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## W. J. T. MITCHELL'S CORE IDEAS ON IMAGE AND TEXT

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### **Abstrak**

*Kajian ini menilik gagasan penting dari teori gambar dan teks milik William John Thomas (W. J. T) Mitchell. Hubungan antara kata dan gambar telah menjadi topik kontroversi, dari pembedaan Plato antara "kata" dan "gambar" di Yunani kuno ke debat terkini seputar interaksi gambar-teks dalam teknologi AI. Kajian gambar dan kata, atau ikonologi, sering mengantar ke diskusi tentang cara politik, kekuasaan, realitas, dan nilai berkaitan dengan gambar dan teks. Sebagai seorang ikonolog penting, Mitchell mengukuhkan frasa "palingan piktorial" pada 1994 untuk menggantikan pentingnya gambar menjadi bahasa. Teori gambar dan teks Mitchell membahas gagasan penting seperti palingan piktorial, metagambar, biogambar, serta gagasan gambar dan teks sebagai media campuran. Karyanya melingkupi persoalan yang luas, dari estetika media, budaya visual, ikonologi, hingga teori gambar. Keperluan menilik kontribusi Mitchell terhadap kajian gambar dan teks meluas semakin teorinya dikenal secara global. Tujuan esai ini adalah menilik konsep-konsep Mitchell, dengan perhatian khusus kepada interaksi dinamis antara kata dan gambar. Ringkasnya, "palingan piktorial" Mitchell memosisikan gambar sebagai entitas dinamis dan menekankan kepentingannya di diskursus akademis dan kebudayaan. Karyanya membahas pertanyaan yang belum selesai terkait hakikat gambar, hubungannya dengan bahasa, relevansi historisnya, dan efeknya terhadap pelihat. Mitchell menantang pemahaman tradisional tentang gambar sebagai objek pasif dengan mengenalkan gagasan "metagambar"—gambar yang merefleksikan hakikat mereka sendiri—dan mentransformasi gambar menjadi subjek aktif yang mampu meneorisasi-diri. Distingsi antara teks dan gambar dikaburkan oleh interpretasi ulang yang juga memajukan pemahaman lebih terhadap cara budaya visual memengaruhi dan merefleksikan kondisi manusia.*

**Kata kunci:** Mitchell, gambar, teks, metagambar, biogambar, palingan pictorial.

### **Abstract**

*This study examines the important ideas of W.J.T. Mitchell's theories on image and text. The link between word and image has long been a topic of controversy, from Plato's differentiation between "word" and "image" in ancient Greece to the current debates around image-text interaction in AI technology. The study of images and words, or iconology, frequently leads to discussions about how politics, power, reality, and value are related to images and texts. An eminent iconologist, William John Thomas (W. J. T.) Mitchell coined the phrase "pictorial turn" in 1994 to counter the linguistic movement, which had replaced the importance of images with language. Mitchell's theory of image and text covers important ideas such as the pictorial turn, metapicture, biopicture, and the idea of image and text as mixed media. His work covers a broad range of subjects, from media aesthetics, visual culture, iconology, to image theory. The necessity to examine Mitchell's contributions to the study of image and text is expanding as his theories become more and more well-known worldwide. The purpose of this essay is to examine Mitchell's concepts, paying special attention to the dynamic interaction between word and image. In summary, Mitchell's "pictorial turn" positions pictures as dynamic entities and emphasizes their importance in scholarly discourse and culture. His work addresses unresolved questions concerning the nature of images, their connection to language, their historical relevance, and their effect on viewers. Mitchell challenges the traditional understanding of images as passive objects by introducing the idea of "metapictures"—images that reflect on their own nature—and transforming images into active subjects that are capable of self-theorization. The distinction between text and image is blurred by this reinterpretation, which also promotes a greater understanding of the nuanced ways that visual culture influences and reflects the human condition.*

