internationally known. Since his death his work has influenced other authors and artists. "The Raven", many times reedited and translated, was also parodied and illustrated, besides adapted to other media.

2.1. Translations

In his book, *"O Corvo" multilíngue* [The multilingual Raven], Serravalle de Sá (2015) refers to the history of the poem and its translations. He says that the success of "The Raven" is due to its characteristics: musicality and stylized language, supernatural atmosphere, infallible metric and hypnotic rhythm, simple structure

with descriptions and metaphors and archetypal symbolism. Inspired by a discipline he taught at the University of Santa Catarina,"Introdução ao estudo do texto poético e dramático" [Introduction to the Study of Poetic and Dramatic Text] he gathered and analyzed some translations of "The Raven" into the languages studied there: versions in English (by Poe in 1845 and 1849); versions in French (by Charles Baudelaire, 1856 and Stéphanie Mallarmé, 1875); in Germany (Carl Theodor Eben, 1869); in Spanish (Juan Antonio Pérez Bonalde, 1887); in Italian (Ernesto Ragazzoni, 1896) and three versions in Portuguese (Machado de Assis, 1883; Fernando Pessoa, 1924 and Milton Amado, 1943). According to the author, those versions were chosen for historical reasons, taking into consideration the impact when published and their ability to remain relevant. His conclusion was that there are no two equal translations because any reading reveals the reader's experience and sensibility.

Although there are almost fifty translations of "The Raven" into Portuguese, the most famous are the ones by the Brazilian Machado de Assis and by the Portuguese Fernando Pessoa.

In his text, Sergio Bellei (1978) affirms that Machado and Pessoa are obviously doing something radically different with Poe's poem. Pessoa practiced poetically what he had elsewhere preached about poetics, in a sermon derived from Poe's own theories. He always proclaims fidelity to translate "rhythmically conforming to the original", and the result is a remarkable poetic achievement (Monteiro, 1988, p. 136).

According to Defenu (2021, p. 171),

> [t]he schematic construction of the rhythmic and phonetic effects of the poem allows Pessoa to perform an empirical demonstration of his own conception of a poetic text as a combination between rhythmic effects and visual images, and considers Translation to be an instrument to explore the unbounded expressive possibilities of poetry.

On the other hand, Machado de Assis changes Poe's rhythm significantly, choosing to render the poem in shorter lines and ignores the power effect of Poe's internal rhymes. He does not try to reproduce an equivalent of sound and meaning in Portuguese as Pessoa does. With this act, Machado puts in practice the ability to make one's own what is foreign and strange, as the modernist Brazilian writers believed and propagated. As a severe critic of his times and contemporaries, he gave the poem a different touch from the original, with diverse meter and prose-like style so as to approach the Portuguese metric style and maintain a certain literary independence with regards to the original (Phillippov, 2011). To be a man of his time, he absorbed Western Culture, but "to be a man of his country, […] he misreads, distorts and adapts foreign texts, so that, by means of this act of appropriation, what is foreign becomes part of an alternative context" (Bellei, 1978, p. 60). Pessoa certainly translates Poe but Machado consciously misreads the American poet.

A very creative and singular translation of "The Raven" is the concrete poem by the Brazilian poet Augusto de Campos, titled "Transcorvo" [Trans-raven], published in his book *Despoesia* (2016), "a visual poem that presents, in the stylized shape of a bird (with three dimensional letters forming wings that evoke also a cross), a version of the last stanza of 'The Raven'" (Kennedy & Peeples, 2019, p. 631). Campos calls this version "intradução" (in-translation) in which structure, metric and rhythm are sacrificed in order to distribute the text in the desired format.

2.2. Parodies

As mentioned before, as soon as it was published, "The Raven" "proved eminently imitable, [becoming] a 19th century meme, with people taking up its verse-form and scenario for their own ends, be they comic, satiric, or serious" (Murray, 2022). In Murray's site we can find parodies and comic poems, political satires, advertisements, tributes to Poe, sequels to "The Raven", non-parodic imitations, fraudulent predecessors, "chanelled poems", prose parodies etc. At least 48 works are included.

A homage paid to Poe came from a National Football League team. As Poe lived in Baltimore for a time and was buried there, residents of the city elected to honor Poe by naming their league team "The Baltimore Ravens", after the poem. The three mascots for the team are three ravens named: "Edgar", "Allan" and "Poe".

One of the most interesting and creative parodies was a campaign by students at Harvard University called "Safe, Free and Green Tap Water" aiming at encouraging people to drink tap water instead of bottled water, which is both environmentally costly and economically inefficient. "'The Faucet': a Parody of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Raven'" is a youtube clip in which someone listens to a tapping but it is not a tapping on the door, as in the poem by Poe, but a dripping tap. Then, the person goes to the bathroom to close the tap and urges everybody to drink tap water.

A very creative parody of "The Raven", aired in the third episode of the 1990 season of the *The Simpson*s series for television "Tree House of Horror", was not concerned with reproducing the original work to the letter. This series undertook several re-readings of literary works, introducing them to the public through parody. In the instance of this episode, it took the form of a trilogy of frightening tales in celebration of Halloween.

