

Panel 32
Experimental Narratives

**Who did I think I was talking to? Self-Reflexivity and Subversion in the
Reconfigured Audience Roles of Ali Smith's *Artful***

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This paper examines how Ali Smith's *Artful* (2012) is conceived as a distinctive intermedial and metamodern work through its interweaving of prose fiction and lecture forms. By analysing the novel through the lens of rhetorical narrative theory, this paper identifies how *Artful*'s narrative structure manipulates different audience roles (narrative audience, narratee, and ideal narratee), creating shifts that draw the reader's attention simultaneously to both content and form. The discourse surrounding the identification of different kinds of audiences in diverse literary texts has become more nuanced in the past decade. This paper's theoretical groundwork will be based on James Phelan's scholarship, which builds upon the foundation of Gerald Prince's and Peter J. Rabinowitz's work in identifying five types of audiences that each narrative speaks to. Three of these five audiences, in *Artful*'s context, shift and metamorphose according to variations in narration or changes in narrative perspective. The novel's seamless merging of personal narrative and academic scholarship engenders these audience shifts, effectively creating a text that challenges traditional distinctions between fiction and non-fiction, reality and imagination. This paper argues that Smith's reconfiguration of audience roles acts as a portal through which one can explore the novel's postmodern features. Through constantly unsettling the audience roles and trusting in the authorial audience's alertness at detecting this act of manipulation, *Artful* points to the self-reflexive and subversive nature of the narrative in attending to its own formal construction whilst offering infinite space for interpretation. Smith's approach exemplifies contemporary literary innovation by acknowledging postmodern metafictional techniques while revitalising them through a reconfiguration of textual forms and audience roles.

Biography

Mingzhou Du is a PhD student from Nanyang Technological University. His field of research includes contemporary British and Irish literature, rhetorical narrative theory, and active readerly engagement.