**Keywords:** Mitchell, image, text, metapicture, biopicture, pictorial turn.

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, there has been much debate about the relationship between text and image, which has changed in accordance with development in both technology and intellectual thinking. Plato made a distinction between "word" and "image" in ancient Greece, considering words to be traditional signs and images to be more intuitively understood representations. This distinction has endured and changed over time, especially as digital technology, the internet, and artificial intelligence (AI) have grown in popularity. Particularly in the area of iconology—the study of the link between words and pictures and how they intersect with politics, power, reality, and value—the development of AI has given the conversation new dimensions. A key figure in modern iconology, W. J. T. Mitchell introduced the concept of "pictorial turn," which challenges the traditional dominance of language in intellectual discourse by emphasizing the fundamental role of images in shaping knowledge and meaning.

In modern context, the debate on image and text extends to various disciplines such as art history and literature. For example, Leonardo da Vinci's (1500) assertion that painting is superior to poetry in *Paragone of Poetry and Painting* and highlights the disparities between verbal and visual communication. Mitchell suggests a more nuanced strategy, focusing on the mixed nature of the two media, in contrast to others who advocate for the exclusivity of text or image.

The relationship of text and image is becoming more widely acknowledged with the emergence of multimodality theory. This idea integrates many media and art forms while going beyond traditional bounds. In a variety of technological media, including television shows, movies, smartphone apps, and AI-powered home assistants, multimodal representation has grown in popularity. Different modalities of representation, such as text, music, and images, not only coexist within integrated technological platforms but also can be analyzed using a unified semiotic framework based on multimodal analysis (Kress, 2001, p. 1-2). The necessity of



multimodal analysis has become undeniable. In this context, Mitchell's ideas on image and text serve as a valuable contribution to understanding the dynamic interplay between visual and verbal communication.

As Mitchell's theories gain international recognition, there is a growing need to systematically introduce and explore his concepts on image and text. By focusing on key aspects such as the pictorial turn, metapicture, and biopicture, we can gain deeper insights into the complex relationship between image and text.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. The Development of the Ideas of Text and Image

The distinction between visual and verbal representation has been a long-standing philosophical debate (Mitchell, 2015, p. 40). Ancient Greek thinkers examined the origins and differences between text and images, with Plato (2018) arguing in *Cratylus* (360 BC) that words are artificial and governed by convention, whereas images are more natural and intuitive (Bateman, 2014, p. 12; Mitchell, 1986, p. 75). He suggests that a well-crafted image emerges from accurately imitating reality. However, in *The Republic*, he views images as mere imitations of true existence, asserting that an artist, like a painter depicting a shoemaker, only replicates appearances without genuine understanding (Mitchell, 2005, p. 86; Republic, §601c, §601e). An artist by creating images becomes far removed from the truth (Republic, §605, b).

In contrast, Aristotle saw art not just as imitation but as a means to represent what is absent, through imagination. In *De Anima*, he distinguishes perception from imagination, explaining that senses grasp forms without material substance, like wax receiving an imprint (Aristotle, 2011, II.12). He defines imagination (*phantasia*) as the faculty that preserves and recreates sensory impressions even without direct stimuli (Mitchell, 1986, p. 14).

During the Middle Ages, the concept of "image" played a prominent role in understanding the relationship between God and His creation, particularly in the doctrine of man as the image of God.

Augustine (2002), in *Confessions*, writes, “Man, created after Thy image and likeness... [possesses] the power of reason and understanding” (*Confessions*, Book XIII). He differentiates between image, likeness, and equality — arguing that an image must resemble its original, like a child to a parent or a painting to its subject. However, equality does not necessitate an image-relation; for instance, two eggs can be identical without one being an image of the other.

Following Augustine, Aquinas (1947), in *Summa Theologica* (I, Q.93, Art.1), maintains that humanity bears God’s likeness as a reflection of the divine exemplar, though this resemblance is imperfect. Medieval thinkers, like their ancient Greek counterparts, were deeply invested in the relationship between images and truth. While Greek philosophers viewed images as imitations of reality, medieval scholars saw them as reflections of God.

