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Implied Author (revised version; uploaded 26 January 2013)

Wolf Schmid
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1 Definition

The concept of implied author refers to the author-image evoked by a work and constituted by the stylistic, ideological, and aesthetic properties for which indexical signs can be found in the text. Thus, the implied author has an objective and a subjective side: it is grounded in the indexes of the text, but these indexes are perceived and evaluated differently by each individual reader. We have the implied author in mind when we say that each and every cultural product contains an image of its maker. The implied author is therefore not a category specific to verbal narration; nevertheless, it is most often discussed in relation to verbal texts, particularly in narratological contexts.

2 Explication

Introduced by Booth in 1961 in connection with his conceptualization of the unreliable narrator (Shen → Unreliability [1]; Yacobi 1981), the implied author has become a widespread term for a concept referring to the author evoked by, but not represented in a work. The concept appears in various forms. Many users treat it as a term for an entity positioned between the real author and the fictive narrator in the communication structure of narrative works. Those adopting a critical stance, on the other hand, use it as a term for a reader- generated construct without an equivalent pragmatic role in the narrative work. In neither of these usages is it claimed that authors have the intention of creating an image of themselves in their works. Instead, the image is understood as one of the by-products that, in the sense of Bühler’s expressive function of language ([1934] 2011), necessarily accompanies each and every symbolic representation. Any of the acts that produce a work can function as an indexical sign bearing this indirect form of self-expression. In particular, these acts include the fabrication of a represented world; the invention of a story with situations, characters, and actions; the selection of a particular action logic with a more or less pronounced world-view; the deployment of a narrator and his or her perspective; the transformation of the story into a narrative with the aid

of techniques such as flattening simultaneous events into a linear progression and rearranging the order of episodes; and finally, the presentation of the narrative in particular linguistic (or visual) forms.

Some of these acts can also serve as indexical signs expressing the narrator. The question of to which of the two entities the indexes should be applied is a hermeneutical problem which can be answered only with very general remarks. The representation of a story and of a narrator to present it are a matter for the author. The selection of the elements of the happenings, their combination into a story, their evaluation and naming are operations that fall into the ambit of the narrator, who is revealed in them. All acts that express the narrator also function ultimately as indexes for the author, whose creation the narrator is.

The concept of implied author has provoked questions above all because it has two dissimilar aspects. On the one hand, it has an objective component: the implied author is seen as a hypostasis of the work's structure. On the other hand, it has a subjective component relating to reception: the implied author is seen as a product of the reader's meaning-making activity. The relative importance of these two aspects varies depending on how the concept is used: essentialists insist on the importance of the work's structure in defining the implied author, whereas constructivists highlight the role played by the freedom of interpretation. At any rate, it must be remembered that, like the readings of different recipients, the various interpretations of a single reader are each associated with a different implied author. Each single reading reconstructs its author. Depending on the function a work is believed to have had according to a given reading, the implied author will be reconstructed as having predominantly aesthetic, practical, or ideological intentions.

3 History of the Concept and its Study

3.1 Russian Formalism, Czech and Polish Structuralism

The concept of the implied author was first formulated systematically against the background of Russian formalism. The formalist Tynjanov ([1927] 1971: 75) coined the term "literary personality," which he used to refer to a work's internal abstract authorial entity. Vinogradov, a scholar of language and style with links to the formalist movement, began developing the concept of the author's image (*obraz avtora*) in 1926 (Čudakov 1992: 237–42; Gölz 2009). He later defined this image as "the concentrated embodiment of the essence of the work," as "drawing together the entire system of the linguistic structures of the characters in their correlation with the narrator or narrators, and thereby being the conceptual stylistic centre, the

focus of the whole" (Vinogradov 1971: 118).

In the 1970s, Russian thought on the idea of the author in the text was taken further by Korman (Rymar' & Skobelev 1994: 60–102). Drawing on Vinogradov's concept of the author's image and Baxtin's theory of dialogic interaction between different evaluative positions, Korman (1977) developed a method he described as "systemically subject-based." At its center lies the study of the author as the "consciousness of the work." Korman's approach differs from the theory of his predecessors in two ways. In Vinogradov's writings, the author's image is described stylistically and presented as the product obtained when the different styles brought into play in a work are drawn together; Korman, on the other hand, concentrates primarily on the relations between the various centers of consciousness in the work. And whereas Baxtin's interest in the problem of the author's image is primarily philosophical and aesthetic in nature, Korman's deliberations are dominated by poetics. For Korman, the author in the work, which he calls the "conceived author," is realized "in the correlation of all the constituent textual elements of the work in question with its subjects of speech, i.e. those subjects to whom the text is attributed, and the subjects of consciousness, i.e. those subjects whose consciousnesses are expressed in the text" (120).

