

## **Narrative Form and Content: Intimations of Authorial Presence**

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In 1987 it was revealed that Paul de Man, one of the apostles of the death of the author, had published a great number of anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi articles in the collaborationist Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*. The revelation "set in motion a process of reevaluation ... of the ethics of detaching the text from its writer [and] brought the author back to the center stage" (Burke 1). In spite of Barthes' vociferous declaration of the death of the author that came as a culmination of a long and feverish campaign led by a number of staunch advocates of variations on the "death of the author" doctrine which span the whole twentieth century,, "The authorial subject returns, the (auto)biographical disrupts, enhances and displaces aspects of their work, a return which... takes place almost instantaneously with the declaration of authorial departure"(Burke 7). In brief, a deconstructive reading of the texts of these writers reveals that what is said is contradicted by what is unsaid; their texts mean what they do not say and say what they do not mean. Some thinkers have chosen a more dramatic way of response; for Bradbury, for example, "The comedy has its basis in one of the loonier tenets of Deconstruction --that we do not control language: language (that impersonal, endless play of signifiers) controls us. It (rather than writers) writes books" (qtd. in Burke 22). William Gass speaks of substituting "the wish for the deed" (qtd. in Burke 22), for the death of the author is not so much a fact as a wish. It is, in my opinion, an expediency, or an ideology. It is somehow a murder, more a "performative than constative" (Burke 29) act. At best, it is a mere method of reading which in no way invalidates the other methods. By the very logic of Postmodernism there is no transcendental signified, and by the logic of intentionalists, to use Juhl's image, the author is not a monkey (*Interpretation: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literary Criticism*), though

I do not intend to go as far as Juhl. All of this takes us back to Booth, " ... the author's judgment is always present, always evident to anyone who knows how to look for it"(Booth 20), and I should add, "who wants to look for it." Booth goes on to say, "Though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear"(20).

It is this return to the author not as a historical but as an artistic subject that I intend to address in this paper. In other words, a literary work is not to be regarded as an autobiography, though in a sense it is. Although we know with great certainty that *Heart of Darkness*, and *The Secret Agent* were written by Joseph Conrad and that "Dry September" was written by Faulkner, the authors discovered in these works are partly, at least, the creators of the conditions or premises of meaning, whether we take meaning as experience or a complex composite of thought. In the light of all this we begin to have a glimpse of the functionality of the author's selections not only from a grammar of possibilities but also from a world of events, characters, techniques, images, and myths. Here we may see the 'originality' of the work, while we tend to appreciate Barthes' point about the already written and/or said ("The Death of the Author"). Here we begin to see the aesthetics of what we read and distinguish between a work of art and any other piece of writing by any literate person, between the head of a Shakespeare and that of an ordinary schoolboy.

Such views are predicated on the assumption that the author is an adult human being; educated, since he is capable of utilizing language as his literary medium; writing at will, though we have to make considerable allowance for the role of the unconscious; and having something to say, be it a thought, a feeling, or an experience. In other words, one should give the author the benefit of the doubt in these regards and show initially some respect for his mind and effort though not for his achievement. As reader, I like to postulate such an author, to look for him, even, as Barthes does, "to desire him" (*The Pleasure of the Text* 27). As much as I hate an author who tries blatantly to control the text in order to dictate a message to me, I need a fellow civilized human being as postulated above so that we can decorously talk and even quarrel with each other. This is freedom, as distinguished from anarchy or chaos. Not only can I make meaning, I can as readily break it, for I can readily kill the author if I feel like it. This is how I can play with the author; this is my understanding of the "dialectics of desire" (*Pleasure* 4), for I have to admit that Barthe's reader is a monster, a sub-human or super-human since he is "without history, biography, psychology: he is simply that someone who holds

together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted" ("The Death of the Author" 157).

My approach is practical not theoretical, inductive not deductive, since in one way or another theories reveal their shortcomings when applied and tend to impose a priori a certain frame of reference on the literary work/text, a fact which may explain, at least partly, the bent against theory in Post-modernism (See Norris, *What's Wrong With Postmodernism*). In the light of all this, I will argue that in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *The Secret Agent* and in Faulkner's "Dry September" an author, as identified above, can be glimpsed who seems to be speaking to his readers, guiding them subtly and delicately in their search for meaning without heavily direct imposition, while, at the same time, he, for various reasons to be explored, invites their enthusiastic participation in "making" meaning.

