"Implied Author": Inclusiveness, Definiteness, Constructivity, Transcendentality ——A Contemplation of *An Outline of Public Interpretation*

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Abstract

There has been fierce disputes on the understanding of the "implied author" since Wayne Booth first proposed in his *The Rhetoric of Fiction* in 1961. As per Booth, the "implied author" is the author's "second self" or an "official scribe" constructed by readers based on the text.Since Booth did not clarify the characteristics of the "Implied Author", there has always been a misunderstanding that there are a thousand "Implied Authors" in a certain text in the eyes of a thousand people. On June, 2017, Chinese scholar Zhang Jiang proposed a term of "Public Interpretation" in his essay *An Outline of Public Interpretation*. In which, he suggests: "Public Interpretation is an effective and commensurable interpretation based on the premise of universal history, with text as its target, public rationality as its boundary constraint; Public Interpretation are with characteristics of rationality, clarity, commensurability, constructivity, transcendentality, reflectivity". With reference to Zhang's theory of Public Interpretation, this essay intends to explore the characteristics of "implied author" and points out the "Implied Author" is with characteristics of "inclusiveness, definiteness, constructivity and transcendentality".

Keywords: implied author, inclusiveness, definiteness, constructivity, transcendentality

Introduction

Wayne Booth proposed the term of "implied author"in his *The Rhetoric of Fiction* in 1961. Booth explains that "implied author" is the author's "second self" or an "official scribe" constructed by readers based on the text. Since Booth did not clarify the characteristics of the "implied author", there has always been a misunderstanding that there are a thousand "Implied Authors" in a certain text in the eyes of a thousand people. Seymour Chatman's influential diagram clearly confined the implied author to the text:
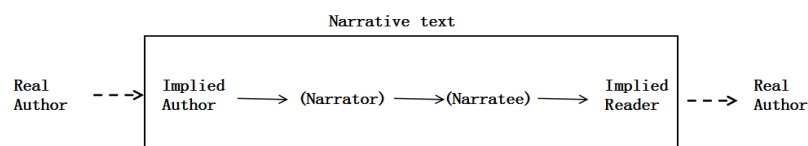
(qtd in Shen, 2011,p.88)

Rimmon-Kenan observes that "the implied author must be seen as a construct inferred and assembled by the reader from all the components of the text", a conception that is

"far safer than imagining it [the implied author] as a personified consciousness or 'second self'".(qtd in Shen, 2011,p.89). Quite Similar to Rimmon-Kenan, Gerard Genette accepts "the definition of implied author as an image of the author in the text".(qtd in Shen, 2011,p.90) Whereas James Phelan points out that "most narratologists who follow Booth seek to make the implied author a textual function rather than an independent agent", He moves the implied author's position from within the text to outside the text and redefines the implied author as "a streamlined version of the real author, an actual or purported subset of the real author's capacities, traits, attitudes, beliefs, values, and other properties that play an active role in the construction of the particular text" (qtd in Shen, 2011,p.91-92). Shen in her *What is the Implied Author ?* suggests a diagram to analyze the implied author:

Encoding Process:
the IA = the person writing in a certain manner, making all the textual choices
Decoding Process:
the reader infers from all the choices made by the IA (=the person writing in a certain manner) the image of the 1A (=the person who has written the text in a certain manner)(2011, p.82).

Shen also points out the significance of the implied author in the context of formalism in the 1960s. Qiao (2008) in his *New Interpretation of the Implied Author* confirms and extends the concept of the implied author: there are interaction between implied author and real author; implied author is constructed in the context of the real author; implied author is an image constructed by the real reader in the reading process; real author creates a person who is better or worse than the real author; implied author are influenced by the social ideology, politics and culture.Those who regards the implied author as invalid includes Liu Y.L. and Li W.M. Liu (2008) in his *The Invalidity of the Implied Author* contends the inefficiencies of the implied author from four aspects of the characteristics, logic, readers, application. Li (2011) suggests that the implied author is just a hypothesis rather than a scientific concept, which is useless when analyzing the text and which should be discarded.

Since Booth's "implied author" is just a general description of a concept, which does not clearly identify the characteristics of "implied author", there has been fierce debates on the understanding of "implied author". This essay intends to explore the characteristics of "implied author" in light of the theory of "Public Interpretation"; points out the "implied author" is with characteristics of "inclusiveness, definiteness, constructivity and transcendentality". "Public Interpretation" is a term proposed by Zhang Jiang On June, 2017 in his essay *An Outline of Public Interpretation*. In which, he suggests: "Public Interpretation is an effective and commensurable Interpretation based on the premise of universal history, with text as its target, public rationality as its boundary constraint; Public Interpretation are with characteristics of rationality, clarity, commensurability, constructivity, transcendentality, reflectivity"(Zhang, 2017c,p.1).