In this adaptation the poem gains a new interpretation: the characters and the story itself are updated to the 20th century. Only ten of the eighteen stanzas are transposed to film, and are recited in voice-over by Lisa, the daughter of Homer, the family patriarch. The comic tone of the animation, contrasting with the poem's melancholy and sadness, is achieved both by the presence of Homer at two levels

of the story and by the rather irreverent image of the crow. As the lines are spoken, Homer performs and exhibits, in the same dark and dismal atmosphere of the poem, the character's actions, behaviors, and feelings. On the other hand, the girl's brother, Bart, mocks the situation, since, although it is aired during *Halloween*, the episode is anything but frightening. Bart takes the raven's form, and says at one point: "Eat my shorts" instead of "Nevermore". The story culminates with Homer chasing the Bart-raven around the study before the last stanza is repeated and the bird throwing books of other stories by Poe onto Homer. Thus, Poe's text creates new meaning by its reconfiguration through the use of parody, and can, thus, be seen as an adaptation.

2.3. "The Raven" in visual arts: Painting

Poe had a decisive influence on the visual arts in France. Particularly after his death, this influence dominated the emergent modernist movements, such as the decadent poetry of Charles Baudelaire and his Symbolist disciple Stéphane Mallarmé. Both translated "The Raven" into French. This is the case in the work of two artists of the late 19th century: Gustave Doré and Édouard Manet, who illustrated translations of the poem into French.

In 1875, the illustrations by Édouard Manet, one of the creators of Impressionism, for "The Raven" were published in an "artist's book", a bilingual edition with the translation into French by Stéphane Mallarmé commissioned by Richard Lesclide (Mitchell,1981, p. iv). Although illustration traditionally fulfills the purpose of bringing something to light, in this book images and words cannot be separated, since the illustration is integral to the work, suggesting unspeakable thoughts and feelings that cannot be verbalized. The technique employed by Manet was the lithograph, which allows the use of the lithographic pencil or brush directly over the matrix. Lines combined with heavy dark stains create textures that enrich the images. Here they also imply that the desolate anonymous narrator could be the young poet himself, with his unmistakable moustache, thus illustrating both the sharing of ideas of the artists on life and art, and the relationship between the American writer and French art and literature. The publication of this book was an avant-garde event both in literature and painting, as it united both artforms in a single physical object: images and words are balanced and it is impossible to take them apart. However, in spite of being conceived in the spirit of the time and illustrated with original lithographs by a painter of prestige, the book was a commercial failure.

Famous in the 19th century for illustrating the works of writers as Rabelais, Balzac, Milton and Dante, Gustave Doré created in 1884, shortly before his death, a series of twenty-six engravings for the special edition of the translation into French, by Charles Baudelaire, of the classic and dark "The Raven". As in his whole production, the images are richly detailed and, in this case, also delicate,

marked by a *chiaroscuro* effect suitable to the poem's atmosphere. The careers of these two artists, Edgar Allan Poe and Gustave Doré, were full of both success and disappointment. During his life, Doré achieved financial success as an illustrator, but his yearning for recognition was never fulfilled while he was alive: the critics of his time ridiculed his capacity even while he was popularly recognized and famous. As for Poe, he enjoyed the opposite fate: although recognized as a great poet while still alive, he never achieved financial stability. While Doré received a large sum for his illustrated edition of "Le Corbeau", Poe got just nine dollars for his most famous poem.

There are some illustrations of "The Raven" by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. One of them, a 1848 drawn, a literal illustration of verses 12–14 of the poem, presents the raven perched on a bust of Pallas and ghostly figures of angels on the wall. The narrator is seated in the foreground and a portrait of Lenore is faintly visible on the far wall.

2.4. "The Raven" on film

Textual elements, and particularly narratives and characters, can be transposed from one medium to another. This is what happens with literary works refigured in film. The influence of Edgar Allan Poe was also felt among film directors. Speaking of adaptations of his works for the big screen is nothing new for fans of the gothic genre: since the dawn of cinema productions based on publications by the American writer have been put to film. The first version of *The Pit and the Pendulum*, directed by Frenchman Henri Desfontaines in 1909, and the films made by Roger Corns are good examples of film adaptations of his works (Peeples, 2004).

"The Raven" has been adapted seven times for the cinema. In the 1930 and 1940s, Universal Studios adapted several Poe's stories. However the most famous film was that of 1963, directed by Roger Corns and including Vincent Price in the cast. In this absurd version, in which special effects are a constant, the audience saw as comical the frightening comings and goings of a troupe of British wizards from the 15th century. The script is an ingenious, imaginative narrative of what takes place when a raven, who is nothing besides a colleague transformed by another wizard (Boris Karloff), knocks on the door of a magician's (Vincent Price) room. The director takes this idea and expands it into a comedy of horror, which climax occurs when Price and Karloff engage in a duel to the death, each employing his black magic tricks (Tudor, 2014). This example illustrates how a work, even when unfaithful to its source for including into it totally foreign elements, turns itself into a horror comedy and can, thus, be recognized as an adaptation.