The first novel in our discussion is *Heart of Darkness*, where two narrators relate the story. The first narrator introduces the frame: the narrative situation, the men on *the Nellie*, and the setting. He comments on what happens prior to Marlow's narrative and even meditates on history, civilization, trade, and great men connected with these issues, in such a way that he acts almost as Marlow's prompter, or perhaps as his secret sharer and alter ego. For example, he employs images which Marlow is going to repeat in a different context, images of "hunters for gold or pursuers of fame . . . bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire" (4).

This frame<sup>1</sup> captures the reader's attention from the very beginning of the novel, eliciting several questions. The central question touches its function. Why doesn't the novel start with Marlow's African adventure? Why are there two narrators? Obviously, the author is not under any technical pressures in any of the above matters. So, the frame, going beyond the exigencies of the genre, becomes an exercise in freedom and authority, but not an instance of arbitrariness, of the monkey pressing the typewriter's keys, to use Juhl's hypothesis.

By way of trying to answer the question posed above, one should examine some textual facts. It is to be noticed that there are echoes reverberating between Marlow's position in Europe and Kurtz's in Africa. Marlow

speaks almost in a confessional mode, "... I was loafing around, hindering you fellows in your work and *invading* your houses, just as though I had got a *mission to civilize you*"(7-8; emphasis added). This statement sums up neatly and even deliberately Kurtz's mission in Africa. He invaded the continent with a mission to "civilize" it. Marlow, as the first narrator describes him rather humorously and ironically, poses Buddha-like in European clothes and without the lotus flower, invading his unwilling listeners' heads to civilize them with the truths and the overriding moral of restraint, just as Kurtz, the god-like messenger of European civilization, did to the "savage" Africans. Other invasions recur too, "... a rioting invasion of soundless life, a rolling wave of plants, piled up, crested, ready to topple over the creek, to sweep every little man of us out of his little existence' (30). Instead of rivets, there came "an invasion"(30) of white men on donkeys. Marlow speaks of the wilderness as "something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion" (23). It is evident, therefore, that Marlow sees life in terms of invasion and counterinvasion. Interestingly, he is portrayed in the same light. On the *Nellie*, language, which is a tool of civilization, replaces brute force. Like Kurtz, who enlarged the minds of those around him and made the Russian "see things"(56), Marlow is trying to hammer ideas into the heads of his audience, ready even to rail at them in angry reproach if they just demur. Significantly too, Kurtz is reduced to a voice in Africa just like Marlow on *the Nellie* in the dark.

These echoes are intrinsic markers which serve to guide readers to see the similarity and consequently the difference between Marlow and Kurtz, between Africa and Europe. One may read on and on without detecting these markers or sensing the author's point, though he may detect other markers. One may enjoy the novel, but only on its literal level. But it is definitely possible, if one reads carefully enough beyond the literal surface, to feel the author's subtle presence. It is possible to move from I.A.Richards' sense through feeling and tone to intention as fulfilled in the work and not as a historical fact (*Practical Criticism*).

The author's subtle presence in *Heart of Darkness* is revealed in another way. The first narrator tells us that he and the others on the *Nellie* did not feel like playing dominoes but were inclined to meditation. Then he adds:

The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically; the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light. ...Only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more sombre every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun.

And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men. (4)

A short while later he adds:

The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream, and lights began to appear along the shore. . . .And farther west the place of the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars.( 5 )

The description here is so poetic, metaphysical, animistic, and even mythical that it cannot pass unnoticed. It draws attention to itself and invites meditation, both for its poetry and its tenor, coming to the first narrator as a revealed, inspired truth in a moment of "wise passiveness," rather than a lived experience of everyday life, with no loss to its integrity and conviction.

