

Review of the poem "inventory of year" by conchitina cruz

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When you first look at "Inventory of year" by Conchitina Cruz, it can be puzzling. One can't help but feel as if the poem has been misprinted or is missing its' pages. It has come to be expected that in pieces of literature pages are filled to the brim with words that tell a story, but this text is different. The poem is at the bottom of the page, where footnotes can be found. It is also written in such a way that mimics the style of a footnotes section with the presence of superscripts, explanatory notes, and comments about the work being presented. It is interesting to see the author take this creative liberty as there is an irony to it since footnotes are often glossed over or play second fiddle to the main body of the text, but because most of the page is blank the poem now takes center stage. Poetry cannot simply be defined by a single definition and that's the beauty of it. It is a creative expression that can take on many forms; the only limit is one's imagination. Cruz was not just trying to be creative by writing this poem in this unique form. She did so deliberately because of the nature of the topic, infidelity. Cruz's poem focuses on a wife's extra-marital affair with another man. Language was used in such a way to portray the hushed and secretive manner one goes about when being unfaithful. The words in the margins mirror how people try to be discrete about their actions since these are shameful acts that they want to keep private and out of the public eye. Despite these efforts, more often than not, affairs are exposed which is why portions of the pages are left blank. It ends up attracting attention to the text and shows that no matter how hard people try, deception cannot be concealed completely. One is bound to make mistakes and become careless in keeping up the act, this was even showcased in the poem. The lines of the

text only occupied a small part of the page in the beginning, but as the narrative reaches its climax the words have almost filled up the entire page. There are other themes the author presents in this poem. It is hard to fully comprehend it all in just one reading, which just goes to show that there are other insights to be gained with re-reading poems multiple times.

One of the more nuanced themes that Cruz was trying to communicate in this poem was a statement about gender politics. Given that it was written on what can be considered the margin areas of a page, she was not only trying to evoke the sense of discreteness in infidelity but also portray the image of marginalization. The main focus of the poem is on a woman yet her story cannot even be given the privilege of having it be told on the focal point of the page. Her narrative is simply relegated to the margins and, as stated before, readers usually tend to skim these parts or pay no attention to it. The implications of this paint a pretty damning image of how women are treated by society.

I believe that the author was trying to say that women and their stories, plights, feelings, and such are often disregarded and set aside for matters that society sees as more important. This parallels how certain information is placed on the footnotes section because it would have disrupted the flow of ideas in the main text (What are Footnotes). It gives us the impression that women's stories do not matter as much compared to their male counterparts. Women can try to speak up, but being noticed is another struggle altogether. In a way, it is like their voices are being silenced. If

nobody is there to listen to them, how can they be heard? It's quite amazing how this much insight can be gained from a short piece of literature.

This poem showcases the power of language and how it is not only limited to being a practical tool for communication. It is also a venue for expressing one's feelings, thoughts, views, opinions, or in this case a way to shed some light on the marginalization of women. Interestingly enough there is a section in the fourth page of the poem that leads one to believe that not only is the wife having an affair but the husband is as well. The hint can be found in these lines of the text: " He believed in the democracy of leaving both women the same messages, sending the same flowers, delivering the same jokes, impressing the same songs upon their mouths, taking them on the same bed, the same sheets... And why would she, the lucky one, fully aware of such duplicability, or at least, bright enough to detect its implication, like the droning of the fridge in an empty kitchen, why should she feel otherwise, then?" If both of them are guilty of being unfaithful, then how come the focus is only on the woman? Her raw, emotional, and duplicitous deeds are highlighted while the husband gets to go on about his affair privately.

A man who has displayed insensitive behavior to his wife as demonstrated by these lines: " Similar to the lingerie her husband occasionally buys for her, a size bigger, without fail. I look at you and see the body it should become." He also came across as condescending in the way he regards his wife in one of the lines quoted earlier: " And why would she, the lucky one, fully aware of such duplicability, or at least, bright enough to detect its implication...." Both of these things prove that he is just as at fault in this

situation, but still, the speaker of the poem (persona) continues to focus on the woman. It seems like the only time women get noticed is when they make mistakes. Men just get a pass for bad behavior.

The imagery in this poem paints a realistic view of the world we live in, flaws and all. We get a glimpse into the woman's life; from the mundane dilemmas such as being too busy to get a haircut up to the darker complexities like her extra-marital affair. As demonstrated by Cruz's writing and format, words are not the only thing that can convey meaning. Forms can do that as well. It was not just a gimmick to have the poem be placed on the margins and written in the style of footnotes, there was thought and intention put into it. Crafting poetry requires deliberate choices so that the writer ends up with a product that not only brings enjoyment to readers but is ideally able to affect the way they see the world and treat other human beings.