In 2005, a collection of Poe's films on DVD was released, including a faithful adaptation of *The Raven*, by the director Peter Bradley (2003). It tells the story of a man who is self-tortured over the loss of his beloved and becomes insane. In a way the film captures Poe's world.

The winner of the 2015 Emmy Award (for cinema), *The Raven,* directed by Thad Ciechanowski, has the poem recited in its entirety and narrates the story of a man wrestling with the nature of life after death and with the purpose of his soul over his lost love.

2.5."The Raven" on music

Since the mid-19th century, the mixture of supernatural and symbolic in Poe's works fascinated Russian and French composers, who used narrative and poetic texts as a support for their musical structures. The affinity between these writings and the music was due to the amorphous, abstract and, at the same time, powerful character of their dramatic illustrations, similar to the same qualities found in the music. Claude Debussy, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Joseph Holbrooke and Jonathan Adams, among classics, and Frank Laine, Jean Leloup and Lou Reed, among pop musicians, are examples of composers whose works were strongly influenced by Poe.

The relations between music and literature are illustrated by the innumerable forms and phenomena made possible by this relationship. Among these phenomena, we can mention the musicalization of literature, that is, the transposition from one medium, literature, to another, music. A specific genre: rock music will be treated in this section. Around the 1950s, the emergence of rock music paved the way for musicalization of poems, that is, the transformation of poems into rock songs.

The fact of a poem being turned into music make us think of medial transpositions, a term employed by Irina Rajewsky (2012) to define "the transformation of a certain media product […] or of its substract into another medium" (p. 24).

The rock genre became popular in the 1960s, and developed subgenres such as "soul rock", "folk rock", psychedelic rock and "hard rock". A new genre came out from this stylistic mixture: progressive rock, a musical form in which musicians started to combine classical music with jazz and rock forms. New compositional arrangements and musical styles arose that imitated classical music prototypes, exploring symphonic forms and long instrumental forms (Redling, 2015, p. 504). Conceptual albums, created around a wide-ranging unified theme and a set of interconnected songs, became part of "progressive rock".

Progressive rock reached its apex with the release, in 1976, of the conceptual album *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* by the rock group *The Alan Parsons Project.* The album title was inspired by the homonymous work by Poe published in 1908. The structure of this album, which was the group's first one, was based on the stories and poems by Allan Poe, and the "Raven" track stood out. The project comprised many albums, but critics were never unanimous in its acceptance. In spite of the interesting verses and musical themes – recounting the horror stories and reciting Edgar Allan Poe's poems – the album had a limited audience. Among

its eleven tracks, "Raven" and "Cask of Amontillado" are directly connected with the American writer. Just like the members of the *Alan Parsons Project*, the composer Lou Reed widened the limits of rock including art and literature in his musical *POEtry*, a musical journey through the works of Poe. This, a kind of "rock opera", was a collaboration between himself and the theatre director Robert Wilson, and included songs, an opening and a *libretto*. It was staged for the first time in February 2000, at the Thalia theatre in Hamburg, Germany. Reed worked with some themes found in the verses by Poe, set them to music and infused them into the bodies and voices of the Theatre's cast. In December 2001, the show was taken to the *Brooklyn Academy of Music,* where characters from the visiting works, among them an eight-foot sculpture of a raven and some characters such as Lenore, Usher and Annabel Lee filled the stage. The poem "The Raven" was accompanied by electronic music and staged by a man (Poe, as a narrator) and two women, all dressed in black, in a dark blue stage (Flick, 2003).

In 2003, Lou Reed released the solo album "The Raven", a reprise of the musical, a post-modern pastiche in which Poe's words are mixed with originally silent characters who are given a voice. In the track dedicated to "The Raven" the poem, recited by Reed himself to the accompaniment of an acoustic guitar, remains almost unchanged.

More recently, Lou Reed hired the artist Lorenzo Mattotti to make visible his extraordinary collaboration with Robert Wilson, since the musical's performance and setting could not be captured in images. The result was a compilation of the songs, stanzas and narratives that made up both projects (the musical and the CD) in a compendium illustrated by Lorenzo Mattotti, with images dedicated to each of the pieces. According to Reed himself, the goal was to "illustrate the pages with the gracefulness, the energy and passion that Lorenzo's work would bring, and compel the intermedial combination of words and images, as strong as any union, along with the mixture of sensitivities, to finally make their home in the pages of the illustrated book" (*The Raven*, 9).

3. Conclusion

The examples discussed above raise interesting questions, examined by Kate Newell (2017) in her work: What kinds of textual and artistic compromise can be considered adaptations? What elements were prioritized in the process? What were the strategies used by the artist to involve the audience? How does the public interact with each product? What are the theoretical differences used in each of the mediums? Where is the limit between the mediums and what happens to them during the process? The answers to these questions will broaden the concept of adaptation.