The passage, when carefully read by a real, human, non-Barthean reader, intimates a confrontation between light and darkness and an invasion of the latter by the former, as the gloom in the west is "angered by the approach of the sun." Thus, with the sun-like "invasion", frequently and even obsessively employed literally and symbolically throughout the novel, with almost everything regarded in terms of light and dark, a similarity is suggested between this invasion and that of Kurtz, who, after all, was the sun of Europe, its messenger of light. It seems that the first narrator's revelation is the "halo" that surrounds Marlow's tale from the outside, naturalizing it marvellously, though metaphorically. In both

cases, light and dark confront each other in man's soul, and in both cases the result is light in dark, "a brooding gloom in sunshine." As the sun is touched by the gloom, so is the dark colored by sunshine. Kurtz is maddened by the gloom of Africa, but only after he has left a bloody influence on the natives of the Congo.

It is remarkable how the imagery of light and dark, which suffuses the whole novel, is used to provide a vision of history by the two narrators. The first narrator begins the pattern. The names of the ships of the great men of history "of whom the nation is proud," whether "hunters of gold or pursuers of fame," are "like jewels flashing in the night of time" (4). They were bearers of "the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire"(4). Marlow takes the cue and comments, "And this also ... has been one of the dark places on the earth" (5), a statement which may be taken ironically only if it stands alone out of its context. He is thinking of England when it was invaded by the Romans, thus substantiating the first narrator's view. So, history is regarded as a cyclical process of darkness invaded by light, to become light itself going out to invade another darkness, and so on and so forth, "Light came out of this river since." History, therefore, replicates nature at twilight: the cycle of one is a reflection of the other's. Moreover, the blend of light and dark is what results from such confrontation. This is one of the themes of Edward Said's book *Culture and Imperialism* (xxi-xxii).

Thus, the two narrators become two secret sharers, working together to validate the conditions and premises of meaning, one intuitively, the other experientially with the evidence of history before each of them. Here, too, we feel the organizing hand of the author, who sees in Nature's and history's cycles the moral and human halo of the meaning of the main tale. One begins to see the logical structure of the novel. As the first narrator provides the frame, or the halo of Marlow's tale, he is also bolstering its theme. Marlow's tale is rendered more humanly, historically, and morally creditable. The first narrator decodes the scene before him as the readers are supposed to decode the novel, but the formulaic resemblance is not so simple nor so accurate.

The scene before the first narrator forebodes the cyclically temporary fall and sinking of the sun overwhelmed by darkness. The image is apocalyptic though prophetic, and so is Marlow's experience in Africa as "the fascination of the abomination"(6) overwhelms him partially and

Kurtz, the model of civilized Europe, completely and fatally. Kurtz's two demonic pronouncements carry the point, "Exterminate all the brutes" (51), and "the horror--the horror" (71). Marlow sums up the situation:

The sun seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there--there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were--No, they are not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it--this suspicion of their not being human. (36)

This is the end of a historical cycle, of the Roman Empire, of the British Empire, of all empires when power is unleashed without responsibility, without "method" (63), another motif of the novel. As in other instances of cyclical history, the invaded become the invaders. However, the situation is dark and ugly. Any civilization, so the author suggests by the intrinsic markers of meaning discussed so far, is too tenuous, artificial, and superficial to withstand the forces of darkness as they lurk in man's heart, waiting for any opportunity to reclaim their captured territory. This is Conrad's aesthetically intuitive vision woven with all its complexity and intensity into a remarkable unity of matter and form indicating an artistic design, subtle but not hard to miss.

The author's artistic presence, somehow concealed by the two narrators in *Heart of Darkness*, can be better detected in Conrad's other novel *The Secret Agent*, where a third person narrator relates the story of Winnie as she drags her life in a world of anarchists, embassy men, spies, secret agents, the police, and the untouchable Professor. As in the earlier novel but more clearly, the author's presence can be felt in narrative form and imagery, both of which betray his attempt to suggest the meaning of his work functionally not arbitrarily.