A New Perspective on the "Implied Author"

Booth proposes the concept of "implied author" in Chapter three General Rules,II: "All Authors Should Be Objective" in his *The Rhetoric of Fiction*:

As he writes, he creates not simply an ideal, impersonal "man in general" but an implied version of "himself" that is different from the implied authors we meet in other men's works. To some novelists it has seemed, indeed, that they were discovering or creating themselves as they wrote. As Jessamyn West says, it is sometimes "only by writing the story that the novelist can discover--not his story--but its writer, **the official scribe**, so to speak, for that narrative." Whether we call this **implied author** an **"official scribe"** or adopt the term recently revived by Kathleen Tillotson--the author's **"second self"**--it is clear that the picture the reader gets of his presence is one of the author's most important effects. However impersonal he may try to be, his reader will inevitably construct a picture of the official scribe who writes in this manner--and of course that **official scribe who will never be neutral toward all values.** Our reactions to his various commitments, secret or overt, will help to determine our response to the work. The reader's role in this relationship I must save for chapter v. Our present problem is the intricate relationship of the so-called real author with his various official versions of himself.

We must say various versions, **for regardless of how sincere an author may try to be, his different works will imply different versions, different ideal combinations of norms.** Just as one's personal letters imply different versions of oneself, depending on the different relationships with each correspondent and purpose of each letter, so the writer sets himself out with a different air depending on the needs of particular works.

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Our sense of the **implied author includes not only the extractable meanings but also the moral and emotional content** of each bit of action and suffering of all of the characters. It includes, in short, the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole; the chief value to which this implied author is committed, regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life, is that which is expressed by the total form (Booth, 1983, p.70-73, bold added).

We can conclude from Booth's description of the implied author that: implied author is constructed by the real reader in the process of reading the text; implied author exists in the text; implied author is the second self of the real author but different from the real author; the same real author may have different implied authors in different text; implied author encompasses the content of moral, emotion, values, styles, techniques etc. Therefore, implied author is with characteristics of "inclusiveness, definiteness, constructivity and transcendentality", which is shown as in diagram 1.

Diagram 1.

Note：n1,n2,n3 is limited constants
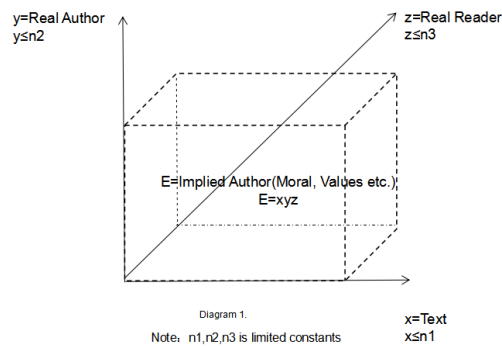
The x axis represents text, the y axis stands for real author, the z axis is for real reader. Quadrant E is the "implied author", which is influenced by x, y, z, represented as E=xyz. x, y, z are all limited constants, thus quadrant E or the "Implied Author" is a limited constant. The text, real author and real reader in the x,y,z axis may change in different historical and social backgrounds, thus the "implied author" or the quadrant E may be variant as well. However, since x, y, z are limited constants, quadrant E or the "implied author" is with boundary and will be constant in the end.

Inclusiveness

The western literary criticism experienced a shift of emphasis from "author to text" and "text to reader" in the twentieth century. Mimesis laid the foundation for the western literary criticism before 1920s, which aimed to interpret the relationship between literature and reality and to seek literature from the real world; the criticism before this period also attached to expression theory, which tried to mediate the relationship between literature and the man's mind and to seek literature from author's emotions (Wei, 2005).The period between 1920s and 1960s witnessed a revolt against traditional mimesis and expression theory. Emphasis was on the literary language and text, beginning from the Russian Formalism, to the English New Criticism and then the French Structuralism. Whereas, in the late 1960s Jauss proposed "the aesthetics of reception" and Wolfgang Iser delivered a lecture on "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction" in 1970. The focus of literary research was then shifted to the reader-text relationship, endowing reader with the authority to interpret the text.