Ancient Greek and medieval thinkers explored images and texts in a metaphysical context, whereas modern philosophers approached the debate through epistemology, aesthetics, and semiotics. Key figures include da Vinci, Lessing, Burke, Greenberg, Fried, and Krauss, who emphasized distinctions between visual and verbal mediums. In *Paragone of Poetry and Painting*, da Vinci (1500) argued for the superiority of painting over poetry, asserting that vision provides a more direct and complete understanding of nature. Lessing, in *Laocoön*, differentiated painting as spatial and poetry as temporal, focusing their distinct expressive modes. Burke (1909, p. 42), in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, claimed that words, despite their vagueness, arouse emotions than images, making them a more powerful medium.

Greenberg and Fried rejected the idea of hybrid arts, advocating for the purity of individual media. Greenberg (1940, p. 4), in *Towards a Newer Laocoön*, saw abstract painting as a rebellion against literature’s dominance, while Fried (1967, Part VII), in *Art and Objecthood*, argued that art should remain distinct from theatricality. Rosalind Krauss (1979), in *Grids*, highlighted the grid as a defining feature of modern art, separating it from narrative and

language. She later introduced the “post-medium condition”, arguing that contemporary artists exploit new technical support beyond traditional materials.

The long-standing debate on the relationship between image and text—whether they are distinct or interchangeable—has evolved with contemporary theories, particularly multimodality. McLuhan argues that all media extend human faculties and influence every aspect of life (media hybridity). He famously stated that “the medium is the message,” highlighting how media shape perception beyond content (McLuhan, Quentin, & Jerome, 2001, p. 26). He also introduced the concept of the “global village,” where electronic communication restructures fragmented cultures into an interconnected whole (McLuhan, 2001, p. 106).

Rancière considered images in *The Future of the Image* as not merely tied to specific technical mediums but operate through relations of meaning and affect. He rejected strict distinctions between visual and linguistic forms, highlighting the fluidity between them (Rancière, 2007, p. 3; Mecchia, 2008, p. 314-315).

Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen’s in *Multimodality: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication* expanded this perspective by arguing that multimodality has replaced monomodality, which privileged writing over other modes of representation. They emphasize the interconnectedness of different media—text, image, sound—across disciplines, from anthropology and philosophy to cultural studies and semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 1; Çoşkun, 2015, p. 40). The shift from print to screen-based communication has significantly influenced human cognition, culture, and knowledge production (Kress, 2003, p. 1).

## **2. Text and Image According to Mitchell**

Based on the theoretical discourse above, Mitchell’s theory of text and image belongs to multimodal theory. Mitchell sheds light on the roots of the text and images, as well as the intricate relationship that exists between them. Mitchell departs from the

parallels between the definitions of image and religious contexts. He references the idea of humanity being created "in the image and likeness of God," a concept that conveys a profound spiritual and abstract resemblance. The definition of image transcends cultural and linguistic boundaries, as reflected in the terms like Hebrew "*tselem*," Greek "*eikona*," and Latin "*imago*" (Mitchell, 1986).

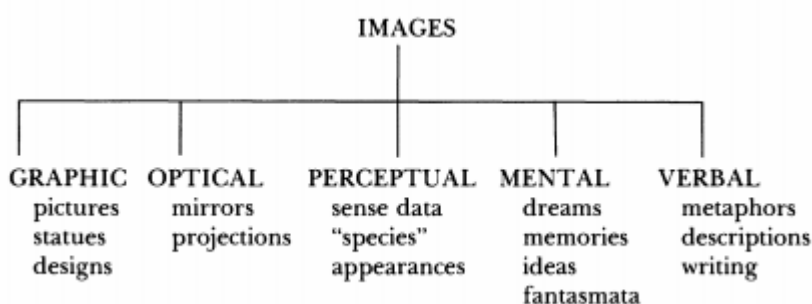
To further elaborate, consider the example of how images are not merely visual representations but also convey textuality that manifests in symbolic meanings deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and practices. In the realm of art history, images have been used to communicate narratives, emotions, and societal values, making them powerful tools of expression. The connection between text and image is evident in various forms of communication, such as advertising, where words and visuals work in tandem to convey messages effectively to the audience.

