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A Stylistic Exploration of Loss and Mastery in Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art"

Luijim S. Jose *, Aicy D. Dulay, Shaira Mae C. Punzal, Cristal Shane Dela Cruz, Desiree D. Francisco

Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Gen. Tinio Street, Quezon District, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines 3100.

* For correspondence: luijimjose@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive stylistic analysis of Elizabeth Bishop's renowned poem, "One Art," focusing on its lexico-syntactic, phonological, graphological, and morphological elements. Through meticulous examination, this research uncovers how Bishop's stylistic choices contribute to the thematic depth, emotional resonance, and aesthetic complexity of the work. The lexico-syntactic analysis delves into vocabulary choices and sentence structure, revealing their role in the poem's exploration of loss and acceptance. The phonological analysis explores sound patterns, including alliteration, assonance, and rhyme, and their enhancement of the poem's lyrical quality. The graphological analysis investigates the visual presentation, examining how punctuation, lineation, and spatial organization influence reader interpretation. The morphological analysis examines word formation, highlighting how specific word types and their derivatives deepen the thematic exploration. This in-depth analysis reveals the complex stylistic structure of "One Art" and its enduring significance. By offering a comprehensive understanding of Elizabeth Bishop's innovative approach, this study contributes to the broader field of literary studies and enhances our appreciation of Bishop's impact on the world of poetry.

Keywords: Elizabeth Bishop, One Art, stylistic analysis, lexico-syntactic analysis, phonological analysis, graphological analysis, morphological analysis, thematic exploration, emotional resonance..

1. INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" stands as a timeless exploration of loss and acceptance, showcasing the poet's mastery in navigating the complexities of human

emotions through language (Bishop, 1976). Renowned for its understated yet profound impact, the poem beckons readers into a contemplative journey through the gradual unraveling of a seemingly simple yet deeply resonant subject: the art of losing. Since its publication

in 1976, Bishop's poem has captivated scholars and readers alike, inviting a myriad of interpretations and analyses.

While numerous studies have examined Bishop's themes of loss, resilience, and the inevitability of change, there remains a notable gap in comprehensive analyses that integrate the poem's multifaceted stylistic elements. This research endeavors to fill this void by systematically dissecting the linguistic layers of "One Art," encompassing its phonological, graphological, morphological, and lexico-syntactic dimensions. Similarly, Jose and Jose (2024) have conducted a detailed analysis of T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," emphasizing how a multidimensional stylistic approach can significantly deepen our understanding of a poem's thematic and emotional complexities (Jose & Jose, 2024). Studies by Jose (2022) examining semantic expansions in biblical texts highlight the complexity of language evolution and its implications for understanding literary and sacred texts, underscoring the interconnectedness of linguistic changes across genres and contexts (Jose, 2022).

Literary analysis has evolved towards a multidimensional exploration of texts, emphasizing the interconnectedness of form and meaning (Attridge, 2004). Studies such as Costello's (2012) examination of Bishop's use of repetition and Thomas's (2008) analysis of the poem's structural progression exemplify this trend. However, few have undertaken a comprehensive stylistic analysis to uncover the nuances of Bishop's linguistic craftsmanship and its impact on the poem's overarching themes.

This research aims to bridge this gap by offering a holistic understanding of Bishop's stylistic innovation in "One Art" and its role in conveying the poem's complex emotional terrain. By illuminating the significance of

Bishop's linguistic choices, this study seeks to enrich future studies of her work and contribute to the broader discourse on contemporary poetry.

By offering a comprehensive stylistic analysis that integrates analyses across these linguistic levels, this study aims to:

- Provide a comprehensive stylistic analysis of Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art," elucidating the interplay between its phonological, graphological, morphological, and lexico-syntactic features.
- Illuminate how Bishop's linguistic craftsmanship shapes the thematic depth and emotional resonance of the poem.
- Offer insights that could inform future studies of Bishop's poetry and contribute to the broader understanding of contemporary verse.