In this text, it was claimed that, by means of manipulations of a literary work, some artists (poets, painters, filmmakers, composers) have proven that adaptation

is a revisionist act that communicates with a larger network of similar actions and also contributes for the expansion of this network. The examples presented also illustrate the fact that the public – readers, spectators, listeners – does not wish to experience the work in a single mode of interaction, in a single medium. Works, that in the past were considered as dependent, perform an important role as they lead readers to other interpretations and conclusions, depending on the aspects emphasized and remembered. So, according to Leitch (2017, p. 700), the adaptation oscillates between a) the back and forth movement between adaptation and authorship; b) the movement between archives dedicated to the preservation and the performance with the goal of telling, retelling and transmitting stories, and c) the challenge posed by the meeting of mediums which leads to the discussion about the role of adaptation today.

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Renderings of *The Painted Bird* on the Chinese Literature Market

ABSTRACT
The translation of *The Painted Bird* in China, though lagged behind due to the social and historical background, has its unique feature from the adoption of translation methods to the rearranging of contents. It can be seen that the Chinese rendering by Wang Zhang follows the doctrine of faithfulness, and in the meantime takes Chinese people's thinking mode and ideological system into consideration. By the flexible application of the translation methods, Wang Zhang's rendering fulfils the demand of publication regulations, copes with Chinese people's thinking habits, and reproduces the war's destruction to the society and humanity in a neutral perspective.
Keywords: *The Painted Bird*, Chinese rendering, comparative study, historical and cultural context, Jerzy Kosinski

The Painted Bird, written by Polish-American writer Jerzy Kosinski in the 1960s, has been translated into many languages varying from Polish, German, Russian to Persian ever since its publication. The Chinese translation of *The Painted Bird*, however, started in the 1990s, which was almost 20 years later than the publication of the book. The particular features of the Chinese renderings are caused by many historical and cultural elements. The research on the translation of *The Painted Bird* in China comparing with its Polish and German renderings offers a glimpse of the differences between the translation in the language of an involved culture, i.e. a culture present in this work, and the translation in the context of a culture not involved. It also reveals the uniqueness of its translation in China, which can enrich the research in this field.

1. General survey of Chinese renderings of *The Painted Bird*

The Painted Bird, which first appeared in the USA in 1965, now has six accessible Chinese renderings.

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The first Chinese rendering of *The Painted Bird* (Kosinski, 1992[1]) was published by Anhui Literature and Art Publishing House in February 1992 and translated by Yaping Mo. In this version, the translator wrote a preface for the book and briefly introduced the book and the writer, emphasising the catastrophe of the Second World War, and its aftermath. The translator also reflected on the issue of confronting past trauma. "As long as there is still violence, war, suffering or their potential threats, this book has its significance" (Kosinski, 1992, p. 11). Under the guiding principle of conveying this tone, the translator followed the original layout of the book. Besides, the translator added reading guides to each chapter, where the translator summarised the disasters either suffered or witnessed by the protagonist.

Other accessible Chinese renderings are listed as follows:

The version translated by Wang Zhang (Kosinski, 2000), published by Beijing Normal University Publishing Group in April 2000, is copyrighted and sponsored by the News & Culture Department of the US Embassy in China and collected in *Translated Collections of American Post-modernist Literature* together with the translated works of *Snow White* and *In Watermelon Sugar*. In his rendering, the translator followed the layout of the original text, without any extra explanation. The fact that it is collected in this series has aroused the readers' interest and reflection. On one of the biggest online reading platforms in China, Douban Reading, the readers of this version speak highly of this book, and in the meanwhile, believe that "this book is an unconventional one in post-modernist works, as it is post-modern in thought instead of in style" (Song, 2012).

The version translated by Deli Chen and published by Jilin Photography Press in March 2001 (Kosinski, 2001a), is collected in *World Literature Treasury* in which Émile Zola's *La Terre* and Maupassant's *Une Vie* are also included. The same version is also collected in *World Alternative Literature Research Institute Recommendation Booklist – Western Literature Classics* in June 2001, in which, for instance, *Lolita*, *El Amor En Los Tiempos Del Colera* are also included.

The version translated by Shuailing Liu and published by Inner Mongolia Juvenile & Children's Publishing House/Inner Mongolia Culture Publisher in May 2001 (Kosinski, 2001c) is collected in *The World Forbidden Books Collection* in which *Decameron* and *Ulysses* are also included.

The version translated by Jun Fan and published by Yuanfang Publishing House (Kosinski, 2001b) is collected in three series, the *World Muckraking Classes* in 2001, the *100 Forbidden Books of the World* in March 2002, and *The Best Sellers of the World* in August 2004, among which the *100 Forbidden Books of the World* was republished in 2011.

[1] All editions cited in this paper are *translated* from Kosinski's original work published in 1976.

The version translated by Ju Sun (Kosinski, 2001d), was published by Kizilsu Kirghiz Publishing House in September 2001 in the series together with *The Golden Room* as the fourth volume of *The World Top Forbidden Books*. In the meantime, this version has also been included in *The World Top Forbidden Novels*, in which *Lolita* and *The Catcher in the Rye* are also included.

From the other books included in the series listed above, it can be inferred how the then Chinese publishing industry valued the importance of *The Painted Bird* and classified its style. All the above versions are now no longer available in online or offline bookstores. The books used in this research are all collected from the transaction platform of used books, www.kongfz.com.