In essence, the interplay between text and image is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that goes beyond mere visual stimuli. It encompasses layers of meaning, cultural significance, and historical contexts that enrich our understanding of the world around us. Mitchell's examination serves as a reminder of the intricate relationship between language and visual representation, inviting us to explore the depths of meaning embedded in every image we encounter.

Mitchell's depiction of images as a diverse family tree is a profound metaphor that encapsulates the complexity and richness of image representation. Just like a real family tree, the branches of this metaphorical tree represent different aspects of images, ranging from the tangible to the abstract. This family tree comprises five branches: graphic, optical, perceptual, mental, and verbal (Mitchell, 1986). A closer examination of each category provides a more comprehensive understanding of this classification.

The branch of the image family tree spans from graphic to verbal. Firstly, the graphic branch includes visual elements such as lines, shapes, colors, and textures. These elements combine to create an image, whether it is a painting, a photo, or a computer design.

Secondly, the optical branch that examines the realm of how the human eye perceives images. For instance, optical illusions challenge our brains to reconcile contradicting information by manipulating our visual experience. Consider the well-known optical illusion, "Rubin's vase", in which, depending on how our brains interpret the visual input, the identical set of lines might seem as either a vase or two faces. Thirdly, the perceptual branch of the image family tree explores the psychological and cognitive aspects of visual perception. This category includes Gestalt principles, which explain how humans recognize patterns and arrange sensory data. For example, we look at a set of dots organized in a specific way. Our brains automatically connect the dots to form a recognized shape. Fourthly, the mental branch examines the deeper meanings and interpretations of images in our minds. Dreams, memories, and ideas are central to this branch. This branch allows viewers to engage with visuals on a mental level. Lastly, the verbal branch of the image family tree emphasizes the intersection between images and texts. Captions, titles, and descriptions are significant to creating visual representation in our minds. Consider the enormous impact a literary work's skillfully written description can have on our mental imagery.



**Fig. 1.** The family tree of image (Mitchell, 1986, p. 10)

Mitchell sees text as mixed media, where words are not just merely verbal but visual representations of speech. By defining text as "visible language," he highlights its dual nature of being both seen

and heard. This concept reminds us of the ancient practice of using pictograms, where symbols conveyed meaning through a combination of visual and auditory cues (Mitchell, 1994). Pictograms served as a bridge between seeing and speaking, akin to a form of visual storytelling. The act of writing itself became a blend of painting and printing, where each stroke carried not only literal meaning but also visual and auditory nuances.

### ***2.1 Images and Pictures***

Mitchell also distinguishes between images and pictures in his work. He highlights that a picture serves as a tangible form of an image, manifested through various physical mediums like paint, stone, metal, or wood. On the other hand, an image is characterized as an intangible entity, rather than an event or a concrete object, always necessitating some form of material support for its manifestation (Mitchell, 2015).

To further illustrate this distinction, consider the depiction of the golden calf in the Old Testament. The Second Commandment explicitly forbids the creation of graven images and the practice of idolatry (Mitchell, 2005, p. 16). This prohibition, in effect, erases “the picture” of the golden calf. However, despite the ban, the golden calf persists—reappearing as an image in other media, not only as a subject within verbal narratives but also as a recurring motif in visual art, such as Nicolas Poussin’s *The Adoration of the Golden Calf* (Mitchell, 2005, pp. 31-32).

Moreover, Mitchell explores the idea that while a picture can be destroyed or defaced, an image remains to survive and can resurface in various forms. This concept is exemplified in the history of iconoclasm, where religious or political motivations drive the destruction of images, yet the underlying concepts and meanings embodied in these images persist and often find expression in alternative verbal or visual narratives (Mitchell, 2015).