In the context of Czech structuralism, Mukařovský (1937: 353) spoke of the author in the work as an "abstract subject that, contained in the structure of the work, is merely a point from which it is possible to survey the entire work at a glance." In any given work, Mukařovský adds, it is possible to find indications pointing to the presence of this abstract subject, which must never be identified with an actual individual such as the author or the recipient. He writes that the subject of the work "in its abstraction [...] merely makes it possible to project these personalities into the internal structure of the work" (353).

Taking the ideas of his teacher as his starting point, the second-generation Czech structuralist Červenka suggested that the "subject of the work," or "personality" (the entity that Mukařovský called the "abstract subject") is the "signified," the "aesthetic object" of the literary work, the work itself being treated as an index in the Peircean sense (Červenka [1969] 1978). For Červenka, the "personality" thus defined embodies the principle by which all the semantic levels of the work are dynamically united, without forcing us to suppress the inner richness and personal color that points back to the concrete author.

At the beginning of Polish research on the subject of the work we find Sławiński (1966, [1967] 1975), whose writings reflect the ideas of Vinogradov and Mukařovský. Where Vinogradov introduces the concept of the "author's image," Sławiński refers to the "subject of the creative acts" or the "maker of the rules of speech."

Balcerzan (1968) uses the term “internal author” to refer to the same entity. “Subject of the work” is the name given to the work’s authorial entity in the framework of literary communication outlined by Okopień- Sławińska (1971). Fieguth (1975: 16), Okopień-Sławińska’s German translator and commentator, describes it as the “subject of the use of literary rules in the work.”

3.1 Approaches in the West

In Western narratology, the introduction of the implied author concept was linked to work on the notion of the unreliable narrator, in other words, the axiological disconnection of the narrator from the horizon of values against which a work operates. The paradigmatic form of the concept was developed by Booth ([1961] 1983), an American literary scholar belonging to the Chicago School (Kindt & Müller 1999, 2006a, 2006b). Since Flaubert and in the Anglo-American sphere, particularly with Henry James, there had existed a view according to which authors should be objective, that is to say neutral and dispassionate. Booth, in contrast, underlined the inescapable subjectivity of the author: “As he writes, [the real author] 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. […] 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 [author] who writes in this manner” (Booth [1961] 1983: 70–1). These words have been understood by some as referring to a self-image intentionally created by the author. However, it is more likely that Booth’s rather imprecise formulation was meant to capture the idea that the creator of every product is inevitably and involuntarily represented through the indexical properties inherent in the product.

According to Booth, the implied author embodies the work’s “core norms and choices” (74). Booth, who subscribed to the criticism of the “intentional fallacy” presented by Wimsatt & Beardsley ([1946] 1976), hoped to sidestep two tenets of the New Criticism with the help of the implied author concept: the doctrine of autonomy and insistence on the need to concentrate solely on the work itself. As Booth (1968: 112–13) objected, the New Criticism’s fight against a string of “fallacies” and “heresies” served to rule out not just the author but also the audience, the “world of ideas and beliefs,” and even “the narrative interest” itself. The concept of authorship in the work was meant to provide a way around these obstacles so as to make it possible to talk about a work’s meaning and intention without falling afoul of the criminal heresies.

Booth’s approach has subsequently been taken up and refined on many occasions (cf. in particular Iser [1972] 1974; Chatman 1978: 147–49; Rimmon-Kenan [1983] 2002

: 87–8). Equivalent concepts have also been introduced, some closely associated with Booth's, others less so. Eco (1979) speaks of the "model author," which he treats as an interpretive hypothesis of the empirical reader, and Easthope (1983: 30–72) draws on the linguistic work of Benveniste in suggesting the term "subject of enunciation." Building on the Slavic origins of the concept, Schmid (1973) introduced the term "abstract author" (taken up by, e.g., Link 1976: 40; Lintvelt [1981] 1989: 17–22; Hoek 1981), which he has subsequently defended against criticism (Schmid 1986: 300–06; cf. also the revision in Schmid [2005] 2008: 45–64; 2010: 36–51).

3.2 The Implied Author Debate

The concept of the implied author has given rise to heated debate. Hempfer (1977: 10) passed categorical judgment over the concepts of the implied (in his words "implizit," i.e. "implicit") author and reader, writing that the two entities "not only seem to be of no theoretical use but also obscure the real fundamental distinction, that between the speech situation in the text and that outside it." Over two decades later, Zipfel (2001: 120) presented a similar indictment of the implied author, condemning the concept as "superfluous to narrative theory," "hopelessly vague," and "terminologically imprecise." Bal has established herself as a bitter opponent of both Booth's implied author and Schmid's abstract author. These "superfluous" concepts (1981a: 208–09), she believes, have fostered the misguided practice of isolating authors from the ideologies of their works. The implied author, she believes, is a deceptive notion that promised to account for the ideology of the text. "This would have made it possible to condemn a text without condemning its author and vice versa—a very attractive proposition to the autonomists of the '60s" (1981b : 42).