"Implied Author" was proposed in the background of formalism when text was emphasized while the author was neglected. Since the "implied author" exists in the the "text", the concept of "implied author" shielded itself from being the target from formalism. While emphasizing the text, "implied author" discusses also author's moral values, echoing previous mimesis and expression theory. In addition, "implied author" is constructed in the reader's reading process, giving reader the initiates in the interpretation of the text, coinciding with the advocates of the "aesthetics of reception". Therefore, "implied author" is a highly inclusive concept which is not only historically meaningful in the background of formalism in the 1960s but is enormously suggestive to the present when the problem of "imposed interpretation" is

prominent. Zhang defined "Imposed Interpretation" as which "deviates from the discourse of the text, weakens literary indicators, and, by virtue of its a priori stance and mode, interprets texts and literature so as to fit in with the interpreter's subjective intentions and conclusions" (2016, p.132). In response to solve this problem, Zhang proposed a concept of "Ontology Interpretation", calling to interpret literary works from three levels: (1) kernel interpretation/ original discourse interpretation (to make interpretation from the text itself, including the ideas and artistic values in the text) ; (2) source interpretation/ secondary discourse interpretation (the author's discourse motive and the background of the deep-layered discourse) (3) effect interpretation/derivative discourse (social and individual's response in the process of text circulation), which can be shown as in diagram 2:

S3（effect interpretation）..（derivative discourse）

S2（source interpretation）...................................（secondary discourse）

S1（kernel interpretation）.............................（original dissouse）

S（Ontology Interpretation）

Diagram 2

If Ontology Interpretation is S,
S={s1,s2,s3}
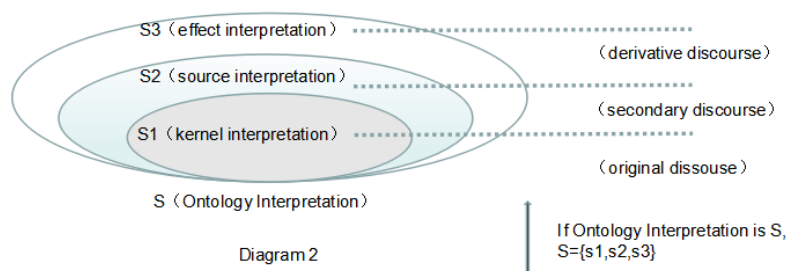
(2017b, p.461-462).

Author's intention is the starting point of the textual meaning, text is the carrier of the meaning, reader is the finder and actualization of the meaning (Zhou, 2017). The meaning of a literary work could not be possible without any of these three elements. Through the comparison of the diagram 1 and diagram 2, we may find that "implied author" and "Ontology Interpretation" both emphasize text, author and reader, which are highly inclusive and suggestive in interpreting literary works.

Definiteness

Many critics believe that "implied author" is uncertain since it is influenced by text, author and reader. However, just as Zhang points out "the aim of public rationality is to find the truth of cognition and definiteness of interpretation. The primary goal of rationality is to seek the definiteness in the uncertainties" (2017c, p.2), "implied author" is also definite since its influential elements of text, author and reader are limited constants with boundary.

In terms of the text, it is self sufficient. The meaning of text is self-sufficient, which underlies in the narration of the text. Once the text is finished, it contains its meaning which is not affected by the understanding of reader or author. In addition, the text is composed with certain language, the signifier and signified of the language is with boundary, thus, the meaning of the text is limited, namely, $x=n1$ (n1 is limited constants).

"Implied author" is the "second-self" of the real author. It embodies the real

author's moral values etc. Thus, the author's intention is of paramount importance to "implied author". Many scholars argue that the author's intention is quite uncertain since many authors don't leave any messages about their writing intentions, or some may give different comments on their own works in different situations, or some author's expression of their intention is different from the real intention in their works. However, as Zhang points out "as long as you are a writer with normal rationality, you must know what you write and what you give to the readers"(2017d, p.288), the author's writing intention and the social background behind these motives are not null but certain and sure, thus, $y=n2$ ($n2$ is limited constants).

The most controversial element of the "implied author" is the reader as Hans-Georg Gadamer suggests "each generation interprets the historical text in their own ways"(qtd. Yao, p.39). It is true that readers tend to understand and interpret the text or history from their own reality and their own social background. However, reader's interpretation is with "universal historical premise", namely, "interpretation regulation exists before interpretation and the starting point of interpretation is decided by foresight of tradition and cognition" (Zhang, 2017c, p.2). Carl Marx suggests: "The nature of mankind is not the abstraction of the each individual but the summation of all social relationship in reality"(qtd.in Zhang, 2017c, p.4). Martin Heidegger says: "being-in-the-world in general is the basic state of dasein"(1961,p.53). Therefore, any understanding and interpretation is ultimately limited by the publicity and society. Interpretation is not the reader's individual understanding but collective and public interpretation, namely, $z=n3$ ($n3$ is limited constants).