## ***2.2 Image and Text as Mixed Media***

Mitchell's inquiry delves deeply into the intricate relationship between text and image, surpassing mere technical considerations. He argues that this relationship serves as a battleground where various political, institutional, and social tensions come to the forefront within the realm of representation. This intersection becomes a dynamic platform where a multitude of conflicting forces interact within the materiality of both text and image (Mitchell, 1994).

From Mitchell's perspective, text and image merge to form composite or mixed media. These mediums amalgamate an array of codes, conventions, communication channels, sensory experiences, and cognitive modes (Mitchell, 1994). This fusion is exemplified in the palpable nature of writing, which is inherently intertwined with visual elements. The mutual dependency between text and image is emphasized as they coexist within each other's domains. Textuality is already "inside the image," and visuality is already inherent in the words (Mitchell, 1994). In other words, textuality is ingrained within the image, while visuality is interwoven into the text.

Mitchell's exploration of the interplay between text and image offers a multidimensional viewpoint. His insights unveil a nuanced interplay between these elements, where meanings, representations, and conflicts converge in both visual and textual expressions. Through diverse examples and detailed analysis, Mitchell's work underscores the intricate nature of the relationship between text and image, offering a rich insight of understanding for those who explore into the complexities of visual and textual communication.

## ***2.3 Pictorial Turn***

In the landscape of intellectual inquiry, crises arise when paradigms shift and new perspectives emerge to challenge established norms. A fascinating occurrence happened in academia at the turn of the 20th century when academics from diverse fields converged to question the supremacy of verbal language, shift their

focus to image, and begin the era of the "pictorial turn" (Mitchell, 1994). A constellation of intellectuals, including Mitchell, Gottfried Boehm, and Ferdinand Fellman, supported this shift by adding distinct perspectives to the developing discourse.

Mitchell introduced the concept of the "pictorial turn" in 1992 (Mitchell, 1992, republished in Mitchell, 1994). Almost at the same time, Boehm embarked on a parallel path, introducing the "*ikonische wende*" or "iconic turn," aiming to build a comprehensive "general image science" (*Allgemeine Bildwissenschaft*) (Bachmann-Medick, 2016). Boehm's effort was a part of his broader "hermeneutics of the image" project, which sought to expand Gadamer's hermeneutics to clarify how images construct meaning (Martinengo, 2018). In a parallel vein, Fellman's (1995) essay *Innere Bilder im Licht des imagic turn* unveiled the "imagic turn," which asserted that text and images are equally important in shaping human understanding.

Though rooted in different disciplines, these approaches converged in challenging the domination of language within the logocentric perspective (Zeman, 2011). Mitchell (1994), who was inspired by Rorty's idea of philosophical "turns," conceived the "pictorial turn," positioning images as central subjects in both scholarly discourse and popular culture. Unlike the linguistic turn, which focused on the primacy of words, the pictorial turn acknowledged that images can convey narratives and messages with as much depth and nuance as words (Paic & Purgar, 2016).

Within the pictorial turn, images acquire a multidimensional significance that extends beyond mere representation. It encompasses domains like visibility, artistic expression, media platforms, ideologies, and disciplines, engaging in a complex interplay (Purgar, 2016). For Mitchell, this change does not mean a return to oversimplified conceptions of mimesis or visual correspondence. Rather, it symbolizes a "postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery" of images as intricate amalgams of "visibility, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality" (Mitchell, 1994).



The status of the image within the pictorial turn is an enigma—hovering between a "paradigm" and an "anomaly," as per Kuhn's terminology. It represents a puzzle that invites further investigation (Mitchell, 1994). Mitchell's call for deeper exploration centers on unraveling the essence of images, their symbiotic relationship with language, their impact on perception, the narrative they construct about the world, their historical underpinnings, and the actions warranted by this newfound understanding (Mitchell, 1994).