When making a general survey on all these versions, one observation was found:

From the perspective of time, the Chinese renderings of *The Painted Bird* were generally published from the end of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century, when the demand for understanding the social life and humanities of western countries by Chinese readers experienced rapid growth.

Through brief research on the above versions, the findings are as follows:

First, as to the translation of the title, most Chinese renderings of the book followed the first version and translated it as *被涂污的鸟* [literally: *The Smeared Bird*]. In back translation, the word "涂污" means "smeared", where the translator regarded "the painted bird" as an image of a twisted and alienated victim. One exception is Wang Zhang's translation *色彩缤纷的鸟* [literally: *The Colourful Bird*]. The word "色彩缤纷的" means "colourful". The translator used literal translation and left space for the readers to find the deeper connotation of the title. The two very different choices by different translators can also be related to the diversified translation purposes.

Second, except for the first Chinese rendering, other Chinese renderings of *The Painted Bird* are collected in different series. Besides the consideration of marketing, it also shows the understanding of the values of the book by its translators. It is included in *Western Literature Classics*, *Holocaust Literature*, *Postmodernist Literature or Alternative Literature*. The translation work of this book was once prosperous in Chinese academia, however, there is not a broad audience of this book.

Because of the various standards of the translation qualities and the many suspicious similarities in different versions, this research chooses Wang Zhang's translation "色彩缤纷的鸟" [literally: *The Colourful Bird*] (Kosinski, 2000) as the object of study. The reason for this choice is that the language used in this version is the most refined and idiomatic. What is more, it serves a very clear purpose, which is to meet the demand for interpreting and broadcasting the most influential literary works from western countries. Therefore, it is typical, representative, and worthy of academic discussion.

2. Background of the translation of *The Painted Bird* – general survey on literary translation in China since its foundation

When it comes to literary translation, both elements within the text and multiple extratextual elements should be taken into consideration. In other words, translation shifts involve the shift of languages as well as the whole dynamic process. Moreover, as translated text is regarded as the "afterlife" of the original text, translation studies inevitably concern the interactive process and result of the original text and the context of target language. Meschonnic (1973) states that "the concept of translation is historical" (p. 310), which shows translation "not only a complicated process with rich connotation, but also a historical activity deeply influenced by the changeable time factors" (Liu, 2017, p. 615). Therefore, to find out and evaluate the translation activity and results of *The Painted Bird* in China, it is of great importance to comb the development track of China's literary translation practice since its foundation, so as to understand the time context and cultural context of the Chinese renderings of the book.

After going through the "eastward transmission of western learning" in Late Qing Period and the prosperity of translation during the May Fourth Period, the translation practice underwent a regular development since the founding of new China in 1949, despite the fact that the interaction and communication between the east and the west decreased during that time. However, the literary translation in China declined during the 1960s and reached its lowest ebb because of Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. Sun (2018, p. 3) even reported that during the Cultural Revolution not a single work of foreign literature was published in China between May 1966 and November 1971. During this period, most foreign literature was neglected; even the proletarian literature from other countries was twisted and denied; both translation practice and the academic research ran into stagnation. Nevertheless, the description of the translation of foreign literary works during the Cultural Revolution as "complete absence" is lopsided.

Since the conference on publishing work presided by Premier Zhou Enlai in 1971, the translation of foreign literature increased gradually, which explains why the achievement of literary translation was mostly made in the latter phase of Cultural Revolution. Ma (2003) classified the translation of foreign literature in China during this period as three categories, namely, openly accessible translations, translations with restricted circulation and unpublished translations. The openly accessible translations were single in type, the original texts of which were mostly from China's allies at that time. The literary works of western capitalist countries were not favoured, however. The original texts of translations with restricted circulation were mainly from Soviet Union, and Japan comes second. Literature from other countries were also chosen as the source text, including Polish writer Adam Mickiewicz's play *Dziady* [Forefathers' Eve]. And the unpublished translations refer to the spontaneous translation by the Chinese translators during

this period, including Mu Dan's translation of *Don Juan* and Ji Xianlin's translation of *Ramayana*. The first wave of translations of *The Painted Bird* overlapped with the complete stillstand of literary translation in China. André Lefevere, the representative of polysystem studies of translation from the United States, regards translation as the rewriting of the original text, which reflects ideology and poetics and manipulates literature in certain ways (Lefevere, 1992a, p. xi). Translation is bounded by social, historical, and cultural context. While other countries paid attention to and showed interests of *The Painted Birds*, this book was not the text choice for China in the 1970s due to the fact that it didn't cope with the mainstream ideology then. Hereby, the translation and broadcast of *The Painted Bird* in China was lagged behind.