As Zhang reveals: "uncertain interpretation and understanding will be tested by law of large numbers and public interpretation which is based on public rationality ", "implied author" will be testified and finalized, namely, $E=xyz$ (E is a constant with boundary).

Constructivity

Shen (2011) proposes the narrative diagram of "author (encoding process)-text(product)-reader(decoding process)" to understand the "implied author". Therefore, the "implied author" involves both the author's encoding and reader's decoding and it is constructed by the author and reader. Qiao in his *New Interpretation of the Implied Author* confirms that the "Implied Author" is constructed in the interaction of real author and real authors as well as influenced by social, history, politics and ideology. As Zhang points out the meaning of interpretation lies in "clarify and construct public understanding, define and expand public horizon" (2017c, p.3), the "implied author" is with constructivity since it is embodied in the text while the text is created by the author and actualized by the reader's interpretation.

Wayne C. Booth in his *Resurrection of the Implied Author: Why Bother?* reiterates the relationship between the "implied author" and real author:

I've done more thinking about how authorial creation of IAs relates to the universality of our daily, hourly, dependence on constructive and destructive role playing. In every corner of our lives,whenever we speak or write, we imply a version of our character we know ismquite different from many other selves

that are exhibited in our flesh-and-blood world.Sometimes the created versions of our selves are superior to the selves we live-with day by day; sometimes they turn out to be lamentably inferior to the selves we present, or hope to present, on other occasions. A major challenge to all of us is thus to distinguish between beneficial and harmful masking. And that challenge is especially strong in literary criticism (2005, p. 77).

Booth is suggesting that the "implied author" is the real author wearing a mask. Writers tend to wipe out the part they don't like in their works consciously or unconsciously. He gives an example with Saul Bellow:

Some decades ago Saul Bellow dramatized wonderfully the importance of authorial masking, when I asked him,"What're you up to these days?"He said"Oh, I'm just spending four hours each day revising a novel, to be called Herzog.""What does that amount to, spending four hours every day revising a novel""Oh, I'm just wiping out those parts of my self that I don't like." (2005, p.77)

Following Booth, James Phelan redefines the implied author as "a streamlined version of the real author, an actual or purported subset of the real author's capacities, traits, attitudes, beliefs, values, and other properties that play an active role in the construction of the particular text" (qtd. in Shen, 2011, p. 92). Therefore, the "implied author" is different from the real author yet is constructed by the real author and influenced by the real author's emotion, moral and values.

While analyzing how Plath's "self" in her poem different from her real life, Booth also interpret the selves readers enact of her poem. He illustrates:

First there is Booth1, the totally engaged reader who initially tried to follow the poem faithfully and accurately at every point, laboring to join the IA in every word, hoping to become the Implied Reader the IA hoped for.In that sympathetic reading, Booth, is consciously or unconsciously joining all lovers of poetry, and especially lovers of the special type who love to read thoughts about death.

Meanwhile there is a version of Booth1, call it Booth1a, who happens to know throughout the time of reading-unlike some other possible poetry lovers reading carefully-that this poet committed suicide shortly after writing this poem the implied "plath"must have sensed that such a reader will be especially touched, as I am, by her managing this creative moment at such a desperate time of life. Just think of how differently we would read this poem if we did not know that she committed suicide

There is, most embarrassingly, the intrusive critic, Booth2, who is exploiting the poem in order to write this essay. Motivated by his book-effort grapling with good and bad masking, sometimes even labeling it"hypocrisy upward and downward"he has imposed his critical interests in a way that would no doubt feel offensive, or at least irrelevant, to any one version of Plath's selves.

Meanwhile, Booth3, the FBP, takes a break, goes to the toilet, reads a page or two of the daily paper-and thinks a bit about how to revise the not-yet-good-enough section of this essay dealing with Plath's poem. He is troubled by an aching back

as he sits too long at his computer :"what the hell, just abandon it and mail it in!" Next day, back to the draft, feeling good about the Beethoven, Booth4, the lifetime moralizer, finds himself thinking not about the poem but about suicide. Unlike many other readers in the audience that Plath must have expected, this Booth has never personally contemplated or attempted suicide. His feelings will be very different from those of any reader who hapens to have failed in an attempt last year. He actually has an uncertain but real conviction that suicide is an immoral act that everyone should resist to the last possible moment. He thus has an irrelevant, aesthetically destructive, temptation to lecture the FBP-Plath for what her act did to the world, by ennobling suicide.