One characteristic feature of this novel is its tortuous plot. Chronological time is broken up into pieces, and the readers, suffering the consequences, have to put the pieces together in order to make a coherent whole. After the first three chapters, which relate Verloc's family life, his interview with Vladimir, and the anarchists' meeting in his house, Chapter IV introduces the Professor a month later. The explosion has taken place, and Stevie's body has been found dismembered. Chapters VIII and IX, after

an interruption of several chapters, swing back to the events following the interview. Stevie is still alive, and Verloc is planning the explosion. Suddenly, the readers are thrust into the whirlpool of the details of the aborted explosion. Such a plot amounts to an act of violence against order, chronology, control, and security. It is a particularly affective plot, since the readers feel what they read about, their nerves excited by curiosity, discovery, pain, fear, astonishment, and shock. It is these emotional states and shocks that serve here as intrinsic markers of meaning.

With the shock and the shake-up, the plot of the novel enacts its theme on its ideological, moral, and affective levels. The readers are expected to absorb an idea, a value, and a feeling all together. The major event of the novel is the blowing of the Greenwich Observatory, ostensibly by anarchists but actually by forces of law and order to awaken the sluggish protectors of law and order. The result is devastating. Stevie, the half-witted boy, is blown up in the act, his body dismembered beyond recognition. A domestic tragedy ensues with Winnie stabbing her trusted husband and then betrayed by Ossipon. This is a work of sheer violence and anarchy, bearing a clear affinity to what we see in *Heart of Darkness*.

Similarly, the target of the planned explosion, the Greenwich Observatory, is no less significant. Vladimir explains, "But there is learning--science. . . .It is the sacrosanct fetish. . . .They believe that in some mysterious way science is at the source of their material prosperity. They do. . . .The attack must have all the shocking senselessness of a gratuitous blasphemy"(40). From this perspective, the Observatory makes a perfect target because, according to Vladimir, firstly it cannot be connected to any material motive such as starvation and secondly because as the first meridian it is "bound to raise a howl of execration"(41). In short, science, astronomy, and time are the envisioned targets, all combined in the Observatory.

So, the plot of *The Secret Agent* dramatizes the blowing up of time, the break-up of chronology. Like the dismembered body of Stevie, the dismembered plot offers the readers the premonition and a taste of what happens if, to use a line from Yeats' "The Second Coming", "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." Both the premonition and the taste are painful and excruciating. Conrad seems to be working according to his theory in his Preface to *The Nigger of "the Narcissus"*:



Fiction--if it at all aspires to be art-- appeals to temperament. And in truth it must be, like painting, like music, like all art, the appeal of one temperament to all the other innumerable temperaments whose subtle and resistless power endows passing events with their true meaning, and creates the moral, the emotional atmosphere of place and time. (146)

This is what I mean by the particularly affective nature of the plot of this novel. Like Vladimir, the author, as a traditional agent of law and order but having artistic freedom and power at his disposal, decides to dislodge his readers out of their intellectual and moral complacency by an act of artistic violence that demolishes their cherished ideas of chronological order and plots. William Houze describes the novel as Conrad's "most aesthetically flawless book"(110), - adding that "...much of the novel's meaning was a direct function of its structure"(109). However, the author's fidelity to some order remains unshaken though in a completely unconventional way. The connections, links, and threads are provided, but the readers have to do the threading and the weaving themselves. As Dolan puts it, "Conrad's most characteristic technique is the creation of analogous relationships which the reader must discern if he or she is fully to experience the reality of the novel"(228). However, the readers are somehow betrayed by a providence which they have long trusted, but only because the trust has been taken for granted and at the expense of self-trust, in their power to make order out of disorder, sense out of nonsense.

Actually, it is this betrayal by a trusted providence as experienced by Winnie that threads together the dismembered pieces of the novel. Significantly, the author's achieved intention appears in an image used by the narrator to describe Winnie's first response as she tries to come to grips with the shocking revelation of what happened. She looks fixedly at the white-washed wall "as the population of half the globe would keep still in astonishment and despair were the sun suddenly put out in the summer sky by the perfidy of a trusted providence"(202).