This research is driven by the central question: How do the stylistic elements across phonological, graphological, morphological, and lexico-syntactic levels contribute to the thematic complexity, emotional resonance, and overall aesthetic significance of Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art"? This research delves into sub-problems related to each level of linguistic analysis, exploring their role in enhancing the poem's mood, tone, and thematic concerns.

By dissecting the intricate stylistic framework of Bishop's poem, this research endeavors to uncover the linguistic subtleties that underpin its enduring impact and thematic richness. Through a comprehensive stylistic analysis, the study seeks to deepen the appreciation of Bishop's artistry and offer valuable insights into the nature of loss, resilience, and the human experience as depicted in contemporary poetry.

This study further integrates the insights from Brunner (2001), who explored the psychological implications of

loss in poetry, offering parallels to the study of emotional resonance in Bishop's work (Brunner, 2001). Additionally, Frost's (2013) research on the evolution of poetic forms reveals the dynamic nature of language and its implications for interpreting contemporary poetry, providing a critical understanding of how linguistic choices shape thematic expression (Frost, 2013).

Studies such as those by Green (2010) on the role of memory in poetry emphasize the importance of personal and collective memory in shaping poetic meaning, which parallels the exploration of human experience in Bishop's work (Green, 2010). Similarly, Martin's (2015) analysis of metaphor in contemporary poetry demonstrates how well-crafted metaphors can enhance thematic depth and emotional impact (Martin, 2015).

The integration of these studies highlights the complex interplay between language, emotion, and interpretation, which is fundamental in literary analysis. As Bishop's "One Art" employs a rich tapestry of language to explore themes of loss and mastery, understanding these dynamics can enrich our interpretation of her poetry. This approach not only deepens our comprehension of Bishop's work but also aligns with contemporary scholarly efforts to bridge linguistic and emotional analyses in literary studies.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative, descriptive approach to investigate the stylistic intricacies of Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art." The methodology encompassed four primary analytical frameworks aligned with distinct levels of linguistic examination: phonological, graphological, morphological, and lexico-syntactic. Each framework was systematically applied to the poem to unveil the ways in which Bishop's stylistic decisions

enrich its thematic exploration, emotional resonance, and overall significance.

2.1. Phonological Analysis

The phonological analysis conducted in this study explored the sound patterns present in the poem, encompassing elements such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, and rhyme. This analysis drew inspiration from Crystal's (2008) definition of phonology, which focuses on understanding how sounds operate within a specific language or dialect. The primary objective of the analysis was to discern how Elizabeth Bishop utilized these sound patterns to enrich the poem's lyrical quality, evoke particular moods, and delve into thematic concerns. Notably, Vendler's (1997) studies highlight how Bishop's deliberate use of alliteration and assonance contributes to the poem's portrayal of loss and the speaker's internal struggles.

2.2. Graphological Analysis

The graphological framework delved into the visual aspects of the poem, including its structure, punctuation, and typographical features. Through this analysis, emphasis was placed on the arrangement of lines, stanzas, and the strategic use of white space. Furthermore, the examination of punctuation marks and their placement provided insights into the pacing, emphasis, and rhetorical effects employed by Bishop to guide readers through the poem's narrative arc and emotional landscape. The significance of visual elements in shaping reader interpretation has been similarly observed in research by Cummings and Simmons (2003).

2.3. Morphological Analysis

In Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art," a morphological analysis delves into the intricacies of word formation, dissecting the selection of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and

adverbs alongside their prefixes and suffixes. Following Bauer's (2003) morphological theories, the analysis examines how Bishop's word choices, particularly her use of adverbs and verbs, contribute to the portrayal of loss and acceptance throughout the poem. For example, it could be argued that Bishop's repeated use of adverbs such as "easily" and "mastered" emphasizes the speaker's attempt to downplay the significance of loss, echoing the theme of resilience in the face of adversity.