Ever since the end of Cultural Revolution announced by The 11th National Congress of the CPC, there was a recovery and revival of literary translation. The Cultural Revolution was over and the country opened to the West, which brought increased interest in translated literature, previously restricted for years from the public space and unavailable to the audience. This in turn stimulated translation activity (Fan, 1999). Qi uses the metaphor of a tsunami to describe the strength and scale of people's eagerness to study, read and get familiar with foreign ideas, through imported literary works in translation (Qi, 2012, p. 136). The put-forward and enforcement of the reform and opening-up in 1978 was an even greater promotion of literary translation. The development of translation studies fit the goal of the reform and opening-up and facilitated it, too. Huang (2008) states that

> the reform and opening-up brought about the unprecedented development of translation course in China; while translation, as the pilot force to serve the demand of reform and opening-up, exerted its effects to promote the fast-changing modernization (p. 7).

Translation coexists with times. The translation boom caused by the reform and opening-up is "large in scale, various in style, and complex in mechanism" (Hu, 2019, p. 106). The translation achievement was much remarkable in the aspects of level, quality and significance, thus served as the bridge of intercultural communication between China and other countries.

In the 1980s, with the translation of foreign literature developing fast and profoundly, the output value of the publishing industry increased largely. On the basis of the economic take-off, Chinese people have become increasingly liberated and open-minded. Openness and pluralism, as a result, became the theme of development, which brought China's literary translation into a new era, with text choices more diversified, and theme more various. Texts from more countries were translated and introduced in China and many translated works were published as a collection or a series. The drive for "letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend" facilitates the blending and merging of thoughts,

schools, styles, and genres. The first and the follow-up Chinese renderings of *The Painted Bird* are all the products during this period of time, which conforms to Chinese people's urgent demand to get to know and communicate with the foreign culture.

The choice of translation strategy is related to the choice of texts and the adoption of translation methods (Baker, 2004, p. 240). Ever since Yan Fu's proposal of "faithfulness, expressiveness, elegance" while translating Thomas Huxley's work *Evolution and Ethics and other Essays* in the late 19th century, this doctrine has been highly evaluated in Chinese translation studies, in which "faithfulness" is regarded as the premier rule of translation. In his review of relevant features of the view of translation in China, Tan (2019) finds that "the most outstanding characteristic of Chinese translation theory has been adherence to the fundamental principle that a translation should be Xin or 'faithful' to the source" (p. 22), regardless of the historical circumstances.

However, although the translation practice is attached to the Chinese translation tradition, it cannot be denied that it is also closely related to the microscopic historical background and the particular characteristic of thought and ideological system of Chinese people (Lan, 2018, p. 12). Lefevere (1992b, pp. 11–12) viewed a culture as a complex system composed by multiple subsystems, literature being one of them. Therefore, in the process of translation, the translator should combine the historical context of his own and that of the target reader, in order to re-interpret the original text. Such translation process involves the faithful transference of the semantic meaning in the linguistic perspective, as well as the rewriting based on cultural and ideological elements, and the decision on what to translate and what to omit. Instead of the preference for the translation strategy of domestication, Chinese translators of this time re-examined domestication and foreignization, and sought a balance between the two. It can explain while faithfulness is adopted as the basic doctrine of translation, the application of omission/deletion, and the semantic changes of the original text are also seen in most Chinese renderings. As will be shown, the examined translation of *The Painted Bird* followed them all.

In the following section, a more detailed analysis on the selected Chinese rendering with the Polish/German renderings of *The Painted Bird* as references will be made.

3. Textual analysis of Chinese translation

The Chinese rendering of *The Painted Bird* is different from the Polish version and German version which show the specificity of a manipulative nature. Besides, the translator also made some changes in order to cater to the needs of Chinese readers.

3.1. Comparative study with German and Polish renderings

The first chapter of the original text is the background introduction of the story. The setting in the Chinese version is *东欧某大城市* [literally: some major city in East Europe] (Kosinski, 2000, p. 2) which is consistent with the one in the original text, whilst the language used by the protagonist is unidentified. The boy's "temporary foster parents" and his father's "prewar anti-Nazi activities" (Kosinski, 1995, p. 3) in paragraph 3 are translated as *临时养父养母* (Kosinski, 2000, p. 3), meaning exactly the same as the original text, and *战前参加过反纳粹活动* (Kosinski, 2000, p. 3) meaning "participated in the anti-Nazi activities in the prewar period", which is also consistent with the original text, although slightly weakened. Unlike the substitution with "Zwangsverschleppung" [literally: forced deportation] in the German version (Harmon, 2022, p. 61), "forced labor" (Kosinski, 1995, p. 3) is rendered literally as *强制劳役* [literally: involuntary servitude] (Kosinski, 2000, p. 3): Chinese readers are no strangers to this concept nor particularly sensitive to it. As one of the victims of World War II, a large number of Chinese captives and male civilians between the ages 20 to 50 years were forced to serve hard labour for the military projects of Japan.