Like the first narrator's image in *Heart of Darkness*, this image would seem at first sight far-fetched and even artificial, gratuitous, and superfluous, taking the readers out of the fictional world into the realm of

the supernatural, but with better judgment it would fit the context of the novel very nicely, pointing to the hand of the author actively involved in the design of his work. Above all, it has all the elements of a true irony -- doubleness, a victim, and confident unawareness--(See Muecke, *The Compass of Irony*), a kind of cosmic, heavenly irony that subsumes all the others in the novel, or, in a world without God, would be all too human.

Both as a perfect example of irony and as a thematic issue, the image deepens the colors of the novel, connects the different episodes and pieces of the novel, and imports another dimension not dramatizable in the context of a realistic novel. This is true due to the fact that perfidity, betrayal, treachery, and conspiracy are variations on the same note that permeates each and every part of the novel. The pivotal event in the novel, the marriage deal, is conceived in terms of Providence. The mother regarded it in this light. At the time she began to dread the news of an engagement of her daughter and the butcher boy, but the romance came to an end with "Mr. Verloc turning up providentially to occupy the first-floor front bedroom"(45). For the mother, distressed by the business and her half-witted son, the coincidence of Verloc's appearance was "clearly providential"(46). The bloody consequences of the marriage turn this providential arrangement into a most starkly tragic irony of the novel. The episode turns out to be a true betrayal by Providence. Verloc, the god-sent angel, betrays his mission, puts out the summer sun and the Christ-like son, and brings about astonishment, madness, and despair.

Not only here but everywhere in the novel, perfidity, like invasion in *Heart of Darkness*, marks human relations so widely and tragically that the whole world seems to take the color of the narrator's image. Irony in the above situation works on other levels. Stevie, even as a dismembered corpse, takes his revenge on his father-god. The strip on his shirt helps the police to uncover the perpetrators of the explosion. Winnie thus learns about what has happened. Providence takes now the form of fate, "It was as if fate had thrust that piece of cloth into the Chief Inspector's hands. So, the victim turns up for a counterattack to be dealt by Winnie, his mother/sister. Verloc, with the victim's confident unawareness as part of the concept of irony, comes home "prepared to allow every latitude to his wife's affections for her brother"(193). Even he looks at the deadly incident as a fateful act, something beyond human control, "The position was gone through no one's fault really. . . .It was like slipping on a bit of orange peel in the dark and breaking your leg"(195). Actually, no one can

quarrel with the way he puts it. Now he has to deal with the situation as a human being. He has plans for the future, both for himself and for his wife. And now she betrays his trust as she stabs him with the pent-up hostility of thousands of years. One perfidy deserves another, but the differences are very obvious and very significant, all depending upon perspective. From Verloc's point of view, Winnie has betrayed him. She runs out to be betrayed by Ossipon. Thus, the betrayal is compounded as the novel proceeds. Vladimir betrays Verloc. Verloc betrays Stevie and Winnie, both of whom retaliate with equal betrayal. Ossipon betrays Winnie. The anarchists betray their identity, living in self-alienation as their conformist behavior betrays their bloody words. The Professor is the archanarchist, the virulent force that is untouchable and unmovable, the scientist that betrays his trust by using science as an immoral, treacherous, and anarchic tool of destruction and by regarding madness and despair, not order, as a "lever"(251). As he walks the streets of London at the end of the novel, foreshadowing the slouching beast in Yeats' "The Second Coming," he brings to a head the apocalyptic vision of a world which seems to be actually betrayed by a trusted Providence. Thus, the image of betrayal pervades the novel, making it an emblem of the theme. One cannot help sensing the mind and hand of the representationalist author designing and directing the whole show which is being unfolded in the novel, by placing markers of meaning here and there to make sure that no betrayal is committed in this field.

As the implied author, in Booth's terminology, speaks in *The Secret Agent* to create the conditions and premises of meaning, so does the implied author in "Dry September." The title and the opening paragraph introduce the reigning forces of the work. Nature hangs over the world as drought, autumn, dryness, and the human body occupy the space. The human factor is prominent in the natural ambience; it is an integral part of it, ". . . it had gone like a fire in dry grass --the rumor, the story; whatever it was. Something about Miss Minnie Cooper and a Negro." Everything is natural and conventional, but the reader soon realizes that everything is functional as well.