2.4. Lexico-Syntactic Analysis

In "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop, through deliberate word selection and arrangement, Bishop guides readers through the speaker's journey of loss, highlighting the repeated act of losing as a means of mastering resilience. This part of the methodology drew on Halliday's (2014) systemic functional linguistics, particularly his theories on lexical density and syntactic complexity, to analyze how Bishop constructs sentences and employs specific syntactic structures to convey meaning, tone, and thematic depth. For instance, Bishop used a pattern of repetition and variation to underscore the speaker's gradual acceptance of loss while also emphasizing the paradoxical nature of mastering the art of losing.

2.5. Data Collection and Analysis

The primary data for this study consisted of the text of "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop. Analysis was conducted through close reading, focusing on instances within the poem that exemplify key phonological, graphological, morphological, and lexico-syntactic features. The findings were contextualized within existing literary criticism and linguistic theory, with interpretations supported by relevant scholarly sources.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Phonological Level

A comprehensive examination of Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" from a stylistic perspective focuses on the phonological level. This analysis involves a detailed exploration of how Bishop strategically employs sound patterns such as alliteration, assonance, rhyme, rhythm, and onomatopoeia. The aim is to uncover how these phonological elements contribute to the poem's thematic depth, evoke emotional resonance, and enhance its overall aesthetic. Specific lines will be highlighted to illustrate how these sound patterns enrich the reader's experience and interpretation of the poem.

3.1.1. Alliteration and Consonance

Throughout the poem, Bishop skillfully employs alliteration and consonance to create a musical quality and draw attention to specific themes or images. For instance:

Line 6: *"Then practice losing farther, losing faster:"*

The repetition of the 'l' and 'f' sounds emphasizes the acceleration and intensification of the act of losing, reflecting the poem's exploration of loss and its impact.

3.1.2. Assonance and Internal Rhyme

Assonance and internal rhyme contribute to the rhythmic flow and lyrical quality of the poem. For example:

Lines 9-10: *"I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster, / some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent."*

The repetition of the 'o' sound in "lost," "two," "owned," and "continent" creates a rhythmic and melodic effect, underscoring the emotional weight of the losses described.

3.1.3. Rhyme Scheme and Structure

Bishop's use of the villanelle form, with its specific rhyme scheme, adds structure and impact to the poem.

For instance:

Lines 18-19: "*—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture / I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident*"

The rhyme between "gesture" and "evident" subtly connects these lines, reinforcing the speaker's honesty and acceptance of the losses experienced.

3.1.4. Rhythm and Meter

The rhythm and meter of the poem contribute to its overall tone and pacing. For example:

Lines 1-2: "*The art of losing isn't hard to master; / so many things seem filled with the intent*"

The measured and deliberate rhythm mirrors the speaker's assertion that the act of losing can be approached as an art form, highlighting the poem's exploration of the emotional complexities of loss.

3.1.5. Phonological Contrast

Contrasts in sound patterns are utilized to emphasize shifts and contrasts within the poem. For example:

Lines 16-17: "*I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster, / some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.*"

The soft and melodious 's' sounds in "cities" and "lovely ones" contrast with the more forceful 'v' and 'c' sounds in "vaster" and "continent," highlighting the varying scales and impact of the losses described.

Through a meticulous phonological analysis of "One Art," it becomes evident how Elizabeth Bishop strategically employed sound patterns to enrich the poem's meaning and emotional depth. The use of alliteration, assonance, rhyme, rhythm, and onomatopoeia not only enhances the poem's aesthetic

quality but also deepens its exploration of themes such as loss, acceptance, and the complexities of human emotions.

3.2. Graphological Level

A thorough examination of Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" at the graphological level reveals how the poem's visual structure and textual organization contribute to its thematic depth and emotional resonance.

3.2.1. Punctuation and Use of Enjambment

Bishop employs punctuation strategically in "One Art" to dictate rhythm and control the reader's pace, enhancing the poem's emotional impact. For example:

Lines 1-5: "*The art of losing isn't hard to master; / so many things seem filled with the intent / to be lost that their loss is no disaster. / Lose something every day. Accept the fluster / of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.*"

The use of semicolons and periods guides the reader through the speaker's contemplation on loss, creating a measured cadence that reflects the poem's central theme. Additionally, enjambment between lines 2 and 3 propels the reader forward, echoing the relentless nature of loss.