The expressions "differed ethnically from the region of his birth" (Kosinski, 1995, p. 3) about the local peasants, "Gypsy or Jewish stray" (p. 4) about the boy and "the harshest penalties" (p. 4) regarding the possible consequences of helping Gypsies or Jews are translated without prettification as *人们的种族同他的故乡完全不同* [literally: the races of people there are totally different from his hometown] (Kosinski, 2000, p. 3), *吉普赛或犹太流浪儿* [literally: Gypsy or Jewish stray] (p. 3), and *最残酷的惩处* [literally: the cruellest punishment] (p. 3), respectively. It is different from the German rendering (Harmon, 2022, p. 61), in which the tone is softened. Besides, the somehow disturbing observation on the persecuted nations: "whose place was in ghettos and extermination camps" was translated faithfully as *吉普赛人和犹太人的最终归宿是贫民窟和死亡集中营* (Kosinski, 1992, p. 4), which intensifies the sarcastic tone of the original text. The exculpation of the local peasants' ignorance the brutality: "Though not by choice" (Kosinski, 1995, p. 4) is translated as *尽管他们不情愿如此* (Kosinski, 1992, p. 4), meaning "in spite of their reluctance" in back translation, which preserves the original meaning, unlike the Polish rendering in which the translator neglects the sarcasm (Barciński, 2022, p.37), arguably in order to be politically correct.

"Mysterious beings, phantoms, ghosts", and "vampires" (Kosinski, 1995, p. 20) in Chapter 2 are translated literally as *神怪* [literally: spirits], *幽灵* [literally: phantoms], *鬼怪* [literally: ghosts] and *吸血鬼* [literally: vampires], respectively (Kosinski, 2000, p. 16). The translator does not try to reinforce the nationality of the boy as the Polish version does by translating the above-listed terms in accordance with Slavic mythology (Barciński, 2022, pp. 27–28). Both references to historical fact: "The partisans had become divided into factions" (Kosinski, 1995,

p. 68) and "land reform" (p. 68) are rendered literally as *游击队已分裂成两派* (Kosinski, 2000, pp. 45–50) and *土地改革* (p. 50) respectively. There is no further explanation of the historic backgrounds as in the Polish version, probably because the translator lacks the Polish translator's cultural, historical background knowledge of these events.

The somewhat shocking explanation of the German's alleged superiority is softened in Chinese rendering:

Source Text:

> [...] because he gobbled up the brains of the Poles, Russians, Gypsies and Jews (Kosinski, 1995, p. 90).

Target Text:

> *因为德国人把波兰人、俄国人、吉普赛人和犹太人的智力全吞下去了* [literally: because the Germans swallowed the intelligence of the Poles, Russians, Gypsies and Jews] (Kosinski, 2000, p. 66).

The translator substituted the word "brain" with "intelligence". The same explanation is reportedly introduced in other translations, so that formidable cannibalistic image of the Germans has been softened.

The German officer's suitability to "order the death of inferior, forlorn creatures" (Kosinski, 1995, p. 113) is translated faithfully as *下令处死什么低级可怜的生物* [literally: order the execution of some inferior, poor creatures] (Kosinski, 2000, p. 81). Compared with the prettification in the German version (Harmon, 2022, p. 62), the Chinese rendering tends to manifest the past sin and suffering directly.

In the following paragraph, "awaited his decision" is translated as *等待着他的裁决* [literally: awaited his verdict] (Kosinski, 2000, p. 82). Such change in meaning undoubtedly intensifies the dramatic effect, no matter if the translator made this modification on purpose or not: the German officer was depicted as an omnipotent and powerful authority, which further tells the reader how the mind of the protagonist, as a young boy, has been twisted by the chaos of war.

Another example is the statement about the Kalmuks:

Source Text:

> […] joined the Germans who permitted them to loot and rape in the manner of their war customs and manly traditions (Kosinski, 1995, p. 175).

Target Text:

> *他们加入了德军，而德国人允许他们按照他们的战争惯例和男人传统掠夺奸淫。*[literally: They joined the German army, who permitted them to loot and rape based on their war customs and men's traditions] (Kosinski, 2000, p. 119).

In the above example, the word "permitted" is translated as "允许", which means in back translation that it has no connotation of "authorisation" as in the original text or understates it on purpose as in the German version (Harmon, 2022, p. 64). The last sentence "I was somehow disappointed; the war seemed to be over" (Kosinski, 1995, p. 182) is not omitted as in the Polish version (Barciński, 2022, p. 41). Understandably, the Polish translator wants the readers to remain empathetic to the little boy. However, the Chinese version readers are, to some extent, in a more neutral position. Even though Chinese people are as empathetic as any other nationals, they do not have the same level of relatedness to the Polish/Jewish/Gypsy boy. Therefore, the need to translate faithfully prevails over the need to protect a certain imagery of the boy.

The information about Soviet Union is also processed differently:

Source Text:

> [e]very Soviet citizen was in debt to this man for everything he possessed and for all his good fortune (Kosinski, 1995, p. 188).

Target Text:

> *每一个苏联人都为自己幸运和幸福对他感恩戴德* [literally: Every Soviet citizen is deeply grateful to him for the fortune and happiness he has] (Kosinski, 2000, p. 127).

This sentence is reportedly omitted in the German version (Harmon, 2022, p. 64), arguably to prevent the infiltration of the communist ideology.

Another observation of the communist practices is as follows:

Source Text:

> The group decided what could make him more useful and what could reduce his usefulness to others. (Kosinski, 1995, p. 192).