More balanced criticism has been put forward in many forms. The objections raised can be summarized as follows: (a) unlike the fictive narrator, the implied author is not a pragmatic agent but a semantic entity (Nünning 1989: 33, 1993: 9); (b) the implied author is no more than a reader-created construct (Rimmon-Kenan [1983] 2002: 87; Toolan [1988] 2001: 64) and as such should not be personified (Nünning 1989: 31–32); (c) despite repeated warnings against an overly anthropomorphic understanding of the implied author, Chatman (1978: 151) puts forward a model in which the implied author functions as a participant in communication—which is, according to Rimmon-Kenan ([1983] 2002: 89), precisely what the implied author is not; (d) in so far as it involves a semantic rather than a structural phenomenon, the concept of the implied author belongs to the poetics of interpretation rather than the poetics of narration (Diengott 1993: 189); (e) Booth and those who have used the concept after him have not shown how to identify the implied author of any given text (Kindt & Müller 2006b: 167–68).

These criticisms are perfectly legitimate, but they are not sufficient to justify excluding the implied author from the attention of narratology. Many critics continue to use the concept, clearly because no better term can be found for expressing that authorial element whose presence is inferred in a work.

It is also striking that those who advocate abandoning the implied author have put forward few convincing alternatives. Nünning, e.g., who believes that it is "terminologically imprecise," "theoretically inadequate," and "unusable in practice," suggests replacing it with the "totality of all the formal and structural relations in a text" (1989: 36). In a chapter "In Defense of the Implied Author," Chatman (1990: 74–89) suggests a series of alternatives for readers uneasy with the term implied author: "text implication"; "text instance"; "text design"; or simply "text intent." Finally, Kindt & Müller (1999: 285–86) identify two courses of action. We should, they suggest, either replace the term implied author with that of "author" itself (which would attract familiar objections from anti-intentionalistic quarters); or, if a non-intentionalistic concept of meaning is to be retained, we should speak instead of "text intention." (Since texts as such do not have intentions, the latter term brings with it an undesirable metonymic shift from maker to product.)

The case of Genette sheds light on the double-sided view of the implied author concept held by many theorists. Genette did not cover the implied author in his *Narrative Discourse* ([1972] 1980), which led to a certain amount of criticism (e.g., Rimmon 1976: 58; Bronzwaer 1978: 3); he then devoted an entire chapter to it in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* ([1983] 1988: 135–54). Detailed analysis in the latter work leads to a conclusion that is not at all unfavorable to the implied author. Genette observes first that, because it is not specific to the *récit*, the *auteur impliqué* is not the concern of narratology. His answer to the question "is the *implied author* a necessary and (therefore) valid agent between the narrator and the real author?" (139; original emphasis) is ambivalent. The implied author, he says, is clearly not an actual agent, but is conceivably an ideal agent: "the implied author is everything the text lets us know about the author" (148). But we should not, Genette warns, turn this "idea of the author" into a narrative agent. This places Genette in a position not so different from that of the proponents of "full-blown models" of narrative communication to which he refers (Schmid 1973; Chatman 1978 ; Bronzwaer 1978; Hoek 1981; Lintvelt [1981]1989), none of whom intended to make the implied author a narrative agent.

That the debate over the existence and utility of the concept of the implied author has not yet come to a standstill is attested by a special issue of *Style* (Vol. 45, 2011) *Implied Author: Back from the Grave or Simply Dead Again?* This question was formulated by Richardson who, examining cases in which "the values, sensibility or

beliefs of the implied author differ radically from those of the actual author" (2011: 6), comes to three conclusions: 1) "the implied author does not communicate"; 2) "we can predicate values of an inferred author based on the material of a given text"; 3) "the implied author remains a very useful heuristic construct" (7). Shen (2011) also argues in favor of the concept, making clear its relevance and significance in today's critical context. Ryan (2011) proposes a critique of the three functions assigned to the implied author: "1) The implied author is a necessary parameter in the communicative model of literary narrative fiction. 2) The implied author is a design principle, responsible for the narrative techniques and the plot of the text. 3) The implied author is the source of the norms and values communicated by the text." Her conclusion is that if an author figure reveals itself through a text, it is as the manifestation of a real person that this figure attracts the interest of the reader. Lanser (2011) formulates "An Agnostic's Manifesto" containing eight propositions that are meant to "speak to theorists on both sides of the implied author divide" (153). She concludes by calling for an empirical inquiry into whether and how belief in an implied author might affect the poetic or hermeneutic enterprise: "We will learn more about implied authorship by testing out how readers process a sense of the author than by continued debate" (158).