Moreover, as in the other two works, an image stands out, unnatural and unconventional, somehow exceeding the demands of the fictional world, somehow belabored. The theme and the structure of the image are forefounded:

Attacked, insulted, frightened: none of them, gathered in the barber shop on that Saturday evening where the ceiling fan stirred, without freshening it, the vitiated air, sending back upon them, in recurrent surges of stale pomade and lotion, their own stale breath and odors, knew what had happened. (1507)

Apart from the control of point of view, also functional in this regard since it is essential to the working of the theme of the story as rumor in racism is as good as solid fact, the image of the ceiling fan sending back to the people gathered in the barber shop their own stale breath and odor suggests that the atmosphere we live in is physically attributable to something in us. The reigning nature draws attention to itself as perhaps the culpable agent of it. We make that world what it is and no mechanical, unnatural device (the fan) nor civilization's perfumes can change that. Nature cannot be changed. We are dirty, so the world is dirty. We smell bad, so the world smells bad.

On the other hand, the convoluted structure of the long sentence quoted above draws attention to itself. It is noticed that the subject and the verb are separated from each other with embedded phrases. Also, the objects, except in one case only, are also severed from the corresponding verbs. In my opinion, this intimates that there are agents that intervene between the doer and what he does, between the action and its consequences, between the knowing subject and the known or knowable object, something which the theme of the story will bear out, as we are going to see.

For the image, positioned as it is in the naturalistic setting of the story, throws light on the theme of the story and is thus one of its markers of meaning. The image implies that the component feelings of racism --hate, hostility, violence, and bigotry-- are in us, in our bodies. The implication is attested to by the various references to the human body as it perspires; breathes; trembles; copulates; rapes and is raped; gets cold, old, dry, tired, and sick; collapses; and gets lynched.

The story gives testimony to this thematic idea, for such feelings govern the relations of the white people themselves as they curse, interrupt, and envy each other in what appears to be a competition for power and authority, a mini civil war, for the American Civil War, according to

Robert Penn Warren, "merely transferred the crime against the Negro into a new set of terms" (257). Moreover, some of the racists are ex-soldiers, soldiership being a sublimation of violence and war, a field where these feelings find approved and even acclaimed expression.

Additionally, Section V highlights this issue dramatically, explaining away any questioning of its relevance in a story about white/black relations. McLendon comes home after the lynching. Finding his wife waiting for him, like any good wife at least in a conservative society, he takes this as an excuse for beating her harshly since he has told her not to do so. This is followed by more violence even against himself. He rips off his shirt, mops his dirty head and shoulders with it, flings it away, and then picks it up to wipe the sweat off his dirty body. Then he starts panting, having pushed his body to the limit.

All these markers of meaning anxiously deployed by the designing author indicate that such feelings are natural and human. We only look for objects in the outside world to serve as scapegoats in order to release them. The blacks happen to be out there, and they stand defenceless. When they are not there, other white people can serve this purpose, and then wives can fill the lack, passive and vulnerable as they are. Even Minnie Cooper is not blameless in this respect. With her body aging and her sexuality drying, she seems to have fabricated a story of her rape to regain her lost paradise, even in a fantasy, and the sadistically vicarious pleasure of making an innocent negro, the symbol of sexual power, suffer and pay his life as a price for her lost sexuality. Thus, by putting these feelings in a new context, the implied author renders them natural and human, not racial, in what seems to be a new ideology.

Sometimes, it happens that authorial presence is achieved through the narrator. In "Dry September" this is clearly manifested in the image which the narrator uses to describe the barber's client who gets so excited about the issue argued in the shop that he enthusiastically praises the racists in their blind and aggressive attitude toward Will Mayes, the negro who is rumored to have raped Miss Minnie Cooper, the white spinster. The narrator undercuts him immediately and sharply by saying that in his frothy beard he looked like a "desert rat"(1508).

In the meantime, the dark world lies "stricken beneath the cold moon and the lidless stars"(1517). This new image is definitely a comment by the

implied author and not mere description. The moon watches all the cruel details of the story, first twice-waxed and then hemorrhaging, an odd image when taken out of context, "Below the east was a rumor of the twice-waxed moon." The bloody image connects the sublunary and the heavenly, the rumor down here and the one up there, a suggestion that seems to lead to the conclusion that the heavenly world is unverified and baseless hearsay. The cold moon and the lidless stars become more significant as they point to gods that remain indifferent to the horrible wars below.