3.2.2. Capitalization and Lineation

Bishop's approach to capitalization and lineation in "One Art" reinforces the poem's exploration of loss and resilience:

Title: "One Art"

The title's capitalization emphasizes the mastery implied in the "art of losing," highlighting the speaker's attempt to assert control over the inevitability of loss.

Line 1: "*The art of losing isn't hard to master;*"

The capitalization of "The" underscores the significance of the concept introduced in the first line, framing loss as a skill to be learned and perfected.

3.2.3. Stanza Form and Spatial Organization

Bishop employs a structured stanzaic form in "One Art" to convey the speaker's gradual acceptance of loss:

The poem consists of six stanzas, each following a villanelle-like structure with a repeated refrain. This formal constraint contrasts with the theme of loss, highlighting the speaker's attempt to impose order and control in the face of chaos.

Lines 13-15: "*—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture / I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident / the art of losing's not too hard to master—*"

The spatial arrangement of these lines emphasizes the speaker's resigned acknowledgment of loss, with the dash signaling a pause that mirrors the hesitation in accepting the inevitable.

3.2.4. The Use of Italics

Italics are sparingly employed in "One Art" to emphasize specific words and phrases, adding emphasis and nuance to the speaker's reflections on loss:

Line 16: "*—Though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.*"

The italicization of "Write it!" highlights the speaker's inner turmoil and reluctance to confront the true magnitude of loss, underscoring the poem's theme of self-deception and emotional resilience.

In "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop, the graphological features—ranging from punctuation and capitalization to stanza form and spatial organization—serve as integral components of the poem's thematic structure

and emotional impact. Through meticulous analysis of these elements, we gain deeper insight into Bishop's portrayal of loss as both a universal experience and a personal journey of acceptance and resilience.

3.3. Morphological Level

A stylistic analysis of "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop, focusing on the morphological level, involves examining the poem's use of word formation, including the selection of specific types of words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs), their prefixes and suffixes, and how these choices contribute to the overall meaning, tone, and thematic development of the poem.

3.3.1. Use of Verbs

Bishop's choice of verbs in "One Art" reflects the speaker's attempt to control and master the art of loss.

Line 1: "*The art of losing isn't hard to master*"

The verb "master" conveys a sense of authority and control, suggesting the speaker's determination to cope with loss through mastery and practice.

Line 6: "*I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,*"

The past tense "lost" highlights the speaker's past experiences of loss, setting the tone for the poem's exploration of the theme.

3.3.2. Use of Nouns and Adjectives

The nouns and adjectives in "One Art" convey a sense of detachment and resignation, emphasizing the inevitability of loss.

Line 5: "*so many things seem filled with the intent*"

The noun "intent" coupled with the adjective "filled" suggests a sense of purpose or determination behind

the act of losing, implying a deliberate acceptance of loss.

Line 14: *"I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster."*

The noun "disaster" juxtaposed with the negation "wasn't" downplays the severity of loss, indicating the speaker's attempt to minimize its impact.

3.3.3. Morphological Derivation and Inflection

Bishop's use of derived words and inflected forms adds depth and nuance to the poem's exploration of loss and acceptance.

Line 12: *"I shan't have lied. It's evident"*

The contraction "shan't" and the past participle "lied" reflect the speaker's resigned acceptance of the truth, suggesting a willingness to confront reality without deception.

Line 16: *"—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture)"*

The gerund "losing" coupled with the pronoun "you" emphasizes the personal nature of loss, highlighting the speaker's emotional attachment to what has been lost.

3.3.4. Pronominal and Article Use

The strategic use of pronouns and articles in "One Art" shapes the speaker's relationship to the act of losing and the objects of loss.

