**ARTFICTIONS TALES**

**IMAGINING ALTERNATIVE (ART) WORLDS**

* Once upon a time, writers found in the lives of artists an exciting model for breaking away from social norms and express themselves in autonomous ways.
* The lives of artists became fashionable, for they allowed to escape the ordinary constrains of society.
* Modern writers found “secular heroes” and aspirational points of reference in the fashionable lives of artists. In narrating the lives of artists (and musicians, poets, composers, etc.), novelists negotiated the clash between the individual and the social and the expansion of the capitalist rhetoric of personal and social success.
* In 19th-century Europe artists represented a bohemian alternative to bourgeois normality, one that was soon to be appropriated and repurposed as a profitable and socially accepted right to individual originality.
* The narratives that explored the process of becoming an artist were popular in 19th-century Europe. They were called Künstlerroman (artist novel) and were connected to Bildungsromane or novels of apprenticeship and personal development.
* Artist novels were not just useful for writers. By engaging with them, readers would also refashion themselves and the social relationships they established in creative and original ways, without the need for leaving the safe confines of the bourgeois home.
* The genre emphasized individual autonomy, but also established modes of social relationships based on individuality and personal development.
* The artist novel was therefore simultaneously creative and conservative.
* Looking at the genre of the artist novel nowadays, we can also realise that it was also elitist and Eurocentric, for the potential of becoming a creator was restricted to a few models that were made fashionable by a few (mostly male, mostly middle class, mostly white) writers.
* Fast forward into the present. Contemporary writers keep writing about creative processes and ways of “becoming an artist”, yet the range of perspectives, voices and approaches have expanded
* Nowadays, writers are looking at art as a socially transformative force, one, however, that can also be mobilized to advance financial speculation, gentrification, and social inequalities more in general.
* The contemporary art novel emerges as a speculative space where all the steps involved in the process of artistic creation are reimagined in light of the collapse of creative capitalism and neoliberal subject-formation.