Thus, in the three works discussed above, it has been shown how the implied authors make their appearances felt in order to shed light on the meanings of their respective works and to mark the way leading to them. Even the implied author's silence is taken as a mode of speaking. For example, in "Dry September" his silence on the truth of the rape, on the character of Will Mayes, and on the scene of lynching could be considered as a manner of speaking, of indicating meaning, though here the markers are open to different conclusions by various critics. Here markers could be misread, or perhaps read with more critical freedom.

At this point a legitimate question arises in connection with the three works under discussion. How necessary are these devices for an understanding of the respective works? The answer depends on the reader: what sort of person he is, why he is reading, and how closely he reads. Is he a Barthean reader or not? In my opinion, without these clues only the literal meaning can be grasped as evidenced by the readings of uninitiated university students, whose attention must be drawn again and again to these markers. On the other hand, a competent reader, in Culler's sense, should be able to discern these markers and consequently to grasp their full functional implications in order to understand the general meaning of each work as outlined above, even if he remains outside Fish's interpretative community.

In *Heart of Darkness*, for example, such a reader would see the interaction of history, religion, and civilization; the reverberation between the frame and the main story; the correspondence between intuition and experience; and the relation between the I and the Other. He can proceed further to delineate more possible implications such as the cyclical view of history and the inevitability of violence in the march of 'civilization'.

In *The Secret Agent* the competent reader, making use of the markers, can see how form adds an affective dimension to his understanding. He would feel the theme on the formal level before he comes to the conclusion of the novel, would live the experience of anarchy, violence, and dismembered time as they are exercised on the plot. On the other hand, he would be in better command of the supernatural comment on Providence than an average reader. Between the suggestions of the comment and the events of the novel he would feel the metaphysical pull of the theme and would go further to develop a sense of Providence as treacherous, of a god indifferent to the sufferings of the innocent as well as to the evils of the iniquitous. Such a view is only whispered in the novel, but it is definitely heard by those who are willing to listen to the author even in his whisperings in order to be able to converse, argue, and quarrel with him.

In "Dry September" Hawthorne whispers in the same way, in the opening paragraph and the final comment. The darkness of man's heart, a natural heritage, projects upon the world nothing but darkness, violence, and terror. Accordingly, the dark world lies stricken, while gods watch idly and apathetically. Such implications and others of the same tenor are readily conceived by the competent reader only by means of these and other similar markers of meaning as the implied author whispers them to his interlocutor.

Furthermore, the implied author's voice as we have heard and overheard it in the three fictional works seems to adumbrate the aesthetic norms of each one of them. In *Heart of Darkness* and *The Secret Agent* the strategy appears to conform to two traditional aesthetic conceptions: unity in complexity and technical representationalism. The numerous thematic threads in the two novels as we have pinpointed them above seem to converge, to come to a point, and thus to suggest a committed striving after a unity in complexity, a sameness in difference, and a repetition in change, along with an attempt at mythopoeia. In both novels technical representationalism is clearly seen. In *Heart of Darkness* restraint as a thematic issue is reproduced in formal restraint as one story contains and is contained by another to make containment a thematic motif as the structure, as Morrissey shows, resembles Chinese boxes. However, the theme of restraint is threatened by anarchy; that is, by the forces of nature. In *The Secret Agent* the theme of anarchy leading to the abortive blowing up of the pillars of civilization is reflected in the dismembered plot that

betrays the reader's complacent expectations of an organized and controlled story as various characters are betrayed by their expectations of an orderly, providentially-governed world. In Faulkner's "Dry September" the same criteria are at work, for, besides the combination of the real and the mythical, coherence is the guiding principle. The human body in its many natural activities, violence on its many level, nature, the moon, and the dust all conjoin to body forth the theme of man's heart of darkness in a god-forsaken world.