Line 3: *"so many things seem filled with the intent"*

The indefinite article "so many" creates a sense of multiplicity, suggesting the ubiquity of loss in the speaker's life.

Line 11: *"—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture)"*

The definite article "the" before "joking voice" and "gesture" emphasizes the specificity of what is being

lost, highlighting the speaker's emotional connection to these losses.

In "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop, the morphological features contribute to the speaker's attempts to come to terms with loss and the inevitability of change. Verbs convey a sense of control, while nouns and adjectives express detachment and resignation. Morphological derivation and inflection add depth to the exploration of loss, and the strategic use of pronouns and articles shapes the speaker's relationship to what is lost. Together, these morphological elements enhance the poem's thematic complexity and emotional impact.

3.4. Lexico-Syntactic Level

A stylistic analysis of the poem "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop, focusing on the lexico-syntactic level, involves examining the poem's vocabulary choices (lexicon) and how words are structured into sentences (syntax) to convey meaning, tone, and thematic elements. This thorough analysis will illustrate how Bishop's lexico-syntactic choices, highlighted through specific lines, contribute significantly to the poem's overall impact and meaning.

3.4.1. Lexical Choices and Semantic Fields

Bishop employs a rich array of vocabulary related to loss and acceptance, such as "losing," "lost," "disaster," "miss," and "master." These words create a semantic field centered around the theme of loss, reinforcing the poem's message.

Lines: *"The art of losing isn't hard to master"* (lines 1, 6, 12), *"to travel. None of these will bring disaster"* (lines 8-9), *"I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster"* (line 15).

3.4.2. Syntactic Structures

The poem "One Art" predominantly consists of simple and compound sentences, with occasional complex sentences for emphasis.

Lines: "*The art of losing isn't hard to master*" (line 1), "*Then practice losing farther, losing faster:*" (line 7), "*I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,*" (line 13).

3.4.3. Repetition and Parallelism

The repetition of the phrase "*The art of losing isn't hard to master*" serves as a refrain, emphasizing the central theme of the poem and creating a sense of rhythm and unity.

Lines: "*The art of losing isn't hard to master*" (lines 1, 6, 12).

The poem utilizes a parallel structure to list examples of loss, each beginning with "*I lost*" or "*losing*," followed by specific details.

Lines: "*Lose something every day. Accept the fluster / of lost door keys, the hour badly spent*" (lines 4-5), "*places, and names, and where it was you meant / to travel*" (lines 8-9).

3.4.4. Usage of Literary Devices

Symbolism, epigram, litotes, anaphora, and irony are used throughout the poem to enhance its meaning and impact.

3.4.4.1. Epigram and Litotes

In line 13, Elizabeth Bishop uses epigrams and litotes to make a point about loss. When she says, "I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster," she's saying that she lost something big and important. But by calling them "lovely ones" and saying they are "vaster," she's kind of downplaying how significant their loss really is. So, even

though losing two cities might seem like a huge deal, she's saying it's not as bad as it sounds.

Line: "*I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,*" (line 13).

3.4.4.2. Irony

Elizabeth Bishop employs irony in the poem, which is a figure of speech that is used in a situation in which there is a contrast between what the reader or character expects and what actually happens.

In the poem, lines 18 to 19, the speaker admits that losing the person they love isn't easy to master, despite their earlier assertions. This irony underscores the complexity of human emotions and the limitations of the speaker's attempts to rationalize loss.

Lines: "*—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture / I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident / the art of losing's not too hard to master / though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.*" (Lines 16-19).

3.4.4.3. Anaphora

Bishop uses the literary device of anaphora in this poem. Anaphora is the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences. The author used it intentionally to add style and emphasis to the message of the poem.

In the poem, the phrase "*the art of losing*" is repeated in lines 1, 6, 12, and 18. This helps the poem to emphasize the meaning, add emotion, and create a sense of rhythm. Additionally, lines 13 and 10 repeat the words "*I lost.*"

Lines: "*The art of losing isn't hard to master*" (lines 1, 6, 12, 18), "*I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,*" (line 13), "*I lost my mother's watch. And look! My last, or / next-to-last, of three loved houses went.*" (lines 10-11).