There is a widespread misconception that the pictorial turn exclusively happens in modern and contemporary visual culture. However, the pictorial turn has manifested repeatedly throughout the course of cultural history, particularly during moments when new image reproduction technologies emerged, such as the invention of photography and television. Mitchell (2015) contends that the pictorial turn can even be seen in ancient periods, as witnessed by the Israelites, who, in an episode from the past, deviated from Moses' law (textuality) and crafted a golden calf (visuality) as an object of worship.

Expanding on this idea, it clears that the concept of the pictorial turn transcends temporal boundaries, stretching back to ancient civilizations where visual representation played a significant role in societal practices. For example, in ancient Egypt, the intricate hieroglyphics, which is the combination of text and image found in tombs and temples, were used not only as a medium of communication but also as a means of immortalizing the stories and beliefs of the people. Similarly, the thousands of years' cave paintings of Lascaux in France show early humans' dependence on visual expression to communicate their experiences and worldview.

Furthermore, the influence of the pictorial turn was also proved in the Renaissance period, an era of significant artistic invention and cultural revival. Artists like da Vinci and Michelangelo revolutionized the way images were created and perceived, ushering in a new era of visual representation that still has an impact on art and society today. Gutenberg's innovation of

the printing press accelerated the spread of visual information, allowing for mass-produced images to reach a wider audience.

In modern times, the development of digital technologies has brought about a new wave of the pictorial turn, with social media and virtual reality revolutionizing the way we engage with images and visuals. The power of the visual to impact our thoughts and actions has never been more evident, from Instagram influencers shaping trends with well chosen images to immersive experiences in virtual environments. The pictorial turn is a phenomenon that has persisted across generations and cultures, reflecting the intrinsic human tendency to communicate, express, and interpret through image.

#### 2.4 Metapicture

Mitchell defines a metapicture as an image that reflects upon the process of visual representation itself. Metapicture allows images to theorize about themselves (Mitchell, 2005). Mitchell provides images with the capacity to have a form of theoretical significance through the use of metapictures (Wiesenthal et al., 2000). Mitchell aims to transform images into subjects that can reflect, effectively turning them into self-theorizing symbols. Mitchell's notion is in contrast to prior perspectives, where pictures were primarily perceived as objects or targets.

A famous example that exemplifies Mitchell's idea of metapictures is Rene Magritte's *The Treachery of Images*, which depicts a pipe with the phrase "This is not a pipe." This artwork challenges the observer to think about the nature of representation and the relationship between words and images. Further explanation will appear below.

Mitchell's exploration of metapictures reveals a new dimension in the field of visual representation. Mitchell challenges us to reevaluate the role of images in shaping our understanding of the world, by allowing images to introspectively analyze and reflect on their own nature. Through metapictures, we are given a unique

opportunity to engage with images not just as static representations but as dynamic entities capable of self-awareness and reflection. Mitchell's conceptual framework challenges us to see beyond the surface of images and appreciate the richness of meaning that they can convey.

As emphasized in his work *Image Science*, Mitchell's depiction of metapicture includes several dimensions:

1. *Images within images*. Metapictures manifest in images that are contained within other images. This includes instances like paintings depicting the act of painting, an image of a movie featured within a movie, or a television show set within another television show.
2. *Images reflecting the nature of images*. Metapicture also appears in images that offer insights into the essence of images themselves (Mitchell, 2005). According to Thierry de Duve, artworks can be "self-analytic," portraying their historical and institutional context. A prime example of this metapicture type is Magritte's "*Les trahison des images*," or *The Treachery of Image* where a pipe image is accompanied by the text "This is not a pipe." The image of a pipe is indeed not a pipe itself but a representation of a pipe. Magritte's art makes us aware of previously unnoticed reality about image and text (Mitchell, 1994).
3. *Metaphors as theoretical models*. Metapictures extend to metaphors that function as theoretical frameworks. Mitchell calls these metaphors "hypericons" or "theoretical pictures." A notable example is Plato's allegory of the cave, which serves as a model for understanding the nature of knowledge (Mitchell, 1994: 48).
4. *Metaphors representing discourse*. Metapicture also encompasses metaphors that symbolize entire discourses or systems of knowledge. For instance, Hobbes' concept of the "body politic" metaphorically refers to society as a large body. This metaphor has given rise to related concepts like "head of state" (Mitchell, 2015).