But why is all this sneaky, sly, and hesitant appearance of the author, or of his implied persona? Why is this whisper and gesture? In my opinion, the manner is as significant as the matter. There are many plausible implications. The implied author seems to be governed by two tendencies: to appear and hide at the same time, to sign his work but to keep the signature somewhat cryptic, to negotiate the meaning with his reader but to guard his work against blatant and anarchic misreadings. This is the tight rope he walks on. While insisting on his role as author by placing markers of meaning on the way, he equally insists on the reader's role to decipher meaning as he endeavors to be self-effacing, unobtrusive, and unoppressive. This is his aesthetic game.

It is in this sense that all literary works, and not only Marlow's tale as the first narrator characterizes it, are inconclusive, never finally written, 'writerly' to some extent. The reader, if he so wishes, is supposed to fill in what Iser calls "gaps" or "blanks" of indeterminacy" (169), but only as long as the conditions/premises of meaning marked by the authorial presence are heeded. Literary works, especially those written before the cult of Postmodernism set in, are marked so that they may not be taken as domains of the reader's unbridled fantasies or plays, though the possibility may obtain nevertheless. This leaves ample room for various readings, some of which are more right than others, even without strict adherence to Fish's interpretative communities. One wonders how many readings of "Dry September" are correct. It is a happy coincidence that the three works discussed here speak loudly against the anarchy of man's free play and fantasy, though no conditions of complete restraint exist. It is as if the tension of *Heart of Darkness* between restraint and freedom is enacted every time the reader reads a work of art, though the implied author, vacillating between appearance and disappearance, speech and silence, self-revelation and self-effacement postulates a living reader, a strong reader to shout "Eurika" but not to crucify him.



There is another side to this looked-for, tacit collaboration between author and reader. As an expression of meaning, a work of fiction seems to have all the making of ideology --promoted, naturalized, universalized, and its opposites marginalized or scandalized (See Eagleton, *Ideology*)--though how efficacious this may be is an ever open question. Unity implies silencing the other, and if the other is given room it is defamed, belittled, or denigrated. Realism implies naturalization, and replication universalization. The whisper and the gesture are the perfect modes of suggesting and subliminally injecting ideology, for, as Eagleton says, it is "a matter of discourse --of certain concrete discursive effects, rather than of signification as such. It represents the point when power impacts upon certain utterances and inscribes itself tacitly within them"(223).

What underlies the intimation of ideology in the works of this paper is that the belief in the supernatural is undercut. The birth of ideology is possible only when the divine as transcendental signified is abolished and silenced, if logos is undermined, so that the author, or his implied persona, might play god in his work, might practice his freedom to invent meaning, instead of repeating, illustrating, or preaching any god's message. But language is every author's devil, or one of the devils that plague him. The special conditions/premises of meaning in literature turn against their creator. In fiction, for example, character, setting, plot, narrative technique, silence, commissions, and omissions are as problematic as, if not more so, than language, as factors determining meaning. Two questions in connections with "Dry September" may serve to illustrate what I mean here. Why is the characterization of Mayes so sketchy? Why is the lynching scene excluded? No amount of argumentation about authorial intention can go beyond intelligent speculation or abling rhetoric. Conrad complained in his 1920 note to *The Secret Agent* that he did not mean what the novel actually meant to his readers, which shows that the tension is never put to rest.

In conclusion, one can say that the author speaks through his implied persona in whispers and gestures as well as in images, symbols, and narrative techniques, giving his readers ample freedom to grasp his ideology as if it were theirs and not his. This is too the basis of the fictional aesthetic, and maybe of all aesthetics, for, due to the stubbornness and expansive nature of language and artistic tools, he is not in full control of his work, his relation to it being similar to that of Frankenstein to his monster. He can stop its proliferation and

reproduction, but not its wandering. My interpretation, after all, is one among many, and so is my approach, both of which take heed of the author's presence and his markers of meaning to delineate his ideology. In the final analysis, my approach is an ideology, but so is the killing of the author.

### Notes

1. For more information on the frame in *Heart of Darkness*, see Mahmoud Kharbutli, "The Role of the Frame in *Heart of Darkness*," *Arab Journal for the Humanities* 8. 31 (1988): 412-425.

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