3.4.4.4. Symbolism

Bishop uses symbolism to convey the message of the poem. Symbolism is the use of a symbol, which can be a word or an image, to communicate a distinct idea. It allows writers to communicate messages visually, even when their work isn't illustrated. Within a text, symbolism works visually as pieces of imagery that create a picture in the reader's mind.

In the poem, symbolism can be seen in lines 10 and 11. Bishop uses the mother's watch as a symbol of time, implying the memories that the speaker had with her mother. In line 11, the speaker describes the houses as ones she loved, which symbolizes family. The house is an intimate and personal space that one generally shares only with loved ones or family.

Lines: "I lost my mother's watch. And look! My last, or / next-to-last, of three loved houses went." (lines 10-11).

Through these detailed analyses of phonological, graphological, morphological, and lexico-syntactic elements, it becomes clear how Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" employs a range of stylistic features to deepen its exploration of loss, acceptance, and emotional resilience. The careful selection of sound patterns, visual structuring, word choices, and syntactic arrangements not only enhances the poem's aesthetic qualities but also enriches its thematic and emotional depth.

4. CONCLUSION

Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" emerges as a masterful exploration of loss and acceptance, rendered through a meticulous and multifaceted stylistic framework. This research has delved into the phonological, graphological, morphological, and lexico-syntactic elements of the poem, revealing how Bishop's linguistic choices intricately weave together to create a profound and resonant piece of literature.

The phonological analysis illuminated Bishop's strategic use of sound patterns such as alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and rhythm. These elements not only enhance the poem's lyrical quality but also underscore its thematic concerns, particularly the inevitability and ubiquity of loss. The rhythmic flow and musicality achieved through these sound patterns contribute significantly to the poem's emotional depth and aesthetic appeal.

Graphologically, Bishop's use of punctuation, capitalization, lineation, and spatial organization plays a crucial role in shaping the reader's experience and interpretation of the poem. The structured stanza form of the villanelle, combined with strategic punctuation and enjambment, guides the reader through the speaker's contemplative journey, reflecting the persistent and pervasive nature of loss. The visual aspects of the poem, including the use of italics and spatial arrangement, further emphasize the themes of resilience and acceptance.

The morphological analysis uncovered how Bishop's careful selection of verbs, nouns, adjectives, and their morphological derivations and inflections contribute to the poem's thematic richness. The choice of words reflects the speaker's attempts to master the art of losing, conveying a sense of control, detachment, and resignation. The strategic use of pronominal and article forms shapes the relationship between the speaker and the objects of loss, adding depth to the emotional narrative.

At the lexico-syntactic level, Bishop's use of lexical choices, syntactic structures, repetition, parallelism, and literary devices such as symbolism, irony, anaphora, and epigram further enhance the poem's thematic and emotional resonance. These elements work together to create a cohesive and impactful exploration of loss,

capturing the complexities of human emotions and the paradoxical nature of mastering the art of losing.

Through this comprehensive stylistic analysis, it becomes evident that Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" is not only a reflection on loss but also a testament to the poet's linguistic craftsmanship. The interplay of phonological, graphological, morphological, and lexico-syntactic features contributes to the poem's enduring appeal and significance. By meticulously crafting each element of the poem, Bishop invites readers into a contemplative space where the inevitability of loss is both acknowledged and artistically transcended.

This study enriches the understanding of Bishop's work and underscores the importance of stylistic analysis in literary studies. Future research could further explore the intersections of stylistic elements in other works by Bishop and contemporary poets, contributing to the broader discourse on the interplay between form, meaning, and emotional impact in poetry. Through such analyses, the intricate beauty and profound insights of poetic works can be more deeply appreciated, fostering a greater appreciation for the art of language and its capacity to illuminate the human experience.

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6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have declared that there is no conflict of interest.

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