<div align="right">(2005, p.83-84)</div>

Reader's interpretation of any text is in the social, cultural, political and historical background of her/his time. Jauss points out that "the step from the history of the reception of the individual work to the history of literature has to lead to seeing and representing the historical consequences of works as they determine and clarify the coherence of literature, to the extent that it is meaningful, for us, as the prehistory of its present experience" (qtd in Holub,1984, p.58).As Booth reveals "the full value of a poet's masking can be understood only when we acknowledge the importance of what it does to our own diverse masks-what we gain from the encounter"(2005,p.83), the "implied author" is constructed both by the author and reader.

Transcendentality

Zhang in his essay discusses the relationship between public interpretation and individual interpretation, suggesting "individual interpretation is the original type and impetus of public interpretation. Individual interpretation will merge into public rationality and public horizon. It will be elevated to public interpretation, being compliance to the regulations of public rationality and public horizon" (2017c, p.3). Therefore, public interpretation transcends individual interpretation. Similarly, the "implied author" of a certain text will be different in different historical and social backgrounds. And these different "implied authors" will face two destinies: the previous unaccepted "implied author" will be understood and accepted as the expansion of public understanding and horizon; or it will be discarded as the public rationality and horizon does not accept it.

The interpretation of Norman Mailer's gender view in his masterpiece of *The Naked and The Dead* is a good example of the transcendentality of the implied author. *The Naked and The Dead* is a war novel about a group of young American soldiers battling their way across a Japanese-held Pacific island. Compared with the powerful,rough, strong male characters in the novel, the women are deliberately pushed at the background as men's ontological desire. The novel reflects the western binary system of seeing man as the subject and woman as the object, man as the self and woman as the other through the presentation of often dehumanized male figures who objectify and mortify women according to their own will. Therefore, he became the central target of the fiercest and cruelest of the women's attacks. He was attacked by feminists as "warrior for male supremacy", a "militarist", an "advocate of

genocide" (Gerson,1969, p.167). However, if we look through his three works *The Naked and The Dead,The Deer Park* and *Tough Guys Don't Dance,* we may see Mailer's development of feminist thoughts in his writings:*The Naked and The Dead* models women as prisoners of sex, having no chance to air their voice; *The Deer Park* exhibits female as passive angry fighters, trying to be heard but failed; finally, *Tough Guys Don't Dance* constructs the dynamic female revolters, claiming the initial feminism success. Therefore, Norman Mailer is not "a typical patriarch, friend of the fetus, and oppressor of the child"(Greer, 1969, p.65) as accused by the extreme feminists, yet neither does he explicitly express his favor over feminism, but exhibits his progressing view towards women by his developing and changing depiction of the female and male figures in his fictions together with the changing world and reality. By talking about the sex, Mailer is actually talking about the morality and reality of his age. While integrating the sex, the morality, the life, the history and reality into his writings, Mailer is reaching people and by reaching people, he is influencing the history of his time and the later age. He not only makes record in his writings of the pain, the hardships of women's quest of equality and independence, but also renders them the initial success against the patriarch society and let them endure and prevail in the new thriving world. In this way, he is showing the readers and the critics that he is not a macho or chauvinist but a writer with integrity to record the voice of the human beings and be a prop and a pillar to help human beings endure and prevail.

Different readers may have different interpretation of the text, yet their horizon will merge and interact, as Gadamer called explains: "when our historical consciousness places itself within historical horizons, this does not entail passing into alien worlds unconnected in any way with our own, but together they constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and, beyond the frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness. It is, in fact, a single horizon that embraces everything contained in historical consciousness" (qtd in Holub, 1984, p.42). The "implied author" will then be adapted, revised, constructed, transcended into a definite one.

Conclusion

With reference to Zhang's *An Outline of Public Interpretation,* this essay intends to re-explore and re-examine the characteristics of "implied author". The "implied author" is jointly constructed by the text, author and reader. It is definite and certain within the boundary of author's intention, reader's horizon and self-sufficient text. The "implied author" is with characteristics of "inclusiveness, definiteness, constructivity and transcendentality".

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