3.3 Towards an Impartial Definition

The implied author can be defined as one of the correlates of the indexical signs in a text that a recipient, depending on his or her conception of the work's intention, may interpret as referring to the author of that text. These signs mark out a specific world-view and aesthetic standpoint. The implied author is not an intentional creation of the concrete author and differs categorically in this respect from the narrator, who is always an implicitly, or even explicitly, represented entity. The implied author belongs to a different level of the work; the implied author stands for the principle behind the fabrication of a narrator and the represented world in its entirety, the principle behind the composition of the work (note here Hühn's "subject of composition" [1995: 5], a development of Easthope's "subject of enunciation" [1983]). The implied author has no voice of its own, no text. Its word is the entire text with all its levels. Its position is defined by both ideological and aesthetic norms.

The implied author has only a virtual existence in the work and can be grasped only by turning to the traces left behind in the work by the creative acts of production, taking concrete shape only with the help of the reader. The implied author is a construct formed by the reader on the basis of his or her reading of the work. If the process of construction is not to simply confirm to the meanings that readers want to find in the first place, it must be based on the evidence in the text and the

constraints this places on the freedom of interpretation. It would therefore be more appropriate to speak of “reconstruction” instead of “construction.”

The implied authors of various works by a single concrete author display certain common features and thereby constitute what we might call an *œuvre* author, a stereotype that Booth (1979: 270) refers to as a “career author.” There are also more general author stereotypes that re-late not to an *œuvre* but to literary schools, stylistic currents, periods, and genres.

Contrary to the impression given by the term “author’s image,” the relation between the implied author and the real author should not be pictured in such a way that the former becomes a reflection or copy of the latter. And despite the connotations of the German *impliziter Autor* (implicit author, which brings with it a shift from the reception-based orientation of *implied* to an ontologizing concept), the implied author cannot be modeled as the mouthpiece of the real author. It is not unusual for authors to experiment with their world-views and put their beliefs to the test in their works. In some cases, authors use their works to depict possibilities that cannot be realized in the context of their real-life existence, adopting in the process standpoints on certain issues that they could not or would not wish to adopt in reality. In such cases, the implied author can be more radical than the real author ever really was or, more circumspectly, than we imagine him or her to have been on the basis of the evidence available. Such radicalization of the implied author is characteristic, e.g., of Tolstoj’s late works. The late Tolstoj was much less convinced by many of his ideas than his implied authors; the latter embodied, and took to extremes, one particular dimension of Tolstoj’s thought. Conversely, it is also possible for the ideological horizons of the implied author to be broader than the more or less markedly ideologically constrained ones of the real author. An example of this is Dostoevskij, who in his late novels developed a remarkable understanding of ideologies that he vehemently attacked as a journalist.

Dostoevskij’s last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, shows another phenomenon, a split of the implied author: whereas ‘Dostoevskij I’ designs the novel as a modern theodicy, ‘Dostoevskij II’ undermines this intention by a subliminal critique of God. The whole novel is characterized by a restless oscillation between the “Pro” of the intending and controlling Dostoevskij I and the “Contra” of its subversive antagonist Dostoevskij II.

3.4 Relevance to Narratology

Why should a semantic entity that is neither a pragmatic participant in communication nor a specific component of the narrative work be the concern of narratology at all? Recall here Rimmon (1976: 58), who points out that “without the

implied author it is difficult to analyze the ‘norms’ of the text, especially when they differ from those of the narrator.” Similarly, Bronzwaer (1978: 3) notes that “we need an instance that calls the extradiegetic narrator into existence, which is responsible for him in the same way as he is responsible for the diegesis.” Chatman (1990: 76) points out another advantage of the concept when he writes that “positing an implied author inhibits the overhasty assumption that the reader has direct access through the fictional text to the real author’s intentions and ideology.”

The concept of the implied author is particularly useful in textual interpretation because it helps us describe the layered process by which meaning is generated. The existence of the implied author, not part of the represented world but nonetheless part of the work, casts a shadow over the narrator, who often appears as master of the situation and seems to have control over the semantic order of the work. The presence of the implied author highlights the fact that narrators, their texts, and the meanings expressed in them are all represented. Only on the level of the implied author do these meanings acquire their ultimate semantic intention. The presence of the implied author in the work, above the characters and the narrator and their associated levels of meaning, establishes a new semantic level arching over the whole work: the authorial level.

4 Topics for Further Research

(a) Where systematic considerations and practical applications are concerned, there is a pressing need to identify the indexical signs that refer to the implied author, and to distinguish between author- and narrator-specific indexes. (b) The manifestation of the implied author in different periods, cultural spheres, text types, and genres has yet to be examined in detail. (c) The presence of the implied author in non-verbal narratives is an important issue.

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