In summary, Mitchell's conception of metapicture introduces a multi-faceted approach that encourages images to transcend their traditional roles. By "allowing" images to engage in introspection and self-theorization, Mitchell transforms them into dynamic agents that contribute to theoretical discourse, enriching our understanding of the complex relationship between image and text.

### **2.5 Biopicture**

Mitchell's core concept of the biopicture is foundational to his theories. In the biopicture framework, images and pictures are conceived as living entities, possessing the ability to undergo transformations, proliferation, extinction, and even resurrection (Mitchell, 2015). Dolly the sheep stands as a prime illustration of the biopicture notion, representing a biological likeness of a living organism rather than a mere mechanical duplicate. Dolly was a genuine living entity with resemblances to its "parent" sheep, originating from three distinct breeds (Mitchell, 2005).

The tragedy of the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center Twin Towers in New York exemplifies the biopicture principle. From the perspective of the assailants, the towers held the status of a global economic icon, embodying notions of decadence and evil. The primary intent behind the 9/11 attacks was to obliterate this emblem of capitalism while orchestrating its demolition as a media spectacle (Mitchell, 2005). It is noteworthy that biopictures are impervious to iconoclasm. This is also evident in the narrative of the golden calf in the Old Testament and its reappearing both in other verbal tales and artistic portrayals (Mitchell, 2005).

The concept of biopictures extends even to the revival of past visual materials, akin to the "reanimation of extinct life" rather than fossilization. Steven Spielberg's film *Jurassic Park* provides a vivid example, where dinosaurs are resurrected as uncanny images through the preservation of their DNA within mosquitoes. Mitchell (2005) terms this phenomenon "biocybernetic reproduction," a

process integrating biological engineering and information science to create organisms.

In essence, Mitchell's biopicture concept portrays images and pictures as dynamic entities embodying the characteristics of living beings, capable of metamorphosis, endurance, and even reawakening. This notion not only redefines our relationship with visual representations but also underscores the vitality within the domain of images.

## CONCLUSION

This study examines Mitchell's core ideas on image and text. Mitchell's ideas depart from the interpretation of images as representations of likeness, organized along a spectrum from concrete to abstract. He sees text as a form of mixed media, labeling it "visible language" and highlighting its role in bringing language into the visual realm. The interplay between text and image is a mutual exchange where text is inherently within images and images are within text.

Mitchell is well-known for coining the phrase "pictorial turn," which he invented in 1994 in response to an attempt to "linguistify" art history. The pictorial turn has been marked as a break from the linguistic turn, in which language lost its prominence in opposition to images.

Mitchell's "pictorial turn" has its departure from Rorty's "linguistic turn." Mitchell highlights the importance of images to both intellectual discourse and popular culture. According to Mitchell, images are situated between a "paradigm" and an "anomaly," raising issues about their nature, relationship with language, influence on viewers and the outside world, historical significance, and how to address these issues.

Mitchell also presents the idea of "metapictures," images that reflect on their own representation process. This approach challenges the traditional perception of images as passive objects by elevating images to a theoretical status. Mitchell repositions images

as active subjects that are capable of reflection, allowing images to self-theorize.

This discourse provides insight into the complex relationship between text, image, and other core ideas of Mitchell. The examination of images as living things with the capacity to change, reflect, and even revive themselves, reframes our understanding of images as more than just representations. Mitchell's work encourages us to reconsider the traditional boundaries between images and text, leading to a new understanding of the complexities that underpin our interaction with visual culture.

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