Target Text:

> *由集体决定怎样才会使他更有用、怎样使他对其他人有用* [literally: the group decided how to make him more useful, and how to make him useful to others] (Kosinski, 2000, p. 130).

It can be regarded as a translation error, but the expressive effect is still close to the original text and does not interfere with the understanding of the context. Because the communist ideology and personality cult that were once dominant in the Soviet Union are easy to understand for Chinese readers, the relevant information has not been concealed in the Chinese version.

3.2. Other characters of Chinese rendering

Apart from the details discussed in the above section, Wang Zhang applies literal translation when rendering the words referring to local people: "man" is translated as *男人*, "woman" as *女人*, "adolescent male" as *男孩*, and "old woman" as *老太婆* throughout the text; all of them are neutral words. As for the pronouns, there are no derogatory words as the ones in the Polish version (see Chapter 3). Instead, the translator follows the original text and applies literal translation without comments or judgements or trying to guide the readers. However, there is one exception: the expression "the Black One" (Kosinski, 1995, p. 20) used by Olga to address the protagonist is translated as *黑娃娃* [literally: the black kiddo] (Kosinski, 2000, p. 15). The original words are neutral, but the word choice of "娃娃" [literally: kiddo] in the Chinese translation is an intimate way to address the young by the elders. This intervention softens the harsh image of Olga to some extent.

In this rendering, the translation of all the names of people and places applies transliteration to give the story an exotic feeling. What is worth mentioning is that in some of the other Chinese versions, the translators use foot notation to ensure the completeness of information.

What is more, different degrees of deletion can be found in all the Chinese renderings. The large-scale deletion in Wang Zhang's translation is worth discussing in more detail. Based on the comparison between the original text and the target text and statistical analysis, the following deletions can be confirmed: 1) paragraph 5 of Chapter 5 (Kosinski, 1995, p. 43) that mentions two saints of the Catholic church and their namedays deciding the migration of storks. This reference sounds alien to the Chinese reader who is not familiar with the cult of saints; 2) paragraphs 36–50 of Chapter 9 (pp. 104–107) that depict, in detail, a rape committed by a peasant on a Jewish girl; 3) paragraphs 9–21 of Chapter 12 (pp. 145–147) that picture a young woman's erotic vagaries with the boy; 4) paragraphs 39–41 of Chapter 13 (p. 151), describing an act of zoophilia; 5) paragraphs 8–18 of Chapter 14 (pp. 163-166), in which sexual intercourse is reported; 6) paragraphs 26–33 (pp. 176–178) paragraph 37 (Kosinski, 1995, p. 179); and paragraph 39 (p. 179) of Chapter 15.

The deleted contents can be divided into two types: one is about culture-loaded information, for example the contents connected with Biblical characters or stories. Preserving these contents might cause confusion among the readers; yet too many footnotes might interrupt the reading experience, thus paragraph 5 of Chapter 5 is deleted.

The remaining deletions belong to the second type where the information is too bloody, cruel, immoral, and related to coitus. Such scenes include a rape of a Jewish girl in Chapter 9, the scene where the young woman Ewka has coitus with the underage protagonist, and where bestiality and incest is described in Chapter 12, the scene where Labina has sex with her customers in Chapter 14, and the scenes where the Kalmuks compete in raping women in different ways.

The acts of sexual violence reveal the increasing decay of humanity, the description of which tartly presents the savagery of human beings at that time and the tremendous damage brought by the war. It is in coherence with the message of the whole story. However, the anti-traditional and anti-moral information is difficult to perceive for the conservative Chinese readers. As a work listed among *Translated Collections of American Post-modernist Literature*, the translation deleted the above contents in order to attract a larger audience.

4. Conclusion

The Painted Bird is precisely peculiar in description and sharply cruel in the close-up depiction of violence. Such literary work deserves to be sampled repeatedly instead of being buried and ignored in the immense ocean of literary works. In the light of so many Chinese translations of this book, there were also readers expressing their expectation for a better style of writing. Comparatively speaking, Wang Zhang's translation is fluent in expression and rich in sympathy. It has reached its aim of broadcasting the American post-modernist literature.

Through the comparative analysis of the Chinese version, the Polish version, the German version, and the independent analysis of the Chinese version, the translator's interventions in this rendering are listed as the following:

Table 1. Translator's Interventions in Zhang's Rendering

Omission/deletion	Some culture-loaded information and a great deal of anti-traditional and anti-moral information are deleted or downplayed
Addition	Barely seen
Semantic change	A few: for the purpose of emphasis
Style/tenor	No archaisation; all the language used is straight-forward to go with the identity of the protagonist as a child
Evaluation and emotional shifts	None; faithfulness is the top priority

All in all, the Chinese rendering of this book is quite distinct from the German rendering and the Polish rendering. The Chinese version of *The Painted Bird* retains a neutral perspective to be as faithful as the original text with some understandable deletion to better meet the needs of its readers. It reveals the cruelty of the war, and the catastrophic destruction to the society and to humanity. In the meantime, it takes into consideration the psychologically conservative reading habits of Chinese readers. With the omission of certain violent and sexual scenes, it meets the requirements of publication regulations in China.

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